
Trading in Air Bangis in the 19th Century

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain trading activities at the Air Bangis harbor during the Dutch Colonial Government. Since the early 19th century, the Dutch Colonial Government had been more ambitious than before to utilize as much forest and agricultural products as possible in the hinterland of the West Coast of Sumatra. This intention was also supported by the improvement of the functions of harbor cities along the West Coast of Sumatra, including Air Bangis. The improvement per se had allowed a small-scale trade to be upgraded to export-oriented free harbors. The high level of trading activity in the Air Bangis harbor was made possible by its hinterland which is rich in export commodities. Among the types of the export commodities were gold, camphor, myrrh, rattan, dammar, coffee and pepper. The Air Bangis harbor had a role in lifting the spirits of the foreign nations, such as Aceh, VOC, English, and the Dutch Colonial Government, to build their influences in the harbor. The competition often caused friction which resulted in a conflict and power overtaking. The winners would take over the power from the losers, established their hegemony and monopolized the trade in the area of Air Bangis. The prosperity of the maritime activities in Air Bangis reached its peak in the first quarter of the 19th century, but it did not last long. In the last quarter of the 19th century, maritime activities in Air Bangis harbor started to decline. Nevertheless, sea voyage and trading activities in Air Bangis harbor had given a specific color to the maritime world in the West Sumatera Coast.

Keywords: *maritime; colonial policy; sea voyage; trading; Air Bangis harbor; West Coast Sumatra*

INTRODUCTION

The arrival of foreign nations in the Indonesian archipelago in the 16th century was pioneered by the Portuguese led by Alfonso d'Albuquerque who came from Goa (India) to attack and occupy Malaka Port in 1511. The fall of Malaka Port to the Portuguese caused the changes in the sea voyage and trading routes. The Muslim traders such as the Arabian, Persian, and Gujarat were unwilling to drop in Malaka Port because the trading monopoly carried out by the Portuguese caused a significant loss to their trade. Consequently, the Muslim traders changed their sea voyage and routes. They sailed along the area of the West Sumatera Coast and got into the North Java Coast through the Sunda Strait (Pires, 2014, pp. 380-3). The change of the trading route was very beneficial as it brought a breath of fresh air for the people in the

coastal towns along the West Sumatera Coast, including Air Bangis.

The high sea voyage and trading activities in the area of West Sumatera Coast pushed the foreign nations to participate in the trading activities in the area. As one of the coastal towns in the area, Air Bangis harbor was inevitably involved in such competition and conflict. Air Bangis was competed over by the foreign nations because it had some factors which other harbors in the area of West Sumatera Coast might not have. Among those factors were (1) Air Bangis harbor was located in the middle of the trading route of West Sumatera Coast on which many foreign traders came; (2) The harbor was surrounded by series of small islands, such as Panjang Island, Unggas Island, Harimau Island, Tello

Island, Pigago Island, Tamiang Island, and Pangka Island that protected the gulf and Air Bangis from the attacks of the Indian Ocean waves; (3) The land of the harbor was surrounded by hills so that it was easy to build a defending fortress; (4) The local people in Air Bangis consisted of various Indonesian ethnic groups and led by the chiefs who were not so dominating that they were easy to be influenced and occupied; and (5) The hinterlands of Air Bangis were rich in forest and agricultural products, such as gold, camphor, myrrh, rattan, dammar, coffee, and pepper (Teijman, 1857, pp. 125-6; Eschel-Kroon, 1783, pp. 19-20 and 50).

In the period of the 17th century to the 19th century, some foreign nations were noted to get involved in the friction to establish their hegemony and trading monopoly in the area of Air Bangis. They were the Acehnese, VOC, English, and the Dutch Colonial Government. Their ambitious interests resulted in a conflict in Air Bangis harbor. To name some, the local people refused the pepper monopoly policy carried out by the Acehnese; the VOC trading politic provoked the local people to expel the Acehnese and the battle between the Paderi clan with the Dutch Colonial government.

