

A SINO-INDONESIAN COMMODITY CHAIN

The Trade in Tortoiseshell in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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We usually analyze the social structure of early modern long distance trade in Asia in terms of ethnicity, seen as the basis for merchant networks, or, with a more cultural emphasis, as expressed in diaspora.<sup>1</sup> This emphasis also fits the categories used by our main sources, whether they are the archives of the great European trading companies or Chinese annals.<sup>2</sup> Given, however, that trade is driven by the search for profit, it would be more logical to use primarily economic models. Relationships can then be located within political economies, rather than seen as expressions of (essentialized) socio-cultural entities. This is easier said than done, as in societies where there is a relatively low level of institutionalization, both legal and bureaucratic, security is sought through personal relationships (from kin to patronage), and hence poorly documented. We usually only glimpse aspects of complex transactions (often as recorded by European competitors or regulators), and there is little quantitative information, let alone long series of data.

Chinese traders in Indonesia were once commonly defined in terms of their relationships with European powers, as facilitators of VOC (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or Dutch East India Company) expansion, or as “middlemen” in the service of (pre-, post-) colonial political elites. Decolonization, the resulting shifts in historiography, and the development of Asian early modern history have discredited this view. An emphasis on the deterritorialized Chinese community of the diaspora has become more popular. But this homogenizing emphasis on an assumed fixed, even static, ethnic identity ignores both the dynamic of ethnogenesis in migrant societies, and differentiation within the category “Chinese.”<sup>3</sup> It also underestimates the instrumentalist use of both ethnic and trans-ethnic ties, and the pliable nature of boundaries.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of “diaspora” reflects current preoccupations, including a simplified Sinocentrism implicit in the idea of the “Han civilizational state,” the influence of modern identity politics, including that of long-distance nationalism, and fears of Chinese economic competition, as manifested in a “bamboo network.”<sup>5</sup> This concept also encourages the dissolution of specific identities into “the Chinese” and excessive emphasis on connections with China. Furthermore, it tends to suggest that all overseas Chinese are the same, underestimating both the range of available identities (various “Chinese,” mestizo, and local) and the institutionalized roles that negotiated difference among “Chinese” and indigenous communities. At least in trading ports, both these categories—indigenous and Chinese—could be subdivided into localized, floating, and “homeland-based” groups, with the caveat that individuals were geographically and socially mobile.

Identity was relatively flexible, and a major factor in ensuring access to resources. Social capital (trust, norms, networks) was mobilized through personal ties, which were often—but by no means always—organized around ideas of cultural identity.<sup>6</sup> It is essential that the distinction between categories of analysis and categories of practice be clear. Social actors may use “ethnic” labels to construct their own frames of reference, reflecting social norms, but this is not to say that ethnicity was actually decisive in determining behavior. Class, for example, might prove to be a more productive analytic tool. Moreover, the different communities were hierarchical; intra- and intercommunal vertical patron-client ties and horizontal instrumental friendships were fundamental to success. In immigrant communities, dependent for security and income on exploiting and developing niche opportunities, self-interest and (limited) trust created essential bonds. These alliances pooled the resources, such as knowledge, capital, technology, and access to labor, which were essential to maintaining commodity chains, the sequence of transactions moving goods from producers to consumers.<sup>7</sup>

Commodity chain analyses are often used to highlight inequalities, for example, between cores and peripheries in world-systems theory. In Wallerstein’s classic formulation the typical exchange of manufactured goods from the center for raw materials from the periphery always benefited the core, as in (neo)colonial exchange.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, much early modern trade also appears exploitative, as prices paid in the production zones are extremely low compared to those in the areas of consumption.

However, as Michael Pearson has shown in his discussion of the trade between India and East Africa, what appears to be a malign, unequal exchange can actually be of mutual benefit if the commodities have a significantly dif-

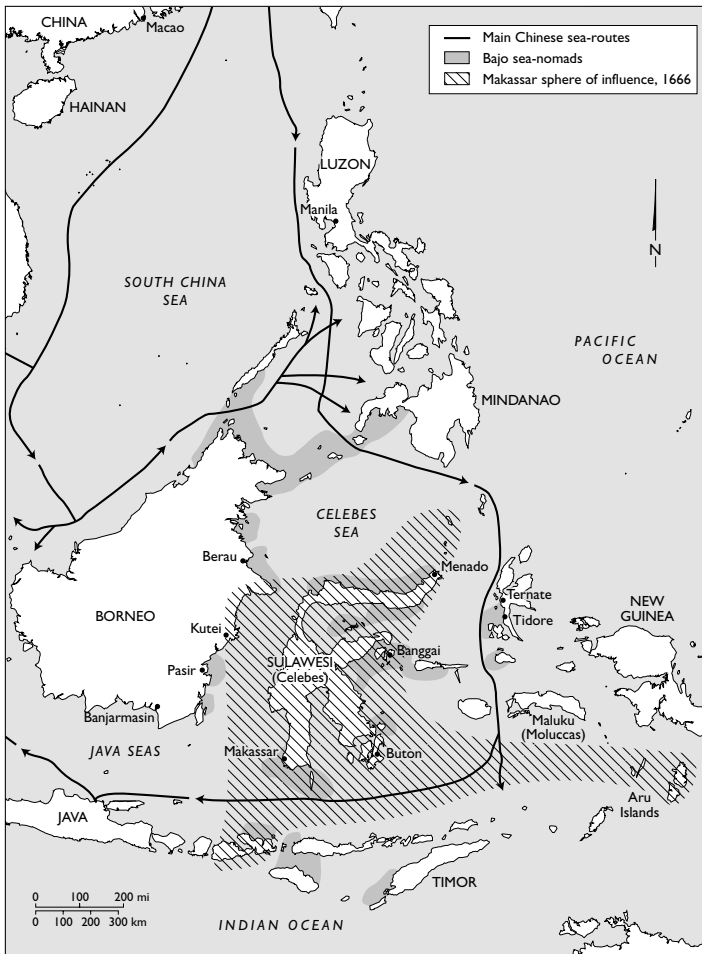
ferent use-value in the two zones. This was so in the case Pearson discusses: ivory and gold were cheap in East Africa, where wealth was measured in terms of cattle and women, but worth a great deal in India.<sup>9</sup> In such circumstances all may benefit, particularly if needs are complementary and dependence reciprocal or even exclusive. Contemporary commodity-chain models stress the role of transnational capital and knowledge-based activities, such as management, technology, or marketing.<sup>10</sup> At different levels in the chain, different forms of knowledge are appropriate and profitable, often forming the basis for a division of labor. This also applies to trade in the early modern period.

In this essay I consider the traffic in sea products between eastern South-east Asia and China, specifically the tortoiseshell trade between Makassar and Amoy (Xiamen) in the seventeenth century and the eighteenth. Documentation is fragmentary, but contextualization enables me to extract the maximum possible information. While “ethnicity” was a basic category in organizing and describing the marine-products commodity chain, transcommunal interdependence was exemplified in complementary forms of social capital, knowledge, and access to finance (in particular credit). Shifts in business practice also indicate that ethnic specialization was not inherent, but contingent, as location within the chain changed over time.

