INTRODUCTION

1. The subject

When Willem Lodewycksz., who sailed on the first Dutch fleet to the East Indies, visited Banten in 1596, this port town, situated on the western tip of the island of Java, was well known as one of the most flourishing entrepôts in South-East Asia, witness his colourful description of its market:

The merchants of various nations, such as the Portuguese, Arabs, Turks, Chinese, Kelings, Pegus, Malay, Bengali, Gujarati, Malabar, Abyssinians, and those from all quarters of India conduct their business in the morning. ... [Spices sold there] are so various that we have forgotten their names now.¹

How different was the situation in the nineteenth century, when Banten was considered one of the poorest, most exploited, and most rebellious regions in Java. This is how it was described in Multatuli’s famous novel, Max Havelaar:

It has been heartrending to listen to complaints about maltreatment, exploitation, poverty, hunger ... while I myself am now going to face hunger and poverty, with wife and child.

And yet I am not at liberty to betray the Government either. I am not at liberty to tell these poor people: “Go, and suffer still, for the Administration wishes you to be exploited!”²

How is this metamorphosis of a once flourishing region into an impoverished backwater to be explained? Johan Talens has argued that the sultanate of Banten maintained a certain prosperity until 1750.³ For the period after 1830, R.E. Elson has discussed social changes in Java under the Cultivation System including Banten.⁴ Nevertheless, the crucial period in between, the 1750-1830 period, has not been studied on an empirical basis, so that it gives the impression that ‘prosperous’ Banten fell into ‘decline’ in the period. What did actually happen in this period? This is the main question of this study.

The problem of the gap between the ‘prosperous’ sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the ‘impoverished’ nineteenth century has been widely discussed in the historiography of South-East Asia. Recently a number of scholars have questioned previous assumptions that many of the indigenous states in South-East Asia which flourished in the seventeenth century fell into a ‘decline’ or into ‘confusion’ during the eighteenth century.⁵ They actually make the point that many South-East Asian polities maintained their political, economic, and cultural inde-
dependence and even prosperity. In his *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies* Anthony Reid argues that the period between about 1750 and 1780 was a watershed, which “represented a kind of crisis out of which a new and modern order was born”. He claims that the most enduring changes of the colonial era, namely, “commercialization, centralization [of administration], intellectual renovation and popularization of culture”, had already taken hold during the above-mentioned period. Reid considers that the changing patterns of trade in South-East Asia, as a result of the expanding Canton trade were an important incentive to commercialisation from 1750 to 1780. In his study of the history of the Mataram Kingdom in the second half of the eighteenth century, M.C. Ricklefs also has argued that after its permanent division in 1755, the kingdom witnessed a growing formalism in state life and a rise of royal absolutism.

Another group of historians has pointed out that the European presence had already exerted a ‘colonial’ impact on indigenous states and local society in South-East Asia in the eighteenth century. Ohashi Atsuko argues that the intensification of Batavian control of the production and transportation of coffee in eighteenth-century Priangan was in the vanguard of modernisation. Mason C. Hoadley shows that the Company considerably modified the Javanese legal administration in Cirebon by the 1740s in order to fit it to the Company interests. Hoadley also argues that under the pressure of the Dutch demand for commercial crops, basic socio-economic changes, manifest in “the tendency to classify persons on the basis of access to the means of production” and “the shift from control of manpower to land ownership” had been taking place well before the advent of colonial/imperialistic exploitation in Cirebon and Jogjakarta.

