

## THE JAVANESE ROYAL PRIVILEGE OF *SENTANA* AND DUTCH FIAT

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### Introduction

Whether explained in terms of divine providence, imperialist greed, or pure accident, the study of Dutch ascendancy to political dominance in Indonesia has attracted considerable scholarly attention. The Dutch East India Company's strikingly successful efforts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to achieve supremacy in the region, particularly in Java, have often been recounted.<sup>1</sup> The Company's first successful foray into Javanese affairs--the founding of Batavia in 1619--foreshadowed a long period of increasingly direct participation in the island's politics. Batavia's struggle for sheer survival during the 1620s against the attacks by the Central Javanese empire of Mataram was followed by decades of mutual suspicion, punctuated by open hostilities with its western neighbor, the aggressive Sultanate of Banten.<sup>2</sup>

Despite earlier entanglement with Javanese powers, Dutch commitment to sustained involvement in Javanese affairs came about only in the late 1660s. In return for decisive military assistance during the Truna Jaya Revolt of 1677-78,<sup>3</sup> Susuhunan Amangkurat II of Mataram in 1685 ceded to the Company large tracts of territory in western Java, including the coastal principality of Cirebon. Further territorial aggrandizement in West Java, complemented by opportunistic political

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<sup>1</sup>A refreshing departure from the almost deterministic accounts of the rise of Dutch power in Java is provided by M. C. Ricklefs in the first chapter of his *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkubumi: A History of the Division of Java* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 13ff.

<sup>2</sup>For Mataram's sieges of Batavia in 1628 and 1629, see H. J. de Graaf, *De Regering van Sultan Agung, Vorst van Mataram, 1613-45, en die van zijn Voorganger Panembahan Séda-ing-Krapjak, 1601-13*, *Verhandeligen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* (hereafter VKI), 23 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1958), pp. 145-63. Scholarly preoccupation with growing Dutch power in the region and with Dutch-Mataram conflicts has led to an underestimation of the very serious threats to Batavia posed by Banten. Just how suspicious the Dutch were of Javanese, and especially of Bantenese, is shown by the strict laws promulgated by the High Government to regulate their presence at Batavia. During the Banten War (1656-59), the Dutch simply expelled all Javanese males from the city because they were "judged to be a very dangerous race which we cannot trust very far. . . ." Jacobus La Bree, *De Rechterlijke Organisatie en Rechtsbedeling te Batavia in de XVIIe Eeuw* (The Hague: Nijgh & van Ditmar, 1951), pp. 91-92, quoting the *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*.

<sup>3</sup>For the Truna Jaya wars of the 1670s, see H. J. de Graaf, *De Regering van Sunan Mangkurat I Tegal-Wangi, Vorst van Mataram, 1646-1677*, VKI, 33 (1961), part II.

maneuvering in Central and East Java, enabled the Company to emerge as the island's dominant political power by the middle of the eighteenth century.

Here one is forced to concede that the variety and multiplicity of accounts describing Dutch progress from trader to tyrant are not matched by a corresponding number of attempts to analyze the deeper complexities of Javanese-Dutch relationships. Little scholarly effort has been directed toward ascertaining Dutch motivation for extending their authority or toward explaining the processes through which they came to wield control over the island's population. But recounting the steps by which one group obtains political control over another is one thing; determining the factors which contributed to that control is quite another.

Perhaps the most significant hindrance to a thorough understanding of the development of the Dutch position in Java is a lack of in-depth studies focusing upon the emerging institutional relations between Dutch and Javanese. In the following pages I shall discuss a specific instance of Dutch-Javanese conflict at the administrative level. By doing so, I hope to identify some of the more crucial factors which determined the scope and set the pace for the expansion of Dutch hegemony in Java. More specifically, I shall examine a Dutch-Javanese controversy concerning limitations on the royal privilege of *sentana*. As far as can be determined from the available sources, the Javanese privilege termed *sentana* (literally: royal family members)<sup>4</sup> assured for every person of royal blood the right to place himself under the protection of whichever prince he or she chose. Traditionally, the privilege seems to have had no limitations with regard to person *qua* person. The politically controversial aspect of the privilege was the degree to which such royal persons could take lands and people with them when they changed alliances. Occasion for studying the differing interpretations given the *sentana* privilege by Dutch officials and Javanese princes is provided by a series of conflicts brought before the Dutch Resident at Cirebon in the late 1720s.

Because the historical significance of this particular Dutch-Javanese conflict lies in the changes introduced into Javanese socio-economic institutions, we must first outline the type of administrative structure which had evolved at Cirebon by the second decade of the eighteenth century. Dutch control over the principality had come about only as an indirect result of internal Javanese political struggles.

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<sup>4</sup>See Th. Pigeaud, *Javaans-Nederlands Handwoordenboek* (Groningen: Wolters, 1938), under *sentana*. Within Javanese governmental circles there seems to have existed an identification between royal family members and official or semiofficial exercise of authority. In this respect it is of importance to note that *sentana* were frequently mentioned in lists of the highest governmental posts. For example, in the Meinsma *Babad Tanah Djawi*, the *sentana* are cited alongside the *bupati* and *mantri*; in the *Babad Gi.janti*, with the *najaka* and *tumenggung*; and in a late eighteenth-century letter from the Surakarta court, alongside the priests. These examples are found in Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta*, pp. 19, 41, and 290. Whatever the precise meaning of the term, in the Cirebon sources it is clear that a *sentana* is someone of royal blood considered by the Javanese as belonging within a special category of persons to whom certain privileges were attached.

In the readjustment of the island's political alignments following the 1677 Truna Java Revolt and the collapse of Mataram rule in West Java, Cirebon ceased to be a vassal of Mataram and became that of the Company. At the time of the transfer of authority the principality's government was divided between several princes. Cirebon's unexpected emancipation from Mataram's yoke had prompted a power struggle between three Cirebon princes, each supported by their respective factions. Unwilling to alienate the disappointed claimants, the Dutch simply parceled out the principality among the three princes, all legitimate sons of Pangeran Giri Laya, the last independent ruler of Cirebon.<sup>5</sup>

As reflected in a series of late seventeenth-century contracts between the Dutch East India Company and Cirebon, the Dutch divided the principality's government first into three and then, in 1699, into four royal houses. By 1726 and the beginning of the sentana controversy, the four branches were presided over by Sultan Sepuh (III), Pangeran Aria Cirebon (II), Sultan Anom (III), and the Panembahan (II).<sup>6</sup> Although sovereign in name, the princes' governmental activities were subject to the Dutch Resident's approval, a type of indirect rule which might be best termed "supervisory government." Each princely house had a separate royal palace, a staff of officials headed by a *tumeng-gung*, or first minister, and a retinue of royal kin, each with their respective vassals and landholdings. While the duties and obligations attached to most official positions were specifically stated in the Dutch-Cirebon contracts, the validity of the sentana privilege, which governed relations between princes, royal vassals, and the latter's property, was not. Late seventeenth-century Dutch lack of foresight or, more likely, ignorance of the crucial socioeconomic implications of the sentana privilege brought about severe complications in the administration of the principality early in the following century. Absence of any formal agreement meant that the scope and continued validity of the privilege had to be clarified, a clarification all the more necessary owing to a clash of wills between the Company's representative and the Cirebon princes beginning in 1726.