Given the above background, this study focuses on trading activities in Air Bangis during the Dutch colonial period. As elaborated earlier, it covers the Air Bangis region as it is one of the free harbor cities in the West Coast of northern Sumatra, which is always contested by foreign nations due to its richness in forest and agriculture products. This study presents historical studies based on archival and library research. The findings of this study are, therefore, expected to reveal the role of the Air Bangis harbor in sustaining such maritime trade activities in the West Coast of Sumatra during the 19th century. In addition to that, this study will enrich the maritime historiography of the West Coast of Sumatra. As such, this study will also explain the historical setting of the Air Bangis harbor, the hegemony and trade monopoly of Acehnese, VOC and English, the rise as well as the decline of trade in the Air Bangis harbor.

AIR BANGIS

The area of Air Bangis was located in the West Sumatera Coast and the northern part of the administrative area of *Gouvernement Sumatra's Westkust*. Air Bangis was bordered with Tapus River in the north, Bukit Barisan Mountain which laid behind the areas of Tapanuli and Siak in the east, *Residentie van Padang* in the south, and the Indian Ocean in the west (Teenstra, 1852, p. 345).

Air Bangis had a harbor with a wide estuary and

a gulf which was safe for ships to anchor (SWK, p. 125/6; Radermacher, 1781, p. 51). The area that became Air Bangis harbor was a swampy area with moderate forest growth, but quite deep and wide territorial waters (Osthoff, 1851, pp. 138-140).

In the beginning, Air Bangis was centered in the estuary of Air Bangis River and Sikabau River which upstream was in Malintang Mountain. Air Bangis River had a 50-meter wide estuary that the people's ships could sail to the hinterlands, such as Ujung Gading (Asnan, 2007, pp. 23-4; Radermacher, 1781, p. 51). However, as time passed by, the estuary of the Air Bangis River could no longer accommodate the big ships to anchor, not only because the mud sedimentation narrowed and shallowed the estuary, but also because there had been many ships sailed to and from the hinterlands and anchored in the estuary.

In the first quarter of 19th century, Air Bangis was under the occupation of the Dutch Indies Government. At that time, Air Bangis was divided into two parts. The first part was the ports of the estuaries of Air Bangis River and Sikabau River which were used to accommodate ships or small boats. The second part was port of Panjang Island which was used to accommodate big ships. Both ports were developed to support export and import activities in Air Bangis.

Map 1. Location of Air Bangis in the area of West Sumatra Coast



Source: Reconstructed from KITLV

The Air Bangis gulf was 7 km wide and 6-8 fathoms deep when the water receded (Muller & Horner, 1855, pp. 63-4; Van der Kemp, 1894, p. 84). The Air

Bangis gulf consisted of a series of small islands, such as Panjang Island, Tello Island, Pigago Island, Unggas Island, Tamiang Island, and Pangka Island. These islands protected the speed of the Indian Ocean waves to the coast that the harbor was safe from the strikes of big waves (Teijman, 1857, pp. 125-6).

Location of Air Bangis was astronomically closed to the equator that it had the maritime tropical climate, namely high temperature, relatively big moisture, cloud formation which was not extreme, and moderate wind movement (Lapian, 2011, p. 46). The area of Air Bangis to the area of Singkil in the North of West Sumatera Coast was the border area of the climate influenced by the south-west wind and north-west wind. The north-west and south-east winds blew in the southern area of Air Bangis to Sunda Strait (Asnan, 2007, pp. 27-8). The rainfall rate in the area of Air Bangis was at the rate of 3.102 mm per year (ENI, 1917, p. 25).

HEGEMONY AND ACEHNESE TRADE MONOPOLY

Since the Portuguese conquered and had control over Malaka Port, the Acehese Sultanate appeared to be a new economic and political power in the western and eastern areas of Sumatera. Moreover, the western area of the Malay Peninsula was also influenced by the new sultanate's presence. The government of Sultan Alauddin Ri'ayat Syah al Qahhar (1539-1571) began the Acehese sultanate's domination and reached its peak in the government of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636). The Acehese Sultanate's domination was strongly felt in the coastal towns along the areas of West Sumatera Coast, such as Daya, Labu, Singkel, Barus, Natal, Air Bangis, Pasaman, Tiku, Pariaman, Padang, and Indrapura. With the wide regional domain in the 17th century, the Acehese Sultanate was regarded as the King of Sumatera Island (Lombard, 2014, pp. 123-4, 140-1, and 143).

