Blood Ties: Exile, Family, and Inheritance across the Indian Ocean in the Early Nineteenth Century

Historians are rarely privy to why any one document ends up in a certain file kept in a particular archive, but the happenstance of discovering an unexpected source that yields an interesting tangent to one’s main topic is undoubtedly one of the pleasures of research. This story tracing marginal centers across the Indian Ocean involves a document in the Indonesian National Archives in Jakarta that caught my eye because it was “out of place” amongst the Dutch East India Company (VOC) records that constitute the archives for my research on the Company’s network of forced migration. My research focused specifically on the circuit of penal transportation and political exile between Batavia, the Indonesian archipelago and the Cape of Good Hope and draws on the VOC archives in The Netherlands, South Africa and Indonesia. The fragmentary overlap between Dutch and British colonial records on Madura in the Indonesian National Archives that provides the basis for this chapter included the translation of a letter dated May 26, 1813, written to the Governor-General of India at Fort William in Calcutta, Lord Minto, from three Madurese princes who were officers of the Bugis Corps commissioned by the English East India Company (EIC) at Fort Marlborough in Bencoolen on the west coast of Sumatra. The file reflects the letter authors’ attempt to pursue their interests by shrewd observation of rivalries between these European colonial powers. The princes were staking a claim to the throne of Madura based on the exile to the Cape of Good Hope of their grandfather, Pangeran Cakraningrat IV, by the Dutch East India Company in the 1740s.¹ This “momentary drama” sheds insight into the intersection between various imperial and indigenous political networks that constituted the early modern Indian Ocean.

The immediate political context of the letter was the British invasion and conquest of Java, and by proximity the neighboring island of Madura, which displaced the Dutch as the major European power negotiating with the Javanese states over control of the island and its surrounding territories. Behind this

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conquest were the wars in Europe spurred on by Napoleon’s ambitious conquests that had altered the nature of states and political alliances in that region, reverberating across the oceans to their far flung colonies and commercial interests. The appeal to British allegiance by the Madurese princes on the basis of a case of political exile that had occurred sixty years earlier demonstrates how powerful family genealogies were in the political context of Southeast Asian states. Indeed, victorious usurpers often rewrote genealogies to reflect glorious and legitimizing ancestry. These family genealogies have been one of the main sources for writing Indonesian history and like most official state histories they most often tell the story of the victors. On the surface, the Madurese princes made their genealogical claim to the British in a letter submitted to William Parker, the EIC Resident at Bencoolen. The letter then circulated amongst British administrators in the newly conquered territories including the Governor of Java, Stamford Raffles. In writing the letter and submitting it up the British chain of command the Madurese princes demonstrated their subtle understanding of shifting European structures of colonial power and of the shifting alliances between European states. As Asian soldiers employed by the British they occupied a subaltern status in the Company forces while simultaneously asserting power as members of the local elite in Bencoolen’s indigenous communities and declaring their blood ties to their royal dynastic status in Madura. Similarly to Pier Larson’s account of Aristide Corroller, who sought to maximize the benefits of his genealogy according to whether he was in the Mascarenes or Madagascar, these Madurese princes sought to use their position in west Sumatra to assert political claims in Madura. Although the British eventually recognized the genealogical legitimacy of their claim, political expediencies of the delicate balance of power in the region resulted in the rejection of their claim in favor of maintaining the status quo.

But the princes’ claims were far more complex than the single letter suggests. They involved the intermarriage between the elites of Madura and Sumatra; the position of exiled elites in their places of refuge; perceptions of distance from centers of political authority; fragmented alliances between European Company officials and Asian elites in the negotiation of rule; the calculation of profitability of colonial enterprises at the margins of empire; and the colonial inter-relationships between the British and Dutch in the Indies archipelago. The immediate geographical and temporal context linked Madura, Java and Sumatra to Penang, Calcutta and London, while the historical reach of the case extended across the entire reach of the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope in the west and to the island of Sulawesi in the east.

