

TO LIVE AS BROTHERS

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TO LIVE AS BROTHERS

Southeast Sumatra in
the Seventeenth and
Eighteenth Centuries

Barbara Watson Andaya



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For My Teachers

With Respect and Thanks



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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade the preparation of this book has absorbed a considerable portion of my academic energy and most of my free time. As I look back over this period I can indeed remember numerous occasions when I was excited by and enthusiastic about the project; conversely, I can also vividly recall feelings of frustration and inadequacy when it seemed that the task I had set myself was simply too great. I was frequently compelled to ask what I was trying to achieve, what could realistically be done with the available sources, and whether, in the end, it would all be worthwhile. Any resolution of this latter question must await the passage of time and the judgment of others, but at this stage it may be useful to explain the reasons behind my selection of subject, the nature of the material I used, the considerations that influenced my interpretation, and the rationale underlying the book's structure.

When I began my research my aim was to produce a study of long-term developments in a specific area of the Indonesian archipelago. Because so many sources for the premodern period are unexplored, I remain convinced that the provision of case studies is a major priority in the reconstruction of Southeast Asian history. Until we can speak with some confidence about a wider range of separate localities, any generalized comments about the region must be made with caution. Too often, for instance, there is a tendency to speak of "change" without recognizing that its nature, rate, and extent differed from one area to another and in many instances came so slowly that the effects are only perceptible when a community is examined over an extended period.

In view of my previous research experience, the choice of Jambi and Palembang as an area for closer study was a logical one. Historians of the Malay world have long regarded southeast Sumatra with particular interest because of the links between this region and Malay cultural traditions. Furthermore, I knew that the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* [VOC]) had established posts in both Jambi and Palembang, I was familiar with the nature of Dutch material, and I felt (incredibly, it now seems) that this new project would not pose challenges very different from those I had encountered during my earlier work. I was soon disillusioned, for I had simply not appreciated the extent to which the ostensibly "Malay" states that developed on the Sumatran side of the Melaka Straits differed from

their neighbors on the peninsula. Consequently, a whole world opened up for me as I began my research, since I knew almost nothing about the numerous groups who inhabit the interior of southeast Sumatra. With certain notable exceptions, modern anthropologists have not been drawn to work on this area; without detailed ethnographic studies, some time elapsed before I felt even moderately confident in my understanding of upstream societies. Still, in spite of all my efforts, the sources accessible to me have meant that some communities within the contemporary provinces of Jambi and Sumatera Selatan (South Sumatra, formerly Palembang) have not received as much attention as others. I can only hope that future researchers will rectify my inadequacies.

Having chosen southeast Sumatra as a focus for study, I was then faced with the question of an appropriate time frame. Believing that the European arrival helped introduce a period of considerable change, I initially planned to begin research in the early sixteenth century. However, my hopes in this regard were thwarted, for relevant Portuguese material proved to be extremely thin. Only from 1615, when the Dutch and English East India Companies arrived in southeast Sumatra, did the sources begin to expand.¹ Even so, they are not spread equally between Palembang and Jambi, and I saw in them no shared climax or clear dénouement around which a "history" could be structured. Information regarding Palembang in the early seventeenth century, for example, is far less complete than that relating to Jambi, but after 1662 VOC representatives in Palembang maintained a continuous correspondence with Batavia until the Company's demise in 1799. By contrast, the Dutch departure from Jambi in 1770 precludes even the apparently simple task of constructing a reliable royal chronology for the latter part of the eighteenth century. Local memories obviously did not disappear, but they are not recorded in a manner that makes them readily accessible. Thus, though about 1600 could stand as a defensible starting point for a joint history, it was less easy to establish where I should end. The problem could have been resolved had the study been limited to either Jambi or Palembang, and for a time I toyed with this notion. I nonetheless resisted the temptation because their history is so intimately connected, because their personification as "brothers" occurs so frequently in the sources, and because I felt that developments in the one helped to explain the pattern of events in the other. Finally, I decided to conclude the book at the beginning of the nineteenth century, at the juncture when European penetration into the area became more intense and the nature of change rather different from that of the previous two hundred years.

The available information has influenced this interpretation of Jambi and Palembang history in other ways. Unlike the relatively sparse documentation provided by the English East India Company, the VOC

material is rich in detail relating to political and economic considerations. It is obviously not all-inclusive, for the Dutch were concerned primarily with their own commercial interests, and their focus was therefore on the court, where they saw power residing. Large areas of the local economy fell outside their interests, and geographically distant places were discussed sporadically and often imprecisely. Nonetheless, the extent and continuity of VOC sources make them an invaluable tool that will continue to serve historians of Indonesia well. Records from the colonial period were also extremely helpful in explaining or expanding earlier information, particularly in regard to Palembang, but I have been constantly aware of the need for caution in applying the "regressive method." Customs confidently described as "traditional" in 1850, for instance, may have changed markedly from practices a century or so earlier.

The indigenous sources most readily available are manuscripts emanating from the courts—chronicles, literary romances, religious texts—with Palembang again being more favored than Jambi. Any historian will be aware that these must be approached with care, since virtually all extant texts were composed or copied in the nineteenth century, and the degree of editing in their record of earlier times is unknown. Less accessible and more problematic, however, is the amorphous and shifting material transmitted orally. The difficulties involved in using such accounts for historical reconstruction are formidable and are compounded by the fact that many versions have been preserved only because they were committed to paper by Europeans or their local assistants. Although grateful for the industry of early collectors, most scholars recognize that any attempt to tap written oral traditions is fraught with methodological problems, especially when they have been translated or edited for publication.² Nor is it immediately apparent how this material can be used in conjunction with Company records, for its favored subjects—the activities of legendary rulers, the wanderings of ancestral heroes, the doings of the animal kingdom, the love affairs of courtiers—seem far removed from the concerns reflected in European archives. Yet indigenous sources have been basic to the formulation of this study, despite historiographical uncertainties, for I saw them as conveying what Jan Vansina has termed "cultural messages" of enduring importance.³ In thinking about the variety of legends, chronicles, and stories I had both read and heard, it appeared to me that certain themes did recur and that they were primarily engaged with three matters: the ineluctable and yet ambiguous association between upstream (*ulu*) and downstream (*ilir*); kinship as a determinant of human action; and the tensions inherent in the ruler-subject relationship.

None of these themes is unique to southeast Sumatra, and all can be readily identified in historical studies from other areas of the archipel-

ago. What attracted my attention in the Jambi and Palembang case was the vigor with which they were articulated in local accounts. Further, when I approached the archival records in terms of these "messages," I did not feel I had entered an alien world; indeed, it seemed that the preoccupations I had discerned in indigenous sources were also being expressed here, albeit in a different idiom. But although European and local voices often spoke in unison, they equally bore witness to the cultural disjunctions that were exposed as Dutch and English involvement in Jambi and Palembang deepened. One way of exploring this interaction, it seemed to me, was to view it against the background of a more general process by which western Europeans in the seventeenth century began "to define themselves as different in significant aspects from the rest of the world."⁴ As Europe's mercantile interests reached out further into the non-European environment, it was commonly in the marketplace and the audience hall that a sense of these differences was keenest. Jambi and Palembang, like so much of the premodern world, were typified by communities in which economic and political dealings were conceptualized in terms of kinship relations and where orality was the cultural lodestone. The Europeans with whom they dealt, however, represented societies in which commerce and government were becoming steadily more commoditized and more depersonalized, a transition in which the internalization of literacy and numeracy and the changing attitudes thereby engendered were critical.⁵

With these considerations in mind, I attempted to write a book that traces and contrasts developments in Jambi and Palembang, the "brothers" of the title, over two centuries. Although proceeding chronologically, it also uses aspects of the oral-literate interplay as departure points for discussing wider implications of southeast Sumatra's political and economic history. The first chapter thus starts with the description of a Portuguese map, selected because it graphically demonstrates the growing textual orientation among early modern Europeans, an orientation often unsympathetic to the entrenched orality of the societies they met in Jambi and Palembang. Nonetheless, by moving between indigenous story and European documentation I tried to show how the themes that permeate legend and folklore can still be identified in archival material and that in many respects they indeed intermesh.

Chapter 2, which relates these themes to events in southeast Sumatra during the first half of the seventeenth century, focuses on the role of kinship in economic activities and the implications of royal genealogies. In England and the Netherlands written documents recording the descent of rulers and nobles were already being detached from mythical origins to become simply statements of blood claims to authority. But in Jambi and Palembang, as elsewhere in the archipelago, genealogies also continued to invoke the relevant family alliances that could facilitate the

formation of economic relationships. By the nineteenth century Jambi's commerce was moribund, and memories of its once widespread trading links, no longer in keeping with the contemporary scene, had slipped away from the kingly pedigree. Archival records, however, show that two hundred years earlier the pepper trade had brought Jambi a wealth surpassing that of Palembang, with Chinese and even Portuguese traders successfully incorporated as the ruler's kindred. Although the arrival of the Dutch and English made the idea of this economic family more difficult to sustain, the prosperity that came to Jambi allowed its rulers both to emulate the "civilized" Javanese court of Mataram and to renounce vassal status. Following the defeat of Palembang by the VOC in 1659, Jambi's future as the elder relative seemed assured.

Chapter 3 employs the image of European account books to invoke the notion of indigenous "balance sheets" by which human memories were constantly recalculating the mutual obligations incurred through interaction with other individuals or communities. By the 1660s Palembang, like Jambi, had also developed as a major pepper producer, but beneath the apparently untrammelled prosperity were indications of growing strains. In both places trading practices introduced by Europeans made it increasingly difficult to balance a cultural ledger that tallied the relationship between upstream growers and downstream buyers in terms of services rendered and received. In a climate of growing commercial suspicion, the idealized notion of the king as a caring kinsman was progressively undermined by his physical intrusion as an unrelenting creditor and demanding overlord. The rivalry inherent in the Jambi-Palembang association also grew more antagonistic as they competed for control over people and territory. When open warfare broke out the Dutch intervened to restore peace, but Jambi's economy had been seriously affected by years of conflict and the decline of the pepper market. In the subsequent agreement the Dutch therefore favored the more economically attractive Palembang, and a generation after the defeat of 1659 it had reasserted its position as the older brother.

The comments about time that begin the fourth chapter serve to compare popular evaluations of the kings who ruled Jambi and Palembang during the late seventeenth century. Concepts of inflexible time periods, an outgrowth of a widening stress on exactness and precision, were intrinsic to the European commercial ethos. Such concepts, however, were often at variance with values encountered in societies where access to standardized measures such as calendars was limited. One of the few ways by which different communities could share a referent to the past was by invoking the "time" associated with a particular ruler who was acknowledged, however vaguely, as a common overlord. In this regard memories associated with contemporary rulers of Jambi and Palembang differ markedly. By 1690 Jambi's upstream and down-

stream had fallen apart, and as the years passed the ulu became progressively more distanced from the Dutch-supported ilir rulers. Among the upstream groups, especially the Minangkabau, there was a widespread call for a restoration of the old order. The mid-seventeenth century was now commonly seen as a kind of golden age from which "time" the Jambi condition had steadily deteriorated. In Palembang, by contrast, a flourishing economy and a peaceful rule meant the present was establishing standards of prosperity and wise government that drew upstream and downstream together and by which later periods would be judged.

Chapter 5 explores this contrast in greater detail in relation to Jambi by tracing the ways in which VOC officials hoped to use written documents like the contract to set in place an administration that would restore local trade. Ulu and ilir leaders placed a similar faith in the powers of the Dutch treaty, not so much because of any specific terms it contained but because it symbolized a relationship associated with the halcyon times of dead kings. The solemnity surrounding the conclusion of "the contract" was charged with such potency that many saw in the resulting document a tool by which the past could be recreated. But the perceived failings of ilir rulers and their role as effective agents of the commercially demanding VOC militated against economic revival and a restoration of the former upstream-downstream association. The flood of Minangkabau settlers simply served to widen the gap, and ultimately the Jambi king, his own standing perilous, turned against the Dutch. In 1770, after an association of a hundred and fifty years, the VOC closed its Jambi factory.

Palembang too was bound to the Dutch by a contract that theoretically at least accorded the VOC a monopoly over all pepper produced; in 1722 this was enlarged to include tin as well. But Palembang did not suffer the same economic decline as Jambi, and the status of its kings was if anything enhanced. In examining the implications of the career of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin (1724–1757), chapter 6 takes up the notion of the heroic ruler, the outsize figure who helps anchor history in strongly oral communities. Although similar attitudes could still be discerned in Europe, the conception of the prince as epic hero, imbued with extraordinary powers, was being increasingly relegated to a distant past. In Palembang, by contrast, the emergence of a leader who seemed cast in the same mold as the heroes of popular folklore was critical in elevating the downstream court into a largely accepted focus for upstream loyalties.

In Europe the concomitant of a weakening oral imperative was the educated view of writing as the proper destination for the worthy thought or noble experience. As chapter 7 suggests, this view was amply demonstrated in the eighteenth century by the florescence of "scien-

tific" publications. Many of these publications deal with non-European societies, a reflection of an expanding interest in lesser-known areas of the world. Interest, however, rarely engendered admiration and in fact often reinforced a sense of cultural superiority. Confident that their "methodical" observations provided a key to understanding the local scene, Europeans in the Indonesian archipelago were thus ready to characterize kingdoms like Jambi and Palembang as being in a state of "decay." In view of how traditional political-cultural-economic unities were formed, however, it is probably more appropriate to think of this period as one that exposed the essential fragility of the kinship-ordered society. In Palembang this is particularly evident on the seas, where Europeans, Bugis, Chinese, Arabs, and Ibanun raiders all contended for access to Bangka's tin. In the interior, however, Ibanun rulers were able to maintain their standing despite widespread demographic movement. Through a period of considerable change, the upstream-downstream relationship, though ill understood by Europeans, proved remarkably resilient; and where Dutch and English observers saw inefficiency and even disorder, local traditions recall peace and prosperity.

Like the introduction, the conclusion also begins with a map, that drawn by William Marsden for inclusion in his *History of Sumatra* (1811). Very different from the Portuguese work that opens this book, Marsden's geographical accuracy and attention to detail provides graphic testimony to the knowledge Europeans had acquired about Jambi and Palembang in the intervening three hundred years. This period had also seen considerable change in the region, for the wealth that Jambi had once enjoyed was long gone, and even Palembang was on the verge of losing its sovereignty. Certain features nonetheless endured; upstream and downstream remained inevitably linked and yet potentially separate; kinship continued to stand as the woof and warp of economic and political relations; rulers still had the potential to emerge as heroic leaders who could take their place among the great ancestors; and the memories of the old relationship linking Jambi and Palembang had not been erased.

As this study nears completion I am very much aware that the analysis I have presented reflects not just the kind of material to which I had access but the personal interpretation I have placed upon it. Other historians would certainly have approached the data in a different way and possibly reached different conclusions. I make no claim for the uniqueness of southeast Sumatra, and much that has been included here will probably strike a familiar chord to colleagues who have worked elsewhere. Yet I also believe that the past in Jambi and Palembang retains a character of its own, and in offering this contribution toward a greater understanding of one area of modern Indonesia I have tried to convey something of that character.



CHAPTER ONE

Writing and Speaking: Approaching the History of Southeast Sumatra

Among the treasures of the National Library of France is a Portuguese atlas dating from the early sixteenth century, probably intended as a gift for the French king. After nearly five hundred years its illustrations still convey a sense of the excitement of Portugal's explorers as they moved out beyond the borders of their known world, an excitement vividly captured by the artist's depiction of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. Sprightly galleons crest curling ocean waves, parakeets swoop around the towers of medieval castles, and scarlet banners proclaim exotic names of towns like "Malaqua," the Malay port conquered by Portugal in 1511. Nearby sprawls the leaf-shaped mass of Sumatra or "Taprobana Insula" (Further Ceylon), ringed by a profusion of multicolored islets as yet untouched by Portuguese victories. But the cartographer, clearly feeling that pictorial techniques alone had not adequately conveyed the extent of these unexplored regions, has found it necessary to append a written explanatory note. "Taprobana" he states confidently, "is surrounded by many islands which are said to number one thousand three hundred and seventy eight."¹

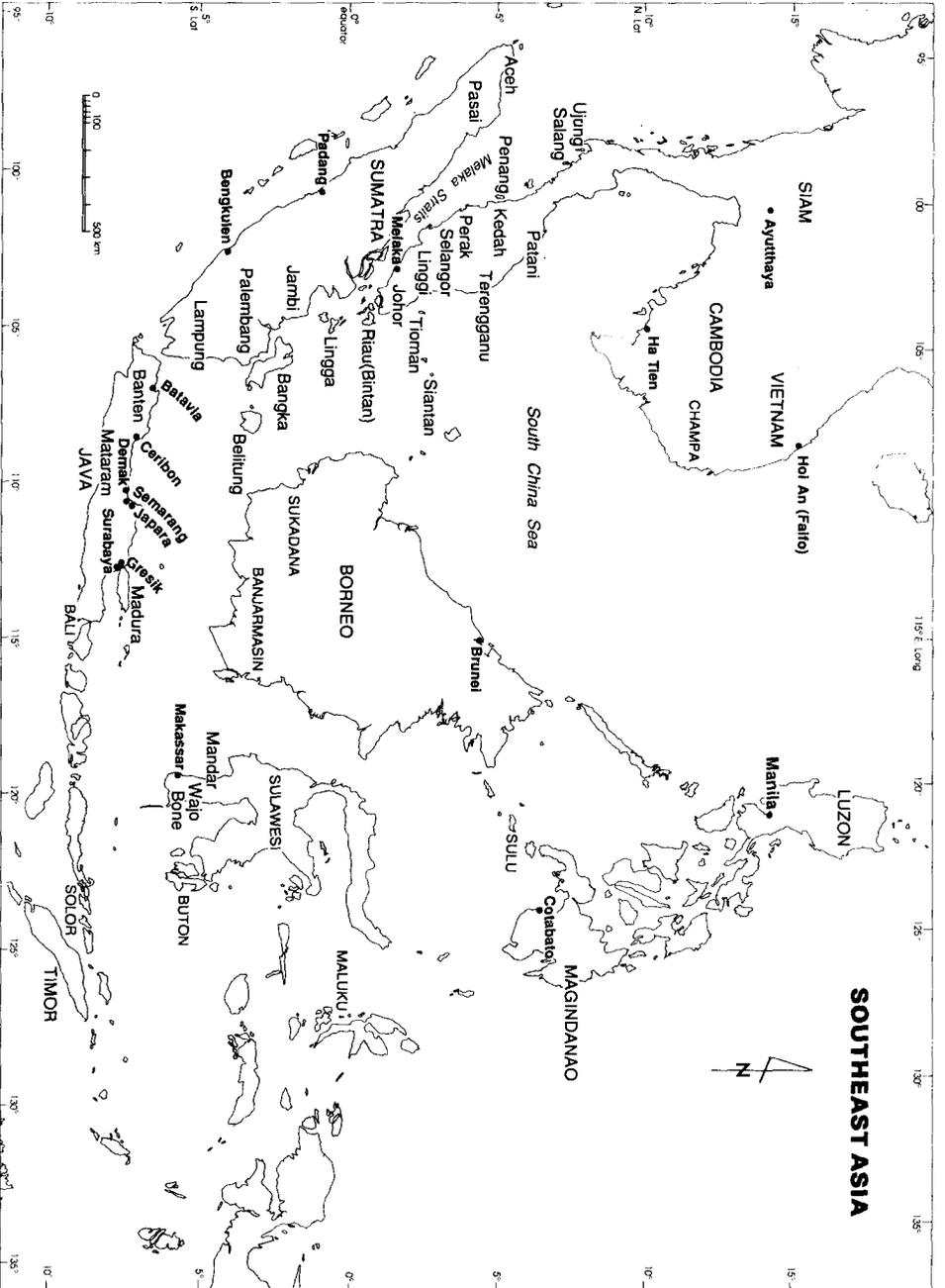
This delightful product of the mapmaker's art serves as a useful departure point for the present study of southeast Sumatra during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its imaginative representation helps us recall that when it was drawn Europeans knew very little of what is one of the world's largest islands, where they were to be the agents of such extensive change. Although the Portuguese had become more familiar with the spice-producing areas of the eastern archipelago following the establishment of their Ternate fort in 1522, challenges from the newly emergent state of Aceh meant that efforts to achieve a similar position in the pepper lands of northern Sumatra were unsuccessful. Because there were no Portuguese posts here after 1524 and because missionary activity was limited, the information collected about Sumatra remained comparatively meager. In the mid-sixteenth century the chronicler João de Barros, synthesising the material then available

to him, reminded his readers that the island "is very large, with many princes and lords in the interior about which we have no knowledge." While he could write in some detail about the northern parts, he knew relatively little about the southern coasts except that they were difficult of access, being "full of islands and shallows."²

Yet even as Barros wrote, European interest in southeast Sumatra, particularly the area known as Jambi, was beginning to expand. For a considerable period Jambi had played only a minor role in regional commerce, being overshadowed by Palembang, its larger and more populous neighbor. With the development of pepper as a cash crop during the sixteenth century, however, Jambi assumed greater importance in international trade and it was here that the Dutch and English East India Companies eventually set up posts in 1615. In subsequent years they had ample opportunity to observe the close ties between Jambi and Palembang and to note that their ruling families were essentially one clan whose bonds of blood were repeatedly strengthened by intermarriage.

Naturally enough, Europeans at the time were unaware that the interaction of these two areas had been a feature of southeast Sumatra for perhaps a thousand years. Local inscriptions and Chinese sources indicate that at least from the seventh century centers of authority situated on the lower reaches of Sumatra's longest rivers, the Batang Hari and the Musi, had vied for dominance. Although probably fostered by competition for commercial supremacy in the Melaka Straits, the rivalry historians have identified may well represent only one side of a relationship in which alliance and antagonism were inextricably mixed, reflecting a very old pattern of "hostile friendship" between paired tribes in early Southeast Asia. When the Dutch and English arrived at the beginning of the seventeenth century the Palembang and Jambi courts were still intimately connected. This connection did not mean that they lived in undisturbed harmony, for blood links and geographical proximity were often causes of dissension. Nonetheless, there was an underlying assumption that the bonds of kindred, however strained, could never be undone. Europeans were assured that "Jambi and Palembang, have always, until the present time, been friends and lived as brothers"; it is noteworthy that local legends, while remembering ancient rivalries, remained equally concerned with tracing long-standing family links. One such account, for example, records that Demang Lebar Daun, the founder of Palembang, had two daughters. The elder married the ruler of Bukit Si Guntang, a sacred hill (*bukit*) that stood nearby, and the younger the ruler of Tanjung Jabung on the Jambi coast. Their descendants, the inhabitants of these areas, were thus kinsfolk.³

The Dutch, who by the 1680s had ousted other Europeans from



southeast Sumatra, believed they could exploit the kinship idiom to foster amicable relations between Palembang and Jambi and so create a favorable trading environment. But although they were certain their intervention could allay any hostilities, the evidence suggests that from the early seventeenth century a more intrusive European presence had intensified intrinsic antagonisms. The kind of trading practices that the Dutch in particular introduced encouraged Palembang and Jambi to compete more aggressively for prestige and for control over resources, piling up communal resentments not easily countered by memories of ancestral ties. Furthermore, while quite ready to act as mediators in disputes, the Dutch consistently worked to discourage marriage alliances between Palembang and Jambi, since any such union was regarded as potentially harmful to the *Company's* interests. They failed to realize that without this public statement of affinity any friendship was devoid of substance.

The belief that the relationship between Jambi and Palembang could be somehow reshaped to serve the VOC's commercial objectives arose not only from basic misunderstandings, but from an entrenched view of Europe's cultural superiority. In southeast Sumatra as elsewhere such convictions were frequently reinforced by the negotiations and activities associated with trade, when it was often plain that European attitudes were very different from those of local communities. As an explanation of some of these differences the Portuguese atlas described above has a specific relevance. The maps it contains could indeed be informative at a purely visual level; however, there is an implicit assumption that viewers will be able to read and will thus appreciate the precisely assured details of the cartographer's notations.

This assumption reflects the fact that when the Portuguese and Spanish first sailed into the Indonesian archipelago in the sixteenth century they were coming from a Europe where the slow ascendancy of literacy over oral and pictorial media had already begun. Although popular culture in European societies was still rooted in orality, there was a general acceptance of the view that education necessarily entailed the ability to read and write. Such views were especially apparent in western Europe, where Protestantism constantly stressed the written word as a source of both practical information and moral guidance. Indeed, the Netherlands was commonly regarded as the most literate nation in the world, and as early as 1525 Erasmus had remarked that "nowhere does one find a greater number of people of average education."⁴ The subsequent evolution of a print culture in Europe meant that the process of devaluing knowledge not acquired from books or specialists in book learning was soon well in train. It was in keeping with this trend that Dutch scholars at the end of the sixteenth century began to criticize existing histories of the Netherlands, claiming they were founded on folklore and fables. Historical reconstruction should aim for truth and

accuracy, and these could be obtained only by using "authentic" textual material and empirical research. Equally important, they insisted, was chronological precision in the writing of history and coordination of dates as a means of studying the interrelationships among events.

The increasing concern with quantitative measurement, exact chronology, and the collection and collation of documents was intimately bound up with the spirit of inquiry and skepticism that fostered the scientific, technological, and philosophical advances in Europe during the seventeenth century. Historians have been at pains to point out that the life of the average person was little affected by the expansion of knowledge and that education did not by itself mean the rejection of existing beliefs and attitudes. Most intellectuals, for instance, accepted the reality of witchcraft, and thus a VOC employee in Jambi could still solemnly inform his superiors of an apparition that had appeared in his lodge, the Devil himself "dressed like a human being but very tall with velvet clothes."⁵ Nonetheless, it is widely agreed that by about 1700 the intellectual bases for the evolution of modern European culture had been laid down. No matter how long they had spent in Asia, the Europeans who came to Palembang and Jambi had been touched by this slow but irreversible current. Men who worked with an hourglass beside them, who had been brought up in the Protestant tradition that time was a precious commodity needing to be "saved," had little patience with societies like those they encountered in Sumatra, where the purchase of even a small amount of pepper could take an entire day. Officials trained to keep regular dated records and to file away information for ready reference saw documentation as indispensable to an efficient administration, for increasingly nonliteracy was becoming equated with primitive peoples. In 1684 the English writer Richard Steele went so far as to declare that anyone unable to read and write "was scarce to be reckoned among rational creatures."⁶ A system of government like that in Palembang and Jambi where the ruling elite knew "nothing of archives" and where kings could "neither read nor write" was thus in European eyes fundamentally flawed. People believed to have no "printed books, written works (apart from the Koran), year books, or memoirs" and who seemed to rely on "memory and tradition" to record even "weighty matters and memorable occasions" were readily seen as untruthful, avaricious, cowardly, vengeful, proud, deceitful. By the same token their histories, transmitted not by writing but through oral recitation, were "mere trifles . . . which deserve not the slightest notice."⁷

Orality and the Reconstruction of History

In their dismissal of the people of Palembang and Jambi as essentially illiterate, European observers were only partially correct. Individual

kings and most of their subjects might be unable to read and write, but the region itself had been exposed to writing for centuries. In 671 c.e., when the Chinese pilgrim Yijing arrived in Srivijaya (commonly accepted as referring to Palembang), he commented on the numbers of learned scholars he found there; it was presumably such people whom local rulers charged with responsibility for producing stone inscriptions. Several from the seventh century have been found in southeast Sumatra and on the island of Bangka, composed in an early form of Malay, using an Indic script and dated in the Saka era. In subsequent years the influence of Islamic culture in coastal areas encouraged the adoption of a modified form of Arabic (Jawi) for writing Malay, although Java's overlordship meant that in the courts, Javanese was normally used to record royal orders. From the sixteenth century, kings also employed scribes who knew Portuguese and who had mastered the romanized script so they could send letters to the Europeans.

In addition, a variety of media was available. By the time of the European arrival the use of stone on which to inscribe kingly commands (*piagam*) had given way to engraved copper and silver plates; paper, now more widely available, was considered most appropriate for commercial matters, especially when they concerned Europeans. In both Jambi and Palembang, rulers may well have encouraged the compilation of texts like royal genealogies, although none has survived from this period. A relatively large number of manuscripts, however, do date from Palembang in the late eighteenth century, suggesting the development of a court collection. Nor was writing simply a preserve of coastal ports, for some interior groups had developed their own chirographic forms, variants of the *ka-ga-nga* syllabary found throughout much of south Sumatra. Among these societies writing, usually on beaten bark, bamboo, rattan, or buffalo horns, was normally reserved for preserving legends sacred to the community or for esoteric formulae used in magic ritual. It could also be used for more mundane purposes such as simple correspondence, and growing contact with trade centers meant letters from interior headmen could well be written on paper.

Nonetheless, the use of "documents" in whatever form by no means superseded orality, and one of the revealing differences between European and local societies was the continuing prominence the latter gave to the spoken word even when written material was available. This is not surprising if one considers that in oral-aural cultures words have far more power than in literate ones and that the enunciation of words by an expert practitioner can invoke powers normally beyond human control. It is similarly useful to remember that in most Indonesian societies the mouth and activities associated with it were accorded a particular significance. The ceremonial consumption of sacrificial food, notably flesh or blood, created a special relationship between those involved, while the most binding oaths were always those in which participants

drank the water in which their weapons had been dipped. The most famous Malay epic, the *Sejarah Melayu*, dating at least from 1612, describes how the divine being who installs the first Malay king on Bukit Si Guntang in Palembang emerges from the vomit of a sacred bull. Saliva was likewise believed to contain within it the essence of "soul stuff," and in this context the human voice can be seen as simply the most potent mouth-force.

The great status of the spoken word was also due to the simple fact that (apart from magical imprecations) it could be understood by all. Written documents, on the other hand, although admittedly remarkable, were regarded warily by nonliterate, unable personally to "know" their contents. Letters to a ruler, for instance, were usually read out publicly. It was not just that silent reading is a skill slowly acquired; in a community where most people were unable to read, the full meaning of the written word could be understood only when it was transmuted into sound. Even among those more familiar with documents, oral communication was always the preferred medium, for in the preparation of any written matter there was always the possibility of a serious but undetected error that might impede its potency. Elegance of speech and proficiency of language, by contrast, could be appreciated by even the most humble, and could be shaped and molded as circumstances required. This attitude was succinctly summed up by the ruler of Palembang when he wrote to the governor of Macao in 1644: "My compliments to you are better spoken by mouth than by letter."⁸

The persistence of the oral environment meant that for most of the period with which this work is concerned there was no dominating impulse toward the compilation of written material about the "history" of the society. Texts of various forms were certainly present in villages as well as in courts, but they were regarded as sacred and magical objects, like kris, spears, ancient cloth, bezoar stones. Stored with the regalia or with the community's power-charged palladia (sacral items to which popular belief attributed supernatural protection), they were generally venerated rather than consulted. The vast body of custom regulating social relations was retained in the communal memory in the form of rhymed proverbs, metered aphorisms, and inherited traditions in turn justified by reference to the authority of some long-dead ancestor. It was thus not a documentary record that provided the key to the past as much as the chanted legend and the sung poem. As one Dutch observer in the early nineteenth century remarked, "Everything they know is from stories," and the oral imperative can still be seen in court writing from the same period. A chronicle compiled in Palembang, although obtained in part "from the writings of former times," is given its authority because the writer "heard it through the accounts of old people."⁹

Among educated Europeans in the seventeenth century, "fable-

based" history was coming under increasing intellectual attack. How could it be, skeptics asked, "that men were attracted to tales so manifestly absurd?"¹⁰ But at a time when Europe had begun to question the wisdom of the ancients, myths and legends in most of the non-European world were regarded as embodying the received knowledge of former generations. In Jambi and Palembang, as elsewhere, the ever-mutating stories handed down from the past were perceived as unchanging. The legends, myths, and tales told by the elders were not, after all, the creation of one individual alone. Participation and acceptance by the audience were essential parts of the oral performance and the process of transmittal to the next generation. With the community's implicit agreement, details extraneous to the present slipped away from legend to be replaced by newly relevant elements that were incorporated as ancestral lore, thus rendering the past continually meaningful.

This awe-inspiring past in which the present was so deeply embedded was above all the domain of the great heroes, outsize figures around whom a people's memories were organized and on whom the burden of history was placed. The role of the heroic personality as an anchor for information and conceptualization has been seen as vital to the continuance of many oral societies. Such comments are especially applicable to Sumatra, where the proliferation of small but culturally distinct groupings stands in marked contrast to neighboring Java and the Malay Peninsula. Each of these groups explained its origins in terms of its descent from some distant hero, an ancestor or *poYang* who had been accorded special powers. From this ancestor all members of the community were ultimately descended, providing a cohesion that linked every individual to his or her wider clan. The recitation of ancestral deeds, occurring in a timeless past, was thus far more than simple entertainment. In a form all could understand, these epics embodied the society's collective experiences, garnering up its "history" as encapsulated in the actions of the *poYang*. The details of the lives of the heroes and ancestors, ever adjusting to the present, provided the origins and validation for relationships, attitudes, law, and custom. In countless small communities the social order was legitimized by the activities of some heroic ancestor. The sense of unity and participation that the recitation of these legends could induce is vividly captured by an American traveller in the Ogan area of Palembang in the mid-nineteenth century:

The minstrel pitched his voice to harsh or plaintive tone, as he read of love and war; he rocked his body, he waved his hand; and men and women, youths and coolies, slid off their mats, and drawing near with swaying heads, and moving hands, kept pace with limb and sympathetic look to the songs of their land, the sagas of Sumatra.¹¹

The recitation of the poyang's life and the subsequent fortunes of the lineage was an important means of recalling the community's significant past. It could also serve to establish claims to specific stretches of territory, for the boundaries between neighboring domains had been traced out in distant times by successive poyang and bequeathed by them to their descendants. By reliving the peregrinations of their ancestors a kinship group reiterated its rights to fish in certain rivers, to hunt the animals and collect forest products in a particular area, and to clear the jungle for swidden agriculture. It was in these terms in the early twentieth century that the *orang kubu*, the jungle dwellers of the Jambi-Palembang border, traced the origins of their possession of large tracts of land in the Lalang district. Kubu in adjoining domains could then see themselves as linked through the kinship of their ancestors, who had also laid down the territorial boundaries within which each group could freely move.¹²

The retelling of ancestral deeds also provided largely nonliterate societies like those in Palembang and Jambi with satisfactory and adaptive explanations of the world around them. Why, for instance, did these orang kubu make their habitat in the depths of the forests? One story collected in the nineteenth century furnished a satisfactory answer. The forebears of the kubu had once been sword bearers for the great hero Iskandar Zulkarnain, Alexander the Great, but because of their involvement in a shameful incident they had fled into the jungle and had there remained.¹³ In the same manner, the activities of the community's poyang, expanded when necessary, provided a ready understanding of the natural environment. A strange outcrop of rocks, a hidden cave, an unusually shaped hill could each be explained by calling on the heroic paraphernalia. Mountains, islands, rivers were all linked to an elaborate folk etymology that, because it was tied to the life of a hero, could not be forgotten. Tun Talanai (after whom the modern capital of Jambi is named), for example, journeyed downriver with his bride, stopping at various places to rest. Muara Tebo is where Tun Talanai "arrived" (*tiba*); at Peninjauan he climbed a hill to gain a better view (*tinjau*); and the Tabir River is so called because curtains (*tabir*) were hung along its banks to prevent Tun Talanai from committing the unpardonable act of watching his betrothed bathe.

In a sense, therefore, the landscape became a "social encyclopaedia," an ever-present mnemonic device providing an index to the community's heroic past.¹⁴ As the names of people and places slid between myth and the everyday world, they served as a fulcrum for the organization of thought patterns and could even provide a stimulus for the story. "Once," a Palembang legend begins, "Palembang had no name."¹⁵ The word "jambi" means areca nut (*pinang*), which was prepared for chewing with betel leaf, gambier, and lime, and was traditionally one of

the gifts associated with a marriage proposal. The origins of Jambi are still explained by association with the legendary queen Puteri Pinang Masak (Princess Prepared Betel) and her suitors. In the same manner, the former name of the capital, Tanah Pilih (the chosen land), helps recall a traditional account of its founding, "chosen" by geese belonging to the great hero Orang Kaya Hitam. The retention of minute details in a society that could not refresh the memory by reference to written documents was also facilitated by characteristic patterns of speech such as rhythm, repetition, rhyme, and verbal cliché. Another aid to memory was the use of formulaic numbers such as nine, which is regarded throughout the archipelago as one of the important and "fortunate" numbers, symbolizing a kind of totality. A Portuguese expedition arrived with "nine" ships; a kris is made with metal from "nine" places; and Jambi and Palembang were persistently conceived as comprising "nine" rivers even though a Western observer might see only seven. What gave authority to these formula was the fact that they could easily be matched by reality. For example, the list of the "nine rivers" of Palembang (Banyu Asin, Sungsang, Upang, Salih, Perugian, Pedato, Tulang Bawang, Patih, and Nibung) changed over time as a reflection of Palembang's strength.¹⁶ And when Palembang extended its control into Bangka in the seventeenth century, the ruler did indeed appoint nine headmen as his representatives.

The profusion of heroic personalities who populate the southeast Sumatran landscape points up yet another feature of local society—its intense localization. Indeed, one Dutch scholar in the nineteenth century saw this localization as a real barrier to historical inquiry. "Their legends are too separate and lack sufficient commonality," he complained, "to be of any assistance in constructing the history of the entire people."¹⁷ Yet at the same time the fragmented societies of this region did share a common mythological world in which the great heroes could provide important points of communication between even ethnically distinct groups. Episodes in the life of one ancestor were frequently found in stories about another, while the poyang of one group might appear in the legends of a neighboring community as a lesser but nonetheless well-known personage. Occasionally figures familiar from elsewhere in Asia, like Alexander the Great (Iskandar Zulkarnain), stride across the Sumatran stage. Believed to be buried on Bukit Si Guntang, he was regarded as the epitome of the conquering king, providing the standards against which lesser beings could be measured. A Jambi prince, stressing his peaceful inclinations, thus told the Dutch that "even if I had the might of Alexander I would not take the throne."¹⁸ In the same mode the individual known as Aria Dilah or Damar became firmly established in Palembang's heroic iconography via the legendary world of Java and Bali. According to Palembang traditions, Aria

Damar was a son of Brawijaya (ruler of the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit) and the daughter of a giant (*raksasa*) whom the king had met in the jungle when he was out hunting. Aria Damar was brought up in the forest but was eventually taken to the Majapahit court, where his supernatural abilities attracted royal attention. Although by this time Brawijaya had another son, he acknowledged that he was Aria Damar's father and sent him to Palembang to become king. After numerous adventures in Palembang, Aria Damar finally married a local princess, the descendant of an interior lord, and gained possession of the country's magic spear and kris. He in turn became king of Palembang, which prospered under his rule. However, Aria Damar's half-brother, now king of Majapahit, feared he would be attacked. Knowing Aria Damar had vowed he would never take another man's wife, the Majapahit ruler tricked him by sending him a beautiful woman who was already married to a *dalang*, a shadow-play puppeteer. When Aria Damar discovered that he had inadvertently broken his oath, he killed himself. According to some accounts he was buried in Ceribon, but in others his grave is said to be somewhere in Palembang.¹⁹

By the early nineteenth century the name of Aria Damar, reputedly the ancestor of the Palembang royal family, had been incorporated into the legends of numerous interior groups to help explain their relations with the downstream court.²⁰ But even more important in upland memories were those ancestors who had emerged from the surrounding environment and whose lives were inextricably caught up with the pasts of many different communities. Among the most prominent of these, epitomizing in his very name the strength of the oral tradition, is Si Pahit Lidah, he of the bitter and powerful tongue, who is one of the great *pojang* of the Pasemah people. It would be impossible to reduce the array of stories attached to Si Pahit Lidah to one version, but they are linked by threads of commonality confirming his supernatural birth and his acquisition of magic powers. Long ago, it is said, an ancestral couple who had no children prayed for a child at a sacred place. Suddenly a boy, Si Runtung, sprang up between them. He was raised as their son, and when he grew up he married the sister of a certain Aria Tebing. This brother-in-law became jealous of Si Runtung, and quarrels broke out between them. Aria Tebing was eventually victorious because he was able to persuade his sister to betray her husband. Thirsting for revenge, Si Runtung appealed to the powerful king (or in some accounts, a holy man) who lived on the slopes of Bukit Si Guntang. The king spat into Si Runtung's mouth, giving him supernatural powers (*sakti*) that enabled him to turn people into stone by touching them with his tongue. Known by his new name, Si Pahit Lidah now embarked on a series of adventures that took him all over southeast Sumatra, wreaking vengeance on any who caused him harm. When he finally met his

death in combat with a giant, his body turned to stone. The pieces were divided among his descendants, who buried them in different places. Si Pahit Lidah thus has many graves, and throughout the area rocks inexplicably found beside a river or down the sides of mountains bear silent witness to his formidable powers.²¹

While Si Pahit Lidah is particularly associated with the Pasemah region, legends collected in the early nineteenth century from the downstream areas of both Palembang and Jambi mention him as one of the original tribal leaders. Another interior ancestor whose life is even more closely involved with the lowland districts is Puteri Pinang Masak, a beautiful Minangkabau princess whose fame came to the attention of Tun Talanai, who ruled at Muara Sebak before there was any mention of Jambi. Tun Talanai travelled upstream and asked Puteri Pinang Masak to marry him. Again there are numerous stories regarding their relationship, but there is general agreement that Tun Talanai was required to win his bride by performing a superhuman task. In one well-known account a reluctant Puteri Pinang Masak agreed to the marriage on the condition her suitor build her a palace in a single night, before the cocks crowed. Tun Talanai, himself a great poyang, would have succeeded had his prospective bride not hung a lamp near the cocks while it was still dark, and so awakened them. Accepting his defeat with good grace, Tun Talanai agreed to acknowledge her as a daughter. Puteri Pinang Masak later became queen with her capital at Tanjung Jabung, while several of her brothers settled along upstream rivers. The king of Majapahit called her "in his language" Raja Jambé or "*pinang*," and so Jambi received its name.²²

Puteri Pinang Masak eventually chose as her consort a Turkish prince, Datuk Berhala, and from this union came one daughter and four sons, including Jambi's greatest ancestor, Orang Kaya Hitam. When he succeeded to the Jambi throne he refused to give the customary tribute to Majapahit despite the urging of his brothers because, he said, they were grandchildren of the raja of Pagaruyung in Minangkabau. Advised by an astrologer that Orang Kaya Hitam could be put to death only with a specially forged kris, the Majapahit ruler enticed him to come to Java with the promise of a daughter in marriage. After a series of adventures Orang Kaya Hitam discovered the Javanese plan. He then killed the smith and obtained possession of the sacred kris Si Genjai, made of iron from nine places. Taking this as evidence of Orang Kaya Hitam's supernatural powers, the ruler of Majapahit gave the Jambi prince a daughter in marriage and agreed that Jambi would no longer have to pay tribute to Java. Subsequently Orang Kaya Hitam returned to Jambi with his Javanese bride and the kris Si Genjai, as well as a sacred spear and cannon, which then became part of the Jambi regalia. The couple established the dynasty that came to rule in Jambi,

and today Orang Kaya Hitam's grave at Simpang on the lower Batang Hari remains an honored place of pilgrimage.²³

Impressive individuals like Si Pahit Lidah, Puteri Pinang Masak, Aria Damar, and Orang Kaya Hitam represent simply the phalanx of a great army of supernatural beings, mythical ancestors, legendary rulers, invincible warriors, beautiful maidens that had spread itself across the terrain of southeast Sumatra's communal memory. Certainly the surviving stories about them represent only a fraction of a vast corpus of oral material that, constantly mutating, was once transmitted from generation to generation. The historian of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries must also acknowledge that most of these were collected or written down only after 1800. But although legends and folklore must have undergone some reshaping over time, those who told them and those who listened perceived them to be unchanging. One Dutchman, for example, was told that a version of the *Sejarah Melayu* he found in Palembang in 1840 was "three hundred years old." A tale recorded in the Pasemah area around 1927 is said to have come "from the time of Poyang Sangbuté Turu, who already existed before the earth was made."²⁴ And while details and even whole episodes may have been added, adapted, or discarded, certain concerns continue to be evident, retained in oral traditions because they remained of enduring relevance to the society. Furthermore, when European archival sources from the premodern period are explored, they throw up repeated instances of preoccupations that match those in the indigenous material collected in later times.

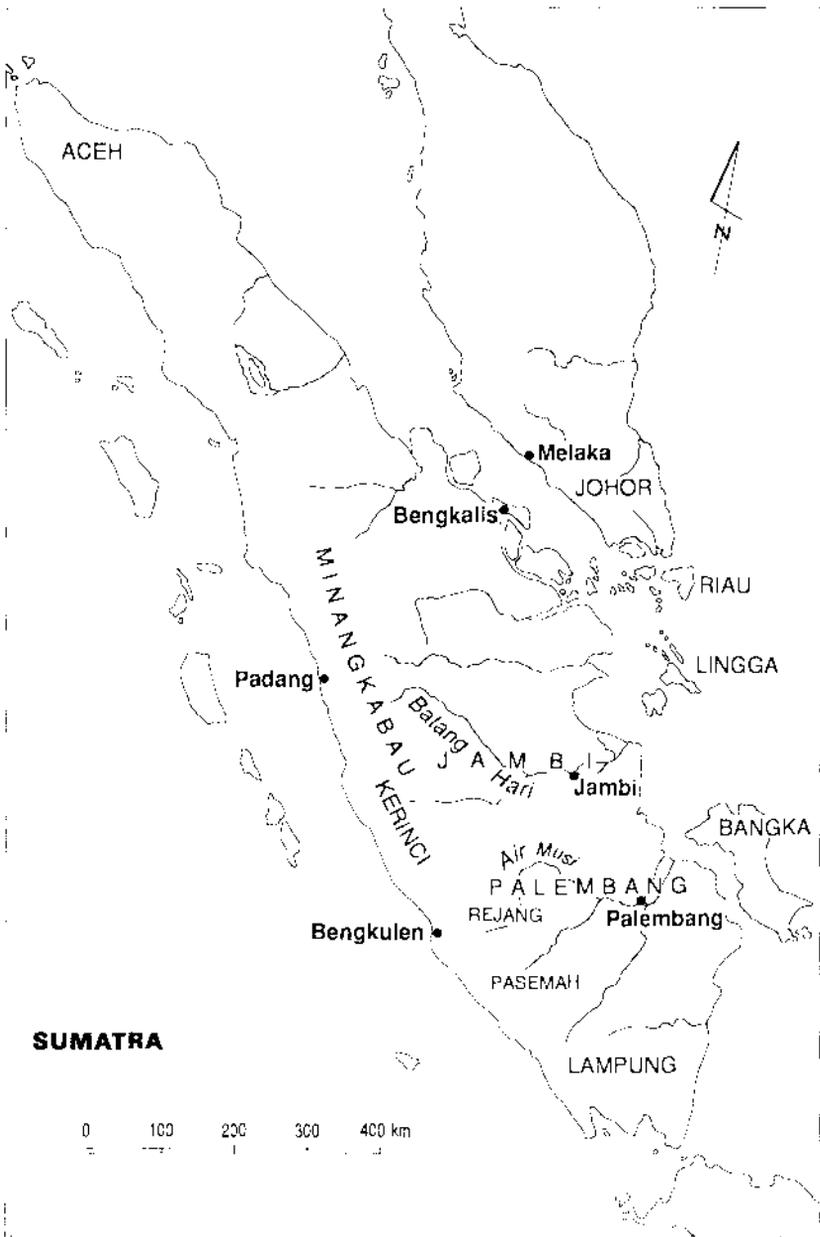
Upstream and Downstream

One of the most pervasive of such preoccupations is the relationship between the ilir and the ulu. A common motif in folklore concerns the hero who, travelling upriver, finds burned twigs or a comb with a woman's hair, indicating that there is a settlement upstream; other stories recount the adventures of the ancestors as they come down from the interior to prove themselves before the coastal king. This juxtaposition of upstream and downstream is a significant one. At the very simplest level the sense of where ulu and ilir lay was the basic means by which ordinary individuals oriented themselves to their environment. Western observers in the nineteenth century were struck by the fact that "people say upstream and downstream even when there is no water to be seen" and that "[they indicate] the situation of places by a simple reference to the ascent and descent of the river."²⁵ In a broader sense, however, an understanding of the ulu-ilir distinction is important because the ilir's domination over the ulu was never seen as inevitable, and the separate identity of the interior was consistently articulated by people at the

time. As an eighteenth-century Rejang man proudly put it, "I am not a Malay; I am a true upstream person" (*Malayo tidah; orang ulu betul sayo*).²⁶

The ulu sense of being different from the coast can be traced in part to a long history of separate development. Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests that the interior of both Palembang and Jambi was peopled by groups who evolved independently from those along the coast. One prehistorian has depicted favorable highland lake areas, like those around Danau Ranau and Kerinci, as being actively settled by early Austronesians and subjected to agricultural clearance from about 2000 B.C.E. onwards. The seventh-century inscriptions from Palembang mention relations with powerful interior leaders, and dates of 500 C.E. have been ascribed to some of the great megalithic monuments of the Pasemah region. The lack of any typically highland words in coastal Palembang Malay has led a linguist to argue that it developed from a Malay dialect at a stage when highland Malay was already distinct.²⁷

The contrasts between ulu and ilir were heightened by the different ways in which they were touched by the outside world. Along the coast of Jambi and Palembang the basic culture was Malay, but geographical proximity had meant varying degrees of Javanese influence. The chronology of Java's expansion in southeast Sumatra remains uncertain, but from at least the late fifteenth century the region was subject to the northcoast port of Demak, and in the seventeenth the central Javanese kingdom of Mataram was the acknowledged overlord. However, although in 1512 Tomé Pires had remarked that the people of Jambi were "more like Palembangers and Javanese than Malays," they remained much closer to the Malay cultural center of Melaka/Johor.²⁸ Inland, the original inhabitants may have been the wandering forest dwellers, the kubu, and in Jambi the oldest settled communities are commonly termed the "batin" groups, *batin* being a title associated with the leaders of non-Muslim jungle and sea peoples. The character of these batin groups was considerably modified by the penetration of Minangkabau influence, personified in the Puteri Pinang Masak legend. Movement downstream from the Minangkabau highlands may have been occurring from early times; by the end of the sixteenth century the upper reaches of the Batang Hari were firmly established as an area for Minangkabau migration (*rantau*).²⁹ In subsequent decades the Minangkabau flow gained further momentum, with the Kerinci highlands in central Jambi providing a secondary route for the downstream movement. Although Minangkabau settlers intermarried with locals, in certain areas their cultural and linguistic domination was so marked that nineteenth-century Dutch observers described Jambi's population in terms of two broad divisions, the batin and the *penghulu*, the latter a Minangkabau title given to lineage heads and denoting those groups in which Minangkabau influence was more apparent.³⁰



In Palembang the picture was even more complex. In the lowland capital cultural and political connections with Java remained much stronger than in Jambi, and at the end of the eighteenth century the language of the court was still Javanese. Even today the Javanese heritage is clearly discernible in the Palembang dialect. The prestige accorded to Java could also be observed farther afield, and as the Dutch moved into the interior in the early nineteenth century they found the name of Majapahit was constantly invoked as the source of laws and government. But on leaving the Musi River with its numerous dialects of lowland Malay, like those associated with the Rupit and Rawas tributaries, Europeans encountered a veritable patchwork of interior peoples. Broad categories like "Middle Malay" employed by Dutch academics in fact incorporated "congeries of ethnolinguistic kindred groups" that reached across the central highlands, encompassing Pasemah and surrounding areas such as Semendo, Lematang, Empat Lawang, Kizam, Enim, Kikim, Ogan, Makakau, and Serawai. On the fringes of this complex Malay dialect region were other cultural clusters that also claimed their own identity, although their languages were closely related to Malay. To the southeast people living along the Komering River and its tributaries spoke variants of Lampung languages; northwest of Pasemah were the Rejang, whose speech, while akin to Malay, was nonetheless quite distinct.³¹

The linguistic differences that identified an individual as belonging to a specific community and a recognized area were thus especially pronounced in the interior; virtually every village along the Komering, for instance, is still said to have its own accent. But the ulu was also distinguished from the ilir by the persistence of clan-based groupings. By the seventeenth century in the downstream capitals of Jambi and Palembang the concept of a *suku* as a lineage group associated with a particular territory had virtually disappeared as a result of centuries of admixture with other maritime societies. There were, of course, some for whom *suku* boundaries remained clear. Prime among these were the *orang laut*, the peoples who inhabited the tidal marshes and offshore islands and whose small family communities were called after the island or river regarded as their domain. Although they spoke versions of Malay and were essential in the local economy, the *orang laut* stood somewhat outside Malay culture because they had not accepted Islam. At the other end of the spectrum was Jambi's royal clan, which was divided into three *suku*. Only the palace *suku* (*suku kraton*), however, could furnish an heir to the throne. The *suku perban* (*suku* of the adopted) and the *suku raja empat puluh* (*suku* of the forty princes) were regarded as being of lesser stock because of the low status of their mothers or their descent from royal progeny expelled from the *suku kraton* for adultery or treason.³²

In the ulu regions, territorial lineages were much more obviously the basis of social organization, whether groups resided in fortified villages like the Minangkabau-descended Tujuh and Sembilan Kota (seven and nine settlements) on the upper Batang Hari or were scattered over a wide area like the *suku pindah* (the moving clans) on the Jambi-Palembang border. The names attached to such lineage groups vary; an eighteenth-century piagem refers to a *marga*, the term commonly employed in much of the Palembang-Jambi region; in Pasemah it was *sumbai*, and in the Lampung and Komering areas, *buwei*. But regardless of the word used, the concept of a larger family descended from a common ancestor and linked with a certain area was similar. Asked in the early nineteenth century to explain what a "marga" was, a Palembang man replied that it was "one road, people of one inclination, one relationship and the same origin." It was understandably rare for interior societies to absorb members from outside their marga, but this separation of ulu and ilir received additional reinforcement in Palembang, where from at least the mid-eighteenth century rulers prohibited downstream inhabitants from settling in interior villages.³³

In the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sumatran world, differences in language and customs thus extended the connotations of "ulu" so that it referred not just to the upper reaches of the river systems but to a society and lifestyle quite distinct from that in the ilir. To a considerable extent these differences could be attributed to contrasting physical and economic environments. Most of the coastal plain that extends down the east side of Sumatra was then covered with thick swamp forest or *rawa*, which in Jambi and Palembang could reach more than a hundred kilometers inland. Although the trees of the swamp forest often grew to sixty meters or more, they subsisted not on rich soils but on extensive waterlogged peat deposits formed by plant debris carried down from the interior. In places no more than a meter above sea level, the swamp forest was subject to inundation during high tides, and the whole area was transversed by tidal creeks left as the water receded. Upstream from the settlements of Jambi and Palembang the land began to rise slightly, the mangroves and nipa palm associated with the coastal marshes slowly giving way to vegetation more typical of the tropical rain forest. But though levées of more fertile soil were built up along the river banks, patches of lowlying backswamps remained behind them. Toward the coast these areas, flooded during the wet season and sometimes for much of the year, gradually merged with the permanent swamp forest. Despite the dense cover of trees and vines, the marshy coastal plains were generally unsuitable for agriculture and therefore could not support a large number of people. The economic base of the lowlands was fishing, the collection of swamp and ocean produce, and the maintenance of centers for regional trade, which were on higher

ground like that around Muara Jambi and Tanah Pilih and in the vicinity of modern Palembang.

The situation was somewhat otherwise in the interior. The same rivers that brought plant debris to the ilir also carried volcanic mud washed down from the Barisan ("line of hills"), the high mountain range that extends down the spine of Sumatra. This richer soil was deposited in tongues along the upper and middle reaches of the major river systems, notably the Tembesi and Batang Hari in Jambi and the Komering, Lematang, Ogan, and Musi in Palembang. The ulu was thus more conducive than was the ilir to human habitation, for swidden agriculture was possible in forest clearings, and crops could be planted along fertile valley floors carved out by tributary rivers in the rugged terrain of the great Barisan and its foothills. Some of the richest soils could be found in the Pasemah highlands, and before the development of pepper growing, rice production was apparently sufficiently extensive in some districts to allow for commercial sale. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, for example, both husked and unhusked rice were listed as products of Palembang; a hundred years later, when the Javanese ruler of Mataram closed its trade to Batavia, the Dutch turned to Palembang to obtain rice supplies.

One of the more obvious results of the higher fertility of the interior was its greater population. Nonetheless, the seventeenth-century Dutch perception of the ulu as "rich in people" (*volkrijk*) must be kept in perspective. Even the most fertile soils of Sumatra cannot compare with those of central Java, and the leaching of cleared land by the heavier Sumatran rainfall deprived the ground of many basic nutrients. For the most part dry rather than wet rice was cultivated, a factor that in turn helped influence the rate of population growth, for while dry rice requires less labor, it also produces less grain. In the ulu, as in the ilir, the size of the population was delicately balanced with the ecological environment. It is noteworthy that even in our own times what villagers in the Komering area of Palembang remember about society in the past is its smallness.³⁴

There seems little doubt, however, that in the early seventeenth century there were many more people living in the ulu districts than in the ilir. By this period, too, the interior had developed a localized economy in which the distribution network mirrored the higher proportion of population centers. While in the marshy downstream area the capital was the primary focus of commercial activity, the ulu was characterized by a number of exchange points that had developed at the junction of important rivers, like Muara Tebo in Jambi. These centers were linked by overland paths to Minangkabau and the west coast, an important factor because the secondary ulu rivers, although numerous, were frequently shallow, blocked by rapids and large stones and unsuitable for

long-distance trade. For many interior people, well-worn jungle tracks, often with small huts for the traveller to rest, were the prime means of communication between various exchange centers. The latter were vital to the interior economy because in the dry season the water in the lower reaches of the major rivers fell, and it was simply not possible to bring cargoes downstream. Until the rains came, trade between the ulu and ilir almost ceased, and the interior could be virtually isolated from the coast. Dangerous rips and shallows made the trip downstream hazardous even when the water was high, and there had to be real inducements before people would consider making the journey. The ulu was equally unfamiliar to most ilir dwellers, for travel upriver whether by boat or raft or on foot was extremely tiring and not lightly undertaken.

Thus, while the great river systems of Sumatra did indeed originate in the interior and flow to the coast, they did not necessarily tie upland and lowland closely together. Geographical separation contributed to an attitude of mutual wariness rooted in linguistic and cultural differences. The keynote in the relationship was ambiguity. On the one hand, the upstream could be frightening in the extreme to people living in the flat coastal plains. In the ilir districts the "terrible movement" of earth tremors could occasionally be felt, sometimes for days at a time, and the river could change color with dead fish floating in its waters, but at least the people here were spared the uprooting of trees, the devastation of crops, and the destruction of dwellings that the interior experienced during volcanic eruption or earthquake. In the nineteenth century some ulu residents still reported hearing the sounds of music from villages that had disappeared into the earth following one of these terrifying episodes.³⁵

There were other reasons for downstream inhabitants to regard the ulu as a domain of danger. Several groups, especially in Lampung, were still headhunters; in 1687, for instance, a party of Komering people appeared at the Palembang court with two heads, said to be those of the king's enemies whom they had encountered in the jungle. The physical distortions of wens or goiter caused by lack of salt may have helped fuel other legends of grotesque monsters who roamed the interior. Popular beliefs affirmed the existence of the *orang bunian*, forest creatures who could vanish at will, and of fantastic apelike figures covered with long hair, the *orang gugu*. The Sumai River in ulu Jambi, on which the majestic Bukit Si Guntang stands, is named for the werewolves believed to haunt the jungle fastness, and still in contemporary times Bengkulu people along Sumatra's west coast called the Rejang of the interior *Rejang berekor* (the tailed Rejang).³⁶

Coastal dwellers also feared the ulu as a place of disease, possibly because the jungle clearings were a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Expeditions sent upstream by the Dutch frequently returned with "hot

fevers, colic and dizziness." Combined with geographic distance, the possibility of falling victim to some illness made the ulu a convenient place for a king to rid himself of rivals; many a hunting or fishing excursion to the interior led to the mysterious death of some high-ranking participant. Belida, an unusually "dry and infertile" ulu district in Palembang, even became an established place of exile for those who had offended against the king. Yet at the same time the interior was the domain of great spirits and ancestors who could be called on for assistance. Pilgrimages to holy graves in the ulu are occasionally mentioned in the sources, and it was to the upstream region that a Palembang king sick of a "native disease" went to be cured. It was also a source of relaxation, for here in the forest clearings deer and wild buffalo could be hunted, and in the smaller tributaries and river meanders, fish could be had for the taking.³⁷

The attitude of the ulu people to the coast was equally ambiguous, for the ilir was imbued with supernatural and potentially dangerous powers. Echoes of what are probably very old perceptions have survived in the cosmology of an isolated kubu group in Jambi studied by a modern anthropologist. For them, upstream deities are benign, associated with dry rice fields, elephants, high mountains, and the sky; the downstream ones, called *orang Melayu* (Malays), are linked with rice, disease, trade, and religion and are regarded as malevolent with the ability to cause great suffering. A parallel is found in folklore from ulu Palembang, where the destructive monsters who thrust their way into the interior almost invariably originate from the coast. For any hero to leave the familiarity of the ulu and travel downstream necessitates the acquisition of special skills and magic objects, not only to endure the rigors of the journey but to survive the traps and tests the cunning ilir people will delight in setting for him.³⁸ From the standpoint of the upstream communities, the gaining of honors from the coast was as much a symbol of the extraordinary gifts of the recipient as it was of the prestige of the downstream king.

Distanced by geography, language, and customs, upstream and downstream were nonetheless drawn together by an economy in which the prosperity of the coastal center depended largely on its ability to offer foreign traders the produce of the interior. The attempts by downstream kings to bring those upstream under their overlordship and the continuing efforts of ulu dwellers to shape this relationship to their advantage dominate the history of Jambi and Palembang in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The ambiguities and potentialities of the ulu-ilir association are a preoccupation of many Sumatran folktales, but as archival sources suggest, it is a preoccupation that grew out of the realities of the local environment.

Children and Parents

A second theme that emerges in both indigenous material from south-east Sumatra and European documents concerns the importance of the family and the absolute necessity for its survival. Perhaps this is most clearly expressed in the recurring articulation of a fear that hung over all mature adults—the fear of childlessness and the possible demise of the family line. As the eighteenth-century observer William Marsden perceptively remarked, “Every one has a regard to his race; and the probability of its being extinct is esteemed a great unhappiness. This is what they call *tungguan putus* [broken lineage].”³⁹ Conception was never seen as the inevitable result of wedlock, and innumerable stories describe the lucky find of a baby by a childless couple or the travels of some hero in search of the elixir that will cure his ruler’s barrenness. The great poyang themselves were not exempt; Tun Talanai’s son was only conceived by the use of powerful medicines, and Orang Kaya Hitam himself died childless. To continue the line the people of Jambi had to seek out one of his brothers who had settled in Java. An English account of an expedition to the Palembang interior mentions that a single man encountered in an ulu village had even been provided with a family by the community, for he was said to be married to a fairy wife and by her had fathered a number of invisible fairy children.⁴⁰

One of the reasons childlessness was a genuine possibility for any individual was the low birth rate. We have already pointed to the fact that the indigenous economy, depending on shifting agriculture and the collection of sea and jungle produce, could support only a small population. What helped maintain the delicate ecological balance between environment and demography was local marriage customs, which encouraged late unions and militated against large families. In the nineteenth century the Dutch found that in Palembang the varied types of marriage fell into three broad categories. The first and least common was *semindo* or free marriage, which entailed no payment or service from the groom or his relatives; in the second, termed *jujur*, a payment was made to the bride’s family; in *ambil anak*, the husband was adopted by his wife’s parents in lieu of bride price. In both the latter cases marriage tended to be later and the number of children fewer than was the case in Java.⁴¹

Another reason behind the fear of *tungguan putus* was the relatively high death rate among small children. There are naturally no figures on infant mortality, but it was obviously a matter for anxiety among expectant parents. An old Lampung *ketika* (divination table) said to date from the seventeenth century thus provides couples with guidance for intercourse with the view to producing a healthy baby. The third, ninth, and

sixteenth days of the month are listed as unfavorable, being almost certain to result in a dead or retarded child.⁴² Children were also especially vulnerable to disease and epidemic. In the eighteenth century Marsden commented that smallpox (*ketumbuhan*) was regarded as "a kind of plague," from which not even the mightiest were safe; in the late eighteenth century a king of Palembang lost fourteen of his children in one outbreak alone. In the highlands, where limited coastal contact meant a lack of genetic resistance, thousands of people could fall victim in a matter of months. When one storyteller from Lampung related how Si Pahit Lidah himself had six brothers and sisters, all of whom died without leaving children, it would have been a situation with which his audience could readily identify.⁴³

In this environment, the birth of a healthy child regardless of sex was an occasion for celebration. Daughters were of particular value because their marriage could mean the receipt of a bride price or, through *ambil anak*, could bring another son into the family. The wedding of a daughter could thus mean a man was himself released from the debts he had incurred by his own marriage. There were other reasons for placing a high value on the birth of a female child. Women played an essential part in the maintenance of the lineage, and in Kerinci they were even responsible for guarding the ancient buffalo horns that symbolized agreements reached by the ancestors concerning territorial boundaries. And it was not only in areas subject to Minangkabau influence that lineage and inheritance passed through the female line. In the Serendo districts of ulu Palembang the eldest daughter, as well as being heir, was also responsible for supervising ceremonies connected with the graves of forebears.⁴⁴ Daughters, who would care for their parents or parents-in-law in their old age, could be even more desired than sons, a mark of special favor from the ancestors. In the early nineteenth century a Dutchman came across a Palembang noble going to the burial site of a past king to ask for a daughter. This wish was later granted, "and when she was six weeks old I went to the grave with my family, made an offering and showed the child." Similarly, a story collected early this century describes how a man from Serampas in Jambi makes a pilgrimage to the grave of Orang Kaya Hitam at Simpang. "In times past," he said, "I had no child and I made a vow to kill a goat on Orang Kaya Hitam's grave if I had a child. I had a daughter, and she is now big, but I have not yet fulfilled my vow."⁴⁵

Even when a child grew to adulthood, however, survival could not be taken for granted. Travellers on the oceans were in particular danger, for the sea was the domain of the spirits of the sea, the *hantu laut*, which could cause shipwrecks and disaster. A trader on a voyage might be taken by pirates, or wrecked, or despite a safe arrival, be detained by some unknown king. A Malay tale popular in the seventeenth century

presents a merchant's wife as begging to accompany her husband on a sea voyage because of her fears he will not return. Daily existence at home could also be fraught with danger, and the fenced hamlets typical of the interior were a witness to the ever-present dread of unforeseen raids from hostile neighbors or depredations by wild animals. In 1773, for example, the Rawas area was said to be virtually depopulated because the people were so fearful of attacks by tigers.⁴⁶ Sudden death could occur even in the apparent safety of the marketplace, where an unsuspecting passerby could fall victim to the explosive force of an amok.

For a community in which life was precarious and unpredictable, the support of relatives was vital. Perhaps the greatest assistance could come from the long-dead ancestors, who possessed supernatural powers and yet remained personally interested in the welfare of their kinfolk; stories often tell of ancestors who appear to give advice or help. Living relatives could equally be a source of solace, especially since tradition demanded that they extract vengeance for any wrong a person might suffer. Accordingly, the larger the family, the more secure an individual would be. A nineteenth-century traveller in the Pasemah highlands thus perceptively remarked that certain customs following a village wedding were deliberately intended "to make brothers [of] all the inhabitants." By contrast, a lack of kinsfolk could only arouse feelings of anxiety. People in one interior Palembang district told a Dutch official they had been so desolate when fire forced a neighboring village to be relocated that they too had moved in order to be closer to their relatives. Yet there was always the possibility of finding members of one's family even among apparent strangers, because each poyang had brothers and sisters who could produce their own lines of descent and thus give rise to distant relatives, albeit as yet unmet. A person might never know all the people in his or her wider family but should nonetheless be ever ready to claim potential kin. A Palembang shadow play or *wayang* story describes a hero whose mother, a white *garuda* (mythological creature, half human, half bird), gives him as a gift a fruit that will vanquish any kind of danger as he goes on his travels. Only his relatives will remain unhurt, and he will thus be able to recognize them.⁴⁷

Relatives meant security, because they could be trusted; as a corollary, those outside the magic circle of kinship were regarded as potentially threatening, a belief that experience frequently supported. Added to stories of pirates, headhunters, slave raiders, and monsters was the recurring incidence of interclan rivalry for control of the same resources and for the flat river valleys and accessible areas of rain forest. Individuals inadvertently found hunting or fishing outside their clan's domain could incur harsh punishment if discovered by those with whom they could claim no kin relationship. During his travels even Si Pahit Lidah

encountered hostility from strangers who refused to give him food, and the perception of distant unrelated communities as the realm of thieves and poisoners persists today. As one folk story puts it, "We do not know their origins (*asal*) or where they come from."⁴⁸

But once a common family link could be established, however remote, the danger was gone. The stronger this relationship, the greater was the obligation to both give and receive help. The dependence on close relatives and the trust placed in them was both a function of and reinforced by the economic environment. In the swidden agriculture typical of the region, the basic working unit was not so much the lineage as a whole but the small family group of parents and children. Little in this economy required the degree of large-scale cooperation necessary in the wet rice villages of Java. A Jambi man thus takes his wife and children with him to Inderagiri to cut rattans; another keeps guard "with his wife and children"; a fisherman "has his wife and children along"; and the family could even be brought on a trading expedition.⁴⁹ On such occasions every member had specific tasks as part of the family-based economy, an interaction reinforced by the tendency to regard parents and children as a single entity. Just as a family collectively participated in pleasure or celebrations, so did they share in shame or punishment. In 1641, for example, the wife and children of a man who had run amok were sold into slavery with him "according to their [Jambi] custom."⁵⁰

Men did, of course, often leave their families when involved in a trading voyage or a military expedition, but it was viewed as a great misfortune to be parted from relatives for any great length of time. Envoys who did not wish to undertake an expensive journey to Java or a trip upstream could satisfactorily excuse themselves by saying that they did not want "to go so far from wife and family" or could insist on taking them along. To a far greater extent than men, women spent their entire lives surrounded by close relatives, a major exception being those who were gifted to the royal household from village families. When a woman of high birth from some distant place married a prince from Jambi or Palembang, it was common for her to be accompanied by a group of kinsfolk, like the Makassar princess who became queen of Jambi in the late seventeenth century or the Siantan wife of a Palembang king twenty years later. The desire to be close to one's relatives was quite understandable in a culture that saw those separated from their family as deprived of essential support. It was this sense of deprivation that a Jambi ruler in 1689, exiled in Batavia, tried to convey to the governor general: "I do not have a father, mother or brothers, therefore I need your help."⁵¹

Within the family unit the great human values such as romantic love between husband and wife were ideally established. It was considered

appropriate for a husband to be stricken with grief when his wife died, to spend long periods weeping by her grave, and for a dead wife to appear to her husband in dreams with words of warning or advice. In 1678 when the king of Jambi (then in Palembang) received news of Johorese attacks on his capital, it was thus appropriate that he ascribed his precipitate return not to any need to protect his self-interest but to the fact that his wife, Ratu Ibu, was ill. By the same token, the spouse of a Jambi prince made it clear that it was her duty to accompany her husband into exile "to live and die" with him.⁵³ The figure of the loyal wife is most clearly exemplified in Sita, the bride of Rama and heroine of the Ramayana stories, but it was a model reinforced by Islamic teachings. Though a manuscript from Banten describes Palembang as "*kafir*" (infidel) in the late sixteenth century, European sources suggest that the Muslim faith was soon well established in the coastal courts. Indeed, part of the very appeal of Islam may have lain in its emphasis on family relationships, inheritance, and the regulations of sexual behavior. The words of a heroine of a seventeenth-century Malay text simply reaffirmed an accepted ideal of wifely behavior: "We women believers [should] be devoted to our husbands in the hope that we shall obtain the mercy of God the Exalted in the hereafter. O you my sisters! Emulate what is described in this story."⁵⁴

As strong as the links between husband and wife were those between parent and child, and the tenacity of these blood ties emerges repeatedly in the records. In some areas, like Tembesi in Jambi, the midwife customarily called out the father's name during a birth, for he was obliged to maintain and provide for his children. It was in keeping with this cultural attitude that the famous Raja Kecil, a Minangkabau adventurer in the early eighteenth century, should send to Palembang for his daughter, born of a commoner woman when he himself was a "lowly person." During his flight to the interior in 1722 an ousted ruler of Palembang took with him two sons, a son-in-law, a concubine, and a small daughter; he was subsequently joined by another daughter who left the court "and fled to her father in the ulu." At the same time a father's duty was to give wise advice and administer stern justice, even to the extent of physical punishment. The superior standing of a father was beyond question for, as a king of Majapahit reputedly said, "It is not right that a child should teach his father."⁵⁴

In return, the greatest duty a child owed its father was obedience. "A son," a Jambi prince reminded the Dutch, "is to his father as a slave is to his master." The return of Orang Kaya Hitam from Java is accordingly explained not as political ambition but as concern over the illness of his aging father, who now needed his help. A child's obligations to its father supersede all others, although this may demand such self-denial that even the ancestors can be found wanting. A sorcerer in a Palembang

bang shadow play thus chastizes the princely hero: "Your father, your royal uncle and your other uncles are locked up in a glass jar. What is the point of being their relative as well as being a descendant of the gods if you do not wish to free your father?"⁵⁵ As we shall see, the perceived *derhaka* (disloyalty) of a Jambi ruler toward his father was considered in the late seventeenth century to be a heinous crime.

A mother is the softer side of the parent relationship, more prone to accede to the demands of the child, more willing to intervene with the father in the child's favor. The mother in one folktale who takes the part of a daughter pregnant out of wedlock was simply being presented according to a maternal stereotype. Thus in 1717 a Palembang prince attributed Dutch favor toward him not to any decisions by the council of the Indies in Batavia, but to the intervention of the wife of the governor general. To express his gratitude he sent gifts and a letter addressed to his "mother" from her "grandchildren."⁵⁶ A child's indebtedness to its mother could never be fully repaid because for nine months she had been the source of life itself, and from her came nourishment after birth. A Palembang wayang story describes how the great prince Arjuna, angry on discovering his father had deserted his mother, determines to gain revenge because he remembers "the debt for the milk that he drank from her breasts." Those who failed to recognize their obligations were deserving of the most terrible punishments, like the man in one folktale who rejects his mother and is finally turned into stone. Something of the deep relationship that bound a child to its mother comes through in a letter to Batavia from the ruler of Jambi describing the sorry state of the country: "It's as if the whole land of Jambi and my mother the queen have simply become booty."⁵⁷

The great feature of these cultures was their ability to progressively enlarge their circle of close kin, an ability reflected in kinship terminology that can be readily applied to near relatives, distant relatives, and nonrelatives alike as a mark of respect or affection. Relations between family members could also be blurred because of the close bonding resulting from the common custom of adoption. The niece of a king of Jambi preferred to stay with him rather than go to her own father "because she had been raised by him since she was small"; a ruler of Palembang who had adopted his nephew felt toward him "as if he sprang from my own body."⁵⁸ Adoption could thus hold at bay the dread of *tungguan putus*, and a legend from the Komerling region of Palembang describes how one of the original founders of an area in Pasemah, himself childless, adopted four sons who continued his lineage and in turn became poyang.⁵⁹

In ideal terms, the relationship most approximating equals was that between siblings, particularly brothers. Although there was still a hier-

archy of older and younger, the formula of a group of brothers—three, five, seven, or nine—who not only share adventures but support each other in trouble appears repeatedly in legends. It was the ties of “brotherhood” that were most frequently invoked between friends who were bound together by long association and common interests rather than by blood ties. In the absence of kin, such relationships could provide the assistance one would normally obtain from relatives. However, without longstanding family links this kind of brotherhood could be maintained only if mutual obligations were scrupulously observed. The tenacity of this message is apparent in a modern version of the Si Pahit Lidah legend written for children: “If you don’t have a true brother (*saudara kandung*) and you conduct yourself properly, other people can become your brothers.”⁶⁰

Yet through the motif of brotherhood that legend so often depicts as one of the sureties in human relations runs a darker thread, one dealing not with affection and support but with jealousy, hatred, and fratricide. Aria Damar’s brother, the king of Java, conspires to kill him; Si Pahit Lidah, betrayed by his own wife, is irrevocably alienated from his brother-in-law. Equally, the ties between child and parent could be strained to breaking point; Tun Talanai, the legendary ruler of Jambi, had his own son locked in a chest and cast out to sea because of fears that the child might one day seize the throne. In ordinary life the same emotions played out in the lives of the ancestors could also tear apart the fabric of peaceful family relations. Brothers frequently quarrelled. Fathers and sons could be rivals. Mothers might favor one child over another. The loyalty of women was often torn between their husbands and their own kin. During quarrels between the Jambi ruler and Makassarese migrants in 1679 a Makassarese princess caused great affront to her relatives when she fled to a sister wedded to a Jambi prince rather than to her brother, the Makassarese leader. Behind the perception of kinship relations as the template for social interaction was thus the realization that they were always subject to disruption.

Because condemnations of impropriety could be so wide ranging and the repercussions so far reaching, sexual misconduct was perhaps the deepest threat to communal harmony. Spying on women bathing, for instance, was considered a great affront of which Europeans were frequently accused; it could be an offense to grasp a woman by the arm, to lurk outside her house, to secretly watch the provocative movements of her body as she stamped rice, even to sit down near her. It was not simply that the tarnishing of a woman’s honor meant an insult to her family, for which her male relatives were bound to seek vengeance; it was also believed that the flouting of sexual mores was a challenge to the very cosmos. A modern scholar has even detected in the earliest forms

of the Indonesian language indications of a belief that such acts, together with murder, would mean the offender would be struck by the lightning god and turned to stone.⁶¹

The conviction that the consequences of sexual crimes such as adultery and incest could be calamitous helps explain the severity of the punishments imposed. In the thirteenth century a Chinese description of Palembang commented that adultery was the only crime that merited death, comments still echoed four hundred years later. Customary law in Jambi allowed for burial alive as a test of innocence and banishment or death for the guilty. Even if this was commuted to a heavy fine, it was an effective condemnation to a lifetime of indebtedness. In the nineteenth century a common reason advanced to explain the shyness of the kubu was that their ancestors had taken refuge in the forest, ostracized because of some long-ago incest. When such relationships were discovered within a village, special ceremonies had to be carried out to purge the contamination, for if the community failed to take action all its members could suffer; tiger attacks, for example, were frequently attributed to some violation of sexual codes. A centuries-old Pasemah statue of copulating tigers, said to have been erected by the ancestors, has been interpreted by at least one storyteller as a warning to succeeding generations to hunt down those guilty of immoral behavior.⁶²

Fundamental to these cultural attitudes was the assumption that all members of the society, from the lowest to the highest born, should be mindful of the dangers inherent in male-female relations. Occasionally, the heroic ancestors displayed their awesome powers by flouting moral strictures with impunity. A story from Jambi, for instance, tells how the great poyang Orang Kaya Hitam asks his sister to massage his leg, uncaring of the punishment this sexually evocative act could incur. More often, however, the legends attached to the great figures of the past helped establish the standards for kingly behavior by showing that great ones too suffered retribution for their immoral acts. Thus Tun Talanai, who cast aside his own son, receives his due punishment when the youth returns with a Siamese army to destroy Jambi; Aria Damar kills himself for dishonoring another man's wife; Perpatih nan Sebatang, the Minangkabau hero who plays a prominent role in many legends from the Jambi interior, flees in shame when he discovers he has unwittingly slept with his long-lost sister, Puteri Pinang Masak.⁶³ In a culture that could condemn even a princess to death for adultery, talk of flagrant royal immorality was far more than titillating scandal. Such rumors betrayed not merely dissatisfaction with a ruler's conduct but a deep-seated fear of looming disaster for the entire community.

The view that the standards governing the lives of ordinary men and women should similarly apply to rulers had important repercussions for interstate relations. Marriages between high-ranking families were

always the basis on which diplomacy rested, and any perceived neglect of the obligations dictated by kinship could precipitate a crisis between kingdoms by alienating an entire royal lineage.⁶⁴ In 1616, for example, the courts of Jambi and Inderagiri were on poor terms because the ruler of Jambi had set aside his Inderagiri wife. Repeatedly in the years that followed, VOC sources throw up examples of ill will between one state and another because of some humiliation, almost always involving a woman. One emotion-ridden instance concerned the refusal of the Jambi heir to end his liaison with a former Bugis slave girl following his betrothal to the daughter of the Palembang king. Years later memories of this humiliation surfaced in the Palembang sultan's oath that he would "root out" all Jambi's royal clan.⁶⁵

The obligation for kings to honor their family commitments meant that shifts in kinship relations between royal houses were highly significant diplomatic events. Europeans soon realized that reports of marital infidelity, an unpaid dowry, a neglected princess were not to be regarded simply as trifling gossip, for they could herald major changes in regional alliances. In 1686 a king of Jambi warned the VOC that Palembang intended to ally with its Javanese overlord Mataram and war against the Dutch. The sure proof of this, he said, was that the Palembang king "had already sent a son or daughter." A key indicator of the attitudes of one ruler to another was the kinship terms employed. If a king addressed another as "father" he was saying something fundamentally different from what would have been implied had he used the word "son." Similarly, when the kings of Jambi and Palembang called each other "brothers" it was much more than just an accepted term of politeness; it conveyed a perception of near equality. After periods of hostility between Palembang and Jambi it was thus through the reinstatement of "the old customs and observances of brothers, without ever offending against this" that reconciliation was urged. The implicit understanding that brotherhood drew Jambi and Palembang together is clearly evident in a statement made by the ruler of Mataram in 1671. Declaring Jambi to be guilty of piracy, Susuhunan Amangkurat I (r. 1646-1677) announced that he intended to punish Palembang as well "seeing they are from olden times kinsfolk."⁶⁶ Ironically, however, this comment was made at a time when the underlying rivalry in the Jambi-Palembang "brotherly friendship" was reemerging with a greater intensity than ever before.

Kings and Subjects

A third theme that can be traced in both archival records and local traditions is the ambiguous attitude toward kingship. On the one hand the ruler is a person of extensive wealth, a source of *sakti*, capable of great

generosity; on the other, he can be greedy, vengeful, and unjust. Legends and European documentation combine to show that despite the special powers attributed to them the actual authority of the downstream rulers was often minimal, especially in the ulu. In the early seventeenth century the settlements at Tanah Pilih in Jambi and Palembang on the Musi each contained a "king" with the title of *pangeran*, a crown prince (usually called *pangeran anum* or *pangeran muda*, meaning "the young lord"), and a collection of royal relatives, nobles, and retainers. But while these kings were willing to sign treaties, receive and distribute gifts, and issue orders, the effectiveness of royal commands seemed to Europeans extremely limited; in Jambi the resident, the head of the VOC post, complained in frustration that there were "as many kings as there were nobles."⁶⁷

Although the downstream ruler claimed a vague overlordship over the interior, he only rarely impinged on the lives of his "subjects" geographically so distant from him. In the ulu greater influence was often wielded by individuals who were distant members of the royal lineage and whose forebears had chosen to reside along the rivers they had been assigned as appanages. They and their descendants came to be regarded not as representatives of the king as much as rulers in their own right. But in terms of "government" even these figures were of only minor importance. The typical mode of regulating relations within and between groups was through a confederation of elders representing clan groupings, like the *lampit empat* (the four mats) of Pasemah or the *pemuncak tiga kaum* (the alliance of three communities) in the Sungai Manau region of Jambi. That this type of clan division might once have been found through the entire region is suggested by legends from Palembang recalling that when Aria Damar arrived the ilir too was governed by four "kings" located at Bukit Si Guntang, Gunung Meru, Lebar Daun on the Musi, and in the Padang River area.⁶⁸

The key element in the exercise of authority in such communities was not force or even the threat of force but the weight of tradition and community attitudes that assumed compliance with the wishes of older relatives. It has been argued, indeed, that in early Austronesian society disrespect toward the elders, like incest and adultery, was also thought to incur supernatural punishment. Behind such beliefs lay the fact that authority was represented by, and shared among, the oldest generation in the community. According to one legend, when the people of Pasemah obtained their laws from the Palembang king, each of the elders received a mat with special markings of blue-black. Those who sat on these had the task of governing.⁶⁹ The significant feature is that the mats, although marking off a sacral space, did not physically elevate an elder above his kinsfolk. As kingship evolved in the downstream regions the heritage of this earlier form of government remained, and in the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fine mats were still a symbol of royalty in the courts of Jambi and Palembang, an appropriate gift for a ruler to make even to the Dutch governor general.

The perception of leadership as residing with the senior kinfolk was also reflected in the terms used to address those in authority. The only title accorded the heads of Bangka in a treaty made between them and the Dutch in 1668 is *pak* (father) or *abang* (elder brother), while a document drawn up in Palembang in the early eighteenth century refers to the *syahbandar* (the chief port official) as the "father and mother of the merchants." A leader commonly described his followers as his "children," and a letter from a Palembang prince to a Jambi ruler in 1719 calls him "the father of his people according to the genealogy." In the same vein a Jambi story describing the selection of the great Orang Kaya Hitam as ruler refers to him as Pak (Father) Hitam.⁷⁰

The view of the king as a lineage head writ large had significant effects on assumptions concerning the relationship between ruler and subject. A Jambi saying makes clear the expectation that royal authority functioned essentially as did that of the family head (*tengganai*), for "the world has a king . . . the house has its *tengganai*."⁷¹ As far as his subjects were concerned, the king's primary task was to act, like a parent and like a village head, as a source of advice and particularly as a mediator in disputes. In the *kampung* (village) such quarrels might range from serious issues like adultery to more mundane matters such as where padi could be spread in the sun to dry away from a neighbor's roaming chickens. Similarly, a king was also expected to provide the calm wisdom that would bring quarrelling parties together. Traditions in both Jambi and Palembang see his involvement as appropriate only when local authorities had failed to reach a solution. In many areas there were specific locations, often near the sites of ancestral graves, where quarrels were settled and oaths of reconciliation sworn. On occasion, however, it was impossible to reach a compromise, and in these cases it was necessary to have recourse to a higher authority. A familiar theme in legends throughout the area is thus the appeal to some distant ruler at a time of anarchy and discord, for the purpose of kings was to provide wise counsel when necessary and dispense judgments all would observe.

European sources from Jambi and Palembang bear out indigenous perceptions of the center's mediating role. On numerous occasions the Dutch mention the departure of the ruler or a representative upstream to settle disputes in the interior, and in Jambi it was said that should somebody be killed in intervillage quarrels, the body could not be buried until the matter had been fully investigated by the ruler. Appeals to such an authority could be crucial in resolving disputes because of the deep-rooted conviction that any wrong suffered demanded adequate

compensation. Theoretically, for instance, any killing required that the perpetrator's relatives surrender a family member as a substitute, but the ruler could order that compensation in money or kind—*wang bangun*—be paid instead. In the execution of his decisions, however, the king should use persuasion and consultation, never compulsion. Royal authority, like that of the clan elder, should rely not on physical punishment but on reciprocity and mutual obligation. Ideally the king should treat his people like kinsfolk. As one Jambi text remembers, "The king married a woman from the Tujuh Kota lands, and he spoke kindly to the people of marga Tujuh Kota, and they came under his authority and did whatever he wanted."⁷²

The councils of elders, which were the foundation of village government, could on occasion be dominated by single individuals, notably in times of crisis. To achieve and maintain this position such persons clearly needed to possess extraordinary abilities that commanded obedience from their fellows. The innumerable stories telling of the emergence of some heroic leader point to the range of ways by which this special standing could be demonstrated: success in warfare could furnish a reputation for invulnerability; alternatively, a prospective hero might be able to play chess expertly with the left hand or communicate with animals; he or she could have found some power-charged (*keramat*) object like a bezoar stone or possess a unique copy of the Koran in which the letter "wau" had a particularly long tail. A tale collected in modern times from ulu Jambi describes how candidates for the position of leader had to be able to withstand fire, cannonades, submersion under water, and pressing beneath an iron mangle. Nobody from the Minangkabau federations of Kota Tujuh (seven towns), Kota Sembilan (nine towns), or Kota Duabelas (twelve towns) could pass the tests, but finally a hero from Keling (India) successfully survived all the trials through the aid of a magic ring and was duly installed as leader. It was from this hero, runs the story, that Orang Kaya Hitam and the nineteenth-century ruler Sultan Taha were descended.⁷³

The concept that even people of humble origins could possess supernatural powers, in time themselves becoming poyang, meant that established authority was never solidly entrenched and that transition to the next generation was always a fragile process. It was quite possible for a villager who had claimed to receive divine revelation in a dream, who was deemed invulnerable, or who was in receipt of a magic talisman to supplant existing district and village heads. Succession to the position of king in the downstream courts was even more open to challenge, for although father-son succession may have been preferred, it was certainly not automatic. Invariably a number of individuals across the royal family were more than eager to stake their claims. All the sons of a previous ruler were potential kings, even those by lesser wives, as were

the numerous uncles and cousins; the influence of royal women could be a further complicating factor. A number of Indonesian groups, including Jambi and Palembang, attempted to resolve the potential threat of fragmentation by appointing an "older" and a "younger" king (often, but not always, father and son) with power gradually moving to the junior ruler. In time the senior king would adopt a prestigious title such as *panembahan* or *susuhunan*, signifying that he intended to release his hold over state affairs and assume the role of adviser. Soon after the Dutch and English arrived in Jambi, for instance, they found that the old king, the *panembahan*, had given control of government over to the *pangeran muda*, his son.

By itself this kind of transference of power did not necessarily provide a guarantee of stability, for although ruling families downstream had been exposed to the notion of hereditary kingship for generations, royal leadership remained personalized and any hold on power tenuous. Each king was engaged in a continuous dialogue with his subjects during which his authority was constantly subject to question. Since there were many potential contenders for high office it was not so much lineage as his ability to demonstrate possession of the special qualities entitling him to be placed above his fellows that determined whether his claims were accepted. The motif of the individual recognized as ruler because he alone can wear the magical headwear recurs frequently in folklore; in the words of a sixteenth-century Chinese description of Palembang, "When the throne becomes vacant all the king's sons are assembled. The cap is handed to them and he who is able to bear its weight succeeds."⁷⁴

Ideally the process by which kingship passed to the most qualified member of the royal clan should take place without conflict. A Jambi tradition regarding the installation of Orang Kaya Hitam as ruler thus recalls how his sister and each of his brothers willingly relinquished their claims and acknowledged their new overlord. "In the evening Orang Kaya Hitam's brother, Orang Kaya Pingai took his *kopiah* (cap) from his head and put it on the head of Orang Kaya Hitam, saying, 'Younger brother, you are king.'" Numerous stories from Palembang similarly relate how a prince's special qualities made him the obvious choice as ruler, while according to legend one king left the country rather than do battle with his brother for the throne.⁷⁵ In practice, however, a ruler had to continually display his superiority over other claimants. He could, for example, demonstrate his ability to withstand sickness or sorcery by sheer longevity. A Palembang king, said to be 123 years old, who had never suffered a major illness, was considered to possess great "luck." "It appears," commented the VOC resident, "the old *susuhunan* will not die." In marshalling the ammunition by which he could assert his position, a king might also invoke the authority and

assistance of his powerful ancestors. As the ruler of Jambi said in 1706, "I am sustained by my subjects and by the lawgivers, both those already dead and those still living." The frequent visits made to royal graveyards were thus a significant political statement.