Information for the following discussion of the sentana privilege comes from two interrelated disputes involving the Cirebon princes, their royal vassals, and the Dutch Resident. The course of the two

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<sup>5</sup>The events leading to Cirebon's submission to the Dutch East India Company are discussed in Mason C. Hoadley, "Javanese Procedural Law, A History of the Cirebon-Priangan Jaksa College, 1706-1735" (Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 1975), pp. 40-54; the contracts binding the principality to the Company are found in Appendix IV of that work.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Appendix I, provides the genealogies of the major branches of the Cirebon royal family. In 1677, the three princes were Pangeran (prince) Marta Wijaya, Pangeran Karta Wijaya, and Pangeran Wangsa Karta, cited in the Dutch records as Sultan Sepuh (literally: the elder sultan), Sultan Anom (literally: the younger sultan), and the Panembahan (another, higher princely title), respectively. Upon the death of Sultan Sepuh (Marta Wijaya) in 1699, the Sepuh estate was divided between his two sons. The eldest, Salamoedin, was given half the estate and raised to the rank and title of Sultan Sepuh (II); his younger brother was given the other half and the title Pangeran Aria Cirebon, thus starting the Pangeran Aria Cirebon branch of the royal family. For convenience we shall use the formal titles of Sultan Sepuh, Sultan Anom, Pangeran Aria Cirebon, and the Panembahan, followed by a roman numeral in parentheses to indicate the individuals and their respective generation.

disputes is recorded in some detail in the Overgekomende Brieven uit Batavia, the official Dutch East India Company records.<sup>7</sup> The first case is the Ratu Bagus v. Ratu Madya affair of 1726-28, which centered on the question of the freedom of a high-ranking princess, Ratu Madya, to leave the palace of one Cirebon prince for that of another. The second case is that of Pangeran Aria Cirebon (II) v. the Panembahan (II) and concerns a dispute over inheritance of land.

### Ratu Bagus v. Ratu Madya

The setting for the Ratu Bagus v. Ratu Madya affair is provided by the frequent exchanges of trade missions between Banten and Cirebon. During the second quarter of the eighteenth century such exchanges seem to have become particularly brisk. They were motivated by the Banten Sultan's demand for Cirebon horses and his subjects' desire to make pilgrimages to the tomb of the venerated Sunan Gunung Jati near Cirebon.<sup>8</sup> But beneath the surface of these peaceful mercantile and religious contacts lurked a history of courtly intrigue and murder by stealth. The shroud of secrecy was rudely stripped away by Resident ter Smitten's report of April 27, 1726, written only a few months before his departure from Cirebon.<sup>9</sup>

In that April report, the outgoing Resident paid particular attention to the activities of a "Bantenese prince," one Ratu Bagus, the principal actor in the unfolding drama. About two weeks earlier a scandalous tale of murder, adultery, and intrigue had reached the ears of the Resident. Briefly, it appears that Ratu Bagus, known in Cirebon as a favorite and spy of the Banten Sultan, had slipped into the Anom palace by night and murdered one of Sultan Anom's dignitaries. The latter had for some time been carrying on an illicit affair with Ratu Bagus's wife, Ratu Madya. Ratu Madya was at that time living in the palace of Sultan Anom, her nephew. What struck Resident ter Smitten as peculiar was the fact that Sultan Anom (III) showed little open hatred toward the murderer. A similar masking of hatred had been characteristic of Pangeran Aria Cirebon (II) when his brother had been murdered by the same scoundrel in Resident Jongbloet's time (1706-14). The perplexed Resident felt that the princes had hidden their real emotions "only out of fear of the Bantenese king [Sultan] because were it otherwise they should easily find a way to help that unwelcome guest [Ratu Bagus] out of this world. . . ."<sup>10</sup> Ter Smitten concluded his report by confessing that he could not imagine what would be the outcome of such behavior. He was safe in this view, because events did not reach their climax until well after he had relinquished his office to Donker van der Hoff in September of 1726.

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<sup>7</sup>A succinct evaluation of the Dutch East India Company records as historical source material is found in Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta*, pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>8</sup>In addition to the missions specifically cited in the Ratu Bagus v. Ratu Madya affair, visits by Bantenese officials and pilgrimages to the tomb of Sunan Gunung Jati at Astana are recorded in Koloniaal Archief (hereafter KA), Overgekomende Brieven uit Batavia (hereafter OB), for 1716, 1724, 1726, 1727, 1729, 1730, 1732, and 1737.

<sup>9</sup>KA 1948 (OB 1727), Cirebon to Batavia, April 27, 1726, ff. 8-9.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., f. 9.

With the arrival of the new Resident, the affair seems to have cooled off somewhat. For whatever reason, the Dutch records do not refer to it again for almost a year and a half. Only in September of 1727 did Resident van der Hoff reopen discussion of the affair. The September report contains news of further scandalous behavior by Ratu Madya, who was still living in Sultan Anom (III)'s palace. She had been married to the infamous Bantenese scoundrel Ratu Bagus since 1723, and was thus bound by Javanese law to her husband. Yet the latter had become so hated at Cirebon that she no longer felt inhibited about following her own "lusts and desires." She had some time earlier resolved to leave the Anom palace and to move into the palace of the Panembahan, for no other reason than to marry Tumenggung Saca Dipura, the Panembahan's former guardian.