Stimulated by these scholars, I shall be examining in this study patterns of change in Banten in the period from 1750 to 1830. The starting year 1750 was marked with the outbreak of a large-scale rebellion which spread throughout the territory of the sultanate of Banten including its nearby territory of Lampung on Sumatra. When the rebellion was quelled with the military assistance of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1752, the sultanate became a vassal state of the VOC in its aftermath. The VOC soon started to promote pepper cultivation in Lampung and Banten, and it attempted to introduce a sort of forced cultivation in the inland regions of Banten. It did not increase the pepper production, but it did encourage the rise of the power of the local elite. At the same time, Bugis, Chinese and other Asian traders, and English country traders incorporated Banten and Lampung into a new inter-regional trade pattern. This trade pattern, in which pepper and maritime and forest products from these regions were taken to the China market in exchange for opium, set the stage for a new economic order in Insular South-East Asian
trade in the decades to come. In 1808, the Napoleonic Governor-General of the East Indies, Herman Willem Daendels, brought a considerable part of the sultanate forcefully under direct Dutch rule. In 1813, during the British rule of Java (1811-1816), the sultan surrendered his remaining authority to the British in return for a pension. The Dutch regime had already considerably entrenched its rule before 1830, when Governor-General Johannes van den Bosch launched the Cultivation System, which marked a further penetration of Dutch authority into local society. Throughout this study I shall argue that the social and trading systems of Banten were in a constant state of transformation in reaction to the Western presence and shifts of the world economy. As a result a colonial society was gradually being shaped during the 1750-1830 period.

In order to discuss how these developments took place, I focus on the interaction between various groups of Banten society and its state centre, in which the sultan and the Western powers both occupied a place. The state centre exerted influence on the local society, which far from being inert and passive, showed considerable vitality and actually influenced the policy making of the state centre. The discussion will be conducted in the following analytical framework.

2. Analytical framework

The state-in-society model proposed by the American sociologist Joel S. Migdal seems, with some slight adjustments, a useful tool to analyse the relationship between state and society. He defines the state as “a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory, and (2) the actual practices of its multiple parts”.14 Migdal argues that the image works to amalgamate the numerous parts into a picture of a dominant, single state. However, practice may weaken such an image of the state, because the periphery or the far-flung parts of the state may also seek alternative sets of rules that might privilege a closely neighbouring ruler to whom they also felt loyal.15

The state-in-society model depicts society as “a mélange of social organizations rather than a dichotomous structure”, such as centre-periphery and modern-traditional.16 Migdal explains that in some societies “the mélange of social organizations is marked by an environment of conflict, an active struggle for social control”. When he further states that “[t]he state is part of the environment of conflict”, he implies that the state (here it can be read as state centre) is one of the various social groups or organisations conflicting with each other.17 This allows us to
postulate that a state could have two centres, such as the indigenous ruler and the Western power.

This model seems a useful tool to analyse the state and society in early-modern South-East Asia. Perhaps the term ‘image’ which gives a rather vague impression should be replaced by ‘concept’ in order to explain what the rulers and the Western powers attempted to impose on South-East Asian society. As long as we agree that a ruler nurtured the concept of a coherent organisation of territorial control, regardless of whether it was effective or not, this model can regard perplexing South-East Asian polities as a state, and will allow us to proceed with the analysis of the multiple relationships which made up that state.

If we refine upon the central institution which creates the state concept as the state centre, Migdal’s model may offer a bird’s-eye picture of a number of studies about South-east Asian states which have taken different analytical approaches. For example, Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah rejected the cosmological explanation of state formation of Heine-Gelden, asserting that it attributed replication of the centre within the realm of a kingdom simply and solely to a cosmological orientation of the mandala scheme. Instead he proposed the ‘galactic polity’ model, in which the ruler remained the symbol of unity, but satellite chiefs maintained political and social relations of a factional sort with the ruler and between each other. In other words, while Heine-Gelden focused solely on the state concept which the state centre created and distributed, Tambiah called attention to the practices of multiple organisations in the society. Migdal’s state-in-society model also helps us understand how Clifford Geertz and A.C. Milner, who wrote about the symbolic exposition and manipulations of the state, were actually analysing the practice of the state centre to create, reinforce, and validate the state concept. Studies by Michael Adas and Luc Nagtegaal, who considered the state as an arena of a constant contest and flux between the local elite, village chiefs, and commoners, may be seen as attempts to analyse the practices carried out by various social organisations.