The ruler could equally draw strength from his association with other power-filled places like sacred mountains, for in the flat, marshy swamplands of coastal Sumatra even the smallest hill symbolized the enormous energy inherent in the earth. When the Dutch envoy Rijklof van Goens had an audience with the ruler of Jambi in Java in 1651, he described how the king received him "sitting on a small hill of earth," a status reserved only for kings. Palembang rulers, residing in the downstream capital, were seen as possessing special power because of the proximity of the small hill known as Bukit Si Guntang, which was sanctified by its association with the progenitor of all Malay kings. It was the sacral authority attached to this place which was invoked by the *bendahara* (chief minister) of Johor in 1693: "the friendship between Johor and Palembang was decreed by God on the hill of Si Guntang Mahameru and has endured until the present time."⁷⁶

In addition, a king could lay claim to an array of items—bezoar stones, rings, and special clothing—believed to embody supernatural qualities. Weapons were always held in particular veneration, and those rulers themselves able to make such items were viewed, like smiths, as people of considerable power. In Jambi the kris Si Genjai came to be regarded as the symbol of the kingdom, so that he who held it would be ruler; Palembang legend similarly tells how one of its first kings gained ascendancy when he forcibly acquired a sacred spear that could cause rain or drought. Even people from the interior made the long journey down to the ilir to ask for water in which the spear had been dipped, believing that a sprinkling would ensure a rich harvest as well as cure the sick.⁷⁷ So supernaturally charged were these lances, arrows, spears, and daggers that solemn oaths were made on them and the water in which they had been submerged, when drunk, bound the participants together. Written documents linked with kings likewise acquired such importance that the royal seal was considered part of the regalia; its surrender meant that the king had relinquished his authority.

Perhaps a ruler's most powerful possessions were his women, who publicly symbolized his virility, itself a mark of heroes, while at the same time openly displaying the extent of his kinship network. Among the women who surrounded the king some were regarded with particular honor because of their high descent and because of their close association with the kingdom's sacred items, its palladia. Stories of the evolution of coastal kingship in Palembang speak of wars between the rulers of Gunung Meru, Lebar Daun, and Bukit Si Guntang, with the king of Gunung Meru finally gaining ascendancy through his marriage to the

daughter of a local holy man from whom he also obtains the sacred spear. In Jambi, it has been suggested, the figure of Orang Kaya Hitam holding the kris Si Genjai personifies the "earth phratry" of the royal clan, while his wife, a Javanese princess who carries the lance and umbrella, symbolizes the "sky phratry." Together the couple, termed in one *pantun* (rhymed quatrain) the "two candles, the two torches," represent the unity of the country.⁷⁸

Access to many women was also important because it was through them that the ruler could enlarge his family, a potent political statement in a land of endemically low population. It was no accident that the queen mother of Jambi, "allegedly 120 years old," greeted a Dutch envoy in a formal audience "with all the children and grandchildren who have spring from her loins and there are many of them" or that at a time when relations with the Dutch were strained, the sultan of Palembang came to visit the Dutch resident with "a great crowd of children," said to number more than seventy. Since the ability to call on kindred for support could guarantee a ruler's hold on power, the loss of any member of the royal clan was a matter of great concern. Following a death, no royal business was conducted, alms were distributed, and kings mourned publicly by the grave, sometimes for weeks. At the same time, losses could be compensated by constantly expanding the king's family through marriage and by incorporating new "sons" and "daughters." When a Jambi prince was killed in fighting with Johor forces, the ruler of Jambi thus insisted that he be given "another person of royal descent" from Johor instead.⁷⁹ There were other means, too, by which the ruler's lineage was enlarged. The custom of giving royal children to a wet nurse created a special bond between foster mothers and the child's family, by which numbers of "milk relatives" (*saudara susuan*) could also be incorporated into the royal clan. In 1673 after a Jambi ruler heard that some women who had suckled and reared his children were prisoners in Melaka, he immediately sent envoys to ransom them.⁸⁰

The ultimate measure of a king's success was the numbers of his followers, for as the Dutch themselves remarked, "The people are attracted toward the person with the most power, the one favored by fortune." In this area of chronically low population, human resources were always the scarcest and most valuable. As a Palembang ruler pointed out, "It is easier for a subject to find a lord than for a lord to find—much less keep—a subject." Without followers, a king had neither prestige nor power. "If there are no subjects," asks a Malay story or *hikayat*, "who will render homage to the king?"⁸¹ The heroic leader of legend is always distinguished by his ability to maintain a large following, and stories recall that Aria Damar brought three hundred people with him when he came from Java, while "many followers" accompa-

nied Puteri Pinang Masak on her journey downstream. Some ancestors even have the capacity to miraculously create their own subjects. In one account Tun Talanai produces people "no one knows from where," while another Jambi legend tells of a ruler who, in his journey downstream, stopped at Muara Tebo. Here he ordered his servants to make a hundred models of human figures. These were filled with rice and then "made alive (*hayatkan*) by the ruler himself" to be led down to the new capital at Tanah Pilih.⁸²

Buttressed by an array of ancestors, sacral items, relatives, and followers, in many ways the position of ilir rulers in Jambi and Palembang appeared formidable. Regicide, which had so struck Portuguese observers in northern Sumatra when they first reached the region, was almost unknown; in Jambi the Dutch remarked that the people would not even use force against a king, much less be involved in any act of violence against him. "They would rather distrust Muhammad than disbelieve in the power of their rulers."⁸³ Europeans also found that the ability to call on the paternalistic judgment of a mediating overlord was commonly regarded as an indication of ordered government, and in 1631 the king of Palembang said he was "ashamed" to hear that there was no king in Jambi. Indeed, the English did not fail to exploit the apparent "kinglessness" of the newly established Dutch republic in the early seventeenth century, claiming that the Netherlanders were "a dirty people with no king." As the Dutch themselves acknowledged, this was a telling accusation because in Jambi they had found that the possession of a king was "the point on which their compass turns."⁸⁴

Presented with repeated evidence of the special status of the royal clan, the Dutch and English tended to see the rulers of Jambi and Palembang as less effective versions of monarchies in Europe. They never fully grasped the implications of the fact that downstream kings in southeast Sumatra lacked the coercive powers of their European counterparts. These rulers simply could not sustain their standing in the ulu solely or even primarily through force. Although the advantages of successful cooperation between upstream and downstream were far-reaching, the ties that developed were by no means inevitable. Interior communities always saw acceptance of the distant coastal king as conditional, and they became "subjects" only insofar as they agreed to regard him as their overlord. Once they had done so, however, his transmutation into a senior kinsman could begin. In the constant retelling and recasting of the shifting ancestral past, some forgotten marriage, an adopted child, a long-lost brother could be located within the convolutions of a poyang's descendants, linking an upstream group with the ruler's forebears. However faint or attenuated, the lines of family relationships revealed by the discovery or incorporation of a shared ancestor could now be acknowledged. It was then possible to

"imagine" the larger economic and political relationships into which upstream inhabitants were drawn as a magnification of their own kin-infused communities.⁸⁵

Although this process was continuing through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were nonetheless repeated instances of the fragility of a "state" where conceptions of family relations remained the cultural mortar even as more complex interactions developed. With foreign traders seeking to gain royal favor and thus expanded access to the pepper trade, the rewards of kingship grew greater; increasingly it became a prize over which princes and their followers were willing to do battle. At the same time kings sought to strengthen their position by tightening their hold over the riches of the ulu and the people who lived there, always the major asset. In consequence, the view of the ruler as a wise mediator and fatherly protector was subject to considerable strain. Those who lived in the interior might see some rewards in a closer association with the downstream kings, but there were also distinct disadvantages.

The European men whose descriptions provide much of the information that supports this study were products of an age in which the ability to read and write was considered essential for advancement. For them the world was already shrinking, and their confident belief that by "reading" maps, geographical distance could be conquered is symbolized in engravings of the period showing a well-known navigator or cartographer holding a miniature globe in the palm of his hand. The expansion of literacy-related skills that characterizes the period in Europe also fostered certain values frequently alien to societies like those in southeast Sumatra, where the voice rather than the pen was the vehicle for preserving and expressing cultural concerns. European sources not surprisingly often display the exasperation and even contempt their writers felt toward a people regarded as inferior because "they can neither read nor write." Nonetheless, within these potentially unsympathetic records evidence of local preoccupations can still be discerned, preoccupations that are echoed in the stories and legends collected from the area in later times. But the persistence of particular themes in Jambi and Palembang should not hide the fact that from the seventeenth century, change began to occur on a hitherto unprecedented scale. Geographically and culturally fragmented societies, where leadership was personalized and fragile and where the most significant bonds were created through kinship, now felt as never before the expansion of the European mercantile world. As a result, the "brotherly friendship" between Jambi and Palembang was to be fundamentally affected.

CHAPTER TWO

Families and Exchanges: The Seventeenth-Century Pepper Trade

In the early nineteenth century, Europeans in Sumatra were struck by the importance accorded genealogies in local societies. In Palembang, commented one, "most of the district heads in the interior can trace their descent for twelve or fourteen generations," and in the capital the nobles too could have "very old genealogies." As another traveler remarked, "The names of their ancestors are held in the highest regard. . . . They suppose them to take concern in the welfare of their posterity, over whom they are always watchful." A successful and influential individual must, by implication, have powerful and solicitous forebears. It was in this mode that a ruler of Palembang wrote in 1816 to the newly installed king of the Netherlands, addressing him as a ruler "descended from one of the foremost lineages of Europe."¹

In their dealings with Palembang and Jambi, the Dutch and English could well understand the status accruing to an individual who possessed a prestigious genealogy. On innumerable occasions in European diplomacy, some contentious issue had been decided by reference to aristocratic or royal pedigrees, decisions in which documents laying out affinities of blood and marriage were regarded as reliable guides to past events. Europeans were therefore fully prepared to accept the written genealogies (*silsilah*) of rulers and poyang as important historical sources. It soon became apparent, however, that the examples they found, whether in downstream court or upstream village, comprised only a fraction of the region's great lineages, for the majority were preserved not in texts that few could read but in the chants and recitations of the elders. Accessible and palpable through the spoken word, the significant *silsilah* were always at the forefront of communal consciousness. On ritual occasions, before some group enterprise, or for simple entertainment, the names of the ancestors were invoked and their deeds retold. Unfettered by dates and unconfined by writing, their lives were constantly mutating, their travels, their marriages, their kin ties ever responsive to the community's needs.

Europeans who had initially regarded indigenous genealogies as

“true” records of chronological descent soon despaired of locating “real” personalities in this floating mythical world. Modern research, however, has suggested that the impressive figures of legend are best interpreted not as specific individuals, but as representatives of something larger—chiefdoms, ethnic groups, whole societies—and as vehicles for conveying meaningful messages about relevant relationships. For cultures in which the exploits of a famed forebear were often more easily remembered than those of a person’s own grandparent, this personification of history could be particularly significant in shaping interaction with other groups. By recalling associations between ancestral relatives it was possible for the peoples of the archipelago to perceive far-flung and unfamiliar places as linked to their own societies through enduring familial ties. Descendants of such distant but acknowledged alliances could then be made welcome and the ancient bonds reaffirmed by new marriages and adoptions.²

Genealogies and Descendants

For economic activities the process of creating and maintaining kinship connections was crucial because trade could not operate successfully without trust, and real trust existed only between relatives. In the village market the serpentine coils of relationships created by blood, marriage, and adoption encircled buyers and sellers, binding them together as a family and transforming commercial transactions into exchanges among kin. In the coastal ports, however, traders were faced on all sides by strangers with whom no reciprocal ties had yet been established, and they had to be constantly on their guard against possible trickery from adulterated products, false weights, bastardized coinage, and unfair prices. The tensions infusing any negotiation between strangers meant there was always a preference for dealing in a familiar place where family connections were well established.³ There traders could expect the fairness, honesty, and helpfulness that should govern all business dealings between kin and that are subsumed in the words *tolong-menolong* (“helping one another”). In indigenous terms this phrase, commonly used in Malay translations of Dutch contracts, still connotes far more than the European concept of simple assistance between friends. A modern anthropologist working among the Rejang has remarked that “a resolute hardheaded commercialism is considered praiseworthy in dealings with Chinese, Minangkabau and Europeans,” but it is despicable among people who are brothers and who should *tolong-menolong* or “help one another.” It was the obligations inherent in the *tolong-menolong* concept that a Jambi prince therefore invoked in negotiations with the Dutch: “As long as we have traded together,” he said, “we have been brothers.”⁴

Evidence of the importance of kinship links in regional commerce is

not difficult to locate. In the fourteenth century a Chinese description noted that Indian traders in the Malay Peninsula were given local daughters in marriage "and thus did not go away." These Indians were the vanguard of innumerable others in later times who built up their trade through the relatives of their wives, like the man in a Perak chronicle who has "one wife in Perak and one in India." Marriage and the kinsfolk it brought guaranteed a welcome, shelter, food, and an entrée to local trading circles. Those who failed to establish these connections were at a distinct disadvantage. A trader from Java in a Palembang folk story neatly encapsulates the mental set of "kinship economics:" "Being a newcomer, how can I get close to people? I will marry one of their daughters." Nor did the extension of the kinship network stop at marriage, for as part of a reciprocal exchange of gifts and favors it was possible to be accepted into a family as a son. A Bugis sailor while in Jambi, for instance, lived with a woman "whom he called mother."⁵

Although an individual's own web of relatives could be extensive, however, it could not be all encompassing. By casting the net of the great silsilah, almost forgotten details could be dredged up to explain and justify a community's connections with people who came of a different race and culture. In Jambi and Palembang, as elsewhere in the archipelago, an Indian prince, a Javanese lord, a Chinese envoy, an Arab teacher, a Cham princess could be attached to the preeminent genealogies, transforming them into ancestors and their trading "descendants" into distant kin. Generations could go by, but memories of past connections could still be invoked to initiate or maintain economic ties. In 1712 a ruler in Borneo thus sent envoys to the Palembang king requesting "free trade for his subjects" since he could himself claim Palembang antecedents and was therefore a kinsman. The same idiom was used by a raja of Inderagiri who wrote to the Dutch asking them to establish commercial links with him as they had done in Jambi "because the king of Jambi is my son, since his father and my wife were sister and brother."⁶ Since a VOC official had been adopted by the Jambi pangeran as a son, the Dutch could now be regarded as relatives of the Inderagiri ruler.

In Jambi and Palembang Europeans thus encountered societies in which the prestigious lineages indeed acted to assert legitimacy and proclaim superior descent. More important, however, their recitation acted not only as a reminder of a community's progenitors but of the shadowy concourse of ancestral heroes whose members could be enlisted as shared forebears. The potentialities of such attitudes were particularly apparent in the economic sphere, for reference to real or perceived family connections provided a conceptual framework that could facilitate wider cooperation among individuals and groups.⁷ Communities might be far removed from each other culturally and geographically, but links

between their ancestors could always be discovered in the important silsilah. A trader could then move into such places with the confidence that kinship ties, however remote, would ensure him a hospitable reception and that those with whom he did business would treat him as they would a relative.

If viewed in this light, the apparently fabulous accounts of kingly origins and alliances from Jambi and Palembang contain some intriguing differences. The most obvious is the more international cast of the royal Palembang silsilah, particularly the honored place accorded links with China. Stories of early kings tell of Sang Sapurba, a descendant of Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain, who appears magically on the hill of Si Guntang and marries the daughter of a local chief. Their daughter in turn weds the emperor of China, and from this union come many children. While Sang Sapurba's line lives on in China "to the present day," the two hundred youths and maidens included in the imperial marriage gifts remain in Palembang to be incorporated into local society. Another daughter, adopted by Sang Sapurba when he found her in the river foam, weds the son of the Chinese envoy. Their elder son becomes ruler in Palembang, while the younger is made raja in the ulu.⁸

The legendary connections between the kings of Palembang and China subsumed in the royal genealogy were not merely grandiose claims but reflected an enduring economic reality. Only twenty sailing days from China, Palembang had long been a major port of call for Chinese trading vessels. Whereas Jambi is hardly noted in Chinese accounts from the early fifteenth century, one of the principal nautical compendiums clearly lays out the sailing route from Kwangtung to Palembang. Here, it is recorded, a man from Canton had established himself as head of a Chinese community consisting of several thousand people. In 1407 the emperor appointed another Chinese to "rule over" Palembang; he was succeeded by his daughter, on whom all "rewards, punishments, degradations, and promotions" depended.⁹

In Palembang memories of links to the imperial court of China did not fade, despite the disruption that must have accompanied attacks by the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit in the thirteenth century and the later subjection by the north coast port of Demak. Writing in the early sixteenth century, Tomé Pires noted that "governors" had replaced kings in Jambi and Palembang, but following Demak's decline about 1550, new leaders apparently came to power. The background of Jambi's kings remains unclear, but in Palembang a combination of sources indicates that the dynasty established there was of Javanese origin with connections to Surabaya. Subsequent Palembang rulers were proud of their Javanese antecedents, but they also incorporated into their genealogy heroic figures from the local scene like the great Sang Sapurba and his string of Chinese relatives.¹⁰

The retention in Palembang's royal lineages of fabled marriages between the ruler's ancestors and emperors of China can be explained in part because the Chinese remained so prominent in local trade. Their intermarriage with local women and appointment to key commercial positions such as syahbandar reflected the importance of the economic association with China. Because of its access to products such as resins, timber, wax, and rattans and its reputation as a distribution center for goods from overseas, Palembang's reputation among Chinese traders remained high. Although Palembang had allegedly been destroyed by Portuguese forces after assisting Japara to attack Melaka in 1512, Pires still considered it to be "the best thing that Raden Patih [of Demak] has, better than his own country."¹¹

The long and uninterrupted Chinese connection, which was to be crucial in Palembang's economic development, is not found to the same extent in Jambi. The toponym "Chan-pei" appears intermittently in Chinese records from the ninth century, when it was apparently regarded as a place of some consequence. The "Melayu" that seems to have replaced Palembang as the dominant center in the area about the eleventh century has also been taken to refer to Jambi. In subsequent years, however, Chinese interest in Jambi/Melayu clearly declined, perhaps as a result of the disruption caused by Javanese raids in the late fourteenth century. Palembang once more asserted its predominance. In the words of the Ming Annals, "Chan-p(e)i . . . has changed its old capital for Kukang [Palembang]; formerly it was a rich country but since the conquest by Java it has gradually become poorer and few trading vessels go there."¹²

For a relatively short period in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries Jambi once more became of interest to the Chinese, but they were driven away by the decline of its trade and the establishment of European monopolies. Jambi's retreat from an international to a more parochial market casts some light on stories about the descent of the royal house collected by the Dutch during the nineteenth century. There is no mention of interaction with China, and the economic ties with places like Makassar and Banten that had been sealed by royal marriages had simply dropped away from the collective memory. The ancestors of the rulers of Jambi are depicted as originating from Java and Minangkabau rather than the world beyond.¹³

In a society for which economic activity was a function of social relationships, elements of the past were retained only if they remained relevant. In Palembang, accounts of ancient links with India, Turkey, Melaka, China, and elsewhere survived because this port remained a cosmopolitan center, a magnet to regional and international trade. By contrast, Jambi in the early 1800s was almost entirely "Malayan" and so poor it would have been hard to believe that Europeans and Chinese

alike had once vied for dominance there. The dynastic histories copied for the Dutch in Palembang and Jambi thus mirror not the seventeenth but the nineteenth-century environment. Yet in 1616 an observer had remarked that although Palembang ran a close second, "the richest of all these kings [along Sumatra's east coast] is that of Jambi."¹⁴ Jambi's brief day of glory as the senior brother in the Palembang-Jambi relationship, recorded for historians in the balance sheets of European trading companies but sloughed off by local memory, is only explained by understanding its emergence as a producer of black pepper.

The Origins of the Pepper Trade

Uncultivated wild peppers from Sumatra and Java had been sold on the international market long before the arrival of the Europeans in the sixteenth century. One type, cubeb pepper, first mentioned as an export from the Palembang-Jambi region in the eighth century, continued to find sales in China and throughout the archipelago both for flavoring food and as an aphrodisiac that could "stimulate the nature to Venus." When the Italian Varthema arrived in northern Sumatra in 1505 he noted that another local kind, long pepper, "different from that which was sold in Europe," was being loaded onto ships bound for China.¹⁵ Black pepper (*piper nigrum*), however, is not a native of the Indonesian archipelago, but of southwest India. Thus, unlike other varieties, it did not occur naturally in the region but had to be deliberately cultivated.

We can only guess at when Indonesians first realized the potentialities of black pepper and began to develop gardens, but the earliest date for its cultivation in Sumatra is probably the fifteenth century. According to Pires, the principal Sumatran producers were the Minangkabau, and traders from this area may have been introduced to pepper by Indians they met in Melaka. But because it is a slow-maturing plant, there had to be real incentives to render it more attractive than annual crops such as cotton. One of these incentives was that *piper nigrum*, requiring not so much fertile soil as warm temperatures and more than 2,500 millimeters of rain per annum, was ideally suited to the climate of the Sumatran interior. More important, many ulu inhabitants during the sixteenth century were encouraged to shift to pepper growing because of the realization that *piper nigrum* was preferred among foreign traders and that the latter were willing to pay good prices to obtain it.

The first area of market expansion was China. Until Sung times (1127-1279) "foreign *fagara*" or black pepper imported from India was too rare and too expensive for popular use, but during this period an elite bureaucratic class developed. They began to promote a cuisine in which pepper was an important condiment. At the same time, expan-

sion of trade meant that larger amounts began reaching China at prices ordinary people could afford. The marked growth in the use of black pepper in China can also be explained by its therapeutic use; piper nigrum, like other peppers, was valued for its medicinal properties and for its powers of rejuvenation—its ability to prolong youth, restore sexual prowess, and maintain glossy black hair. At a more pragmatic level, black pepper gained a mass market in China because of its use in the preparation of food and the preservation of meat through the winter. In the fifteenth century pepper was even being paid to soldiers as part of their salary, and two hundred years later China may have been importing between ten and twelve thousand piculs of pepper annually.¹⁶

The response to this almost insatiable Chinese demand was soon apparent in the Indonesian archipelago. Pepper growing in northern Sumatra expanded as Aceh rose to prominence in the wake of Melaka's fall to the Portuguese in 1511, while farther south Minangkabau settlers gradually began to introduce pepper gardens in rantau areas like those at the headwaters of the Batang Hari. It was not long before Sumatra surpassed India as China's major supplier. Despite edicts against sea-going trade, the major carriers of this pepper were the Chinese themselves, particularly those from Fukien; it was they, indeed, who responded most readily when the ill-enforced restrictions on overseas commerce were finally lifted in 1567. But the Chinese always preferred to carry out trade in a recognized entrepôt where they could dispose of a large cargo and buy up goods from all over the archipelago. This preference helps explain why Jambi was not initially frequented by Chinese junks, even though it was known for its pepper at least by the mid-sixteenth century. Growers from the upstream districts of Jambi brought their pepper downstream, from whence local traders carried it to larger ports. One of these would have been Palembang; another was Banten in west Java; a third was Patani, on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula; and to these were added the ports of north coast Java such as Gresik.¹⁷

For sixty years or more most of the pepper Jambi produced was sold not in the downstream port itself, but in places more popular among Chinese traders. Consequently, Palembang's commerce still far surpassed that of Jambi; in 1589 the imperial court approved four licenses for junks to trade to Palembang, the same as for the well-known port of Banten and only one less than for Siam.¹⁸ It says much for the attraction of Palembang that junks still continued to find their way there despite the difficulty of negotiating the treacherous Bangka Straits. What finally helped propel Jambi into greater prominence was not so much its indirect connections with China but the expansion of the second great arm of the pepper trade, that which stretched deep into Europe.

In the fifteenth century European pepper imports had risen considerably; by 1500 they had reached about twelve hundred tonnes annually,

about as much as all other spices combined. The goal of dominating an assured and growing market was a major stimulus behind Portuguese expansion into Asia. Although for the greater part of the sixteenth century Portugal's main source of *piper nigrum* was southwest India, the capture of Melaka in 1511 brought its traders close to the pepper-growing areas of northern Sumatra and western Java. Through their control of Melaka, the institution of a Crown monopoly, and their policy of deliberately keeping supplies below demand, the Portuguese were able to dominate the European market. However, they quickly realized China's great potential, and the aim of supplying both Europe and China prompted attempts to gain more direct access to sources of black pepper.¹⁹ In 1509, even before the taking of Melaka, they had made overtures to the Sumatran pepper ports of Pedir and neighboring Pasai, setting up a *padrão*, a marble cross bearing the coat of arms of the Portuguese crown, to show discovery and possession. But this promising entry into the pepper trade ended with the Portuguese expulsion from China in 1522 and the Acehnese capture of Portuguese posts in Pasai and Pedir two years later. The Portuguese were still at odds with Aceh when the Chinese eventually readmitted them in 1554. They therefore had to depend more on Jambi pepper available in Patani, where they had established relations about 1517, and on supplies from Sunda, where a small Portuguese community had grown up.²⁰

Through the sixteenth century Portuguese monopoly policies helped to keep pepper prices high in Europe, and by 1592 it cost about 14 percent more than it had a century earlier. Pepper was thus rarely used in food preparation, where it faced competition from cheaper spices, especially ginger. As in China, however, pepperish plants remained an essential item in medicinal preparations, and of all the available varieties apothecaries came to favor *piper nigrum*. It became a key ingredient in the potion *diatrion pipereon*, a medicine regarded as something of a panacea, for it "breaketh grosse winde, digesteth meat, provoketh appetite, resolveth crude humours . . . restoreth memory, cleareth the voice, putteth backe grey heares, remedieth the gouthe which commeth of a colde cause" and "whosoever aged doth use much of this medicine he shall not need any other help to preserve his health." With this kind of endorsement it is not surprising that an increasing number of urban dwellers in Europe habitually used pepper; by 1570 upwards of two thousand tonnes were being imported.²¹

During this period the reputation of Sumatran pepper began to rise, prompting an English writer to remark, "Who is it hath not hearde of the isles of Molucca and Samatra, where the Portingales gette the greate plentye of rich drugges and fine spices?" Jambi itself had been known to the Portuguese as a source of pepper at least since 1545, and in 1568 Lisbon made special mention of this area in instructions for new initia-

tives to increase Portuguese access to pepper supplies. But direct trade with Jambi took some time to develop, possibly because of doubts about the extent of its pepper harvest.²² In the latter part of the sixteenth century, however, more serious thought was given to Jambi as hostility to Christians made the commercial environment of Banten less hospitable. The combination of a need for greater pepper supplies and anxiety about the extent of existing sources encouraged local Portuguese authorities to examine more closely the possibility of direct trade with Jambi, one of the few places not controlled by either Aceh or Banten. By the turn of the century, therefore, Portuguese traders from Melaka were visiting Jambi more frequently.

Having decided to foster direct links with southeast Sumatra, the Portuguese were determined to keep their knowledge from reaching other Europeans, and in this ambition they found a ready ally in the local environment. The southern Melaka Straits became a graveyard for European vessels, and Jambi's coastline was particularly deceptive. Unlike Palembang, it lacked a natural landmark such as Bangka's Menumbing mountain, the only guide to sailors being the uninhabited offshore island of Berhala. No villages broke the monotony of the swamp forest, and the entrance to the main river, the Batang Hari, was difficult to locate because it divided into a number of tributaries as it wound through the marshy delta. Only two of these arms, Sungai Nior and Sungai Berbak, permitted the entry of large ships, and careful navigation was necessary to avoid the sandbanks lying just below water level.²³ By river the Jambi capital lay more than a hundred and twenty kilometers from the coast, and strong tides and hidden snags made the upstream voyage difficult. When currents lessened between May and mid-August it could be made in about eight days, but during the rainy season from September to February the downriver flow was so strong that cables made of rattan and specially hired porters were needed to drag ships up. Even then it might take three weeks to reach the capital, and in 1615 one exasperated Englishman complained that he could have sailed to Europe in the time he took to go up the Jambi river.²⁴

The Portuguese and the other Europeans who followed them soon realized that along these coasts maps and instruments were of far less value than a local guide. It was their knowledge of the surrounding waters that gave the orang laut, the river and sea people who frequented the islands and coasts of Sumatra, such special status; skilled pilots were regarded with great veneration, being deemed to have a mastery of esoteric knowledge.²⁵ In Jambi the most important orang laut settlement was Simpang, about thirty kilometers from the sea at the junction of the Nior and Berbak. It was ideally located to guard the entry to the main river and was also conveniently situated near a channel deep enough for larger ships to anchor and unload. The small orang laut *perahu* met

incoming trading vessels and led departing ships safely out to sea, while the people also acted as rowers for the king's boats and conveyed letters, gifts, and information to the main settlement upriver.

In most respects Jambi's environment was not so different from that of Palembang, where the meanderings of the Musi River were as delusive as those of the Batang Hari and where the skills of orang laut pilots had long been essential to successful trade. Palembang, however, had never lost its attraction to overseas traders, whereas Jambi had for many years been little frequented except by native shipping. Yet by the beginning of the seventeenth century, Jambi's reputation had equalled or even exceeded that of its neighbor, and Chinese junks were coming regularly to Jambi in April and May, some directly from China and some via Patani. With the accompanying stimulus to the pepper trade, Portuguese efforts to exclude other Europeans were doomed to failure.

In 1596 the first Dutch vessels had reached Sunda, sighting as they rounded southern Sumatra and western Java their first Indonesian pepper plants, "climbing like hops on high thick canes. . . . Growing in rows like juniper-berries."²⁶ Shortly afterwards the English arrived, and the stage was set for direct conflict. Several Portuguese fleets left Lisbon for Asia, and there was even talk that Portugal might move to assume control over all Sumatra in order to lock the Dutch and English out of the lucrative pepper trade. But the Portuguese did not have the resources to achieve such a goal. More than a third of the ships that left Lisbon between 1604 and 1608 were wrecked, captured, or burned in enemy attacks.²⁷ Furthermore, because the Portuguese and Spanish crowns had been joined in 1580, the truce between the Netherlands and Spain in 1609 guaranteed the newly formed Dutch Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie access to the Iberian market. The position of the English was also strengthened when their East India Company gained a monopoly of pepper entering England, thus acquiring a secure home base from which it could reexport to other countries. When these factors were combined with superior commercial organization and greater capital resources, domination of the European spice market by the Dutch and English seemed assured. The Portuguese could counter this domination only by keeping their knowledge of the less accessible pepper areas, so painfully acquired over nearly a century, to themselves. Several Portuguese maps from this period therefore deliberately place Palembang, Jambi's neighbor, in Java. In this endeavor they were aided by the ruler of Banten who, disillusioned with the Dutch and English, actively discouraged anyone from guiding them to Jambi.

The effort to control access to Jambi proved a fruitless exercise. The almost inevitable move of the northern Europeans into Sumatra received impetus from the energy of Jan Pietersz Coen, who became director of the VOC's Banten lodge in 1613. His desire to be indepen-

dent of the Chinese Banten merchants prompted a move to Batavia; the same goal of bypassing competitors like the English led him to look to Jambi, where there was said to be "as much pepper as in Banten." In September 1615, having recruited the assistance of a Chinese merchant in Banten as a guide, Coen sent a ship to Jambi carrying a VOC representative. In October a second Dutchman, Andries Soury, arrived, bearing instructions to gauge the river's suitability for shipping and to continue negotiations regarding access to the pepper trade. He was also to avoid making any move that might antagonize the people of Palembang, since they might in the future be useful trading partners. Accordingly, messages of friendship and gifts were sent to the pangeran of Palembang, but although the Dutch did note reports of "much pepper" there, they decided to establish their post in Jambi. Here they had received a friendly welcome due to their letter of introduction from the king of Johor, a son-in-law of the panembahan, the senior Jambi ruler. Their hopes of edging out the English were nonetheless disappointed, for despite Dutch protests their rivals had been well received at court when they too reached the capital in October.²⁸

Participants in the Pepper Trade

Although the Dutch and English had been trading in the archipelago for well over a decade, they still found problems in adapting to Jambi's commercial environment. At a very basic level was sheer physical survival. Jambi's main settlement, like that of Palembang, consisted of houses of nipa palm built out over the water, with many people living on the river itself in homes constructed on floating rafts. The heat and humidity of the surrounding swamp forest proved a breeding ground for infection, and Jambi, where the life span of a European was reckoned at about three years, was soon condemned as the "most unhealthy place in all India."²⁹ Racked by recurring illness, the small group of Dutch and Englishmen nonetheless bent their energies toward their goal of direct access to pepper supplies. They found this too was no easy task, for pepper was not cultivated downstream. The major producers were the Minangkabau living along the upper reaches of the Batang Hari, notably in the two districts known as Tanjung and Kuamang, the federations of Kota Tujuh and Kota Sembilan.³⁰ Although about sixty small boats went upstream to collect pepper twice annually, the difficult journey took six to eight weeks, and the bulk of the pepper was brought down by the growers themselves. More than a hundred rafts and perahu loaded with gold as well as pepper arrived each year, their first appearance between the end of March and the beginning of April following the wet season and after the gathering of the *pikul agung*, the great harvest, which took place from October on. A smaller harvest

occurred between April and September, and the upstream growers again appeared in Jambi with their cargoes of pepper around November and December. Each raft could carry about 150 piculs, and it was estimated that about forty to fifty thousand bags of pepper were annually taken from the Jambi highlands down to the coast or out through the rivers of Inderagiri.³¹

Although this was the normal pattern, deliveries of pepper could frequently be disrupted because of difficulties in geographical access between ulu and ilir. In both Jambi and Palembang delays could often run into months since the rafts on which pepper was transported downstream could navigate the dangerous reaches of the river only when the water was high. In Jambi the Batang Hari meanders down from areas less elevated than those in Palembang; when the river was low, traffic from upstream could not proceed beyond Muara Tembesi. Disruptions also occurred because of frequent quarrels among the various Minangkabau groups, attributed by the Dutch to their "wild or popular government" and ranging from minor differences to raids seeking vengeance for the killing of a kinsman. When the English and Dutch arrived in Jambi, for example, the upstream Minangkabau were at loggerheads "over a buffalo." Although the VOC agent considered this "a trifle, which doesn't even warrant being related," it had meant that no Minangkabau had come downstream for two years, and according to reports it was forty years since there had been so little pepper. The situation did not begin to improve until 1619, when the quarrels were settled and the Minangkabau appeared once more.³²

A further feature of Jambi's economic environment was the lack of direct market competition between buyers and the personal relationships they commonly developed with individuals from whom they purchased pepper. The Portuguese probably understood this situation better than their Dutch and English rivals, for they were often of mixed blood, born from marriages between Portuguese men and local women encouraged by Lisbon in order to develop a population of loyal overseas subjects. "Black Christians" had been trading in Jambi for more than two generations, accepting the periodic rises and falls in pepper prices and making no attempt to introduce a "contract" to formalize commercial dealings. Whenever a ship was available in Melaka it was sent to buy pepper in Jambi, where there was a small Portuguese kampung but no official factor. If supplies were unavailable the captain would purchase other local products, like the famous dye-yielding rattan *jernang* (*Daemonorhops draco*), better known as dragon's blood. The Portuguese traders were thus not very different from others in the region, competing on the same terms as the Chinese, the Malays, and the Javanese. They were also valued as interpreters, envoys, and scribes because Portuguese was used as a medium of communication with Europeans, and

their standing was further enhanced by their reputed knowledge of military technology. The Palembang syahbandar in 1640, for example, was a Portuguese mestizo whose brother-in-law lived in Melaka, while a royal ambassador to Batavia was another man of mixed parentage named Pasqual Rodrigo.³³

The Dutch and English soon discovered that they were operating at something of a disadvantage because in this society business dealings were customarily conducted within the framework of a real or putative family. One of the first VOC factors in Jambi in fact complained that he was unable to break the hold of Malays and Javanese on the pepper trade "because they are all *saudara* [brothers]."³⁴ With their long experience in Asian seas, the Portuguese appreciated and could, if they chose, exploit the kinship idiom; when seeking to consolidate Portugal's position in Jambi, the captain of Melaka thus sent his own son as an envoy. Until the arrival of other Europeans, however, they had seen no need to claim all Jambi's pepper as their own. As a result, trading conflicts had been minimal, and when the Dutch and English reached Jambi they described the Portuguese as "much-loved."³⁵ But when faced by European competition, Portuguese attitudes began to change. At the same time the Jambi market had to contend with the intense rivalry between the English and Dutch, who were each determined to dominate the trade from which Portugal drew such profits.

The hostility between the newcomers obviously puzzled the ruler of Jambi, whose personal name is not known but who was always referred to as "the panembahan," to which was posthumously added the honorific Kota Baru ("new town," probably in reference to Tanah Pilih).³⁶ In the traditions he had inherited and understood, the king should properly act as the father and protector of all comers, so that beneath his patronage the trading community functioned as a larger economic family. The Portuguese, for instance, were "sometimes called his oldest children," and the panembahan's son used similar terms in trying to persuade the Dutch to live in amity with the other European traders. "The English," he said, "are our children, and the Portuguese our brothers." He wished Jambi and Batavia to treat each other as "man and wife."³⁷

It was soon clear, however, that such an approach was not compatible with the commercial rivalry that accompanied the arrival of the Dutch and English. Increasingly the Europeans demonstrated that they were not willing to respond to the mediation of their "father" and did not appreciate his efforts to distribute his favors evenly among his "children." Hostile exchanges grew more intense. The English king and the Prince of Orange, said the Portuguese, were "stableboys" of the ruler of Portugal, while according to the English the Dutch were pirates, a kingless people who would seize control of Jambi as they were doing in

Banda. The Dutch retaliated by describing the English as "rude, ungoverned, drunken and abusers of women." Before long, verbal acrimony erupted into violence. In 1617 a Portuguese fleet came upriver, intent on recruiting Jambi support for an attack on the Dutch lodge. When the panembahan refused, they set fire to some houses and took about sixty people, mostly women and children, back to Melaka. Two years later an Englishman was killed in one of the many armed altercations that occurred between the Dutch and English and even among their slaves.³⁸

When diplomacy in Europe brought England and the Netherlands closer together, the directors of the East India Companies instructed their subordinates to work toward greater collaboration. In Jambi, the Dutch and English factors signed agreements to prevent untoward rises in pepper prices "which injure us both," and in 1620 and 1621 they attempted to reach an arrangement by which the pepper trade would be divided between them, with the price fixed at eight rials the picul. Private commercial deals would not be made without consultation, and if one party's purchases exceeded the other's, the difference would be shared.

Although violence between the Dutch and English was restricted to some extent, the rivalry between them remained, "our love from the teeth outward only," as one Englishman put it. In Jambi the captains of the two lodges attempted to improve their respective positions by outdoing each other in declarations of affection toward the ruler. At this stage the greatest display of friendship had to be a willingness to offer protection against a threatened attack by the aggressive ruler of Aceh, Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636). Aceh had been a feared power for almost a hundred years, but now Iskandar Muda had announced his intention of dominating all the pepper-growing areas and of forcing any who wished to buy pepper to "take it from his hand."³⁹ From 1618 he had embarked on a series of raids of the pepper- and tin-producing areas of the Malay Peninsula that resulted in wholesale destruction and the deportation of thousands of people. With these examples, the fears in Jambi of an impending invasion seemed amply justified, especially as the panembahan was father-in-law to the sultan of Johor, a sworn enemy of Iskandar Muda. The panembahan had further aroused Acehnese ire by refusing to give up his widowed daughter, the former queen of Johor, when she fled home to her family in 1623.

Despite this defiance, Jambi survived the Acehnese threat unscathed. The panembahan had been successful in arranging a marriage between another of his daughters and the son of the Palembang ruler, who then dispatched to Jambi an army of four thousand men and fifty large ships. Furthermore, he could invoke the support of the Europeans, all anxious to obtain additional trading benefits and dissuade the panembahan

from moving his capital to Muara Tebo, more than a hundred fifty kilometers upstream. When the English promised assistance the Dutch could do no less, and in 1625 they sent a small fleet to Jambi to deter the expected attack.⁴⁰ In the end, however, it was not the English or the Dutch but the Portuguese who routed Iskandar Muda's forces, defeating them in a great sea battle in 1629. Don Aleve de Botelho, the governor of Goa, then decided to push Portugal's advantage, and the following year he personally led a fleet of more than thirty vessels to Jambi. The panembahan was offered protection against Aceh on condition that the other Europeans were driven out, but if this demand were not met Jambi would be attacked "with fire and sword" and would suffer the same fate as the king of Aceh. Obviously angered by threats from a people he had regarded as his kinsfolk, the panembahan stood his ground. He was responsible for the safety of the Dutch and English, he said, who had placed themselves under his fatherly protection. Should he surrender them it would make his name "odious to the world and infamous among kings." Half the Portuguese fleet then sailed upriver, but met Dutch resistance. In the ensuing battle Don Botelho was killed and his remaining ships retreated in confusion.⁴¹

In 1627 further opportunities came for the Dutch and English to vie for the panembahan's favor because of quarrels with Palembang. Years of intermarriage between the royal houses meant that Jambi princes could lay claim to the Palembang throne, and vice versa, but on this occasion the Palembang nobles refused to accept the panembahan's grandson as their king. Greatly insulted, he asked both the Dutch and English for assistance, saying he intended to attack his neighbor. As an inducement, he promised toll-free trade for ten years to any who would help him, and with an eye on each other's efforts, the Dutch and the English each sent three ships. Hostilities were averted, however, through the mediation of the Dutch and the death of the leading players, including the panembahan, in 1629 and 1630. With the installation of a new Palembang ruler, hostilities were laid to rest, and the harmony that ideally typified brotherly relations at least outwardly restored.⁴²

The position of the Dutch and English in Jambi was strengthened by the support they had offered against Aceh and Palembang and by the exclusion of the Portuguese. For the next forty years they worked side by side, albeit resentfully, this cooperation itself attesting the importance of the pepper trade. Slowly, nonetheless, the VOC appeared to be gaining ascendancy. In 1641 Melaka was captured from the Portuguese, and the following year an agreement was signed with Palembang promising the Dutch a monopoly of pepper exports. The other Europeans did not easily relinquish their hard-won interests, however, and in 1643 the governor of Macao also negotiated an alliance, which allowed for continuing Portuguese trade with Palembang. In Jambi, where the

Dutch faced continued competition from the English, old animosities were rekindled during the Anglo-Dutch war of 1652-1654. The English even claimed that in a short time ships would arrive to take both Melaka and Batavia, and they greeted any reports of military successes against the Dutch with public rejoicing. Relations in Jambi deteriorated so greatly that one Dutchman privately confided his fears of a "second Amboina."⁴³

One issue on which Dutch and English were united was their opposition toward Chinese participation in Jambi's pepper trade. In 1615 Coen estimated that every year two or three large junks reached Jambi, buying about 5,500 piculs of pepper and bringing in exchange items ranging from silk cloth and buttons to pottery and medicines, often specially selected for the Jambi market. A core of Chinese settlers was already beginning to put down roots, partly as a result of developments in China from whence migration had escalated during the late sixteenth century. The effects of this movement were particularly marked in the European-controlled settlements of Manila and Batavia. In 1619 the latter's Chinese population was between three and four hundred, but by 1627 it had increased to 3,500.⁴⁴ Some of these new arrivals moved out to places like Jambi, where they became integrated into the small but growing Chinese community.

In Jambi, as in Palembang, a primary reason for the acceptance of the Chinese was their liaisons with local women, often presented to them from the ruler. Such unions were encouraged by local courts because they drew Chinese into the circle of kindred and because according to custom a local marriage transformed any foreigner into the king's subject. Chinese traders entered willingly into these relationships, mainly because female assistance was essential in a society in which marketing and hawking were primarily in the hands of women. "When [the Chinese] come from China," commented one observer in Banten, "they buy wives. . . . They have several wives, whom they employ."⁴⁵ In Jambi too these wives may have been bought, but they served their Chinese husbands faithfully, accompanying them to the interior to purchase pepper, guarding their stalls and houseboats downstream, and selling their cloth in the market. Should a Chinese merchant be suddenly summoned to appear before the ruler or need to attend to business matters in some other port, he could rely on his wife to take charge of his affairs.

A second factor contributing to the position of Chinese traders was their adoption of Islam. Some who arrived in Jambi may already have been Muslim, for the offspring of Sino-Arab marriages in ports such as Chuan Chau (Zayton) in Fukien took the lead in trading with the southern seas. Chinese Muslim communities are known to have been established along Java's north coast in the early fifteenth century, and it is not

difficult to accept traditions that they were part of a network stretching along trading routes from Palembang to Champa.⁴⁶ Now, however, this older Muslim Chinese element was augmented by new arrivals who elected to adopt Islam, demonstrating their conversion by taking on an Islamic name, submitting to circumcision, and shaving the head. This latter custom, popularly regarded as a sign of piety, clearly differentiated converts, or what the Dutch called the *geschoren Chinees* (shaven Chinese), from their non-Muslim countrymen.

Married to local women, speaking a Chinese dialect, Malay, and often Portuguese as well as a regional language, the "shaven Chinese" and more particularly their *peranakan* (mixed-blood) children were well equipped to fill important commercial positions. In the downstream port it was customary for at least one syahbandar to be Chinese, while another Chinese merchant, termed by the Dutch "syahbandar of the uplands," seems to have held a similar position in the interior. Such men were also linked with other regional centers via their own family ties; in consequence, the Chinese connection could range through the archipelago and back to China itself. The interpreter in Jambi, for instance, born of a union between a Chinese man and a local woman, was brother to the syahbandar of Japara and through him was related to the first Chinese captain appointed at Batavia.⁴⁷

There can be no doubt that the Chinese valued kinship ties in commercial relationships. As an English observer remarked in 1804, "It rarely happens that [the Chinese] will trust each other with property when no family connection exists."⁴⁸ Yet while such links remained the basis of business activities, it could also be argued that in important ways the Chinese, like the Europeans, had already begun to break out of an economic system that conceived of trade as an extension of exchanges between kindred. The Chinese who came to Southeast Asia, although usually poor and uneducated, were accustomed to the concept of a written contract drawn up to regulate relations between those who could not rely on ties of blood or adoption to ensure fair dealings. Studies of Chinese commerce in the eighteenth century also suggest that while many traders would have been unable to read a book, they were sufficiently literate to write a business letter and maintain commercial accounts.⁴⁹ The economic activities of Indonesians, of course, show that it is quite possible to carry on extensive and far-reaching business dealings relying basically on memory; however, it is undeniable that the range and variety of transactions are vastly increased once the practice of maintaining lists and records is introduced. The keeping of such accounts was apparently common among Chinese traders, since the first action taken by the Dutch after the death of one of their Chinese subjects was always to inspect his papers to ascertain if any debts were owed by or to him.

The strong commercial position of the Chinese in Jambi meant that they were well situated to challenge the Europeans, especially since they were not included in the Dutch-English agreement that had aimed to keep pepper prices low. In 1617 Jambi pepper had been available at thirteen rials for ten sacks, but the next season Chinese willingness to pay more drove prices up to 3 or 3.5 rials per sack. The Chinese were also ready to match offers made by Europeans for additional benefits in return for trading advantages. The Chinese interpreter, for instance, attempted to negotiate an arrangement by which his countrymen would assist in the casting of weapons in return for allowing six or seven junks annually to buy toll-free pepper.⁵⁰

The Dutch and English, determined to put an end to this competition, now drove off ships from China and Siam as they approached Jambi. The VOC ordered its representatives to be particularly vigilant because its main settlement of Batavia, founded in 1619, was envisaged as a center for the redirected junk trade. The Jambi ruler objected strongly to this unprecedented intrusion into local commerce. "When the Dutch first came here," he said, "they said my place would be rich, but now they are trying to shut out the Chinese who give the most trade."⁵¹ For some years Chinese junks tried to enter Jambi despite opposition, but by the middle of the century efforts to divert them away from the Bangka Straits were successful. Until the eighteenth century direct junk traffic between China and southeast Sumatra virtually disappeared.

The Chinese who remained in Jambi nonetheless found that their skills were in high demand. Buyers did go upstream to purchase pepper, but it was more common for the interior people to bring their supplies downriver themselves. The Europeans, however, were impatient with the restraints this practice imposed on commercial activities and with the relatively small amounts traded. In Soury's words:

Last April eight or nine perahu came down and I saw that they were the poorest people that God has made. They will haggle over a gantang—what am I saying?—even ten grams! How can such people be merchants? When they want to sell something, they come and make a great noise regarding what is available for purchase in the lodge. I have to bring out a thousand guilders of cloth and when it is all out they sit for half the day filling their bellies with betel and tobacco to buy two or three pieces. Six to eight is for them a great amount.⁵²

Despite their suspicion of the Chinese, both Dutch and English now found it quicker and more convenient to "trust out" money and cloth to Chinese who then went upstream and bought pepper on their behalf. Rather than having monies owed by some pepper grower far in the inte-

rior, it was easier for Europeans to have debts incurred by "their" Chinese who lived near the Company lodges and who were more likely to comply with demands for repayment. It was not long before Jambi nobles began to follow the European example, buying cloth on credit from the Dutch or English and then sending Chinese to the interior. By the mid-1630s the Minangkabau had become so accustomed to having Chinese go upriver with goods to advance for pepper that "it was unlikely that they will come downstream again as they used to do in the past."⁵³

As well as acting as agents the Chinese also traded on their own account. A number had taken up residence in the pepper-growing areas of Kuamang and Tembesi and were therefore well placed to benefit from the kinship relations that linked them both with their own race and Jambi society. Using trading methods eminently suited to the local scene, they were essentially small peddlers, being willing to sell by piece rather than lot and offering the buyer a selection of assorted cloth rather than requiring purchase of a twenty-piece pack or *corge*. Although they displayed a keen sense of changing tastes, the Chinese understood that the interior growers were more influenced by the size of the cloth and its price, rather than its quality. By reducing the price appropriately, the Chinese were thus able sell rough or even damaged pieces. Their slim profit margins were obtained from buying up pepper by volume (using a container called a *kulak*) and delivering it by weight calculated according to another measure of capacity, the *gantang*.

The success of the Chinese as peddlers was also due to their willingness to carry debts for years before pressing for payment. Meanwhile, they were ever ready to issue more credit, while at the same time repaying their debts to the Dutch and English from their own resources. This attitude was in marked contrast to that of the Company accountants, who had been instructed to balance their accounts annually and who could face demotion for "untidy" bookkeeping. To ensure rapid repayment of amounts due them, European officials sometimes posted people to watch for indebted pepper growers as they arrived downstream the following season so that any pepper owed could be forcibly seized.

Although Chinese played such a key role in the Jambi pepper trade, few individuals would have had the capital to finance buying on a large scale. In 1636, for instance, fifteen Chinese in Jambi together sent back to China a total amount of only 1,257 rials. A certain "Bingou" was able to remit 700 rials, but most could spare only 50 rials or less and were already indebted to a richer patron.⁵⁴ With the Portuguese defeat in 1630 and the decline of the junk trade, the English and Dutch were therefore able to dominate bulk pepper purchases.

Women and the Gift Economy

The Europeans who had now established a near-monopoly over Jambi's pepper trade were fully aware that it was necessary to offer gifts as a sign of goodwill and as a preliminary to any commercial negotiations. They were not prepared, however, for the unending nature of gift giving, for the "perpetual cycle of exchanges" that involved the whole society but was particularly significant in regard to the marketplace.⁵⁵ In an environment that established trade itself as enhanced reciprocity, the ruler and the women attached to the court could play a critical role in the acceptance of strangers as trusted merchants. Through the presentation of a wife, emblematic figures from foreign trading groups could be recruited as royal "kindred" and in the process a whole community caught up in the embrace of the larger economic family. This had been a key element in the success of Chinese traders and to some extent had facilitated the acceptance of the Portuguese. In the case of the English and the Dutch, however, exchanges of womenfolk occurred only in a diminished form. This was not because the newcomers were oblivious to the importance of kinship links. In 1614, indeed, the English directors in London seriously considered the suggestion of "a gentleman of noble parentage" that his daughter, skilled in music, needlework, and conversational skills, be given as a wife to "the king of Sumatra" because this would "advantage" the Company. One of the first VOC representatives in Jambi, similarly aware of the economic benefits to be derived from family associations, told the court that all the Company ships now arriving actually belonged to his father. The Jambi ruler responded in the time-honored way by dispatching one of his court women as a gift. But the incoming factor, Andries Soury, was appalled at this apparently licentious behavior and soon afterward informed the panembahan that all the claims made by his predecessor were false. In a display of moral indignation, Soury sent the woman back to the ruler.⁵⁶

This incident, which receives only passing mention in Dutch records, deserves attention because it points up very basic cultural differences regarding the creation and maintenance of commercial relationships. The exchange of females, with its capacity to transform strangers into relatives, was an essential component in the smooth functioning of trade. Men who had slept with the same woman or were related through her were bound to each other by ties that laid the basis for the mutually beneficial association subsumed in the *tolong-menolong* concept. The "whoredom" that men like Soury saw as "so common" in Jambi was in many cases a manifestation of the sexual reciprocity deeply embedded in indigenous economics. The European tendency to regard the gifting of females as further evidence of native "lechery"

thus gave rise to bewilderment and often outright hostility. For local society, refusal to enter into the kinship relationship was an indication of dislike, perhaps even hatred. This attitude was made patently evident one morning in 1657 when the VOC resident in Jambi heard the firing of cannon and looked out from his lodge to see "a collection of armed people outside" threatening to attack "merely because we had refused to give the king a free Christian woman."⁵⁷

Exchanges of a kind did, of course, occur. When the English in Jambi allowed the pangeran anum, the royal heir, access to the women whom they maintained in their lodge and with whom they themselves had "carnal knowledge" (*oleeselijk conversatie*), they obtained what the Dutch deemed "unfair" trading advantages. But those European officials who accepted the slave girls and concubines sent as royal gifts had little understanding of the mutual obligations that to local societies were implicit in the ties now apparently established. Thus, although Jambi kings willingly permitted female subjects to cross the river to spend the night in the European lodges as long as the court was informed, such individuals were usually treated by the Dutch and English as simple prostitutes. And since both soon acquired a notoriety for their cavalier attitude to women, the resulting liaisons tended to engender animosity rather than harmony.

Because Europeans were generally ignorant of the cultural norms regarding appropriate behavior between the sexes, they did not find it easy to recruit agents in the local marketplace, where the small peddling trade was largely the preserve of women, some of whom even made their own trips upstream to sell their goods and buy pepper. Probably the uncertainty of these dealings provided another reason for European preference for Chinese as middlemen. But notwithstanding their often crass treatment of ordinary females, the Europeans were forced to tread more carefully when it came to their interaction with wealthy court ladies, some of whom were important pepper purchasers in their own right.

Although the English and Dutch came to understand that it was crucial to retain the favor of senior court women, it is unlikely that they realized just how influential such females could be. Throughout most of the archipelago a major role of women, and particularly senior ones, was to act as mediators in human relations. They were used in all situations wherein the potentiality for shame to males (and thus the threat to community harmony) was high, whether it concerned the collection of debts or the restoration of honor in cases of adultery. On one occasion in Jambi, for example, the pangeran dipati's consort and his mother arranged a tea party for the wife of the Dutch resident in order to settle between them the question of the pangeran's longstanding debts to the VOC. In relations between kingdoms the role of females could be criti-

cal, as in 1710 when a Jambi prince seeking help sent "two of his trusted female retainers" to Johor with symbolic gifts indicating his willingness to become a vassal.⁵⁸

Court women also exerted considerable political influence because they were present on most state occasions and served the ruler privately as well. Those who received the pangeran's particular favor could be chosen to stand beside him and hold his betel box and were thus party to many private discussions. Indeed, some years later a maidservant in the Jambi court "who always gave the king *pinang* [betelnut]" came secretly to the Dutch lodge to warn of a plot against the VOC representatives.⁵⁹ Because of their access to the ruler, the potential influence court women could exert, both at a private level and in public, was considerable; the wife of the Jambi panembahan, for instance, was the prime advocate of the court's pro-Portuguese attitude in the early seventeenth century. They were similarly important in interstate diplomacy, since their opinions could be decisive in the selection of royal brides. Thus in 1659 three Banten women, wives of a high-ranking noble, arrived in Jambi to inspect the ruler's daughter and assess her suitability as a wife for the younger brother of the Banten sultan.⁶⁰ Perhaps because of the influence of matrilineal Minangkabau, the standing of women was particularly pronounced in Jambi, where lineal proximity to royal females could be a significant factor in claims for power. In 1627 and again in 1636, the Jambi court argued that its pangeran anum should succeed to the throne of Palembang because his mother, Ratu Mas, was from Palembang and because he had married a Palembang princess, the only daughter of the previous ruler.

The value of maintaining favor with royal women became very apparent in Jambi following the death of both the panembahan and his son the pangeran in 1630. The pangeran's widow, Ratu Mas, was a Palembang princess, and for a number of years while her sons were young she acted as regent. She continued to receive her husband's share of the tolls as well as drawing an income from several appanages, including the rich pepper-growing district of Tembesi, which had formed part of her dowry. This wealth made her a principal figure in the pepper trade, and in 1642 she bought 3,160 rials worth of cloth from the Dutch, more than twice as much as any other Jambi noble. The Dutch and English in fact each borrowed from her heavily. Furthermore, her goodwill was essential because of the influence she wielded in the affairs of both Jambi and Palembang as the daughter of a king of Palembang and the widow of a ruler of Jambi. Although she was unsuccessful in engineering the succession of one of her sons in Palembang, being opposed by her own uncles and brothers, she continued to be a formidable figure in local affairs until her death in June 1665.⁶¹

For societies in which marriage relations and family bonds operated

as a kind of language, the public exchange of noble ladies like Ratu Mas and her European counterparts should have confirmed the economic association between local kings and the new Dutch and English lords in Batavia and Banten. Liaisons with lower-class women were a pale substitute for the formalized marriage ritual that should have bound not merely individuals but a whole clan and its descendants irrevocably together. Unable to carry their relationship to its logical point by establishing true kinship ties, the kings of Jambi and later Palembang resorted to "adopting" Europeans as sons. A formal ceremony was held, and new names, clothing, and symbols of high office were bestowed. In 1640 the VOC factor in Jambi was given a pike and a gilded silk cloth woven by the wife of the pangeran anum and was told to address the ruler "no longer as king but as father." This was not simply a political gesture, for the status of "son" was accorded only selected Europeans and from the indigenous viewpoint established a unique bond. One Jambi resident, Pieter de Goyer, was adopted by the pangeran but was interred near the Dutch lodge when he died. Some time later the king discovered that the grave had been neglected. Expressing his dismay that de Goyer had been buried "like an animal" without even a fence to mark his resting place, the pangeran asked permission to erect a sepulcher to honor his "son." "Strange words from a heathen king," de Goyer's successor remarked, but he humored the request by setting up a gravestone that, he assured his superiors, had cost only ten rials.⁶²

Dutch and English "sons," however, usually displayed a disappointing lack of regard for filial obligations, while their "kindred" in Batavia and Banten rarely fulfilled the expectations of their newly acquired relatives in Jambi (and subsequently Palembang). Since the economic interaction with these Europeans was not supported by the ties of kinship so integral to the functioning of local commerce, the courts of southeast Sumatra accorded added weight to other exchanges. The offering and acceptance of gifts had always been indispensable for the conduct of trade; now public presentations between kings and Europeans became crucial in manifesting and nurturing their relationship. Letters to and from prominent Europeans like the VOC governor general were consequently vital in establishing an atmosphere appropriate for commerce, even though the rulers of Jambi and Palembang might be personally unable to read and write. For them, the exchange of letters was not just a means of communication but a substantiation of a personal commitment. Great attention was therefore given to the language employed, which represented far more than mere courtesies. A decision to address the governor general as "father" rather than "brother," for instance, was a signal that some favor might be solicited. Similarly, any correspondence received from Europeans, read aloud in a public audi-

ence, was carefully perused for the symbolic messages it might contain. A misplaced seal, unfortunate phrasing, or long lapses between letters could cause consternation and bewilderment.

Critical in the exchange process was the bearer of the letter, the envoy, whose task was to act as the ruler's spokesperson and to elucidate or expand on the written document. A high-ranking envoy was a mark of respect, while any honors he received reflected the regard in which his master was held. The Jambi ruler thus explained to Batavia that the presentation of a title, a pike, a betel box, and a rattan mat to one resident was not just a reward for his knowledge of local language and customs; it would also serve to bring Batavia and Jambi closer together. In 1616 his predecessor had expressed intense humiliation when a Palembang representative coming to greet Andries Soury was arrested at sea by a VOC captain, for it was commonly accepted that "envoys are a token of brotherhood."⁶³

Above all, the envoy's task was to supervise the exchange of gifts which, in the absence of family links, stood as the most visible demonstration of the bonds between the ruler and powerful Europeans. Frequently the highest value was placed on rarity rather than on monetary worth, and it was in this vein that a Jambi noble presented the governor general with "a beautiful plumed bird." An item with personal associations could be a sign of special friendship; on the same occasion the Jambi ruler sent a ring that only he had worn and that gave protection "against all venomous bites or poison."⁶⁴ Gifts could also embody significant messages. In the eighteenth century, for example, a Palembang prince despatched to Batavia a golden box filled with earth and some of his own hair, indicating his willingness to submit himself to Batavia's overlordship. By contrast, a poor gift could stand as a deliberate insult, as when the ruler of Johor sent the Dutch resident in Jambi a single piece of old cloth and a small amount of dirty wax.

Seventeenth-century Europeans had largely grown away from the medieval notion that commercial exchange should occur "orally, between men face to face, and within the framework of the gift."⁶⁵ Apart from gauging their monetary value, the Dutch and English gave little thought to the presents they sent to local rulers; Batavia for one continued to instruct its representatives to be "thrifty" (*zuinig*) in selecting gifts, an attitude that sometimes gave rise to a sense of grievance in societies unaccustomed to the idea of thriftiness as commendable. European hopes of controlling the amounts expended on presents were nonetheless encouraged because initially the rulers of Jambi, like their neighbors in Palembang, had been satisfied with modest offerings, and a Chinese description from about 1618 noted that it was enough to give the ruler fruit and silk "in a fixed quantity." A decade later the Dutch even tried to reach an agreement with the English whereby neither

party would present gifts to the king or his women, since this would prejudice the interests of the other.⁶⁶

However, in the competitive climate of the seventeenth century, a trend that saw growing expenditure on the *ruba-ruba* (gifts offered to the ruler by incoming traders) was difficult to reverse. When the Dutch and English first arrived, mirrors, spectacles, pictures of Amsterdam, muskets, and small amounts of cloth had been considered appropriate presents; a generation later Europeans anxious to attract court favor had to be prepared to offer cannon, precious stones, fine porcelain, jewelry, luxurious cloth, and exotic animals such as sheep. The necessity to obtain royal approval transformed every court ceremony—a royal birth, a marriage, even a death—into an opportunity to acquire commercial advantages. For the Europeans it was not a favored wife or a beloved grandchild who helped press their case as much as an unusual and expensive gift that had caught the ruler's fancy. Thus in 1637 the English offered splendid presents to the Palembang ruler on the occasion of his son's circumcision and in so doing were able to persuade him that the Dutch were "great enemies." As the panembahan of Jambi remarked, "Jambi is open to the Dutch and the English. The one who gives the most will get the pepper." Royal exploitation of European rivalry grew so extreme that access to pepper was denied on some occasions when presents failed to please. Batavia therefore responded readily when informed that "more than the Jews their Messiah the king wants a Persian horse with black feet and a red body, or all black, or black and white on which he can receive letters from Batavia." One VOC resident in fact complained that although the pangeran was always expressing his goodwill, "his principal aim is to obtain rare cloth, velvet, braid and lace."⁶⁷

European amenability to such requests reflected the fact that the worldwide demand for pepper had brought Jambi to the attention of international commerce to an unprecedented extent. Yet until the early seventeenth century the trading environment in the downstream port was not so very different from that of a large village market. Business dealings remained highly personalized, with the ruler in his role as mediating "father" presiding over the activities of his "children," from whom he received gifts and to whom he offered in return his protection. As foreign merchants arrived in greater numbers they too had been drawn into this circle of kindred, primarily through unions with local women. The presence of Chinese and "black Portuguese" thus presented no challenge to the way in which trade had customarily operated.

From the establishment of Dutch and English posts in 1615 this situation had begun to change. For the first time foreign traders attempted to arrogate commerce in a specific item (i.e., pepper) to themselves and were prepared to use violence to drive out their competitors. The ideal notion of the king as father-head of a harmonious trading family was far

more difficult to sustain, especially since these newcomers were less willing than previous groups to enter into the marriage relationships so crucial in the functioning of the indigenous economy. The new commercial associations were thus proclaimed not by wives and children but by the display of exotic European gifts. The pangeran of Jambi who succeeded in 1630 might not be linked to the Europeans through marriage, but when he held an audience to hear the reading of their letters his entry could well be announced by a "black Portuguese" trumpeter; he might be wearing European spectacles, especially ordered to assist his failing sight; his horses had European saddles; his ladies were dressed in cloth of European make; his children played with novelties of German porcelain. In one letter he asked specifically for a ship "like the councilors in the council of the Indies use." Humble though they might be, the Dutch and English lodges set standards for residences that he tried to emulate, even asking for "chimney tiles" painted with flowers. Tools from Batavia such as screwdrivers and files furthered his reputation as a craftsman, particularly in the making of ammunition. Already known for his carving, the Jambi ruler also asked for a lathe to fashion ivory, a soldering tool to manufacture jewelry, and craftsmen to assist him in his work.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, the European tendency to see such gifts as a means of purchasing commercial favors meant they rarely considered the obligations or expectations that acceptance or bestowal implied. The Dutch and English believed the crucial factor in obtaining the king's approval was the financial worth of the items they offered rather than their rarity or personal association, a belief fostered by royal demands for increased evidence of European affection. Having complied with royal wishes, the Dutch and English were thus puzzled and annoyed by additional requests for personal items, such as a ring or a hatband. It is also unlikely that the VOC governor general put much store on the "model perahu" sent him by the Jambi pangeran and "made with his own hands."⁶⁹ Certainly, after two generations of Dutch and English competition, the rich and luxurious possessions that had accumulated in the Jambi court were a visible statement of its wealth and claims to rival the hitherto more prosperous Palembang. But while Jambi kings also saw this storehouse of gifts as a potent reminder of the relationship with their European relatives, to English and Dutch merchants the plumed birds, the magic rings, the charmed daggers with which they were presented remained merely things, commodities to be exchanged for money or given away to some other ruler.

Jambi Becomes the Elder Brother

Although the Dutch mentioned a time not long before their arrival in Jambi when the king had been poor and when the nobles too were pov-

erty stricken, by the 1630s any such memories had disappeared. Pepper growing had spread up along the Tembesi and down the Batang Hari as far as Muara Ketalo, but the increase in revenue was more obvious in the downstream court than among the upstream growers. As international demand expanded, the group of individuals who controlled the rich pepper-producing districts had prospered considerably. The Dutch and English had initially assumed that the pangeran directly ruled over the pepper growers. It soon became apparent that this was not the case. "The nobles here are as much master as the king and they do what they want," Soury observed. "Each one can be a master."⁷⁰ Prominent among this elite were Chinese who had been granted virtual monopolies over certain interior areas as a mark of special favor or who had flourished in their role as agents for the European companies. One noted "shaven" Chinese pepper trader, for instance, had several villages under him, owned a hundred slaves, and lived in a large house. His title of Orang Kaya Setia Utama had been announced throughout the town "by beat of drum," and he was "just like a Jambinese."⁷¹

The court women comprised another important group who shared in the riches flowing to the center. This was made apparent on ceremonial occasions when royal widows, wives, and concubines appeared decked with precious jewels and arrayed in costly imported cloth, leading at least one resident to comment disapprovingly on the "unbridled luxury" of Jambi's high-born women. Several had sufficient resources to carry on trade on their own account, and their taste for exotic items was encouraged by the wealth now available to them. In 1663 the new Jambi pangeran had two beautiful perahu made of "iron and gold" built "as playthings for his ladies," and the following year he ordered "a few small diamonds fashioned in the shape of a water lily, suitable for wearing with women's clothing."⁷²

A third group who gained greater benefits were those people responsible for the final sales of pepper, particularly the syahbandars and their subordinates. The syahbandars directly profited from the increased amount of shipping, since they received anchorage money for every vessel that docked. It was vital to seek their favor because they and their assistants handled all operations at the port such as the loading and unloading of cargo, the supervision of weighing, and the collection of tolls. Thus, while the ruler and his wife were given gifts of diamonds, the mestizo Portuguese syahbandar of Palembang received rings set with rubies and in Jambi the Dutch gave "pretty things" to a syahbandar's wife in the hope of gaining an advantage over their rivals.⁷³

But by the mid-seventeenth century it was clear that of all the court circle it was the ruler who prospered most from the competition between different traders and their willingness to comply with demands for a greater share of the proceeds. In 1616, for example, a flat tax of 10 per-

cent was paid on all exports with no charge on any incoming goods. By 1628 this export toll had been raised to 12.5 percent, plus a 10 percent levy payable by pepper growers. The VOC estimated that through imposts of various kinds the king made a profit of 30–35 percent on the pepper he sold them. Furthermore, the European presence had also enabled the ruler and the court to enter into the pepper market as buyers. With advances of cloth and money from both Dutch and English, their agents could go into the countryside or collect incoming pepper from tollhouses set up along the rivers, paying prices well below what would have been given in Jambi itself.⁷⁴

The wealth brought to Jambi by the pepper trade enabled its kings to maintain a lifestyle equalling or even surpassing that of their prosperous relatives and rivals in Palembang. However, this wealth had other less advantageous repercussions, for it brought southeast Sumatra to the attention of powerful and ambitious kings. Although Aceh's aspirations to extend control into this area had been checked, Javanese rulers were just as anxious to lay claim to overlordship. Palembang, geographically closer to Java, had already repelled an attack by Banten in 1596, but from 1625 the aggressively expansionist Sultan Agung of Mataram (r. 1613–1646) proclaimed himself Palembang's "protector." In 1641, following the arrival of a fleet of three hundred Javanese ships ostensibly to supervise the collection of wood, the ruler of Palembang went to Mataram to pay personal homage.

To this point Jambi had managed to maintain its independence, and the pangeran had even declared that he would "never be subservient to the Mataram yoke." However, growing prosperity meant that almost inevitably Jambi too attracted Sultan Agung's attention. In 1642, faced by Javanese threats to support Palembang claims to his throne, the Jambi pangeran, like his neighbor, went to pay homage in Mataram. During the 1650s both Palembang and Jambi regularly sent tribute, and both rulers presented themselves at the Mataram court.⁷⁵

There were a number of reasons for Jambi's willingness to follow the Palembang example, despite treaties with the Dutch and English. The first was the simple fear of attack by a demographically superior state.⁷⁶ The large Javanese armies, which could lay siege to enemy centers, impressed even the Dutch; in 1629 the force that unsuccessfully attacked Batavia was estimated at about 160,000 men. Although in 1641 the Mataram fleet returning from Palembang had received a crushing defeat from VOC forces, the Jambi pangeran remained unconvinced of Dutch supremacy. He was afraid, he said, because the ruler of Mataram was a potentate who had "a million subjects for every thousand of the Dutch." He had personally seen Sultan Agung's forces during his visits to the Javanese court, but although he had heard of Dutch military might, he had never himself witnessed it.⁷⁷

A second factor that helps explain the anxiety of Jambi and Palembang kings to retain Mataram's favor was their growing economic dependence on the rice trade of Java as pepper cultivation became more widespread. Sago, harvested in the tidal marshes, was still a staple, but increasingly it was becoming regarded as the food of lesser people. Although *ubi* (tubers) and other roots could also serve as a substitute in times of rice shortages, it was commonly believed that if rice was not available, starvation would result. The deep-rooted cultural importance of rice is suggested in a Palembang legend that includes a golden rice plant in the country's original regalia. To deprive oneself of rice was considered akin to fasting, and a prince of Jambi thus vowed he would eat no rice until the wrongs of his father and grandfather were avenged.⁷⁸

Even in Palembang, which had previously yielded a rice surplus, the shift to pepper began to affect the extent of rice cultivation. By the 1630s it was said that very little was being produced for export, and most Palembang rice was consumed locally. But it was in Jambi, where so much interior energy had been diverted to pepper growing, that the dependency on outside supplies from Siam, Cambodia, and Java was especially apparent. In the latter part of the year ships from Java arrived bringing rice and salt, to be followed when the winds changed by those from the north. If for any reason they did not appear, and if crops at home failed or Javanese ports were closed, the position could be desperate. In 1631 the refusal of the Mataram ruler to allow any ships to leave for Palembang contributed to a rice shortage in the area so severe that the king of Jambi forbade the making of arak. The high returns that pepper offered in the first half of the seventeenth century meant attempts to encourage rice planting in Jambi were unsuccessful, and price rises reflect the fear generated during any lack of this staple. Normally rice cost fourteen to sixteen rials the *koyan* and twenty in a poor harvest, but in 1639 after a drought the price reached fifty rials. In this context the benefits of the Javanese connection were obvious. In 1654, after the pangeran of Jambi had sent another mission to the Mataram court, Sultan Agung's son, Susuhunan Amangkurat I, ordered each Javanese coastal lord to send fifty lasts of rice to Jambi.⁷⁹

A third reason for the enormous respect given to Java was its great prestige as a center of refinement and culture. The view that Javanese culture was intrinsically superior was well established among the Javanese-descended court of Palembang, and the Dutch remarked that Palembang people felt complimented if they were regarded as "Javanese." It was the Palembang example that a wealthier Jambi now sought to surpass. The *pangeran gedé* (crown prince) was heard many times to say that he found the Javanese language and attire the most attractive in the world, and an edict was even passed declaring that the

interior people must lay aside their Malay clothes and dress in the Javanese style if they appeared at court. After news arrived that the Mataram ruler had acquired a new prestige item, such as an Arab horse, the Jambi ruler was quick to emulate his example. He and his nobles, like their Palembang relatives, had Javanese titles, while amusements such as Javanese wayang, dancing, and gamelan were part of court life. In 1652, when the ruler of Jambi asked for a Dutch ship "completely equipped" to sail to Java, his hope was that he would thereby impress the Mataram court.⁸⁰

Another means by which the Jambi court could display "Javaneseness" was by holding tourneys, public displays of horsemanship and combat against captured animals. These were modelled on tourneys in Java where all the nobles, splendidly dressed, appeared with horses and lances and engaged in mock battles. They did not simply provide entertainment; this was an occasion when those who had met the king's favor could be publicly rewarded and those who were in disfavor could be humiliated. It could also be a time for imparting confidences or gaining the ruler's ear. Above all it enabled the Jambi king to make plain his superior status by cantering around on one of the small horses from his fifty-strong stable, displaying his newly acquired weapons. Tourneys were held every Saturday, and it was considered a great affront should either the Dutch or English captains fail to attend. The VOC resident even pressed his superiors to buy him a better horse so that he could make a more impressive showing.⁸¹

Admiration for Mataram and subservience to its ruler also helps to explain the greater attention to Islam that Europeans now began to discern in the Jambi court. During the last years of his life Sultan Agung showed a growing interest in Islamic matters, and this must have been remarked by the vassal rulers who came to pay homage. In 1649 the Jambi pangeran asked Batavia for two or three "clean and unbound books with gold margins on which to write his new laws and daily sermons," and according to the Dutch "these people are presently so religious that the ordinary man is about half, and the nobles wholly, like priests." Another striking example of Javanese (and possibly Muslim) influence concerned marriage. When the Dutch first reached the archipelago, they noted that most men commonly had only one wife; and even though a king might be surrounded by many women, one was usually singled out as official spouse and queen. But in 1650 Susuhunan Amangkurat I told the "great ministers," the court nobles, and the village officials to take another wife. Two years later the king of Jambi also gave permission to his "most powerful vassals to take two or three wives." In September of that year he set an example by taking a second wife, the daughter of the *temenggung* (one of the senior ministers).⁸²

Jambi's ability to emulate the Mataram court was a prime element in

its new status. Previously overshadowed by Palembang, it now enjoyed a reputation of being the foremost pepper producer in the region, the wealth of its court a byword. Although Palembang had also begun to produce pepper, it had not yet been able to match Jambi's reputation. During the 1650s the latter's superiority seemed confirmed by the dramatic destruction of the capital of Palembang by Dutch forces in November 1659.

The VOC had sent envoys to Palembang soon after their arrival in Jambi, but no post had been established and trade was carried out only intermittently. Although a contract had been negotiated in 1642 promising the Dutch exclusive rights to Palembang's pepper, a surplus on the world market meant it was some time before the VOC made any effort to enforce this agreement. In 1655, however, a Dutch captain trading in Palembang invoked the 1642 contract and confiscated several junks and their cargoes of pepper. Subsequent negotiations did not go well, and relations took a turn for the worse during 1658 when Cornelius Ockersz, a man who had already alienated the Jambi ruler, was sent to Palembang to buy pepper. On at least two occasions he attempted to impound incoming vessels, including one belonging to a Mataram prince.

Aware that the situation was explosive, the pangeran of Palembang sought a reconciliation in the traditional way. Ockersz was to be drawn into the royal family by being adopted as a son, his new status affirmed by the gift of a special kris and the title of *temenggung*. But the behavior of Ockersz made light of the honor bestowed on him, for according to the pangeran he sought to arrogate even greater privileges to himself, waving "a red flag" and proclaiming, "What matters the pangeran of Palembang?" Such public disdain for kingly affection was intolerable. In August 1658 a party of Palembang men accompanying the departing Ockersz downstream captured his ship. More than forty of those aboard were killed, including Ockersz; twenty-eight remaining Dutchmen were taken prisoner and reportedly forcibly circumcised.⁸³

The VOC could not let such an incident go unanswered. In November 1658 and again in October 1659, fleets were sent to blockade the river, not merely to compel Palembang to release the prisoners and agree to observe the contract but to provide a lesson "to surrounding Moor princes." In mid-November 1659, the VOC fleet moved upstream and was soon within range of Palembang's main fortifications. Although local forces put up a strong defense they were eventually overwhelmed, and by November 16 the ruler, known only by his posthumous title of *Seda ing Rajak*, had fled, and his capital had been taken. Finding that most of the Dutch prisoners had been killed, the VOC commander decided to exact a terrible revenge. The palace was looted "of all its riches and a vast train of artillery"; the royal graves behind

the city, comprising five buildings gilded and decorated with stone statues, were destroyed; and the entire town and nearby settlements were put to the torch.⁸⁴

News of this event was received with jubilation in the Jambi court because of a resurgence of hostility toward their Palembang relatives. Rivalry for control over the rich pepper arcas along their common border had become more intense in recent years, and the Jambi pangeran said openly that despite their family ties the Palembang king had given offence on many occasions. Encouraged by his Dutch "son," the resident Pieter de Goyer, the Jambi ruler had actively supported the Dutch campaign, even supplying a diagram locating and illustrating Palembang's defenses.

The belief in Jambi that the Dutch had acted as instruments of divine retribution was strengthened because Palembang had popularly been regarded as impregnable. About 1642 a new syahbandar, a mestizo Portuguese from Makassar, had been appointed to supervise improvements to Palembang's fortifications, and by 1659 the defenses were impressive even to Europeans. Rafts loaded with flammable material were moored at intervals along the river, ready to be cut loose and set adrift among any invading fleet. Rows of stakes had been planted in the water near the main settlement, and a chain suspended from bank to bank as a further impediment. A fort had been built on the island of Kembira, strategically situated just downstream from the capital, and two others constructed on the left bank. These forts were defended on three sides by thick walls of durable *ungling* wood filled with dirt and plugged with hardened rice balls, making them almost impenetrable.⁸⁵ Specially constructed apertures allowed for artillery to fire at attacking forces. Opposite was the settlement of Palembang itself, the river banks crowded with floating rafts and houses standing on piles in the water. The central area, however, lay behind a wall more than a kilometer square made up of "vast trunks of trees" surrounded by a moat around which were arrayed more than seventy cannon. In all, the defenses were such that one Dutch observer expressed disbelief that "the natives could construct such artillery." For the people of Palembang, further guarantees of protection lay in the spiritual power of two great cannon draped with red cloth that stood outside the main walls. Indeed, the revered Muslim authorities who sprinkled incense over them while offering prayers for victory had stated confidently that Palembang would not fall.⁸⁶

The unexpected defeat of Palembang directly benefited the Jambi ruler in a number of other ways. First, he gained subjects when many people fled to Jambi following the Dutch attack. Second, his arsenal was increased considerably since the Dutch acknowledged his support by granting his request for several Palembang guns and boats, including

the ruler's personal pleasure craft. Third, and most important, his standing as a Dutch ally enabled him to place his nominee on the Palembang throne. Seda ing Rajak had died shortly after the Dutch attack, and his young son's claims to succeed were challenged by his nephew, Kiai Temenggung, who was supported by the Jambi court. In September 1660 the Jambi pangeran arrived in Palembang with an escort of about a thousand men to install Kiai Temenggung as ruler, while marrying his own daughter to the son of the former king.⁸⁷ When a Dutch fleet was dispatched in 1661 to blockade the entrance to the Musi River, the Jambi pangeran advised his Palembang client to reach an agreement with the VOC. The subsequent contract to which the new king set his seal in June 1662 permitted the Dutch to establish a post in Palembang and gave them a monopoly of all its pepper for 4 rials the picul in cash and 4.5 in goods. In a situation where their pangeran addressed the Jambi king as "father," some Palembang nobles feared that they would soon become completely subservient to their neighbor.⁸⁸

Evidence of Jambi's enhanced status was manifested in its ruler's connections with some of the leading royal families in the region. The pangeran's mother was from Palembang; one of his wives was a lady from the powerful kingdom of Makassar; an aunt was the wife of the king of Inderagiri; a daughter was the wife of the raja muda of Johor; and in 1659 had come an added honor when the younger brother of the sultan of Banten asked for another daughter in marriage. The Jambi ruler was thus part of a prestigious royal network, and his position as an uncle of the kings of the prominent Islamic states of Banten and Makassar set him well above Palembang. These relationships and his association with the Dutch led Batavia to again seek his services as mediator, this time in its quarrels with Banten. The two had been at odds for some time, and the sultan of Banten said he had given his oath to an *ulama* (Islamic teacher) from Mecca that he would never cease to do battle against the Christians. However, the pangeran of Jambi persuaded him that the shedding of human blood did not please God; moreover, said the pangeran, "Banten and Batavia are his children, the one being his nephew and the other his brother." As a result of these discussions, the VOC concluded a peace treaty with Banten in 1659. The Jambi pangeran's contribution was acknowledged in both Batavia and Banten with "great honor," his envoys returning home laden with "extraordinarily valuable gifts." With the presents received from Banten, his daughter's impending betrothal, and the prestige acquired through his mediation, the pangeran, said the VOC resident, appeared to be "drunk from prosperity."⁸⁹

This new status finally emboldened Jambi to throw off Mataram's overlordship. Despite the enormous respect accorded Java, their rela-

tionship had never approached the "brotherly friendship" to which Jambi aspired, because the Javanese court generally looked down on people from Sumatra, even those of rank. Something of this attitude comes through in one text of the Panji tales when a king of Malayu visiting Java is asked to bring the princesses in his suite to the royal palace (*kraton*). He excuses himself, however, requesting that they might come later "when they are more fully Javanized, for now they are stiff."⁹⁰ Jambi resentment toward Mataram became apparent after 1661, when the old ruler, now entitled *pangeran ratu*, stepped down and allowed his son, Pangeran Dipati Anum, to take over. Two years later a meeting was arranged with the king of Palembang in an effort to persuade him to end the practice of sending envoys to Mataram. But Palembang remained uncertain, and although its new ruler refrained from sending the customary umbrella, the symbol of submission, he was not eager to be openly defiant. Conversely, Jambi's leaning toward Mataram's rival, the VOC, was made evident in 1663 when the Dutch resident, Evert Michielsz, was made "one of the king's councillors," awarded a high title, and presented with a pike that had previously belonged to the king. In May 1663 Michielsz returned to Batavia and informed the governor general that Jambi was to sever relations with Mataram.⁹¹

The Jambi example served to hearten Palembang, whose ruler in 1665 took a tentative step in the same direction by instituting Saturday tourneys "in the Jambi manner." By 1668 he had not paid homage to Mataram for three years. Perhaps encouraged by his alliance with the Dutch, he then attempted to reassert control over Bangka, a move that added to the displeasure of the Mataram *susuhunan*. When reports were received that about six hundred warships were being made ready in Java to attack Palembang, its *pangeran* moved quickly to dispatch envoys with tribute. But the *susuhunan* refused to see them, and the gifts sent back—a buffalo, a plough, and a rake—were a public reminder of Palembang's lowly status. The latter thus remained nominally subservient to Mataram until the 1680s. By contrast, emboldened by its connections with the VOC, the English, Makassar, Johor, and Banten, Jambi's Pangeran Dipati Anum proclaimed that he wished to reign "as a king, not as a vassal. . . . Our ancestors were sovereign kings; why should we not be too?" Perhaps the enhanced stature arising from these claims to independence lay behind the inscription on the new *pangeran*'s seal, with its proclamation that Jambi would survive "forever."⁹²

In the nineteenth century the end of vassal status was still remembered as a milestone in Jambi's history, a number of accounts seeing its demise not as defiance but as an arrangement between two ancestral relatives. Through his marriage to the daughter of the sultan of Mataram, Jambi's great hero Orang Kaya Hitam gained possession not

only of the legendary kris Si Genjai but suzerainty over Jambi, which he would now rule jointly with his Javanese princess.⁹³ The ties with Java suggested in this legend to some extent lingered on, for Javanese was still spoken in the Jambi court well into the eighteenth century, and economic connections remained important. Politically, however, the old relationship was gone. The confirmation of Jambi's position came in 1669 when the ruler of Jambi, Pangeran Anum, decided to install his father, then termed pangeran ratu, as Sultan Agung "with a sheet of written paper and a massive gold kris." The choice of an honorific used by the rulers of Mataram and Banten was a public declaration of Jambi's status. "Never before," commented the Dutch resident, "has such a title been assumed by one of the kings, and no one could previously take it unless envoys had been to Mecca, as did Mataram, Banten, and Makassar." Furthermore, it was not long before Pangeran Anum began to make inquiries in Banten regarding the title of sultan for himself, and in 1676 his thirteen-year-old daughter married Sultan Agung of Banten. The latter then bestowed on Pangeran Anum the new name of Sultan Muhammad Syafi'i. These honors were duly acknowledged by the respect accorded Jambi in the Palembang court. When Sultan Agung came to visit Palembang in 1677, the Palembang ruler sat on a cushion at his feet while villagers from the interior made the long and dangerous trip from the interior to pay him homage. The Dutch themselves recognized Sultan Agung's standing when they asked him to help negotiate the 1678 treaty between Palembang and the VOC.⁹⁴

In a society for which economic exchanges were an extension of gift giving, the impersonal forces of supply and demand were not the predominant factor in determining the shape of commercial activities. Far more important in establishing the terms for trade was the extent to which buyer and seller could interact as part of an imagined family whose members extended to each other the generosity and fairness expected of relatives. As the "father" of his people, the ruler's genealogy and his own marriage connections helped personify a network of kinship relationships, offering the basis for establishing economic ties even between strangers. From this perspective, and in the context of the mid-seventeenth century, Jambi's commercial future seemed assured.

In fact, however, these bright prospects did not eventuate. Although the Jambi silsilah collected in later times list the kings who reigned in the seventeenth century by name and in order, there is no hint of the status they had once enjoyed in the region, nor of the marriages that linked them to kingdoms such as Makassar and Banten. This attrition of communal memories provides telling evidence of the manner in which a largely oral society retains from the past only those features that seem relevant to the present. From the latter part of the seventeenth

century, Jambi's prosperity continued to decline, and two hundred years afterward royal connections with such prestigious places as Banten and Makassar were not only irrelevant but unimaginable. It is the written European sources that describe the unprecedented wealth of earlier Jambi kings and that show how they attempted to incorporate those who vied for pepper—the Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, and English—into their economic family. But the same sources also show that although Palembang was for a time relegated to the position of second brother, it never lost its standing as a major trading port. The kinship relations between great ancestors in far-off lands, embedded in the genealogy of its kings, survived because they remained essential to the economic process.

Yet there was an underside to the riches the pepper trade brought, for it had introduced new elements into dealings between the downstream kings and upstream societies in both Jambi and Palembang. Even more fundamentally, mutual competition to control people and resources had infused their *old rival/relative relationship* with a hostility that had not previously existed. These concerns were to become more obvious as the seventeenth century advanced.

CHAPTER THREE

Accounts and Reckonings: Upstream-Downstream Tensions and Jambi-Palembang Rivalry

Numeracy was as critical as literacy to Europe's commercial endeavor, and European trading companies in Asia shared the conviction that commerce could not be properly conducted without written financial records. A director of the English East India Company even considered the knowledge of accounting, that "noble order of debtor and creditor," to be foremost among the qualifications necessary to produce "the perfect merchant of foreign trade." In the early seventeenth century these were not idle words. The refinement of bookkeeping methods provided joint stock companies like the VOC with a system by which a vast range of transactions could be translated into coordinated columns of figures. Regarded as one of the great commercial advances of the age, the technique of double-entry accounting enabled merchants to maintain a purview of business concerns that could now stretch to the other side of the globe. As an English poet eulogized, "By this ingenious pilot safely may/We trade at home, to Indies find a way."¹

Because regular, accurate records were vital for making informed economic decisions, company factors were constantly enjoined to maintain their ledgers systematically, and in their accompanying letters they were expected to supply further details to help in formulating commercial policies. During the seventeenth century these balance sheets were largely favorable, reflecting the ascendancy of the VOC over its European rivals; indeed, a hundred years later officials often referred to earlier figures as they bemoaned the extent to which the profits from the pepper trade had fallen away. On one level, therefore, the calculations that tracked profits and losses in terms of precise amounts of pepper deliveries, the exact dates on which they were received, and their equivalent monetary worth stand as a chronicle of Dutch mercantile success. On another level, however, they can be regarded as significant cultural statements, for the values on which they were based, emphasizing the pursuit of profit even if it entailed the loss of goodwill, were to have far-reaching effects on the conduct of trade in southeast Sumatra.