The Resident was even more shocked to learn that Ratu Madya was carrying out her plan despite the fact that she had not yet been divorced from her husband by the Javanese priests.<sup>11</sup> Sultan Anom protested vehemently against her flight. He not only demanded that the Resident have her returned, but increased the pressure by making threats against the Panembahan. When questioned by the Resident, the Panembahan calmly replied that Ratu Madya had every right to flee from the palace of Sultan Anom. Such action was specifically sanctioned by the law of sentana "which means blood relatives of reigning princes, who have the right above all others to go over to whatever prince they desire, with only this restriction; that there is nothing [bad] to be said about their person."<sup>12</sup>

Between the time of this first report on the renewal of the affair in September 1727 and its final settlement in February 1728, there must have been considerable intrigue and maneuvering behind the scene, only part of which appear in Resident van der Hoff's official reports. According to these reports, the Resident first solicited the other princes' opinion on what should be done about Ratu Madya's behavior. Being reluctant to become involved, they first sought to avoid having to give a negative answer to the Resident's request for a general assembly of the Cirebon princes, by politely suggesting that Batavia should deal with the problem. When this suggestion did not satisfy the persistent Resident, two of them, Pangeran Aria Cirebon and Sultan Anom, quietly absented themselves from the principality so that a princely assembly could not be held.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, since the Resident considered the matter of the utmost importance for the continued peace and tranquillity of the realm, he insisted that Ratu Madya be returned immediately to the palace of her nephew, Sultan Anom. Van der Hoff's concern was undoubtedly motivated by his uneasiness that the strong interest in the affair shown by the Sultan of Banten could easily lead to a break in Banten-Cirebon relations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>KA 1973 (OB 1728), Cirebon to Batavia, September 26, 1727, f. 166. Unfortunately the Dutch records do not contain more detailed information about the marriage and divorce procedures, which fell under the authority of the priests (*paepen*).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., f. 167.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., November 16, 1727, f. 181.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., September 26, 1727, f. 167; reiterated in *ibid.*, November 16, 1727, ff. 180-81 and 190.

Some of the Resident's uneasiness seems to have been justified. How seriously the principals took the matter was demonstrated by the fact that Ratu Bagus courted the Resident's help. In return for aid in removing the stain on his honor, Ratu Bagus appears to have made substantial offers to "improve" his conduct. These promises shed a great deal of light on his activities at the principality. First, he would no longer report to the Banten Sultan on conditions at Cirebon or on the abilities of her reigning princes. Second, he would no longer use the romantic setting of moonlight on the sea as a means of kidnapping Cirebon women and sending them to Banten. (This stratagem seems to have been effective despite repeated injunctions and harsh preventive laws.) Third, he would not entertain the Banten trading embassies as lavishly as he had formerly done. Finally, he promised to limit severely the number of occasions on which the Arabic "priest" Sajid Oemar would make "his fraudulent pilgrimages" to the holy grave of Astana.<sup>15</sup> He said he was also going to bring the whole case to the Banten Sultan's attention in hopes of expediting an honorable solution.

If lived up to, Ratu Bagus's promises would certainly contribute to peace and order in the principality. This prospect, in addition to the fear of potential conflicts with Banten, made the Resident feel that the matter had to be settled in a manner which would cause as little inconvenience as possible. The simplest solution appeared to be to have Ratu Madya returned immediately to the Anom palace, even though this meant supporting a notorious character like Ratu Bagus and transgressing Javanese law.

So far, however, the Resident's efforts in this direction had been effectively blocked by Ratu Madya's stubborn and successful appeal to the privilege of sentana. The princes were collectively reluctant to sanction the Resident's proposal since it violated a specific provision of Javanese law; and the far-from-defenseless princess stated outright that she needed no permission to decide under which prince she wished to reside, since "the Javanese law of sentana permitted her to change over to another [princely house] so long as there was nothing [bad] to say against her person or behavior."<sup>16</sup> It was precisely over this last point that Van der Hoff was most anxious to meet with the princes in late 1727. But, as we have seen, Sultan Anom and Pangeran Aria Cirebon had by then conveniently departed for the Cirebon hinterland, and so the discussion had to be postponed until early the following year.

Before turning to the results of that meeting and the affair's denouement, it may be useful to pause here in order to consider the motives of the principal actors in the drama: Resident van der Hoff, Ratu Madya, Ratu Bagus, and Sultan Anom. Despite the somewhat moralistic tone of Van der Hoff's reports, it is clear that his principal objective was to uphold the Company's interpretation of law and order. He saw Ratu Madya's stubborn insistence on her sentana privileges as provoking difficulties between Banten and Cirebon. This preoccupation with the case's political ramifications probably accounts for his painting Ratu Madya in the blackest of tones. His reports emphasize her adulterous behavior, her abandoning herself to her "lusts and

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<sup>15</sup>Ratu Bagus's offer to improve his conduct is contained in *ibid.*, September 26, 1727, ff. 167-68.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, November 16, 1727, f. 181.

desires" in leaving Sultan Anom's palace, and her apparent indifference to the principality's matrimonial norms. The very strength of Van der Hoff's condemnation is a warning against accepting it uncritically. His strong support of the notorious Ratu Bagus, Ratu Madya's estranged husband, is a good indication of his partisanship. As we shall see, the Cirebon princes were far from convinced that Ratu Madya had behaved immorally or, more to the point, illegally.

It is quite possible that Ratu Madya fled from Sultan Anom's palace out of fear of her husband. Ratu Bagus had not only murdered her paramour, but had done so precisely in that palace. The apparent ease with which Ratu Bagus could enter and leave her place of refuge does raise the suspicion of some sort of connivance on the part of Sultan Anom.

As for Ratu Bagus, concern for his honor may account for the murder of his wife's lover, the explanation implicitly endorsed by Resident van der Hoff. Yet the role of outraged husband does not fit with what we know of Ratu Bagus's character. First, the murder, like that of Pangeran Aria Cirebon's brother a decade earlier, seems to have been more an assassination than a *crime passionelle*. Second, his activities at Cirebon, including espionage, kidnapping of women, and lavish entertainment of trade delegations, are not those of an honor-conscious cuckold. While specific evidence is lacking, it seems very likely that Ratu Madya was less important to Ratu Bagus's heart than to his pocket-book. Whatever the economic rewards of his employment by the Sultan of Banten as procurer, spy, and henchman, his only claim to property in Cirebon seems to have been through his marriage. If so, then his assassination of his wife's lover and his flat denial that she could divorce him and remarry could be explained by his concern to preserve that claim. (This may also account for his almost desperate attempts to enlist the Resident's support in the controversy.) Some confirmation for this interpretation comes from the fact that his interest in Ratu Madya's property was apparently shared by Sultan Anom.

