

CALCULATING MERCHANT RULERS AND CULTIVATING
COLONIAL SUBJECTS: COFFEE CULTIVATION IN
JAVA AND SRI LANKA UNDER THE DUTCH EAST
INDIA COMPANY, TO 1740 A.D.*

K.W.GOONEWARDENA

PART I - JAVA

"A species of black beans from which they make a black water and drink warm." This naive observation made from Mocha by Pieter van den Broecke in 1616, was, says de Jonge¹, the Dutch East India Company's first contact with coffee. Its active participation in the coffee trade, however, became notable only towards the last quarter of the seventeenth century when the drinking of coffee became a fashion in Europe and coffee-houses were springing up all over the continent, particularly in England and France and, rather more belatedly, in the Netherlands.

* The author acknowledges with gratitude that this paper originates from research into Sri Lankan history made possible, by a Visiting Commonwealth Fellowship held at the S.O.A.S., London, and by support from the University of Peradeniya.

1. J.K.J.de Jonge, De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indie, Vol.VIII (Hague/Amsterdam, 1875) (hereafter cited as: De Jonge) p.CXXIV; cf. also P.A.Leupe, "Invoering der Koffijkultuur op Java, 1700-1750" in Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Indie (Amsterdam 1859) (hereafter cited as: Leupe; p.54 and Kristof Glamann, Dutch-Asiatic Trade, 1620-1740 (Copenhagen/Hague 1958) (hereafter cited as: Glamann) p.183.

After some fantastically high profits obtained during most of the sixteen-nineties at the auctions in the Netherlands, the turn of the century saw a somewhat more sober market for the Mocha coffee. But before long it picked up, both as regards price, and, even more impressively, as regards the volume of demand. Although the Heeren XVII (the Directors of the V.O.C.) sometimes blew hot and cold with regard to their orders for coffee from Mocha whenever there were significant fluctuations in the home market, it had nevertheless become one of the most important and profitable commodities of the Dutch Company by the second² decade of the century, as they themselves stated in 1712. Around that time, however, the Heeren XVII were about to receive coffee from a new source of supply which presented prospects of even more pleasing profits. That source was the island of Java where the V.O.C.'s Asian headquarters of Batavia was situated.

An examination of early eighteenth century coffee cultivation in Java was thought to be relevant and instructive, in regard to the projected study of the cultivation of that plant (also under the aegis of the V.O.C.) in Sri Lanka - and that, for several reasons. For instance, cultivation in Sri Lanka was attempted more than a decade after the Governor-General and Council at Batavia had organized systematic cultivation in Java, at the instance of the Directors; therefore, the Batavian experience must undoubtedly have had its influence on the experiment in Sri Lanka. Moreover, it is natural to expect that even after the cultivation got going in this island, developments in Java relating to coffee would have begun to impinge on the position of the new producer, and the latter in turn would have had an impact on cultivation considerations in Java. The fact that the Heeren XVII ultimately decided to favour coffee cultivation in one island more than in the other is yet another reason to make us pay some attention to the developments in coffee cultivation in Java.

2. For the above, see Glamann pp.186-94.

There are further reasons, of a rather different nature from the above, which make some comparative study - even to a limited extent - desirable. For instance, if any policies and methods adopted by the V.O.C. officials in Sri Lanka were different from those adopted in Java, they might point to, and illumine significant differences in the traditional economic, social, and administrative background in Sri Lanka as against the latter region. Any differences between the reactions of the subject peoples in the two islands towards the colonial coffee policies might serve a similar purpose, as also would any significant differences (as between the two areas) in the relationships between, say, the chiefs and the ordinary people. It goes without saying that similarities would throw their own special light on economic and social history.

Quite apart from all these considerations, one also finds that an excursion into the history of coffee cultivation in Java has an absorbing interest and value all its own. Thus, despite certain limitations imposed by considerations of objective, of time and space, and by reliance, for the most part, on printed documents and secondary material, that excursion has turned out to be so extensive that what had been projected as a history of coffee cultivation in Sri Lanka has had to be divided into two parts, the first dealing with Java and the second with Sri Lanka. Having made these preliminary remarks we can now go on to consider something of the history of the cultivation of coffee in Java.

At a time of very high sale prices of coffee in Europe but, at the same time, of great difficulties in procuring supplies from Asia⁴ the Heeren XVII were excited at the news that coffee was to be found growing in Java itself. Accordingly, on the 17th February 1707 they wrote to Governor-General Johan van Hoorn & Council asking for various particulars relating to cultivation, prices and quantities, and also for a sample. They further stated that if this product which was so much in demand at the time could be cultivated and

3. For previous work relating to Java coffee see Appendix: Select Bibliographical Note.

4. Glamann, p.192

promoted "successfully in our own lands and colonies, we would not be wanting in making our benevolence and favour felt by those who do so or have already paved the way and contributed towards that objective."⁵

Van Hoorn who had taken to coffee cultivation as a hobby⁶ some years earlier, immediately sent the required information along with two sackfuls of coffee beans. He further explained how he had already given coffee plants to the native chiefs both in the Batavia region and in the more outlying Cheribon, and encouraged them to take to its planting. At the same time he stressed that this culture would have to be fostered not only by the united goodwill of the Batavian Government but also by the powerful support and continuingly steady orders of the Heeren XVII themselves. The emphasis on this latter aspect, de Jonge points out, was because Van Hoorn knew from experience how changeable the orders of the XVII could be in regard to the cultivation of various products, depending generally on the state of the market in the Netherlands .

That this aspect of the Directors' policies was likely to apply to coffee cultivation also, was clearly implied in a communication sent by them not long after the above statement of Van Hoorn's. By their missive of 5th November 1711, they expressed satisfaction with the progress being made in coffee culture and indicated their expectation of better results with regard to the quantum of the coffee production than with regard to that of the indigo which latter crop, they admitted, was a more troublesome one for the natives to grow although what little that was being produced was of high quality. To encourage the Javanese to produce increasing quantities of coffee, the XVII suggested

5. de Jonge, VIII pp. CXXXV-VI; Leupe, p.56.

6. de Jonge, VIII pp. CXXXV-VI.

7. Ibid. CXXXVI.

that they should be paid something more than even what was required for subsistence, even as much as 12 to 15 stuivers per pound⁸. But the ominous qualification to the effect that these prices were authorised "for the time being" /voor eerst/ clearly foreshadowed reductions in price when the XVII should think it desirable.

Meanwhile, with the active encouragement of the Governor-General & Council, cultivation of the new plant progressed, rather haltingly at first, more steadily thereafter, and, finally, by leaps and bounds. In November 1711, the Batavian authorities could report that they had collected 894 lbs. that year; two years later the amount collected was 1,774 lbs.; in 1715/16 it was 9,084 lbs.; two years later that amount itself was quadrupled; and in 1721/22 the increase was nearly seventeen times the amount received in 1718/19. In 1723 nearly a million pounds was shipped to the Netherlands and in the collection year 1723/24 the Batavian authorities received 1,804,797 lbs. of coffee into their stores. There was now no doubt that the culture of coffee had become a resounding success in Java.

-
8. Ibid. CXXXVII. Twenty stuivers made one guilder or florin and was roughly equivalent to the English florin. Whilst the V.O.C. accounts were kept in guilders, stuivers and penningen (or pennies) local transactions at Batavia and many other places in the East - as far as the V.O.C. was concerned - were reckoned in relation to the rix-dollar. The rix-dollar was reckoned at 48 "heavy" (swaare) stuivers (or stuivers Hollants) and 60 "light" (lighte) stuivers. The stuiver of account was the heavy stuiver. It was important, therefore, to note whether light or heavy stuivers were being referred to in the documents. As for weights, the Dutch pound was 0.494 kg. or about 1.09 lb. avdp. See C.R.Boxer, The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800, (London, 1973 - Pelican impression) Appendix III p. 341 and Uytrekening Van de Goude en Silvere Munts Waardye, Inhout der Maten En Swaarte der Gewigten, In de Respective Gewesten van Indien. (Middelburg, 1691) pp. 1 and 3.
9. de Jonge, VIII p. CXXXVII; cf. also Glamann, p.208.

Chiefs and people had both taken to coffee cultivation with enthusiasm. Governor-General Zwaardecroon and his Council reported to the Heeren XVII that the Javanese had displayed a remarkable pleasure and satisfaction when they received payment for their coffee as they had realised that with that money they were in a position to buy rice and other necessary things¹⁰. This remark suggests that at this time the poorer Javanese were also participating in this cultivation and benefiting from it, along with the chiefs. The Batavian authorities, however, considered it their duty to point out to their superiors that production could outstrip demand; because there was no lack of land and no lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Javanese, who, it was also said, otherwise had the reputation of being lazy¹¹.

When, in the mid-1720s the Heeren XVII took stock of the position of Java coffee, they had reason to be thoroughly pleased. From having supplied less than one-tenth, Java had come to supply over two-thirds of the coffee which they were offering for sale in Europe¹² - and the production trends in Java, as reported by Governor-General & Council, were such that it would in all probability be soon able to supply all of the Company's requirements, displacing Mocha altogether as a source of supply, if so desired.

Besides, from the Company's point of view, Java had great advantages over Mocha. The supplies from the latter were more uncertain and subject to the control of an independent authority, unlike the coffee areas of Java

10. de Jonge, IX p. XVIII

11. Ibid. pp. 85, 76.

12. Glamann, pp. 206, 208.

which were almost completely under the Company's control¹³. Moreover, as the V.O.C. bought coffee at Mocha in competition with other European rivals as well as with Asian merchants, the cost there tended to be much higher than in Java where the Company had fixed its own price. Thus, for example, whilst coffee purchased at Mocha had in 1723 cost the Dutch 17 stuivers and 8 penningen (or 0.88 of a florin or guilder) per pound, in the following year 19 stuivers and 6 penningen (or 0.97 guilders), and in 1725 full 22 stuivers (or 1.2 guilders), the Java coffee had all the time been fixed at

-
13. The servants of both the Dutch and English Companies complained frequently about the arbitrary exactions of the Mocha officials and of bribes that had often to be given in order to get business done. But K.N.Chaudhuri in The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760 (New Delhi 1978) - hereafter cited as Chaudhuri-at pp.370-73 shows that there was another side to the story. For serious doubts raised as to whether European merchants really paid all the bribes, alleged by them to have been paid to Asian officials and others, see K.W.Goonewardena, "Ayutthia in the Twilight Years and Its Triangular Relations with the V.O.C. and Sri Lanka" (Paper submitted to the International Conference on Thai Studies, New Delhi, Feb. 1981) pp. 23,24, 65-67.

8 stuivers (or 0.4 guilders) the pound¹⁴. What was more, the Javanese coffee had sold in the auctions in the Netherlands at only two or three stuivers less per pound than the Mocha product. Thus we know by calculating from the contemporary printed price lists that at the Amsterdam auctions in 1723 whilst the Mocha coffee rendered f 0.31 per pound more than the purchase price at Mocha, the Java coffee yielded f 0.60 to f 0.66 per pound more than the purchase price in Java. The position was similar with regard also to the auctions of the Zeeland Chamber of the V.O.C. that year. It was apparent, therefore, that the margin of profit on the Java coffee (purchase and sale prices alone being considered) was about twice that on the Mocha coffee¹⁵.

-
14. The purchase price of 8 stuivers (heavy) for the Java coffee had first been fixed by Governor-General van Riebeeck on 14 April 1711, as can be seen from J.A. van der Chijs, Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek, 1602-1811 (hereafter cited as van der Chijs) Part IV (Batavia/Hague 1887) p.11 and de Jonge IX p.85. For the Mocha prices referred to, see Governor-General & Council (GG&C) to XVII, 26 March 1725, Koloniaal Archief (hereafter K.A.) of the Algemeen Rijksarchief at the Hague, No.1898 (Bd.6) f.2588 and Glamann, p.201. It has to be noted, however, that in his calculations at pp.206 and 208, Glamann has confused "light" suivers with "heavy" and has failed to see that the purchase price of 10 stuivers per pound in respect of Java coffee should refer to "light" stuivers. Thus the profits on the Java coffee prior to 1726 were far more than Glamann visualized. In the present article the stuivers referred to are "heavy" except where specifically stated otherwise.
15. For the auction prices, see Sri Lanka National Archives (henceforth S.L.N.A.) 1/794, unpaginated. It is known that Amsterdam and Zeeland together accounted for about 3/4 of the coffee sales. Cf. also Glamann, pp. 201,206-07. As the Mocha coffee was first taken to Galle (a V.O.C. port in Sri Lanka) and then sent on to Europe, the hypothetical freight costs of that coffee could not have been less than that of the Java coffee. For further factors that enhanced the profitability of Java coffee, see pp.68-69 below.

Despite the undoubtedly much higher profitability of Java coffee, the Directors, however, decided not to withdraw from the trade at Mocha, but only to reduce their purchases there and to eliminate fixed establishment costs by giving up the V.O.C. Residency and, instead, merely sending a ship each year for coffee purchases there.

At least five considerations appear to have motivated them to continue the Mocha trade (though on a more limited scale than before). One was the ever-present hope of selling goods at a profit at Mocha (or the Red Sea region, in general); and financing, part at least, of the coffee purchases out of those profits; in fact, the problem of finding bullion to finance purchases was so acute at this time that in buying coffee mere barter with little profit seemed to have been preferable to disbursement of bullion at - in other respects - somewhat more advantageous terms. One can guess that a second consideration must have been the desirability of being in a position to offer the best coffee¹⁶, even in limited quantities, to the more fastidious customers or the connoisseurs of good coffee who preferred the Mocha variety to the Javanese - although in a fit of pique and anger the Directors were soon to go on record saying there was really no difference in taste between them - whatever "a group of lumpen Turks and Persians" might say! A third consideration was given explicit expression in their letters. By participating in the trade at Mocha they wished to push up the price there to such an extent that their European rivals would find the competition with the cheaper Java coffee of the V.O.C. in the European coffee market all the more disadvantageous. In Asia, too, they hoped with their cheaper Java coffee to drive the European and Asian traders with Mocha coffee out of the markets, especially in Surat and Persia¹⁷. A fourth consideration must, of course, have been the desirability of keeping the Mocha contacts alive in case Java supplies were disrupted through unforeseen troubles or

16. But see p.62 below for another angle to these purchases.

17. For this idea and for the denigration of the tastes of the Turks and Persians, see Glamann, pp.208-11, and pp.58-62 below.

problems on that island¹⁸. Connected with this was a fifth reason. The XVII did not wish to see the Javanese alone supplying all the coffee as that might put so much money and power into their hands as to make them a threat to the Company¹⁹.