This article explores these royal Madurese blood ties, starting from the archival fragment and, like Southeast Asian indigenous genealogies, setting long warp threads bound to the exile of the Pangeran of Madura, Cakraningrat IV to the Cape of Good Hope in the 1740s, and back still further to the founding genealogies of the region. These genealogies were written for legitimizing claims to power within indigenous polities through lines of succession, but they were also used by Europeans to make comprehensible the intricate webs of indigenous status and to discern potential allies and figures of legitimate authority. Written indigenous and European sources were, in some cases, spun together into complex weft threads, one strengthening the other. European colonial officials were dependent on access to both indigenous language and other European
language records as their source of authority and expertise. Indigenous genealogies, historical narratives and legal codes were sometimes commissioned by Europeans to “set the record straight” and thereafter constituted indigenous authority in ways that would not necessarily have been acceptable in pre-colonial societies. The evolution of indirect colonial rule under the various European East India Companies therefore drew upon multiple sources of information. As Heather Sutherland has noted in the case of the Dutch East India Company: “Subsequent administrations and colonial theorists made a virtue of necessity, elevating the Company's pragmatic accommodations into a colonial philosophy, and finding new political benefits in old institutions.”

Weaving these stories together into a single narrative cloth begins with the frustrated hopes of disinherited Madurese nobles engaged in the military service of the English East India Company in Sumatra, back to several generations of Madurese Pangerans who had entered into allegiance with the Dutch East India Company and declared war on the Javanese court to which they had previously owed submission, ultimately with the intent to assert the independence of Madura from both Javanese and Dutch vassalage. These events were part of the unraveling of the last strands of the unified Javanese Mataram empire, but also brought ruin to the Pangeran Cakraningrat IV and further marginalized Madura within the politics of the archipelago.

The letter from the three princes put forward their case for the throne with great delicacy. Their father, Prince Raden Tamoongong Wijaah Adin Negrat (sic) was the youngest of four sons of Pangeran Cakraningrat IV. However, being the only legitimate son he was apparently heir to the throne. In regard to noble succession the relative status of wives was significant but did not absolutely determine the right to rule of the next generation. These matters of legitimacy and illegitimacy, and of primogeniture, were well understood by the English, who first sought to ascertain why the sons of the youngest son were claiming the throne. Having satisfied themselves in cultural terms that they understood, that the youngest son was the only “legitimate” son, the EIC Acting Resident, G.J. Siddons, went on to describe his efforts to find out exactly what the princes wanted from their petition. However, the English did not discuss that these princes claimed their father's right to rule not only on the basis of being the “legitimate heir” but also “by the general suffrage of the people.” This is significant because they were not claiming “legitimacy” only on the basis of the marital status of their father's mother but also on their father's popularity with the people of Madura. Such a consideration would have been irrelevant to the English for whom royal and noble status was strictly a matter of birth and, in matters of inheritance, marriage and legitimacy.

This raises an important point in terms of inheritance in Southeast Asian kingship, including both Java and Madura. Primogeniture was not the norm, heirs to the throne were chosen on the basis of talent, personality and charisma from amongst the legitimate children of Javanese rulers, who were polygamous, and whose court relationships were ranked on the basis of the status of the woman's family from first wife, other official wives, minor wives, and unofficial wives, including slave concubines. It was not unheard of, unlike in European royal succession, for the charismatic son of a minor or unofficial wife to rise though talent and intrigue to rule, in which case the court genealogy would be rewritten to reflect a more glorious lineage and mask any lowly origins.
Luc Nagtegaal argues that this was particularly the case in Madura where legitimacy was tied to the people's perceptions of an ideal ruler possessing attributes of kingliness, especially martial prowess, which were more important than the apparent bloodline.6

The polities on the island of Madura, lying off the northeast coast of Java, were intimately linked to the major empires of the region as kingdoms that often sought to maximize their own independence. The genealogies of the Madurese noble families were tied directly to the ancient Majapahit empire in the fifteenth century. The Cakraningrat lineage was ruler of the western part of the island, Bangkalan, originally known as Madura. They were, therefore, one of the most ancient lineages in the region and tied through marriage to the inland Javanese Mataram empire in the seventeenth century.7 For generations Madurese rulers sought to maximize their independence from the central Javanese courts even if it meant fighting alongside the Dutch Company.8 But the VOC was not the central concern of indigenous rulers, their main focus was on the internal politics of the region, although increasingly in the late eighteenth century the region's politics was also seen in religious terms that were linked to global Islamic trends.