Of the four main actors in the affair, Sultan Anom's position was both the most central and the most equivocal. It was his insistence that Ratu Madya be returned to his palace which had initiated the Resident's first direct participation in the affair. Yet nothing in the brief references so far considered helps explain the urgency of his demands that Ratu Madya remain in his palace. Her residence there had not been of long duration, for we learn in a later report that she had been ordered to Sultan Anom's palace by the previous Resident of Cirebon, whose term of office spanned the years 1720-26. Familial ties do not seem an adequate motivation either. Above all, the fact that his demands for her return ran directly counter to the sentana privilege which he was ostensibly supporting indicates that we should look elsewhere to account for his behavior: namely, to the provision of the sentana privilege regarding personal property. Although the practical and legal expressions of the provision will be considered in connection with the second case discussed in this article--Pangeran Aria Cirebon v. Panembahan of 1728--the basic intent of the traditional provision is crucial to the argument here. One of the few pieces of evidence illuminating the property provision of sentana law dates from the very beginning of Dutch rule at Cirebon, an exchange between the acting Cirebon Resident, Captain Willem de Ruijter (1688-89), and the tumenggung of Sultan Sepuh (I), Raksa Nagara. At one point in their discus-

sion of a land dispute, De Ruijter inadvertently raised the sentana issue. Expecting, or hoping for, an affirmative answer, he asked the princes "if a person from Sultan Anom['s following] transferred to Sultan Sepuh, would not the lands and property remain with the former [i.e., the old master]?" To this the tumenggung, as the representative of the Cirebon realm, responded "that when a subject [*onderdaan*] transfers from one prince to another the lands and property follow, because one's possessions belong under one's master."<sup>17</sup> The validity of the tumenggung's interpretation was confirmed by the opinion of the other princes.

Clearly, then, when royal vassals, such as Ratu Madya, shifted to new masters, their property holdings followed. If such was traditional practice, then it is plausible that in 1727 Sultan Anom was trying to prevent the transfer not so much of Ratu Madya's person but of her possessions, which had "belonged under" him during the period she had resided in his palace. Sultan Anom's desire to retain control of those possessions and Ratu Bagus's efforts to assure continued access to them brought the two men into an alliance of convenience.

The alliance, however, was purely a matter of economic interest. But while Ratu Bagus could pursue it unambiguously, Sultan Anom was in a quandary. For as a prince and co-ruler of Cirebon, he was committed in principle, if not in practice, to upholding the sentana privilege, including its provision governing property. (The degree of his and the other princes' commitment to the privilege is attested by a rare show of solidarity against the expressed wishes of the Dutch Resident.) Was strict maintenance of the royal privilege not worth the risk of losing Ratu Madya and whatever advantages her residence brought to the Anom house--particularly since, as we learn from a later report, all the Cirebon princes, including Sultan Anom, had at one time or another benefited by such transfers of royal vassals and their property? One suspects that at bottom he was relying, not unjustifiably as it turns out, upon Ratu Bagus to resolve the dilemma for him. If Ratu Bagus, using the threat of Bantenese intervention, could put enough pressure on the Dutch Resident to decide the case favorably for both of them, then the Sultan would be free to join his voice to those of the other princes in defense of the privilege. In this game, however, he had to keep from showing his hand too obviously; hence his departure for the hinterland at the strategic moment to avoid an open choice either way.

With this digression on the motives of the drama's principal actors, we can return to the final resolution of the case in February 1728. As noted above, in late 1727 Van der Hoff had been unsuccessful in arranging a meeting with the princes. Only early in 1728 was he able to bring all parties together. The final resolution was achieved in a series of discussions between the princes, the Resident, and ultimately Ratu Bagus, which lasted some five days between February 23 and 28. The essential points of the five-day discussion were combined in a single report of February 28. As a result, our information on the February 23 meeting of the princes and the Resident, the subsequent deliberations of the princes, and the final showdown between the

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<sup>17</sup>KA 1344 (OB 1689), Resident to Batavia, March 9, 1688, ff. 1622-23, see also note 28. The context of these remarks makes it clear that the tumenggung was referring to the sentana privilege.



princes and Ratu Bagus on February 28 has a somewhat ex post facto character. Even so, the course of the discussions seems reasonably clear. The first meeting, on February 23, was opened by the indignant Resident complaining about the (re)marriage of Ratu Madya to Tumenggung Saca Dipura which had been solemnized a few days earlier. This act, Van der Hoff charged, done without his foreknowledge, "not only directly violated the customary usages of Cirebon but also would cause the destruction of the Cirebon realm's tranquillity."<sup>18</sup> The princes would be sharply reprimanded by Batavia if the marriage were not annulled and Ratu Madya restored to her former domicile at once.

The princes disagreed with the Resident's interpretation of the marriage's implications. Sultan Sepuh and the Panembahan both declared that they did not see how the marriage violated Cirebon matrimonial norms. Ratu Madya enjoyed the royal privilege of sentana and could thus do as she pleased "and in particular take care of matters concerning marriage."<sup>19</sup> The princes' statement (which drew no dissenting comment from either Sultan Anom or Pangeran Aria Cirebon), clearly rejected Van der Hoff's insinuation that royal weddings needed the Resident's approval. (It also suggests that in family matters, even those touching on divorce and marriage, the Cirebon royal family followed the ancient customs of the principality rather than the provisions of Islamic law.)

Not one to let mere princes or Javanese law stand in his path, Van der Hoff responded by submitting a prepared list of so-called crimes related to Ratu Madya's marriage to Tumenggung Saca Dipura. He asserted that Ratu Madya had been banned to Sultan Anom's palace a few years earlier for "extravagances", and was not permitted to leave without the permission of that prince. He alleged that she secretly corresponded with her husband-to-be, left for the Panembahan palace without permission, and (re)married without being divorced from her lawful husband. The Resident's wrath also fell upon the Panembahan for not immediately returning Ratu Madya when requested to do so, and upon the Tumenggung for his part in encouraging the infatuated princess. Tumenggung Saca Dipura was also accused of marrying the lady without the permission of Sultan Anom and of general insubordination to the wishes of the Honorable Company. The Resident concluded his tirade by threatening to take the matter directly to Batavia.<sup>20</sup>

