

Out of A Crocodile's Mouth, Enter A Tiger's Snout:
Kingship in Cirebon and the Dutch East India Company's
Intervention in the Late Seventeenth Century



M.A. Thesis

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Introduction

“that only with the VOC shall I sustain.”¹

Sultan Sepuh I of Cirebon to
Governor-General Ricklofs Van Goens and The Council of Indies
Cirebon, 4th May 1680

“I am the righteous heir! It runs in my blood.
I am not with the Dutch! They are the Dutch!”²

A spokesperson of the protesters in the open rejection
against the coronation of Sultan Sepuh XV PRA Luqman Zulkaedin
Cirebon, 14th August 2020

The present master thesis investigates the kingship practice in Cirebon, one of the oldest sultanates on the northern shore of Java, before and after the Dutch East India Company's intervention in the late seventeenth century. In January 1681, three sultans of Cirebon- Sultan Sepuh I, Sultan Anom I, and Panembahan Kacirebonan- each led an entity that formerly was one sultanate, signed a treaty of alliance with the Dutch East India Company (or the VOC). The alliance was possible due to VOC's success in liberating Cirebon from what they defined as “Mataram despotism.” However, the transition only took Cirebon out of “a crocodile's mouth” only to enter “a tiger's snout.”³

Although the VOC was widely known for its mercantilist ambition, it was never merely a trading body. Since the Dutch Republic elites handed *octrooi* (the charter) in 1602 to the company, it began to function as a quasi-state. This company filled its echelons with armed traders and transported commodities from Asia to the *Patria* (fatherland) with heavily-armed East Indiamen.

¹ Frederick De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia Van 't Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1680* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1912), 4th May 1680, p. 206.

²“Detik-detik Penolakan Penobatan Sultan XV Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16xRHBdHj-w> minutes: 1'52''-1'56'' accessed on 17th October 2020.

³ Heroe Kasida Brataadmadja, *Kamus 5000 Peribahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 1985). p. 319 This Malay/Indonesian proverb has the similar meaning as “from the frying pan into fire” – moving from a bad luck to another bad luck.

The company's landing in Cirebon's shore took place within the above context. Unlike the shared imagination among European colonists, Cirebon was not a *terra nullius*. At least two centuries before the company's arrival, Cirebon was already home to a sultanate known for its Islamic sacrosanct characteristic. Behind the abiding memory of Cirebon's devotion to Islam, its acceptance toward the VOC occupied the center of its *sejarah peteng* (dark history).⁴ However, it is "today's" viewpoint that determines the light and darkness of the seventeenth-century phenomena. The present study will delve into historical traces left by the VOC and Cirebon courts to contextualize our understanding regarding the issue. Departing from the same metaphor, one can ask: Did collaboration with the VOC bring Cirebon into the darkness or light? In so doing, this introduction will begin with a brief historical background of Cirebon and its contact with the VOC.

Cirebon as A Sovereign

On 22nd July 2020, Sultan Sepuh XIV, the fourteenth king of Kasultanan Kasepuhan, one out of four sultanates in Cirebon, passed away.⁵ About two weeks after the funeral, royalties from the same court prepared the new king's coronation, who happened to be the late king's eldest son. The solemn preparation for the ceremony within the *keraton* (palace) was in contrast with the heated rejection outside the complex.⁶ The rejectionists who claimed to speak on behalf of "the legitimate heirs of Keraton Kasepuhan" insisted that the coronation was unlawful.

Their protest banners exposed the reason: the crown-prince, together with his three direct predecessors, are not the heirs of Sunan Gunung Jati, the founding father of Cirebon.⁷ Thus, none of them deserved to sit on the throne. The mob then took their shot to prevent the fourth generation from reigning or what they figuratively categorized as "the bending of history." With such narrative, their leader, who claimed to be the *polmak* (the acting-sultan,

⁴ *Sejarah Peteng* is a blanket term applied by Cirebonese to categorize controversial histories that Cirebon royal families consider taboo. Islamic boarding schools (*Pesantren*) as another authority among Cirebonese often tries to break the tradition by discussing it publicly. The boundary of *sejarah peteng* is continuously disputed mainly by the royal families and the *Pesantren*. In general, the dark history covers royal intrigues or betrayals.

⁵ *Pikiran Rakyat*, 22 July 2020, accessed on 16th October 2020, His complete title is: Sultan Sepuh XIV Pangeran Raja Adipati Arief Natadiningrat. At the present time, Cirebon has four largest and oldest kingdoms: Kasultanan Kasepuhan, Kasultanan Kanoman, Panembahan Kacirebonan, and Panembahan Kaprabonan. Hitherto, charismatic personalities are continuously claiming to be the most legitimate successors of the four kingdoms, if not proclaiming their new kingdom altogether.

⁶ *Pikiran Rakyat*, 14th August 2020 accessed on 17th October 2020.

⁷ *Pikiran Rakyat*, 14th August 2020 & "Warga Tolak Penobatan Sultan Sepuh XV Keraton Kasepuhan, Ini Alasannya" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7--M0cWNUU> accessed on 17th October 2020.

taken from Dutch word: *volmacht*, mandatory), made media statements that he instead holds the credential to be the new sultan.⁸

The presented latest news confirms that Javanese time works in a cyclical rather than a linear way.⁹ In the last three centuries, Cirebon has changed its status from a sovereign priestly-kingdom into a sub-province within the Republic of Indonesia. Nevertheless, these changes never diminish the importance of sultanates that occupy the city's oldest courtiers. Successional disputes remain an agitating issue that encourages people to object the coronation without bothered by the outbreaking coronavirus.

About a few hundred meters from the demonstration site lies the dispirited Cirebon port that used to be a cosmopolitan venue. Cosmopolitanism is one of the ideal images that Cirebon's collective memory is longing for. Cirebon port is one out of many sites along the north shore of Sumatra and Java that share the legend of Dampu Awang. In this coastline, local tales believe that Dampu Awang was a foreign seafarer that anchored in their wharf "a long time ago." The following scenes show similarities across the stories: it begins with a fight between a local hero with Dampu Awang, who captained a fully-loaded ship. The former claimed victory, confiscated the cargo, and subsequently became the powerful ruler in the region.¹⁰ Beyond factual claims, the above stories shed an implicit memory of connectedness between Cirebon and the vast sea-based network.

Cirebon's port also became the confluence of information where Tome Pires, the Portuguese factor and apothecary, recorded in his travelogue. Pires wrote that Cirebon was headed by a political officer known as Lebe Uça, who served Pati Rodim, a higher rank political officer from Demak. Demak was the neighboring port city, which at the same time was the oldest sultanate in Java.¹¹ However, Twentieth-century scholars argue that Lebe Uça was more

⁸"Silsilah Sultan Sepuh XI Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon versi Keluarga Rahardjo" <https://www.liputan6.com/regional/read/4291930/silsilah-sultan-sepuh-xi-keraton-kasepuhan-cirebon-versi-keluarga-rahardjo> accessed on 17th October 2020, Raharjo Djali, the *polmak* even brought up "historical sources" to prove the crown-prince to be the great-grandson of Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch Islamologist and advisor to the Dutch East Indies' colonial government.

⁹ Ann Kumar. "Significant Time, Myths, and Power in the Javanese Calendar" in Jan van der Putten and Mary Kilcline Cody, eds., *Lost Times and Untold Tales from the Malay World* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009). p. 1.

¹⁰ Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Merchant and the King: Political Myths of Southeast Asian Coastal Politics," *Indonesia* 52 (October 1991): 41, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3351154>, p. 44-45.

¹¹ Tomé Pires, Francisco Rodrigues, and Armando Cortesão, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires : Volume I*, Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society, Second Series (Surrey: Hakluyt Society, 2010), <https://login.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/login?URL=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xww&AN=508147&site=ehost-live>, p. 183-184, Pires wrote Cirebon as "Cherimon (Choroboam)" and described it as a subsection of "Java."

of a religious official than a political officeholder.¹² Represented by Pires' confusion, both domains were hardly separable in Cirebon, perhaps more interwoven than other sultanates in Java.

The founding father, Sunan Gunung Jati, is the first personification of the sacrosanct image of Cirebon. Multiple versions of *Babad Tjerbon* (the chronicle of Cirebon) ingeniously connect the Sunan to a combined lineage of a father who reigned over an Arabic kingdom of Bani Israil and a mother who happened to be a Sundanese princess of Pajajaran.¹³ Pajajaran was one of the most influential Sundanese Hindu kingdoms in West Java. His paternal lineage symbolically connects him with the global Muslim world, whereas his maternal line attaches him to pre-Islamic kingdoms. The combination of these lineages legitimizes him to be a Muslim ruler on the traditionally Sundanese territory.

However, in narrating the latter, Cirebon's historiographies generally adopt paradoxical views. On one side, Cirebon claims to be the legitimate successor of the Hindunese kingdoms.¹⁴ On another end, the Islamization of these kingdoms was Cirebon's *raison d'être* (the reason for being). Any objection by the infidel rulers must be answered with military action.¹⁵

European scholars who long had seen political Islam as a "deviant practice" pinpointed how the Sunan also led military power to annex another territory, implying his profane ambition.¹⁶ However, the rigid dichotomy fails to grasp how a military had always been an integral part of a Muslim rule that could serve its religious or secular purpose. Cirebon historiographies believe that violence was the last resort of Islamization. Thus, Sunan Gunung Jati's shows of power, both physical or supernatural, have one end: to convert his adversary.

Notwithstanding, Sunan Gunung Jati had established a kingdom covering both physical and spiritual realms that he inherited from his five heirs.¹⁷ After the fifth generation,

¹² R.A. Kern, "Het Javaanse Rijk Tjerbon in de Eerste Eeuwen van Zijn Bestaan.," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 113, no. 2 (January 1, 1957): 191–200. p. 194.

¹³ J.L.A Brandes and D.A. Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbon* (Batavia: Albrecht & Co., 1911). p. 7. & P.S. Sulendraningrat, *Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon* (Cirebon, 1984). p. 15-19.

¹⁴ Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century* (New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981). p. 53.

¹⁵ Brandes and Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbon*, *ibid.* p. 83 & Sulendraningrat, *Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon* *ibid.* p. 38-39.

¹⁶ Frederick De Haan, *Priangan De Preanger-Regentschappen Onder Het Nederlandsch Bestuur Tot 1811*, vol. 1e Deel, n.d. p. 15 & Hoesein Djajadiningrat, *Critische Beschouwing van de Sadjarah Bantēn : Bijdrage Ter Kenschetsing van de Javaansche Geschiedschrijving* (Haarlem: Joh: Enschede, 1913). p. 109.

¹⁷ Local historiographies appalled the kingdom established and inherited by Sunan Gunung Jati as the Kingdom of Pakungwati. See: P.S. Sulendraningrat, *Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon* *ibid.* p. 20. This study will mostly

his legacy could not survive entirely. The third king, who was the fifth generation of Sunan Gunung Jati's lineage, was the concluding ruler of the united sultanate.¹⁸ The king, Panembahan Girilaya, succumbed to Mataram's entrenching influence. Mataram was the powerful Javanese sultanate located in the hinterland of Central Java or the southeast of Cirebon. The then ruler was Sunan Amangkurat I. Sunan Amangkurat I was the direct successor of Sultan Agung, the greatest ruler of Mataram.

Mataram had secured an alliance with Cirebon since 1625. The alliance occurred when Mataram was under the leadership of Amangkurat I's father, Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma. Sultan Agung positioned Cirebon as Mataram's reconnaissance post toward the western part of Java and reinforcement spot for his expedition force, as happened in his failed ambitions in invading VOC's stronghold in Batavia.¹⁹ From Cirebon's perspective, the alliance had long been coercive than mutually-beneficial.

The lowest point of Cirebon-Mataram relations began with Amangkurat I's suspicion that Cirebon was gradually detaching itself from Mataram's alliance. The Mataram king then implicitly accused that Cirebon was considering to bandwagon with Banten. Mataram's distrust was proven after finding that Cirebon provided asylum for their fugitive(s), which the former categorized as a felony. Based on this case, Amangkurat I "invited" Panembahan Girilaya whose at the same time was Amangkurat I's son-in-law, to pay a court visit to Mataram's palace.

The visitation of Cirebon sultan to Mataram was an annual agenda. However, Panembahan Girilaya, the Cirebon third king, foresaw that the order was more of a warrant than a regular invitation. Shortly after Cirebon's entourage arrived in the capital city, Amangkurat I ordered his subordinate to drape *tali wangsul* (a rope that forms an open knot) around his in-law's neck as the symbol of surrender.²⁰ The Cirebon king could not oppose the order and believed that God had predestined the tragedy. Since then, he served a city arrest imposed by his father-in-law, together with his wife, two eldest sons, Pangeran Marta Wijaya

write Pakungwati as "the unitary sultanate of Cirebon". The terminology is chosen to depict Pakungwati that stands as the antithesis of the trifurcated sultanates in Cirebon.

¹⁸ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: alih aksara dan bahasa teks KCR 04* (Cirebon : Ngaglik, Sleman, Yogyakarta: Rumah Budaya Nusantara Pesambangan Jati Cirebon ; Deepublish, 2013). p. 110.

¹⁹ Hasan Muarif Ambary, "Peranan Cirebon Sebagai Pusat Perkembangan Dan Penyebaran Islam," in *Kota Dagang Cirebon Sebagai Bandar Jalur Sutra*, ed. Susanto Zuhdi (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1998). p. 48.

²⁰ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ibid.* p. 109.

and Pangeran Karta Wijaya, and the rest of the entourage. In 1666, he passed away in exile and left Cirebon's leadership in a vacuum since no succession took place, not until the next sixteen years.²¹



Image In.1. & In.2 (left to right): Tombstone and the tomb of Panembahan Ratu, the last ruler of the unitary sultanate of Cirebon, in Girilaya, a village nearby the Mataram's royal graveyard complex in Imogiri, eastern outskirts of Yogyakarta. The king who died in exile is posthumously addressed as Panembahan Girilaya, the lord who passed away in Girilaya.²² Source: KITLV Digital Image Series Number: 99206 (Image In.1.) and 99208 (Image In.2).

Cirebon between Major Powers

Niccolo Machiavelli, the fifteenth-century Florentine diplomat, and political theorist, once wrote:

“...alliance will always be more useful than remaining neutral, for if two powerful neighbours of yours come to blows, they will be of the kind that, when one has emerged victorious, you will either have cause to fear the victor or you will not.”

²¹ Local historiographies have at least two versions on the final year of the unitary sultanate of Cirebon: the first version indicated that the reign of Panembahan Pakungwati II ended as soon as he served the city-arrest in Kartasura on 1662. See for instance: E. Nurmas Agradikusuma, “Baluarti Kraton Kesepuhan Cirebon”, *ibid.* p. 9 / Appendix II. The second version marked the death on 1666 as the end of the unitary sultanate: see: Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan*: *ibid.* p. 109.

²² Image 1.2 is KITLV 99206 and 1.3 is KITLV 99208. Titles for both images are “Graf van Pangeran Girilaja, vermoedelijk bij Cheribon”. Caption of the photos assumed that these pictures were taken in Cirebon. In fact, Panembahan Girilaya was buried in Yogyakarta. A comparison with recent pictures of the same grave confirmed this argument.

Since 1662, Mataram had effectively decapitated Cirebon by imposing city arrest on Cirebon's king and entourage. In contrast to Machiavelli's proposition, the alliance did not work in Cirebon's favor. In reverse, it almost erased Cirebon from Java's political map. Panembahan Girilaya, the Cirebon king, could not request any help from his confidants. Since the king departed for Mataram, he left Cirebon only to the juvenile prince, Pangeran Wangsakerta. Not to mention how in return for the king's surrender, Mataram deployed its soldiers to watch over Cirebon. The end of Cirebon's fate loomed as Panembahan Girilaya powerlessly occupied Mataram's pavilion, luxurious confinement for Mataram's political prisoners. However, a rebellion by Pangeran Trunajaya turned the tide. The spearhead of the rebellion was a Mataram minor prince who originated from Madura, an island on the Northeast shore of Java known for its warriorhood. The uprising became one of the most impactful challenges toward Mataram's hegemony.

Cirebon princes, who were serving Mataram's city arrest, closely witnessed the great rebellion as Trunajaya's troops did not only ravage Mataram's outer territories. They mightily marched into the core of power, plundered the palace, and transported the captives. A Javanese account that reported the brutality metaphorically associated the rebels with "wounded bantengs and tigers fighting over meats."²³ Banten, Mataram's archrival and Cirebon's "cousin," helped fuel the unrest by supplying firearms and ammunition to the rebels. Banten also communicated with Pangeran Trunajaya and requested his help to locate the position of two Cirebonese princes.²⁴

In response to Banten's request, Trunajaya ensured that the two princes were in Kediri, his stronghold in Eastern Java. After Trunajaya troops allowed Banten to rescue its cousins, Cirebon's fate was entirely at Banten's hand. Unprecedentedly, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa of Banten underwent his way to resolve Cirebon's vacuum of power. Instead of installing one ruler, the Sultan of Banten coronated not only two but three princes of Cirebon as sovereign rulers.²⁵ The three princes bore the title of Sultan Sepuh, Sultan Anom, and Panembahan

²³ Z.H. Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1980). p. 219-220. *Banteng* (Bos Javanicus) is often called "Southeast Asian Bull," whereas *Macan* is an umbrella term for big cats (*Panthera*). In Java, the term usually refers to either tiger or leopard, in a few cases, it includes panther.

²⁴ R.H. Unang Sunardjo, *Selayang Pandang Sejarah: Masa Kejayaan Kerajaan Cirebon Kajian Dari Aspek Politik Dan Pemerintahan* (Cirebon: Yayasan Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon, n.d.). p. 56. H.J. De Graaf in, *De Opkomst van Raden Troenadjaja*, vol. 20, 1 (1940, n.d.). doubted the large-scale coalition between the two. But admitting that there were limited exchanges of hostages and weapons between the two. See: Frederick De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia Van 't Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1678* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1907), 30th September & 5th November, among others.

²⁵ Unang Sunardjo, *Selayang Pandang Sejarah*, *ibid*, p. 58-59.

Kacirebonan, following the birth order.²⁶ The third prince who did not serve the city arrest with his late father became the minor king, which he claimed to be his right after “guarding” Cirebon during the power vacuum.²⁷ This division of power threatened the eldest’s crown prince privileges while benefited the secondborn, as the coronation swiftly turned his fate from being merely the second prince into a king.

In the last decades of the seventeenth century, the power competition on Java did not only attract “local players.” The Dutch East India Company (hereafter, the VOC) that had settled its presence in Batavia, a port city in the west of Cirebon, also eyed Cirebon to be the location of one of its regional establishments. Cirebon’s strategic location was the utmost reason for the company’s interest. As shown by the map below (In.3), Cirebon mediated the western part of Java known as *Priangan* and the central part that was the inner territory of Mataram. Unlike other VOC’s establishments, Cirebon never offered any unique commodity. Cirebon’s pepper, coffee, and timber also had modest qualities compared to similar products from other areas.

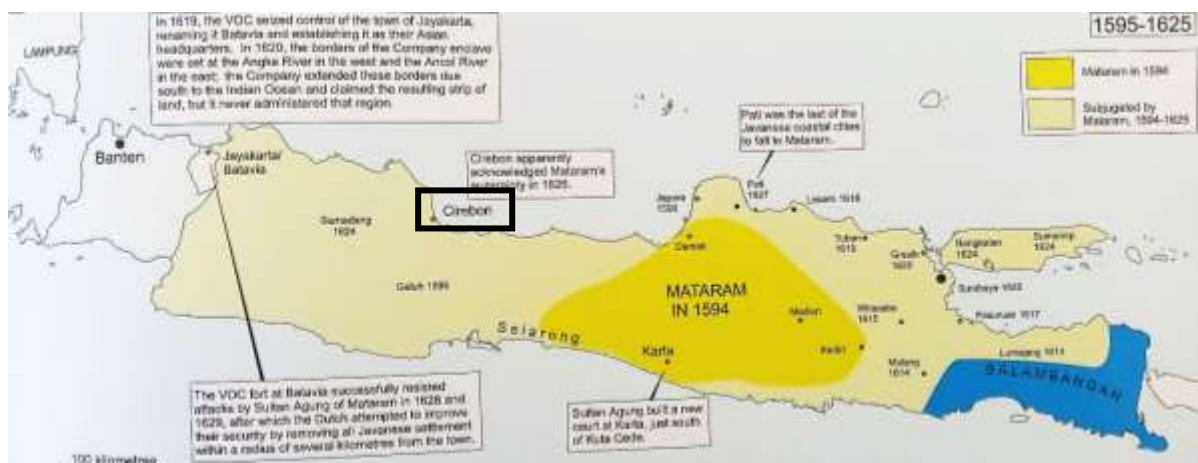


Image In.3. Cirebon in the expansion map of Mataram between 1595-1625. The map indicated that Cirebon accepted Mataram’s suzerainty in 1625. Source: Robert Cribb, “Java. 1595-1625”, 1: 1000000, in *Historical Atlas of Indonesia* (Surrey: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2000). p. 89.

One of the manifestations of this interest was VOC’s projection to “safeguard” Cirebon from the belligerents in Pangeran Trunajaya’s uprising. This projection represented how the company saw intervention in local politics as a means of its economic ends. The discrepancy

²⁶ Brandes and Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbong*, *ibid.* p. 132-133.

²⁷ Atja and Ayatrohaedi, *Nagarakretabhumi 1.5: Karya Kelompok Kerja Di Bawah Tanggungjawab Pangeran Wangsakerta Panembahan Cirebon* (Bandung: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1986). p. 75-76.

between the two princes and VOC's political projection will lay the groundwork for the Cirebon alliance with the VOC. To what extent this alliance affected Cirebon in the kingship issue? The following subchapter will present the research questions to elaborate on the broad question of the present study.

Research Question

This thesis investigates the authority and the power of kingship under the Cirebon kings under the context of the alliance between the trifurcated sultanate of Cirebon with the Dutch East India Company (or the VOC). Authority and power are two pillars of kingship that operated in different but intertwining realms. The former deals with the legitimacy that is either top-down descending on the king from a transcendent source and/or ascending from the bottom up by his "subjects." Power is mainly about the practical, social force of a king to achieve his real, material life policies. Obviously, the relationship between authority and power is a universal one that has been discussed for kingship at almost all times and places. This thesis will add an early modern Indonesian case study of this relationship as set in an early colonial context.

This thesis investigates how three Cirebonese kings – Sultan Sepuh, Sultan Anom, and Panembahan Kacirebonan – reconciled sources of authority and power of which today's lenses consider opposing each other. For the Cirebonese kings, Sunan Gunung Jati had always been the most important source of authority. As far as power is concerned, it was the VOC, at least since 1681, that became the most important source.

This thesis will investigate the extent to which there was a tension between the kings' Islamicate legitimacy and a position of power that increasingly derived from outside colonial force? The later developed holy-war and anti-colonial lenses consider such an alliance as peculiar if not deviant or betrayal. However, during the late-seventeenth century, when Java was in turmoil because of various indigenous uprisings, the VOC became increasingly conspicuous of Muslim sources of authority and power in Java. To what extent did the Cirebon kings lose actual power due to this, and to what extent did this loss of power affect their authority, both from the point of view of the kings themselves as from that of their followers at the court and beyond? All these questions will be explored in this thesis based on both Dutch and Javanese source materials.

Previous Related Studies

Cirebon is often present in the study of Java's early-modern political and economic history but rarely becomes the central topic. The political history of Cirebon tends only to be the background of historical studies with other focuses. The kingship that was weak before the foreign intervention often is responsible for declination/unintended changes in the maritime world, as studied by Singgih Tri Sulistiyono, or legal-procedure, as researched by Mason C. Hoadley.²⁸

The Cirebon sultanates' political insignificance prompts a study by A.G. Muhaimin that positions Cirebon as a vibrant site of multifaceted Islam. Mosques, Islamic boarding schools (*Pesantren*), shrines, and sacred tombs are constantly in competition to fill the niche left by the “powerless” courts.²⁹ Cirebon’s artistic world also attracts some researchers namely: Matthew Isaac Cohen who studied the shadow play and Laurie Margot Ross who researched Cirebon’s mask dance.³⁰ In general, both studies argue that artistic expression creates a middle ground between disputing streams (politic and religion, orthodox, and traditional practice of Islam). Nevertheless, some exceptions must be pointed out, namely the works of Sharon Siddique, Hassan Muanif Ambary, and Tim Sejarah UNPAD.