#### The Context: Makassar and Trade

The geographical facts of an excellent site determined Makassar’s location, a sheltered harbor on the southwest peninsula of Sulawesi (Celebes), facing the Makassar Straits between Borneo and Sulawesi.<sup>11</sup> However, the timing of Makassar’s rise was due to politicoeconomic developments in Europe, China, and the region—particularly in the strategic Straits of Melaka and Maluku (the Moluccas or “Spice Islands”). South Sulawesi had participated in trade with China and India since before the thirteenth century, but only indirectly, via the southern Philippines and the northeast coast of Java.<sup>12</sup> Makassar itself lay on a commercial backwater and produced few commodities, so its traders had to tap into trading flows at other locations, where local and transit goods were accumulated and exchanged (see map 1).

The main sea lanes linking China to Melaka, Java, and Maluku bypassed the Makassar Straits, running down through the Sulu Sea, or past the north Borneo sultanate of Brunei, or via Java.<sup>13</sup> Makassar’s own exports were not rich enough to attract traders when more valuable cargoes (notably Maluku spices) could be picked up elsewhere. In the early sixteenth century, before Makassar became a major commercial player, the Portuguese Tomé Pires



**Map 1** Makassar's sphere of influence before 1669.

noted that it exchanged rice, foodstuffs, and gold for Gujarati, Bengali, and Coromandel textiles. Vessels from Makassar sailed to Java, Melaka, Borneo, and Siam, and “all the places between Pahang and Siam.”<sup>14</sup> Most of these ships may have been owned and crewed by Makassar-based traders of outside origin, such as Malays or Javanese, rather than by local Sulawesians.<sup>15</sup> Commerce was probably of less importance to local elites than control of the wet-rice fields that had provided the basis for centralizing power.

However, during the first half of the sixteenth century, various imperial ambitions combined to make Makassar an attractive trading center. The galleon link between Manila and Acapulco (1565), Central Javanese Mataram's

conquest of the north Java ports (1625), and, in the 1620s, campaigns to establish a spice monopoly in Maluku by the VOC all drew traffic toward the Makassar Straits. By the 1630s Makassar was receiving one junk a year from Macau and two or three from Maluku.<sup>16</sup> After the Dutch took Melaka, in 1641, some Indian Muslim, Portuguese, and Malay merchants left to seek friendlier harbors, and Makassar benefited. These men brought their contacts, capital, and market knowledge with them, as well as their ambition.<sup>17</sup>

The exchange of Indian textiles for “smuggled” Maluku spices became Makassar’s main attraction for European and Indian merchants, but it was by no means the only commerce. Makassar transhipped eastern archipelago commodities like wax, tortoiseshell, slaves, gold, and sandalwood, as well as ironware and textiles. Certain consumption goods, including sugar, tobacco, horses, and textiles were destined for internal use, while some locally produced textiles, coins, rice, and iron were exported.<sup>18</sup>

Merchants focused on distant markets found many of these items uninteresting, either because of cost-profit calculations, or because they could be more easily obtained elsewhere. But after the 1620s, as the relative availability of spices attracted more traders, the resulting opportunities drew other profitable commodities to Makassar, such as Chinese goods from Macau and Manila. The once peripheral harbor emerged as an important port of call. By the mid-seventeenth century, Makassar had joined Brunei and Sulu as a central link in the regional trade in sea and forest products.<sup>19</sup>

Makassar may have benefited from the VOC’s military expansion in Maluku, but it soon had to pay the price. The company’s obsession with safeguarding the spice monopoly required strong action against “smuggling,” so Makassar had to be brought under control. After a series of ultimata, blockades, and military campaigns, the Portuguese and English were expelled, and it was decreed that Chinese and Indian goods could be obtained only from Dutch Batavia. The company finally conquered Makassar, in 1666–1669, generating a wave of refugees who settled throughout the Malay world, creating networks that were to help shape later political and commercial trends.<sup>20</sup> However, a Chinese trading presence remained in Makassar and was able to tap into the energy released with the dramatic expansion of Chinese trade and migration following the consolidation of Qing control in the 1680s.

### The Chinese, the VOC, and the Bugis

We know little of Makassar’s Chinese community before Dutch documentation began in the early seventeenth century, although we do know that they

had their own residential area, and some acted as trading partners and incidental advisers to the ruler and the company. Chinese identified with VOC patrons were vulnerable to political tides before the conquest, but benefited after the war; conversely, those closest to the court were more likely to move on once the Dutch took over in 1669.<sup>21</sup> After the conquest, the victorious Admiral Speelman listed nineteen Makassar Chinese, noting that about half had been resident in the town before the war, and the rest had arrived subsequently.<sup>22</sup>

It might be assumed that the Chinese community would expand rapidly under the VOC, but growth was slow in the seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup> A casual reader of the 1688 census might have been impressed by a “Chinese” community said to number 627, but few (perhaps only the men) would have been of full Chinese descent, as the category included not only 52 men, 52 women, and 112 children, but also 342 slaves and 69 debt-bondsmen.<sup>24</sup> It is true that Ongwatko (captain of the Chinese, 1669–1701) was one of the two most prominent traders of the postwar years (the other being the Indian Muslim Mapule), but when he was succeeded by his son Ongieko, in 1701, the VOC referred disparagingly to the “small handful” of Chinese.<sup>25</sup> A *peranakan* group of locally born creoles had developed, of mixed ancestry, but in 1701 the VOC did not yet rate them as Chinese, hence the dismissive “handful.”<sup>26</sup> In 1724, the company reckoned there were just forty Chinese inhabitants of Makassar.<sup>27</sup>

The Makassar Chinese community seems to have been smaller and less stable than some other comparable groups, such as that of Ambon, which was also active in agriculture.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, VOC officials hoped that it might be possible to eliminate Chinese trade in the waters around Sulawesi and Maluku; in 1727 they restricted traffic in the hope that Chinese commerce around the Spice Islands would “die out.”<sup>29</sup> In 1731 Chinese trade east of Makassar was banned.<sup>30</sup> This had the unexpected effect of making Makassar more attractive as an entrepôt, and it seems that just as the Dutch were becoming optimistic about the decline of their competitors, the fundamental changes that were to lead to the “Chinese century” were gathering momentum.<sup>31</sup> In Makassar, the origins of these changes lay in an increasing Chinese appetite for trepang, the unprepossessing sea slugs known also as *bêche-de-mer*.<sup>32</sup>

Trepang fishermen are first mentioned in the Makassar archives in 1710, but such references quickly became common. In 1732 the VOC decided to appoint a lieutenant of the Chinese to assist the captain, because Chinese commerce was increasing, driven by growth in the trepang trade.<sup>33</sup> Although

at first this was primarily routed through Batavia, the establishment of an (initially) erratic direct junk trade with Amoy after 1746 initiated a further expansion of the Chinese community.<sup>34</sup> In 1759 Chinese immigration was subjected to supervision, but restrictions seem to have become serious only in the 1780s, when the economic power of the Chinese created problems for Makassar's Dutch administration.<sup>35</sup>

For the VOC, trade control was a priority; some products, such as spices, were subject to monopoly, others were restricted, while ship movements were channeled through systems of passes.<sup>36</sup> This was more difficult in some regions, and for some commodities, depending on the geographical distribution of production and markets. Forest and marine commodities (except pearls) were particularly difficult to manage, with their dispersed collecting zones and multiple potential exchange sites, while highly localized spice production was particularly amenable to monopoly.<sup>37</sup> Local Dutch officials were often less interested than Batavia in limiting commerce, perhaps because they themselves, and the communities they administered, derived such benefits from it. Already in 1695, Makassar indignantly rejected Batavia's suggestion that tortoiseshell was being smuggled into the port.<sup>38</sup>