Declaring their ignorance of the charges listed by the Resident, the princes asked for an adjournment in order to discuss the matter among themselves. This they were granted, but were ordered to report their findings to the Resident by February 25. On the appointed day, Sultan Sepuh and the Panembahan, as spokesmen for the four princes, reiterated their objections by observing that "Ratu Madya had been divorced from her husband, Ratu Bagus, by the priests, and therefore she was perfectly free to enter into a valid and legal marriage with Tumenggung Saca Dipura."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>KA 1973 (OB 1728), February 28, 1728, sec. iii, ff. 27-28.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., f. 28.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., ff. 28-31.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., f. 32. Specific information concerning the role of the priests in marriage and divorce matters is not available. Here we can merely note the apparent discrepancy between Ratu Madya's divorce on her own initiative and the provisions of

Losing all patience, Van der Hoff summoned the stubborn princes to the Dutch fortress on February 28, 1728. There they were confronted with the allegedly wronged Ratu Bagus, who claimed that he was not divorced. Ratu Bagus then met alone with the princes for a lengthy discussion which, unfortunately and possibly intentionally, was not recorded for posterity. His powers of persuasion were remarkable. After this meeting the princes completely reversed their earlier stand. One cannot discount the possibility that personal threats by the feared henchman of Banten gave added eloquence to his arguments. Ratu Madya's marriage to Tumenggung Saca Dipura was declared invalid, and the princess was speedily returned to the Anom palace, where she was placed under heavy guard.<sup>22</sup>

After months of verbal skirmishing with the princes, Van der Hoff had finally managed to settle the matter in a satisfactory manner, at least insofar as Banten-Cirebon-Batavia political relations were concerned. A few months later, the Resident could report that the marriage of Tumenggung Saca Dipura had been dissolved without undue consequences. Furthermore, the tumenggung had again pledged his loyalty and obedience to the princes.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Panembahan continued to complain from time to time about this particular violation of his privileges, the political situation in the principality returned to normal. Even Ratu Bagus's return the following year with the Banten trade delegation provoked no outbreak. Nor did he try to revenge himself on the tumenggung. That this was specifically mentioned by the Resident may be taken as a measure of how critical he felt the situation could have become had he not arranged a victory for Ratu Bagus.<sup>24</sup>

Yet in a larger sense the affair's conclusion raised more problems than it solved. For in imposing a political solution dictated by Dutch interests, the Resident had to ignore the validity of the traditional royal privilege of sentana. To be entirely consistent, his ruling in the 1726-28 affair would have to be interpreted as meaning that from then on the sentana rule would in general not be binding. At the same time, the Resident was still confined by Batavia's policy of letting local Javanese government function as usual, if under Dutch supervision.

Under these circumstances the Resident devised what to him may have seemed a compromise solution. Instead of completely abolishing the sentana rule, Van der Hoff used the opportunity presented by the

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Islamic law which, except in specific circumstances, recognize only the husband's prerogative to initiate divorce proceedings.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., ff. 33-34. The Panembahan, recalling these events a year and a half later, claimed that the princess was taken from his palace by force on the Resident's orders. KA 2031 (OB 1730), f. 105.

<sup>23</sup>KA 1999 (OB 1729), May 20, 1728, ff. 39-40.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., September 15, 1728, f. 92. That maintenance of the principality's peace was not entirely due to Van der Hoff's maneuvering is suggested by a slightly later entry in the Cirebon records, which shows that Tumenggung Saca Dipura was away in the Priangan lands when Ratu Bagus visited Cirebon. Ibid., November 27, 1728, f. 5.

Ratu Bagus affair to impose an important restriction on it. This restriction, designed to ensure that in the future the rule would not endanger agricultural productivity, was proclaimed on February 28. It specified that "with regard to people enjoying the privilege of sentana about which must can be said, [the rule] should now be modified. Henceforth on the occasion of changing royal masters they may no longer take with them or keep possession of the land occupied by them, but must relinquish it and allow it to remain with the prince under whose protection they had formerly lived."<sup>25</sup> The significance of the proclamation is emphasized by the Resident's subsequent order: the princes must make a copy of the proclamation, presumably in Javanese, have it stamped with the Company's official seal, and enter it in their respective administrative records.

In practice, the 1728 proclamation was no real compromise, but severely affected Javanese law and political processes. For while in theory royal vassals were still free to change their lords, in reality this became a political impossibility, since it meant forfeiture of that control of land and the people working it which formed the essential basis of the nobility's wealth and status. At the same time, Van der Hoff's proclamation should be understood as consistent with long-term Company policy. The Dutch-Javanese contracts of the 1680s, as well as the resolutions of a number of land disputes, show the Company consistently working to freeze all "land-ownership" rights with the aim of reducing conflict between Javanese potentates and contributing to the social stability essential for high agricultural productivity.

This Company concern to maintain agricultural productivity is not only evident from its attitude towards questions of land tenure. It was also determined to secure a stable and hopefully immobile agrarian population, and pursued this goal by introducing a "feudal" element into Javanese land-holding patterns, by which laborers became bound to the land on which they worked. Not unexpectedly, therefore, Van der Hoff's February 1728 proclamation preventing the political conveyance of lands was complemented a few months later by another proclamation concerning agricultural laborers. This decree, dated May 20, 1728, specifically prohibited the migration or, as the Dutch put it, "flight," of agricultural workers from one district to another.

[All Javanese officials] invested with lands and duties are by this [proclamation] expressly instructed that from now on all people of another [potentate] are to be promptly surrendered to their chief. Those officials who disobey and shelter such fugitives shall be set from their position, sent shackled to Cirebon, and given over to the Resident. Henceforth [they will] be exiled in a chain-gang from this island to a place approved by our lords, the Governor-General and Council of the Indies.<sup>26</sup>

Taken together, the proclamations of February and May 1728 must be seen as translating long-term Company ambitions into enforceable statutory rules. The Ratu Bagus case, because it implicitly involved issues of land tenure and control over productive labor, merely provided an opportunity for the Company to act.

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<sup>25</sup>KA 1973 (OB 1728), Cirebon to Batavia, February 28, 1728, f. 33.

<sup>26</sup>KA 1999 (OB 1729), Cirebon to Batavia, May 20, 1728, ff. 40-44.

Pangeran Aria Cirebon (II)  
v. The Panembahan (II)

But to return to the sentana issue, how did the Cirebon princes react to the Resident's February 1728 decree? Predictably, the issue was not entirely laid to rest by the Resident's imposed political solution. How complicated the sentana issue could become when it was directly linked to land tenure questions becomes apparent when we consider a related dispute, the case of Pangeran Aria Cirebon (II) v. the Panembahan (II). Unfortunately, the only specific information on this affair in the Dutch records is provided by two brief letters written by the litigants themselves to inform Batavia of their pleas. Either the Dutch Resident at Cirebon did not comment upon the case or his comments are not included in the present collection of the Company's records at The Hague.