The European demand for pepper clearly worked to the advantage of ilir rulers, and the initial willingness of interior communities to become involved in cash cropping suggests that they too saw future benefits for themselves. As the seventeenth century proceeded, however, it became apparent that upstream expectations could not be fulfilled. Behind the impressive accumulation of wealth in the downstream courts and the profits recorded in European account books it is possible to see new areas of conflict that jeopardized both the delicate ulu-ilir association and the fragile Jambi-Palembang brotherhood. Local societies may not have maintained the kind of debit-credit records familiar to European merchants, but they did have a cultural balance sheet by which individuals and communities tallied favors received and given against obligations rendered or due. In the dealings of the kings of Palembang and Jambi with their subjects and with each other, these unwritten ledgers were becoming progressively more unbalanced. On the one side, the changing nature of commercial demands and the desire of ilir kings to strengthen their hold over the rich pepper districts of the interior exacerbated the tensions inherent in the upstream-downstream apposition. On the other, the rivalry so integral to the Jambi-Palembang relationship became more pronounced as pepper-growing areas along the border were disputed and as rulers sought to extend their access to the human resources that provided prestige, labor, and fighters. As this competition became more intense, the association between Jambi and Palembang was increasingly measured not in terms of reciprocal exchanges but as a reckoning of wrongs suffered and vengeance obtained. Although the Dutch were able to negotiate a peace settlement in 1683, they deliberately did not exploit the traditional methods of resolution, such as royal marriages, that had previously worked to bond the Jambi and Palembang courts together. From the late seventeenth century, therefore, the links between them began to weaken.

Strains in the Upstream-Downstream Relationship

Before the arrival of the Europeans, economic links between ulu producers and the ilir port had been maintained primarily through volition. Geography made enforcement of control almost impossible, and interior groups would come downstream to sell their goods only if they were convinced that they would meet fair treatment. A king might claim for himself power-charged humans such as dwarves and twins and the exotic items of the jungle and the seas, but a subject who acknowledged royal prerogatives could justifiably look to some reward. Downstream recognition of these expectations is indicated by a piagem from Palembang, written on a buffalo horn and dated 1576 A.J. (1653 C.E.), that relieves its recipient from paying tribute because he had presented his twin sons, Kalung and Tiwa, to the court.²

This concession was considerable, for central to the maintenance of the ulu-ilir relationship was the regular appearance of upstream people at court, offering gifts in return for royal patronage and protection. Their physical presence was an important demonstration of homage, since the ruler's standing was manifested through the display of many followers. Europeans saw a relationship in which the ulu people were kept downstream "to waite on [the king's] base pomp yet they cannot tend their pepper gardens" as exploitative and as evidence that local rulers "would rather be a king of outward show and state than of a flourishing land and subjects."³ They did not understand that it could be more important for a ruler to have his subjects gathered around him as immediate and indisputable evidence of his authority than to have them laboring unseen in some distant place in pursuit of profits that might not be apparent for many years.

Women had an important place among those who surrounded the king, representing perhaps the most valuable "tribute" a subject could offer. As we have seen, Europeans noted the presence of women in the Jambi and Palembang courts but only partially realized their significance. A Dutchman might remark that "Indonesian kings show their greatness and power through maintaining many women in order to display their lecherous appetite," but he was unaware that this visual statement of a ruler's virility was an essential component of royal legitimacy. Women were also necessary because they were employed in large numbers within the royal establishment to attend to the personal needs of the ruler and his family and to carry out necessary tasks like gathering firewood and carrying water. When the king went to war, his women could perform vital services such as making the rice balls that were packed into a fortress wall to give added strength, as well as preparing food and supplies for defending forces. In 1652, when Jambi feared an attack from Palembang, orders were specifically sent to the ulu to bring down females as well as males for *corvée* duties.⁴

Conversely, the presentation of a female could potentially yield great rewards to any subject because of the possibility that she might become the object of the ruler's attentions. Her family would then be bound to the ruler in a very special way and in return for giving up a daughter should properly gain not merely recompense but continuing advantages. This flow of women to the palace was a crucial link in upstream-downstream relations since in Jambi and Palembang females serving in the court very frequently came from ulu districts, where most villages were found. In the world of legend one of the most pervasive themes is the way in which, sometime in the distant past, the sexual union between an upstream woman and a downstream king helped establish the basis for cooperation between ulu and ilir. Here the ruler is readily presented as a distant but senior kinsman, the obligations to him justi-

fied by ancient bonds that make the rendering of tribute and the fulfillment of labor service explicable and even proper. A king might well favor his "relatives," but they in their turn must be ever ready to lend assistance. An example of the way in which connections between the downstream ruler and the interior were explained was apparent in the Belida area of Palembang, described by Europeans as an extremely infertile area whence those who displeased the king were banned. A rotational *corvée* system operated by which a certain number of men and women were constantly at the palace gathering wood, carrying water, cooking, feeding animals, and so forth. However, legends collected in later times justified Belida's obligations by relating how the original ruler of Palembang, Prasienan, was displaced by a Sultan Mangni, who subsequently married Prasienan's daughter. Prasienan fled in anger to Belida, followed by Sultan Mangni, who rewarded his father-in-law with a title, a spear, and a white umbrella. In return, forty people from Belida were sent to the downstream court to act as wood and water bearers.⁵

Underlying the upstream-downstream association was an implicit assumption that relations between village and court rested on mutual recognition of the rights and obligations of both parties. The people gave gifts, goods, and labor; the ruler rewarded and protected. In fact, of course, this ideal environment could only be sustained if interaction was rare, and by the mid-seventeenth century this was no longer the case. As kings of Palembang and Jambi sought to tighten their hold over the pepper-growing interior they were less willing to sit passively in the capital and await the "gifts" brought by their subjects. Increasingly, trips to the ulu to hunt or fish were combined with forcible collection of pepper supplies, tribute, and women, "the prettiest unmarried daughters."⁶ It is almost certain that such girls would never see their families again, for they now became in effect the king's property, as easily given to a favored Chinese as sent to the Dutch in payment for a debt.

The ambiguity of upstream-downstream dealings is reflected in stories depicting the complexities of the king's relations with the ulu men whose women served him and even bore his children. For most males the seizure of a daughter or sister was as much an affront as the abduction of a wife, since most young women were promised or betrothed as children. In the village the aggrieved husband, father, brother, or lover would have been entitled to take due revenge, even to the extent of killing the offender. The standard of behavior for commoner and prince alike is laid out in the legend of the great Palembang hero Aria Damar, who vowed he would never take another man's wife. When he was tricked into doing so by his half-brother, the king of Majapahit, he found the shame so intolerable that he killed himself. Another story attached to the royal Palembang genealogy tells of a ruler who

demanded that the bride of any of his subjects should first share his bed before going to her husband's. Any woman who became pregnant by the king was required to remain at court, and her husband was sent away. A man called Jeladri wished to marry a beautiful girl, but the king kept her in his kraton. After three days Jeladri came to ask for his wife, offering a kris as a substitute. The ruler refused. Eight days later Jeladri came again, but the king paid him no attention because he was caponing his cocks. Jeladri then took his kris and ran amok, killing the ruler and all the occupants of the kraton. And indeed, in 1629 Dutch sources record that the heir to the Palembang throne was killed by one of his own people whose bride he had taken.⁷ Such actions by a king were clearly at variance with the notion that he should act as a caring kinsman.

Another frequent theme found in both folklore and archival records is the deflection of popular animosity toward the ruler onto his representatives. Royal ladies, who often accompanied court parties upstream to choose girls to enter the palace, are similarly a target of hostility, and the king's exactions or demands for extraordinary *corvée* duties are frequently attributed to the "cruel" queen or "greedy" *gundik* (secondary wife). A Jambi chronicle, describing strains between the ulu and ilir, thus blames the ruler's wife, who was "very unkind to any attractive (village) women. She took them and made them her slaves." Dutch sources also suggest that the influence of such ladies was often discerned in royal actions. In 1642, for instance, the decision of the Palembang king to outfit a fleet of forty ships and three thousand men for a voyage to Bangka and Japara was attributed to requests from his new *gundik*, who "had encouraged him in all kinds of strange activities." Naturally, few of the women who entered the kraton attained this degree of influence. Most were condemned to a life of servitude in a court where the Javanese model created an environment quite foreign to them and where their own status was clearly inferior. The attitude of the Jambi ruler who ordered his Malay subjects to wear Javanese dress in his presence is mirrored in a Palembang wayang story from the court that depicts a *buta* (monster) from the jungle as "stupid" because he does not know *kawi* (literary Javanese) or Javanese customs.⁸

The tensions between upstream and downstream expressed by folklore in terms of human relationships reflect real strains that could and did develop in the economic interaction of ulu and ilir. The early seventeenth century witnessed a vast expansion of the international pepper market, and the high prices of the period are testimony to the apparently insatiable worldwide demand. This in turn encouraged a spread of pepper growing down Jambi's Batang Hari, through the Tembesi area to Merangin, and up into the Palembang highlands. The wide-

spread shift to pepper, however, concealed certain factors that were not obvious to European commentators. First, unlike rice or cotton, pepper is a slow-maturing plant. It was four years before a grower could expect to see the first berries, and six to seven before any substantial harvest could be expected. Because pepper plants ceased to bear after about thirty years, and because the leaching of soil nutrients could cause a decline in production well before that, forward planning was vital. Pepper growers needed to be aware of the passing of seasons so they could lay out new gardens that would be mature by the time older plots had to be abandoned. Second, considerable labor investment was required to produce a successful pepper harvest. A clearing had to be made in the jungle, no easy task given the size of the trees and the basic implement, the *parang* or cleaver.⁹ The absence of wet rice cultivation in most of the area also meant that pepper growing could not build on a tradition of communal cooperation in agriculture. As the basic economic unit, the nuclear family would have been placed under considerable strain by the high labor input required by pepper cultivation. Although men were responsible for clearing the forest, women and children assisted in other essential tasks—planting out the *cengkering* (prop-plants), training the small pepper vines around them, and keeping the roots clear of weeds. During the two annual harvest periods, the “great harvest” between April and June and the “small harvest” from September to November, pepper growers and their families would be particularly busy, picking, cleaning, drying, and bagging the berries. The sifting of one picul (roughly sixty kilograms) of pepper, for instance, would take a woman the entire day. Behind all this labor was the knowledge that a thriving garden of perhaps five hundred to a thousand plants could be ruined by the depredations of elephants, an earthquake, an unusually dry or wet season, or disease. Yet though the work of years could be lost in a season or even a few hours, the profits from the sale of pepper initially made the investment worthwhile.

Because of the degree of labor and time involved, it was impossible for most families to grow cotton and pepper or rice and pepper simultaneously. In the early seventeenth century the rate of return favored pepper, but the long nurturing period before the plants reached maturity meant growers could not readily respond to shifts in prices by moving to alternative crops. The limitations imposed by pepper growing became a serious matter as the impact of increased production began to be felt in Europe. Pepper can be stored for several years without deteriorating, and by the middle of the seventeenth century, warehouses in Europe were filling up as sellers tried to keep the price high and as consumers turned to ginger as a substitute. By 1652 Europe was said to be glutted with pepper, the surplus sufficient to last for at least three years. The

Dutch even tried to persuade the pangeran of Palembang to change half his pepper gardens into rice, claiming that "already more pepper was produced than the whole world needed."¹⁰

Excess pepper in Europe inevitably affected the prices the Dutch and English were willing to pay, and by the 1640s a downward trend was already apparent. When the panembahan of Jambi died in 1630, the Dutch and English paid only six rials, with a reduction to four a few years later. In both Palembang and Jambi this trend was exacerbated by the entry of the ruler and the nobles into the market in an effort to buy up pepper cheaply and then sell to the Europeans. In consequence, the payment given to the growers was often far below that specified in the contract. Signs of producer resistance to falling profits soon became apparent. By 1630, just a few years after the English and Dutch had reached an understanding, albeit shaky, to control the pepper price in Jambi, Minangkabau growers were complaining about the amount they received and said they would destroy their gardens or plant rice instead if the situation did not improve.

Behind the growing wealth of the Jambi and Palembang courts the question of falling prices continued to fester. In 1654 ulu villagers in Jambi were still threatening to pull out their pepper because they were receiving only two rials the picul. Often they simply refused to sell to the Europeans, held the harvest until a more advantageous offer was made, or carried it elsewhere. The growing use of slaves as laborers exacerbated the problem. Minangkabau heads of pepper-growing districts on the upper Batang Hari complained that an increase to three rials a picul would still yield no profit when the cost of supporting their slaves was taken into account. In Palembang, where slaves were also "much desired for the pepper gardens," other expenses were incurred when the levy on the sale of a slave was raised from one half to two rials, to be paid directly to the king. Before their attack on Palembang in 1659, the Dutch had thus watched with frustration as Malays, Javanese, and Chinese bought up pepper at six or more rials the picul, claiming as they were loading that it was cotton. Although such "smuggling" was more difficult after the VOC post was established, pepper growers in the Komering region were known to be taking their harvest out to Banten and the west coast. In the face of this loss of income the Palembang ruler retaliated by establishing his own posts to collect dues from passing traffic and by requiring his people to sell to him well below the market price.¹¹

Ulu-ilir tensions were aggravated further as money became more common in the purchase of pepper. In the early seventeenth century the most common coin in Jambi and Palembang was the lead *pici* (from Old Javanese *pisi*, meaning coin), which had probably been introduced to Java by Chinese traders around 1590. With some locally struck, using

the more durable tin instead of lead, *pici* were strung together in *paku* of a thousand, providing a useful currency for the lower end of the market. Periodic fluctuations in exchange rates, however, made storing *pici*s disadvantageous. In 1619 in Jambi 8,500 *pici*s were equivalent to one ryal, but by 1636 the rate had dropped to about 6,900 per ryal, and it was sometimes as low as 3,500. Since pepper was priced in rials but purchased with *pici*s, this degree of movement obviously worked against growers. Arbitrary decisions from downstream might also cause the *pici* to lose value. In 1640, for instance, the Jambi ruler sent 100,000 *pici*s into the interior to encourage their use, but two years later he decided to make *pici*s heavier and to abolish the smaller ones then current.¹²

The growing demand for rials, constantly in short supply, gave rise to further problems. When the Dutch and English arrived in Jambi and Palembang, the silver ryal had been almost unknown; less than a generation later, people who had previously been familiar only with "dirty *pici*s" often refused to accept anything else. Unlike *pici*s, which had a limited life, rials could be kept and stored, being frequently used for personal ornaments, sewn to cloth or headbands, or strung on necklaces and bracelets. Silver Spanish rials were often melted down to make jewelry or to decorate a kris, and on one occasion even a tea service for the Palembang ruler. Rials were also desirable because downstream kings increasingly demanded at least some tribute in specie. It became customary, for example, for a ruler to be weighed against rials on the occasion of his installation, a privilege sometimes extended to members of his family to mark some rite of passage.¹³ Yet despite their high standing, rials too could be questioned. Falsification was common, and many were adulterated with copper; when the Jambi king began to strike his own rials in 1675 it proved impossible to force growers to accept them because so many were misshapen. For inhabitants of the interior, uncertainties about the value of coinage were increased further by the bewildering array of specie brought in by the Europeans and from other parts of Asia. Although Europeans attempted to persuade the *boventlanders*, the ulu people, to take other coins—*stuivers*, *schillings*, *ducatoons*—only rarely would they consent to a substitute for the Spanish ryal. But because kings themselves were often paid with Dutch coinage in lieu of another currency, they sometimes compelled acceptance. In 1671, for instance, the Palembang ruler took about 19,000 *rijksdaalders* with him to his upstream tollhouse to buy pepper forcibly from passing rafts.¹⁴

The expanding monetization of the economy infused another element of strain into upstream-downstream relations because of doubts about the value of coinage and the fear of many interior people that they might be the target of ilir subterfuge. In the transactions between agents

from the ulu and their customers in the ulu, another area of suspicion concerned the question of weights, always a sensitive matter in trade because there was no standardization between regions. Furthermore, weights could be readily adjusted, a practice particularly apparent in times of rice shortages, when a larger gantang could be used. As long as commerce rested on trust, such matters would not lead to disputes. In both Jambi and Palembang, for instance, native traders bought pepper by volume but sold it by weight. A *kulak* was filled with grain from one of the sacks on a raft, and from this a mutually acceptable estimate of the weight of the entire delivery was reached. But problems could always occur when a group began to move out beyond the small circle of "relatives," and the good ruler is thus commonly presented as the one who introduces weights and measures so that trade can be carried out harmoniously. The copper basin once in the possession of a Palembang kubu group, purportedly given them by Ratu Sinuhun, a legendary queen of Palembang, was probably used for measuring out important items such as salt when trading with nonkubu traders.¹⁵

Indigenous ideas of weights as adjustable according to the needs of the moment rather than fixed according to absolute standards was not acceptable to Europeans, who demanded exactness and consistency in commerce. With the growing use of middlemen in the Jambi and Palembang pepper trade, the relationship between European buyers and upstream sellers became less personal and suspicions about variations in weights less easy to resolve. Growers often believed that the differences between the scales used in the Jambi court and those of the Europeans were due to deliberate efforts to cheat them, and in 1632 the ulu people were so convinced that the Dutch scales were false that they gave this as a reason for refusing to come downstream.¹⁶ Their suspicions were not completely ungrounded, for despite their insistence on accuracy, Europeans were prepared to manipulate the scales in the interests of profit. In 1643 the VOC official going up to Kuamang was thus instructed to weigh the pepper with a scale five *kati* heavier than the one used in Jambi to "relieve the heavy costs involved." But as time passed there was some realization of how easily ulu suspicions could be aroused, and in 1665 the Dutch resident of Palembang went so far as to send a model of the old scales to Batavia, asking that the proposed new ones be an exact replica. The treaty of 1678 with Palembang tried to address some of the major problems regarding equivalences by laying down that a picul should be set at a hundred *kati*, with the syahbandar being responsible for making any adjustment if deliveries contained stones or dirt. No one but he could hold the *dacing* (scales), and he would be entitled to weigh pepper "the whole day" as long as the indicating marks could be seen.¹⁷

Nonetheless, written contracts alone could not eliminate the growing

alienation between upstream producers and downstream purchasers, evidence of which is apparent in the deliberate adulteration of pepper. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, when growers had sold directly to incoming traders, Jambi pepper had been considered remarkably clean and free of the dirt, stones, and rubble (collectively called *ampas*, or rubbish) typical of other places, which could make up to 6 percent difference in weight.¹⁸ By mid-century, in response to what was seen as unfair treatment, a variety of ingenious devices had been adopted to cheat the scales and so obtain a better price; such devices could range from increasing the weight by soaking the pepper grains in water to mixing them with small seeds specially blackened over a fire. Far from being trusted relatives, the buyers in the downstream capital and their agents were increasingly being viewed as wily opportunists and the marketplace an arena for confrontation and antagonism rather than trust and friendship.

Perhaps the most important reason for the strains developing in the upstream-downstream relationship was the Europeans' attitude to debts, and their willingness to extend credit in the form of goods or money. In itself, this practice was probably not new, for such inducements may well have been necessary to ensure delivery of forest and sea products, none of which was cultivated and all of which were difficult and time consuming to procure. But pepper, being a cash crop with predictable harvests, was eminently suited to the credit system. It was possible for a buyer to reserve the crop due the following season by issuing goods or money in advance on the assumption that delivery would soon follow. The Dutch and English entered into similar arrangements, allowing upstream growers to buy large amounts of goods or cloth in return for promises of pepper supplies. However, a bad season, sickness, or simply misplaced optimism could often mean that these debts could not be repaid, at least in the short term. For the Protestant Dutch, who believed that there was "honor in having no debts," this failure to pay was a clear sign of imprudency or even dishonesty. A record of indebtedness was crucial to bookkeeping, and there were constant complaints that "the Malay nation felt no shame" in incurring or apparently forgetting debts.¹⁹

Europeans understandably did not appreciate that in this society a small part of a debt might be intentionally left unpaid, since it ensured that the bond established between giver and receiver would be a lasting one.²⁰ They were also wrong in their view that in these cultures debts were readily ignored. The critical difference lay in the perception of when and how debts should be repaid. For example, if a noble in Jambi committed a fault he was normally fined. The amount of the fine was then "written down" and placed in a box, being passed on to his children but without any pressure for its repayment. The debtor himself

remained bonded to his creditor until such time as the debt was paid, but the passing of time was not necessarily a matter for concern. Years after the Dutch had given up hope of repayment, a Jambi noble thus appeared at the VOC lodge with three hundred piculs of pepper as partial reimbursement for debts incurred by his long-dead father.²¹ But this repayment need not have been made in monetary equivalents, or even by the debtor himself; it could be honored by someone else who in their turn was beholden to him. One can do no better than to cite Firth's classic example: In the long term, the payment owed by *B* to *A* may be paid back by *C* to *D* when "*B* may be the father-in-law of *A*, *D* the son of *A* and *C* the brother of *B*."²²

The question of debts also caused problems between the court and the Europeans, who did not appreciate that the debtor-creditor imbalance could be rectified not merely by the recompense of pepper or money but (for instance) by loyal service and the presentation of gifts. It was also understood that a rich individual should properly forgive the debts of someone in penury, especially a widow. The willingness of Ratu Mas and other nobles to lend to the Dutch and English reflected the generosity expected of the wealthy and the belief that refusal of a loan subjected the supplicant to great humiliation. Yet at one point the VOC gave instructions that further credit should not be given to the Jambi ruler because of his record of indebtedness. When he was informed of this, the king was so angry that he threatened to cut the right hand off anyone found trading in the VOC lodge.²³ By the same token, importunate requests for payment were also regarded as improper, for the very fabric of social relations was interwoven with the assumption that all debts would, at some time and in some form, be repaid. A person guilty of dunning must thus be greedy and uncaring.

Such attitudes were not shared by the Europeans, for whom the restoration of the equilibrium between profit and loss was of foremost concern. Any amounts unpaid at the annual closing of the books were carried over to the new balance sheet, a commercial practice that meant there was no question of "forgetting" debts. In 1679 the VOC resident was instructed to press the family of the recently deceased Sultan Agung for repayment of monies owed, and in 1791 the VOC was still requesting reimbursement for loans given out to a Palembang ruler during conflicts in 1722 and 1731.²⁴ Furthermore, the kings of Jambi and Palembang found that the Europeans would only accept a form of payment that could be readily translated into a monetary asset. Many of the traditional means of repaying debts—the bestowal of courtly titles, adoption as a royal son, gifts of women—were simply inadequate.

European insistence that settlement for debts be made in money or goods that could be resold placed great pressure on the court elite. By 1623 there were already complaints that the Jambi pangeran and his

nobles owed the VOC large amounts, and in 1632 the total was listed at 5,603 rials; twenty years later court debts to the Dutch were in excess of 10,000 rials. The English too were concerned at the amount of money owed them, considering the situation "doubtful and desperate."²⁵ Indebtedness on this scale occurred primarily because the conduct of the pepper trade in the seventeenth century encouraged the wealthy and privileged to become creditors. Whole districts might have acquired goods on credit from a noble, a Chinese, or the ruler, who had in turn received them from the Dutch or English. Alternatively, court officials or members of the royal family may have agreed to stand as guarantor for a client trading on their account, which meant they would assume his debts should he be unable to pay. In such cases it was customary for debtors to offer themselves and their families as bondsmen and women to their wealthier patron. A message from a Minangkabau leader in 1636, for example, indicates that he expected the ruler of Jambi to act as guarantor for any debts owed by Jambi people to Minangkabau. A generation later the Dutch commented that the Jambi ruler was "borge" (guarantor) for "many people."²⁶

Debt bondsmen and women, however, were not slaves, and they could not normally be sold to balance European account books. Meanwhile, pressure on the ruler for repayment was unremitting. Already in the 1642 treaty between the Dutch and Palembang, the pangeran had agreed to tell his subjects that they could not obtain cash or cloth on credit until their previous delivery of pepper had been loaded for shipment. Anyone who owed money "could be kept prisoner and taken to Batavia, and the king will not stop this, regardless of whether they are his people, the queen's or those of his nobles." Another treaty the following year in Jambi provided that the king should "compel" those indebted to the VOC to pay their debts and that he would allow the Dutch resident upstream to collect payment. In 1648, after "hard words" were exchanged, the Jambi ruler finally agreed to foreclose even on nobles whose debts to the Dutch were outstanding.²⁷

Because of the pressure for repayment applied by both Dutch and English, Jambi and Palembang rulers as well as the court elite began to act more and more like debt collectors, employing intimidation or force to call up what they were owed. Even religious authorities could be used to induce pepper growers to repay debts. In Jambi a merchant originally from Pahang who had been made *tuan kadi* (religious judge), with responsibility for administering "the law of Allah" (*hukum Allah*), was charged with the collection of debts on behalf of the king and other nobles. In 1691 when the ruler of Palembang was upstream collecting debts, he was similarly accompanied by the head imam.²⁸

Well before the defeat of Palembang and the monopoly contract of 1662 the effects of European insistence on a balanced ledger were

already apparent in Jambi. Royal hunting or fishing expeditions to the interior became an occasion for forcible collection of debts from pepper growers, and even the ruler's own relatives were subjected to intimidation and threats. In 1652, following constant requests from the resident, the ruler told his mother and nobles to sell their jewelry and their slaves to raise money to pay their debts; some of his officials, including the syahbandar, would organize payments. Furthermore, Chinese would no longer be permitted to go upstream to purchase pepper on credit. By 1654 the situation had only slightly improved, and the governor general informed the pangeran that Jambi would never be restored to Dutch favor as long as payments remained outstanding. This demand was the more humiliating since the interior headmen had been called downstream especially to hear the customary public reading of Batavia's letter. The pangeran agreed to appoint an official to collect all debts according to a list drawn up by the resident and he himself demanded repayment from his own clients on pain of confiscation of slaves and goods. At the same time he reminded the resident that he was unable to pay for those who had defaulted to the Dutch because he in turn had been failed. Given this situation, he said, the governor general's ultimatum made it appear as if he no longer wished to continue their "brotherly friendship."²⁹

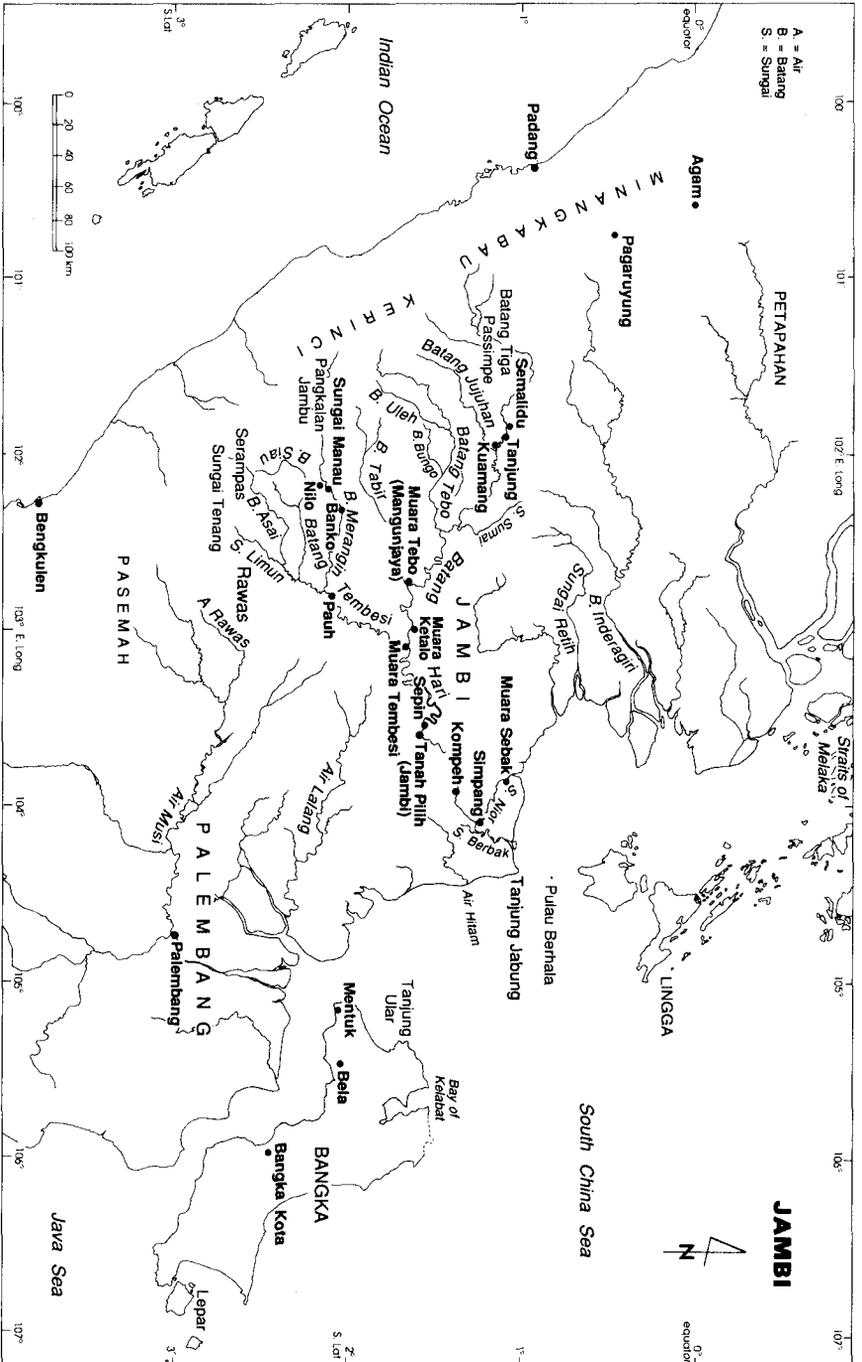
Despite the strains developing between ulu and ilir it remained crucial for both Palembang and Jambi kings to retain or extend authority over interior groups because the latter were essential in generating royal income and because they had become heavily indebted to the ruler or court agents. In 1655, hearing that seven villages of dissatisfied pepper growers were fleeing to Palembang because of the low prices they were offered, the Jambi pangeran went upstream with armed vessels and captured two hundred people. One hundred fifty of these fugitives were brought back to Tanah Pilih, together with a considerable portion of their stored rice harvest. One of the nobles was left in the uplands with a large force to maintain the ruler's authority. Such measures did not yield sufficient revenue to compensate for the court's growing debts, however, especially as Europeans now preferred payment in specie rather than the pepper that was glutting the markets of London and Amsterdam. By 1672 this insistence was so great that the Jambi king imposed a tax of five rials for every thousand pepper vines as part of a widespread levy intended to help pay his debts to the VOC. The case of one man and his family, so indebted to the Jambi ruler that he fled in desperation to Palembang, is certainly not unusual. But the Palembang pangeran made similar demands on his people, taking trips to the interior with most of his court to collect outstanding debts and to forcibly buy up pepper at low prices. It is not surprising that a Minangkabau pepper trader in an eighteenth-century Lampung story advises his son

to cut wood or catch fish for sale if he needs capital, but “don’t become indebted to the raja or to the Company.”³⁰

The Chinese in Jambi suffered particularly from the deepening upstream and downstream tensions. Sometimes an entire district could be indebted to a Chinese who had in turn borrowed cloth or money from the Dutch or English or a member of the court to purchase pepper on credit. A list of twenty-eight indebted nobles in Jambi, for example, shows that although only seven were Chinese, they owed more than all the rest combined.³¹ In 1642 the heir to the Jambi throne, Pangeran Dipati, in debt to the Dutch for 770 rials, claimed that “Jockie” (Orang Kaya Setia Utama, a wealthy shaven Chinese) owed him a large sum. In an attempt to regain these debts, Pangeran Dipati abducted Jockie from his home in the VOC compound. The Europeans responded to such measures by adopting similar tactics, seizing the property and slaves of Chinese traders as compensation for outstanding amounts. Dutch and English agents followed the Chinese upstream to call up debts, their collection techniques including even beatings by Company slaves. The Chinese were also pressed by the ruler and court nobles. Many a Chinese wife secretly hid her husband’s belongings while he lay on his deathbed, and some suffered shocking tortures to make them reveal where their spouse’s alleged wealth was hidden.³²

Squeezed for payment for the cloth or money they had received on credit, the Chinese in turn applied pressure to their debtors. In 1635 the Minangkabau said they were afraid to come downstream to trade, in part because they were indebted to Chinese. Desperation sometimes gave rise to outright violence. A number of Chinese had taken up residence in upstream Jambi, and in 1639 several local Minangkabau planned an attack on their settlement in Kuamang. The attack itself was aborted, but the question of whether or not the action was justified divided the community; it was only settled when the ruler and his mother went upriver to supervise the punishment of those who had robbed the Chinese. The situation worsened as Europeans compelled “their” Chinese to call in debts owed by interior growers, for forced collection simply encouraged the tendency to adulterate pepper or pick the crop too early. Furthermore, the use of Chinese as agents of European companies meant that whatever ties of family or friendship might have been established were subject to unprecedented strains. Anxious to protect their investments, the VOC even allocated some of their Chinese one or two slaves for protection. In a vain effort to stop the Europeans from employing Chinese, the pangeran forbade the latter to go upstream, claiming that the opium they offered for sale was impure.³³

In Jambi increased European trade also fueled ulu-ilir tensions in other ways. When the Dutch and English first arrived in 1615, the authority of the local families who controlled interior districts was so



A = Air
 B = Batang
 S = Sungai



JAMBI

South China Sea

Java Sea

Indian Ocean

107° E Long

107° E Long

106° E Long

105° E Long

106° E Long

107° E Long

100° E Long

101° E Long

102° E Long

103° E Long

104° E Long

105° E Long

106° E Long

107° E Long

3° S lat

3° S lat

equator

equator

100°

101°

102°

103°

104°

105°

106°

107°

108°

109°

110°

PASEMAH

PALEMBANG

BANGKA

PETAPAHAN

LINGGA

JAMBI

NINAGKY

KERINCI

SUNGAI

SURABAYA

SEKELUPAT

INDRAGIRI

BENGKULU

Strait of Melaka

Pulau Benua

Bay of Kelabat

Bangka Kota

Lepar

Merituk

Bela

Muara Sebak

Muara Tembesi

Muara Tembesi (Jambi)

Muara Tembesi (Jambi)

Muara Tembesi (Jambi)

Muara Tembesi (Jambi)

Simpang

great that it was necessary to obtain their permission before crossing the boundaries. With the spread of pepper growing, the heads of certain appanages could sometimes be in receipt of greater income and in control of a larger population than the pangeran himself. One such area was Merangin, which was situated on a river that joined the Tembesi and had a long history of active trade.³⁴ By mid-century Merangin had become one of the principal pepper areas; although the Dutch population estimate of two hundred thousand is almost certainly too high, it does indicate that this region was perceived as a more densely populated area than the capital, where the inhabitants numbered about four to five thousand. Merangin was under a royal cousin, the pangeran temenggung, who came to independent arrangements with the Dutch, employed his own agents to buy up pepper, and maintained a lifestyle very similar to that of the ruler. Possessing "almost the same power as the king," he was naturally unwilling to accept a position of subservience to the downstream court.³⁵

Almost inevitably the wealth of Merangin aroused the envy of the Jambi ruler, and antagonisms became more apparent from 1663, when Pangeran Dipanegara, the son of the temenggung, took over the region on his father's death, assuming the same exclusive rights and extending his authority even into the Kerinci districts. When the Jambi pangeran attempted to place his own nominee in control of Merangin, the local people made clear their resistance; Pangeran Dipanegara, they said, was their lord, "of very high descent, possibly above the pangeran." Even the kubu of the deep jungle were willing to accept his mediation in disputes, and in the words of the VOC resident, "all the heathen and the people have submitted to him and will have no other."³⁶

Pangeran Dipanegara was eventually brought under the authority of the downstream court, not because he had been defeated in battle but because he owed substantial amounts to both the ruler and the Dutch. Pressed for repayment, he too began to use force; as a result, many of his subjects fled into Palembang and up to Minangkabau. Although Pangeran Dipanegara was able to meet some of his obligations by selling valued items for rials and by presenting the king with gold and silverwork, eighty slaves, and four hundred buffalo, he was essentially pauperized. He was thus in no position to challenge the downstream ruler, and when the latter took over his debts, Pangeran Dipanegara in effect became a bondsman.³⁷

Ulu resentment at this type of ilir exaction increased longstanding strains in other areas of the upstream-downstream relationship. The most accessible groups living along the main river, the so-called Batin Duabelas (the twelve batin groups) were subject to corvée duties, being required to appear at the capital whenever the ruler required workers, bringing their own food supplies. These occasions could be as varied as

a royal wedding or the preparation of ships to carry envoys to Batavia, but demands were obviously greatest when danger threatened. In 1642, for example, the Jambi pangeran sent nobles upstream to bring people down because he feared that Mataram might order Palembang to attack. It appears, however, that orders for corvée workers increased after the Dutch and English set up permanent posts in Jambi, and following the VOC move into Palembang in 1662. Not only were rulers anxious to ensure that the Europeans did not surpass them in terms of defenses or housing; the requests of the Europeans themselves also placed added burdens on local people. Any substantial building program in the capital involved an expedition upstream because rattans and bamboo were difficult to obtain along the coast and because building woods like the serviceable *medang*, the durable *tembusu*, or the long-lasting and prized *ungling* were not found in the ilir's swamp forests.³⁸ The size of these trees made collection complicated, since they could be floated downriver only after the rains fell in October and November and the water level rose. In 1656, when the Jambi ruler promised to deliver eighty logs, forty people had to be sent "a hundred [Dutch] miles" away; they were not expected to return for two months.³⁹ It is not surprising that in many folk stories, release from corvée duties in return for some service to the king is a common theme.

In sum, the arrival of the Europeans and the growing demands for pepper encouraged the rulers of Jambi and Palembang to extend their control into the interior. In the process they gained access to resources that brought them great wealth, but for their ulu subjects it meant recurring ilir intrusion. In 1644, for example, the king of Palembang said he planned to send representatives upstream "with a written document and a seal" to compel some of his subjects who were taking pepper out to the west coast of Sumatra to deliver their supplies to him. It was unlikely that villagers could read his orders, but the king's seal was resonant with sacred powers; in the early nineteenth century the seal of the ruler of Palembang was said to be "the mark which the sultan had made to destroy all European might."⁴⁰ A villager who opted to disobey royal commands could not therefore do so lightly. Further, the association with the Europeans, while stimulating demands for pepper, also provided ilir kings with access to a powerful new armory, regarded as a potent means of extracting compliance from upstream dwellers. European assistance in maintaining weapons and manufacturing ammunition was requested or recruited, and in Palembang in 1659 captured Dutchmen were being used against "rebellions in the mountains." Two years later de Goyer, the Jambi resident, gave his "father" muskets and ammunition to use against the "rebels" of Kuamang and himself accompanied the ruler upstream. In subsequent years Batavia received further requests for ammunition and gunpowder so that the pangeran

could “subdue his rebellious subjects.” At the same time rulers made a concerted effort to prevent this new weaponry reaching the ulu, and a request from the English to sell saltpeter, essential for making gunpowder, in the Jambi interior was roundly refused.⁴¹

One strand of popular legend in Jambi and Palembang presents the ulu-ilir relationship as balanced between a distant but caring kinsman and his grateful and supportive relatives. Another strand, however, depicts the same association in terms of the abduction or ill-treatment of upstream women. Beneath this personalization lie real tensions that emerged in the economic environment of the seventeenth century as ilir kings, aiming to dominate the pepper trade, began to push deeper into the ulu. The author of the *Hikayat Banjar*, a text from southeast Borneo that appears to date from this period, had no doubt that in Sumatra the “vapors” exuded by pepper had undermined relations between the ruler and his interior subjects. From the king of Banjar comes the pronouncement:

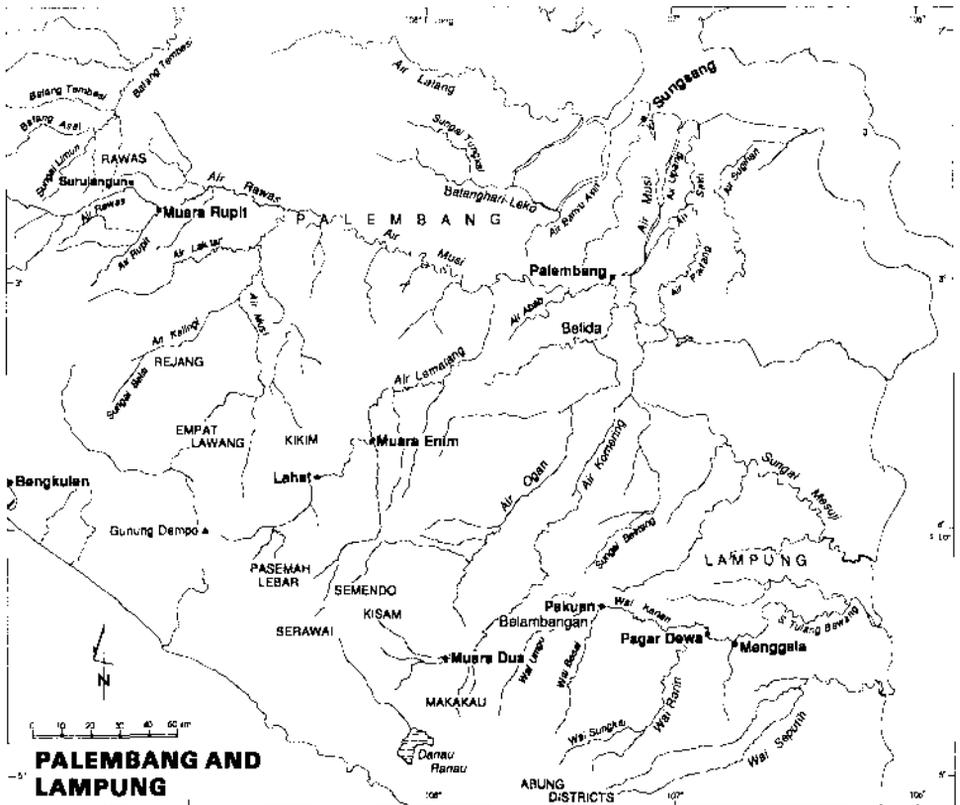
Let people nowhere in this country grow pepper, as is done in Jambi and Palembang. Perhaps these countries grow pepper for the sake of money, in order to become wealthy. There is no doubt that in the end these countries will go to ruin. There will be much intrigue and food will become expensive, for the vapors of pepper are hot and anything else planted will not grow very well. The government will be thrown into disorder because the rural population (*orang sakai*) will not think highly of the townsfolk (*orang kota*). The functionaries from the capital will not be respected by the people in the rural areas who grow pepper. . . . Let [the rural people] plant some ten or twenty plants only, just enough for private consumption. . . . Let it not be as in Jambi and Palembang.⁴²

Rivalry for Labor and Resources

It is significant that the *Hikayat Banjar* couples Palembang and Jambi together, for their rulers were not concerned merely with asserting their position in the ulu. They maintained another set of “accounts” that was also subject to constant scrutiny—the tallying of the relative strength of their kingdoms in terms of the extent of territory and people controlled. The rulers of Jambi and Palembang frequently proclaimed that they were “one,” and indeed intermarriage meant that rulers and court nobles alike were essentially part of the same family. Yet embedded in this relationship was a rivalry that, though generally contained, always had the potential to expand into open hostility. Despite ideal depictions, any association between kin was shot through with contradictions. Parents could as well be unjust as affectionate; a child rebellious, not obedient; a brother treacherous rather than loyal. On one level legends and genealogies thus record the ties that bound Jambi and Palembang; on

another, stories talk of unjustified raiding, the abduction of women and children, even the attempts of a Jambi queen to poison the Palembang ruler.⁴³ In the economic context of the later seventeenth century, this darker side of the Jambi-Palembang relationship was to become increasingly apparent.

In the ilir struggle to assert control in the ulu, Palembang had an advantage over Jambi because the Lematang, Ogan, and Komering rivers joined the Musi not far from the capital and thus provided several avenues to the interior. During the 1660s and 1670s the pepper areas of Komering were brought under Palembang's control, and Komering groups, greatly feared because of their reputation as headhunters, subsequently formed an important component in its armies.⁴⁴ In Jambi, by contrast, the pepper-growing areas in ulu Tembesi, Merangin, and on the upper Batang Hari were some distance from the capital, and parts of Tembesi were actually closer to Palembang. But the fundamental difference in the geography of the two places was that the Batang Hari, unlike the Musi, flowed down from areas peopled by Minangkabau.



The Minangkabau of the upper Batang Hari were particularly susceptible to the kinds of tensions inherent in upstream-downstream dealings because their ties with the ilir were so tenuous. Should they come downstream to trade, for example, they moved into an alien environment where they could well find themselves the target of the "privileged thieves" who frequented the capital. This group, also noted in Palembang, consisted of poor, unattached youths who lived by theft, looting, and arson. Part of their booty was delivered up to their leader, normally a court noble, and punishment came only if they were actually apprehended. It was probably one of this group who in 1625 robbed and wounded two or three Minangkabau in the Jambi capital. When it appeared no effort was made to bring the guilty to justice, other Minangkabau simply refused to come downstream. So serious was the situation that the pangeran's brother was sent to the interior as mediator. In addition, the Minangkabau sense of being outsiders must have been strengthened by the pangeran's insistence that they dress in the Javanese way if they appeared at court. In 1663 the Minangkabau of Tanjung and Kuamang roundly declared that they preferred to trade in Inderagiri, in part because there they could deal with a "Malay" king, whereas in Jambi there was "a Javanese ruler."⁴⁵

The Minangkabau also objected to the high tolls the Jambi pangeran charged them and to his attempt to force them to come downstream by forbidding sales to the ulu Chinese agents of the European companies. In response, royal envoys were sent to the interior to persuade the Minangkabau to come "as of old," and a meeting was held at Kuamang between Jambi representatives and "the greatest king of the Minangkabau, called Pagaruyung." None of these measures was successful in guaranteeing Minangkabau patronage; when the trading environment in Jambi was unsatisfactory, they persisted in carrying their pepper to Inderagiri and even as far as Palembang.⁴⁶

Jambi kings had to use force judiciously along the upper Batang Hari because the area from Muara Tebo upward could effectively act as an independent economic unit. The border settlement of Tanjung was only fifteen days from Agam in the Minangkabau heartland, and Agam was three days from Padang on the west coast. Jungle paths provided good connections to these places, and riverine and overland routes also led out to Inderagiri and Johor, so that the area was sometimes called "little Melaka" because of its close links with the Malay-Minangkabau economic network. During the dry season, when trade with the Jambi capital was cut off by the fall in the river level, Muara Tebo acted as an exchange point for gold coming down from Minangkabau; pepper from Tanjung, Kuamang, and Sumai; and cloth purchased from English and Indian traders in Johor and brought overland by Malay traders. Indeed, the interior was said to be better provided than Jambi proper, and the only items needed from the coast were iron and salt. The

Minangkabau of Tanjung and Kuamang even established their own toll gates, placing a rattan across access paths and demanding payment from Chinese and Javanese traders.⁴⁷

A fundamental impediment to the acceptance of Jambi authority was the Minangkabau view of the upstream Batang Hari as lying under Pagaruyung's jurisdiction. An individual with the title *kiai ranga* had been named in the Jujuhan district as Jambi's representative, but in 1642 the "great king of Minangkabau, Pagaruyung" was reported to be collecting tribute there. There were thus clear problems about incorporating this self-contained territory, with large numbers of people whose loyalties lay elsewhere, into the Jambi "state." In 1650 disputes broke out once more, and once more the issue was the degree of control the ilir ruler could exert along the upper Batang Hari. The Jambi pangeran appointed two heads in the border districts, but they were accused of bad government, the opposition being led by four Minangkabau regents: Yang Muhammad Besar, Yang Muhammad Kecil, Raja Hitam, and Baginda Ratu. Governing in the name of Pagaruyung, they wielded tight economic control, together dominating the trade in iron and salt.⁴⁸ Intermittent hostilities continued for another decade, and in 1662 the ruler of Jambi again made the trip upstream in an effort to affirm his overlordship. He also made approaches to the Minangkabau ruler, who eventually decided to support Jambi's authority rather than that of the Minangkabau regents. Jambi and Minangkabau were to be like "one land," and the "kaiser" of Minangkabau said he wished to hear no more complaints from his "son," the Jambi ruler, about the behavior of Minangkabau along the upper Batang Hari. If such complaints did come to his notice, the golden sword that he had sent to Yang Muhammad Besar would surely rise up and kill him.⁴⁹

The disputes between local Minangkabau leaders and the downstream kings were not concerned merely with tolls or revenues or even with the developing gold trade of the upper Batang Hari, over which the Jambi ruler attempted to establish a monopoly in 1666. A more basic issue was the question of authority over human resources. If he could assert himself here, claimed the Jambi pangeran, he would be able to call six to eight thousand people his subjects. When local disputes caused a thousand individuals to flee upstream into the Minangkabau-controlled districts, an envoy was sent up with a letter to one of the local "kings," Yang Muhammad Besar, demanding that those who had left Jambi be returned. The accompanying message attempted to draw on the entire arsenal of spiritual power that lay at the command of the pangeran, the future Sultan Agung. If the Minangkabau head should read the letter, hold it, wear the clothes or look at his image in the accompanying mirror that had been sent as gifts, "he would certainly die." Two imam were left in Tanjung as royal representatives to super-

wise affairs and to make known the Jambi demand for payment of five-eighths ryal from each family.⁵⁰

It was precisely this kind of demand that aroused the resentment of Minangkabau settlers and made Jambi overlordship less tenable, undermining the ruler's traditional position as mediator in his subjects' quarrels. There was frequent fighting among the estimated three hundred villages along the upper Batang Hari, but downstream intervention proved ineffective in bringing the quarrelling parties together. In 1670 the Jambi ruler made a personal trip upstream to ask the Minangkabau to cease fighting so that trade could be carried out, but disputes again broke out in Tanjung with Yang Muhammad Kecil and Raja Hitam supported by other Minangkabau groups from Inderagiri. At this point one powerful faction in the downstream court decided to exert force. Against the wishes of his old father, Pangeran Dipati Anum (later Sultan Anum Ingalaga; in this period effective ruler of Jambi) went upstream under pretext of taking a pleasure trip with his wives. Along the way he impressed an army, so that by the time he reached Tanjung he had a large force. Raja Hitam was put to flight and two border villages set on fire.⁵¹ In the ongoing rivalry with Palembang for control over the interior, the Jambi ruler appeared to have gained a small but significant victory.

But extension into the ulu was not the only way of increasing resources. Jambi and Palembang, like other areas of Southeast Asia, were always concerned with the need to expand their populations, and acquisition of slaves was a well-established means of enlarging access to a pool of people who would work and fight for the ruler and enhance his general prestige. Both areas, indeed, enjoyed established reputations as lucrative exchange centers for slaves because of their links with local orang laut who, as well as delivering sea products, also roamed the surrounding waters as raiders. Normally a vessel under full sail was not a target, but any that foundered on the rocks or was caught in the shallows was considered fair game, an offering from the spirits of the sea. It was customary, the Dutch were assured, for such ships and their cargoes to be taken by the sea people and brought to shore as legitimate booty. Captured crews would then be presented to the ruler or sold. But because of their proximity to one another, neither Jambi nor Palembang had a monopoly over raiding in these waters. In 1629, for example, a group of orang laut captured a Cambodian ship near Bangka. Some of those aboard were taken to Jambi, and some to Palembang.⁵²

The potentiality for rivalry in the acquisition of slaves increased with the growing wealth of the Jambi and Palembang courts as rulers and nobles vied to display their acquisitions of "women and girls from other countries"—India, Bali, Java, Makassar, and Banten—who were purchased with pepper. Nor were such women simply decorative orna-

ments. As a Dutch envoy noted, when "the ruler's maidens, bejewelled and adorned, enacted a play and danced for us, the king was well aware that this entertainment would swell his purse," for guests were expected to present the performers with a sum of money.⁵³ Lower down the scale female slaves were equally a worthwhile investment, carrying water, collecting firewood, and assisting in peddling. Encouraged by the attitudes of the Europeans, for whom "slavinne" (female slave) was often a pseudonym for whore, owners increasingly sought to gain an additional source of income by selling rather than gifting the sexual services of their attractive women.

The demand for slaves was greatest and competition the most keen, however, in the pepper trade. Because local populations were frequently reluctant to take on the backbreaking physical work required to clear the jungle for new pepper gardens, rulers resorted to forced labor—slavery—to respond to the expanding world market. By the mid-seventeenth century the abundance of cheap textiles reaching the interior made ulu growers less willing to accept cloth in exchange for their pepper; their preference was for rials or slaves, both male and female. The value of human labor in turn meant that raiders became bolder and their hunting grounds more extensive, and here Jambi appeared to be the leader as its orang laut attacked isolated settlements and small native ships plying the trade routes between the north coast of Java and the Melaka Straits. They were even making sweeps as far north as Ujung Salang, where the pangeran justified attacks because the people were not Muslim. A normal expedition undertaken by about twenty perahu could carry back about a hundred people, but at times the number could be much greater; in 1669 an estimated twenty-five hundred slaves were captured in Jambi raids.⁵⁴ These captives, usually other orang laut groups or coastal dwellers, supplied the unskilled labor for the lower end of the market, often costing only about eight rials each.

There was a ready market for the numerous women and children taken in these raids, since they could perform many of the lighter tasks connected with pepper cultivation. The greatest demand, however, was for "strong young men," and it was generally agreed that the best male slaves came from Buton and Sulawesi, notably Mandar and the Bugis/Makassar areas. Extensive wars here had opened up new sources for slaves, with traders drawing on those captured in raids or made prisoner after some battle.⁵⁵ Because of its established trading links with Makassar, Palembang was well able to hold its own in competition with Jambi, and by the 1660s slaves were the main trading item brought by Bugis and Makassar ships. About eight vessels arrived annually from Makassar, each bringing approximately forty slaves to be sold in a public market in exchange for pepper, cloth, or gold. Prices were variable, with children costing as little as 3.75 rials each and the cheapest adults

about eight. These captives were usually raided from the islands of eastern Indonesia such as Solor and Timor and were commonly regarded as unintelligent, presumably because they could not understand Malay; they were also more vulnerable to disease. By contrast, the "strong young Bugis" who could help clear jungle tracts or carry several bags of pepper each weighing sixty kati (roughly 37.5 kilograms) were worth between thirty and forty rials. In a buoyant market a Makassar trader with a cargo of slaves could expect to make between 30 and 50 percent profit on his venture.⁵⁶

Palembang's slave trade with Makassar was actively encouraged by its pangeran, from the 1670s entitled Sultan Abdul Rahman, who sent missions to Buton and Makassar to buy up slaves, sometimes as many as two hundred at a time. At home he insisted on having first choice of any cargo brought by Malays and Makassar traders, and these slaves were then sent upstream with a few supervisors. Ultimately most would have been absorbed into local society; in the pepper-growing area of Komering, for example, they became part of a slave culture, with their own genealogies and their own poyang, the slave of the ancestor of the Komering people.⁵⁷ Like Jambi, however, Palembang suffered a setback in its acquisition of slaves after 1669, when the Dutch assumed overlordship of Sulawesi. Unwilling to see a drain of manpower from Sulawesi and anxious to exclude Bugis and Makassarese from the Sumatran pepper trade, the VOC actively discouraged links between these areas. Although Jambi and Palembang were still visited by Makassar ships, the supply of human labor was far less than before. But Palembang depended on "slaves and stolen people" for pepper growing, and this interference by the Dutch prompted Sultan Abdul Rahman to write to Batavia asking for permission to purchase slaves freely "because he desires to see pepper growing improve." At the same time his own raiders became more aggressive, and Palembang fleets were reported to be raiding as far afield as Borneo.⁵⁸

An alternative means of acquiring labor was through the extension of territory, and in this regard Palembang rulers had another advantage over Jambi because of the proximity of several offshore islands, notably Bangka. Occupied by orang laut groups along the coast and "mountain people" in the interior, Bangka had been under Japara during the sixteenth century. Subsequently, both Johor and Palembang had tried to extend their control over the coasts adjacent to their own. But Johor's interest appears to have been relatively slight, and its rulers apparently did not object when the pangeran of Palembang asserted his suzerainty over the island in the early seventeenth century. When the Dutch arrived in Palembang in 1616 the head of Bangka, married to the daughter of the Palembang king, was among the royal party that greeted them.⁵⁹

✓ Palembang's claims over Bangka were to have long-term implications. VOC officials understood that this marriage had brought Bangka under Palembang's overlordship, but it is apparent that the relationship was fraught with tension. Although the people of Bangka lacked the bargaining position of the pepper- and rice-growing communities of the interior, they clearly resisted the intrusion of Palembang authority. Prominent in this opposition was the head of Bangka himself. Forced acquiescence in marriage alliances would have served to fuel rather than allay hostility, and in 1642 the heads of Bangka said that they had once had their own king, Urata, who had married a Palembang princess but had been put to death.⁶⁰

✓ In this context, Palembang's control could only be maintained by force. For more than thirty years periodic raids were mounted against Bangka, with *orang laut* loyal to Palembang guiding well-armed fleets through the surrounding reefs. When captured, leaders of local resistance met harsh punishment, and their followers were transported to Palembang as slaves. In desperation Bangka heads appealed to Banten, Johor, and Jambi for help; but in the end it was the VOC that responded, concerned at rumors of French and British interest in the area. Perceiving Bangka as a potential exchange center, in July and August 1668 the Dutch signed treaties with the Bangka chiefs that promised the latter VOC protection.⁶¹

Despite assurances that this association would last "as long as sun and moon shone," Dutch interest in Bangka soon waned. The island remained at the mercy of Palembang slave raids, which Sultan Abdul Rahman said were a punishment for appeals to his old enemy Banten.⁶² Although the sultan took a daughter of the principal Bangka head as a wife, attacks on the offshore islands continued. Settlements on Belitung that refused to submit were destroyed in 1673, and two years later another force of two thousand men was sent there. An alliance between Banten and Palembang in 1677 deprived the leaders of Bangka and Belitung of any alternative source of support, and when the Dutch described the islands in 1683, the coasts were virtually depopulated. Most of the local inhabitants had been deported to Palembang to work in the pepper gardens; those who managed to escape the periodic raiding parties had fled to the mountains.⁶³

Jambi rulers must have been particularly conscious of Palembang's subjugation of Bangka and Belitung because it heightened the disparities in the human resources each controlled. Despite Minangkabau migration into the interior, Jambi had far fewer subjects than Palembang, and in 1627, at a time when Aceh appeared most threatening, the downstream capital could apparently muster a defensive force of only sixty ships and about seventeen hundred men.⁶⁴ But although there were no large islands off Jambi's coast, there were adjacent areas of eco-

nomic importance, relatively well populated, where its kings could look for labor and economic resources. The most important of these was Tungkal, which adjoined Jambi's northern boundary and which provided access to the Minangkabau areas via the Sumai and Inderagiri rivers. It was thus linked to the Muara Tebo exchange network that stretched across to the rich pepper-growing area of the Tembesi, tying together Johor at one end and Minangkabau at the other.⁶⁵

Tungkal, however, was very different from Bangka. Any moves by Jambi into this strategically placed area were bound to be problematic because Johor exercised a loose sovereignty here, probably dating from Melaka times. Legends collected in the area depict the first head of Tungkal as a long-lost son of the Johor ruler, his marriage to a Jambi princess occurring only with Johor's approval. Memories of the strong ties between Tungkal and Johor are echoed in the written records. In 1623 Sultan Hamid of Johor died, leaving a widow, who was a princess from Jambi, and a small son. This widow fled back to her family in Jambi, where it was widely expected that she would receive as a source of income either the island of Linggi or the district of Tungkal.⁶⁶ It is not clear whether this eventuated, but sometime before 1630 Jambi was said to have "taken" Tungkal. Johor's ruler, Sultan Abdul Jalil (r. 1623-1677), demanded its return and sent a fleet of ships to enforce his suzerainty. Subsequently a compromise was reached whereby it was decided that at some future time a Johor princess was to be married to the pangeran of Jambi. When such a marriage took place, she would take twelve villages with her as a dowry. In 1657 the Jambi pangeran told the Dutch that he had indeed acquired these villages through his Johor wife "a long time ago."⁶⁷

These arrangements did not meet with the approval of many Tungkal people, and a number of villages demanded that they be returned to their "rightful" lord, the ruler of Johor. In 1659 an attempt was made to reach a solution through a royal marriage by arranging a union between the pangeran's daughter, "a beautiful fair Indian woman" and the raja muda of Johor, whose mother was herself from Jambi. The villages in contention were to revert to Johor as a bridal gift, thus bowing to the wishes of local people and yet saving Jambi's honor. Soon after the wedding, faced by difficulties at home in Johor, the raja muda left Jambi, promising to return in a short time to collect his bride. Five years after the wedding, however, he had still not returned, and there was no child as evidence the marriage had even been consummated. Soon afterward, the raja muda was betrothed to a daughter of a powerful Johor minister, the *laksamana*.⁶⁸

The sense of insult in Jambi was extreme, but the ruler hesitated to resort to warfare.⁶⁹ A meeting between the ruler of Jambi and the raja muda of Johor at Lingga in 1666 was unsuccessful in resolving the dis-

pute, however, and Dutch attempts to mediate were equally fruitless. As a result, from March 1667 Johor fleets began to raid up the Jambi River, attacking scattered settlements, burning fruit trees and houses, and capturing prisoners. Feelings of grievance and hostility in Jambi were further inflamed when the princess at the center of the dispute died.⁷⁰ The conviction that she had been poisoned by Johor agents gave rise to renewed calls for revenge. Tungkal, where control was already contended, was a prime target for Jambi raids. Any previous arrangements reached by marriage were set at naught as hundreds of people were carried off from Tungkal as well as Inderagiri, to be distributed among the Jambi ruler and his nobles. Nonetheless, the gains Jambi made were ephemeral. By 1695, although Tungkal was expected to be neutral in disputes, it was acknowledged to be under Johor, and raids there by the Jambi ruler were considered an affront.⁷¹

Jambi's enmity with Johor ultimately contributed to the economic decline of the downstream port and was thus a critical factor in the Palembang-Jambi "balance sheet." At first, however, it appeared as if Jambi would triumph, primarily because of the support of loyal orang laut. In the nineteenth century legend still remembered that the head of the sea people had been adopted by the great hero Orang Kaya Hitam as a brother, entrusted with the state kris, Si Genjai, and given the right to raid along the Jambi-Palembang coast. Seventeenth-century Dutch sources support stories of the high position once accorded orang laut leaders, for prominent raiders were known to act as captains of royal trading vessels and were linked by marriage to highly placed individuals in the court.⁷² During this period the best example of such a person is an orang laut chief named Long Pasir, held in such esteem by Sultan Agung that he was given one of the royal gundik. As a renowned raider, he was in a position to reciprocate and reinforce the ruler's favors by sharing part of his booty. In one raid on Inderagiri, for example, he brought back to Jambi four hundred orang laut and sixty Johorese as prisoners; on another occasion he presented a Chinese woman he had captured to the royal harem.⁷³

As Long Pasir's raids spread over an area that included the entire Melaka Straits and stretched out to Borneo, Bali, and Sulawesi, his booty and the share enjoyed by the ruler increased proportionately. Attracting a number of orang laut followers from Johor, he even began to attack European vessels. A female escapee from one of his raids reported that he had burned "a tall kafir" alive, and from time to time European clothes were brought to the VOC lodge as evidence of Long Pasir's boldness. Sultan Agung's patronage allowed him to operate almost with impunity; and when his men set upon two VOC people near the lodge, the resident considered the fine imposed far too light. Nonetheless, it gives an idea of the kind of resources at the disposal of a successful raider, for he was ordered to pay 425 rials, 385 to the

pangeran and 40 to the wounded men.⁷⁴ Long Pasir and his orang laut probably played an important role in guiding the Jambi fleet through the treacherous waters of the Riau archipelago in 1673. During the subsequent Jambi attack, the Johor capital on Riau was looted and burned in a wave of vengeance for real and imagined wrongs. More than seventy ships left Jambi, with an estimated two thousand men; they returned with more than two hundred vessels as well as guns and booty. Thirty-five hundred people had been made captive, and forty slaves were delivered to Sultan Agung.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, Jambi's retention of authority over its orang laut was always fragile. Despite their links with local courts, men like Long Pasir were never totally subservient and frequently acted as independent agents who carried on their own private war of raid and counterraid. Emotional and cultural ties between the sea people and a land-based king could be deep and lasting, yet for most orang laut leaders continuing acknowledgment of overlordship was bound up with the ruler's ability to extend periodic rewards—gifts, titles, women—in return for the booty they offered him as tribute. But by the 1670s Jambi's ability to generate the economic benefits that could make its ruler's authority attractive was shrinking, largely as a result of Johor raids on its seaborne trade. Normally forty Javanese ships would come annually with salt and rice, but in 1667 only sixteen had appeared; in consequence the price of rice on the Jambi market increased markedly.⁷⁶ During the next three years Johor orang laut had continually raided the Jambi River, three hundred perahu launching a particularly devastating attack in November 1670. Several hundred people were carried off, and houses and rice fields were destroyed. Repercussions of this raiding were also felt in the interior, for the threat to Jambi seemed so great that boys as young as twelve years old were called downstream to help construct and man defenses.⁷⁷

Since Jambi's economy was already contracting because of falling pepper prices and European efforts to control the imports of cloth, the defeat of Johor in 1673 proved no panacea. It was not long before difficulties developed in the partnership between Sultan Agung and Long Pasir. The Jambi king could exercise little control over the manner in which his "kinsman" carried out raids, and it was claimed that Long Pasir's crews even raped women in front of their husbands, who were tied up and made to watch. Although Sultan Agung, pressured by the Dutch, did have one offender put to death, it may have been Long Pasir's refusal to render the Jambi court adequate booty that ultimately caused him to lose favor. Captured by Johor raiders in 1674, he was without a patron and was condemned to a lingering and painful death.⁷⁸ For many people, however, even revenge of this nature would not have expunged the bitter memories of raids carried out in Jambi's name.

With its maritime trade declining it was vital for Jambi to retain con-

trol over the pepper areas in the interior. Almost inevitably, however, this involved conflict with Palembang because some of the largest pepper districts lay along the Tembesi River, which flowed down from the hills along the Jambi-Palembang border. Ulu Tembesi lay somewhat closer to Palembang than to Jambi, being about eight days' travel from the former and up to twelve from the latter. It was thus one of those shadow districts that could maintain links with the two downstream centers simultaneously. About 1623, however, Jambi had gained some advantage there because a number of Tembesi villages had been part of the dowry of the Palembang princess Ratu Mas when she had married Pangeran Gedé of Jambi. Today Tembesi's position as part of Jambi is affirmed by a legendary marriage between the great Orang Kaya Hitam and the daughter of the raja of Tembesi, but memories of earlier ties with Palembang can also be traced in oral tradition. A story collected forty years ago about the origin of the people in the Tembesi region relates how "there was once a Palembang princess called Ratu Ibu, and she married a Jambi prince." On their return journey to Jambi, people along the way learned that a Palembang princess was passing and came in crowds to make obeisance. When she left, many followed her to Jambi. "These people are now called the orang suku pindah" (the moving clans).⁷⁹

The implications of these shifting loyalties can be traced in the archival records, for by 1631 it was already apparent that the Palembang pangeran had not relinquished his claims to the area. Reported to be sending envoys, letters, and gifts to persuade the Tembesi people to give their allegiance to him, he also made a veiled threat to "come and visit and totally ruin them" should they refuse to place themselves under his overlordship. Yet the evidence suggests that Jambi's efforts to strengthen its hold in Tembesi were even more intrusive. By the 1640s a number of districts were rebelling against Jambi rule, and in 1655 the occupants of seven villages sought protection under Palembang. Although several well-armed ships had been sent up to forestall such defections, the Jambi ruler feared the movement to Palembang could continue. The Dutch blockade of Palembang in 1659 saw fifteen hundred people fleeing back to Jambi, but with the restoration of peace, the Palembang ruler once again began to assert his authority. As the English factor in Jambi put it, "The ulu people under the king of Palembang invaded the ulu people under the king of Tembesi. They burnt five or six dozens [villages] and have taken the affrighted people away."⁸⁰

If war over Tembesi was to be averted, it was essential for kinship links between Jambi and Palembang to be restated. In 1670 Pangeran Adipati Anum of Jambi married a daughter of the ruler of Palembang. At the same time the Palembang crown prince and his brother

(Pangeran Dipati and Pangeran Aria) married two Jambi princesses, and as part of the arrangement Palembang gave Jambi a large number of people. However, the marriage between Pangeran Anum and his Palembang wife proved as unsuccessful as that between his sister and the raja muda of Johor, and the results were as far-reaching. Again the problem was neglect of a high-ranking woman. At the time of his betrothal in 1670, Pangeran Anum already had a concubine, a former Bugis slave known as To Ayo. He was so infatuated with her that he had sworn to "live and die" with her at his side, and during the betrothal ceremonies he deliberately paraded his "Bugis whore," as a later co-wife called her, before the Palembang court. The marriage to the Palembang princess was duly solemnized but not consummated, and a year later she was still a virgin. Her father, Palembang's Sultan Abdul Rahman, refused to allow his daughter to leave for Jambi, insisting that her husband should instead come and live with her. The following year Pangeran Anum was finally persuaded to leave To Ayo and visit his wife, but he did not stay long, claiming he needed to return to Jambi because of the threatened Johor attack. The real reason, said people in Palembang, was that "he wished to be with his beloved To Ayo." Now he no longer spoke to his wife except through the medium of other noble women, sending her instead gifts such as expensive cloth and even one of his bastard sons to rear. The implication that this was in effect "their" child was too much for his wife to bear. Angrily she sent the boy back, demanding that her husband come and live with her.⁸¹

In the context of increased economic competition, the breakdown of this marriage precipitated a major crisis in Jambi-Palembang relations. The ruler of Jambi, the revered Sultan Agung, was obviously distressed at his son's behavior and made a special trip to Palembang, where he begged that the friendship between the two states be maintained, at least during his lifetime. With his counsel and the mediation of the "great women" of the court, a compromise was reached. It was arranged that the girl should be married off quietly to another son of Sultan Agung, a raden by a Chinese gundik, and that she would in addition receive a double dowry "so that her relatives would not be estranged." But while Pangeran Anum agreed to the divorce, he flatly refused to permit his former wife to marry his half-brother.⁸²

Only the great prestige of Sultan Agung, as the senior kinsman in Palembang-Jambi's royal clan, prevented the outbreak of war. After all, Sultan Abdul Rahman was not likely to forget that in 1662 he had come to power primarily through Jambi support. In the wake of the marriage crisis, Sultan Agung stayed for some time at the Palembang court, instructing his nephew in the making of muskets. Their relations were so close it was even rumored the Palembang ruler intended to give "his crown and kingdom" to Jambi, and he willingly agreed to allow Sultan

Agung to take command of negotiations for a new treaty with the VOC. But the old king's efforts to restore the balance between the two kingdoms were undermined by his son Pangeran Anum, whose disregard for the sensitivities of the Palembang court was demonstrated shortly afterward when he raised his Bugis wife, the former slave To Ayo, to royal consort with the preeminent title of *ratu mas*.⁸³

Against this background the death of Sultan Agung and the loss of his mediating influence in September 1679 removed the only obstacle to full-scale war. The search for manpower gained a new urgency, finding an answer in the large numbers of Makassarese who were now fleeing from Sulawesi following the combined Bugis-Dutch defeat of Goa in 1669.⁸⁴ Both Palembang and Jambi were logical places of refuge since southeast Sumatra had long been frequented by Sulawesi traders. Early in the sixteenth century Tomé Pires had noted the trading connection between Palembang and Makassar, and more than a hundred years later the numbers of ships arriving annually was so great that the Dutch ordered much of their cloth according to Makassarese preferences. In 1671 the ruler of Palembang was actively recruiting Bugis and Makassarese, who now took a more obvious place in the Palembang court, serving in his guard, acting as his "pressers" (parties of men who made forcible recruitments), and abducting any unprotected slaves in return for royal recompense.⁸⁵

Jambi's connections with Makassar were even stronger, mainly because their royal families were closely related. Pangeran Anum's mother was herself from Makassar, and in 1663 envoys had been sent to Goa to confirm their friendship and to request the despatch to Jambi of "pretty Makassar women in order to increase the number of Makassarese." In addition to his beloved To Ayo, Pangeran Anum had also taken a Makassarese lady as an "absolute wife." Following Makassar's defeat by the Dutch in 1669, he thus extended a welcoming hand to the refugees who soon began arriving in the western archipelago. When Karaeng Fatimah, daughter of the deposed Makassar ruler, was divorced by the ruler of Banten, Pangeran Anum (now called Sultan Anum Ingalaga) asked for her hand. They were formally married in 1678, and because of her prestigious parentage, Karaeng Fatimah was soon made Jambi's senior queen. In consequence, efforts to attract more Makassar settlers were increased. The *pandita muda* (deputy religious leader), one of Jambi's principal imams, was a Minangkabau from Makassar; his brother personally returned to Sulawesi to issue invitations to Makassarese to settle in Jambi. Any Makassarese of high birth was made welcome.⁸⁶

Jambi appeared to have scored a major victory over Palembang in the competition for manpower when Karaeng Fatimah's brother, Daeng Mangika, the highest-ranking of all the refugee Makassar

princes, arrived in Jambi in 1679. Sultan Ingalaga welcomed his brother-in-law in a public meeting, and their relationship was formalized by the swearing of an oath that bound them together as brothers "until eternity." Daeng Mangika was honored by a new name, Pangeran Sutadilaga, and it was arranged that he should be of the "same grade" as the Jambi king. They also agreed that Daeng Mangika's followers would stand outside Jambi law and be free from heavy *corvée* and exactions by the Jambi court.⁸⁷

Jambi's apparent achievement in attracting such a prestigious prince and his very considerable force raised unforeseen problems. While such large numbers of Bugis and Makassarese migrants appeared to meet a need for manpower, in many respects they were a destabilizing influence. To the increasing incidence of independent Bugis-Makassar raiding was added the question of jurisdiction, since many of these newcomers had taken service under the ruler of Jambi but still had ties with their even more nobly born leaders. Because their allegiance was divided, it was difficult to absorb them into the existing political structure, and in Jambi this issue brought the growing antagonism between the two "brothers" to a head. Sultan Ingalaga's claim that any Makassarese indebted to him was a Jambi subject was completely rejected by Daeng Mangika, who offered compensation instead. When Sultan Ingalaga refused to accept this, about 160 of his Makassarese guard deserted him, placing themselves under Daeng Mangika.⁸⁸

The open rift between Sultan Ingalaga and Daeng Mangika coincided with renewed hostility between Johor and Jambi, and in May and June 1679 three hundred Johor perahu appeared in the Jambi River. Although Sultan Abdul Rahman of Palembang felt obliged to help his relative, he sent merely a token force, which meant that Sultan Ingalaga's only hope of effective resistance lay in Makassarese support. In the event, however, Daeng Mangika and his men went over wholesale to the enemy. This combined force inflicted a resounding defeat on Jambi, in the process laying bare the vulnerability of the Jambi-Makassarese alliance. From the Jambi point of view, Daeng Mangika was a traitor. "I treated him like a brother," said Sultan Ingalaga, "but he allied with Johor." Daeng Mangika, for his part, wrote to tell his relatives in Batavia of how the Jambi ruler had betrayed their agreement and dealt with him not as a king but as a "mere governor." The loyalties of Makassar women were also torn, but Karaeng Fatimah remained loyal to her Jambinese husband.⁸⁹ The Dutch watched aghast as the invading forces set fire to the English post adjacent to their own and killed its captain. The Chinese section of Jambi was also burned and looted, and many wealthy homes robbed. Even orang laut women weaving *kajang* (palm-*frond*) mats for sale to the VOC fell victim to the raiders. Trade with the ulu ground to a halt, and fearing for their lives, the Dutch and the

remaining English who had fled for safety to the VOC lodge decided to leave. Shortly afterward, with whatever goods they could carry, the terrified Europeans put to sea and in a few days arrived in Palembang. In September 1679 Jan van Leene was sent to Jambi to salvage the VOC goods that had not been looted, to close down the lodge, and to bring back to Batavia any Makassarese still remaining. When he arrived he found that many, including Daeng Mangika, had already left of their own volition for nearby ports such as Palembang.⁹⁰

Daeng Mangika's appearance in Palembang came at a critical point. Jambi's defeat by Johor had coincided with the death of Sultan Agung, who had been crucial in maintaining the fragile balance with Palembang. His son's succession as Sultan Anum Ingalaga simply served to rekindle old resentments. Supported by his royal women, Sultan Abdul Rahman of Palembang openly declared his intention of attacking Jambi to avenge his daughter's "dishonorable" divorce. When the Jambi ruler committed the unpardonable crime of killing a Palembang envoy, Sultan Abdul Rahman declared he could endure no more. The Dutch resident remarked that the queen in particular was "so opposed to Jambi that on several occasions she has advised her two sons (Pangeran Aria and Pangeran Dipati) to divorce their Jambi wives."⁹¹

So great were the wrongs the royal family of Palembang had suffered that any equilibrium could be restored only by revenge. At a time when Palembang forces were clashing with Jambi along the downstream border river of Lalang and when orang laut from Johor and Jambi fleets were attacking Sungsang, the arrival of Daeng Mangika with a thousand people appeared to supply Palembang with a ready army. Daeng Mangika himself had personal reasons for hostility toward Sultan Ingalaga, for he too felt resentment at the treatment accorded him and felt bound to avenge the death of his uncle, who had been killed in the fighting against Johor. He and Pangeran Aria (Sultan Abdul Rahman's second son) swore an oath of brotherhood, and by October they had gathered around them a further three thousand people and more than fifty ships. Daily more Bugis and Makassarese were reported to be arriving from Banten.⁹² In late 1680 a fleet of about eighty Palembang and Makassar ships under the joint command of Daeng Mangika and Pangeran Aria set out for Jambi. Another force led by several nobles left for the interior with the object of attacking from upriver and repelling Jambi raids along the border.

Facing this imminent invasion, Sultan Ingalaga solicited support from his old enemy, Johor, promising to accept its overlordship in return for assistance. The VOC stayed neutral, despite requests for aid; Johor honored its promise, however, and a fleet of more than fifty well-armed vessels sailed to help the Jambi king. The arrival of another hundred Johor ships and two thousand men in May 1681 tipped the balance

against the Palembang-Makassar forces. Sultan Ingalaga was able to stage an unexpected resistance, personally leading an assault in which Daeng Mangika was mortally wounded, together with a number of Palembang leaders and several hundred of their followers. About seven thousand men eventually limped back home.⁹³

The degree of hostility that now prevailed in Palembang-Jambi relations far eclipsed the antagonisms of earlier disputes. Johor's alliance with Jambi was openly proclaimed by royal marriages bonding their rulers as brothers, and Johor and Jambi orang laut continued to raid Palembang's downstream areas, on one occasion capturing about four hundred people. Sultan Abdul Rahman, however, would not concede defeat, and while his forces laid siege to Jambi from upstream, he appealed to the Dutch to mediate. In April 1681 Batavia dispatched a small expedition under the leadership of François Tack to negotiate a peace between the hostile parties. Sultan Abdul Rahman then accepted a contract by which he agreed to deliver up all Makassar and Bugis people; to extend the VOC monopoly to include opium and Javanese cloth as well as Indian textiles; and finally to relinquish to the Company jurisdiction over all foreign traders, including the Chinese.⁹⁴

Tack's primary concern was to oversee what he termed a "brotherly peace" between Palembang and Jambi in order to see a return to profitable trade. The main disagreement concerned the disputed jurisdiction over Tembesi, where a number of villages had passed back and forth as part of successive marriage settlements. Invoking the notion of an ideal equilibrium, Tack called on the language he felt would be most persuasive, telling both rulers that "if two brothers quarrel, both are guilty." The Jambi envoys, however, argued forcibly that Palembang was not so much a brother but a son, for Sultan Abdul Rahman had been placed on his throne by his uncle, Sultan Agung. On this occasion he had presented several Tembesi villages to Jambi as a token of gratitude.⁹⁵

In putting forward this argument the Jambi court obviously expected VOC sympathy because of their years of association and Sultan Agung's previous services to his "brother," the governor general in Batavia. They were soon disillusioned, for Dutch interests militated against supporting Jambi's claims of senior status. By this time Palembang's pepper-delivering capacity appeared much more promising than did Jambi's, and Sultan Abdul Rahman had in addition agreed to pay 22,500 rijksdaalders toward the costs of the VOC expedition. Despite the avowed Dutch stance of neutrality, the resulting contract of August-September 1681 was weighted in Palembang's favor in accordance with the VOC's aim of restoring a balance between the two. Ten disputed villages were to revert to Palembang; any Palembang captives taken by Jambi raiders were also to be returned to Palembang; and Sultan Ingalaga was required to give the Palembang ruler some compensation.⁹⁶

Predictably, this new treaty increased Sultan Ingalaga's sense of grievance toward a relative who seemed to have unfairly ingratiated himself in Dutch favor. He considered, he said, that if he did not seek revenge against Palembang "he would no longer be worthy to bear the name of sultan." Early in 1682 he was already preparing his warships for battle and amassing supplies of ammunition obtained from Siam, whence he had despatched the gold and silver flowers (*bunga mas dan perak*), the traditional symbol of vassalage. In March 1683 an army of about two thousand men gathered to recite Jambi's grievances against Palembang and to swear their loyalty and determination to gain vengeance.⁹⁷ The following month Sultan Ingalaga personally led a fleet that attacked and burned the orang laut village of Sungsang at the mouth of the Musi River. Farther upstream other invading groups from Jambi captured or killed numbers of people busy planting padi along the riverbanks. Simultaneously fighting broke out in the interior as Jambi and Palembang both sought to confirm their position in the Rawas-Tembesi area. Anxious to forestall possible intervention from Arung Palakka, the overlord of Sulawesi, to whom Sultan Abdul Rahman had appealed for help, Batavia again intervened. In July 1683 it was decided to send troops to Sumatra in defense of the 1681 treaty, together with a negotiator to bring the disputing parties together. In September, using a combination of threat and persuasion, the commissioner Willem Hartsinck finally induced Sultan Abdul Rahman of Palembang and Sultan Ingalaga of Jambi to sign agreements of mutual peace "on the kris and the Koran." One essential element, however, was missing; in the aftermath of the VOC-initiated treaties no marriage was concluded to mark the return of brotherhood, for the Dutch believed that "the familiarity and blood ties between these two kingdoms are not good for the honorable Company."⁹⁸

The apparent resolution of the protected quarrels of the 1670s and 1680s and the English decision to abandon Jambi encouraged Batavia to believe that its pepper monopoly would now be unchallenged. But the VOC's commercial goals were based on the assumption that the ilir would be able to dominate the interior, an assumption that stemmed from a fundamental misunderstanding of the upstream-downstream association. Always fragile, this relationship had been subjected to fresh strains during the course of the seventeenth century as a result of more frequent ilir intrusions and the commercial demands the European presence had introduced. To revert to the images with which this chapter opened, it was becoming increasingly difficult to view the king as a distant but benevolent kinsman and to balance a cultural ledger that tallied the ruler-subject relationship in terms of favors extended and obligations incurred.

Meanwhile, continuing competition between Palembang and Jambi was intensified as they vied to gain control over people and territory, especially in the lucrative pepper districts. The involvement of Johor coupled with the arrival of Makassar and Bugis refugees in the area expanded the potentialities for conflict, and when war finally broke out the Dutch moved in quickly as mediators, hoping to protect their economic interests. Yet the image of an undisturbed equanimity between Palembang and Jambi was also a chimera. Their brotherhood was rooted in rivalry, and without a restatement of the ancient links that had drawn them into a sometimes hostile but nonetheless binding association, the apparent balance between them was bound to be short-lived. As the seventeenth century drew to a close, VOC efforts to discourage their relationship combined with other factors to shape a commercial environment in which the scales were permanently weighted in Palembang's favor.

CHAPTER FOUR

Rulers and Memories: Good and Bad Times in Palembang and Jambi

Central to the commercial ethos that Europeans brought to Asia was the belief that time was valuable and that it should be “saved” where possible and “spent” in productive ways. When the chronicler of the first European circumnavigation of the globe, Antonio Pigafetta, arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in 1522, he was distressed to be told it was Thursday, “for it was Wednesday with us, and we could not see how we had made a mistake, for I had always kept well, I had set down every day without interruption.”¹ But Pigafetta’s concern with having “lost” twenty-four hours of his life did not reflect some personal idiosyncrasy, for throughout western Europe there was a growing preoccupation with the interaction between time and human experience. The Dutch and English who reported on events in Palembang and Jambi, products of cultures where time was rapidly being commoditized, regarded the instruments that measured its passage—calendars, hour-glasses, and clocks—as indispensable tools of commerce. In deciding on trade policies, high-ranking *Company* officials needed to survey the past and anticipate the future, while employees at the lower levels were required to demonstrate that their time had been occupied usefully. By completing the obligatory daily journal, for instance, a VOC resident was supplying his superiors with a dated account of his doings, often giving the precise hour when this or that task had been commenced and completed.

In their dealings with Jambi and Palembang, the representatives of European trading companies encountered a society also intrigued by the relationship between time and human activities. Here, however, the great concern was the determining of astrologically auspicious moments that would ensure the success of an enterprise. The promulgation of written edicts by downstream rulers was thus linked to a specific point in time captured in power-charged numerals. In early times these dates were established by reference to the solar Saka era, but in the mid-seventeenth century Mataram’s influence saw the adoption of a new

Javanese-style court calendar combining the Saka and lunar-based Muslim systems. In practical terms, however, religious observances encouraged an increasing tendency to employ Islamic dating. In the ilir capitals the five prayer times helped divide the day into recognized periods, and the great festivals of the Muslim year became an essential calendrical gauge.² By the early eighteenth century the use of Islamic dates on coinage and commercial contracts had become accepted in both Jambi and Palembang, a trend that may have been fostered by the European desire for "legal" documentation. Initially, for example, only Christian dates were affixed to VOC treaties with Jambi and Palembang, but from 1681 it was customary to include the equivalent Muslim month, day, and year. Often, too, the precise hour was noted, for European clocks acquired as royal gifts were soon absorbed into the battery of magical resources that could help announce the favorable moment. Court rituals were scheduled to coincide with the chiming of these "striking watches," by reference to which a ruler's death could be fixed, the receipt of a letter acknowledged, the completion of a mosque recorded. Indeed, clocks became so ceremonially essential that when one belonging to the ruler of Jambi failed he asked if it could be repaired in Batavia.³

Exposure to several chronometric methods, however, did not make the peoples of Jambi and Palembang more time conscious in the European sense, and the Dutch frequently expressed exasperation with a society where "wasting" time was of no concern. Palembang courtiers, for instance, would have been taken aback had they known that after just an hour of preparatory compliments one envoy from Batavia noted in his journal "my patience was almost completely at an end."⁴ Nonetheless, it is apparent that in the downstream courts, where literacy was expanding, greater use of dating in written documentation did nurture the conception of sequential time as a guide for arranging events in an acknowledged order. Outside the courts any trend in this regard was much weaker. The vast majority of people in Jambi and Palembang recalled key incidents in their lives by reference to indices that were personally meaningful and that had little relevance for those not directly involved. Although seasonal occurrences such as planting, harvesting, the coming of the rains, and the ripening of certain fruits could also be used to help remember events and to schedule important tasks, they too were often applicable to a limited locality. Nor did communal histories necessarily contribute to a common "calendar," for the ancestral hero of one village might be a shadowy figure or quite unknown in the folklore of its neighbors, and the timeless world in which they moved was indifferent to dates and chronology.

What could provide a time-referent for different groups, however, was the reign of a common overlord. The geographical and cultural

divide between upland and lowland peoples might offer little that could draw their pasts together, but the lives of kings whom they had all acknowledged, albeit loosely, could present a means of identifying a shared block of time. In this manner an individual's own life could be reckoned "in terms of the king's activity." As the authority of downstream kings spread farther into the interior, the name of a particular ruler could be invoked to call up memories of the events, both good and bad, associated with his "time." His reign became the basis on which time was calculated; a Jambi storyteller, anxious to stress the age-old character of his tale, thus remarks that it occurred in a period "when the name of the raja is unknown."⁵

The Good Time in Palembang

By the latter part of the seventeenth century it was apparent that the pepper trade, initially so advantageous to the downstream kings, had introduced new strains in the commercial and political environment. These strains were to be felt far more keenly in Jambi, where ulu discontent became increasingly directed toward the ilir ruler. In Palembang, by contrast, the tensions associated with the extension of pepper cultivation were gradually eclipsed by a steadily growing prosperity in which most people came to participate. In the nineteenth century, when the Dutch began collecting stories about Palembang's past, they found that the long reign of Sultan Abdul Rahman (popularly known as Cindé Balang because he was buried near a small temple [*candi*] of that name) was remembered as a culturally heavy period. It was believed that during this time traditional custom, commonly termed the Undang-Undang Simbur Cahaya (the Laws of the Rays of Light) was laid down, that Islam was firmly established, and that the boundaries between clan groupings were delineated.⁶ Stories spoke of Sultan Cindé Balang's special qualities, his powers of meditation, his gift of second sight, his prowess in war; "people say that he gained the love and respect of his subjects, that he was mild-tempered, wise and fair, and that under him the land blossomed and prospered."⁷

But Sultan Abdul Rahman was not the only figure later generations associated with a culturally significant time. The Dutch also discovered that another name, that of a queen called Ratu Sinuhun, was just as frequently invoked as the epitome of all that was good in a ruler. When local people were questioned about her husband, the answers were vague; most said that she was married to Pangeran Sidang Kenayan, said to have ruled in the early seventeenth century, although others made her the partner and helpmeet of Sultan Abdul Rahman. Common to all stories, however, was the perception of the reign of Ratu Sinuhun as a period crucial in the formation of Palembang society. To her, for

example, was attributed settlement of the ilir, for when people committed crimes or resisted her representatives they were forcibly brought to the downstream capital and given a choice as to whether they wanted to settle there and serve her or be punished. "The present population," wrote one Dutch official in 1823, "say that they chose the former. . . . This is the reason that the people in the ilir are directly under the control of heads in the capital, and are more liable for personal service than are the people in the uplands." It was Ratu Sinuhun who had organized the ranking of nobles by distributing titles, and it was she who had provided traders with their first weights. During her reign, too, the first agreements were made with the people of the interior; even the forest dwellers, the orang kubu, said it was Ratu Sinuhun who gave them their first clothes, taught them how to eat rice and use salt, and made them her subjects. To this day her grave at Sabukingking (a district in the modern city of Palembang) remains a revered and holy place of pilgrimage for those who wish to offer thanks or ask for assistance.⁸

There is no difficulty in identifying Sultan Abdul Rahman in European sources, which also present him as an exceptional figure who had been able to assume kingship in Palembang in 1662 though not the direct heir. Ratu Sinuhun, however, is another matter. Although some past Palembang queen may well have provided the basis for this ancestral myth, it is also possible that "Ratu Sinuhun" does not refer to a specific person. An anthropologist who worked in the Pasemah areas in the 1970s has pointed out that the royal Palembang edicts found there referred to the ruler not by name but by the phrase "Sinuhun Susuhunan," the exalted one. He therefore suggests that Ratu Sinuhun might not be one individual at all but "the name for a personification of the order that legend held to originate in the palace and court of Palembang kings." Ratu Sinuhun may thus represent far more than some king's wife and even more than a wise and caring ruler. In a sense she symbolized the heart of the political system. "In all Sumatra," a Dutch scholar has commented, "the kingdom is represented as a woman and the king as male. Through his magic power he awakens the life in the kingdom."⁹ What is revealing is that by the early nineteenth century many Palembang people linked Ratu Sinuhun and Sultan Abdul Rahman in a continuum of "goodness." Their names helped recall times long before when the ruler, like a parent, nurtured his subjects/children and when the land prospered.