The first Madurese noble to have challenged the Javanese sultan was Trunajaya, who married into the ruling clan of powerful Islamic center of scholarship in Java and sought to depose the unpopular Amangkurat I of Mataram in the late seventeenth century. The VOC refused to assist the rebellion, and ostensibly one of their allies, as instead they sought to consolidate trading advantages from Amangkurat in return for protecting him from the invasion. Trunajaya was able to garner support from Banten on the northwest coast of Java and assembled an army of Javanese, Madurese, Buginese and Balinese who believed his claim to be a rightful descendant of the rulers of ancient Majapahit. Amangkurat I fled when his palace was attacked in 1677 and Trunajaya urged the Crown Prince, whose support he had gained, to support his cause and continue the rebellion by attacking the Dutch and riding the region of Europeans. Amangkurat II instead betrayed his Madurese ally who fled to the coast but was eventually captured and murdered by Javanese troops in 1680.9 It was the VOC's support of a rebellion in the late 1680s in Banten by Sultan Haji against his father, Sultan Ageng, that resulted in the expulsion of the EIC from Java and their relocation to the west coast of Sumatra where they eventually set up their headquarters in the region at Bencoolen to develop the pepper trade.10

The next Madurese ruler who challenged the center of authority in Java was Panembahan Cakraningrat II (r. 1680–1707) who refused to submit to the control of Mataram. The VOC considered him a reliable ally and called upon him to supply Madurese troops help fight the First Javanese War of Succession (1704–07).11 In the aftermath of the war when one of his sons succeeded to the throne of Madura, Cakraningrat III (r. 1707–18) was given in marriage a Javanese princess, sister of the Susuhanan, to cement the alliance between the two courts. Cakraningrat III also refused to present himself at the Javanese kraton (palace) while he attempted to extend his own power base from West Madura to Java, but he allowed his Javanese wife to visit her family in his stead, all the while secretly lobbying the VOC for formal alliance. This pattern of Madurese rulers shifting alliances between the central Javanese court and the Dutch Company characterized several generations of Madurese rulers who were
primarily concerned with extending their own power base and consolidating their independence.

Pakubuwana II, who was sixteen when he was declared Susuhunan, tried to centralize power in his own hands by cutting off direct contact between the VOC and local regents. He had given one of his sisters to Cakraningrat IV in marriage as a way to cement his hold on his princely vassals. In trying to alienate the regional rulers from the VOC, Pakubuwana II was particularly concerned about Cakraningrat IV because the Madurese ruler was clearly playing off the VOC against the Susuhunan in order to maximize his own independence. The crisis following the Chinese uprising in Java during the early 1740s, which had been exacerbated by the infamous massacre of the Chinese population of Batavia in 1740 by the Dutch and their indigenous allies, had emboldened the Susuhunan into open rebellion against the VOC aimed at ridding Java of the Dutch one and for all. He arrested the Dutch garrison stationed at the kraton and forced them, on threat of death, to convert to Islam. The VOC then turned to their erstwhile ally, Cakraningrat IV, to assist them against the Susuhunan. He agreed, through renounced his ties to Pakubuwana II and pledged allegiance to the Company as a vassal. Madurese troops under Cakraningrat IV committed the ultimate betrayal of the Javanese ruler by assisting in the conquest and plunder of the Kartasura palace in November 1742 accompanied by Chinese and Javanese mercenaries. Cakraningrat IV thereby realized his ambitions to reverse his inferior position to Pakubuwana II, but his victory was short-lived. The VOC insisted that he return the palace to the Susuhunan because they were more interested in imposing a treaty on Pakubuwana II that ceded to the Company sovereignty of west Madura and most of northeast Java, as well as cessation of Javanese shipping and overseas trade.