VOC bases were few, and their patrols easily evaded. Much trade went underground, developing connections beyond Dutch control. Sulawesi Bugis and Makassarese, Chinese and, particularly after 1760, country traders operating out of India were all, in varying degrees, in competition with the company. For the trade in sea products, this was particularly true in the waters around Borneo, the Sulu Sea, southern Maluku, and the arc of islands further south known as Nusa Tenggara.<sup>39</sup>

Chinese and "Bugis" (that is, anyone from South Sulawesi) were crucial to the integration of local networks into long-distance commerce. Following Bugis dispersal at the end of the seventeenth century, their trade became focused on an axis centered on Johor-Riau to the west and Makassar to the east. Indeed, despite the company's attempted stranglehold, Bugis activity increased.<sup>40</sup> Chinese traders, the second major integrating factor, were regarded by the Dutch with profound ambivalence. They may have played an essential role in VOC settlements, but the company was deeply suspicious of their role in competitive trading systems.<sup>41</sup> The sultans of both Ternate and Tidore, however, were hostile to Dutch attempts to limit the lucrative Chinese presence.<sup>42</sup> Geography, profit incentives, and the resilience of Asian networks ensured that the newcomers from the north remained marginal to entire economic sectors, despite the military dominance of the VOC.

## The Trade in Marine Commodities

Sea products such as tortoiseshell, pearls, coral, and seaweed had been valued imports into China from at least the time of the Sung. Tortoiseshell came from Champa, the Philippines, Java, Borneo, Sumatra, Malaya, and Thailand; Borneo and Sulu, easily accessed from Makassar, were specifically listed in the early fifteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Apart from an occasional reference to India, tortoiseshell is given as coming from Southeast Asia. Late Ming tax lists include Indonesian products such as aromatic woods, resins, plants, spices, seeds, rhinoceros and deer horn, ivory, skins, feathers, birds' nests, and sea products. The most important marine commodities were agar-agar (seaweeds) and tortoiseshell, of which the most valuable came from the hawksbill turtle. The plates that comprise the shell were described as being yellowish brown with black streaks, and were known to the Dutch as *karet*, a word of West Indian origin.<sup>44</sup>

Eastern Indonesia first joins Sulu and Borneo as a supplier of tortoiseshell in the late sixteenth century, with turtle populations being reported at north and west Sulawesi, particularly the Gulf of Tomini; Menado was the site of a major trading center. Roderich Ptak believes most of this trade was in local hands: "The Chinese, if they took part in it, certainly came to eastern Indonesia by way of Java, as private merchants from Fujien or Kwangtung or as settlers from the western part of Indonesia. Few, if any, seem to have sailed the 'eastern route' that travelled down from the Sulu archipelago via Minahassa, the Moluccas and Banda islands."<sup>45</sup>

The catchment areas and collecting markets for turtles and trepang overlapped, but trade in the former was much older, smaller, and more diffuse. If trepang virtually all went to China, tortoiseshell was a desirable product in many markets; moreover, the differences between hunting turtles and gathering trepang meant *karet* could not develop into a bulk commodity like trepang. Nevertheless, the expansion of fishing fleets and markets would have intensified the trade in turtles. As was the case with trepang, the tortoiseshell commodity chain involved skippers and fishermen, intermediate traders, wholesale merchants, and shippers. Chinese generally provided marketing and product expertise, and most of the capital; Sulawesians and Malays were prominent traders, although *peranakan* Chinese gained ground in the late eighteenth century, while Buginese and Makassarese did much of the gathering and fishing.<sup>46</sup> But one particular group specialized in turtle-catching: the "sea nomads" or "sea gypsies," or Bajo, as I will call them hereafter.<sup>47</sup>



Turtle-favored environments are characterized by shallow seas offering seagrass beds for feeding and access to sandy beaches which serve as nesting sites; the Sulu Sea in the southern Philippines and the coastal waters of eastern Indonesia met such needs, and consequently were rich in turtles.<sup>48</sup> So it is not surprising that Brunei, in northeast Borneo, and the southern Philippine sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao were early centers of the turtle trade. They also claimed hegemony over Bajo communities' home waters. Although these groups were widely distributed throughout Southeast Asia, major concentrations were to be found around the Riau-Lingga archipelago, east and northwest Borneo, the coasts of south, east, and north Sulawesi, the Sulu Sea, and Nusa Tenggara. Typically, these were shallow waters dotted with coral reefs and islands.

The eastern archipelago Bajo was described by François Valentijn at the end of the seventeenth century, and then by J. N. Vosmaer over a hundred years later.<sup>49</sup> Vosmaer, a trader who spent months in Sulawesi, was familiar with the tortoiseshell trade and the Bajo. Like modern biologists, the Bajo distinguished four sorts of turtle; the most sought after was the hawksbill, the source of karet, the thirteen or more plates of which the shell was composed. The Chinese preferred a shell with regular markings in black and white; they were prepared to pay extraordinary prices for such "white turtles."<sup>50</sup> The VOC labeled this white and transparent shell "Japanese"; the other top-quality type, "Surat," was clear and well "flamed," but much less valuable.<sup>51</sup> The Chinese would also pay up to fifty guilders for the hind feet of turtles, if they weighed more than half a kati which was, however, very rare.<sup>52</sup> The combined karet from one turtle rarely exceeded 3 kati (nearly 2 kg.) in weight, although it was said that occasionally 4 to 5 kati could be taken from one animal.<sup>53</sup>

By the early seventeenth century, the VOC was already interested in tortoiseshell as a cargo to be exchanged in Japan and India for, respectively, metals and textiles. In fact, the first reference to tortoiseshell in the company's *Generale Missiven* refers to the latter; in 1614 it was reported that there was great potential for ambergris and tortoiseshell sales in India. In 1617 the Dutch estimated that they could dispose of 4,000 to 5,000 pounds in Surat each year, while Cambay and Masulipatnam were other promising markets. However, before they could sell their karet, they first had to buy it, in increasingly fierce competition with other merchants, including the English and the French. The former, by far the most important, had established their Makassar lodge in 1614 primarily to access foodstuffs, but by the mid-1620s

they were increasingly interested in high-value commodities such as spices and tortoiseshell.<sup>54</sup>

The local royal courts also benefited from the expansion of trade: in 1638 VOC officials recorded that the ruler of Makassar drew taxes from rice, tortoiseshell, cloves, wax and pepper, copper and iron.<sup>55</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, the Dutch were emphasizing the strong grip of the Makassar Chinese on the tortoiseshell trade, noting in 1657 that they could only obtain karet “through our Chinese creatures.”<sup>56</sup> The English experienced similar difficulties in obtaining supplies, and in 1665 they complained that the VOC was giving 5 percent commission to their Chinese agents, who then used credit to monopolize imports.<sup>57</sup> After the Dutch conquest, in 1669, the English were expelled, but the key Chinese role in Makassar’s tortoiseshell trade actually increased, in parallel with the early-eighteenth-century boom in the China-focused trepang industry. Consequently, the VOC was always frustrated in its efforts to develop regular access to karet.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the company repeatedly tried to tap into marine-commodity circuits by using a combination of naval and political pressure to open up areas of supply, particularly in the Southwest and Southeast Islands (Zuidwestereilanden and Zuid-oostereilanden) of southern Maluku.<sup>58</sup> These were a source of spices as well as of sea products, and consequently irresistible to traders the Dutch called “smugglers.” As early as 1645, they complained that small seasonal fleets and occasional vessels, primarily from Sulawesi, were collecting ambergris and tortoiseshell there, and making handsome profits on sales in Makassar: 700 percent in the case of tortoiseshell.<sup>59</sup> Buyers in Makassar would have re-exported the shell to markets such as that in Surat.<sup>60</sup>

