

# **The Role of Intra-Southeast Asian Trade in the Development of the Regional Economy in the Nineteenth Century: With special reference to Singapore trade, c. 1820–1913**

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Place of fieldwork: Netherlands

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The purpose of this research is to examine the development of the Southeast Asian regional economy in the nineteenth century through an analysis of "Intra-Southeast Asian trade." Intra-Southeast Asian trade relates to trade between Southeast Asian countries that comprised a significant part of all Southeast Asian trade in the nineteenth century. However, its importance has been ignored because large parts of it were only recognized as an entrepot trade composed of exchanging industrial products with primary goods. Previous studies have tended to analyze the growth of Southeast Asian exports in the colonial era through the framework of the center-periphery model.

The dynamism of Intra-Southeast Asian trade is of great importance to the examination of the activities of local merchants and traders. In Southeast Asia, a local trade network that connects neighboring countries has developed since the fifteenth century. This network of intra-regional trade has expanded through colonial advancement such as the foundation of the Singapore FreePort in 1819. Furthermore, local merchants and traders have been engaged not only in an entrepot trade of exchanging industrial products with primary goods, but in the division of labor system inside Southeast Asia by supplying producers of primary goods with necessities. We must therefore reconsider the development of the economy of Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century through the new viewpoint of intra-regional trade in order to redefine Southeast Asia as an area that has an autonomous system.

The aim of this research trip was to collect the trade statistics relating to the Dutch East Indies at the library of Leiden University in Holland. As a result, I was able to identify a gap in the series. Namely, from 1825 to 1873, we can see statistics of both foreign trade, such as trade between Java and China, and domestic trade, such as trade between Java and Sumatra. After 1874, however, there is a lack of statistics regarding domestic trade until 1914, which leads to an incomplete picture of the trade that took place in the Dutch East Indies during this period. Therefore, although I have succeeded in collecting the basic sources for my research, my future work will involve looking for measures and historical sources to help supplement the lack of statistics related to domestic trade from 1874 to 1913.



**Picture 1 The library of Leiden University:** Leiden University was founded in 1575. The library holds a number of colonial archives related to the Dutch East Indies in the nineteenth century.



**Picture 2 A night view of the canal in Leiden:** The townscape of Leiden was built along the canal.

**Note:**

- Thank you for the opportunity to work on your research summary. You have provided a sound overview of your current research and have noted where future research is needed.