From an initial reading of VOC sources such memories might come as something of a surprise. Shortly after Sultan Abdul Rahman came to power there are reports of rebellions in Palembang's ulu districts, probably reflecting resentment at ilir demands for increased pepper production at a time when growers were receiving far less than previously. Expanded production in Asia had led to low prices and a glut in

Europe, and in 1678 the VOC concluded another contract with Palembang, reducing the pepper price by one rijksdaalder per picul. Continuing shortages of Spanish rials and other desired specie also compelled VOC policy makers to adopt new measures to limit the amount of pepper they bought. Credit was made more difficult to obtain; weighing was carried out more strictly; inferior or adulterated pepper was rejected; and VOC ships leaving for Batavia now loaded only fifteen or sixteen hundred piculs whereas before they had carried two thousand. But these measures provided only a partial solution to the problem of overproduction, and by 1686 there was simply insufficient warehouse space for storage of the pepper surplus.

Meanwhile, VOC attempts to control the cloth trade also gave rise to widespread dissatisfaction. The 1681 treaty gave the Dutch a monopoly of Indian textiles, with the right to confiscate "illegal" cargoes of piece goods brought by any other traders. But the late seventeenth century saw prices for Indian cloth climb, and the high profit margin required to balance the VOC's books meant the Dutch were persistently undercut by native traders who brought textiles from distribution points like Johor. Rising prices had also resulted in a dramatic increase in the imports of cheap Javanese cloth, prompting the Dutch to extend their monopoly to cover textiles from Java as well. These restrictions caused considerable resentment, especially among the palace women, and the ruler himself complained about the "poor rough cloth" the Company was offering.¹⁰

A further area of dispute concerned the VOC's efforts to set in place the cornerstone of its commercial policies, the *mare clausum* or closed sea. As the Dutch gradually extended their control over key trading ports—the spice islands, Melaka, Makassar, Banten, north coast Java—the measures they introduced began to affect longstanding trade routes. A specific ground for complaint in Palembang was the VOC's refusal to grant passes for trade to eastern destinations such as Bima, Makassar, Timor, and Buton, where cloth and pepper had previously been exchanged for slaves. Direct trade from Palembang to Aceh had also been forbidden, and stricter measures were introduced to prevent free trade in pepper, seen by the Dutch as smuggling, with VOC cruisers patrolling the Musi delta and the Bangka Straits.¹¹

Inevitably these moves aroused some popular hostility against the Dutch. The adulteration of pepper reached unprecedented proportions, and sometimes at night stones were hurled into the lodge compound. Sultan Abdul Rahman, however, remained untouched by this resentment, and despite occasional differences he himself never sought to terminate Palembang's relationship with the VOC. Indeed, early in his reign he had proclaimed that he would "as soon eat pork as go to war against the Company," and this attitude had been reinforced by the favorable treatment he had received in the Dutch-mediated peace settle-

ment.¹² For its part, the VOC's expectation of a lasting and economically rewarding future in Palembang is attested by the gradual expansion of its lodge, situated on the Aor River opposite the royal palace. Here the marshy land was gradually drained, and a small community of VOC subjects, mostly Chinese and Christians of mixed Malay-Portuguese birth, began to settle. So dominant did the Dutch position appear that Jambi's Sultan Anum Ingalaga scornfully compared Palembang subjects to Company slaves; his people, on the other hand, were like the VOC's brothers.¹³

The protection offered by the Dutch in the unstable world of the late seventeenth century makes it possible to understand Sultan Abdul Rahman's decision to maintain the VOC contract. Notwithstanding friendly gestures in 1677, Banten remained a threat, and its ambitions to control the pepper-growing districts along the Tulang Bawang River in Lampung were a constant source of dispute. In June 1682 when news was received of Dutch victories in Banten, Sultan Abdul Rahman came to the lodge and stayed "from six to nine o'clock . . . being very gay," and he did not respond later that year when the former Banten ruler attempted to rally an anti-Dutch alliance.¹⁴ Palembang's relations with its former Javanese overlord were also changing. Although Susuhunan Amangkurat's envoys were received with honor, Sultan Abdul Rahman was no longer prepared to accord Mataram the subservience of former times. In 1685 he declined to evict the Dutch, as the susuhunan had requested. The climate of uncertainty was exacerbated by the continuing presence of fleets of Makassarese adventurers around Bangka and their alliance with a refugee Minangkabau prince, a claimant to the Pagaruyung throne known by the high-ranking title *yang dipertuan sakti* (he who has spiritual power).

Most serious, however, were relations with Johor and Jambi, for their orang laut continued to raid for slaves in Palembang waters despite the peace settlement of 1683. Sultan Abdul Rahman's second son, Pangeran Aria, retaliated by conducting his own raids, apparently with his father's blessing. He too attracted a following of Malays, Minangkabau, Makassarese, and orang laut, and the constant raid and counterraid meant that for several years renewed warfare was an ever-present threat.¹⁵ Rivalry with Jambi over the Tembesi district persisted; and although Palembang's population was reckoned to be ten times that of its neighbor, Sultan Ingalaga had powerful allies. As Sultan Abdul Rahman explained to the Dutch, "I only have the governor general and council of the Indies as my brother and friends, not like the king of Jambi, who has many brothers and relatives such as Johor, Minangkabau, and Siam."¹⁶ In this situation, the Company lodge with its small armed force was an open declaration that Palembang did not stand alone.

The positive attitude of the Palembang ruler was undoubtedly fos-

tered by the amicable relations that developed between the court and individual Dutchmen. It may be no coincidence that the governor general installed in 1678, Rijklof van Goens, had been raised in the Indies, spoke good Malay, and was familiar with local customs, having twice headed the Jambi post from whence he had gone to Palembang as envoy. His representative, Jan van Leene, who came to Palembang the same year to negotiate a treaty, was fêted by Sultan Abdul Rahman as an honored guest. The first minister even gave him a kris with the names of both van Leene and himself engraved on the hilt "done with his own hand." Egbert van Swenne, who took charge of the Palembang lodge in 1679-1680, felt he too had good relations with the king and nobles; when he left, Sultan Abdul Rahman promised to protect the Dutch lodge and the Company personnel "like a father."¹⁷

Because of past cooperation, Sultan Abdul Rahman's subsequent complaints about problems in the pepper trade and the shortcomings of certain VOC representatives were taken seriously. In 1691 Isaac van Thije was appointed to investigate the situation in Palembang and to oversee the conclusion of a new agreement. In many respects the resulting contract resembled those of previous years, but it gave particular attention to the causes of disputes, such as variations in weights and pepper adulteration. Van Thije's visit ended on a satisfactory note, coinciding with several other developments that contributed to the general peace of the period. Palembang forces pursued the Minangkabau prince, the yang dipertuan sakti (who had fled to Komering and from thence to the Palembang interior), into Jambi, while the Makassarese who had been such a threat in the Belitung area left for east Java to join the Balinese rebel Surapati.

The renewal of the VOC contract in 1691 thus came during a time of sustained peace in Palembang, when ilir authority was generally acknowledged in the upstream districts. A principal reason for this peace was the absence of the economically damaging civil wars that were to divide Jambi but that did not threaten Palembang until many years later. Almost invariably such wars occurred because of quarrels within the royal clan, usually between princes contending for kingship and its associated wealth and power. Despite the respect a son should give to his father, the potential for conflict between a ruler and his heirs was great, particularly regarding the sharing of revenues. In Jambi during the early seventeenth century, for example, disputes regarding the division of tolls caused such enmity between the panembahan and his son that sometimes they did not speak to each other for weeks.

In Palembang this kind of generational hostility was equally apparent. Sultan Abdul Rahman had two sons, the elder entitled Pangeran Dipati and the younger Pangeran Aria, and both had at times opposed him. Pangeran Dipati was alienated because he had hoped his aging

father would step aside and install him as ruler, while Pangeran Aria was a notorious raider whose alliance with his "brother," Daeng Mangika, was reportedly aimed at seizing the Palembang throne. The brothers were also antagonistic toward each other, and the Dutch had already decided that if conflict broke out they would support Pangeran Dipati. Not only was he well disposed to the VOC, but he was allied with Pangeran Dipakusuma, the son of the previous ruler of Palembang (Sultan Abdul Rahman's uncle), who was very popular in the ulu. In October 1691, however, the situation was completely altered by the death of Pangeran Dipati while on a trip upstream. As a result Pangeran Aria, Sultan Abdul Rahman's errant but only remaining son, became the sole object of his father's affection. Pangeran Aria was in fact already displaying some leadership ability, and the year before had been appointed to head a force of two thousand Palembang men and a hundred ships sent to assist Jambi's pangeran ratu against upstream rebellions in Rawas. On this occasion Pangeran Aria performed well, and in accounts recorded more than a century later his heroic deeds during the Jambi wars identify him as a fitting heir to his father.¹⁸

The succession to the Palembang throne now appeared clarified. In 1692 Sultan Abdul Rahman began building a new palace for himself, the implication being that he might soon step aside and allow Pangeran Aria to govern. He also married Pangeran Aria to Pangeran Dipati's widow, Ratu Mas, a Jambi princess who was daughter to the famed Sultan Agung. The next year Pangeran Aria was made effective ruler of Palembang. The "time of Sultan Abdul Rahman" thus incorporates two kings. Although Sultan Abdul Rahman did not die until 1706, Pangeran Aria ruled from 1694, and in 1700 his father accorded him the title of pangeran ratu, indicating that he had been raised above all other princes. Twelve months later he was installed as Sultan Ratu Senapati Ingalaga, while the old sultan ratu, Abdul Rahman, took the name and title of Susuhunan Pangeran Samijaya. When Pangeran Aria succeeded in 1706 as Sultan Muhammad Mansur, he had been actually governing Palembang for about twelve years.

Pangeran Aria was fortunate in that he came to power under the protection of his father and faced no open opposition from princes and nobles in the court. The most obvious rival, Pangeran Dipakusuma, initially showed his displeasure by absenting himself from court occasions. Nonetheless, the chains of kinship in which he was enmeshed held firm: because Sultan Abdul Rahman had given him a daughter in marriage, he was both cousin and son-in-law of the king and brother-in-law to Pangeran Aria. Indeed, similar bonds of sexual union united the entire court, for in 1691 following the death of Pangeran Dipati, and when he himself felt close to death, Sultan Abdul Rahman had shared out his concubines among favored princes and nobles.¹⁹ Although he

lived for another fifteen years, the distribution of his wives was a visible reminder of links that drew the court together, and no powerful cabal sought to usurp the Palembang throne.

Against this background of peace Palembang's economy thrived, despite restrictions imposed by the Dutch contract. This in itself is a tribute to longstanding trading skills. As the Dutch themselves acknowledged, "From olden times the people of Palembang have been traders and seafarers. . . . They are experienced in seatravel from ancient times." The "great private trade" of Palembang, which drew comment in 1671, was still flourishing a generation later.²⁰ But it can also be argued that Sultan Abdul Rahman himself played a leading role in the prosperity that enabled tradition to lay aside memories of royal impositions. Exploiting Palembang's position as the best source of VOC pepper when supplies in Jambi began to dry up, he contended that the Dutch should properly grant him special favors "so that our brotherly union is apparent to all countries below the winds."²¹ Eager to retain Sultan Abdul Rahman's goodwill, the VOC made a number of concessions that were crucial in maintaining Palembang's commercial attraction to other native traders. September 1685 saw the end of attempts to monopolize the sale of native textiles, and local ships were permitted to bring in Madurese and Javanese cloth. Isaac van Thije had argued that any efforts to control such sales would cause an uproar among the ordinary people, since although court women still preferred Indian textiles, most of the men "from the king to the lowest paddlers" wore batik or other types of Javanese and Madurese cloth. Pieces from India were reserved for special occasions. Other concessions permitted Palembang inhabitants to carry pepper directly to Batavia rather than delivering it at the VOC lodge, allowed Chinese from Batavia less restricted access to the Palembang market, and authorized Sultan Abdul Rahman to purchase slaves in Batavia for use in the upstream pepper plantations.²²

One of the keys to Palembang's commerce lay in its peddling trade. Examination of a list of small ships leaving for Batavia between December 1684 and February 1685, for instance, shows a range of items being carried, including areca nut, gambier, rattans, cotton, wax, small clay pots, jernang and other resins, and large numbers of kajang mats.²³ This latter item, indeed, provides an example of how the European presence affected trading patterns in unspectacular but socially significant ways. Kajang mats had a multitude of uses, from sails for perahu to sacks for pepper, but since they were woven from nipa palm they had a limited life. There was thus a constant market, which was further enhanced by the rise of great port cities like Batavia. In 1689 two thousand kajang mats were loaded onto VOC ships leaving Palembang for Java; by 1700 the number had risen to five thousand. The growing demand for kajang mats provided steady work for the producers, orang

laut women who collected the leaves and wove them during the drier months of the year. This occupation provided their families with income to help carry them through the west monsoon, when adverse winds limited fishing. Transportation also gave employment to small traders, since VOC captains were reluctant to load cargoes of mats because they were bulky and susceptible to fire. From about 1701 it became common for native perahu returning to Java from Palembang to carry mats at the rate of .25 rials per hundred, with the average cargo numbering between two and four hundred. This arrangement was a further incentive to production. In the four months between November 1703 and the end of February 1704, a total of 14,700 kajang mats was shipped to Batavia alone.²⁴

Palembang's jungles continued to support a vibrant trade that included valued products like the numerous tree resins (*damar*). Of these probably the best known came from various rattans grouped together as *jernang*, which yielded a red substance used both as a dye and in medicinal preparations. Bangka was also known for a scented wood obtained from diseased trees of the species *Gonstylus bancanus*. Since it was found to be acceptable in Persia as a substitute for the more expensive *gaharu* or aloe wood (*Aquilaria*), Batavia occasionally placed orders in Palembang. When this happened the resident had to seek out suppliers on the islands of Bangka and Belitung, but it is not difficult to understand why it was so hard to obtain. Because the trees were not cultivated, but grew wild in the jungle, obtaining the wood took some time. After an infected tree was found, it was cut down and dragged to a swamp, where the trunk gradually decayed. A year or more passed before the valuable heart was exposed. Collection was thus time consuming and laborious, and one resident complained that he was forced to canvass "stupid, naive" people who carried small amounts by perahu from Bangka and Belitung. It was impossible to predict how much might be delivered in a season or to foresee the quality; in 1697 he said at least a quarter of the "aloes" wood he had received was unsuitable for sale. The stiff competition from Javanese and Chinese buyers meant he had only managed to obtain supplies with Sultan Abdul Rahman's assistance.²⁵

Another forest product was rattans, which were used for a variety of purposes ranging from whips to ships' tackle, according to the length and thickness. So valuable was this trade that in 1658 the ruler of Jambi had even laid down that rattans be sold only to him.²⁶ Yet though the demand was virtually insatiable, it was difficult to obtain large supplies. Some types, found in marshy swamp-forest areas, could be collected only during the dry season; other varieties, growing deep in the jungle where their prehensile-like thorns fixed them firmly to the rain forest canopy, were equally inaccessible. The best rattans came from the

Lalang area, where the arduous work of cutting and gathering was carried out mainly by the forest dwellers, who then exchanged them for salt and cloth obtained from local traders. The latter were probably responsible for boiling and drying the rattan to remove gums and resins, after which the canes were brought to market in bundles of two or three hundred. Periodically the resident received orders from Batavia to buy rattans, but the competition from Javanese buyers was fierce, and he was sometimes forced to purchase supplies that were still green.

In addition to the traditional harvesting of jungle and ocean products, some interior groups in Palembang were growing cotton in preference to pepper, as well as a relatively new crop, gambier, used for dyeing and for betel preparation. Previously gambier had been considered sufficiently rare to be included among gifts sent to Batavia, and in 1690 fifteen plants were presented to the governor general. It was possibly during this period that the practice of cultivating gambier in combination with pepper was introduced, and in later years gambier was to become one of Palembang's important exports. The most popular alternative to pepper, however, was rice, encouraged by the downward shift of pepper prices and by periodic shortages when trade with Java was disrupted. In 1706, for example, when no Javanese ships arrived, a koyan of rice cost between 60 and 65 rials, and because of this high price, "great and small" growers alike had gone over to padi planting. Although the price dropped by almost half after the 1707 harvest and after the arrival of traders from Java, recurring shortages were a considerable incentive for rice cultivation. The ruler warned Batavia that he intended to divert energy into growing rice rather than pepper.²⁷ This trend continued, and by the end of the eighteenth century the bulk of ulu tribute paid to the court was in the form of rice.

There is little doubt, however, that the clandestine traffic in pepper, carried out in defiance of the Dutch monopoly, was the main source of Palembang's trading profits. In 1689 the annual harvest was estimated at eighty thousand piculs, but the resident calculated that less than half was being delivered to the VOC. The disadvantageous Dutch monopoly contract could not cut off trading connections that had been established over centuries, and the VOC vision of a closed sea in which key archipelago ports were under Dutch control and where all traders were required to carry a pass was unworkable. The sheer extent of the oceans and the numerous coasts outside VOC influence made such a system impossible to supervise. Native captains saw the possession of a written pass as a form of protection against pirates and Dutch patrol boats, not as a document that bound them to sail with certain products to certain places at certain times. Traders constantly arrived in Palembang holding a pass for some other destination, claiming that they had been blown off course by contrary winds, while others lacked passes because

they came from areas without Dutch posts. Conversely, a trader might set out from Batavia or Melaka with a legitimate pass giving his name and destination and listing his cargo and the number in his crew. Yet if he put in at some native port and acquired a new cargo, his pass became meaningless. In all such cases Sultan Abdul Rahman took the part of local captains and argued strongly against any penalty.²⁸

Frequently operating under royal patronage, numbers of traders were thus willing to defy Dutch patrols and smuggle pepper to nearby ports where the price was higher. This traffic occurred during the calm period of the east monsoon, and the geography of the Palembang coastline made prevention impossible. Behind the curtain of the swamp forest were innumerable tidal streams that formed a constantly shifting network joining the main river and its major arms. The principal outlets were the Banyu Asin, Air Hitam in Jambi, and Air Salih, with the latter in turn linked to rivers that led directly to Komering, one of the prime pepper areas. Another waterway, the Selat Jarang, had three branches that led out to sea. These were too shallow for the passage of Dutch cruisers, but they were much used by smaller native craft, which also sailed out to meet incoming Chinese junks. Flowing into the Banyu Asin was the Lalang River, which as late as 1686 was unknown to the Dutch. To their surprise they discovered that it was a much-frequented meeting place for English and Portuguese vessels and local perahu, ideally suited for this purpose because the channel was deep enough for European ships to anchor.

Sultan Abdul Rahman was willing to tolerate such private trade because he suffered no commercial loss. Although he did not receive the Dutch toll on smuggled pepper, he himself erected tollhouses higher up on important rivers, and patrols along the coast by loyal orang laut helped ensure that only a lucky trader succeeded in taking his goods from Palembang without paying some duty to the king. The sultan also realized quickly that he gained no benefit from the Dutch demand for white pepper, which lost about 40 percent of the pepper grains in the making but gave him the same toll of .75 rijksdaalders per picul. In 1691 the making of white pepper for sale to the Dutch was forbidden.

The royal clan, so often the source of opposition, cooperated with the Palembang ruler because they drew considerable benefit from covert trade in pepper, in part because of their privileged access to the pepper-growing areas. When the Dutch set up their post in Palembang, the upland people themselves brought their pepper down or sold it to traders who came upstream. From the beginning of his reign, however, Sultan Abdul Rahman began to arrogate greater control to himself and his family, establishing new weights, "appointing various *jenang* or supervisors," and forbidding private individuals to go to the interior. Although Chinese played an active role as downstream agents, they were not per-

mitted upstream as had been the case in Jambi; indeed, the Palembang resident claimed that not “a single Chinese” lived in the ulu.²⁹ By 1672 a royal pepper monopoly was in place, and Sultan Abdul Rahman and his relatives made frequent trips upriver to ensure that their control over pepper collection was maintained. A piagem issued by a certain Pangeran Purbaya (probably the eldest son of Pangeran Aria) dating from 1699 c.e. thus lays down that anyone who takes pepper out before ordered to do so should be sent to Palembang with his wife and family, regardless of status.³⁰ The trade of the royal family was further encouraged because their vessels were exempt from normal tolls in Batavia if they went as part of the escort for a royal ship. They could therefore take advantage of the higher payment for pepper the VOC offered in Batavia, where there was also a far more varied range of cloth. In addition to the trading privileges they enjoyed, the royal clan was actively involved in smuggling, and as far as the Dutch were concerned some of the most notorious offenders were the court women. In 1681, for instance, nine perahu laden with pepper belonging to the wife of Pangeran Dipati slipped out of Palembang, the captains then transferring the cargo to a larger vessel, which carried it to Riau, the new capital of Johor on Bintan Island. Sultan Abdul Rahman’s own mother was termed an “experienced tradeswoman (*koopwif*).”³¹

Although pepper was often secretly carried north to Kedah and Aceh and over the mountains to the new English post at Bengkulen, the most important destinations were those frequented by the Chinese. Unaffected by the glut in Europe, the market for pepper in China had continued unabated, fueled by a rising population where households bought it not by the ounce but by the pound. Furthermore, following the conquest of Formosa in 1683, Chinese authorities adopted a more liberal attitude toward overseas trade. Chinese shipping began to expand, and junk captains were fully prepared to evade VOC cruisers. In 1694 it was said that China could not get enough Palembang pepper, since it was not only of good quality but cheaper than that from the west coast of Sumatra.³²

There were three major points in Palembang’s trade with China. The first was Riau, reestablished as the capital of Johor after the attack by Jambi in 1673. Johor had successfully remained outside the monopoly system of the VOC, and its new port, situated on Bintan Island where the Karang River flows out into a wide bay, developed into a gathering point for Chinese, Indian, and European traders as well as ships from all over the archipelago. This busy center needed to be supplied with food, and Palembang had long been a source of Johor’s supplies, particularly since small perahu could sail to Riau from Palembang the entire year. The presence of Chinese junks, with cargoes ranging from silk cloth to opium, iron ware, and food items, drew Palembang traders like

a magnet. In 1692 it was estimated that perhaps as much as twelve thousand piculs of pepper may have been annually smuggled out to Riau in small perahu to meet the Chinese; in subsequent estimates this figure rose even higher. The bendahara, the minister who acted as regent in Riau, had made real efforts to lay old enmities to rest. His goodwill continued when he succeeded as ruler of Johor, following the king's assassination in 1699. Despite Palembang's horrified reaction to this regicide, economic links remained strong, and by 1714 plans for a marriage alliance were in progress.³³

A second important point in the trading connection with China lay to the north. Soon after he came to power Sultan Abdul Rahman had bought junks specifically to sail to Vietnam, Siam, and Cambodia; eight years after the conclusion of the first monopoly treaty with the VOC, three or four ships were still leaving annually for Siam loaded with pepper.³⁴ Trade in this direction was encouraged by the expansion of a settlement on the Cambodian coast known as Ha Tien or Kiang K'ou and called Pantai Mas by the Malays. The name Kiang K'ou is mentioned in Dutch sources as early as 1623, but according to legend it emerged in the latter part of the century under the leadership of one of the many migrants who left China during this period to make their living overseas. Situated on a branch of the Mekong, Ha Tien was more accessible than other ports in Cambodia. Trading vessels were carried there naturally via a strong ocean current that flowed through the Taiwan Straits, along the southern coast of China, around central and southern Vietnam, and into the Gulf of Siam. The same stream continued on down the coast of the Malay Peninsula, and with this favorable siting Ha Tien developed into a rendezvous for the junk trade from China, Formosa, Macao, Vietnam, and Siam as well as drawing much traffic from the archipelago.³⁵ It also became a key exchange point in the network that supplied Palembang with salt and rice during the west monsoon.

A third area of relatively new importance was Siantan, which replaced Pulau Tioman as the most important rendezvous in the South China Sea. Advantaged by a good harbor, it too was geographically well located. A strong current passed this area during August, following the southwest monsoon, bearing the vessels bound for China and Vietnam with it. At other periods of the year it was easily reached by ships from the north coast of Java. Siantan was thus able to act as a secondary distribution point for spices and other items, and soon became a favorite port of call for Siamese ships en route to Palembang with cargoes of rice, salt, lac, and rough Vietnamese and Chinese porcelain. Initially the captains of such ships dealt mainly with a shifting community of Malay and Minangkabau traders, many of whom were married to Siantan women. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, the

exchange economy that centered on Siantan was dominated by Bugis and Makassarese, a significant development in view of the two to three thousand Makassarese and Bugis then living in Palembang.³⁶

Sultan Abdul Rahman was the primary beneficiary of Palembang's overseas trade, and by the end of the seventeenth century his wealth had become legendary. Besides being "the greatest pepper merchant," he received a percentage of the tolls paid by incoming and outgoing traders as well as the lavish gifts they presented to obtain his favor. Another source of income was the old custom that on the death of a foreign merchant the ship and cargo went to the king. The demise of any well-to-do subject could also provide the occasion for his or her property to be confiscated by the ruler in payment for real or alleged debts. Ceremonies such as the weighing of a princess against silver coins continued to feed the royal coffers, to which were added the large amounts of pepper and rials the king received as tribute from the interior.³⁷

The Dutch were impressed by reports of "millions" of rials and of a treasury that grew "yearly,"³⁸ but surrounding rulers would have been just as struck by Sultan Rahman's command of human resources. Wealth and subjects were always intimately connected, and Palembang's retention of authority over the inhabitants of the ulu was a key element in its economic success. New pepper areas were opened up by imported slaves and by captives taken during raids into Jambi territory, and from about 1690 the voluntary drift of people to Palembang from Jambi became more apparent. The suku pindah groups who populated much of the Rawas area, and who had been previously considered among the principal pepper growers in Jambi, now acknowledged the ruler of Palembang as lord. Several thousand Minangkabau were also cultivating pepper in ulu Tembesi. In these areas, at the periphery of Palembang territory, government was relatively light. Occasionally a party from downstream would appear on a hunting trip to collect pepper or taxes, but for the most part authority rested entirely in the hands of the local headmen and the elders who assisted them (collectively known as the *peroatin*). Sultan Abdul Rahman and his son were both aware of the need to retain ulu goodwill, consistently arguing against increases in the price of Indian cloth and drawing influential upstream leaders into discussions regarding the introduction of new coinage. When they rejected one type of rial the future Sultan Muhammad Mansur simply told the VOC resident that he would not force his subjects to accept the unfamiliar coins against their will.³⁹

A second essential element was the local Chinese community, largely composed of *peranakan*. In 1682 there were about thirty Chinese merchants, four of whom were appointed to supervise pepper deliveries to the Company. They also had responsibility for selling VOC cloth, which they received on credit, on behalf of the Dutch. Below them were

four other private merchants who had little to do with pepper and had no influence in the fixing of prices for goods. Twenty-one less prosperous Chinese traders acted as agents for the wealthier merchants in the bazaar and supplied the court with cloth for the interior. At this time there was only one Indian Muslim merchant.⁴⁰

Ten years later three of the four men in charge of the ruler's business were still Muslim Chinese, and at least one often acted as a royal agent, carrying pepper to be sold in Riau. All were established traders, accustomed to maintaining commercial records; for example, the goods left by one Chinese who had acted on the king's behalf included not just cloth, silver utensils, gold thread, and so forth, but various "writings, books and accounts."⁴¹ In the constant dealings with Europeans required of the king's factors, Chinese familiarity with documentation for trading purposes was clearly advantageous. In 1694 a private Dutch burgher from Melaka claimed—without evidence—that he had bought fourteen thousand piculs of pepper from Sultan Abdul Rahman's principal scribe and agent, a *peranakan* Chinese entitled Kiai Raksadita. However, the latter produced the receipt he had filed away "which is otherwise than among these Javanese [i.e., Palembang people], who seldom keep receipts longer than the affair itself lasts."⁴²

It is reasonable to suggest that Sultan Abdul Rahman's access to Chinese bookkeeping skills made possible a closer supervision of the royal economy and a greater awareness of the sources and disbursement of the ruler's income. Certainly there is clear evidence that continuing efforts were made to bring all the Chinese under the royal umbrella. They were frequently required to accept Islam and shave their hair as a token of conversion and would then be given a local woman as a wife. When the Chinese received cloth and goods on credit from the court they became both kinsmen and debtors, a combination that worked together to make them into subjects. Because of marriage and debt relationships, the resident remarked, "almost all Chinese have an interest in the Palembang court." In mid-1691 Sultan Abdul Rahman requested that any Chinese, regardless of origin, who had taken up residence in Palembang and who owed him money or was "trusted" (i.e., had credit) should be placed under his jurisdiction. If the Dutch did not agree, he threatened, he would be compelled to evict all Chinese from his lands, to take from them all the goods they owned, and to claim back the women given to them by the court as concubines. In 1696, after continued pressure, Batavia finally agreed that jurisdiction over all Chinese in Palembang would be surrendered to Pangeran Aria.⁴³

Less obvious than the Chinese but equally important to the economy were the *orang laut* of Sungsang and Palembang's offshore islands. By the 1680s resistance in Bangka had been virtually eliminated, and it seems that Sultan Abdul Rahman had been able to strengthen the ties

between himself and the local inhabitants. Nineteenth-century traditions confirm VOC reports of a marriage between Sultan Abdul Rahman and the widow of the previous Bangka head, through which the people there “acknowledged the Palembang ruler as their legitimate king.”⁴⁴ Neighboring rulers responded by recognizing Palembang’s claims to overlordship in the waters around Bangka and Belitung, and in 1698 the sultan of Sukadana sent an envoy with a gift of diamonds as compensation after his people attacked Belitung and took fifteen people prisoner. Through its *orang laut*, alternately raiders and collectors, Palembang was ensured of a steady supply of slaves and sea products, in return for which protection was extended against any marauders.⁴⁵ Indeed, Palembang’s standing in the Melaka Straits was such that when the Johor ruler was killed in 1699 a number of his *orang laut* subjects said they would not serve under the new dynasty but would leave for Palembang instead.

The final link in the economic chain is the most difficult to discern, but the vitality of Palembang’s forest trade provides testimony to the continuing interaction with the shadowy jungle dwellers, the *orang kubu*. To this can be added an intriguing report dating from October 1692. In that month the “wild people” along the Bulian and Bahar rivers, tributaries of the Lalang, rebelled against Jambi authority and “fled to Palembang . . . to take refuge with Ratu Mas Dipati.” Ratu Mas, it will be remembered, was a Jambi princess, daughter of the revered Sultan Agung, widow of the former Palembang crown prince, and now betrothed to his brother, designated as the next king. With this pedigree she was clearly the highest-born female in the country, and the inclusion of her name in royal correspondence indicates that she had already assumed the place at court appropriate to a future queen.⁴⁶ Added to this, her very title would have summed up memories of that other powerful Ratu Mas, the Palembang princess who had ruled Jambi in the time of its prosperity.

Kubu belief that this distant queen would somehow provide them with a refuge is a revealing comment on how Palembang rule had come to be perceived by the end of the seventeenth century. Although it is tempting to see reverberations of the Ratu Sinuhun myth in this call to “Ratu Mas,” it can also be interpreted as an appeal to the gentler aspect of the parent-ruler image thought to have manifested itself in Palembang overlordship. Dutch sources provide further evidence that the stories of peace and prosperity attached to Sultan Abdul Rahman’s memory were generated by genuine regard. In his prime he had contended that “a king should win the hearts of his people,” and in his old age the “love” the people bore the *susuhunan* and their verdict that his had been a “good” reign drew comments from the VOC resident.⁴⁷ Few people in Palembang would have personally remembered any king

before him, and he must have appeared invulnerable. Even the Dutch were amazed. "It seems," wrote another resident "that the king cannot die. . . . He is 123 years old and has never had a serious illness."⁴⁸ His progeny were a testimony to his virility; in 1690 he was said to have had seventy children and grandchildren, an impressive statement in a society where the lives of children were fragile. Sultan Abdul Rahman died on 10 December 1706, but the sense of unchanging rule was perpetuated. On 25 October 1708, announcing that he wished everything to be "as good as in the reign of my father," Sultan Mansur made the symbolic move to the palace of the deceased *susuhunan*, surrendering his own residence to his son and heir, Pangeran Purbaya. According to the resident, "People say everything is being done as in the time when the older sultan lived there."⁴⁹ His description of the new ruler distributing generous gifts to all the leading nobles and Chinese while they weighed him against Spanish rials and lead picis in itself approaches allegory, for the nub of Palembang's economic activity was the king himself. To him the country's wealth flowed and by him it was dispensed. The memories associated with "Cindé Balang," in short, stand as a cultural personification of a successful economy and a Good Time.

The Bad Time in Jambi

The elevation of Cindé Balang into a community ancestor represents a realization of the potentialities of indigenous kingship. In Jambi the "time of the *panembahan*" in the early seventeenth century was similarly remembered as a period when people were well off and the country was ruled wisely. The tensions that always existed in the ruler-subject relationship were submerged by the favorable verdict of communal memory. A decade after his death in 1679 a similar process had occurred in regard to Sultan Agung. Nurtured by his prestige and longevity, his name too had become a symbolic referent invoking an idyllic "time," compared with which the present was merely a shadow. The apparent failure of subsequent Jambi kings to match the achievements of their forebears was to have far-reaching effects on dealings with the interior and on the association between them and their "brothers" in Palembang.

Much of the heroic stature acquired by the *panembahan* and his grandson, Sultan Agung, can be traced to the contrasting bleakness of the years that followed. The effects of the decline in pepper prices, the end of the junk trade, and the domination of the Dutch and English were being felt well before Sultan Agung's death in 1679. By 1670 Palembang produced an estimated forty thousand piculs of pepper annually, while Jambi was delivering only about sixteen thousand, less than half the amount of former times. In 1676 prolonged rains swelled

many rivers, and old people said they had never seen water so high. In Merangin, Tebo, and Tembesi, pepper gardens were flooded and ruined.⁵⁰ Two years later the Jambi resident bemoaned the stockpiles of cloth that lay unsold and rotting in the VOC warehouse and the extent to which trade had fallen away. With rice scarce and expensive, Jambi could no longer compete as a market with the nearby ports of Palembang, Riau, and Bengkalis. Then came the disastrous wars with Johor and Palembang. In 1679 the main settlement was destroyed in the Johorese attack, and the upstream areas, notably Tembesi, were constantly raided by Palembang forces so that many pepper gardens were consequently abandoned or destroyed.

The Dutch monopoly, established after the departure of the English in 1679 and as part of the conditions of the 1681 contract, thus came at a critical time. Stricter measures against smuggling and the monopoly of textiles militated against commercial recovery. The VOC's own figures reveal the unwillingness of the *ulu* inhabitants to deliver pepper and Jambi's failure to attract traders from elsewhere. Between August 1683 and 31 July 1684 the Dutch lodge in Palembang made a profit of 37,570 guilders, while only 2,868 guilders were recorded for Jambi in the period from 1 August 1684 to 31 July 1685. Nor did native traders fare much better. In 1680 five ships arrived from Johor with five thousand rials' worth of Indian cloth, but could sell very little; on another occasion an Indian brought in four thousand pieces of cloth, which had to be put into storage for lack of buyers.⁵¹

Jambi's commercial decline directly affected the wealth of the ruler, Sultan Anum Ingalaga, for the income previously drawn from tolls and duties on pepper dried up as foreign and internal trade shrank. A public indication of his declining prestige was the divorce of his daughter in 1682 by the sultan of Banten.⁵² It may have been with the hope of finding another wealthy patron that Sultan Ingalaga made application to the king of Siam, sending the message that he was willing to submit the gold and silver flowers, the traditional sign of vassalage demanded by Siamese kings, in return for trading privileges. However, the VOC did their utmost to ensure that this link was not strengthened, and ultimately the gesture came to nought. Sultan Ingalaga openly admitted that his country was economically in a "bad condition." "I am living in great difficulties," he wrote to the VOC, at the same time asking permission to delay repayment of his debts for another three years.⁵³

As a direct result of his poverty Sultan Ingalaga now began to depend more heavily on a share of the booty brought back by his *orang laut* who "in place of fishing have spread everywhere pirating." At home the Chinese were among the first to feel the effects of the ruler's penury, and a number had their property and valuables confiscated to help defray Sultan Ingalaga's expenses. Given the declining economic situation in

Jambi, it is not surprising that there was an exodus of Chinese traders, with a large group settling in Palembang. By 1700 most had left, and little remained except the name "Pecinaan" attached to the settlement around the Dutch lodge. Piracy on the seas and the departure of the Chinese further discouraged maritime trade, in turn making the capital even less attractive to the ulu, where the impact of the ruler's straitened circumstances was also apparent. Sultan Ingalaga was now attempting to control the internal pepper trade by reserving the main areas for himself and to increase his profits by offering growers a low price. It was said that villagers fled when news was received of the approach of royal emissaries.⁵⁴

A further reason for the alienation of the interior was the extent of authority wielded by the three queens, Sultan Ingalaga's two Makassarese wives and the former "Bugis whore," To Ayo. The latter, her title raised from Ratu Mas Dipati to Ratu Mas Sultan, was able to hold her position against her Makassar co-wives despite her origins, and she was considered dominant "not only in trade but in everything." Meanwhile, Karaeng Fatimah (daughter of the former ruler of Goa, and previously wife of the ruler of Banten), who brought with her all the prestige of the Makassar royal house as well as substantial wealth, was installed as Ratu Sultan Ingalaga. Together, the political skills and economic power of the three queens were so great that they essentially ruled the country. In the rich pepper-growing areas of Merangin and Tembesi they took control of several villages formerly under Pangeran Dipanegara and on occasion even went to the ulu areas to collect pepper and carry off children, attractive maidens, and goods. Although one article of the 1683 treaty specifically attempted to exclude them from the pepper trade, they were known to be smuggling to Melaka, Riau, Macao, and Bengkalis, buying up supplies of the high-quality cloth available there from Indian and English traders.⁵⁵ Ratu Mas Tengah, the third royal consort, equipped a ship under a famed pirate, Panglima Teko, to trade in Siam, and the Dutch believed the desire of the queens for access to Siamese luxury goods lay behind the ruler's approach to Ayutthaya. Sultan Ingalaga seemed unable to refuse them any request. Orders reached Batavia for lace, mirrors, and textiles like gold cloth and *gobar serasah* "of the new kind,"⁵⁶ in addition to the horses, diamonds, muskets, Dutch gunpowder, and gilded and flowered paper that the debt-ridden Jambi court was still purchasing.

In a society disposed to perceive rulers as wise and caring, it was these "foreign" women, rather than Sultan Ingalaga himself, who initially felt the brunt of popular enmity. Their "insatiable lust" was viewed as the cause of Jambi's troubles, and they were blamed for the growing *corvée* burden that had fallen on upstream communities since the early 1670s. Recurring conflict had brought constant demands for

labor to defend the capital and prepare ships and defenses; in 1680, when an attack from Palembang was expected, there were claims that "all the ulu people in Jambi had been brought down." Two thousand men were sent to guard the Lalang area, through which passed the principal land route between downstream Jambi and Palembang. No sooner had they returned to their village than another summons came for the bovenlanders to again come down to prepare stockades. The Dutch resident reported the apprehension of those upstream as they sought to escape the king's pressers. But even while most ulu people were working on Jambi's defenses and the construction of a new mosque, others were diverted upstream to cut wood for a "new fortified house for the ruler's first wife."⁵⁷ In every sense the royal women, whose origins lay outside Jambi, seemed to fit one stereotype of the downstream queen, which presented her not as a caring mother but as a cruel manipulator of royal authority.

Throughout the 1680s the growing impositions of the ilir made the upstream ripe for rebellion. All that was needed was a leader of standing. There were certainly several candidates available, but the clearest challenge came from Pangeran Dipanegara, whose family had long ruled over Merangin and who claimed that in genealogical terms he and his brother had greater rights to the throne than did Sultan Ingalaga himself. Following a public quarrel with the Jambi ruler, Pangeran Dipanegara fled upstream to Rawas, where he became a focus for dissident elements.⁵⁸

Although Sultan Ingalaga managed to ride out this crisis, he was nonetheless desperately in need of support that would enhance his status and economic resources. An apparent solution seemed to present itself in the person of an ousted Minangkabau ruler, Sultan Ahmad Syah, bearing the customary title *yang dipertuan sakti*, who appeared at Belitung in December 1684. Sultan Ahmad soon compelled attention because his call for a holy war against the infidel Dutch in preparation for an imminent Judgment Day and the end of the world appeared as the fulfillment of prophecy. In much of the archipelago the decade between the turn of the Javanese century in 1677 and that of the Muslim calendar in 1688 had been a period of anticipation and apprehension, for this was one of those fateful times when it was expected that a leader would emerge to purify the faith and set the world to rights.⁵⁹ In a climate in which rumors of impending doom were gaining currency, Sultan Ahmad was widely regarded not merely as a scion of the revered Minangkabau line, but as a living god. Allied for a time with Palembang's Pangeran Aria, he soon attracted several thousand people, not only Minangkabau but Makassarese and Malays from Riau, Johor, and Jambi. At first the Dutch dismissed Sultan Ahmad as simply another raider, but they grew more concerned when they learned that

letters announcing his mission were being sent to Aceh, west Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and as far east as Sulawesi and Maluku.⁶⁰

It was natural that Sultan Ahmad should look to Jambi for particular support because of its special relationship with the Pagaruyung court. About 1680 Sultan Ingalaga had gone upstream to Jujuhan to meet Puteri Jamilan, the Minangkabau queen, and during this meeting the boundary and the authority of the Jambi ruler over Minangkabau living along the Batang Hari had been reaffirmed.⁶¹ In May 1686 an ambassador arrived in Tanah Pilih with the request that Sultan Ingalaga join Sultan Ahmad, offering in return a portion of any booty taken in battle. The Jambi ruler must have been delighted at the prestige of this association and at the potential wealth it promised, for in just a few months about four thousand Minangkabau—men, women, and children—came to live in Jambi, where they were treated as the king's "spoiled darlings." Sometime after this the relationship between Sultan Ingalaga and Sultan Ahmad was affirmed when the Minangkabau leader adopted the Jambi ruler as a son.⁶²

These events impelled Batavia to take action, for clearly the Company could not allow Jambi to fall under the influence of those who openly advocated a war to evict infidels. In May 1687 Gerrit Coster, assisted by troops from Banten and Palembang, led a VOC expedition to blockade the Jambi River. But Sultan Ingalaga refused to comply with Coster's demand that he surrender all Minangkabau. He had sworn, he said, to be their protector.⁶³ When the anti-Dutch mood grew more threatening, the VOC personnel in Jambi, fearing for their lives, secretly crept aboard one of the blockading Dutch ships. Sultan Ingalaga and his wives took up residence in the Company lodge while the Jambi fleet was made ready and stockades constructed along the riverbanks.

From his perceived position of strength, the Jambi ruler attempted to negotiate a truce. Rejecting his overtures, the Dutch withdrew to the Kompeh River about a mile below the town. Although VOC forces were insufficient to ensure victory, Coster received unexpected support when several nobles and their followers defected. Among them was none other than Pangeran Dipati, Sultan Ingalaga's eldest son and heir to the throne. Daunted by the now formidable opposition, Sultan Ingalaga fled upstream to Muara Tebo with his Minangkabau following and a few supporters. Downriver, Coster later wrote, "God blessed our weapons," and the town of Jambi was taken on 5 September 1687. Acting on his own initiative, Coster then installed Pangeran Dipati as king of Jambi, naming him Sultan Kiai Gedé, and in return the new ruler agreed that any remaining Minangkabau, Makassarese, and Bugis were to be expelled.⁶⁴

In the formulation of memories of a Bad Time, this installation of a

Dutch client as ruler of Jambi was critical. A son's disobedience was not uncommon, particularly within the royal clan, but it could only be culturally acceptable in extraordinary circumstances. Kiai Gedé had publicly sworn he would never recognize Sultan Ingalaga as his father "as long as there was breath in his body," but his defiance had been condoned and even rewarded. In the process the ambiguous relationship between Jambi kings and those of Palembang had been brought to the fore, since Sultan Abdul Rahman publicly demonstrated his continuing animosity toward Sultan Ingalaga by honoring Kiai Gedé with the title of pangeran ratu. Pangeran Aria of Palembang also arrived in Jambi with a contingent of Komering troops to provide Kiai Gedé with further support. The Jambi ruler was thus placed under a weighty debt, which he was not permitted to forget. During his stay in Jambi, for example, Pangeran Aria claimed a certain court lady as a gift for his father, even though he knew that the new Jambi ruler had enjoyed her for many years and had recently taken her as a lawful wife.⁶⁵

Upstream, whence Sultan Ingalaga had fled, there could be no question as to who should rightfully be king in Jambi. Past enmities forgotten, interior communities, especially those living under the cultural shadow of Minangkabau, rallied to his support. At the same time Sultan Ingalaga also attempted to subvert one of the bases of ilir strength by offering gifts and promising booty to the orang laut in return for assistance. When Coster set sail for Batavia with most of his force at the beginning of 1688, the situation was thus ripe for open confrontation between father and son. Accordingly, a company of more than two hundred soldiers, together with a contingent of Palembang men, was left behind under the resident, Sijbrandt Swart, to prepare Tanah Pilih's defenses.

As the water in the river rose after the wet season, Sultan Ingalaga was able to move downstream. On 16 March 1688 his army, made up of about fifteen hundred men and about a hundred women, was reported close to the capital. However, he decided against an attack and a few days later appeared at the Dutch lodge with a large following to negotiate peace terms. In return for a satisfactory settlement, Sultan Ingalaga offered to give up claims to the throne and live quietly with his wives and children "just like Sultan Agung." Believing that this was simply a ruse, Swart unilaterally decided to take action. When Sultan Ingalaga fled to the home of one of the nobles, he was placed under arrest and put on a ship bound for Batavia, together with all his wives, children, concubines, slaves, and personal belongings. In July 1688 Sultan Ingalaga, now an impoverished exile in Batavia, expressed his situation in the most emotive way he could. He felt, he said, as if he had "no father, mother, or brothers."⁶⁶

As if to echo Sultan Ingalaga's despair, the ever-tenuous but nonethe-

less crucial alliance between Jambi's upstream and downstream fell apart as ulu supporters of the exiled ruler found a champion in his younger son, Pangeran Pringgabaya. Refusing to recognize his brother as ruler, Pringgabaya retreated upstream to Muara Tebo, where he founded a new settlement known as Mangunjaya. Under his rule it began operating as an independent kingdom, developing rice lands and even minting counterfeit Spanish rials. With their own ruler and capital, the ulu districts controlled by Pringgabaya were ready to counter any ilir claims to authority. Kiai Gedé might have the sponsorship of the VOC, but Pringgabaya was under the patronage of Pagaruyung, to whom he had sent "a lump of earth, a drop of water, a fish and a cutting of grass" as a symbol that he submitted Jambi's lands, rivers and jungles to Minangkabau overlordship. Kiai Gedé might also have received honors from Palembang, but his brother could boast the prestigious title of *sri maharaja batu johan pahlawan syah* (great king and champion warrior), bestowed on him by the Pagaruyung court.

In economic terms the Muara Tebo area became even more important than before. Strategically placed on the junction of the Batang Hari, Tebo, and Sumai rivers, Mangunjaya was situated on the major land and river routes between Minangkabau, Indragiri, and Tungkal and was connected by direct routes to the border settlement of Tanjung. From here mountain tracks led to Padang, Bengkulu, and other places on the west coast. These links quickly attracted Bugis traders, who brought cloth and salt to trade for pepper and the gold that was mined along the upper Batang Hari. The Johorese were also prominent in the Mangunjaya economy; they came up the Tungkal River and then walked overland with their opium and textiles purchased from Indian traders in Riau. Access via the Tembesi meant that people from Palembang were similarly arriving in the area to buy and sell. It seems that Pringgabaya even gained the trust of the *kubu*, the collectors of forest produce.⁶⁷ In 1691 his status was further raised when he was joined by Sultan Ingalaga's "father," Sultan Ahmad Syah, the *yang dipertuan sakti*, whom many worshipped "as a god." With a combined force of about ten thousand people, Pangeran Pringgabaya was said to reign in the interior "with more glory and might" than did his brother downstream. An indication of his confidence was his decision to take the title of *pangeran dipati anum*, normally the prerogative of the heir to the throne.⁶⁸

For thirty years Jambi was effectively divided at Muara Tembesi into two kingdoms, one centered upstream at Mangunjaya and the other downstream at Tanah Pilih. Despite several attempts, it was impossible for Kiai Gedé to evict Pringgabaya by force, even with VOC help. Mangunjaya was an estimated forty Dutch miles from the downstream capital, which meant five or six days' hard rowing. During the wet sea-

son the river's strong downward flow impeded movement upstream, and even during drier periods skilled navigation was necessary because of the many unseen snags and shifting currents. Although Kiai Gedé had great faith in European weaponry, it had little effect on the success or failure of campaigns in the interior. The cannonades and blockades that had been fairly effective in besieging downstream settlements were useless, for boats were always vulnerable to hidden enemy attack from the jungle curtain, and it was not easy to engage the enemy in battle on land. The terrain was uncompromising, covered with thick rain forest marked only by tracks which were sometimes blocked by bamboo stakes. Requisition of food locally was difficult and unpredictable because villages were scattered and their inhabitants likely to flee at any sign of danger. Occasionally troops might come across a plot of rice in the jungle, but an active native soldier, the Dutch estimated, required at the minimum 1.5 pounds of rice (about .75 kilograms) per day. Adequate supplies therefore had to be transported. In addition, the porters needed to carry kajang mats, rattans, ammunition, and guns, as well as cloth and other gifts necessary to win and maintain the loyalty of potential followers. Finally, sickness was an ever-present threat, and was often fatal. In 1690, for instance, the resident reported to Batavia that on his most recent trip upstream his "fireworker" had died.⁶⁹

Pringgabaya's army also faced problems. Like Kiai Gedé, he shared the conviction that European-style weapons were essential in warfare, but they were expensive and difficult to obtain. Javanese-made bullets, for instance, cost about four to ten rijksdaalders per hundred, while Malay gunpowder (to which pepper was sometimes added) cost one rijksdaalder the gantang. English gunpowder, found to be particularly suited to native flintlocks, was preferred, but it too was scarce.⁷⁰ Some villages made their own artillery and ammunition, but this required access to materials. Local army leaders were of necessity active traders, and Pringgabaya kept himself supplied with the means to manufacture ammunition and weapons by exchanging upstream gold for lead, tin, and iron from Johor traders. Like his brother, he also faced the problem of feeding the large and uncoordinated body of men, women, and children that made up a native force. Although stockades were normally connected by paths to nearby villages, if an army was hungry it simply melted away. Villagers coerced into military service would usually stay with their leader as long as he could feed them, but there was frequent mention of "overlopers," that is, the people who fled from one side to another primarily to obtain food. Amoeba-like, an army's size constantly fluctuated, reflecting not only the prestige of the leader, but the priorities of its members. It could shrink markedly, for instance, when time came to plant padi and could even abandon the field if some tragedy, such as the death of a leader's child, was seen to portend defeat.

Despite the political stalemate, it soon became apparent that in economic terms Kiai Gedé was fighting a losing battle. In 1689 no pepper at all reached the Dutch lodge, and by 1695 the Tanah Pilih population was so poor that when two Banten ships brought in a hundred corges of cloth (about two thousand pieces), it was sufficient to supply demand for the next three years. Even rough Javanese cloth was too expensive for some people, though it cost only .25 rial a piece. Local women began once more to weave, a practice that appears to have been less common during the days when the pepper market was buoyant and Indian cloth plentiful and cheap. "There are now as many looms as there are people," commented the resident.⁷¹ Rice was particularly dear, partly because the harvests of 1691 and 1694 had been destroyed by flooding, but primarily because of the lack of Javanese ships. By 1695 the cost was between fifty and sixty rials the koyan, and two years later there was "no rice at any price." Previously one of the major items the downstream offered to the interior had been salt brought by Javanese and Siamese traders, but now this too was in short supply. As the years went by the situation was to deteriorate further. In 1707 rice in Jambi cost forty-three rijksdaalders the koyan as against thirty-two in Palembang and thirty in Java; salt was fifteen rijksdaalders the koyan in Palembang, but thirty-two in Jambi.⁷²

Economic contrasts reflected other changes in the relationship between Jambi and Palembang as Kiai Gedé began to resent the inferior status his obligations had imposed on him. Ignoring years of strife, Kiai Gedé harked back to times when, he said, the two countries had lived "in good brotherhood" and when there had been an understanding that "Palembang should not despoil Jambi, nor Jambi Palembang." Currently it seemed that Sultan Abdul Rahman and his son intended to extend their control over all Jambi.⁷³ The imbalance in the Jambi-Palembang relationship was publicly demonstrated in the behavior of the royal family. When the 1678 treaty between the VOC and Palembang had been concluded, Sultan Agung had supervised proceedings so that it was drawn up "in the Jambi manner." During his stay in Palembang he had been treated with great honor, with Sultan Abdul Rahman sitting on a cushion at his feet. With the situation reversed, the Jambi ruler Kiai Gedé was now obliged to defer to his Palembang "father."

Batavian officials, who had long believed that the close relationship between Jambi and Palembang was not in VOC interests, cared little for such tensions as long as trade was not affected. Indeed, Dutch actions themselves served to point up Palembang's higher standing. In 1690 the VOC drastically reduced its representation in Jambi because of continuing losses and the murder of Swart by one of his slaves. A small contingent remained, but administratively it was under the resident of Palembang, who continued to report on Jambi affairs until

1707. Should either Kiai Gedé or his brother wish to communicate with Batavia, he was required to use the Palembang resident as intermediary. The gifts the Palembang ruler sent to the Kiai Gedé in mid-1694 were a symbolic reminder of the inequity in their status, reminiscent of the relationship Palembang had once had with Mataram. Sultan Abdul Rahman presented his Jambi client with "a thin horse and a *perahu jalur*," but in return he asked from Jambi "a musket, a dancemaiden, and a smith."⁷⁴

Palembang's superiority to Jambi was further demonstrated in demographic terms. Repeatedly Kiai Gedé complained of raids into Tembesi by Palembang people, and in 1688 it was reported that about two thousand people from this region and Merangin, "the best and only pepper area of this kingdom," had been captured and taken away. In one district there were said to be were no inhabitants at all for a distance of about thirty or forty Dutch miles.⁷⁵ Many were also leaving voluntarily, seeking a new overlord in Palembang, where there were reputed to be "mountains of gold." Nor was it only ordinary men and women who were migrating. One Jambi noble who had cooperated with the Dutch also decided to move to Palembang, bringing with him forty-one people, including women, children, and slaves. Another, who had been given a wife in Jambi to persuade him to stay, preferred to go to Palembang, where he had been honored with high status and a noble title.⁷⁶

Kiai Gedé also lost control over Tungkal, another area of economic importance that had long been disputed between Jambi and Johor. In 1695 Johor's claims here seemed established, but in 1706 it was once again given to Jambi by the ruler of Johor as a gesture of goodwill. However, the people of Tungkal claimed that their connections were not with Kiai Gedé but with Pangeran Pringgabaya in Mangunjaya; they had previously been under the *panembahan* and now wished to be under the person they considered his rightful heir. Since they were not of Sultan Ingalaga's lineage, they said, Kiai Gedé could not compel them to be his subjects. By 1708 Pringgabaya was theoretically lord of Tungkal, although much of the trade was still going to Johor.⁷⁷

To Kiai Gedé's surrender of authority over the upstream and the periphery was added the drift of people from his ilir capital. Not only was he losing subjects to Palembang, Inderagiri, Johor; they were also fleeing upstream, sometimes conducted secretly at night by Pangeran Pringgabaya's recruiters. For Kiai Gedé the lurking specter of becoming a king without subjects looked set to become reality. In 1695 there were only six hundred men in Tanah Pilih able to carry arms, and the next year this had fallen to four hundred. The twenty-five people allocated each day to defend the town were simply not enough to inspire confidence.⁷⁸

A further matter for concern was the collapse of Kiai Gedé's ties with

the orang laut, traditionally so closely connected with the Jambi royal house. Previously the people of Simpang (Kuala Nior) had always been on guard to act as pilots and envoys, but now they could be absent for weeks at a time. Often a Dutch ship would arrive in the river and find there was no one to take up Batavia's letters or assist the crew with loading and unloading vessels. The departure of so many orang laut meant those who were left were more vulnerable to raids by other groups from Palembang and Johor. In this situation Kiai Gedé's attempts to compel orang laut loyalty by calling up their debts were of no avail. There were indeed local orang laut preying on the few Javanese vessels whose captains still saw some benefit in coming to Jambi, but their booty did not reach the downstream court.⁷⁹

If more evidence of Kiai Gedé's failures was needed, it could be seen in his inability to hold the tenuous loyalty of that shadowy group, the orang kubu. Under Sultan Agung the prestige of the downstream ruler had been such that even "a party of wild people, alias orang kubu" was willing to accept his mediation in their disputes. But in 1692 some orang kubu were in open revolt, their attacks so effective that no one from Tanah Pilih dared venture out into their rice fields. The reason for orang kubu anger was straightforward: Kiai Gedé had sold into slavery three of their children who had been presented to him as a gift. The Lalang River kubu also renounced Jambi's overlordship, and no trade in jungle products was possible. Without the loyalty of trusted middlemen, it was impossible to make contact with the forest dwellers, and in 1694 VOC representatives in Jambi were unable to obtain a supply of rattans Batavia had requested because the "wild people" had fled.⁸⁰

It was the upstream Minangkabau who lost most by the disruption of trade caused by the ulu-ilir division, and it was they who took the initiative to try and reconcile the two brothers. In 1696 the "emperor of the Minangkabau," with the assistance of leading Islamic elders, attempted to bring about a reunion. Nearly two years later, in July 1698, Kiai Gedé went upstream for a prearranged meeting, leaving his women and children in the care of the Dutch sergeant. During this gathering, attended by the Minangkabau chiefs and a large number of interior people, a solemn oath was sworn between the two brothers, and Kiai Gedé handed over the kris Macan Turu (Sleeping Tiger) as a sign that he was willing to see the throne pass to Pringgabaya's son. He also agreed that he should retire to "old Jambi" and live privately, like his grandfather Sultan Agung. To affirm the promises made, the oath of reconciliation was then engraved on a copper or silver plate and worn by Pringgabaya as a belt, while he himself gave a daughter to Kiai Gedé to rear as his own child. In the optimism that followed this apparent reunion, three hundred people came downstream to trade.⁸¹

It soon became clear, however, that the 1698 agreement was insuffi-

cient to allay the animosity between the two brothers, and perceptions of a Bad Time appeared to be confirmed as Jambi remained divided. Pringgabaya was still upstream, and Kiai Gedé refused to honor his oath and surrender royal authority, even though he himself was increasingly alienated from his people. Looming behind this rejection by so many of his subjects was the darkening sense of a lost legitimacy suggested in Dutch sources and spelled out in oral tradition. Going against the normal manner in which myths are constructed, legends telling of the loss of sacred items by the king convey messages of the deep cultural unease that became attached to memories of Kiai Gedé's reign. According to one story the sultan of Johor seized Jambi's sacred weapons and gongs; another account relates the loss of the kris Si Genjai when the Jambi ruler fled upstream.⁸² Dutch records in fact show that after the attack of 1687 the sacred cannon, Linda Mustaka and Linda Panon, believed to embody the protective powers that guarded the country, were taken into VOC custody. In vain did Kiai Gedé argue for the return of these items, which "were always passed from king to king. The kingdom of Jambi should not be deprived of them." Sultan Ingalaga had also taken with him into exile the sword Sri Mengula and the kris Banyak Putera, which were still in Dutch hands in the eighteenth century and which, said the Jambi ruler, "belonged to his ancestors."⁸³ The absence of Jambi's palladia in a sense prefigured the economic decline now occurring. Without the regalia, poverty and distress were not only expected but, in cultural terms, inevitable.

Kiai Gedé's personal situation was rendered more vulnerable by the widespread belief that Jambi's rapid deterioration must have resulted from some heinous act among one of the highborn, almost certainly the king. Accusations that he had committed one of the greatest sins, repudiation of his father, were now heard more frequently; it was, people said, "an offence against God and custom." Pringgabaya made it known that any money and gifts he collected in the ulu were to be sent to Batavia for Ingalaga's upkeep, since Kiai Gedé had refused to recognize his filial obligations. Furthermore, said Pringgabaya, the Islamic teachers had told him that he would be "cursed by God" if he did not bring about his father's return and that the country could never prosper unless Sultan Ingalaga or the *qucen* came back to Jambi. If rebellion was necessary to accomplish this, it would be "according to the customs and obligations which children owe their parents."⁸⁴

The actions of Kiai Gedé himself further heightened the sense of moral breakdown and impending catastrophe. So anxious was he to gain a following that any fugitive who fled from the interior was made "quality" and given a river district to command. Searching desperately for ways to alleviate his financial distress, Kiai Gedé flouted many of the age-old strictures governing the conduct of kings and thus

heightened the widespread hostility toward him. He was accused, for instance, of taking freeborn people and selling them as slaves, of imposing large undeserved fines, and of stealing from his own family under the pretense of borrowing. He even sold off the dowries of some of the court women, including items that had been brought from Palembang. Not surprisingly, the principal court ladies and several of his best soldiers secretly fled up to Pringgabaya in the interior. Deserted by the orang laut, Kiai Gedé used his guardsmen to act as his pirates, and groups of about fifty men were permitted to steal at will, attacking any trader bold enough to come downstream. As a reward for sharing their booty with him they were permitted access to court women, but their conduct soon showed they were beyond Kiai Gedé's control. From any other subject, murder and theft on the scale practiced by Kiai Gedé's guards would have meant death by the kris and the imprisonment of wife and children, but he was afraid to take any action against them lest they leave him bereft of support.⁸⁵

The greatest condemnation of Kiai Gedé was the widespread belief that he had defied the laws governing sexual relations. It was irrelevant that Dutch inquiries found no evidence to support these allegations; Kiai Gedé's reign was already being seen as a Bad Time, integral to which was royal immorality. Popular imagery thus hastened to provide supporting stories of incest, sodomy, and "unnatural" treatment of royal women. Kiai Gedé was said to have taken as a concubine his niece, Pringgabaya's daughter, who had been given to him to rear in 1698; according to rumor he had even slept with his sister and his own daughter.⁸⁶ Although those involved denied anything improper had occurred, this purported incest aroused Pringgabaya so much that he publicly announced he intended to kill his brother. The upstream nobles said they too could no longer tolerate Kiai Gedé's rule because he had taken a concubine of Sultan Ingalaga as his own while his father was still alive. Talk of a "foulness" in Jambi that needed to be cleansed implanted memories that did not easily disappear. Traditions collected in later times condemned Kiai Gedé for alleged incest with his mother, while one account ascribes the division of Jambi to "something evil" between Kiai Gedé and a woman belonging to his "father," Sultan Agung. He had also committed *derhaka* by attempting to kill Sultan Agung and then by persuading the Dutch to banish him. In these stories Kiai Gedé is clearly presented as a usurper guilty of heinous crimes who has used the VOC to attain his own ends. So reprehensible was his behavior that in the nineteenth century his heirs were still excluded from the Jambi succession.⁸⁷

If any further proof were needed at the time of Kiai Gedé's unsuitability as king, it was his persistent failure to bear sons, whereas Pringgabaya could boast proudly of six. It must have seemed like an omen in

1693 when there was a widespread epidemic illness lasting three months. Several court women died, among them Kiai Gedé's pregnant wife, delivered of a baby son who also failed to survive. Surrounded by hostility, fearing for his own life, Kiai Gedé was so devastated by this tragedy that he said he would give up the throne.⁸⁸ He now depended totally on Dutch support and went nowhere without his women and his personal store of wealth.

Meanwhile, the deteriorating economic situation had impelled the VOC to reconsider its commitment to Jambi, and in January 1697 the Dutch military complement was again reduced. Since the VOC seemed to have no confidence in Kiai Gedé, the position of Pringgabaya appeared even stronger following the 1698 agreement. His constant claim that he was not aiming for power for himself but merely acting as a dutiful son fed the popular belief that the Sultan Ingalaga, the true king, caring and paternal, would someday return to Jambi and bring back the prosperous days of the past. The resentment that had surfaced during his reign was forgotten as messages, remembrances, even one of his teeth were sent back to Jambi to encourage his supporters. Expectations of Sultan Ingalaga's imminent return were fostered, if anything, by his death in 1699, for when his body was returned to Jambi, Kiai Gedé had it buried secretly with none of the normal ceremony. Many people refused to believe that their king was dead, claiming that a Dutchman had been buried in his place.⁸⁹

By the end of the century the Bad Time in Jambi had become even worse because the situation in the ulu was hardly better than that in the ilir. Pringgabaya lacked the earlier patronage he had received from the Minangkabau, since he had fallen out with the powerful yang dipertuan sakti when the latter tried to extend his control over much of the Minangkabau-settled interior. Quarrels also broke out with the Minangkabau heads at the upper reaches of the Batang Hari, who objected to the manner in which Pringgabaya had interfered with their trade and his usurpation of authority in an area where "our grandfathers had control." His efforts to monopolize commerce with the downstream districts had forced salt up to the extraordinary price of eighty rijksdaalders the koyan, and most settlements above Mangunjaya, including the Minangkabau areas of Tujuh Kota and Sembilan Kota, rejected his authority. Finally, Pringgabaya was no longer acknowledged in the rich pepper area of Merangin, where the son of the old Pangeran Dipanegara, aided by his economic links with Bengkulu and Kerinci, had reestablished control.⁹⁰

To assert his position, Pringgabaya turned to force; in the ensuing raids and skirmishes, villages were burned and their occupants put to flight. The situation worsened as men of little experience favored by Pringgabaya were elevated to positions of considerable power. A new

administration was introduced, termed the *raja sembilan belas* (the nineteen lords), "all of them Bugis, Makassarese, slaves and runaways"; they were given control over the upland rivers, and nothing could be done without their approval. In other areas Pringgabaya sought to bind people to him by the presentation of gifts and titles. Soldiers fleeing from the ilir were welcomed and given new positions; some local authorities were now entitled to call themselves pangeran, a term previously reserved for princes. The growing hostility to Pringgabaya meant that he, like Kiai Gedé, began to fear for his life. Never moving without his wife and treasure (a few piculs of gold), he prepared his own food to avoid poison and refused to take any action without consulting "a certain book which Malays call *kitab kelima*" in search of auspicious moments.⁹¹

In these unsettled circumstances the pepper trade in Jambi showed no signs of improvement. The tiny contingent of "postholders" left to guard the VOC compound reported that only 130 piculs of pepper had been delivered in the 1704 book year, and in the following twelve months it was even less. Yet the Dutch were reluctant to abandon the post because of fears that the English might return. By 1706 Batavia was convinced that definite action was necessary, and in October of that year the incoming governor of Melaka and the new Palembang resident went to Jambi in an effort to organize some solution regarding the question of who should rule. Attempts to negotiate a settlement were frustrated, however, because Pringgabaya refused to meet his brother, accusing him of incest and disloyalty to their father.⁹² In September 1707 another envoy, Abraham Patras, therefore arrived in Jambi to take up where the previous mission had left off.

Patras found the situation in Jambi extremely complex. The animosity between the two brothers was intense, and there were constant rumors of planned assassinations. Nor could he detect any popular feeling favoring one prince above the other, although he believed no other individual would be accepted as king as long as either was alive. What was clear was the deplorable state of the country, the flight of its people, and the desperate need for the restoration of peace and the union of ulu and ilir so that trade could revive. The nobles who communicated with Patras had no doubt about the proper solution. First, the contract with the Dutch should be revived, and the Company should return "as in the time when the panembahan first established himself at Kota Baru" (Tanah Pilih). Second, the people wanted a reconciliation between their two princes so they could reign together as Sultan Agung and his son Sultan Ingalaga had done so many years before. Sultan Agung, it was pointed out, had stepped aside to allow his son to govern while he himself had retained the respect due the senior ruler.⁹³

After several months of negotiations, Patras was able to institute a

meeting between the two brothers, and on 14 August 1708 a “brotherly oath of friendship” was sworn at the *paseban*, the great gathering place. In an assembly of princes, nobles, and common people, Pringgabaya vowed that Kiai Gedé, as his older brother, should be the senior king, “just like Sultan Agung in the time of Sultan Ingalaga, that is how we shall be.” On 10 September Kiai Gedé formerly installed Pringgabaya as younger king and regent of the whole kingdom. To record this momentous event, Pringgabaya, the nobles, and the interior heads asked Patras to assist them in setting out a written record of the promises that had been made, which were to come into effect as soon as Kiai Gedé handed over the state kris. Dated 14 Rajab, Saturday evening in the year 1119,⁹⁴ this compact set out the following terms:

1. All the people of the nine rivers asked that the same methods of government be adopted by Sultan Kiai Gedé and Sultan Sri Maharaja Batu (i.e., Pringgabaya) as in the time of Sultan Agung and Sultan Ingalaga.
2. Each should forget the ills done to each other and should live like Sultan Agung and Sultan Ingalaga, since Sultan Ingalaga and all the nobles and princes and ordinary people of Jambi had respected Sultan Agung. Everyone, including Sultan Sri Maharaja Batu, would be obliged to honor Kiai Gedé in the same way as Sultan Ingalaga had honored Sultan Agung.
3. Anyone who had previously criticized either king, whether prince, noble, or ordinary person, should be pardoned. But henceforth, any critics would be punished by the two brothers acting together.
4. Sultan Kiai Gedé was to live like Sultan Agung and enjoy the same privileges. Raja Maharaja Batu should live at Tanah Pilih like Sultan Ingalaga with his wives, children, and grandchildren.
5. All the inhabitants of Jambi should be permitted to return to their original homes, whether upstream or downstream, where they could live with their relatives.
6. The Minangkabau should be treated well, as in the time of Sultan Agung and Sultan Ingalaga. A syahbandar should be appointed, Mangunjaya should be abandoned and all the guns brought down to Tanah Pilih.
7. If either prince failed to recognize these promises, he would not be honored as king.
8. Raja Maharaja Batu was to live in peace with the Company, like Kiai Gedé, as customary from olden times.

A crucial factor in restoring the Good Time of Sultan Agung was the return of the English. As one noble put it, “Before, when Jambi was flourishing, there were two lodges, that of the English and that of the

Company."⁹⁵ The final clause of this compact therefore specified that the English should be allowed to return to Jambi and open a post. On their own initiative, the court was also responsible for drawing up another agreement to regulate the flow of revenue and labor to the ruler. Dated Jumadilakhir, Tuesday, 1119, at the time of eight o'clock, it proclaimed that "on this day all was forgiven, and this will last forever for the children and children's children who live along the Jambi river."⁹⁶ The people of Sungai Tabir were to bring Sultan Kiai Gedé tribute, while responsibilities for supplying his guard, bringing his wood and water, and performing other corvée services were shared among several other communities living along tributaries of the Batang Hari. The final document drawn up by the court took the form of a genealogy of past Jambi kings with Pringgabaya presented as their successor. In return he promised to govern correctly and to protect traders from all interference. During a communal celebration of the conjunction of the present and the past, a great feast was held on the Dutch side of the river, and the head imam read aloud for all to hear the vows Pringgabaya had made.⁹⁷

Means of measuring the passing of time, though of growing interest within court circles, had little relevance for the mass of people in Palembang and Jambi. For them, historical time was heroic time, and the significant events of the past were remembered through their association with the great ancestors. In Palembang, where the written records of the Dutch East India Company provide an understanding of why memories associated with Sultan Abdul Rahman endured, the emergence of rulers as culturally heavy figures who ruled over a Good Time exerted a significant influence on the ruler-subject relationship. By attaching the activities of his or her own forebears to the "time" of legendary but powerfully encoded names like Sultan Cindé Balang or Ratu Sinuhun, the common person acquired access to a weighted and prestigious past. But whereas in Palembang the standing of kingship was considerably enhanced during the last part of the seventeenth century, the situation in Jambi evolved quite differently. Here the death of Sultan Agung in 1679 symbolized the end of the Good Time. The economic decline that followed and the ulu-ilir division saw a marked deterioration in the emotional attachment to individual rulers. The written contracts drawn up in the Jambi court in 1708 were concluded in the belief that time could in a sense be recreated, that the solemn conclusion of these compacts would bring back the Good Time of the panembahan and of Sultan Agung. But full equality was impossible in any brotherly relationship, and if Pringgabaya were to model himself after Sultan Ingalaga and become Jambi's senior ruler, it was necessary that his elder brother stand aside as their grandfather Sultan Agung had done. However, at

this very point Kiai Gedé, previously willing enough to take a subservient position, was presented with a newborn son by “Nyai Kedil, one of his legal wives, and also his dearest.”⁹⁸ Rescued from the fate of *tungguan putus*, Kiai Gedé was now filled with the ambition of bequeathing kingship to his own descendants. In consequence, the possibility of any immediate resolution to the Jambi conflicts began to slip further away.

CHAPTER FIVE

Contracts and Obligations: Upstream-Downstream Relations in Eighteenth-Century Jambi

The European conviction that trade was best conducted within a framework of written records is perhaps most clearly exemplified by the numerous contracts the VOC concluded in Asia, for the perception of these agreements as the basis for its commercial activities lay at the heart of the Company's dealings with Indonesian kingdoms. Throughout nearly two hundred years VOC representatives held firmly to the belief that once two parties had agreed on terms and had signed copies, the contract should structure their relationship. If both sides accepted and understood this document, any deviation from the agreed text must be regarded as an offense, and the Company was empowered to take appropriate measures to protect its trade should the cosignatories practice "deception."

The people of Jambi and Palembang were well accustomed to the idea of a contractual friendship. For generations relations between individuals and groups had been solemnized by ritual, communal feasting, the swearing of oaths, the threat of supernatural punishment should promises be broken, and above all by exchanges intended to affirm the alliance. The most lasting manifestation of friendship was always the creation of new kinship ties by the giving and receiving of women and by ceremonies during which the leader of one group adopted the other as a son or brother. At the same time, these ties could be reinforced by other solemnities. Frequently, for instance, a buffalo representing the unity of two groups was slaughtered and the meat and blood then ritually consumed. Each party took a horn, on which a record telling of their agreement might be incised. This was then retained in the community as a sacred heirloom. In a quarrel between two *marga* in Komering ulu in the nineteenth century one headman thus produced a buffalo horn dated 1576 A.J. (1653 C.E.) as proof of his clan's territorial rights.¹

Stored with the community's ritual objects, such indigenous contracts were normally revered rather than consulted. In a society where literacy was limited it was far easier to direct questions toward some respected elder who could provide an authoritative answer; as a result of this reliance on oral transmission, the understanding of what some past contract contained might be quite different from actuality. In the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, a Lampung man brought out a treasured copper piagem that his ancestors had received from Banten and asked a Dutch official the meaning of the Javanese inscription. He was upset to discover that "it did not say how far the authority of his lineage reached." This piagem, like other "documents," had been treasured not just because it was a symbolic reminder of a past agreement, but because it was imbued with its own sacral force. When a visitor to the Pasemah region was shown copies of treaties local groups had made with Stamford Raffles, he found that the wax seals were invariably missing. Since they were believed to contain the concentrated power of the signatories and to be charged with the sanctity of the exchange, the people had eaten them. "Somehow, should the writing get lost the seal at any rate had become part of themselves and its potency would descend to their heirs."²

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries these attitudes were often puzzling to Europeans. In Dutch eyes, treaties were certainly a declaration of friendship, but their primary purpose was to facilitate trade and to list specific commercial arrangements to which both sides were bound. They were not in any way "sacred" and could be altered or renegotiated to suit changing circumstances. When local kings avowed their friendship but disregarded the contract provisions, their behavior was regarded as further evidence of native perfidy. But despite constant disillusionment, VOC officials continued to believe that the key to commercial success lay in the signing of an advantageous contract, which the native signatory would honor. For their part, the courts of Jambi and Palembang did understand that contracts were a formal announcement of the relationship with the Europeans, and as time went on more discussion was given to the implications of particular articles. But for them the most important clause was always the first, with its affirmation of lasting friendship and its promise of an enduring *tolong-menolong* association not only with this king but with his descendants. The remainder of the contract was always subsidiary to this great declaration.

Following the formal signing of the contract, copies bearing the seals of the VOC, various nobles, and the king himself were exchanged. In Jambi and Palembang, where these sacrally charged items were normally kept with the royal regalia, the occasional losses of original contracts in Batavia would have been bewildering if not incomprehensible.

In the courts of southeast Sumatra the signed copies were viewed in the same light as the buffalo horns of the ancient oaths. Like the charters of medieval England, they were "a symbolic replica of the ritual by which the exchange was solemnized . . . both a legal record and a quasi-magical object."³ No royal wedding ever bound the "brother" or the "father" in Batavia to the royal houses of Jambi and Palembang, and no progeny were produced as a living testimony to their close relationship. But in nineteenth-century Palembang court officials nonetheless believed that when contracts had been signed with the Dutch a hundred years earlier forty youths and forty maidens had been sent to Batavia, like the legendary exchanges that had once occurred with China.⁴ In effect, the contract had made them kin. The varying hopes and expectations that resulted from the contract/kinsman association are no better exemplified than in the relationship between the VOC and Jambi during the eighteenth century.

Efforts at Ulu-Illir Reconciliation

For a short time after the agreement of September 1708 the Dutch were confident that a signed contract would be sufficient to maintain the older king-younger king concept and restore Jambi's prosperity. It soon became apparent, however, that this division of authority was unworkable. In the first place, Kiai Gedé was clearly reluctant to relinquish government and assume the passivity associated with the senior ruler. The birth of his son had fostered hopes that he could retain kingship in his own lineage, and he was heartened by the support he received from Sultan Mansur of Palembang, who had adopted the newborn prince as his own child. There was even some talk in Jambi that Kiai Gedé might marry a Palembang princess. A year after the 1708 contract he had not honored the agreement to leave the royal residence and move to the house his father had once occupied, and Pangeran Pringgabaya was still living on his boat moored on the river.⁵

In the second place, Pangeran Pringgabaya's ability to command popular support as the reigning king was increasingly under question. In the downstream port it was felt that he lacked commitment to the illir, since he and his leading supporters had left their wives and children in Mangunjaya and had not allowed the downstream people taken there in former times to return home. His real ties were in the ulu, where he had lived for twenty years, and his refusal to relinquish the revenues of Sungai Tabir was a particularly contentious issue, since this district had been intended to provide Kiai Gedé with an income. But the very strength of Pringgabaya's position in the ulu also began to work against him. In the competition with his brother to control both people and resources, Pringgabaya soon began to transgress the bounds separating

the obligations due an overlord from simple exploitation. The Minangkabau at the headwaters of the Batang Hari resented his interference in trade, while the people of Tujuh Kota had openly declared they they would not accept his authority and were already building defenses in expectation of warfare. Pringgabaya had also alienated Pangeran Sutawijaya, the *mangkubumi* (first minister) and heir to the pepper-rich Merangin area. Betrothed to Sutawijaya's sister for twelve years, Pringgabaya seemed reluctant to conclude the marriage, and he had attempted to install his favorite, a former Makassar slave, as Merangin's head. The people of Merangin strongly resisted this move, and Pangeran Sutawijaya, understandably alienated, had promised Kiai Gedé that if good military leadership were available, he would take up arms against Pringgabaya.⁶

Despite the complexity of the situation, Dutch faith in the powers of the contract appeared unshaken. In November 1709 the VOC administrators in Batavia drew up a draft treaty, which the Jambi resident, Abraham Patras, presented to the two brothers. Confirming VOC monopolies over trade in pepper and opium, it named as negotiating parties the Dutch East India Company on the one side and on the other "the kings Kiai Gedé and Sri Maharaja Batu Johan Pahlawan Alam Syah, the first as senior and the second as reigning sultan."⁷

The Jambi nobles, equally concerned at the continuing hostility between the brothers, also sought to oversee a reconciliation, invoking the age-old tradition of the verbal oath, made even more potent by a contract in the Dutch style. In late 1709, at the liminal period between Syaban, the eighth month of the Islamic calendar, when the ancestors were traditionally propitiated, and the onset of the holy fasting month of Ramadhan, they supervised the swearing of friendship between Kiai Gedé and Pringgabaya. Under the supervision of the *fakih* (Muslim legal authority) the two brothers affixed their seals to a written document dated "1121, the year Wau, 30 Syaban, at eight o'clock" (4 November 1709). By this they promised "in the name of Allah" to govern "as in the time of Sultan Agung," since Allah "had put kings on the earth to do good and to follow the law of Allah." In the presence of all the leading nobles, the princes held hands and vowed that if they did harm to each other, or their people, or their women, they would justly merit divine retribution.⁸

Efforts to find a solution to the Jambi question were also initiated by Minangkabau leaders, who as always were concerned about developments in Jambi because of the potential disruption to trade. Although Muara Tebo still operated as an exchange point, especially for cheap Indian cloth brought up from Padang and Bengkulu, the ulu's access to salt had been restricted in recent times by the effects of the VOC's monopoly on the west coast and its destruction of salt pans there. Since,

in the words of Patras, the ulu "could not do without salt," upstream traders now began to arrive in Tanah Pilih, bringing with them the serviceable Indian cloth that they bought elsewhere and sold much more cheaply than the VOC. The salt they brought was imported from Batavia and Java's east coast and normally sold for the equivalent of twelve to sixteen rijksdaalders the koyan. Like the Dutch, however, Kiai Gedé realized that access to salt could be a means of compelling ulu compliance. In 1707, having purchased a large portion of available supplies, Kiai Gedé was able in effect to operate a monopoly, charging twenty-eight rijksdaalders the koyan.⁹ Because of the need to guarantee unimpeded access to such essential items, Minangkabau leaders on the upper Batang Hari believed that some resolution with the downstream court was necessary. Indeed, this was considered so crucial that appeals for mediation went beyond the rantau areas and up to the court of Pagaruyung itself.

The subsequent Minangkabau intervention in the Jambi disputes was especially significant because of the awe with which the Pagaruyung rulers were popularly regarded and the powers associated with them. The impressive letters bearing the seal of the yang dipertuan sakti or of Puteri Jamilan, the Minangkabau queen, that periodically arrived in Jambi were redolent with ancient claims. Genealogies traced their glorious descent from Iskandar Zulkarnain, King Solomon, and the Prophet himself and listed the powerfully charged items they possessed—the pike that had killed a hundred thousand giants, the cloth woven by the noble heroine Sita, a piece of the wooden staff *kayu gamat*, which had been shared with China and Turkey.¹⁰

On various occasions seventeenth-century sources refer to arrangements by which successive kings of Jambi accepted their status as a vassal of Pagaruyung, and the importance of these "contracts" is indicated by their retention in oral memory. Stories collected in the nineteenth century recalled that the great Minangkabau yang dipertuan had once summoned the sultan of Jambi to a meeting at the border settlement of Semalidu. "I wish to give the rantau to you," he said, "because I do not have the strength (*kuasa*) to come and see all my subjects in the rantau rivers. I wish to give you the region from Semalidu to Tanah Pilih, from the Tujuh Kota and the Sembilan Kota to Jambi . . . from Petajin [near Muara Tebo] to Muara Sebak [near the coast, on the Nior River]." Two buffalo were then slaughtered, one facing upstream and one downstream. Their blood was mixed with the horns, and after these were buried, the meat was eaten and an oath of loyalty sworn. The symbolic mixture of *darah daging* (flesh and blood) made Jambi and Minangkabau one. The same legend also recounts the efforts made to delineate the jurisdiction of the three regents who controlled the Batang Tiga, three river districts at the headwaters of the Batang Hari, in the

name of Pagaruyung. They were accorded the area "from the notched durian to the *sialang* tree" (a tree where wild bees have nested), while downstream from Tanjung would be under the ruler of Jambi. Whoever broke this oath would suffer "the curse of *daulat*" (the special powers of royalty).¹¹

It was these old contracts that Minangkabau now evoked in hopes of bringing about some resolution. Pringgabaya's apparent refusal to honor an agreement made by their "grandfathers" led the Batang Tiga regents—Raja Hitam of Satiung, Baginda Ratu of Siguntur, and Raja Muhammad of Batujini—to come downstream in 1708 to voice their resentment. They were followed by even more impressive visits, for in November 1708 and again the following year envoys arrived from Puteri Jamilan, the Minangkabau queen, to remind her two "grandsons" of earlier agreements made between Pringgabaya and the yang dipertuan and of the meeting between herself and their father. On that occasion she had charged him with the government of Jambi, and this responsibility now fell on them. As a mark of special favor she sent the princes and the first minister gifts of "robes which I myself have worn."¹²

Despite these initiatives, animosity between the two princes simmered as Pringgabaya increased his efforts to win the support of both Palembang and Johor. But opposition to him in the downstream court as well as the interior was increasing, and in late 1710 a short-lived rebellion broke out in Mangunjaya, led by a man and woman who said they planned to install the first minister, Pangeran Sutawijaya, as king. When Kiai Gedé appeared upstream, however, support for the rebel leaders collapsed. Pangeran Pringgabaya's weapons, his mother, wives, concubines, and children, as well as several nobles who had remained at Mangunjaya, were all sent downstream. Kiai Gedé himself continued up to Jujuhan and Tanjung, and in early 1711 he felt sufficiently confident to inform the governor general that "all the people of Sembilan Lurah" (a reference to Jambi's "nine" districts) were now under him.¹³

By this time the Dutch, persuaded by Patras, had withdrawn their earlier support for Pringgabaya in favor of their former client, Kiai Gedé. In September and October 1710 two small VOC forces left Batavia for Jambi, and on 14 December Pangeran Pringgabaya was forcibly taken into custody. He and his family were then conducted to Batavia, from whence he was exiled to Banda, where he died in 1716. The 1709 contract therefore remained unratified, and a new treaty was concluded in September 1711 with Kiai Gedé alone. So close was the association between them that some upland groups now believed Kiai Gedé planned to give the Dutch eighty of their children, forty girls and forty boys, as the traditional symbol of their relationship.¹⁴

Ulu-ilir Divisions and Minangkabau Migration

The new Dutch contract was predicated on the assumption that the collapse of Jambi's pepper trade had been caused by the ulu-ilir division. VOC officials therefore believed that the solution lay in the installation of a downstream king who would be recognized by all. In the absence of any other clear contender and despite previous experience, they hoped that Kiai Gedé would fill this role. Very soon, however, it became apparent that he was still unable to capture the ulu's loyalty and support. A primary reason for this failure was the marked increase in Minangkabau migration and their unwillingness to enter into the unwritten but implicit ulu-ilir contract unless it held out promise of real advantages.

Minangkabau groups had been settled in the upper Batang Hari for well over a century, growing pepper and mining gold, but the defeat of Aceh by the Dutch in 1667 had encouraged an unprecedented surge of migrants and seasonal workers into the Jambi rantau, drawn by the development of new gold-mining areas around Jujuhan, Tabir, Tebo, and in ulu Tembesi. In 1688 the Dutch described one such district on the upper Batang Hari, about two weeks' travel from Jambi. Here many thousands of people came seasonally to seek gold after the heavy rains of the wet season had washed down gold-bearing soils from small streams and creeks. More than two hundred years later there were still memories here of a time when the water was yellow because of gold digging upriver, when kampung were great and numerous, when children and women wore much gold jewelry, and every day people ate as much rice as they wanted.¹⁵

In the early eighteenth century Minangkabau gold seekers began to move farther downstream, following two principal routes. The first was the Batang Hari itself, which gave access to the gold-producing rivers of Sumai, Bungo, Tabir, and also (via the Tembesi) to the newer mines of Limun; the second, which probably developed somewhat later, went overland across the Kerinci plateau and then followed shallow mountain streams like the Merangin, which tumbled down from the highlands to become one of Jambi's great rivers. The Dutch were only vaguely aware of these developments, but something of the enterprise of early migrants comes through in surviving stories of heroic ancestors who made the journey down to Jambi from the Minangkabau heartlands to legitimize claims to territory through their possession of secret knowledge (*ilmu*) and sacral items such as a giant elephant tusk.¹⁶

The prominence given to the Minangkabau in Jambi folklore reflects their growing social and economic visibility. Gold had been exported from Jambi for at least two hundred years, but in the eighteenth century

it gained a new importance because of the decline of pepper. Advantaged by skills developed in gold-producing areas of their homeland, Minangkabau migrants dominated both the production and the sale of Jambi's gold. A primary factor in Minangkabau success was their group cooperation. Usually six to seven men among whom there was "a kind of equality" worked together in a joint enterprise, pooling their resources and knowledge. This cooperation made possible the exploitation of a larger surface area and probably encouraged the introduction of more sophisticated equipment. The evidence is not conclusive, but it seems that in Jambi the traditional way of obtaining gold, especially in the shallow mountain streams, was simple panning, a technique also used in the deeper downstream rivers during the dry season. The colonies of Minangkabau in Limun, Batang Asai, and Pangkalan Jambi, however, had apparently begun to excavate shafts to tap gold-bearing veins lying just below the ground's surface. The Dutch also spoke of the use of "machines" by the new arrivals, apparently a reference to Minangkabau adaptation of the *kincir* or waterwheel. Originally developed for irrigating wet rice fields, this was being used to divert water from canals into sluices as the gold was being washed. By these methods a band of workers could collect from six to twenty *tahil* of gold per annum.¹⁷ The Minangkabau domination of gold production gave them a commanding position in the economy of ulu Jambi, for in many places in the Sumatran interior, gold became a medium of local exchange. "Every man," commented William Marsden, "carries small scales about him, and purchases are made with it so low as the weight of a grain or two of padi." It was the Minangkabau who were the most able gold traders, their experience apparent in their ready detection of any attempt to adulterate gold by adding iron or copper filings.¹⁸

The emergence of Minangkabau as leaders of ulu resistance to the ilir probably owed much to the fraternity of the gold fields and the economic resources at the command of successful miners. But they were also accepted by non-Minangkabau, who believed Minangkabau generally to have "the character of great sorcerers, who by their spells can tame wild tigers and make them carry them whither they order them on their backs." The special knowledge that enabled the Minangkabau to produce kris and other weapons of such potency gave them also the ability to propitiate the spirits of the earth. Their ability to dig for gold successfully was proof that they were in league with supernatural forces.¹⁹ Men with these credentials could be readily accepted as local leaders.