Siddique provides the most extensive investigation of the sultanates' modern existence in Cirebon that acts as cultural centers rather than institutions with political significance. This sociological study analyzes Cirebon in a long-term view and attempts to find the middle-ground between the strong Islamic character with traditional political powers that are struggling to be significant. She argues that religious institutionalization manifested by key rituals that involve sacred sites and routine reminiscences of holy figures, especially Sunan Gunung Jati, preserve the sultanates’ legitimacy in the contemporary setting.³¹

²⁸ Singgih Tri Sulistiono, “Perkembangan Pelabuhan Cirebon Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Kehidupan Sosial Ekonomi Masyarakat Kota Cirebon 1859-1930” (n.d.). & Mason C. Hoadley, *Selective Judicial Competence: ibid.* p. 3-4 & 12.

²⁹ A. G Muhaimin, *Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat Among Javanese Muslims*. (Canberra: ANU Press, 2011), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4847989>. p. XVII.

³⁰ Laurie Margot Ross, *The Encoded Cirebon Mask: Materiality, Flow, and Meaning along Java’s Islamic Northwest Coast*, Studies on Performing Arts & Literature of the Islamicate World, volume 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2016). p. 1-2 & 279. & Matthew Isaac Cohen, “An Inheritance from the Friends of God: The Southern Shadow Puppet Theatre of West Java, Indonesia” (New Haven, Yale University, 1997).

³¹ Sharon Joy Siddique..” Order No. 7770038, Universitaet Bielefeld (Germany), 1977. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/docview/302863967?accountid=12045>. p. 185-187.

Hasan Muanif Ambary uses geopolitical analysis to understand Cirebon's "peculiar" option to align with the company. This study positions Cirebon as a political entity without paying much attention to the sultans. Banten and Mataram's unceasing pressure forced Cirebon to opt for the only choice left. By "pressure," Ambary refers to the unjust relations that benefitted the major power more than Cirebon. This study approaches the political dynamics in Java at the end of the seventeenth century through the relation of multiple powers. The "bird-eye" analysis concludes that alliance with the VOC was the only "rational" choice.³²

Among the three, the present research is willing to assert its distinctiveness from a report composed by researchers affiliated with the Department of History Universitas Padjajaran (Tim Sejarah UNPAD). The research report generically titled *Cirebon di Abad ke Tujuh Belas* (Cirebon in the seventeenth century) covers political, economic, social, and cultural changes in Cirebon during the stated period. As a subsection of politics, Cirebonese sultans and how the VOC's intervention impacted them is one of this research's interests.

The UNPAD project provided at least three niches, of which the present study aims to fill. *Firstly*, the UNPAD project sees the practice of kingship as a monodimensional subject. In observing the sultans, it focuses more on the sultans' policy in the material world. Therefore, it concerns the practice of governance of the three sultans, both individually or collectively. Upon VOC's arrival, the narrative focuses on the company that pressured the sultans to accept the treaty. The treaty with the VOC, therefore, terminated their power entirely.

Secondly, In explaining the sultans' consensus to secure the treaty, this project uses a hoary terminology of "*divide-et-impera*" (divide-and-conquer).³³ The terminology is a go-to phrase in Indonesian nationalist historiography that hardly admits that local leaders' in the seventeenth century likely to access "European helps" in achieving their political interests. Not to mention how they were hardly familiar with the idea of anti-colonialism and national unity.

Thirdly, this project mostly relies on two twentieth-century Dutch publications about Cirebon: *Gedenkboek der Gemeente Cheribon 1906-1931* by the Municipality of Cirebon, published on 1st April 1931, and *De Sultans van Cheribon* by E.B. Kielstra published on 1917. UNPAD Project concerning the seventeenth-century Cirebon then becomes staple literature for

³²Hasan Muarif Ambary, "Peranan Cirebon...", *ibid.* p. 48-49.

³³ Tim Peneliti Jurusan Sejarah Fak. Sastra UNPAD, *Sejarah Cirebon Abad Ketujuh Belas* (Bandung: Pemda Tk. I Provinsi Jawa Barat, 1991). p. 80.

any subsequent studies with similar topics. Therefore, it is safe to say that recent studies on Cirebon concerning its relation with the VOC barely accessed Dutch primary sources. The use of local sources in UNPAD's study is mainly dedicated to shedding light on the pre-VOC period. It also attempted to sort "facts" from "fictions" rather than asking what the narrative represents; thus, limiting its use.

In order to fill the three lacunas, the present study sees kingship as a two-dimensional subject: quoting M.C. Ricklefs, kingship operates in the intertwined material and immaterial world or "Seen" and "Unseen Worlds," respectively. By applying this perspective, this study attempts to see beyond VOC's (or European) understanding of the local rulers' power. The present study endeavors to contextualize the seventeenth-century phenomenon by not forcing the twentieth-century anti-colonial and nationalist lenses to observe colonial history. Furthermore, this study optimizes the corroboration of primary sources produced by the VOC and Cirebonese courts, in which the following subchapter will elaborate.

Sources and Challenges

This study's primary sources are documents produced by the Dutch East India Company and Cirebon's chronicles and annals. The main challenge to access and interpret both kinds of sources lies in the pursuit of accuracy and authenticity of the written information. The VOC documents, and European sources, in general, are overly-appreciated as the provider of objective and accurate information regarding the past. One consequence that follows this treatment is its use to consult and contrast local sources to quest facts and eliminate "unhistorical elements." The "unhistorical elements" usually refer to rulers' glorification and supernatural narratives, which are inevitable parts of local historiographies.³⁴

VOC sources are mainly useful to obtain in-detailed and chronological records about court politics, thus representing the material world of kingship. The coverage, however, relies on the divulgence from the Cirebon side. In Cirebon, VOC's transformation from a foreign "peacekeeper" into the area's sole protector affected information flow. More entrenched the VOC to the court politics, the more access they obtain to the information within the court's

³⁴ Hoesein Djajadiningrat, "Local Traditions and the Study of Indonesian History," in *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965).p. 74-75.

walls. Nevertheless, VOC sources are not monolithic; presented below are variations of sources of which this study accessed.

Information present in internal correspondence between VOC officers in Cirebon with Batavia (*Correspondentie met de gouverneur-generaal of de Hoge Regering*) tends to be straightforward in reporting the courtly politics and the extent to which it corresponds with the VOC's interest. It also recorded its plan or projection concerning their local counterparts before disclosing it to the intended addressee. As local rulers were not among the subscribers, reports about them were often blatant and less politically-correct.

In contrast with their internal communication, the correspondence between VOC representatives in Cirebon with indigenous officials (*Correspondentie met Inheemsden*) connected company officials with their local counterparts, thus representing their relations. The written messages were more cautious and bounded by the agreed protocol, including the use of mannerly dictions and honorific titles to address officials. This element, no matter how trivial, indicates a changing political landscape. For instance, after Cirebon and the VOC formalized the treaty, the old sultan or Sultan Sepuh addressed himself as "his servant" in the letter to the Governor-General, a self appellation he never used previously.³⁵

The present study mostly accessed the two types of correspondence that belong to the incoming letters and documents (*Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren*) dispatched by Cirebon and Batavia. The recipients were the two chambers with the most shares in the VOC: Amsterdam and Zeeland. Besides the two, this study accessed entries of the daily journal in Batavia (*Daghregister van het Casteel Batavia*) and retrospect for the new officials (*Memorie van Overgave*) by VOC's highest official in Cirebon, which most studies categorize as "resident." The present study mainly focuses on the local layer of communication: between VOC officials in Cirebon with Batavia.

When it comes to immaterial elements, one should expect their scarcity in VOC sources. One of the reasons was the company's dependency on local informants to comprehend the unseen world. Once a local actor shared it with the company official, the record maker may include it in their reports. One example occurred when the VOC and Cirebon royalties were preparing the signing ceremony. The latter informed how the sultans were keen to have Al-

³⁵ *Daghregister van Het Casteel van Batavia*, 6th May 1683, p. 999. The written appellation is "zijn slaaf."

Qur'an as one of the paraphernalia. Beyond a complementary object, VOC sources included the spiritual significance of the holy book. The document presents as follows:

“The solemn oath under their Alcoran should be a part of the ceremony; They complemented their information by saying, in their language: the contents of these books could be a curse. If one does not stringently obey this treaty.”³⁶

In contrast with VOC sources, Cirebon sources indicated that kingship's material and immaterial world is interwoven. The narrative on sultans' governance and the military campaign is present alongside their contact with supernatural guardians or story concerning their religious observances. The incorporation of both realms remains consistent with the presence of the VOC in the stories. The Dutch's arrival in Cirebon affected its immaterial world both positively and negatively: These sources tend to see the Dutch as the sultans' new guardians that replaced the spiritual protectors whom the sultan used to trust.

As with other court historiographies, some of the sources conspicuously favor the kings that commission the work. However, the reign of multiple rulers in Cirebon (hence, multiple court poets) implies how relative the transcendental superiority was. Out of the three rulers, the youngest prince, Panembahan Kacirebonan, sponsored more manuscript writings than his two brothers. The apolitical characteristic might contribute to his appreciation for literature. In table In.4 presented below, sources no. 2, 5, & 7 were composed by the third prince's court.

The production of Cirebon historiographies went beyond the courts' wall. *Babad Tjerbon*, the primary chronicle of Cirebon, has at least seven versions written by the courts and authors associated with Islamic boarding schools (*Pesantren*). In which both parties strive for the legitimacy of the authorship.³⁷ The courts and several contemporary philologists argue that the “royal-sponsored” historiography has more authority since it comes with clearer grasps of Cirebon's court-centered history. *Pesantren*'s version claims otherwise; distancing from power allows them to be objective. Sources with *Pesantren*'s background tend to shift the core of Cirebon history from court politics to the more orthodox sites of Islam. The sultanates were nothing more than the means to achieve religious outcomes. Thus, they shall forever obey their core mission in proselytizing Islam; any deviation, including “cooperation with the Dutch,” is a sign of deterioration.

³⁶ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia Van 't Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1680* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1912)., 23rd January 1681, p. 46.

³⁷ Dadan Wildan, *Sunan Gunung Jati: Petuah, Pengaruh, Dan Jejak-Jejak Sang Wali Di Tanah Jawa* (Ciputat, Tangsel: Salima Network, 2012).p. 6.

The present study only accessed published local sources. Some of these publications are also annotated, Latinized, or even translated into Dutch or Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, the obtained information can not escape the rearrangement of the manuscript. Reading guides, analysis, and interpretation of philologists, who previously worked with the original documents, inevitably influence the present study's understanding of the local historiographies. Notwithstanding, this study prioritizes the corroboration amongst local and Dutch sources, as both types of sources are mutually-complementing. Combining both would enrich the present study's understanding of the practice of kingship.

The accessed Cirebon sources are presented in Table In.4 below:

Multiple Versions of the Cirebon Chronicle (<i>Babad Tjerbon</i>) and Cirebon Annals Accessed in This Study						
Versions of Cirebon Chronicle						
No	Title	Authors	Annotators/ Editors	Date in the Manuscript	Publication Date	Covered Periods
1	<i>Babad Tjerbon-Brandes</i>	Muhammad Noer	J.L.A. Brandes & D.A. Rinkes	16 th March 1877	1911	Sunan Gunung Jati-Treaty with the VOC 1680s
2	<i>Babad Tjerbon-Purwaka Tjaruban Nagari</i>	Pangeran Arya Cirebon	Atja	1720	1986	Sunan Gunung Jati-Treaty with the VOC 1680s
3	<i>Babad Carub Kandha Naskah Tangkil</i>	Ki Kampah	Muhammad Mukhtar Zaedin, <i>et.al.</i>	Approximately 1880s	2002	Around Sunan Gunung Jati
4	<i>Babad Tanah Sunda</i>	Pangeran Sulaeman Sulendraningrat	-	1984	1984	Sunan Gunung Jati's biography
Cirebon Annals						
5	<i>Sejarah Cirebon-Naskah Keraton Kacirebonan Kcr.04</i>	Unknown	Muhamad Mukhtar Zaedin, <i>et.al.</i>	1860	2013	Sunan Gunung Jati- 1888
6	<i>Sejarah Wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah Sunan Gunung</i>	Unknown	Amman N. Wahju	Approximately 1890s	2005	Sunan Gunung Jati-1889

	<i>Jati Naskah Mertasinga</i>					
7	<i>Nagarakretabhumi</i> 1.5.	Pangeran Wangsakerta	Atja & Ayatrohaedi	1720	1986	Sunan Gunung Jati

Table In.4. Accessed Local Sources (Chronicle and Annals)

Structure of the Study

The present study will consist of three substantial chapters. Following the introduction, the first chapter elaborates on the idea of Javanese and Cirebonese kingship and its relation. Since the former has been extensively studied, the first chapter will explore how it can be the departure point to understand the latter. More importantly, how both practices of kingship deal with the material and immaterial dimension of a king. This angle is useful to observe the presence of an interrupting foreign force that innately strips the power from kings.

The second chapter will deal with the formation and the signing of the treaty of alliance between Cirebon and the VOC in 1681. Beyond a chronological account, this chapter will contextualize the treaty as an integral conquest tool, rather than a peaceful substitute of a military annexation. Notwithstanding, the process was not one-sided since the local actors were keen to secure the treaty, regardless of the concessions that imperatively benefitted the foreign force. The agreed draft was negotiated and written with consents, despite the unequal position of both parties. Beyond the text, this chapter unfolds the context behind the treaty, including the undiscussed issue.

The third chapter will reveal the repercussions of VOC's intervention on the kingship practice, as documented by VOC sources and local historiographies. This chapter reveals the discrepancy between VOC and Cirebon's notion of power. The former focused its attention on the king's practice in the "seen worlds," whereas the latter saw the "unseen worlds" as the most important realm. Following this chapter, the present study will be closed with a conclusion.

Chapter 1

Javanese Kingship

Soe Hok Gie, an Indonesian student activist of Chinese background in the 1960s, once compared Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, to a Javanese king. In his widely-published diary, he wrote as follows:

“Thus, Soekarno has three titles: politics (*Kawula Ing Tanah Jawi*), military (*Senapati ing Alaga*), and religion (*Syekh Sahidin Ngabdulrachmad*). He was the continuation of Javanese kings. Therefore, he acts like one. He has many wives, built many palaces, *et cetera*.”¹

Soe Hok Gie was certainly not a fan of the president whom he criticized. In fact, he contributed to toppling down Soekarno from his “throne” only to be replaced by General Suharto, another Javanese president who was as fanatics to Javanese idea of kingship. Hok Gie's note asserted that royal titles, empresses (or concubines), and palaces constitute a Javanese king. This remark was not baseless since Javanese kings from the Sultanate of Mataram (henceforth, Mataram) are often associated with the ownership of the three “regalias” and many other heirlooms appalled after a human name. However, what were the imperative characters for a Javanese king? Were the three elements mentioned by Soe Hok Gie sufficient to make someone a king?

This chapter begins with the positioning of Mataram and Cirebon kingship under a blanket term of “Javanese kingship.” This emphasis is necessary to highlight the connection between both. Furthermore, the first half of this chapter aims to unfold the definition of an ideal Javanese king by observing four kings of Mataram and Cirebon that represented the best as well as the disastrous kingship practices. The archetypes of both traditions were Sultan Agung of Mataram and Sunan Gunung Jati of Cirebon. In contrast, kings that brought their respective kingdoms into calamity were Amangkura I of Mataram and Panembahan Girilaya of Cirebon. Furthermore, the second half of the present chapter elaborates the two kings' shared-trajectory. This trajectory brought the two incapable kings into the quest for a new source of power, which would strip off their power but left them with their authority.

¹ Soe Hok Gie, *Catatan Seorang Demonstran* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1983). p.155.

Javanese, Mataram, and Cirebon Kingship

In the opening of 1981's *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century*, Soemarsaid Moertono mentioned that many scholars had extensively studied Javanese kingship. The focuses have abundantly been given to the intertwining relationship between the kingship's spiritual and political dimensions.² Moertono's research, together with the previous studies he referred to, positions later-Mataram or the Sultanate of Mataram as one of the Javanese kingdom archetypes. The association is hardly debatable, considering the vast influence Mataram once had. However, Positioning Mataram as the example of Javanese kingship may cloud our observation toward other Java entities that were or were not under Mataram's rule. Mataram did not exercise its power on the vacuum: many of the vassals and allies (to a certain extent) were independent sovereigns.

This study and chapter, in particular, focuses on Cirebon as one of the sovereigns that reigned under Mataram's shadow for about six decades (1625-1681).³ The preliminary studies on Javanese kingship have discrepancies in positioning Cirebon. Soemarsaid Moertono includes Cirebon, as represented by *Babad Tjerbon* (the Cirebon chronicle), in his study. He argues that the chronicle has congruencies with *Babad Tanah Jawi*, the primary chronicle on Mataram's history, regarding the definition of an ideal king.⁴ Both traditions agree that a king ideally was an inheritor of the preceding major powers; hence, an ingenious genealogy was imperative.

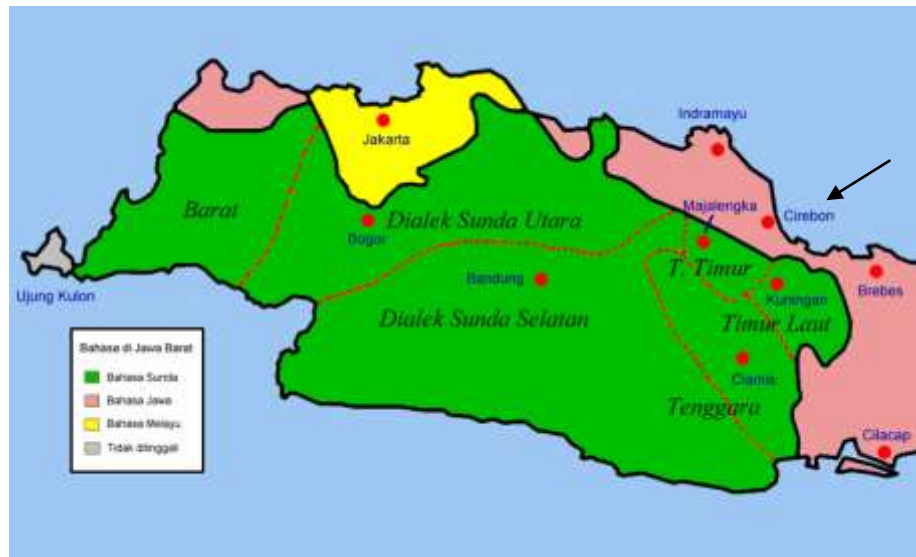
De Graaf and Pigeaud, two Dutch Javanologists, dedicated a chapter to study Cirebon and considered it one of the first Islamic kingdoms in Java. The preposition "in" differentiates De Graaf and Pigeaud's incorporation of Cirebon from Soemarsaid Moertono's approach. De Graaf and Pigeaud bring up earlier connections between West, Central, and East Java, to emphasize Cirebon's position in the concept of Java. War and conflict dominate the relations

² Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century* (New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981). p. 1. Soemartono mentioned these scholars: Berg, Stutterheim, Bosch who focused on the magico-religious aspect of the kingship, Rouffaer and Winter on the state-administration, Soeripto and Jonker on the judicature, Krom, Berg, Djajadiningrat and De Casparis on the historical development, Raffles, Veth, and Pigeaud on the general description on Java and its people.

³ Robert Cribb, *An Atlas of Indonesian History* (London: Curzon Press, 1997). p. 89.

⁴ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*..., *ibid.* p. 53-55.

between the three parts, mostly because of both authors' scrutiny toward political aspects above others.⁵



Map 1.1 Linguistic Map of West Java. This map shows that Cirebon borders the Sundanese-speaking with the Javanese-speaking area. Arrow is added by the present author. Source: Wikimedia Commons, link: https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestand:Linguistic_map_West_Java.png accessed on 1st November 2020, 22:13 CET

Notwithstanding, Cirebon's status as a port city and its geographical position (see Map 1.1) often narrows the discussions into a consensus: Cirebon is a node of multiple influences.⁶ In the kingship practice, nevertheless, history has its stake to dictate facts. Cirebon obtained its sovereignty by defeating pre-Islamic Sundanese powers while admitting its inability to eliminate Mataram, a Javanese sultanate.⁷ Cirebon could "peacefully" expel Mataram only by the intervention of the Dutch East India Company. However, Cirebon never underwent any drastic changes to discontinue Mataram's legal and political legacy. Upon this argument, Cirebonese kingship is often associated with Mataram's model, without overlooking its hybridity. Based on the stated analysis, this chapter uses terms as follows: Mataram and Cirebon kingship, in which the two are collectively called "Javanese kingship."

⁵ H.J. Graaf and Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, *De Eerste Moslimse Vorstendommen op Java, Studien over de Staatkundige Geschiedenis van de 15de en 16de Eeuw* (Leiden: KITLV, 1974). p. 134.

⁶ I borrowed this sentence, with minor changes, from Laurie Margot Ross. The original sentence is "(Cirebon is) the node of transoceanic commerce" see: Laurie Margot Ross, *The Encoded Cirebon Mask: Materiality, Flow, and Meaning along Java's Islamic Northwest Coast*, Studies on Performing Arts & Literature of the Islamicate World, volume 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2016). p. 9.

⁷ Sulendraningrat, *Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon* (Cirebon, 1984). p. 38-40 & 80.

The following parts of this chapter adopt the notion in Javanese ideas of power that concentrate on the quest, pursuit, preservation, and accumulation of power more than its implementation and exercise.⁸ Rather than describing Mataram and Cirebonese separately, the following subchapter will draw examples from the highest and lowest points throughout both entities' histories. The last subchapter will investigate what kind of kingship was a soft spot of encroaching colonial force, represented by the Dutch East India Company?

A King's Primary Task

Wayang Kulit (shadow puppet show) has been extensively positioned as an artistic representation of the Javanese universe.⁹ In its recent development, two *wayang* scenes attract more spectators than others: the fight and clown scene. Before starting the former, *Dalang* (the puppet master) usually recites *Ada-Ada* (a song that signifies turmoils). One of the widely-known variations begins with the following phrases:

"Bumi gonjang-ganjing, langit kelap-kelap..."

(the earth shakes, the skies are ablaze with lightning)¹⁰

The puppet master sings the above melodious poem to narrate a group of knights who are on their way to fight ogres in the thickness of a forest. However, the lyric's first lines connect a human-made calamity (the battle) and the natural phenomena (the earthquake and lightning). The following scenes will be the same from one show to another: the battle will not be decisive at first, but the good will eventually defeat the evil. The victory never solely aim to kill the ogres but restoring the universe's stability.

The gist of the scene reflects the essence of Javanese kingship, which is to maintain stability. Resembling the Indic idea, a Javanese king is an intermediary between macro-and

⁸ Benedict R. O'G Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," in *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1972). p. 8 & M. C. Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java, 1726-1749: History, Literature, and Islam in the Court of Pakubuwana II*, Southeast Asia Publications Series (St. Leonards, NSW : Honolulu, Hawaii: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin ; University of Hawaii Press, 1998). p. xix.

⁹ Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese*, Monograph Series (Ithaca, New York: Modern Indonesia Project Southeast Asia Program Department of Asian Studies Cornell University, 1965). p. 5. & Verena H. Meyer, "The People and the Wayang by Franz Magnis Suseno: Translation and Introduction," *International Journal of Dharma Studies* 4, no. 1 (December 2016): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40613-016-0028-6>.

¹⁰ Soesatyo Darnawi, *A Brief Survey of Javanese Poetics* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1982). P. 52-53.

microcosm, the universe, and humans.¹¹ Therefore, indicators of an ideal king go beyond physical realms. As coined by M.C. Ricklefs, kingship operates in both the “seen” and “unseen” worlds.”¹² The former deals with the material and practical world, which usually was manifested in political or military policies. The latter deals with the legitimacy that usually comes from a supernatural force, both “top-down” from transcendental source(s) or “bottom-up” from the king’s subjects.