I focus on the interaction between the practices of the state centre to impose a state concept, and the practices of the society to support and/or undermine it, because I believe that this interaction was crucial to both the maintenance and transformation of the state system. On the one hand, when the state centre and the multiple social groups mutually benefited by supporting each other, their interaction contributed to the maintenance of the traditional state system. On the other hand, when their benefits contradicted each other, the state centre and the multiple social groups would search for alternative practices to maintain their own respective benefit, but the practices of the one side were restricted by the other. I also include in my analysis the practices of groups outside the
state, such as freebooters called ‘pirates’ or ‘smugglers’ by the European authorities, because the state attempted to control them on the basis of its state concept, while these outside groups, allying with groups within the state, tended to undermine the state concept.

Migdal, Tambiah, Adas, and Nagtegaal emphasise the conflicting nature of the relations between various social organisations. In traditional Banten, however, the relationships between social groups (I use this term because ‘organization’ gives too organised an image to the loosely formed social groups in Banten) were often formed by compromise, alliance, networking, and notwithstanding the will to win power over other groups. In the sultanate of Banten various social groups were not only related horizontally to each other, but some of them were vertically connected from the bottom up to the apex of the state centre, through multi-layered power relations. As the relationships between social groups were not institutionalised but were basically personalised in Banten, as in many other South-East Asian states, they were always shifting, according to perennial change of the power balance, rather than forming a solid structure.

In one anthropological theory, practice, one of the focuses in this study, stands for all forms of human action which are taken “as the reference point for understanding a particular unfolding of events, and/or for understanding the processes involved in the reproduction or change of some set of structural features”.

Throughout this study I shall discuss how the interaction between the practices of the state centre and the practices of various social groups played an important role in the changes taking place in Banten from 1750 to 1830.

3. Previous studies

Previous studies of the Banten sultanate present a wide perspective of different views and approaches. As early as the eighteenth century, François Valentyn and J. de Rovere van Breugel wrote a brief history of the sultanate from its legendary foundation down to their contemporary times respectively in the 1720s and the 1780s. In the mid-nineteenth century P.P. Roorda van Eysinga and J. Hageman made attempts to write an entire history of the sultanate of Banten until its abolition. These early studies focused on chronicling political events such as the succession of the sultans and the encounters between indigenous rulers and the Dutch. However, given the lack of available sources they contain not a few speculations.

As relevant sources were eagerly collected and published in the second half of the nineteenth century, various general histories of Java, in which
Banten and Lampung occupied a certain part, were written on the basis of the published sources. All of these historians during the colonial period focused on three events in Banten history: the internal conflict between Sultan Haji (r. 1676-1687) and his father Sultan Agung Tirtayasa (r. 1651-1682) in 1682-1683; the Banten Rebellion of 1750-1752, raised by a religious leader Kyai Tapa and a member of the royal family Ratu Bagus Buang against de facto ruler Ratu Sharifa Fatima (r. 1748-1752) and the VOC; and the defeat of Sultan Mutakin (r. 1804-1808) by Daendels in 1808. Taking these events as milestones, scholars tended to consider the 1682-1750 period as a prosperous era, because of the good relationship between Banten and the VOC which brought peace and protection for the sultan against his court rivals and outside enemies. In contrast, the 1752-1808 period has been described as a period of decline, because of conflicts about the succession, the declining pepper production, and the sultan's oppressive policies. Different opinions have been aired about the precise onset of the decline: did it occur in the 1780s when the Dutch at war with the British could no longer suppress piracy in the Java Sea and the Sunda Strait or decades earlier? Other reflections have claimed that after 1808, Daendels' exacting rule provoked further social unrest, and consequently Banten was 'disturbed by gangs of robbers'.

A few existing colonial studies of Lampung history are a carbon copy. They stated that Lampung, which had suffered from the smuggling perpetrated by Palembang and English traders, enjoyed peace and an increase of pepper production from the 1750s because of the endeavours made by Dutch Residents. Because VOC control weakened again owing to the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in the 1780s, local people suffered from invasions by the Palembangers, the English, and pirates, and were bowed under the exploitation of the greedy local elite, in addition to failing victim to severe natural disasters such as epidemics. While Dutch scholars were unflattering about Raffles' policy for the Lampung region, they approved of the Dutch rule which restored 'peace and order', especially because the Dutch did not shun doing their battle with ‘usurper’ Raden Intan II, an influential member of the local elite.