To tie the loyalty of the vassals, the Acehese Sultanate implemented some ways, such as a political marriage, socio-religious tie, and cultural approach. In the political marriage, the Acehese Sultanate's family married the ruler's sons and daughters of the coastal towns in order to maintain a good relationship between the two parties. In the cultural approach, the Acehese Sultanate used the Islamic cultural approach. The Acehese theologian and dignitary were sent to the towns in the West Sumatera Coast as teachers to teach religion and Islamic literature (Kathirithamby-Wells, 1969, pp. 457-8; Mansoer, 1970, pp. 74-6).

As the Acehese Sultanate's vassal, a representative

of Acehese king bearing the title of Acehese commander or who was known as harbormaster was placed in Air Bangis harbor. The harbormaster per se carried several responsibilities, such as controlling the sea voyages and trading with the rights to collect customs and excises, becoming trading agents or heads of governments in the harbors, collecting trading commodity from the hinterland areas as well as taking them to Aceh to be traded in the markets in Aceh and be exported to foreign countries. Every ship that anchored was obliged to pay custom and excises to the harbormaster. The amount changed as it was subject to the harbormaster's policy. The one stipulated by Acehese Sultanate was very high. Christian Netherlands and Englishmen had to pay 7% of their trading cost that was unloaded at the harbor, whereas the Moslems had to pay with gold. Before the 17th century, there were not any custom and excises but stamp cost (*chappe*). Stamp cost was usually paid with raw materials and money (Lombard, 2014, pp. 149-150). The Acehese Sultanate also provided the rights to the harbormasters to monopolize the trading in the harbors. The monopoly implemented by the Acehese Sultanate in Air Bangis was done by controlling all the pepper trading and obliging the pepper farmers in Pasaman (an area in Air Bangis) and Tiku to sell their harvests to the harbormasters in Air Bangis or transport them directly to the markets in Aceh. The Sultan bought the pepper in the markets in Aceh with various prices starting from 4 *real*, 20 *real*, 30 *real*, and even reaching to 40 *real* a *bahar* (1 *bahar* = 375 ponds = 185,25 kg) (Lombard, 2014, pp. 144-5).

In the trade transaction with the Europeans, the Acehese sultanate determined 54 *real* a *bahar* for the price of pepper. The Dutch and English traders usually bargained to 40 *real* a *bahar*. However, the Acehese Sultan did not want to lower the price. At that time, it was useless to oppose because they needed the pepper badly from the areas controlled by the Acehese Sultanate, and without pepper, the Dutch and English trading did not work (Lombard, 2014, p. 152).

The price of pepper implemented in Aceh was much more different from the vassals, such as in Air Bangis and other towns in the areas of West Sumatera Coast. The harbormaster's policy has caused the price difference. They monopolized the pepper trading from the local people and determined the price which was much cheaper than the price in the markets in Aceh. Consequently, many local people often opposed the harbormaster's existence. They disagreed with the harbormaster's unjust action of monopolizing the pepper trading and other commodities. However, there were

some locals who received the harbormaster's existence because they were the Acehnese who had descendants. The friction between the harbormasters and the local people often resulted in anarchy. The local people did their protest by burning down their pepper plantations and prohibited the surrounding people from replanting their plantations. The pepper commodity fell in the markets because of the local people's protest. This action made the Acehnese Sultanate's economy fell because pepper was one of the Acehnese high-ranking commodities (Mansoer, 1970, p. 87).

Until the 17th century, the Acehnese Sultanate did not have any maritime laws to protect their maritime sovereignty that the laws and controls in the sea were very weak. This condition was then used by the local traders (also called private traders) to misconduct. They made trade contracts with the Dutch and English ships. They did not sell the agricultural products to the Acehnese, but to the Europeans, such as the Dutch and English. They were definitely excited about the price offered by the Dutch and English which was much higher than the one determined by the Acehnese Sultanate. They made a transaction in the sea to avoid the harbormaster's control. The private trader's activity was known as "*Sampan Aceh*" (Mansoer, 1970, p. 161).

Given many Acehnese Boats became not loyal to the Acehnese Sultanate, the Acehnese economy was decreasing and getting worse. The friction between the harbormaster and the local people often resulted in a rebellion and termination of cooperation with the Acehnese Sultanate. Such a crucial situation was used by the third party who wanted the Acehnese's vassals to be free and independent. The third parties were VOC and English who had trading interest in the coastal towns in West Sumatera Coast, including Air Bangis. Nevertheless, the main objectives of VOC and English were to grow their influence and monopolize the trading in the Acehnese vassals and be the new rulers.