Of the two letters addressed to the Governor-General, the one dated June 26, 1728 and written by Pangeran Aria Cirebon (the victor) is by far the most important for what it tells us concerning the relation of the sentana privilege to property rights. According to this letter, at some unspecified earlier date the Resident and the princes had heard arguments in the dispute between Pangeran Aria Cirebon and the Panembahan, and had decided in favor of the former. Only at the close of the letter do we learn that two princes, Sultan Sepuh and the Panembahan, had refused to endorse the decision. As a result, Pangeran Aria Cirebon felt compelled to explain in some detail the reasons for the ruling in his favor. For convenience' sake, this explanation can be divided into two parts: a statement of the general validity of the traditional sentana privilege; and a defense of Pangeran Aria Cirebon's specific claims in the contest with the Panembahan.

The argument begins with the assertion that sometime before the creation of the Pangeran Aria Cirebon branch of the Cirebon royal house, i.e., before 1699, the Cirebon princes had agreed that "their [blood] relatives shall have the freedom to be able to transfer themselves and their [possessions] to whichever prince they desire."<sup>27</sup> Whether this agreement refers to the statement, cited above, made in 1688 by Sultan Sepuh's tumenggung, cannot be established with any certainty. But the close similarity between them demonstrates the legitimacy of the sentana rule's provision on possessions over a relatively long period of time. Since both surely reflect an older rule in traditional Javanese law, a justifiable interpretation of Pangeran Aria Cirebon's 1728 statement is that the sentana privilege was merely *updated* on the occasion of the principality coming under Dutch rule.

Immediately after mentioning the general terms of the sentana property provision, Pangeran Aria Cirebon's letter proceeds to cite three specific examples of the provision's application, namely: (1) the transfer of Pangeran Nata Ningrat's vassalage from Sultan Sepuh to Sultan Anom; (2) Pangeran Jama Pura's from Sultan Anom to Pangeran Aria Cirebon (I); and (3) Pangeran Wira Kusuma's from Sultan Anom to the Panembahan. Furthermore, the letter stresses that, when these royal princes had transferred their vassalage, they had all been allowed to retain their lands and people. The only exceptions to these

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<sup>27</sup>KA 1999 (OB 1729), June 26, 1728, f. 67.

conditions were when the lands were widely separated or where the people involved were working directly to produce deliveries for the company. Unfortunately, neither this letter nor any other available document offers any unambiguous information about the first two of the three examples cited.<sup>28</sup>

The one example elaborated on in Pangeran Aria's June letter is the case of Pangeran Wira Kusuma and his wife Raden Ajeng. Raden Ajeng, a close relative of Sultan Anom, married Pangeran Wira Kusuma, who was then a vassal of the Sultan. Pangeran Wira Kusuma later transferred his allegiance to the Panembahan, taking with him the lands and people originally granted him by Sultan Anom. Moreover, Raden Ajeng had received a share of the village of Taru Rasmi from Sultan Anom, probably as a wedding gift, and she lived there with her husband. The fact that she was the spouse of a nobleman who became a Panembahan vassal implies that she also transferred her allegiance from the Anom house. The couple's property thus should legally have passed to the Panembahan on their deaths. And indeed this is precisely what happened, according to Pangeran Aria Cirebon's letter. It specifically states that Pangeran Wira Kusuma's property lapsed to the Panembahan, his new lord, and remained in the latter's uncontested possession down to the time of the present dispute (1728). The only exception was Raden Ajeng's share of the village of Taru Rasmi, which was returned to Sultan Anom because "according to an earlier tradition from olden times it is a village which may not be transferred from one to another prince."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Here the problem of how names and titles were set down in the Dutch records presents substantial difficulties for identifying the persons mentioned. With regard to the first case, that of Pangeran Nata Ningrat, it may be the same as the one recorded by the Dutch as arising in 1688; see KA 1344 (OB 1689), Resident to Batavia, March 9, 1688, ff. 1621-24. This dispute, which had prompted Tumenggung Raksa Nagara's observations in 1688, revolved around the land and people of a certain Raden Aria Surya Dipura. Had there only been a difference in the name, or only a change from Sultan Anom to Sultan Sepuh instead of vice versa, one would be tempted to argue strongly for the identity of the two cases, since Javanese princes often had several names during their careers. Mistakes or inaccuracies in the original records or in the copies preserved at The Hague may account for the discrepancies. On the other hand, it seems highly unlikely that someone with the title of *raden* in 1688 would be referred to as *pangeran* some forty years later.

The second case, that of Pangeran Jana Pura, is very likely identical with the Surya Dita affair of 1717. Surya Dita had changed masters from Sultan Anom to Pangeran Aria Cirebon. As in the Ratu Bagus affair, a conflict arose as to whether or not the property Surya Dita held could be counted among his new lord's possessions. The case was initially heard by Javanese judges (*jaksa pipitu*), but procedural complications and pressure exerted by the Dutch Resident resulted in an essentially political compromise. The case is discussed in Hoadley, "Javanese Procedural Law," pp. 172-77.

Although the identification of these two cases remains problematic, the issues involved in both indicate that the sentana privilege was of crucial importance to the princely class. Parenthetically, we may note that the use of such examples by the princes to substantiate their arguments strongly suggests that they had access to fairly detailed administrative records. The probability that these were written records is strengthened by the fact that the legal precedents cited occurred some thirty to forty years earlier, i.e., generally beyond living memory. Unfortunately, few of these records are now extant.

<sup>29</sup>KA 1999 (OB 1729), June 26, 1728, f. 68.

The second section of Pangeran Aria Cirebon's letter sets down a defense of the ruling in his favor in the 1728 dispute with the Panembahan as to who should inherit rights over the land and people belonging to Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom. Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom was the widow of the deceased Pangeran Aria Cirebon (d. 1723) and the mother of his successor, Pangeran Aria Cirebon (II) (the author of the letter under consideration). The letter argues that through her marriage Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom had become a member of the Pangeran Aria Cirebon house. Accordingly, all her personal property, even that given her by her father, the Panembahan (I), belonged to him, her son, as successor to the Pangeran Aria Cirebon house. The property in question had not only legally passed from the Panembahan holdings, but as a matter of record it also had been used and occupied by the Pangeran Aria Cirebon house since Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom's death. Witnesses could be brought to testify to this.