I would call this historiography a representation of the Pax-Neerlandica view. This view was main stream in the colonial period, notwithstanding a few scholars who presented a negative evaluation of Dutch presence in Banten. The disorder wreaked by ‘pirates’ and ‘robbers’ offered a justification for the imposition of Dutch colonial rule which was destined to bring ‘peace and order’. The Pax-Neerlandica view was closely related to the available published sources, which concentrated primarily on political and military issues and had little to say on socio-economic matters. P.J.B.C. Robidé van der Aa and N. Mac Leod who referred extensively to
unpublished sources in their studies on the 1750-52 rebellion and political conflicts around 1682 respectively also reached the same conclusion, namely that the Dutch intervention resolved internal conflicts and brought ‘peace and order’.36

Another group of scholars collected information from the Banten court and local society. Hoessein Djajadiningrat devoted an exhaustive piece of philological research to the Banten chronicle, Sajarah Banten, examining the text in careful comparison with related sources in Dutch, Portuguese, Javanese, and even with local oral traditions.37 Various scholars have studied the piagem or copper plaques inscribed with the sultan’s decrees dating from the seventeenth century.38 When the idiosyncratic clan system in Lampung began to attract anthropological interest, a number of scholars and colonial officials compiled ethnographic reports and made studies.39

After the independence of Indonesia, G.W.J. Drewes and D.H. Burger argued that the VOC intervention in 1682 and the Dutch trade monopoly after 1684 brought an end to commercial developments in Banten.40 The negative evaluation of the VOC presence developed into an anti-colonial view, fuelled by nationalistic feelings, in Indonesia, less in standard works on Indonesian national history than in works on the local history of Banten.41 Some archaeologists, turning away from the findings of their excavation research,42 have written a history of the Banten sultanate, consulting only a small number of previous studies, without referring to the sources available, and depending totally on highly contested sources.43 Halwany Michrob and A. Mudjahid Chudari consistently explain the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in a dichotomous framework of the oppressing Dutch and the oppressed Bantenese people.44 This is also reflected in a recent work of an Indonesian historian, Nina Herlina Lubis, who has written a history of Banten from prehistory to the birth of the new province of Banten in 2000, referring to much wider published sources and previous studies.45

It was the impact of commercial traffic on the state formation that has been the most prominent theme in the post-independence historiography of Banten.46 On the basis of extensive archival research, M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs argued that in the early seventeenth century the rivalry between the English, the Dutch, the Chinese in Banten, and the sultan of Banten resulted in the intensification of the socio-economic control exercised on the trade and pepper production by the sultan and the nobles.47 Inspired by her arguments, Leonard Blussé and J. Kathirithamby-Wells discussed the impact of the arrival of the northern European on the local commerce and the state formation of Banten.48 As Kenneth R. Hall’s theorisation of state systems in early South-East Asia awakened fresh interest in the impact of international trade on the state formation process,49 Freek
Colombijn and Kathirithamby-Wells discussed seventeenth-century Banten with reference to Hall’s model. Claude Guillot discussing conflicts between the princes and the court officials over the international trade policy, and Anthony Reid arguing the centralisation of the government under the constant pressure from the VOC, seem to make the same point. The ‘trade impact approach’ of Meilink-Roelofsz and her followers has indubitably expanded and deepened our insight into the state formation process of seventeenth-century Banten.

The problem of the trade impact approach is, however, that until quite recently no scholars had studied Banten in a full scale beyond 1682. The upshot was that this approach left an impression that the year 1682 was a significant break in history of Banten, after which the prosperous state fell into a decline. A few attempts to write a history dealing with the period after 1682 have referred to only limited published sources.