While they decided thus to participate in the Mocha trade in a more limited manner, the Heeren XVII also decided that the profitable position in regard to Java coffee should be made even more profitable - by greatly reducing the price paid to the Javanese for their coffee. They were doubtless influenced in this decision to some extent by a rather steady decline in the sale prices of coffee in Europe between 1719 and 1723²⁰. But more decisive appears to have been a confident feeling that coffee cultivation in Java could now be manipulated in the same manner as the production of spices had been controlled by them in the Moluccas. Hence the suggestion made to the Batavian authorities that if production could not be properly limited by price reduction it could be done by extirpation of the trees. The XVII also expressed the view that the reduction in price could be further accentuated by making payments partly in goods, in which the Company would be making big profits, and partly in cash. This device would also reduce the run on Batavia's cash which had begun to cause concern²¹.

-
18. As a matter of fact, the V.O.C. had re-established a residence at Mocha by the 1730s which was given up again around 1739. See KA 2344 f.209.
19. See the words of the XVII quoted in van der Chijs, IV. p.184. For a probable sixth reason see p.62 below. It should be noted in that connection that some Mocha coffee purchases were essential if any of the Java coffee was going to be passed off as Mocha coffee.
20. Cf. the statistics in Glamann, Appendix C Table VI p.285.
21. The idea of profiting in this manner by part payment in goods had occurred first to Zwaardecroon & C. cf. on the above, de Jonge, IX. pp.85,92.

At the close of 1724, on receipt of these instructions, Governor-General Hendrick Zwaardecroon, who was a horticultural enthusiast and a great protagonist of coffee culture in Java (he himself being a producer and supplier of coffee) decided to effect some element of price reduction only by making payments in commodities at a profit. However, because of the great unwillingness of the Javanese to accept more than one-fourth of the payment in textiles, he had to pay the remaining three-fourths in cash. On the textiles, nevertheless, the Company was profiting 100%²².

Though Zwaardecroon and his Council did not wish to make any other price reduction, Mattheus de Haan, who succeeded to the Governor-Generalship towards the middle of 1725, had no such hesitations. He was prepared to go all the way with the Directors - or even beyond - in reducing purchase prices. He effected a preliminary reduction by half shortly after his assumption of office²³ and proposed a further reduction the following year.

In a document placed before the Indies Council, (the Hooge Regeering) on 15th January 1726, de Haan gave three main reasons for the proposed reductions. One was the acute shortage of cash which had been prevalent at Batavia for quite some time, and which at that moment made it impossible to pay for the coffee that was being delivered. The second was the fear that a plentiful supply would cause a marked decrease in the sale price of coffee in the Netherlands. Both these factors had been more or less anticipated by the Directors in their instructions to Zwaardecroon earlier. The third reason, however, was more political than economic and a rather novel one, and de Haan

-
22. Realia. Register op de Generale Resolutien van het Kasteel Batavia, 1632-1805 (hereafter cited as Realia) ed. by J.A. van der Chijs, 3 vols. (Hague/Batavia 1882-85) I.p.298. For the orders of the XVII and the "price" reduction see: de Jonge, IX.pp.160-61; Realia, I.p.263; J.J.van Klaveren, The Dutch Colonial System in the East Indies (Rotterdam 1953) (hereafter cited as van Klaveren) p.61.
23. Realia, I.p.298; de Jonge, IX.pp.92, 159; van Klaveren, p.61.

considered it to be more important than even the others. This was the alleged wealth and opulence of the Javanese chiefs caused by their receipt of high prices for the delivered coffee and the implications of this in view of what he considered to be their rebellious nature. He asserted that this wealth could be utilised to create a dangerous threat to the Company - particularly because these chiefs had allegedly begun to purchase firearms in recent days. He argued that the Company should, therefore, not make itself "still more powerless by transferring yet more treasures into their purses." As later developments were also to show, there does not appear to have been much substance in this last argument, but it was of such a nature that none of his fellow-councillors were likely to venture on a contradiction, more particularly because de Haan's ostensibly anxious concern over security was likely to go down well with the Directors at home, for the latter had already indicated apprehension of the Javanese becoming too rich and powerful²⁴.

As it was, the Council accepted these views and by the secret resolution of that same date (15th January 1726), the price to be paid for coffee was drastically reduced to two stuivers per pound, and thus by three-fourths the price that had obtained in 1723. The reduction was made applicable to all areas, though some very slight upward adjustment of price was stipulated for land which they

24. and may have given de Haan the cue. See p.10 above and van der Chijs, IV.p.184. For de Haan's ideas and proposals and the consequent decisions, see de Jonge, IX.pp.100-110; cf. also ibid. 92-94 and regarding the reductions in price, see further the table between pp. 160 and 161, also in de Jonge, IX.

considered to be private²⁵ (and which, incidentally, supplied, on average, less than a tenth of the total coffee delivered). It may also be noted that the burden of the price reduction was further weighted by a doubling of the "over-weight" of 5 lbs. that had hitherto been additionally demanded with every picol of 125 pounds.

When de Haan had sounded the Javanese chiefs on the projected reduction in purchase price, some of them had pointed out that three-fifths of the new price barely covered the transport costs. The Governor-General claimed, however, that he had convinced them that the new price would still leave them with more profits than the production of sugar (in which also some of them had been engaged).

Despite this claim, de Haan apparently expected some adverse reactions from the Javanese because he renewed a placaat, or regulation, of 1723 against smuggling in coffee, making its provisions even more rigorous. At the same time he issued another amplified placaat forbidding, under severe penalties, non-Christian²⁶ natives from buying, selling,

-
25. Lands (mostly situated in an around Batavia) which had been sold, leased, or otherwise granted by the V.O.C. to Europeans or other non-Javanese attached to the Company's cause were categorised as "private" lands and favoured. But the lands that had continued to be traditionally held by native Javanese chiefs and people were classified by the Dutch authorities as being Company's lands, or domains, from which feudal-style dues and services were owing to the lord, namely the V.O.C. See further, p.14n.28, pp.34,35,41,42 below.
26. Security-wise the Christians, most of whom appear to have been of non-Javanese origin, were considered safe, and in many respects they were favoured above the non-Christian Javanese. For this placaat, see van der Chijs, IV.pp. 189-90 and de Jonge, IX.p.94. For the Dutch colonial status system, see W.F.Wertheim, Indonesian Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change, 2nd revd. ed. 2nd imp. (Hague 1964) p.136.

using, or possessing fire-arms and stipulating the immediate surrender of any already possessed. This was apparently to underline the political and security alarms which he had already sounded in relation to the Javanese chiefs. It is also possible that he feared the repercussions of the drastic lowering of prices more than he openly disclosed. Further hints of the expected unpopularity of the price-reduction are furnished, first, by the Council's decision, at his instance, to gratify with a small sop or present those Javanese Chiefs who had shown themselves to be readily accommodating regarding the reduced prices;²⁷ and, secondly, by the later decision of 5th March 1726, also on his suggestion, to warn the chiefs, among the coffee suppliers, at the time of their impending departure home, that they should see to it that no one in their respective jurisdictions uprooted or damaged any coffee trees, on pain of imprisonment in chains for such actions as well as appropriate penalties for failing to prevent such action²⁸

Zwaardercroon, who had opted for a retired life in Batavia, was one of those who had misgivings about the wisdom of such an enormous price-reduction as had been effected by de Haan - and that, not purely because the late Governor-General was himself a coffee producer, but also on account of the repercussions on the Javanese and, therefore, on the production of coffee, as a whole²⁹.

27. de Jonge, IX. pp. 94, 109.

28. Ibid. pp. 111-12 and 94. This may have been the first occasion when a theory of the V.O.C.'s ownership of the lands held by the Javanese had been unmistakably put before those people. The placaat stated that "no fruit-trees, much less coffee trees, could be uprooted as they were rooted on the Company's lands, which they (the Javanese) occupy and of which they enjoy the usufruct, purely through the Company's favour, and subject to recall." van der Chijs, IV.p.190.

29. de Jonge, IX, p.XVIII.

De Jonge cites a pamphlet-writer of the period to indicate how some Dutchmen themselves visualised the adverse effects of de Haan's actions on the Javanese. The writer had said that the Governor-General would perhaps have "brought a few hundred thousand guilders worth of profits to the Lords and Masters (ie. the Heeren XVII), but he had certainly brought down upon them full ten million curses from the native people."³⁰

In this context, what is most intriguing is to find that the reports from the Governor-General & Council to the Directors give hardly any indication of Javanese dissatisfaction. In their letter of 5th December 1726³¹, they informed the XVII that despite the price-reduction, the culture seemed to be in a good state, as evidenced by the nearly one million pounds of coffee that had been since received from the two main coffee-producing regions around Batavia - the adjacent Preanger region and the more distant Cheribon which bordered on the Preanger³².

30. Ibid. p.XX.

31. Ibid. pp.114-15

32. At times the documents distinguish the coffee-growing areas under the V.O.C. in some detail; but more often the references are more general and vague. It appears that the Ommelanden in the environs of Batavia and the so-called Jakatrasche Bovenlanden further to the south were often lumped together with the Preanger lands situated further away to the east. For all practical purposes, this general arrangement has been followed in this essay, with only a broad distinction being made between the Preanger region (encompassing the other divisions mentioned above) and Cheribon which was to the east of that region and more remote from Batavia. A Dutch presence in Cheribon - at least on the west - was signified by a small fort at the coastal town of Cheribon and by the Resident and his few subordinates.

In the circumstances so they said, they had been surprised to hear recently from the officials in Cheribon that on account of the reduction in price there had arisen an interruption in the gathering of coffee for delivery and the Javanese had abandoned some plantations, and that, therefore, they (the Cheribon officials) were afraid to impose the ten pounds' "overweight", instead of the previous five on each picol of 125 pounds, as ordered recently from Batavia, lest the natives become more refractory and discontented. The officials had, therefore, asked permission to refrain from levying the additional "overweight". That request, Governor-General & Council continued, had been granted by letter of 30th November 1726 on condition that they saw to it that the Cheribon bales of coffee carried the same weight as the Batavian bales when weighed in the Fatherland.

As regards the reports of the alleged reactions of the Javanese to the price-reduction, de Haan and Council went on to assure the Directors that they had pointed out the absurdity of those reports and had further explained to those officials that the natives could subsist better with the present price for coffee than with what they got for their other crops on which, moreover, they had to expend more trouble and labour than with regard to coffee production. The officials had, therefore, been enjoined to press the lazy Javanese to get along with that work. Finally, the Batavian authorities were able to conclude this subject on a triumphant note by drawing attention to the reply lately received from the Cheribon officials, by which Batavia's stand was shown to be fully vindicated. In that reply, those officials were begging pardon for their all-too-general report, (the weakness of) which they ascribed to the absence of the sergeant Penninck, 'who, otherwise had been getting that lazy folk to do their proper work.'³³

Though the Batavian authorities appeared to have been thus convinced that their price-reduction had had no adverse reactions amongst the Javanese, they had already

33. de Jonge, IX.pp.114-15.

reported other factors that were causing a diminished supply. In their letter to the Directors a few weeks earlier³⁴ they calculated that the coffee delivered that year would be less than half the quantity of the previous year. They attributed this development to the belated rainfall and the reported flight of hired Javanese labourers most of whom were said to have gone back to their dwelling-places because they had not been paid enough by the chiefs. Granted that these reports were accurate, de Haan and his councillors indicated no relationship between them and the price-reduction. They merely stated that they would take all steps to step up coffee cultivation, particularly in the Company's own lands, in order to meet the annual Patria demand of four million pounds.

Meanwhile, the news of de Haan's reduction of the coffee purchase price had been received by the Heeren XVII with great pleasure mingled with some anxiety lest the extent of the reduction might lead to adverse results. But after they found that despite that reduction, the shipments at the end of 1726 were as high as before and the reports from Batavia were most optimistic³⁵, they wrote to Batavia on 28 August 1727 lavishing fulsome praise on de Haan for the memorandum, on the basis of which the Council had reduced prices. At two stuivers the pound, Java coffee must have been (other things being equal) four times more profitable to the V.O.C. than it had been in, say, 1723 when the purchase price had been eight stuivers. At the auctions at the close of 1727, Java coffee fetched over eight times the purchase price paid to the Javanese (0.85 to 0.87 guilders per pound for coffee purchased at 0.10 guilders). On the other hand, the Mocha coffee bought

34. 21 Oct. 1726 in ibid. pp.94-95.

35. The shipments to Europe at the end of 1726 must have included considerable quantities left over from 1725 or otherwise brought in before the price reduction was announced (see eg. Realia p.298), thus shrouding the effects of the price-reduction. On the initial misgivings of the XVII regarding the wisdom of making such an enormous price reduction, see Leupe, p.64.

in 1726 at 14.6 stuivers or 0.73 guilders the pound was, undoubtedly, sold at the same auctions of 1727, for 1.21 guilders which is only slightly over $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the purchase price. When one considers the fact that nearly 4 million pounds of Java coffee purchased at 0.10 guilders the pound found their way to the Dutch auctions in the autumn of 1727 as against 561,000 pounds of the much more expensive Mocha coffee offered at the same auctions³⁶, one can imagine how much the XVII must have appreciated de Haan's role in reducing prices.

In the general letter of 8th December 1728, the Governor-General personally expressed his great joy and thankfulness regarding the praise that had been showered on him and which, he said, would now spur him on to look out for further means to promote the Company's true interests and profits. But in that same letter, de Haan and his Council admitted that against all expectations supplies from the Preanger and Cheribon regions had been lower than even during the previous year, and that too by a full 780,000 lbs. The reports indicated that this had been caused by excessive and late rains, which had also affected the indigo fields causing them to be replanted three times. They remarked in pessimistic vein that all this showed that the fruitfulness of coffee and almost all other crops was undependable. In any event, they now feared that they would be unable to supply a good part of the annual order of four million pounds and they hoped to make this good in the future by better harvests or by new plantations on the Company's own lands. However, in order to fulfill the objectives of the Directors, they emphasized that they would in no way increase the buying prices, as that could pave the way for ill-intentioned persons to create a shortage by neglecting the coffee plants, concealing the fruits or by other trickish ways, all with a view to forcing the price further up, instead of being satisfied with the (presently) fixed price³⁷.

36. For the relevant coffee purchases and the auction prices, see de Jonge, IX table between pp.160 and 161, and Glamann, pp.201, 285.

37. de Jonge, IX.p.133.

Now, all this talk about not increasing, under any circumstances, the price paid to the Javanese coffee producers, makes little or no sense if the fall in production had been due only to unavoidable natural calamities, as hitherto suggested by the Batavian authorities. But we can assume, from other information in this very same letter that other factors had also been at play in regard to the fall in production. After saying that all necessary steps had been taken to prevent coffee from being disposed of at a higher price to unauthorized profit-seekers or foreigners, they go on to say that but for two steps taken on the initiative of the Governor-General there would have been more harmful consequences arising from the displeasure of certain Javanese. These men who appear to have been previously denied their just payments by their chiefs, had begun to abandon the lands after destruction of the coffee trees. The Governor-General had provided against this development proceeding far, first, by laying down in March 1726 severe penalties against the destruction, damaging, or neglect of coffee trees and, second, by making arrangements in September 1727 for the owners themselves to receive direct and immediate payments for the coffee brought and delivered by them to the Company, without having any obligation towards their chiefs other than to pay a trifling sum for necessary certificates relating to ownership and the amount of coffee being transported.³⁸

In their letter of 29th March 1729 to the Heeren XVII, Governor-General de Haan and his Council for the first time begin explicitly to express doubts about the unfavourable weather alone having caused the meagre supply of coffee in the Preanger and Cheribon regions the previous year. They wonder whether some other factors could have led to the extinction of the urge and enthusiasm for this culture, because in some areas which were of the same type, and which had been subject to the same inclement weather, supplies had not declined. They had, therefore, ordered the Dutch Resident in Cheribon to give a further explanation so that the real reason remained no longer hidden; otherwise, they intended to take extraordinary

38. de Haan & C. to XVII, 8 Dec. 1728, de Jonge, IX. pp.137-38.

measures through which they could well ferret out the truth. Moreover, as they considered the progress of coffee-culture to be of the greatest importance for the Company, its neglect, either through lack of the necessary forethought or through the suppliers being defrauded with regard to payments or through any other reason, would not remain unpunished by them³⁹.

