

## Border studies in southeast Asia: Challenges and opportunities

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**Abstract:** The centers of trade and economic activities in the region of Southeast Asia rank from a huge and modern to a small and traditional pattern. Malacca and Singapore have been cases in point for huge and modern patterns, while the border areas in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines are the cases for small and traditional centers. This paper will argue that with global connectivity and regional dynamics, the small and traditional trade and economic centers could shift to modern ones. History records that the introduction of the Southeast Asian region by the outside world, especially in relation to trade and economic activities, was largely derived from the significant role played by the people in the mainland of Southeast Asia regarding the silk roads route and the role of the people in the insular or islands of Southeast Asia regarding the spice trade route in the premodern time. Later in the modern time in Southeast Asia, the role of Islam, the Europeans and the center trade of Malacca around the 17th and 18th centuries played a significant role. Indeed, huge trade centers like Malacca in the 17th C and 18th C and later by Singapore in the 9th C have been very important throughout the history of trade in the Southeast Asian region. However, we must not ignore the roles of the border areas in the Southeast Asian archipelago, especially in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the border region of the Philippines which have played a dominant role in trade and economic activities. These activities have been smaller and more traditional than the Malacca and Singapore cases, but economic activities could develop rapidly with the global connection and its interconnectivity. Besides, those border areas have also become an important key for security issues not only in the Southeast Asia region in particular but also in the Asia Pacific or Indo Pacific region as well. The security of the region of Southeast Asia and even Indo Pacific could be affected by the situation in those border areas. Interconnectivity is a challenge as well as an opportunity for these border areas to become the future of trade and economic activities within the region of Southeast Asia that also connects with the region of Indo Pacific, especially China, South Korea, and Taiwan. The planning of Indonesian capital movement to East Kalimantan will add opportunities for those border areas located near the proposed new capital. About the above issues, this paper will address several issues: firstly, the history of trade and economic activities in Malacca, Singapore, and the border areas in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines; secondly, the different patterns of trade and economic developments of the Malacca, Singapore, and the border areas in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and Philippines; thirdly, the challenges and opportunities of the border areas in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines to develop bigger trade centers in the future; fourth, the interconnectivity of those border areas to Asia Pacific region. This paper uses an interdisciplinary approach in the fields of social sciences and humanities. With this study, it is hoped that a better understanding of regional dynamics will be obtained, especially in the border areas. The period that we use is from 1998 until present time regarding if there was changing policy due to the end of Old Order to the Reformation period of Indonesian

government. As a result, the development of border areas had been in existence before the colonial time in which people moved freely and had trade contacts. Even though they used to have the same ethnic linkage, after the formation of a modern state where they have different citizenships, in reality they can relate to each other in harmony and peace because of the similarity of ethnic linkages they had in the past. Colonial powers intended to replace the powers of traditional kingdoms with the idea of civilizing the colonized areas. Therefore, to overcome the gap between the Indonesian population who live in border areas bordering foreign countries, management is needed that is no longer informal (traditional ways), but formal and modern. For that reason, the existence of competition due to differences in the quality of human resources they have, often causes competition which also becomes a medium for illegal trade, illegal trafficking, illegal drugs that affect or disrupt good relations between the two countries that border each other. With the change in policy from the centralistic and authoritarian during the New Order which was in power for 32 years since 1966, when the New Order era ended, the reform era began which prioritized transparent accountability towards a more democratic society. The paradigm shift in the context of this policy is expected to contribute to the management of border areas from the traditional or informal to the modern and formal towards the development of peaceful and sustainable border areas.

**Keywords:** Malacca; southeast Asia; Indo pacific; border trade; and sustainable border development

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## **1. Introduction**

It is commonly known that trade and economic activities in Southeast Asia both in the mainland and in the insular have had their influences on spheres. The dynamics of those activities can be seen in what happened in the case of the silk route from China to Constantinople located in the Arabic world that already lasted more than a thousand years ago. Long before the discovery of new roads to Asia by Western nations, trade relations had been established between the inhabitants of Asia itself, namely between India and China. In the story of Marco Polo's journey, this trading relationship has been going on for a long time. It is interesting to mention the work written by Chen (1994) who explains the importance of this silk trade route in the past of Southeast Asia. A Venetian merchant, namely Marco Polo, was able to talk about it in his writings. Marco Polo called the route that occurred the "Silk Road" because it had been going on for thousands of years. Commodities traded included tea, silk, and several products, including spices for medicines and cooking ingredients. The kingdoms in India such as the Moghul Dynasty, Ming Dynasty, Ching, and so on used these commodity products as material for trade among the people of Southeast Asia, and trade with India and China. In the absence of political relations, the aspects of trade and autonomy have been strengthened especially in each kingdom in Southeast Asia. Thus, the existence of relations in the social and cultural fields creates impression that the people of Southeast Asia have never been politically colonized by either India or China in their territory, despite China became the empire of the silkroad (Aswi Warman Adam et al., 2023, pp. 50–70, Anna Mutmainah, 2024, pp. 208–209; Clements, 2019, pp. 125–153). Vietnam, for example, in the world of mainland Southeast Asia, has been deeply influenced by Chinese culture for more than a thousand years, but the Vietnamese people did not feel that they were colonized by China. In fact, in the general Chinese view of the world or areas to the south, especially

in the islands or insular of Southeast Asia, the region or islands in Southeast Asia are known as Nanyang which means islands located in the south of China as a peaceful area. This means that China does not feel a threat from South and Southeast Asia nor does it feel a threat from China. The same thing also happened between India and regions in Southeast Asia where socio-cultural relations in terms of the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism have been going on for quite a long time in that region. After the Arabs conquered Constantinople, the name of Constantinople was changed to Istanbul and later Istanbul became the name of the city until now.

Meanwhile, the trade and economic activities also lasted in different ways, particularly in the insular islands of Southeast Asia ranging from eastern to western parts of the Indonesian archipelago. There was not much information regarding what, how, and to what extent the connection between the two trade and economic trade. Or can it be said that those trade and economic activities separated from one to the other or overlapped one to the other? However, despite those trade routes already lasting for such a long time, the information about these trade and economic activities became clearer only after the Arabs attacked Constantinople and there was no more contact between the Europeans and the Chinese traders. The Europeans had traded only in Constantinople and its surrounding regions, while the trade and economic activities were dominated by the locals and mostly by the Chinese traders.