Batavia wanted more of this valuable shell and was always dissatisfied with the efforts of their Makassar merchants to obtain it; they in turn complained that they could not compete against Bugis and Makassarese “smugglers” on the one hand, or Chinese commercial networks, credit, and pricing on the other. In October 1696 Makassar’s VOC officials wrote to Batavia: “It is certain the Noble Company here will never get one pound [of tortoiseshell], because the Chinese know how to secure their advantage, by collecting it secretly from the Turijene fishermen, called Bajo in Ternate, and carrying it without paying duty, which we call smuggling, but that is by no means the case with the above mentioned fishermen or natives, who bring it to market here.”<sup>61</sup>

In 1697 the Makassar governor was more specific, complaining that while

in theory they could expect to obtain tortoiseshell and birds' nests, in reality the Chinese Captain Ongwatko controlled this traffic "almost on his own and ruin[ed] it for other, small traders, by providing goods a year in advance against the supplies for the following year."<sup>62</sup> A year later, when Batavia demanded extra vigilance against turtle smuggling, Makassar's officials replied they could only do more if they carried out extremely rigorous searches of Chinese sloops just before they sailed. They warned that this would be seen as an unreasonable violation of custom and would ruin trade, so they would rather continue as before. The Dutch could never replicate Chinese success, the Makassar governor continued, as "it [would] not be practicable for us . . . to obtain tortoiseshell like the Chinese do, who send small boats with their slaves or hired men to the surrounding islands . . . to exchange old iron, or lengths of cloth with the Turijene [Bajo] or fishermen, scraping together the tortoiseshell two or three at a time . . . against commodities which are put out on long-term credit."<sup>63</sup>

The amount of time and effort that it took to collect a cargo is illustrated by the journey of a Chinese ship en route to Mindanao that was seized in 1693. The cargo of wax, tortoiseshell, and tobacco was only worth 1,076 rds (rijksdaalders), but had taken the captain forty-three months to assemble.<sup>64</sup> For the Dutch, such small-scale scouring of the seas was out of the question. Moreover, they complained, their Chinese "*vrunden*" (friends) grabbed many a juicy cargo by offering higher prices for "smuggled" goods.<sup>65</sup> All the company servants could do was to try friendly persuasion on the fishermen, because the private traders always outbid them, and no amount of vehement protest helped.<sup>66</sup>

That sweet-talking was less effective than high prices was hardly surprising. So the following year the Makassar authorities advanced captain Ongwatko 400 rds to deploy as credit on their behalf, hoping to obtain more tortoiseshell, but the results remained poor. Neither fishermen nor merchants could be persuaded to sell for less. When the captain's "blacks" came back to Makassar with two piculs (about 124 kg.) he offered them to the company officials at the going price of 100 rds, but they did not dare exceed the VOC limit. Moreover, the law-abiding company—if not officials acting on their own behalf—always ended up paying 10 percent more than the "smugglers," so the governor proposed that all goods in which the company itself traded should be freed of duty.<sup>67</sup>

The VOC was thus advancing money to the Kapitan China, who used it to outfit his "blacks" voyages to fish and barter with locals lower down the commodity chain, such as (Bajo) gatherers or petty part-time traders. Typi-

cally, there were several intermediate levels between the company and producers. A description from February 1703 confirms this complexity. Tjako, a Chinese trader from Makassar, told the Dutch in Ternate that sixty Buginese had established a settlement in Banggai, and twenty or thirty Buginese vessels were sailing through the islands, even to the inner coasts of the Gulf of Tomini and Gorontalo, exchanging textiles for wax and tortoiseshell. Consequently, the people of Banggai now put such a high value on the shell (one *salempuris*—an Indian cloth—per turtle) that Tjako himself did not dare buy on behalf of his master. He added that he had heard that all these vessels belonged to the Kapitan China of Makassar, Ongwatko. When these Buginese brought the goods to Makassar, they would be stored in private houses, and no duty was paid.<sup>68</sup> Presumably the Buginese obtained their stock for barter from Ongwatko, who then had privileged access to their cargoes.

Besides the local Chinese, Buginese, particularly the efficient traders from Wajoq, were also outperforming the company.<sup>69</sup> In 1715 the Makassar governor wrote that Wajorese were able to buy all the locally available tortoiseshell (more than 20 picul) for sale in Batavia, as they were willing to pay 110 to 115 rds per picul. This made it impossible for the inhibited company to fulfill its quota. The governor was as impatient with his subordinates as Batavia was with him, accusing them of laxity. He complained that Wajorese boats from Selayar, without Dutch passes and laden with textiles, were being allowed to sail past Buton to Southeast Sulawesi. These smugglers from Wajoq, noted the governor, avoided VOC restrictions by claiming to be Bajo: “They pass themselves off as fishermen, sail the Banda and Ternate seas and with their petty trade make themselves master of all the tortoiseshell.” This could not be stopped unless the smaller VOC outposts blocked such activities; however, their efforts would no doubt have been as ineffective as those of Makassar itself, and for the same reasons.<sup>70</sup>

Other regional markets were also active in the tortoiseshell trade, including the old centers round the Sulu Sea, or, more locally, at Kutei and Berau on the east Borneo coast, where Chinese and Malays exchanged textiles for karet; these ports were still regarded as too “perilous” for the Dutch to visit.<sup>71</sup> Banjarmasin was also a wealthy market offering tortoiseshell, as well as pepper, gold, and aromatic woods, while the ruler of Brunei offered to provide gold, pearls, wax, tortoiseshell, birds’ nests, and other attractive commodities to the company in 1719.<sup>72</sup> But Ternate remained the main port shipping tortoiseshell to Batavia, collecting it from southern Maluku, the Gulf of Tomini and, later, from new if equally unreliable sources such as Mindanao. It is clear that the company’s main competitors here were “Bu-

ginese” (including Makassarese, Wajorese, and, particularly in the Gulf of Tomini, Mandarese), many of whom would have been supplying Chinese merchants.<sup>73</sup>

The VOC was unable to break into the commodity chain at any level: they were ineffective in controlling production zones and could not compete in the various markets, ranging from beachside barter to wholesale deals in the ports. Holding to the principle of buying cheap and selling dear, the company capped the amounts officials could offer, so the Chinese regularly outbid them. However, bowing to reality in 1704, Batavia allowed its Ternate and Tidore agencies to raise the tortoiseshell price to 70 rds per picul in the hope of attracting Gorontalo karet to Dutch Maluku, while urging that Chinese be discouraged from buying the shell.<sup>74</sup> Company attempts to expand their supplies over the next few years followed a familiar pattern, combining intimidation with adjustments in prices and permitted trading zones.