Matheus de Haan died in June 1729 and Diderik van Durven was elected by majority vote to the position of Governor-General (subject to confirmation by the Heeren XVII). In the first Generale Missive sent thereafter, Van Durven and his Council admit that the criticisms of the XVII (by letter of 12th October 1728) regarding the quality of much of the coffee last shipped to the Netherlands, were fully justified: it was too green and insufficiently dried.⁴⁰

From this admission it would appear that in order to mask the true extent of the fall in coffee production and to thereby minimise the very probable displeasure of the Directors towards the Batavian authorities, immature (and inadequately dried) coffee had also been shipped in 1727/28. In fact, at the V.O.C. auctions of 1728, Java coffee fetched by far the lowest price it had hitherto fetched at any of the auctions.⁴¹

The most significant point, however, in the first General Letter under the new Governor-General, is the open and categorical admission that the principal cause of the disastrous fall in production was the price reduction under de Haan. After saying that they had reason to fear that coffee supplies would turn out to be much less in 1729 than even in 1728, they say that there was no other reason for this situation than the low price that was being paid for this product. And, contrary to what de Haan and his Council had been previously saying, the new Governor-

39. Letter of 29 March 1729 in de Jonge, IX.pp.141-42.

40. The letter is dated 18 July 1729. See de Jonge, IX. pp.142-43. Note that Batavia tries to put part of the blame on the suppliers and part on the ships' officers (for not having given the coffee an airing during the course of the voyage); *ibid.* p.143.

41. Namely, 0.70 to 0.71 guilders per pound (Dutch). See table in Glamann, p.285.

General and his Council (the members of which were more or less the same as under de Haan) categorically stated that it was impossible for the suppliers to subsist on this low price and it would, therefore, have to be somewhat raised in order to encourage supplies.

It is useful to pause at this point and examine certain features and implications of the reports of de Haan and the Batavian Council submitted to the Directors of the V.O.C. One of the most striking features is the way in which the adverse repercussions and implications of the price reduction on coffee supplies were hidden from the Directors. On account of the standing rule that - inter alia - copies of all important correspondence (including that between Batavia and the officials in the outlying regions, such as Cheribon) had to accompany the Generale Missive, some inconvenient documents must, however, have had to be despatched. It is instructive to note how the damaging reports from Cheribon in 1726 relating to the Javanese abandoning some coffee plantations as a reaction to the price reduction, are made to look unfounded. That impression was strengthened when the Cheribon officials themselves taking their cue from the hostile reaction of Batavia to their report, wrote back virtually condemning that very report.

It is, however, not only the Cheribon servants of the Company who were trimming their sails according to the anticipated winds of official favour or disfavour, as the case may be. Apart, doubtless, from functionaries in other coffee-producing regions, in the Batavian Council itself we see that this was happening. With the exception of the new Governor-General, van Durven, who had abstained⁴² on the decision to lower prices in January 1726,

42. On the ground that it was not a judicial matter and that in terms of the orders of the XVII conveyed by letter of 1st Nov. 1709, he, as functioning President of the Raad van Justitie, could vote in Council only regarding judicial matters. cf. de Jonge, IX. p. 108.

the very Councillors who had apparently gone all the way with de Haan between 1726 and 1729, in presenting a false picture of the repercussions of the price reduction on the Javanese, and of their reactions to it, were found barely seven weeks after his burial, giving an entirely different (and, in point of fact, a truer) picture of the situation. For the accuracy of the record, and also as an illustration of shrewd but unscrupulous tactics, we may also note how in the last Generale Missive sent under de Haan in March 1729, the ground was being rather cleverly prepared for the inevitable admission that price manipulations had also played a part in the fall in supplies.

There are certain other aspects of Batavian reportage which are interesting in themselves, but which might also be useful to keep in mind during our subsequent consideration of Dutch coffee policies in Sri Lanka. These are the alleged reasons given, or hinted at, for the fall in production. The weather - late and heavy rains - was a useful excuse for nearly three years⁴³. One suspects that alleged inclement weather could cover a lot of sins and was one of the best stock excuses for poor or inadequate performance in regard to colonial products, at a time when the distant metropolitan centre had, generally speaking, no other source of information on the subject than its own subordinates in the colonies.

The reports of de Haan also mentioned or hinted at problems in coffee production caused by another red herring: Javanese chiefs allegedly not paying the cultivators under them adequately. These cultivators are described in 1726 as hired labourers, and in 1728 more as owners of the lands, although the fact that they are said to have fled from the lands after destroying the coffee plants suggests that if permanent abandonment was also involved, some of them at least were not the owners of

43. Note the mark of authenticity that had been given (p.18 above) by stating that the adverse weather had also affected the indigo fields causing them to be replanted three times during a particular year.

the lands, but cultivators working for the chiefs more or less as hired labourers.

In fact, the problem of how much of the coffee in the Preanger and Cheribon regions was cultivated by settled cultivators and how much by shifting cultivators who had been induced or coerced by the chiefs to work on their plantations virtually as indentured labourers has been a moot point. Van Klaveren whilst pointing out that most of the cultivation in these regions appears (in the first half of the eighteenth century) to have been of the ladang or shifting type suggests that "there must have been means of pressure on ladang people which are not recorded."⁴⁴ There is, however, evidence to suggest that particularly after the beginnings of coffee cultivation, the Dutch tried to strengthen the position of the native chiefs vis a vis the ordinary people.⁴⁵ When de Haan threatened the chiefs with severe penalties if they allowed those under them to in any way harm coffee production, his action indicates a belief in, or a convenient assumption of, the absolute authority of the chiefs over the people. In this context, the report that people had destroyed the coffee plants before abandoning lands appears incredible unless the lands were owned by them, or they hoped to elude the chiefs forever, or else the destruction had been with the explicit or tacit consent of the chiefs themselves. It is also possible that the explanation might lie in the Javanese chiefs being at this time not as authoritarian, powerful, and ruthless as they were often depicted to be. Settled cultivators or possessors of land were in all probability also more numerous than hitherto assumed. This is suggested by the decision of the Batavian Council on 1st March 1729 to augment coffee supplies urgently by ordering that each household in Cheribon and the Preanger areas should plant ten new coffee plants.⁴⁶ We recall also the evidence, from Zwaardercroon's time, of the participation of chiefs as well as the ordinary people in coffee cultivation.

44. van Klaveren, pp.61-62.

45. See below pp. 52-54.

46. See van der Chijs, IV.p.220; Realia I.p.263.

The laziness of the Javanese is also suggested in the reports to the Heeren XVII as a factor in the fall in production, and the temporary absence of a Dutch "coffee" sergeant is given as a crucial factor for inaccurate reporting from Cheribon and for some dislocation in cultivation. It is true that a few such officials had been appointed to supervise, control, and promote cultivation of coffee - often other products too at the same time - since at least 1715.⁴⁷ An element of coercion or slave-driving is implied by the appointment of such officials (who were generally military officers), and implied also from the report from Cheribon which we have already noticed.⁴⁸

On the other hand, there is no doubt that by far the bulk of the coffee production (over nine-tenths as we have seen) was conducted by the Javanese and their chiefs themselves, as evidenced by the data regarding supplies,⁴⁹ the nature of the placaats and the exhortations to the chiefs (and princes) - quite apart of course from the fact that one or two Europeans could not have successfully supervised cultivation over such vast and often quite inaccessible areas.⁵⁰ In fact, we recall that in the Generale Missive of 29 March 1729 one of de Haan's ostensible concerns was over what could possibly have killed the earlier motivation and enthusiasm of the Javanese for coffee culture. What is more, the price reduction itself had been justified in January 1726 because the native response had been too enthusiastic towards that culture. We also note that once the success of coffee production had been assured, Batavia, even in the time of Zwaardcroon, had tried to discourage cultivation in areas outside adequate control of the Company. Thus, when

47. See pp. 43-44 below.

48. p. 16 above

49. See p. 13 above and de Jonge, IX.pp.102-04 and table between pp.160 and 161.

50. The Report of van der Schuer and van Baerle (referred to below) gives some idea of the difficult terrain even in areas relatively close to Batavia. cf. de Jonge IX.p.158.

without any encouragement from the Dutch, some coffee produced in Bantam was offered in 1724, the Governor-General and Council had masked their displeasure and bought the lot through fear that otherwise it might reach the hands of the English or some other foreign nation.⁵¹ They were equally displeased when they found that coffee cultivation was being undertaken in Mataram, and fervently wished for its ill-success.⁵² What is more, when the XVII heard of these developments, they instructed Batavia not only to create problems regarding the acceptance of the coffee but also to put obstacles in the way of the progress of those plantations. They added the caveat, however, that these things should be done with due circumspection.⁵³

All this evidence would indicate that when there was advantage to be had, the Javanese were not lacking in industry or enterprise - so much so that the Dutch found it necessary on occasion to stifle such enterprise. It appears, therefore, that the refrain of the lazy Javanese¹ was too often only a concoction of the colonial administration required for the exculpation of its bungling and erring officials, or for the morale of colonial power.⁵⁴

51. de Jonge, IX.pp.87-88.

52. Ibid.p.88.

53. Letter of 20 July 1726 in Leupe, p.64.

54. In an otherwise admirable essay on "Dutch Historical Sources" in An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography ed. by Soedjatmoko, Mohamed Ali and G.J.Resink (New York 1965) pp.235 and 237, Graham Irwin claims that "the element of propaganda" was "entirely absent from the Company's records" and that "Dutch accounts of Indonesian customs, institutions and manners ... are as free from distortion and inaccuracy as they well can be." What is stated above regarding the allegations of Javanese "laziness" and on several other matters elsewhere in the present essay (e.g. at pp.22,24,29,32-33, 39,49-51,51n.94,55-56) would, however, show that Irwin's claims cannot be maintained.

Having thus examined the significance of certain aspects of Batavia's reports to the Heeren XVII primarily during the Governor-Generalship of de Haan, we can now consider the developments in coffee policy after van Durven's exposure in July 1729 of the true reasons for the decline in production.

For a moment, the Governor-General (and his Council) had toyed with the idea of solving the problem by settling Chinese on the lands of the Cheribon princes, in the belief that more successful development of plantations could be obtained thereby. It had been reported that these princes had been found agreeable to this idea when they had been shown the advantages that would accrue by way of tithes from the Chinese settlers. But ultimately the Batavian authorities appear to have balked at the idea of their having to pay advances to such settlers until such time as they could be on their own feet⁵⁵. Van Durven, therefore, had to think in terms of a price increase. But he (and his Council) had informed the Directors that they would delay increasing the buying price until they saw the nature of the new harvest towards the end of the year. Apparently seeing no improvement in the situation they decided by Resolution of 24 January 1730 to raise prices slightly.⁵⁶

55. van Durven & C. to XVII, 30 Nov. 1729, de Jonge, IX. p.152.

56. Ibid., pp.XXI-XXII; Realia, I.p.298; van der Chijs IV.p.246. The price increase was first confined only to the Preanger areas, but by resolution of 14 Dec. 1730, the increase was made applicable to Cheribon too. See on this, van der Chijs, IV. pp. 274-275; Realia, I.p.263.

This increase (to 2 1/3 and 2 3/4 stuivers) was considered inadequate not only by Javanese cultivators and chiefs but also by those Dutch civilians and Company's servants engaged in the cultivation - as can be seen from the Report of 7 September 1731 of two members of the Council, van der Schuer and van Baerle, appointed to go into representations that had been made. This report⁵⁷ showed also that (despite the new plantations that had been undertaken at the Company's instance since 1726) there was yet a shortfall of well over one million pounds in total supplies in 1730 when compared with supplies in 1725. To remedy this situation they recommended a further increase in price so that the producers of the so-called Company's lands (that is the lands under the chiefs and princes) received 3 1/4 stuiver per pound and the suppliers from the so-called private lands, (or lands sold, granted, or leased by the Company), received 3 1/2 stuivers.

It appears that these recommendations were not implemented on account of two reasons. One was that within a few months' time the Governor-General Van Durven, as well as van Baerle and several other members of the Council were dismissed by the Heeren XVII⁵⁸ and new members appointed in their place. The second reason was that before long the supply position had greatly improved.

In the meantime, by missive of 14 September 1731, the XVII signified their approval of the price increase of 1730, noting that it had been little over one-third of a stuiver more on each pound. They also stated that on account of the great scarcity of cash, they were unable to agree with the otherwise fine suggestion of Governor-General and Council to build up one year's extra stocks at Batavia. They suggested instead that the plantations in Java as well as in Amboina and Ceylon should be so extended that in addition to the annual shipment of four million pounds for Patria a further four million pounds could be

57. de Jonge, IX.pp.158-59.

58. by letter of 9 Oct.1731, de Jonge, IX.pp.168ff.

built up over a period of three or four years, and this old coffee could then be shipped. They believed that this coffee could be shipped earlier in the year than was customary with the fresh stocks and that the Company could obtain greater profits by thus being in a position to market its coffee earlier in the year than its English or other European rivals.⁵⁹

As for the supply position in Java, it soon improved beyond recognition; so much so that the new Governor-General, Dirk van Cloon, and his Council believed that the lands around Batavia, inclusive of Cheribon, could supply all that Europe needed and more. These were lands over which the Company claimed full sovereign rights and exercised a great deal of control. But much against the secret wishes of the V.O.C., and its efforts at discouragement, coffee cultivation had also developed significantly in the relatively more independent state of Mataram. Batavia, therefore, thought that the time was ripe to get the ruler to extirpate coffee trees and to turn his attention more towards two other products in which the Company was particularly interested at the time: indigo and pepper, the former being a crop which it had found very difficult to get cultivated because the inhabitants apparently found it to be burdensome and uncongenial, and the latter being a crop regarding which the V.O.C. had begun to face various problems, including serious English competition in the traditional pepper-producing areas, and that too during a period of increasing demand.

The Councillor Extraordinary, Frederik Coyett, who was sent as a special envoy⁶⁰ to the Mataram court achieved success in his mission. The treaty concluded on 8 November 1733 contained, inter alia, very interesting and significant provisions in Article 5.