VOC

A trading armada of VOC firstly came to the area of West Sumatera Coast in 1600 under the leadership of Paulus van Kaerdan. However, the arrival of the Dutch trading armada was not welcomed by the local people. In some coastal towns, they were expelled, and the local people directly opposed them. The VOC failed to carry out the trade transaction because of the opposition. The reaction shown by the local people towards the arrivals of ships of VOC was inseparable from the Acehnese's influence which was still strong in the coastal towns in

West Sumatera Coast (Blink, 1929, pp. 5-6).

In 1665, the VOC trading ship led by Jacob Groenewegen came again to West Sumatera Coast and anchored in Air Bangis. They attempted to eradicate the Acehnese's influence, but they still failed (Kielstra, 1887, p. 516). In the middle of 17th century, VOC had propagandized to erase the Acehnese's influence not only in Air Bangis, but also in the coastal towns, such as Padang, Pariaman, Tiku, and Pasaman. In carrying out their mission, VOC sometimes used the power of the navy because they wanted to be the only ruler to monopolize the agricultural products of Minangkabau hinterlands (Asnan, 2007, pp. 60-1).

Jacob Groenewegen's failure to occupy Air Bangis harbor in 1665 did not make VOC lose their spirit. After twenty-two years, exactly in 1687, the VOC trading ships came again to Air Bangis harbor. This time, they were successful. VOC started to build their trading lodges in Air Bangis named north *Comptoir* with Air Bangis as its capital city (Asnan, 2016, p. 1).

The presence of VOC in Air Bangis harbor was not much different from what the Acehnese Sultanate had done previously, which was looking for pepper and gold from the hinterlands. Furthermore, they also carried out the trading monopol. As pepper and gold were the primary commodities of these areas, they were then tightly guarded and controlled by VOC.

The pepper collected in the warehouses in Air Bangis was delivered to Padang. In Michelsen's note, the pepper delivered from Air Bangis to Padang was calculated as much as 1,200 to 2,000 *bahar*. However, according to Kroeskam's note, the amount was only about 500 to 800 *bahar* (Kroeskamp, 1931, p. 49).

Besides pepper, the commodity monopolized by VOC was gold. The gold in Air Bangis harbor came from the hinterlands, such as Rao and Pasaman. The gold obtained was traditionally mined by the local people. The gold bought by VOC from the local people was delivered to Coromandel to be printed into gold money. The gold money was used by VOC to buy cotton from West India and South India. VOC used the cotton as a means of exchange to buy gold, pepper, and spices from the people in West Sumatera Coast, including the people from Air Bangis. The system had been carried out by VOC since 1668. From the result of trading, it was calculated that VOC got a profit of around 75% (Dobbin, 1992, p. 66 and 75). The trade monopoly was not limited to only pepper and gold. There were some other commodities monopolized, such as camphor, myrrh, dammar, rattan, opium, salt, cotton, coffee, copra, and coconut oil (Ball, 1984, pp. 154-5; Drakard, 1990, p. 33).

The power and trade monopoly of VOC started to end by the time of the arrival of foreign power competing with the trade armada and power of VOC, namely English. However, it was not the only reason. The end of the power of VOC in Air Bangis was also because the Dutch trade armada bankrupted globally. As a result, VOC was officially closed down by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1799. By the end of the VOC power, the English took over Air Bangis.

ENGLISCH MONOPOLY

English fleet of warships entered the area of West Sumatera Coast and occupied Padang on 30th November 1795. At the same day, the English directly opened their representative posts in Air Bangis and Cingkuak Island (Kielstra, 1887, pp. 16-7). The English regional domain covered the areas which were formerly occupied by VOC. The areas were transferred to English based on the King of Nederland's order, William V, who escaped to English after his country was occupied by France (Amran, 1981, pp. 350-1).

The power of English in Air Bangis was almost the same as the other posts in the area of West Sumatera Coast. Air Bangis is made as the places to market their merchandise and places to get pepper, gold, and other spices. The English were actually better than the VOC to market their products, such as cloth. The weakness of VOC to market cloth was used by the English by supplying much cheaper cloth than VOC.

