Toward Cities, Seas, and Jungles: Migration in the Malay Archipelago, c. 1750–1850

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The period discussed in this chapter falls in the one hundred years before mass long-distance migration rapidly expanded throughout the world. It seems a consensus that industrialization, which entailed large-scale production of raw materials and food, caused mass migrations in the modern world. For example, Adam McKeown, who has discussed the global migration from 1846 to 1940 with a special focus on Chinese migration in North and Southeast Asia, has argued that “[t]he rise of a global economy centred on European, North American, and Japanese industrialization was the context for increased long-distance migration of settlers and workers” in cash-crop plantations and rice fields in Asia in the period in his discussion.1 His argument, however, may give an impression that modern migration was propelled mostly by the industrialization in the above-mentioned countries, and that migration prior to his period was much smaller in scale and shorter-distance. This chapter discusses the migration in the larger Malay Archipelago (taken here as the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, and present-day Indonesia; hereafter the Malay Archipelago or the Archipelago) before Western private enterprises promoted cash-crop and food production, in order to understand the modern expansion of migration in a longer timeframe.

No scholars of global migration have paid serious attention to the migration in the Malay Archipelago in the period in question, probably because they have assumed industrialization in the later period to be the most (or even only) important factor prompting mass long-distance migration. In fact, Western private industries started to promote cash-crop and food production remarkably only after 1870. The Cultivation System (1830–1870) in Java, through which the colonial government controlled local cultivators’ production via local agents (local elites and village chiefs), did not create long-distance migration.

In this chapter, however, I will argue that new types of migration were increasing in the Malay Archipelago preceding the industrialization. First I will explain that the British Straits Settlements (Melaka, Penang, and Singapore)...

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1 McKeown 2004: 166.
and Batavia received an increasing number of commercial and slave migrants in their urban quarters, and also labor and military migrants in their suburbs, starting from different years. Next I discuss labor migration in tin mines in Bangka and gold mines in northwest Kalimantan respectively after 1750 and 1740. Third, I discuss “maritime migration,” which Indonesian, Chinese, and other Asian migrants conducted in a small scale in search of marine and forest products, better protection from local rulers, and better locations for their trade and maritime raids throughout the Archipelago, at an increasing pace after the 1780s. I focus on West Kalimantan and North Sulawesi, where this type of migration typically took place. Unfortunately the data to show the exact scale of migration (the numbers of migrants in certain places each year) are very limited in the period in question. Here I will attempt to put together available fragmental information of the migration scale, while I will indicate the population trend and other related information, in order to obtain an image of the migration scale.

Then I will attempt typological analysis of the above-mentioned cases of migration, applying the CCMR-model. In most cases the Chinese were a dominant group among migrants, and the production and collection of China-bound products, such as tin, pepper, and marine products, triggered the migration in