59. Ibid., pp.162-163.

60. For the instructions to Coyett, his mission and the concluded treaty (and its provisions) see letter of G.G.van Cloon & C. to XVII, 7 March 1734 in de Jonge, IX.pp.222-40.

It stated, first of all, that with a view to helping the peasants (in Mataram) and in order to encourage them to plant pepper, from which as well as from other products they could subsist better than by planting coffee, the Company was promising and undertaking to pay 5 rix-dollars per picol of 125 pounds of pepper. The argument that the cultivation of other products was more advantageous to the Javanese than that of coffee, calls for some comment. It contradicted the earlier arguments of the Batavian authorities (which we have previously noted) describing coffee as an easier and more profitable crop for cultivation than other crops. The propaganda indicating concern for the welfare of the peasant must have also sounded rather hollow if news of the coffee policy of de Haan had reached Mataram; and still more so, in view of the further provision in Article 5 stipulating that in return for the V.O.C. having raised the purchase price of pepper, the Susuhunan (or ruler) should order the destruction of all coffee plantations in his territory except for a few that were to be allowed on a limited scale for the strictly domestic use of the principal chiefs.

The 5th Article further stipulated that the least trade in coffee was not to be permitted. What was more, the Company received full authority - "permission" is the euphemistic diplomatic expression used - to go after six months from the date of the treaty into all the villages, whether in the lowlands, the highlands, or the sea-coasts, and uproot all the (unauthorised) coffee plants and to confiscate all the coffee that might be found destined for trading transactions. The Susuhunan was to decide what portion of the confiscated coffee could be retained by the Company. This last proviso notwithstanding, one of the most significant points to emerge from the above stipulations is the extent to which the V.O.C. had acquired rights of interference in the internal economic activities of what was then the most powerful indigenous state surviving in Java, although of course it had been declining over the years into a dependent status in relation to the V.O.C. and had become particularly susceptible to its pressure at this time. The way in which spontaneous indigenous enterprise was being stifled and economic activity forcibly channelled to subservise the Company's interests is particularly relevant for our understanding of what was happening to the indigenous economies.

About a year subsequent to this treaty of 8 November 1733, the Batavian authorities found that after the despatch of coffee to the Netherlands, they were left with a stock almost double the reserve stock that they had been expected to keep. They, therefore, considered it to be high time to devise ways and means of keeping supplies down to the required level lest they be saddled with unwanted stocks, and more than they could pay for. They noted that the recent plans to encourage pepper cultivation (by promising a higher purchase price) would come in useful to dissuade the people from extending coffee plantations or replacing old or dead coffee plants with new ones. The encouragement provided by pepper, however, was not considered adequate to reduce coffee production to the required level. They appear to have considered extirpation of a certain number of coffee trees essential for the purpose, although they had hitherto prescribed heavy penalties for anyone in their territories - the Preanger and Cheribon regions - who might venture on precisely that activity.

Through fear of the adverse results that might otherwise arise, Governor-General & Council decided to proceed with circumspection and care. By resolution of 27 December 1734 they appointed a Commission consisting of two Councillors Extraordinary, F.J. Coyett and Abraham Patras - the latter of whom was soon to be chosen as Governor-General and, thereupon, replaced on the Commission by G.W. van Imhoff - to report to the Council on ways and means of achieving the objective of limiting production. The report was to be made not only after making a close study of the position of coffee cultivation in the Company's territories but also after sounding the native chiefs on the question of limiting production.⁶¹

61. G.G. Patras & C. to XVII, 21 March 1735, de Jonge, IX. pp. 250-51. Doubtless, a decline in the selling price of coffee which had set in around this time also contributed towards the idea of enforcing a reduction in production. See Glamann, p. 286; cf. also Chaudhuri, (for full title etc. see note 13 above) p. 365.

In terms of this resolution Coyett and van Imhoff had a conference with the chiefs of the regions around Batavia (who had been summoned for the purpose in the name of the Governor-General) in the presence of the Commissioner for Native Affairs⁶² and his assistants. The administration's objective of limiting coffee production was first communicated to the chiefs along with assurances of its good intentions, and their views were, thereafter, invited. The outcome of these procedures was the Report of Coyett and van Imhoff dated 26 August 1735.⁶³

The Report, inter alia, traced the increase in coffee production since the year 1731 leading up to a position such that even the whole of Europe would soon be unable to absorb what Java supplied. They pointed out that the situation was aggravated by the fact that the benefits of any increased consumption in Europe were being offset by the increasing supplies from the rival European plantations in the West Indies and on Mascarenhas and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. This development was causing great prejudice to the Company's plantations on Java and they could think of no remedy against that competition. On the other hand, there was an appropriate remedy - long applied in the Moluccas, they pointed out, in respect of excess clove and nutmeg trees - for checking the excessive growth of Javanese supplies so that the V.O.C. need have no fear of being over-burdened with supplies.

The remedy lay in uprooting the excess plants and seeing to it that only a fixed number of plants was maintained thereafter. Coyett and van Imhoff further assured the Council that it need have no anxiety regarding any repercussions that might flow from the application of this solution, because the chiefs of the Kampongs (or villages), who happened to be also the chief suppliers, had, so they said, readily agreed at the conference that there was no other feasible alternative.

62. See pp. 43-44 below.

63. in de Jonge, IX.pp.253-62.

For purposes of extirpation of excess trees, the two commissioners proposed that a distinction should be drawn between Cheribon on the one hand and the regions closer to Batavia on the other. Whilst only one-eighth of the plants in Cheribon were to be uprooted (whereby only the oldest trees would be affected) as much as half the plants in the Preanger and other lands closer to Batavia were to be uprooted. This would, in their view, still yield more than half the total projected supplies from the latter area and the balance (or less than half) would be from Cheribon.

Several reasons were given for the proposed disproportionate extirpation policies. One was that they envisaged that the regions closer to Batavia would have to cater to the V.O.C.'s new emphasis on pepper planting and, for that reason, more land would be made available by getting as much as half the coffee plants to be uprooted. In this connection they stated, though without giving specific reasons, that these regions could be the sooner and the better turned towards pepper cultivation, than Cheribon. Moreover, the natives could proceed with their plantation activities in these regions without any fear of changes in coffee policies because they (the commissioners) proposed that any further manipulations regarding coffee supplies, whether for cutting down production by further uprooting of plants or starting new plantations for increase in production, should be confined to the Cheribon region. As things stood at the time, however, they preferred that in this region, on the lands rendered vacant by the proposed uprooting of one-eighth of the coffee plants as well as on any other uncultivated lands, the inhabitants should be encouraged to plant paddy, with which crop Cheribon was not too well provided.

The question arises as to whether these were indeed the only reasons, or the more important ones, for the seemingly more favourable treatment recommended in respect of the Cheribon region. A clue towards an answer may be obtained by examining the implications of one of the commissioners' statements on prospective pepper supplies.⁶⁴

64. Ibid, p.258.

They explain their emphasis on making arrangements for such supplies from the Preanger region rather than from Cheribon by remarking that the Company could depend on a more trustworthy supply of products from the regions closer to Batavia because it had easier and greater control over them on account of that very fact of proximity itself. Cheribon, it must be noted, was, in contrast to the Preanger region, less under Dutch control, partly, of course, because of its greater distance from Batavia and partly on account of the somewhat connected fact of the greater degree of autonomy exercised by the Cheribon chieftains, most of whom the Dutch usually referred to as princes. It would, therefore, have been more difficult to enforce a widespread and radical extirpation of coffee plants in the region and the consequences of any attempt to do so must have appeared to Coyett and van Imhoff to be fraught with great danger. Such considerations would also explain their seemingly contradictory proposal to allow a greater proportion of coffee plantations to be retained in a region which they considered to be less subject to Dutch control, and thus more open to smuggling; whereas, primarily on account of the implications of inadequate control they had recommended that the newly-emphasized crop, pepper, should not be encouraged there at all.⁶⁵

The report of the commissioners went on to suggest a uniform reduction in the purchase price of a picol to 6 rix-dollars (ie. to about 2 1/3 stuivers for a pound), so that the distinction hitherto made between the coffee

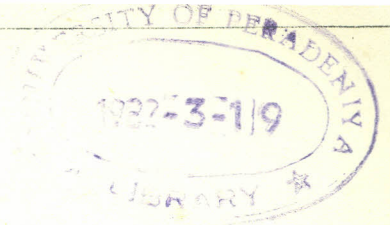
65. It should be emphasized also that the Commissioners had been careful to point out in the report that the extirpation of 1/8th of the coffee trees in Cheribon could be so done that only the oldest trees would need to be uprooted. Moreover, their recommendation that future manipulation of production should be confined to Cheribon was easily said because they would not be answerable for the results of any future decisions.

from private lands and that from the so-called Company's lands would be done away with, and the same purchase prices would apply to both categories.

Several reasons were given for the latter recommendation. They pointed out that the private lands were mostly situated close to Batavia and they had none of the problems and expenses of long-distance transport which the other category was subject to in the delivery of coffee. With equalized prices for the two categories, the private lands would still be at an advantage. A second factor adduced in support of their recommendation was their suspicion that a lot of coffee from the other category of lands was being bought up at the lower price and re-sold to the Company at the higher price by owners of private lands.⁶⁶ A third consideration behind their proposal was that, by this means, it would be possible to automatically, but indirectly, bring about a reduction in production by the possessors of private lands when they realised that coffee was not so paying a crop as before.

The direct method of ordering the uprooting of half the coffee trees was not considered feasible with regard to this category - the possessors of the so-called private lands - because, in the opinion of the Commissioners, those people had been exhorted so very much to take to coffee cultivation by the V.O.C. itself, had devoted their own lands for the purpose, and made a living out of it. That the people in the other category

66. This had been happening even in the time of Zwaardecroon who had tried to prevent it by means of a placaat issued in April 1723 (v. der Chijs, IV.p.159). It may also be noted that this "abuse" has a further significance: the contribution of the purely Javanese elements to coffee production was more than the supplies attributed to them would indicate. For an idea of the proportion of coffee produced from the so-called 'private' lands, see pp.13, 24 above and the Report of Coyett and van Imhoff in de Jonge, IX. p.258.



of lands had also been exhorted in the same manner, that they might have devoted to the crop what many (if not most of them) considered to be their own lands and that they might be equally, if not more, dependent for a living on that crop - such considerations did not enter into the reckoning; they were to be ordered to uproot half the coffee plants on their lands.

Two factors appear to have played a part in this discriminatory attitude. One was the idea that the Company's overlordship over the Preanger and Cheribon regions made it the lawful owner of all the lands situated therein and consequently feudal dues or tithes were owing to it from every parcel of land. The idea had been expressed as early as January 1726 by de Haan in his memorandum to the Council of the Indies. He said that the Javanese coffee cultivators had hitherto been freely enjoying "the fruits from the Company's lands without having been up to now burdened with the tithes or any other dues owing to the true owner."⁶⁷ Now, in 1735, Coyett and van Imhoff gave their own elaboration of the V.O.C.'s alleged feudal rights by saying: "they [the Javanese] occupy the Company's lands and therefore must bear up having to cultivate on them whatever crops the Company might find to be most agreeable [to its interests]."⁶⁸ The second factor responsible for the discrimination might have been a sense of identification with, or nearness to, one category and a sense of inherent apartness from, if not of hostility, towards the other. The favoured category of possessors (or owners) of private lands consisted, for the most part, of burgers or Dutch colonists together with other settlers attached to the Dutch interest, such as native Christians and Chinese.⁶⁹ The most that the Commissioners recommended to their disadvantage - apart from the equalisation of coffee purchase prices - was to say that if the Council thought it fit, it could prohibit new plantations by this category of landed interest.

67. de Jonge, IX.p.106

68. Ibid. p.259. See also note 28 above and pp.41-42 below.

69. Ibid. p.259.

In the final part of their report, they discussed what crops could be cultivated in place of the coffee plants that were to be uprooted according to their scheme. They first took up for consideration three crops which the V.O.C. had already encouraged or induced the Javanese to cultivate on its behalf even before coffee cultivation had been thought of. One of them, kurkuma or turmeric, they did not wish to encourage above the existing level of cultivation because the demand in the Netherlands did not warrant it. Regarding another product, indigo, they admitted that it was a particularly profitable article for the Company and greatly in demand in Europe, but they also pointed out that its planting and preparation required so much trouble and toil that "the lazy Javanese" had a great aversion to it, particularly because they could barely make a living - this suggests that the actual cultivators are spoken of here - on account of the very low price paid for it. (One cannot help but note that it must have been the very low price combined with the exceptional toil and trouble involved rather than any inherent laziness that had made the Javanese reluctant cultivators of indigo.) The Commissioners reported further that the indigo as well as cotton thread, the third product which they took up for consideration, were both looked upon by the Javanese as nothing but items of tribute imposed on them by the Company, because the prices paid for them were so inadequate.

In these circumstances, Coyett and van Imhoff had decided not to insist during their discussions with the chiefs on any new cultivation of indigo and cotton; but only to enjoin them to see that they delivered the quantities which they had hitherto been bound to supply annually. If they had insisted on replacing the profitable coffee with these two products, they feared that they would have caused dissatisfaction among the chiefs and also discouraged them from taking to a plantation which the Company wished to greatly encourage at this time, namely,

pepper.⁷⁰ They claimed to have found the chiefs willing to take to pepper planting. In fact, these men had declared that the very lands that were denuded of coffee plants could be used for pepper because the nature of the requisite terrain and the kind of labour that was required for cultivation as well as for gathering the crop were both similar, although, as they said, the plants as well as the crops looked so dissimilar to each other.

On the basis of their discussions with the chiefs, the Commissioners expressed their firm belief that given the necessary encouragement and supervision, pepper would soon turn out to be as successful a crop as coffee, in the environs of Batavia. They suggested, however, that encouragement of the newly-emphasized crop should not follow the pattern of coffee by paying a relatively high purchase price at the outset and drastically reducing the price as soon as the people had taken to the crop in a big way. To ensure the people's respect for the Company and their faith in it (which, they seem to acknowledge, had been lost by the coffee policies) they recommended that the necessary incentive required in the early years should be provided by the payment of a special premium of 100 rix-dollars for every 100 picols delivered from a particular area.⁷¹

70. Whilst the demand for pepper in both Europe and Asia had been increasing, the V.O.C. in the 1730s also faced increasing competition in its bid for supplies. With waning control or influence in the Malabar coast and with increased English trading activity there and even in the northern parts of the archipelago (where Chinese traders too were active) the V.O.C. naturally thought of repeating with pepper in Java the success which they had already achieved there with coffee. Relatively higher sale prices in Europe spurred the Company on, all the more, cf. Glamann, pp.89-90, 281 and Chaudhuri, pp.325-26.

71. This, we may note, would benefit the chiefs, or intermediaries, rather than the small producers. In fact, many colonial arrangements usually tended towards such results.