Air Bangis was crowded by the English trading ships. At least 200 ships anchored in Air Bangis from Madras, Bengali, and Bombay (Kathirithamby-Wells, 1977, pp. 147-161). They sold cloth and exchanged them with camphor, myrrh, pepper, and gold carried by the people from the hinterlands who came to Air Bangis. The English not only sold cloth at a lower price but also provided credit to the private businessmen in Air Bangis. The tactic carried out by the English was smooth monopoly system because they firstly wanted to get the sympathy from the people before building a strong relation and trade network (Dobbin, 1992: 109).

The domain of English in Air Bangis lasted for 30 years. In 1814, English transferred the areas of West Sumatera Coast back to the Dutch Government through London Convention. However, Thomas Stamford Raffles as the English governor in *Sumatra's Westkust* was unwilling to transfer the area under his government to the Dutch Government at least until 1819 (excluding Air Bangis, Natal, and Tapanuli). After the London Convention in 1824, the three areas, namely Air Bangis,

Natal, and Tapanuli were transferred to English in 1825 (Asnan, 2006, pp. 31-2).

PROSPERITY OF AIR BANGIS

The end of 1825 was the beginning of the Dutch Colonial Government in the area of Air Bangis. They did not want to lose the chance to broaden the areas and do the trading monopoly in the northern area of West Sumatera Coast.

The occupation of Air Bangis was one of the initial steps of the Dutch's strategies to boycott the movement and trading of Paderi in the northern area of West Sumatera Coast. During this time, Air Bangis had become one of the marketing centers for gold, pepper, and other commodities from the hinterlands under the control of the Paderi clan. From this harbor, the Paderi clan interacted with the foreigners, such as Acehnese, Europeans (except the Dutch), Chinese, and other groups of traders to buy equipment for war and other daily needs. The interaction carried out by the Paderi clan with the traders took the form of free trading (Asnan, 2007, p. 85).

The main Paderi clan's trading partner was the Acehnese traders because there had been a relation tied up among the Acehnese traders and the local people before the Dutch occupied this area. The Dutch Government considered the trading activities of the Paderi clan with the Acehnese traders as illegal. The actors involved in the trading activities were called *smokelhandler* (smuggler) by the Dutch Government (Asnan, 2007, p. 86).

The existence of *smokelhandler* pioneered by the Paderi traders in the area of Air Bangis disturbed the Dutch traders' monopoly because a lot of commodities from the hinterlands were not traded to the Dutch. Consequently, the Dutch Government in Air Bangis tightened the system of the commodities that went in and out from the hinterlands to the harbor and closed the routes access of the Paderi traders to the coast. This action triggered the Paderi Clan's anger since Air Bangis and some of the coastal towns in the northern area of West Sumatera Coast were the Paderi clan's domains. The friction between the Dutch Government and the Paderi clan in Air Bangis reached its peak in 1831 which resulted in a loss to the Paderi clan (Damste, 1906, p. 290; Hamka, 2008, p. 314).

After the Dutch won the attack against the Paderi in Air Bangis, military fortresses were built and filled in with the strong weaponry equipment. In 1837, Air Bangis was made the capital city of *Residentie Air Bangis* (Air Bangis Residency) (*Besluit 29 November 1837*, ANRI). To support the status as the capital city, the Dutch Colonial Government built a lot of government facilities

and public facilities, such as government infrastructure, harbor facilities, military quarters, hospitals, housing, stores, post offices, and so on (Nur, 2004, p. 105).

As a maritime city, the main attention of the development of Air Bangis was centered in the surrounding harbor located on the coastline and estuary of Air Bangis River. The objective of building the harbor was to improve the trading activities. The facilities built in Air Bangis were piers, warehouses, offices, and others. The initial work carried out by the Dutch Government was to move the center of the pier which was used to be in Panjang Island to the estuary of Air Bangis River in the coastline of Air Bangis city (Nur, 2004, p. 104). However, the pier in Panjang Island was not closed down. Panjang Island pier still served the big ships that anchored, uploaded, and loaded goods. While the new pier was used to deal with the administration, trading, food collection and water supply for ships on the coastline of Air Bangis city. For that purpose, the Dutch Indies Government settlements provided small ships as transportation connecting the pier in Air Bangis city with Panjang Island Pier. Moreover, lighthouses were also built in the pier in Air Bangis city and Panjang Island. The reason behind the buildings of the two lighthouses was actually to improve the supervision and security of sea voyages and trading in Air Bangis gulf from the pirates.