From this picture, the Chinese already played a major role in the context of silk routes, particularly in the mainland of Southeast Asia, and also in the spice routes, particularly in the insular islands of Southeast Asia. However, the fall of Constantinople had accordingly given some impacts on the social cultural, economic, and political development in Asia in general and in Southeast Asia in particular. One of the new developments was the discovery of new coastal ports ranging from West Europe, Africa, India, and later Southeast Asia. It seems that the Europeans, particularly the Spanish and the Portuguese traders, about the Tordesillas agreement in 1494 and the Saragoza agreement in 1521 divided the world into two divisions namely under the Spanish and the Portuguese sphere of influence particularly in the 17th to 18th centuries. This happened in the context of the spice trade. In other words, both of them played a dominant role in connecting these coastal ports after the Arabs seized Constantinople to be a part of their regions and this was well known as the Sabil or Sabillilah wars. The aims were to control the trade and economic activities that benefited both of them and later would be followed by other Europeans such as the Dutch, the British, and the French in the 19th century in the context of sugar, coffee, and tobacco plantations that were already familiar or well known in the international trade.

The trade relations of the silk route from East to West finally met with traders from Europe, especially in Constantinople. It seems that Constantinople, which was once a predominantly Christian area, was taken over by Islam, so Constantinople changed its name to Islambul and eventually became Istanbul until now. The story of the development of trade and autonomy owned by the kingdoms in Asia such as India and China seem to run without interference by the outside world or Europe.

Indeed, huge trade centers like Malacca and Singapore have been very important throughout history of trade in the Southeast Asian region. Malacca had become a popular place for traders from different parts of the region. Singapore is a very

important economic trading center as well and it has become the center until now. Nevertheless, we must also see the development of the roles of the border areas in the Southeast Asian archipelago, especially in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines which have crucial roles in trade and economic activities at the smaller levels. These areas have been very dynamic and recently are more developed, especially in the Indonesian borders that have been paid serious attention by their government. The economic dependency on the Malaysian side has slowly reduced with the greater connectivity with other Indonesian cities, such as Makassar, and Surabaya (Puryanti, 2017). Indeed, the development of infrastructure is side by side with the development of trade and economic activities there, especially with other Indonesian cities. Previously, it has been known for its dependency on Malaysian sites. Puryanti (2017) pinpoints the pattern of patron-client relationship which has been evident in which the Malaysian side, Tawau's trade has acted as patron.

These activities have been smaller and more traditional than the Malacca and Singapore cases, but economic activities could develop rapidly with the global connection. Besides, those border areas have also become an important key for security issues as well. The security of the region of Southeast Asia and even Asia Pacific could be affected by the situation in those border areas. The evidence of transnational terrorists in the border areas between East Malaysia and Mindanao, the Philippines for instance, has indeed impacted the security of those two regions. Besides, there has been a shift from the role of pirates played by the Sultanate of Sulu to becoming new economic and trade centers in the region. Interconnectivity is the challenge as well as the opportunity for these border areas to become the future of trade and economic activities within the region of Southeast Asia that also connects with the region of Asia Pacific, especially China, South Korea, and Taiwan. The planning of Indonesian capital movement to East Kalimantan will add opportunities for those border areas located near the proposed new capital.

## **2. Literature review**

There are significant references that can be used to analyse the problems of border studies in Southeast Asia: Challenges and Opportunities. Djoko Marihandono and Bondan Kanumoyoso in their work entitled, *Rempah, Jalur Rempah dan Dinamika Masyarakat Nusantara* (Spices, Spice Routes and Dynamics of Indonesian Society) shows how and to what extent that before the development of Malacca in Southeast Asia, it was well-known that every small kingdom had its own territory. After the coming of the Europeans such as the Portuguese and Spanish, they did not disturb the existence of the small kingdoms, but they tried to manage them in the context of European interests. Southeast Asian history in general was seemingly viewed from Europe's perspective rather than from the Southeast Asian perspective itself. This picture lacks inner development or from within point of view. Therefore, there are some gaps between mainland development and the insular or island development in Southeast Asia. The relationship between the two great countries, India and China, can be seen from the sociocultural aspect adopted by India and China. The Indonesian archipelago is geographically located in the shipping lanes that have connected the Western world and the Eastern world since the 1st millennium AD. As world trade

routes, the islands in the archipelago have become a stopover for ships from various directions, which are not only transit ports but also stimulated by the rich spices of archipelago (Marihandono and Kanumoyoso, n.d.).

It is also significant to see from Suebsantiwongse's work (2022) entitled, "Candi Pembakaran at Ratu Boko: Possible Function and Association with the Mediaeval Sri Lankan Monastery at Anuradhapura". The Creative South: Buddhist and Hindu Art in Mediaeval Maritime Asia that even though the relationship has existed for quite a long time in its history in Southeast Asia, it does not appear that the power of territorial or political struggles was carried out by India and China which began in the early centuries of AD. The relationship that existed long enough not in the context of territorial expansion allowed for the development of trade and the creation of autonomy owned by nations in Southeast Asia. Unlike the case when the Western colonies, which were originally in the European region, fought over territory in Africa, their arrival in Southeast Asian countries was also inseparable from the impact of this development. It is still unclear what happened in the mainland of Southeast Asia, particularly amongst the trade and economic activities before the discovery of new coastal ports or trades by the Europeans. At least from the archeological and historical notes, there were still local economic trades driven by the local elites, the Indic and Sri Lankan influences, supported by the Chinese traders as the brokers. Suebsantiwongse (2022) argues about the connection between the Javanese and the traders from Sri Lanka by using certain languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, and Old Javanese regarding bodhighara or stupa at Candi Prambanan. These connections mark to what extent the religious and cultural relationship between the two regions in Southeast Asia and South Asia in general. One classic historical record regarding attempts to carry out attacks from the local to the regional level is shown by the Srijwijaya kingdom which attempted to annex Bali during the reign of King Udayana and his wife from Java who had the title Sri Gunapriyadharmapatni better known as Mahendradatta from East Java. The description of historical dynamics regarding efforts to annex Sriwijaya to Bali is an illustration of how the transition from local to regional kingdoms occurred. Then it was followed by the development of the kingdoms in East Java in the 10th and 11th centuries called the Kediri kingdom. It finally reached its peak in the period of the Majapahit kingdom in the 13th to 15th centuries AD which led to the formation of empires that had the character of an empire, meaning that the desire to annex other kingdoms began to emerge. Despite such developments, it seems that each kingdom still has the trading system that it manages and is still developing its autonomy. For an overview of this historical situation, for example, it can be seen when there was a change from the regional stage to empire as shown by the Majapahit rulers as a comparison see: (Wolters, 1999). However, it seems that the trade routes in Asia, especially the silk route and the spice route, seemed to run separately because the influence of the arrival of Europeans had not been carried out as intensely as in the following centuries.

