The background features a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of white dots. On the left side, there are several overlapping circular elements. A prominent one is a large circle with a scale from 140 to 260, with major ticks every 10 units and minor ticks every 2 units. Other circles include dashed lines, solid lines, and arrows pointing in various directions, creating a technical or scientific aesthetic.

JOHOR'S HISTORIC RELATIONS WITH THE NETHERLANDS. AN OVERVIEW (C.1602-1824)

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OVERVIEW AND TIME FRAME

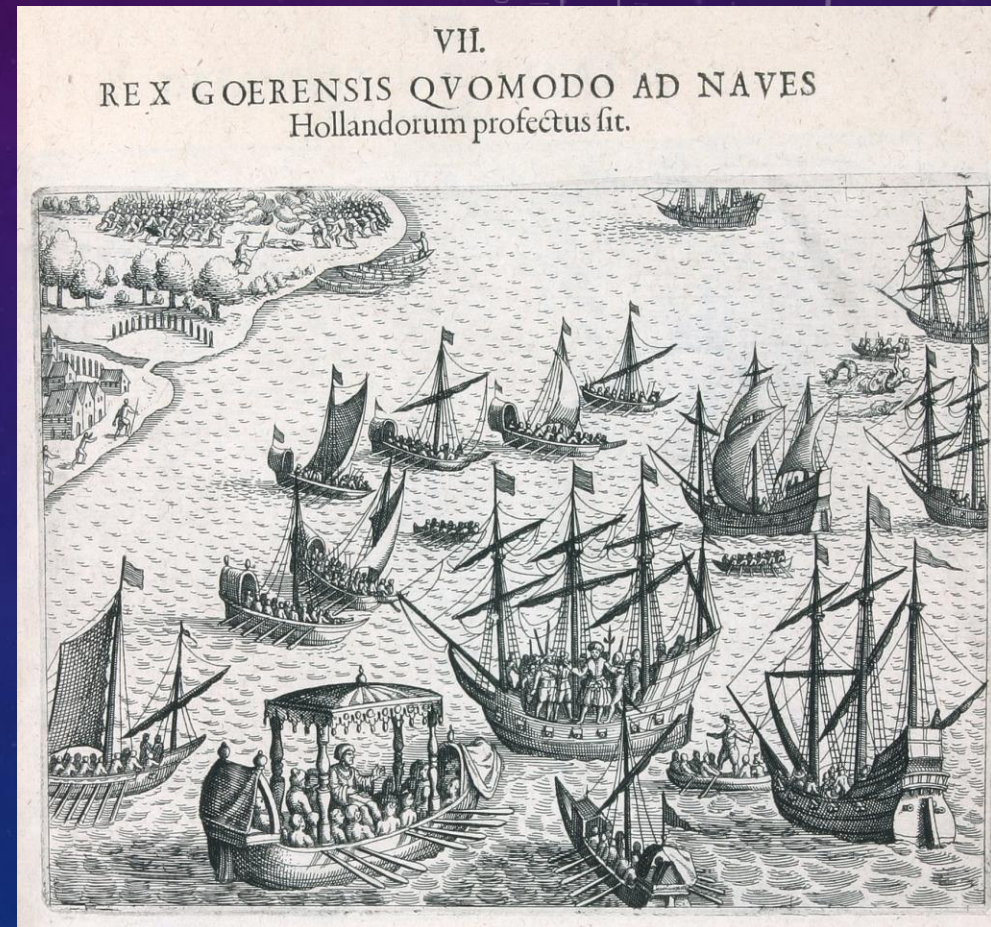
- From first contacts around 1602 until 1824
- Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 17 March 1824:
 - Divide region through Singapore and Melaka Straits into 2 spheres: mainland to British; islands to the Dutch.
 - Outcome of Raffles' interference in the royal succession in 1819.
 - End of *direct* diplomatic relations of NL/Johor
- Later: Consular representation in Singapore; embassy in KL
- In course of 2 centuries of direct contacts: information, knowledge