The letter then attempts to discredit the arguments put forward by the Panembahan. It appears from the letter that the Panembahan had (unsuccessfully) claimed the property of Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom on the grounds that she was his half-sister and that in any case the lands she had received from their father, the first Panembahan, were loaned, not granted as permanent possessions. Since he could not support this contention by producing witnesses, the letter continues, "according to Javanese law, the claim cannot stand and the case is lost."<sup>30</sup>

Pangeran Aria Cirebon's letter ends by mentioning the conclusion to the dispute. Since he had won the case, a document had been drawn up for the princes' signatures. The document was undoubtedly a type of *jayapattra*, or "letter of victory" (known as a *surat kukudung* in eighteenth-century Javanese litigation) awarded the victor at the termination of a legal case.<sup>31</sup> It was at this point, however, that complications arose. Sultan Sepuh refused to endorse the document, by implication contesting the validity of the decision. His objection was based on the issue of whether the February 28 proclamation limiting the property provision of the sentana privilege could be applied to the current dispute. Since the Panembahan used precisely this line of argument as the basis for contesting the decision in his own letter to Batavia, we may defer discussion of this objection till we turn to consider the Panembahan's letter.

Before doing so, it may be worth suggesting briefly some of the implications to be derived from Pangeran Aria Cirebon's letter for an understanding of traditional property relationships in Java. We may note, first, that with one exception the property under dispute was limited to property held by individuals. Specific references, as well as the general context, make it clear that this "property" constituted both land and people. Thus the question of whether property was held in a manner analogous to the often (mis)used term *fief* does not complicate our discussion.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., f. 69.

<sup>31</sup>For a discussion of the development of the *jayapattra* in Javanese legal procedure, see Mason C. Hoadley, "Continuity and Change in Javanese Legal Traditions: The Evidence of the Jayapattra," *Indonesia*, 11 (April 1971), pp. 95-109.

The single exception is the village of Taru Rasmi. This village belonged to a class of villages and/or districts which "may not be transferred from one to another prince," and Pangeran Aria Cirebon added that it "must always lapse to the one [prince] from which it came." Taru Rasmi is very likely the present village of Trusmi, located a few kilometers west of Cirebon. If so, its exemption from the usual land tenure provisions would have been due to its close association with Raden Walang Sungsang, who, tradition asserts, was in the fifteenth century Sunan Gunung Jati's predecessor and later trusted adviser. The village would thus have fallen into the category of *perdikan*, or freehold areas, exempt from both taxes and governmental control, thanks to their sacred or religious character.<sup>32</sup>

Aside from the special case of Taru Rasmi, or Trusmi, virtually all the references in our material concern personal--as opposed to borrowed or entrusted--property. Earlier we suggested that Ratu Madya possessed such personal property. Whatever its nature, that property seems to have excited the cupidity of both Ratu Bagus, her husband, and Sultan Anom, her overlord. Moreover, she obviously held this property in her own right, independent of her marital status. Under Javanese law she was perfectly free to take it with her in the event of changing overlords. A better-documented example of this type of property relation is provided by the case of Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom, cited in Pangeran Aria Cirebon's letter. Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom most decidedly held personal property. She received this property, specifically land and people, before her marriage and could, and did, bequeath it to her heir. It is, however, somewhat unclear whether her heir received the property as a result of personal legacy from his mother or ex officio in his capacity as head of the Pangeran Aria Cirebon branch of the royal family. In the latter case, Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom's property must have become incorporated in some manner with that of her husband, thus creating a form of jointly held property.

Unfortunately, the questions of whether marriage automatically resulted in the wife becoming a vassal of her husband's overlord (or vice versa), and whether each was entitled to inherit this property upon the death of the other, remain unsettled. The logical corollary of the inheritance question--what happened if there was no issue from a marriage--is illustrated by the case of Pangeran Wira Kusuma. Because he does not seem to have had any heirs, at his death his property lapsed to his latest overlord. It appears then that the properties given to Pangeran Wira Kusuma and to Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom had definitively and irrevocably passed from the hands of the givers.

In spite of the paucity of our data, the basic outlines of at least one variant of traditional Javanese property holdings have been brought into sharper focus. Personal property, consisting of land and people, clearly played an important role in eighteenth-century Cirebon. The disposal of that property, including the right to transfer, inherit,

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<sup>32</sup>By far the best discussion of the *perdikan* institution remains B. O. Schrieke, "Iets over het Perdikan-instituut," *Tijdschrift voor Indische taal-, land-, en volkenkunde* (hereafter *TBG*), LVIII (1919), pp. 391-423. P. de Roo de la Faille unconvincedly challenged Schrieke's reconstruction of land tenure in an article entitled "Over het grondrecht onder Javaansch Vorstenbestuur," *TBG*, LIX (1919-21), pp. 21-121, to which Schrieke replied in "Uit de Geschiedenis van het Adatgrondenrecht," *ibid.*, pp. 122-87.

and alienate through gift, was clearly left to the discretion of the individual male or female holding that property. Yet, none of the above should be taken to imply that personal property was the only, or even most common or important, property-holding arrangement; rather, it was only one of several systems of "ownership," the precise details of which await further investigation.<sup>33</sup>

Having examined Pangeran Aria Cirebon's defense of his victory, as well as some of the implications inherent in that defense, let us now turn to the Panembahan's claim. On September 22, 1729, in a much-delayed reply to Pangeran Aria Cirebon's "brief," the Panembahan wrote to Batavia to challenge the decision reached in Cirebon. In this letter the Panembahan did not deny his opponent's interpretation of Javanese law or the validity of the three examples cited. Rather, he based his appeal on the Company's proclamations. The prince acknowledged that his half-sister, Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom, had indeed left the Panembahan house for that of Pangeran Aria Cirebon (I), his opponent's father. (Although no date is given in his letter, this must have happened around 1700 when her marriage took place.) She had indeed taken her land and people with her, and they had remained with the Pangeran Aria Cirebon house. But it was precisely the retention of this property, the Panembahan claimed, that was "in direct violation of the contract signed between the princes and the Company."<sup>34</sup>

The Panembahan failed to specify clearly which provisions of the Dutch-Cirebon contract Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom's actions had violated. He merely stated that while royal vassals could change masters, they "may not take land and people with them." Since Van der Hoff's proclamation of February 28, 1728 is the first and only Dutch ruling with regard to the sentana issue, it is virtually certain that the Panembahan was referring to it (in addition the wording of his letter is strikingly similar to that of the proclamation). After citing the contract, the Panembahan immediately went on to complain of ill-treatment by the Resident during the earlier Ratu Bagus case. (It will be recalled that the final order to remove Ratu Madya from his palace and to return her to Sultan Anom was contained in the same report in which the Resident mentioned issuing the February 28 proclamation modifying the sentana rule.)