Despite all these efforts, the indications are that marine commodities continued to flow through primarily Chinese circuits outside VOC control. A spike in supply occurred in 1730, when the Ternate governor threatened to search all Chinese houses; suddenly karet stocks were discovered in many forgotten storerooms. Chinese and Sangirese sold the officials an impressive 851 lbs. of tortoiseshell, while Menado provided 62 lbs. and Gorontalo 22 lbs.; the result—935 pounds of karet—exceeded the total collected in the preceding fifteen years. This energetic governor brought in 3,597 pounds weight of tortoiseshell in the course of his four-year tenure.<sup>75</sup> As a result of this squeeze on the Chinese, Batavia was reasonably satisfied with sea-product supplies in the early 1730s, but this was to prove the high point of the company’s trade in tortoiseshell.<sup>76,77</sup>

The Dutch lacked the knowledge and contacts needed to work with the dispersed populations who provided karet, and the company was unwilling to match prices in the port itself. From the mid-seventeenth century, at least, Chinese in Makassar and Batavia had cornered tortoiseshell supplies by providing credit to intermediate traders who were able, in turn, to connect with fishermen and Bajo. The rapid development of the trepang business from the early eighteenth century onward led to further commercialization of such networks. Producing areas were drawn into the market as exports of trepang created the opportunities and provided the means to buy imports, many of which were of Chinese origin.<sup>78</sup> One result was an ongoing Sinification of the middle levels of the marine-products trade in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Until the mid-1700s the trade between Makassar and China had been indirect. The most important and best documented of the intermediate ports was naturally VOC Batavia, though other independent rendezvous, such as Banjarmasin, must not be discounted; even in Batavia the buyers were Chinese, not the company. In 1746 an intermittent direct junk connection between Makassar and Amoy was established, but Dutch policy vacillated.<sup>79</sup> In 1769, however, strong pressure from the local VOC and the ruler of Bugis Bone finally forced a reluctant company to allow annual visits. Soon after 1770 Amoy passed Batavia as Makassar's main trading partner. The junk brought in large quantities of tobacco, tea, silk, pans, and linen; on the return voyages the cargo was more uniform, dominated by trepang, accompanied by small amounts of wax, birds' nests, and tortoiseshell; this last was by far the most valuable sea product per unit. Other marine commodities were much less important. Seaweed (agar-agar) exports did become significant by the 1770s, but not via the Amoy junk. The seaweed was exported through Batavia, probably because the junk was fully loaded with trepang.<sup>80</sup>

With the massive growth of the trepang trade, Makassar's economy became clearly China-centered, as can be seen in the local VOC's shipping registers.<sup>81</sup> Exchanges with Nusa Tenggara also surged, as Makassar became the central entrepôt in a south-north traffic exchanging trepang for commodities like porcelain, tobacco, or textiles.<sup>82</sup> If in the 1720s the main items traded in Makassar were Indian cloth, Javanese tobacco, rice, and salt, by the 1760s the main imports were arrack from Batavia, rice, raw cotton, coconut oil, and trepang, while the dominant (re)exports were trepang and seaweed to Batavia (to meet the Chinese junks), and cash being sent to pay for imports. The pattern in the 1770s was the same, but now much trepang was going straight to Amoy in addition to Batavia. The 1780s showed a similar, but more intense pattern.

The Makassar harbormaster's registers also provide more detailed insights into the tortoiseshell trade, enabling us to locate the sources of shipments and the ethnicity of captains. In the 1720s the dominant points of origin for Makassar's karet were Solor, a small island to the east of Flores (with 81 percent), and Barru, on the central west coast of south Sulawesi (19 percent); both had become politically and hence economically subject to the Dutch after 1669.

However, by the 1760s tortoiseshell came from two quite different areas, both politically independent of the VOC: the sultanate of Buton, off the southeast arm of Sulawesi (94 percent), and the Bugis territories of the

southwest peninsula (6 percent). The volume of tortoiseshell traded had grown, riding the intensification of trepang fishing. Such independent areas chose to trade at Makassar, despite Dutch regulations and fees, because of the direct junk link with Amoy. This trend is confirmed by the data from the 1780s, with Banda producing 30 percent, Bugis 23 percent, Buton 20 percent, Ternate 19 percent, and Bonerate 8 percent of Makassar's karet. The emergence of Maluku as a major source of supply is striking. Banda and Ternate had traditionally shipped their tortoiseshell to Batavia, but the junk connection drew supplies away from the Dutch center and into exports to China via Makassar. This was a significant realignment.

There were also important shifts in the proportions of tortoiseshell-carrying skippers as classified by ethnicity. In the 1720s all were of Sulawesi origin (44 percent Wajorese, 41 percent Makassarese, and 15 percent Buginese). Dutch policy confined their voyages to a zone stretching from Batavia through Nusa Tenggara, so the marine products available in these seas represented a significant remaining opportunity for Sulawesians; the previously important Straits of Melaka and Maluku waters had become forbidden territory.<sup>83</sup> Chinese, however, were still permitted to sail to the east, and they played an important role in exchange between Makassar and Maluku. By the 1760s the category "Wajorese" had disappeared from Makassar's trade register.<sup>84</sup> Their role was taken over by the ill-defined "Company Subjects" (which probably included many Wajorese) who were bringing in 83 percent of tortoiseshell. Chinese were responsible for a further share, with *peranakan* logging an impressive 14 percent and Chinese 3 percent of the total.<sup>85</sup>

The Chinese proportion of tortoiseshell imports had soared by the 1780s; *peranakan* had maintained their 14 percent, but Chinese now claimed 66 percent, so together they were responsible for 80 percent of karet coming into Makassar. It is unlikely that Chinese hunted turtles; the dramatic growth in their import share reflects commercialization in once-peripheral islands, as increasing market penetration made it easier for them to buy tortoiseshell. In 1787 more than half the Chinese captains were *peranakan* (13 of 24 skippers), most of whom (12) arrived from Buton. The non-*peranakan* Chinese, on the other hand, were more wide-ranging, importing karet from various sources (Bugis, 3; Banda, 2; Ternate, 1), or exporting to Batavia (4) and Amoy (1). Unfortunately, 1787 is the only year for which there is a breakdown between Chinese and Chinese *peranakan*, but it suggests that the latter concentrated on short-haul imports, while the former were more diversified importers (from South Sulawesi and Maluku) and exporters.<sup>86</sup> Malays were also quite significant in this later period.<sup>87</sup>

## Conclusion

The advantage of a commodity-chain approach is that it places relationships within an explicitly commercial context, in which a complementary search for profit transcends divisions between political entities and ethnic groups. The exploitation of comparative advantages enables participants to benefit from the difference between expenses incurred and receipts generated as they pass products on to the next link in the chain. The trepang business sustained an ongoing integration, involving financiers, outfitters, and various levels of merchants and traders, as well as fishermen. It was so important to the economy of eighteenth-century Makassar that the VOC, the Chinese Captain, and major traders cooperated to stabilize prices.<sup>88</sup> Tortoiseshell was a much more valuable commodity, but supplies were also less predictable. Diving or dredging for trepang in appropriate waters guaranteed a result, whereas the only reliable opportunity for finding turtles was during the west monsoon nesting season (December, January, and February).<sup>89</sup> This was also the time the trepang fleets were out accumulating their cargoes, and those sailing near known nesting beaches probably hunted turtles as a profitable sideline. Increased killing would have intensified pressure on turtle populations and might explain the disappearance of the hawksbill from Sulawesi's Togian islands, famous for their karet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>90</sup>

In the seventeenth century, local rulers and Chinese merchants supported tortoiseshell-seeking trading and collecting expeditions, manned by motley crews that probably included slaves, clients, free men who had taken goods on credit in order to trade, traditionally subaltern Bajo, or simply fishermen who sought the protection of their lord before sailing. It remains very difficult to know to what extent such relationships and activities were economically based, either as a business partnership or a calculated investment.<sup>91</sup> But the development of the trepang industry seems to have further commercialized the tortoiseshell trade, and as fishing groups became more aware of the value of their products, they demanded higher prices.<sup>92</sup>

The Dutch failed to gain a foothold in the marine-products market. Their attempts to control the production zones were ineffective, and they were unable to compete in trading centers like Makassar. If in the late 1600s and early 1700s the company was castigating its servants for their failure to provide tortoiseshell, by the mid-eighteenth century the VOC in Makassar was no longer interested in the issue. There was a clear dwindling in Batavia's tortoiseshell imports in the second half of the eighteenth century, while Makas-



sar's imports and exports grew.<sup>93</sup> But East Indonesia's karet increasingly went straight to China, bypassing the company completely. This position as outsider seems to have been readily accepted for trepang, which was a specifically Chinese product, but had earlier been a source of great frustration to the Dutch, anxious as they were to obtain tortoiseshell for exchange in Japan and Surat. However, by the mid-eighteenth century they had given up on tortoiseshell as well as trepang. Despite the need for cargoes that could be used in China to obtain tea (a major reason for the country traders' interest in marine products), the VOC seems to have become resigned to its own nonparticipation.