The proposals of Coyett and van imhoff were adopted for execution, by the Batavian Council at its meeting on 26 August 1735.⁷² But we notice that there was no real drop in coffee supplies in the next few years, partly occasioned in all likelihood by the coming into maturity of new plantations that had been encouraged at the turn of the decade and partly - and more important - because the extirpation proposals had not been fully carried out. In 1738 well over 4 million pounds had to be purchased when there was already in stock a quantity of over 13 million pounds. There was thus more coffee accumulating in the godowns of the Company in Batavia than could be disposed of in Europe. To make matters worse, the Batavian authorities were faced with a serious shortage of cash.

These circumstances led Governor-General Valckenier to propose further measures to curb production. On 5th December 1738 he and his Council decided to order the extirpation of half the coffee plants in all areas, inclusive of Cheribon, and to proclaim that in 1739 only half the quantity delivered in 1738 would be accepted for purchase, and for that too only half the payment would be made in cash whilst the other half would be in bonds carrying an interest of $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.⁷³

There were protests from all areas - the Preanger (including the so-called Jacatran highlands) as well as Cheribon - against both the extirpation orders and the payment in bonds for part of the supplies. Batavia ultimately gave in on the question of non-cash payments. The total quantity to be accepted annually was also fixed at nearly 3 million pounds. But on the extirpation orders, it yielded only to Cheribon, and in fact made the execution of the orders relating to the regions nearer

72. Realia, I. pp. 263, 298.

73. van der Chijs, IV. p. 434; Realia, I. p. 298.

Batavia even more stringent than originally envisaged.⁷⁴ With regard to extirpation in Cheribon we find Governor-General and Council admitting that it had not been "executabel" there.⁷⁵ Great play was made by Batavia that its ultimate decisions had been influenced by its realisation that thousands of poor inhabitants under the Cheribon princes were likely to suffer adverse effects if the extirpation policy had been put into effect.⁷⁶ But there is no doubt that the solicitous concern expressed for the poor in Cheribon - there were poor in the Preanger too - was only a sanctimonious veil drawn over an accommodation with an unpleasant reality: the feared potential power of the Cheribon princes to cause serious problems if they were antagonised too much.

The way in which the state of the market in Europe and the connected interests of the V.O.C. dictated the policy towards coffee cultivation, was once again demonstrated within about an year of the decisions taken in December 1738. Even as Governor-General and Council were wondering whether their limitation of annual deliveries to less than three million pounds might not result in any excess being disposed of to smugglers by the cultivators, news was received that the demand in Europe had once again risen. The Directors now required six million pounds of coffee per annum instead of around four million. The Batavian authorities immediately became fearful lest the extirpation of coffee trees as well as the lowering of prices together with the limitation of deliveries that had already been effected might result shortly in inadequate supplies to meet the new demand. So in January 1740 the quantity of coffee that would be accepted by

74. Resolutions of 13 March and 20 March, 1739, van der Chijs, IV.pp.448-49; Realia, I.p.298; de Jonge, IX. pp.xxiii, xxv.

75. Realia, I.pp.263,298.

76. de Jonge, IX.pp.xxiii-xxiv. See also van der Chijs, IV.p.449.

the Company was once again raised to four million pounds.⁷⁷

What happened in Java in subsequent years is outside the purview of our present concerns. This is, therefore, the appropriate point at which we could look back on our sketch of coffee culture with a view to identifying more closely some of the salient features that might be helpful or meaningful for the projected study of coffee cultivation in Sri Lanka.

We could begin by noting the alternating 'blow hot' 'blow cold' policies of the V.O.C. In a sixteen-year period we can discern six such phases. Up to 1724 there was active encouragement of coffee cultivation everywhere in Java, except latterly in what may be called the "princely states". A second phase commences in the course of 1724 with instructions from the Heeren XVII to reduce prices and discourage cultivation and accordingly a period of strong disincentives to production lasted till 1727 with Governor-General de Haan presiding successfully over that phase. His very success brought its nemesis in the form of alarmingly low production (despite coercive regulations to stem the rot) and so a third phase lasting till 1731 was commenced in 1728. New plantations were encouraged or ordered and the buying price of coffee was somewhat raised as an incentive. From 1732 to 1734 was a passive phase during which things were allowed to run their course, with neither encouragement nor discouragement, except, of course, with regard to the "princely state" of Mataram. A fifth phase was ushered in in 1735 (with an added emphasis in 1738) during which discouragement was the order of the day, prices were again lowered and even a policy of drastic extirpation of trees was decided upon. Propaganda was

77. de Jonge, IX.p.xxv; van der Chijs, IV.p.503. The balance 2 million pounds - these references are all to Dutch pounds - required to complete the new annual order from the XVII, would, of course, be supplied from the accumulated stocks at Batavia.

now to be towards the promotion of pepper cultivation. But at the end of 1739 that policy was halted and we see in 1740 what appears to be another phase of encouragement of coffee cultivation in response to a greater demand than ever before for the product from the Directors of the Company. That was the sixth phase.

These rapid oscillations of V.O.C. policy indicate the narrow calculations of profit of a merchant concentrating on the day-to-day state of the market and not the considerations of a ruler mindful of (may be equally selfish) wider and more long-term concerns. The disadvantages that could arise from antagonising the Javanese, losing credit in their eyes or creating an aversion amongst them towards the cultivation of commercial crops - these were all at some time or the other sensed by officials on the spot from the time of Van Hoorn through Zwaardercroon and van Durven to the time of Patras. But the long-established model of the Moluccan spice monopoly was undoubtedly too powerful for such considerations to have much effect. Hence the attempts at a strict monopoly, paying minimum prices and expanding or limiting production strictly according to the market. Thus, the activities of the ruler were dictated by the objectives of the merchant. Involvement in the administration of the Preanger and Cheribon regions was more or less limited to contriving that coffee and other required crops were duly produced and delivered to the Company through the instrumentality of the chiefs, in the quantity and quality, and at the rates, prescribed.

Ideas of sovereignty or lordships derived from European feudal theory appear to have formed the basis for a claim to the supply of coffee as virtual tribute payments, and, from 1726, under a system of compulsory cultivation, from the lands possessed by the Javanese. Van Klaveren⁷⁸ was mistaken in believing that the claim related only to (previously) uncultivated soil. De Haan's statements and the Report of Coyett and van Imhoff make it clear that the V.O.C. claimed to be the "true owner"

of all the land occupied by the Javanese and that it had the right, therefore, to prescribe the cultivation, on its behalf, of whatever crops it pleased.⁷⁹ On all these occasions there was no reference to Javanese law or practice and we may assume that the claim was based on a colonial theory of domination. A further fact lends strong support to this view. In the Report referred to above, the lands possessed by the Dutch and those favoured non-Javanese attached to the Dutch cause are described as their "own hereditary lands" (eygen erven) and these lands are contrasted with those of the Javanese, "who are reckoned as occupying the Company's lands" ('die gerekent worden's Comps. landen te bewonen')⁸⁰

79. See p. 35 and p.14n. 28 above.

80. de Jonge, IX.p.258. On the imposition of Dutch law in regard to the concept of property, as well as the influence of the European feudal system, in colonial administration in Java, see J.Faes, Geschiedenis van Buitenzorg (Batavia, 1902) pp.28,36. Even if there had been a reference to Javanese law it would have been necessary to take that with a pinch of salt in view of the Company's lack of knowledge and expertise on such matters at the time and also because necessity would have been the mother of invention, given the V.O.C.'s inability to pay for the real value of the coffee (and other products) obtained from the Javanese. On this latter point, (the inability to pay the real value of the produce), see also J.S.Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice. A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India, (New York 1956) p.20.

With a view to ensuring that cultivation of coffee (and other prescribed crops) on these so-called Company's lands was carried out as desired, the V.O.C. appointed various Dutch functionaries. Van Klaveren says that when coffee culture developed quickly a special Commissary of Native Affairs was appointed in 1727. He was entrusted, inter alia, with the supervision and control of the Preanger region, whilst similar functions were performed by the official called the Resident in regard to Cheribon.⁸¹ The origins of the Commissary's office, however, go back to a much earlier period than Van Klaveren indicates. As early as 1660 an official to control and supervise clove production in the Moluccas had been appointed and we know that, doubtless influenced by that precedent, a Commissary of Native Affairs had been functioning in Java well before 1715. Furthermore, in December 1719 the precedent of 1660 is recalled and a similar official, along with 'some inspecteurs' under him, was appointed to see to coffee cultivation as well as indigo and other prescribed cultures. Whether this meant a revival of the post of Commissary (because it might have become defunct) or the creation of a new office with several subordinate posts to supplement the work of the Commissary, we do not know. A Commissary for Native Affairs - there appear to have been slight variations in the nomenclature of this post in the records - was, however, functioning even in 1726.⁸² As regards cultivation in Cheribon, the Resident was doubtless assisted by a few Dutch officials, as our earlier encounter with the role of the sergeant Penninck around 1726 would indicate. As we have previously noted, an element of coercion with regard to cultivation is implied by the appointment of such officials.

The work of supervision and control of coffee cultivation by the Commissary in the Preanger and the Resident in Cheribon (assisted by their subordinates) was ostensibly buttressed by the placaats or proclamations against smuggling in coffee and against uprooting or damaging the plants.

81. van Klaveren, pp.63-64.

82. See evidence in K.A. (vide note 14 for elucidation of K.A.) 1928 f.405. For the 1715 and 1719 references, see Realia, I.pp.306 and 27 respectively.

After the disruption of cultivation resulting from the price reduction, proclamations were issued ordering compulsory cultivation of a specific number of plants per household, as well as proclamations forbidding people from fleeing from one region to the other (apparently to escape the unprofitable cultivation of coffee).⁸³

The extent to which these placaats could be enforced, especially in the remoter regions must have been quite small wherever the Regents or the Princes withheld active co-operation in the matter. Under such circumstances the effectiveness of the Commissary's role or that of the Resident would not have been appreciably enhanced by such proclamations. Besides, we have previously noted that a couple of European officials could not have successfully controlled or supervised cultivation over such vast and often inaccessible areas. It has also to be noted that these officials often had many other duties besides overseeing the prescribed crops. Moreover, the inefficiency and corruption of these men (that have been recorded) must have further reduced their role in the promotion of coffee cultivation.⁸⁴

For these reasons the role of the Javanese cultivators and their chiefs acquires all the greater significance. Despite the discriminatory price policies in favour of producers who were Dutch or, at least closely attached to the Dutch interest, by far the largest proportion of coffee had, as we have already seen, been produced by the Javanese. It appears that notwithstanding the disparity in the price paid, and the greater problems of transport, the Javanese were either able to bring the coffee to market at relatively less cost or else they were able to subsist with more contentment on lower rates of remuneration for this product than the other producers. Whatever the reasons, the Javanese responded with alacrity to the opportunities for profit when

83. This last placaat was approved in Council on 19 Dec. 1727 (Realia, I.p.27). The others have been noted earlier in this essay.

84. See e.g. evidence of irregularities etc. of officials around 1715, 1723 and 1736 in van der Chijs, IV. pp.63, 159 and 388-89 respectively. cf. also van Klaveren, pp.63-64.

prices were attractive. That the prodding or prompting of Commissioners or coffee-sergeants had not been necessary is quite clear, particularly when we take note of successful production in Bantam and Mataram, two areas regarding which the V.O.C. (as we have seen) not only prayed for ill-success all the time, but also worked openly or secretly to eliminate coffee production.

On account of the manner in which the Javanese took to coffee cultivation, we have pointed out that there was little substance behind the constant refrain of the "lazy Javanese". In fact, such Europeans as were involved in cultivation - with a few exceptions such as Van Hoorn and Zwaardcroon - do not appear to have been so very successful because, despite the system of pricing being weighted in their favour and despite relatively lower transport costs, their production was not as high as it should have been. That was why Coyett and van Imhoff had suspected (and Zwaardcroon had previously noted) that a good part of what this group (and certain others close to the Europeans) passed off as produce from their own lands was in reality coffee clandestinely purchased from the Javanese for sale to the V.O.C., advantage being taken of the discriminatory pricing system. Moreover, it is certain that hardly any of the Europeans or those of mixed European descent themselves laboured in the coffee gardens.

We may note in this connection that the Heeren XVII had, by the second decade of the century, inquired whether cultivation of coffee in Amboina, might not be more successfully conducted through Europeans by assigning lands to them, rather than through natives. Zwaardcroon's (and his Council's) reply in November 1721 appears to be relevant to Java and other parts of Asia, and not merely to Amboina. He says that the European free persons (colonists) are "usually too lazy and too proud to themselves work in the fields; and, therefore, they have to employ slaves, whom, however, they are often too poor to buy." Thus laziness, contempt for manual labour, and an inability to engage successfully in coffee plantation work emerge as weaknesses amongst Europeans in the East Indies colonial setting rather than amongst the indigenes themselves. Of these traits, the laziness may be partly attributed to the enervating effects of a tropical climate on Europeans; but part of it undoubtedly stemmed from the haughtiness of a ruling group which assigned

wearisome and heavy labour to slaves or colonial peoples. (But part of it no doubt was sheer laziness !). Apart from these characteristics, Zwaardecroon also pointed out that the European settlers were more difficult to get along with as they raised many problems which the natives would never dare to raise. He, therefore, concluded that the method of producing coffee by means of the natives, which had been hitherto followed, was "really the best and the most profitable" for the Company.⁸⁵ The Dutch had indeed evolved an effective alternative model of colonial exploitation to the West Indian model of colonial plantations worked through slave labour, by harnessing the land as well as the labour of the Javanese peasants and that too, with far less expense and responsibility than the West Indian planters had to bear in respect of their slaves.⁸⁶

Coffee production in Java, then, must have become all the more a contribution of the Javanese on account of the factors militating against production by Europeans mentioned by Zwaardecroon. As to how cultivation of coffee was carried on by the Javanese, we have already seen some evidence in the course of our survey of developments during the period under consideration. We can now briefly discuss some of the more significant aspects of that information.

One point that has emerged rather clearly is that cultivation was by and large in settled areas or close to settlements. We noticed that when the Batavian authorities

85. Zwaardecroon & C. to XVII, 30 Nov. 1721, de Jonge, IX, pp. 75-76. For evidence of laziness and lack of enterprise amongst Dutch colonists in 17th century Sri Lanka, see K.W. Goonewardena, "A New Netherlands in Ceylon ..." in The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies, Vol. II. No. 2 (July 1959) pp. 229, 334. cf. also, Boxer, The Dutch Seaborne Empire (full title etc. given in note 8 above) pp. 246 and 250.

86. See also van Imhoff's comments in this regard at pp. 68-69 below.

wished to revivify the fallen state of coffee production, they considered that ordering every household even in distant Cheribon to plant ten new coffee plants would be a meaningful measure towards achieving that objective. If some of the ladang people (or those who engaged in shifting cultivation) had also been brought into cultivation activities on a regular basis, they must have had to give up their nomadic life; because we know that the cultivation process (including the picking, drying and peeling of the coffee) involved work spread through a good part of the year.