In Mataram and Cirebon’s case, Islam occupied a central role in the “unseen worlds.” However, Islam is never monolithic in the study of Javanese kingship. A king could be fond of Islam’s mystical world, thus engaging himself in the serenity of Sufism. A Sufi centralizes his religious practice in the inner directedness toward God. This idea resembles Javanese’s utmost spiritual achievement in unifying the servant and the master (*manunggaling kawula gusti*).¹³ Another interpretation positioned Islam as a coercion tool (therefore, punishment). In Java, “punishment” did not only refer to the Islamic penal system (*hudud*) but also forced-implementation of other facets of *sharia*, namely forced-marriage with Muslim women, which often preceded by forced-circumcision. The combination of the last two was perhaps the most common practice among Javanese kings.¹⁴

The archetypes of kingship in both sultanates were apparent in two figures: Sunan Gunung Jati (reigned between 1479-1568) for Cirebon and Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma (reigned between 1613-1646) for Mataram. The greatness of the two is traceable firstly in their politics of lineages. Beyond their family tree, both kings excelled in leading their respective kingdoms, observed from the “seen” and “unseen worlds”. Another palpable proof of this choice is how their tombs crown the respective royal graveyards (see Image 1.2 & 1.3). Both Cirebon’s in Gunung Jati and Mataram’s royal graveyard in Imogiri occupies a hill, echoing Megalithic’s veneration of elevated grounds.

¹¹ J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). p. 109.

¹² M. C. Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java*, *ibid.* p. xxiv.

¹³ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*..., *ibid.* p. 14 & 20.

¹⁴ M.C. Ricklefs labeled this practice as “Islamic kingship,” an interpretation that prioritizes the “harsh” side of Islam. See: M. C. Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java*...*ibid.* p. 222-225. Later in 1681, VOC would forbid Cirebonese kings to forcefully circumcise European prisoners. See: J.E. Heeres and F.W. Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum BKI*, 91, 3e Deel (1676-1691) (s’Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934). p. 233.



**DENAH PEMAKAMAN GUNUNG JATI
KARYA PANGERAN RAJA KAPRABON
TAHUN 1949**

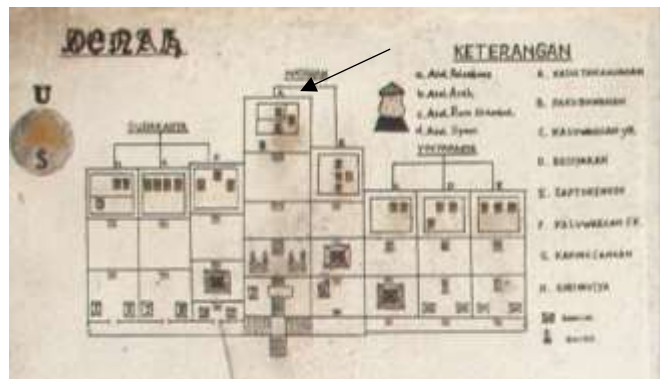


Image 1.2 & 1.3 floor plans of Gunung Sembung (Cirebon) and Imogiri (Mataram) Royal Cemetery that positioned Sunan Gunung Jati and Sultan Agung's tomb on the top of the hill. Additional arrows from the author.

Source: Gunung Jati- "Denah Pemakaman Gunung Jati Karya Pangeran Raja Kaprabon 1949" collection no.1 HIMSKE-Dwicahyo & Imogiri- Wikimapia <http://wikimapia.org/4429264/id/Makam-Raja-Raja-Mataram-Imogiri#/photo/1217738> accessed on 12th November 2020

The Kings' Genealogies

In Mataram and Cirebonese historiographies, the first and foremost source of kings' legitimacy comes from their genealogy. Sultan Agung and Sunan Gunung Jati's lineages feature globalized elements that legitimated them in being a Javanese-Muslim ruler. The global element is apparent in the incorporation of figures from Abrahamic or Islamic tradition. Both Sunan Gunung Jati and Sultan Agung are narrated to be the descendants of the first man, Nabi Adam, and his son, Nabi Sis or Prophet Seth. The same line also connects them with Muhammad and his only daughter: Fatima.¹⁵

The local element is traceable in how these lineages emphasize the continuation of both kings with noble personalities from preceding (including pre-Islamic) powers. Sunan Gunung Jati undoubtedly has a more ingenious lineage as he was the first ruler of Cirebon, whom some researchers believe to be a foreigner. The lineage portrays him as a son of a Hindu-Sundanese princess from the Kingdom of Pajajaran, one of the largest Shiva-Hinduneses kingdoms in West Java. His maternal line also connects him with the grandest king in the Sundanese tradition, Prabu Siliwangi.¹⁶ Inheriting the Sundanese blood constitutes him to be an ideal ruler in the

¹⁵ Dadan Wildan, *Sunan Gunung Jati: Petuah, Pengaruh, Dan Jejak-Jejak Sang Wali Di Tanah Jawa* (Ciputat, Tangsel: Salima Network, 2012). P. 81-88. & E.P. Wieringa, "An Old Text Brought to Life Again; A Reconsideration of the 'final Version' of the Babad Tanah Jawi," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 155, no. 2 (1999): 244-63, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003876>. p. 247.

¹⁶ Brandes and Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbon* (Batavia: Albrecht & Co., 1911). p. 7-8.

Western part of Java, the home of the Sundanese, the second-largest culture group in Java. *Babad Tanah Jawi* stretched Sultan Agung's line to the earlier Islamic sultanates and Majapahit, the most powerful Hindunese kingdom that occupied the eastern part of Java.¹⁷

One of the most-apparent glocalised elements is the incorporation of Javanized-Hindu gods: Batara Guru (Shiva) and Batara Brahma (Brahmā). *Babad Tanah Jawi*, a chronicle that presents Sultan Agung's biography, dedicated its first pages to describe these gods who rule *kahyangan* (heaven).¹⁸ The focus then narrowed to Batara Brahma, who descended to earth and ruled over Java. After generations, Sultan Agung was born as an heir of this ruling line. In some works, Sunan Gunung Jati is also associated with his maternal line that incorporates the same gods.

Being a descendant of Hindunese gods and preceding kings, as well as Islamic prophets, equipped the two kings with a legitimate identity in leading their respective kingdoms. With such backgrounds, both Sultan Agung and Sunan Gunung Jati held the right to be a Muslim king without abandoning their cultural backgrounds. Despite the importance, the genealogical legitimacy was only one element that constitutes the two kings' greatness.

Asceticism

This subchapter argues that beyond having supreme ancestors, both kings were the most outstanding rulers due to their commitment to asceticism.¹⁹ An ascetic way-of-life has always been the irrefutable method for Javanese kings to obtain power, congruent with other methods that distance a man from his earthly ambition.²⁰ Possession of heirlooms (*pusaka*) in the form of weapons, ritual paraphernalia, or other talismans was only the material outcomes of intense contact with the immaterial world, but not the method to obtain power itself.²¹

An ascetic lifestyle operated in the interwoven "seen" and "unseen worlds." For Mataram kings, their relationship with Nyai Roro Kidul, the Southern Sea goddess in Javanese

¹⁷ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1980). p. 26-27.

¹⁸ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah*, *ibid.* p. 7-14.

¹⁹ Regarding the centrality of asceticism for a Javanese king, see: Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java...*, *ibid.* p. 14-15.

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture." *ibid.* p. 10-11. Anderson pointed out that in personal level, such asceticism usually comes in forms of *yoga* or meditation.

²¹: Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java...*, *ibid.* p. 20-21.

tradition, is one of the primary elements in determining the quality of their asceticism.²² *Babad Tanah Jawi*, the primary chronicle of Java, recounted that Mataram's founding father, Panembahan Senapati, commenced the intimate relationship with the goddess. Enchanted by her immaculateness, Panembahan Senapati copulated with the goddess; thus, they symbolically were Mataram's progenitors. Subsequently, Panembahan Senapati bestowed the immortal goddess to be the eternal empress of Mataram kings.²³

The mystical relationship was one of the supernatural powers that "gave birth" to Mataram. Thus, the extent to which a Mataram king preserved this relationship determined the quality of their unseen worlds. Sultan Agung undoubtedly championed this requirement. According to *Babad Tanah Jawi*, a Mataram king should meditate with crossed-arms and an upturned head toward the sky, should he wants to meet the goddess.²⁴ The same chronicle narrates how Sultan Agung was fond of this ritual.²⁵

However, VOC informants also noted how Sultan Agung sometimes went outside the serene practice of mysticism. Worth to be mentioned that a Javanese king was also a chief celebrant in religious festivities, resembling Indian kings who became the permanent attendee of a sacrifice ritual.²⁶ VOC embassy reported that the sultan observed the Friday and grand prayer at the end of the fasting month.²⁷ His decision to use the title of "sultan" did not only imply his admiration for the Islamicate kingship but also to compete with Banten, another sultanate that guarded the west-end of Java and Sunda Strait that divided Java and Sumatra.²⁸ Banten rulers had become sultan a few years before Sultan Agung dispatched missions to Mecca, in obtaining the same title from the *emir* (governor) of Mecca.²⁹

²² Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java...ibid*, p. 9.

²³ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi...*, *ibid*. p. 104.

²⁴ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi...*, *ibid*. p. 106.

²⁵ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi...*, *ibid*. p. 182.

²⁶ Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition...*, *ibid*. p. 110.

²⁷ De Graaf, *De regering van Sultan Agung, vorst van Mataram (1613-1645)...*, *ibid*. p. 106-107.

²⁸ Sultan is not the only title for a muslim ruler. The first adaptation signified the bearer as a non-caliphal ruler; thus a king who obtained his political position without any association to the four companions of Prophet Muhammad as the legitimate caliphates. The first use can be traced back to the tenth century by the Ghaznavid ruler, Mahmud of Ghazna in 999. See: Mahmud of Ghazna." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, edited by Esposito, John L. : Oxford University Press, 2003. Later, the title was closely associated to the Ottoman Empire that conferred it to Muslim kings inside or outside their territory as a "diplomatic token." Many of Southeast Asian Muslim rulers, including Sultan of Banten and Sultan Agung, obtained the title through this trajectory. See: Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).p. 48.

²⁹ De Graaf, *De regering van Sultan Agung, vorst van Mataram (1613-1645)...*, *ibid*. p. 106-107.

Despite the amorous relationship between Sultan Agung and Nyai Roro Kidul, the sultan asserted to the goddess that in God's eyes, a human being had a higher status than a supernatural creature like herself. To accentuate his message, The Sultan displayed an exceptional observance toward Koranic principles. He told his empress that human and supernatural creatures must not conjoin. Should Allah blessed their union, they will be reunited on judgment day.³⁰

Based on the above scene, Sultan Agung obtains the honor to be the greatest king due to his prowess in synthesisism. In the term coined by a Javanologist, M.C. Ricklefs, the sultan was the "great-reconciler."³¹ Synthesisism is a keyword to comprehend Javanese openness toward outer influences instead of fully adapting or opposing it. Sultan Agung's story conspicuously portrays the synthesis between the pre-Islamic mythology and Islamic teachings, with a subtle emphasis on the latter's superiority.

The "invention" of Nyai Roro Kidul was believed to correspond with Sultan Agung's twofold failures in attacking the Dutch East India Company's stronghold in Batavia, today's Jakarta. These failed attempts allowed the VOC to gain naval supremacy over the Java sea.³² Subsequently, Mataram that had gradually lost its influence along the northern shore of Java, "discovered" the goddess, uncoincidentally, in the Southern Sea.³³ However, a supernatural primacy did not always come in the dawn of military valiancy. On other occasions, Sultan Agung could balance both worlds. Apart from the losses over Batavia, Sultan Agung's military commandership was impregnable.³⁴

In Sunan Gunung Jati's story, asceticism belonged to both the personal and political domains. Personal piety and the mandate to proselytize the teachings were inseparable. The more non-believers accepted his call to embrace Islam, the more pious he became. Violence was necessary if the infidel ruler bore arms to challenge the noble mission. This narrative

³⁰ Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java*:..., *ibid.* p. 10.

³¹ M. C. Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries*, 1st ed, Signature Books (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2006). p. 66. & M.C. Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java*: *ibid.* p. xxi-xxii.

³² Pramodya Ananta Toer. "Sastra, Sensor, dan Negara: Seberapa Jauh Bahaya Bacaan?" Pidato pada Ramon Magsaysay Award 1988 <http://www.komunitasdemokrasi.or.id/news/147-sastra-sensor-dan-negara-seberapa-jauh-bahaya-bacaan> accessed on 28 October 202 16:41.

³³ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi*..., *ibid.* p. 182

³⁴ Cribb. *An Atlas of Indonesian History*. *ibid.* p. 89. & De Graaf, *De regering van Sultan Agung, vorst van Mataram (1613-1645) en die van zijn voorganger Panembahan Séda-ing-Krapjak (1601-1613)* (S.L: Brill, 1958). Chapter IV, Chapter XII, & Chapter XVI.

mainly serves Cirebon's attempt to preserve their distinctive character of being the node of Islamization in Java. In *Babad Tanah Sunda*, one version of the Cirebon chronicle that incorporates the Sunan's biography, he successfully converted five infidel rulers. In which the three submitted their territory to the newly-declared sultanate of Cirebon.³⁵

As a part of his ascetic life, Sunan Gunung Jati also communicated with spiritual powers that appeared as Islamic saints, mainly originated from Koran or other Islamic exegeses. Supernatural creatures and powers that he encounters along his way are not the ends. Those were merely means to reach "Islam." *Babad Cirebon Carub Kandha Naskah Tangkil*, one version of the Cirebon's chronicle, dedicates a chapter to narrate the Sunan's quest of *Hakekat* (the true nature of life). In so doing, He holds conventions with Nabi Khidir (Prophet Khidr) and Nyawa Rasulullah (Soul's of Muhammad).³⁶ The two prophets are among holy figures that often appear in the Javanese persona's spiritual journey. Especially for Nabi Khidir whom his presence is synonymous with the conferment of mystical or secret knowledge.³⁷ Generally, the gist of Sunan Gunung Jati's biography focuses on his commitment to Islamization. Sunan's stories imply that Islam is a fulcrum of stability. Exhorting his surroundings to embrace it is one way to strengthen the axle of his universe.

Resembling Sultan Agung's example, Sunan Gunung Jati's political and military policies corresponded to his immaterial objective. Islamization was the primary motive behind Cirebon's territorial expansion and annexation. Under Sunan Gunung Jati, Cirebon fought three major wars: the siege of Sunda Kelapa, a port city which later will be Batavia, the Battle of Palimanan against Rajagaluh kingdom, and the Battle of Talaga.³⁸ In which all three campaigns ended with the Islamization of the defeated-ruler or the liberated subjects. Tales about the three fights mostly involve supernatural assistance to Sunan Gunung Jati or his troops.

³⁵ Sulendraningrat, *Babad Tanah Sunda....,ibid.* p. 38. 80, & 83.

³⁶ Ki Kampah, *Babad Cirebon: Carub kandha naskah Tangkil* (Kesambi, Cirebon : Ngaglik, Sleman: Rumah Budaya Nusantara Pesambangan Jati Cirebon ; Deepublish, 2013). p. 253-257.

³⁷ Su Fang Ng, *Alexander the Great from Britain to Southeast Asia: Peripheral Empires in the Global Renaissance*, First edition, Classical Presences (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). p. 84-85 & 307-308.

³⁸ Atja, *Tjarita Purwaka Tjaruban Nagari* (Bandung: Ikatan Karyawan Museum, 1972). p. 63.

In Cirebon, the means of control was also not secular. Sunan Gunung Jati built a congregational mosque (*Masjid Jami*) in each subjugated territory to police their obedience to Cirebon. In practice, their adherence to Islam determined their degree of loyalty to Sunan Gunung Jati.³⁹ The amount of taxes were reduced, so the subjugated territories will not use it as a pretext for separatism. These mosques operated under the grand mosque's centralized control (*Masjid Agung*) that occupied the capital city. Construction of other mosques in the territory must hold Sunan Gunung Jati's permission or authorized by the grand mosque.⁴⁰

Two above case studies indicate that asceticism was the fulcrum of Javanese power. It could be manifested in mystical experiences as well as public-oriented piety. The objective might vary, but the immaterial primacy should dictate their policies in the material world. Any physical decline was tolerable as long as they could ensure that the immaterial worlds are on their side. What will be the case if a Javanese king obtains power from a party that is stranger to their immaterial world? Will they entirely fail their role as a king? Or could they reconcile the tension by incorporating their foreign protectors, no matter how strange, into their spiritual world? The following subchapters will tackle these questions by presenting kings that brought their respective kingdoms into the lowest-point.

The Incapable Kings

This subchapter attempts to understand what power means for Mataram and Cirebon by observing their lowest point. However, one shall not solely contrast Sultan Agung and Sunan Gunung Jati to their successors who were assumed to be lacking the same qualification. This subchapter is interested in observing the “survival skill” of Javanese kings when they could not hold onto the “traditional” sources of power. Was there a “good” and “evil” source of power? Or, as coined by Benedict Anderson: “the Javanese power does not raise the question of legitimacy?”⁴¹

Scholars agree that no Mataram and Cirebon kings could replicate the success of Sultan Agung and Sunan Gunung Jati, respectively. However, they are hardly in unison in deciding the antonyms of the two great kings. Among the list of rulers, Amangkurat Agung (1726-1742)

³⁹ Unang Sunardjo, *Selayang Pandang Sejarah: Masa Kejayaan Kerajaan Cirebon Kajian Dari Aspek Politik Dan Pemerintahan* (Cirebon: Yayasan Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon, n.d.). p. 32.

⁴⁰ Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: ..., ibid.* p. 109.

⁴¹ Benedict Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture.” *ibid.* p. 10-11

and Panembahan Girilaya (1649-1666) are the two most pertinent cases concerning this study's focus. The principal indication lies in the disarray of "seen worlds" that translated into the dismal of the "unseen worlds," regardless of any effort to conceal it. Both kings helplessly witnessed their kingdoms' disintegration and, directly or indirectly, laid the groundwork for the VOC's intervention in their respective kingdoms.

Both kings contributed to open their courts' gate for the VOC. The two kings reigned in the same period, *circa* the 1640s-1670s or when Javanese rulers began to see the potential of siding with the Dutch East India Company.⁴² Therefore, both kings' policies were mutually impactful, especially Mataram toward Cirebon but seldomly *vice versa*. Familial relationships also tied the two kings. Cirebonese blood ran in Amangkurat I's vein as he was born from a Cirebonese mother, known as Putri Batang.⁴³ They also were in-laws, as Panembahan Girilaya married one of Amangkurat Agung's daughters.⁴⁴

Discontinuing Legacies

For Amangkurat Agung, his first mistake that dragged Mataram into the downfall was discontinuing his father's legacies, who has always been the dynasty's greatest ruler. Such decisions did not constitute a good start in the kingship tradition that upholds the element of continuation. His first move was relatively symbolical; he ordered his subjects to manufacture red bricks (*bata*) that will be the primary material of Mataram's new palace in Plered, today's Southeast Yogyakarta.⁴⁵ Plered became the first Mataram's palace that used red bricks instead of woods as its main material.

The material changes indicated that one of Amangkurat Agung's motivations to build a new palace was based on an incident during Sultan Agung's reign. In 1636, Sultan Agung's throne pavilion (*siti inggil*), made entirely of wood, caught in a fire. An archaeological investigation by Jacques Dumarçay, a French archaeologist, pointed out that the construction

⁴² Lucas Wilhelmus Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger: The Dutch East Indies Company and the Northeast Coast of Java, 1680-1743*, Verhandelingen van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde 171 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996). p. 71.

⁴³ Rijklof Van Goens, *De Vijf Gezantschapreizen van Rijklof Van Goens Naar Het Hof van Mataram 1648-1654*, ed. Graaf, Hermanus Johannes de (s'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956). p. 60.

⁴⁴ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: alih aksara dan bahasa teks KCR 04* (Cirebon : Ngaglik, Sleman, Yogyakarta: Rumah Budaya Nusantara Pesambangan Jati Cirebon ; Deepublish, 2013). P. 109.

⁴⁵ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi...*, *ibid.* p. 183

of Plered had been planned in response to the incident.⁴⁶ *Babad Tanah Jawi*, however, only pinpointed Amangkurat Agung's disfavor to reoccupy his father's palace as the primary reason behind the construction of Plered.⁴⁷

After settling in the new palace, Amangkurat Agung's sentiment toward his father's legacy took the bloodiest turn. Plered became the scene of his decision to eliminate every old element under his rule, in a literal manner. Amangkurat Agung ordered pogroms to his father's confidants, together with their families.⁴⁸ As if the assassinations did not satisfy him, he ordered a massacre toward Muslim clerks whom the king believed to be the provocateurs behind his younger brother's decision to rebel against him.⁴⁹ *Babad Tanah Jawi* is silent about the bloodshed; to bridge the gap, one will read Rijcklof van Goens' account. Van Goens, a VOC officer who later ascended to be a governor-general, paid several visits to Amangkurat Agung's court and meticulously reported the tragedy.

Amangkurat Agung ordered his four henchmen to locate their potential targets and wrote down their names, addresses, and the number of family members. The henchmen should also ensure that none of the targets escaped from Mataram's jurisdiction. As soon as Amangkurat Agung received the gathered-intelligence, he subsequently ordered the massacre. One of the bloodiest episodes in Mataram's history began with the firing of two large cannons to signal the executioners. According to Van Goens, Mataram's troops had mercilessly taken five to six thousand lives in less than thirty minutes. Among the slaughtered were innocent women and children.⁵⁰

Beyond the vulgar exposition of brutality, the selection of targeted figures implies Amangkurat's mission to eliminate Sultan Agung's legacy. VOC's embassies that paid a visit to the court of Sultan Agung reported that the king was surrounded by a group of people who "grew a long beard." Both the reports and scholarly analysis argue that those men were religious officials and not Javanese, as growing a beard was not a custom.⁵¹ Under Amangkurat

⁴⁶ Jacques Dumarçay, "Plered, capitale d'Amangkurat I^{er}," *Archipel* 37, no. 1 (1989): 189–98, <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.1989.2570>. P. 189 & 191.

⁴⁷ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi*..., *ibid.* p. 625.

⁴⁸ Sudibyo, trans., *Babad Tanah Jawi*..., *ibid.* p. 184-193 & Rijcklof Van Goens, *De Vijf Gezantschapreizen*..., *ibid.* p. 238, 244, & 248.

⁴⁹ Van Goens, *De Vijf Gezantschapreizen*..., *ibid.* p. 248.

⁵⁰ Van Goens, *De Vijf Gezantschapreizen*..., *ibid.* p. 250

⁵¹ De Graaf, *De regering van Sultan Agung, vorst van Mataram (1613-1645)*..., *ibid.* p. 107.

Agung, the tide had significantly turned. He massacred Muslim clerks, regardless of the accusation. As if the mass-killing was insufficient, Amangkurat Agung poured his enmity in a remark:

“Religious leaders ideally are role-models in the practice of good deeds. However, for them (re: the slaughtered), they must be responsible for my brother’s death.”⁵²

Panembahan Girilaya’s story was relatively unstained from the blood. As far as power concerns, his leadership was lack thereof. Panembahan Girilaya was, in fact, the fifth generation in Sunan Gunung Jati’s lineage who reigned as the third king of Cirebon. The sunan’s son and grandson passed away before the coronation. After Sunan Gunung Jati gave up his throne in 1495, Cirebon had no definitive rulers for seventy-three years.⁵³

At the earlier stage of his reign, Panembahan Girilaya displayed an unquestioned commitment to replicate Sunan Gunung Jati’s ascetic leadership. He was not fond of trade and left Cirebon’s seaport to be quieter than before. He sensed that Cirebon should host more Arabs who always teach the “Prophet’s religion” than Chinese and Dutch because they only cared about the economy and other mundane issues.⁵⁴ Panembahan Girilaya would gradually abandon his religious orientation and pursued financial gain more than spiritual achievement. Some local annals and chronicles scapegoated his wives for this deterioration.⁵⁵

As Panembahan Girilaya had deviated from Sunan Gunung Jati’s mandate, his political preference also went against the Sunan’s friendliness with Banten. In the previous subchapter, one has written that Panembahan Girilaya was Amangkurat Agung’s son-in-law. In addition to Cirebon’s status as Mataram’s vassal, this in-law relationship weakened the former’s bargaining power.⁵⁶ With such a weakness, Cirebon could not resist carrying out Mataram’s requests that disbenefit them, such as to show an aggressive gesture against Banten.