This Dutch failure reflected their inability to operate effectively in the fine channels of commerce, where small numbers of commodities were slowly collected from diffuse and unpredictable sources. Outposts on forsaken beaches, like that in Aru, proved incapable of building the necessary relationships and were too expensive for a company operating on tightly controlled calculations of profit and loss.<sup>94</sup> This precluded paying the prices Asian merchants were willing to offer. The Chinese in Makassar drove prices upward, because they knew the market could sustain their purchasing policy. Before 1750 most of the tortoiseshell that passed through their hands may have been bound for Batavia, but it was destined for Chinese traders accumulating junk cargoes, not for the VOC. This Chinese-dominated complex operated under the company umbrella, but may have been linked to other, independent and hence less-documented markets where Makassar karet could be sold. Such harbors would have included Kalimantan ports and Sulu, established points of rendezvous for the China trade.

Tortoiseshell must have remained an important commodity in Bugis, Chinese, and country trader networks that avoided the VOC. In this respect the Wajorese are intriguing. In the 1720s, these efficient traders had been the major importers of tortoiseshell into Makassar (44 percent) and dominated exports to Batavia (83 percent), only to disappear from the harbormaster's administration after the 1730s. This shift parallels two other trends: the decline in Batavia's tortoiseshell imports, and the growing Chinese domination of Makassar's sea-product trades after the Amoy link was established in 1746. Two, by no means exclusive, hypotheses might explain this. According to the first, Wajorese "smugglers" left VOC-controlled circuits and operated out of areas under Buginese rule, entering "Bugis" networks trading to Sulu, Brunei, and various Borneo, Sumatra, and Melaka Straits ports, notably Riau.<sup>95</sup> These links, supported by scattered Bugis settlements, helped reconstitute Makassar's old east-west trading connection, broken by the VOC

in 1666. Insofar as Wajorese remained in Makassar, they probably became "Company Subjects." This might have had the advantage of freeing them from intervention by the Bone kings, who were prone to meddle in the community's affairs.<sup>96</sup> The second hypothesis is that this east-west link remained insignificant, that the Wajorese, like other Indonesian peoples, had lost their commercial capacity, and that the picture presented in Makassar's shipping register shows the new reality: a Chinese-dominated commercial world.

A compromise scenario, with less emphasis on ethnic segregation, seems most likely, that there were cross-cutting relationships connecting the circuits avoiding Dutch restrictions with those making use of company ports. The former were exemplified by Sulu, where Bugis, Chinese, and European country traders accessed commodities, including those proscribed by the VOC, such as guns and opium, as well as textiles, sea products, and China goods. It is possible that there were Bugis (or other) chains that chose, for political or religious reasons, to isolate themselves from Chinese or European networks, but their extent is impossible to judge. However, since the exploitation of different commercial environments offered complementary advantages, the search for profit probably created links between apparently separate systems of exchange.

Uneven documentation makes it impossible to know how far Makassar merchants may have participated in commercial circuits not sanctioned by the company. It is quite possible that capital accumulated by Makassar Chinese was also invested in "smuggling" circuits operating out of other ports. This raises the interesting point of why it was Makassar that became the center of the trepang trade. Geography was important, but VOC policy must have been crucial, as the company jealously restricted the junk trade to a few select ports, including Makassar. Company fleets may have been unable to shepherd the movement of small *perahu*, but a junk of up to 200 tons burden with several hundred men on board was much easier to police. But other factors might also help explain why neighboring harbors, notably Banjarmasin, could not compete effectively with Makassar in the trepang trade.

Banjarmasin was a port of comparable size and shipping activity to Makassar, but independent until the VOC established a supervisory trading post there, in 1747. If for some reason the Amoy junk did not come to Makassar, as happened occasionally in the mid-eighteenth century, trepang traders took their cargoes to Banjarmasin or Batavia in the hope of connecting with a China-bound vessel. Pepper had always drawn Chinese merchants to the Borneo port, but nonetheless Makassar proved more attractive as a transit point for trepang. One possible reason for this is that the Borneo junks left

fully laden with pepper and had no room for trepang, just as Makassar's agar-agar was carried to China via Batavia, as vessels leaving the Sulawesi port preferred to use their holds for trepang. But another explanation may be more relevant.

The success of a commodity chain depends on efficient movement between different stages, including shifts from one place to another, or to another organizational level (retail to bulk, or vice versa), or alterations due to (semi) processing. Each mutation required certain types of knowledge, technology, and coordination that, in early modern times, were closely linked to social capital. In the case of the commodity chain of marine goods, Bajo, Bugis (that is, Sulawesi), and Chinese all brought specialist skills to their various but not static points in the chain.

Makassar's trade in sea products was probably shaped by patterns developed earlier in Sulu or perhaps Brunei, areas familiar to the Bajo, who also frequented Sulawesi waters. Skills and contacts acquired there became increasingly valuable in Makassar as the availability of spices attracted more traders after 1620. The Dutch conquest initiated several decades of stagnation, until the explosion of the trepang trade in the early eighteenth century, when experience in the tortoiseshell trade enabled some key players to connect Chinese demand with local supply.

The Chinese Captains were such players; the central role Ongwatko played in the late seventeenth century was neither unique nor temporary. In 1742 Captain Lianko petitioned the VOC for the traditional captains' privilege of sending a vessel to the Gulf of Tomini for tortoiseshell and trepang.<sup>97</sup> But the Bajo were also crucial, and while they were numerous in Sulu, North Borneo, the Sulawesi seas, and around Ternate and Nusa Tenggara, they were not common west of Pulau Laut, off the Borneo coast. So in contrast to the Sulawesi courts, Banjarmasin had no tradition of working with Bajo, which would have limited its direct access to karet. In Makassar, on the other hand, Dutch permission (and perhaps protection) for the junk traffic; Chinese credit, purchasing, and marketing networks (in Southeast Asia and China itself); Bajo maritime expertise; and Bugis links to Bajo and their own skills in shipping, fishing, and trading all combined to create the trepang industry, building on the established tortoiseshell trading network. This is an example of the "organizational learning" that underpins complex commodity chains.

Cooperation between Southeast Asian knowledge and technology (of fishing sites and techniques, shipping) and Chinese expertise (in marketing, finance, and credit) was fundamental to the marine-commodities trade. In

the case of trepang, the difference in use-value was absolute: only Chinese ate trepang, and while tortoiseshell was used in local handicrafts, the profits in overseas trade were considerably more attractive. Ethnic differentiation was important in that it related directly to relevant knowledge about production and consumption, and to social capital embodied in networks of trust. However, these networks were not, and could not be, limited to any one community. The very basis of the successful trade in sea products lay in transcommunal transactions.