Other facilities built in Air Bangis were warehouses which were divided into two parts. The first part of the warehouse was to keep the food supply. The second one was to collect the various commodities (called entrepot). The warehouse was not only used by the government, but also by the traders who wanted to rent. The rent in Air Bangis in 1866 was f. 13.07, but it was dramatically going down to be f. 3.38, and in 1868 was f. 2.51 in 1887 (*Overzicht van den Handel en ...*, summarize from 1866-1868). The rising and falling cost of warehouse rent in Air Bangis was usually influenced by the traders' interest and export commodities available in the harbor. The more available the export commodities were, the more traders came to the harbor.

Besides, there were office facilities as the supporting infrastructure to control the uploading and loading, export and import activities, etc. The offices in Air Bangis Harbor were the duty and custom representative office under the harbormaster, the representative office of *Nederlands Handel Maatschappij* (NHM), and the others (Asnan, 2007, pp. 97-8; Mansvelt, 1824-1826, pp. 55-57).

In 1839, the Dutch Colonial Government made policy by making Air Bangis as a free harbor for public trading (export-import). Natal harbor was closed down for public trading and only used for coastal sea voyages

or harbor for small trading (*kleine handel*) (*Besluit 4 February 1939*, ANRI; *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indie*, 1841, p. 40). The policy made Air Bangis a crowded export-import harbor in the northern area of West Sumatera Coast.

The peak prosperity of Air Bangis was in 1839-1870. During that period, Air Bangis became the *prima donna* in the northern area of West Sumatera Coast because it became a free harbor that could serve various foreign ships and was supported by the presence of NHM representative. Moreover, in the following years, the Government of Dutch Indies Government opened a sea route for *Nederlandsch Indische Stoomvaart Maatschappij* (NISM) and *Koninkelijke Paketvaart Maatschappij* (KPM) in Air Bangis harbor. NISM and KPM were shipping companies subsidized or owned by West Indies Government to serve trading and sailing activities in Netherlands East Indies. The main point was actually to execute trading and sailing monopoly (Asnan, 2007, p. 278).

The opening of sea route for NISM and KPM in Air Bangis supported the development of the harbor. By the presence of the two shipping companies, the development of sea trade network in Air Bangis was getting broader that the regional reach with the forelands (places across) was getting broader, too. The trading route in Air Bangis was initially dependent on the route made by the traders in this region. Not only with the forelands, but this harbor also had the trade network with the hinterlands connected by the rivers and footpaths. The famous trade route in this area connected Air Bangis with Rao in the hinterland (Muller & Horner, 1855, pp. 64-5; Asnan, 2007, p. 144).

Trade and sea voyage activities in Air Bangis were supported by the availability of rich export commodities in the hinterlands and the demand of many import commodities of the people in Air Bangis and the hinterlands. The export and import commodities in Air Bangis varied a lot. The export commodities in Air Bangis were gold, coffee, camphor, and the agricultural products (Eschels-Kroon, 1783, pp. 19-20; Drakard, 1990, p. 33), while the import commodities were salt, pottery, kerosene, opium, and equipment for ships (Nur, 2004, pp. 101-2). Of all the import commodities, salt was the one monopolized and strictly controlled by the Dutch Government. Salt was sold with the high price f. 05.00 per load in Air Bangis, whereas f. 06.00 per load in the hinterlands (Van der Kemp, 1894, pp. 148-150).

As the trade city, export and import activities in Air Bangis had provided income to the Dutch government. The following is the export and import values in Air Bangis in 1846-1868. See table 1.

Table 1. Value of export and import in Air Bangis in 1846-1868 in gulden.