⁵² Van Goens, *De Vijf Gezantschapreizen...*, *ibid.* p. 250.

⁵³ Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan Gunung Jati: naskah Mertasinga*, Cet. 1 (Bandung: Pustaka, 2005). p. 505.

⁵⁴ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...*, *ibid.* p. 87-89.

⁵⁵ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...*, *ibid.* p. 89. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan...*, *ibid.* p. 179.

⁵⁶ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...*, *ibid.* p. 92-93. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan...*, *ibid.* p. 181.

The aggressiveness peaked in 1650 when Mataram requested Cirebon's help to invade Banten.⁵⁷ Cirebon's agreement in reinforcing Mataram became the nadir of relations between two sultanates that were connected by blood. Banten's founding father was Sunan Gunung Jati's son. Like Cirebon, Banten also venerated Sunan Gunung Jati as their "patron saint."⁵⁸ Banten had always been displeased by Cirebon's status as Mataram's vassal, but an open conflict never occurred until the reign of Panembahan Girilaya.

In resemblance to *Babad Tanah Jawi*'s silence over the massacre, Cirebon annals and chronicles exposed nothing regarding Cirebon's conflictual past with Banten, not to mention Panembahan Girilaya's role in Banten's invasion. Besides the apparent betrayal element, Cirebon's military power could not do much in front of Banten's might. As the classical dictum goes, the war broke out due to the failed diplomacy. Before the armed conflict, Mataram used Cirebon as a pawn in figuring out Banten's political stance. Beyond merely an observation, Cirebon's embassy must convey Mataram's request for Banten to acknowledge the former's superiority.⁵⁹

The diplomatic effort fell short and infuriated Amangkurat Agung. Subsequently, the Mataram king pressured Cirebon even further by putting Cirebon in a difficult position. He dragged Cirebon into a military campaign against Banten. Should Cirebon refused to reinforce Mataram, Amangkurat Agung would find out the degree of Cirebon's loyalty toward him.

Panembahan Girilaya succumbed to his father-in-law's order. He deployed his troops to strengthen Mataram's column, only to surrender before engaging in a single fight. Deterred by Banten's invincibility, Cirebon requested a truce as soon as their sealift entered Banten's water. Cirebon troops had begged for Banten's mercy, but the latter did not know such a word on the battlefield. They forced Cirebon's internees to march into Banten's palace, Keraton

⁵⁷ Hoesein Djajadiningrat, *Critische Beschouwing van de Sadjarah Bantën : Bijdrage Ter Kenschetsing van de Javaansche Geschiedschrijving* (Haarlem: Joh: Enschede, 1913). p. 32.

⁵⁸ Djajadiningrat, *Critische Beschouwing van de Sadjarah Bantën...*, *ibid.* p. 15.

⁵⁹ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...*, *ibid.* p. 92-93. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan...*, *ibid.* p. 90. Vernon J. Parry and Michael Cook, eds., *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730: Chapters from the Cambridge History of Islam and the New Cambridge Modern History* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976). p. 111. & Titik Pudjiastuti, *Perang, Dagang, Persahabatan: Surat-Surat Sultan Banten*, Ed. 1 (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia : Toyota Foundation, 2007). p. 257.

Surosowan, and subsequently beheaded all of them.⁶⁰ Despite being a victor, the Sultan of Banten was not happy with his soldiers' treatment toward Cirebonese.⁶¹

To conceal Panembahan Girilaya's shortcomings, multiple versions of Cirebon chronicle and *Kacirebonan* manuscripts came up with stories to boast Cirebon's "latent superiority" before Mataram. Subjects of these stories are Panembahan Girilaya and Cirebon's soldiers, two actors that were responsible for Cirebon's infirmity before Mataram. One fragment of these stories claims that Panembahan Girilaya never sincerely homaged Amangkurat Agung.⁶² He instead esteemed the soul of Sunan Kalijaga, who was always mystically present behind the throne of Mataram's king. Sunan Kalijaga was one of the nine saints of Java (*Wali Songo*) whom Mataram venerated. In Mataram's context, the holiness of Sunan Kalijaga was equal to Sunan Gunung Jati for Cirebon.

The present case studies indicate that the two kings were unable to follow their ancestors' mandate in asceticism. Since they could not constitute a firm core of their power, their material practices went into disarray. Instead of continuing their ancestors' legacy, the two kings redefined the standards and imposed new meanings toward their acts. Unlike Amangkurat Agung, who purposely annihilated his father's legacy, Panembahan Girilaya realized that he should not deviate from Sunan Gunung Jati's mandate. However, he hardly reoriented himself to the right path. When the continuance was not possible, a king could reestablish its world and dignity, mostly by revamping their "unseen worlds."

Weak Kings, Rebellion, and Intervention

Observing the agent (king) and his social organization (kingdom) is insufficient to comprehend the two kingdoms' relations, especially Cirebon with the Dutch East India Company. Therefore, this subchapter will present the Javanese political context, which in that period was chaotic. The chaos, which was often associated with an "unstable universe," challenged both kingdoms and changed their fate. It weakened both kings in different manners and exposed them to the

⁶⁰ The Banten Annals (*Sajarah Banten*) recounted the war in-detail. See: Hoesein Djajadiningrat, *Critische Beschouwing van de Sadjarah Bantën: Bijdrage Ter Kenschetsing van de Javaansche Geschiedschrijving* (Haarlem: Joh: Enschede, 1913). p. 62-65 & H.J. De Graaf, *De regering van Sultan Agung, vorst van Mataram (1613-1645)...*, *ibid.* p. 48-49.

⁶¹ Titik Pudjiastuti, *Perang, Dagang, Persahabatan: ...*, *ibid.* p. 258.

⁶² Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...*, *ibid.* p. 94-95. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan...*, *ibid.* p. 182. Both annals wrote that Sunan Kalijaga came as a light creature, this supernatural power is also possessed by Sunan Gunung Jati whom they wrote as the immaculate human (*Insan Kamil*).

VOC that sought local allies in return for political-economy benefits. The subchapter will be concluded by presenting a theoretical contingency concerning the practice of kingship under colonial tutelage.

Rebellion has always functioned as a control toward Javanese kingship.⁶³ Vast-scale unrest conducted by Pangeran Trunajaya of Madura against Mataram between 1674-1678 did not only reveal Amangkurat Agung's shortcoming but swiftly changed Cirebon's fate.⁶⁴ Beforehand, Cirebon infuriated Mataram due to the former's inability to be a "good ally." Mataram's annoyance peaked in the arrestation of Panembahan Girilaya by his father-in-law, the then Mataram's ruler. Mataram accused Cirebon of providing asylum for one of its fugitives, an intolerable violation of the alliance between the two. In 1662, Amangkurat Agung ordered his son-in-law to present in Mataram's court. By closely observing the development, Panembahan Girilaya knew that the invitation was a request to surrender than a regular courtesy call.⁶⁵

In response to Amangkurat Agung's order, the Cirebon king bid farewell to his court for the last time. He departed to Mataram's palace in Plered with an entourage that consisted of his wife and two sons, the crown-prince Pangeran Marta Wijaya, the secondborn Pangeran Karta Wijaya, and other courtiers. He left his third son, Pangeran Wangsakerta, in Cirebon. Pangeran Wangsakerta would later be the minor-sultan of Cirebon as a reward for his presence in Cirebon during the power vacuum.

As soon as Panembahan Girilaya reached Mataram's court, Amangkurat Agung's confidants welcomed him with suspicion and undertreatment. Panembahan Girilaya's aides hardly accepted their king's permissiveness to the condescendence.⁶⁶ The king then reiterated the mystical presence of Sunan Kalijaga behind Amangkurat's throne; thus, he shall not cause any trouble. He also did not resist once one of Mataram's courtiers draped *tali wangsul* (a rope with an open knot) around his neck. The rope signified his total surrender and the beginning of his city-arrest in Mataram. Since then, Cirebon's leadership was in a vacuum for sixteen years.

⁶³ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*..., *ibid.* p. 5.

⁶⁴ De Graaf, *De Opkomst van Raden Troenadjaja*, vol. 20, 1 (1940, n.d.). p. 11.

⁶⁵ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan*..., *ibid.* p. 109. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan*..., *ibid.* p. 191.

⁶⁶ Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan*..., *ibid.* p. 185.

In response to all the treatments, Panembahan Girilaya said that he only complied with God's fate (*takdir*) and consoled his aids by saying that God had predestined this tragedy.⁶⁷

Takdir also allowed Pangeran Trunajaya of Madura to onslaught Mataram's dominance on Java. He did not only cause unrest in Mataram's fringes as he plundered Mataram's capital court of Plered, although the king had fled from the scene. His direct attack into Mataram's heart meant differently for Cirebon. Panembahan Girilaya did not witness the punishment's end as he had passed away in 1666, four years after the arrest. He was buried in the Girilaya hill that constitutes his posthumous name. However, the rebels took Mataram's captives with them, including two Cirebon princes, to their stronghold in Kediri, a land-lock region in today's East Java. Banten that previously had supplied the rebels with firearms and cannons informed Trunajaya that Cirebon's princes were among their captives.⁶⁸ As soon as Trunajaya realized that Cirebon was not his enemy, he transported the two princes to Banten, wherein the Sultan of Banten coronated both princes as two new Cirebon rulers.⁶⁹ The decision divided Cirebon into two sultanates; however, the Sultan of Banten claimed that he only acted according to the late Panembahan Girilaya's last will.

Cirebon and VOC sources have discrepancies concerning Banten's motivation to divide Cirebon. Cirebon sources claim that the policy was taken to prevent Cirebon from the looming successional conflict. Reflected by the absence of the story around the Cirebon invasion of Banten in 1650, Cirebon local sources tend to whitewash its conflictual past with Banten. This narrative is widely-accepted and relatively unchallenged in other Cirebon historiographies. However, a letter from the secondborn Cirebon prince, Pangeran Karta Wijaya, to VOC's high government in Batavia claimed otherwise. Pangeran Karta Wijaya indicated that his late-father, Panembahan Girilaya, had always wanted to coronate his two eldest sons as kings. Based on his father's last will, he insisted that the company must treat him and his brother equally.⁷⁰

Both Amangkurat Agung and Panembahan Girilaya brought their respective kingdoms into disarray. The former could not contain Trunajaya and failed to extinguish his resistance

⁶⁷ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...*, *ibid.* p. 109-110. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan...*, *ibid.* p. 191-192.

⁶⁸ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia Van 'T Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1678* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1907). 30th September & 5th November.

⁶⁹ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...*, *ibid.* p. 111. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan...*, *ibid.* p. 193-194.

⁷⁰ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia Van 'T Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1681* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1917). 3rd April 1681, p. 215.

that outbreak almost the entire island. When he could not rely on his power, the quest for a new source of power began. The latter was powerless in front of Mataram, waged a war that corroded his kingdom instead of forced Banten to concede Amangkurat Agung's power. Soon after he decided to accept his destiny and wore *tali wangsul*, he had ended Cirebon's fate, at least as a unitary sultanate. His sons bore the repercussion of leading newly-established kingdoms that, to some extent, inherited the powerlessness and the desperation of a more potent ally.

On another end, The Dutch East India Company, another power on the island, was recently convinced that meddled in local disputes would help them fill their gold chest. Thus, on the brink of Trunajaya's rebellion, the company drew a blueprint of the intended political situation. Among other projections, they must ensure that Cirebon was free from the disputing parties. Cirebon should not fall into Mataram, the rebels force under Pangeran Trunajaya, moreover not to Banten.⁷¹ The company's interventionist gesture also went in-line with Mataram's despair in requesting reinforcement. Mataram did not have many options; its local allies were exposed to the allurements in bandwagoning the rebels under Pangeran Trunajaya. The alliance with the company had always been in Mataram's mind, regardless of the relations' ups-and-downs.⁷² Cirebon had Banten as its traditional ally, but the division of the sultanate also branched off the political decision. One party saw the VOC as his savior, and another party tried his best to kick out the Dutch and pulled Banten in Cirebon's politics.

Cirebon would fall for the former, as the three kings agreed to submit their power under the Dutch East India Company. The company then attempted to monopolize its control toward Cirebon and annihilated Banten's influence. A twentieth-century anthropologist, Clifford Geertz proposes to foresee a contingency of this situation. By observing nineteenth-century Balinese states that centralized their attention to pomp, he argued that Balinese states and likely, another state could exercise a pomp power. Rituals and mass-based festivities were not the indications of powerlessness nor solely the means to obtain power; it was the power.⁷³ The rituals acted as the exemplary center for the king's subjects to look upon. Power and authority were inseparable, and possession of "real" political power was not imperative. Without the

⁷¹ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia Van 't Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1677* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1904), 17th September 1677, p. 300.

⁷² De Graaf, *De Regering van Sunan Mangku-Rat I...*, *ibid.* p. 85-86, 170-174.

⁷³ Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980). p. 13.

“real power,” a king remains powerful as the authority is power itself. Geertz coined this term as the “theater state.”⁷⁴

The impact of colonialism in local kingship depended on the degree of colonial encroachment into the local practice, among other factors. Under the full-blown nineteenth-century colonialism, Bali practiced kingship, where power and authority were intertwined. The colonial force’s attempt to strip off political power did not amputate the kingdom as it always depended on the authority. Panembahan Girilaya’s powerlessness before Mataram fitted this notion. Regardless of his blatant exhibition of weaknesses, his “unseen worlds” indicated otherwise. His inability to resist Mataram did not signify the absence of power; it was his ability to see and act beyond the physical realm. Another consequence of this assumption is to position Mataram as a colonizing power rather than an ally.⁷⁵

Javanese Ideal King: A Chapter Epilogue

This chapter has brought up brief histories of four kings from Mataram and Cirebon. The four kings help the present study unfold an ideal king’s definition in two contrasting times: during the glorious and decline period. By observing the four stories, an ideal king’s primary task lies in the notion of maintaining stability in and between the “seen” and “unseen” worlds. However, the unseen worlds always had a higher priority for a king. In order to stabilize this universe, a king was required to obtain power from an austere method that contrasts the lavishness that “outside” observers easily spot.

Another demand for an ideal king is to follow the ancestors’ examples. However, political contexts around a king’s reign determined the possibility for him to continue the legacy. Should a Javanese king hardly ensured the continuance, he would exercise another measure to conceal his incapacity. The concealment could occur in the “seen worlds” by annihilating the inheritances altogether or in the “unseen worlds” by indicating how the supernatural world provided the real and undisputed meaning behind a king’s decision not to exercise “real power.” In general, the king’s inability to preserve the ancestors’ mandate led to the redefinition of power, including its legitimate source and means to obtain and exercised it.

⁷⁴ Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State...*, *ibid.* p. 13-14.

⁷⁵ Van Goens, *De Vijf Gezantschapreizen...*, *ibid.* p. 188-189. Since 1624, Van Goens reported that Cirebon saw the relationship with Mataram as unfair. In a ceremony held by Sultan Agung, Van Goens witnessed the presence of Cirebon’s embassy, no matter how half-hearted they were.

However, to what extent would the redefinition of power tolerate the presence of a foreign and colonial force? A party that later would be seen as the direct opposite of Islam. The following chapter will elaborate on the first encounter between the three new Cirebon kings with the Dutch East India Company. The chapter will investigate the negotiation of power between two parties that resulted in Cirebon's acceptance of VOC's protection toward the three sultans.

Chapter 2

The Negotiation of Power

This chapter aims to unravel factors that shaped Cirebon's inclination to secure an agreement with the VOC in 1681. This chapter begins with political and military contexts that intensified the proximity between the VOC and Cirebon sultans. Furthermore, the context brought Cirebon and the VOC into the negotiation concerning the first treaty between both parties. Scrutinizing the negotiation of the treaty's structure and clauses are imperative to grasp both parties' expectations regarding their relations. Both parties' expectations indicate not only the ideal but also the consentient colonial practice. A treaty should not be the only accessed document to reveal how it impacted the partakers. A treaty as a document rarely incorporates the contexts around the formulation nor the repercussion.

This chapter chronologically presents VOC's intervention in Cirebon in three phases: The first phase was VOC's engagement in the anti-banditry campaign that brought them to the service of Sultans of Cirebon. The second phase deals with VOC's victory on the campaign that commenced the negotiation. The third phase deals with the formulation of the treaty. As with other treaties between the VOC and Asian rulers, it benefitted the former thoroughly. The signing of the contract peaked at the gradual loss of power that had occurred since Mataram put the third Cirebon king in a city arrest. As far as power concerns, the treaty stripped many of it but left the sultans with one undiscussed issue: Islam, their primary source of authority. Before elaborating on the core topic, this chapter will begin with an anecdote on one of the sultans' receptions toward the treaty.

The year 1680 was about to pass; two weeks before the new year, Upper-Merchant Jacob van Dijk, the newly-appointed Dutch East India (hereafter, the VOC) commissioner for Cirebon, welcomed his seven local counterparts in Batavia. The seven men held the credential for being Cirebon's royal emissaries to the High Government of Batavia. Thus, they acted as an embassy to accept royal gifts from Governor-General Rijklof van Goens to the three sultans of Cirebon. The gifts varied from varieties of silk products to pistols with rationed ammunitions, of which the oldest sultan received more bullets than his two younger brothers. Before presented themselves in front of the Governor-General, van Dijk reported that he and

the seven men toasted Spanish wine to honor their respective lords. After bidding farewell to Governor-General Van Goens, the embassy Van Dijk headed back to Cirebon by sea.¹

Once the entourage arrived in Cirebon, the first agenda was to present the gifts to their kings. Despite the importance of gift exchange between the kings and the VOC, the ceremony was only an opening scene of another crucial event. In the court's square (*alun-alun*), the court crier declaimed the alliance treaty draft that the VOC and Cirebon were formulating. The oldest sultan (hereafter, Sultan Sepuh I) as the highest-rank attendee of the ceremony suddenly became displeased once he heard a clause that would equally position him with his brothers.² He verbally expressed his discomfort and asserted his higher status than his brothers, thus indirectly urged the company to revise it.³

Sultan Sepuh I and his younger brothers were descendants of Sunan Gunung Jati, the Cirebon founding father, whom not only Cirebonese but also the Dutch acknowledged his sacerdotal character. For instance, Rijcklofs van Goens, the governor-general of the VOC who later authorized the signing of the 1681 treaty, wrote that Cirebonese royalties owned ascetic characters.⁴ Pieter Van Dam, the author of the VOC's "encyclopedia" about its operation in Asia (known as *beschryvinge*), also included a story on Sunan Gunung Jati's holiness as a critical figure to understand Cirebon.⁵ Six generations later, the reigning sultans depended on the "fourth" and outside party, the Dutch East India Company, to define their power. What were the causes behind this reliance?

¹ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia Van 't Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1678* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1912), 1st January 1681, p. 4.

² De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia...1681*, *ibid.* 1st January 1681, p. 4.

³ National Archief The Hague, The Netherlands (Henceforth, NA), Inventaris van het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie 1602-1795 (1811) (Henceforth, VOC), 1.04.02, 1362, Missive door den capiteijn Jochum Michielse en den raet den 3 Januarij 1681 aen gouverneur generael Rijckloff van Goens ende raden van Indien tot Batavia geschreven, f. 1274.

⁴ van Goens, "Reijsbeschrijving van Den Weg Uijt Samarangh Nae de Konincklijke Hoofdplaats Mataram, Mitsgaders de Zeeden, Gewoonten Ende Regeringe van Den Sousouhouan, Groot Machtigste Koningk van 't Eijlant Java," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 4, no. 1 (1856): 307–50, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90001140>, p. 330.

⁵ Pieter van Dam and Frederik Willem Stapel, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*. 2,3: ..., Ongewijzigde herdr. 1939, Rijks geschiedkundige publicatiën Grote serie 83 ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1976), p.p.380-381.

Conflicts Outside and Inside the Court's Wall

This subchapter elaborates on the conjuncture between two fundamental reasons behind Cirebon's decision to secure a treaty with the Dutch East India Company. The two reasons were the internal dispute between the two eldest sultans of Cirebon and unrest that made each sultan in dire need of a third party to protect their branched interests. The rebellion by Pangeran Trunajaya of Madura eliminated Mataram from the competition to encroach influence over Cirebon. Therefore, leaving Banten *vis-à-vis* the VOC. As the opening of this paragraph had mentioned the victor, how did the VOC gain the upper-hand over Banten? To what extent the internal rivalry paved the company's way to entrench its influence over Cirebon?

The year 1677 witnessed how Mataram, the greatest Muslim dynasty in Java, was not an exception to the Javanese principle of *Cakra Manggilingan*: life works as a cycle; whoever on top might as well goes down. Pangeran Trunajaya of Madura, an extended member of Mataram royalties, revolted against the dynasty and so close to ending its supremacy. The Susuhunan of Mataram saw the brink of his power, thus requested VOC's assistance to fight the charismatic prince.⁶ The unrest took place on an expanding battleground and forced the VOC to think about potential areas that might fall under Trunajaya's hand.

On September 1677, the company projected to keep Cirebon away from two disputants in Pangeran Trunajaya's rebellion: the rebels and Mataram. Beyond the belligerents, the VOC also paid attention to the Sultanate of Banten that had been exploiting the turmoil to corrode Mataram's power. Banten was not a belligerent in the rebellion. However, the VOC paid close attention to them since it has the likelihood of exerting influence over Cirebon.⁷ Such alertness was not baseless considering Banten's unceasing ambition to annex Cirebon. Not to mention how Banten had contributed to discharging the two eldest princes of Cirebon from Mataram city-arrest, coronated them as sovereign rulers, and repatriated them into Cirebon that had been in a vacuum-of-power for sixteen years.

⁶ The elaborative explanation of Trunajaya's charisma and why it was pertinent to comprehend his political adventure see: Simon Kemper, "War-Bands on Java: Military Labour Markets Described in VOC Sources" (Leiden, Universiteit Leiden, 2014). p. 6-17.

⁷ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia Van 't Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1677* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1904)., 17th September 1677, p. 300.

However, Banten did not only undergo a good-will politic to pull Cirebon in becoming their ally. Banten also backhandedly supported a criminal group that ravaged Mataram's territories around Cirebon. The campaign operated in the same manner as a proxy war. The primary mission was to erode Mataram's dominance in West Java, as the Javanese kingdom was occupied by a turmoil that was close to ending its hegemony. Mataram's incapacity to tackle Banten's proxy would then signal Cirebon about the weakness of Mataram, Cirebon's ally for about six decades.

At the beginning of October 1678, two VOC officers: Commander Jacobus Couper and Captain Jochem Michielsen, arrived in Indramayu, a coastal city west of Cirebon. Both officers were well-equipped with military power to fight bandits that they assumed originated from Banten.⁸ Only by the end of the month, Commander Jacobus Couper confirmed the origin of the bandits. He discerned that the Sultan of Banten, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, recruited and purposely dispatched the bandits to cause unrest in Mataram's territories around Cirebon: Karawang, Tegal, and Indramayu. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa of Banten also inaugurated Pangeran Kidul, one of his confidants, to spearhead this group.⁹ The VOC subsequently named the group after the slightly misspelled name of the leader: The *Kidolese rover*.

Two months before the VOC fought the bandit in Indramayu and Cirebon, VOC's Resident of Banten William Caef reported that the Kidulese bandit had no intention of peace nor maintained a friendship with the VOC. He subsequently listed the bandits' misconduct: robberies, "improper" violence, arson, and unjust treatment toward (European) prisoners. According to VOC's resident of Banten, the bandit's *modus operandi* was ransacking one village to another. He was also convinced that the Kidulese owed their invincibility to Banten's support.¹⁰ The Kidulese bandit did not fight for separation, but mainly a large-scale criminal group. According to the resident of Banten's report, the bandit never proclaimed himself as an

⁸ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1340, Aentekening bij sinjeur Couper gehouden in zijn reijse van Indermaijoe over Cheribon naer Tegal sedert, 21 -29 December 1678, f. 1516.