In the course of the eighteenth century, however, there was a growing appetite for imported goods in once-peripheral regions, which, because of trepang, now had commodities they could export. Chinese earthen- and metalware were popular, so traders with easy access to this merchandise acquired a commercial edge. There was a partial “Sinification” of the sea-products trade, as the Chinese expanded their role from that of wholesale purchasers of trepang into shipping and direct trade with the producers. Upstream levels of the trade, once dominated by Sulawesians, were successfully penetrated by the Chinese, perhaps aided by an effective use of local knowledge by the *peranakan*.

Over a period of a century and a half, changes in commodity chains moved Makassar from the periphery of commerce to the center. For several hundred years, Makassar’s skippers had sailed out to connect with long-distance trade in other harbors, as the main shipping routes bypassed South Sulawesi. After the sixteenth-century rise of Gowa-Talloq, Makassar became a more useful source of foodstuffs, particularly rice, but was not, in Michelin terms, worth a detour. From the 1620s, however, political distortion of the spice trade redirected these extremely attractive goods to Makassar, drawing more merchants to the port. This increased the number of potential purchasers for other commodities, including Borneo pepper and tortoiseshell. The arrival of Portuguese and English, Spanish from Manila, and, in the mid-seventeenth century, a new wave of Portuguese and Indian Muslim merchants fleeing Dutch Melaka all added to the international synergy driving commerce. The VOC conquest put a stop to that, but from the beginning of the 1700s trepang emerged as a new staple product, generating rapidly swelling commodity flows from Makassar to China, and creating feeder routes for importing trepang and distributing exchange cargoes throughout eastern Indonesia. The ramifications of new sources of credit and trade opportunities linking many small settlements transformed the commercial landscape of the region.

## Notes

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20. Leonard Y. Andaya, "The Bugis-Makassar Diasporas," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 68.1 (1995): 119–38.
21. Sutherland, "Trade, Court and Company." Loquo, or Loquin, the Chinese captain (head of the community) before the conquest in 1669, received considerable advances

from the Dutch company and was clearly a trusted trading partner, but died in poverty (NA VOC 1220, 833; NA VOC 1267, 350).

22. Cornelis Speelman, "Notitie Diendende voor Eenen Korte Tijd en tot Nader Last van de Hoge Regering op Batavia voor den Ondercoopman Jan van Oppijnen," typescript held in the KITLV, Leiden, from the 1669 original, D H 802, 744. For information on the manuscript, see Noorduyt, "De Handelsrelaties van het Makassarse Rijk Volgens de Notitie van Cornelis Speelman (1669)."

23. Chinese numbers (and trade networks) may have been strengthened if some of the fifty Chinese who arrived in 1685, fleeing religious restrictions in the Philippines with a cargo of wax, sugar, and tortoiseshell, chose to stay in Makassar, but most probably moved on (GM 4:797). Citations in this form refer to the twice yearly reports, or *Generale Missiven*, sent by the VOC administration in Batavia to the Netherlands; those covering the years up to 1761 have been published by several editors—W. Ph. Coolhaas, J. van Goor, J. E. Schooneveld-Oosterling, and H.K. s'Jacob—as *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, 13 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1960–2007). The published volume number is followed by the page reference.

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25. Speelman lists a "Watko" or "Wanco" who arrived after the conquest and immediately set off for Mandar. On the VOC-created Chinese-officer system, see Mona Lohanda, *The Kapitan China of Batavia 1837–1942* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1996). The officers were usually wealthy merchants who could use their influence with both company and community to further their commercial ambitions. On Mapule, see Sutherland, "Trade, Court and Company," 89–92. For the VOC perspective on Ongwatko, see NA VOC 1647, 223.

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27. GM 7:755.

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29. GM 8:100.

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33. NA VOC 2238, 119.

34. Gerrit Knaap and Heather Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders: Ships, Skippers and Commodities in Eighteenth Century Makassar*, *Verhandeligen* 224 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), 145–49.

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43. Ptak, "China and the Trade in Tortoise-Shell (Sung to Ming Periods)."
44. Stephen Tseng-Hsin Chang, "Commodities Imported to the Chang Chou Region of Fukien during the Late Ming Period: A Preliminary Analysis of the Tax Lists Found in Tung-Hsi-Yang K'ao," *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400–1750*, ed. Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), 179–94; *VOC-Glossarium: Verklaringen van Termen Verzameld uit de Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatien die Betrekking Hebben op de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Den Haag: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 2000).
45. Ptak, "China and the Trade in Tortoise-Shell (Sung to Ming Periods)," 221.
46. Sutherland, "Trepang and Wangkang."
47. The specialists in marine commodities were Sama speakers known as Orang Laut



(sea people) in the Western archipelago, and Samal, Badjau, or Bajau Laut in the southern Philippines and along the northeast Borneo coast, while the Bugis and Makassarese called them Bajo or Turijene (water people). See Leonard Andaya, "Historical Links between the Aquatic Populations and the Coastal Peoples of the Malay World and Celebes," *Historia: Essays in Commemoration of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Department of History, University of Malaya*, ed. Muhammad Abu Bakar (Kuala Lumpur: Department of History, University of Malaya, 1984), 34–51; Clifford Sather, *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, History and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-Eastern Sabah* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997); David E. Sopher, *The Sea Nomads: A Study of the Maritime Boat People of Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: National Museum, 1977).

48. The current status of turtles in the region can be found on various turtle websites.
49. François Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën, Vervattende een Naaukeurige en Uitvoerige Verhandelinge van Nederlands Mogentheyd in die Gewesten, Benevens eene Wydlustige Beschryvinge der Moluccos, Amboina, Banda, Timor, en Solor, Java en alle de Eylanden Onder Dezelve Landbestieringen Behoorende: Het Nederlands Comptoir op Suratte, en de Levens der Groote Mogols: Als ook een Keurlyke Verhandelng van 't Wezentlykste, dat Men Behoort te Weten van Choromandel, Pegu, Arracan, Bengale, Mocha, Persien, Malacca, Sumatra, Ceylon, Malabar, Celebes of Macassar, China, Japan, Tayouan of Formosa, Tonkin, Cambodia, Siam, Borneo, Bali, Kaap der Goede Hoop en Van Mauritius . . .*, vol. 1 ('s-Gravenhage: H. C. Susan, 1856).
50. J. N. Vosmaer, "Korte Beschrijving van het Zuid-Oostelijk Schiereiland van Celebes, in het Bijzonder van de Vosmaers-Baai of Van Kendari: Verrijkt met Eenige Berigten Omtrent den Stam der Orang Badjos, en Meer Andere Aanteekeningen," *Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap* (1839), 135. For extensive information on Chinese use of tortoiseshell, see Ptak, "China and the Trade in Tortoise-Shell (Sung to Ming Periods)."
51. GM 1745, 9:245.
52. A kati is 617 grams.
53. Ptak gives the Chinese and European names for the four turtle types ("China and the Trade in Tortoise-Shell [Sung to Ming Periods]," 197.)
54. F. W. Stapel, *Het Bongaais Verdrag* (Leiden: University of Leiden, 1922); Villiers, "One of the Especiallest Flowers in Our Garden."
55. NA VOC 1127, 577v.
56. NA VOC 1221, 353.
57. Villiers, "One of the Especiallest Flowers in Our Garden."
58. So called because of their location relative to the VOC base on the nutmeg island of Banda. The former group included the lesser archipelagos of Babar, Damar, Luang, Leti, Tomang, and Wetar; the latter included Tanimbar, Timor Laut (a subcluster of the Tanimbar archipelago), Aru, Kai, Watubela, and Goram. For an early-eighteenth-century description, see Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, 2:32–43.
59. P. A. Tiele and J. E. Heeres, *Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanders in den Maleischen Archipel*, 3 vols. (The Hague: 1886–1895), 3:245. This would mean, roughly, that tortoiseshell could be bought for 0.31 guilders a pound in southern Maluku, and sold for 2.4 guilders a pound in Makassar.