Hessel Gerritsz, c.1625
Berlin: Nationalbibliothek



AGENDA

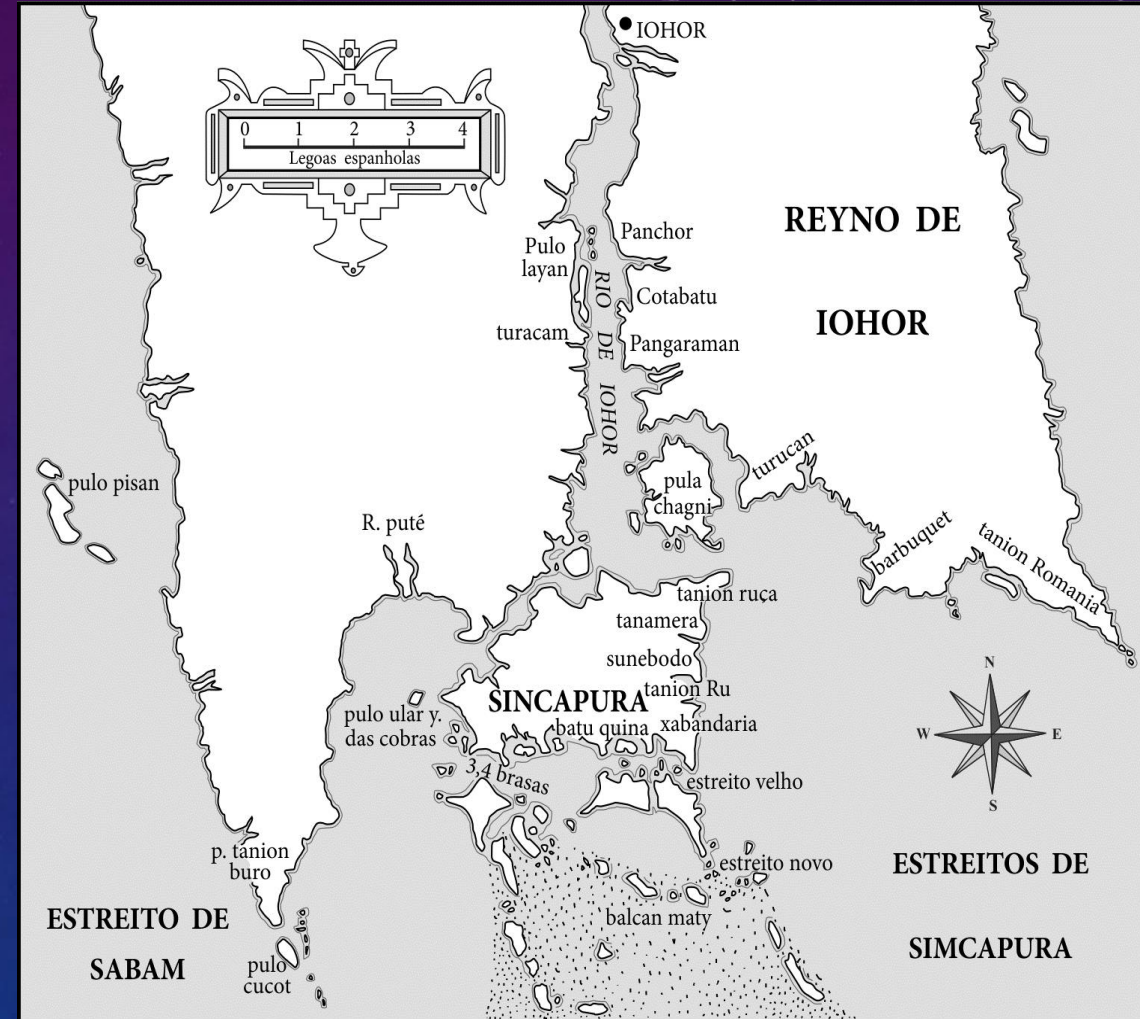
- Focus on Johor, but not a chronological narrative
- Broad impressions from reading/reviewing/viewing documentation of different types and from different sources: formal, informal.
- Asking questions: What can these sources inform us about values, world views, mutual engagement and trade with a focus on the early years?
- What is esp. unexpected or surprising?
- Summarize observation in 4 points