⁹ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia Van 'T Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1678* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1907), 12th-13th December 1678, p. 725. In Banten, one can find royalties named after points of the compass, namely Pangeran Kidul (*Kidul* means South) and his brother Pangeran Lor (*Lor* means South). The present study will use the proper spelling of the prince's name: thus, "Kidul."

¹⁰ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1678*, *ibid.* 25th August 1678, p. 283.

independent ruler.¹¹ Notwithstanding, the bandit equally tested the efficacy, integrity, and solidarity among the Cirebon's sultans.

The previous chapter has figured how Cirebon local sources tend to factor out the conflictual past with Banten. The Kidullese bandit's story was not an exception, even though the Kidullese became the primary background behind Cirebon's decision to align with the VOC. Two versions of the Cirebon chronicle, *Babad Tjerbon*-Brandes, and *Babad Tjerbon Tjarita Purwaka Caruban Nagari* (Hereafter, *Babad Tjerbon-CPCN*), circumvented this story. Pangeran Trunajaya's rebellion has a more central position in these sources rather than the criminal group. Thus, VOC's "protection" aimed to prevent Cirebon from falling either into Trunajaya or Mataram, but not a single attention is given to Banten.¹²

By mid-1679, the VOC reported the bandit's activity from Cirebon, indicating that the group had marched eastward.¹³ Commander Jacobus Couper described in a lengthy note regarding the unrest's development and emphasized how the VOC had done their best to protect Sultan Sepuh I from the bandits. In contrast, Sultan Sepuh I only supplied the VOC with firewoods, salt, and six men that Couper considered insignificant for his military campaign. On another occasion, Couper reported that Sultan Sepuh I provided him with more men that were only useful for logistic procurement and weapon maintenance.¹⁴ In about three years of the campaign, VOC sources barely mentioned Cirebonese soldiers' presence in any decisive battle. Should Sultan Sepuh I could not reinforce VOC's military, why Sultan Anom I was absent from compensating for the shortcoming?

The absence of military support from Cirebonese sultans shed light on the fundamental yet typical issue in Javanese courts: the conflict between the two sultans- Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I. Sultan Anom I's absence in buttressing VOC's campaign was rooted in his intense disagreement with his older brother, Sultan Sepuh I. Instead of backing his brother or the company, he aligned with the rebels and reinforced their troops. This dispute became the most determining internal factor that opened Cirebon's gate for a third party's interference, as

¹¹ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia*,...1678, *ibid.* 25th August 1678, p. 284.

¹² Brandes and Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbon* (Batavia: Albrecht & Co., 1911). p. 24 & Atja, *Tjarita Purwaka Tjaruban Nagari* (Bandung: Ikatan Karyawan Museum, 1972). p. 69.

¹³ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1349, *Memorie door den Ed. Jacob Couper aen den capiteijn Jochem Michielsz. ter gouvernor tot Batavia nagelaten dato 18 Junij 1679*, f. 2160.

¹⁴ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, *Missive van den capiteijn Jochum Michielse en den raet uijt Cheribon den 4 Junij 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven*, f. 2191.

far as VOC sources concern. This sentiment does not resonate in the Cirebon chronicle, as the two brothers shared a harmonious relationship.¹⁵ Notwithstanding, the two sources share the same notion on the necessity of a “fourth party” to maintain harmony. However, in the Cirebon chronicles, both Banten and the VOC managed to carry out this role properly.¹⁶

Sultan Sepuh I alignment to the VOC occurred because he sensed that the VOC could restore his exclusive right to be the only legitimate successor of his late father.¹⁷ He was displeased with Banten that coronated his two siblings for the sake of preventing any successional conflict. Throughout his correspondences with the VOC, Sultan Sepuh I shared his vision of seeing Cirebon under one sultan, which he referred to himself. In convincing the VOC, Sultan Sepuh I believed that the aspiration was not about his political greediness but more of the ancestral mandate. The mandate might be in-line with Cirebon’s long tradition of having a single ruler. However, it conflicted his brother’s claim that before their father passed away, his last-will was to make the eldest and the second-born prince as sovereign rulers.¹⁸

On another edge, Sultan Anom I undoubtedly indebted Banten for his kingship. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa of Banten coronated him as a sultan, which he assumed equally positioned him with his brother. Based on these reasons, he preferred Banten to be Cirebon’s main ally and relentlessly persuaded his brother to abandon the VOC.¹⁹ Due to his opposing gestures toward the company, The VOC saw Sultan Anom I’s agitation as an “evil act” which he purposely conducted to “misguide” his brother.²⁰

Besides agitating his brother, Sultan Anom I underwent a military means to assert his alignment with Banten. In this period, Sultan Anom I’s military mainly functioned as a political tool to guarantee his alliance with Banten. He deployed six hundred men to reinforce the bandit that operated around Cirebon. The amount of deployed soldiers even exceeded Banten’s request of five hundred men.²¹ Sultan Sepuh I understandably worried about his brother’s steps

¹⁵ Brandes and Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbon...*, *ibid.* p. 23-24 & Atja, *Tjarita Purwaka Tjaruban Nagari...*, p. 68.

¹⁶ Brandes and Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbon...*, *ibid.* p. 24 & Atja, *Tjarita Purwaka Tjaruban Nagari...*, p. 69.

¹⁷ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia Van 'T Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1680* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1912), 4th May 1680, p. 206.

¹⁸ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia.....1681*, *ibid.* 3rd April 1681, p. 215.

¹⁹ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, Missive van den capiteijn Michielse en den raet tot Cheribon in dato primo Maij 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven, 1st May 1680, f. 1789.

²⁰ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1681*, *ibid.* 1st January 1681, p. 4.

²¹ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 8th February 1680, p. 62.

and decided to leak his brother's plots to the VOC. Considering Sultan Anom's decision to oppose the VOC, the leaked information might be the only source to include another belligerent story in the present study. After he unfolded his brother's secrets, Sultan Sepuh I concluded the letter by an assurance to the VOC that he did not deploy a single soldier despite Banten's request for eight hundred men.²²

A year later, the bandit was still at large and uneased Sultan Sepuh I. He then wrote a letter to Batavia and requested them to fortify his territory with a wooden fortress or *pagger*. Uniquely, he proposed that the wooden fort should also cover the Kalisapu river; thus, the bandit's prahus would neither infiltrate nor exfiltrate through this gap. The unique request stood upon another leaked-plot that he shared with the VOC. Sultan Sepuh I revealed to the company that his brother planned to flee Cirebon for Banten with one of the prahus.²³

In contrast to Sultan Sepuh I's concern, the VOC seemed to be confident with their performance despite losing a few troops. It was hardly a one-sided claim as Sultan of Banten, in one of his letters to Sultan Sepuh I, narrated the VOC's valiancy and expressed his sorrow toward slaughtered and imprisoned Banten soldiers.²⁴ In one account, the VOC reported that a joint-force of European and Makassarese soldiers took several bandits as hostages and put them under interrogation. Those who provided the company with information would receive *ampon* (clemency) in return. Most hostages begged *ampon* to Karaeng Bissei, VOC's Makassarese commander, rather than the Dutch officers, signifying the Makassarese warrior's ruthlessness.²⁵

The Kidullese banditry undoubtedly became the immediate reason behind Cirebon's proximity with the VOC. Beyond the bandits that openly created chaos in Cirebon, the banditry revealed that Cirebon's primary issue was its internal division. The VOC claimed its victory in the anti-bandit campaign. However, it did not necessarily allow them to impose control toward Cirebon. As the dispute prolonged, the company underwent any means to resolve it. The

²² De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 8th February 1680, p. 62.

²³ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Missive van den capiteijn Jochum Michielse en den raet uijt Cheribon den 4 Junij 1680..., f. 2191.

²⁴ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1681*, *ibid.* 18th March 1681, p. 117.

²⁵ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Missive van den capiteijn Jochum Michielse en den raet uijt Cheribon den 4 Junij 1680..., f. 2191 & Missive van den capiteijn Jochum Michielse en raet tot Cheribon den 19 November 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven, ff. 2229-2230.

following subchapter presents one of the dispute resolutions that the VOC undertook and how effective it was to safeguard VOC's interest in Cirebon.

The (Temporary) Ending of the Conflict

This subchapter highlights that the shortcoming on the battlefield forced Sultan Anom I, the VOC's opposer, to abandon his plan. In return, it paved the way for Sultan Sepuh I and the VOC to materialize their plan to subjugate Cirebon. In May 1680, VOC's superiority on the battlefield was beyond question as they managed to weaken the bandit. This situation indirectly pushed Sultan Anom I to eyes for a politically-realistic option. Being aware of his unfavorable position, he convinced the company that he would withdraw his support to the bandit. He also promised the VOC that he would not lend any hand or provide shelter for the bandit.²⁶

However, the promise was more of a diplomatic statement. Between 1679 and 1680, Sultan Anom I would still covertly deploy troops to back Banten's campaign, military support that the 1681 treaty would strictly forbid. Sultan Sepuh I saw his brother's power play with Banten as a threat that he must eliminate. Upon this ground, Sultan Sepuh I repeatedly showed his keenness to have the VOC as the sole protector of Cirebon, which certainly intended to oust Banten from the court politics.

War is politics by other means, as dictated by Prussian war-theorist Carl von Clausewitz. The court intrigues never to have a definitive victor until the war came up with one. By the end of 1680, the Kidulese bandit and the two masterminds behind them, Sultan Anom I and Banten, must admit VOC's valiancy on the battlefield. Many of the bandits were taken as hostages or executed. Kneeling in front of VOC's superiority, Sultan Anom I, who attempted to flee only to be prevented by his brother, saw the most plausible option was to follow his nemesis *cum* older brother's gesture to begin a peace dialogue with the VOC.

The loss of Banten in the proxy war that it orchestrated catalyzed the company's hegemony over Cirebon. The victorious anti-bandit campaign, however, was inadequate to allow the company to exert its control. The VOC subsequently utilized one of its most effective conquest mechanism: a peace treaty. Seeing this scene as a tragedy leaves out how keen Cirebon, especially Sultan Sepuh I, to be under the company's guardianship. As he

²⁶ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 1680, 23rd April 1680, p. 188.

melancholically wrote in his letters to the VOC: “*Dat Ick alleen onder de Compagnie magh staen.*”²⁷

Negotiating Power: The formulation of the 1681 treaty

This subchapter aims to reconstruct the negotiation that led to the 1681 treaty. By delving into the negotiation, one may observe acceptances, objections, and compromises concerning the treaty’s content. The “dialogue” highlights to what extent the treaty stood upon the consent of both parties, regardless of how the result seemingly relished the VOC more than the sultans.

On the last day of the year 1680, the Governor-General and the Council of Indies in Batavia decreed a resolution that endorsed the company’s plan to have Cirebon under their protection.²⁸ The Governor-General and the Council believed that the arrangement would serve the sultan’s interest at best and protected them from malevolences. With the resolution in their hand, VOC’s representative in Cirebon had the legal basis for inviting the three kings and their judiciary apparatuses to sign the treaty.

The Dutch East India Company considered a treaty an essential conquest tool that mutually complemented its military power.²⁹ The debate around a treaty formulation often questions the position of the signatories. From the lenses of legal philosophy, equal positioning is the very foundation of a treaty-making. When the Dutch had signed several contracts with Asian rulers, European jurists were still debating the validity of securing a treaty with a non-Christian partaker, mainly with a “Mohammedan” ruler.³⁰ However, since a treaty in the context of colonialism was a political tool, the notion of equality based on the signatories’ identity (Christian, “Mohammedan,” or others) was insufficient to unfold a local ruler’s keenness to secure a treaty with a colonial force.

²⁷ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 4th May 1680, p. 206. The quoted sentence means “that only under the company, I may stand.”

²⁸ Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia (Henceforth, ANRI), Archief van de gouverneur-generaal en raden van Indië (Hoge Regering) van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie en taakopvolgers, 1612-1812 (Henceforth, Hoge Regering), Resolutie Gouverneur-Generaal Batavia, K66A, 31st December 1680, ff. 864-866.

²⁹ Arthur Wetsteijn, “Love Alone Is Not Enough: Treaties in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion” in Saliha Belmessous, *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 19.

³⁰ Richard Tuck, “Alliances with Infidels in the European Imperial Expansion,” in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, ed. Sankar Muthu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 61–83, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139016285.004>, p. 61-64.

In many areas, including Cirebon, the treaty was a product of political contexts around it. The Cirebon treaty stood upon local leaders' (exploited) despair and gratitude to VOC's ability to fight their enemies. The exploitation was conspicuous if one saw VOC's tendency to brag about what they had done to safeguard Cirebon's interest. As a prove, VOC representatives in Cirebon repeatedly posed a rhetorical question to the sultans: "What would and could the Cirebonese sultans do should the honorable company never help them?"³¹

The treaty's final draft resoundingly benefitted the VOC more than the sultans. However, the sultans contributed to the shaping of the treaty and consciously decided to be signatories. What made them do so? Was the notion of exploitation and pressure sufficient to unfold their motivation? Or, perhaps, they equally perceived the treaty as a just and morally-acceptable means to achieve their interest, regardless of the shadowing presence of a colonial force as a repercussion?

About seven months before Batavia decreed the endorsement, Captain Jochem Michielsens paid a courtesy call with Cirebon's three rulers.³² The courtesy call to Cirebon's court never have a fixed schedule, but for Captain Michielsens, such a visit was regular. The VOC officer was there to learn the three leaders' stance toward the company. The question was crucial to understanding the kings' position when the VOC had gradually defeated the Kidullese bandits, forced Banten to end their "proxy war," and left Cirebonese kings with only one plausible ally to align with. Worth to mention that an alliance had always been a natural feature of Cirebon foreign politics.

In its earlier years, Sunan Gunung Jati saw Demak, the oldest sultanate in Java, as his strong ally. The Sunan actively supported Demak in its wars, *vice versa*. At the same time, Banten was a friendly-state or merely an ally by-blood.³³ In 1625, Mataram's dominance dictated Cirebon's option. Cirebon accepted Sultan Agung, the greatest king of Mataram, as their sole protector. Unlike with Demak and Banten, Cirebon perceived its alliance with Mataram weighed more on the Javanese sultanate's arrogance and greediness.³⁴ However,

³¹ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden...1680*, *ibid.* 1680, 4th May 1680, p. 203-204.

³² De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden...1680*, *ibid.* 1680, 4th May 1680, p. 203-204.

³³ R.H. Unang Sunardjo, *Selayang Pandang Sejarah: Masa Kejayaan Kerajaan Cirebon Kajian Dari Aspek Politik Dan Pemerintahan* (Cirebon: Yayasan Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon, n.d.). p. 28.

³⁴ Van Goens, *De Vijf Gezantschapreizen van Rijklof Van Goens Naar Het Hof van Mataram 1648-1654*, ed. Graaf, Hermanus Johannes de (s'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956). P. 188-189.

Mataram's power deterred Cirebon from forming the alliance until the rebellion altered Cirebon's fate and brought Cirebon to another major power: The Dutch East India Company.

In response to the question regarding the sultan's perception toward the Dutch East India Company: Sultan Sepuh I boldly answered that he would live and die for the company. As the previous subchapter has exposed, Sultan Sepuh I had always been positive when it came to VOC's presence in Cirebon. He often humbled himself in his correspondences with the company, for he did not have enough power even for self-protection. Thus, he was longing for VOC's guardianship.

When it came to Sultan Anom I, he responded with a riddle, for he would only ally with the strongest.³⁵ The answer puzzled VOC's delegations, who asked him to elaborate. Before Captain Michielsen asked a follow-up question, he convinced Sultan Anom I that the VOC and Cirebon alliance would constitute one strong party. Subsequently, Sultan Anom I answered: "Our (The VOC and Sultan Anom I) collaboration would make the strongest party. However, should the company withdraw their support from Cirebon, I would be unfortunate."³⁶ Responding to Sultan Anom I's doubt, Karaeng Bissei, the Makassarese commander who served the VOC, replied: "We are here neither to play with nor to harm your majesties; We will always be at you and your subjects' service."³⁷

The presented dialogue marked the first reported exchange between the VOC and the three sultans regarding the possibility of accepting the VOC as their protector. After hearing responses from each of the sultans, Captain Jochem Michielsen allowed the three sultans to deliver a joint-communiqué concerning the VOC's protection. Once the sultans replied in unison, Captain Michielsen released three salvos with his musket to celebrate the new beginning and the intended arrangement of the Cirebon-the VOC relations.³⁸

Not long after the three sultans stated their consent, Sultan of Banten became aware of what he thought was an unpleasing development. He regretted the decision and expressed it in a way that the VOC had predicted since 1677. Banten certainly played the lineage politics to boast their entitlement of being Cirebon's protector. Banten also claimed that they had rescued

³⁵ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 4th May 1680, p. 204.

³⁶ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 4th May 1680, p. 204.

³⁷ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Missive van den capiteijn Michielse en den raet tot Cheribon in dato primo Maij 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven, 1st May 1680, f. 2186.

³⁸ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Missive van den capiteijn Michielse en den raet tot Cheribon in dato primo Maij 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven, 1st May 1680, f. 2186.

the princes from political turmoil caused by Trunajaya's rebellion. Regardless of the expressed displeasure, Sultan of Banten concluded his letter with a promise to the VOC that he will respect Cirebon's decision and withdraw his people that roamed in Cirebon and VOC's territories in the surrounding areas.³⁹

Despite commencing the new phase, the VOC was aware that they must deal with the unsolved rivalry between Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I. Sultan Sepuh I had yet given up with his proposition. He consistently thought that the VOC should allow him to be the only Cirebon leader, considering "the tradition," his loyalty, and service toward the company.⁴⁰ Whereas the Young Sultan was not sincerely enthusiastic about the negotiation with the VOC. After speaking on behalf of his brothers regarding their stance toward the proposed-treaty, Sultan Sepuh I privately warned VOC's delegation about how distrustful Sultan Anom I could be. He specifically mentioned that despite Sultan Anom I had shown a positive gesture toward the treaty, the young sultan still provided asylums for thirty Kidullese bandits to evade VOC's execution.⁴¹

The VOC only agreed partially with Sultan Sepuh I's proposal, nonetheless. On one side, the VOC admitted that it would be practical to only communicate with one head instead of three. In practice, the company honored Sultan Sepuh I to be the spokesperson of his two brothers. Contrarily, the VOC respected "what was already arranged by Banten." The "Banten arrangement" referred to the first two sultans' equal positioning and acknowledged the third as the deputy of Sultan Sepuh. Therefore, Sultan Sepuh I's coronation as the only leader went against the legacy, not to mention the potential of inciting great quarrels.⁴² The company believed that they should not change the "most esteemed and recommended" arrangement in which the three sultans "had practiced for quite a while."⁴³

Appropriating tradition in a treaty had always been VOC's typical approach to convince their local counterparts to secure an agreement, notably for the first treaty between the two.⁴⁴

³⁹ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden 1680 In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 28th August 1680, p. 559-560.

⁴⁰ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden 1680 In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 4th May 1680, p. 204.

⁴¹ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Missive van den capiteijn Michielse en den raet tot Cheribon in dato primo Maij 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven, 1st May 1680, f. 2186.

⁴² NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Missive van den capiteijn Michielse en den raet tot Cheribon in dato primo Maij 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven, 1st May 1680, f. 2186.

⁴³ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Missive van den capiteijn Michielse en den raet tot Cheribon in dato primo Maij 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven, 1st May 1680, f. 2186.

⁴⁴ Wetsteijn. "Love Alone Is Not Enough...*ibid.*" p. 20.

On the debate about the number of kings that would reign over Cirebon, the VOC openly showed their fondness toward one tradition and refused to acknowledge another. The company conspicuously chose which practice of tradition would benefit them more. The VOC decided to respect the “Banten legacy” but ironically refused to adopt “Cirebon’s legacy,” or the restoration of Cirebon’s unity.

Less than a week after Captain Michielsen’s courtesy call, Sultan Sepuh I dispatched a follow-up letter that once again begged for VOC’s interference to appoint him as the only Cirebon ruler. Although Sultan Sepuh I always relied on the company’s military assistance, he groundlessly promised the VOC that once he became the sole ruler of Cirebon, he “would destroy any party from Banten or Cirebon who betrayed the company.”⁴⁵ Once again, he confided his brothers’ ingenuity, who remained in an “unlawful” contact with Banten.

The three sultans had confirmed VOC’s plan to form a treaty since the end of April 1680. Nevertheless, the VOC only began to discuss the proposed clauses only two months before the signing. Three reasons might explain this situation: *firstly*, Batavia (Governor-General and Councils of India) only approved the plan in December 1680. The Cirebon treaty would not solely bond the company’s representatives in the area but the VOC as a whole organization. An approval from the highest authority was then an imperative element in a treaty formulation.

Secondly, after the VOC defeated the Kidulese bandit, Cirebon sultans quickly requested another help to tackle Galunggung’s rebel. Unlike the Kidulese, the Galunggung rebel leader, known as Adipati Galunggung, proclaimed himself a king. In response to this claim, the three kings were in unison to perceive them as a threat, thus inviting the VOC to fight them on behalf of the sultanates. This request arguably delayed the VOC to settle their treaty with Cirebon.⁴⁶

Thirdly, Batavia was optimistic that Cirebon sultans would not object to the clauses as “it shares similarities with the previous treaty with Mataram.”⁴⁷ Batavia did not specify which treaty that they were referring to. However, one can assume that the high government referred

⁴⁵ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 4th May 1680, p. 205.

⁴⁶ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 1st December 1680, p. 792-793.

⁴⁷ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum BKI*, 91, 3e Deel (1676-1691) (s’Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934). p. 70-74.

to the treaties signed between February-October 1677 between Mataram and the VOC.⁴⁸ Susuhunan of Mataram signed these treaties mainly to lure the VOC in intervening in their war against the Madurese Rebel, Prince Trunajaya, that Susuhunan was gradually losing.

In the 1677's treaties, The VOC included clauses that deal with the exemption of toll, freedom on textile and opium trade, and monopolization of certain commodities, among others. Three benefits that the VOC would also reap after the Cirebon treaty came into practice. Regulation on the VOC's relations with Makassarese, Malays, Balinese, Chinese, Moors, and others is also present among the clauses. Nevertheless, the proposed rearrangement of distributing power among three rulers was not present in the 1677's treaty. Since he never heard such a proposition, one might understand another reason behind Sultan Sepuh I's intense and continuous objection toward the clause.

In the second week of December 1680, the VOC exchanged correspondences among themselves and the sultans to update the treaty's finalization. Regarding the clauses, VOC's preference for the distribution of responsibility among the three sultans remained. The argument and the middle-ground were mostly consistent: the VOC would treat and address the three as independent governments, but when it came to communication, the VOC found it easier to speak with one king instead of three. The spokesperson would always be Sultan Sepuh I, which from time to time, delegated the responsibility to his aide: Sahbandar Wira Sasmita. Nevertheless, around this time, the VOC added another argumentation behind this preference. They assumed that communicating with Sultan Sepuh I was safer since the company did not entirely trust Sultan Anom I.⁴⁹

In response to VOC's insistence, Sultan Sepuh I showed a defensive gesture. He continued to refuse VOC's proposal to "lower" his position. The written persuasion and royal gifts could not alter his mind, which prolonged the stalemate until the signing day. In return for meager military supports during the campaign and an unspecified amount of salt, firewoods, rice, and horses, The High Government of Batavia and Director-General Cornelis Speelman generously presented luxurious goods that they obtained from every corner of Asia. Most of

⁴⁸ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum BKI*, 91, 3e Deel (1676-1691) (s'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934). p. 70-74.