Another example of other sources as written by Philippe Regnier (1990), titled, *Singapore: A City-State in Southeast Asia*, gives a clear description on how in a "locked or isolated area"

(Landlocked country) in Laos shows dependency, one state to another in the mainlands of Southeast Asia. He traces back how the King Fa Ngoum is said to have

celebrated his victory after successfully integrating all the small kingdoms in Laos which became known as the kingdom of Lane Xang, which is now in the Pak Pasak region, now known as Vientiane. In the 16th century (1560) King Saysettha moved from Luang Phrabang and declared Vientiane the capital of the kingdom of Lanexang (Nakorn Chantabouly Sita Tanakhanahood Uttama Rajathany). In the 17th century, one hundred years later, especially during the reign of King Souliyawongsa Thamikarat, the new capital city of Vientiane developed rapidly as a development of civilization in mainland Southeast Asia. At that time, Vientiane was the center of political administration, socio-economics, and culture. Likewise, the royal palace is depicted as a row of golden houses along the Mekong River valley (Ardhana, 2010).

Regnier (1990) argues that:

*There is no need here to examine the history of colonization in Southeast Asia. However, it is helpful to show how commercial entities were set up by the will of successive European regimes, and how these entities fitted into a pre-established regional and international order (“historical continuity”) and perpetuated the formation of emporia which were vital for seafaring and for trade” (Regnier, 1990).*

From this description, indeed the social, cultural, economic, and political development in Southeast Asia can be traced back from the local to the regional development until finally developing to the international ones. Abdullah (2004) describes the situation of the people in the archipelago world in Southeast Asia ahead of the initial touch of this region with the arrival of European colonial powers. At the same time, it can be argued that although the Europeans were mostly Christians, they did not want to radically change the religion of the native people (Ardhana, 2013). The significant goal was to improve the trading and economic activities.

In records, they are known to occupy an area called the segregated environment. Tribal communities have inhabited coastal areas for quite a long time, especially for tribes that have a well-known reputation in the world of waters or seas such as the Javanese, Timorese, Makassarese, and Bugis who are generally known as the Malays as a whole (Ardhana and Maunati, 2011). They meet each other, one trader to another where various kinds of local languages in the archipelago are used. The trading centers of the coasts were attractive for foreign traders, especially Chinese, Indians, and Arabs to come to trade and exchange their commodities with one another and stay for some time until a safe and comfortable wind season came again to continue their good journey, coming from China or India, or vice versa. Meanwhile, in the seas of Asia especially Southeast Asia, it is better known for its spice commodity, so the region is said to have a spice route. This trading activity is also controlled by local authorities in the area. In the political field, especially about the issue of autonomy, local people still have autonomy in managing traditional governmental powers and also in regulating trade in general. Adnan Amal (2010) depicts how the spice trade was colored by the existence of various wars both domestically and with foreign traders to maintain self-esteem, and integrity from arbitrary power.

In addition to this, it can be said that from the modern historical sources, as noted by

Ardhana (2007a) titled, “The Minority Groups and Multiculturalism in Sabah Malaysia”, *Ethnicity: Socio-Cultural and Economic Challenges*. Carmencita Aguilar

(ed.) and Ardhana (200b), titled, “Interaksi Etnisitas dan Perdagangan di Wilayah Perbatasan Krayan, Ba Kelalan dan Long Pasia”. *Dinamika Etnisitas dan Hubungan Ekonomi Pada Wilayah Perbatasan di Kalimantan Timur-Sabah*. From these sources, it can be seen that Southeast Asia had been populated by the Austronesians who were believed to come to the regions from both the mainland and the insular of Southeast Asia from South China, and that are the Chinese, arriving in Vietnam, Indonesia, and other regions. It can be understood why there are so many Chinese living in the Borneo Island, particularly in Sarawak and Sabah in East Malaysia (Ardhana, 2007). Meanwhile, in certain parts of the Asia Pacific region, most of the populations are believed to have come to the regions from Africa for a long time, the Melanesians. The Melanesians arrived in the Pacific region approximately ten thousand years ago and later arrived in the Mollucas islands and Papua around six thousand years ago. In such a long time, they grew in the regions and established small kingdoms until entering the 15th century particularly when the decline of Majapahit kingdoms that had ruled dominantly in the islands of the Indonesian archipelago. Indeed, the people in the border regions, particularly in the insular of Southeast Asia, have similarities in terms of ethnicity, experiences and seem to be easier to communicate with their neighbors such as the local people from Sarawak and Sabah and the local people in the border regions in Borneo (West and North Kalimantan) who are mostly Chinese.

In the case of the insular or the islands of Southeast Asia, it is important to look at Jeroen Touwen’s (1997) interesting work on *Extremes in the Archipelago: Trade and Economic Development in the Outer Islands of Indonesia*, which analyses the two different regions of the Indonesian archipelago. In comparison to the western part of the Indonesian archipelago, the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago was not given much attention during the colonial era. In addition to this, the eastern part lacks Indic or Hindu influence which is in comparison with the western part of the Indonesian archipelago. Therefore, it can be seen that the western parts are rich in written sources like *Lontara*, *Lontar*, *Babad*, *Tambo* in comparison to the eastern part which is rich in oral tradition. It is not surprising if there is a lack of historical sources and there is limited evidence regarding this issue. The Dutch colonial power mentioned the western regions as the inner region and the eastern part as an outer region. However, according to archeological and historical notes, there are certain records that the Hindu Javanese influences from Majapahit in the limited regions such as mentioned in the *Negarakrtagama* from the Majapahit era. However, it is still not clear to what extent the influences in terms of political control to the regions in certain parts of the eastern Indonesian archipelago. At least certain records mentioned that Makassar was a center of the eastern Indonesian archipelago such as southeastern parts of Indonesia including Sumbawa, and Timor. In this regard, an interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to see the development of the land and sea world of Southeast Asia more comprehensively. As stated by Judith Schlehe (2020, pp. 49–64) in her work entitled, “*Social Sciences in Southeast Asia: An Anthropological Perspective*”, explaining the borrowing of anthropological concepts in analyzing the structure of society and culture in Southeast Asia so that understanding the analysis of this regional study more comprehensive and comparative to explain the phenomena that have occurred in Southeast Asia in the past and today.

### **3. Main issues and method**

Some significant issues need to be elaborated and analysed in depth as follows: First, the history of trade and economic activities in Malacca, Singapore, and the border areas in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines, especially in Tarakan, Nunukan, Sebatik, Tawau, Sangihe,

Talau, Davao; Second, the different patterns of trade and economic developments of Malacca, Singapore, and the border areas in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines; Third, the challenges and opportunities of the border areas in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines to develop bigger trade centers in the future; Fourth, the interconnectivity of those border areas to the Asia Pacific region. The chosen modern period has been selected to understand the crucial problem of old and recent issues in Indonesian border, where their positioned is being weak referring to their neighboring countries.