“How the King of Johor headed toward the Dutch ships” (1606)

SYNOPSIS

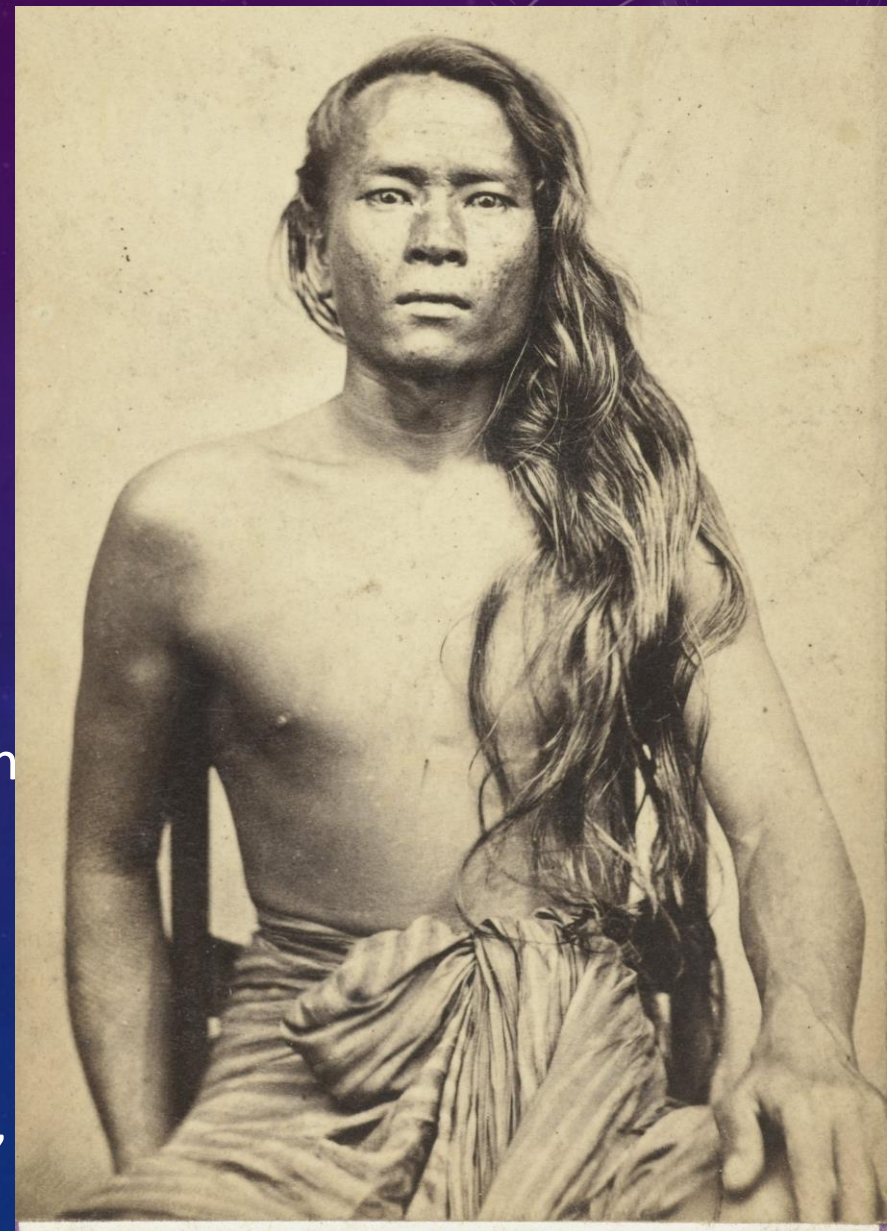
- Takeaways
- 1) Initiatives and agency
- 2) Making sure the Dutch understand issues in certain ways
- 3) Problems of self-representation (ref: Dutch)
- 4) Snapshot of trade, structure of trade
- Conclusions



Mainland Johor with the riverine towns and Singapore, c. 1615 (redrawn map)