Cakraningrat IV was justifiably outraged at this turn of events and went into open rebellion in eastern Java in alliance with the Hindu-Buddhist Balinese, to prevent the Company from consolidating rule in the region. He also sent one of his sons to Bencoolen in west Sumatra seek military assistance from the English because they were the Dutch Company's main European rival in the region, but aid was not forthcoming. The VOC had played politics in exactly the same manner as Cakraningrat IV by shifting alliances as it suited them. But under VOC imperial law, the treaty between Cakraningrat IV and the Company was binding and he was in violation of their agreement, if they were able to enforce it. These treaties were used by the VOC as legal justification for their intervention and conquest of indigenous territories throughout the Indian Ocean. Historians have analyzed these agreements as part of the evolution of international law that underpins the global geopolitical system to the present day. The recognition or non-recognition of sovereignty is a key component in the modern state system. Bangkalan therefore was no longer an independent polity in the perception of the European powers operating in the region. Southeast Asian rulers, who saw treaties in terms of symbolic alliances that were negotiable rather than standing and enforceable contracts, did not share this understanding of their meaning.

In 1745 the VOC formally removed Cakraningrat IV from the Bangkalan throne on the basis that he had agreed by treaty to become a vassal of the Company. This was reinforced by Pakubuwana II's cession of Madura to the Company, an agreement in which the Madurese rulers took no part.
Consequently the VOC declared Cakraningrat IV a rebel. He was eventually captured and exiled to the Cape of Good Hope, not as a prisoner of war or political exile, but as a rebel against the Company, which was an entirely different status to many of the noble exiles sent to the Cape. At least one of his sons was exiled to Ceylon, and one of his more pliable sons declared the Company's vassal as Pangeran of Madura.

Cakraningrat IV had proven to be an inconsistent ally of the Dutch Company. In their opinion he was a traitor. But the interests of European companies in the region were marginal to the considerations of indigenous rules. Cakraningrat IV had merely used his alliance to achieve his own ends of independence for Madura and to extend his own territorial ambitions in Java. His threat to Company rule in Madura and eastern Java had been a serious one, yet his exile to the Cape was relatively uneventful. He does not appear to have made a great impression or demands on the Company rulers at the Cape. Although he had been sentenced to hard labor at the Cape, befitting a rebel against the Company, upon his arrival in late December 1746 on board what must have appeared to the deposed ruler the inappropriately named ship Fortuijn, Cakraningrat IV was housed at the Castle. He was not demeaned by forced labor and was given a modest living allowance, although he was kept under surveillance at all times by an accompaniment of armed guards. The only material demand he appears to have made on the Cape Company officials was for a ration of rice instead of bread. Batavia refused his requests for repatriation home as he still posed a threat as a powerful political figure in Java and Madura.

By the time Cakraningrat IV died at the Cape in 1749 the Company had gained control over the whole of Madura and their vassal ruler officially became a subject of the VOC with no independent right to reign. Although Cakraningrat IV had been buried according to Islamic burial rituals at the Cape, like many other exiled nobles, there was an order for his body to be disinterred and sent back to the land of his ancestors for burial. This was often requested by the families of the exiles and, for the Company, granting the request had the advantage of proving that these individuals were no longer a direct threat to the VOC. However, these requests were not always fulfilled. The Dutch were not able to control the indirect threat of some exiles being declared saints and their grave sites became places of pilgrimage and devotion that reinforced Islamic loyalties against the European presence in the region. Families stretching across exile sites did not necessarily lose touch permanently with their homelands and former status. Several exiles, or their descendents born in exile, returned to the archipelago to exert considerable political influence. In the case of one son of a Javanese exile whose father was himself the son of an exile, his return to the Javanese court resulted in his being elevated to a religious advisor to the Crown Prince. His anti-European sentiments expressed as Islamic fervor resulted in his re-exile from the island.