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<sup>33</sup>Pangeran Aria Cirebon's letter provides substantial clues as to other types of "ownership." In describing Pangeran Wira Kusuma's property, the Dutch translation of the letter specifies the nature of his holdings by adding in parentheses that it "was not under the general [category of] ricefields or villages." This would seem to be an oblique reference to the general category of man-power (*cacah*) lists held by each prince. A second clue is the mention of an important exception to the freedom to transfer land and people, i.e., those directly involved in producing deliveries for the Company. This suggests that, where the export crops demanded by the Dutch were concerned, possibly indigo and teak, there existed special land tenure arrangements. And, finally, toward the close of the letter there is a reference to holding lands on loan (*verleen*), which conjures up visions of a "feudal" system. Of the types of systems suggested in the letter, an investigation of the *cacah* would seem to offer the most fruitful approach to traditional Javanese land and labor relations.

<sup>34</sup>KA 2031 (OB 1730), September 22, 1729, f. 104.



In effect, the sole legal basis for the Panembahan's claim to Ratu Aria Cirebon Anom's land and people was a retroactive application of Resident van der Hoff's proclamation. The Panembahan was not alone in interpreting the proclamation to mean that all precedents from before February 28, 1728, were now to be disregarded. As noted earlier, Sultan Sepuh also questioned the propriety of the decision and refused to sign the document of victory.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Sultan Sepuh's position was cited in support of the Panembahan's appeal. (Whether he was eventually successful in this appeal I do not know, since it fell under Batavia's jurisdiction and is not mentioned in the Cirebon records.)

### Discussion

The data provided by the two disputes--Ratu Bagus v. Ratu Madya and Pangeran Aria Cirebon v. the Panembahan--are certainly not as detailed as one could wish. Yet despite these limitations a reasonably clear picture of the nature of the sentana privilege emerges. For our present purposes, however, the significance of the cases lies in what they reveal about changing Dutch-Javanese relations. In this regard, the 1728 proclamations can be seen as a watershed separating an era in which traditional Javanese norms prevailed and one in which Dutch-legislated rules governed royal privilege.

The question arises as to why the Dutch felt it necessary to tamper so directly with Javanese law, when they were officially committed to upholding local administrative traditions within the framework of what we have termed supervisory government.

As we have seen, the Resident decreed a settlement in the Ratu Madya case essentially in order to avoid disrupting relations between Cirebon and Banten. The Cirebon princes' objections to his decree, grounded in the Javanese law of sentana, led the Resident to introduce modifications in that law at the conclusion of the case. In these events political motives seem the most obvious explanation for Dutch interference. The Company had every interest in preventing clashes between its vassals, which otherwise might endanger the "peace and order" (*rust en orde*) it so cherished. (War was almost always an expensive and unpredictable matter.)

Regional political stability was, however, but one objective of Dutch policy. An equally important and closely related goal was obtaining as much tropical produce as possible. Economic concerns were in fact a major factor behind the Dutch insistence on modifying the sentana rule's provision on the transfer of land and people. The aim was clearly to tie lord and peasant together in permanent and predictable relations, so that exactions on the latter could be routinely accomplished through the former.

Initially, Dutch officials had attempted to "stabilize" the agrarian system in zones under their administration by indirect means. The Dutch records provide many examples of Company exhortations to Javanese potentates to live in peace and to enjoy their respective possessions. The frequency of such homilies may probably be taken as a gauge of

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<sup>35</sup>KA 1999 (OB 1729), June 26, 1728, f. 69.

their ineffectiveness. When the problem was raised in the controversy between Ratu Bagus and Ratu Madya, the Company was more than ready to seize the chance to "stabilize" agrarian conditions by reinterpreting the sentana rule to its own advantage: hence Van der Hoff's prohibition on the transfer of people or conveyance of land *under any conditions*.

To conclude that Javanese played no role, or only a passive one, in the transformation of administrative conditions at Cirebon would be a mistake. Autonomous Javanese activities and ambitions constituted crucial elements in determining the extent and depth of the innovations introduced by the Dutch. Ratu Bagus, assassin, kidnapper, and spy for the Sultan of Banten, was surely not in favor of the Company's attempts to impose law and order in Cirebon. Yet he did not scruple to appeal to the Dutch Resident for help when it suited his purpose. His threat to enlist the Sultan's aid seems to have been a bluff, since it is highly unlikely that Banten would have gone to war over his marital difficulties. Yet the Dutch were sufficiently sensitive to the potential for trouble that the Resident immediately intervened in the affairs of the Cirebon royal family.

Still more revealing were the actions of the Panembahan and Sultan Sepuh in the dispute with Pangeran Aria Cirebon. The Panembahan (with the Sultan's support) not only appealed to Batavia as the final authority in legal matters (as did his antagonist) but based his arguments on Dutch-imposed rules. In both cases certain Javanese were quick to take advantage of the new, Dutch-created conditions to further their own interests. If the Company was not yet *de jure* sovereign of Java in 1728, the reliance of some Javanese on Company statutes indicates clearly that it was fast becoming *de facto* ruler in key regions.

By way of conclusion it may be useful to consider the role of precedent in the development of the Company's administration of Javanese affairs. What did the outcomes of our two cases forebode for Dutch-Javanese relations? On the simplest level, the manner of settling the Ratu Madya affair involved the two proclamations of 1728, which would define the basis of litigation and determine the outcome in all future disputes of this nature. More importantly, the two proclamations meant that the scope for appealing to alternative sources of law and differing judicial interpretations, so characteristic of traditional Javanese litigation, had been severely limited. After 1728, the only valid source of law with regard to sentana was Dutch legislation. This in turn presaged a general trend toward the development of specific and restrictive statutes, which eventually replaced the traditional and diverse sources of Javanese law.

If specific examples considered here revolve about the sentana rule and the political and economic issues it involved, a similar pattern of indigenous litigation being subsumed and redefined by Dutch decrees seems to have been a common feature of the early eighteenth century. The gradual establishment of a set of precedents, motivated by Dutch political and economic priorities and reinforced by particularistic Javanese response to the new conditions, offers a partial explanation of the process by which traditional Java was transformed into part of *Nederlandsch Indië*.