1. INITIATIVES AND AGENCY

- Accustomed to thinking about 19th century: reluctant responses to European initiatives
 - Result of technology, knowledge gap?
 - Earlier period: not so; confident, pro-active, seize initiative
- 1) Show Dutch the best spots for observing enemy shipping through the straits
- 2) Spearhead diplomatic mission to the Netherlands in 1603-5 (one of only 3)
- 3) Invite to trade; “friendly king” who is much respected (c.1595)
- 4) J. developed differentiated approach to handling early European, Asian traders: understanding what they wanted, interested in



B/W photo of Malay sailor in Singapore, c.1890-1900. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

2. ENSURING THE DUTCH UNDERSTAND THINGS IN CERTAIN WAYS

- Extension of the previous point: How can the Europeans be useful in advancing regional political ambitions?
 - Early 17th Century: Use Dutch to create counterbalance to Aceh, Patani, Portuguese
 - Later?
 - Dutch: Don't get involved if possible
- J. present themselves early on to the Dutch as the “true heirs” of Melaka: coopt in wars against Portuguese, Aceh --- claiming rightful inheritance (keyword: hierarchy of rulers; “Emperor of the Malay Kings”)
- Patani: coopt the Dutch to help right a wrong, “expunge dishonor” (keyword: political values, organizing principles)
- Presenting the *bunga mas dan perak* to the Siamese monarch? (keyword: vassal or token of friendship?)

3. PROBLEMS OF SELF-REPRESENTATION

- The Dutch Republic and self-representation
 - Why is this even an issue?
 - A people without a king in the early modern Malay world
 - A federation of equals in a hierarchy of Asian monarchs
- Who are they and how do they represent themselves?
 - Difficult starting point: Portuguese
 - A group of merchants?
 - The “King of Holland”: the imagined counterpart

4. SNAPSHOT OF TRADE, C.1610-15

- Dutch East India Company (VOC) maintains “factory” in Johor capital Batu Sawar from 1603 to about 1620s, trade after 1640 from Melaka.
- Reason establish base: one of the best pepper ports in the straits region, initially low taxes on commodities exports
- Closed with other factories as part of rationalization exercise to reduce costs.
- Eclipsed by Banten, Aceh, Jambi in the pepper business, became uncompetitive due to rising taxes, gifts
- Surviving documents: yield snapshot of who, in what, and how much was traded.
- Batu Sawar important for maritime and overland trade

Map of the Peninsula (top is east) and of the overland trading routes terminating at “Johor” (Batu Sawar), photo of now lost map, c. 1615