Year	Import Value			Export Value		
	Goods	Currency	Total	Goods	Currency	Total
1846	186,071	14,826	200,897	156,682	56,723	213,405
1847	131,424	5,301	136,725	130,739	11,320	142,059
1848	182,520	10,431	192,951	111,048	25,778	136,826
1849	108,209	60,397	168,606	85,123	20,045	105,168
1850	101,931	1,102	103,033	74,345	1,664	76,009
1851	133,785	1,565	135,350	74,704	3,832	78,536
1852	106,471	977	107,448	81,041	887	81,928
1853	91,665	345	92,010	84859	2,048	86,907
1854	122,520	2,427	124,947	104,645	7,352	111,997
1855	164,998	538	165,536	110,967	4,981	115,948
1856	153,471	3,667	157,138	115,461	4,516	119,977
1857	-	-	-	-	-	-
1858	2,566	-	2,566	300	-	300
1859	281	-	281	300	-	300
1860	176	-	176	1,105	-	1,105
1861	418	-	418	60	-	60
1862	562	-	562	20	-	20
1863	55	-	55	-	-	-
1864	474	-	474	-	-	-
1865	817	-	817	6,091	-	6,091
1866	9,584	-	9,584	-	-	-
1867	1,650	-	1,650	-	-	-
1868	11,797	-	11,797	140	-	140
Total			1,613,201			1,276,776

Source: *Overzicht van den Handel en de Scheepvaart in de Nederlandsche Bezettingen in de Oost-Indie Buiten Java en Madura, (summerize from 1846-1868); and also see Archive Sumatra's Westkust (Swk.) No. 126/13, Jaarlijksch Verslag van het Sumatra's Westkust, 1856, ANRI.*

The data from the table showed that the total import value was higher than the export. In the first eleven-year period (1846-1856), the export and import activities were still high, but in the second half period (1858-1868), it reversed; the values of export and import fell. Moreover, there were not any reports on the export and import values in 1857. The decrease of export and import values was due to the position of Padang which was getting stronger as the centers of political and economic activities in the area of West Sumatera Coast. These were the factors that caused the decrease of the export and import activities

in Air Bangis and harbors in the coastal towns along the area of West Sumatra Coast.

The big income from the trading and sea voyage activities in Air Bangis attracted the Dutch Government to get much profit. They implemented customs/taxes in the harbor. The customs/taxes implemented were various, such as for the export-import, regional, market, harbor, towing money, head, the opium trade, tobacco, gambier, chicken, journey, mining, and blacksmithing. The value of the taxes that should be paid varied; some were based on the quantity of the goods, and some were based on the

government's decision (Asnan, 2007, pp. 90-1).

The development of sea voyages and trading in Air Bangis were supported by the various groups of businessmen; some were European, foreign Easterner, and local. The Europeans also had the roles as the *transportaannemers* (right holders of the transportation service supply) licensed by the Dutch Government to operate some transportation facilities to transport the people and goods to and from Air Bangis (Asnan, 2007, pp. 110-111). The foreign eastern businessmen, the Chinese, had the roles to make trading companies, such as Lie Gieng, Lie Matjiau, Lie Sing, and Hoi Atjou. The trading companies influenced the trading and sea voyage activities in the harbor. Many of them became the agents between the local businessmen and the European (Asnan, 2007, pp. 119-120). The other business the Chinese dealt with were to be ship operators, carpenters, oil makers, and bakers (SWK, p. 27/24). Some of the local businessmen had the roles as small traders and some others as ship owners (Asnan, 2007, pp. 124-5).

FALLING OF AIR BANGIS

The aforementioned prosperity of Air Bangis did not last long. The indications of the sea voyages and trading decreases in Air Bangis harbor in the last quarter of the 19th century were due to some factors. First, the topography of Air Bangis which was located in the narrow- swampy low land (Osthoff, 1851, pp. 138-140). Because of the topography, the Dutch Government had a problem to pile the land in order to widen the harbor.

Second, the financial condition. The central government and Financial Directorate in Batavia did not agree to the development proposal to widen the harbor and city of Air Bangis that they did not disburse the fund (SWK, p. 151/2). Consequently, the development of Air Bangis and city was neglected that sea voyages and trading activities ran down. The businessmen, such as the Chinese, Indian, and Arabic who had been living there, suffered a loss. Then they chose to move to Padang harbor and Sibolga (*Kolonial Verslag* 1902, Bijlage A.). Their moving eventually made the sea voyages and trading activities worse.