This paper uses an interdisciplinary approach in the fields of social sciences and humanity, such as history, anthropology, and social psychology on certain issues not only in the past but also in the present times. The weakness of this method is that we are not focusing on the historical disciplinary. On the other hand, the advantage of this approach is that we can reveal the social phenomena in a clear and in-depth way. For example, we analyze social relations in society by using sociological concepts such as social classification and social differentiation. The period that we use is from 1998 until present time regarding of there was changing policy due to the end of Old Order to the Reformation period of Indonesian government. The Old Order is more to centralized and authoritarian regime, meanwhile, the Reformation period led to the transparency and openness toward a democratic society. On the diagnostic variable, we are taking an example of the border area between East Kalimantan society and East Malaysia people. Before the establishment of modern Indonesia, both of these ethnic groups had the same ethnic linkage, however, after the modern Indonesia had been established, they have different citizenship. With this study, it is expected that we will have a better understanding of regional dynamics, especially in the border areas.

### **4. The silk road and the spice route in the border region in southeast Asia in the classical period**

In the succeeding period, there was a new development in Southeast Asia (the mainland and the insular Southeast Asia). Each kingdom in the region of Southeast Asia had its trading activities which were controlled by its local rulers. The commodity traded on the Asian mainland was in the form of silk, so the trade route that is thousands of years old is known as the Silk Route. These trading commodities were also widely traded as far as Constantinople, which was a center of trade and a place of transit when people from India and China transacted trade. Even though there were trade relations, these trading activities did not seem to interfere with the autonomy of each kingdom in Asia in general and in Southeast Asia in particular. This is understandable because many of the actors in the trade sector are controlled by the ruling class who carry out their trade transactions through traditional bureaucratic structures that exist in each region in Asia. The condition of the kingdoms in Europe



was certainly different from the situation in Asia in general, especially at the end of the Middle Ages (Medium Aevum, or what is known as the Dark Ages) which developed between 1300 to 1500 AD. In Asia, this period was the transition of kingdoms that were previously local and were able to develop at the regional level. Southeast Asia developed a new place as a melting pot. It is known that places like Malacca are nicknamed, “the Land below the Wind”, which is used as a stopover between ethnic groups originating from the eastern and western regions of the archipelago. Before the discovery of new sea networks from Europe to Asia, particularly to Malacca, Malacca was only the center for local and regional economic and trade activities. There was not much historical evidence related to the past development in the context of this period.

In the period of the 15th to 16th century, it can be said that the modern period in Asia began when the end of Majapahit rule or the end of the classical period of Indonesian history and entered the modern period of Southeast Asia such as the Islamization, the coming of Europeans and the spread of Mission and Zending in the region of Southeast Asia. Although the arrival of Europeans in fact, this condition led to why the aspects of trade and autonomy were successfully mastered by each independent kingdom in Southeast Asia. Trade and issues of autonomy are the main characteristics in viewing the dynamics of society and culture in Asia.

For a long time, Southeast Asia had already developed the spice trade. It is even said that this spice trade route lasted quite a long time from east to west until it reached Constantinople, which was a meeting between merchants from the east and traders from Europe such as the Portuguese and Spanish. With the fall of Constantinople, which was captured by Islam, relations between East and West seemed to stagnate. However, when a new route was discovered in the form of the Suez Canal in 1869, a replacement was found from Constantinople which changed its name to Istanbul in Turkey, namely by going around the African continent (Cape of Good Hope or Good Hope), to Goa in India and finally meeting with the trading center in Malacca which connected spice traders from east to west. The Portuguese considered Malacca important and eventually conquered it in 1511, which became the center of trade in Southeast Asia. The fall of the Hindu royal power and the influx of Western influences became the characteristics of the entry of the Asian world into its modern era. Western rulers saw the prospect of trade activity in Asia. Therefore, various efforts from European colonies such as Portugal, Spain, France, England, and the Netherlands competed to control new territories not only in Africa but also across Asia. Thus, the trading activities and autonomy owned by the local rulers in Asia began to be slowly seized so that the freedom in the world of trade and the autonomy which had previously been seized by the Western colonial powers towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

The arrival of Europeans in the later period, especially the VOC, seems to have played an important role in maintaining security issues which have become a magnet for the arrival of foreigners to Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular (Reid, 1993). Its presence in the early days allowed for cultural and economic relations between Europeans and residents in the archipelago. At this time the role of the king, the royal family, and wealthy foreigners played an important role in maintaining the trading activities and issues of autonomy they had at that time without significant

interference from their power. In colonial cities, the position and position of the local rulers were side by side. Their position as a special class seems to be taken over by new masters who come from above the wind, while local people occupy positions at the bottom layer of the existing hierarchical structure (Abdullah, 2004). In other words, this was the beginning of the modern era which was marked by the end of the Hindu royal power and the development of Islamic kingdoms which mainly developed in the coastal areas of the Archipelago, then the arrival of Western or European influence in Asia. In other words, it can be said that these areas are described not like coastal cities at the time of the development of maritime empires in the world of the Indonesian archipelago, especially in the 17th to 18th centuries which according to John Smail's terminology (Smail, 1961) noted that there was still autonomy owned by each of the local kingdoms in the region.

Towards the end of the 18th century, Britain felt how significant it was to protect its economic and political interests in Asia, especially between India and China. In Southeast Asia, such as in the Sunda Strait, for example, it was under the control of Dutch power. On the other hand, The British felt how important it was to control the Malacca Straits, as it was known that whoever was able to control the Malacca Straits was considered to control Southeast Asia as a whole. That is why the British felt the need to control trading centers which in reality in the 17th and 18th centuries, these activities were controlled by local rulers who still had full autonomy. In 1786, the British established a power base in Penang. It can be said that throughout the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, it appears that Britain played a significant role in trading activities in the Malacca Straits.

However, England needed accommodation with the Dutch powers that existed in the region. The British and Dutch agreement in 1814 returned Malacca to the Netherlands, but an English man named Thomas Stamford Raffles had established his fort in Bengkulu (Bencoolen), Sumatra. The discovery of the Suez Canal in 1869 seemed to accelerate the discovery of new areas and trade with Asia, where the important function of Constantinople seemed to decrease drastically because the Europeans found new trade routes to Asia, such as around the African continent, the discovery of a stopover area in Goa in India, and finally met with centers of trade activity that linked India and China in the Malacca Straits. The British role in developing Singapore caused many large ships from China and Malays in spice trading activities to be attracted to visit and stop in Singapore which connects Europe and East Asia like China.