⁴⁹ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia...1681*, *ibid.* 23rd January 1681, p. 4.

the listed items were silk products and muskets that came with the ammunition and cartridge bags.⁵⁰

Shortly before the signing procession, a VOC's representative, Commissioner Jacob van Dijk, took his last shot to change Sultan Sepuh I's mind. He verbally boasted all the sacrifices that the company had made to safeguard the sultans from Kidulese bandits.⁵¹ Van Dijk added how the company had rescued the sultans from Mataram's forced-alliance and subsequently freed Cirebon subjects. Thus, he advised the sultans not to trade the state of being free with anything. To maintain their freedom, Cirebon should only follow VOC's directions that aimed nothing but to prosper and ensure Cirebon's survival. Van Dijk concluded his words by saying that none of his younger brothers objected to the arranged clause. Subsequently, Van Dijk instilled the fear of alienation in Sultan Sepuh I should he insisted on his stance.⁵²

In response to VOC's persuasion, Sultan Sepuh I delayed his answer and requested a copy of the treaty for him to study. On the next day, three aides of Sultan Sepuh I - Tumenggung Raksa Nagara, Sahbandar Wira Sasmita, and Kyai Angga Diraksa- informed VOC's delegation that their king had thoroughly read the document and changed his mind. Surprisingly, Sultan Sepuh I withdrew his objection and accepted VOC's arrangement.⁵³ Unfortunately, VOC sources fell short in providing information to understand the alteration of an overnight decision. Relying on local sources is also unproductive as this episode is absent from the narrative. Thus, an assumption should be made by comparing this letter with other sources concerned with similar issues.

Throughout his correspondences with the VOC, Sultan Sepuh I imagined a scenario that would perfectly fit his expectation. The VOC would be the protector of Cirebon, wherein he would be the only ruler. Since the VOC refused to accommodate his proposition, Sultan Sepuh I must set his priority straight: inviting the VOC or becoming the sole sultan of Cirebon? Since the beginning of the anti-bandit campaign, Sultan Sepuh I openly expressed that the unrest may cost his life, and the company's engagement was a great blessing.⁵⁴ Thus, having

⁵⁰ See appendix for the complete list of the gift.

⁵¹ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Copie rapport van den E. Jacob van Dijk behelsende sijne verrichtinge als expres commissaris op Chirrebon in dato 16 April 1681, f. 1014.

⁵² NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Copie rapport van den E. Jacob van Dijk behelsende sijne verrichtinge als expres commissaris op Chirrebon in dato 16 April 1681, f. 1014.

⁵³ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1360, Copie rapport van den E. Jacob van Dijk behelsende sijne verrichtinge als expres commissaris op Chirrebon in dato 16 April 1681, f. 1015.

⁵⁴ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1680*, *ibid.* 8th February 1680, p. 62.

the VOC as his protector would continuously fulfill his fundamental needs: personal safety, although sacrificing his dream to be Cirebon's sole ruler like his father.

After the VOC overcame the most intense objection, the treaty was ready to be signed by both parties. VOC's representatives, Jochem Michielsen and Jacob van Dijk signed the draft on 7th January 1681. A week later, the three sultans signed it in a solemn ceremony on the palace's square or *alun-alun*. The sultans asked their religious officials to raise Al-Qur'an during the ceremony to remind the signatories that "the (holy) book will curse us if we do not strictly comply with the treaty." Besides the sultans, other signatories from Cirebon's side were seven jurists (*Jaksa Pepitu*) who represented the court's judiciary body.⁵⁵

The treaty began with the indirect quotation of sultans' gratitude for the company's sacrifice in combating the bandits that had threatened them. The following paragraph elaborates on how both parties reached an agreement, thus, briefly recounted the court visit of Captain Michielsen and Karaeng Bissei to Cirebon at the end of April until early May 1680. As the VOC had repeatedly asserted, the treaty positions the three sultans equally, acknowledged sovereignties of the three, yet trusted Sultan Sepuh I to bear more responsibilities than his two brothers. Furthermore, the drafter wrote that the treaty would bind the signatories "as long as the moon and sun shine" or practically: forever.

Based on the correspondence with the three sultans and adaptation of 1677's contracts between the VOC and Banten, the 1681 treaty incorporated clauses as presented by the table below:

No	Issue of the Clause	Clauses that Bind The VOC	Clauses that Bind Cirebon
1	War-conducting and Treaty-Signing	The noble company agreed to protect the brethren of Cirebonse kings, their land, people, and their descendants, from all enemies, against which the noble company itself is in no covenant of peace as long as the party still respected their treaty with the VOC.	The kings and their people promise to be always ready to assist the noble company in emergency times. Should the king requested VOC's help, the former will bear the cost, <i>vice versa</i> . The VOC strictly forbids the kings to wage war and to sign any peace treaty with any party without the company's permission.

⁵⁵ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum BKI*, 91, 3e Deel (1676-1691) (s'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934). p. 240.

2	Mediating role in the case of a court conflict	The VOC agreed to be the mediator should there any conflict between the kings	The kings should take VOC's advice
3	Relations with Susuhunan of Mataram	<p>The VOC is responsible for inviting Susuhunan of Mataram to ratify the treaty.</p> <p>The company was obliged to punish the kings, collectively or individually, should they violate the clauses that deal with their relationship with Susuhunan of Mataram.</p>	<p>Sultans of Cirebon must show nothing but integrity to the Susuhunan and being a steadfast and faithful ally who honors, respects and recognizes their authority without being prejudice toward the relationship with the company</p> <p>The kings and people of Cheribon shall remain within the confines of their land, such as they are known today, without being allowed to expand further or move slightly from their territory to the damage and harm of the company or the Susuhunan.</p> <p>If there may be a difference in the limits, this will be settled by the other party committed, without prejudice to this bond of friendship.</p>
4	Construction of any establishment	The VOC can build a lodge or any establishment as they wished that will facilitate their trading activities	Sultans shall not build any establishment on land or off the Cirebon's shore without the company's permission
5	Monopoly and exemption of toll and other taxes	<p>The VOC will monopolize the textile and opium trade in Cirebon</p> <p>VOC could determine the price of the pepper and is righteous to confiscate any excess stock</p>	<p>Sultan shall not permit anyone under his power to collect a toll or other forms of taxes from VOC's fleet/traders.</p> <p>Sultan must only trade peppers that grow within their territory to the company or the third party that the company had appointed</p>
6	Mobility of traders	The VOC could police any trader in Cirebon while forcing them to hold or show a pass. The company could also determine the amount of tax that the trader must pay.	Sultans' port master (Sahbandar) must assist the VOC in monitoring the traffic of traders that arrive or leave Cirebon and collecting taxes from them
7	Supply of rice, sugars, and woods	The VOC may request the sultans to provide them with rice, sugars, and wood(works) and determine the purchase price	<p>Sultan must fulfill VOC's request and agreed to the set price.</p> <p>Should there be any cancellation, Sultans could</p>

		The VOC could collect taxes from merchants that sell the staple products in Cirebon by 200 <i>rijksdollars</i> /trader	sell the products on the market after VOC's permission
8	Policy on seaport and sail safety		<p>Sultans should do their best to prevent any pillaging of stranded ships, mainly from VOC's armadas</p> <p>Sultans should bear the expense of paying any party in safeguarding the cargo. They were as well responsible for compensating for the loss of any cargo, apart from punishing the looters</p>
9	Citizens and Domestic Security		Sultans must not allow any Makassarrese, Malays, or Moors to settle in their territory, nor they are allowed to permit other nations to mingle and to conduct any business with Makassarrese
9	Policy on fugitives, escaping slaves, and treatment to prisoners		<p>Sultans must repatriate and shall not provide asylum for any fugitive, escaped-slaves, thieves, murder, or any other criminals that flee from the VOC or Susuhunan's territory</p> <p>The sultans deserve ten <i>rijksdollars</i> for an escaping slave and twenty <i>rijksdollars</i> for a criminal fugitive if they can capture and repatriate them</p> <p>The sultans must not forcefully circumcise any Christian prisoner</p>
10	Travel restriction	In any emergency occasion, the VOC must provide sea transports for Sultans and residents of Cirebon to evacuate from the locality	In any case, where the VOC could not provide any ship, Sultan Sepuh I is allowed and must be able to replace VOC's role: as long as the sailing does not pass Bali in the east and Borneo in the north

Table 2.1. The 1681 treaty. Source: NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1354, Copie articulen tusschen den gouverneur generael ende de raden van India en de gebroeders coningen van Chirrebon in dato 7 Januarij 1681, ff. 1034-1042. The same treaty is also published in Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum BKI*, 91, 3e Deel (1676-1691) (s'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934). p. 233-240.

Multiple Facets of the 1681 Treaty: A Chapter Epilogue

For the Dutch East India Company, the above clauses indicated that the Cirebon treaty was a tool of annexation.⁵⁶ It explicitly assures European signatories' political and economic interests.⁵⁷ The treaty's implementation was assured by the use of military power that came in three forms: military triumph materialized the treaty, military mutual-assistance was a means to preserve the relations, and military as a punitive tool unobtrusively enforce the implementation of the treaty.

The treaty manifested European possession and dispossession in the issue of political exercises more than a territorial transfer.⁵⁸ Notwithstanding, the VOC became the primary consumer of what grew on it and what was traded in its bazaar, the exception of law and taxes, and the owner of the exclusive right to construct any architectural establishment. The company also held the right to police Cirebon's "cosmopolitanism," as the company was righteous to control the land-and-sea traffic and the inter-ethnic relation, with an extra caution toward Makassarese.

The use of a treaty as a tool of expansion depended on the local kingdoms' character, in which Cirebon was undoubtedly a "soft spot." The brotherly dispute and competition to invite a third party accelerated the realization of the treaty.⁵⁹ Therefore, local rulers' openness toward it was also a factor that shaped a treaty and determined its materialization possibilities.

For Cirebon rulers, the treaty was a survival means, regardless of how it worked for the two sultans differently. For Sultan Sepuh I, the treaty formalized his alignment with the Dutch East India Company that had always guaranteed his safety. The cost was exorbitant, but he showed no objection toward clauses concerning the monopoly of commodities or clauses restricting his freedom. In general, he seemed to buy Van Dijk's persuasion that following VOC's direction would ensure his safety.

In contrast to his brother's keenness to ally with the VOC, indecisiveness had always been Sultan Anom I's rule of the game. Unlike his brother, he never saw the VOC as the only

⁵⁶Saliha Belmessous, "Introduction" in Saliha Belmessous, ed., *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900* (Oxford, UK ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).p. 5-6.

⁵⁷Martine van Ittersum, "6. Empire by Treaty? The Role of Written Documents in European Overseas Expansion, 1500-1800," in *The Dutch and English East India Companies*, ed. Adam Clulow and Tristan Mostert (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 153–78, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048533381-009>. p. 155 & 172.

⁵⁸ See Belmessous, "Introduction" in Saliha Belmessous, ed., *Empire by Treaty: ...ibid*, p. 6-7.

⁵⁹ van Ittersum, "6. Empire by Treaty?....", *ibid*, p. 155.

option; thus, the treaty was only one means to survive. Reflected by his puzzling answer to Captain Michielsen and Karaeng Bissei's question, he tried his best to be in the middle. Amid the anti-bandit campaign, he saw that Banten was losing its ground, then he ensured the company that he would not carry on with his reinforcement to the bandit. He disliked his brother's preference but never openly rejected VOC's presence in Cirebon. Unexpectedly, He was the treaty's first signatory who immediately forced the VOC to implement the clauses. In one of his letters, Sultan Anom I sought permission from the company to build a market and a prahu shelter for his court as he was not in favor of sharing the facilities with his older brother. The reason was straightforward: because the VOC promised to treat the kings equally.⁶⁰

Studies on VOC's colonization of Cirebon often see the treaty as the primary evidence to answer the extent to which the company had ripped off Cirebon's power.⁶¹ Notwithstanding, the present study is in dissent with such argumentation. *Firstly*, the treaty did not touch upon Islam, an essential element that constituted Cirebon's very characteristic. The observation of Cirebon, pre-and post-treaty, will not be complete if Islam was factored out. *Secondly*, a treaty contains legal languages that express the ideal practices. Thus, the clauses stand more as mentifacts of both parties' agreed protocol to coexist, regardless of how colonialism defined the relations. For instance, the last cause that forbids the kings to travel beyond Bali does not mean that Cirebonese kings had done so. The present study argues that mentifacts are insufficient to grasp the impacts of a treaty toward local rulers' politics, including the practice of kingship. The implementation and repercussion would be more logical to be present in the post-treaty documents.

The above two notes will constitute the gist of the following chapter that mainly endeavors to unravel the repercussions of VOC's colonization over Cirebon, as textually represented by the treaty, toward the practice of kingship. What would be Islam's position in Cirebon's kingship under VOC's power? Would Islam be the core element in reading the repercussion of the treaty toward Cirebon's kingship? The following chapter will again tackle the answers by corroborating local and VOC sources.

⁶⁰ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia.....*1681, *ibid.* 3rd April 1681, p. 215.

⁶¹ Firlianna Tiya Deviani, "Perjanjian 7 Januari 1681 Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Kehidupan Sosial Politik Ekonomi Di Kerajaan Cirebon (1681 M-1755 M)" (Cirebon, IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, 2016). p. 132-142. , R.H. Unang Sunardjo, *Selayang Pandang Sejarah: Masa..., ibid.* p. 63.

Chapter 3

The Cirebon Kingship under The Dutch East India Company

On 8th January 1681, a convoy of two ships, the yacht “Elizabeth” and the flute “Buuren” were sailing toward Cirebon.¹ In the middle of their voyage, both ships’ crews sighted a comet with an unusually large tail in the northwestern sky. For the Dutch shippers, a comet was nothing more than an astronomical phenomenon. However, Javanese cosmology imposed more meanings: the northwest tailed-star (*lintang kemukus*) is an omen for a court’s internal conflict. Kings and ministers fought for power and eventually unease villagers and farmers. The turmoil would then lead to a food shortage: the rice would be scarce and more expensive than gold.²

The precision of the astrology concerning the situation in Cirebon speaks for itself. Not only the first half that concerns the internal dispute but also the phrases that warns a disruption in the rice supply. The previous chapter had indicated how the brotherly dispute between Cirebon sultans invited The Dutch East India Company to interfere in Cirebon’s politics. The interference came with a lengthy concession that generally relished the company. One point of the concession allowed the company to monopolize over rice, among other commodities.

Conspicuously, the company’s presence affected Cirebon beyond the issue of food stock. To a certain extent, the 1681 treaty had given the VOC a powerful role to define the sultans’ power exercise. The sultans obeyed this arrangement to maintain their status as (partially) independent rulers under the company’s protection. They were sovereign in front of their traditional enemies, but they also became subjects of colonial power. What seems to be the sultans’ paradoxical status of the kings within the colonial machinery will be the core issue of the first three subchapters.

In elaborating the sultans’ position, this chapter will begin by portraying VOC’s settlement in Cirebon that represented the beginning of its influence over the sultans. The second chapter will investigate the extent to which the VOC had entrenched its influence over Cirebon by observing the sultans’ position. Under the VOC, the sultans seemed to operate as

¹ Frederick De Haan *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia Van 't Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1681* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1912), 23rd January 1681, p. 206.

² Tiknopranoto and Marsisuwignya, *Sejarah Kutha Sala: Kraton Sala, Bengawan Sala, Gunung Lawu* (Surakarta: TB Pelajar, n.d.). p. 26.

both independent as well as subjugated rulers. The former was the front-face that the company liked to exhibit, whereas the latter was their actual places within the colonial structure.

The following subchapter will resurface the dispute between the two oldest sultans as a pretext for the VOC to impose a tighter control. Unlike the mainstream analysis, the VOC hardly benefitted from the conflict. Reversely, the company saw it as an obstruction of their power exercise toward the sultans. Therefore, rather than preserved it, the company attempted to resolve it and maximized its control.

The 1681 treaty had minimized the negotiation space, if not entirely gone. However, Panembahan Girilaya, an incapable king whose infirmity brought Cirebon's "seen worlds" into the disarray, had shown that a king could do more than being exposed by the external pressure. A king could actively shape his ideal world, especially in the immaterial realm. One pertinent example is Cirebon's "unseen worlds" that remain "positive" regardless of their powerlessness before Mataram.³

The case was indeed different when it came to the three sultans' relation with the Dutch East India Company. VOC's status in front of Cirebon was incomparable with Mataram, especially concerning the two's historical relation. Therefore, the last subchapter will tackle the questions that begin with the notion of the "distance" between the VOC and Cirebon. How did the three kings justify their conscious choice to accept The Dutch East India Company as their protector? Or, more elaborately, how did they reconcile their choice with the mandate to derive authority from Sunan Gunung Jati, a figure that committed to proselytization of Islam?

VOC's Presence in Cirebon after the 1681 treaty

The present subchapter aims to portray briefly concerning the company's presence in Cirebon after the 1681 treaty. By the end of the 1670s, VOC had yet to settle in Cirebon. The early 1680s marked the new beginning for the company in this area. As the company had secured an agreement with Cirebon sultans, they began to construct physical establishments and appointed a resident who acted as VOC's highest officer in the area. Therefore, this subchapter will begin by narrating the short story of Reserve Officer (*vaandrigh*) Benjamin van Der Meer, VOC's first resident for Cirebon.

³ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: alih aksara dan bahasa teks KCR 04* (Cirebon : Ngaglik, Sleman, Yogyakarta: Rumah Budaya Nusantara Pesambangan Jati Cirebon ; Deepublish, 2013). p. 94-95.

On July 1679, *Vaandrigh* Benjamin van Der Meer was about to left Semarang, the pivotal port city in the North of Java, bounded to Mataram. His written order mentioned that van Der Meer should present himself before Pangeran Puger, the crown prince of Mataram, and left early in the morning to avoid the Banten bandits.⁴ About two years later, the same officer became a lieutenant who served in Cirebon, an area that his company had liberated from the same bandit that he previously was cautious for. He was not merely a visitor as Batavia had appointed him as the first resident; hence, VOC's chief of mission in Cirebon.⁵

Throughout his correspondences as the resident of Cirebon, Lieutenant van Der Meer often mentioned that he composed the letter from a fort named *Bescherming* (the protector, see figure 3.1.).⁶ The fort was undoubtedly the company's bulwark in Cirebon, both physically and figuratively. The company controlled the monopolized commodities from within the forts' wall: pepper, textiles, and opium. The company did not need to worry about the food supply as the sultans had promised in providing staple needs, namely rice, sugars, and woods. Nevertheless, as the name tells, the fort carried out more security tasks than economic responsibilities.

Resembling other VOC's forts, *Bescherming* was a squared-shape fort with four bastions: two "whole-shaped" and two "half-shaped." The fort was built out of stones and contrasted the wooden-or bamboo-fortress (*pagger*) that belonged to the sultans.⁷ The fortress' distinctiveness was depicted with great astonishments by manuscripts produced by the third prince of Cirebon (hereafter, *Kacirebonan* manuscripts). The manuscript portrays the fortress with attention to detail regarding the recentness (*Bénténg kang anyar winangun*-the newly established fortress), the feature (*Bénténg Pasang Bedil*-the armed fortress), and the function

⁴ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia Van 'T Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1679* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1904). 17th July 1679. p. 519.

⁵ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia Van 'T Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1681* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1912). 18th April 1681. p. 238 Some preliminary researches on the history of Cirebon in the seventeenth century mixed the refurbishment with the establishment year; thus, mistakenly assumed that VOC erected the fort in 1685 with Resident Marten Samson as its first occupant. For examples, see: Nina H. Lubis and Et. Al., *Sejarah Tatar Sunda* (Bandung: Satya Historika, 2003). p. 270 & Tim Peneliti Jurusan Sejarah Fak. Sastra UNPAD, *Sejarah Cirebon Abad Ketujuh Belas* (Bandung: Pemda Tk. I Provinsi Jawa Barat, 1991). p. 143.

⁶ De Haan, *Priangan De Preanger-Regentschappen Onder Het Nederlandsch Bestuur Tot 1811*, vol. 1e deel, n.d. p. 52.

⁷ Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia (Henceforth, ANRI), Archief van de gouverneur-generaal en raden van Indië (Hoge Regering) van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie en taakopvolgers, 1612-1812 (Henceforth, Hoge Regering), *Dagh-Register van Het Casteel Batavia*, 8th March 1686, Hoge Regering, f. 301.

(Kuta Bénténg-to fortify the city).⁸ The manuscript also explicates how the fort was meant to ensure the sultans' security from their enemies.⁹

The staffing of the fort was regular, soldier, clerks, and other supporting functions, of which the reason behind their presence are carved in an inscription at the entrance of the fort:

*“Nadat A^o 1681 de Landen door hulp van de Generale Nederlandse Compagnie van de overheersers bevryd en dezelve benevens de dorpers onder voorn. compagnie genomen waren geworden...”*¹⁰

“Since the year 1681, the lands had been liberated from despots with the assistance of Dutch general company; the same went for the inhabitants that were taken under the company...”



Figure 3.1. Plan of Fort Bescherming in Cirebon. The different shapes of the bastions are narrated by *Dagh-Register van Het Casteel Batavia*, 8th March 1686 as “two whole-shaped bastions and two half-shaped bastions.” Source: Unknown, *Platte Grond van 't Fort de Beschermingh Tot Cheribon Plan van de Werken Tusschen de Spruit Sikaro Ende Groote Rivier van Indermajo De Spruit Sinkaro by Indermajo, van de Negory Diapok Passer Tot de Groote Rivier van Indermajo*, Kaartcollectie Buitenland Leupe (Cheribon, Indermajo, Seventeenth Century).

<https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/map-collection/af992e1c-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84>

The VOC's settlement in Cirebon mainly functioned as a beacon that reminds the sultans regarding the company's presence around them. Therefore, rather than a trading post, VOC's settlement in Cirebon was more of a political office. As the highest rank local counterparts, sultans' role and position were at VOC's interest. With such power mandated by the treaty, the VOC in post-1681 Cirebon was powerful in adjusting the role and position with their favor. The following subchapter will furthermore delve into this issue.

⁸ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...ibid.* p. 114-115.

⁹ ANRI, Hoge Regering, *Dagh-Register van Het Casteel Batavia*, 18th February 1686, Hoge Regering, ff.182-183.

¹⁰ De Stads Gemeente Cheribon, *Gedenkboek der Gemeente Cheribon 1906-1931* (Cheribon: N.V.A.C NIX & Co, 1931). p. 8.

The Sultans' Position under VOC's Protection

This subchapter aims to identify the Cirebon sultans' position and status under the VOC's tutelage, observed mostly from the company's angle. The sultans were "independent," but obediently served VOC's interests. Despite the paradoxical front-face, VOC's treatment was consistent: the sultans were their "honorary colonial officers."

In Jacob van Dijk's persuasion toward Sultan Sepuh I, he promised that should Cirebon followed the company's direction, the VOC would ensure Cirebon's long-lasting freedom and prosperity. After the treaty signing, his promise did not fell short. Van Dijk was particular when he boasted what the company would do for the sultans. He contrasted the state of being free on one end and the Mataram-alliance on another. From VOC's perspective, or at least Jacob van Dijk's, Cirebon's freedom was equal with the absence of the despotic Mataram in its court politics.¹¹

Cirebon sultans' title was one tangible evidence concerning VOC's promise to distance Cirebon from Mataram. During the treaty formulation, Syahbandar Wira Sasmita, a port master and Sultan Sepuh I's confidant, advised the company to address his lords as *panembahan* (the homaged) and not a sultan. Addressing the Cirebon princes as sultan would potentially infuriate Banten and Mataram.¹² Previously, the title had been a cause of the dispute between the two major powers. Banten refused to lower themselves before Mataram because of the ownership of the title. Banten asserted that they only bowed to Emir of Mecca, the conferrer of the title. Besides the potential of displeasing Mataram, Panembahan had always been the Cirebon kings' title since the second ruler.¹³ Regardless of the warning, the VOC proceeded to honor the two eldest princes as Sultan Sepuh (*lit.* Old Sultan) and Sultan Anom (*lit.* Young Sultan). Either appraised or accused the kings of wrongdoing, VOC officials were obliged to address them with the complete title.

The company repeatedly emphasized the protocol in calling both kings as sultans to highlight their independence from Mataram. For instance, the 1688's treaty that aimed to resolve the brotherly conflicts included two clauses, the twenty-first and twenty-second, that regulated the titles' usage within and without the formal correspondence. In formal letters, the

¹¹ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1354, Copie rapport van den E. Jacob van Dijk behelsende sijne verrichtinge als expres commissaris op Chirrebon in dato 16 April 1681, f. 1015.