Radically different from the works above is Talens’ recent study, which refers exhaustively to hitherto unpublished VOC records on Banten society in the 1600-1750 period. Examining the state formation of Banten in terms of relationships of the political centre with the various social groups of which Banten society was composed, Talens concludes that the year 1682 was not necessarily a serious break in Bantenese history, and that the sultanate continued to be a feudal state. He also rejects the ‘glorification’ of seventeenth-century Banten, arguing that the Islam did not function as emancipatory and egalitarian ideology, and that the local and foreign merchants did not exert any weighty political power. Talens’ empirical research has made his arguments much more convincing than previous studies.

For the Banten Rebellion of 1750-1752, the article by P.J.B.C. Robidé van der Aa in 1881 has been the only case study devoted solely to it on the basis of contemporary sources. Concentrating his analysis on the Company’s measures against the rebels, he concluded that Sharifa’s ambition to gain political power and her arbitrary rule were the principal cause of the Rebellion. Apparently Robidé’s analysis emphasising political factors was adopted by the most of the historians of the colonial period, and some in the post-independence period. Kathirithamby-Wells and Talens suggested that economic oppression impelled people to rebel, pointing out the negative impact of compulsory cultivation of pepper and mobilisation for construction works respectively. Tubagus Roesjan emphasised a religious factor in the rebellion, maintaining that the peasants hated the rule of Ratu Sharifa because she co-operated with the heathen Dutch. Talens also argues that because Sharifa gained political power with help of the Company, the legitimacy of the court was undermined.

These arguments, on some of which the influence of the Pax-Neerlandica view and anti-colonial view are discernible, are not fully con-
vincing. The historians who emphasise political factor failed to explain how it was possible for the political elite to mobilise a large number of ordinary people. Pertinently, the rebel leaders were people from outside the court circle, which had suffered directly from Sharifa’s dictatorial rule. It should be pointed out that compulsory cultivation was not a phenomenon specific to this period, and it is not clear to what extent such orders were strictly implemented and whether they caused the people any additional hardship. However interesting Talens’ hypothesis may be, he does not show any direct connection between the exploitation for construction works and the rebels. In Chapter Three I shall show that the Islamic element was not a very compelling factor among the vast majority of the rebels.

Since independence little empirical research has been carried out on the second half of the eighteenth century. Unfortunately I have not consulted Dinar Boontharm’s recent dissertation on the Banten sultanate in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the study of Lampung history the anti-colonial view has been dominant. According to a handbook on the local history of Lampung published by the local office of the Department of Education and Culture, various groups of people fought against Dutch colonialism throughout the eighteenth century. For those who hold this view, Raden Intan II is a national hero, who bravely fought against the Dutch colonialism in the early nineteenth century. Keeping his distance from the anti-colonial view, Suzuki Tsuneyuki has argued chiefly systems in Lampung underwent a transformation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His explanation of the inception of this transformation is open to argument as he does not refer to eighteenth-century sources. Nevertheless, his explanation of the transformation process of the chiefly systems as a result of the interaction between the sultan and local chiefs has inspired me in many ways. Jeff Kingston has described the history of Lampung in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in terms of struggles between the Dutch, the English, and local chiefs. His discussion on the eighteenth century refers little to sources, although he gives a detailed explanation of Dutch and English attempts to exert influence on the territory and the resistance they met from the local elite in the nineteenth century, on the basis of extremely thorough archival research.

A number of studies mentioned rampant ‘piracy’ and ‘smuggling’ around Lampung and Banten in the eighteenth century. Studies supporting the Pax-Neerlandica view maintain that they caused the ‘decline’ of the pepper production and the sultanate as a whole, uncritically taking VOC views at face value. Conversely, post-independence studies representing the anti-colonial view have described the ‘piracy’ in extraordinarily heroic tones. Very different from these, recent studies such as those
by James Francis Warren and Eric Tagliacozzo consider that ‘piracy’ and ‘smuggling’ in Insular South-East Asia formed a part of a new economic system taking shape in the second half of the eighteenth century, in which obtaining tropical products for the growing China market became increasingly important. My argument about ‘piracy’ and ‘raiding’ in Chapter Six is impacted by these scholars.