Because of this British influence in Malaysia, this development led to the increasing role of Singapore as a trading center which was originally only a small village as part of Malaya or Malaysia. At that time Singapore was only inhabited by a few thousand people. The British played a significant role because they established a trading factory in Singapore in 1819. Thomas Stamford Raffles founded the modern city in Asia which not long after in 1824, Singapore was fully controlled by the British Colonial government. This development then resulted in Singapore being prominent in world trade, for example in the tin and rubber trade. In this regard, the spice trade, which was an important trading commodity in the 17th and 18th centuries, seems to have been replaced by new commodities such as tin and rubber. Rubber even became an important international export trade after 1870 (Ardhana, 2008).

In this case, it is necessary to understand and explore why trade relations occurred and had autonomy that lasted quite a long time in Asia before the arrival of the West. It can be understood that each region of Asian society, such as India and China, is not too intense in establishing relations with the Southeast Asian region. They have their trading activities and at the same time have their autonomy. Indeed, there were attempts to establish relations in the political field, for example between the Chinese kingdom of Kublai Khan who visited Singasari where Ken Arok's power at that time was very strong so political ties between one kingdom and another did not work out well. Because of this failure, it seems that there are no further attempts to continue.

However, it is different from Thailand as part of Southeast Asian countries which have different dynamics when compared to all countries in Southeast Asia, where in Thailand there was no colonization compared to neighboring countries such as Vietnam, Burma, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, etc (See also for an example: Chheang Vannarith, 2022, pp. 68–90). In contrast to the development of Western colonial countries in general, there were indeed great influences from two countries in the Asian region itself such as India and China, although they had great influence in Southeast Asia, these two countries were not considered politically colonizing the territories of their neighboring countries.

Towards the fall of these regions into the confines of Western colonial rule, especially towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Southeast Asia, where most of its territory became territory divided by Western colonial powers such as Britain in India, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, France in the Indochina region such as Laos, Cambodia, Spain, and America in the Philippines, Dutch and English in Indonesia. It is not surprising that many historical writings about this area are seen from the point of view of the respective colonial governments that colonized the region. This is characterized by the influence of modernization which does not only come from outside but also from the strength of local communities in the Indonesian Archipelago.

For quite a long time, the historical perspective of Asia was viewed from a Western perspective. Likewise, each region only concentrates on developing its region without looking at social relations, namely the relationship or connectivity and interconnectivity between one region and another in the Southeast Asian region in particular, and Asia in general. Often when problems occur between nations in Asia, not many people understand them well. For example, the emergence of events related to the separatist movement in South Mindanao, the displacement of ethnic minority ethnic groups, the Rohingya in Myanmar (formerly Burma), and so on (as a comparison see: Ardhana, 2004). This shows the very limited knowledge of fellow historians or history students about regional dynamics that occur in Asia in general and in Southeast Asia in particular. Those who study history should be able to understand not only the local dynamics in the environment in which they are located but also these regional dynamics to see the position or point of view of each nation in peaceful life in the region and also in maintaining international peace.

## **5. The border areas in the modern era in eastern Indonesia, east Malaysia, and the Philippines**

The islands of Southeast Asia, such as eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines, especially in Tarakan, Nunukan, Sebatik, Tawau, Sangihe, Talaud, and Davao, there is no centralized power. For example, the name of the Bajau people, almost all countries claim that the Bajau is the property that is recognized by each country in Southeast Asia. For example, some think that the Bajau people come from Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines. The existence of the Bajau people is considered very mobile so their culture can also be found in various regions of the world's islands in Southeast Asia. Therefore, it is not surprising that ethnicity and culture are still claimed between the territories of one country and another. They were also fought over through ongoing wars in the past between legitimate countries as modern states and the remnants of the Sulu sultanate whose influence was felt to enter modern Southeast Asia. Of course, with these local wars, various European interests that came later attempted to integrate the existing forces, namely that economic and trade activities were expected to run well in the following periods, although it took quite a long time for the West to finally intensify its power in the region. From this historical perspective, it can be explained that poor management of the areas colonized by the British in Malaysia, for example, certainly had an impact on subsequent developments in the border areas that occurred in Indonesia. The development of border areas between Indonesia and Malaysia could be observed within the areas of North Kalimantan and Sarawak as well as North Kalimantan and Sabah. Studies have widely reported that mutual dependencies among the people residing in the border areas in Southeast Asia have occurred for a long time and indeed still happen up to the present day (Ardhana, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008; Maunati, 2007, 2008, 2009; Tirtosudarmo, 2005). This kind of mutual dependency is equally witnessed in the border areas between Nunukan Regency of East Kalimantan, Indonesia, and Tawau-Sabah, East Malaysia, Malaysia. Nunukan and Sebatik islands (Nunukan regency consists of several sub-districts, including Krayan, Nunukan, sebatik, sebuku, Simanggaris, Sebukung. The capital of Nunukan Regency is located at Nunukan island. Nunukan and Sebatik Islands are located in the borders between Indonesia-Malaysia) are transit places for Indonesian Workers Overseas (TKI – Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (Today, it is known as Indonesian Community Workers or Pekerja Masyarakat Indonesia (PMI) both documented and undocumented TKI (Riwanto, 2005). Based on our interview with the informant, the total documented TKI in Sabah: was 538,180 people, illegal (undocumented) TKI, according to Immigration Sabah 329,388 people, not including the illegal movement of people through rat ways (jalan-jalan tikus) in Kalabakan and Tawau, around 182,746 people in 2008.

Due to problems in Malaysia (including deportation), a large number of former TKI have settled down in Nunukan. They did not want to go back to their hometowns mostly due to economic reasons. It is not surprising since they migrated to Malaysia in the first place due to a lack of jobs or job opportunities in their hometowns. Settling down in Nunukan and Sebatik has become the common trend for former TKI, like the Buginese, the Timorese, and the Javanese, to mention a few. Apart from this, they continue to rely on the Malaysian side in many ways, like trading, selling products,

buying basic needs, and so forth. Both Nunukan and Sebatik are inhabited by the Buginese as the majority, while the indigenous people, the Tidung are small in number. The tension between Tidung and Buginese in Nunukan had been witnessed due to certain issues like economic jealousy. Being small islands, Nunukan and Sebatik have their own dynamics, especially because of the movement of people, being transit places, and being relied on by the Malaysian side.

Indeed, a large number of people from different regions in Indonesia—including Sulawesi, East Nusa Tenggara, and Java—have migrated to Nunukan and Sebaik Islands. Their stories of migration could be separated from the big picture of their movement to East Kalimantan. Bugis people who are originally from South Sulawesi have been widely known to move all over the archipelago, including East Kalimantan. In East Kalimantan, they reside in coastal areas like Balikpapan, Samarinda, Bontang, Tarakan, and Nunukan Regency (especially Nunukan and Sebatik Island). Nurhan (2009) reports that the Bugis have migrated all over the archipelago, including Kalimantan (Borneo), Java, Sumatra, and even the Malaysian Peninsula. The involvement of Bugis in Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Malaysia Peninsular has not only in the political life but also in the economic aspect, particularly trading activity. Mixed marriages with local people have been part of the stories of their movement to new places (Nurdin, 2009).