The most telling factor in the standing of individual Minangkabau was their frequent claim to be envoys of the revered Pagaruyung court. Anyone who purported to be the messenger of such a power was accorded enormous prestige, and from the late seventeenth century one can trace a succession of Minangkabau claiming to be sent from the

yang dipertuan or Puteri Jamilan. Of these the most successful was Raja Kecil, who for a brief time (1717-1721) reigned as king of Johor, his standing as a messenger of the Minangkabau queen further enhanced by the widespread belief that he was a son of the murdered Sultan Mahmud of Johor returning to reclaim his heritage. In Jambi the same phenomenon was apparent on a lesser scale. In 1689, for example, a Minangkabau named Raja Balang appeared with six thousand men to join Pangeran Pringgabaya, and a few years later a certain Raja Putih, a Minangkabau "from over the green mountain" arrived at Mangunjaya with his following.²⁰

A clear statement that some ulu communities were still dissatisfied with downstream rule came in March 1711, when a Minangkabau called Raja Ibrahim, presenting himself as a representative of the yang dipertuan sakti and Puteri Jamilan, appeared in the ilir capital with a small escort of seven or eight people. Raja Ibrahim brought with him the silver plate on which was written the 1698 contract that Pringgabaya and Kiai Gedé had mutually sworn under Minangkabau auspices. It was known that he had been a favorite of Pringgabaya, and he claimed this plate had been given him as proof he was a true representative. He also had with him letters accrediting him as the agent of "Duli Yang Dipertuan Sultan Pagaruyung who occupies the royal throne of Minangkabau and its vassal lands." According to Raja Ibrahim, the rulers of Minangkabau, "the kings behind the green mountain," were disturbed that although they had given Pringgabaya the title of sultan, he had been banished to Batavia. They therefore intended, he said, to send a large army to ensure that he was brought back and reinstated.²¹

Raja Ibrahim persisted in the claim that the Minangkabau ruler in Pagaruyung had ordered him to take up arms to bring about Pringgabaya's return. As leader of the Minangkabau in the Mangunjaya area, he was regarded with particular veneration, and it was not long before another rebellion broke out near Muara Tebo. Although the uprising initially comprised only about forty people armed with a few Minangkabau muskets, support for Raja Ibrahim grew, especially among the gold miners. Raja Ibrahim also gained the allegiance of numerous upstream groups when he appointed as his deputy the foster father of Pringgabaya's daughter. A number of ulu heads were related to Pringgabaya by marriage and had previously received their districts as a gift from him. Such people therefore supported Raja Ibrahim in his demand that either Pringgabaya or his eldest son, Raden Astrawijaya, should be returned to Jambi to govern in Kiai Gedé's place.²²

Urged on by Resident Patras, Kiai Gedé was persuaded to personally lead upstream a force of about eight hundred men, to which were added eight Ambonese employees of the VOC. But his reports from the interior were confused and conflicting, alternating between optimism about

the possibility of taking Mangunjaya and despair about evidence of new dissension. Although it was obvious that the Minangkabau were by no means united against him, he dared not make a stand against the rebels. On 10 July 1711 he left for Tanah Pilih, where he arrived four days later, bringing with him the inhabitants of several ulu villages. It was estimated that about twenty-five hundred people would now be resettled near the Jambi capital.²³

The Mangunjaya rebels thus remained in possession of their forts around Muara Tebo. Raja Ibrahim was known to be corresponding with some of the downstream nobles and several court ladies, and he announced publicly that he would not submit until Pangeran Pringgabaya, "the sultan our father," was returned. He and his followers were apparently convinced that they were acting under the direct orders of Pagaruyung, and support for their cause was fed by numerous letters circulating in the upstream region urging resistance. Purporting to come from the Minangkabau rulers, these were widely accepted as genuine. One sent to the Dutch, for example, was said to come from "Sultan Mualam Duli Yang Dipertuan Besar Syah, son of Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain who occupies the throne of Minangkabau and its tributary lands." It announced that "Duli Yang Dipertuan had made his grandson, Sultan Sri Maharaja Batu Johan Pahlawan Alam Syah king of Mangunjaya, and had given him the lands from the foot of Gunung Merapi to Mangunjaya." Because he had been taken away, the country had been destroyed, and "Duli Yang Dipertuan of Pagaruyung wished that the captain of Jambi would place everything on the old footing again."²⁴

Patras did not believe that these letters, sent to communities where few could read, were in fact from the Pagaruyung court. Envoys whom the Dutch accepted as legitimately representing the yang dipertuan of Minangkabau, since they carried a royal kris as proof, denied the existence of any such correspondence. Local Minangkabau rajas, they said, had sent these letters to frighten Kiai Gedé and his people. But whatever their provenance, they were clear evidence of a general Minangkabau dissatisfaction with the current economic situation and of the belief that this could be rectified by Pringgabaya's return. Determined to find a solution to the continuing unrest, Patras finally threatened to cut off salt supplies to the interior, since he knew that the ulu could "only get it from elsewhere with difficulty." A short time later, in December 1711, the Minangkabau regents—Raja Hitam, Raja Mohammad and Baginda Ratu—dispatched an envoy to Tanah Pilih with the message that they were willing to help suppress the rebels. According to other envoys from Pagaruyung, if steps were not taken to put down the rebellion, the yang dipertuan was determined to undertake the task himself.²⁵

Assisted by the VOC, Kiai Gedé was then emboldened to make yet

another expedition upstream, this time with twenty-six ships and seven hundred well-armed men. Although promised pardon, the rebels refused to surrender. In the battle that followed, Mangunjaya was finally taken, its defenses destroyed, and Raja Ibrahim and several other leaders captured. In early February 1712 Kiai Gedé returned to the capital, escorted by a party from Tujuh Kota. In a Dutch bid to bolster the Jambi ruler's standing, three of the leading rebels were publicly hanged on a specially built gallows, an act the resident knew would cause "a great shock" among the people. "I do not think," he wrote to Batavia, "that anyone will rebel against their lawful king again." Raja Ibrahim's death "in shackles" in the Company jail in 1714 thwarted the resident's plan to have him executed as an example to other Minangkabau. But an indication that ulu opposition to the ilir was still flourishing became apparent even while Raja Ibrahim lay incarcerated, for letters purportedly from Puteri Jamilan arrived in Tanah Pilih asking that he be released and that Pringgabaya be brought back as king once more.²⁶

New Kings, New Contracts, Old Problems

For a brief period it seemed that some accommodation in Jambi's ulu-ilir relations was possible and that hopes of economic recovery could become reality. Certainly there is ample evidence that interior communities like Tujuh Kota welcomed the prospect of reconciliation with the downstream capital and the opening of trade after thirty-five years. Indeed, expectations of return to the prosperity of the past excited responses in areas far removed from Tanah Pilih. Beyond Jambi borders the Minangkabau kings of Passimpé sent envoys downstream to their "elder brother" to assure him that they and other Minangkabau groups had together resolved to honor the oath taken "by our ancestors in olden times at Rantau Kapas with the panembahan." Henceforth they would come downstream to trade so that "Passimpé would be Jambi's head and Jambi would be Passimpé's tail," with Tanah Pilih the main negotiation place. The heads of Serampas and Sungai Tenang, far on the boundary with Kerinci, whose contacts with Tanah Pilih had lapsed for a generation, also asked that trade be resumed "as of old."²⁷ Kiai Gedé himself seemed to be more appreciative of the extent to which ilir commerce depended on good relations with the Minangkabau and showed a greater willingness to accommodate their needs. In 1717, independently of the Dutch resident, he drew up a "contract" with local Minangkabau traders that guaranteed their property and people from seizure by the ruler, placed them under Minangkabau rather than Jambi law, limited the kind of corvée required, and exempted them from tolls and the requirements to present expensive gifts.²⁸

Nonetheless, hopes of recovery were short-lived, for the restoration of

ulu-ilir relations depended on the economic recovery of the downstream port, and this proved impossible to attain. Relations with Johor were soured in 1714 when Kiai Gedé attempted to prevent pepper from being taken to Johor via a well-established route down the Tungkal River. The resulting attacks by Johor orang laut on vessels sailing to and from Jambi were highly effective in deterring maritime trade, and by 1718 three hundred Minangkabau traders who had settled in the capital two years before had all left. The failure of the downstream economy in turn undermined efforts to restore economic links with the interior, and the VOC's account books reflected the deteriorating situation. Between 1707 and 1719 the Dutch received only 3,397 piculs of pepper in Jambi, and the losses amounted to 112,216 guilders.²⁹

Less than four years after the failure of Raja Ibrahim's rebellion, ulu dissatisfaction was again threatening to erupt into violence. His own income slipping away, Kiai Gedé and his unpopular favorites made ever greater demands on his people for payment of debts, presentation of tribute, and rendering of corvée; there were rumors that he had destroyed certain documents that set out the rights of ulu dwellers and on which he had earlier placed his seal. The view of the ilir king as miserly and oppressive seemed confirmed as Kiai Gedé, under pressure from the Dutch to produce more pepper, announced that any cotton gardens discovered would be destroyed. When he married the wife of his predecessor, a practice sanctioned by tradition, the image of the immoral, uncaring king was complete, for Pringgabaya was at that point not dead but alive in Banda.³⁰

It was not lightly, then, that the people of Tujuh Kota complained that "old laws and customs" were no longer observed. Excluded from decision making, the downstream nobles were equally unhappy. Led by Pangeran Nattaningrat, Kiai Gedé's powerful son-in-law, they accused the ruler of governing without consultation, "against the old custom of the kingdom and its laws." From their standpoint, the solution to unpopular rule had already been provided by VOC actions in 1687 and 1710: the king should be deposed and a new one installed. When Kiai Gedé went upstream to Tujuh Kota in September 1718 to collect taxes and tolls, the ilir leaders began to formulate a plan to unseat him in favor of Pangeran Pringgabaya's son, Raden Astrawijaya. About a hundred people left Tanah Pilih for Muara Tembesi to rally ulu support.³¹

By February 1719 the rebel force, numbering about eight hundred, had established themselves upstream from Tanah Pilih and had begun to attack the royal residence. About eight thousand men from the Minangkabau settlements of Tujuh and Sembilan Kota and adjacent districts were reported to be coming down to join the uprising, and perahu from the interior arrived daily. The rebel leaders were adamant

that they would have nothing more to do with Kiai Gedé and that Jambi could flourish only if Raden Astrawijaya was installed as king. Bereft of support, Kiai Gedé took to his bed at the end of May. When the Dutch resident, Paulus van der Stoppel (1718-1721), learned that Pangeran Nattaningrat and the leading nobles planned to seize the king's wives and all his gold, he decided to intervene. Placing the royal residence under a VOC guard, van der Stoppel took possession of the regalia and the sacred cannon, forbade any marriage between the king's wives and ulu heads, and prevented members of the royal family from retreating upstream. This was the situation on 20 June 1719 when Kiai Gedé died after an illness of less than three weeks. Two days later his body was buried "in the presence of many headmen from the uplands," and in September 1719 the VOC sent Raden Astrawijaya back from Batavia. He was duly installed as Sri Sultan Astra Ingalaga, a title that deliberately incorporated that of his grandfather, "because this person is revered by the Jambinese."³²

While the new king remained in the lodge, the interior heads, the nobles, and the resident met to frame what they hoped would be a lasting solution to Jambi's problems. The leading courtiers, including Kiai Gedé's son-in-law, Pangeran Nattaningrat, and the latter's son Raden Demang, acknowledged the new king and made an oath that they would be true to him until death. Everything would be restored "as it was in the time of Sultan Agung and Sultan Ingalaga," and messages were sent upstream to announce the new order. But the prime instrument in inaugurating Sultan Astra Ingalaga's reign and in laying out the subject-ruler relationship was the written contract. In December resident van der Stoppel, the ruler, the principal nobles, and heads of the "nine rivers of Jambi" signed an agreement that confirmed the VOC pepper monopoly yet at the same time proclaimed that the kingdom would be governed according to "the old customs as they were in the time of Sultan Agung." These would not be changed but would endure for the signatories and their descendants forever.³³

Whatever hopes lay behind the signing of yet another contract proved to be unfounded. Once again the resident's letters from Jambi bewailed the unrest upstream, which he attributed to the increased demands for tribute and extortion by powerful royal favorites. It became apparent that support for Sultan Astra was not as universal as the Dutch had believed, and once again this hostility was articulated in complaints about his perceived moral shortcomings. Although it was understood that any new king was customarily entitled to the wives and concubines of his predecessor, Sultan Astra had given the ulu heads a written guarantee, a "contract," that he would not sleep with a certain gundik who was so unpopular that she was accused of poisoning Kiai Gedé. There was naturally an outcry when he announced that she was already

pregnant by him. He was also accused of neglecting his obligations to his relatives, having divorced his first wife without giving her proper maintenance and keeping Kiai Gedé's widow and her son, Pangeran Surianegara, confined in the palace without economic support. The sight of a former queen of Jambi exchanging hair oil and bundles of leaves for rice caused a public scandal. The thirteen-year-old Surianegara did not forgive the king for condemning him to penury and vowed that he would eat no more rice until he had avenged the wrong done him.³⁴

The most obvious leadership for opposition to Sultan Astra came from Pangeran Nattaningrat, who had been married to the now deceased daughter of Kiai Gedé and had appointed himself guardian of the previous ruler's widow and son. During a trip upstream to Muara Tebo in May 1720, Nattaningrat found common cause with the orang ulu leaders, with whom he swore an oath to remove Sultan Astra Ingalaga and put Pangeran Surianegara, Kiai Gedé's son, on the throne. Supported by the heads of Kota Tujuh and Kota Sembilan, Pangeran Nattaningrat claimed that Sultan Astra was not following the "customs" established by the Company and Kiai Gedé and was therefore not worthy to be king. Once again, however, the Dutch intervened to support their chosen candidate, and under great pressure from the resident, the upland heads agreed to take an oath of loyalty to Sultan Astra. The penghulu of Muara Tebo, Tujuh Kota, Sembilan Kota, Petajin, and the areas from Tanjung to Ujung Jabung put their name to a document in which they recognized Astrawijaya as ruler, "according to ancient customs." Sultan Astra then moved to protect his position by arresting Pangeran Nattaningrat and his son Raden Demang, imprisoning them in the palace.³⁵

Such measures were completely ineffectual in winning popular support for Sultan Astra, either in the court or among the population at large. The basic problem was, of course, the economic decline of the downstream port, but the Dutch still believed that the Jambi situation was amenable to some form of compromise. The problems, they argued, must lie in the nature of the contract that van der Stoppel had concluded in 1719. In June 1721, accused of a "poor administration," he was therefore demoted and recalled to Batavia. Abraham Patras was dispatched once more to Jambi, and on 21 October a new contract was concluded, following the same form as that of 1711. Despite continuing difficulties between upstream and downstream, Patras was also able to initiate a reconciliation between the king and his cousin, Kiai Gedé's son, Pangeran Surianegara. During an emotional meeting, Surianegara handed over the state kris, and in the accompanying ceremony he was accorded the new title of Sultan Muhammad and married to Sultan Astra's sister. A few months later another potential source of opposition

seemed to be eliminated by the death of Pangeran Nattaningrat. In November 1724 Sultan Astra's position appeared confirmed when the Dutch resolved that Pangeran Surianegara, together with his family, should in future make his home in Batavia.³⁶

It was apparently Surianegara's departure that triggered off another rebellion, this time against Sultan Astra. It was led by the principal nobles, who had long fretted against the loss of their lands and people and the influence of the ruler's favorites. They found considerable support among the upland peoples, for both groups complained that Sultan Astra was not abiding by "the contract"; the interior heads in particular argued that promises of a return to the same pepper price they had received in "the time of Sultan Agung" had not been honored.³⁷ In January 1725 a cabal headed by Pangeran Nattaningrat's son Raden Demang took possession of the state kris and royal treasure and imprisoned the king in "a stone house." They then informed the resident that they wanted "a son or grandson" of Kiai Gedé on the throne—that is, Pangeran Surianegara or Raden Demang himself.

For several months Jambi was without a ruler. However, a brother of Sultan Astra had escaped to the interior, where he found a welcome among the *Tujuh Kota*, whose loyalty had now reverted to the *Pringgabaya* line. In May 1725 a large force from this area arrived downstream once more, pushed their way into the royal compound, and released the imprisoned Sultan Astra. On June 11 their leaders placed him on the throne again, compelling the inhabitants of *Tanah Pilih* to take an oath of loyalty and swear that they would never take up the sword against *Tujuh Kota*. Raden Demang, however, did not give up easily. By late June he had forced the *ulu* rebels out of their defenses and had forced them to retreat upstream. With Dutch compliance Sultan Astra was again deposed, and in July Batavia sent Kiai Gedé's son, Pangeran Surianegara, back to Jambi. With great ceremony and in the presence of princes and nobles, the youth was installed as ruler with the title Sultan Muhammad Syah. *Baginda Ratu*, one of the *Minangkabau* regents from the upper *Batang Hari*, adopted the new king as a brother and asked that trade with the uplands be resumed. In 1726 Raden Demang, now first minister, brought down the principal interior headmen, including those of *Tujuh Kota*, *Sembilan Kota*, the *suku pindah*, and *Tembesi*. Setting aside their crises, they kissed the feet of the new ruler and swore to live peacefully under his rule. The curse of "the ten plagues" would fall on any who was disloyal to him or to his protector, the Company.³⁸

On 21 December 1726 this apparently promising situation was dealt a body blow when Surianegara, the new Sultan Muhammad Syah, died of smallpox, an event that caused a "great shock" among the people, no doubt confirming the belief that Kiai Gedé's line was cursed. Once

again there was no king in Jambi. Now it was the turn of the Pagaryung court to propose a solution, and under Minangkabau auspices an agreement was made whereby Sultan Astra should be released and his four brothers permitted to return to Jambi. In March 1727 the Minangkabau yang dipertuan himself appeared in Tanah Pilih, bringing with him the three Jambi princes who had taken refuge upstream. On 30 March, after two years' imprisonment when "he did not know if it was day or night, and when sometimes he had spent two days without food or being able to wash," the dethroned Sultan Astra was again free. To forestall any possible challenge by Raden Demang, a large number of uplanders in boats decorated with yellow flags and umbrellas (the symbol of royalty) arrived downstream and anchored two miles above the lodge.³⁹

The Minangkabau yang dipertuan left suddenly before the matter was completely settled, but the seal of approval his appearance in Jambi had given to the regime brought fresh hopes of ulu-ilir reconciliation. In early 1728 one of the Minangkabau regents from the upper Batang Hari sent the message that he would urge his subjects along the Limun River to sell their gold in Tanah Pilih. There were encouraging reports that in Tembesi the suku pindah groups, numbered at about four thousand, were planting pepper again, and they also appeared willing to cooperate with the king regarding corvée duties. Even if the heady days of pepper cultivation had gone, the Dutch expressed cautious hopes that Jambi might well be able to act as a distribution center for salt and cloth.

The VOC decision to retain its Jambi post was signalled on 30 August 1727 when a new contract was signed and a start made on the reconstruction of the Dutch lodge. The position of the restored king appeared further strengthened following the departure, capture, or death of all his leading opponents. Raden Demang left for Palembang, and several followers of the rebel nobles were publicly shot in the public square, the paseban, as a warning to others. Palembang's Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin (1724-1757), whose mother was from Jambi, appeared favorably disposed and agreed to assist in capturing those opponents of Sultan Astra who had taken refuge in his territory. This friendship was furthered by the visit to Palembang of the aging sister of the former Sultan Ingalaga (d. 1699), a lady of "enormous prestige," "illustrious and eminent," to see her Palembang relatives. In the messages she presented, Sultan Astra clearly stated that he wanted an end to the estrangement between Jambi and Palembang and "unity between the two as in the days of old."⁴⁰ His explanation that previous flaws in his government were due to immaturity, poor advisers, and the absence of family support seemed convincing enough, and there were

hopes that he and his brothers would now be able to provide a much needed leadership.

It quickly became clear, however, that the problems Jambi had faced over the previous fifty years had not disappeared. The contracts formulated in Batavia were based on the belief that the downstream could dominate the interior. This had never been the case in Jambi, and there was no evidence of any change, especially in light of the continuing penury of the downstream court. A key factor was the loss of orang laut loyalty, which had dribbled away in the face of the ruler's poverty. Inability to offer protection to incoming traders or to drive off enemy raiders became particularly serious because of continuing disturbances in the southern Melaka Straits. In 1722 Bugis forces had taken the island of Riau, defeating the Minangkabau prince Raja Kecil, who had for a short time reigned as king of Johor. Jambi's close association with Minangkabau made it a prime target for Bugis hostility, and it was said they would also have attacked Tanah Pilih had it not been so far inland. Several Bugis vessels were reported near the mouth of the Jambi River, precipitating a hasty construction of defenses. Although Sultan Astra Ingalaga had been able to pacify the new rulers of Riau, the damage done to Jambi's maritime trade was already extensive.

A deteriorating port economy further contributed to the decline of pepper growing, already displaced in most areas by rice or cotton. Some replanting of pepper was undertaken in the 1730s, but continuing raids by Palembang groups in Tembesi and beyond discouraged further expansion. Along the Ketalo River, for instance, the people said that they had begun to develop gardens three times but had been forced to leave them on each occasion. In 1739 the resident estimated that the Dutch could still expect about two hundred piculs per annum, but in that year a very dry east monsoon season followed by heavy rains and flooding destroyed many mature vines and thousands of young ones. Two years later most pepper plants were struck by a disease that caused them to lose their blooms within a month. In 1740 a general order that uplanders need not come downstream for *corvée* duties except for defense was extended to release ulu people from all court service as long as they agreed to plant pepper. The retraction of trade with Java and Siam, however, made it even more imperative to plant rice. One of the leading princes said he wished to convert a newly laid out pepper garden at Muara Siau into a rice field, and two years later all downstream people were ordered to plant rice, with a fine to the value of ten *rijksdaalders* if they refused.⁴¹

Because Tanah Pilih offered so few attractions, Dutch hopes of establishing a steady trade in gold proved elusive. As Sultan Astra explained, along the established gold-bearing rivers like the Tabir, Tebo, and

Bungo there had been a longstanding custom that goods were distributed on credit with payment expected in two or three years. When he urged that this practice be reinstated, promising himself to act as guarantor, the resident pointed out there was little indication that the interior people were ready to come downstream. It was well known that higher prices for gold could be obtained in Inderagiri, Bengkulen, and especially Palembang, and it would be a long time before they could be wooed away.⁴²

The difficulties in reestablishing trading links between the coast and gold-mining areas of the interior was also due to the effective invasion of these districts by Minangkabau. By 1728 the Jambi ruler said that the Minangkabau gold seekers were swarming in their thousands, "like wild men," and there were said to be fifteen or twenty in every village. More than a decade later the resident commented that there were many more "Minangkabau" in the interior than Jambinese, and that the latter were outnumbered ten to one. In 1761 it was even claimed that "all bovenlanders" were called Minangkabau. It is therefore not surprising that the ongoing accommodation between local society and Minangkabau newcomers is a recurring theme in Jambi's local traditions.⁴³ One motif concerns the establishment of forms of government that recognize the customs of both sides in order to settle disputes arising between the new arrivals and older communities. According to a tradition collected in the Bangko area of Jambi, for instance, two Minangkabau lineage heads joined with the district chiefs of Muara Langkap on the Jambi-Kerinci border to form a federation in which Minangkabau and Jambi customs were both acknowledged. Nearby at Nilo a *sidang* (gathering) composed of the "father"—the *dato berempat* (the four lineage heads associated with Kerinci)—and the "mother"—the *menteri bertiga* (the three ministers linked with the batin groups in the Bangko region)—met to settle quarrels.⁴⁴

By contrast, other stories tell of murder and death when the existing inhabitants were forced to relinquish territory to incoming Minangkabau who often resisted paying even nominal ground rent. Dutch sources bear out the impression that conflicts arose when the new migrant groups, anxious to gain access to favored areas, evinced little knowledge of or regard for local claims. Such tensions were often fuelled by the downstream king, anxious to link himself with these economically powerful groups. In 1721, for instance, Sri Maharaja Raja Hitam, one of the regents from the upper Batang Hari, claimed that Sultan Astra Ingalaga had awarded him rights over the mines in the Tebo area in return for support. As evidence, he produced a written document from the sultan and Resident van der Stoppel specifying that half the gold should be sold to the sultan and half to himself. If this edict was not obeyed, announced the royal order, the people would no longer be per-

mitted to the fish in the ruler's rivers, use his water, cut his wood, or live on his land. But as large numbers of Minangkabau arrived to work the Tebo gold, resistance to their presence grew.⁴⁵ When the local people refused to give up their mining rights, claiming them as a heritage from ancient times, a noble, Ngabei Karta Laksamana, was sent upstream in early 1722 to take control. It was hoped that as a smith he would be able to effect a compromise, since in Minangkabau tradition goldsmiths were always regarded as neutral figures who were able to order the end of hostilities between rival parties. The Tebo villagers, however, still refused to comply, saying they would deliver tribute to a Jambi ruler but not to a Minangkabau and declaring that they wanted to be governed "as in the time of Pancambahan Rantau Kapas."⁴⁶

The difficulties involved in creating new economic and cultural links between these Minangkabau communities and the downstream port were even more obvious in the gold-producing district of Limun. It was only with the intervention of the Minangkabau ruler in 1729 that the four Limun heads agreed to recognize Sultan Astra Ingalaga as their overlord, although they requested that their leaders continue to be installed by the Minangkabau regents, acting as representatives of Pagaruyung. In 1732, however, the area was drawn into Palembang politics when Sultan Anum, the deposed Palembang ruler, fled to Limun. Here he married the daughter of one of the Minangkabau heads and set up defenses to resist the Palembang forces sent to capture him. His final surrender in 1736 did not put an end to the troubles in the area, because the gold diggers were divided into two factions, those who had supported Sultan Anum and his father-in-law, and those under another Minangkabau leader who had been attached to the Palembang forces. They were impervious to downstream efforts to restore order, even when Sultan Astra had announced his intention of closing the Jambi River to force the gold miners to acknowledge him as ruler. In 1740 the Minangkabau invited Sultan Astra to install several heads in Limun with the aim of encouraging commercial and political links with the ilir, but there was little evidence of changing commercial loyalties. Not only was Limun linked into the economic network of the interior; there were also well-travelled paths to Palembang, only eight or ten days away. In 1744 a new path was cut to link the two with resthouses established at points along the route. A tributary of the Batang Hari, the Sikut, provided another connection with Rawas, while Surulangun, in Palembang territory, developed into a major meeting place. In addition, Limun was only twelve days' travel overland from Bengkulu, where the English were said to be willing to defray the expenses of traders willing to bring their gold down from the interior.⁴⁷

European officials, primarily concerned with ocean-borne commerce, were only dimly aware of the vast traffic that was carried across

the Sumatran interior. Here a person often walked for weeks along jungle paths, carrying a load weighing as much as fifty kilograms in a specially constructed basket on his or her back. "It astonishes a lowlander," wrote one observer, "to see with what ease they walk over these hills, generally going at a shuffling or ambling pace."⁴⁸ At the urging of the Dutch, Sultan Astra attempted to restrict Limun's trade, prohibiting commerce with Palembang, forbidding the transport of rice upstream, proscribing sales in Indian cloth, and attempting to "block up the jungle paths." All such endeavors proved ineffective because of the many overland routes linking Limun to other areas. Even the promises given to Minangkabau overlords were not sufficient to induce the Limun gold miners to trade in a downstream port that offered little commercial advantage.

The Dutch had hoped that they might be able to resuscitate Jambi's trade through the sale of opium, but this too proved impossible because the opium trade was already in Minangkabau hands. In the early part of the seventeenth century it had been extremely difficult to sell opium in Jambi, but in the following decades consumption had expanded dramatically. This process had been encouraged by links with poppy-growing areas of India provided by English traders, with Riau and the English post in Bengkulu important redistribution points. In Jambi several court nobles were known addicts, and when Sultan Astra came to visit the Dutch lodge on New Year's Day in 1722 he brought with him his own prepared opium pipe.⁴⁹

Opium smoking was not a cheap habit, since the drug commanded high prices; a chest containing about 140 English pounds, for instance, could be purchased for about three hundred rials and be sold again for five hundred, and on "occasions of extraordinary scarcity" it could sell for its weight in silver, upwards of three thousand rials a chest. In 1737 the VOC resident in Jambi was selling opium at 101 percent above the price in Batavia. Addiction was part of the reason for the high prices, but opium was also seen as a magic potion that enhanced a man's virility, courage, and strength, especially before battle or some other dangerous enterprise. It was therefore a valued gift, and when he intended to recruit the help of some interior heads a downstream minister asked the Dutch in advance for opium and Chinese tobacco.⁵⁰

The Minangkabau gold miners of Limun and Batang Asai were known as consumers of opium, but they were also active traders in the drug. The Dutch had hoped that they might be persuaded to buy supplies from the VOC in Jambi in exchange for gold so that opium could become an alternative to specie.⁵¹ However, they found that the proximity of Bengkulu and Riau so frequented by English traders made this goal unattainable. The benefits of the salt trade, touted as another prospective lure for upstream gold miners, were equally disappointing.

Drastic measures by the resident and king, such as forbidding any salt to go upstream unless there was evidence of trade with the VOC, were impossible to enforce.

Sultan Astra Ingalaga was fully aware of the need to strengthen his ties with the interior. One means of doing this was by reaffirming the ruler's position, and between 1729 and 1734 he spent long periods in the ulu with the hope of settling the continuing disputes between Minangkabau and local people. But the newcomers, he told the resident, refused to pay heed to him, and although he could rightfully command the suku pindah groups along the Tembesi to cut wood and tell the Tujuh and Sembilan Kota people to plant pepper, he could not make gold diggers and Minangkabau traders come down to Tanah Pilih. "All the people connected with the gold trade are subjects of the yang dipertuan," he explained; "they are not under me but upstream kings." Their cooperation could only be obtained through the intervention of the "three united princes" of Batang Tiga. The authority of these regents was reinforced further in 1732, when Puteri Jamilan, the Minangkabau queen, sent them "a pike and a sword" as a symbol to the upstream gold miners that they governed on behalf of her and the emperor of Minangkabau. For a time Sultan Astra was even in consultation with the regents in the hope of expelling all newly arrived Minangkabau from the villages of Tujuh and Sembilan Kota.⁵²

Part of the underlying cause of the continuing village disputes was the great importance placed by the Minangkabau on the necessity of gaining redress for any real or imagined wrong. Minangkabau *adat* (customary law) gave the "sister's brothers, sons and nephews" of an injured party full rights to wreak revenge. If murder was involved and the guilty party could not be found, vengeance could be exacted from family members "to the very last degree." Indeed, a contemporary commentator in Padang considered the Minangkabau desire for retribution to be "the canker of the coast." In Jambi calls for revenge were exacerbated by the large numbers of itinerant unmarried men ready to respond to the call of their leaders or kinsmen. In 1738, for example, a troop of a hundred Minangkabau invaded the village of Kembang Seri on the Batang Hari and destroyed all the pepper gardens there. They said they would not leave the people in peace until the Jambi ruler had given compensation for the death of one of their countrymen who had lived on the king's side of the river but had been killed by a Kembang Seri villager. Because the identity of the murderers was unknown, no arrest had been made, but now the safety of the entire river was threatened as other Minangkabau living at Limun went upstream with their weapons to lend assistance. Although the leaders were finally captured and brought down to Tanah Pilih, a year later a Minangkabau prince calling himself Yang Dipertuan Baginda Duljamal still demanded more

than six hundred rials as compensation. Sultan Astra had little choice but to pay him, since he was "a powerful and neighboring king."⁵³

The disregard of upstream Minangkabau for Sultan Astra's authority and the defiance of their leaders was indicative of continuing ulu dissatisfaction with ilir government. In February 1733 a deputation from a number of Minangkabau raja along the upper Batang Hari arrived at Tanah Pilih with a message asking that Raden Demang, Kiai Gedé's grandson, be brought back from exile in Batavia. Other upstream communities, taking their lead from influential court figures, increasingly saw recognition of royal jurisdiction as something to be negotiated and accepted only if the terms were favorable. Everywhere there were reminders of the deteriorating status of the downstream king. Traditionally, for instance, elephant tusks had been regarded as a royal monopoly, but now private trade was common. The resident was similarly told that in former times people had rarely dared to oppose a royal letter; currently documents bearing the king's seal giving a trader free passage and exempting him from any debts incurred by his "ancestors" received scant regard.⁵⁴

Authority over the interior had never come easily to the kings of Jambi, but there had been times in the past when interior groups had actively courted their patronage. Now the ruler and his agents were themselves forced to seek out clients. Sometimes, indeed, they were successful. In 1736 one of Sultan Astra's brothers went up to Kerinci to persuade the people there to bring their gold to Jambi instead of Bengkulen, which they had patronized for the last twenty years. This intervention was apparently fruitful because among the king's presents sent to Batavia in 1741 were four pieces of "medicine trees"⁵⁵ that grew in the Kerinci region, an indication he now had some authority there. Local legends also suggest that the lower areas of Kerinci remained within the Jambi orbit, and it is to the Jambi ruler that tradition attributes the division of cloth that created the two federations of Kerinci, the *delapan helai kain* (eight pieces of cloth) and the *tiga helai kain* (three pieces of cloth).⁵⁶ But this relationship could be maintained only if the people themselves desired it. Most ulu areas could operate economically independently of the downstream center, with local federations establishing their own verbal contracts to regulate such matters as boundaries, the administration of gold mines, and the regulation of debts. To enforce his own authority a particular headman might request a piagem from Jambi, but it appears that honors from the ilir king were increasingly insignificant.⁵⁷

A further reason for the declining status of the downstream court was the lack of royal leadership. Several of the princes in the court were opium smokers, and Sultan Astra himself did not rise before midday. Without the symbols of leadership, especially the state kris, his standing

was further undermined. It was even reported that he had sold some of the remaining regalia. Proximity resulting from his prolonged residence in the interior also served to destroy the illusion of the king as a distant but caring father as fines were exacted, debts forcibly collected, corvée imposed, and complaints about royal appointees ignored. Among the Sembilan Kota it was openly said that "no upstream people want the king to stay there any longer."⁵⁸

Because of Sultan Astra's lengthy sojourns in the interior his brothers began to act themselves like kings, attempting to attract their own following and build up their resources. Disturbed at these developments, a party of court nobles went upstream in 1733 to persuade the ruler to return to Tanah Pilih and participate in a new oath of unity. A written document dated 9 Haji 1145 (23 May 1733 c.e.) was drawn up, reiterating that the laws of Jambi should be the same as those "of the time of Sultan Agung and Sultan Ingalaga" and laying down that individuals who ignored them would be punished "by the thirty plagues of the Koran."⁵⁹ The lack of success of these measures is suggested by the fact that two years later Raden Demang, Kiai Gedé's grandson, was brought back from exile at Sultan Astra's request with the hope that he might be able to restore harmony to the realm. Shortly after his arrival, however, he died in suspicious circumstances during a fishing trip.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the rivalry between the royal brothers steadily increased, in every way opposing the cultural ideal of fraternal allegiance typified in legends like that of the great Orang Kaya Hitam loyally supported by his brothers and sister. Disputes among the brothers were so constant that the resident did not even bother providing details, merely telling his superiors that "the usual court quarrels" were in progress and to recount them would mean an "unending narrative." Several of the princes had acquired appanages that previously had been important for pepper and spent long periods upstream, supposedly encouraging the planting of pepper but in reality exacting tribute and taxes. One, for instance, controlled Merangin and Air Hitam while the youngest, Pangeran Sutawijaya, took over Tujuh Kota, where in 1741 he was forcibly pulling out cotton trees. The headman of Kembang Seri complained that the most senior prince, the pangeran ratu, had forced people to perform corvée, despite royal orders, and had enslaved thirty children. The people begged the ruler to take action, since this exploitation was causing many people to flee "to look for another lord."⁶¹

By the 1740s the Dutch were convinced popular opposition to Sultan Astra was so strong that it was again time to find an alternative king for Jambi. They were also concerned at deteriorating relations between Jambi and Palembang. Although Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin had indeed married Sultan Astra's sister, she was in fact the widow of an opponent of the Jambi ruler who had fled to Palembang. Far from

bringing Jambi and Palembang together, this union fueled ill feeling between them. Sultan Astra, who had not been informed of the marriage, said he felt so "wounded" by the insult that his only recourse was to go to war.⁶² The Dutch had no desire to see a renewal of conflict, and their plans for a change of government in Jambi, perhaps even the installation of an "upstream" and a "downstream" king, therefore assumed greater significance. Increasingly disapproving of Sultan Astra, they focused their attention on his youngest brother, Pangeran Sutawijaya. Despite the latter's unpopularity in some quarters, he still retained a following in the interior and was known to have the approval of the Minangkabau regents, who had used his services in settling disputes between them and Tujuh Kota. Having donned "the white cloth," he was also supported by the Islamic teachers. In particular, Pangeran Sutawijaya had a good relationship with Sultan Mahmud of Palembang, whose niece he had married.⁶³

In 1742, faced by a group of nobles who said they would no longer recognize him, Sultan Astra reluctantly agreed to step aside in favor of Pangeran Sutawijaya, hand over what regalia he still possessed, accept the title of panembahan, and move downstream to Kompeh. A written document announcing the change in government was prepared by the resident on 21 October 1742. On 25 January 1743, in the presence of the princes and representatives of all the interior groups, Pangeran Sutawijaya was confirmed as Sultan Anum Seri Ingalaga. Sultan Astra Ingalaga was to be termed Panembahan Puspanegara, with his income to come from one of the Jambi rivers. The following month the ruler put his seal to another document drawn up by the resident by which he swore to honor the 1721 treaty negotiated by Patras "of honored memory."⁶⁴

The Demise of the VOC Contract

The renewal of the VOC contract in 1743 came at a time when the implications of the Dutch-Jambi relationship, itself shaped by the contract, were becoming more apparent and the inherent tensions less easy to resolve. To a considerable extent such tensions were due to the dependence of downstream kings on VOC support. From 1687 until their final departure in 1768 the Dutch had a direct influence on the choice of every Jambi king, and this fact had become apparent in the language with which the governor general was addressed. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Jambi ruler had seen himself as superior to most Europeans with whom he came in contact. Dutch factors, as his children, were under his protection, while the governor general in Batavia was his brother. Throughout the eighteenth century the kings of Palembang also continued to refer to the governor general as

their "brotherly friend." By contrast, he had become the "father" of the kings of Jambi, with all that this connoted. Sultan Astra, who had grown up in Batavia, even termed himself the governor general's servant, and his links with the Dutch were openly confirmed when he took a woman from Peinaan, the VOC-supervised settlement around the lodge, as a wife. Because of Dutch involvement in their selection, successive kings felt VOC support was necessary to maintain their position. Kiai Gedé, for instance, considered the small VOC presence so essential to his continuing security that he did not wish to have a corporal put in irons for murder because this would reduce the military complement.

Dutch intervention in Jambi affairs in turn meant that the residents of the eighteenth century were more like powerful nobles than mere heads of a trading lodge. The tendency to see the resident as a second ruler was apparent even on the death of Kiai Gedé in 1719, when he willed his wives, concubines, children, and grandchildren not to his heir but to the Dutch.⁶⁵ On departing for a trip upstream, Sultan Astra similarly gave his seal to the VOC, saying, "I have left you in charge of my palace, women, and my honor and reputation."⁶⁶ The resident had such influence that he could even decide who should properly be permitted to settle in the downstream capital. In 1717, when ten orang laut vessels from Lingga came upriver and asked Kiai Gedé to take them under his protection, he was initially favorable. But he was overruled by the resident, who claimed they were pirates and should be ordered to leave. The leaders of the 1719 rebellion themselves claimed they were acting with the resident's approval. Only when it became known that van den Stoppel had prevented the king's women from marrying upland headmen and had distributed rice and money to rally opposition to Kiai Gedé did Batavia define more rigidly the extent to which a resident could "rule." Even so, in the absence of a king following the death of Sultan Muhammad Syah in 1726, Isaac Gouijn took over government completely, passing out brandy to encourage support for his own royal client and even imprisoning two princes.⁶⁷

As kings appeared unable to settle upstream quarrels, the position of successive residents was further enhanced. Not only did they act as mediators by resolving disputes; they also distributed gifts to interior heads and presented them with the insignia of office, an embossed ratan. Because of the instability of government and the frequent absences of rulers upstream, residents assumed many tasks normally assigned to leading nobles, such as sending letters with the king's seal to the interior. Acting as Company agents, they even began to trade in wax and elephant tusks, previously considered a royal monopoly. The continuing failure of Jambi kings to revive the country's former prosperity meant that many people came to prefer the VOC as their overlord. Sev-

eral royal women, neglected or divorced, appealed to the resident as their guardian and protector; a number of interior heads brought their *verband briefjes* (contract letters), the piagem that were believed to set out their rights and that past kings had given their forebears, to the resident in case the ruler made any change in them. When Baginda Ratu of Si Guntur, one of the Minangkabau regents, asked for toll-free trade down the Jambi River for his people, it was to the resident that he sent his present of rice, receiving in return various cloth goods to "encourage his loyalty."⁶⁸

There were also important symbolic statements of Dutch "kingship" in Jambi, for key items remained in the possession of the VOC. Despite a request by Pringgabaya, it appears that the sword Sri Mengula and the kris Banyak Putera, which his father had taken to Batavia, were never returned. In 1719 the regalia, consisting of the kris Macan Turu, the kris Si Genjai, as well as supernaturally endowed swords, muskets, and cannon were all in Dutch hands as surety against Kiai Gedé's debts.⁶⁹ The resident even had his own "kingdom," the settlement of Pecinaan around the Dutch lodge with its inhabitants, a motley collection of Chinese, Jambinese, and other "eastern nations." The reconstructed Dutch lodge itself had been built with more than twenty thousand stones brought from the walls of the king's residence and from "old Jambi," so that Sultan Astra could rightly say, "My house is the Company's house."⁷⁰

The emergence of the Jambi resident as what was essentially a second king raised contentious questions regarding jurisdiction. The attraction of living in Pecinaan was considerable, because these people now became VOC subjects and were exempt from any obligations to the king as long as they served the resident when required. The Dutch also argued that all incoming foreign traders should be under the resident's control, although the court held that this should apply only to those who came with a VOC pass. The 1719 contract that van den Stoppel and his assistant Willem Dacms drew up in consultation with the court nobles specifically tried to address the problem of the relationship between Tanah Pilih and Pecinaan. It entitled the resident to service from Pecinaan people "as in the time of Sultan Agung" but laid down that if foreign traders wished to place themselves under the ruler, the resident could not prevent them from doing so.⁷¹

The 1719 contract, significant because it was initiated locally rather than in Batavia, was nonetheless as ineffective as any other in resolving the ambiguous relationship between the VOC and the kings of Jambi. It can be argued that much of the animosity directed toward individual rulers resulted from their invidious position as agents of a commercial company whose treatment of locals was usually uncaring or even cruel.⁷² But the ruler's dependence on the Dutch meant he could not

readily resist either onerous trading demands or requests for men to cut and deliver forest trees from upstream areas, to pull the cables that towed Dutch ships upstream, to unload their cargoes. As the underlying contradiction between VOC agent and independent king became more evident, successive rulers also became more critical of individual residents. Such complaints, whether based on perceived or real failings, provide a barometer of relations between the Dutch and Jambi. When Jambi subjects expressed grievances against their kings, they were repeatedly made in terms of moral shortcomings. The same holds true of accusations made by rulers about residents. They were imparting a message not only about a particular person but about their relationship with the VOC as well. Actions that might have been excused or explained in happier times now became the basis for resentment and discontent. This was especially so in regard to the treatment of local women, who were often flagrantly exploited as sexual partners regardless of their marital status and without the royal sanction that would have legitimized the relationship.⁷³ Sultan Astra also complained bitterly about Jacob Vries de Witt (acting resident, 1728) who in fulfillment of a *niat* (vow) that he would hold a great feast if he recovered from an illness, sailed upriver with all the women from Pecinaan and even carried an opened yellow parasol, "which none except the sultan is allowed to use." On his return he began to cavort openly with his concubines, and when he was reported in the lodge "drunk with his whore, the lower half of his body naked," the king told him he should "conduct himself like a Christian."⁷⁴ Beneath the frequently expressed resentment about the way Dutch officials in Jambi usurped the ruler's role and arrogated royal privileges are intimations of an alienation that was ultimately to bring "the contract" to an end.

This alienation gathered pace from the accession of Sultan Anum in 1743 and accelerated following a visit he made to Palembang in 1745, which resulted in a formal reconciliation. On this occasion Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin expressly told the resident that he and the Jambi ruler were "brothers-in-law, and blood relatives," and Sultan Anum's attitude began to show an obvious change after his return home. Arguing that it was "not good for two suns to shine in Jambi," he now said that he feared nothing and that there was no need for the VOC to remain. Three years later his views were even stronger. In high hopes of concluding a marriage between his son and Sultan Mahmud's granddaughter, he announced that "Palembang and Jambi are one, why should I be afraid of the Company?" The resident's attempts to persuade him to cut his ties with Palembang were totally unsuccessful.⁷⁵

In this atmosphere the periodic differences between resident and ruler that had long been part of the VOC relationship became more serious. Sultan Anum now claimed that children born of a mother from

the king's side of the river and a father from the VOC side were his subjects; he even argued that the people of Pecinaan should be under him as well. There was growing evidence of royal resentment toward Dutch trading restrictions, particularly in regard to salt and gold purchases; local people acting on behalf of the VOC, previously permitted to go upstream to trade, were now told that they must sell their salt to the ruler. Without informing the resident, Sultan Astra ordered the beating of the gong (*gum-gum*) on both sides of the river, proclaiming that all gold should be sold to him. In 1748 he went up to Limun, where he personally tried to purchase supplies and prevent the people there going downstream.⁷⁶

Sultan Anum's disenchantment with the Dutch association was evident later that year when he went upstream to Muara Tebo. Despite repeated requests to return, he stayed there for twelve months, and two years later he threatened to go and live permanently in the interior. It was clear that he could see little advantage in the VOC contract. The Company was now entering its final years and was increasingly unable to supply the trading items the ulu wanted. The people of Limun, though they were known to have more than forty tahlil of gold in store, said they would not come down because they could not obtain the desired goods. The Dutch could not compete with Palembang, whose king maintained his own warehouse halfway between Palembang and Limun, where traders could stay free of charge and in which were stacked all kinds of cloth. In 1750 Limun traders took at least 425 tahlil of gold to Palembang to exchange for cloth and opium, and the entire Limun district was said to be filled with piece goods obtained from the English or in Palembang. Other independent peddlers carried gold back and forth to Rawas, also under Palembang sovereignty, where they obtained everything they wanted. In 1748 a new path had been cut to facilitate connections between Limun and Bengkulen, where gold was sold to the English.⁷⁷

Various reasons were put forward for Jambi's difficulties. The Dutch resident felt a major problem lay in the king's inability to read and write, so that he could not study documents and had to believe everything he was told. Sultan Anum attributed his problems to the opposition of his brothers and his son-in-law. The royal princes, he said, did not rise before midday and spent the rest of their time gambling and watching amusements and dancing. At his request several were arrested and sent to Batavia, but he still feared the VOC might support one of his remaining brothers as king. The first minister complained that Sultan Anum refused to give him the "great seal," "the main sinew and soul of this office," which authorized him to make rulings as he thought fit.⁷⁸ The Minangkabau considered the fault lay with the king himself and his treatment of the interior people, especially those of Tujuh and

Sembilan Kota. They were ashamed, they said, that they did not come downstream to trade, but the ruler constantly interfered with river traffic. Relations were so strained that when a Minangkabau delegation arrived downstream to discuss trading concerns, Sultan Anum declined to meet them, pleading grief at the death of his daughter.⁷⁹

Further, it seems that Sultan Anum himself had come to see the association with the Dutch not in terms of a beneficial alliance but as a relationship that had somehow aroused supernatural ire. His daughter's death in 1750 convinced him that his country was cursed, a belief that seemed confirmed by another epidemic illness two years later when his son by his second wife died. "Old people cannot remember such an unhealthy time here," wrote the resident. In the same year a major earthquake occurred; "a whole mountain and two *negeri* [villages] disappeared into the water, and for three days the river downstream was filled with mud and dead fish."⁸⁰ These developments were not conducive to a sense of well-being, and in January 1754 the situation worsened when there was an open display of violence between the Dutch and the Jambi court. The details of the quarrel are not clear, since the resident, Johannes Aalders, was a confirmed drunkard, and his account of what happened is confused. It appears, however, that an altercation occurred when Aalders refused to surrender a wealthy merchant to court justice; this was followed by further disputes during which he aroused court enmity by firing on the palace. Sultan Anum responded in kind. Realizing that he was ill-equipped to defend the lodge, Aalders panicked. On 9 February the entire Jambi garrison appeared in Palembang, saying they had fled for fear of being killed.⁸¹

Although Sultan Anum showed no desire for the Dutch to return, the VOC authorities nonetheless decided to reopen the post. Jambi had yielded no profits for more than half a century, but if abandoned it might become a hiding place for pirates and provide an opening for the English. Furthermore, Aalders had left behind gold and money belonging to the Company. Sultan Anum refused to repay this and rejected demands that he come personally to Batavia to apologize. An expedition of nearly three hundred men was therefore sent to Jambi in June 1754 to blockade the river.

Struck by disease, the VOC force suffered nearly fifty deaths in the first three weeks and was soon forced to withdraw. A stronger expedition followed, and on the insistence of his nobles, Sultan Anum finally sent envoys to negotiate with the Dutch resident in Palembang. Here Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin of Palembang acted as mediator, and on his "friendly and fatherly advice," Jambi concluded another treaty with the VOC on 1 June 1756. Sultan Anum promised to compensate the Dutch for their losses and confirmed the trading privileges they had obtained by the contract of 1721.⁸²

It is hardly likely that the VOC had any real expectations that this new contract would in fact restore Jambi. By this stage, indeed, VOC officials themselves were losing faith in the power of the written agreement to regulate commercial relations with native states, and from 1743 it was considered unnecessary to maintain an official contract book.⁸³ By mid-1758 the Jambi ruler had still not sent envoys to Batavia as he had earlier promised to do and was already regretting his decision to allow the Dutch to return. "It is my land," he said, "and no one else has anything to say about it except me." He was even thinking of asking "another foreign Company" (i.e., the English) to settle in Jambi. The resident's threat that the VOC would then send a thousand men and bring Jambi to its knees evoked a bitter response. If the Dutch tried to attack again, Sultan Anum told the acting resident, he would simply retreat to the interior where no one could chase him. The VOC should not imagine Jambi would be like Java, "where people can be compelled more easily. Here the river goes up high and it would be hard to reach me without harming the Company, which has already had experience of how many people can be lost, not through the might of my subjects but through the power of the spirits (*duyvels*)."⁸⁴

The anti-Dutch mood in Jambi was heightened in February 1760 when eleven large Bugis ships appeared at Simpang carrying about four hundred fighting men. During this visit a betrothal was negotiated between the two-year-old daughter of Sultan Anum and the Bugis leader Raja Haji, who was subsequently given the royal Jambi name of Pangeran Sutawijaya.⁸⁵ This alliance came at an opportune moment, for Sultan Anum had received a further blow. In 1757 his patron, Sultan Mahmud of Palembang, had died, to be succeeded by Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin. Like his father, Sultan Ahmad was much admired by the Jambi ruler, who expected that a proposed marriage between the daughter of this "rich and powerful king" and his own son and heir, the pangeran ratu, would cement their new friendship. But despite the fact that the wedding plans were already well in train, Sultan Ahmad told Sultan Anum that the proposed union could not take place until Jambi's affairs and its relations with the VOC had improved. In September of that year he took the decisive step of cancelling all arrangements and marrying his daughter to the son of the *imam besar* (the head imam), an Arab sayid. In a conversation with the Dutch resident he dismissed Jambi as a place where little could be achieved because of its uncompromising terrain, "full of mountains and jungles."⁸⁶

Sultan Anum was still smarting from this humiliation in April 1760 when the resident announced his decision to leave Jambi because the sultan would not fulfill the contract. The court nobles, convinced that Jambi could not survive without the VOC and desperately searching for an alternative, pushed for the installation of a new king. Since Sultan

Anum was unwilling to stand down in favor of his popular son, it seemed that the only acceptable candidate was Pangeran Natakusuma, brother of the sultan of Palembang. Pangeran Natakusuma's rights through inheritance were unimpeachable, for his wife was a Jambi princess, the daughter of Sultan Muhammad Syah (d. 1726) and thus the granddaughter of Sultan Kiai Gedé. In August 1761 Sultan Anum sent a special envoy to Palembang with a personal invitation for Pangeran Natakusuma to become ruler of Jambi, so that they could govern jointly "as brothers together."⁸⁷

Had this union occurred, it would have been the logical outcome of Jambi-Palembang relationships during the previous century and would have changed the face of southeast Sumatran history. But over these hundred years the Dutch had consistently worked against a close association between Jambi and Palembang; on reflection, they again decided that it would not be in VOC interests to see a Palembang prince on the Jambi throne. Such an alliance would make Palembang too powerful, and it was vital "to keep a balance between native kings." The Palembang resident used all his powers to dissuade the sultan from accepting the Jambi offer, and eventually the plan was abandoned.⁸⁸

Jambi was now flung back on the Dutch once more. In early 1761 a new resident, A. F. van Solms, had reached Jambi, successfully chasing away a party of Bugis led by Raja Haji, whom he encountered downstream. Van Solms immediately began constructing another lodge on higher ground at Kompeh Besar, downriver from Tanah Pilih. He also took heart from the fact that he was given the court name of Pangeran Sutasarta, the first time a resident had received such an honor for many years. In October 1763 he was successful in obtaining Sultan Anum's agreement to yet another contract; it obliged the Jambi ruler to send envoys to Batavia, to make restitution for the goods left by Aalders in 1754, to provide protection for the new Dutch lodge at Kompeh, and to relinquish claims to authority over Pecinaan. The *bovenlanders*, especially those from Minangkabau and Limun, would be encouraged to come downstream, and efforts would be made to foster pepper planting. In return, the Dutch would take Jambi again under their protection and would pay an increased pepper price of $7\frac{1}{2}$ rijksdaalders a picul.⁸⁹

Nonetheless, Batavia had misgivings, particularly about the attitude that the heir, the pangeran ratu, might take after Sultan Anum's death. Virtually in control of government, the pangeran ratu had openly said that Jambi could not fulfill the terms of the contract his father had concluded.⁹⁰ He himself feared that when his father died the Dutch might throw their weight behind his cousin, a son of Sultan Astra Ingalaga. In view of the VOC's history of king-making in Jambi, the pangeran ratu's future looked precarious. In local eyes the break between them

was symbolized by the VOC's decision to move downstream to Kompeh Besar. As the Pecinaan people said, it was akin to a separation between parents. "Our lord's order [to move] is very difficult, because we belong half to our mother and half to our father, and the sudden move of the Company is like that of a mother. If the father [i.e., Sultan Anum] could be again closely allied with the mother [the Company], and again sit next to her, and the mother do likewise, then these humble servants will together again return and live under their mother, according to old custom."⁹¹ No such reconciliation came about. On 20 March 1768, "in the morning at six o'clock," the Dutch post at Kompeh Besar was attacked by about a hundred men. This event finally prompted Batavia to leave Jambi; after more than a hundred and thirty years, the VOC post was irrevocably closed. Communication with the court ended abruptly, and a letter from Jambi to the sultan of Palembang in 1771, raising the possibility of a reconciliation with the VOC, received a cool response.⁹²

The Dutch regarded the written contracts they signed with Jambi kings as a means of furthering their own goals and providing the ilir ruler with VOC support. Local leaders became willing participants in the contract-making process, seeing in these powerful documents a way of recreating a golden age of prosperity believed to have existed in the past. Yet given the economic imbalance between ulu and ilir, such hopes were illusory. With the crumbling of the pepper market, gold became Jambi's most important product; but like so many resources, it was located upstream. The vitality of the ilir port thus depended on a continuing exchange with the interior, but the ability of Jambi rulers to participate in this reciprocal interaction was undermined by their need for VOC support and Dutch insistence that they defend a monopoly contract intended to serve the Company's interests. Kings who were condemned as exploitative, greedy, and miserly were readily seen as immoral as well, and it was often in these terms that local dissatisfaction was expressed. The possibility of any resolution was rendered more problematic by the migration into the ulu of Minangkabau gold miners, who were culturally less inclined to acknowledge the authority of the Jambi ruler. By the time Sultan Anum finally turned against the Dutch, the standing of downstream kings had been eroded. Their continuing inability to galvanize popular support becomes apparent when we turn to examine Palembang, where a civil war also resulted in the installation of a Dutch-backed ruler. Here, however, the king developed into a genuine folk hero, and in the upstream areas ilir overlordship was essentially unchallenged.

CHAPTER SIX

Kings and Heroes: Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin of Palembang (1724-1757)

One outgrowth of expanding literacy in western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the developing corpus of philosophical writings that sought to examine the nature of government and in particular the justification for kingship. Resistance to the notion of divinely ordained rulers was especially evident in the United Provinces of the Netherlands, where responsibility for national concerns rested not with a king and council but with a body known as the Estates General. Yet even here what might be seen as a republican tradition was countered by equally strong monarchical sympathies growing out of an emotional attachment to the House of Orange, whose founder, William the Silent, had led the struggle for independence against Spain. This tradition was fostered because the complicated system of government in the Netherlands made it possible for a member of the House of Orange to be elected *stadhouder* (viceroi or governor) of all or most of the provinces and so gain a position similar to that of a king. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was thus an uneasy tension between monarchical and republican tendencies. For twenty years from 1650 there was no stadhouder, and the regents of the Estates General regained control of government; in an outburst of Orangist sentiment in 1672, however, William III was reinstated as stadhouder. From 1702 there were another four decades of rule by the regents, but in 1747 William IV became the first hereditary stadhouder of all the provinces.

The ambiguous attitudes toward kingship apparent in Dutch society had curious parallels in Jambi and Palembang, where legends remembered a time when there had been no kings, and where the authority of the ilir rulers over the interior was conceived as one of partnership between the capital and "the nine rivers." As a VOC envoy in Palembang in 1755 put it, "The ruler is not sovereign, and in affairs of importance does not act without consulting with his nobles and even ordinary people . . . The king is only master of his own household affairs."¹ One

cannot, of course, take the comparison too far. One crucial difference between kingship in the Netherlands and in Jambi and Palembang was the conceptual distance between later stadhouders and their illustrious ancestor, William the Silent. Despite their personal ambitions, his descendants were never more than men, pale shadows of their legendary forebear. The epic hero celebrated in chapbooks and popular histories belonged to a mythical past and was increasingly irrelevant in a present where any public figure could be the butt of satirical pamphlets and lampoons. Although the House of Orange continued to command respect, there were no traces of the apotheosis associated with "the Father of the Fatherland."

But in Jambi and Palembang, where the present and past were inextricably interlaced, the great ancestors still established the relevant criteria by which contemporary kings could be measured and set standards they could still attain. The rulers held in highest regard were those whose lives and achievements most nearly echoed those of the heroic past, and the crumbling of Jambi kingship was at least partly due to a failure to match the examples provided by the rulers of popular legend. Kingship in Palembang, like that in Jambi, was also built on delicate foundations, and yet during the eighteenth century the prestige of its rulers reached unprecedented heights. The king in his role as hero is tellingly exemplified in the reign of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin (1724-1757). When the Dutch began collecting popular accounts of Palembang's history at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they found that "Sultan Lemabang," as he was commonly known after his burial place, was grouped with figures such as Aria Damar, Ratu Sinuhun, and Cindé Balang and was regarded as one of the most impressive heroes of Palembang's past. His name was coupled with a time when Palembang was peaceful, when people gained much profit (*banyak peruntungan*), and when many traders came.² But Sultan Mahmud's standing was not due simply to the fact that his wealth and domains far exceeded those of his neighbors. In his own career Sultan Mahmud had essentially reenacted the heroic life associated with the ancestors of legend. Fifty years after his death remembrances of his "time" were still so powerful that his great-grandson also adopted the title Mahmud Badaruddin as a public reminder of his prestigious descent.

The Origins of the Heroic King

To appreciate the factors contributing to Sultan Mahmud's heroic status, it is necessary to trace the manner in which he came to power, for his emergence from obscurity was itself critical in formulating images of his rule. In 1710 it is unlikely that anyone would have seen a future king in the person of Pangeran Jayawikrama, a son of Sultan Muhammad

Mansur Syah by a minor wife. The succession seemed already firmly established, since the old ruler had named as his heir Pangeran Purbaya, his only son of fully royal birth. This choice met with wide approval, and it was generally assumed that on Sultan Mansur's death Pangeran Purbaya would take his place. However, in October 1710 Pangeran Purbaya died unexpectedly; it was commonly believed he had been poisoned.³

The inevitable accusations of conspiracy fueled antagonisms between the two princes who hoped to assume the now vacant position of heir. Sultan Mansur himself was known to favor his oldest remaining son, Pangeran Dipati Anum, the elder brother of Pangeran Jayawikrama. However, an influential faction within the court opposed this choice on the grounds that the mother of these two princes, a woman from Jambi, was a commoner. They argued that the rightful successor was the fully royal pangeran ratu, Sultan Mansur's younger brother. The need to resolve this dispute grew more urgent from the end of 1713 because of Sultan Mansur's failing health. The ruler himself proposed a compromise; his brother should be regent until Pangeran Anum was old enough to succeed. A marriage could be negotiated with a daughter of Johor's raja muda, a union that would bring Pangeran Anum both the support of a powerful neighboring kingdom and a royal bride to compensate for his mother's low birth.⁴

With his father mortally ill, Pangeran Anum was justifiably apprehensive that a hostile court would refuse to honor this arrangement. However, his attempt to seize power in September 1714 was unsuccessful because he could not rally sufficient support, and following Sultan Mansur's death his uncle was installed as Sultan Agung Kamaruddin. When Pangeran Anum refused to accept the prestigious but lesser title of pangeran ratu, he was condemned to exile. In early November, accompanied by four of his brothers, including Pangeran Jayawikrama, he departed for Bangka. Sultan Agung then informed the Johor court that all marriage arrangements should be cancelled, and shortly afterward he assumed the impressive title of sultan ratu.⁵

Pangeran Anum by no means relinquished his ambitions. Against Sultan Agung's express orders he had taken with him to Bangka a large amount of gold and silver, weapons, provisions, and about five hundred people. From Bangka he sent envoys to Batavia, promising the Dutch "everything in Palembang" to "the very last grain of rice" if they would assist him to regain what was rightfully his.⁶ In May 1715, by which time it was clear no help from Batavia would be forthcoming, Pangeran Anum left Bangka for Palembang, his ostensible purpose being the interment of two deceased relatives in the royal graveyard. But he was known to have a following on Bangka that numbered a good two thousand, and Sultan Agung, suspecting an attack was imminent,

dispatched a force to compel his nephews to retreat. They took refuge in Johor, where they were received with honor, but the possibility of an alliance disappeared when they lost favor with the *raja muda*.⁷ Toward the end of 1716 the Palembang princes left Riau and sailed to Siantan, where Pangeran Anum and Pangeran Jayawikrama both married daughters of local leaders. In March 1717 they returned to Bangka, fuelling further rumors of an impending attack on Palembang.⁸

Pangeran Anum had good grounds for believing that he would be successful, for Sultan Agung's choice of advisers had alienated powerful nobles. The atmosphere of uncertainty was exacerbated because the succession still lay open; Sultan Agung had produced no heir and had failed to appoint a *mangkubumi*. There were a number of potential contenders, including the absent Pangeran Anum. Clearly nervous about his position, Sultan Agung had for some time been preparing his warships and building defenses. The borders in Rawas were similarly strengthened to discourage any attack (through Jambi, and a mission was sent to Johor to affirm Palembang's desire for friendship.⁹

In Batavia the VOC Council maintained a close eye on Palembang affairs, for they were less than happy with Sultan Agung's handling of commercial matters. Furthermore, they were being courted by Pangeran Anum, who had already dispatched three missions asking for assistance, referring to the governor general as his "father" and to himself as a "son" and sending a gift of Bangka tin as an inducement.¹⁰ What made the Dutch particularly anxious to see the Palembang succession settled, however, was the raiding by Pangeran Anum's followers on passing shipping. The resident, Abraham Patras, reported that many people favored the prince's return, since he had indicated that he was now willing to accept the position of either *pangeran ratu* or *mangkubumi*. In March 1717 matters came to a head when Pangeran Anum sent a letter addressing Sultan Agung as father and asking if he could come and pay a visit to the grave of Sultan Mansur, his own father and "Your Majesty's older brother."¹¹

In retrospect, Pangeran Anum's request can be interpreted as an open assertion of his royal descent. On 24 October his fleet entered the river, and it was soon apparent that he intended to seize power by force. Five days later he "and all his relatives" paid their respects at his father's grave; shortly afterward "old Palembang" (a short distance below the Dutch lodge) was in his hands. "Everything is burning," the resident noted in his journal; and Sultan Agung, facing the prospect of defeat, finally agreed to permit Pangeran Anum to return. During "a great assembly" on 8 November he was declared *mangkubumi* and presented with a kris, the country's cannon, a seal, and "a written document" announcing his new position as well as his entitlement to the revenue from tolls. Sultan Agung then wrote to Batavia to announce that

on Saturday, 8 Haji 1129 at 12 o'clock the direction of government had been given over to "our son Pangeran Dipati Anum" who was now to be regarded "as if he was my own flesh and blood" with authority over all affairs in Palembang. In a solemn ceremony he had been named Sultan Anum and presented with the clothing appropriate to this high status.¹²

Although Sultan Anum thus appeared to have triumphed, the VOC continued to receive bitter complaints from Sultan Agung, who accused his nephew of appropriating all revenues and awarding high titles to his favorites. He had even installed his younger brother, Pangeran Jayawikrama, as the pangeran ratu. In early 1719 Sultan Anum announced he was henceforth to be called Sultan Ratu Anum and demanded that his uncle surrender the state kris and change his title to susuhunan as a sign that he relinquished authority. This Sultan Agung refused to do. In January 1721 he sent a secret mission to Batavia to ask the Dutch for help and for the return of the son of a previously exiled prince as an alternative heir.¹³

In Batavia it was decided that the situation in Palembang again warranted some kind of intervention, especially as it was known that Sultan Anum was requesting help from Bugis princes in Wajo and Mandar. The complexity of the affair demanded a representative who was fully versed in Palembang matters, and in May 1721 Abraham Patras was accordingly sent back as commissioner. When he arrived in June he found that skirmishes had already broken out because Anum had heard of Sultan Agung's secret mission to Batavia. But although Sultan Anum was popular in the interior, a number of influential nobles had been alienated when he had taken their wives and children into his own compound as hostages for their support. Any resolution seemed impossible because Sultan Agung announced he would rather die than "again come under the authority of Sultan Anum," and that if "two kings ruled, all Palembang would fall into ruin."¹⁴

Two factors distinguished the situation in 1721 from that three years earlier; the first was the new influence wielded by Pangeran Jayawikrama; the second the hostility that had developed between him and Sultan Anum. Although Pangeran Jayawikrama had been raised to pangeran ratu, he considered he had not been sufficiently rewarded for his loyalty. Resentful of his brother's continuing arrogation of authority, he had paid court to Sultan Agung's eldest and recently divorced daughter. While Sultan Anum had also proposed marriage, she had rejected both him and his eldest son. The suit of Pangeran Jayawikrama, however, had been accepted. For Sultan Anum this apparent betrayal was a source of deep humiliation. "It is this marriage," wrote Patras, "which is the cause of the present war and which accounts for the bitterness between the brothers." Years later, Sultan Anum still

blamed Sultan Agung's daughter for causing divisions between him and his brother, and there can be no doubt that at the time emotions were intense. One of Sultan Anum's own concubines even warned Jayawikrama that his brother was plotting to poison him.¹⁵

The alliance with Sultan Agung considerably strengthened the position of Pangeran Jayawikrama, who already had a high standing among the populace generally and whom Patras described as a man of "courage and good spirits." Hoping that he would eventually be able to oversee a peace settlement, Patras helped to institute an arrangement by which Sultan Anum agreed to govern in consultation with Sultan Agung, while the older man retained the income from the pepper tolls, giving Sultan Anum whatever portion he thought was proper.¹⁶ But the enmity between Sultan Anum and Pangeran Jayawikrama made it unlikely that a compromise would have any lasting success. Following the departure of Patras for Jambi in September, fighting again broke out, and the situation was unchanged when he returned in November.

The key to success was clearly control of human resources. Although Patras estimated that Sultan Anum had ten times as many people as his brother and uncle, many of his followers were reluctant to oppose their old king and his popular son-in-law, Pangeran Jayawikrama. Anum's ability to maintain a large fighting force lay primarily in his access to cheap rice supplied by his supporters in the interior. Ships under his control also brought guns and gunpowder from Johor; these were used to mount attacks on vessels belonging to Sultan Agung. The latter, his maritime trade threatened, lacked the means to purchase either food or ammunition, and his followers had to pay four or five times as much for their rice. Although Jayawikrama also had authority over a considerable number of people and commanded a contingent of nearly two hundred Bugis, it was doubtful whether he would be able to hold their loyalty. In January 1722 he and Sultan Agung told the Dutch they feared their people would desert them because they had no food. Already "slaves and ordinary people of the lowest kind" had fled to Sultan Anum.¹⁷

Since 1714 the Dutch had been uncertain whom they should support as king of Palembang. There was always a tendency to favor the "legitimate" ruler, but in the end their own interests were the deciding factor. Sultan Agung and Pangeran Jayawikrama seemed more willing than Sultan Anum to accommodate the Company's commercial goals. They had even given Patras a gold box containing earth, dry grass, and rice as a symbol of their willingness to surrender Palembang to the VOC in return for support. It was therefore decided to make Sultan Agung a loan of 1,500 rijksdaalders to buy supplies; shortly afterward, when several ships loaded with rice arrived from Siam, the older ruler was able to sell rice at the same price as his nephew.¹⁸

VOC officials in Batavia nonetheless believed that further action was necessary because they feared Sultan Anum might again retreat to Bangka, where tin was now known to exist in viable quantities. Meanwhile, Sultan Agung had offered to pay for any expenses incurred by the VOC in supporting his cause. In March 1722 four hundred Company soldiers were accordingly sent to Palembang; there they combined with the forces of Jayawikrama to patrol the Musi and prevent Sultan Anum from fleeing upstream. At the same time Sultan Anum was informed of Batavia's decision to support Sultan Agung and told to place himself under the authority of his "lawful king."

Although Anum was willing to surrender his cannon, he refused to give up his small arms, or have a European guard in his palace, or place any of his sons in the VOC lodge as hostages. Foreseeing resistance, the Dutch commander ordered Sultan Anum's compound surrounded, and for several hours a steady cannonade was maintained. Under cover of darkness, however, Sultan Anum and his family set fire to the palace and escaped upriver.¹⁹

With the lessons of Jambi before them, the downstream court and its Dutch supporters were determined to prevent Sultan Anum from becoming a focus for opposition in the ulu. Pangeran Jayawikrama himself led a force upstream to capture the fugitive, and although he was unsuccessful, Sultan Anum was prevented from establishing a settled base or crossing the Barisan to Bengkulen by the vigilance of the border villagers in Pasemah and Rejang. Two further expeditions sent upstream provided a further statement of ilir authority, and by early 1724 Sultan Anum was reported to have taken refuge in the Jambi interior.²⁰

Although Sultan Agung and Pangeran Jayawikrama appeared victorious, they both realized how much they owed to VOC assistance. New clothes were the gifts normally bestowed by a ruler on a favorite, and Sultan Agung told the governor general he felt as if he were burdened with many heavy garments, so that his body was "not strong enough to bear them." He would never be able to forget the assistance that had come "like rain on parched grass, brought the dead from their graves and had helped make Palembang and Batavia one." In June he concluded a contract with Patras by which he reiterated his willingness to pay any costs incurred by the Dutch for their military intervention. He confirmed the Company's monopoly of pepper without demur, and to this was added exclusive rights to the tin being produced from newly developed mines on Bangka.²¹

On 15 March 1724 Sultan Agung died, and five days later the nobles elected Pangeran Jayawikrama as ruler, installing him with the reign name Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin "in the presence of Palembangers high and low and the interior heads or peroatin." Like his father-in-law,

Sultan Mahmud carried with him memories of indebtedness to the VOC, which he did not set aside despite the strains that were later to occur. The closeness of this relationship was exemplified in the respect Patras was accorded, and even at the time the Palembang court asked if he could remain and be promoted, because "he knew about Palembang affairs." Immediately following his own installation Sultan Mahmud sent Patras (who had yet to be appointed to the council of the Indies) gifts fit for a governor general, the items for which Palembang was famous—pepper, gambier, elephant tusks, rattan mats, ambalo wood,²² wax, as well as the new product, tin. In 1755 when another VOC envoy, Johannes Paravicini, arrived to negotiate a revised contract, he found that Patras had a "great name" as "the founder and restorer of their liberty." Sultan Mahmud's resistance to any changes in the existing contract was at least partly due to its association with "the blessed" Patras, who was still mentioned with veneration well over fifty years later. By elevating the VOC envoy and later governor general to heroic status, Sultan Mahmud and his heirs were acknowledging that Dutch intervention had been an important factor in his success. In 1714 he had been merely the son of a lowborn gundik. Now he was ruler of what was to become one of the wealthiest states in the archipelago.²³

The King and Bangka's Riches

As we have seen in the case of Sultan Abdul Rahman, wealth and the capacity for generosity were integral to the conceptualization of a "good" king. Palembang had known prosperous kings before, but Sultan Mahmud was believed to surpass them all. In 1755 Paravicini was told that the ruler's riches in money, gold, silver, and jewels comprised "an almost incalculable treasure." For the ordinary man and woman this treasure was clear proof that Sultan Mahmud was not of the common herd, but had been favored by destiny. Their king himself shared this view, for as he told one resident, "I have money, and am well enough blessed by heaven."²⁴

Several differences between Palembang and Jambi at this stage help account for the former's economic superiority: the lack of protracted internal divisions, the absence of major demographic change in the interior, the relative strength of Palembang's pepper trade. Nonetheless, in regard to the latter there were already marked changes. Although the pepper gardens of the Palembang interior were considered "in good order" at the beginning of Sultan Mahmud's reign, as in Jambi, production showed a steady decline. VOC figures never include the entire Palembang harvest, but they are nonetheless revealing. In 1729 some 3,660,000 Dutch pounds of pepper were delivered to the lodge; in 1741 the figure was 3,026,375; in 1743 it had declined to 2,737,300; and in

1751, it stood at 669,718.²⁵ The basic reason for Palembang's emergence as one of the wealthiest Indonesian kingdoms was thus not pepper; rather, it was the exploitation and development of the tin mines on Bangka.

The existence of tin on Bangka had been known at least since the late seventeenth century, and although never exported in large quantities, it appears to have been used in making picis as well as ammunition. However, the VOC only became aware of Bangka's tin in 1717, following Pangcran Anum's flight there.²⁶ By 1722 several factors encouraged greater Dutch interest. Tin was already valued as a ballast in ships bound for Europe and had a good market in India; however, the VOC's immediate hope was that it could be used to purchase Chinese tea, now in high demand in Europe. Tin was one of the few items that the Dutch were able to sell profitably in China, where it was used in a variety of ways: to manufacture utensils, both for export and home use; to make *tutenag* (an alloy similar to aluminum, used through much of the archipelago in the same way as pewter); and for tin foil, employed widely in religious ceremonies and also in the manufacture of tea cannisters. Well before the VOC learned about Bangka's tin deposits, Chinese vessels were already sailing there directly to buy up supplies. Palembang ships bound for Java were also loading tin ostensibly as ballast but in fact for sale in Batavia. In December 1719 Sultan Ratu delivered thirty-six thousand pounds of tin sand and twenty thousand pounds of slab tin to Batavia, telling the Dutch that he planned to encourage the people of Bangka to expand their tin mining.²⁷

Although the 1722 treaty promised the VOC a monopoly of Bangka tin, both Sultan Mahmud and the Dutch were uncomfortably aware of the fragility of Palembang's hold over the island. The acceptance of Palembang's overlordship was relatively recent, and the exercise of authority was impeded by geographical separation, for Bangka waters were treacherous and negotiable only by those with extensive knowledge of local conditions. After the winds changed in March, for instance, adverse currents could force ships onto rocks or sandbanks, and during this period the northeast coast was virtually inaccessible by sea. Sultan Mahmud had himself spent some time living on Bangka and was aware of how easily overlordship could dissipate. He therefore took a particular interest in the administration of Bangka and Belitung, requiring local heads to appear before him annually with gifts of tin, wax, mats, and knives and hatchets made of Belitung iron. Determined to limit private trade in tin, he sent his own vessels out to accompany Dutch patrol ships and guide them through the dangerous reefs. In May 1729 Sultan Mahmud set off personally to Bangka with more than fifty well-armed warships, and when he returned he left behind half his fleet to keep watch. Those who attempted to sell tin without remitting to

the ruler some share of their profits were severely punished, while Dutch residents who indulged in the forbidden but common private trade were denounced to their superiors in Batavia. For the greater part of his reign, traffic in tin by Sultan Mahmud's subjects from which he did not benefit was kept to a minimum. Even in 1755 a native VOC employee who had been secretly sent to Bangka to investigate the extent of smuggling found it impossible to buy any clandestine supplies because the miners said this was against the king's orders.²⁸

In 1722, when the contract with Palembang had been renewed, the tin trade had been of minor importance in the local economy; by 1729 the Bangka mines were said to be the primary source of the king's wealth, with four to five thousand piculs being delivered annually to the Dutch lodge.²⁹ But while Sultan Mahmud may have been relatively successful in preventing his own subjects from selling tin independently, he found that the large numbers of Bugis and Makassarese arriving in the region were not nearly so responsive to his wishes. Palembang had long been a place for migration from Sulawesi; now Bugis communities in Selangor and Linggi on the Malay Peninsula and especially in Johor's capital Riau (where they had assumed control in 1722) gave added stimulus to the outward flow. Bands of refugees, searching for underpopulated and undergoverned areas to settle, saw Bangka as an obvious target. The 1720s therefore saw the development of small Bugis mining settlements, the inhabitants supporting themselves by selling tin "legally" in Palembang or more frequently smuggling it to Riau.

Like so many local rulers, Sultan Mahmud regarded these new arrivals warily. On the one hand, they were renowned traders and skilled fighters whose services could be of benefit; on the other hand, they were notoriously unwilling to accept established authority, and Sultan Mahmud's own ships were by no means exempt from the attacks of Bugis raiders. His reaction to several requests for permission to settle in Palembang territory suggests that recent occurrences, especially in Johor, had made him nervous. In 1728, for instance, a party of nearly fifty Bugis men, women, and children who arrived on Bangka from Madura were captured and sent back. Later that year a party of five Bugis arrived as envoys from one of their high-ranking countrymen in Selangor, asking for permission to trade. Although they were allowed to return unharmed, their goods were confiscated.³⁰

A test of Sultan Mahmud's resolve came toward the end of 1729 when a Bone prince, Arung Mappala, arrived on Bangka from Banjarmasin. Using a combination of persuasion and force, he was able to assert his authority over about four hundred Bugis who were then mining tin on Bangka. He made his base on Tanjung Ular, a high, rocky point protected from sea attacks by a reef, from which vantage point Bugis ships were able to preserve the northern coastline as their own.

Arung Mappala's following was further swelled by the arrival on Bangka of Sultan Mahmud's brother, the refugee Sultan Anum, in November 1730. The building of forts and clearing of jungle paths to facilitate movement across the island made it apparent that they planned to take control.

On receiving news of developments on Bangka, Sultan Mahmud moved swiftly, dispatching five thousand men and 130 warships to defend his interests. Despite their numerical inferiority, however, the Bugis proved well able to hold their own. After several skirmishes in which the Palembang forces were routed, the VOC resident told his superiors that in his view Sultan Mahmud could not defeat Arung Mappala and Sultan Anum, and that without Dutch assistance Bangka could well be lost.³¹ The situation was the more serious because the number of Bugis on the island was steadily increasing, with daily arrivals from Johor, Linggi, Batu Bara, and Inderagiri. Two-thirds of Bangka was under the control of either Arung Mappala or Sultan Anum.

Seeing his domination of the tin trade in Palembang slipping away, Sultan Mahmud again promised to pay all VOC costs if the Dutch would lend him their assistance. Batavia lost no time in responding. Sultan Mahmud was given muskets with which to arm his men, the river was patrolled, and stockades were erected. In March 1731 a VOC fleet was sent to cruise the Bangka Straits, and a few weeks later the resident landed on the island with a small force of Europeans. Their subsequent attack on the Bugis post at Tanjung Ular was completely successful. Its defenses were destroyed, Arung Mappala forced to retreat, and about a hundred people taken prisoner. With the arrival of a Palembang force in July, the campaign was over. By September, Arung Mappala had left Bangka, while Anum had fled to Belitung and from thence to Tunkal. In the words of the resident, the people of Bangka "acknowledged the authority of their rightful lord."³²

There can be little doubt that assistance from the Dutch had been vital in Sultan Mahmud's retention of control over Bangka. He never forgot that debt, nor the advocacy he attributed to Abraham Patras. When the latter was installed as governor general in 1735, a congratulatory mission arrived from Palembang accompanied by three ships loaded with gifts. Patras died after only two years in office, but during this period Sultan Mahmud made significant concessions to Dutch demands, such as agreeing to "extirpate" all gambier and cotton bushes and repaying a large proportion of the costs involved in the Bangka campaign. Rather than gestures of weakness, these concessions were a recognition of the heavy obligations he owed to the VOC.

With his authority over Bangka restored, Sultan Mahmud's primary concern was to exploit the riches for which he had fought. The main

impediment to achieving this goal was the sparsity of Bangka's population. If the Palembang ruler was to retain control of the tin trade, it was vital that the island be peopled by loyal subjects who would acknowledge his rights over the mines. It was natural that Sultan Mahmud should think first in terms of his own relatives. His first and most loved wife was a part-Chinese Siantan woman, now entitled Mas Ayu, whom he had married some years before when he had taken refuge on that island with his brother. In September 1734 he announced that because of his love for Mas Ayu he was sending a fleet of ships back to Siantan to bring to Palembang more than a thousand of her "relatives, good friends, and servants." Five hundred were settled in the Mentuk area of Bangka, with the specific aim of increasing tin deliveries by establishing close links between producers and buyers.³³ The females of this family, bearing the title "yang," were henceforth reserved exclusively for the sultan's palace.

A second attempt to settle "family" on Bangka was less successful. In 1737 Sultan Mahmud married a Mandarese princess from Cenrana in Sulawesi, and she so captured his affection that she was elevated to senior queen "and placed above all other women." As a result, a number of her relatives from Mandar, Makassar, and Banjarmasin soon arrived in Palembang with hopes of status and rewards from a rich patron. Several were given high titles, and a number settled on Bangka to mine tin. With their privileged position buttressed by the influence of the queen, they in turn attracted other refugees. By 1745 it was estimated that about a thousand Mandarese were living on Bangka, especially around Kelabat Bay.³⁴ It was not long before disputes with neighboring communities broke out. The head of Mentuk complained that "Bugis" (in which he included Mandar and Makassar people) were raiding the mining areas, seizing the smelted tin as well as the wooden troughs where the tin was washed. Unable to refuse his wife's requests for favors, but reluctant to accede to the demands of his importuning relatives, Sultan Mahmud turned again to the Dutch. Through a combination of treachery, persuasion, and force, resident and ruler were together able to convince the Mandar leaders to leave.³⁵

The marked increase in Chinese migration to Bangka in the mid-eighteenth century should therefore be seen against a specific background. Sultan Mahmud realized his income depended on continued development of tin, but he lacked the human resources to open new mines. Chinese had been an integral part of Palembang's economy for generations, and in their new occupation as tin miners they were initially accepted without conflict or disruption. In a sense, of course, the peranakan community in Palembang was already "family." Several of Sultan Mahmud's wives had Chinese blood and his business matters were also handled by local Chinese merchants. It was they who kept his

accounts, supervised pepper deliveries, negotiated with the Dutch, and dealt with matters such as recalling picis and minting new ones.³⁶ The leading peranakan merchants were sufficiently influential to oppose Sultan Mahmud's choice as *kapitan cina* (captain of the Chinese) and have their own candidate appointed instead. The arrival of Mas Ayu's family and their settlement around Mentuk had further strengthened the position of Sultan Mahmud's peranakan relatives. When Thomas Horsfield was collecting oral traditions two generations later, it was well known that the original head of Mentuk had been the father of one of Sultan Mahmud's wives, a part-Chinese whose family had been Muslim for several generations. Horsfield was told that under him sustained efforts had been made to clear the area of jungle and develop agriculture.³⁷

Peranakan Chinese also remained in charge of tin collection as the numbers of Chinese miners began to increase during the late 1740s. Some of the latter may have fled from Batavia after the disturbances there in 1740, but most were more recent arrivals. Chinese migration to the Nanyang, the southern seas, had been on the rise since the late sixteenth century, but there had been a marked expansion after the withdrawal of imperial prohibitions on overseas trade in 1683. Lured by the prospect of future riches, young men from China itself or from the overseas Chinese communities in Siam, Cambodia, Vietnam, and elsewhere in the archipelago took passage for Bangka on native ships and the junks willing to defy Dutch patrols. Many of these migrants would have honed their mining skills at home in places like the tin- and copper-producing districts of Yunnan and possibly overseas in the gold fields of west Borneo and Vietnam. These skills were combined with the concept of a partnership, the *kongsi*, in which all participants shared in the profits.³⁸ When this highly successful form of cooperative enterprise was joined with an indigenous administration like that of Sultan Mahmud, which actively sought to encourage mining, development proceeded apace.

The main mining settlement on Bangka for most of the century was Bela. According to later accounts it was developed after Mentuk by a Chinese called Ah Sing, and indeed a certain "Kapitan Assin, Chinese" is mentioned in the the shipping lists of 1757 as the "king's servant." Ah Sing's descendants said he had been appointed kapitan cina of Bela and that he had then introduced more efficient methods of mining and had given ingots a specific weight. He also began to encourage people from China and Borneo who "knew about collecting tin ore and about mining, and about the uses of canals and aqueducts" to come to Bangka. From Bela, Chinese settlement spread to the Bay of Kelabat, where the harbor was suitable for native vessels, and from here mining moved into the northwestern peninsula. By 1747 the resident noted at

least seventeen new tin-mining settlements, and by the mid-1750s it was estimated that there were about four thousand Chinese on Bangka. Thus, although Malays, "Bugis," and the "mountain people" continued to mine tin, the Chinese comprised the overwhelming majority of miners.³⁹

This demographic change in turn affected the rate of tin production, for Chinese mining methods were more efficient, more sophisticated, and therefore more rewarding than those used by local workers. Nonetheless, they still involved the coordination of human labor rather than complex machinery. The Bangka kongsi were each composed of a hundred or more men under the direction of a leader who was also responsible for maintaining the accounts. Their first priority was to establish rights of access to some stream or river, not only to wash the tin but also to facilitate transportation to some collection point. Next came the arduous task of digging out canals, six feet deep and six feet wide and up to two hundred feet long, through which water could be directed and controlled by sluice gates. The excavated tin sand was piled on the banks and thrown into the canals, where it sank to the bottom. When the sluice was opened, the water rushed through the canal, washing the rubble away. Skilled smelters then formed the tin into ingots, and by mid-century there were said to be about ten smelteries on the island.⁴⁰

Although it took six to seven months before a mine could be brought into production, the mining techniques of the Chinese and their open or *kulit* workings gave them a considerable advantage over indigenous methods, which relied on digging narrow cylindrical shafts. Between 1733 and 1754 the tin delivered to Batavia rose from 1,879 piculs to about 16,000 piculs per annum. By 1755 it was estimated that Bangka could produce 73,000 piculs annually.⁴¹ Even at the relatively low VOC price of 7.5 Spanish rials per picul this represents a sizeable income for the ruler, and in fact much of Bangka's tin was sold secretly elsewhere for a substantially higher sum. Most significant at this stage, however, is that control over the Chinese and general direction over the mines remained in the hands of Sultan Mahmud's appointees. These officials collected the tin from the miners and brought it to Palembang, returning with goods and food, especially rice. In the resident's view, this steady flow of rice to Bangka was one of the principal reasons for the increase in production, and without it tin from Bangka would have been substantially reduced. Sultan Mahmud also provided the mines and smelteries with gunpowder and ammunition purchased secretly in Riau or ordered from Batavia so that the workers could protect themselves against raiders. He himself sent out armed fleets, and sometimes more than a hundred of his ships, all equipped for war, patrolled Bangka's waters.⁴²

Sultan Mahmud's control over Bangka meant that the smuggling or

private trade that gave rise to growing Dutch complaints occurred with his knowledge and direct involvement. Because the prices the VOC offered for tin were comparatively low and because the Dutch were not willing to buy all the tin Palembang produced, it was more profitable to carry cargoes to posts like Riau outside VOC surveillance or to sell directly to overseas buyers. As mining spread to the northeastern coast of Bangka, which was closer to Riau and less accessible from Palembang, there was a noticeable rise in the number of ships in Bangka waters, often flagrantly flouting VOC requirements that they purchase passes. In 1747, for example, thirteen Chinese junks, at least two of which came from Siam, were observed off Palembang, their captains claiming that they had been “delayed” because of “strong currents.” Some had passes, but several others argued that they did not need them or said they were unaware that they were supposed to go first to Batavia.⁴³

Although the oceans were less easy to police than inland rivers and jungle paths, Sultan Mahmud was nonetheless able to exploit the smuggling of tin as his predecessors had done before in regard to pepper. With his *peranakan* Siantan relatives at Mentuk acting as supervisors, small *perahu* that could avoid VOC cruisers carried tin supplies to collecting centers such as Air Hitam, between Jambi and Palembang, where they were loaded onto larger vessels or sold to independent traders. Disregarding whatever destination was specified on their passes, royal junks under the command of Palembang Chinese also took cargoes of tin to Ha Tien to be exchanged for rice and other goods. Some even sailed directly to China. In 1753, for example, although Sultan Mahmud sent twelve ships to Batavia loaded with tin, another five carrying pepper and tin sailed directly to Canton, Amoy, and Ningpo. When the Dutch suggested that VOC ships collect tin from Bangka, Sultan Mahmud roundly declared that the island was under his jurisdiction and that it was his right to collect revenues and tin, and to dispose of goods as he wished.⁴⁴

Because tin was then so central to VOC interests Sultan Mahmud had his way on this matter and was able to bargain with Batavia to preserve a number of other privileges that ensured essential food supplies would not be impeded. Although rice planting had replaced pepper in many areas, being combined with cotton, gambier, or tobacco, Palembang still relied heavily on incoming traders for rice and salt. The arrival of ships from Java from September was thus vital for the local economy. Continuing VOC efforts to compel all Javanese trade to pass through Batavia, however, meant that for some captains Palembang ceased to be a destination. In 1733 Sultan Mahmud wrote to ask that “according to old custom” traders from Java and Madura be permitted to obtain passes from VOC officials in Surabaya, Semarang, and Ceri-

bon rather than in Batavia. They could then sail immediately to Palembang with their rice, tamarind, vinegar, and salt. Palembang ships should likewise be able to receive their passes from local authorities so that they could bypass Batavia and go directly to the rice- and salt-producing areas of Java's northeast coast.⁴⁵ Although the Dutch continued to resist the idea of open trade between Palembang and Java, Sultan Mahmud took care to buy up enough rice from incoming cargoes so that he always had a supply on hand. In addition, communities that had abandoned pepper growing in favor of rice now submitted part of their harvest as tribute. In 1744 when the failure of rice crops caused hunger in some interior areas, he was able to alleviate the problem from his own stocks. In the same way, if ports in Java were closed or if rice failed to arrive, Sultan Mahmud was in a controlling position.