The mid-eighteenth century was a turning point in Javanese politics because the VOC forced a split in the Mataram court, dividing Javanese rule in Java between two reconstituted courts in Yogyakarta and Surakarta. The main aim of the respective rulers of these courts was to reunify the kingdom under a single ruler. Both courts attempted to use the Dutch to achieve their ends, but the effect of the “divide and rule” strategy meant that even if the Company didn’t “rule” Java completely, the divided Javanese court was less of a threat to
their continued presence. By the late eighteenth century, Dutch power in the Indies, and particularly in Java, was waning as the Company lumbered towards bankruptcy. Javanese and other local rulers perceived a real possibility of their expulsion.  

Simultaneously, Muslim teachers directly from the Arabian Peninsula were exhorting Javanese rulers towards a renewed faith. In 1787 letters from Javanese religious leaders in Mecca stated that Pakubuwana III had lost his legitimacy to rule partly because as “A king of the Europeans, you please God no more … you apostate from the Faith! I am nominated as king of Java, who maintains the Faith of the Prophet …” These were powerful words and although the author and carrier of this and other letters was not found, Pakubuwana III indeed died within the year. The accession to the throne of Pakubuwana IV was accompanied by demands by the Dutch that his religious advisors be arrested and exiled in order lessen the influence of what was perceived as increasingly militant Islamic influence at court. Merle Ricklefs argues these santris were not Wahabis but were mystics and less orthodox than previous religious advisors.  

Meanwhile, the English East India Company settlement in Bencoolen on the west coast of Sumatra had struggled to achieve its goal of developing pepper production and trade in the region. The British had relocated to Bencoolen in the aftermath of their expulsion from Banten. This had been a condition of the treaty signed between Sultan Haji and the Dutch East India Company. The English factory at Bencoolen was opposed both by the Sultan of Banten, who claimed that the rulers of the region were his vassals, and by the VOC, which attempted to squeeze the English out of the lucrative pepper trade. EIC officials were in a precarious position regarding their alliances with the local rulers upon whom they depended in order to develop the pepper trade. These alliances were so precarious that the English temporarily abandoned the region in the early eighteenth century and upon their return a few years later they tried to use ‘Topazes’ (Portuguese-Asian Creole Christians), slaves from Madagascar, Sepoys (soldiers) from India and finally Bugis migrants from the eastern Indies archipelago as soldiers and labor for their settlement. By the mid-eighteenth century the British actively sought Chinese immigrants from Macao to develop clove and nutmeg farming in the region. By the end of the century, they were importing convicts from Bengal for public labor and spice farming. These measures were a result of Dutch attempts to cut off alternative supplies for these spices in the region.  

Pakubuwana IV was still on the throne when the British invaded and conquered Java in 1811–12, with the assistance of indigenous militias and Sepoys brought from India. The Napoleonic Wars rather than internal events in the region brought about the invasion, although its impact reverberated throughout the archipelago. The British interregnum between 1811–16 did not stop attempts by Javanese rulers to be rid of European influence, which, as Rickelfs has argued, was secondary to their main aim of consolidating power internally. Pakubuwana IV as Sultan of Surakarta had as his primary aim the dominance of the court of Yogyakarta, at the time under the rule of Hamengkubuwana II. Pakubuwana IV betrayed Hamengkubuwana II to the British even though it was he who had secretly opened negotiations for rebelling against the Europeans. The British, along with their Sepoy auxiliaries, stormed the Yogyakarta kraton in 1811–12, arresting the sultan and sending him into exile. By 1815, the Sepoys
had become increasingly unhappy with their position in Java. They feared they would be left behind under the command of the Dutch as the British planned to hand back the territory. It was suspected that they were in contact with Pakubuwana IV and were seeking support to mutiny against the British. The plot was discovered and the ringleaders arrested and shot, while other Sepoys were exiled.24