60. GM 5:62. Ptak notes that the British were making 40 to 50 percent on the trade there in 1632, and repeats a contemporaneous estimate that Gujarat absorbed 12,854 pounds of shell between 1638 and 1645. It is possible that the price for tortoiseshell was by this stage higher in India than in China, as there are indications that China had become an exporter of tortoiseshell. Ptak, "China and the Trade in Tortoise-Shell (Sung to Ming Periods)."
61. NA VOC 1579, 154; see also NA VOC 1556, 255 (1695). Issues of jurisdiction also complicated "smuggling." The Bajo were protected by local rulers; until 1726 the Bajo were able to sail using a pass from the king of Gowa and were thus exempt from Dutch restrictions (GM 8:75).
62. NA VOC 1595, 215. As well as these typically Chinese products, Ongwatko also traded in slaves, including at Banggai and Tobunku, and had trade connections in Manila and Timor, NA VOC 1414, 348.
63. NA VOC 1595, 298.
64. GM 1693, 5:583. The rijksdaalder, c.2.5 guilders, was the VOC money of account.
65. When particularly irritated by competition, be it Portuguese, English, or Chinese, the company tended to fall into heavy irony, referring to their "friends."
66. NA VOC 1663, 92-93.
67. NA VOC 1676, 180-81. A picul equaled c. 62 kilograms.
68. NA VOC 1676, 281.
69. Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*.
70. NA VOC 1867, 49-50.
71. GM 1718 7:373; GM 1719 7:398; GM 1706 6:418; GM 1720 2:51; GM 1722 7:633; GM 2:679; GM 3:844; GM 4:336. In May 1831 the *Singapore Chronicle* described how raiders along the coast prevented the development of exports of tortoiseshell and trepang from Kutei; pirates took most of the shell ("Remarks on the Exports of Coti," reprinted in J.M. Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago* [London: CASS, 1968], 57).
72. GM 4:279, 408; GM 1719 7:398.
73. On the Eastern Indonesian marine-products trade in general, see also R. F. Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone: Past and Present in the Social Organization of a Moluccan Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003); David Henley, *Fertility, Food and Fever: Population, Economy and Environment in North and Central Sulawesi, c. 1600-1930* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005); Sutherland, "Review Article,;" Esther Velthoen, "'Wanderers, Robbers and Bad Folk': The Politics of Violence, Protection and Trade in Eastern Sulawesi 1750-1850," *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750-1900*, ed. Anthony Reid (London: Macmillan, 1991), 367-88.
74. Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*. Prices had clearly risen: Ongwatko had offered the VOC 2 picul for 100 rds.
75. Governor Jacob Pielat left Ternate in 1732 to continue a promising career in Ceylon, GM 1731 9:234; GM 8-9; Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 207-8.
76. During the financial year 1731-1732, VOC purchases of tortoiseshell from Portu-

guese, Chinese, and native traders amounted to 2,093 pounds, and in October 1731 Ternate sent 1,983 pounds to Batavia. In 1735 the VOC obtained a total of 1,030 tortoiseshells worth 2,769 guilders, and 5,972 pearlshells (for mother-of-pearl), weighing 6,568 pounds and worth f.985.5 (GM 1734 9:625; 1731 9:234; 1735 9:630).

77. Value in Guilders of Tortoiseshell Passing through VOC Batavia from Makassar: Years 1711–12: From Banda, 1,400; From Ternate, 1,200; To Japan, 2,800; To Surat, none. Years 1712–13: From Banda, 1,000; From Ternate, 900; To Japan, 2,400; To Surat, none. Years 1730–31: From Banda, none; From Ternate, 4,300; To Japan, 5,300; To Surat, none. Years 1731–32: From Banda, 500; From Ternate, 1,200; To Japan, 4,600; To Surat, none. Years 1752–53: From Banda, none; From Ternate, 400; To Japan, none; To Surat, 1. Years 1771–72: From Banda, 300; From Ternate, 800; To Japan, none; To Surat, 600. I am very grateful to Dr. Els Jacobs for this information. The original sources were the archives of the company's general accountant, held in the National Archives in The Hague, inventory numbers BGB 10.758, 10.767, 10.777, 10.791.

78. For example, in the mid-eighteenth-century Buton became the main collection port channeling trepang from southeastern waters to Makassar; in the early days this exchange was limited in range and value. But by the 1780s Buton was able to absorb an impressive range of manufactured goods (textiles, porcelain, axes, etc.). Heather Sutherland, "Power, Trade and Islam in the Eastern Archipelagos, 1700–1850," *Religion and Development: Towards an Integrated Approach*, ed. Philip Quarles van Ufford and Matthew Schoffeleers (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988), 145–66. See also Sutherland, "Review Article."

79. Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*.

80. Sutherland, "Trepang and Wangkang." Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*, 98–102, 145–49.

81. Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*. The registers, introduced in 1713, were the primary source for this analysis. For sources and methodology, see *ibid.*, 5–9. The data can be consulted by arrangement with the Nederlands Instituut voor Wetenschappelijke Informatiediensten, an institute of the Netherlands' Royal Academy of Sciences. The following paragraphs draw on this data, referred to hereafter as "Data base of the Makassar's harbormasters register."

82. Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*; Noorduyn, "De Handelsrelaties van het Makassaarse Rijk Volgens de Notitie van Cornelis Speelman (1669)."

83. Travel restrictions were always changing, and sometimes ignored, but nonetheless were an important constraint for those wishing to trade in VOC ports.

84. Toward the end of the 1720s the ruler of Buginese Bone prohibited Wajorese trade with Batavia; Wajorese withdrawal accelerated in the 1730s, during the war between the Wajorese rebel Arung Singkang and the VOC; in 1735 they left Makassar. Despite their return in 1742 the community vanished from the trade statistics, probably because of classification changes. J. Noorduyn, "The Wajorese Merchants' Community in Makassar," *Authority and Enterprise among the Peoples of South Sulawesi*, ed. Roger Tol, Kees van Dijk, and Gregg Acciaiolli (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000), 95–120. See also Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*.

85. Ibid.
86. "Data base of the Makassar's harbormasters register"; see Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*.
87. "Data base of the Makassar's harbormasters register"; Sutherland, "The Makassar Malays."
88. Sutherland, "Trepang and Wangkang."
89. C. F. H. Campen, "De Visscherij op Halmahera," *Tijdschrift voor Nijverheid en Landbouw in Nederlandsch-Indië* 28 (1884); Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone*.
90. On the contemporary situation, see Anthony J. Whitten, Muslimin Mustafa, and Gregory S. Henderson, *The Ecology of Sulawesi* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1987).
91. For fundamental criticism of Warren's influential emphasis on coercion in the sea-products trade of Sulu, see Sutherland, "Review Article."
92. Sutherland, "Trepang and Wangkang."
93. See note 77.
94. *GM* 6:144; *GM* 8; *GM* 16:417, 532.
95. Andaya, "Local Trade Networks."
96. Noorduyn, "The Wajorese Merchants' Community in Makassar."
97. *NA VOC* 2568, 696.