Third, the spreading of malaria in Air Bangis. Malaria spread very fast and became the scaring epidemic in Air Bangis as a result of the swampy-natural environment of Air Bangis. Furthermore, there were so many water absorptions clogged in the people's settlements that caused puddles of water. Besides, the rain intensity in this area was high (Nur, 2004, p. 130).

Fourth, the government which changed the sea

voyage and trading policy and implemented the tax. Air Bangis was no longer a free export- import harbor for the public trading because of the growth of Padang city as the economic and political centers in the area of West Sumatera Coast. With the existence of the policy, the export commodities from Air Bangis harbor should be transported first to Padang, and the import goods got into Air Bangis from Padang (Asnan, 2007, p. 163). The Dutch Government issued a tax policy in 1888 to be implemented in all harbors in the area of West Sumatera Coast, including Air Bangis. The tax policy was still improved in 1891 so that the sale value of the local people's export commodities was cheap and contradicted to the purchase value determined as expensive (Kroon, 1917, p. 348 and 503).

Fifth, the development of land transportation and road buildings in the hinterlands which consumed the fund and time of the colonial government. The highway was built to connect the area of Air Bangis harbor with Rao in 1851. The route passed Ujung Gading, Air Hadji, Muara Kiawai, Simpang Empat, Talu, and Lundar (BOW, 1854-1933, p. 2683). The objective of building the road was to facilitate the traders from the hinterlands to transport their merchandise to the coastal areas that it would increase the trading and sea voyage activities, but it failed because the Dutch Government was too busy with the administrative areas in the hinterlands. The trading and sea voyage activities in Air Bangis were ever-decreasing after the building of roads from Natal-Mandailing-Tarutung-Medan and connection of roads from Bukit Tinggi-Bonjol-Rao-Muara Sipongi-Mandailing-Medan was finished in 1912. Consequently, the commodities from the hinterlands were not transported to Air Bangis anymore, but to Padang and Sibolga (*Verslag over de BOW*, 1917, pp. 71-2; SWK, p. 125/7).

Sixth, the development of West Sumatera Coast at the end of 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century which experienced such a fast economic-growth due to the openings of various big plantations. In a very relatively short time, West Sumatera Coast had become the most critical big-plantation areas in Sumatera Island (Blink, 1926, p. 101). The Dutch Indies Government seemed to follow the development that they focused more on the areas. The policy to make West Sumatera Coast be the main concentration for their economic activities in Sumatera Island started to weaken. The opening of the route of NISM directly from Padang to Penang harbor and Singapore could be seen as the proof of self-adjustment of the Dutch Indies Government on the new development (Asnan, 2007, p. 319).

CONCLUSION

Air Bangis was only a small harbor for the people's ships or boats that wanted to sail to the hinterlands from Air Bangis River to Sikabau River. From the 17th century to 19th century, Air Bangis harbor was under various dominations. The Acehnese was the first ruler that implemented the trading monopoly in Air Bangis. Besides Acehnese, Air Bangis was also influenced by the Europeans, such as the Dutch trading armada (VOC) and English. By the middle of 19th century, Air Bangis was colonized by the Dutch Indies Government. Friction always happened when the foreigners tried to establish their hegemony and trading monopoly. The friction not only happened among the foreigners who wanted to dominate but also with the local people who disliked their existence.

In the middle of the 19th century, the Dutch Government made Air Bangis a free harbor. The policy provided fresh air to the development of the harbor. The Dutch Government, in the end, completed the facilities and infrastructure to accommodate the sea voyages and trading activities. This harbor, then, was functioned as an export-import harbor from and to various countries in the world. The main export from Air Bangis were nature and agricultural products. Before the 19th century, the main export commodities from Air Bangis were gold, forest products (rattan, camphor, myrrh) and agricultural product, such as pepper. After the harbor developed in the 19th century, some of the main export commodities changed in this area, such as coffee, be it the coffee from the government plantation or the people's and copra.

Air Bangis definitely had a role for its surrounding areas. The role could be seen in export-import activities in the harbor. Besides, it also played a role as the Dutch economic and political centers in the northern area of West Sumatera Coast, specifically when it was made as the capital city of Air Bangis Residency.

By the end of the 20th century, the role of Air Bangis harbor in the export-import activities started to decline. There were many things that caused the decline. One of which because Sibolga was made as the new colonial-political and economic centers in the northern area of West Sumatera Coast.

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