¹² De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1681*, *ibid.* 1st January 1681. p. 5.

¹³ P.S. Sulendraningrat, *Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon* (Cirebon, 1984). p. 101.

first and second kings must be addressed as the sultan and the third as Panembahan. In other circumstances, they could use their full names.¹⁴

VOC's insistence toward the titles highlighted how the company acted as it were a military commander that determined its officers' "ranks." Like military ranks, the title also came with responsibilities. The responsibilities were related to the very reason behind the company's endorsement. The sultans must exhibit the company's growing influence in front of Mataram that was gradually losing its hegemony.

Since 1677, the VOC projected to liberate Cirebon from its surrounding major powers. Nevertheless, the company carried out the plan gradually to avoid luring Mataram into an open conflict. For instance, the 1681 treaty never pushed Cirebon to abandon Mataram. The treaty allowed Cirebon to treat Mataram as its ally rather than a patron. Despite the judicious steps, Mataram was still displeased by the newly-established alliance.¹⁵ Mataram's disagreement even deterred the Cirebon sultans from commissioning their embassies to inform Mataram concerning the new alliance. In return, this hesitancy frustrated the VOC, which continuously questioned the sultans' commitment to acting accordingly with the treaty. Worth to mention that the first treaty between Cirebon and the VOC mandated friendly relations between Cirebon and Mataram.¹⁶

Even after Mataram formally received the news, the then ruler, Amangkurat II, refused to ratify the treaty.¹⁷ The Mataram king argued that the VOC-Cirebon alliance obstructed Mataram's rehabilitation effort after Pangeran Trunajaya, the Madurese rebel, ransacked the sultanate. Amangkurat II's infuriation went into the extent of his refusal to communicate with Sultan Sepuh I whom he claimed: "had been detracted from his heritage by the treaty."¹⁸

With this remark, Amangkurat II sensed that Cirebon had refused to follow their ancestors that were "loyal" to Mataram. Subsequently, Amangkurat II proposed Sultan Anom I, whom the VOC disliked, to be Cirebon's sole ruler. This sentiment opposed VOC's preference but unexpectedly conform to the choice of Banten, Mataram's archenemy.

¹⁴ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum BKI*, 91, 3e Deel (1676-1691) (s'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934). p. 467.

¹⁵ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1681*, *ibid.* 16th October 1681, p. 614.

¹⁶ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1681*, *ibid.* 16th October 1681, p. 615.

¹⁷ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia Van 'T Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1682* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1917). 18th April 1682. p. 238.

¹⁸ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1682*, *ibid.* 18th April 1682. p. 238.

Mataram's proposition was never materialized, not until in 1697, after Sultan Sepuh I's death.¹⁹ Sultan Anom I's appointment as the most senior ruler had nothing to do with the strengthening of Mataram's influence. Because in the early eighteenth century, Mataram opted to withdraw all of its claims from Cirebon.²⁰

The sultans' status as colonial officers was even more conspicuous when the company dragged them into wars that fell outside their jurisdiction and interest. The most known campaign was the battles against Surapati, a former Balinese slave that caused an islandwide turmoil at Java in the mid-1680s, that took place in the Central and Eastern Java.²¹ Besides the military operation against Surapati that cost many VOC soldiers' lives, including Captain François Tack, the acting commander, Cirebon soldiers also took part in smaller-scale operations that mainly aimed to restore security to their territory.

Since early 1680, the company's presence in West Java was concerned with small unrest conducted by a man of Balinese origin, Wangsa Naya, and at least two deputies: Cakra Yuda and Abdul.²² This rebellion took place around the highlands of Indramayu and Karawang, two Mataram's territories in West Java. Unlike Pangeran Kidul's troops, Wangsa Naya did not pose any direct threat to the sultans, and neither did they act as a proxy of another power. The sultans never complained to the company regarding the group's activity, which contradicted what they had done with the Kidul bandit and the Galunggung rebels. Moreover, VOC recorded that the group mostly intercepted caravans or prahus and robbed their cargos.²³ In general, neither the VOC nor the sultans detected any political motive behind the group.

After a failed attempt to persuade Wangsa Naya and Cakra Yuda to surrender by "visiting" Batavia, the VOC carried on with its military campaign. By April 1682 began to reinforce its line-and-column with Cirebonese soldiers. According to VOC records, the joint-force quickly cornered the rebels. Only months after Cirebon's reinforcement, the rebels kept losing ground, soldiers, and hostages. Unlike the anti-bandit campaign by the end of 1680, the VOC wrote the reinforcement as "Cirebon troops," indicating how the contingent represented

¹⁹ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum BKI*, 93, 4^e Deel (1691-1725) (s'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1935). p. 155.

²⁰ Robert Cribb, *An Atlas of Indonesian History* (London: Curzon Press, 1997). p. 92.

²¹ Hermanus Johannes de Graaf, *De Moord op Kapitein Francoise Tack 8 Februari 1686* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1935). p. 85-90.

²² ANRI, Hoge Regering, *Dagh-Register van Het Casteel Batavia*, 9th April 1681, ff. 785-786.

²³ ANRI, Hoge Regering, *Dagh-Register van Het Casteel Batavia*, 14th March 1687, f. 187.

Cirebon as one entity, not only one of the sultans.²⁴ Cirebon's active participation in this campaign indicated how the sultans fulfilled VOC's assistance request, regardless of how the enemy did not pose any immediate threat.²⁵

Even if a military campaign served the sultans' interest, VOC's assistance operated on transactional relations. The treaty's first point mentioned that a military campaign's expenses must be borne by the party that requested it. The VOC began to implement the clause since the campaign against the Galunggung rebels that became the first joint-campaign after the 1681 treaty. The rebels had loomed as a threat for the three sultans since the end of 1680. Around that time, the chief, known as Demang Galunggung, declared his independence from Cirebon.²⁶ Since then, the three sultans voluntarily deployed their soldiers to reinforce the company's military power. Notwithstanding, the VOC remained to be the staff-holder. The company strategized and decided the number of soldiers it needed for the reinforcement. After discussing the power composition, the three sultans often went into detail regarding the expenses.²⁷

The present subchapter argues that after the 1681 treaty, the sultans became "honorary" officers in VOC's service. Honorary, because the sultans remained to be rulers of their entity, regardless of the limited power exercise. The 1681 treaty had also positioned the sultans to be equal with other local powers, namely Mataram and Banten. Nevertheless, they still were officers who had oathed their loyalty to the company. After 1681, however, the sultans' loyalty was not the fundamental problem that challenged VOC's dominance. The unsolved brotherly dispute continued to prevent the company from maximizing its control toward the sultans. The following subchapter will unravel why the conflict was hardly solved and how it affected the sultans' power.

²⁴ ANRI, Hoge Regering, *Dagh-Register van Het Casteel Batavia*, 9th April & 20th June 1682, Hoge Regering, f. 353 & f. 615.

²⁵ ANRI, Hoge Regering, *Dagh-Register van Het Casteel Batavia*, 14th June 1687, Hoge Regering, f. 384.

²⁶ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia Van 'T Passerende Daer Ter Plaetse Als Over Geheel Nederlands India Anno 1680* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1912), 1st & 2nd December 1680, p. 792-794.

²⁷ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 'T Casteel Batavia...1681*, *ibid.* 2nd April 1681, p. 614.

A Prolonged Conflict or Uncured Incapacity?

The present subchapter unfolds the prolonged brotherly dispute that obstructed the VOC in exercising its control over Cirebon's sultans. The 1681 treaty failed to resolve the internal conflict between the two sultans. As it took another seven years for the VOC to do the trial-and-error, the brotherly-dispute did not only reveal a traditional issue among Javanese princes. It also uncovered the company's incapacity to overcome the most troublesome issue that had been obstructing the efficacy of their power exercise over Cirebon.

The sultans' new status conferred by the VOC could not halt the resurfacing of the old problem. The brotherly dispute between Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I became a more apparent threat to VOC's interest. As Cirebon had become an integral part of the colonial machinery, the conflict hampered the effectiveness of the company's operation in the area. It might also indicate another possibility; the company only scapegoated the protracting conflict to cover its incapability to exercise adequate control toward all sultans of Cirebon.²⁸

The VOC decreed three treaties that were entirely or partially concerned with the brotherly conflict in less than one decade. As the previous chapter had elaborated, the 1681 treaty was the first written agreement that partially regulated the relations between the three kings. It underlined equality among the three kings while mandating Sultan Sepuh I as the spokesperson of the "sultans council." As the oldest sultan, he was also in charge of any duty should the VOC not fulfill it.²⁹ The equal treatment suggested to Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I that none would be an absolute ruler over Cirebon.

In 1682, three years before issuing another regulation, the VOC learned that they could not yet trust Sultan Anom I. Tumenggung Raksa Nagara, a Chinese Muslim prime minister of Sultan Sepuh I, informed the VOC that Sultan Anom I donated rice, meat, and other food stocks to the Bantens. Nevertheless, the report did not go into detail regarding the recipients. In response to this recurred intrigue, the VOC decided not to touch the main culprit but instead tightening the security in Cirebon's port. The company deployed four hundred men led by six sergeants to search every ship of "contrabands" before entering or leaving the Cirebon port.³⁰

²⁸ James D. Tracy, "Asian Despotism? Mughal Government as Seen From the Dutch East India Company Factory in Surat," *Journal of Early Modern History* 3, no. 3 (1999): 256–80, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006599X00260>. p. 273.

²⁹ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum...3^e deel*, *ibid.* p. 240.

³⁰ De Haan, *Dagh-Register Gehouden In 't Casteel Batavia...1682*, *ibid.* 13th September 1682, p. 1871-1872.

However, VOC's restraint of carrying out *lèse-majesté* to its least favorite sultan would not last long.

In 1685, the VOC commissioned a seasoned officer, Captain François Tack, to solve the dispute. He established a council of "deputies" that would force the kings to delegate their tasks. Captain Tack believed that the lesser their managerial duties, the lesser friction would occur.³¹ Moreover, since 1681, the VOC had always wanted to limit the kings' power exercise. The installation of additional deputies was also necessary to minimize Tumenggung Raksa Nagara's role, Sultan Sepuh I's prime minister. In his report, Captain Tack blatantly showed his suspicion of Raksa Nagara. Tack also depicted the prime-minister as an experienced courtier who was crafty, ambitious, and a provocateur that potentially set Sultan Sepuh I against Sultan Anom I.³²

Captain Tack was the first VOC officer who did not scapegoat Sultan Anom I for the heated court politics. His unorthodox approach grew Sultan Anom I's trust toward the company. Sultan Anom I passionately marched with his soldiers to West-and-East Java when the VOC desperately needed its allies' support to fight Surapati, the Balinese insurgent who roamed all over Java. Regardless of the modest combat skill, Sultan Anom I's troops were loyal to their Cirebonese and Dutch commanders. In contrast, Sultan Sepuh I was certainly unhappy with Captain Tack's conclusion that "Raksa Nagara, Sultan Sepuh I's minister, has embezzled Sultan Anom I who genuinely is a prince with good conduct."³³

Captain Tack also proposed that the Cirebon sultans must be assisted by five *wedana* (king's highest-rank aide) that acted as an advisory council. Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I would each have two *wedanas*. As the youngest, Panembahan Kacirebonan would only have one *wedana*. Captain Tack also ordered each of Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I to have eight *sentanas* (blood-prince), four *mantris* (the third level aide with most executive duties), and five *lurahs* (the lowest level aide). Tack did not specify each position's tasks but indicated that *wedana* held the highest rank, whereas *lurah* occupied the lowest position. In addition to the

³¹ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1417, Missive door de heer commissaris en ambassadeur Francois Tack en den raat tot Chirrebon aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven in dato 19 December 1685, f. 1920.

³² NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1417, Missive door de heer commissaris en ambassadeur Francois Tack en den raat tot Chirrebon aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven in dato 19 December 1685, f. 1921.

³³ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1417, Missive door de heer commissaris en ambassadeur Francois Tack en den raat tot Chirrebon aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven in dato 19 December 1685, f. 1921.

total of twenty aides for each sultan, Captain Tack provided each of them with three hundred Javanese men (without any specifically assigned duties) and thirty-six prahus.³⁴

Captain Tack's suspicion toward Raksa Nagara as the conflict engineer would be proven as the most accurate analysis concerning the brotherly conflict. Unfortunately, a fierce battle between the VOC and Surapati, the Balinese rebel, killed the captain. As the mastermind passed away, the idea was abandoned and replaced by an imprudent policy.

Batavia deployed another officer, Johannes Hartogh, to replace Captain Tack.³⁵ Unlike his predecessor, Hartogh relied on Sultan Sepuh I's misguidances to assess Cirebon's situation. The biased source of information led Hartogh to carry out the first legal action against Sultan Anom I since the VOC indicated its political interest toward Cirebon in 1677. In August 1687, Sultan Sepuh I dispatched an intelligence report to Hartogh. He updated the courts' situation and pinpointed Sultan Anom I's intrigues in complotting with VOC's enemies. His report included names that he accused of supporting his brother's evil conduct and his confidants that the VOC should not touch. Sultan Sepuh I urged the company to notify him before apprehended Sultan Anom I.³⁶

In response to Sultan Sepuh I's information, Johannes Hartogh requested Sultan Anom I surrender himself to Batavia with dignity. Sultan Anom I realized that the only Dutch officer he trusted had gone; thus, he must answer Hartogh's "invitation" without any advocate. Now, the only issue that obstructed Sultan Anom I from departing for Batavia was his unhealthy condition. He promised Hartogh that once he recovered, he would present himself before the High Government of Batavia.³⁷

Kacirebonan manuscript narrates this episode in an allegorical way. For instance, the open conflict between Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I was absent from the story. However, Sultan Sepuh I's enmity toward his younger brother was represented by his prime-minister, Ki Patih Nadin. According to Cirebon sources, Ki Patih Nadin was fluent in Malay. The language

³⁴ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1417, Missive door de heer commissaris en ambassadeur Francois Tack en den raat tot Chirrebon aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven in dato 19 December 1685, f. 1921.

³⁵ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1439, Translaat Javaanse ola van den Sultan Sopo aan haar Eds, 9th August 1687, f. 1899.

³⁶ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1439, Twee origineele missives van den resident Willemsoon aan haar Eds. in datis 4 en 7 Julij 1687, f. 1890.

³⁷ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1439, Missive van den Ed. capiteijn Willem de Ruijter en raad aan haar Eds. uijt Cheribon 14 September 1687, f. 1908.

proficiency made Sultan Sepuh I to appoint him as the liaison-officer to the Dutch.³⁸ His position and proximity with the Dutch hints that Ki Patih Nadin was Tumenggung Raksa Nagara, the brotherly dispute's mastermind.

Ki Patih Nadin accused Sultan Anom I, whom he believed providing shelter for Buginese to support his plot in combating his older brother and the company's presence in Cirebon.³⁹ On another side, Sultan Anom I's hostility to his older brother was personalized in his son. Sultan Anom I's son sought permission from his father to annihilate his uncle, Sultan Sepuh I, as his uncle was responsible for his father's imprisonment.⁴⁰ Sultan Anom I did not let his son in retaliating and preached to him instead, "you shall reflect how your actions will have repercussions for your children and grandchildren."⁴¹

Kacirebonan manuscript does not specify Sultan Anom I's confinement location as it only wrote that the company did not allow Sultan Anom I to leave "a fort." However, Sultan Anom I's letter to Johannes Hartogh indicates that the confinement took place in Batavia.⁴² In November 1687, only a few months after Sultan Anom I became a political prisoner, he wrote a note to Johannes Hartogh. The note was likely to be redacted by a VOC's clerk as it positioned Sultan Anom as the third person. It also has fewer appraises to the company's leaders than his usual correspondence. The content goes straight to his statement of innocence. Furthermore, he wrote down three names that he urged the company to investigate. Unsurprisingly, all of the accused were Sultan Sepuh I's confidants, including Tumenggung Raksa Nagara.⁴³

In the upcoming year, Johannes Hartogh and the High Government of Batavia annulled the accusation against Sultan Anom I.⁴⁴ Batavia found the sultan was not guilty and probed investigation to Raksa Nagara and other courtiers that were responsible for tensions between the sultans.⁴⁵ In other words, Batavia confirmed the accuracy of Captain Tack's observation

³⁸ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...ibid.* p. 122-123. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: Sunan Gunung Jati: naskah Mertasinga*, Cet. 1 (Bandung: Pustaka, 2005). p. 194.

³⁹ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...ibid.* p. 122.

⁴⁰ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...ibid.* p. 123.

⁴¹ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan...ibid.* p. 123.

⁴² NA, VOC, 1.04.02, Translaat Maleijtse brief door Sulthan Anum aan d'Ed. De Hertogh, f. 1942.

⁴³ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, Translaat Maleijtse brief door Sulthan Anum aan d'Ed. De Hertogh, f. 1942.

⁴⁴ J.K.J De Jonge, *De Opkomst van Het Nederlandsch Gezag over Java: Verzameling van Onuitgegeven Stukken Uit Het Oud-Koloniaalarchief*, vol. 8 (s'Gravenhage, 1875). p. XLVII.

⁴⁵ De Jonge, *De Opkomst van Het Nederlandsch Gezag over Java...vol. 8, ibid.* p. XLVII.

that they previously shelved. Reflected by the blunder in apprehending Sultan Anom I, one can assume that VOC's incapacity partially caused the prolonged brotherly dispute to resolve the conflict. The apprehension of Sultan Anom I also indicated how the VOC had trespassed the sultan's infallibility and treated him slightly higher than a criminal. However, Sultan Anom I fought back by urging the same legal mechanism that imprisoned him to probe investigation toward whom he believed as the real culprits.

In early 1688, Sultan Anom I's legal battle came with a fruitful result. The company regretted its decision and amnestied him.⁴⁶ The VOC realized its mistake of accusing Sultan Anom I as the agitator of the prolonged dispute and proposed a new treaty that restored his honor as one of the Cirebonese kings. The 1688 treaty was meant to be the legal basis of coexistence between the three kings. It begins with a bold opening clause that urged Sultan Sepuh I to treat his brothers with honor and civility.⁴⁷

In general, the treaty emphasized two issues: *firstly*, the coexistence between the three kings that must stand on the ground of brotherhood, peace, and legality. With clauses that concern the three sultans, the treaty signaled the restoration of Sultan Anom I's dignity as a king. However, as the kings could no longer exercise the "real" power of which the 1681 treaty had regulated, the 1688 treaty regulates more on royal protocols.⁴⁸ For instance, the treaty fixates the seating arrangements of the three sultans during the weekly horse race. On this occasion, Sultan Sepuh I must sit in the middle, Sultan Anom I to his right, and Panembahan Kacirebonan to his left. Another part of the treaty mandated the sultans always to involve the company as the mediator.⁴⁹

Secondly, the 1688 treaty asserted the importance of delegating the kings' tasks to their deputies. In response to the recent incident, the 1688 treaty includes clauses that prevent the deputies from overpowering the kings. In so doing, the VOC incorporated a threat to impose a death penalty for *mantris* (deputy with most executive duties) should they trespassed the boundary of their responsibilities.⁵⁰ In more detail, the VOC fixated on stabbing with kris in *alun-alun* (the palace's square; thus, a public space) as the capital punishment for the violator.

⁴⁶ De Jonge, *De Opkomst van Het Nederlandsch Gezag over Java...* vol. 8, *ibid.* p. XLVIII.

⁴⁷ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum...* 3e deel, *ibid.* p. 459.

⁴⁸ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum...* 3e deel, *ibid.* p. 460-462.

⁴⁹ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum...* 3e deel, *ibid.* p. 467.

⁵⁰ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum...* 3e deel, *ibid.* p. 469.

Furthermore, the VOC also required twelve *mantris* who served the three kings (five for Sultan Sepuh I, four for Sultan Anom I, and three for Panembahan Kacirebonan) to sign the treaty. Therefore, the treaty also legally bound them, not only their kings.⁵¹

The validity of the 1688 treaty lasted until 1697, the year when Sultan Sepuh I passed away. The death annulled every clause in the three treaties between Cirebon and the VOC. Therefore, the company sensed the necessity to formulate another treaty two years after Sultan Sepuh I's death. The 1699 treaty's gist was unimagined in the 1680s, as the VOC acknowledged its former nemesis, Sultan Anom I, as the most senior ruler in Cirebon.⁵²

About two decades after Cirebon signed the 1681 treaty; the VOC remained to position the kings as its "honorary officers." The company maintained the sultans' independence from other local rulers and actively endorsed the usage of titles that represented their independence from Mataram and Banten. Nonetheless, the sultans only went "out of a crocodile's mouth only to enter a tiger's snout." The freedom was nothing but an arrangement for Cirebon to rely on the Dutch East India Company as the determiner of their destiny.

The prolonged dispute between Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I discombobulated the company. Subsequently, the kings' position, represented by Sultan Anom I, reached the lowest point. Although the VOC allowed Sultan Anom I to surrender himself with "dignity," the false accusation stained VOC's self-proclamation as a peaceful mediator of any conflict between the sultans.

Furthermore, the VOC admitted its mistake and proposed another treaty to restore Sultan Anom I's honor while concealing the company's incompetence. Nevertheless, the treaty never meant to revive the sultans' power. Contrarily, it positioned the sultans as nothing more than "living collections" of a colonial exhibition. The Saturday horse race functioned as one of the vitrines where the VOC positioned the sultans in what they thought was the ideal, fair, and most importantly, conflict-free arrangement.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the VOC had its string firmly attached to Cirebon sultans. The sultans merely became the chief celebrants of royal processions. Even if they exercised their military commandership, it meant to support the company or fought their enemies with VOC's permission. The *bescherming* did not only fortify Cirebon's territory but

⁵¹ Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum...3e deel*, *ibid.* p. 469.

⁵² Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum...4e deel*, *ibid.* p. 469.

also incarcerated Cirebon's kingship inside it. To what extent the loss of power affected Cirebon's authority? Did Cirebon's submission to the company in "seen worlds" contradict their "unseen worlds"? Or, like their predecessors, once the kings displayed the inability to hold onto the traditional source of power, they would redefine it?

The Reinstallment of Ideal Kings

This subchapter aims to unravel the "unintended" effect of VOC's policies that ripped off the sultans' power. As far as the present study concerns, power for a Cirebon king never entirely relies upon its exercise in the "seen worlds." The archetype of kingship, Sunan Gunung Jati, had shown that the practice of kingship in the material world only echoed the notion in the immaterial world. Notwithstanding, the dichotomy was never as simple; sometimes, the "unseen worlds" were a safe space to express their latent objection and displeasure with the material world they lived in. In elaborating on the unintended result, the present subchapter will first return to the archetype of Cirebon's kingship, Sunan Gunung Jati.

Pangeran Sulaiman Sulendraningrat, the author of *Babad Tanah Sunda*, one version of Cirebon chronicle, concluded his piece with an anachronical chapter. The title is "Sunan Gunung Jati Purba observes the Prayer of Need for his descendants/Indonesians" (*Sunan Jati Purba Salat Khajat Mendo'akan Anak Cucu/Rakyat Indonesia*). The opening paragraph of the chapter is written as follows:

"(Sunan Gunung Jati)...recalled his dialogue with the Pertula's Urn when he drank its water; the urn warned him that at the end of times, his descendants and their country would be colonized. Lord Sunan immediately observed the prayer of need (*salat khajat*); begging for the independence of his descendants and beseeching so they will not be afflicted with misery."⁵³

This subchapter begs to differ with "Sunan Gunung Jati's prayer." According to his three direct descendants at the end of the seventeenth century, colonialism did not always come with a negative connotation. The Dutch East India Company generally helped the sultans to carry out their ideal mandate to restore peace and stability in their territory. The latter effect echoed the Resident of Cirebon's remark in 1931 that the Dutch presence in the area aimed to *de balans te houden* (to maintain balance).⁵⁴ Did the company's successful effort in alienating

⁵³ Sulendraningrat, *Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon...ibid.* p. 94.