The categories or classes of Javanese involved in coffee production appear to have been roughly three: regents or princes with their subordinate officials, peasants who cultivated coffee on their lands for their own profit, and, finally, hired labourers, retainers, and those liable to compulsory services who cultivated the lands of the first category, the indigenous ruling class. It is possible that compulsory services in the coffee plantations of that ruling class were also provided from amongst the households of the second group, the land-owning peasants. But by and large, this group had independent producers, who appear to have been the most numerous among the coffee producers - if one were to judge by the great emphasis placed by de Haan, on the necessity to recognize them as the true owners of the coffee and, therefore, to eliminate as far as possible, any middleman role of the regents or chiefs. The argument is not invalidated by any unscrupulous motivation (such as the one we have earlier deduced) which may be ascribed to de Haan. Again, with somewhat similar motivation, Valckenier refers in 1739 to "thousands of poor people" among the coffee suppliers, who, he says, often banded together to bear the transport costs of their produce.⁸⁷ As regards the hired labourers mentioned under the third category, we have previously noted that many, if not most of those who were described by de Haan as hired labourers in 1726 were in effect described by

87. van der Chijs, IV.p.449.

him in 1728 as the owners of coffee lands who had to be protected against exploitation by the chiefs. But it is likely that some were indeed hired labourers, if the references to the abandonment of certain lands cultivated with coffee implied no subsequent return, and also because there are references to some of them abandoning the plantations and going back to their dwelling places.⁸⁸

Before we take a closer look at the role of the chiefs and the strictures passed on them by the Batavian authorities, we should make note of the by no means passive reaction of the Javanese cultivators (whether independent or not) to the unconscionable price reductions of the V.O.C. They not only abandoned some of the coffee lands but even gave vent to their resentment by uprooting and destroying much of the planted coffee. We have surmised that where abandonment of lands was of a permanent nature the people involved must have been hired labourers, and, in other cases, owners of lands. In any event, the actions of these people, particularly of those who destroyed the planted coffee, points to some sturdiness of spirit and to a defiance of the authority of the chiefs as well as of the V.O.C. In that connection some conjectures were made with regard to the attitude of the chiefs: either they sympathised with the popular resentment against the Company or else they did not have the power and the necessary ruthlessness to suppress these expressions of popular feelings.

The fact is that none of these conjectures are supported by the usual views of the Company's officials (or, of later writers,⁸⁹ for that matter); rather, they are contradicted.

88. See pp.19,23 above.

89. Even an exceptionally liberal scholar such as Wertheim. See W.F.Wertheim, Indonesian Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change, 2nd revd.ed. 2nd imp. (Hague 1964) pp.90-91. Furnivall noted that in the traditional system, custom limited the arbitrary exercise of power by the rulers and that Dutch support enabled the chiefs to act more arbitrarily than before. But he gave full credence to the allegations of arbitrary conduct on the part of the rulers and chiefs, made by V.O.C. officials. See Netherlands India ..., pp.34,35,44. See also pp.50-51 below.

Far from there being any sympathy or understanding between the chiefs and those under them, Governor-General and Council expressed concern over the fact that the chiefs did not pay their dues to hired labourers and even embezzled the payments for coffee made by the Company in favour of the actual cultivators. To remedy this latter abuse de Haan stated that he had made arrangements to see that the cultivators themselves received the payment. But it is as well to note at this point that, as we have previously shown, de Haan's statements and assessments are rather suspect because he was looking for any kind of excuse or scapegoat to cover up the disastrous effects on coffee production caused by his own policies. We also recall in this connection the fear of the Dutch officials in Cheribon to impose the newly-decreed ten pounds' "overweight" on coffee for fear that the people who had already shown signs of dissatisfaction might become even more refractory. Such statements suggest popular feelings against Dutch coffee policies rather than against the administration of the chiefs. Again, we notice what appears on the face of it to be a lack of sympathy for the cultivator when we find Coyett and van Imhoff stating in their report that the chiefs of the Preanger readily agreed with their suggestion that the best remedy for the prevalent overproduction was the extirpation of the trees. But, then, we know that whatever may have been stated in that report, the fact was that the chiefs were soon found to be opposed to any extirpation of coffee plantations.⁹⁰

Whilst all this should make us cautious about accepting all the allegations against the Javanese chiefs, there is no doubt that the coffee cultivation system favoured the rise of oppressive practices. The Dutch favoured chiefs who fostered the cultivation even at the expense of the people. For this reason they raised some chiefs from obscurity to great prominence. Van Klaveren has cited the case of the regent of Tjiandjoer whose territory was enlarged by Zwaardercroon because he had taken coffee cultivation so much to heart. We have seen the cases of those chiefs who had readily accepted de Haan's price reduction being granted marks of his favour as against the empty-handed send-off to those who had protested. Moreover, when,

90. See pp.38-39 above.

as in 1726, the chiefs were severely threatened with punishment if anyone in their respective jurisdictions was found to have uprooted coffee plants, we notice what strong pressures towards oppression and authoritarianism on the part of the chiefs were emanating from the colonial government. In point of fact, appointments to regentships were made conditional on the regents' undertaking to duly promote the development of crops required by the V.O.C., inclusive of coffee.⁹¹

When we add to these things the corrosive influence (on a traditional society) of commercial profit, which appears to have become quite significant along with the success of coffee, we can imagine what varied and powerful forces were intensifying and extending the alienation of the chiefs from the people. It is in such a context that we find in later years a regent prepared to pay 10,000 rix-dollars to the Company for the privilege of riding in a gilded coach during his stay in Batavia.⁹² This sum was equivalent to the price paid by the V.O.C. for about a quarter million pounds of coffee in the 1730's. The indulgence in such pastimes had necessarily to depend on the extortion of the peasants and it also meant that the money paid out for coffee was returning to Batavia, back to the Company itself. Although indulgence in vain and empty luxuries and the oppression of subjects had probably not reached such high levels by the end of our period (1740) there can be no doubt that tendencies in that direction must have been accelerating.

There remains the question of how much power and authority the chiefs actually possessed and exercised over the people during this period. Van Klaveren, who does not specify any particular period, is generalizing for the entire eighteenth century when he says: "Their power over the people was virtually unrestricted. They could demand arbitrary services and tributes from them. The common man was not respected even in his rights of

91. See the relevant clause in the appointment of Wira Mangala as the new Regent of Tjiandjoer, on 14 May 1727 in van der Chijs, IV.p.196.

92. van Klaveren, p.61.

husband and father.⁹³ This picture stemmed no doubt from the official reports of the eighteenth century. But we have to note that it appears to be a characteristic of colonial reporting at this period - and, we can suspect, not only at this period - to ascribe the most despotic and rapacious type of administration to the traditional indigenous sphere,⁹⁴ and on the other hand to emphasise the colonial government's concern for, and intervention on behalf of, the ordinary man under such an administration. By reading between the lines, and by getting at the real motivation we have been able to see on several occasions that such ostensible concern or intervention in Java has been an attractive cloak to cover less endearing objectives and actions. What is more, that garb tends to obscure the very vital fact that the Company had deliberately tended

93. Ibid. p.61.

94. This characteristic, so far as the V.O.C. is concerned, could be traced to as far back as the 1620's when the foremost servant of the Company at the time, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, writing on the indigenous Javanese administration wrote: "May not a man in Europe do what he likes with his cattle? Even so does the master here do with his men, for everywhere these, with all that belongs to them, are as much the property of the master as are brute beasts in the Netherlands. The law of this land is the will of the King, and he is King who is strongest." Judging by Coen's actions, such as the wholesale massacre of the people of the Banda Islands, it would appear that the wish was father of the thought expressed by him here. (Coen's words are quoted in J.S. Furnivall, Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy, Cambridge 1944, p.44).

to increase rather than reduce the power of the Javanese chiefs over the people under them.

To get the newly-introduced crop, coffee, cultivated in satisfactory fashion, the Dutch appear to have soon decided to strengthen the power of the chiefs over the people; for it was through the chiefs that they had to get it cultivated as they themselves had hardly any direct relations with the ordinary man. The position is clear when we examine the development of their policies towards the chiefs after the decisive take-over of Cheribon and of those parts of the Preanger which had not hitherto been under their control (and which constituted by far the largest portion of that division).

This take-over took place after the Treaty of 1705 with Mataram whereby these areas were ceded to the V.O.C. The Preanger areas were taken over immediately, and by Resolution of 15 March 1706 it was decided that they were to be "ruled in the Javanese manner and by the Javanese laws". But in case there was any abuse of authority by the regents (or superior chiefs), the people could appeal against their punishments to the Governor-General and Council.⁹⁵ Control over the more distant Cheribon appears to have been undertaken in 1708 with the despatch of Commandeur Cnol as a special Commissioner. But even in regard to this region (which, as we have seen, remained relatively more autonomous than the Preanger region during our period) the original intention had been to control the judicial power of the chiefs. Accordingly, we find it laid down by resolution of the 21st December 1708 that the sentences in all cases involving the death sentence or other corporal punishment had to be referred to Batavia for approval.⁹⁶ It appeared that in this manner the V.O.C. was attempting not only to bring the chiefs in the two regions more under its control but also trying to limit and circumscribe their power over the people under them.

95. de Jonge, VIII.p. lxxxiii.

96. Realia, I.p.262.

The significant development that took place within a few years was that whilst the first aspect of their policy remained operative, the second one of trying to limit in some ways the power of the chiefs over the people - that came to be more or less jettisoned. This was done despite the fact that, under normal circumstances, the second aspect would have reinforced the first. But circumstances were changing. The intense effort that was being made to promote coffee cultivation in these two regions, it would appear, required that the hands of the chiefs should be strengthened - or, at least, that was what the V.O.C. appears to have believed. Thus, a big change in attitude and policy was signalled when on the 8th April 1712 Governor-General and Council pronounced that "the chiefs of the Preanger lands have an absolute jurisdiction over their subjects, both in civil and criminal matters, subject only to their keeping the Resident informed of their actions."⁹⁷ There is little doubt that what was laid down in respect of the Preanger region must have been even more applicable to Cheribon, over which the Company exercised a weaker control.

97. Ibid. p.262: van der Chijs, IV.pp.20-21. It may be noted that with these resolutions there was a two-fold strengthening of the position of the Preanger Chiefs vis-a-vis the people under them. Whilst relaxing Dutch control over judicial matters, the powers of the Pangeran of Cheribon over these chiefs were also reduced by these decisions. In 1706, by resolution of 2nd March, the Pangeran had been given control (or more likely he was allowed to retain control) over the Preanger chiefs as a vassal of the V.O.C. (See: van der Chijs, III - Batavia/Hague 1886, p.566). Now, that control was reduced. In a series of further measures in 1724 and 1730 that control was still further reduced so as to emphasize the direct answerability of the Preanger chiefs to Batavia. (See Realia, III.p.83). Thus whilst these chiefs acquired greater authority to deal with the people under them (through these and other developments which will be noted next), their direct subjection to Batavia was also being increasingly emphasized.

We have also to note that it was not merely a removal or modification of restraints previously imposed by Batavia, that soon took place. With the fall in production in 1726 the beginnings of compulsory cultivation of coffee were made. Then, as we have seen already, the chiefs were not merely encouraged but also virtually driven to adopt a more authoritarian attitude in their administration by threat of severe penalties if they did not prevent the people in their respective jurisdictions from damaging coffee plantations. To these proddings towards greater authoritarianism were added the various placaats which we have already noted in connection with the role of the Commissary and the Resident. Of these, the one which weakened the position of the ordinary man most and correspondingly strengthened that of the chiefs was probably the placaat that was confirmed by Secret Resolution of the Council on 19 December 1727. By this, the free movement of people was restricted so as to prevent their leaving one area and settling down in another, in effect tying them like serfs to the land in which they resided.⁹⁸ A similar placaat issued in September 1739 laid down corporal punishment for the first offence and six months' imprisonment in chains for the second, along with a fine imposed on those chiefs who allowed such persons to settle down in their areas. It is very illuminating to find the raison d'etre of this placaat stated to be the need to ensure the delivery of stipulated products to the Company by the chiefs.⁹⁹

Whilst we note that the Company tended in this manner to increase the powers of the chiefs and make them more

98. Realia, I.p.27. As far as the freedom of movement of people was concerned, the indigenous administration appears to have been rather "liberal" judging by Dutch references to "vagabonderende" natives around the time of their take-over of these lands. See van der Chijs, III.p.616.

99. van der Chijs, IV.p.491; cf. also, J.Faes, Geschiedenis van Buitenzorg, (Batavia 1902) p.36.

arbitrary and more callous towards their people, we have also to draw the conclusion that until then the chiefs had not possessed such powers. That would mean that the indigenous administration had been less authoritarian than generally assumed. In case such powers had indeed existed in the indigenous system, then they must have gone into abeyance by the time of the placaats, or else the chiefs had chosen not to exercise them, which again would give a better complexion to the traditional system than usually portrayed.

The evidence pretty well points to the fact that during the first three or four decades of the century, the Javanese chiefs had not been exercising the kind of ruthless and arbitrary power which V.O.C. officials so often alleged was inherent in the traditional system. Even after the Company, seeking a regulated supply of coffee, goaded these chiefs on with new inducements, pressures and instruments for the exercise of more arbitrary power than before, the general result was too mild and unsatisfactory for its profits, as the experience of de Haan and van Durven indicated. In fact, in August/September of 1731 some of the chiefs had informed the Commissioners van der Schuer and van Baerle that ever since the drastic price reduction of 1726 coffee cultivation had correspondingly declined and entire plantations had been abandoned by the people without their having been in a position to arrest those developments by any manner of means.¹⁰⁰

It thus appeared that where popular feelings had been aroused, the chiefs had either no ability, or no inclination, or did not think it feasible, to impose their will in opposition to those sentiments - despite the awesome power of the Company which they could count upon in the furtherance of its interests. That the chiefs had not prevented the destruction of coffee plants after the price reduction can be ascribed to such factors and attitudes. The protest against the extirpation orders of 1735 stemmed

100. de Jonge, IX.p.158.

from similar considerations as well as, presumably, a more direct motive of self-interest.

Evidence of a more positive concern for the welfare of the people under them, is indicated by yet other evidence. In 1722, the Preanger chiefs acting in concert requested the Dutch to suspend for some time their extraction of timber from these lands partly on the ground that "the weary, prostrate, and worn out" people had to be given some rest.¹⁰¹ In January 1736, Governor-General Patras had to accede to two requests from the Cheribon princes. One was for the abolition of the post of Superintendent of Charcoal Supplies and the other was for a limitation on the inland trips of the Resident, the reasons for both requests being based on concern over unnecessary impositions on the people.¹⁰² And finally, in December 1742 we find these princes making representations to the authorities against "the unreasonable treatment meted out to their subjects during the past three or four years, through the imposition of false weights and measures when they delivered goods" to the Company's officials.¹⁰³

Before concluding this essay, it appears appropriate to briefly place the significance of Java coffee, during the period under review, in a wider perspective by touching on the part it played within Asia, and also examining its role in the European market in competition with Mocha coffee brought especially by the English East India Company, and with coffee from other sources of supply.