Apart from Bugis people, the Javanese have also migrated to the border areas. The movement of Javanese to Kalimantan has its uniqueness. Some people joined the government program of transmigration, working as civil servants, working for companies (mining, logging, plantation, etc.). Javanese from East Java have moved to East Kalimantan voluntarily for individual reasons. This kind of movement has long been done by the Javanese. Nunukan and Sebatik are often not the targeted destinations, but in the end, they end up staying there. Many of the people who reside in Nunukan and Sebatik originally worked in Malaysia, East Malaysia. Riwanto (2004) considers Nunukan as a 'transit' area.

The unbalanced development of the Southeast Asian maritime sea can be traced back to the history of the economy and trade of the two regions. Malacca and Singapore (Ardhana, 2008) on one side and the border areas in Eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines, especially in Tarakan, Nunukan, Sebatik, Tawau, Sangihe, Talaud, and Davao have developed slower and even backward due to the different dynamics of trade and economic history in the regions. It can be said that in the western parts of Southeast Asia such as Malaysia and Singapore the sea trade or border trade have been managed in professional ways or modern management. While in the eastern parts of Southeast Asia, it is still not paid much attention by the states in the regions. This caused illegal and informal transactions to happen among the people in the border regions.

Indeed, Singapore border management seems more modern, but in fact, certain parts of border regions in the mainland and island of insular Southeast Asia still have traditional ways of developing the border trade such as between East Sarawak and North Kalimantan, between Laos in Aranyaphratet and Nong Khai in Thailand (Ardhana, 2005). This situation caused the informal and illegal border trade to develop for a long time.

During the colonial time and entering the New Order rule the border areas were not paid much attention by the central government both in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. That is why these border regions are considered as a backyard, not a front yard. The ethnic relationship has become the key connection among the people in the border areas between Indonesia (Kalimantan) and Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). This is possible since they come from the same ethnicity, the so-called Dayak, which on the Indonesian side they call the Lun Dayeh and on the Malaysian side they call the Lun Bawan, but they are the same ethnic group as the Dayak. However, since the emergence of the modern states, particularly after Indonesia and Malaysian state became independent states in Southeast Asia, the people of Sarawak (Malaysia) call themselves the Orang Malaysia, and the people on the Indonesian side call themselves the Indonesians, even though they are the same ethnic group. Through this ethnic relationship, they can barter or sell goods or agricultural products such as rice, vegetables, and the like, by exchanging this with other commodities from the Sarawak of Sabah side namely noodles, gas, cloth, soaps, and the like. This can happen due to the floating lives (*pasang surut*) (as a comparison see: Ardhana, 2007; Sithirith and Grundy-Warr, 2013). Therefore, the commodities can be brought to the land in Kalimantan after the tide water the ships would leave for Tawau and its surrounding regions. However, this does not go smoothly since sometimes there are many issues due to the dependency between local people on the Kalimantan side and the local people on the Malaysian side. It seems that the local people in Sarawak perceive themselves like what is happening on the border between Laos and Thailand as well. Sarawakians perceive themselves as superior to the Kalimantan side as inferior since most of the Karayan or Lun Dayeh live in the landlocked and remote areas on the border of the two states (Ardhana, 2007). Due to this situation, the local people in Kalimantan are offended, since the local people in Kalimantan are called the “Indon”. According to the people on the Malaysian side, it is an abbreviation of the people of Indonesia or Indonesians. The different ways can be seen in the context of Vietnamese and Laos history. Laos people never perceived that their country was colonized by the Vietnamese, though the Vietnamese influenced Laos for more than one thousand years. Vietnam, for instance, even provided access by building a bridge between Laos and Vietnam since Laos is a landlocked country (Ardhana, 2007).

Through this issue, they can solve their problems by the border problems. However, those local people recognized their positions were far away from the city center since they were ignored in some respects. They are trying to find a way to integrate themselves though they are living in separate areas. In this context, they try to find out how to create a new concept of integration regarding the economic interest (from a landlocked country to a land-linked country) (Ardhana, 2007).

With the rapid movement of people to Nunukan and Sebatik, their condition is not static. Some have experienced moving up in terms of economic circumstances. Puryanti (2017) pinpoints the development of border areas in Nunukan and Sebatik with smooth connectivity with other Indonesian sides, such as Makassar, Surabaya, Tarakan, and Balikpapan. In a similar vein, Bond (2020) notes the infrastructural progress in Nunukan and Sebatik.

Tawau, a border area on the Malaysian side, has also become a place for many ethnic groups. Tawau has been the location for a range of diasporic communities

including the Bugis, the Bajau, the Chinese, and Indians to name but a few. The Bugis in particular hold an important position there. The international migration of the Bugis, especially to Malaysia, has taken place over three main phases: during the 17th century, around 1965, and from 1980 to the present day. The early migration was due to the fall of the kingdom of Sumba Opu in South Sulawesi to the Dutch colonial power. At that time, it was not only commoners who migrated all over the archipelago and to other parts of Indonesia and Malaysia but also nobles. The second wave was partly due to the Islamic rebellion in South Sulawesi, while the last wave was economically motivated. Slowly, the Bugis took up significant roles in both economic and political arenas. In the new country, the Bugis also practiced their traditions and established networks amongst themselves.

The growth of border areas has been partly due to the opening of global connectivity, in which each location is no longer an isolated area, but connected with other areas.

## **6. Southeast Asia, Asia pacific, and its interconnectivity**

Connectivity and interconnectivity have been discussed in the historical accounts. Wolters (1999) touched on the usefulness for us in understanding the historical dynamics in Southeast Asia in the context of the emergence of local states which then developed into regional states and finally created the emporium states. This picture will help us to analyze the emergence of Kutai, Tarumanegara in the 4th and 5th centuries (local states), which developed into Sriwijaya in the 7th century and towards the creation of the great kingdom of Majapahit in the 14th century, which had its influence in the sphere of not only the island of Southeast Asia but also the mainland of Southeast Asia such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Cambodia.

Reid (1993) describes and analyzes the development of society and culture in the regions of Southeast Asia regarding their role in the context of the commercial era in the 15th to 17th century. Though it is unclear to what extent the relationship among countries in the regions, at least this study is very useful in the broader context of understanding the border studies in Southeast Asia. Chen (1994) highlights the early connection between the Silk trade on the mainland and the Spice trade in the insular of Southeast Asia.