A second source of rice for Palembang was the junks from Siam, which arrived in early January and February after the Javanese had left. In 1745, when the Dutch attempted to prohibit traffic to the north, Sultan Mahmud retaliated by sending envoys to Siam offering to send the "gold and silver flowers" to Ayutthaya in return for regular rice supplies. Probably aware of the panic a similar move by Jambi had aroused among the Dutch sixty years earlier, he realized that this could be an effective negotiating point. The following year Batavia agreed to open the route between Palembang and Java as far as Semarang in the hope that this would stimulate pepper and tin supplies by discouraging trade to Siam and the north. In response, Sultan Mahmud agreed to discontinue correspondence with Siam. However, he still protested against VOC efforts to limit trade to Siam and Cambodia, especially since there were periodic rice shortages in Java. It was impossible, he argued, for his people to cultivate both pepper and rice simultaneously; in the words of the pangeran ratu, "It was from olden times the custom that when the Javanese left, the Siamese and Cambodian ships came with rice and salt, and it was by this means that the land had survived so long." Sultan Mahmud maintained that he would be willing to lose a few, perhaps a hundred people for the VOC, but he would not let his whole kingdom starve. If the old ways were not permitted, he threatened to go to the interior and plant rice, and the VOC would then get no pepper. In 1747, despite Amsterdam's misgivings, attempts to restrict trade between Palembang and Cambodia and Siam were for a time abandoned.⁴⁶

Sultan Mahmud's ability to manipulate the relationship with the Dutch to his advantage was particularly evident in his conflicts with Gerrit Pan, resident from 1747 to 1750. Pan's efforts to limit passes and inspect royal vessels as he did small perahu so incensed Sultan Mahmud that he threatened to send all the people from Siantan and "other places" who had migrated to Bangka back to their own countries, so

that the VOC's tin trade would collapse. During 1749 he ensured that little tin was delivered to the Dutch lodge, and of necessity Pan was forced to comply with the court's request for more than fifty passes. Sultan Mahmud registered his dislike of Pan in other ways, such as installing another Chinese agent without prior consultation and appealing to Batavia when there were disagreements regarding procedures for weighing tin. He also accused Pan of smuggling and of turning a blind eye to English ships buying tin from Bangka. At one point Sultan Mahmud even told the orang laut at Sungsang not to guide VOC ships upriver. For several months during 1750 Sultan Mahmud feigned illness and refused to see the resident. The final straw occurred when Pan left his lodge to live on a bamboo raft on the river, shortly afterward abducting the wife of his Chinese neighbor.⁴⁷ Although Pan defended himself vehemently, he was unable to counter Sultan Mahmud's influence in Batavia and eventually left Palembang in disgrace.

Because Sultan Mahmud and the VOC saw the contract as working to their mutual advantage, the periodic disagreements about prices and debt repayment were normally resolved. The nature of their association was made apparent in 1755 during the course of a Dutch mission to Palembang headed by the syahbandar of Batavia himself, Johannes Paravicini. Although there were initial difficulties because Paravicini lacked the required letters of accreditation, he impressed the court sufficiently for Sultan Mahmud to call him "a second Patras," while Paravicini considered the Palembang ruler good-hearted and "exceptionally intelligent." In the contract they concluded in 1755 Sultan Mahmud agreed to take stronger measures against smuggling and piracy, confiscate any junks arriving from China, increase pepper production, and permit inspection of ships by Company cruisers. He even said he would discourage the use of picis in favor of other forms of currency and forbid the planting of coffee, rice, and cotton. The VOC was also expected to make a contribution to the working of the alliance and in return for exclusive rights to Palembang tin therefore promised to support the sultan in "the peaceful occupation of his state." To prevent a recurrence of former animosities Paravicini stressed the importance of sending competent residents who treated "the king as a king, and his subjects as people."⁴⁸

Dutch confidence in Sultan Mahmud's abilities was evident the following year when he was asked to help in drawing up a new contract between the VOC and Jambi. By the end of his reign Sultan Mahmud clearly considered this friendship had served him well. Through Dutch assistance he had been made king, and their support had been vital in the maintenance of his authority over Bangka. The wealth from the tin trade made his position in Palembang unassailable. In his own words, "I cannot understand why kings who are allies of the Company quarrel

with it, while experience shows us that they always succumb and the Company triumphs. I war with the Company, but in quite a different manner. I fire pepper and tin at the Company, and it bombards me with good Spanish rials." In contrast to Jambi, the Dutch in Palembang thus became caught up in the traditions associated with a successful reign. Although both Sultan Mahmud and Sultan Anum asked for help, says one account, the Company decided to help the former because his gifts (a golden chessboard, Palembang earth, and his own nails and hair) were greater. "Then the Company came from Batavia to build a lodge. They were given a place upstream at Sungai Aur to build a fort of bamboo. . . . Now everything in Palembang was completely in order. . . . There was again peace in Palembang." Long after Sultan Mahmud's death it was remembered that under his rule "every year traders of all kinds came to Palembang and brought tin from Bangka and iron from Belitung, all bringing riches to Palembang. The country was extremely prosperous."⁴⁹

The King as Overlord

If Sultan Mahmud's wealth provided the basis for legend, it also gave him the means by which he could extend his overlordship into the interior of Palembang and thus increase his command over the ulu. Sultan Mahmud himself realized that this was not easy in the underpopulated lands of Sumatra, where the loss of even a few people was a matter for concern. As he told the VOC resident, "It is easy for a subject to find a lord, but it is often difficult for a lord to find a subject, much less maintain one." But despite acknowledged difficulties Sultan Mahmud was far more successful than his Jambi relatives in maintaining the upstream-downstream association. Apparently inconsequential details point up the difference. Elephants' tusks, for example, which could be obtained only from the depths of the interior jungles, were traditionally a royal monopoly. In 1726 the VOC directors in Amsterdam were so impressed with the number included in Palembang's gifts for Batavian officials that they inquired about the possibility of Dutch entry into the trade. The resident replied that it was difficult to find tusked elephants in Sumatra, where they were generally small and tuskless. Those sent by Sultan Mahmud to Batavia were brought from the boundaries of his kingdom, along the borders of Bengkulen, whence he usually received two or three pairs a year as tribute. In Jambi, by comparison, there were complaints that the royal monopoly was being ignored and that elephants' tusks were being sold by private individuals.⁵⁰

Sultan Mahmud's ability to maintain his standing in the interior was due in part to geography. An obvious contrast with Jambi was Palembang's distance from the Minangkabau areas. By the middle of the

eighteenth century there had been some Minangkabau movement into Rawas, but only in numbers amenable to ilir control. Sultan Mahmud was aware, however, that there was the potential for problems. In 1752, for example, disputes broke out in one interior district, and some Minangkabau were killed. Problems were avoided when the Palembang villagers were punished and ordered "to give the Minangkabau enough people to compensate them for those lost." Furthermore, in contrast to Jambi, the downstream Palembang court had already established certain traditional rights among the most distant upland groups whom the Dutch described as guards or *wachthouders*. In return for freedom from taxes and corvée, they were charged with watching the borders and ensuring that the king's subjects did not leave without his permission.⁵¹

Use of force was undoubtedly an important factor in confirming Palembang's authority in the interior. Contingents from Komering raided into the border areas of Rawas and ulu Tembesi which, as "the heart of the pepper lands," were still disputed with Jambi. Many of the growers there were carried off to Palembang, with defenses along the Jambi boundary built to ensure that they remained. Ultimately more effective than force, however, was the enticement of protection, economic advantages, and attachment to a prestigious overlord; these factors persuaded numbers of new "subjects" to place themselves under Palembang voluntarily. The suku pindah were induced to return "within Palembang's boundaries," while Sultan Mahmud's mediation was even accepted by Minangkabau migrants in the rich gold-bearing areas of Limun. In 1741 an expedition that included several VOC employees was sent up to ensure the continuing disputes there among local heads were satisfactorily resolved. On another occasion, when told that about a thousand people from ulu Bengkulu had attempted to drive some interior Palembang people from their villages and pepper gardens, Sultan Mahmud dispatched armed forces to chase out the unwelcome invaders.⁵²

A further contrast between Jambi and Palembang was the strengthening of the economic links binding ilir and ulu together through tightening royal control over upstream-downstream trade. A principal factor in this process was the introduction of what was referred to as "tiban-tukon," a phrase apparently derived from combining the Javanese *tiban*, referring to an object given to an inferior, and *tuku*, meaning "purchase."⁵³ Although a royal monopoly over pepper had theoretically been in place in Palembang since the beginning of Sultan Abdul Rahman's reign, it had not been enforced in recent times. About 1738 or 1739, however, Sultan Mahmud closed trade in pepper to the interior to anyone except himself or members of his own family. All pepper would be bought up in exchange for cloth and other items at a set rate that gave the royal purchasers a substantial profit, since the textiles had

been bought cheaply by agents in Batavia. It was the ruler who fixed the prices, and between twelve and fifteen men were appointed as his representatives or *jenang* to collect all the pepper from the "nine rivers."⁵⁴

It is easy to see compulsion as a reason for the relatively smooth operation of *tiban-tukon*, but it is clear that it could not have functioned without *ulu* compliance. The rulers of Jambi were all too aware of the drain of gold from Limun to centers in Palembang and thence to the coast. At intervals along the connecting jungle paths, several only recently opened, were small rest huts stocked with cloth brought from Palembang for purchase by passing gold traders. Far more important than enforcement, therefore, was Sultan Mahmud's recognition that the upstream-downstream relationship could be maintained only through acquiescence. As one resident remarked, "The orang *ulu* are an obstinate people who only acknowledge the king's authority as much as they themselves wish." Sultan Mahmud told the Dutch repeatedly that the upstream groups must be governed "very softly," for they would simply run away if he attempted to use violence against them.⁵⁵

A variety of examples illustrates how this conviction functioned in practice. The issues of *corvée* labor and monetary payment had in the past frequently provided bases for dispute. But now, on occasions when the VOC asked for assistance in the collection of wood for buildings or palisades, the interior heads were asked to come downstream to discuss the costs according to the length and thickness of the logs and the time involved. Perennial problems regarding currency variation were also resolved amicably. Sultan Mahmud acted as an advocate for his subjects when he tried to explain why they would not accept Spanish rials, which were different in appearance from the old Mexican ones, being slightly thicker in the middle than around the edge and having a different emblem on the face. When conflicts between England and Spain made rials difficult to obtain, Sultan Mahmud promised to do his best to persuade the interior people to accept ducatoons and rupees as an alternative. In 1743 he took several good examples and asked the interior heads why they were unacceptable, considering they were made of silver and were heavier than Spanish rials. But when *ulu* representatives remained suspicious and insisted they could not accept this new currency, Sultan Mahmud was unwilling to pursue the matter further.⁵⁶

Indications of Sultan Mahmud's standing in the *ulu* emerge even in the normally unsympathetic Dutch sources. In 1733, encouraged by the return of peace, several headmen from Rawas who were then living in Jambi appeared before Sultan Mahmud to say they wished to return to Palembang. One was given the traditional embossed rattan or cane of authority, and as a sign of his new relationship with the downstream court, he left his son to be brought up with the family of a leading noble,

the commander of troops on the Jambi frontier. Ties of marriage or blood were invoked elsewhere as a basis for establishing the ilir connection. In 1740 about four thousand people from Bengkulu under eight heads moved back to Palembang, complaining that they had been badly treated by the English. Arguing that they were all “descended from the ruler of Palembang” and were thus his subjects, they said they had left during the war with Sultan Anum but now wished to return to their villages, about four or five days’ travel upriver. They were willing to begin planting pepper, but in return they wanted protection against raids by Rejang people, who they said had carried off about a thousand victims.⁵⁷

The most significant evidence of Sultan Mahmud’s prestige can be seen in the extension of Palembang influence into Lampung, where Banten had claimed jurisdiction since the seventeenth century. The districts under contention lay along the border river of Tulang Bawang which, as Lampung’s most important pepper-producing area, had long fretted against Banten’s authority. In 1735 the heads of Belambangan and Pakuan, both in ulu Tulang Bawang about four days’ travel from the Palembang capital, appeared before Sultan Mahmud “with all their relatives.” Their purpose was to pay homage to the Palembang ruler and to ask him to take them and the two thousand people they represented under his protection. They promised they would then set about replanting their pepper gardens. As a justification for their request, the head of Pakuan told the court that in the past his forebears had owed allegiance to “one of [Sultan Mahmud’s] ancestors” whom they called Sultan Kebon Gedé. An indication of Sultan Mahmud’s own attitude was his reference to this area not as Lampung but as Komerling Darat (interior Komerling).⁵⁸

The VOC paid particular attention to Lampung developments because of the current demand for pepper as an exchange item for the much-desired Chinese tea. The arrival of the Pakuan delegation in Palembang was significant because this district, situated at the junction of the Wai Umpu, Wai Besai, and Wai Kanan, was famed for its pepper. According to their spokesman, the people of Tulang Bawang wanted to free themselves of Banten’s “terrible yoke.” With the knowledge and assistance of people from Palembang, they had already dug a canal joining the Wai Umpu to the Tulang Bawang, enabling traders to evade Banten toll posts. Rest houses had also been constructed along jungle paths to facilitate the transport of their pepper to Palembang.⁵⁹

The following year Banten attempted to assert its position along the Tulang Bawang, sending a fleet of seventy ships. A large force of armed men drove people from their villages, burned houses, and imprisoned headmen suspected of disloyalty. As the Banten troops moved toward

the Palembang border, however, they were pushed back by a Komerling army led by Palembang's pangeran ratu. Most then surrendered, and many weapons were captured.⁶⁰

From this point a heated dispute developed between Sultan Mahmud and the Banten ruler, Sultan Abdul Fatakh Mohammad Syafai Zainul Arifin, regarding their historical claims to Tulang Bawang. The latter claimed that Banten had controlled Lampung for 263 Muslim years and that the tributaries of the Tulang Bawang had all been governed by his grandfather. Sultan Mahmud, for his part, alleged that his ancestors had exercised authority there in older times and that in his "old archives" there was evidence to show that Lampung had been seized by a predecessor of the Banten ruler. The people of Komerling Darat, said Sultan Mahmud, were "descended from Palembang," and Tulang Bawang was among the "nine rivers" of Palembang his forefathers had controlled.⁶¹ The Tulang Bawang representatives agreed with Sultan Mahmud's claims, with the stipulation that they were not subjects of Palembang "but *saudara* or brothers" and had always been free of tribute. Their ancestors had come from Ranau, "an inland sea," and they had been encouraged by Palembang to settle in Tulang Bawang in earlier times.⁶²

To strengthen his claims Sultan Mahmud, like the ruler of Banten, had begun distributing titles, *kris*es, and piagem reiterating his right to collect pepper and to act as mediator in local disputes. The Dutch noted that about a hundred Lampung leaders from Pakuan, Pagar Dewa, and Menggala down to the Abung River had already received new and "extraordinary" titles from Palembang. In Pagar Dewa, for instance, a man previously called Gunung was known as Raja Alam; another, Gommo, now had the title *aria*; a certain Anak Gajah had been named Pangeran Kasumadinata. The presentation of such titles raised the status of the recipient considerably, for a nineteenth-century observer remarked that the marriage value of daughters of a man with a high rank (*pangkat*) could be four times as great as that of those without. Nor was it only males who were the recipients of these honors, for women too were receiving "gifts and titles" to entice them to bring their pepper to Palembang for sale.⁶³

Escalation of fighting between Palembang and Banten toward the end of 1737 forced the Dutch to take action because they believed that without access to Tulang Bawang pepper, that "so desired grain," the economy of their vassal Banten would collapse. Since Lampung was the "pearl in Banten's crown, the source of all its revenues," VOC authorities continued to support Banten claims to Tulang Bawang, despite evidence that this was contrary to the wishes of most local people. It is a testimony to Sultan Mahmud's feeling of obligation toward the Dutch that he was willing to accept the subsequent settlement of September

1738, although it clearly advantaged Banten. By this agreement the ruler of Banten was recognized as the “rightful king” of Tulang Bawang; in return he agreed to bear the expenses for the establishment of a small VOC post there to maintain peace and supervise pepper purchases. In this way the VOC hoped to restrict the amount of Lampung pepper reaching Palembang.⁶⁴ In the following December a Dutch commissioner convened a meeting of Lampung, Palembang, and Banten representatives. The Dutch had decided to demarcate the boundary between Palembang and Banten territories by reference to specified rivers and mountains; it could then be shown on VOC maps. Explaining the reasons behind his rejection of local petitions for Tulang Bawang to be placed under Palembang, the governor general told Amsterdam that there were no written records regarding suzerainty over the area and that everything was based on “oral accounts and simple stories.”⁶⁵

The agreement of 1738 did nothing to end the personal rivalry between the Palembang and Banten rulers or lessen the ambition of each to control Tulang Bawang. Initially at least the local pepper growers benefited from the rival distribution of gifts, piagem (popularly known as “copper skins” or *kulit tembaga*), and titles.⁶⁶ “At present,” remarked one Dutch official with only a degree of exaggeration, “you find more pangerangs, kiai mas, and temenggungs than ordinary people, and if a free slave gives as little as four bahara of pepper to the Banten representative or five or six rials worth of gold to the Palembang nobles he gets whatever title he wants.” Pepper cultivators were also able to bargain for better prices for their products. The head of Pagar Dewa said frankly that it mattered little to him who bought his crop; he simply sold to the one who gave the best price. With this as the criterion, it was easy to see why Palembang was preferred to Banten, for its traders were willing to offer about eight rials a picul, and in 1741 six Lampung chiefs appeared in Palembang with the request that Sultan Mahmud carry their pepper to Batavia.⁶⁷

Sultan Mahmud continued to press his claims to Tulang Bawang, supported by local heads who dispatched their own delegations to the Dutch lodge in Palembang with pleas that they once again be allowed to trade in this port “under their old and own lord.” The VOC-supervised treaty thus did nothing to change the undeniable fact that Palembang’s influence in Tulang Bawang was much more of a reality than Banten’s. Indeed, when a VOC official asked for the return of the crises that Sultan Mahmud had presented to eighteen local heads, one man refused outright, saying it was a gift from the Palembang ruler. The small VOC posts along the Tulang Bawang River were powerless to stop Palembang traders moving into the area, especially since larger ships could not go higher than Pagar Dewa, about twenty kilometers upriver from Menggala. Nor was trade dependent on river transport, for the jungle

paths made smuggling possible through the entire year, even when river levels dropped during the dry season. Excluded from the Palembang interior by the royal monopoly, traders from Palembang were buying pepper from Tulang Bawang by continuing the traditional practice of advancing goods and money in expectation of deliveries. Ships from Palembang arrived laden with trade items, and special warehouses were even erected to store them. Dutch attempts to enforce a compromise by which three bahara of pepper should be sent to Banten for every one sold to Palembang only aroused further hostility.⁶⁸

Although there were periodic complaints about Palembang's intrusion and forcible collection of pepper, it was toward the VOC-supported Banten representatives that Tulang Bawang hostility was largely directed. Locals objected, for instance, to the forced trading methods used by Banten traders, whose kulak was very large, "about thirty pounds in the hundred overweight" and who paid with goods that had "little use" and were valued too high. Violence toward Banten's agents grew more frequent, resulting in major clashes between Palembang and Banten forces during 1741. In November of that year, however, a Banten fleet sent to Tulang Bawang was driven off. In another confrontation the following month nearly fifty Banten soldiers were taken prisoner and smuggled past the Dutch lodge into Palembang in small perahu covered with kajang mats. Judged guilty by Sultan Mahmud, they were all sent to Belida, more than a day's travel up the Musi River. There they were divided up and consigned separately as slaves to villages lying considerable distances apart. The expectation that Lampung chiefs present themselves regularly at the Palembang court now became a virtual obligation, and the whole Menggala area was soon reported to be "full" of Palembang people. Since 1738 Banten had received no pepper deliveries of any significance from Tulang Bawang, for everything went to Palembang. Many Lampung headmen and their followers were indebted to Sultan Mahmud for undelivered pepper and had thus effectively become his subjects.⁶⁹

But Sultan Mahmud's overlordship in Tulang Bawang did not merely give access to pepper. From about 1730 Palembang movement into this area had gained momentum in response to the newly circulating tales of almost unbelievable finds of gold. The gold-producing districts were along the tributaries at the upper end of the Tulang Bawang River, the most important being Jitan, above Belambangan. Travel thence was difficult, for the rivers were often made impassable by rapids and swift currents, and perahu had to be unloaded and carried overland until another navigable place was reached. All told, the journey from the coast to Jitan could take well over three weeks. Many, however, considered the rewards worthwhile, for in the Jitan area gold was readily found, either by panning or by digging out canals along the river bank

using methods similar to those practiced by tin miners. Shafts were also excavated, and about half an hour's travel from Jitan there was a large working "two or more rods wide and 1.5 fathoms deep." In such places miners were already reported to be using the waterwheel to drain off water, probably reflecting some acquaintance with mining techniques developed by the Minangkabau. The Dutch representative at Tulang Bawang believed that there was much gold as yet undiscovered, which could be exploited if a hundred "knowledgeable miners" were sent to help develop the area.⁷⁰

For a brief period in 1747 it seemed that a gold-mining partnership between Banten and the VOC would be successful, but subsequent agreements coincided with a rebellion against the Banten queen and thus came to naught. Yet the small Dutch post on the Tulang Bawang remained as a symbol of Banten's putative sovereignty, preventing the king of Palembang from openly ruling territory that was effectively his. As a result the mid-eighteenth century in Lampung displays the lack of order so often associated in local legends with kinglessness. Far from any center of authority, Sultan Mahmud's representatives themselves often abused their position, and one even attacked a VOC sergeant, saying that the Dutch were "only men." There was also a rising number of adventurers, notable among whom were Bugis and Makassarese. Finding Bangka mining dominated by the Chinese, they drifted into Lampung to join some local leader or set up their own small fiefs. Some were bold enough to invoke the name of the Palembang ruler to justify raids on local settlements and the seizure of women, pepper, and gold.⁷¹

Another reason behind the apparent lawlessness was a growing challenge to the position of the traditional lineage heads, sometimes from their own followers, whose ambitions had been encouraged by the indiscriminate granting of favors by both Banten and Palembang. Elders began to express concern that some of their subjects had been given titles grander than their own and could boast of favors from the Banten or Palembang ruler. In July 1742, for instance, a party of Lampung men was included in a Palembang mission to Batavia and returned "laden with presents and titles of honor." Some had even been introduced to the governor general and the council.⁷²

For many Lampung people there was a clear answer to the prevailing lack of government. They needed to be attached more closely to a prestigious king to whom they could appeal for protection or support. The most obvious candidate was Sultan Mahmud of Palembang. The VOC may not have recognized him as ruler of Tulang Bawang, but economic realities fed into legends that helped confirm a belief that the area was linked to Palembang by ties of ancestral kinship. In 1818 a Dutch official in Lampung was told that one of their great culture heroes, Sabatang, was descended from a Wali named Raja Iskandar, who had estab-

lished himself at the foot of Bukit Si Guntang "near the site of the later town of Palembang." Returning home from his travels in Java, Sabatang's ship foundered near Palembang, and the spirits then changed it into an island that attached itself to Bukit Si Guntang. Sabatang had seven sons, and the seventh, Umpu Si Runting, had many descendants who left their homeland somewhere near Lake Ranau and moved along the Musi and other Palembang rivers into Tulang Bawang and other parts of Lampung.⁷³

The perception of Palembang as a distant but powerfully relevant kingdom is also found in Lampung epic songs or *tetimbai*. Often set against a "Palembang" background, these sung poems, like their counterparts from the Palembang ulu, mirror the ambiguity of the Lampung-Palembang relationship. For example, the *tetimbai* of Si Dayang Rindu, written versions of which date at least from the eighteenth century, tells the story of a beautiful maiden from the Niru district (a tributary of the Lematang River) who is desired by the Palembang ruler, Pangeran Ria. Although he offers a great bride price, her father refuses the offer because she is already engaged to another man. Faced by the great army of the Palembang ruler, Si Dayang Rindu is forced to leave her betrothed and board a Palembang ship. However, the exultant Palembang commander so angers her menfolk that they can endure the humiliation no longer. In the ensuing battle with the Palembang forces, all the ulu leaders are killed and the people flee, with one version listing the names of the villages where they dispersed. But the upstream eventually triumphs because when Dayang Rindu is taken to Palembang she flies away to heaven before the union can be consummated, leaving the pangeran to lament his loss.⁷⁴

One expert in the sung poetry of south Sumatra has been struck by the perception of the Palembang ruler contained in these traditions. While the actions of the Palembang king are not condoned, he himself is never personally vilified. In the early nineteenth century, oral accounts attributed the extension of Palembang's authority in ulu Komering and along the Tulang Bawang to the reign of "Sultan Lemabang" (Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin), and the ambiguity of the resulting relationship is symbolized in another telling of the Dayang Rindu legend collected by a Palembang man in the 1880s from the ulu Ogan area and translated from *bahasa ulu* (the upstream language) into Malay. It describes how the Palembang king is made aware of Si Dayang Rindu's beauty when he finds a strand of her hair floating downriver in a golden cup. Although her suitor is killed, the Palembang ruler cannot defeat the ulu men. When fighting has been going on for some time, he finally resorts to the ruse of sending one of his women as a gift to Dayang Rindu's grandfather, renowned for his exploits in battle. This woman discovers the secret of the old warrior's invulnerability and tells the king, whose

followers are then able to kill him. Dayang Rindu is brought down to Palembang, but she is followed by another suitor. To save her honor he kills her and then cuts her body into two pieces. The upper half is taken back to her family in Niru, but the lower half remains with the king in Palembang.⁷⁵

The King as Hero

Although Sultan Mahmud died in 1757, the memories of his reign remained potent ones. Succeeding in 1804, his great-grandson also chose to be called Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin in the hope of recreating just such another reign and of bonding himself with a powerful ancestor who would be a ready source of assistance. In after years, threatened by attacks from both British and Dutch, this second Sultan Mahmud made a special pilgrimage (*ziarah*) to offer prayers at the Lemabang grave and to invoke the help of his great forebear. The passing of time only enhanced the legend, and when Dutch officials and amateur historians first began to collect local accounts about Palembang's past they found that of all its kings, "Sultan Lemabang" was considered "the richest and mightiest."⁷⁶ The process of elevation into a cultural hero was well in train, and in several areas Sultan Mahmud, like Ratu Sinuhun or Cindé Balang, was credited with the introduction of culturally significant items, such as certain titles and customs, together with scales and weights. Less than two generations after his death some groups had woven the name of Sultan Lemabang into the genealogies of their legendary poyang, providing the fragile bond by which they could link themselves with the larger political and economic order.

The emergence of a figure around whom the myth of heroic kingship could be reconstructed, enhancing the prestige of the downstream capital and providing a shared focus for the loyalties of communities that otherwise had little in common, is precisely what appears to be lacking in Jambi during this period. It would be easy to explain this difference in terms of material wealth; however, it is not enough to say simply that the kings of Jambi were poor and those of Palembang rich and powerful. As one historian of popular culture in Europe has argued, power alone is not enough to bring about the metamorphosis into a popular hero. Louis XIV of France, for example, spared no efforts to present himself as a heroic figure, but it was his grandfather, Henri IV, who captured the imagination of French peasants and who is prominent in their folklore.⁷⁷ In Palembang Sultan Mahmud's son and successor, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin, reigned for twenty years and was said to have been well-liked and at least as rich as his father, but he did not earn the same niche in the popular mind.

In all societies the extent to which historical figures are transmuted

into myth appears to depend on the degree to which elements in their lives correspond to cultural stereotypes of heroic behavior. Sultan Mahmud, it can be argued, acquired a special place in the collective Palembang memory because in so many respects the deeds associated with him paralleled those of the great figures of legend. The themes and formulas that provided the anchors for the typical heroic life—the rejection, the battle, the conquest, the brave warrior, the great lover, the prosperous king—were being played out in Sultan Mahmud's own career. In other words, he became a personification of the heroic principle, and the stories about him were articulated in the same spirit that informed those attached to formidable ancestors like Iskandar Zulkarnain, Si Pahit Lidah, or Aria Damar. It might even be possible to go further and suggest that heroic models were so well known, so persuasive, and so explicit that they helped influence the way in which individuals responded to events and were thus part of the historical action they help explain.⁷⁸

The range of stories about Sultan Mahmud written down or collected over the past two hundred years is in itself a testimony to his standing as one of the outsize figures around whom the past is constructed. Those originating from the court were compiled by officials who had access to “written sources as well as stories told by old people” and who could refer to royal genealogies and court records that listed memorable dates and events. In his March letter of 1724 the Dutch resident simply noted that Sultan Mahmud was now ruler, but a court chronicle, apparently compiled about 1851, gives the date of this installation as 27 Jumadil Akhir, 1136 (23 March 1724), on Thursday, at 1 o'clock. Again, according to VOC reports Sultan Mahmud died on “16 September [1757], at six o'clock”; court records provide the Islamic date, 1171, on the third day of Muharram, on a Friday evening at the time of the sunset prayers (*magrib*).⁷⁹ In the eighteenth century Islamic dating in Palembang's court documents became more common as a greater number of people became conversant with the Muslim calendrical system. These dates provide an indication of events during Sultan Mahmud's reign that the literate elite considered worthy of attention, such as the building of a new palace in 1150 A.H. (1737 C.E.) and the completion of a great mosque in 1161 (1748).⁸⁰

Stories about Sultan Mahmud from outside the court have a rather different character and reflect the interests of the local community. An example comes from an oral history of Bangka, recorded by an official, Temenggung Kerta Negara, in 1861. Here considerable attention is given to the arrival on Bangka of Sultan Mahmud's part-Chinese Siantan wife, Mas Ayu, and her guardian, Wan Akub, as well as the involvement of her family in support of the future sultan. A woman possessed of supernatural powers (*bertuah*), Mas Ayu woke her new hus-

band one night "about four o'clock." She urged him to take action if he wanted to become king over all Palembang, for she had dreamed that she had swallowed Palembang itself. When her husband refused to believe her, she told him to shake her head. He did so, and on hearing a sound like water inside a coconut, he realized that she possessed special gifts and accepted her prophecy. Mas Ayu then gave Sultan Mahmud a magically empowered kris she had inherited from her father and accompanied him during the attack on Palembang. Following his triumph, her family was rewarded by being allowed to remain on Bangka. Her menfolk were given the title of abang and the women that of yang, with the provision that they would be reserved as wives for the sultan or members of his family.⁸¹

Whether collected at the court or village level, these stories about Sultan Mahmud have been preserved because they were written down, often by a Dutchman or at his behest. It is not possible to gauge the extent of "editing" that occurred in the selection of material or its presentation or how far the content of these stories has altered over time. An account of the 1722 treaty that emphasizes the Company's acceptance of Palembang's authority, for instance, was recorded in the nineteenth century and may have been intended to direct a message to Dutch colonial officials. Yet at the same time the modern historian is sharply reminded of the tenacity with which certain culturally important details can be retained, such as the name of a certain Arab, Syaikh Abu Bakar Baspatu, mentioned in passing in Dutch material as a negotiator, but in local accounts serving as a reminder that this was the time when Arabs began to settle in Palembang.⁸²

What is most striking about these accounts is not their variation or even their "accuracy," but the presentation of Sultan Mahmud in terms of the formula that permeated the heroic mythos. One of the most common of such formula, in Palembang as elsewhere, concerns the hero's rise from obscure origins to greatness. Palembang folklore throws up the common theme of the young boy who, appearing in a village, is adopted by a childless couple who only later become aware of his special powers; another recurring motif is that of the princely ancestor locked in a box and cast out on the waters by some jealous father, to be found and reared by a fisherman and his wife ignorant of his origins. Stories about Aria Damar, the legendary ancestor of Palembang kings, tell of his birth from the union of the ruler of Majapahit with the daughter of a *raksasa* (giant, monster), who fled the palace when her origins became known. As a youth Aria Damar served the king unrecognized until his descent was acknowledged and he was sent to become ruler of Palembang. Sultan Mahmud, excluded from higher circles because of his mother's humble parentage and only as an adult accepted as a claimant for the throne, fits neatly into this pattern.⁸³

In the long passage toward reclaiming his rightful inheritance, the individual destined for heroic status must suffer humiliation, endure rejection, and confront great danger. His very success in overcoming these obstacles is proof that he is fated to be a leader. To achieve his ultimate goal, he must depart and undergo a period of testing before claiming his own. His adventures are themselves a symbolic representation of the hero's character, spiritually preparing him to meet the challenges that will confront him on his return.⁸⁵ The career of Sultan Mahmud appeared to embody all these elements. For several years, in company with his brother Sultan Anum, he had lived as an exile, wandering the archipelago. Even at the time this absence gave him considerable standing, and he told the envoy Paravicini that during his youth he had spent much time roaming and therefore knew "all the Malay coasts and islands."⁸⁵ His exile on Bangka and his journeys to distant lands thus provide the context for many of the stories associated with him, all of which implicitly justify his elevation as king.

One of these, "Cerita raja-raja didalam negeri Palembang" (Tales of the kings of Palembang), begins with Sultan Mansur's death in 1126 (1710 C.E.) and describes how his two sons, shut out of their inheritance, leave for Bangka with a great fleet, later return to Palembang, and then flee again to Lingga. The account breaks off at the moment the Minangkabau prince Raja Kecil, here called the raja of Singapore, invites them to join his entourage. Although fragmentary, descriptions of the fleet of perahu setting out from Sungsang resonate with unspoken allusions to the great departures of legend, like that of the semidivine prince Sang Sapurba, who left Palembang for the island of Bintan, from whence his son founded a dynasty in Singapore.⁸⁶ A further account collected in the Palembang interior describes how the young Sultan Mahmud, then Pangeran Jayawikrama, escapes to "the land of the Bugis" because "he wants to see the customs of other countries." Here he amazes the Bugis with his courageous words and even defeats the raja Bugis in a personal duel. Consequently he is acknowledged as king, but he sails back to Palembang, leaving behind a minister (*menteri*) as his representative. When he returns to Bangka, everyone is amazed to hear how he defeated the land of the Bugis. His sakti has been tested against the most feared warriors of the archipelago and has not been found wanting; he is a renowned conqueror who has "defeated many countries."⁸⁷

The great hero, the essence of energy and fertility, is by definition an accomplished lover, and Dutch sources provide numerous references to the women who were taken into Sultan Mahmud's palace. Whether they came from Palembang, Jambi, Siantan, Java, Sulawesi, or from local Chinese families, these women were a testimony to his virility and his prestige overseas. At the same time the traditional hero is also capa-

ble of a deep and abiding attachment when his true match appears. Again, Sultan Mahmud's career furnished the necessary material. From Dutch sources we know that in May 1715 Sultan Anum and Pangeran Jayawikrama asked to return to Palembang to bury "a prince and princess." In the accounts collected in the nineteenth century this princess is presented as a wife of Pangeran Jayawikrama. One version relates that she died in Palembang itself, but when her husband came back to arrange the funeral, his uncle refused him entry and sent him away with the unburied corpse. In another, his wife Raden Ayu fell sick on Bangka and died. Her body was placed in a coffin, but on returning to Palembang to bury her the funeral party was met with violence and forced to retreat. The image of the faithful husband driven away with his dead wife touched a chord among a people for whom romantic love lay at the core of many a story. It may also have exerted a particular appeal in the women's quarters of the royal palace, where the idea of lasting affection between a man and a woman was the ideal, but where reality saw many wives and concubines in competition for the favors of their shared husband. A manuscript that belonged to an eighteenth-century Palembang princess tells the story of the legendary Javanese prince Panji, whose beloved wife Angreni is killed by order of her father-in-law so that Panji will marry the daughter of the king of Kediri. Grief-stricken, Panji goes to sea, taking his wife's body with him. A storm springs up but drops as he approaches the shores of Lemahbang (in fact the name of a kampung near the Palembang kraton, where Sultan Mahmud—"Sultan Lemabang"—was later buried). Panji is himself told the story of another hero, Aji Darma, who also lost his loved wife. Because he could not contemplate union with another woman, he travelled to many lands in search of battle so that he could be reunited with his wife in death. Panji was much moved by this story, which provided the motivation for his campaigns in Bali and east Java. A century after Sultan Mahmud's installation, it was still believed that he too fought against his uncle because of his anger and sorrow when his wife was refused a proper burial.⁸⁸

Possibly the greatest trial the hero must face in his years of adversity is the opposition of enemies, who often come from the ranks of those closest to him—a jealous father, a resentful uncle, an unfaithful wife, a disloyal brother. Once more Sultan Mahmud's life provided all the appropriate ingredients. Passed over by his father, rejected by his uncle, he then fell out with his brother Sultan Anum. The ensuing struggle for power provides the themes for numerous stories individually and collectively demonstrating that Sultan Mahmud is no ordinary man. The contest for the love of a beautiful woman, for instance, is a classic arena in which special powers, courage, and audacity can all be demonstrated. The desire of both Sultan Anum and his brother to acquire the

hand of the sultan ratu's daughter attracted even Dutch attention, and local accounts of her seduction display Pangeran Jayawikrama in all his heroic colors. Reminded by a "milk brother" of the ruler's pronouncement that the princess would marry the victor in some future contest, Pangeran Jayawikrama formulates a bold plan to gain her hand. One night he and his foster brother succeed in making their way into the closely guarded palace where the princess lives. A marriage is then necessary to save her honor; by his cunning, daring, and resolution Pangeran Jayawikrama has overcome his rivals.⁸⁹

Pangeran Jayawikrama's apparent invincibility is further proof that he is destined to be a great leader. On one occasion he was attacked while sitting on the steps in front of his house. "He fell into the water, but survived, although the stairs were smashed by the bullets." Even after he becomes ruler he withstands attempts by his relatives to kill him while he sleeps. Because of his ilmu, say old people, the sultan proved invulnerable. But VOC sources suggest that these perceptions are not merely empty formulae. According to Dutch records, Sultan Mahmud's successful domination of the rice trade caused considerable hostility among the more powerful princes; but an attempt by one of his brothers, Pangeran Dipati, to mount a rebellion against him failed completely. Company correspondence hints at Sultan Mahmud's ousting of other rivals, for in 1757 there is mention of a "pretender" to the Palembang throne who had taken refuge in Bone.⁹⁰ Perhaps the most oft-cited instance of the ability of Sultan Mahmud to repel those who intend him harm is based on an incident that took place in 1728. According to the resident's letters, early that year a party of Balinese slaves attacked and killed their master, the pangeran ratu, together with several other people. Sultan Mahmud's successful pursuit and punishment of the assassins, confirmed in Dutch correspondence, is interpreted in a number of stories as evidence of his ability to stand against the conspiracies of his enemies, even if they originate among his own relatives.⁹¹

Like so many heroes, Sultan Mahmud did not inherit power but took it by force. His ability to survive opposition shows his unusual abilities, but the seizure of kingship is in itself a major exploit. A successful usurpation was the ultimate test of political legitimacy, and the very acts of betrayal by which Sultan Mahmud attained power are themselves a sign of special status. By defying and surviving his society's moral order, Sultan Mahmud acted in the shadow of some of the great ancestors who themselves had committed incest, fratricide, adultery.⁹² As he enters the heroic realm, kingly transgressions that could be seen as the cause of the people's distress in less prosperous times are elevated into triumphant cultural challenges affirming his predestined greatness.

Set against the disorder that prevailed after the death of Sultan Mansur, Sultan Mahmud's rule is depicted as initiating a new "time." In

the words of one text, “There was a period of disturbance in Palembang. When darkness fell, the people of one and the same negeri murdered each other, so that there was not a moment of peace. Food was very scarce because the traders from overseas stayed away and the people from the interior were afraid to come downstream. The difficulties in Palembang at that time were very great, and both in the ulu as well as in the ilir there was much banditry.” The specter of a conflict that divides kin has reared its head, for “many *priyayi* (nobles) and *menteri* and people were killed on both sides, although they were all children of Palembang (*anak Palembang*).” In this situation, the heroic king emerges to restore order. “The entire population, from the city to the headwaters of the nine rivers, was of one mind that Jayawikrama must be sultan, to reign over Palembang with all its dependencies.”⁹³ The disruption common to the beginning of a dynasty is thus put to rights at his installation, for with his reign, peace and prosperity return.

Although filtered through the heroic prism, the legends attached to Sultan Mahmud do not stand alone. The ideal of the king as ruling in consultation with the community’s leaders to maintain the social equilibrium was not so far removed from reality. When Paravicini visited Palembang he noted that although Sultan Mahmud was a strong and authoritative ruler, he took care to consult the court nobles and interior heads on matters of importance. The 1755 contract was publicly read aloud, and discussion on its contents lasted four days. Sultan Mahmud himself insisted that there would be “great dejection” among his people if he did not follow old customs. The following year the resident summed up the situation succinctly: “The king is in harmony with his children and the whole kingdom is completely peaceful.” When Sultan Mahmud died in 1757 he had been ruling for thirty-four years, as long as many people could remember, a length of time well able to be translated in popular accounts into the holy figure of forty years.⁹⁴ The throne passed peacefully to his son, but powerful remembrances of his reign were left behind—a new mosque, a new palace, a royal graveyard at Lemabang. In time Sultan Mahmud was also attributed with other ancestral actions, like the determining of weights, the fixing of tribute, and the introduction of new titles. By the 1890s his standing was so high that he was even said to have ended the customs of *jujur* and *ambil anak*, which had traditionally regulated marriage.⁹⁵

The career of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin and his place in Palembang memory is another reminder of the osmosis between the world of the present and that of legend. It is not just that historical heroes become almost indistinguishable from those of myth and folk tales; more explicitly, in these heroic societies “the experiences of celebrated mythical protagonists are re-experienced by the living in analagous circumstances.” It is thus possible for individuals to anticipate their ances-

tral status and in their own lifetime not simply to resemble but in fact to become figures of legend. In eighteenth-century Palembang the prestige of Sultan Mahmud had important repercussions, for by attachment to the same overlord a range of different tribal groups in the hinterland together became his "subjects." In this type of cultural order, where the actions of rulers had a "multiplying" and therefore a "disproportionate historical effect," the status of the king as it were defined the limits of the land.⁹⁶ The most telling expression of this royal prestige is seen in Palembang's relations with Jambi. As Sultan Mahmud remarked, he and the Jambi ruler were indeed "brothers and kinsmen"; in fact, however, there could be no doubt of their relative standing, for Sultan Anum, like a poor and powerless relative, had effectively asked to be taken under Palembang's protection.⁹⁷ The difference between Palembang and Jambi was manifested in the persons of their rulers. It is significant that today the graves of eighteenth-century Palembang kings are still preserved as a proud memorial to the past, while those of their relatives in Jambi lie overgrown and deserted by the quiet waters of the Sepin.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Descriptions and Judgments: Southeast Sumatra in a Time of “Decline”

Throughout the eighteenth century the European view of writing as the most efficacious vehicle for communicating information was evident in the growing number of publications issued by the proliferating scientific societies. In the sharing of “useful discoveries,” it was believed, the educated elite of Europe could be drawn together as “one single society, united by a common goal which is the progress of the sciences and letters.”¹ Although it was axiomatic that Europe was the center of intellectual activity, the written medium meant that even those at the periphery of enlightened thought could participate in the great endeavor. The year 1778 saw the founding of the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences) which, though the most distant from Europe of all the scientific societies, was nonetheless linked to like bodies through the correspondence and articles contained in its *Verhandelingen* (Transactions).

The Batavian Society differed from its counterparts in Europe, however, because it was mainly composed of high-ranking VOC employees who espoused the belief that the Company should be more than a mere commercial concern. Ideally, it should also be involved in the pursuit of nobler goals, such as the “natural history, antiquities, customs and mores” of the peoples of the Indies. This vision of the European official as not simply a trader but as a man of science was soon apparent in relation to Sumatra. In the space of a few years, four studies appeared, all by men involved with the East India Companies whose work had been encouraged by their association with scientific societies.² The first issue of the *Verhandelingen* even included a lengthy piece on Palembang by one of the founders of the Batavian Society, J. C. M. Radermacher.

These new works on Sumatra attracted attention in Europe’s “enlightened” circles, partly because they dealt with a little-known region of the world but also because they claimed to be based on accurate and methodical observation. It was this, the authors contended, that distin-

guished their efforts from travel accounts intended for a popular audience. In his *History of Sumatra*, William Marsden spoke for his fellows when he stressed that his object was "not, ultimately, to write an entertaining book, to which the marvellous might be thought not a little to contribute, but . . . to add . . . to the general knowledge of the age . . . [and] to furnish . . . facts to serve as *data*."³

Vehement insistence on empirical observation as a basis for scientific conclusions created more stringent criteria for descriptions of non-European societies. Yet the very strengths of this approach contained inherent dangers. In Sumatra, as elsewhere in the Indonesian archipelago, the belief that scholarly research should be drawn from personal experience inevitably meant that those areas that were important to Europeans or that for some reason had attracted their attention, received much greater attention than those where Europeans did not go or where they had no economic involvement. Furthermore, because of the importance educated Europeans placed on literacy as a mark of "civilization," societies unable to produce written histories of their own fared badly. Jambi represents a classic case. Despite the fact that the Dutch had been trading there for a hundred and fifty years, it warrants only a few lines in Radermacher's account; it had, after all, been abandoned by the Company more than a decade before. In his *History*, Marsden applies the same implicit criteria. Although he accepted that Jambi had been "of some importance at an earlier stage of European commerce," the "treachery" of the inhabitants meant it was now "little frequented by any other than native merchants." Because Jambi's "history" was stored more in oral legend and folklore than in court writings and because Europeans judged it economically insignificant, it was relegated to the margins of scholarly interest; in the words of the prestigious *Encyclopaedia of Netherlands India* "nothing is known of Jambi's history" until 1833, when it was taken under Dutch "protection."⁴

The same comments cannot be made of European treatment of Palembang, and its importance to the VOC is evident in Radermacher's account. By the early nineteenth century the English too had hopes of extending their commercial interests in southeastern Sumatra, and these ambitions are apparent in the attention accorded Palembang and Bangka in contemporary writings.⁵ But the Dutch were equally determined to maintain their favored position in Palembang in the wake of the VOC's demise, and this determination resulted in a wave of articles and reports that provided hitherto unavailable material on the area. Because of its continuing importance to both Dutch and English, written sources for Palembang are more extensive than for Jambi, and as a result its history for the last decades of the eighteenth century is more accessible.

These contemporary observers were generally agreed that although

Palembang was obviously prosperous, it was still touched by a process of "decay" that was affecting all archipelago societies.⁶ The descriptions and judgments they so confidently committed to paper, however, were informed by deep-seated convictions of European cultural superiority. Although commentators themselves provided details of the pressures to which many societies in the region were now subject, they were often unable to see the implications of the "data" they had so carefully set down. The history of the archipelago shows that what Europeans described as "kingdoms" were in fact cultural-economic unities comprised of a web of kinship-infused relationships. Eminently suited to bonding smaller communities, these relationships could be successfully transposed to a larger stage. Nonetheless, there was always a degree of tension in the resulting associations, a tension that increased in direct proportion to the numbers of participants involved. Constant nurturing was necessary to maintain ties that depended on volition rather than compulsion, and this proved increasingly difficult in the changing environment of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. In the Palembang case the "degeneration" that Europeans perceived represented the fragilities inherent in the indigenous state. It is also apparent that such strains were more evident on the oceans, the environment Europeans knew best. When they looked landward toward Palembang's interior, it was harder to sustain the "decay" argument. Here, notwithstanding considerable demographic dislocation, the centuries-old ties between ulu and ilir were not undermined and in many cases were even strengthened. But in attempting to explain this phenomenon, contemporary European observers translated upstream-downstream relations into an idiom they could understand. Although based on "data," their verdicts were as a result culturally awry.

The Changing Environment on the Oceans

Most Europeans familiar with the Malay-Indonesian archipelago were aware that the political and economic climate of the late eighteenth century was very different from that prevailing a hundred years earlier. The difference was particularly evident in regard to maritime trade, where one of the most noticeable shifts was the decline of the Dutch East India Company and the collapse of the "closed sea" concept it had fought to preserve. A monopolistic outlook, conservative ideas, and cumbersome organization had proved major obstacles to any effective response to changing commercial demands, and from 1740 what has been termed the Dutch "world emporium" could no longer dominate trade in certain commodities as it had once done.⁷ In the first decades of the century the English East India Company displaced the VOC as the leading importer of pepper into Europe, and it was the English who

came to dominate the expanding China trade in tea and porcelain. The bases of the VOC monopoly system were finally swept away by the defeat of the Netherlands in the fourth Anglo-Dutch war of 1780-1784. In the subsequent peace negotiations the VOC was forced to accept the principle of free navigation to the eastern seas, the death blow to its commerce in the Indonesian archipelago.

The inflexibility of the Company's economic policies had clearly contributed to its withdrawal from Jambi; the same inflexibility was also apparent in Palembang, where the Dutch never relinquished their hope of resuscitating the pepper trade. Such aspirations were quite unrealistic in view of pepper's displacement not only by rice but by other more profitable cash crops such as cotton, tobacco, and gambier. A series of earthquakes in the late 1750s destroyed many gardens, most of which were never replanted, and in 1758 Palembang failed for the third successive year to deliver twenty thousand piculs of pepper as the contract specified. In 1776 another disaster struck when a prolonged drought killed more than forty thousand vines. Meanwhile, problems also arose in the tin trade because the market in Canton collapsed in the late 1750s and did not recover until the 1780s. For some time, therefore, the Company was concerned to reduce the amount of tin purchased. In 1765, for example, it took only sixteen thousand piculs, although it had previously indicated a willingness to buy as much as thirty thousand. But Palembang was still bound to the Dutch by a monopoly contract, and the ruler was thus unable to "legally" sell his tin elsewhere. Faced with his own mounting surplus, he took the obvious step of seeking out his own markets, particularly in China. In the years that followed, junks arrived regularly at Amoy, Ningpo, and Canton, sometimes bringing more tin in a single delivery than the entire annual sale to Batavia. Although tin shortages again developed in the 1780s, the Dutch were then in a poor position to compete with the high prices offered by other buyers.⁸

Against this background Palembang rulers renewed their contract with the Dutch in 1763, 1775, 1776, and again in 1791, but the accompanying negotiations were never without problems. For the VOC the commercial advantages of maintaining an establishment of more than a hundred people in Palembang steadily diminished, despite the large amounts of tin they did receive. Rising costs forced Batavia to make more stringent demands on their trading partners, the acceptance of which hinged on the ability of individual residents to present Dutch desires in a favorable light. In his mission of 1755, Paravicini had stressed the importance of selecting competent representatives, and occasionally VOC personnel fulfilled their duties well. In 1758, shortly after his installation, the new ruler Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin (1758-1774) bestowed on Resident Huybert Jan de Heere a "great *tombak* or

pike with a kris, each overlaid with gold, saying that I could carry this through his whole land in his name and could use it in his stead if it was necessary, against his own subjects as well as any others who might try to harm me."⁹

To a considerable extent de Heere's success was due to his sensitivity to local customs. He made a point, for instance, of paying a visit to the court every two weeks, since the ruler liked to hold an audience "even if there was nothing to say." Because of his favorable standing, de Heere was quietly able to build up the marshy land around the Dutch settlement on Sungai Aor and create a new village he called *Uitvlugt* (Loop-hole), "a whole negeri" of about three hundred Chinese and natives who made their living by market gardening. "These people," he said, "regard themselves as my vassals, and me as their lord." Sultan Ahmad's attitude toward the VOC is evident in the request he made in 1760, when he asked the Dutch to ensure that "no one succeeds me except my son the crown prince, *Pangeran Ratu*."¹⁰

As the eighteenth century progressed, however, it became increasingly more difficult to find other competent Company servants able to deal with native rulers. Asked to select one of his scribes to go to Jambi as head, de Heere himself told his superiors that although his assistants were all "upstanding" men, they were not fluent in Malay.¹¹ It is not surprising that no subsequent resident in Palembang received the same honors as de Heere or that following his departure relations with the Dutch were often troubled. The recurring disputes over weights, coinage, debts, and slow deliveries continued, given an added sharpness in 1770 by Sultan Ahmad's alarm at the design of a new lodge which, he claimed, resembled a fort that could well eclipse his own residence. Although he finally agreed to accept the new design, shortly afterwards he began enlarging and improving his palace.

In 1774 Sultan Ahmad relinquished the throne to his son, Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin, and as he lay dying two years later again asked the VOC to give the new ruler its support. Nonetheless, the years after Sultan Ahmad's death saw further strains develop between the Dutch and the Palembang court. The exchanges so central to the economic process fell away; resident and ruler rarely met, envoys visited Batavia less frequently, attempts were made to reduce the ceremonial surrounding the receipt of Company letters. When a large fleet sent by the Estates General passed through the Bangka Straits in 1784, Sultan Mahmud intended to send merely "a few pieces of salted buffalo meat and some dried fish," but the resident told him this was not acceptable.¹² As in Jambi, complaints of the moral failings of individual residents, such as insults to royal women, were more frequent, and court attitudes were reflected in the behavior of ordinary people. By the 1790s Dutch officials who had grown accustomed to gifts of food to alleviate

the high cost of living in Palembang found that the customary offerings from the VOC's own people, the kapitan cina and the people of Sungai Aor, were less forthcoming. For the first time the Dutch also became targets of the group known as the "permitted thieves." There were even occasional incidents of violence toward the Dutch posts in Palembang and Lampung, some apparently carried out with the implicit blessing of the court.¹³

The eighteenth century had also seen the VOC challenged by renewed English competition. In south Sumatra pepper growers along Palembang's border areas had gone to Bengkulu to trade for many years, but for the first time in well over a century it was possible to envisage the English actually displacing the Dutch. In 1781, following the outbreak of the fourth Anglo-Dutch war, the Palembang resident heard with consternation of the fall of Padang to English troops, and there were even rumors that Melaka would be taken. Padang was returned to the Dutch in 1785 after hostilities ended, but the next year Captain Francis Light negotiated the lease of the island of Penang to the East India Company. It became apparent that the leaders of this new port intended to compete directly with Melaka and even Batavia. In 1795 the dominance of the English seemed confirmed when the stadhouder of the Netherlands permitted a temporary British occupation of Melaka and Dutch possessions in west Sumatra to prevent their capture by the forces of Napoleonic France.

The group most influential in alerting local rulers to the potential eclipse of the Dutch was the English country traders who had begun to frequent ports in the Melaka Straits as opportunities in India lessened.¹⁴ Kingdoms whose rulers had not signed monopoly treaties with the Dutch, such as Aceh, Kedah, Selangor, Terengganu, and above all Riau, became popular ports of call. The patronage of the English was welcomed not only because they could supply cheap Indian cloth, but also because they brought cargoes of opium, use of which was now entrenched in Malay society. English country traders, unlike the VOC, also dealt in guns, ammunition, and gunpowder considered superior to that derived from local production. The exchange of cloth, opium, and weapons for the spices and tin essential for the China market encouraged an expanding interaction between native traders and the English, even in areas where monopoly contracts signed with the VOC supposedly excluded them.¹⁵

Local kings were impressed by the possibilities of the English alternative. In 1758 Sultan Anum of Jambi had even told the Dutch that he would ask "another foreign power" to settle in Jambi, a clear reference to the VOC's English rivals. The following year, English from Selangor and Kedah were reported to have appeared in the Jambi River, selling cloth and opium in such quantities that it was even reaching the

Minangkabau areas. In 1762 the Palembang court sent a mission to the English in Bengkulu to investigate the possibility of their paying higher prices than the Dutch for tin and pepper.¹⁶ English economic inroads gathered pace, and the outbreak of the war between England and the Netherlands in 1780 heightened speculation about the consequences of a VOC defeat. The numbers of English ships cruising the Melaka Straits caused considerable apprehension among the Dutch in Palembang, and the resident reported that Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin (r. 1774–1804) was in close contact with English traders, despite protestations to the contrary. There were even reports of his sending to one captain the presents normally dispatched to Batavia, promising that if more Englishmen arrived he would conclude a contract and give the Dutch lodge to them. Yet any such negotiations were perforce conducted in secrecy, for the VOC monopoly made it impossible for Sultan Mahmud to follow the practice of neighboring kings and publicly adopt favored English traders as royal "sons."¹⁷

Another feature that distinguished the eighteenth century was the marked expansion of Bugis migration to the western archipelago following their conquest of Johor's capital, Riau, on the island of Bintan in 1722. As a result an arrangement had been reached whereby a Bugis prince held the position of *yang dipertuan muda* (the deputy lord) and was effective ruler, while the Malay sultan held the purely symbolic position of *yang dipertuan besar* (the great lord). Widely regarded as "the best merchants among the eastern isles," the Bugis soon consolidated their hold over Riau's economy, affirming its reputation as the most important exchange center west of Java. With Bugis ships bringing spices and slaves, jungle and sea products, tin and pepper, Riau became the hub of a Bugis/Makassar network linking virtually every port in the archipelago. Inevitably, it was a magnet for both English and Chinese traders. In 1783, for example, the governor of Melaka reported that several European ships and thirteen junks were lying at anchor in Riau, including two flying the imperial flag.¹⁸

Riau's proximity made it a tempting lure for Palembang traders who wished to sell their products in a more open market. At the same time it was a reminder of Bugis penetration into the region, for by the mid-eighteenth century Bugis groups had not only assumed power over the Riau archipelago, but had carved out their own kingdom in the former Johor territory of Selangor. Their position in neighboring Jambi was also strong. Sultan Anum had given a daughter in marriage to the Bugis *yang dipertuan muda*, and following the Dutch departure in 1770 the Jambi court became increasingly drawn into the Bugis ambit. Palembang rulers were somewhat more wary, partly because of their contract with the vehemently anti-Bugis Dutch, but also because their experience with Sulawesi princes had not always been happy. In 1771 Sultan

Ahmad refused to permit the crew of a ship from Mandar to settle in Palembang, saying that he already had "too many bad people in his land." No Bugis lady from Riau was ever received into the Palembang court as a royal wife and no Palembang princess offered to Riau.¹⁹ Yet the Bugis remained a forceful economic and political presence that neither Sultan Ahmad nor his son could afford to ignore.

European descriptions of Palembang during this period invariably pay attention to another recent development—the increase in Bangka's Chinese population. The effects of the Chinese presence in Palembang itself had always been somewhat muted because most were under the control of Muslim *peranakan*, men of mixed ancestry who were related to the king, shared his religion, spoke his language, and whose titles and authority were evidence of their special standing.²⁰ Although successive contracts with the VOC had specified that the Dutch should have jurisdiction over Chinese traders, the resident in 1763 commented that he had little to do with them because they were almost all under the sultan's authority. To this point *peranakan* Chinese had served the king well and from the 1750s had been crucial in the revival of direct trading links with China and in the seaborne trade with Siam and Ha Tien. In 1764, for example, the Dutch discovered that the ruler had commissioned at least seven Palembang Chinese to organize the construction of junks in Siam intended to carry tin from Palembang to China.²¹

Initially the same held true of Bangka, for during the first years of Chinese migration to the island the miners had been under the supervision of the king's own *peranakan* clients and relatives. As the numbers of Chinese increased, however, it was more difficult for *peranakan* leaders to maintain their authority. By the beginning of Sultan Ahmad's reign the migrant Chinese population on Bangka was estimated at 25,000–30,000. While liaisons with local women certainly did occur, the increased numbers of Chinese travelling between Palembang and Java on native ships shows up the transiency of the mining population. The "marriages" that took place were usually temporary and were in any event limited by the sheer preponderance of Chinese males. By the early 1780s there were as many as twenty separate *kongsis* on Bangka, each composed of between two hundred and a thousand Chinese miners whose ties with their homeland remained strong. Deceased *peranakan* leaders, for instance, were normally buried with their Palembang relatives, but this new breed of Chinese captains wanted their bodies sent back to China for burial. Separated both geographically and culturally, the connections between the Bangka *kongsis* and the Palembang ruler were based almost entirely on pragmatic exchanges of money and goods. The tin the Chinese collected was theoretically delivered only to royal agents, with a quarter of the payment being given in cash and three quarters in cloth, rice, and other goods. Rice was reckoned at a set

price of a hundred rials the koyan regardless of whether prices fell or rose, while the value accorded other goods fluctuated. In addition, the king gave the miners cannon and weaponry to defend the wooden stockades built near the diggings.²²

Lacking traditional ties of loyalty or patronage with the Palembang ruler, there was no incentive for the Bangka Chinese to abide by trade relationships they deemed disadvantageous. It was considerably more profitable for miners in isolated settlements to sell tin to passing ships, like those of the English and Bugis, who offered a higher price—reportedly half as much again as that given in Palembang. The Chinese thus became ever more prominent as "smugglers," private traders who bypassed the ruler's monopoly, and a number of kongsis were independent enough to mint their own tin coinage. The networks they established made possible direct trade with Riau, Ha Tien, and even China, since the richest mines on the northwest and eastern coasts were not readily accessible to either VOC cruisers or the king's patrols. In 1778 a Chinese map of Bangka was discovered showing the most important "smuggling places," and Chinese knowledge of local waters was so great that the resident advised hiring a Chinese pilot to take a vessel into Kelabat Bay.²³

Toward the end of his reign, aware that his control over the Bangka Chinese was weakening, Sultan Ahmad changed the way in which the island was administered. All Chinese captains were replaced by court nobles from Palembang, and by 1780 only two areas were under Chinese heads. Although several of the newly appointed *tiko*²⁴ were certainly peranakan, they lived in the capital and were represented by Bangka people "of good birth." Through them the tiko extended money to the mine workers, who then delivered the tin for eight rials the Bangka picul of 150 kati; the tiko in their turn sold it to the ruler for eight rials the light picul of 100 kati. From his profit of 50 percent the tiko had to pay for transport and also supply the king's palace with necessities. The deficiencies of this system soon became apparent, for a financially pressed tiko would be unable to supply goods on credit, and Chinese miners felt aggrieved because the Bangka picul was about fifty kati heavier than that used in Palembang. Some Chinese, comparing the price they received from the tiko with that obtained by the ruler from the Dutch, considered his profits unreasonably high. Without wives and families in Palembang and aware of other alternative sources of income in the mines of Perak or Borneo, many decided to leave. Although population estimates of Chinese miners on Bangka in the 1780s varied from between 6,400 to 13,000, it was a far cry from the 25,000-30,000 of previous times. This Chinese emigration in turn markedly reduced the flow of tin to the capital.²⁵

Another group usually mentioned in accounts of Palembang from

this period were the Arab migrants, who by the mid-eighteenth century exerted considerable economic influence in the Melaka Straits. By the 1760s, for example, there was already a group of "Arab priests" who acted as royal advisers in Palembang, and their commercial activities are evident in the lists of incoming and outgoing ships kept by successive residents. In 1759 only ten Arab vessels are noted, but by 1795–1796 there were more than forty. When Radermacher published his description of Palembang in 1781 he contended that private trade there was dominated by Arabs, operating both on their own account and as royal agents. A recent study of the Semarang salt trade has noted that between 1774 and 1777 about half the shipments from that port were in the hands of Palembang Arabs, and of the thirty-six ships leaving Palembang for Melaka between September 1795 and August 1796, twenty were owned by Arabs.²⁶ The Dutch were so much in fear of their competition and influence that in 1791 when the Jambi ruler made inquiries about reviving the VOC contract, he was told that expulsion of all Arabs would be a condition for the Company's return.

The Arabs of Palembang were a select community, primarily men from the Hadhramaut who bore the title sayid as evidence of their descent from the Prophet. As his kinsfolk, sayids were regarded not merely as authorities on religion but were attributed with "supernatural power" (*'al sultat al-ruhiyah*), which made them venerated and even feared. Since local kings competed to persuade these prestigious men to join their courts, promising them status, riches, titles, and high-ranking women, the number of Arab migrants was in effect a measure of the material inducements individual rulers could offer. In the mid-eighteenth century there were only very few sayid merchants in Jambi; in Palembang, by contrast, the sayid community increased steadily. Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin was particularly anxious to encourage them to settle in Palembang, and during his reign sayid numbers grew markedly. Shortly after his accession he had gone so far as to cancel a planned wedding between his daughter and the son of the Jambi ruler, marrying the lady instead to Palembang's "head priest," a sayid.²⁷

Wealthy sayid families, like other Arabs, were part of a commercial network that stretched across the archipelago and back to India and the Arab heartlands. The Dutch attributed their rapid penetration to the special advantages granted them by local rulers, such as toll-free trade, but the reasons for their commercial success are much more complex. It was not merely that they were linked by marriage to the wealthiest and most prestigious royal families; the sayids of Hadhramaut were considered the most commercially adroit of all the Arab groups, products of a culture with generations of mercantile experience in such matters as accounting, investment, credit arrangements, written contracts. Exploitation of these skills had far-reaching implications in the personal-

ized, orally structured economics that typified most Indonesian areas. While family ties were naturally important for all Arabs, and particularly the sayids, the commercial ethos underlying their business activities "had already moved beyond the family framework . . . placing primary emphasis on economic self-interest."²⁸

Local rulers, who had seen the exchange of women and gifts and honors as the principal means of strengthening their links with these venerated relatives of the Prophet, had direct experience of this "economic self-interest." Arab loyalty to a single court was not easily won, and no ruler would dare to intimidate or threaten them as they often did the Chinese. Certainly Palembang was wealthy, but members of its sayid community were commonly involved in a number of centers, and they readily moved when better trading opportunities were perceived elsewhere. They were easily attracted, for example, to neighboring ports such as Riau, while a number transferred their activities to the new English settlement on Penang or to other European-controlled towns. Nor were they necessarily ready to observe the strictures intended to maintain the ruler's hold over his economic resources, and at least one sayid was sufficiently bold to take to wife a high-ranking Mentuk lady, even though these women were traditionally reserved for the ruler.²⁹

European sources depict the interaction between these groups primarily in terms of commercial competition for access to Bangka's tin. Less apparent, however, was the challenge their rivalry posed to the kinship-obligation relationships that had sustained Palembang's fragile jurisdiction over the offshore islands. New mines were discovered on Bangka in 1779, and twenty years later one commentator could still remark that "the tinmines have yielded immense quantities of ore, and appear inexhaustible."³⁰ But in the highly competitive environment of the late eighteenth century, producer and middlemen alike proved far less amenable than before to the authority of the Palembang king. The Dutch had long been unable to prevent "smuggling"; now the ruler too was being progressively excluded from the profits of Bangka's lucrative private trade. Chinese, Bugis, Malay, and Arab merchants bought up tin along the isolated east coast and then either went directly to Riau to buy cloth and weapons or made coastal assignments with English captains. The latter sometimes appointed their own agents on Bangka, dropping off cloth and opium, which was then secretly taken back into Palembang. It was also apparent that the king's own relatives and subjects were increasingly prepared to flout his orders and trade in tin on their own account. In an effort to limit these activities the Palembang ruler prohibited the import of opium and in 1778 under Dutch pressure forbade all trade to Riau, but these were empty gestures. Palembang was no match for Riau in commercial terms, and ties of patronage and kinship were thus placed under enormous strains. One of the three

principal "smugglers" on Bangka was Abang Tiwi, brother of Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin's "much loved" Mentuk wife, who received goods on credit from sayid traders to whom he secretly sold tin. Though the ruler's relative, he was summoned to court to be punished and was eventually put to death.³¹ In 1784, partly in hopes of affirming their former economic position, VOC forces captured Riau. But although the island was placed under direct Dutch control, the trading network slipped amocba-like away to reshape itself around alternative ports such as Terengganu, which had for some time served as a meeting place for English, Portuguese, Chinese, and Bugis traders and a dissemination point for opium and firearms. Now it became an important outlet for the tin and pepper previously taken to Riau.

Among the Palembang subjects whose cooperation facilitated the inroads of outsiders into the tin trade none were more crucial than the orang laut. The sea people who guarded Sungsang, the entry to the Musi River, had a very old relationship with Palembang kings, and as Palembang's authority moved further offshore, successive rulers had sought to establish similar ties with the orang laut who frequented the waters around Bangka, Belitung, and Lepar. But the subsequent links, established at least partly by force, could never be taken for granted. Retaining the loyalty of sea peoples who could readily attach themselves to some other court depended primarily on the ability of the Palembang ruler to serve as a legitimizer for orang laut leadership and as a conduit for economic activity. When Sultan Ahmad came to power in 1757, this certainly appears to have been the case, and Belitung headmen still appeared annually at court with gifts, receiving in turn titles and honors. The ocean products they delivered, like *bêche-de-mer* (*teripang*), seaweeds, and the iron extracted from the rocks surrounding Belitung, were indispensable for attracting overseas buyers. Orang laut also contributed directly to the economy by delivering to the market slaves taken in raids, acknowledging their acceptance of Palembang suzerainty by offering the king their choicest booty. In 1759, for example, a party from Bangka brought to port the captured occupants of a foundering Portuguese vessel. Although the captain, the son of the Timor resident, had died, Sultan Ahmad was so taken with the captain's "young and pretty daughter" that he took the entire crew into his palace, asking the widow to adopt Islam and become his wife.³² Recognizing Sultan Ahmad's involvement in raiding and concerned at the numbers of Javanese slaves for sale in Palembang, the Dutch for the first time included in the contract of 1763 an article obliging the ruler to act more forcibly to contain piracy.

Raiding, however, showed no signs of diminishing, for in the latter half of the eighteenth century the influence of Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin over the sea people was noticeably weaker than that of his

father and grandfather. A primary reason was orang laut involvement in the ever-expanding search for slaves, itself largely attributable to the "voracious demand" for human labor from the VOC, its officials, and private Dutch citizens. Orang laut raiding reached a peak never before experienced, and the competition for slaves of all kinds meant that no perahu, however small, was safe from attack. Whether carrying a few women intending to work in Palembang as prostitutes or a travelling wayang troupe en route to Banten, small native craft could represent a prize of several hundred rials to an orang laut captain.³³

Because of the inexhaustible market for slaves and the extent of orang laut participation, more traders were prepared to go directly to less accessible islands such as Belitung and Lepar. Here they could deal firsthand with orang laut "pirates" and purchase an adult male for as little as ten to fifteen rials, well below the price asked in Palembang itself. As a result, the linkages between orang laut and outside traders grew stronger. Orang laut with their own clientele were far more willing to bypass royal prerogatives and act independently of the Palembang king, both in raiding and in disposing of their slaves and booty. In 1784, for instance, Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin was told that a group of "Bilitongers" had on their own initiative deliberately led a Chinese junk bound for Mempawa onto a reef. Most of the crew were drowned, but without recourse to the ruler the orang laut took the captured survivors and cargo to be sold in Mentuk. The situation was made more complex when the flight of the Johor ruler from Riau in 1787 left many of his erstwhile orang laut subjects without a patron. A hundred years earlier their forebears had seen a royal protector as vital for their well-being and after the Johor regicide of 1699 had willingly looked to Palembang; now, however, they showed no inclination to recognize the southeast Sumatran coast as Palembang's domain. In 1790 orang laut from Lingga even killed one of the Sultan Mahmud's envoys.³⁴

A weakening of already fragile ties between the orang laut and the Palembang court was exacerbated by the presence of numbers of independent agents, Malay, Minangkabau, Bugis, and Arabs who had taken to the seas to "seek their fortune." For them too raiding became a source of livelihood, and they often proved less than willing to share their profits with the Palembang ruler or acknowledge his authority over the seas that were their hunting ground. When this kind of leadership allied with orang laut groups, piracy assumed a new dimension because it combined local maritime knowledge, navigational skills, capital, and access to arms. To this some adventurers could add the emotional appeal of deeper associations. The grandson of Raja Kecil, the Minangkabau prince who had claimed to be the son of the murdered Sultan Mahmud of Johor, was able to rally considerable support among Palembang's orang laut, many of whom were descended from groups

once linked to the Johor court. Pangeran Yusuf, Sultan Mahmud's uncle, was another well-known raider who was for some time able to carve out his own fiefdom around Bangka and Belitung. The Siantan-descended people of Mentuk were especially drawn to him because he was supported by Pangeran Dipati, a son born of the marriage between Mas Ayu of Siantan and Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin. In areas of Bangka where Pangeran Yusuf held sway he demanded a Spanish rial from every inhabitant, and in Belitung pirate captains were delivering their captives to him because he was their "protector."³⁵ The influence of Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin over raiding patterns in the seas where he claimed authority was thus considerably less than his predecessors as his orang laut subjects, often under the leadership of rival princes, proved willing to attack royal vessels and carry off Palembang people.

In this environment the arrival of the Ilanun in the 1780s represented yet another strain on the maintenance of the ruler-subject relationships so crucial to maritime trade. Apparently originating from central Mindanao, Ilanun movement to the coastal areas and farther afield to Sulu and northwest Borneo may have been caused by a volcanic eruption about 1765 that destroyed much of the Ilanun heartland. The relocated Ilanun communities gained a formidable reputation for raiding, forming profitable partnerships with wealthy Taosug traders who provided capital for expeditions and markets for captives and booty. Several of their leaders became linked through marriage to the rulers of Sulu and Cotabato, although others were virtually independent of any overarching authority.³⁶

The Ilanun were first noticed in Palembang waters in 1783, when a small fleet was reported to be raiding for slaves around Bangka. In 1787, however, Ilanun forces were instrumental in driving the Dutch from their post on Riau, and their consequent involvement in Johor politics meant they began to appear regularly in the western archipelago. During the northwest monsoon between December and February, their great fleets rode out from Borneo or from semipermanent colonies on the small islands dotting the South China Sea.³⁷ By 1790 Ilanun bases could be found in Retih, Riau, Jambi, Pulau Berhala, Tungkal, and Air Hitam, and from these settlements the Ilanun systematically preyed upon neighboring coasts.

As raiders the Ilanun far eclipsed the orang laut. Their fleets could consist of dozens of boats, the largest carrying up to eighty fighting men and about a hundred rowers. They were consequently able to build up such speed that in a light breeze they could well outstrip European vessels. Any becalmed craft was helpless because Ilanun boats were equipped with iron hooks with which they could engage their victims and with heavy rails at the bow to assist in boarding. Another reason for the success of Ilanun raiding was their access to weapons and gunpow-

der, some of which they obtained through trade with the English and some of which they made themselves. A third factor was the navigational skills that enabled them to negotiate the coastal waters of the Melaka Straits. Traditional knowledge was augmented by compasses and telescopes bought or plundered from Europeans and more particularly by local orang laut captured in raids and pressed into Ilanun service. With their larger ships, superior arms, and knowledge of the environment, the Ilanun were quite willing to defy Palembang's principal orang laut settlement at Sungsang and raid up the Musi River, attacking native cargo vessels, Chinese junks, and Dutch ships alike. Growing bolder, the Ilanun also began to board Arab vessels, which they had initially regarded with awe. Between January and October 1791 the Ilanun overmastered twelve of Palembang's best ships and captured sixteen smaller perahu sailing to Bangka. VOC vessels too were attacked with impunity, with "European" (usually mestizo Christian) women being taken as wives for Ilanun leaders. As they acquired greater knowledge of local geography, Ilanun raiders also moved up coastal rivers, attacking interior regions that had hitherto considered themselves safe from seagoing piracy. In one area "far up" the Tulang Bawang, for example, they took seventy people.³⁸

With their slave-based trading network stretching from Sumatra to Sulu and eastward to the Moluccas, the Ilanun soon saw the potentiality of direct involvement in the tin trade. In some areas of Bangka, slaves or intimidated locals worked mines specifically for Ilanun "overlords," and it was even said that they were collecting more tin than was being delivered to Palembang. Often it was fear of reprisals rather than prospects of rewards that made Palembang orang laut agree to join the Ilanun as raiders, but in other cases they entered willingly into the association because it was more profitable than their former relationship with the court. The well-known Panglima Raman, for example, son of a Bugis father and an orang laut mother, assisted the Ilanun in mounting raids on coastal settlements and passing ships and shared in the proceeds. Joined by some Palembang orang laut groups, like those from Lepar, he showed no compunction in attacking ships at the very mouth of the Musi River or in raiding Bangka coasts and carrying the prisoners off to Lingga.³⁹

The inability of the Palembang ruler to protect his people further damaged the ties between the court and the offshore islands. On a number of occasions Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin said he was unable to repel the raiders, and in 1794 the resident claimed that the king could not put more than twenty armed ships to sea. By 1796 Bangka had suffered almost constant Ilanun raiding for about six years, and Sultan Mahmud complained that fifteen hundred of his people had been taken in the previous twelve months alone. As a result Chinese miners were

fleeing the island, while local inhabitants were taking refuge deep in the interior. The situation was exacerbated by a major smallpox epidemic in 1798 that killed thousands of people.⁴⁰ Something of the horror of these years survives in a Belitung legend telling of an Ulanun pirate whom the local people nursed back to health and adopted as their son, to be like an *anak kandung* (womb child); when he returned years later, however, he offered them not the respect and affection due to parents, but the attack, humiliation, and torture normally meted out to hated enemies.⁴¹

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the control of the Palembang ruler over the waters surrounding his kingdom had been severely reduced. The numbers of people involved, the competition in the tin trade, and the traffic in human beings combined to undermine the delicate intermingling of favors bestowed and obligations incurred that were the only means of sustaining a political and economic order on the seas. Palembang's authority over the offshore islands had always been subject to challenge, but during the previous century interlocking linkages, albeit tenuous, had been established and in the main sustained. What European observers judged to be the declining power of a maritime trading state was therefore more a demonstration of the strains placed on a basically land-based kingdom that had extended its suzerainty into seas where economic rivalries were fierce. In contrast, the ancient ulu-ilir relationship remained remarkably resilient, even though it too was operating in a context that required constant restatement of old links and careful fostering of new ones.

A Changing Environment in the Ulu

The Europeans who wrote what were intended to be scientific accounts of Sumatra in the late eighteenth century were all aware that substantial populations existed in upstream areas, but only Marsden and his contemporary, Charles Miller, felt sufficiently confident to describe ulu groups at length. Radermacher had no direct experience of Palembang's interior, and his judgment that its inhabitants were "stupid and simple" was based largely on his opinions of ulu representatives he had seen during royal audiences. VOC sources are at first glance only slightly more revealing, since eighteenth-century Palembang rulers permitted Dutch representatives access to the interior on a mere two or three occasions. Informants in the court were not necessarily more knowledgeable, for princes and nobles rarely visited the upstream appanages they had been assigned. Further, as the pepper production declined, VOC attention shifted from the ulu to the more economically profitable tin trade of the coast. Dutch interest in the interior was only revived in the early nineteenth century in the face of greater English involvement in southeast Sumatra.

Although Marsden did draw attention to the writing system used by the Rejang and other interior groups, contemporary Europeans generally saw little of historical worth in the stories of ancestral peregrinations by which ulu communities recalled their past. When juxtaposed with archival material, however, accounts of heroic adventure in which the poyang masters his adversaries and claims authority over new lands assume a new significance. Taken together, the sources suggest that in the ulu, as on the seas, demographic movement was contributing to an extremely fluid and at times threatening environment. Intervillage raiding, for example, had long been a feature of the upstream landscape, but now access to more effective weaponry bought from the English or from Bugis traders along the west coast rendered it potentially more damaging. One such instance occurred in 1765 when seven hundred Bengkulen Malays equipped with English muskets appeared in ulu Palembang, destroying two whole villages and forcing the inhabitants to flee. They were repelled only after the arrival of a force from the ilir, also well armed. It also appears that Palembang rulers were less able to contain Minangkabau migration into Palembang-controlled Rawas. In 1779 about six hundred Minangkabau were reported to be moving in from Limun, attacking local people and burning pepper plantations, presumably in retaliation for perceived wrongs they or their kinsmen had suffered.⁴²

But though Minangkabau migration was to have a significant effect on the later development of Rawas,⁴³ it paled beside the continuing Palembang expansion south of the Mesuji River, which Dutch contracts had specified as Lampung's northern boundary. Banten's overlordship had little meaning here, and in 1777 Palembang people were reported to be "all through" the Tulang Bawang region, their movement facilitated by the numerous jungle tracks connecting riverine routes. Inhabitants of Lampung's border districts could reach Palembang's downstream capital in a few days, and the Palembang ruler continued to sponsor the distribution of titles and honors to persuade pepper growers to sell to his agents. It was said, in fact, that although a man could buy the title of pangeran for eighty rials from Banten, the king of Palembang would give it for nothing. Now this pressure was also being felt in central Lampung, where there were frequent Banten accusations of Palembang people along the Wai Besai and Wai Abung. Bearing gifts and letters from the Palembang king, they demanded in return entry to gold-bearing areas. In 1793 the VOC was predictably unsuccessful in bringing about recognition of the Lampung-Palembang boundary by means of a new contract.⁴⁴

Palembang's push southward was generated not just by the attraction of Lampung's gold and pepper but also by its human resources. A number of traditions from the Komering region talk of Palembang rulers who were eager to populate the area, and the perennial concern to

retain and increase population may have been more critical in the late eighteenth century following several devastating smallpox epidemics. Because smallpox had recurred periodically in the ilir, inhabitants there had been exposed to contact for many generations and had built up a degree of resistance. Thus, even when severe, epidemics did not prove fatal to a large proportion of the population. In the interior, however, exposure to infectious diseases had been much more limited, and the possibility of widespread deaths rose with increased ulu-ilir interaction. The young, the old, and pregnant women were all particularly vulnerable, and whole villages could be decimated in a few weeks. In 1758 smallpox ravaged the interior and in 1772 again swept through Lematang, Komering, and Ranau, while Rawas was reported to be depopulated as survivors fled to the safety of uninfected areas. More outbreaks occurred in the 1790s, and there were claims that deaths in the ulu from smallpox exceeded ten thousand.⁴⁵ Losses on this scale could not readily be replaced, especially since so many of the victims were children and fertile women.

These developments may help account for Palembang's increased raiding into Lampung, since any decline in population meant a parallel decline in food production. Although many former pepper-growing districts had shifted to dry rice, Palembang now had to supply food to the thousands of Chinese tin miners on Bangka, and in 1783 it was estimated that they would require about twelve hundred koyan of rice per annum. When ships from Java did not appear or when the quantity was inadequate, the lack of local supplies could have severe repercussions, especially after 1770, when the VOC reintroduced restrictions limiting trade with Siam. Ulu rice growing was thus essential to the smooth running of the economy, and should planted areas be abandoned or crops fail, the results could be catastrophic. In 1775, for instance, there was almost no rain in some interior districts for five or six months, and the following year another poor harvest resulted in an estimated five thousand people allegedly dying of hunger. Though the 1791 treaty permitted trade with Siam once more, in 1796 another crop failure pushed the cost of rice to 123 rials the koyan, and there was not enough to supply the downstream port, let alone the Bangka miners.⁴⁶ The constant threat of lack of food would have lent a new urgency to the development of rice lands. Stories collected a generation later told of Palembang raiders capturing whole families from areas as distant as Wai Sungkai and resettling them in ilir Komering and along Sungai Belitang to grow rice. Warehouses were constructed in the vicinity of Palembang; certain communities were obliged to keep them stocked with rice so that in times of shortages, supplies could be distributed to those in need.⁴⁷

There was another dimension to this raiding, for much of the Palembang thrust into Lampung occurred independently of the downstream

from the flow of humanity down from the Pasemah heartlands. A trickling migration along the tributaries of the major river systems had probably been occurring for many years, but about the mid-eighteenth century it became more marked. The primary reason appears to have been a shortage of resources within Pasemah itself. The Pasemah highlands, like those of Minangkabau, were well populated in contrast to the lowlands, and in 1817 an English traveller estimated that there were about a hundred thousand people in Pasemah Lebar alone. As elsewhere in the archipelago, demographic superiority was based on the ability to produce surplus food, in this case wet rice grown along the flat and fertile valley floors, which were easily flooded and worked with water buffalo. Dutch observers also believed that the dominance of ambil anak marriage, by which a man was adopted by his wife's family, encouraged earlier unions and more children than among communities where jujur was paid. The continuing demand for rice and the limits on suitable land acted as stimuli to push Pasemah groups out in search of low-lying areas near running water where they could lay out their fields. The need for new space may have become more imperative because swidden agriculture encouraged the spread of *alang-alang* grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) in cleared areas of the interior. Once *alang-alang* was established, it was difficult to bring the ground back into production. By the early nineteenth century numerous communities that traced their origins to Pasemah had established themselves in the districts of Kisam, Semendo, and Makakau and along the upper areas of the Ogan and Komering.⁵⁰

In Pasemah legends these migrations are often depicted as the spread of a great family, where poyang accepted strangers as their children and reached amicable arrangements with other poyang in newfound lands. Yet although the territory into which the Pasemah groups moved might have appeared uninhabited jungle, it was, of course, the preserve of already established groups whose concepts of boundaries and inherited rights were deep rooted. Dutch sources suggest that from the 1780s people living along the Komering, Ogan, Enim, and Lematang rivers had become aware of the growing challenge posed by Pasemah migration as these newcomers sought to appropriate favorable tracts of land, raided villages, captured young men to supply them with labor, and seized women for marriage partners. Indeed, equally striking in the surviving oral accounts are the recurrent descriptions of conflict between Pasemah groups and those communities whose territorial claims they challenged.⁵¹

Orally transmitted stories of migration and settlement are difficult to relate to a specific time, and demographic shifts in the Palembang interior were certainly not a new development. The nature of the sources does not facilitate reconstruction, and the modern historian feels some

sympathy with nineteenth-century Europeans who complained about the difficulty of tracing past developments there because of the "lack of written documents in which the history of the land is recorded."⁵² Nonetheless, the available material combines to suggest that the latter part of the eighteenth century saw a steady migration of peoples down from the highland areas and continued movement of various Palembang groups into Lampung. Memories of raid and warfare reflect the fragmentation of an area occupied largely by small tribal societies among whom competition for economic resources meant constant contention for territorial occupation.

In such a context it might appear that ulu-ilir relations would be placed under severe strains, yet from the indigenous standpoint it was precisely this type of "lawless" situation that made access to an overlord most necessary. In a highly competitive environment the mediating services of a prestigious king whose decision would be respected by all contending factions was often the only recourse for settling ongoing disputes. One piagem found in Pasemah dating from 1685 A.J. (1759 C.E.), for instance, specifies that "if people undertake raids against another village, and the attacked are killed, the blood price [*bangun*] must be paid; if anyone from among the attackers are killed, then nothing need be done." Another piagem from Tanah Abang on the Ogan River indicates that the ruler's assistance was similarly called upon to restore trade between villagers and the kubu, the jungle dwellers.⁵³ That downstream intervention often occurred in response to ulu petitions is suggested in a piagem from Ujan Mas, a district near Muara Enim highly favored for settlement because of its location on flat land at the junction of several rivers. The decision recorded by the Palembang court carefully delineates the territorial boundaries between Ujan Mas and its neighbors, mentioning in the process thirteen rivers and more than twenty different settlements, details that could only have been provided by people from the area.

It further appears that the judgment of ilir kings was being sought in disputes involving the taking of debt slaves. One piagem given to the head of Muara Rupit in Rawas in 1729 A.J. (1802 C.E.) "as a token that he carries out the king's commands" laid down that if a question of debts arose between a Palembang person and an orang ulu, and if the debt was not paid, up to double the amount could be claimed. "Higher than that he may not go." If previous declarations had not been made to the council of elders (*peroatin*), then no claim could be made. It was forbidden to apply pressure for debts resulting from gambling or cockfighting, and local leaders should consult together to ensure there was no fighting or killing. No one was permitted to sell human beings, for "that is the exclusive right of the king," and no trader or foreigner was permitted to take up residence in the interior under pain of being fined.

Eighteenth-century court documents also include copies of several piagem distributed to interior heads that differ from those of earlier times in specifying that neither the debtors nor their families should be enslaved. While such piagem often include traditional claims, it is notable that on the reverse side of several is a Malay translation of the Javanese original, suggesting that it was not merely a formulaic statement but was intended to be read and understood.⁵⁴

In 1818 one observer commented that trade in Palembang was declining, the taxes were arbitrary, and the nobles high-handed. "Yet it is amazing that despite all this oppression, the kings of Palembang can maintain their authority over the whole outstretched kingdom without an army and even without police."⁵⁵ While descriptions of lawlessness on the seas could readily be attributed to the ineffectiveness of an administration deprived of European guidance, it was less easy to explain why the ulu-ilir association apparently held good when "banditry" was so prevalent and when "government" seemed so minimal. Explaining this apparent anomaly was the concern of the numerous descriptions of Palembang compiled as the VOC staggered toward its dissolution in 1799 and as both the English and Dutch governments looked to inherit its interests.

Ulu-Ilir Ties and the Downstream Capital

Dutch and English observers of southeast Sumatra during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries came from societies in which governmental bureaucracies were growing increasingly more efficient and more centralized. When seeking to explain in writing how Palembang operated "without an army and without police," contemporary commentators assumed that the survival of the ulu-ilir association must be somehow due to the incorporation of measures similar to those that had been so successful in shaping the nation-states of Europe. Their descriptions accordingly transformed the downstream capital into an administrative "center," the territories occupied by the various clan groupings (*marga*) into "provinces," and the amorphous links between ulu and ilir into a bureaucratic chain of command that stretched from the coast to the interior. This chain was depicted as being held together by "officials," foremost among whom were the *jenang*, the royal representatives. They were responsible for the transmission of royal orders to district chiefs, who seemed to be the principal sources of authority in the interior. Bearing the title of *dipati* or *pesirah* and usually claiming descent from a long line of leaders, these chiefs were locally nominated and confirmed by the downstream ruler. What appeared to be the next level of command was occupied by village headmen distinguished by Malay and Javanese-derived titles like *ginda* (*baginda*) and *kria* (*kiai aria*), *lurah* or *ngabei*. European descriptions then traced the "chain" into the

villages, where the key figures were identified as the *matagawe* (literally, family elders in charge of work), appointed by their kinsmen and approved by the king. A group of three or four of these elders, the *penggawa*, assisted the village head and was responsible for collecting tribute, encouraging the planting of crops like pepper, receiving strangers, delivering letters and reports, resolving minor quarrels, and imposing fines. Together, the *pesirah* and village leaders of a *marga* were termed the *peroatin*, the *adat* heads, who formed a kind of council, which could include as many as two hundred people. This met at the largest village to discuss common concerns and decide on the resolution of serious offenses. The ruler in Palembang was involved only when there was some protracted quarrel, a killing, or accusations against a *dipati*.⁵⁶

Having endowed native government with something approaching a "structure," Europeans were concerned to determine its functions. In their view a bureaucracy was properly concerned with tasks such as maintaining the law, raising revenue, and organizing military duties, all of which rendered a population more responsive to central control. From this viewpoint it was not difficult to see tribute and *corvée* labor in Palembang as the equivalent of taxes and military service nor to depict them as another reason for the survival of the *ulu-ilir* relationship. Some observers even equated the *jenang* with a revenue collector, because he helped channel "taxes" and labor to the ruler or individual court nobles and princes. The *pesirah* too was considered an important link in the revenue chain, since every three years most district heads went downstream to pay homage (*sebo*), accompanied by various *matagawe* who each brought a gift of rice as well as cotton, fruit, and coconuts.