Studies about early-nineteenth-century Banten are also very few. Sartono Kartodirdjo has emphasised the failure of the Dutch policy to strike a chord with the local elite group in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. However convincing his empirical analysis of developments in the late nineteenth century may be, he is on less certain ground when he discusses the pre-1830 situation, basing himself only on data from the late nineteenth century. Peter Boomgaard and R.E. Elson have referred to unpublished governmental records on Banten in the 1820s, but they briefly discussed only certain specific themes such as rights to land, village environment, and village hierarchy. As a result, Sartono’s explanation of the socio-economic and socio-political situation in that period is still influential.75

This quick survey reveals that most of the colonial historiography referred merely to a limited number of published sources, and that so far nobody had attempted a full-scale empirical study on Banten and Lampung in the period from 1750 to 1830. Hence in the following chapters I shall explore developments in Banten and Lampung during this period, on the basis of primary sources. Keeping my distance from the Pax-Neerlandica view and the anti-colonial view, I shall discuss the developments which occurred in the interaction between various groups of Banten society and its state centre. For this purpose I have decided on the following thematic approach.

4. Themes

The first two chapters of this study will explain the fundamentals which regulated the socio-political and socio-economic changes in Banten and Lampung, and the last five chapters are devoted to chronological developments. By the term ‘fundamentals’ I mean the ecological, historical, economic, and ideological bases of the sultanate, and the power relations between the state centre and the various social groups. Chapter One will look at the ecological, historical, economic, and ideological context, by re-examining previous assumptions by other writers.76

In Chapter Two, an analysis will be made of power relations between the state and the various social groups involved. I shall discuss the socio-economic and ideological aspects of power relations in the sultanate,
showing how power holders on every level maintained their status and income on the basis of mutual obligation, and how they legitimised these relations with their followers. Within this context, special attention will be paid to the ongoing debate on the Javanese village.

The Banten Rebellion from 1750 to 1752 will be the subject of Chapter Three. Examining why and how the rebels attracted a large number of ordinary people to their side, I shall discuss what sort of factors regulated local people’s practices.

Chapter Four deals with the period from 1752 to 1770, in which the sultan’s power was relatively stable. I shall begin by explaining what sort of relationship was established between the sultan and the Company, and what sort of state concept was created. Having done so, I shall discuss the Dutch intervention in local society in Lampung and Banten, and inquire into how the local elite and commoners acted both concordantly and discordantly with this state concept, in order to secure their own benefit. The research by Ohashi Atsuko and Mason C. Hoadley, who have respectively been analysing social changes in eighteenth-century Priangan and Cirebon where the VOC attempted to promote the cultivation of coffee are especially relevant to this study. David Henley’s theoretical schematisation of the local acceptance of the alien authority is quite useful for the analysis of the developments in Lampung. Their studies are referred to in this and the following chapters.77

Chapter Five deals with the period from 1770 to 1808. This period was marked by the decline of the central power position of the sultan. First I shall explain the changing relationship between the sultan and the Company, showing how the Company’s support ironically weakened successive sultans’ power. This is followed by a discussion of the reaction by the local elite to the Dutch policy to promote pepper cultivation in the inland regions of Banten. Then I turn to the developments in Lampung, explaining why and how local chiefs and pepper cultivators allied with outside groups such as the Palembangers and the English.

In Chapter Six, an analysis is given of the peripheral regions which gradually ‘liberated’ themselves from the sultan’s control. First I discuss a newly emerging trade pattern around Lampung, which the Dutch disparaged as ‘piracy’ and ‘smuggling’. This new situation is explained in terms of the transformation of South-East Asian trade in connection with the growing China trade. The development of the sugar industry which occurred at the same time in the eastern regions of Banten led to an increase in the Chinese population and thriving local commerce. I shall explain that these developments benefited neither the sultan nor the VOC, but instead meant a loss of control by the state centre.

Chapter Seven treats the period from 1808 to 1830, in which Dutch and English actively engaged in colonial state formation. After explaining
the changing relationship between the sultan and the colonial rulers, I shall discuss what impact the colonial policies, such as the reform of the administrative and revenue systems, had on the local society, and how multiple groups in the society reacted to them.

For a survey of the primary sources, I refer to the Appendices 1 near the end of this study.