Then it appears, as discussed by Sudarman (2023, pp. 386–388), that European influence also protected the role of Islamic traders in mediating spice trade activities in the 17th and 18th centuries. With the role of Islamic traders where the rulers in the Indonesian Archipelago were predominantly Muslim at that time, it was possible for them to have autonomy in trading activities at that time, such as the dominant role of ethnic Bugis traders in Bali in particular and in the Archipelago in general (Ardhana, 2024, pp. 15–18; Nuryahman, 2024, pp. 173–188). In this spice trade commodity, it can be seen how this commodity continues to develop, which is used by the local population as an ingredient in traditional medicine such as cloves, nutmeg, as well as betel, tobacco, lime, areca nut to name a few of them (Ardhana et al., 2023, pp. 1–36).

Despite the limited evidence, at least this book will guide our perspective regarding the correlation between the silk and the spices trade routes in Southeast Asia.

Smail (1961) discusses a significant issue in the understanding of the existence of the autonomous states that ruled each country according to their traditional laws in the context of trade and economic activities in Southeast Asia in the 17th and 18th centuries. Meanwhile, Abdullah (2004) depicts the role of collective memory in the Indonesian archipelago, which has played a major role in the creation of national unity. Though there are some differences regarding the form of ethnicities, cultural traditions, local languages, and the spread of the religious adherents, in fact, due to the long historical process under the common fates in the context of colonialism, finally emerges the national ideology in the form of nation-state formation. Meanwhile, Ardhana (2010) notes that though Laos is considered to be a landlocked country, in fact, the Lao people can work with its neighboring states like with the Vietnamese in order to be able to live side by side and to establish connectivity.

In comparison to the Asia Pacific region regarding the interconnectivity in the context of border regions, it seems that Southeast Asian countries have been paid more attention by social scientists, especially by the former European rulers who colonized the region in the past of their colonial times. (Grundy-Warr, 2001) It can be traced back to how the Dutch, for instance, in Indonesia, called the Netherlands Indies, the French in its previous colonial era in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, and the British in Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore, and the Spanish were later followed by the Americans in the Philippines. The Dutch in its colonial region, for instance, had paid more attention to the western part of the Indonesian islands due to the new commodities such as sugar, coffee, and tobacco, in the 19th century than the eastern parts of the archipelago which trading in the context of spices or spices trade in the previous era particularly in the 17th and 18th century.

Due to the past time of the Dutch colonial policy had affected some evidence that there are not many written sources by those islands in the western parts rather than in the eastern parts. James Fox, an anthropologist from Australian National University, argues that that is one reason why the eastern parts like Sumba, Flores, and Timor lack written sources. This means that there are certain oral traditions and also myths and other oral sources that can be used for the information in the field research. This caused the imbalanced development between the western parts and the eastern parts of the Indonesian archipelago in the context of historical and anthropological research. In addition to this, due to the New Order rule in Indonesia (1966–1998) which was the authoritarian and centralized rule for more than 32 years it seems that the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago had been ignored and had some negative impacts on the economic development in the regions. Until recently, after the Reformation period started in 1998 and in recent times the central government tried to plan to move the capital city of Indonesia to Borneo (Kalimantan). Therefore, it can be said that the weak management of border issues rooted in such a long time, which in the 2000s can still be seen in the informal trade activities such as in Sarawak, Sabah, Sangahe-Talud, and other border regions. This kind of border picture can be seen also between the border between Nong Kai (Thailand) and Aranyaphratet (Laos), Laos, and Vietnam, where the informal aspects play a major role in border management. These border pictures are different in comparison to the border region between Malaysia and Singapore.



Historical evidence shows that Singapore has developed faster compared to other Southeast Asian regions. As already known the economic aspect has played a dominant role both in local and national development in Southeast Asia that can be seen in the western parts of the Indonesian archipelago (Ardhana, 2004). However, the situation is different if we look at what is happening in the eastern parts of the archipelago, where the border trade becomes important to be analyzed to be able to compare the country's development. Historical notes mention that in comparison to Southeast Asia, it seems that the Asia Pacific region lacks information in the context of managing the border professionally. Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand have already managed the border region much better, while Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines still have some problems in the context of managing their border with their neighboring states in terms of illegal border trade. The different patterns of trade and economic developments of Malacca, Singapore, and the border areas in eastern Indonesia, East Malaysia, and the Philippines. There are many issues regarding the management of natural and human resources. In the past, Cambodia, for instance, still looked at how to develop natural and human resources to be able to compete regarding the border trade with its neighboring states (Ardhana, 2008).

During the colonial era after the 19th century, for instance, the Dutch viewed Sumatra, Java including Bali as the time, and for the eastern parts such as Borneo (Kalimantan), Celebes (Sulawesi) and the rest of the islands such as the Moluccas and Papua are to be considered as the future for its colonial state. This uncertain situation caused illegal traders and even terrorists to connect from the South of the Philippines, such as the Sulu Islands. to the Pacific region and until entering the eastern parts of the Indonesian archipelago for instance in Central Celebes or Sulawesi such as Palu, Poso, and the surrounding regions.

The Dutch concentrated in the western parts of the Indonesian archipelago and Malaysia under the British—due to limited human powers—not controlling the region so left uncontrolled region by the previous colonial power. This is a challenge to be able to develop the region. This uncertain political situation caused the emergence of the Sulu Sultanate to become stronger in controlling the movement of people in the Pacific region for instance between Malaysia and the Philippines border (Ardhana, 2009c). In addition to this, it caused the emergence of sea pirates and it can be considered to disturb the maritime sea routes in the Pacific region in general. The lack of formal state control in the Pacific region in the past time, it caused many pirates who tried to master and caused the imbalance economic and political situation in the region. This uncertain economic and political situation as some factors caused the illegal trade in the border region that can connect the Lun Dayeh or Lun Bawan and the Tidung people from the Kalimantan valley and sell their commodities with the traders in the coastal regions who commonly consist of the Buginese and the Javanese or the people from Nusa Tenggara. Not only the Buginese, the people of Sulu but also the Bajo or the Bajau spread amongst the small ports including Sebatik (Indonesia), Tawau (East Malaysia), Sangihe, Talaud, Nunukan, and Tarakan (Indonesia) to mention a view of them. In addition to this, Winzeler, in his work on “Modern Bidayuh Ethnicity and the politics of Culture in Sarawak” stated that the discourse on the construction of ethnic identity can be seen in this discussion on how the Bidayuh society see their identity based on local wisdom (Winzeler, 1997).

Unlike other border areas in the Mainland of Southeast Asia which have developed rapidly to be the center of economic activities, like establishing duty-free zones (Ardhana et al., 2004, 2006, 2007), the border area between Indonesia and East Malaysia, especially the border between Nunukan and Sebatik Islands with Tawau, Sabah, East Malaysia, their basic needs still depend on other countries, the Tawau region. This difference is of course influenced by various factors, but the contributing factor is due to the development that was previously centralized in Indonesia so that the border areas received less attention. Even though the border area is the main gate of a country. Now, indeed, regional autonomy has been implemented, but the border areas are still in a floating position because the center is still playing a role, while the regions have not moved much to accelerate the development of the region due to limited funds. Various institutions participate in studying and discussing borders, but the disbursement of funds to build infrastructure and other things is still limited. Because of transportation, border communities are economically dependent on neighboring countries.