Details of this type were of prime importance to both Dutch and English as each assessed the advantages of greater involvement in Palembang and sought to calculate the worth of the tribute submitted to the *ilir* court. However, what impeded efforts to clarify and evaluate Palembang's system of revenue gathering was the variety of ways the state's "income" was raised. Thus, although rice-growing districts such as those along the middle reaches of the Musi, the Lematang, and the Ogan were required to submit a percentage of their *padi* harvest, the amount was not standardized, being estimated at one fifth in some areas and in others a quarter. Along the Komering tribute was commonly offered in pepper and by *turun benih*, the sending down of rice seed after the family's needs were met; the final amount could range from half the crop to a quarter or a third. Other areas were subject to the *tiban-tukon* system, whereby cloth, iron, salt, and other items could be bought only from royal agents for fixed and often artificially high prices; in return, the people delivered pepper, cotton, and jungle products such as wax.⁵⁷

Lacking in the collection of revenue, Europeans considered, were

regulation and order. In the capital, for instance, the population was to all appearances free of tax, but family heads were required to supervise the execution of certain tasks for their patron, who was either the ruler himself, a prince, or a court noble.⁵⁸ European commentators were also unsure as to whether gifts should be categorized as revenue, since on all court occasions—at the end of the fasting month; at a king's succession; at a royal marriage, baptism, or circumcision—the *pesirah* was expected to give presents to the ruler and the *jenang*, the cost of which was largely met by people in his district.⁵⁹ Should the *jenang* visit a village, he and his entourage had to be fed and fêted, and on occasions like the Muslim New Year, *matagawe* near the capital each gave their *jenang* a chicken, a coconut, rice, dried fish, spices, firewood, and other small items, which were then passed on to the sultan to feed guests.

Similar difficulties of classification were encountered in regard to labor duties. Europeans familiar with Javanese recognized that the term *sikep* referred to work of some kind, and in Palembang too they found that large numbers of people, termed *orang sikep*, provided personal service either in lieu of or in addition to tribute. Again, however, there was enormous variation. The heaviest corvée seemed to fall on those who lived along the Banyu Asin, the Musi, the Lematang, the Komering, and the Ogan, which were most accessible from Palembang itself. Obligations could cover a wide range of activities. The *orang laut* of Sungsang were thus required to patrol the river between Palembang and the sea, while some Komering districts were expected to build boats and furnish rowers. Other villages took turns providing labor for the palace (*sikep dalam*); people from Belida supplied four to six hundred water carriers, rotating every three months. At the mouth of most rivers, particular groups were assigned for other duties such as the transport of *tiban-tukon* goods, and to these could be added specifically local tasks; the villagers of Beting, for instance, cared for the nests of the waterbirds at the mouth of the Abab River.⁶⁰

While groups living along rivers near the downstream capital were subject to sometimes onerous demands, those who lived at the margins of Palembang territory appeared by contrast to have minimal obligations. "Around the entire country from the borders of Jambi along the source of the Rawas, the Rupit, Lakitan, Beliti, and Kelingi, with the inclusion of all Rejang, up to the Musi, the Ogan and the Komering runs a cord, called by the people 'sindang,' the depth of which is five, six and ten hours walk . . . which is free from all tax in return for acting as watchers of the land." The responsibility of *sindang* villages was to guard the borders, not only to forestall outside attack but more particularly to prevent the king's people escaping. It was difficult to gauge the extent of Palembang authority in such areas, since the sultan's *jenang* were acknowledged, but geographical inaccessibility meant that

the tiban-tukon system had never been imposed. Herman Muntinghe, who came to Palembang as commissioner in 1818, even considered that the Pasemah districts lay outside Palembang's suzerainty and must be excluded from any calculations regarding potential income.⁶¹

The identification of a nascent bureaucracy linking upstream and downstream through the tribute-labor system seemed to provide a convincing explanation for Palembang's ability to survive as a kingdom. What gave Europeans of the period greater confidence in their reconstruction of the administrative "structure" in Palembang was access to written court documents that comprised lists of ulu obligations and taxes. The core of this material was compiled during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin, who from his installation had taken a greater interest in the maintenance and storage of records as a tool of government. His attitude is evident in a remark made to the Dutch envoy in 1791, when he asked that the receipt for 36,588.5 rials he had repaid to the VOC be written on the back of the contract because "loose papers" were easily mislaid.⁶² After the British looted the Palembang kraton in 1812, they salvaged a good percentage of the letters its kings had received from Batavia over the previous forty years. These indicate that from about 1776, following Sultan Mahmud's succession, correspondence was filed more systematically, facilitated by the now common practice of employing dates.⁶³ Perhaps encouraged by the numbers of document-conscious Arabs attached to the court, perhaps desirous of emulating Javanese rulers, perhaps as a result of expanding elite literacy, Sultan Mahmud also attempted to record in writing the numbers of people living along the main rivers and their obligations in tribute and corvée. According to a text written in Javanese and dated 1719 A.J. (1792 C.E.), "It was the time of the king's decision to make a collective survey / of the royal servants and the state of the realm, and to examine the regulations everywhere in the country districts / At the border of the town and moreover outside in the hills, the dependencies which have regulations from the realm."⁶⁴ This survey was maintained and expanded by his sons, and it is probably significant that the kings of Palembang were now able to read and write. In the early nineteenth century both the Dutch and English were able to consult court material that listed between 840 and 849 ulu villages and the number of mata-gawe in each, together with the services and tribute for which they were subject.⁶⁵

Europeans were certainly not incorrect in locating a kind of chain linking ulu and ilir, and the "officials" they identified were undoubtedly important individuals; the jenang, for instance, had been noted as men of influence at least since the seventeenth century, while the peroatin, the adat heads, were similarly people of high standing. Nor were they wrong in their assumption that the willingness of upstream

groups to travel downstream for royal service was a comment on kingly authority, especially in a period when a continuing program of royal building produced a constant demand for *corvée*. In 1759, when his son suggested he should "leave a reputation to his descendants," Sultan Ahmad began work on a new palace of wood, surrounded by a walled compound. The work of felling the trees and transporting them downstream took the better part of four years and at times involved as many as two thousand people summoned from the uplands.⁶⁶ By 1765 another fort as large as the previous one was also under construction; and when the VOC decided to use stone and brick to reconstruct its lodge, Sultan Ahmad responded by calling down several hundred laborers to extend his own residence, using bricks baked in kilns along the Ogan River under the supervision of a Chinese. Meanwhile, it was decided to erect mausolea that would provide suitable memorials to these kings after death, and both Sultan Ahmad and Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin made substantial extensions to the Lemabang complex. Such projects involved considerable labor, and when one of the leading princes died in 1776, five hundred people were reported to be working on the grave.⁶⁷

Yet although observers in the early nineteenth century were generally satisfied that they understood the nature of Palembang's administration, their concept of a "traditional" governmental structure implied a stasis in ulu-ilir relations that had never existed.⁶⁸ Furthermore, influenced by their own expectations and by access to written court lists of tribute and service, they attributed to the downstream court a degree of control it had never possessed. Europeans failed to realize that records like the "census" of 1792 were rarely consulted and that they were more a symbolic reminder of connections than a statement of specific and inflexible obligations. The people of Belida were thus theoretically required to deliver about five thousand *gantang* of rice, but according to royal documents this was "sometimes more, sometimes less." As Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin explained to a Dutch envoy in 1791, if real trust existed between contracting parties, there was no need for a precise description of mutual responsibilities.⁶⁹

European perceptions of the ulu as the domain of a sturdy but simple yeomanry subservient to a civilized ilir were reinforced by descriptions from travellers in the interior. During a trip to the Pasemah areas in 1811, Stamford Raffles commented on the health and prosperity of the villagers he met, although he regretted they had "no written memorials of past transactions or events, nothing in the form of history." The Palembang capital, on the other hand, with its strong Javanese influence, was adjudged to be "the most civilized part of Sumatra."⁷⁰ To some extent these attitudes were reinforced by stories collected from the people themselves. Along the Komering, for example, Europeans were told that once, long ago, Ratu Sinuhun and Sultan Lemabang (Sultan

Mahmud Badaruddin) had given the ancestor of each family twenty-five gantang of rice and other items. Each matagawe whose forebear had received this gift had to honor the debt by annually returning a proportion of his rice to the ilir court. The name of Sultan Lemabang was similarly invoked as the originator of the custom by which all men of ulu Komering (where the population was estimated at ten thousand) were subject to *sikep perang*, the obligation to fight for the downstream king, a punishment because their ancestors had killed a jenang.⁷¹

The view of the ilir as the dominant partner in the upstream-downstream nexus tended to obscure the fact that geographical realities made forcible levying of tribute or corvée extremely difficult. As one perceptive observer commented, the crucial element in a smooth relationship was the ability of the ilir court to employ "gentle persuasion." In effect, ulu inhabitants had to be lured downstream.⁷² Gifts and service tendered to the ruler therefore never went unrecognized, although the recompense given was not necessarily manifested in a way Europeans understood. When a pesirah returned home after paying homage, for instance, he took back with him proud evidence of the honors bestowed on him—a complete set of courtly garments, a kris, a new title, and a piagem—which together were considered ample recognition of whatever tribute he had brought. In the 1780s tribal chiefs as far distant as the hill country behind Bengkulu valued such honors sufficiently to make the long trip eastward to receive the title of pesirah from the Palembang king. When the Dutch took the royal palace in 1821, they found warehouses filled with Chinese porcelain stored for distribution as gifts.⁷³

Concerned with establishing the series of offices that connected the upstream and downstream, Europeans in the early nineteenth century paid little attention to the kinship ties that infused political and economic interaction. Occasionally, however, the sources contain revealing glimpses of social practices such as the custom of acquiring "milk brothers," by which the royal family, the nobles, and "even the lower classes" could have "many brothers and sisters whom they protect and from whom they receive protection." In the same mode, the exchange of women and the enduring perception of the ruler as a distant kinsman remained a fundamental means of affirming bonds between the ilir court and upstream communities. Most of the attendants within the court were females, and many were from ulu districts, gathered during royal hunting and fishing expeditions. Significantly, upstream chiefs rewarded with the princely title of pangeran were normally those who had presented the palace with a daughter, for they had in effect become the king's relatives. Rawas and Komering in particular had a reputation for supplying the palace with attractive women, some of whom probably became royal favorites. Local sources note Sultan Ahmad's

attachment to what the Dutch termed his "seraglio," and one resident considered a liking for women to be "the great weakness" of Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin; he had "many" wives and secondary wives, several of whom had "great credit" with him.⁷⁴ The links that this kind of exchange established in village consciousness is suggested in the many stories that tell of girls impregnated by the ruler whose sons are then sent back to become great village ancestors.

This is not to imply, of course, that the ambiguity inherent in the ulu-ilir relationship had disappeared. For people in the downstream areas, banishment to the interior was considered "a great punishment," and stories continued to circulate of perverse upstream customs and of villages inhabited solely by creatures with large heads and small bodies. Nonetheless, the ulu was still considered a potential place of refuge, and it was there, rumor ran, that the king had chosen to bury the royal treasure. Conflicting attitudes were similarly apparent in the ulu. Pasemah groups were especially insistent that they were not subservient to Palembang, pointing to the tradition that they were descended from a poorer brother of the mighty queen Ratu Sinuhun. They paid homage (*sebo*) every three years to the Palembang ruler, but they were not liable for corvée and were not "indebted" (*berutang*) to him.⁷⁵ In other areas there is continuing evidence that the ulu communities were ready to protest against labor demands and to insist on better treatment before they would acknowledge Palembang as overlord. In 1766 eight thousand people from twelve villages reportedly moved back to Jambi because they had been required to go downstream and clear a large stretch of jungle for the cultivation of rice and fruit trees. Although Sultan Ahmad sent envoys to persuade them to come back, only seventy returned, on the condition that they would be free from corvée and taxes. Rewards and titles were not always sufficient to guarantee ulu compliance, and in 1778 the Dutch resident commented on the resentment felt by groups brought downstream to work on the new palace. It is not difficult to locate themes of interior resistance in stories detailing the exploitation of ulu women by Palembang rulers and the brave resistance of their male kinsfolk.⁷⁶

The personalization of upstream-downstream relationships embedded in such stories is revealing. Like those cited earlier from Lampung, they often represent the ruler of Palembang as unjust and harsh; but it is not he who is banished, or imprisoned, or put to death for apparent misdeeds toward his subjects. Somehow the king is always able to make amends for his actions, and the blame is deflected onto some unworthy representative. The motifs that periodically surface in legends from Jambi, telling of the loss of the royal kris or the ruler's immorality, are conspicuously absent in Palembang accounts.

The contrast between the ability of Jambi and Palembang rulers to

maintain a standing in the ulu can be traced to a number of factors, the most obvious of which is economic. The departure of the VOC in 1770 had seen no revival in Jambi's commerce; although English merchants occasionally went there to sell opium, it was known to Europeans chiefly as a pirate lair. Palembang's maritime trade had also been affected by the piracy so prevalent in the Melaka Straits, but it nonetheless remained the preeminent exchange market in Southeast Sumatra.⁷⁷ Its estimated population of twenty-five thousand inhabitants included a large commercial community of Arabs, Chinese, Cochinchinese, Cambodians, Siamese, Malays, Javanese, Bugis, Makassarese, and Mandarese who brought the products so desired in upstream communities—salt, metal tools, porcelain, and textiles. To these were added goods manufactured in Palembang and also much prized in the interior, such as gold and silverwork, guns, and silk cloth. Palembang was also noted for the ordered administration of its marketplace, a feature that aroused favorable comments from Europeans in the nineteenth century as it had done from Chinese hundreds of years before. Upstream dwellers thus knew that the items they brought, whether cotton, tobacco, woven mats, or jungle products, could be sold in an orderly environment in which the tensions inherent in commercial transactions were kept at bay. Weights were carefully regulated and the exchange rate for picis fixed at sixteen per Spanish rial. Should disputes occur, appeals could be made to one of the three syahbandar whose duty it was to collect customs, ensure repayment of debts, and resolve quarrels.

There were, of course, other exchange centers. In the upstream areas of Tulang Bawang and Komering, river connections with the capital were difficult, and Muara Dua therefore served as a regional market where Palembang traders and local sellers could meet. A similar settlement was Muara Rupit, situated at the junction of the Rupit and Rawas rivers, favored because of its strategic siting and the forest paths leading to the gold-bearing areas of Jambi and the west coast. Lahat, in the Pasemah heartland, provided a meeting place where slaves could be traded in return for salt brought from the ilir. However, although undoubtedly prosperous, such places operated essentially as distribution points, facilitating the flow of goods between the interior and the downstream capital. None ever emerged as a rival to Palembang in the way that Muara Tebo had done in Jambi, and contemporary descriptions attest to the strength of the economic links between upstream and downstream. "Every day," wrote Radermacher, "one sees hundreds of ships going up and down the river."⁷⁸

But the difference in the ulu-ilir relationship in Palembang and Jambi did not hinge merely on the fact that the former was rich and the latter poor. Another crucial element was Jambi's proximity to Minangkabau. While honors bestowed by the kings "over the green mountain"

were received with pride, the perception of the Jambi ruler as a Minangkabau vassal made it difficult for him to stand as an independent source of prestige and legitimization, especially as the interior was increasingly settled by Minangkabau migrants. Radermacher even considered Jambi to be part of Minangkabau, and in local sources it came to be listed as one of the eight *bab* or gateways to the Minangkabau heartlands.⁷⁹

Though the Pagaruyung court also claimed Palembang as a "grand-child," its influence there was always muted. In ulu legends and folklore, Palembang rather than Pagaruyung was cited as the most relevant source of sacral authority, as the place where ancestral rulers and their living descendants could be petitioned for support and assistance. On the hill of Si Guntang, on which the progenitor of Malay kings had once appeared, were the graves of revered figures like Raja Iskandar; and the ulu heads who swore their oaths of loyalty on this sacred site were themselves touched by its supernatural strength. Around the town itself, at Sabukingking, Candi Balang, and Lemabang were the burial places of former rulers, concentrated points of energy where offerings could be made for protection from misfortune or in hopes of future blessings. The belief that the influence of these awe-inspiring ancestors could extend even into very distant upstream villages was a cultural magnet of the utmost potency.

In ilir Jambi the graves of past heroes like Orang Kaya Hitam at Simpang still drew supplicants, but in its "poor and inconsiderable" capital such holy sites were not matched by the pageantry of a king resplendent in his glory. In the center of the town of Palembang, by contrast, the impressive structure that was the king's residence represented another concentration of power into which those from upstream could tap. Here, during the set days of the royal audience, the imagery of legend became palpable. Magnificently dressed, the ruler sat in state as the focal point of a hierarchy where the rank of each courtier was displayed by the color and design of his or her clothes and the decorations on their banners. The ulu heads who paid their homage on behalf of kinsfolk and followers carried back with them eloquent symbols of the new status they had attained, not just in the form of titles and gifts, but in the stories they could relate. Descriptions of the Palembang king, splendidly arrayed, speaking the royal language of Javanese, surrounded by his guards, women, and nobles and by the albinos, hunchbacks, dwarves, and twins that were his by right must have been heard many times. In each retelling the ulu audience, though geographically so distant, were more than entertained; they became emotional participants in the royal spectacle.⁸⁰

During the latter part of the eighteenth century one further factor

helped enhance the special status of Palembang's downstream capital: its emergence as a center for Islamic studies. The ability to attract religious specialists who could take responsibility for ritual activities and act as royal advisers had long been a hallmark of the successful archipelago state, and Palembang was no exception. The growth of a substantial Arab community fostered greater connections with the Islamic heartlands, and by 1787 the traffic of Islamic "priests" between Palembang and Java had become so marked that it aroused Dutch concern.⁸¹ The presence of these men in the Palembang court would also have been a clear incentive to the translation and preparation of Muslim texts, and the names of several Palembang scholars have been preserved. The most famous, Abdul Samad al-Palimbani, is believed to have been the son of a Hadhrami migrant and a Palembang noblewoman. Although he spent most of his adult life in Mecca, his writings in Malay became known throughout the archipelago, and his name was a telling reminder of his Sumatran birthplace.⁸²

With learned teachers attracted by royal support, Palembang's reputation as a patron of Islam grew steadily. Through their Arab connections its rulers could claim descent from the Prophet himself, while the pious could point with pride to the great mosque built during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin and set apart from lesser buildings by its large glass windows and jewelled cupola. In their own replications of the downstream environment, ulu communities reaffirmed their willingness to look to the ilir court as an appropriate model. Like Palembang kings, upstream groups incorporated ancestors from Mecca into clan genealogies, and an Englishman in the Pasemah highlands in 1817 noted that a mosque stood in the middle of each village. The teachers who had encouraged their construction and had promoted the faith were being rapidly absorbed into local folklore, providing a new source of heroes famed for their miraculous deeds and wise leadership. And in joining the ancestral ranks, these religious figures brought with them a mental iconography that invoked the great centers of Islam—Mecca, Aceh, Banten, Demak, Ceribon, Minangkabau—a world into which the downstream capital provided a gateway.⁸³

Behind all these developments was the simple fact that for the greater part of the eighteenth century and for the first decade of the nineteenth, Palembang was at peace. "Many of the old inhabitants," wrote Thomas Horsfield in 1812, "speak . . . with rapture of the prosperity which was enjoyed by all conditions of people during [Sultan Ahmad's] reign." In 1774 this ruler decided to assume the position of *susuhunan* and allow his son to rule. Following his father's death, Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin stressed he might well introduce new laws that would benefit the realm, but for the rest he would not disturb the *adat lama* (old cus-

toms). Potential challenges from within the court failed to materialize, and when Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin died in 1804 his son duly followed him as ruler.⁸⁴

A crucial ingredient in the maintenance of this peace was the VOC presence, for in return for a general compliance with the contract, the Dutch offered successive rulers their support against would-be contenders. By 1791 the Jambi ruler had become convinced that his forebears had been wrong to evict the Dutch, whom he now saw as the reason behind Palembang's prosperity. Twenty years later a son of Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin could still tell the English that "in all former times, from the first introduction of the Hollanders into Palembang . . . they have been of the greatest advantage to our ancestors." In comparison with the turbulence associated with the abolition of the sultanate in 1825, the days of the VOC were remembered as a Good Time. In the words of a former court official writing a generation later, "As long as Palembang lived in harmony with the Company, peace and safety increased. It was a time of great prosperity for the whole country and all its inhabitants, for peace reigned in the land. Traders came in great numbers, from overseas and also from the interior, because the king of Palembang maintained a just and well ordered administration, and protected his own people as well as strangers."⁸⁵

The enlightened Europeans of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were members of an extended intellectual family linked not by blood but by a style of thinking, a belief in the notion of rationality.⁸⁶ The aim of supplying reliable "data" that would advance knowledge led a number to attempt descriptions of non-European societies in the Indonesian archipelago, including those in Sumatra. Jambi, of little economic interest to Europeans, was essentially ignored. Palembang, by contrast, attracted increasingly more attention as both English and Dutch representatives evaluated the potential rewards should control be extended over this area. Placing Palembang in the maritime environment they knew best, such men saw "piracy" and "smuggling" on the oceans as evidence of a steady deterioration in indigenous political authority. But the ties between Palembang and the offshore islands had always been fragile, and it was this fragility rather than some kind of decline that was now being exposed. Europeans themselves found the decay argument more difficult to sustain when they turned to consider Palembang's relationship with its interior. Here, though only dimly understood by those who described them, the types of exchanges that were failing on the oceans were still able to draw together subject and ruler, upstream and downstream, in a generally workable association.

CONCLUSION

To Live as Brothers

Three hundred years and a world of experience are caught between the sixteenth-century Portuguese map that began this study and that included by Marsden in the 1811 edition of his *History of Sumatra*. The very lack of geographical precision that typifies the earlier work contributes to its mood of exuberance; in Marsden's map, by contrast, this excitement has given way to a more sober presentation where the principal rivers, the major settlements, the mountain ranges are all clearly identified and where added annotations provide practical information in the manner approved by a scientific age.

In a sense, the changing European association with Jambi and Palembang is encapsulated in these two maps, so widely separated by time. In the sixteenth century, Europeans had been emboldened to embark on voyages to unknown lands on the other side of the globe because they believed great riches could be found there and because they believed that such voyages were indeed feasible. By the end of the eighteenth century, this process had gone so far that Edmund Burke could talk of Europeans "unrolling the Great Map of Mankind" in which "there is no state or gradation of barbarism . . . which we have not at the same instant under our view."¹ The Dutch and English East India Companies established to carry out trade in such regions were born of cultures intimately involved with many of the great scientific and technical advances of the age. Their representatives in Jambi and Palembang considered basic literacy and numeracy essential for any individual claiming to be educated, and they were quick to criticize a people where the ability to read and write was exceptional.

The approach to commerce that grew out of these attitudes did not sit easily with the trading environment that Europeans encountered in southeast Sumatra. Here, to a far greater extent than in Europe, successful trading relations depended on the creation and maintenance of kinship ties with the ruler, the center of the tribute-trade nexus. Other migrant groups, notably the Chinese, were bound to the court by high titles, privileged offices, and the bestowal of women; for the Europeans, however, this type of exchange was always limited. As a result, gifts and written documents assumed additional importance as a means of incorporation into a society in which the ruler was the principal merchant. *

But because the Dutch and English resisted inclusion, considering their own culture inherently superior, they remained observers of the local scene rather than participants. The publications about Sumatra their countrymen produced at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century certainly testify to a greater awareness of the region, but they were built on an assumption that the "enlightened" men of Europe were better able to understand the true nature of Sumatran society than were local people themselves.

While contemporary Europeans spoke of a decline in the strength of native kingdoms, they were only dimly aware of the extent of the changes that had occurred over the previous two hundred years, changes that had significantly affected the relationship between Jambi and Palembang. As early as the seventh century there are hints of linkages between these two areas, and when Europeans arrived their association was so close that the royal families were essentially part of the same clan. Palembang had long been the superior partner because of its greater population, its superior resources, and above all its far-reaching trading links. During the sixteenth century, however, the movement of Minangkabau into the upper Batang Hari helped transform Jambi into a major pepper area. Although Palembang also acquired the reputation of a pepper producer, for two generations Jambi was undoubtedly the "elder brother," a position reflected in the status enjoyed by its king, Sultan Agung (d. 1679). The confidence generated by prosperity encouraged his son to cast off the overlordship of Mataram much earlier than did Palembang, and for many years this period was remembered as a time when all inhabitants of Jambi flourished.

Nonetheless, the wealth derived from pepper production had a price. In both Jambi and Palembang the new prosperity that came to the downstream court was dependent on closer links between the ruler and the interior pepper growers. Previously it had been understood that force was of limited use in a situation wherein the ulu areas were cushioned from the coast not merely by geography but by deep-seated traditions that emphasized the differences between upstream and downstream. Following the Dutch and English arrival, however, the bonding created by the exchange of gifts, the acceptance of mutual obligations, and putative kinship ties was frequently undermined by the commercial tensions injected into the marketplace. These tensions were in turn exacerbated by competition among Europeans and their resistance to absorption into the familial network that lay at the heart of indigenous economic activity. In 1662 the VOC established a pepper monopoly in Palembang, and the English withdrawal from Jambi in 1679 enabled the Dutch to assume the same dominance there. In a short time Jambi's relations with the Dutch deteriorated to such an extent that in 1687 Sultan Ingalaga was banned. The installation of his elder son by the VOC

was never fully supported by Jambi people, and for thirty years an alternative center operated upstream under the direction of Ingalaga's younger son.

Coinciding with hostilities against Johor and the decline of pepper prices in Europe, these developments hit Jambi hard. Simultaneously, the relationship between its royal house and that of Palembang was also under strain as both vied to control rich pepper-growing areas along their common border. The growing animosity between them was apparent in the increasing problems surrounding royal marriages and in the recurring warfare during the 1670s and 1680s. Although Jambi was "unified" under Dutch auspices, the downstream was never able to regain its earlier status. The ulu-ilir association was further weakened by the numbers of migrant Minangkabau who moved in to exploit the gold-bearing areas of the uplands. Setting up their own communities, they never saw themselves as full subjects of the Jambi king. By the early eighteenth century there was a growing feeling in Jambi that things were awry, and in ensuing years successive groups attempted to recreate the past by solemnly concluding written contracts that would bring back "the time of Sultan Agung." Finally, the resentment so often directed against the king was turned against the Dutch themselves, and following an attack on the lodge in 1768, the VOC closed the Jambi post.

The economic deterioration of downstream Jambi was underscored by the prosperity of its neighbor Palembang, where the trading network was far wider and far more deeply entrenched. Although pepper growing developed more slowly here, Palembang rulers were able to take advantage of their very considerable human resources as they extended their overlordship into the Komering-Lampung districts and deeper into the highlands. While the death of Sultan Agung in 1679 was often evoked as signalling Jambi's decline, the reign of Palembang's Sultan Abdul Rahman (1662-1706) was remembered as a Good Time, when the foundations of culture and custom were laid down. Palembang was doubly favored because the income lost from the decline in pepper prices was regained many times over by the opening of the tin mines on Bangka. Though control over the island was always subject to challenge, its tin provided Palembang rulers with a wealth that became legendary. In turn this prosperity promoted the prestige of the ilir court, making interior areas more receptive to closer association with a downstream king. In particular, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin (1724-1757), whose career personifies the heroic ideal, came to be seen as an emergent ancestor worthy of inclusion in communal genealogies from Rawas to Lampung. This development was significant because the uncertainty and increased pace of change that typified the latter part of the eighteenth century placed considerable strain on the kind of kinship bond-

ing that underlay Palembang's commercial success. The influx of outside groups made the maintenance of control over coastal waters extremely difficult and at times impossible. Yet in their relations with the interior, the hold of Palembang rulers was sustained and the prestige of its capital affirmed. The contrasting genealogies of Jambi and Palembang collected by Europeans in the early nineteenth century, constantly readjusted to reflect existing social and economic relations, thus spoke not so much to the past but to the realities of the present.

This account of southeast Sumatra during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been based largely on European sources. The themes it has explored, however, arose from the accounts of the people themselves, the legends and stories by which the past was recalled. It would be dangerous indeed to see in this material—episodic, fragmented, edited—evidence of an unchanging and ageless culture. Oral traditions are subject to continuous adaptation, and other supporting evidence is needed before one can assume that attitudes expressed in particular accounts are not just a response to some immediate demand. Further, in the two hundred years covered by this study, the place of literacy in these societies had itself changed. Documentation had become an important prop to kingship, not just for its sacral connotations but for facilitating practical communication. By at least 1822 in Palembang the wise sayings and customary law associated with rulers like Cindé Balang were being written down, evidence of a weakening of the oral heritage.² Familiarity with written material was also growing among the population generally. In 1823 a Dutch commissioner commented that although education was very limited, most Palembang traders kept notes regarding their affairs and sometimes journals during their travels. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II (r. 1804–1812, 1813, 1818–1821), was even willing to lend books from his extensive private collection.³ A revealing comment on the extent to which attitudes were changing is found in an account of Bangka compiled by a Palembang noble in 1861. He attributed the lack of any unified history of Bangka to the fact that its inhabitants were “dull and stupid” and that “to the present time they do not know how to write stories.”⁴ Nonetheless, modern scholarship has convincingly shown that increasing literate skills, although influential, do not by themselves produce a sudden break in patterns of thought or cultural values.⁵ Written and spoken indigenous sources, though collected by different people at different times and in different forms, throw up similar concerns that have proved remarkably tenacious over time. As such they provide a unique complement to European archival records.

✦ One of these concerns is the upstream-downstream relationship, which has provided a continuing theme for this book and which is still evident in later times. In Palembang the death of Sultan Mahmud

Baha'uddin in 1804 saw growing conflict between his two sons as each sought to assume the position of ruler. The English and Dutch, competing for control over Palembang's rich resources, became drawn into these hostilities with each supporting a contending prince. The kind of rivalries so characteristic of the maritime world were now transposed to the interior, and the vulnerability of even a rich and relatively powerful "state" was exposed. The apparent ulu-ilir unity collapsed, and Palembang was divided into two, with an upstream king ruling in Rawas and another in the downstream capital. In a manner reminiscent of earlier events in Jambi, the Dutch (who returned to Palembang in 1816 after the Napoleonic Wars), sought to assert their authority by exiling rulers they regarded as uncooperative and by installing others they considered would be more amenable to a reorganization of the Palembang administration. By 1825 their patience was exhausted. In that year the last sultan of Palembang was deposed, and Batavia assumed direct control over his kingdom. But simple possession of the downstream capital, unquestionably the most prosperous and populous of all the east coast Sumatran states, did not by itself guarantee upstream loyalty.⁶ Despite Dutch promises to abide by "the laws of Cindé Balang" and efforts to retain symbols of past rule such as piagem, the ulu people of Rejang and Pasemah did not readily accept the new authority. The "poor brother-rich sister" conceptualization that had previously helped to link these districts to the ilir was fundamentally undermined by European ideas of downstream domination, and it was not until 1866 that they were brought under Dutch control. Their sense of a separate identity nonetheless remained, and twenty years later a Pasemah man could say categorically that in many important matters "we ulu men do not follow the custom of the sea coast people."⁷

In Jambi the ulu-ilir juxtaposition is equally apparent as the divisions that had developed earlier resurfaced. About 1820 conflict within the royal family led the ruler to abandon the downstream port and flee upstream to Tembesi. In 1833 a Dutch expedition to Jambi resulted in the signing of an agreement placing the country under the protection of the Netherlands. The Dutch reestablished their post at Muara Kompeh but faced recurring resistance, which came to a head following the accession of Sultan Ratu Taha Safiuddin in 1855. Three years later his refusal to negotiate a new contract provided the rationale for the dispatch of another military force from Batavia. Sultan Taha was deposed and his old uncle installed as a Dutch *leenman* or vassal. For nearly half a century Sultan Taha continued his opposition from his upstream capital at Muara Tebo while the Dutch concluded contracts with successive downstream kings. In 1901 Sultan Taha led a full-scale revolt, and following his death during an attack on his headquarters three years later, the Dutch assumed full control over Jambi. In so doing they endowed

the downstream capital with an administrative superiority over the interior that it had never possessed and that was essentially alien to indigenous conceptions of the ulu-ilir association.

- A second theme infusing popular legend that has been a particular concern of this study is the relationship between king and subject, leader and follower. A comparison of the history of Jambi and Palembang shows clearly that wealth and prosperity were always critical in attracting loyalty to the center, enabling the ruler to be seen as emulating the ideal king by acting as a generous patron and justifying the submission of tribute by his people. It is significant, for instance, that one of the rival princes in early-nineteenth-century Palembang gained a considerable following because of the largesse he could distribute. However, it was equally important for a leader to display the attributes of a wise and caring parent and to incorporate the extraordinary and heroic attributes that provided a link with the ancestors and ensured him or her a place in the collective memory. To recruit support Palembang's Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II was willing to adopt as sons those upstream men who served him well, but he also knew it was essential to demonstrate his legitimacy by gaining control of the country's regalia.⁸ In Jambi, stories attached to the great Sultan Taha still talk of his possession of the kris Si Genjai, and although "deposed," he continued to be seen by villagers as the proper mediator in their disputes. Following independence Sultan Taha was named as one of Indonesia's *pahlawan nasional* (national heroes), a status that has since been awarded to Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II as well.

- A third and fundamental theme has been the persistence with which political and economic relations in Jambi and Palembang (as elsewhere in Indonesia) are perceived in terms of kinship connections. Formulaic terms like "brother" and "father" were not just empty phrases; they evoked certain emotions that were common across the society. Although incorporation of Europeans into this kin-infused environment was not easy, by the early nineteenth century a number of archipelago societies had reshaped stories about the origins of the world in order to trace a distant relationship. In 1823, for instance, a Dutch commissioner in Komering was told that in the beginning a garuda had come to earth and settled on a nearby mountain. In time the garuda perished through lack of food, but out of its body came seven parakeets. From these were descended the clans of the Lampung and upper Komering areas; the Javanese; those who lived along the Musi River; the Minangkabau; the Bugis; the Pasemah groups; and finally, white people.⁹ If Europeans could somehow be transformed into distant relatives, it should then be possible to hold them to the obligations of kindred, and in this mode a Jambi story explains Sultan Taha's conflict with the Dutch. "I do not want to attack the government," the sultan says, "but I am complain-

ing because long ago in the time of the old people, that is, in the time of Muhammad Fakaruddin [i.e., 1833-1841] I was taken as the governor general's child. According to adat, if we are angry with a child, we hit him with a rattan, and if we are angry with a grown child, we hit him with words. But now my father, Seri Paduka Governor General, hits me with bullets. That is why I am angry with his representative."¹⁰

In these kinship-ordered societies the relationship between political and cultural groupings, as between individuals, was conceptualized in terms of interaction between family members. When Europeans first arrived in southeast Sumatra they found the inherent rivalry in the "brotherhood" of Jambi and Palembang to be for the most part contained by continuing marital alliances that bound their ruling families together. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the two courts were more distanced than at any point over the previous two hundred years, a development largely attributable to the effects of the European presence. During their conflicts with Palembang, the Dutch (therefore had high hopes of recruiting support from Jambi, but in the end this was not forthcoming. Indeed, a later chronicler considered it important to record the occasion when the Jambi sultan had met his beleaguered relative to affirm the bonds of kindred. "The two kings met, taking each other by the hand and kissing each other, while they both wept. Then His Majesty [of Palembang] spoke, 'Uncle, this is the will of the Almighty.' His Majesty the sultan of Jambi answered, 'My son, this is your fate. You cannot change it. But I do not belong to another race.'"¹¹ It is true that with the recasting of colonial and subsequently independent Indonesia this relationship has been substantially diminished. Yet still today Jambi villagers near the awe-inspiring Bukit Si Guntang on the Sumai River call up memories of a Palembang princess and her Jambi husband who lie buried together on the mountain slopes in the company of the ancestors.¹² And in the end, despite the voluminous European documentation, it is in such shifting, elusive, but revealing memories that the essence of southeast Sumatra's history has been retained.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.H.	Anno Hijrae, the Muslim era
A.J.	Anno Javanico, the Javanese era
AN	Arsip Negara Republik Indonesia
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague
B.C.E.	Before the Christian Era
BKI	<i>Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië</i>
C.E.	Christian Era
CRDJ	<i>Cerita Rakyat Daerah Jambi, Ceritera Rakyat Daerah Jambi</i> (folk tales from the Jambi area)
CRDSS	<i>Cerita Rakyat Daerah Sumatera Selatan</i> (folk tales from South Sumatra)
fo., fols.	folio, folios
Hs.	handschrift, manuscript
IG	<i>De Indische Gids</i>
JIAEA	<i>Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia</i>
JMBRAS	<i>Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
KI Hs.	Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Handschrift (Western Manuscripts in the Royal Institute for Ethnology, Leiden)
KI Ms. Or.	Koninklijk Institute voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Manuscriptum Orientale (Non-Western Manuscripts in the Royal Institute for Ethnology, Leiden)
KITR	Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, Amsterdam
KT	<i>Koloniaal Tijdschrift</i>
n.d.	No date given
n.f.	No folio given
n.p.	No page given
NS	New Series
OIC	Comité Oost-Indische Handel en Bezittingen, 1796-1800 (Archives of the Committee of East Indian Trade and Posts, State Archives, The Hague)
RAB	Raad der Aziatische Bezittingen (Council of Asian Posts, State Archives, The Hague)
TAG	<i>Tijdschrift van het Aardrijkskundig Genootschap</i>
TBB	<i>Tijdschrift voor het Binnenlandsch Bestuur</i>
TBG	<i>Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde</i>
TNI	<i>Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië</i>
UB Cod. Or.	Universiteit Bibliotheek, Codex Orientalis (Non-Western Manuscripts, Library of the State University at Leiden).

<i>VBC</i>	<i>Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen</i>
<i>VKI</i>	<i>Verhandelingen van de Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde</i>
VOC	Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie

NOTES

Introduction

1. It is worth remembering that the VOC records that have been preserved represent only part of the documentation that once existed. In 1617, for example, all the papers in the Dutch lodge in Jambi were burned in a Portuguese attack. Other potentially valuable sources, like the maps, diagrams, and sketches that occasionally accompanied correspondence to Batavia, were rarely sent on to Amsterdam and have not survived.

2. The literature on this subject is considerable. Some historians have seen exploitation of “folk tales” as a valuable means of gaining insights into the lives of “the people.” For examples, see Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 82, and Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, pp. 13, 18. The problems involved in using such stories for historical reconstruction are discussed by Bottigheimer, “Fairy Tales, Folk Narrative Research and History,” pp. 343–358. For trenchant criticisms of those who attempt to use transcribed folk stories as “oral tales,” see Dundes, “Fairy Tales from a Folkloristic Perspective,” pp. 258–269. In Indonesian societies, however, it does seem clear that popular stories were used in the moral education of children. *Sejarah Pendidikan Daerah Sumatera Selatan*, p. 16; Amiruddin, *Cerita-Cerita Purba Dari Pulau Bangka*, p. 7.

3. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. 196–199. In my understanding of the interplay between orality and literacy, I have been particularly influenced by the work of Walter Ong, especially *Orality and Literacy*.

4. Hulme and Jordanova, “Introduction,” p. 7. In *Possessing Albany*, Donna Merwick has argued that the Dutch and English were “essentially different” (p. 5), particularly in their approach to the land. In the sources I used, which dealt primarily with political and economic matters, I did not discern such differences.

5. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 7–8, 29–30, 97–99.

Chapter One

1. Malaisie-Insulinde (Portuguese Nautical Atlas). National Library of France, Ge. DD. 683, file II, V. About 1519. I am grateful to Professor Valeric Flint for bringing this map to my attention.

2. Dion, “Sumatra through Portuguese Eyes,” pp. 142, 145. It is also useful to remember that the famous *Suma Oriental* of Tomé Pires, although written at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was not published until 1944.

3. VOC 1911 Palembang to King of Jambi, 3 Nov. 1718, fo. 105; Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, p. 241; Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, pp. 179, 240; Korn, “De oorsprong van het Djambische rijk,” p. 170; KI Ms.

Or. 76, "Sila-sila raja-raja didalam negeri Palembang," fols. 1–29; KI Hs. 371a, "De kroniek van Palembang," n.f.; Boers, "Oud volksgebruik," p. 377. In the Shellabear version of the *Sejarah Melayu*, Tun Talanai, regarded as one of the founders of Jambi, is said to be the son of the original Palembang king, Demang Lebar Daun. I was fortunate enough to be told a number of legends about old links between Palembang and Jambi during a trip to Bukit Si Guntang on the Sumai River in Jambi in January 1987. For other stories, see *CRDJ* (1979), p. 17, and *CRDJ* (1980/1981), pp. 21–26, 47, 140. This latter account says that Gunung Merapi in Minangkabau, Bukit Si Guntang in Jambi, and Bukit Si Guntang in Palembang have the same origin, being made up of a snake cut into three parts by a Sumai hero. The head of the snake is in Minangkabau; the tail became Bukit Si Guntang in Palembang, the stomach, Bukit Si Guntang in Jambi.

4. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, p. 155; Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 115. Such comments must naturally be taken in context, since most Dutch citizens still lived on the margins of literacy. In 1630, for instance, 43 percent of bridegrooms and 68 percent of their spouses were unable to write their names. However, at the end of the eighteenth century, another survey of marriage registers shows that only 15 percent of Amsterdam grooms and 35 percent of brides could not provide a signature. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, pp. 176, 181.

5. *Dagh-Register*, 1663, p. 688.

6. Thomas, "Literacy in Early Modern England," p. 116.

7. VOC 1759 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Aug. 1708, fo. 60; 2741 Jambi to Batavia, 9 April 1749, fo. 32; 2761 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Jan. 1750, fo. 57; KI Hs. 456, A. F. van Solms, "Memoric Nagelaten," n.f.; Radermacher, "Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra," pp. 8, 84, 120.

8. VOC 1147 King of Palembang to Governor of Macao, 13 May 1644, fo. 436.

9. KI Hs. 557b, de Sturler, "Aantcekeningen van eene reis," n.f.; Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 74.

10. Cited in Hazard, *The European Mind 1680–1715*, p. 51.

11. Gibson, *The Prison of Weltevreden*, p. 172. "Coolics" here seems to be a typesetter's error for "girls." Because the recitation occurred in the presence of a manuscript, Gibson assumed it was being "read." But as Amin Sweeney has pointed out, the reading of handwritten Malay texts was difficult, and it was therefore necessary to memorize large sections. *A Full Hearing*, p. 85.

12. Keereweer, "De koeboes in de onderafdeeling Moesi Iir," pp. 359–361; van Dongen, "De koeboes," p. 189.

13. KI Hs. 371a, "De kroniek van Palembang," n.f.

14. The phrase is used by Havelock in *Preface to Plato*, pp. 27, 93–94.

15. KI Hs. 371a, "De kroniek van Palembang," n.f.

16. Gibson, *The Prison of Weltevreden*, pp. 146–147. In Jambi the "nine" rivers could also vary. In the early nineteenth century they were listed as the Batang Hari, Tembesi, Merangin, Tabir, Bungo, Tebo, Limun, Senemat, and Jujuhan. In place of the last two a later source gives the Mesumai and Asai, while others include the Alai and Siau. See Barnes, "Account of a Journey in 1818," p. 347; Haga, "Eenige opmerkingen over het adatstaatrecht van Djambi,"

p. 239. The Palembang rivers given here were listed by the sultan of Palembang in 1737 (VOC 2410 Palembang to Batavia, 17 April 1737, fo. 7). By 1929 it was customary to see these as the Kelingi, Beliti, Lakitan, Rawas, Rupit, Batang Leko, Ogan, Komering, and Lematang. See de Roo de la Faille, "Uit den Palembangischen sultanstijd," p. 320 n. 3.

17. Tombrinck, "Hindu monumenten in de bovenlanden van Palembang," p. 1.

18. VOC 1559 Jambi to Batavia, 15 March 1694, fo. 51v. Zulkarnain literally means "the two-horned." Iskandar Zulkarnain is of little importance in Indian mythology, but in the archipelago his deeds caught the imagination of Indonesian peoples, filtered through Arab and Persian accounts and reinforced by reference to a shadowy "Zulkarnain" in the Koran. The stories associated with him are legion. See van Leeuwen, *De Maleische Alexanderroman*.

19. KI Ms. Or. 76, "Sila-sila raja-raja didalam negeri Palembang," fols. 3-5; KI Hs. 371a, "De kroniek van Palembang," n.f. According to this latter account the burial site is unknown, although in December 1986 I was shown a grave reputed to be that of Aria Damar not far from the center of Palembang. Javanese stories of Aria Damar are given in de Graaf and Pigeaud, *De Eerste Moslimse Vorstendommen op Java*, pp. 37-39, 200.

20. Radermacher, "Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra," p. 167; KI Hs. 557b, de Sturler, "Anteckeningen van eene reis," n.f. One Pasemah headman, for instance, explained that the Majapahit king had allowed them to pay homage to Aria Damar in Palembang because they had no ships with which to make the difficult journey to Java.

21. Boers, "Oud volksgebruik," p. 373. A compilation of Si Pahit Lidah legends is in Westenek, *Waar Mens en Tijger Buren Zijn*, pp. 13-25; for further discussion, see Collins, "Besemah Concepts," pp. 27-35.

22. de Kock, "Legenden van Djambi," p. 49; Mennes, "Ecnige aantekeningen omtrent Djambi," pp. 26-28.

23. den Hamer, "Legende van de kris Si Gendje," pp. 113-127. This is the fullest version of a legend first mentioned in published sources in de Kock, "Legenden van Djambi," pp. 44-46, the basis of which is found in KI Ms. Or. 72, "Hikajat Negari Djambi."

24. See de Kock, "Schetsen van Palembang," p. 3; Helfrich, "Uit de folklore van Zuid Sumatra," p. 278.

25. Damsté, "Het landschap Loeboe Oelang Aling," p. 327; Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra in 1823*, p. 390. This distinction, of course, is typical of the region. See further Drakard, *A Malay Frontier*, p. 16.

26. Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, p. 42; Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings*, p. 199; Collins, "Besemah Concepts," pp. 57-58.

27. Bellwood, *Prehistory of the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago*, pp. 231, 293; Mitani, "Languages of South Sumatra," p. 15; Kulke, "Epigraphical References," p. 9.

28. Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, II, p. 154.

29. Rantau is a general term given to areas of Minangkabau settlement outside the four upland valleys (Agam, Tanar Datar, Singkarak-Solok, and Limapuluh Kota) that make up the Minangkabau heartland.

30. Tideman, *Djambi*, pp. 71-78.

31. Mitani, "Languages," pp. 1–16; Jaspan, *Folk Literature of Sumatra*, p. 6; Blust, "On the History of the Rejang Vowels," pp. 422–423.
32. Tideman, *Djambi*, pp. 71–72.
33. ARA Ministerie van Kolonien 3075a, "Missive van den Commissaris," n.f.; Brandes, "Nog eenige Javaansche piagem's" (1887), p. 590.
34. Tsubouchi, "History of Settlement along the Komering Ogan-Lower Musi Rivers," p. 33.
35. KI Hs. 581, Wellan, "Palembang," n.f.; van Hasselt, *Ethnographische Atlas van Midden Sumatra*, pp. 72–73.
36. VOC 1428 Palembang to Batavia, 10 Feb. 1687, fo. 394v. In the nineteenth century most commentators did not realize goiter was due to salt lack, but thought it was caused by carrying heavy loads or drinking poor water, so that only those who drank the "pure water" of the Musi (and were thus closer to trade routes) were exempt. Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, p. 45; Jaspan, "From Patriline to Matriline," p. 2.
37. VOC 1498 Palembang to Batavia, 11 Nov. 1691, fols. 192v–193; 1911 Palembang to Batavia, 21 Oct. 1718, fo. 101; 3528 Palembang to Batavia, Apart letters, 7 Jan. 1778, fo. 192–193; 1322 Palembang to Batavia, 21 Jan. 1677, fo. 1188; "Iets over de landstreek Belida," pp. 554–556.
38. Sandbukt, "Kubu Conceptions of Reality," p. 89; see further Collins, "Besemah Concepts," p. 118.
39. Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, pp. 244, 264.
40. de Kock, "Legenden van Djambi," pp. 35–45; Presgrave, "Journey to Pasummah Lebar," p. 41.
41. This is a very simple categorization. Marriage customs were complex and at times lacked consistency; further, they were subject to change and variation, especially during the nineteenth century. See Collins, "Besemah Concepts," pp. 125, 142; Hoven, *De Pasemah*, pp. 38–68; "Afschaffing van de djoedjoer in Palembang," pp. 225–230.
42. van der Tuuk, *Les Manuscrits Lampongs*, pp. 134–137.
43. Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, p. 191; "De Lampoengsche distrikten," p. 332.
44. Westenenk, "Rèntjong-schrift," p. 95; Hoven, *De Pasemah*, p. 71.
45. KI Hs. 557b, de Sturler, "Aanteekeningen van eene reis," n.f.; den Hamer, "Legende van de kris Si Gendje," p. 156; van Dongen, "De koeboes," p. 232.
46. Winstedt, *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, p. 4; VOC 3385 Palembang to Batavia, 31 March 1773, fo. 41.
47. Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings*, p. 219; Pauw ten Kate, "Rapport van de Marga Semendo Darat," p. 530; *CRDSS* (1985), pp. 6–7; Overbeck, "Bambang 'To' Séna," p. 109; *CRDJ* (1979), p. 22.
48. *CRDSS* (1983), p. 2.
49. For example, VOC 1536 Jambi to Palembang, 25 Sept. 1693, fo. 58v; 1437 King of Jambi to Palembang, 4 June 1687, fo. 380.
50. *Dagh-Register*, 1640–1641, p. 165.
51. VOC 1453 King of Jambi to Batavia, rec'd 8 July 1688, fo. 655.
52. VOC 1338 Palembang to Batavia, 23 July 1678, fo. 363v; 1911 Batavia to Jambi, 8 Oct. 1718, fo. 107.

53. Banks, *Malay Kinship*, pp. 53–54; Jones, ed., *Hiikayat Sultan Ibrahim bin Adham*, pp. 173–175
54. Tideman, *Djambi*, p. 104; VOC 1980 Palembang to Batavia, 22 July 1722, fols. 228–229; Second Register, 18 Dec. 1722, fo. 14; KI Hs. 371a, “De kroniek van Palembang,” n.f.
55. Overbeck, “Bambang To’ Séna,” p. 108; “Silah-silah keturunan radja-radja Djambi,” p. 2.
56. VOC 1911 Pangeran Anum of Palembang to Batavia, rec’d 21 Jan. 1718, fo. 5, and to wife of governor general, rec’d 13 July 1718, fo. 57.
57. Overbeck, “Bambang Gandawerdjaja,” p. 153; *CRDJ* (1979), p. 54. In the nineteenth century a Dutch academic commented disapprovingly on the “indulgence” of mothers in central Sumatra toward their offspring; see van Hasselt, *Reizen in Midden Sumatra*, I, pt. 2, p. 84.
58. VOC 1728 Palembang to Pangeran Pringabaya, 17 Dec. 1706, fo. 52; 1911 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec’d 31 Jan. 1718, fo. 2.
59. Pauw ten Kate, “Rapport van de Marga Semendo Darat,” p. 353–355; *Generale Missiven*, IV, p. 531.
60. Usman, *Serunting Sakti*, p. 14. The use of the Si Pahit Lidah legend in the moral education of children is noted in *Sejarah Pendidikan Daerah Sumatera Selatan*, p. 16.
61. Gerson, “Oendang-oendang in de Lematang-Ocloe en Ilir en de Pasocmah-landen,” p. 114–116; Blust, “Linguistic Evidence for Some Early Austronesian Taboos,” p. 300.
62. Hirth and Rockhill, *Chau Ju-Kua*, p. 61; Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgangh*, II, p. 19. An illustration here shows a Malay woman convicted of adultery being strangled by the traditional method, using a cord; van Dongen, “De koeboes,” p. 184; *CRDSS* (1983), p. 36.
63. de Kock, “Legenden van Djambi,” pp. 36–41; “Piagam atau sejarah Marga Air Hitam,” fo. 4; Westenenk, “Rèntjong-schrift,” p. 104; VOC 1498 Palembang to Batavia, 22 Jan. 1691, fo. 147v.
64. See further Sahlins, “Other Times, Other Customs,” p. 517.
65. Coen, VII, p. 144; VOC 1456 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1689, fo. 1952v. See further chapter 3 on the outbreak of the Johor-Jambi wars.
66. VOC 1428 King of Jambi to Batavia, rec’d 1 July 1686, fo. 407v; 1386 King of Jambi to Batavia, 3 Sept. 1683, fo. 1001; 1283 Jambi to Batavia, 25 June 1671, fo. 1291v.
67. Wellan, “Onze eerste vestiging,” p. 375.
68. KI Hs. 371a, “De kroniek van Palembang,” n.f.
69. Blust, “Linguistic Evidence for Some Early Austronesian Taboos,” p. 290; Collins, “Besemah Concepts,” pp. 93–94.
70. VOC 1980 Palembang to Batavia, 18 Dec. 1722, fo. 23; 1338 Palembang to Batavia, 23 July 1678, fo. 3630; 1926 Pangeran Nattaningrat to Pangeran Anum, rec’d at Batavia 18 April 1719, fo. 71; “Silah-silah keturunan radja-radja Djambi,” p. 2.
71. Kato, *Matriliney and Migration*, p. 41.
72. KI Ms. Or. 71, “Pjaritera Negari Djambi,” fo. 2.
73. *CRDJ* (1980/1981), pp. 21–26.
74. Hirth and Rockhill, *Chau Ju-Kua*, p. 61.

75. Boers, "Oud volksgebruik," p. 382; "Silah-silah keturunan radja-radja Djambi," p. 2; for a Palembang example, see UB Cod. Or. 7653a, fo. 52ff; de Roo de la Faille, "Uit den Palembangschen sultanstijd," p. 319.

76. de Graaf, *De Vijf Gezantschap Reizen van Ryklof van Goens*, p. 91; VOC 1536 Bendahara of Johor to Palembang, rec'd 22 Jan. 1693, fo. 28.

77. den Hamer, "Legende van de kris Si Gendje," p. 137; KI Hs. 371a, "De kroniek van Palembang," n.f.

78. See Korn, "De oorsprong van het Djambische rijk," pp. 170–187, for further elaboration. A pantun usually consists of two rhymed couplets, the symbolism of the first explaining the meaning of the second.

79. *Dagh-Register*, 1669–1670, p. 221.

80. VOC 1294 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Feb. 1673, fo. 368.

81. VOC 1911 Palembang to Batavia, 24 May 1718, fo. 49; 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1747, fo. 51; Bausani, *Notes on the Structure of the Classical Malay Hikayat*, p. 20; KI Ms. Or. 72, "Hikajat Negari Djambi," fo. 25; *CRDJ* (1980/1981), p. 103.

82. KI Hs. 117, Ullman, "Een blik in der Residentie Palembang," fo. 32; KI Ms. Or. 72, "Hikajat Negari Djambi," fo. 25.

83. VOC 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 5 April 1708, fo. 97.

84. Coen, I, p. 178; VOC 1103 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Feb. 1631, fo. 157v; Wellan, "Onze eerste vestiging," p. 376; *Generale Missiven*, I, p. 109.

85. I have taken the concept from Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 14–16.

Chapter Two

1. van der Kemp, "Palembang en Bangka in 1816–1820," pp. 663, 759; de Kock, "Aanteekeningen en schetsen over Palembang," p. 302; Presgrave, "Journey to Pasummah Lebar," p. 41.

2. In modern times this reduction of the unknown to the familiar is captured in the words of a Malay trader from Malaysia's east coast. "My grandfather went to Pulau Bendak (Bandanaira, in the Banda Islands) many times, a very long trip. I am sure I have kinsmen there now." Gosling, "Contemporary Malay Traders," p. 75.

3. Both Malay and European accounts, for example, explain the close trading connections between Brunei and Melaka by pointing out that all the merchants who went to Melaka from Brunei were "relatives" of one of the highest Melaka nobles. Brown, "Sejarah Melayu," p. 126; Nicholl, *European Sources for the History of Brunei*, p. 4.

4. Jaspán, "From Patriliney to Matriliney," p. 24; VOC 1187 Jambi Daily Register, 24 Feb. 1652, fo. 692.

5. Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 17; Raja Chulan, *Misa Melayu*, p. 78; *CRDSS* (1985), p. 80; VOC 1841 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Feb. 1713, fo. 24.

6. VOC 1827 Palembang to Batavia, 5 Oct. 1712, fo. 55; 1249 Inderagiri to Batavia, 4 Nov. 1664, fo. 43.

7. On this topic, see Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, pp. 101, 130, 136.

8. In some versions the Chinese emperor marries the second daughter of the Palembang ruler. A. H. W. de Kock was told that this story was "three hundred years old." See his "Schetsen van Palembang," pp. 341–348; KITR RG 156, "Sedjarah Melajoe," fols. 22–24; Shellabear, *Sejarah Melayu*, pp. 24–29.

9. Mills, "Chinese Navigators in Insulinde about A.D. 1500," pp. 69-74; Groeneveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago," pp. 71-72; Mills, *Ma Huan*, pp. 98-102.

10. In 1691 the Dutch were told that the forebears of Palembang kings had come from Java "about a hundred years ago," and court chronicles note the arrival of a lord from Surabaya, giving the Muslim date 981 (1573/1574 C.E.). See Pires, *Suma Oriental*, II, pp. 154-155; de Graaf, *De Regering van Panembahan Sénapati Ingalaga*, pp. 64-65, and de Graaf and Pigeaud, *De Eerste Mostimse Vorstendommen op Java*, pp. 199-205; Brown, "Sejarah Melayu," p. 25; see also the "Palembang" version of the *Sejarah Melayu* (KITR RG 156) described in Roolvink, "The Answer of Pasai," pp. 129-130, and KI Hs. 371a, "De kroniek van Palembang," *passim*.

11. Pires, *Suma Oriental*, II, p. 155; Groeneveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago," p. 78. The claim that Palembang represents the oldest Chinese community in Indonesia, suggested in the controversial "Annals of Semarang and Ceribon," deserves attention. See de Graaf and Pigeaud, *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th centuries*, p. 14.

12. Groeneveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago," p. 72.

13. The exception is the "Turkish" prince, Datuk Berhala, said to have married Puteri Pinang Masak. Turkey had a high reputation during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the retention of this figure in nineteenth-century genealogies may reflect the revival of Turkish power during this later period.

14. van Sevenhoven, "Beschrijving van de hoofdplaats van Palembang," p. 75; Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, p. 397; Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago*, pp. 97-98; Glazemaker, *De Rampspoedige Scheepvaart der Franschen*, p. 131.

15. Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgangh*, I, p. 86; Jones and Badger, *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema*, pp. 233-234.

16. See Schafer, "T'ang," pp. 109-120; Mote, "Yuan and Ming," pp. 174-175; Spence, "Ching," pp. 272-274; Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, IV, pt. 3, p. 520; Yule, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, I, p. 80; II, pp. 204, 235; T'ien, "Cheng Ho's Voyages," pp. 186-197; Wills, *Pepper, Guns and Parleys*, p. 10.

17. Blussé, "Chinese Trade to Batavia," p. 196; *Strange Company*, p. 43; Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence*, pp. 245, 263, 281.

18. Ng, "Chinese Trade with Southeast Asia," p. 92.

19. Galvão, *The Discoveries of the World*, p. 50; Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, I, p. 180; Chang I'ien-Tsê, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 62.

20. Mendes da Luz, ed., *Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas*, fo. 97; Terpstra, *De Factorij der Oostindische Compagnie te Patani*, p. 185.

21. See further Bailey, *A Short Discourse of Peppers*; Burnell and Tiele, *The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten*, II, p. 72; Wake, "The Changing Pattern of Europe's Pepper and Spice Imports," pp. 362, 388-392; Bastin, "The Changing Balance of the Southeast Asian Pepper Trade," pp. 20-21.

22. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, II, bk. 2, p. 370; Wicki, "Duas relações sobre a situação da Índia Portuguesa," p. 148; Teensma, "An Unknown Portuguese Text on Sumatra from 1582," p. 317. The reference to 1545 was kindly supplied to me by Mr. Jorge Dos Santos Alvaz.

23. Although Sungai Berbak provided a shorter route to the capital than Sun-

gai Nior, the sandbanks here were a greater impediment. The “mosquito’s hole,” an aptly named small river that gave entry into the Berbak and avoided the sandbanks, was later discovered.

24. Wellan, “Onze eerste vestiging,” pp. 339–349.

25. A pilot who guided the first Dutch ships through the Sunda Straits, for instance, was paid five rials of eight per ship, although a laborer working all day loading pepper would get no more than his rice and a quarter rial. The Dutch also noted that their pilot was paid homage “as if he were a king.” Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgangh*, I, p. 32. For Malay views of a pilot’s skills, see Winstedt and de Josselin de Jong, “The Maritime Laws of Malacca,” p. 38.

26. Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgangh*, I, pp. 32, 35.

27. Disney, *Twilight of the Pepper Empire*, p. 64.

28. Wellan, “Onze eerste vestiging,” pp. 339–383; VOC 1059 Jambi to Batavia, n.d., fols. 282v–283.

29. Coen, II, 87–88; Coolhaas, “Oud nieuws uit Djambi,” p. 78.

30. The sources give no indication as to when Minangkabau movement into this area had begun, but Jambi had been noted by Pires in the early sixteenth century as a source of gold, and it may have been this which first attracted Minangkabau migration.

31. Coen, I, p. 177. One bag of pepper weighed between thirty and forty kilograms.

32. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 177, 476.

33. *Dagh-Register*, 1640, pp. 273–275; VOC 1138 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Feb. 1642, fo. 584.

34. Wellan, “Onze eerste vestiging,” p. 369.

35. Coen, I, p. 42; VOC 1059 Jambi to Batavia, n.d. 1616, fo. 282; Jacobs, *Documenta Malucensia*, II, p. 554.

36. As the name suggests, Tanah Pilih (chosen land) appears to have been a relatively recent settlement. “Old Jambi” or Muara Jambi, is downstream from Tanah Pilih, and there are legends of a move downstream to Tanah Pilih from Muara Tebo.

37. Coen, VII, pp. 115, 127; VOC 1118, Jambi to Batavia, 6 Sept. 1635, fo. 486; 1125 Jambi to Batavia, 5 Feb. 1637, fo. 516v.

38. VOC 1099 Jambi to Batavia, 1 Jan. 1630, fo. 114, and Daily Register, 14–15 April 1630, fo. 97; Davies, *A Primer of Dutch Seventeenth Century Overseas Trade*, p. 52; Wellan, “Onze eerste vestiging,” p. 348; Coen, I, pp. 379, 429.

39. W. Sainsbury, *Calendar of State Papers*, 1622–1624, p. 2; *Generale Missiven*, I, p. 80.

40. VOC 1080 Jambi to Batavia, 23 Sept. 1623, fo. 354v; Tiele, *Bouwstoffen*, II, p. xxv; *Dagh-Register*, 1624–1629, p. 318.

41. de Graaf, *De Regering van Sultan Agung*, p. 164; Wellan, “Twee aristocraten in het begin van de 17e eeuw,” pp. 328–332.

42. Coen, V, pp. 32–33, 68; Tiele, *Bouwstoffen*, II, pp. xxvi–xxvii, 127–128; *Dagh-Register*, 1624–1629, p. 318; *Generale Missiven*, I, p. 247.

43. *Dagh-Register*, 1653, p. 158; Souza, *The Survival of Empire*, p. 107. In 1623 a number of Englishmen in Amboina, suspected of plotting to seize the VOC fortress, were tortured by the Dutch in a particularly brutal manner, arousing much enmity.

44. Dobbin, "From Middlemen Minorities to Industrial Entrepreneurs," p. 110; Blussé, *Strange Company*, pp. 80–87.
45. Blussé, "Western impact," p. 30.
46. de Graaf and Pigeaud, *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, p. 13.
47. Meilink Roesloefsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence*, p. 259.
48. Cited in Blussé, "Chinese trade to Batavia," p. 198.
49. Freedman, "The Handling of Money," pp. 64–65; Shiba, *Commerce and Society in Sung China*, pp. 28–37; Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China*, pp. 3–9.
50. Coen, VII, p. 344.
51. Coen, II, p. 222; VII, p. 277.
52. Coen, VII, p. 111.
53. *Generale Missiven*, I, p. 541; Bassett, "The Factory of the English East India Company," p. 103.
54. *Dagh-Register*, 1637, p. 122.
55. See Douglas, "Foreword," vii–xviii.
56. The "King of Sumatra" was presumably the ruler of Aceh. W. Sainsbury, *A Calendar of State Papers*, 1513–1616, p. 335; Wellan, "Onze eerst vestiging," p. 380.
57. VOC 1220 Jambi to Batavia, 30 Oct. 1657, fo. 812v.
58. VOC 1827 Second Register Jambi to Batavia, 7 Nov. 1712, fols. 8–9; 1267 Jambi Daily Register, 6 April 1668, fo. 561; 1945 Jambi Daily Register, 8 April 1720, fo. 30.
59. VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1663, fo. 31; 1945 Jambi to Batavia, 21 July 1720, fo. 52.
60. VOC 1229 Jambi to Batavia, 11 Nov. 1659, fo. 392.
61. VOC 1127 Jambi to Batavia, 10 Nov. 1638, fo. 398; 1131, Jambi to Batavia, 18 April 1639, fo. 1327v; 1138 Jambi to Batavia, 8 April 1642, fo. 595; 1252 Palembang to Batavia, 18 June 1655, fo. 1050; *Dagh-Register*, 1665, p. 247.
62. *Dagh-Register*, 1640, p. 110; VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1663, fo. 27.
63. Coen, VII, p. 143; *Dagh-Register*, 1648, p. 73; 1656, p. 35; 1664, p. 10.
64. VOC 1202 Jambi to Batavia, 15 Oct. 1658, fo. 559; *Dagh-Register*, 1671, p. 445.
65. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, p. 51.
66. VOC 1098 Agreement between the English and Dutch, Jambi, 4 May 1626, fols. 16–17; Groeneveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago," p. 75.
67. VOC 1125 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Jan. 1637, fo. 520; Jambi to Batavia, 5 Feb. 1637, fo. 512; 17 Dec 1637, fo. 784; 1246 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Feb. 1664, fo. 345; Coen, VII, p. 143; *Generale Missiven*, VIII, p. 199.
68. For example, *Dagh-Register*, 1653, p. 21; 1661, p. 373; 1670–1671, pp. 261–262; VOC 1229 Jambi to Batavia, 23 Dec. 1659, fo. 416; 1233 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Dec. 1660, fo. 84.
69. *Dagh-Register*, 1648, p. 37.
70. VOC 1061 Jambi to Batavia, 17 July 1616, fo. 271v; Wellan, "Onze eerste vestiging," p. 375; Coolhaas, "Oud Nieuws uit Djambi," p. 79.

71. *Dagh-Register*, 1647–1648, p. 17; VOC 1125 Jambi to Batavia, 5 Feb. 1637, fo. 510; 1167 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Jan. 1648, fo. 332; 1131 Jambi to Batavia, 14 Dec. 1639, fo. 1371; 1115 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Sept. 1647, fo. 510.

72. VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Sept. 1663, fo. 1668; *Dagh-Register*, 1634, p. 44; 1664, p. 546.

73. VOC 1142 Jambi to Batavia, Daily Register of Jeremias van Vliet, fo. 309v; 1359 Palembang to Batavia, 30 March 1680, fo. 420.

74. Coen, I, p. 177; V, 392; VOC 1115 Jambi to Batavia, 4 Sept. 1634, fo. 773.

75. de Graaf, *De Regering van Sultan Agung*, pp. 274–275; VOC 1131 Jambi to Batavia, 11 Oct. 1639, fo. 1417v; 1142 Daily Register of Jeremias van Vliet, 9 Oct. 1642, fo. 313; 1127 Jambi to Batavia, 4 July 1638, n.f.; *Dagh-Register*, 1640, p. 63; de Graaf, *De Regering van Sunan Mangku-rat*, pp. 53–54.

76. It is impossible even to guess the population of Jambi and Palembang in this period. Some estimates have been made for Java in the seventeenth century, but their reliability cannot be established. See Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, I, pp. 11–15. In 1910 it was estimated that the population density in Jambi averaged 2–4 people per square kilometer; 6–8 in Palembang, and 230 in Java and Madura. Van Breda de Haan, “De rijstteelt,” p. 264.

77. Tiele, *Bouwstoffen*, pp. 111–115; VOC 1119 Jambi to Batavia, 1 Sept. 1636, fo. 1241.

78. VOC 1996 Jambi to Batavia, 8 Oct. 1722, fo. 75.

79. VOC 1103 Jambi to Batavia, 11 July 1631, fo. 163; 1105 Jambi to Batavia, 16 Oct. 1632, fo. 251; 1131 Jambi to Batavia, 24 June 1639, fo. 1342; 1214 Jambi to Batavia, 19 July 1656, fo. 187; *Dagh-Register*, 1656, p. 34.

80. Tiele, *Bouwstoffen*, III, p. 114; VOC 1195 Jambi to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1652, fols. 398r–v; VOC 1195 Jambi to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1652, fols. 398r–v.

81. See further Wellan, “Indische tournooien,” pp. 387–397; Coen, VII, p. 106; VOC 1202 Jambi to Batavia, 27 April 1654, fo. 379v; 1195 Jambi to Batavia, 13 March 1652, fo. 391; 1229 Jambi to Batavia, 14 Feb. 1659, fo. 376; 3 Dec. 1659, fo. 429v.

82. Tiele, *Bouwstoffen*, III, p. 458n2; Ricklefs, *Modern Javanese Historical Tradition*, p. 55; VOC 1195 Jambi to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1652, fols. 398r–v.

83. The VOC interpreted this entire incident as a ruse on the pangeran’s part, an example of native perfidy.

84. de Graaf, *De Regering van Sunan Mangku-rat*, pp. 55–58; Macleod, “De Oost-Indische Compagnie,” (1904), pp. 799–800; Wellan, “Heeft de gemeente Palembang recht,” pp. 16–23; VOC 1226 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Nov. 1658, fo. 540. The Javanese “Seda in Rajecq” means “he who died in an enclosure.” This title, listed in Palembang genealogies, is also given in archival material cited in Wellan, “De stad Palembang,” pp. 216–217, and in Coolhaas, *Generale Missiven*, VI, p. 468.

85. *Ungting* wood, also known as *bulian* (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*) was scarce and highly valued because of its durability and resistance to insects.

86. *Dagh-Register*, 1643, pp. 6–7; Nicuhof, *Voyages and Travels to the East Indies*, pp. 186–188; Wellan, “De stad Palembang,” p. 216; VOC 1147 Palembang to Batavia, 2 Oct. 1644, fo. 434; 1229 Truytman’s Report, Nov. 1659, fols. 336–348.

87. VOC 1226 Jambi to Batavia, 17 Sept. 1658, fo. 541; 15 Oct. 1658, fo. 552v; 1229 Dirk van Lier's Report, n.d. Sept. 1659, fo. 401v; Wellan, "De stad Palembang," pp. 219–220.

88. *Dagh-Register*, 1663, p. 30; VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1663, fo. 30.

89. *Dagh-Register*, 1659, pp. 94, 102, 141; VOC 1229 Jambi to Batavia, 15 April 1659, fo. 382v; 3 Dec. 1659, fo. 408.

90. VOC 1498 Isaac van Thije to Batavia, 22 June 1691, fo. 79; Poerbatjaraka, *Pandji-Verhalen Onderling Vergeleken*, pp. 274, 310.

91. *Dagh-Register*, 1663, pp. 139, 145, 694; VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 20 April 1663, fo. 357.

92. de Graaf, *De Regering van Sunan Mangku-rat*, p. 66; *Dagh-Register*, 1664, p. 9; 1668, p. 121; VOC 1233 Jambi to Batavia, 2 Nov. 1660, fo. 763v; 1252 Palembang to Batavia, 13 April 1665, fo. 418; 1257 Palembang to Batavia, 3 March 1666, fo. 641.

93. KI Ms. Or. 72, "Hikajat Negari Djambi," fo. 44; de Kock, "Legenden van Djambi," pp. 44–48; "Silah-silah keturunan radja-radja Djambi," pp. 1–2; den Hamer, "Legende van de kris Si Gendje," p. 113ff.

94. VOC 1272 Jambi to Batavia, 24 Sept. 1669, fo. 909v; 1294 Jambi to Batavia, 20 May 1674, fo. 42v; 1328 Jambi to Batavia, 22 March 1677, fo. 268v; Macleod, "De Oost-Indische Compagnie" (1905), p. 1280; *Dagh-Register*, 1676, p. 296.

Chapter Three

1. Mun, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade*, p. 3; McMickle and Vangermeersch, *The Origins of a Great Profession*, p. 41.

2. Brandes, "Nog eenige Javaansche piagem's" (1900), p. 131.

3. *Dagh-Register*, 1631–1634, p. 321; VOC 1338 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Oct. 1678, fo. 385; Bassett, "The Factory of the English East India Company," p. 269.

4. VOC 1195 Jambi to Batavia, 11 Feb. 1652, fo. 387.

5. KI Hs. 371a, "De kroniek van Palembang," n.f.; see also Boers, "Oud volksgebruik," p. 382.

6. VOC 1248 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1664, fo. 2387; 1290, 26 Feb. 1672, fo. 208.

7. KI Hs. 371a, "De kroniek van Palembang," n.f.; *Generale Missiven*, I, p. 247.

8. VOC 1138 Palembang to Batavia, 17 Jan. and 23 Feb. 1642, fols. 585–587; KI Ms. Or. 71, "Tjaritera Negari Jambi," fo. 2. Later Jambi accounts attributed the decline of the royal house in the early nineteenth century to a power-hungry queen who mistreated the daughters of influential headmen sent to the ruler's household. See de Kock, "Aanteekeningen en schetsen over Palembang," pp. 107–110; Overbeck, "Bambang To' Séna," pp. 112, 119.

9. Even in the nineteenth century the Dutch complained about the absence of tools such as the hoe and the plough, which were commonly found in Java. It then took about five months to clear a pepper garden, and recent estimates put the time needed for clearing a hectare of forest in south Sumatra at about 129 six-hour work days. KI Hs. 171, de Sturler, "Nota over de achteruitgang van

de handel te Palembang,” n.f.; Barlow and Muharminto, “Small Holder Rubber in South Sumatra,” p. 2. Evidence suggests that methods which allowed for greater productivity were introduced in the eighteenth century, but all increased the amount of labor required. See Kathirithamby-Wells, *The British West Sumatran Presidency*, pp. 59–60.

10. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade*, p. 81; VOC 1098 Palembang to Batavia, 12 March 1659, fo. 574.

11. VOC 1099 Jambi to Batavia, 14 Nov. 1630, fo. 129; 1147 Palembang to Batavia, 2 Oct. 1644, fo. 433v; 1202 Jambi to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1654, fo. 383r-v; 24 Dec. 1654, fo. 392; 1282 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Dec. 1671, fo. 841v-842; 1138, 17 Jan. 1642 fo. 587v; 1311 Jambi to Batavia, 8 Aug. 1675, fo. 294v.

12. For a further discussion of picis, see Blussé, *Strange Company*, pp. 35–48; *Dagh-Register*, 1636, p. 180; 1640, p. 63; VOC 1127 Palembang to Batavia, 16 Aug. 1638, fo. 46; 1141 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Aug. 1642, fo. 33v; 1290 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Sept. 1672, fo. 219v.

13. *Generale Missiven*, III, p. 786; VOC 1759 Palembang to Batavia, 22 Nov. 1708. The practice of weighing the king against gold and silver on special occasions was practiced in India, although it was apparently ended during Aurangzeb's reign because it was associated with Hinduism.

14. Sometimes there also appears to have been a preference for picis. See further *Dagh-Register*, 1663, pp. 36, 358; 1664, p. 694; VOC 1414 Palembang to Batavia, 5 July 1685, fo. 189; 1236 Jambi to Batavia, 3 Jan. 1661, fo. 692; 1292 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Dec. 1671, fo. 841.

15. van Dongen, “De koeboes in de residentie Palembang,” p. 190. It is worth noting that according to one legend the regalia brought from Java included a set of *neraca* (scales). “Adat monografic dalam propinsi Sumatera Tengah,” n.p.

16. *Dagh-Register*, 1631–1634, pp. 68–69; 1664, p. 535.

17. VOC 1151 Orders for J. J. Pars, 6 Nov. 1643, fo. 468; *Corpus Diplomaticum*, III, p. 138.

18. Coen, I, p. 177.

19. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, p. 53; Wellan, “Onze eerste vestiging,” p. 380; VOC 1536 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1693, fo. 5v.

20. See Wuisman, “The Rejang and the Field as Anthropological Study Concept,” p. 111.

21. VOC 1131 Jambi to Batavia, 24 June 1639, fo. 20; 1177 Jambi to Batavia, 24 Jan. 1650, fo. 32.

22. Firth, *Elements of Social Organization*, p. 142.

23. VOC 1202 Jambi to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1654, 384–384v.

24. VOC 1347 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Oct. 1679, fo. 621; “Palembang in het jaar 1791,” p. 117; also 2674 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 31 May 1746, fo. 43, when the Palembang ruler asked to be excused from these debts.

25. VOC 1095 Jambi to Batavia, 11 Feb. 1632, fo. 114; 1187 Jambi Daily Register, n.d. (1651), fo. 701; 1195 Jambi to Batavia, 11 Feb. 1652, fo. 389v; E. Sainsbury, *A Calendar of the Court Minutes*, III, p. 294.

26. VOC 1119 Jambi to Batavia, 3 Oct. 1636, fo. 1244; *Dagh-Register*, 1664, p. 7.

27. *Corpus Diplomaticum*, I, p. 410; *Dagh-Register*, 1647–1648, p. 17.
28. VOC 1125 Jambi to Batavia, 5 Feb. 1637, fo. 510; 1131, 16 Sept. 1639, fo. 1359; 1498 Palembang to Batavia, 11 Nov. 1691, fo. 193. In a Palembang story one local head sends two *malim* (people learned in religion) to collect debts incurred at gambling by the king when he was a young man and had no family responsibilities. *CRDSS* (1985), pp. 22–24.
29. *Generale Missiven*, II, p. 602; VOC 1195 Jambi to Batavia, 11 Feb. 1652, fo. 389v; 1202 Jambi to Batavia, 24 Jan. 1654, fo. 362v; 27 April 1654, fols. 372, 376; 1209 Jambi to Batavia, 12 June 1655, fo. 295.
30. VOC 1209 Jambi to Batavia, 1 Feb. 1655, fo. 289; *Generale Missiven*, III, pp. 741, 782–783, 816; 1257 Jambi to Batavia, 2 Aug. 1666, fo. 689; Drewes, *De Biografie van een Minangkabausen Peperhandelaar*, p. 105.
31. VOC 1187 Jambi Daily Register, 1–2 March 1651, fo. 701r–v.
32. For example, in 1671 the wife of an Encik Ko Fe was forced to put her hands into boiling oil, and her head was put between two planks and left until it swelled “in an unhuman way and her eyes nearly came out” in an attempt to force her to disclose where her husband had left his goods and money. VOC 1283, Jambi to Batavia, 4 Feb. 1671, fo. 1551; 1166 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Sept. 1647, fo. 510; 1138 Jambi to Batavia, 8 April 1642, fo. 696v; 1127 Jambi to Batavia, 10 Nov. 1638, fo. 398.
33. VOC 1118 Jambi to Batavia, 6 Sept. 1635, fo. 480; 1517 Palembang to Batavia, 18 Nov. 1692, fols. 168r–v; 1131 Jambi to Batavia, 16 Sept. 1639, fo. 1358; 1257 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1666, fo. 718.
34. The famed Karang Berahi stone, which dates from the seventh century, is on an island in the Merangin River and probably marked some toll post that collected from passing river traffic.
35. VOC 1131 Jambi to Batavia, 29 Oct. 1639, fo. 1382; 1167 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1647, fo. 331.
36. VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 16 March 1663, fo. 345; 12 June 1663, fo. 15; 1267 Jambi Daily Register, 14 Aug. 1668, fo. 563v; 1277 Jambi to Batavia, 14 July 1670, fo. 1227v.
37. VOC 1272 Jambi to Batavia, 23 July 1669, fo. 895v; 1283 Jambi to Batavia, 4 Feb. 1671, fo. 1574v; 25 June 1671, fo. 1292; 1322 Jambi to Batavia, 1 Nov. 1676, fo. 1193v; 1338 Jambi to Batavia, 10 May 1678, fo. 407.
38. Second only to *ungling* (see chapter 2, n. 85), *medang* (*angelesia*, a genus of the family *Rosaceae*, in Sumatra often called ironwood or *kayu besi*) yielded heavy dark brown wood that was resistant to insects and was highly suitable for salt-water pilings. *Tembusu* (*Fagraea gigantea*) similarly gave a valuable heavy timber that could last for fifty to sixty years.
39. Probably an exaggeration. A Dutch mile varied, but was usually equated at an English league (4.827 kilometers). *Dagh-Register*, 1640, p. 450; VOC 1138 Jambi to Batavia, 8 April 1642, fo. 597v; 1214 Jambi to Batavia, 3 Feb. 1656, fo. 179v.
40. VOC 1147 Palembang to Batavia, 2 Oct. 1644, fo. 233; Iskandar, “Palembang Kraton Manuscripts,” p. 71.
41. *Dagh-Register*, 1659, p. 4; 1661, p. 370; 1663, p. 31; VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 20 April 1663, fo. 462.
42. Ras, *Hikajat Bandjar*, pp. 331, 375.

43. See, for example, *CRDJ* (1979), pp. 19, 39–44, 55; UB Cod. Or. 7635a, fo. 58.
44. VOC 1137 Jambi to Batavia, 29 Oct. 1639, fo. 1381; 1265 Palembang to Batavia, 5 April 1668, fo. 507; 1294 Palembang to Batavia, 22 Feb. 1673, fo. 332.
45. VOC 1087 Jambi to Batavia, 2 Dec. 1625, fols. 154v, 156v; 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 12 Jan. 1663, fo. 9.
46. *Dagh-Register*, 1636, p. 43; VOC 1138: Jambi to Batavia, 18 March 1642, fo. 602; 8 April 1642, fo. 597v; *Generale Missiven*, II, p. 231.
47. VOC 1257 Jambi to Batavia, 2 Aug. 1660, fo. 1257; 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 12 Jan. 1663, fo. 9; 1386 Palembang to Batavia, 23 March 1685, fo. 890v; 1118 Jambi to Batavia, 6 Sept. 1635, fo. 486.
48. *Dagh-Register*, 1640, p. 232; VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 17 May 1663, fo. 361.
49. VOC 1243 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb 1663, fols. 29–30; 17 May 1663, fols. 363–364.
50. VOC 1246 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Feb. 1664, fo. 169.
51. VOC 1277 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Jan. 1670, fo. 1214; 1278, 19 Nov. 1670, fo. 1205v; 1311 Jambi to Batavia, 25 May 1675, fo. 288v; 8 Aug. 1675, fo. 290v.
52. VOC 1098 Jambi to Batavia, n.d. Dec. 1629, fo. 15v; 1099 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Jan. 1631, fo. 151; *Dagh-Register*, 1641, p. 137.
53. VOC 1257 Report by Jacob Pits on Palembang, 25 Sept. 1666, fo. 706.
54. VOC 1187 Jambi to Batavia, Daily Register of Syahbandar Abraham Steen, en route to Jambi, 24 Feb. 1651, fo. 692; 1267 Jambi to Batavia, 30 May 1668, fo. 544; 1272 Jambi to Batavia, 24 Sept. 1669, fo. 907; *Generale Missiven*, III, p. 710.
55. See further L. Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, chaps. 2–5; Noorduyn, *De handelsrelaties van het Makassarse rijk*, pp. 110–111; Sutherland, “Slavery and the Slave Trade in South Sulawesi,” pp. 266–268.
56. VOC 1257 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1666, fo. 725; 1265 Jambi to Batavia, 12 Oct. 1667, fo. 768v; 1277 Palembang to Batavia, 2 July 1670, fo. 1203v.
57. VOC 1247 Palembang to Batavia, 23 June 1666, fo. 654; 1282, 12 Dec. 1671, fo. 841; Pauw ten Kate, “Rapport van de Marga Semendo Darat,” p. 537.
58. VOC 1498 Isaac van Thije to Batavia, 22 June 1691, fo. 80; 1637 Report by Jacob Bottendorp, n.d. Feb. 1700, fo. 34; *Generale Missiven*, IV, p. 529; V, p. 624; de Roy, *Hachelijke Reys-Togt*, p. 5.
59. de Clercq, “Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het eiland Bangka,” p. 126; Wieringa, *Carita Bangka*, pp. 62–64; Coen, I, p. 45.
60. VOC 1138 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Feb. 1642, fo. 585.
61. *Generale Missiven*, III, p. 157; 1240 Palembang to Batavia, 3 Aug. 1662, fo. 872; *Dagh-Register*, 1661, p. 372; 1668, pp. 9, 35, 41, 58, 69, 83, 106, 107, 155–156, 691; 1672, p. 125; Tiele, *Bouwstoffen*, III, p. xxv; Bassett, “The Factory of the English East India Company,” p. 96; *Corpus Diplomaticum*, II, pp. 398–403.
62. *Generale Missiven*, III, p. 682; VOC 1271 Palembang to Batavia, 10 Oct. 1669, fo. 866.

63. *Dagh-Register*, 1671, pp. 449, 465, 468, 496; 1672, pp. 9, 52; 1673, p. 122; 1675, p. 46; 1677, pp. 38, 258; VOC 1294 Palembang to Batavia, 15 May 1673, fo. 351; 1386 Palembang to Batavia, 2 Oct. 1683, fo. 935v, 951v.

64. VOC 1091 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Oct. 1627, n.f.

65. VOC 1453 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Feb. 1688, fo. 646r.

66. Nordin, "Marga Tungkalulu," pp. 6–20; VOC 1080 Jambi to Batavia, 23 Sept. 1623, fo. 354v.

67. VOC 1220 Jambi to Batavia, 30 Oct. 1657, fo. 808.

68. VOC 1209 Jambi to Batavia, 12 June 1635, fo. 296v; 1220 Jambi to Batavia, 30 Oct. 1657, fo. 808; 1226 Palembang to Batavia, 6 March 1658, fo. 561v; Jambi to Batavia, 11 March 1658, fo. 527v; 1229 Jambi to Batavia, n.d. May 1659, fo. 387v; L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, pp. 85–86.

69. An indication of the depth of feeling these events aroused is apparent when one considers that in villages where the details of VOC sources could never have penetrated, stories can still be found of brave heroes who taunted the king for his failure to take up arms against Johor. See, for example, *CRDJ* (1980/1981), pp. 32–37; *CRDJ* (1979), pp. 39–44.

70. *Dagh-Register*, 1663, p. 139; 1664, p. 533; 1666, p. 182; L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, pp. 85–86; VOC 1264 Jambi to Batavia, 21 May 1667, fo. 90; 1267 Palembang to Batavia, 22 March 1668, fo. 531; 12 Oct. 1668, fo. 523; Jambi Daily Register, 6 Sept. 1668, fo. 564v; 1278 Jambi to Batavia, 19 Nov. 1670, fo. 2106v.

71. VOC 1264 Jambi to Batavia, 22 March 1667, fols. 79r, 88; VOC 1277 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Jan. 1670, fo. 1210v; 1278 Jambi to Batavia, 19 Nov. 1670, fo. 2106; 1569 Jambi to Batavia, 7 May 1695, fo. 98.

72. den Hamer, "Legende van de kris Si Gendje," pp. 130–133; see also Boers, "Oud volksgebruik," p. 382; VOC 1386 Jambi to Batavia, 20 July 1682, fo. 989; 1428 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1686, fo. 419v; *Generale Missiven*, IV, pp. 691–692.

73. VOC 1267 Jambi to Batavia, 9 July 1668, fo. 550; VOC 1277 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Jan. 1670, fo. 1211v; 1278 Jambi to Batavia, 3 Dec. 1670, fo. 2113v.

74. VOC 1257 Jambi to Batavia, 4 Dec. 1666, fo. 728; VOC 1272 Jambi to Batavia, 24 Sept. 1669, fo. 907v; VOC 1283 Jambi to Batavia, 25 June 1671, fo. 1291v; *Generale Missiven*, III, p. 615; L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, p. 105. In the dynamics of orang laut raiding, the links of kinship binding leaders and followers were obviously a key element. "Long" means oldest brother; another pirate head was "Bapak" Maning. VOC 1485 Palembang to Batavia, 28 March 1690, fo. 7.

75. Folk stories retell tales of the courage of Jambi captains as they single-handedly stormed the Johor stockades and recaptured their princess. See, for example, *CRDJ* (1982), p. 141; VOC 1294 Jambi to Batavia, 5 April 1673, fo. 391v; 23 Oct. 1673, fo. 393v. For a detailed description, see L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, pp. 88–89.

76. VOC 1265 Jambi to Batavia, 12 Oct. 1667, fo. 768v; 1304 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Nov. 1674, fo. 3; 1278 Palembang to Batavia, 10 Dec. 1670, fo. 2094; 15 Jan. 1671, fo. 2098.

77. VOC 1278 Jambi to Batavia, 10 Nov. 1670, fo. 2106v; 1283 Jambi to Batavia, 19 March 1671, fo. 1583.

78. VOC 1304 Jambi to Batavia, 19 Nov. 1674, fo. 10v. In Pahang the king ordered Long Pasir's hands cut off, and five days later "his back was cut up cross wise, and pepper and salt sprinkled into the wounds." *Dagh-Register*, 1674, p. 338.

79. VOC 1118 Jambi to Batavia, 6 Sept. 1635, fo. 484; "Adat monografi dalam propinsi Sumatra Tengah," n.p. It is of interest that when the informants were asked where they had obtained the stories, one remarked that he had never read a story about the history of Jambi; *Sejarah Jambi Dari Masa Kemasa*, p. 19.

80. VOC 1103 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1631, fo. 169v; 4 March 1645, fo. 422v; 1209 Jambi to Batavia, 1 Feb. 1655, fo. 289; 1229 Jambi to Batavia, 1 June 1659, fo. 373; Bassett, "The Factory of the English East India Company," p. 273.

81. *Generale Missiven*, III, p. 741; VOC 1277 Palembang to Batavia, 12 July 1670, fo. 1203v; 6 Oct. 1670, fo. 1205; 1283 Palembang to Batavia, 20 April 1671, fo. 1553v; 1282 Palembang to Batavia, 21 Dec. 1671, fo. 846; 1290 Palembang to Batavia, 11 March 1672, fo. 210v; 5 Nov. 1672, fo. 228v.

82. A divorce could, of course, leave a sense of deep humiliation; in 1672 it was reported that a daughter of Sultan Agung, divorced by Pangeran Diponegara, had taken refuge in the Palembang court and would not return, being "ashamed that she is an abandoned wife." VOC 1302 Report on Jambi, 11 Aug. 1674, fo. 148; 1294 Palembang to Batavia, 6 April 1673, fo. 346v–347; Palembang to Batavia, 23 Nov. 1673, fo. 363; 1304 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Nov. 1674, fo. 1.

83. VOC 1294 Jambi to Batavia, 23 Oct. 1673, fo. 395v; Palembang to Batavia, 5 Jan. 1674, fo. 627.

84. L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, p. 120; idem, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, p. 130ff., 208–227.