Though the V.O.C. had embarked on coffee cultivation in Amboina and Sri Lanka (two other areas under its control outside Java) there was no significant development

101. van der Chijs, IV.p.156.

102. Ibid.p.388.

103. See Resolution of 28 Dec. 1742 in Realia, I.p.263. For evidence of the prevalence of such practices all over Asia amongst V.O.C. officials around this time and consequent condemnation of their servants by the XVII, see Goonewardena, op.cit. in note 13 above, pp. 68-69.

in either of those areas until the mid-thirties, when cultivation in their territories in Sri Lanka began to acquire some importance. As for Amboina, the crop never became noteworthy having petered out after the price reduction made (at the same time as in Java) in 1726.¹⁰⁴ But the Directors continued to exhort the Batavian authorities to encourage coffee cultivation in Amboina even after production had dwindled to less than a thousand pounds a year. The idea appears to have been not to focus on uncertain profits from Amboina coffee but on the sale of textiles to the Amboinese at such profit that the coffee purchases could be made worth while thereby.¹⁰⁵ We thus see another interesting facet of the Company's coffee policies in Asia. The persistent interest in Amboina however must have been fostered by yet another consideration which we have previously noted. This was the fear of the XVII that the Javanese might obtain too much money from coffee and thereby become powerful enough to pose a threat to the V.O.C., if coffee was not produced in other V.O.C. areas, thus diverting some of the money paid for coffee away from Javanese pockets.¹⁰⁶

There was one area where the V.O.C. had territory in which they were certain coffee could be successfully grown, but where they deliberately refrained from promoting its cultivation. That was the Malabar region, from which in fact coffee plants had been introduced into Java in 1699, through the instrumentality of Zwaardcroon who was then a Councillor Extraordinary in the Batavian Government serving on a mission to that region. No promotion of coffee cultivation was to be undertaken in this region because, as the Heeren XVII explained in 1727 (by letter of August 28), it was an area that was exposed to many competitors.¹⁰⁷

104. Resolution of 18 Jan. 1726, Realia, I. p. 298.

105. XVII to G.G. & C., 30 Aug. 1732 in Leupe, p. 64.

106. See pp. 10, 12 above and footnote 19.

107. Leupe, p. 64.

The complete control over production and supply which the V.O.C. envisaged could not be maintained in a region where in addition to indigenous rulers such as the Zamorin of Calicut and the raja of Travancore, the Dutch would have had to contend with their chief commercial rivals, the English; who were very active there.

In these circumstances, any significant quantity of coffee produced under the V.O.C.'s control was Java coffee. (until the mid-thirties). And, once the Company was assured of adequate supplies for the European market, it became increasingly keen to dispose of the balance profitably in Asia itself. A certain amount was sold retail in Batavia for local consumption, as the Resolution of the Batavian Council on 20th May 1727 indicates.¹⁰⁸ The V.O.C.'s selling price was fixed at six stuivers the pound (Dutch), although almost all the coffee was received by the Company at one-third that price. But the quantities sold at Batavia and other places in the East Indies must have been quite small because of the poverty of the people, a fact emphasised by the Heeren XVII in regard to the Banda islanders when the Batavian authorities tried to paint unreal prospects of coffee sales amongst those people.¹⁰⁹

Though the prospects in the archipelago were dim, there appeared to be very bright vistas to the north-west: in Surat and Persia and, to a lesser extent, in the Coromandel region and in Bengal. Surat, "the storehouse of all India",¹¹⁰ was a particular focus of attention because of the great and long-standing demand for Mocha coffee there and because the high prices at Mocha were attributed in great measure to that demand. By their letter of 28 August 1727 the Directors of the Company instructed Batavia to sell as much of the Javanese coffee as possible at Surat in view of the high coffee prices there, and "more especially in order to prevent private traders and the so-called Goerabs (ships) from Mocha coming there

108. Realia, I.p.298.

109. Glamann, p.211.

110. Chaudhuri, (for full title etc. see note 13) p.49.

to trade.¹¹¹ These considerations appeared to be so important that the XVII also enjoined in that letter that the Asian demand should be first fulfilled before any coffee was despatched to the Fatherland, and that, if, as a result, there was not enough for the European market, then steps should be taken to extend the plantations.

The following year, however, priority appeared to have been given once again to shipments to Europe, the instructions being that only the balances remaining were to be used for the Asian trade. This shift in emphasis may perhaps have been due to news received relating to shipments of Java coffee having been allegedly brought to Surat by Muslim merchants.¹¹² The suspicion that V.O.C. officials at Batavia were involved in private trade in Java coffee at the Company's expense surfaced again in 1731 when the Heeren XVII had reason to believe that the French had been able to secure Java coffee.¹¹³

These suspicions did not mean, however, that the Directors lost interest in pushing sales in Persia and India. On the contrary, a decline in sale prices in Europe in the late twenties appears to have induced them still further to urge exploitation of the Asian market. To counteract the reported preference in taste for the Mocha coffee in that market, they suggested in 1728 itself that coffee which had been left to mature for some time in the stores might successfully deaden any peculiarity in the taste of the product from Java. If that failed they suggested that coffee from Sri Lanka or Amboina should be utilised to break into the Asian market.¹¹⁴ In their letter of 14 September 1731 they posed the question as to whether more sales could not be effected and "greater damage done to the Arabs" by lowering the prices in certain areas from

111. Leupe, p.68.

112. Leupe, p.68.

113. Glamann, p.210. Van Durven and others were dismissed from the service because the Directors believed that these officials were involved in private trade and other corrupt practices at the expense of the Company.

114. Leupe, p.68.

12 to 10 stuivers (the pound).¹¹⁵ It was emphasized that all such strategies should depend on the nature of the place of sale and the prevailing market prices.

With these instructions and strategies in mind, the Batavian authorities attempted to establish a position for Java coffee, at the expense of the Mocha product, in Persia and the Indian markets. The shipments sent, though, do not seem to have been more than 10,000 pounds at a time. Probes were made in the markets of Coromandel, Surat and Persia. But there was no real success to speak of. All efforts appear to have floundered on the rock of a deep-seated predilection for the flavour of Mocha coffee as against the Java product, in all these markets, as de Haan pointed out in December 1728.¹¹⁶ That was perhaps one reason which impelled Governor-General & Council in the later years of the thirties to instruct the Dutch authorities in Sri Lanka to try out coffee from that island too in these same markets. By that time coffee cultivation in Sri Lanka had turned out to be a proven success, and there were also the advantages of geographical proximity to the relevant markets. Moreover, sale prices in Europe had reached a new low and there was a more urgent need to find good markets in Asia. Hence Batavia authorized disposal of the coffee even at 6 or 7 stuivers the pound.¹¹⁷ Accordingly, by resolution of 29 November 1738, the Colombo Council decided to send 10,000 pounds to Surat and another 10,000 to Cochin for transshipment to Persia.¹¹⁸

Whether the coffee was from Java or (as happened later on) from Sri Lanka also, we notice that the V.O.C. was disposing of only very paltry quantities in Asia in comparison to the four million pounds that were taken annually

115. Leupe, p.69.

116. de Haan & C. to XVII, 8 Dec. 1728 in de Jonge, IX. p.138. See also Glamann, pp.209-11.

117. K.A. 2314 (Bd.4) fo.1714 and S.L.N.A. 1/76 fo.362. As usual, the stuivers referred to are 'heavy' and the pound is the Dutch pound weight.

118. S.L.N.A. 1/76 fo.362.

for sale in Europe. Besides, it appeared to be only with the greatest difficulty that even ten thousand pounds were vended in any of the Asian markets: Java (and Sri Lanka) coffee could not really compete with Mocha coffee. Towards the end of the period under review, the Heeren XVII gave a striking illustration of this fact when they pointed out by letter of 4 September 1739 that whereas the French had been able to bring coffee from Mocha and sell it in Persia for about eleven stuivers, the V.O.C. had been unable to dispose of its Java coffee there even for two stuivers less.¹¹⁹

The XVII, however, appear to have drawn a different conclusion, from the one presented by their servants in the East, from all this evidence. They appear to have believed that the failure of Java coffee in the Asian markets was the result of poor salesmanship or even of illicit trading activities on the part of their officials in the East. They were quite certain that the failure was not due to any preference for the flavour of Mocha coffee, no matter what their officials in Asia might say. Glamann has drawn our attention to a rather colourful outburst in this connection.¹²⁰ In September 1738 they declaimed:

"We believe that there is no one in the whole world with a tongue so refined that he can distinguish between good, well-dried Java coffee seeds and the Mocha variety; as for us, when we did that test time and again no one was able to see that distinction. How can it then be believed that a set of lumpen Turks and Persians have so much more refined tongues than we and other people possess?"

Apart from the undertones of racist arrogance and an inadequate appreciation of special tastes cultivated over a long period within particular cultures, this passage is noteworthy for another important reason. Did the absolutely confident assertion that when tests were

119. Glamann, p.211.

120. p.211. A rather free translation of the Dutch quotation is given below.

repeatedly made by the Directors in the Netherlands no one had been able to note any difference between Java and Mocha coffee - did that mean that they had been able to successfully pass off some at least of the much cheaper Java coffee as Mocha coffee, in the Dutch auctions? It appears highly probable, particularly because coffee under the label of "Mocha" definitely fetched a higher price at the auctions.¹²¹

Whether any of the Java coffee was passed off as the Mocha product or not, the fact remains that Java coffee remained profitable enough for the V.O.C. and far more profitable to it, as we have previously seen, than the genuine Mocha product, which it also bought from time to time.¹²² As the English bought Mocha coffee at about

121. In this connection it is significant that in 1728 (11th Oct.) the XVII had ordered all the Chambers of the V.O.C. "in future to remove all the coffee seeds from their packings, mix them all together and re-pack them in their old packings. Care was to be taken to see that the ordinary coffee seeds and the damaged remained each in its own grade." Whether this exercise was to apply only to Java coffee or whether Java and Mocha coffee were both mixed together is not clear from the brief extract given in Leupe, p.67. It is unlikely, however, that such a sharp practice as the latter would have been explicitly laid down in writing. The fact that such an exercise as that noted above was in operation is a significant pointer to manipulations. Consider also the suggestion (p. 59 above) made in 1728 to Batavia as to the manner in which any peculiarity in the taste of Java coffee might be successfully masked.

122. See pp.8,17,18 above. For some of the English and Dutch purchase prices at Mocha, see Glamann, Table 38 at p.205.

the same price as the Dutch, we can see how much more profitable than the coffee trade of the English Company that of the V.O.C. must have been, because the latter was also the sole shipper of the higher-profit-yielding Java coffee.

The picture is further improved in favour of the Dutch Company when we consider the total quantities taken to Europe. In the period 1725 to 1740 the English East India Company brought to Europe some 13,244,448 pounds¹²³ (avdp.) which works out to an average of 827,778 pounds per year. During this same period - barring two or three years during which there was a shortfall - the V.O.C. was, as we have previously seen, annually despatching from Java for the European trade over 4.3 million pounds avdp. (or 4 million Dutch pounds). When we note that this is five times as much as the English Company was bringing into Europe, we can visualize how very much bigger the V.O.C. impact must have been on the European coffee market through its Java exports - even if we leave the Mocha coffee of the V.O.C. out of the reckoning.

An indication of the relative volume and value of the Java coffee is provided by certain other data. In 1724, the English Company took to Europe 2,671,424 pounds of Mocha coffee which was by far the largest quantity of coffee ever taken by them in any given year from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century. When Chaudhuri points out that the import value of this shipment amounted to no less than 21% of the total value of all the English Company's imports to Europe that year,¹²⁴ we are provided with yet another angle of evaluation of the over 4.3 million pounds of Java coffee taken by the V.O.C. to Europe almost

123. Calculated from data in Appendix 5, Table C9 in Chaudhuri (see note 105 above) p.522.

124. The Trading World of Asia ..., pp.361-62. Chaudhuri (p.362) also estimates that "in the second and third decades of the eighteenth century this share was more than 10 per cent on an average..."

every year after 1725.¹²⁵

The importance which we can assign to the Java coffee, as a result of the above data and calculations, in regard to the Dutch Company's imports into Europe, is seriously called into question by several conclusions of Holden Furber in his study of European trading empires in the East. He says, inter alia, that coffee "affected the Europe trade very little until late in the eighteenth century" and that "In shorter supply and more expensive to lay down in Europe, coffee could never compete with tea as a drink for the poor"; and also that coffee "was never to play a role in the East India trade comparable to that of tea."¹²⁶

It would appear that Furber's notions of tea being cheaper than coffee and of its being a drink for the poor stem from its post-eighteenth century reputation and are, therefore, mistaken in relation to much of that century

125. Calculating on the basis of the table given by Leupe at p.71 (the source is not indicated) we find that in the period 1726 to 1740 (both years inclusive) only a little over 3.5 million Dutch pounds (over 3.8 million pounds avdp.) were sold in Europe by the V.O.C., on average, each year. It is difficult to say what part (if any) deductions for tare, spillage, private sales, substitution for Mocha coffee, (or other methods of disposal outside the public auctions) may have played in yielding this figure which is considerably lower than the average amount surmised by us as having been despatched from Java. It is also possible that there are inaccuracies in Leupe's figures or else that our surmise is about 12% off the mark. But calculations made by Governor-General van Imhoff in 1747 (see p.70 below) indicate that our surmise errs on the side of underestimation.

126. Holden Furber, Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800 (Minneapolis 1976) pp.253-255.

itself. In the early part of the century, the more popular drink was coffee and, in fact, as far as England was concerned the public consumption of tea was first begun in the already flourishing coffee houses.¹²⁷ Though the sales records of the English East India Company for the period after 1706/07 have disappeared,¹²⁸ the sales records of the V.O.C. as given by Glamann enable us to see that right up to 1740, tea was generally more than twice as expensive as coffee.¹²⁹ The relative position must have been roughly the same in relation to the coffee and tea sold by the English Company. Even if the reports of extensive smuggling of tea into England¹³⁰ are proved to be accurate, tea must still have been more expensive than coffee. Moreover, it should also be remembered that even in the latter part of the century, tea did not catch on in continental Europe in the same way as in England (and it is the total European impact that Furber himself has been discussing)..

The supplies brought to Europe or placed in the European auctions - which are not the same things, but in the absence of anything better, the two may be equated for

127. The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol. IV, Ed. E.E. Rich and C.H. Wilson (CUP 1967) pp.296-98. See also Charles Wilson, England's Apprenticeship, 1603-1763 (Lond. 1965) p.307: The Growth of English Overseas Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, ed. W.E. Minchington (Lond. 1969) pp.23,24, 125,127; John Burnett, A History of the Cost of Living (Penguin Books 1969) pp.82,135,180,212.