⁵⁴ De Stads Gemeente Cheribon, *Gedenkboek der Gemeente Cheribon 1906-1931...ibid.* p.9.

the sultans from real power serve their interests at best? Or, the sultans became more potent in the realm that the VOC barely paid attention to?

This thesis accessed five out of seven versions of the Cirebon chronicle (*Babad Tjerbon*).⁵⁵ For Cirebonese, the multiple versions of the *babad* have the highest authority in recounting their history. A contemporary annotation of the chronicle is even considered as one version of it. Besides *Babad Tjerbon*, Cirebon has an abundant amount of annals and chronicles that deal with its past. It may come from a court scholarship like the *Kacirebonan* manuscript composed under the youngest king's supervision, Panembahan Kacirebonan. Alternatively, it could also be a product of a family-based writing tradition like the Mertasinga manuscript authored and preserved by the Argawinata-Warsini family that resided in Mertasinga village, West Cirebon. This family is the descendant of Sultan Sepuh I; thus, holding the authority concerning the *babad* authorship.

Almost all the accessed sources include the period when Cirebon was under the Dutch East India Company's control. In these sources, the VOC is only a character in Cirebon court's politics. The company officers were never present as foreigners and having local names (see table 3.2). The way of Cirebon sources presented the Dutch normalized VOC's presence in Cirebon, regardless of the disruption that the company had done. The normalization is a way of asserting that the sultans' remained in control.

Name in Cirebon Sources	Real Name(s)	Notes
Jenderal Pinter Rebut	Governor-General Pieter Both	VOC's first governor-general, <i>pinter rebut</i> means literally: a good-snatcher
Kapten Martinu	Merchant Marten Samson	VOC's resident of Cirebon in 1685
Kapiten Karang	Captain Joachem Michiels, Lieutenant Van Happel, or Merchant Marten Samson	The three are associated with VOC officers who won a battle in Karang, a village in Cirebon
Letnan Pandem	Upper-Merchant Johannes de Hartogh	A VOC officer that apprehended Sultan Anom I whom later regretted his decision

Table 3.2. VOC officer names with their localized versions in Cirebon sources.

source: Edi S. Ekajati, *Sunan Gunung Jati, Penyebar Dan Penegak Islam Di Tatar Sunda*, Cet. 1 (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 2005). p. 74-77. & Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: alih aksara dan bahasa teks KCR 04* (Cirebon : Ngaglik, Sleman, Yogyakarta: Rumah Budaya Nusantara Pesambangan Jati Cirebon ; Deepublish, 2013). p. 123.

⁵⁵ A. G Muhaimin, *Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat Among Javanese Muslims*. (Canberra: ANU Press, 2011), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4847989>, p. 163.

In its early presence in the sources, the Dutch intermediates the relations between Cirebon and Mataram. As a major power, Mataram has more tendency to instruct the VOC in serving their interest. Mataram saw the VOC, especially its military, as a mediator, law-enforcer, and a striking-force. VOC's last service for Mataram was escorting Panembahan Girilaya, the third sultan of Cirebon, in surrendering himself to Mataram in 1662. Sixteen years later, VOC, represented by Kapiten Karang (Captain Jochem Michiels) and Raja Gowa (Karaeng Bissei), suddenly became Cirebon's protector. The abrupt change of VOC's alignment is the only representation of VOC and Cirebon's alliance, except for *Babad Tjerbon-Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari* (hereafter, *Babad Tjerbon-CPCN*) that narrated the treaty in detail.⁵⁶

However, the Cirebon chronicles and the two manuscripts do not narrate the Dutch monolithically. On one side, the sources echo "Sunan Gunung Jati prayer," as presented at the beginning of this subchapter. The Dutch are synonymous with degradation and wrongness. The association between the cause and the effect mostly takes a subtle form. *Babad Tjerbon-Brandes*, one version of the Cirebon chronicle with annotation from a Dutch philologist J.L.A. Brandes, narrated how Syekh Lemahabang, an outcasted Javanese saint, prophecied an era when Cirebonese normalized wrongdoings (*adharna*).⁵⁷ The *adharna* era referred to an unprecise period after Kasepuhan and Kanoman establishment (1676) and when Mataram moved its capital city to Kartasura, today's western Solo, Central Java (1680). Therefore, the time markings narrowed down to 1681, when the VOC formalized its protection over Cirebon.

The same sources also argue that the Dutch presence had expelled Cirebon's supernatural guardians. The Dutch that built the fortified city illumined Cirebon, but the illumination indiscriminately drove out jins and spirits from the cut-down forests.⁵⁸ Besides voicing the supernatural concern, the story also implicitly brings up the ecological critic toward VOC's activity in Cirebon. Apart from extracting peppers, one of Cirebon's commodities that VOC traded was woodworks.⁵⁹ With the forest's disappearance, the supernatural guardians

⁵⁶ Atja, *Tjarita Purwaka Tjaruban Nagari* (Bandung: Ikatan Karyawan Museum, 1972). p. 188-189.

⁵⁷ Brandes and Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbon* (Batavia: Albrecht & Co., 1911). p. 132.

⁵⁸ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 116.

⁵⁹ R.A. Kern, "Het Javaanse Rijk Tjerbon in de Eerste Eeuwen van Zijn Bestaan.," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 113, no. 2 (January 1, 1957): 191-200. p. 197-198. & Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum...3e deel, ibid.* p. 235.

would gradually abandon Cirebon and posed the city into danger and chaos.⁶⁰ Therefore, the smooth power transition in the material world did not always correspond to the immaterial benefit.

On another end, VOC's presence is anonymous to the restoration of Cirebon's peace, security, and stability. This portrayal is usually represented by the fortress's construction (*Bénténg*) and VOC soldiers' deployment in becoming the sultans' security detail.⁶¹ The sultans did not only support the erection of the fortress. They also actively defended it from any objection, both from outsiders as well as their relatives. The *Kacirebonan* manuscript narrates how Pangeran Kusumajaya, a distant cousin of Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I, denounced the new fort. In response to his remarks, Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I convinced his cousin that the fort served their interest in maintaining order in Cirebon.⁶²

Pangeran Kusumajaya was the figure who comes with a blatant anti-Dutch narrative. However, as the previous paragraph has pointed out, Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I verbally defended the Dutch from his objection. As he could not express his fury to the sultans, Pangeran Kusumajaya transformed himself into a giant and beheaded many Dutch soldiers in "The Battle of Cidamar" without even touching them.⁶³ Even after the show of supernatural power, the two sultans showed no sign of repentance. Pangeran Kusumajaya then used his powerful "weapon," a blunt warning to the sultans:

"Why did you easily fall into the Dutch lies? Their words are venomous; I believe their mundane ambition has blinded you. You have enlivened Cirebon, replace its language, and tear down what has been our heritage. You have worshipped the impermanent world; the unseen world has gone, and it will gradually deprive Cirebon's power. The Dutch will witness how Cirebon would lose its greatness and debase everything. We will be defeated without even going to war."⁶⁴

The two sultans' backing toward VOC's entrenchment should not be seen as local rulers who defended European invaders. Cirebonese sources never present the VOC as an entity that came from across the ocean. Tuan Morgel, a personification of the company in these sources,

⁶⁰ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 116.

⁶¹ Brandes and Rinkes, eds., *Babad Tjerbon...ibid.* p. 130 & Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 112. & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: ...ibid.* p. 194.

⁶² Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 117.

⁶³ As far as this study concerns, the battle is not traceable in VOC sources.

⁶⁴ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 115-116 & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah: ...ibid.* p. 197.

appeared with an ingenious background story. He was a descendant of the Sundanese-Hindu kingdom of Pajajaran. Pajajaran was the first kingdom that ruled a port city that the VOC called Batavia. Pajajaran ruled over Sunda Kelapa (Batavia) for three hundred years between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. However, Tuan Morgel's great-grandfather refused to embrace Islam and departed to Ondres Island (*Pulau Ondres*). In Ondres Island, he unlawfully mingled with the White-skin nation (*Bangsa Kulit Putih*) and eventually had white-descendants.⁶⁵ Ondres Island most likely refers to "Onrust," an island on the coast of Jakarta where VOC built a shipyard and a fort for coastal defense.

Through this justification, VOC and Cirebon's relations occurred between two kingdoms that shared Pajajaran's lineage. Positioning the VOC as Pajajaran's descendant also equipped the Dutch rule over Cirebon with the element of continuation. Ensuring a new ruler's connection with the preceding powers has always been an imperative element of legitimacy. A similar story is also traceable in Mataram's context in a manuscript titled *Serat Baron Sakender* or the tale of Baron Sakender.⁶⁶ The tale personified VOC with Mur Jangkung, a corrupted name of Jan (Pieterszoon)-Coen, VOC's 4th Governor-General in Batavia. Mur Jangkung is narrated to be the brother of Baron Sakender or Baron Alexander. The last name originated from Alexander the Great (Malay, Iskandar Zulkarnain), a character that ingeniously connected Javanese or Malay rulers with Europe. Like Tuan Morgel, Mur Jangkung was a descendant of Pajajaran, who had the traditional right to rule over Batavia.⁶⁷

Furthermore, VOC's guardianship also allowed Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I to focus on exercising their role in Islamic teachings. After the sultans trusted the VOC to carry on their responsibility in maintaining stability over Cirebon, they began to hold collective grand prayers, namely: Friday prayer (*jumngah*) and Eid prayers (*riyadi*).⁶⁸ They also agreed to appoint one religious chief (*penghulu*) in leading the Grand Mosque (*Masjid Agung*). They could also collectively celebrate Prophet Muhammad's birth (*mulud*) that began with the beating of a sacred gong named Sekati.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 91 & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah)...ibid.* p. 181.

⁶⁶ M. C. Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749-1792: A History of the Division of Java*, London Oriental Series, v. 30 (London ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). p. 377-407.

⁶⁷ Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749-1792: ...ibid.* p. 378.

⁶⁸ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 91 & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah)...ibid.* p. 181.

⁶⁹ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 112.

The two kings also implemented a single legal system by holding a conjoined court procession, especially civil cases. The sultans delegated this task mostly to the seven jurists (*Jaksa Pipitu*) and their deputies (*mantris*); of which the two held the legal capacity to organize a court.⁷⁰ Similar to the religious processions, the court procession also took public space (the court's square/*alun-alun*) as its setting. Thus, making it visible to their subjects as well as their new-protectors.⁷¹ This exhibition of unity was conspicuously an outcome of the 1685 and 1688 treaty. Both treaties regulated that the legal procession must be held in unison, led by capable apparatus (thus, the seven jurists), and took place in *alun-alun*.⁷²

Sultan Sepuh I's successor, Pangeran Aria Adiwijaya, or Sultan Sepuh II, reaped more religious benefits from the peace and stability. His proximity to the company started at a young age. His mother, Sultan Sepuh I's widow, Ratu Sultan, requested VOC's help to foster her children according to Sultan Sepuh I's custom.⁷³ After became a sultan, Sultan Sepuh II chose to be a Sufic ruler who mastered mystical poems (*suluk*) and Koranic quotes (*wirid*).⁷⁴ However, his utmost intention was to abandon the physical world entirely and existed in a transcendental form.

Sultan Sepuh II's life goal represented his strong commitment toward Sufism that his ancestors never demonstrated. Unlike Sunan Gunung Jati, who exercised an outward-oriented spirituality, Sultan Sepuh II saw the highest spiritual achievement in the personal commitment to abandoning worldly affairs. In this case, Sultan Sepuh II synthesized this Sufic notion with the Javanese spiritual achievement of *manunggaling kawula gusti* (the unification between the

⁷⁰ Mason C. Hoadley, *Selective Judicial Competence: The Cirebon-Priangan Legal Administration, 1680-1792*, Studies on Southeast Asia, no. 15 (Ithaca, N.Y: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1994).

⁷¹ Javanese court cities share a planalogical feature called *Mantjapat*. This concept centralized the city's activity in the city square (*alun-alun*) surrounded by the palace (*kraton*) represented the political institution in the south, the grand mosque (*masjid gede/agung*) represented the religious institution in the west, market (*pasar*) represented the economic institution in the south, and attorney office/law court (*pajeksan/pengadilan*) represented the judiciary body in the east. Therefore, both the grand mosque and the square were two public spaces where royal families tend to hold any mass-based rituals. The discussion and announcement of the 1681 treaty between VOC and Cirebon always took place at *alun-alun / paseban*. For the general concept of *manjapat* see: Mr. F.D.E. van Ossenbruggen, "Het Primitieve Denken Zooals Dit Zich Uit Voornamelijk in Pokkengebruiken Op Java En Elders. Bijdrage Tot de Prae-Animistische Theorie," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 71, no. 1 (1916): 1–332, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90001710>.

⁷² Heeres and Stapel, eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum BKI*, 91, 3e Deel (1676-1691) (s'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934). p. 467. & VOC 1417, p. 1921.

⁷³ NA, VOC, 1.04.02, 1599 Cheribon-2, Translaat Maleijtse missive van Ratoe Sulthan Sopo tot Chiribon aan haar edele de hoge regeeringe tot Batavia geschreven, 22 October 2020, ff. 1-4.

⁷⁴ Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 24.

servant and the master) and the Hindunese idea of *moksha* (the final liberation from the normal human life-and-death cycle).

However, Sultan Sepuh II's intention to physically vanish occurred when the VOC had settled its power over Cirebon. This fact implied that the more entrenched the company toward Cirebon's politics, the lesser space in the material world a sultan would have. Therefore, during Sultan Sepuh II's reign (1697-1723), VOC's entrenchment went to the extent that motivated him to exist entirely in the immaterial world.

Under VOC's protection, Cirebon sultans could act accordingly to their ancestral mandate. As transitional rulers, Sultan Sepuh I and Sultan Anom I exercised more Islamic than Sufistic kingship. They underwent a more formal interpretation of Islamicate kingship, revived and visited the grand mosque, held mass-based grand prayers, and appointed officials in charge of practical management in religious affairs. All these practices also concealed the dispute between the two as they exercised everything conjointly. The two sultans' religious practices were outward-oriented and likely to be their practice of what Clifford Geertz theorized as "power serving pomp, not pomp power."⁷⁵ The pendulum then swang from the exercise of public piety into the inward-oriented practice, represented by the king's fondness toward Sufi practices. The narrative centralized in the inner directedness to God and uninterrupted obsession toward mystical practices.

VOC's physical settlement helped the sultans to enforce security and stability over their area. However, the repercussion of VOC's intervention in Cirebon traversed the physical world. The company's presence replaced Cirebon's supernatural order and annoyed the spiritual guardians. However, the sultans preferred the company's armed fort more than the jins, ghouls, and other guardians of the unseen worlds. Moreover, it was the company's firepower that maintained stability in the sultans' territory and allowed them to observe their spiritual obligations. Therefore, the company, unintendedly, restored Cirebon sultans to be ideal kings.

⁷⁵ For "Pomp power" see: Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980). p. 13.

Sultans as Chiefs of Ceremonial Units: A Chapter Epilogue

In Indonesian historiography, the anti-colonial narrative assumes that a local power's acceptance toward VOC's influence would corner the former into powerlessness. Reversely, the present chapter has shown that VOC's protection toward Cirebon gave the sultans chances in answering the demands of an ideal king.

The company maximized its control over Cirebon and treated the sultans as the "ceremonial unit" of a military force. From the company's perspective, the sultans' main task was to "parade," carrying ceremonial flags to assert their independence in front of their former allies and putative adversaries. As in any military parade, the most powerful party was unlikely to march on the ground. They would sit on the tribune while watching the display of power. Regardless of their ceremonial function, the powerful party would order the ceremonial unit to engage in "real battles" like other soldiers from time to time.

Notwithstanding, the sultans never centralized their notion of power in "real battles." As "the chief of ceremonial units," the procession constitutes the core of the sultans' universe. Therefore, VOC's decision to distancing the sultans from real power even provided more space for them to achieve their ideals. As illustrated by their ancestors, the more distanced Cirebon kings from their worldly ambitions, the more powerful they became.

The three Cirebon sultans redefined their source of power, a "survival skill" of Cirebon kings once it was impossible to continue the tradition. As a result, the VOC was never a foreign intruder. The VOC, which in Cirebon sources known as Tuan Morgel, was only Cirebon's distant cousin that held the ancient right to rule over Batavia. Therefore, allied with *Tuan Morgel* and delegated them the sultans' core task to maintain stability over Cirebon did not violate Cirebon's commitment toward Islam.

This kingship practice went uninterrupted until at least the 1780s. It was Sultan Sepuh who altered the practice. Sultan Sepuh V was once a pupil (*murid*) in a Rifai'ah Sufi order (*Tarekat Ripangiah*). However, he left the Sufic world and bore arms against the VOC.⁷⁶ His soldiers were not the royal military but armed-volunteers from Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), an institution that always contends the sultanates' authority. He was the first Cirebonese king who revolted against the VOC by bearing the holy-war narrative. However,

⁷⁶ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 133 & Amman N. Wahju, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah)...ibid.* p. 207

some local sources denounced the notion of holy-war and instead argued that the sultan only had a psychopathic tendency.⁷⁷ The accusation indicated that regardless of the heroic and pioneer act, open opposition toward the company hardly made Sultan Sepuh V a good king.

⁷⁷ Irianto Bambang, ed., *Sejarah Cirebon: naskah Keraton Kacirebonan: ...ibid.* p. 134 & Amman N. Wahyu, ed., *Sajarah wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah)...ibid.* p. 207

Conclusion

Every time a Dutch East Indiaman bounded to Asia, it did not only transport the Dutch East India Company's personnel, firearms, rations, and documents. The transoceanic adventure also brought along European ideas to become the passengers' lenses in understanding their destination. Among other ideas, their understanding of power was one of the crucial viewpoints that either helped or misled their view toward their local counterparts.

The present study that focuses on kingship in Cirebon by the late seventeenth century has indicated that the VOC only concentrated in the seen worlds of Cirebon's power. By corroborating VOC sources with Cirebon chronicles and annals, this study found that Cirebon kingship consistently upheld spiritual primacy above material achievements. The relations between both were complexly interwoven and challenging to be matrixed. As far as this study concerns, Cirebon's "real world" politics merely materialized its supernatural world: Islam that combined inward-oriented Sufi practice with outward-oriented proselytization. The harmonious relations between the seen and unseen worlds, nevertheless, was not always the case.

Major powers that were fighting over hegemony in Java, Banten and Mataram, pushed Cirebon further from the possibility of preserving the balance between the two realms. Since its establishment in the mid-fifteenth century, Cirebon had sought alliance as a vital tool to survive. Notwithstanding, the total reliance on its allies tore Cirebon apart. As the external politic ruined Cirebon's material world, the sultan obtained an opportunity to rebuild it with spiritual guidance from the immaterial world. Therefore, Cirebon's inability to halt Banten and Mataram's entrenchment were not weaknesses; in contrast, it displayed Cirebon's restraint of retaliation and resignation toward God's will.

This study found that such a gesture continued once Cirebon accepted The Dutch East India Company's aim to take Cirebon as its protectorate by signing the 1681 alliance treaty. In contrast with the previous alliances, Cirebon sultans actively negotiated their position before formalizing the alliance with the VOC. Both sultans saw the negotiation room as a means to protect their interests while attempting to weaken their sibling *cum* competitor. Therefore, their objections and petition for the company mainly aimed to win the brotherly dispute that had started even before the treaty signing. The VOC sought the conflict as the most troublesome obstruction toward its power exercise over Cirebon.

Haunted by the prolonged dispute, the company's policies that strip off the two sultans' significance aimed to weaken them and resolve the conflict. This observation goes against the widely-accepted narrative that the VOC benefitted from the rivalry. VOC's "peaceful" approach through treaties and negotiation successfully swept the dispute under the rug, but the mere cover-up did not satisfy the High Government at Batavia. A decisive yet reckless policy was taken and subsequently forced the VOC to taste its own medicine. Sultan Anom I's arrestation was a blunder as he fought the VOC back by the very legal proceeding introduced by the company.

This study highlighted that the VOC saw its treaties with Cirebon as the conquest tool rather than justified agreements between two equal parties. The VOC held control in determining whether an issue was negotiable. Subsequently, the company closed the possibility for Cirebon sultans to negotiate their positions, the only issue that concerned them. As far as this study covers, none of Cirebon sultans objected to VOC's proposition in monopolizing commodities while policing the sultans and their subjects.

Despite the promising beginning, Cirebon only went out of a crocodile's mouth to enter a tiger's snout. Their excitement for an equal alliance fell short. As far as VOC's concern, Cirebon kings were powerless and losing grip toward political, economic, and military exercise. Not to mention how the VOC had established echelons of deputies to decentralize the sultans' power. However, the VOC unintendedly restored the sultans to their ideal. A Cirebon sultan must prioritize his spiritual achievements. Delegating their political and military tasks to an ally was common. Worth to reassert that a Javanese king's core responsibility is maintaining a stable universe, regardless of the means.

The sultans' adaptability annulled any potential tension between their ascetic mandate with their acceptance toward the Dutch East India Company's presence in Cirebon. Moreover, The Dutch East India Company was never a total foreigner. The company was nothing more than a non-Muslim relative who shared the Pajajaran lineage with Cirebonese sultans. However, subtle critics and objections toward the VOC are easy to spot in Cirebon's chronicles and annals. It took about a century for Cirebon to transform the latent hostility into a call to hoist the holy war banner and bear arms against an infidel aggressor.

The present master thesis has covered both angles in observing the VOC interaction as a colonial force with Cirebon. Treaties that the VOC assumed will detach the Cirebon sultans from their power had unintendedly given the sultans opportunities to be an ideal ruler, an idea of which the company had no interest to recognize. A ruler that focused on the ascetic lifestyle while minimizing their engagement in worldly affairs. The contemporary heated debate among Academics and Cirebon royal families that exclusively blames the VOC for Cirebon's divisiveness and loss of power should therefore consider revising its agenda.

Appendix

The list of royal gifts presented by Governor-General Nicolas Speelman to the three Cirebon Sultans on 1st January 1681. These gifts were meant to be the “binder payment” for the treaty.

Sultan Sepuh I	Sultan Anom I	Panembahan Kacirebonan
1 Persian Carmine Velvet Silk	1 Persian Red Velvet Silk	1 Persian Green Velvet Silk
5 ellen golden mohair*	1 fine rifle	1 fine rifle
1 fine rifle	1 magazine pouch	1 magazine pouch
1 fine carbine	2 pistols	20 round shots
2 carbine magazine pouches	25 round shots	6 pieces Patola Handkerchief
2 pistols	8 pieces Patola handkerchief	2 Sarassa coverlet
50 round shots	2 Sarassa coverlet	2 pounds clove
12 pieces Patola handkerchief**	2 pounds clove	2 pounds cinnamon
4 Sarassa coverlet***	2 pounds cinnamon	2 pounds nut
3 pounds clove	2 pounds nut	1 pound mace
3 pounds cinnamon	1 pound mace	
3 pounds nut		
2 pounds mace		
<p>*Ellen is “European measure of length, used in the Asian textile trading. It was about 45 inches, or 0.688 meters,” whereas Mohair is “a yarn or fabric from the hair of the angora goat, either pure or mixed with wool or cotton.”</p> <p>** Patola is “fine dress, mostly made of silk; light silk fabric with snake motive; decorative design of songket weaving.”</p> <p>*** Sarassa is “multi-colour silk clothes. Printed cotton with various patterns, from Coromandel.”</p>		
<p>Source: <i>Daghregister van Het Casteel Batavia, 1st January 1681</i> & Mona Lohanda et al., <i>VOC Glossary Indonesia A List of Terms Found in the Marginalia of the VOC Archive Series of the Daily Journals of the Castle of Batavia</i>. (Jakarta: ANRI & The Corts Foundation, 2008). p. 9,131, & 156</p>		

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16th October 1681

9th April 1682

20th June 1682

6th May 1683

18th February 1686

8th March 1686

14th March 1687

14th June 1687

Map

Platte Grond van 't Fort de Beschermingh Tot Cheribon Plan van de Werken Tusschen de Spruit Sikaro Ende Groote Rivier van Indermajo De Spruit Sinkaro by Indermajo, van de Negory Diapok Passer Tot de Groote Rivier van Indermajo

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