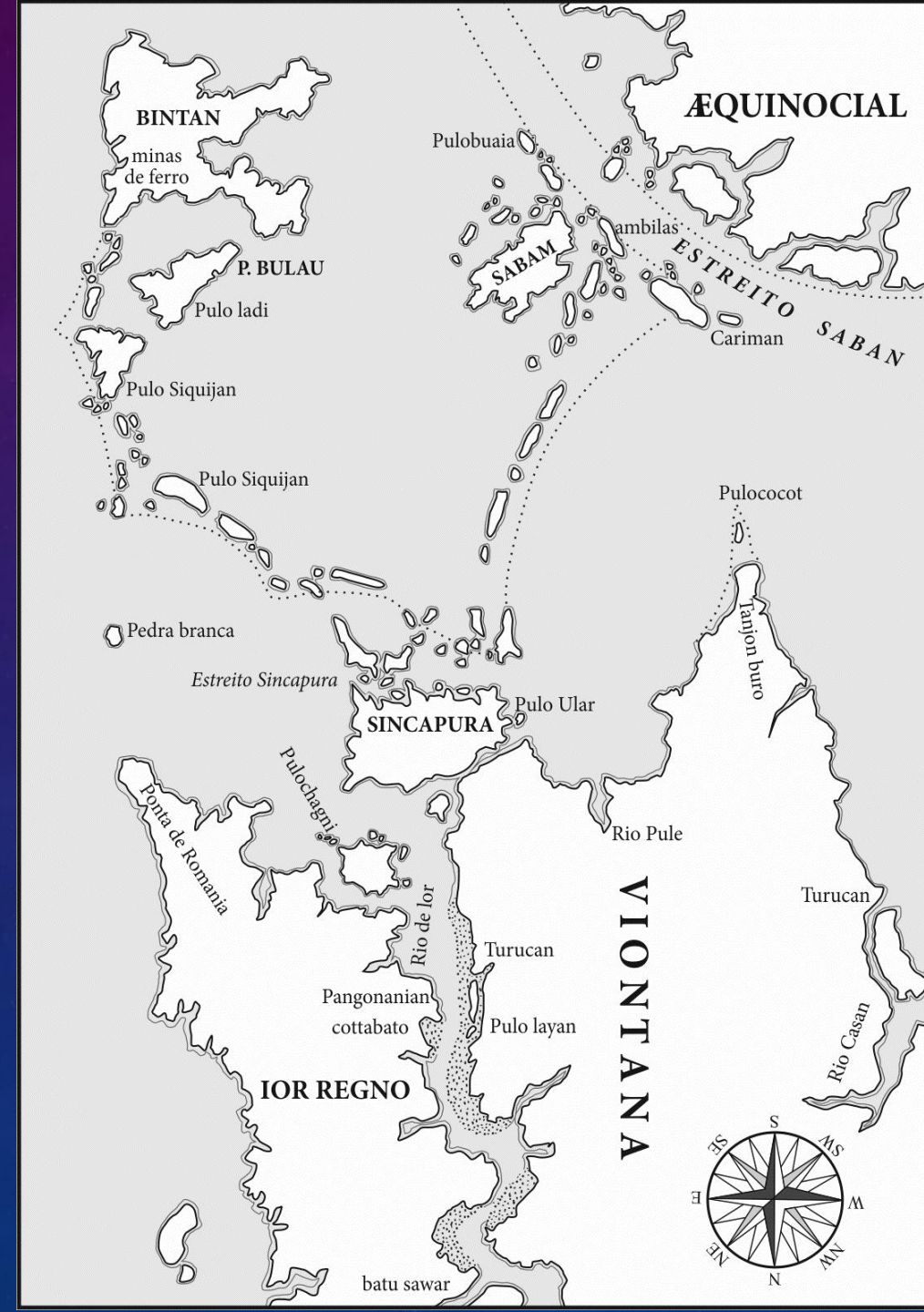
TRADE CTD.

- Pepper (mainly from Sumatra), jungle produce (resins), rattan, precious woods, gold dust, bezoar stones, diamonds. Also dried/salted fish, skins and hides, tin from Bangka-Billiton and Peninsula, things made of rattan, finished boats/cargo ships built in and around the estuary/straits.
- Also ship repair business: broken masts and yard arms, ropes, wooden anchors, fixing leaky vessels
- Import: food, textiles, iron, copper
- Portuguese report in the 1630s that largest clients of Johor for goods and services were the Dutch --- but brisk business also with the Portuguese who had a permanent “ambassador/representative” living in the capital city.
- Large (independent?) merchant community based at Batu Sawar, but biggest merchants were members of the royal family, leading merchant-officials.
- Foreigners subject to a royal monopoly: buy from/sell to the royal warehouses

SOME CONCLUSIONS

- Long relationship, admittedly not always happy
- Misleading to look at it through prism of 19th century history, values
- Johor: not passive or reluctant, but “on the ball”/”gung-ho” --- diplomatically and commercially pro-active, outward-looking
- *Both sides* developed over time a *differentiated strategy* for dealing with Europeans/locals
- Johor was for some time in the 16th and 17th centuries an important trading/services centre
- Decline? Internal convulsions (esp. after succession crisis of 1699 and wars that followed), rising taxes/overheads
- Johor revive in second half of 18th century: chiefly Bintan (Tanjung Pinang/Penyangat), royal seat moved out of the Johor River region to the Riau islands (Bintan, Lingga).

Redrawn map of Johor River region and the Straits, c.1615



Thank you



Section of map depicting the Singapore and Tebrau Straits, early 18th C
National Archives, The Hague