85. VOC 1283 Palembang to Batavia, 28 July 1671, fo. 1564; VOC 1290 Palembang to Batavia, 4 Jan. 1672, fo. 238.

86. *Dagh-Register*, 1663, p. 30; 1664, p. 256; VOC 1248 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Nov. 1665, fols. 2769, 2761–2762; 1277 Palembang to Batavia, 16 Oct. 1670, fo. 1205; 1369 Jambi to Palembang, 8 Oct. 1681, fo. 863.

87. VOC 1350 Report by Johannes van Heeden, 31 Dec. 1679, fo. 339; 1347 Letters from Daeng Mangika to Kraeng Goa, n.d., fols. 657r–658v; 2286 Malay contract of 1086 [1675], included with Jambi papers 1733, fols. 60–61.

88. VOC 1350 Report of Johannes van Heeden, 31 Dec. 1679, fols. 339–341.

89. VOC 1347 Daeng Mangika to Karaeng Goa in Batavia, n.d., fo. 558. Another of Daeng Mangika's sisters also deserted to the Jambinese, presumably because of her planned marriage to Sultan Ingalaga's oldest son. VOC 1347 Palembang to Batavia, 9 Sept. 1679, fo. 597; 1369 Palembang to Batavia, 2 July 1681, fo. 844v.

90. VOC 1347 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Oct. 1679, fo. 611v.

91. VOC 1338 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Oct. 1678, fo. 387r–v; 1359 Palembang to Batavia, 19 July 1680, fo. 452.

92. VOC 1369 Palembang to Batavia, 19 July 1681, fo. 835.

93. A more detailed account of this campaign can be found in L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, pp. 129–130.

94. *Corpus Diplomaticum*, III, p. 285.
95. *Dagh-Register*, 1681, p. 775; VOC 1369 Tack to Batavia, 2 July 1681, fols. 843v–846v; 1403 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 8 Oct. 1681, fo. 893v.
96. *Corpus Diplomaticum*, III, pp. 275–282; VOC 1369 Report by Tack, 8 Oct. 1681, fols. 862v–873.
97. *Dagh-Register*, 1682, I, pp. 3–4; II, p. 921; VOC 1386 Jambi to Palembang, 17 Feb. 1683, fo. 966; 1386 Jambi Daily Register, under 8 March 1683, fols. 972–974v.
98. VOC 1338 Palembang to Batavia, 25 Oct. 1678, fo. 387; 1386 Palembang to Batavia, 12 May 1683, fo. 896; 24 May, fo. 899; *Generale Missiven*, IV, pp. 613–614.

Chapter Four

1. Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage around the World*, II, p. 185. Pigafetta was subsequently told about the need to add a day if one travels westward around the globe.

2. In Jambi, for example, it was noted that “the breaking of the *puasa* or fast is not only a great feast but provides a means of calculating the days.” VOC 1267 Jambi Daily Register, 24 May 1668, fo. 547v. See further de Casparis, *Indonesian Chronology*, pp. 17, 26, 38, 44; Wicks, “A Survey of Native Southeast Asian Coinage,” p. 282; VOC 1138 Jambi Daily Register, 3 Jan. 1642, fo. 591.

3. VOC 1177 Jambi to Batavia, 24 Nov. 1651, fo. 677; E. Sainsbury, *A Calendar of the Court Minutes*, IV, p. 85.

4. “Palembang in het jaar 1791,” pp. 24, 29, 38.

5. Sahlins, “Other Times, Other Customs,” p. 524; *CRDJ* (1982), p. 97.

6. van den Berg, “Oendang-oendang Simboer Tjahaja,” p. 4; UB Cod. Or. 7653a, fo. 88.

7. UB Cod. Or. 7653a, fols. 58–88; de Kock, “Schetsen van Palembang,” p. 360; de Sturler, *Bijdrage tot de Kennis en Rigtige Beoordeling*, p. 78. Sultan Abdul Rahman's name was even mentioned in a nineteenth-century Surakarta chronicle as a “king with magic powers.” Florida, “Writing the Past,” p. 327.

8. de Kock, “Schetsen van Palembang,” p. 356; Bickmore, *Travels in the East Indian Archipelago*, p. 532; ARA 3075a, “Missive van de Commissaris van Palembang, 1823,” n.f.; Boers, “Iets over de Passumah landen,” p. 560; van Dongen, “De koeboes,” pp. 189–190. Sabukingking, where the famed Telaga Batu stone and more than thirty other inscribed stones have been found, was obviously a holy place from early times.

9. Collins, “Besemah Concepts,” pp. 100–102; Korn, “De oorsprong van het Djambische rijk,” p. 180.

10. For further details see B. Andaya, “The Cloth Trade in Jambi and Palembang Society,” pp. 38–39.

11. VOC 1338 Palembang to Batavia, 22 April 1678, 336v–337; 25 Oct. 1678, fo. 373; 1359 Palembang to Batavia, Oct. 1680, 449v; 1407 Palembang to Batavia, 30 Oct. and 20 Dec. 1684, fols. 2751–2780v.

12. VOC 1253 Palembang to Batavia, 27 Dec. 1665, fo. 2033.

13. VOC 1338 Palembang to Batavia, 25 Oct. 1678, fo. 387.

14. VOC 1376 Palembang to Batavia, 21 June 1682, fo. 421; 16 Oct. 1682, fo. 438.

15. VOC 1403 Paduka Raja Johor to Heads of Jambi and Palembang, rec'd

in Batavia 30 July 1684, fols. 291v–292v. Relations with Johor appear to have improved after 1685, when Pangeran Aria sent two large ships loaded with pepper as a gift to Riau.

16. VOC 1414 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 9 Dec. 1685, fo. 213.

17. VOC 1338 Palembang to Batavia, 11 Oct. 1678, fo. 367v; 1359 Palembang to Batavia, 5 May 1680, fols. 421v–422; 22 June 1680, fo. 433.

18. VOC 1369 Palembang to Batavia, 8 Oct. 1681, fols. 882, 885v; 1485 Palembang to Batavia, 31 June 1690, fo. 16; UB Cod. Or. 7653a, fo. 81.

19. VOC 1498 Palembang to Batavia, 11 Nov. 1691, fo. 193v; 1517 Palembang to Batavia, 17 March 1692, fols. 7v–8v; 10 April 1692 fols. 72r–v; 19 June 1692, fo. 108v; 1536 Palembang to Batavia, 29 Sept. 1693, fo. 45.

20. VOC 1282 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Dec. 1671, fo. 843; 1498 Isaac van Thije to Batavia, 22 June 1691, fo. 79.

21. VOC 1623 Pangeran Ratu of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 17 March 1699, fols. 21–22; 1676 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 18 May 1703, fo. 4.

22. See further B. Andaya, "The Cloth Trade in Jambi and Palembang Society," p. 40; VOC 1428 Palembang to Batavia, 21 Sept. 1686, fo. 380v; *Generale Missiven*, V, p. 624.

23. VOC 1414 List of ships sent to Batavia, 10 Dec. 1684 to 3 April 1685, fo. 180v.

24. VOC 1676 Palembang to Batavia, 9 Nov. 1703, fo. 12; 12 Dec. 1703, fo. 20; 1691 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Feb. 1704, fols. 7–12.

25. VOC 1596 Palembang to Batavia, 27 March 1697, fo. 45; Burkill, *A Dictionary of the Economic Products*, I, pp. 759, 1117.

26. VOC 1226 Jambi to Batavia, 11 March 1658, fo. 531.

27. VOC 1728 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Feb. 1706, fo. 4; 14 Jan. 1707, fols. 7–8; *Generale Missiven*, VI, pp. 406, 486.

28. VOC 1407 Palembang to Batavia, 20 Dec. 1684, fo. 2776.

29. VOC 1248 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1664, fo. 2385.

30. VOC 1290 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Sept. 1672, fo. 218v; Brandes, "Nog eenige piagem's" (1900), p. 495.

31. VOC 1290 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Sept. 1672, fo. 218v; 1369 Palembang to Batavia, 24 Oct. 1681, fo. 900v; 1498 Isaac van Thije to Batavia, 22 June 1691, fo. 86.

32. *Generale Missiven*, V, pp. 666, 753, and VI, p. 25.

33. VOC 1498 Palembang to Batavia, 15 March 1691, fo. 33; 25 Sept. 1691, fo. 154; VOC 1854 Palembang to Batavia, 11 July 1714, fols. 98–99; *Generale Missiven*, V, 461.

34. VOC 1277 Palembang to Batavia, 17 May 1670, fo. 1194.

35. VOC 1080 Jambi to Batavia, 23 Sept. 1623, fo. 359; see also Gasparone, "Un Chinois des mers du sud," pp. 363–385.

36. Raja Ali Haji, *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, pp. 27, 45; VOC 1728 Palembang to Batavia, 12 July 1706, fols. 87–88.

37. VOC 1282 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Dec. 1671, fo. 841; VOC 1485 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Jan. 1691, fo. 66v; 22 June 1691, fo. 58.

38. VOC 1498 Isaac van Thije to Batavia, 26 Feb. 1691, fols. 5v, 13, 17; 22 June 1691, fo. 70.

39. VOC 1663 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Sept. 1702, fo. 22; Second Register, King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 16 Nov. 1702, fo. 2.

40. VOC 1376 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Sept. 1682, fo. 436.

41. VOC 1557 Pangeran Aria of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 16 April 1694, fo. 65.

42. VOC 1569 Palembang to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1694, fo. 4.

43. VOC 1580 Palembang to Batavia, 15 March 1696, fo. 44; 11 June 1696, fo. 52; Pangeran Aria to Batavia, rec'd 30 April 1696, fols. 74–75.

44. Wieringa, *Carita Bangka*, pp. 74–75; VOC 1498 Isaac van Thije to Batavia, 22 June 1691, fo. 79.

45. *Generale Missiven*, V, pp. 400, 603; VOC 1485 Palembang to Batavia, 28 March 1690; 1485 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Jan. 1691, fo. 66v; 1498 Palembang to Batavia, 25 Sept. 1691, fo. 154; 1536 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1693, fols. 6v–7; 1557 Palembang to Batavia, 20 Feb. 1694, fo. 6v.

46. VOC 1517 Palembang to Batavia, 18 Nov. 1692, fols. 172v–173; Jambi to Palembang, 22 May 1696, fo. 96; Jambi to Palembang, 2 Oct. 1692, fo. 186; 1557 Pangeran Ratu of Jambi to Pangeran Ditaningrat, n.d., rec'd in Batavia 1 March 1691, fo. 23; Palembang to Batavia, 18 Sept. 1694, fo. 110v; Jambi to Palembang, 26 July 1694, fo. 120.

47. VOC 1517 Palembang to Batavia, 29 Jan. 1693, fo. 279v.

48. VOC 1691 Second Register, Palembang to Batavia, 9 Oct. 1704, fo. 8; 1711 Second Register, Palembang to Batavia, 6 Feb. 1706, fo. 15.

49. VOC 1728 Palembang to Batavia, 16 Dec. 1706, fo. 80; 1743 Palembang to Batavia, 11 April 1707, fo. 31; 1759 Palembang to Batavia, 22 Nov. 1708, fo. 10.

50. VOC 1277 Jambi to Batavia, 2 July 1670, fo. 1220v; 1320 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Jan. 1676, fo. 305v; 1330 4 Dec. 1677, fo. 679; *Generale Missiven*, IV, p. 193.

51. See further B. Andaya, "The Cloth Trade in Jambi and Palembang Society," p. 42.

52. VOC 1382 Jambi to Palembang, 20 Sept. 1682, fo. 475v; 1386 Sultan Ingalaga to Batavia, rec'd 3 Sept. 1683, fo. 997v; 1414 Sultan Ingalaga to Batavia, rec'd 20 Aug. 1685, fo. 241v.

53. On the approach to Siam, see further Pombcijra, "Crown Trade and Court Politics in Ayutthaya," p. 127; L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, pp. 134, 163. On the bunga mas dan perak, see Glossary.

54. VOC 1428 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1686, fols. 419v, 423v; 1437 Kiai Gedé to Chinese Captain, n.d., fo. 364; Coolhaas, *Generale Missiven*, V, p. 82.

55. For examples of the influence of the queens, see VOC 1386 Jambi to Batavia, 20 July 1683, fo. 986; 1403 Jambi to Batavia, 17 Feb. 1684, fols. 301–303; 1414 Jambi to Batavia, 30 June 1685, fo. 234; B. Andaya, "The Cloth Trade in Jambi and Palembang Society," pp. 37–38.

56. *Gobar serasah* here probably means a cotton cloth with a flower pattern, with the predominant colors blue, brown, and white.

57. *Generale Missiven*, IV, p. 802; VOC 1414 Jambi to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1684, fo. 229.

58. VOC 1386 Jambi to Batavia, 20 July 1683, fols. 987v–989; 1414 Jambi to Batavia, 10 Nov. 1685, fo. 246.

59. In 1677 it was reported in Palembang that the crown prince of Banten, then in Mecca, had sent back a message to inform his fellow Muslims that the war that had broken out in Java was a sign the end of the world was near. About the same time there were also calls among Minangkabau communities on the Malay Peninsula and along Sumatra's west coast to take up the sword against the infidel Dutch. VOC 1328 Palembang to Batavia, 20 March 1677, fo. 353; 21 July 1677, fo. 261; L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, pp. 119–123.

60. VOC 1407 Jambi to Batavia, 7 Nov. 1684, fo. 2796. See further Kathirithamby-Wells, "Ahmad Shah ibn Iskandar," pp. 48–63.

61. VOC 1794 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1710, fo. 44.

62. *Generale Missiven*, V, pp. 79, 81; VOC 1440 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Oct. 1687, fols. 220r–v.

63. VOC 1437 Coster to Batavia, 25 May 1687, fo. 369v.

64. *Generale Missiven*, V, pp. 119–120.

65. VOC 1498 Instructions for Joannes Real, 22 June 1691, fo. 127v; 1453 Jambi to Batavia, 25 June 1688, fo. 661v.

66. *Generale Missiven*, V, p. 213–215; VOC 1453 Sultan Ingalaga to Batavia Commander, rec'd 8 July 1688, fo. 655.

67. *Generale Missiven*, V, p. 215; VOC 1517 Jambi to Palembang, 8 April 1692, fo. 91v.

68. *Generale Missiven*, V, p. 79; VOC 1498 Palembang to Batavia, 11 Nov. 1691, fo. 192v; 11 Dec. 1691, fo. 201; 1485 Jambi to Batavia, 22 June 1690, fols. 88–91v; 1517 Jambi to Palembang, 8 April 1692, fo. 91v.

69. VOC 1485 Jambi to Batavia, 7 March 1690, fo. 83v.

70. VOC 2239 Jambi Resident to King of Jambi, 20 Sept. 1733, fo. 58; 1428 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1686, fo. 422v.

71. See further B. Andaya, "The Cloth Trade in Jambi and Palembang Society," p. 39.

72. VOC 1743 Palembang to Batavia, 23 April 1707, fo. 22; 10 Aug. 1707, fo. 87.

73. VOC 1637 Report by Jacob Bottendorp, 16 Feb. 1700, fo. 48; 1456 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1689, fo. 1952v.

74. VOC 1557 Palembang to Batavia, 20 Feb. 1694, fo. 7. A *perahu jalur* is a small dugout, suitable for only one man.

75. Probably an exaggeration, since this would be equivalent to a distance of 150–200 kilometers. VOC 1440 Coster to Batavia, 21 Jan. 1688, fo. 2221; 1462 Pangeran Ratu of Jambi to Batavia, rec'd 3 May 1688, fo. 141; 1453 Jambi to Batavia, 28 May 1688, fo. 652v.

76. VOC 1580 Jambi to Palembang, 4 May 1696, fo. 92.

77. VOC Jambi to Palembang, 7 May 1695, fo. 98; 1728 Palembang to Jambi, 20 Oct. 1706, fo. 115; Pangeran Sutawijaya to Kiai Gedé, rec'd at Jambi 5 Dec. 1706, fols. 73, 78; 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 5 March 1708, fo. 16.

78. VOC 1569 Jambi to Palembang, 31 Jan. 1695, fo. 37; 1596 Report by Jacob Bottendorp, 15 Feb. 1696, fo. 20.

79. VOC 1776 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Feb. 1709, fo. 22.

80. VOC 1277 Jambi to Batavia, 14 July 1670, fo. 1227; 1498 Jambi to Palembang, 20 Dec. 1691, fo. 241r; 1557 Palembang to Batavia, 28 July 1694,

fo. 89; Jambi to Palembang, 22 June 1694, fo. 108; 1517 Palembang to Batavia, 18 Nov. 1692, fo. 172v; Jambi to Palembang, 2 Oct. 1692, fo. 186. For legends of rejection of Jambi rulers by kubu groups, see Darmsté, "Een Maleische legende," pp. 281–285, and van Hasselt, *Volksbeschrijving van Midden Sumatra*, III, pt. 1a, p. 3.

81. VOC 1663 Pringgabaya to Jambi Sergeant, n.d., rec'd in Palembang 15 March 1702, fo. 17; 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 30 Oct. 1707, fo. 12; Report by Willem Lagarde, 30 Jan. 1708, fo. 63.

82. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 108; den Hamer, "Legende van de kris Si Gendje," p. 140; de Kock, "Legendes van Djambi," p. 51.

83. VOC 1517 Pangeran Dipati to Batavia, rec'd 13 Feb. 1688, fo. 636; 1596 Report by Jacob Bottendorp, 15 Feb. 1696, fols. 14–15; 1580 Palembang to Batavia, 11 June 1696, fo. 84; see also chapter 5.

84. VOC 1456 Pangeran Pringgabaya to King of Palembang, rec'd in Batavia 15 March 1689, fo. 1956; *Generale Missiven*, V, p. 462; VOC 1517 Jambi to Batavia, 17 March 1692, fo. 11v; 1580 Jambi to Palembang, 19 Feb. 1696, fo. 59; 1557 Pringgabaya to Jambi, rec'd 6 Nov. 1694, fo. 145v.

85. VOC 1498 Palembang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1692, fo. 235v; 1517 Jambi to Palembang, 29 Jan. 1693, fo. 279v; 1557 Jambi to Batavia, 10 March 1694, fo. 33; 15 March 1694, fo. 46v; 1569 Jambi to Palembang, 8 Jan. 1695, fo. 40; 1691 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Aug. 1704, fo. 68.

86. VOC 1759 Report by Willem Lagarde, 30 Jan. 1708, fo. 54.

87. "Silah-Silah keturunan radja-radja Djambi," p. 4; van Hasselt, *Volksbeschrijving van Midden Sumatra*, III, pt. 1a, pp. 201–203; KI Ms. Or. 78, "Geslacht registers der vorsten van Palembang," n.f.

88. VOC 1536 Palembang to Batavia, 10 Sept. 1693, fo. 30; 1557 Pangeran Purbanagara to Jambi, rec'd 24 March 1694, fo. 38; 1728 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Dec. 1706, fols. 28, 14; 1759 Report by William Lagarde, 30 Jan. 1708, fols. 52, 54; 1557 Letter from nobles of Mangunjaya to Kiai Gedé, n.d., fo. 64v; 1759 Pringgabaya to Patras, 1 Syaban, rec'd at Batavia 10 April 1708, fols. 32–34; 1743 Pringgabaya to Patras, rec'd at Batavia 13 Dec. 1707, fo. 54.

89. VOC 1728 Pangeran Sutawijaya to Kiai Gedé, rec'd at Jambi 5 Dec. 1706, fo. 73; 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Sept. 1708, fo. 7; 1776 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1709, fo. 49.

90. VOC 1498 Jambi to Batavia, 24 July 1690, fols. 91r–v; 1517 Jambi to Palembang, 2 Oct. 1692, fo. 185; 1536 Jambi to Palembang, 2 May 1693, fo. 25; Palembang to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1693, fo. 52v; 1569 Jambi to Palembang, 8 Jan. 1695, fols. 39–40; 1596 Report on Closing of Jambi, 15 Feb. 1696, fols. 21–23; Jambi to Palembang, 20 June 1697, fo. 59; 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 5 April 1708, fols. 83–86.

91. VOC 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 5 March 1708, fols. 11–12; 5 April 1708, fols. 82–87. A kitab kelima was a guide to the five ominous times of the day, over each of which the spirits presided. An example of such an almanac can be found in van Hasselt, *Ethnographische Atlas van Midden Sumatra*, plate xxxiii, figs. 1–3, and plate xxxiv, fig. 1.

92. *Generale Missiven*, VI, pp. 300, 355; VOC 1728 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Dec. 1706, fo. 14; Jambi to Pringgabaya, 27 Dec. 1706, fo. 52.

93. *Generale Missiven*, VI, p. 576.

94. 30 September 1708. Patras noted the date should have been 1120. VOC 1776 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1709, fo. 78.

95. VOC 1711 Pangeran Dipaningrat of Jambi to Batavia, rec'd 29 June 1705, fo. 25.

96. The first day of Jumadilakhir in 1120 (see n. 94) fell on 18 August 1708 and the last day on 15 September.

97. VOC 1776 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1709, fo. 49.

98. VOC 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Sept. 1708, fo. 17.

Chapter Five

1. Brandes, "Nog eenige piagem's" (1900), p. 131. This was about the time Komering came under Palembang control (see chapter 2), and presumably the date originated from the court. The finding of other buffalo horns incised with writing is mentioned by various authors. See, for instance, Westenenk, "Rëntjong-schrift," p. 95; UB Cod. Or. 1914 (6)B, n.f.

2. Veth, "Het landschap Aboeng," p. 44; Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 205.

3. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, p. 30.

4. Wolders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 82.

5. VOC 1743 Palembang to Batavia, 11 April 1707, fo. 34; 1776 Palembang to Batavia, 5 April 1709, fo. 20; 18 Jan. 1710, fo. 10; 1794 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1710, fols. 6–9, 28, 40.

6. VOC 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 5 April 1708, fo. 97; 1776 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1709, fols. 52–53; 14 March 1709, fols. 17–19, 83–84; Pangeran Sutawijaya to Batavia, rec'd 25 March 1709, fols. 35–37; 1794 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1710, fols 7–9; 9 Aug. 1710, fo. 100.

7. *Corpus Diplomaticum*, IV, p. 334.

8. VOC 1794 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1710, fols. 48–52. Syaban has only twenty-nine days, and the first day of the following month, Ramadhan, would be November 4. The lengthening of Syaban to thirty days may have been an error or it may have been deliberately done to avoid contracting business during the fasting month.

9. VOC 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 30 Jan. 1708, fo. 49; 5 March 1708, fo. 27; 1776 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1709, fols. 12–13; 1743 Jambi to Batavia, 30 Oct. 1707, fo. 32; 1808 Jambi to Batavia, 25 Sept. 1711, fo. 19.

10. VOC 1759 Jambi to Batavia, 19 Nov. 1709, fols. 42–43; 1794 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1710, fo. 43.

11. Korn, "De oorsprong van het Djambische rijk," pp. 185–186.

12. Batujini has been identified as the Padang Lawas of more recent times. VOC 1794 Letter from Puteri Jamilan given to Patras, 28 Oct. 1709, fo. 44; 1827 Yang Dipertuan Besar of Minangkabau to Jambi, rec'd 2 Jan. 1712, fo. 19.

13. VOC 1808 First Register, Jambi to Batavia, 5 March 1711, fols. 15–22; Kiai Gedé to Governor General, rec'd 17 April 1711, fo. 51.

14. VOC 1808 First Register, Jambi to Batavia, 28 March 1711, fo. 64.

15. *Generale Missiven*, V, p. 229; Damsté, "Het landschap Loeboc Oelang Aling aan de Batang Harie," p. 346.

16. "Himbauan untuk pergi merantau," n.p. I would like to thank Ibu

Nur'aini, formerly Pemilik Kebudayaan in Sungai Manau, Jambi, for arranging for me to see the locality's sacred *gading* (elephant tusk). For references to the settlement of this area in the mid-eighteenth century, see Barnes, "Account of a Journey in 1818," p. 345.

17. Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, p. 165-168; Tideman, *Djambi*, p. 227; Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism*, p. 27; VOC 2029 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Nov. 1725, fo. 18; Barnes, "Account of a Journey in 1818," p. 345.

18. VOC 2100, 27 Nov. 1728, fo. 38; Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, p. 171. Scales for weighing gold, together with the accompanying implements, such as a scoop to take out rubbish, a brush, a knife, etc., have become family *pusaka* (heirlooms). They are all stored in a box wrapped in an embroidered cloth called a *puro*. I would like to thank Mr. Ali Ibrahim of Bangko for showing me such heirlooms in his family's possession.

19. Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, II, p. 45. See further Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism*, p. 118. For instance, one legend recalls that the Minangkabau migrants searching for gold along the Batang Hari possessed a magic cock, which crowed on certain sites as a sign they contained gold. "Adat monografi dalam propinsi Sumatera Tengah," p. 55. For other examples regarding the special powers of Minangkabau, see *CRDJ* (1979), pp. 28-31, 59.

20. L. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor*, pp. 258-273; VOC 1462 Jambi to Batavia, 19 Dec. 1689, fo. 150v; 1580 Jambi to Batavia, 9 Oct. 1696, fo. 121.

21. VOC 1808 First Register, Jambi to Batavia, 28 March 1711, fols. 58-59; 1827 Copies of letters from Yang Dipertuan Besar of Minangkabau and Raja Ibrahim, rec'd 2 Jan. 1712, fols. 18-19.

22. The complex developments in the interior during 1711 are detailed in the numerous letters exchanged between Patras and the interior in VOC 1808 First Register, fols. 15-101.

23. VOC 1808 First Register, Pangeran Surakarta to Patras, 11 July 1711, fo. 100; Second Register, Jambi to Batavia, 25 Sept. 1711, fo. 9.

24. VOC 1827 Jambi to Batavia, 10 Jan. 1712, fols. 6-9; King of Minangkabau to Jambi, rec'd 2 Jan. 1712, fo. 19.

25. VOC 1808 Second Register, Jambi to Batavia, 25 Sept. 1711, fo. 19; VOC 1827 Raja Ibrahim to Niai Emas Ayu Dipaningrat, rec'd 12 Dec. 1711, fo. 21; Daily Register of Trip Upstream, 20 Jan. and 1 Feb. 1712, fols. 36, 39.

26. VOC 1854 Jambi to Batavia, 15 July 1714, fols. 53-54; *Generale Missiven*, VII, p. 97.

27. VOC 1868 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1715, fols. 8, 17; 1895 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Feb. 1717, fo. 5. According to the standard Jambi genealogies, the panembahan of Rantau Kapas ruled in the sixteenth century or early seventeenth century. In the nineteenth century the tuanku of Passimpé, which is in the Kota Duabelas in the valley of the Batang Singir, claimed to be directly descended from the kings of Minangkabau. van Hasselt, *Volksbeschrijving van Mid-den Sumatra*, III, pt. 1a, p. 12.

28. The contract was dated 28 Zulakhir 1128 (21 April 1716). VOC 1895 Translated Malay contract between the King of Jambi and traders, rec'd at Batavia 26 Feb. 1717, fols. 13-17; Jambi to Batavia, 13 Feb. 1717, fo. 6.

29. VOC 1854 Jambi to Batavia, 15 July 1714, fo. 47; 11 Sept. 1714, fo. 68; 1868 Pangeran Temenggung and Nattaningrat to Raja Muda of Johor, rec'd at

Batavia 4 Feb. 1715, fo. 19; 1911 Jambi to Batavia, 19 Jan. 1718, fo. 31; *Generale Missiven*, VII, p. 422.

30. VOC 1895 Jambi to Batavia, 13 Feb. 1717, fo. 5; 1911 Jambi to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1718, fo. 4.

31. VOV 1868 Jambi to Batavia, 11 Jan. 1716, fo. 4; 1911 Jambi to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1718, fols. 3–4; 6 Feb. 1719, fols. 25–27.

32. VOC 1926 Jambi to Batavia, 17 March 1719, fo. 12; 30 June 1719, fo. 19; 24 Oct. 1719, fo. 37; *Generale Missiven*, VII, pp. 400, 422–423.

33. See *Corpus Diplomaticum*, IV, pp. 523–526.

34. VOC 1945 Jambi to Batavia, 21 July 1720, fo. 48; Second Register, 3 Sept. 1720, fo. 4; 12 Dec. 1719, fo. 22; *Generale Missiven*, VII, p. 537; 1996 Jambi to Batavia, 6 Sept. 1722, fo. 75.

35. VOC 1945 Pangeran Nattaningrat and upstream heads to Jambi, rec'd 11 May 1720, fo. 43; Sultan Astra Ingalaga to Jambi Resident, rec'd 9 June 1720, fols. 45–46.

36. VOC 1961 Jambi to Batavia, 4 Nov. 1721, fo. 15; 1980 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Feb. 1722, fo. 29; 1996 Jambi to Batavia, 12 July 1723, fo. 4; 2013 King of Jambi to Batavia, rec'd 8 Nov. 1724, fo. 35.

37. VOC 1996 Jambi to Batavia, 30 June 1722, fo. 56.

38. VOC 2029 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Nov. 1725, fols. 2–3; 2051 Jambi to Batavia, 28 March 1726, fo. 5.

39. VOC 2073 Jambi to Batavia, 11 Sept. 1727, fols. 11–15.

40. VOC 2100 Jambi to Batavia, 1 Feb. 1729, fo. 3; 2133 Jambi to Batavia, 26 May 1729, fo. 82; 16 June 1729, fo. 88; King of Jambi to King of Palembang, rec'd 10 Oct. 1729, fols. 97–98; 2163 Jambi to Batavia, 26 Oct. 1730, fo. 9.

41. VOC 2346 Daily Register of Trip Upstream, 6 April 1735, fo. 89; 2502 Jambi Daily Register, 27 and 30 Oct. 1740, fo. 43; 20 Nov. 1740, fo. 25; 2569 Jambi Daily Register, 24 April 1742, fo. 29; 19 June 1742, fo. 34.

42. VOC 2133 King of Jambi to Batavia, rec'd 28 Sept. 1729, fo. 74.

43. VOC 2100 Jambi to Batavia, 27 Nov. 1728, fo. 38; 2780 Jambi to Batavia, 29 Feb. 1752, fo. 5; 3059 Jambi to Batavia, 2 Dec. 1761, fo. 19. For examples of such traditions, see Roesam, “Marga Batin VII,” pp. 4–6; *CRDJ* (1979), pp. 17, 45, 59; Klerks, “Geographisch en ethnographisch opstel,” p. 28.

44. See, for example, Gani, “Marga Lubuk Gaung”; “Kebudayaan daerah dan lima buah tarian tradisional,” pp. 1–2.

45. van den Bor, “Een en andere betreffende het ressort,” pp. 1–14; VOC 1980 Pangeran Dipati of Jambi to interior heads, rec'd at Batavia 9 April 1722, fols. 2–3; Jambi to Batavia, 16 March 1722, fo. 7.

46. de Josselin de Jong, *Minangkabau and Negeri Sembilan*, p. 83; VOC 1980 Jambi to Batavia, 15 March 1722, fo. 24. See n. 27.

47. VOC 2193 King of Jambi to Jambi Resident, rec'd 6 March 1731, fo. 39; 2383 Jambi to Batavia, 30 Oct. 1736, fols. 10–11; 2467 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1740, fo. 115.

48. Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, p. 320.

49. VOC 1125 Jambi to Batavia, 5 Feb. 1637, fo. 510v; 1980 Jambi to Batavia, 16 March 1722, fo. 12.

50. Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, p. 277; VOC 1808 First Register, Pangeran Mangkubumi to Jambi Resident, 11 May 1711, fo. 90.

51. Barnes, "Account of a Journey in 1818," p. 342; Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, p. 278; VOC 2467 Extract from General Missive, 15 Oct. 1739, fo. 23; 2502 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Nov. 1740, fo. 18.

52. VOC 2133 King of Jambi to Jambi Resident, rec'd 31 Dec. 1729, fo. 36; 2163 King of Jambi to Jambi Resident, rec'd 10 May 1730, fo. 53; 2193 King of Jambi to Jambi Resident, rec'd 6 March 1731, fo. 39; 2239 Jambi Daily Register, 20 Dec. 1732, fo. 165.

53. Stapel, "Een verhandeligen over het onstaan van het Menangkabausche rijk," p. 465; VOC 2458 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Nov. 1738, fo. 7; 2467 Jambi Daily Register, 3 Nov. 1740, fo. 125.

54. VOC 2239 Jambi Daily Register, 28 Feb. 1733, fo. 184; 1996 Baginda Ratu to Pangeran Nattaningrat, rec'd at Batavia 28 June 1723, fo. 91.

55. *Sintuk* or cassia (*Cinnamomum burmanni*), valued for its spicy bark.

56. VOC 2534 Jambi to Batavia, 26 Dec. 1641, fo. 16. See Klerks, "Geographisch en ethnographisch opstel," p. 16.

57. Such a piagem is that dated 15 Safar, 'Tuesday, the year Jim, 1117 (8 June 1705) from marga Pembarap (Bangko district) and described in Husin, "Marga Pembarap," pp. 10–11. The reading of this piagem in June 1970 was conducted with full ceremony, with the sacrifice of a goat and the offering of rice. The piagem, given by "Sultan Sri Ingalaga" to the dipati of Pembarap, lists the boundaries of the marga, noting that the territory has been received as a gift from the sultan. It is primarily concerned with regulations regarding the payment of fines.

58. VOC 2438 Jambi to Batavia, 9 Jan. 1739, fo. 15; 2239 Jambi Daily Register, 12 June 1732, fo. 39; 2193 Jambi Daily Register, 5 Oct. 1731, fo. 113.

59. VOC 2286 Translated Malay Regulations, 1733, fols. 59–60.

60. It seems fairly obvious that he was killed. VOC 2346 Second Register, Jambi to Batavia, 13 Nov. 1735, fo. 2.

61. VOC 2467 Jambi Daily Register, 5 June 1739, fo. 58; 2534 Jambi Daily Register, 26 Aug. 1742, fols. 56, 73; 26 Nov. 1742, fo. 73; 2534 Jambi Daily Register, 12 June 1741, fo. 40.

62. VOC 2286 Jambi to Batavia, 7 Sept. 1733, fo. 18.

63. She was the daughter of Sultan Anum, former ruler of Palembang and brother of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin (1724–1757). VOC 2315 Retiring Report by Jacob Schouw to Jan Dinnies, 23 Nov. 1734, fo. 84; 2383 Jambi Daily Register, 5 March 1736, fo. 78; 2438 King of Jambi to King of Palembang, rec'd in Jambi 30 Sept. 1738, fo. 19; 2438 Retiring Report by Jan Dinnies to Pieter Jamin, 9 Jan. 1739, fo. 15.

64. *Corpus Diplomaticum*, V, p. 345.

65. VOC 1996 Jambi to Batavia, 23 March 1723, fo. 9

66. VOC King of Jambi to Jambi Resident, rec'd in Batavia 10 March 1732, fo. 21.

67. VOC 1911 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Nov. 1717, fo. 8; 2073 Assistant Resident of Jambi to Batavia, 11 Sept. 1727, fo. 9.

68. VOC 1945 Jambi to Batavia, 3 Sept. 1720, fo. 4; 1996 Jambi to Palembang, 30 June 1722, fo. 59; 2029 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Feb. 1726, fo. 9; 2193

Jambi Daily Register, 29 July 1731, fo. 101; 2239 Jambi Daily Register, 15 March 1732, fols. 28–29; 20 June 1732, fo. 41.

69. VOC 1794 Jambi to Batavia, 17 March 1710, fo. 67; 1841 Jambi to Batavia, 12 Feb. 1713, fo. 7; 1926 Jambi to Batavia, Inventory of Kiai Gedé's goods, 24 Oct. 1719, fo. 41; 1945 Jambi to Batavia, 3 Sept. 1721, fo. 6; 2315 Jambi to Batavia, 23 Nov. 1734, fo. 94; 2383 Jambi to Batavia, 3 March 1736, fo. 2.

70. VOC 1776 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1719, fols. 67–68; 1996 Jambi to Batavia, 23 March 1723, fo. 9.

71. VOC 1794 Jambi to Batavia, 28 March 1710, fo. 62; *Corpus Diplomaticum*, IV, p. 525.

72. For example, one of Kiai Gedé's servants attacked four European soldiers who subsequently died from their wounds. According to Jambi law, such a death could be avenged through payment of wang bangun. Patras, however, was determined on a severe punishment which would deter such actions in the future. At his insistence the murderer was killed, dragged from his home by his feet, and the body thrown into the river with a stone around the neck. The whole affair was carried out on the king's side of the river and was supervised by one of the leading nobles. VOC 1794 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1710, fols. 12–13.

73. See, for example, the complaints regarding Willem Daems in VOC 2013 King of Jambi to Batavia, rec'd 24 March 1724, fo. 13.

74. VOC 2100 Declaration by H. T. Verbrugge and N. Martijn, 31 Oct. 1728, fo. 93.

75. VOC 2674 Palembang to Batavia, 27 Feb. 1747, fols. 12–13; Jambi to Batavia, 29 April 1746, fo. 23; 2761 Jambi to Batavia, 23 Dec. 1747, fo. 13; 2718 Jambi to Batavia, 15 March 1750, fo. 81.

76. A court servant walking through the capital made any public announcements in a loud voice, at the same time beating on a gong or gum-gum. VOC 2674 Jambi to Batavia, 29 April 1746, fo. 23; 2718 Jambi to Batavia, 23 Dec. 1747, fols. 7–8; 16 Feb. 1748, fols. 24–25.

77. VOC 2741 Jambi to Batavia, 9 March 1749, fols. 22–23; 28 Dec. 1741, fo. 11; 2761 Second Register, Jambi to Batavia, 3 Dec. 1749, fo. 11; Second Register, 31 Jan. 1751, fols. 14–21.

78. VOC 2761 Acting Resident to Incoming Resident Jan Aalders, 3 Dec. 1749, fols. 7–14; 2780 Jambi to Batavia, 26 March 1751, fo. 7; 2965 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Dec. 1758, fo. 16; 2991 Jambi to Batavia, 18 March 1760, fo. 63.

79. VOC 2467 Jambi Daily Register, 20 March 1739, fo. 50; 28 Dec. 1739, fo. 151; 2761 Acting Resident to Incoming Resident Jan Aalders, 3 Dec. 1749, fols. 9–11; Jambi to Batavia, 15 March 1750, fo. 72; 2761 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Jan. 1750, fo. 60.

80. VOC 2761 Jambi to Batavia, 21 Jan. 1750, fo. 61; 2780 Jambi to Batavia, 29 Feb. 1752, fols. 7, 39.

81. Further details are in VOC 2741 Jambi to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1748, fo. 12; 2761 Acting Resident to Incoming Resident Jan Aalders, 3 Dec. 1749, fo. 25; 2826 Batavia's Secret Resolutions, 19 March 1754, fols. 12–13; 2837 Palembang to Batavia, 3 Feb. 1754, fo. 2; KI Hs. 456, A. F. Solms, "Memorie

Nagelaten," 27 April 1766, n.f.; de Kock, "Legendes van Djambi," p. 54; KI Ms. Or. 72, "Hikajat Negari Djambi," fols. 30-31.

82. VOC 2844 Commissioner van der Werp to Batavia, 8 June 1754, fols. 205-211; 15 July 1754, fols. 215-216; 2887 Palembang to Batavia, 2 June 1756, fo. 84; *Corpus Diplomaticum*, VI, pp. 85-87.

83. *Corpus Diplomaticum*, V, p. 345.

84. VOC Jambi to Batavia, 22 Nov. 1758, fols. 4-5; 2991 Jambi to Batavia, 20 Jan. 1760, fo. 28; 2965 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Dec. 1758, fo. 2.

85. This had, of course, been Sultan Anum's own name before his accession. Raja Ali Haji, *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, pp. 118, 350; VOC 2991 Jambi to Batavia, 18 March 1760, fo. 66; Second Register, 28 April 1760, fo. 6; 3089 Jambi to Batavia, 16 Jan. 1764, fo. 10.

86. VOC 2934 Palembang to Batavia, 20 April 1758, fo. 10; Palembang to Jambi, 10 Sept. 1758, fo. 70; 2965 Jambi to Batavia, 18 Dec. 1758, fo. 2.

87. VOC 2965 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Nov. 1758, fo. 4; 3028 Secret Jambi to Batavia, 29 Aug. 1761, fo. 145.

88. VOC 3059 Jambi to Batavia, 2 Dec. 1761, fo. 11; 3028 Secret Jambi to Batavia, 29 Aug. 1761, fo. 150.

89. See *Corpus Diplomaticum*, VI, p. 232.

90. VOC 3121 Jambi to Batavia, 12 May 1764, fo. 3; 3152 Jambi to Batavia, 30 Sept. 1765, fo. 12.

91. VOC 3121 Jambi to Batavia, 12 May 1764, fo. 5; 3182 King of Jambi to Batavia, rec'd 11 July 1766, fo. 25; 3152 King of Jambi to Batavia, rec'd 15 Nov. 1765, fo. 30.

92. VOC 3333 Second Register, King of Jambi to Palembang, rec'd at Batavia 29 July 1771, fo. 7.

Chapter Six

1. van Soest, "Het contract van 1755," p. 174.

2. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 81; see also Vos, "Koopman en Koning," p. 30.

3. VOC 1794 Palembang to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1710, fols. 56-57. Some accounts say Pangeran Purbaya was poisoned by a Jambi prince; other reports attribute his death to one of his brothers. See *Generale Missiven*, VI, p. 540.

4. VOC 1854 Palembang to Batavia, 26 March 1714, fols. 31-32; 4 May 1715, fo. 57; 11 July 1714, fols. 98-99.

5. VOC 1854 Malay letters from Pangeran Dipati to Governor General, rec'd at Batavia 22 Dec. 1714, fo. 21; Report by Syahbandar C. Haaselaar, 22 Dec. 1714, fo. 24.

6. As above, n. 5; VOC 1868 Pangeran Dipati and his four brothers to Batavia, rec'd 22 July 1715, fo. 76.

7. At the time Pangeran Anum said that this was because he had taken under his protection a European whom the king of Johor wanted to put to death. VOC 1895 Pangeran Dipati to Batavia, rec'd 26 April 1717, fo. 43. According to the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (which confuses Pangeran Dipati Anum and his brother Jayawikrama, later Sultan Lemabang), the Palembang prince fell from favor because he broke wind one day publicly at court. It was because of this display

of coarse manners that Sultan Abd al-Jalil refused to give his daughter in marriage. Raja Ali Haji, *The Precious Gift*, p. 47.

8. VOC 1868 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Feb. 1715, fols. 5–6; Third Register, 13 Oct. 1715, fols. 9–14; 9 Dec. 1715, fo. 12; 1882 Palembang to Batavia, 21 Feb. 1716, fols. 12–13; 13 April 1716, fo. 34; 1895 Palembang to Batavia, 27 Jan. 1717, fols. 5–6; 1 Feb. 1717, fols. 15–16; 1911 Pangeran Dipati Anum to Batavia, rec'd 5 Sept. 1718, fo. 91.

9. VOC 1868 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Feb. 1715, fo. 5; 4 Sept. 1715, fo. 187; 1882 Palembang to Batavia, 18 March 1716, fo. 33; 22 Sept. 1716, fo. 67; Third Register, 6 Dec. 1716, fols. 3–4.

10. VOC 1895 Pangeran Dipati to Batavia, rec'd 26 April 1717, fo. 43; 3 May 1717, fo. 44.

11. VOC 1882 Palembang to Batavia, 7 June 1716, fols. 8–10, 20; 1895 Pangeran Dipati Anum to King of Palembang, rec'd at Batavia 25 Sept. 1717, fo. 77; Palembang to Batavia, 27 Oct. 1717, fols. 92, 101; 1911 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 5 Sept. 1718.

12. 8 Haji 1129 corresponds to Thursday, 13 Nov. 1717; ARA Collectie Engelhard, Aanwinst 1916, no. 172, n.f.; VOC 1895 Palembang Daily Register, 24–29 Oct. 1717, fols. 23–29; Palembang to Batavia, 14 Nov. 1717, fo. 109; 29 Nov. 1717, fo. 44; 1911 Palembang to Batavia, 8 June 1718, fo. 39; 24 May 1718, fo. 50; King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 21 Jan. 1718, fo. 2.

13. ARA Collectie Engelhard, Aanwinst 1916, no. 172, n.f.; VOC 1911 Palembang to Batavia, 20 March 1718, fo. 25; 21 Oct. 1718, fols. 95–96; 30 Jan. 1719, fo. 52; 1926 Palembang to Batavia, 18 March 1719, fo. 5; 1961 Palembang to Batavia, 29 March 1721, fo. 11.

14. ARA Collectie Engelhard, Aanwinst 1916, no. 172, n.f.; VOC 1961 Palembang to Batavia, 18 Aug. 1721, fols. 57–58; 8 Aug. 1721, fols. 61–63; Sultan Ratu to Batavia, rec'd 16 Sept. 1721, fo. 65.

15. VOC 2075 Sultan Anum to Batavia, rec'd 4 Nov. 1727, fo. 127; 1961 Report by Patras, 27 Jan. 1722, fols. 84–90.

16. VOC 1961 Palembang to Batavia, 18 Aug. 1721, fo. 38; ARA Collectie Engelhard, Aanwinst 1916, no. 172, n.f.

17. VOC 1961 Palembang to Batavia, 3 Jan. 1722, fols. 58–60.

18. VOC 1961 Jambi to Batavia, 4 Nov. 1721, fo. 25; 1961 Palembang to Batavia, 3 Jan. 1722, fo. 59; Report by Patras, 27 Jan. 1722, fo. 93; 1980 Palembang to Batavia, 22 March 1722, fols. 7–14.

19. *Generale Missiven*, VII, pp. 603, 614–615; VOC 1980 Palembang to Batavia, 29 April 1722, fo. 55; 8 May 1722, fols. 64–66; 19 May 1722, fo. 99.

20. VOC 1980 Report by Carel Poppeljon on his trip to the interior, May 1722, fols. 103–108; 1996 Palembang to Jambi, 26 March 1722, fo. 30.

21. VOC 1996 Palembang to Batavia, 29 March 1723, fo. 8; *Corpus Diplomaticum*, IV, pp. 536–543.

22. *Dysoxylon acutangulum*, a rare but much desired timber, finely grained and found particularly on Bangka.

23. van Soest, "Het contract van 1755," p. 185; VOC 2013 Palembang to Batavia, 15 March 1724, fo. 2; King of Palembang to Patras, rec'd 29 April 1724, fo. 25; *Generale Missiven*, VII, p. 695; Horsfield, "Report on the Island of Banka," p. 306.

24. van Soest, "Het contract van 1755," p. 169; VOC 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1747, fo. 48.

25. VOC 2860 Extract from Heeren XVII to Batavia, 8 Oct. 1753, fols. 80–81.

26. This date is given twice in VOC sources. VOC 1895 Palembang to Batavia, 9 March 1717, fo. 15; 1961 Second Register, Palembang to Batavia, 2 Sept. 1721, fo. 10. Other sources suggest that mines began to be developed commercially by local people in 1711, a date widely found in the literature. See van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, VII, p. 66. For an extended account of the history of tin mining on Bangka, see Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*.

27. VOC 1945 Palembang to Batavia, 29 Dec. 1719, fo. 6; Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*, pp. 3, 23n.23.

28. VOC 2029 Palembang to Batavia, 10 Oct. 1725, fo. 57; Second Register, Palembang to Batavia, 4 Dec. 1725, fo. 3; 2073 King of Palembang to Syahbandar of Batavia, rec'd 13 Aug. 1727, fols. 30–31; 2133 Palembang to Batavia, 21 July 1729, fols. 59–60; King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 27 Sept. 1729, fo. 122; 2865 Palembang to Batavia, 21 Sept. 1755, fo. 431.

29. VOC 2133 Third Register, Palembang to Batavia, 30 Nov. 1729, fo. 3.

30. VOC 2073 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Feb. 1728, fo. 22; 2100 Palembang to Batavia, 2 Sept. 1728, fo. 27.

31. VOC Palembang to Batavia, 2 Dec. 1730, fo. 18.

32. VOC 2193 J. Menut to A. Oostwalt, 14 June 1731, fols. 138–141; Palembang to Batavia, 17 Aug. 1731, fo. 134.

33. VOC 2315 Palembang to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1734, fo. 44; 2345 Palembang to Batavia, 29 Nov. 1735, fo. 8.

34. VOC 2534 Palembang to Batavia, 27 Dec. 1741, fols. 183–185; 27 Feb. 1742, fo. 191; 2650 Palembang to Batavia, 16 Nov. 1745, fo. 47.

35. VOC 2607 Palembang to Batavia, 30 Oct. 1743, fols. 5–12; 2630 Palembang to Batavia, 11 March 1744, fols. 5–7; Palembang to Batavia, 14 April 1746, fo. 55; 2674 Palembang to Batavia, 3 June 1746, fo. 46.

36. The exchange rate was now sixteen small bundles, or five hundred picis, to one large bundle; one large bundle (eight thousand picis) was equivalent to one rial. For examples of royal accounts, see VOC 2761 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 10 Feb. 1750, fo. 23; King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 10 Oct. 1750, fo. 131.

37. Horsfield, "Report on the Island of Banka," p. 309.

38. VOC 2837 Palembang to Batavia, 5 March 1754, fo. 29; 2865 Report on Bangka and Belitung, 21 Sept. 1755, fo. 430; Wang, "The Origins of Chinese Kongsis," p. 52. The word kongsis is first mentioned in VOC sources in 1783, but the type of cooperative organization with which it is associated appears to be much older. Initially the word appears to have been used by non-Chinese to refer only to the head, the scribe, but was then extended to the group as a whole. See VOC 3867 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Oct. 1783, fo. 905v, and a translated Malay report on Bangka, 17 Nov. 1783, fo. 988v; see also Chew, *Chinese Pioneers on the Sarawak Frontier*, p. 20; Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*, p. 18.

39. VOC 2934 Arriving and Departing Ships, 20 Oct. 1757, fo. 70 (from

Bangka); 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1747, fo. 57; 2837 Palembang to Batavia, 5 March 1754, fo. 29; 2865 Report on Bangka and Belitung, 8 Oct. 1755, fo. 430; Horsfield, "Report on the Island of Banka," p. 310.

40. VOC 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1747, fo. 56. This description dates from 1783 (VOC 3867 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Dec. 1783, fols. 904–905) and is reproduced in Vos, "Koopman en Koning," p. 220.

41. Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, III, pp. 458–459; VOC 2865 Report on Bangka and Belitung, 8 Oct. 1755, fo. 431.

42. VOC 2674 Palembang to Batavia, 30 April 1747, fo. 38; 2741 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1749, fo. 43; 2818 Retiring Report by Gerrit Pan to J. A. van der Werp, 30 Dec. 1752, fo. 7; King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 13 Aug. 1753, fo. 67; King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 17 Oct. 1753, fo. 86; 2837 Palembang to Batavia, 5 March 1754, fo. 20; VOC 2865 Report on Bangka and Belitung, 8 Oct. 1755, fo. 431.

43. VOC 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 1 Feb. 1747, fols. 11–21.

44. VOC 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1747, fo. 51; 2818 Palembang to Batavia, 19 May 1753, fo. 53; 2908 Palembang to Batavia, 14 May 1757, fo. 12.

45. VOC 2239 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 13 March 1733, fols. 6–8.

46. 2650 King and nobles of Palembang to Batavia, 12 Rabiawal 1158, rec'd n.d. July 1745, fo. 27; Palembang to Batavia, 10 Aug. 1745, fo. 42; 2674 Palembang to Batavia, 27 Feb. 1746, fols. 7–8; 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1747, fols. 40, 51; Vos, "Koopman en Koning," p. 42.

47. VOC 2718 Palembang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1747, fo. 18; 2741 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1749, fols. 29, 44; 2761 Palembang to Batavia, 17 April 1750, fo. 71; Palembang to Batavia, 23 June 1750, fols. 99–108; 2799 King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 21 June 1752, fo. 10.

48. van Soest, "Palembang in 1755," pp. 165–197, and *Corpus Diplomaticum*, VI, pp. 59–64.

49. VOC 2865 Paravicini's Report, 21 Sept. 1755, fo. 389; Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 81.

50. VOC 2239 Jambi Daily Register, 20 June 1731, fo. 40; 2051 Palembang to Batavia, 30 Jan. 1727, fols. 15–16; 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1747, fo. 51.

51. VOC 2345 Palembang to Jambi, 7 Dec. 1735, fo. 80; Palembang to Batavia, 18 Jan. 1736, fo. 88; 2799 Palembang to Batavia, 20 April 1752, fo. 2.

52. VOC 2029 Palembang to Batavia, 10 Oct. 1725, fo. 62; 2467 Palembang to Batavia, 10 April 1739, fo. 96.

53. I am grateful for the help of Dr. Stuart Robson in reconstructing the meaning of this phrase.

54. VOC 2569 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1742, fo. 78; 2780 Palembang to Batavia, 30 Nov. 1751, fo. 90; 2650 Palembang to Batavia, 8 Jan. 1745, fo. 17.

55. VOC 2534 Resident's comments on General Missive of 1738, fo. 202; 2607 Palembang to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1743, fo. 8; 2780 Jambi to Batavia, 29 Feb. 1752, fo. 9.

56. VOC 2286 Palembang to Batavia, 31 July 1733, fols. 51–52; 2467 Palembang to Batavia, 30 March 1739, fo. 58; 2502 Palembang to Batavia, 21 Nov. 1740, fo. 59; 2607 Palembang to Batavia, 11 March 1743, fo. 8; 2630 Resident's answer to Amsterdam's comments of 28 Aug. 1742, fols. 16–17.

57. VOC 2286 Palembang to Batavia, 31 July 1733, fo. 23; Palembang to Jambi, 24 April 1733, fo. 73; 2502 Report by Seri Ibrahim and eight envoys, 25 Oct. 1740, fols. 89–91.

58. Kebon Gedé is the name of one of the royal graveyards. Sultan Muhammad Mansur is known to be buried there.

59. VOC 2418 King of Banten to Batavia, rec'd 11 April 1737, fols. 34–40.

60. VOC 2383 Palembang to Batavia, 12 Dec. 1736, fo. 12.

61. The others were Banyu Asin, Sungsang, Upang, Salih, Pidato, Perugian, Putih, Nibong. Sultan Mahmud also named Bangka, Belitung, and Lepar as lying under Palembang authority. VOC 2410 Palembang to Batavia, 17 April 1737, fo. 7; *Generale Missiven*, IX, pp. 747, 599, 812.

62. VOC 2549 Instructions to Head of Tulang Bawang, 28 March 1741, fols. 111–129.

63. Hunne, "Weder een Javaansche inscriptie op Sumatra," pp. 363–369, and "Javaansche inscriptiën," pp. 1–20; VOC 2478 Report on Tulang Bawang, 23 Aug. 1739, fols. 191–219; 2549 Banten to Batavia, 29 Dec. 1741, fo. 397; 2634 Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1744, fo. 20; Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 144.

64. VOC 2589 Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 29 April 1742, fo. 193; *Corpus Diplomaticum*, V, pp. 270–274.

65. VOC 2478 Malay letter from Lampung heads to Banten, rec'd 2 July 1739, fols. 100–105; 2499 Report on Tulang Bawang, 30 Dec. 1738, fols. 15–31; de Jonge, *De Opkomst van het Nederlandse Gezag*, IX, p. 276.

66. An example of such a piagem is in van den Tuuk, "Brieven," p. 402.

67. VOC 2478 Report on Tulang Bawang, 30 Dec. 1738, fo. 237; 2534 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1741, fo. 13; 2589 Tulang Bawang to Banten, 31 Aug. 1742, fo. 256; 2611 Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 4 Oct. 1743, fo. 6.

68. VOC 2478 Report on Tulang Bawang, 30 Dec. 1738, fo. 219; 2502 Palembang Envoys to Batavia, rec'd 10 June 1740, fols. 48–54; 2512 Banten to Tulang Bawang, 28 March 1740, fols. 13–15; Tulang Bawang to Banten, 5 April 1740, fo. 19; Banten's Instructions to J. F. Somerfield, 18 May 1740, fo. 53; 2589 Report on Tulang Bawang, 20 May 1742, fols. 105–107.

69. VOC 2589 Report on Tulang Bawang, 29 April 1742, fo. 204; Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 19 Sept. 1742, fo. 274; Letter from envoys of King of Banten, rec'd 28 Dec. 1742, fols. 22–23; 2569 King of Palembang to Batavia, 16 Syawal 1144, rec'd n.d. Jan. 1743, fols. 63–64; 2611 Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 12 April 1742, fols. 53–55.

70. VOC 2611 Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 28 June 1743, fo. 142; 2725 Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1747, fo. 11; 2634 Lampung to Batavia, 1 Oct. 1744, fols. 194–195; 2749 Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 27 Jan. 1749, fo. 8.

71. VOC 2569 Report on Tulang Bawang, 20 May 1742, fols. 41–45; 2634 Tulang Bawang to Banten, 31 Oct. 1744, fols. 17–20.

72. VOC 2589 Tulang Bawang to Batavia, 9 Aug. 1742, fo. 185.
73. Francis, *Herinneringen uit den levensloop van een Indisch' Ambtenaar*, pp. 136–139; Canne, “Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der Lampung,” p. 507.
74. Voorhoeve, “Some notes on South Sumatran epics,” pp. 95–100.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, pp. 364, 378; KI Hs. 288 Boers, “Algemeen verslag der Residentie Palembang,” n.f.
77. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 167.
78. See further Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*, p. 67.
79. This is equivalent to 17 September 1757 c.e. VOC 2908 Palembang to Batavia, 22 September 1757, fo. 31; Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, pp. 49–50, 442 nn. 51, 81. A discrepancy of one or two days can occur in conversion to Christian dates because in Muslim countries the beginning of every month is determined by the sighting of the new moon and because the day is reckoned from sunrise, while the Christian calendar begins the day at 1 a.m. in the morning.
80. These dates are supported by Dutch sources. VOC 2383 Palembang to Batavia, 25 March 1736, fo. 11; 2741 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1749, fo. 54; Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 81.
81. See Wieringa, *Carita Bangka*, pp. 76–87. In this legend it is Wan Akub and his brothers who first realize the existence of tin on Bangka. See de Clercq, “Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van Bangka,” pp. 132–134; KI Hs. 400, Ullman, “Het eiland Banka en zijn uitwendige gesteldheid,” fols. 9–20.
82. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 77; VOC 1961 Palembang to Batavia, 20 Feb. 1722, fo. 119; de Kock, “Schetsen,” p. 366; VOC 2345 Palembang to Jambi, 7 Dec. 1735, fo. 80. The name of Raden Serdang, the border guard who captured Sultan Anum, is also remembered in local stories. I am indebted to Radin Husin of Palembang for sharing his material on Sultan Mahmud with me.
83. The mention of Aria Damar as the founder of the Palembang dynasty is mentioned in several contemporary accounts. See Radermacher, “Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra,” p. 88; van Sevenhoven, “Beschrijving van de hoofdplaats,” p. 63.
84. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p. 129.
85. van Soest, “Het contract,” p. 188.
86. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, pp. 37–38; KI Ms. Or. 531. KI Hs. 184 is a poor translation of this work; Brown, “Sejarah Melayu,” p. 25ff.
87. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 81; UB Cod. Or. 7653a, fols. 101–115.
88. de Kock, “Schetsen,” p. 363; UB Cod. Or. 7653a, fo. 104; Poerbatjaraka, *Pandji-Verhalen Onderling Vergeleken*, pp. 164–166; KI Hs. 288 “Algemeen verslag der residentie Palembang,” n.f.
89. de Kock, “Schetsen,” p. 365. A “milk brother” is one who has shared the same wet nurse.
90. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, pp. 75–76; VOC 2607 Palembang to Batavia, 20 April 1743, fo. 1; 2630 Palembang to Batavia, 11 March 1744, fo. 14; de Kock, “Schetsen,” p. 368; VOC 1011 Batavia to Makassar, 31 Dec. 1757, fo. 27.

91. VOC 2073 Palembang to Batavia, 13 Jan. 1728, fo. 20; 25 Jan. 1728, fo. 6; 15 Feb. 1728, fo. 23; Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 81; de Kock, p. 368. Because of the death of the crown prince a second son, Pangeran Aria, married to a Jambi princess, was installed as the pangeran ratu. VOC 2133 Jambi to Palembang, 10 March 1729, fo. 76; 2193 Palembang to Batavia, 54 Sept. 1731, fo. 213.

92. See further Sahlins, *Islands of History and Mythical Realities*, p. 79, and idem, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*, p. 24.

93. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 76.

94. van Soest, “Het contract van 1755,” p. 174; VOC 2607 Palembang to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1743, fo. 5; 2883 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1756, fols. 2–3; UB Cod. Or. 7653a, fo. 115. The number forty has a particular place in Islam because forty Muslims are required to make up an Islamic community.

95. van den Berg, “Oendang-oendang Simboer Tjahaja,” p. 7. These customs were still thriving when the Dutch took over direct control of Palembang, and continuing legislation was directed toward eliminating them because of the obstacles they placed in the way of marriage. It is relevant to note here that the official perception of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I has now changed, for in contrast to his namesake he is seen as ruling in Dutch interests. See, for instance, Alfian et al., *Sejarah Perlawanan Terhadap Imperialisme*.

96. Sahlins, “Other Times, Other Customs,” p. 520. See further Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, p. 7; Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, p. 41; Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*, p. 14.

97. VOC 2438 Jambi Daily Register, 9 Oct. 1739, fo. 84; 2699 Palembang to Batavia, 13 March 1747, fo. 53; 2383 Palembang to Jambi, 22 Feb. 1736, fo. 35.

Chapter Seven

1. See further McClellan, *Science Reorganized*, pp. 8–9.

2. The and van der Veur, *The Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap*, pp. 1–5; Eschels-Kroon, *Beschreibung der Insel Sumatra*; Radermacher, “Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra,” pp. 3–144; Miller, “An Account of the Island of Sumatra,” pp. 160–179; Marsden, *History of Sumatra*. Miller’s article was translated into German in 1781; Eschel-Kroon’s book appeared in a Dutch edition in 1783; Radermacher’s article was republished in 1781; a second edition of *The History of Sumatra* came out in 1784, and a third expanded version was issued in 1811.

3. Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, pp. vi–viii. His italics. The same remarks also appeared in the preface to the first edition. Miller too stressed the value of “authentic information,” and Eschels-Kroon specifically criticised the description of Magindanao by the English country trader, Thomas Forrest, because it embellished the truth. *Beschreibung der Insel Sumatra*, p. xii; Miller, “An Account of the Island of Sumatra,” p. t61.

4. Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, p. 358. See Paulus, *Encyclopaedia van Nederlandsch-Indië*, I, p. 610, and also Tideman, *Djambi*, p. 30, for an illustration of the lack of historical material for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

5. For instance, Horsfield’s “Report on the Island of Banka,” written for

Stamford Raffles in 1812, and the account of Palembang by Major Court, British resident in Palembang in 1813. Court, *An Exposition of the Relations of the British Government with the Sultaun and State of Palembang*. In his third edition of 1811, Marsden also expanded the section on Palembang considerably, drawing heavily from Radermacher's work.

6. Dr. Reber has argued that Raffles independently formulated his theories regarding the decline of Malay states and the resultant rise in piracy, but he also stood in a long tradition of views on native "decay." See, for instance, Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, pp. 204, 207. Reber, "The Sulu World in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," p. 6.

7. See further Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585–1740*, p. 392. There is some disagreement as to when the decline of the VOC should be identified. Vos, "Koopman en Koning," p. 11.

8. VOC 1030 Batavia to Palembang, 26 June 1776, fo. 183. On Palembang's tin trade, see further Vos, "Koopman en Koning," pp. 21–55, 112.

9. VOC 2934 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Jan. 1758, fo. 21.

10. VOC 3089 Retiring Report by H. J. de Heere to Isaac Mens, 27 June 1763, fols. 103–104, 108; 2991 Palembang to Batavia, 24 June 1760, fo. 145.

11. VOC 2965 Third Register, Palembang to Batavia, 8 Oct. 1759, fo. 2.

12. VOC 3674 Palembang to van Braam, 2 Sept. 1784, fo. 92. In the end he sent a letter wrapped in yellow cloth; tin; and two rattans also wrapped in yellow cloth.

13. VOC 1035 Batavia to Palembang, 2 June 1781, fo. 364; 21 Aug. 1783, fo. 595; OIC 103 Secret, J. van Bogaart to First Commissioner General, 6 Feb. 1797, n.f.

14. "Country" trade was port-to-port trade east of the Cape of Good Hope. Although both private and East India Company traders independently participated in this commerce, the links between them were always close. During the eighteenth century, British private country traders outnumbered all others from Europe, and by the end of that period their activities had become professionally organized and financed.

15. VOC 3182 Palembang to Batavia, 18 Oct. 1764, fo. 17; Marsden, *History of Sumatra*, pp. 173, 187; Lewis, "The Growth of the Country Trade," pp. 114–129. On the Malay addiction to opium, see B. Andaya, *Perak, the Abode of Grace*, p. 327.

16. VOC 3094 Secret, Palembang to Batavia, 29 Dec. 1762, fols. 2–4; a comparison of prices between contracted prices and those of the free market is found in Vos, "Koopman en Koning," p. 215.

17. VOC 3628 Palembang to Batavia, 31 May 1782, fo. 106; Jones, "Two Malay Letters," pp. 24–35.

18. VOC 3653 Secret, Melaka to Palembang, 6 April and 11 March 1783, fols. 91, 94; Lewis, "The Growth of the Country Trade," pp. 114–129.

19. VOC 3333 Palembang to Batavia, 4 April 1771, fo. 29. Sultan Mahmud Baha'uddin described Raja Haji, the Bugis yang dipertuan muda, as a "bird of flight" and corresponded with him only through ministers. VOC 3628 Secret, Palembang to Batavia, 19 March 1781, n.f.

20. One such person is Kiai Demang 'Icja, the Chinese captain, the son of a Chinese man and a Palembang noblewoman. He had his own private army and

a valuable tin district on Bangka and was described as “the king’s oracle.” VOC 3674 Palembang to Batavia, 15 July 1784, fo. 77.

21. VOC 2965 Palembang to Batavia, 17 Feb. 1759, fo. 18; 3024 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Jan. 1761, fo. 5; 3124 Secret, Palembang to Batavia, 11 Sept. 1764, fo. 39.

22. VOC 1023 Batavia to Palembang, 15 April 1769, fo. 106; 3867 Translated Malay Report on Bangka, 17 Nov. 1783, fo. 908v.

23. Radermacher, “Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra,” pp. 83–84; VOC 1032 Batavia to Palembang, 29 June 1778, fo. 396; 3535 Palembang to Batavia, 7 Jan. 1778, fo. 212. For a Malay account of private Chinese tin trade with Riau, see Wieringa, *Carita Bangka*, 103–104.

24. Probably from the Hakka dialect, in which *taigé* (Mandarin *dage*) means “elder brother.” The word was apparently used for all the Sultan’s representatives on Bangka, regardless of their ethnic origins. VOC 3733 Palembang to Batavia, 28 Jan. 1786, fo. 73.

25. VOC 3535 Palembang to Batavia, 7 Jan. 1778, fo. 211; 3867 Malay Report on Bangka, 17 Nov. 1783, fols. 910v, 916; Palembang to Batavia, 23 Dec. 1783, fo. 903v; Radermacher, “Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra,” p. 83.

26. Knaap and Nagtegaal, “A Forgotten Trade,” p. 155; Radermacher, “Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra,” p. 96. VOC 2965 Palembang to Batavia, 21 April 1759, fo. 35. I have come to this conclusion after examining all the shipping lists for the 1780s and 1790s.

27. The sayids are said to have come to Palembang around the time of the Balinese attack on the crown prince in 1714. VOC 2761 Jambi to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1751, fo. 25; 2780 Jambi to Batavia, 21 March 1752, fo. 70; 2934 Palembang to Batavia, 10 Sept. 1758, fo. 70; 2956 Jambi to Batavia, 22 Nov. 1758, fo. 4; KI Hs. 456 A. F. van Solms, “Memorie Nagelaten, 27 April 1766, n.f.

28. Udovitch, *Partnership and Profit in Medieval Islam*, p. 210; van den Berg, *Le Hadhrumout et les colonies arabes*, p. 134 ff; Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 5, 96–97. For an example of sayid “bookkeeping,” see VOC 3628 Enclosures in Palembang to Batavia, 19 March 1781, fols. 1–7, and also Serjeant, “The Hadrami Network,” p. 153, for a description of these complex interport transactions in modern times.

29. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 90.

30. Stavorinus, *Voyages to the East Indies*, I, p. 357 (translator’s note).

31. VOC 3581 Palembang to Batavia, 20 Sept. 1779, n.f.; ARA Collectie Engelhard, Aanwinst 1916, no. 175, Walbeck’s Retiring Report, 12 Nov. 1794, n.f.; de Clercq, “Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van Bangka,” pp. 145–149. The Malay text is given in Wieringa, *Carita Bangka*, pp. 112–113.

32. VOC 2965 Palembang to Batavia, 20 April 1759, fo. 7; 3024, 13 July 1761, fo. 39. She refused, and the party was banished to the interior. After two years, when the Company offered a reward of three hundred rials, they were recovered and returned.

33. L. Andaya, “Man as Rare as Flowers,” p. 55; VOC 3412 Report by a native taken by pirates, 28 Jan. 1774, fols. 73–74. There is mention in the sources of “hooren” travelling to Palembang as passengers, while some Palembang

bang captains had standing arrangements with procurers in Batavia who provided them with kidnapped women. See, for example, VOC 3333 Arriving ships in Palembang under 10 November 1771 and 3525 Slave Reports (M), 16 Feb. 1778, n.f.

34. VOC 3674 Palembang to Batavia, 16 July 1784, fo. 17; VOC 3906 Palembang to Batavia, 13 April 1790, fo. 126.

35. VOC 3089 Retiring Report by H. J. de Heere to Isaac Mens, 27 June 1763, fo. 97; 3244 Palembang to Batavia, 18 April 1768, fo. 7; 3248 Secret, Palembang to Batavia, 29 Dec. 1767, fo. 636; 3303 Palembang to Batavia, 17 Nov. 1769, fo. 22; VOC 3333 Palembang to Batavia, 25 February 1771, fo. 10. Lengthy descriptions of attacks by Siak princes on Palembang shipping are found in UB Cod. Or. 7304, fols. 519–523.

36. Warren, *The Sulu Zone*, pp. 149–153.

37. VOC 3867 Report on Bangka, 22 Dec. 1783, fo. 911r. Sultan Mahmud of Johor had sent a mission to Tempasuk, an Ilanun base in north Borneo, to seek assistance against the Dutch, who had taken possession of Riau three years earlier.

38. Warren, *The Sulu Zone*, p. 24; VOC 3761 Palembang to Batavia, 24 May 1787, fo. 27; 3810 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Sept. 1787, fo. 130; 3960 Palembang to Batavia, 3 Oct. 1791, fo. 14; RAB 128 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1798, n.f.; OIC 103 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Feb. 1787, n.f.; Palembang Daily Register, 24 June 1793, n.f.

39. Raja Ali Haji, *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, pp. 194, 263–264, 376; OIC 103 Palembang to Melaka, 2 July 1795, n.f.

40. ARA Collectie Engelhard, Aanwinst 1916, no. 175, Retiring Report by P. Walbeck to J. van den Bogaart, 12 Nov. 1794, n.f.; OIC Konings Brieven, King of Palembang to Batavia, rec'd 15 Jan. 1796, n.f.; AN 36. Retiring Report by J. van den Bogaart to Aart Palm, 30 Nov. 1802, fo. 116.

41. van Severnhoven, "Rapport over het eiland Billiton," pp. 92–94; *CRDSS* (1985), pp. 92–94.

42. VOC 3124 Secret, Palembang to Batavia, 11 Sept. 1764, fols. 34–35; 1034 Secret, Batavia to Palembang, 11 Dec. 1779, fo. 88; in the early nineteenth century there were also complaints about the "orang Melayu" who were raiding in the Pasemah regions. See ARA Collectie Baud, "Nota van de heer Muntinghe," n.f.

43. de Sturler, *Proeve eener beschrijving van het gebied van Palembang*, p. 54.

44. Stapel, *Corpus Diplomaticum*, VI, pp. 665–668.

45. Inoculation was begun along the west coast by both British and Dutch, but it faced considerable local opposition. Kathirithamby-Wells, *The British West Sumatran Presidency*, p. 118; VOC 3494 Resident's notes on Amsterdam's Missive of 15 Oct. 1773, fo. 32; 3385 Palembang to Batavia, 31 March 1773, fo. 40; OIC 103 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Feb. 1797, n.f.; OIC 104 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1796, n.f. For legends about a terrible illness (personalized by a creature named Dandai), quite probably representing memories of small-pox epidemics, see *CRDSS* (1983), pp. 9, 25.

46. VOC 3493 Palembang to Batavia, 29 Feb. 1776, fo. 34; 3733 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Dec. 1783, fo. 13; OIC 103 Palembang to Batavia, 25 Feb. 1796, n.f.; OIC 104 Palembang to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1796, n.f.

47. ARA 3075a, "Missive van de Commissaris over de Komering, 1823," n.f.; "De Lampong's," pp. 1–50.
48. VOC 1034 Secret, Batavia to Palembang, 3 June 1780, fo. 88; "De Lampongsche distrikten," p. 258; see also Drewes, *De Biografie van een Minangkabausen Peper Handelaar*, pp. 106–107; Tsubouchi, "History of Settlement along the Komering Ogan-Lower Musi Rivers," pp. 6–13.
49. VOC 3628 Palembang to Batavia, 31 May 1782, fo. 107; 3653 Secret, Palembang to Batavia, 15 Sept. 1783, fo. 83.
50. "De Lampung's," p. 34; van Hoven, *De Pasemah*, pp. 13–14, 19–21.
51. AN 70.15 "Stukken betreffende aanmerking over de rivier Komering, March 1823," n.f.; for an example of stories collected in modern times, see CRDSS (1983), pp. 1–6, 75–78.
52. "De Lampongsche distrikten," p. 250.
53. Brandes, "Nog eenige Javaansche piagem's" (1887), p. 582; (1891), pp. 611, 620; Roo de La Faille, "Uit den Palembangschen sultanstijd," p. 342.
54. Brandes, "Nog eenige Javaansche piagem's" (1887), pp. 589–590; (1900), pp. 502–503; UB Berg 146, fo. 11. Kindly translated from the Javanese by Pak Rahmad Marzuki.
55. Radermacher, "Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra," pp. 97–98; Francis, *Herinneringen uit den levensloop van een Indisch' Ambtenaar*, I, p. 237.
56. Radermacher, "Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra," pp. 85–87; ARA Collectie Baud, "Nota van de Heer Muntinghe," n.f.; van Sevenhoven, "Beschrijving van de hoofdplaats," p. 90; Reijnt, "Iets over het inlandsch bestuur in de binnenlanden van Palembang," p. 258–267; de Sturler, *Bijdrage tot de Kennis en Rigtige Beoordeling*, pp. 72–78. Sturler had access to reports compiled by his brother, J. L. de Sturler, in 1822–1824. Such accounts formed the basis for later descriptions, of which some examples are KI Hs. 117, Ullman, "Een blik in de residentie Palembang," fo. 144; van Royen, *De Palembangsche Marga*, p. 15.
57. ARA 3075a "Missive over de Komering," n.f.; de Kock, "Aanteekeningen en schetsen," p. 321; ARA 3075, "Statistiek van Palembang," n.f.; KI Hs. 264, Dezentje, "Uit hoeveel onderscheidene soorten van bevolking bestaan de dessas."
58. In the capital family heads were known as *orang miji*, from the Javanese *piji/miji*, meaning "to assign someone a task."
59. This was known as *timbang* (weighing) and appears to have replaced the earlier custom of physically weighing the ruler or a member of the royal family.
60. van Royen, *De Palembangsche Marga*, p. 15; ARA Collectie Schneither, 117, "Overzicht van . . . de Heer Muntinghe," n.f.; KI Hs. 117, Ullman, "Een blik in de residentie Palembang," fo. 145; "Bijdrage tot de kennis der oorspronkelijk instellingen van Palembang," pp. 454–462.
61. OIC 65, General Missive, 13 Nov. 1798, n.f.; ARA Collectie Schneither, 117, "Overzicht van . . . de Heer Muntinghe," n.f.
62. VOC 3494 Palembang to Batavia, 12 March 1777, n.f.; "Palembang in het jaar 1791," p. 130.
63. See Iskandar, "Palembang Kraton Manuscripts," p. 71; Ricklefs and Voorhoeve, *Indonesian Manuscripts in Great Britain*, p. 153; Klinkert, "Verzamelingen van Maleische brieven," pp. 81–103. Perhaps symbolically, the only let-

ter from the Jambi ruler included in this collection had no date and was illegible because the ink used was too acidic and had corroded the paper.

64. A copy of this text is UB Berg 146. See Pigeaud, *The Literature of Java*, III, p. 75.

65. Villages and tribute along the Musi, Lematang, and Ogan rivers listed by the British resident of Palembang and Bangka, Major M. H. Court, in 1813 are essentially the same as those listed in UB Berg 146, fo. 17ff. Court, *An Exposition of the Relations of the British Government*, pp. 246–251. See further ARA 3075 “Statistiek van Palembang.” The Dutch may in fact have been witness to a slow but important shift in literary skills. The production of documents and storing them for reference represent different stages in the shift away from memory. The social acceptance of solitary, silent reading, as in 1791 when Sultan Mahmud Baha’uddin read a letter from the Dutch to himself, is also a gradual process. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp. 18, 138; “Palembang in het jaar 1791,” p. 31. On the implications of the transition to silent reading, see Saenger, “Silent Reading,” pp. 367–414.

66. VOC 3024 Palembang to Batavia, 10 Feb. 1761, fo. 7; 3182 Palembang to Batavia, 8 Oct. 1764, fo. 16.

67. VOC 3303 Palembang to Batavia, 13 Nov. 1770, fo. 48; 3494 Palembang to Batavia, 15 May 1776, fo. 77; Radermacher, “Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra,” p. 93. I am indebted to Radin Husin and the officials of the Department of Education and Culture in Palembang for acquainting me with details of the impressive Lemabang complex.

68. Jeffrey Kingston has made a similar point in relation to Lampung. See his “Manipulating Tradition,” p. 22. One twentieth-century authority even maintained that the Dutch colonial government had simply continued traditional practices. de Roo de la Faille, “Uit den Palembangschen sultanstijd,” pp. 346–347.

69. “Palembang in 1791,” p. 132; UB Berg 146, fo. 12.

70. Raffles, *Memoir of the Life*, pp. 42, 79, 336; Appendix, p. 7.

71. ARA 3075a “Missive over de Komering, 1823,” n.f.

72. Reijnst, “Iets over het inlandsch bestuur,” p. 259.

73. Kathirithamby-Wells, *The British West Sumatran Presidency*, p. 20; van Sevenhoven, “Beschrijving van de hoofdplaats,” p. 92.

74. van Sevenhoven, “Beschrijving van de hoofdplaats,” p. 90; VOC 2991 Palembang to Batavia, 15 March 1760, fo. 47; de Kock, “Aanteekeningen en schetsen,” pp. 300, 318; ARA Collectie Nederburgh, Retiring Report by Jan de Vries to Gijsbert Hemmy, 13 Sept. 1780, n.f.

75. VOC 3151 Palembang to Batavia, 6 Aug. 1765, fo. 6; Radermacher, “Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra,” pp. 97, 123; KI Hs. 557b de Sturler, “Aanteekeningen van eene reis,” n.f.; Kroele, “Aanteekeningen gehouden op eene reis,” p. 68; Gramberg, “Pasemah,” pp. 536–558; van Vloten, “De Ranau districten,” p. 302.

76. VOC 3186 Secret, Palembang to Batavia, 25 April 1766, fo. 45; 3528 Palembang to Batavia, 7 Jan. 1778, fo. 197. Prime among these heroines is Dayang Merindu. See UB Cod. Or. 7365a, fols. 26–27; KI 371a, “De kroniek van Palembang,” n.f. For other examples, see CRDSS (1983), pp. 18–20, 62–64; CRDSS (1985), pp. 14–17.

77. Between September and March 1725–1726 ninety vessels were recorded as having arrived at Palembang; by 1794 the number had fallen to forty-five. VOC 2013 Arriving Ships, fols. 38–90; OIC 103 Arriving Ships 1793–1794, n.f. For Palembang's trade, see Radermacher, "Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra," pp. 126–127; van Sevenhoven, "Beschrijving van de hoofdplaats," pp. 77–78.

78. Radermacher, "Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra," p. 92.

79. Radermacher, "Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra," p. 9; Loeb, *Sumatra*, p. 98.

80. UB Berg 146, fols. 3–5; Radermacher, "Beschryving van het eiland Sumatra," pp. 111, 125; VOC 3494 Palembang to Batavia, 12 March 1777, n.f.

81. Kulke, "Epigraphical References," p. 5; VOC 3535 Palembang's answer to General Missive, 30 Oct. 1776, n.f.; VOC 3124 Palembang to Batavia, 7 April 1764, fo. 98; 3556 Palembang to Batavia, 6 April 1779, fols. 173–174; 1041 Batavia to Palembang, 21 Sept. 1787, fo. 509.

82. On the extensive writings known to have been produced in Palembang during this period, see Drewes, *Directions for Travellers on the Mystic Path*, pp. 199–229; Drewes, "Further Data concerning Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani," pp. 267–292; Chatib Quzwain, *Mengenai Allah*. Abdul Samad's writings were also responsible for introducing the Samaniyyah *tariqa* (Sufi or mystic brotherhood) into the archipelago.

83. See Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 33; van Vloten, "De Ranau districten," pp. 294, 298. Sulu royal genealogies attribute the introduction of the Muslim faith to a sayid from Palembang, and according to Surakarta traditions at least one high-ranking noble studied sufism in Palembang. Personal communication, Dr. Nancy Florida, 12 July 1991. See also Majul, *Mustims in the Philippines*, p. 56. For a serious effort to compile some of the oral material dealing with the spread of Islam in south Sumatra, see Gadjahnata, *Masuk dan Berkembangnya Islam di Sumatera*.

84. Horsfield, "Report on the Island of Banka," pp. 313–314; VOC 3494 Palembang to Batavia, 18 April 1777, n.f.; 3810 Palembang to Batavia, 23 Nov. 1788, fo. 133.

85. "Palembang in 1791," p. 133; Bastin, "Palembang in 1811 and 1812," p. 307; Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, pp. 81–85.

86. Gay, *The Enlightenment*, I, p. 3.

Conclusion

1. Hulme and Jordanova, "Introduction," in Hulme and Jordanova, eds., *The Enlightenment and Its Shadows*, p. 9.

2. UB Cod. Or. 1914 (6) B, Leiden University Library; Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 142. In 1866 the sultan of Jambi also ordered the compilation of Jambi laws. See van den Berg, "Djambi: oendang-oendang," pp. 119–196.

3. van Sevenhoven, "Beschrijving van de hoofdplaats," pp. 80, 94. For accounts of later lending practices, see Kratz, "Running a Lending Library in Palembang in 1886 AD," pp. 3–4, and "A Brief Description of the 'Malay' Manuscripts of the 'Overbeck Collection'," p. 96.

4. Wieringa, *Carita Bangka*, p. 56. In a story collected in contemporary times in Jambi, a father's curse not only condemns his daughter to spinsterhood but his descendants to illiteracy. *CRDJ* (1978/1979), pp. 25–30.

5. The most convincing exposition of this argument is Sweency, *A Full Hearing*, esp. p. 94.

6. Cited in Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago and Adjacent Countries*, p. 97.

7. Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 199.

8. van den Kemp, "Palembang en Bangka in 1816–1820," pp. 335, 343, 476.

9. ARA 3075a, "Missive over de landen gehoorende onder de Komering," 1823, n.l.

10. "Silah-silah keturunan radja-radja Djambi," fo. 4.

11. Woolders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang*, p. 171.

12. *CRDJ* (1980/1981), p. 47ff. I was also told similar stories of kinship links between the "orang Palembang" and the people of Bukit Si Guntang on the Sumai River in Jambi during my visit there, 8 January 1987.

GLOSSARY

The amounts given for weights, measures, and currency are the standardized forms that gradually became accepted during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There could be considerable local variation.

<i>adat</i>	Custom, traditional law
<i>ambil anak</i>	Literally, to adopt a child; the practice of adopting a man as a son-in-law in lieu of bride price
<i>arak</i>	Arrack; liquor distilled from rice and sugar or from coconut palm
<i>aria</i>	Javanese princely title
<i>arung</i>	A princely title in southwest Sulawesi
<i>atap</i>	Roofing thatch, usually of palm leaves
<i>bahara</i>	Three piculs, or about 375 Dutch pounds (185 kilograms)
<i>batang</i>	Large river
<i>batin</i>	Indigenous title for headmen in Sumatra; also used for orang laut leaders
<i>boenlanders</i>	Dutch term for upstream people
<i>bukit</i>	Hill
<i>bunga mas dan perak</i>	Small trees made of gold and silver, usually with birds and flowers attached and accompanied by other gifts, sent to Siamese kings by their vassals as tribute
<i>daeng</i>	In southwest Sulawesi, a noble title for both men and women
<i>dayang</i>	Term used for female court attendants; often attached to female figures of legend
<i>demang</i>	Head of a district
Dutch mile	This varied, but was usually regarded as the equivalent of the English league (4.827 kilometers)
<i>gantang</i>	Container for measure of capacity; variable, but about 5 kati
<i>garuda</i>	Mythological creature with the head of a bird and the body of a human
<i>gundik</i>	Secondary wife
<i>ilir</i>	Also <i>hilir</i> ; downstream
imam	Muslim elder who leads congregation in Friday prayers
<i>jenang</i>	Javanese <i>jeneng</i> ; supervisor or deputy; in Jambi and Palembang, the ruler's representative, usually entrusted with carrying orders to the interior
<i>jernang</i>	General term for a variety of rattans yielding red resins for dyeing and medicinal purposes, the most well known of which is <i>Daemonorhops draco</i> (dragon's blood)

<i>jujur</i>	Bride price
<i>kafir</i>	Infidel, non-Muslim
<i>kajang</i>	Palm fronds woven together and used for mats, sails, roofs, etc.
<i>kampung</i>	Cluster of houses; neighborhood or village
<i>karaeng</i>	High-ranking Makassarese title, for both men and women
<i>kati</i>	Sixteen tahlil or about six hundred grams
<i>kongsi</i>	Chinese term referring to a partnership or group of people engaged in a commercial activity
<i>kota</i>	Minangkabau village settlement, usually fortified
<i>koyan</i>	Varied from 27 to 40 picul according to the area and the type of produce; commonly about 3,500 Dutch pounds or 1,700 kilograms
<i>kraton</i>	Royal palace, ruler's residence
<i>kris, keris</i>	Malay or Javanese dagger
<i>kulak</i>	A basket, a measure of weight; variable, but usually less than a <i>gantang</i>
<i>mangkubumi</i>	A prestigious title which could be given to the first minister in Jambi and Palembang courts, or used as an honorific in titles for princes
<i>marga</i>	Tribal or clan grouping
<i>mas ayu</i>	Javanese title for high ranking women
<i>muara</i>	River mouth (also <i>kuala</i>)
<i>negeri</i>	Settlement or state
<i>nipa</i>	A palm, <i>Nipa fruticans</i> ; <i>atap</i> is thatching made from its leaves
<i>orang kaya</i>	literally, rich man; a term for nobles in Malay courts
<i>orang kubu</i>	Proto-Malayan forest dwellers
<i>orang laut</i>	Proto-Malayan sea peoples, made up of numerous different groups with a distinctive maritime culture
<i>padi</i>	Unhusked rice
<i>panembahan</i>	In Jambi and Palembang, a title given to senior (often retired) rulers, with connotations of religious knowledge
<i>pangeran</i>	Prince; a title for the ruler in seventeenth-century Jambi and Palembang, but gradually lessening in exclusiveness and later often given to interior heads
<i>pangeran ratu</i>	In the seventeenth century, a title taken by kings; given to the foremost ranking prince after rulers began to take the title of sultan
<i>penghulu</i>	In Minangkabau areas of Jambi, the head of the lineage; also a head of a district
<i>perahu</i>	General term for boats without decking; <i>proa</i>
<i>peranakan</i>	Person of mixed descent; in southeast Sumatra, usually a Muslim Chinese whose mother is local
<i>peroatin</i>	Community elders who collectively acted to settle disputes
<i>piagem</i>	Royal orders, usually engraved in Javanese on copper or silver plates
<i>pici</i>	Coin, originally of Chinese origin but later struck locally as well; made of copper, lead, or tin

<i>picul</i>	A hundred kati; 122.5 Dutch pounds (about 60.5 kilograms) for pepper, 125 Dutch pounds (about 62 kilograms) for tin
<i>puyang</i>	Literally, patriarch or grandfather; in Sumatra, ancestor of a clan or tribal group
<i>puteri jamilan</i>	Title of queen mother in Pagaruyung who legitimized royal Minangkabau succession
<i>raden</i>	Aristocratic Javanese title used for both men and women
<i>raja</i>	King
<i>raja muda</i>	Literally, the young king; used in Malay states for the heir, usually eldest son or brother of ruler
<i>rantau</i>	Minangkabau areas of settlement and migration outside the four central highland valleys
<i>ratu</i>	King or queen
<i>ratu mas</i>	Javanese title, usually used for principal wife of ruler
<i>rawa</i>	Morass where river overflows; swamp forest that grows permanently in flooded areas
resident	Title of head of VOC post; in Jambi and Palembang he usually had the rank of merchant (<i>koopman</i>) or senior merchant (<i>opperkoopman</i>)
rial	Spanish silver coin; converted at different rates during the seventeenth century but eventually set by the VOC at 60 stuivers (one Dutch guilder = twenty stuivers)
<i>rijksdaalder</i>	Dutch coin, valued by the VOC at forty-eight stuivers until 1665, and thereafter at three guilders (sixty stuivers)
<i>sakti</i>	Supernatural power
<i>sayid</i>	Title for male descendants of the Prophet (Arab <i>sayyid</i>)
<i>silsilah</i>	Genealogy, line of descent
<i>sirih</i>	Betel vine; also a quid consisting of betel nut, arecanut, gambir, and lime
<i>suku</i>	Lineage, tribal grouping
<i>sungai</i>	River
<i>susuhunan</i>	In Palembang, a Javanese title adopted by a semi-retired ruler who had surrendered responsibility for government to the heir apparent
<i>syahbandar</i>	Harbormaster
<i>tahil</i>	Chinese tael; a weight used for gold, roughly equivalent to two silver Spanish rials; about .0375 kilograms
<i>temenggung</i>	A title found in both Javanese and Malay courts; in south-east Sumatra, bestowed on high ranking princes; recipients might be given an interior area to administer
<i>tolong-menolong</i>	Helping one another
<i>ulu</i>	Also <i>hulu</i> ; upstream, headwaters of a river
<i>wai</i>	River in Lampung languages (Malay <i>air</i>)
<i>wayang</i>	Shadow play, usually performed with flat leather puppets
<i>yang dipertuan</i>	He who is made lord; the highest Malay title
<i>yang dipertuan sakti</i>	Term of address for the <i>raja alam</i> (king of the world), the supreme ruler of Minangkabau

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