Meanwhile, in Madura, Cakraningrat IV’s son had proved such a loyal ally to the VOC that his title was raised to Panembahan Cakraningrat V. His grandson, with the title Cakraningrat VI, upon whose death his father’s brother assumed rule as Panembahan Adipati Cakraningrat VII (r.1780–1815). Although the Dutch state took over from the bankrupt VOC at the end of the eighteenth century the political alliances in the Indies were not dramatically affected by the change in Dutch power. Cakraningrat VII and his sons continued to assist the Dutch against local and foreign rivals, including the English, and the Dutch gave his eldest son the rank of Colonel and Crown Prince. Cakraningrat VII himself was elevated in status by the Dutch and crowned as the first Sultan of Madura. However, as Sutherland points out, there was no fundamental reorientation by the Madurese rulers, their local interests remained paramount. When the British invaded Madura in 1811, Cakraningrat VII arrested all the Dutchmen and gave them as prisoners of war to the English. Sutherland writes: “This was, say the Madurese sources, in revenge for the exile of his grandfather to the Cape of Good Hope.”25

It was in this charged atmosphere that the Madurese princes made their claim to the Governor General of India through the British Resident at Bencoolen. The princes sensibly did not ask for the dethronement of the reigning aged king of Madura but rather that at his death, one of them should succeed to the throne. They viewed this as “an act of retribution justice”. They further went on to observe: “The Dutch are the ancient enemies of the English; the Dutch deprived us of our birthright, it is in the power of the English to restore it to us. The attachment of our family to the English Company is undoubted and some of us have shed our blood in fighting their battles.”26 Hedging their bets with a more achievable demand, they stated:

We further humbly hope from the interposition of the Right Hon. the Governor General in our favour that some portion of the net annual personal revenue of the reigning King which amounts (exclusive of the provision which he has made for his family at Madura) to between 50 and 60,000 dollars… We do not presume to state how small, or how large, a portion would suffice for this purpose wishing to leave that point to the liberal disposition of the ruler of India; should he condescend to succor men of rank reduced to poverty through the machinations of the Dutch (Who are the ever-bitter foes of the English and who know not what it is to love Justice and good order and who do not respect the rights of Rulers or of Kingdoms) by causing an amicable negotiation to be entered into in our favour with the reigning King of Madura.”27

The princes were well aware of their position of subalternity and framed their petitions within this recognition of relative powerlessness. Like others presented in this volume, the protagonists here laid claims to elevated social status by every means at their disposal in order to stave off further decline in their individual and family circumstances.
The princes' appeal to material support was more palatable to English officials and more achievable given the English Company's own unstable position in the region. The Acting Resident at Bencoolen, G.J. Siddons, acknowledged that the three brothers had commissions as lieutenants in the Corps of Buginese and were of "respectable character." The oldest was stationed at Padang and the two youngest in Bencoolen. According to Siddons, the oldest brother who was about 45 years old, "Raden Mahomed Gain Pakbansa (sic) has, on more than one occasion of his being actively employed, particularly distinguished himself as a zealous, judicious and courageous officer."28 Alongside this report and correspondence was a translated copy of the Dutch treaty dated 1803 with the son of the king of Madura appointed after Cakraningrat IV's exile. European powers acknowledged these treaties as part of legitimate international law, which had itself been forged largely in the tumultuous crucible of the Indian Ocean during the seventeenth century. The English therefore recognized the legitimacy of the current rulers in Madura.

The treaty opened with the acknowledgment of Dutch sovereignty over Madura and the King's reign on the pleasure of the Company:

The whole of Madura having been ceded by the Soosoohoonan (sic) to the Dutch Company in proper sovereignty and it taken possession of as such, I Pangeran Adee Patee Sutcho de Ningrat (sic) declare myself fully informed of the same, and therefore receive it from their hands not in any respect as an hereditary right, which must devolve to my children or heirs, but as a deposit to be delivered to whomever they may at any time be pleased to order. My children or family can therefore claim no right to dispute the pleasure of the Said Dutch E I Company, whom I hereby acknowledge as my lawful Sovereign and Superior, and myself their Vassal and Subject…

This left the rulers of Madura in no doubt as to their sovereign claims regarding the Dutch Company but as I have suggested, this understanding of treaties as perpetually binding was not necessarily shared between Europeans and Southeast Asians. The British used this legal justification stated in the treaty to deny the right to rule of the Madurese princes, claiming that as there was no indigenous sovereign right to rule in Madura, the princes could not claim the throne on that basis.