The dependence of the people on Nunukan and Sebatik Islands has been going on for a long time because on one hand, these areas are very close to Tawau and on the other hand supplies from other parts of Indonesia, such as Surabaya and Makassar take a long time due to transportation problems. Apart from that, the border region itself is not yet developed in terms of industry so various needs cannot be fulfilled from the available local products. This kind of dependence also applies to other areas in Nunukan Regency, for example, the Krayan sub-district which is dependent on the Ba Kalalan area, Sarawak (Ardhana, 2006, 2007; Maunati, 2006, 2007). At that time, the people of Krayan even wrote to President Abdurrahman Wahid that they wanted to become part of the Malaysian Sarawak region if they continued to receive less attention in the availability of their basic needs. On the islands of Nunukan and Sebatik, conditions are better because their territory is more accessible than other areas by sea, unlike Krayan which can only be reached by small plane (formerly DAS; now Susi Air) from Nunukan and Tarakan.

This expression about the dependency of the border communities in Nunukan and Sebatik was conveyed by various informants from various ethnic groups with different occupations. This dependence is mainly in the form of daily needs, such as oil, gas, sugar, etc. Based on observations and interviews with people on of the two islands, many people depend on Malaysia to meet their needs, they even say 80% of Malaysia. For example, traders usually take their wares from Tawau in various ways, including first, buying from boatmen who buy goods from Tawau and supply them to small traders; second, coming to Tawau to buy merchandise; and through agents.

Because of its enormous dependence on Malaysia, Malaysia's condition is often used as a country of comparison, especially for economic issues. The Nunukan and Sebatik people often say "The father is Malaysia, the mother is Indonesia, one leg is in Malaysia, and the other leg is in Indonesia". This means that they make a living in Malaysia or depend on Malaysia, but they remain loyal to Indonesia.

Sabah, Malaysia, which is opposite of Nunukan and Sebatik, Indonesia because of its easy-to-reach location, is often used as a comparison in various ways. It is a common understanding that many Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) work in Malaysia through Nunukan. The opportunities of the border areas in eastern Indonesia,

East Malaysia, and the Philippines to develop bigger trade centers in the future not only in the regions of Asia Pacific as mentioned above but also with Burung Island with Australia (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2006, 2008, 2009), and also with Taiwan (Yuniarto, 2019). As mentioned by Kuah Kun Eng in his work on “Negotiating Central, Provincial and County Policies: Border Trading in South China (2000) better border management is possible for the future of the Asia Pacific region. Therefore, we will improve the interconnectivity, trade traffics among the different ethnic groups by connecting the cross-border trade professionally.

## **7. Conclusion**

In conclusion, we could say that the development of border areas in Southeast Asia has been in existence since pre-modern and pre-colonial times. During the pre-modern time, both mainland and insular Southeast Asia had already connected. This can be seen from the historical, sociocultural, economic and political dynamics which show the strong relationship between the mainland and island worlds in Southeast Asia. However, the role played by Westerners such as Marco Polo, for example, shows how he introduced relations between the Asian and European worlds in general and relations between various ethnic groups in Southeast Asia in particular. Marco Polo described trading in the mainland of Southeast Asia known as the Silk Road which had occurred for thousands of years. Similarly, the trading route could be found in insular Southeast Asia. In the past, in both mainland and insular Southeast Asia there were many trading activities, not only goods but also slaves. The role of the kingdom had been a great deal, especially to have its power and authority.

During colonial times, the colonial powers intended to understand the work of such powers since they had economic interests as well. The changing structure of traditions and patterns of trade by colonial powers had been done to control their territory. European colonial powers, including Dutch, British, Spanish, Portuguese, and French had controlled or colonized Southeast Asia. Tome Pires, a Portuguese who came to Malacca in the early 16th century witnessed the trade contacts amongst different ethnic groups both from insular and mainland Southeast Asia. He would like to know the origin of those people. They came from different areas and kingdoms. The traders were from the center of the Kingdom but they went to border areas which were free areas at that time. Kingdoms had authority. Colonial powers had limited resources in controlling the whole region, so that is why they did not consider border areas important. They tended to focus on Western areas like Sumatra and Java. Thailand had never been colonized.

From anthropological records, indeed, the development of border areas had been in existence before the colonial time in which people moved freely and had trade contacts. Colonial powers intended to replace the powers of traditional kingdoms with the idea of civilizing the colonized areas. For example, the slave trade was against human rights. The competition amongst colonial powers has impacted the remote areas, like border areas which started to be paid attention to. Nevertheless, the control was not as strong as the center areas. The border areas continued to have their daily activities in which the movements of people happened freely. Mutual dependencies have been in existence from the past to recent situations since the central powers have

not been able to pay attention equally. From a historical perspective, it can be said that all the powers, colonial powers, and central government powers were lacking in the border areas. In Indonesia, for example, it was only during the reformation era that the border became an important area and was paid serious attention. This can be understood since the border regions in Indonesia were managed in informal ways so that there were many illegal logging and illegal trafficking took place in the border region between Indonesia and Malaysia and in the border region between Indonesia and the Philippines. Therefore, to overcome the gap between the Indonesian population who live in border areas bordering foreign countries, management is needed that is no longer informal (traditional ways), but formal and modern. In addition to this, there is competition between residents who inhabit a border area where there is a weakness of the population who inhabits the border area in Indonesia compared to the population who lives in the border area in Malaysia or in the Philippines, for example. This is proven because Indonesians, who are often known as Orang Indon (meaning Indonesians), are seen as having a weakness in foreign languages, for example English. From historical records it can be seen that the gap in mastery of foreign languages in the context of English is caused by Indonesia being colonized by the Dutch in the past. On the other hand, Malaysians and Filipinos can master foreign languages better because these two countries were colonized by England during their colonial history. There is certainly a lack of understanding in English as a language of communication in border areas in Southeast Asia.

It is not surprising why Indonesians work on oil palm plantations, for example, compared to workers from Malaysia who know English who can work in palm oil clinics, restaurants and so on. To improve conditions at this border, the Indonesian government, for example, has started to improve infrastructure conditions in its border areas which border other countries in Southeast Asia. The development of infrastructure has slowly happened, especially in seaports. The planning of capital movement is proven to the attention of border areas. This study is also important to understand the connectivity not only among the people who live in Southeast Asia, but also in the Indo Pacific region in general in the present time and in the future as well.

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