128. Chaudhuri, pp.362,521-22 and 538.

129. Glamann, pp.285-86.

130. Chaudhuri, pp.385,392-95.

rough and ready purposes - by the two Companies are also relevant for a discussion of Furber's contentions. It is known that between 1725/26 to 1730/31 the V.O.C. placed 2,495,945 lbs (avdp.) of tea in the Netherlands auctions. This gives an annual average of 415,990 lbs. Statistics are not available for the later years, but we know from Glamann (whose data are being used for these calculations) that it varied from about one million pounds transported to Europe in 1732 to about 200,000 lbs. in 1741, and also that the Dutch Company lost ground during these years in the "race for the China tea."¹³¹ We may, therefore, assume with some confidence that V.O.C. imports of tea during the period from 1725 to 1740 did not really exceed an annual average of half a million pounds, as against over four million pounds of coffee. The English Company's imports of tea during this same period averaged 1,012,784 lbs per annum¹³² which is only slightly more than its average for coffee imports. It is also roughly double the amount we have arrived at in respect of the V.O.C. tea supplies and only one-fourth the V.O.C. coffee supplies. When we add up the annual averages of the quantities of tea taken by both the Companies to Europe and compare the resultant amount with the similarly calculated total for coffee, we find that the coffee imports were nearly three-and-a-half times as much as the imports of tea.¹³³ Moreover, the statistics given by Chaudhuri on the percentage

131. Glamann, pp.225,241 and 243.

132. Calculated from Chaudhuri's Appendix 5, Table C19 on p.538. It must also be remembered (when quantitative comparisons of tea and coffee are being made) that unlike in regard to tea, the English East India Company was not the sole legal importer of coffee into England. It had no say in regard to imports from the Levant or the West Indies.

133. There is a problem relating to the imports of coffee and tea into Europe which is not taken up for discussion as it appears that in the light of the evidence available no meaningful conclusion for our purposes can be arrived at. That is the problem of smuggling. Much smuggling into Europe (and, thereafter, within Europe) of both these beverages has been noted. See e.g. Glamann, pp. 210,238-39; Chaudhuri, pp.385,392-95.

value of tea and coffee respectively amongst the East India Company's imports from Asia indicate that the percentage value was higher for coffee than for tea in most years up to about 1735, although pound for pound coffee must have been cheaper than tea.¹³⁴

This evidence refutes Furber's contention that coffee was in "shorter supply" and less in demand in Europe than tea - at least in regard to the period up to 1740. It seems also to further contradict his conclusion that coffee - according to the context, referring primarily to coffee brought by the East India Companies - "affected the Europe trade very little until late in the eighteenth century." Before adducing further evidence which should clinch arguments on this aspect of the matter, it is useful to note two assumptions which appear to have contributed towards Furber's misunderstanding of the true situation. One, is his implied assumption that the Levant market was more important for European coffee purchases from the Mocha region than the supplies from the East India Companies. The other is more specifically related to Java coffee. He says that "throughout the eighteenth century" it "never succeeded in overcoming ... the increased competition from West India coffee in Europe."¹³⁵ If by this is meant complete elimination of West India coffee, then, of course the statement will stand. But without doubt what Furber implies is an inability on the part of Java coffee to hold its own in the European market against West India coffee.

That both the above assumptions are incorrect - for the period up to 1740 - can be demonstrated quite clearly with the aid of a memorandum which Governor-General van Imhoff presented to the secret sessions of the Batavian Council on the 14th March 1747.¹³⁶ In fact, this memorandum takes up for consideration, inter alia, all the sources of competition to Java coffee including the Levant

134. Chaudhuri, pp.97,521-22 and 538.

135. Furber, Rival Empires ..., pp.253,255 respectively.

136. Extracts from the memorandum ("Bedenkingen over de jaarlijksche retouren uijt Indie ...") in de Jonge, X.p.127ff, especially pp.127-30.

region. Though it is dated in March 1747 it appears relevant for the entire period up to 1740. Moreover, based as it undoubtedly must have been on the statistics and other information available to the Company at that time, it places the position of Java coffee in an illuminating perspective both with regard to the coffee trade of the V.O.C. as well as in regard to that of its competitors.

As sources from which the Company's competitors were taking coffee to market, van Imhoff refers to the Red Sea (Mocha) region where, along with the V.O.C., the English and the French were active; in addition, the French were transporting the commodity from their own possessions of Mauritius and Mascarenhas; and, finally he refers to the supplies brought from the Levant and the West Indies. It is significant to find him singling out the West Indies supplies and describing them as being "considerable". So it appears that the biggest competitor for Java coffee was the West Indian. He further points out that all in all more coffee was being grown than could be used up in the whole world. But, says van Imhoff, the decisive factor really hinged on who could supply the coffee at the lowest cost and thus remain longest in the market. In this respect it was the V.O.C. which had so many advantages.

Among these advantages, the Governor-General emphasised the fact that the Java coffee took up only ballast space, which would otherwise have had to be filled by less valuable items.¹³⁷ In the case of the rival Companies which had to depend only on the Mocha or Red Sea region supplies, they had to set apart entire shiploads only for coffee because there was little else by way of merchandise that could be obtained from that region. He also hints at the fact that these rival ships had to waste much unutilised space (at least during the voyage from the West Coast of India to the Red Sea) because, apart from bullion,¹³⁸ the

137. It is apparent that ballast goods were reckoned to be free of freight costs. See also Glamann, p.25.

138. On the need for bullion for this trade, see Chaudhuri, p.369.

Arab demand for goods had proved to be uncertain and unstable. As for the coffee from the Indian Ocean islands of the French he pointed out that there was likewise no economical handling of supply both on account of the nature of these islands and the state of French affairs in the East. Apart from other disadvantages, the Levant supplies were too expensive because most of the supplies had to come partly overland to the Mediterranean ports from Arabia (in the Yemen or Mocha region). Moreover, experience had shown that the supplies from Mocha were difficult to get at whenever the prices fell too low; he stressed that coffee procurement was liable to be much more elusive for the Levant merchants as that region was far more distantly situated from the producing areas.

Thereafter, van Imhoff took up the question of the West Indies coffee. He pointed out that here too, unlike in the case of the Dutch, ships had to be specifically assigned - at least for the most part - for transporting the coffee alone, and thus making the transactions less economical. If the sale price fell to one (Dutch) shilling (or twelve stuivers) there was no profit for the freight-carrier or the merchant, nor even for the West Indian planter, who had to spend much more than was the case in Java for everything required for cultivation. Moreover, if the market was so low it would not be worth the merchant's while to tie up his capital by holding on to such a poor commodity in the expectation of an improvement in the market.

All these arguments were adduced to prove that the V.O.C. alone was able to bring its coffee - leaving out of consideration of course, its relatively small Mocha purchases - to the European market at the lowest possible cost and also that it was therefore in a position, if need be, to hold on to its stocks for a longer period.¹³⁹ It is very interesting and, in the absence of any more precise information, very valuable to find estimates of coffee

139. As he himself points out coffee was a commodity which could be kept for several years without losing in quality. de Jonge, X.p.129. But cp. Chaudhuri, p.363.

consumption and supply in van Imhoff's memorandum. He estimates the annual European consumption of coffee in the mid-1740s at nearly nine million pounds (eight million Dutch pounds) and the total quantity brought to Europe at about eleven million pounds of which he says the V.O.C. alone would in all probability be bringing and selling or stockpiling fully half or about 5½ million pounds each year. As the Governor-General undoubtedly had fairly adequate information at his disposal in order to make these calculations, we can accept them as being sufficiently accurate for all practical purposes. We might also remember that even in 1742, before he assumed the Governor-Generalship, van Imhoff had reminded the XVII that "coffee had been for a long time an outstanding crop to the Company".¹⁴⁰

These calculations and other points made in van Imhoff's memorandum directly support in many respects the refutation we have made (on the basis of other evidence and calculations) of Furber's underestimation and depreciation of the role of coffee, more especially of Java coffee, in the Europe trade.

Coffee, it is seen, affected the Europe trade to a notable extent. It appeared in far more voluminous quantities in that trade than tea: the eleven million pounds a year that van Imhoff spoke of as against two million or so pounds of tea (the acknowledged chief supplier, the English East India Company supplying only around a million pounds annually). The Levant coffee trade with Europe was of little consequence in comparison with the trade in Java coffee, and even the West Indies had, during this period, a significantly smaller share of the Europe trade than Java (when due allowances are made for coffee from the Levant and from English and French sources of supply in Asia). We had earlier noted the very favourable mark-up on the cost price of the coffee, which the V.O.C. had been obtaining from Java since 1726 at virtually tributary rates. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that, given the other advantages mentioned by van Imhoff, Java coffee, produced under a system of V.O.C. exploitation of the peasants in an indirect manner and through pressure

140. Leupe, p.53.

applied on the native chiefs, continued to maintain its position during this period even against the fruits of slave labour in the West Indies plantations system.

It is appropriate, however, that the final assessment regarding the results obtained from this alternative model of colonial exploitation should be left to the Directors of the Company themselves. In 1735, they declared that:

"the coffee has been now for many years past a magnificent product which has been largely responsible for keeping (the Company's) affairs going (well). But (now) on account of the fact that other nations have been following the example of the Company and have been daily expanding their plantations, and also as a result of the large supplies that are being brought from other regions, that crop too has begun to fall considerably in price - as witnessed by the fact that now, for the first time, it has had to be sold in the respective Chambers of the Company for 12 or 13 stuivers the pound."¹⁴¹

141. Leupe, pp. 59-60.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Whilst a few unpublished documents from the Dutch East India Company's records at the Algemeen Rijksarchief at the Hague and from the Sri Lanka National Archives have been utilised in this essay, the bulk of the Company's records that have been consulted have been from printed sources.

Of these, the most important and extensive have been the sources that have been reproduced or given in extract in the monumental series, De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indie, more especially, volumes IX and X edited by J.K.J.de Jonge. In his erudite introduction and footnotes he has drawn on many other valuable records of the V.O.C., sometimes summarising their contents. In this manner, de Jonge has provided a rather broad-based and invaluable access to contemporary V.O.C. records relating to coffee cultivation and many connected matters.

Volumes III and IV of another work of monumental proportions give us access to the resolutions and proclamations of Governor-General and Council relating, among other things, to coffee culture and aspects of administration relevant to it. This is the work entitled Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek, 1602-1811 (Vols. III and IV published, Batavia/Hague 1886, 1887) edited by J.A.van der Chijs. Though van der Chijs has often chosen to summarise or give only extracts from the resolutions and proclamations, it will be apparent from this essay that he has provided us with far more than small mercies. Moreover, there are many occasions when he provides us with other valuable documentation such as quotations from letters and comments of the Heeren XVII.

It is particularly fortunate that certain lacunae or inadequacies (for our study) in both the above works are filled by a register or index of resolutions of the Batavian Government edited by the indefatigable J.A.van der Chijs referred to above. This is the three-volume work entitled Realia. Register op de Generale Resolutien van het Kasteel Batavia, 1632-1805 (Hague/Batavia 1882-85). Though this

work betrays some evidence of hasty compilation or printing, it appears to be accurate enough for most practical purposes, as the continued dependence on it of generations of historians would also indicate.

In regard to primary printed sources, we have, finally, to note the usefulness of P.A. Leupe's contribution entitled "Invoering der Koffijkultuur op Java, 1700-1750" in Bijdragen tot de Taal - Land -en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Indie" (Amsterdam 1859) pp.53-71. It is perhaps the earliest piece of writing on coffee cultivation in Java. But it is not really an essay on the subject, so much as a stringing together of various quotations or extracts from the V.O.C. records (pp.53-62), followed by six appendices (pp.63-71) of extracts from further official documents of the Company. The appendices - Leupe does not use that term - have the following headings: "Some notes regarding Coffee Culture"; "Some Regulations relating to the Transport [of Coffee]"; "Some Regulations relating to the Sale [of Coffee]"; "Some Regulations relating to the Sale of Coffee in Asia"; "Averaged Five-Year Demand for Coffee from Asia, from 1700 to 1750"; "Statement of the Coffee Sold by the Netherlands East India Company 1700-1750". Reflecting perhaps the state of the archival records at the time, or of scholarly practice, Leupe does not give any archival reference numbers etc. to the records he cites or quotes from (except the dates of the documents). But all the evidence points to their perfect authenticity. In default of ready access to the original records themselves, Leupe's material has proved to be invaluable, particularly because he has so often picked on information overlooked in the other compilations referred to above.

Of secondary works purporting to deal primarily with coffee, I am aware of two. Though they proved to be of little or no use for this essay, they are mentioned here so as to forewarn those interested in the subject. The first is entitled: De Onmogelijke Vrijheid - Het Gouvernement als Koffieondernemer (Utrecht, 1948) by A. Goedhart. The author concentrates on the 19th century as that was his real research concern. About a dozen pages, however, touch on our period by way of an introduction

to his main contribution. There is nothing that is new in these pages except perhaps a paragraph or two that may be relevant for coffee cultivation in Sri Lanka. The second is the work by William H. Ukers entitled The Romance of Coffee: An Outline History of Coffee and Coffee-drinking through a Thousand Years (New York, 1948). For the period covered by our essay - and, in fact, not only for that period - this work was found to be quite inadequate and inaccurate.

With Kristof Glamann's well-known work, Dutch-Asiatic Trade, 1620-1740 (Copenhagen/The Hague, 1958), we encounter a contribution which has been most useful, particularly for the commercial aspects of coffee. But a few problems of general interest not taken up by him, have been discussed in this essay, quite apart from modification, amplification, or addition, to one or two matters of a more specific nature. On the administrative, economic and social implications of coffee cultivation in regard to the Javanese people, much useful comment and material relevant for this essay have been found in J.J. van Klaveren's The Dutch Colonial System in the East Indies (Rotterdam 1953) on pages 59 to 66. But one problem is that it is at times difficult to pin-point the exact year or years to which his statements refer, many of them being generalisations for the entire eighteenth century. It was, unfortunately, not possible to consult a work which both Glamann and van Klaveren (more especially the latter) have drawn upon, namely, F. de Haan's Priangan. De Preanger-regentschappen onder het Nederlandsch Bestuur tot 1811, 4 Vols. (Batavia 1910-12). It is hoped that little of significance relating to our period has been overlooked from this work by Glamann and van Klaveren, and that anything missed by them is to be found in the printed records mentioned earlier.

It has also to be noted that valuable information, insights, and points of comparison have been furnished by a recent scholarly work which deals with English trading activities in Asia two to three centuries ago. This is K.N. Chaudhuri's The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760 (New Delhi, 1978). His

chapter on "coffee" and some of the statistical tables have been of particular value. On the other hand, Holden Furber's Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800 has provided some points for disagreement and refutation. But it, perhaps, needs to be mentioned that on most other matters Furber leaves little room for such disproof. J.S. Furnivall's Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy (Cambridge 1944) and his Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India (New York, U.S.edition 1956) were of some use for an understanding of Dutch policy and also as indicators of the limits of inquiry made up to that time into the subject-matter of this essay. Finally, on economic developments in Europe having relevance to our theme, we may also mention The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol.IV - The Economy of Expanding Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century ed. E.E.Rich and C.H.Wilson (Cambridge 1967). Despite its sub-title, this volume is concerned with the first half of the eighteenth century too.