Nevertheless, the Madurese princes in Bencoolen were also part of a much more sustained relationship between the indigenous polities of west coast of Sumatra and Madura that was not determined by European influence in the region. The west coast of Sumatra had long been the source of pepper production in the region and had been under the nominal sovereignty of the Sultan of Banten. Banten as a major entrepot had been the initial port of call for European companies seeking access to the pepper trade. But the Europeans also sought to make alliances with indigenous polities for pepper trading that circumvented indigenous regional overlords. Not surprisingly, Sumatran pepper suppliers sought to trade their wares to the highest bidder and resisted European insistences on monopoly trading treaties. While the east coast polities were much more integrated into the Indian Ocean trading networks, the west coast was relatively isolated from major shipping lanes and because of the geographical terrain, with a multitude of rivulet outlets from the hinterland to the sea, political authority in the region was fragmented by not having a central riverine port.
Political fragmentation was also socially constructed with multiple kinship-based territorial groups in constant competition with no legitimate central legal or revenue extracting authority. Neither the Dutch nor the English were able to prevent nor control internecine conflicts in order stabilize pepper production at the village level and there was no strong ruler or state to enforce regional contractual obligations for pepper supplies.

The English East India Company had established a factory and fort at Bencoolen in 1685 by treaty with the local ruler of Selebar even though he owed his allegiance as a vassal of Banten. Despite considerable financial investment in a permanent base at Fort Marlborough, Bencoolen remained an unprofitable and marginal region of the Company's activities and as such garnered little attention from Calcutta and London. English Company officials mistook the inherently fragmented nature of political authority in the region for individual weakness on the part of leaders and sought to elevate village chiefs by allocating them noble titles and a show of support in order to cement their obligations to the Company. Alternatively, they occasionally attempted to punish local rulers for breaking contracts for the supply of pepper but this was a short-sighted and counterproductive course of action, pursued through frustration rather than sound judgment regarding the dynamics of pepper production in the region.

The British found that their most reliable local allies were the Asian migrant soldiers who constituted the Bugis Corps. The existence of Bugis diaspora communities in the archipelago was commonly acknowledged in the region after the Dutch East India Company had conquered their homeland in Sulawesi in the late seventeenth century. However, ethnic identity in the region was fluid—who claimed to be Bugis or Malay or any other ethnicity changed over time and place. Members of the Bugis Corps came from varied backgrounds and by the mid-eighteenth century even the English commander in Bencoolen recognized that recruits were mostly Malays. Unlike the English, the Bugis Corps members married into local elite families and became increasingly influential in Bencoolen by adopting a middleman position between the English and the Sumatrans. The position of Bugis captain in Bencoolen was one of significant authority and the Madurese royal exile community resident in Bencoolen intermarried with this powerful faction. British reports regarding the Company settlement at Bencoolen acknowledged the power of these local rulers and the Eurasian minor officers of the Company who were longstanding employees at the factory, unlike the residents appointed from outside the region who were sent in to sort out the rather shambolic and precarious position of Company interests. Walter Ewer, sent to Bencoolen as Commissioner in 1800 wrote to his superiors that “you must consider that this a Batavian settlement, not an English one.” By this, he meant that Eurasian Company servants, Bugis Corps and indigenous rulers maximized their own power and financial advantages over those of the Company.

As Kathirithamby-Wells and Hashim have noted, according to contemporary Dutch reports, Panenbahan Cakraningrat IV had sought alliances with the British by sending his youngest son to Bencoolen to learn English language and manners in order to be a liaison with the court. Other family members were banished by Cakraningrat IV to Bencoolen when he broke with the VOC and his son went into rebellion on the Dutch side prior to his exile to the Cape of

Blood Ties 445

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Good Hope.\textsuperscript{35} The complex genealogies of the Madurese court linked these exiles both to local Sumatran and to Bugis families and accordingly the sons of these exiles served in the Bugis Corps of the English East India Company. These multiple alliances were not stable and clashes between individuals resulted in the murder of the British Resident, Thomas Parr, in 1808. This was most probably the result of the humiliation he inflicted on the son of the Bugis captain, Daeng Mabela, who was thought to be embezzling money—although this is, of course, a matter of perspective.\textsuperscript{36} The English Company found itself unable to operate without the cooperation of the Bugis and Madurese communities in Bencoolen and the next Company resident sought to stabilize relations with their erstwhile allies.

