

PREFACE

This book has taken much time and devotion from its compilers. Had we known the complexity of what was initially conceived as a modest task we would probably not have embarked upon it. Nevertheless, it is central to the aims of the Economic History of Southeast Asia (ECHOSEA) Project at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, and it is not inappropriate that it should have occupied a large portion of its resources.

The book is intended to provide a firmer quantitative base for the economic history of Southeast Asia before the advent of firm colonial statistics around 1870. Long-distance exports represent only a small part of the total economy, of course, but it was a more important stimulus in the Archipelago at least than in most other parts of the world at that time. Moreover it is the only aspect of the economy for which quantitative data is reliable.

We believe the record of these exports does make a difference to the way the history of the region can be understood. It provides long-term time series for the first time, which serve to place the colonial period in a context of what went before.

David Bulbeck and Wu Yiqi were successive Research Assistants in the ECHOSEA Project during its five years of support (1990–94) by the Research School. Tan Lay Cheng was employed in a similar capacity for a few months earlier, when the research for this book was just beginning. Anthony Reid, as Convenor of the Project, was responsible for the direction of this Data Paper in particular. The tables were constructed chiefly by David Bulbeck (especially cloves and pepper) and Wu Yiqi (especially coffee), while the introductory explanations were written by Anthony Reid and David Bulbeck.

We must particularly thank Pierre van der Eng for his assistance throughout, especially in the difficult matter of price and currency conversions. He urged us on to take the step of extending to prices and values, which at first seemed too difficult. We are also very grateful to Linda Poskitt and Clare Guenther, successive Administrators of the ECHOSEA Project, who battled heroically to get all these difficult tables into a readable format. The two cartographers involved were Ian Faulkner and Ian Heyward.

Other members of the ECHOSEA team have been helpful in various ways, notably John Drabble, Anne Booth, Howard Dick, and Evelyn Winburn.

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Anthony Reid