The three Madurese princes who petitioned the English for their rightful inheritance were high-ranking members of the Bugis Corps in Bencoolen. Raden Naka Wiradiningrat, Raden Muhammed Zain Perbangsa and Raden Abdul Karim Santarrah were the sons of Raden Temenggong Wiradiningrat who was the son of Cakraningrat IV sent to Bencoolen to petition the English for assistance at the outbreak of hostilities with the VOC. Even though the British did not send support to Cakraningrat IV, Raden Temenggong Wiradiningrat remained in Bencoolen while his father was in open rebellion against the VOC. When Cakraningrat IV was exiled to the Cape of Good Hope, Raden Temenggong Wiradiningrat stayed in Bencoolen and raised his family there.\textsuperscript{37} His sons, particularly Raden Muhammed Zain Perbangsa, who was known by the British as Lieutenant Raden Muhammed, was a member of the English forces along with the Bugis lieutenant, Daeng Dion Indra, to try to stabilize the pepper supply from villages in west Sumatra, particularly the Manna district.\textsuperscript{38}

By the early nineteenth century, the Manna district was in almost total disarray; with village level internecine raiding that had all but destroyed pepper plantations and production in area. The depredations being suffered by the villagers included slave raiding of women and children by the inland villagers of Pasemah Ulu Mana who were funneling captives to the coast for sale in the regional slave trade. Throughout 1813 the acting resident of Fort Marlborough, G.J. Siddons, sent detailed reports to Calcutta about the “disturbances” in the region, and was at pains to acknowledge that the Bugis Corps officers, Lieutenant Daeng Dion Indra and Lieutenant Raden Muhammed were doing their best with the limited resources allocated to them to bring the situation under control. While the resident in Bencoolen petitioned for further resources, arguing that the disruption of slave raiding against the villagers and the resumption of pepper production could only take place with the substantial extension of military presence in the area, the English authorities in Calcutta calculated that it simply was not worth the financial investment in this marginal outpost of the Company’s empire. Despite detailed reports of the violence of attacks and the desperation of villagers, as well as the helplessness of the Bugis Corps to adequately protect the villagers, no significant response or investment was forthcoming.\textsuperscript{39}

It was precisely at this moment that the English East India Company’s attention was already diverted to the invasion and occupation of Java. And it was at during this time that the Madurese princes, apparently with the support of the EIC acting resident of Bencoolen, G.J. Siddons, wrote their petition to
Lord Minto. And as the British were pleased with the performance of the son of the present ruler they saw no reason to disrupt the status quo on behalf of the petitioners. Madura’s marginalization in the geo-politics of the region remained intact. They did, however, grant the three princes a very modest pension to be paid from the treasury of Madura, and thus the matter was closed.

Conclusion

Obviously, I have not constructed this narrative on the basis of the one set of letters pinned together in the Jakarta archives. In narrating our stories of marginality and of life histories we are often confined to traces in the colonial archives. Conversely, several articles in this issue have traced the life histories of ordinary individuals who left extraordinary written records that create the opportunity for more nuanced process biographies spanning the Indian Ocean. Pier Larson has shown how Aristide Corroller sought to document his own life partly in order to legitimize his hereditary claims as part of the ruling elite in Madagascar. While my paper differs by having only one letter written by the Madurese princes, it is clear that they were aware of the power of legitimizing genealogies and sought to insert themselves into these narratives for the benefit of their English patrons. Southeast Asian societies have a rich history and archive of narrativizing their own history through court chronicles, histories, and genealogies, and these have been sources for historians willing to learn the appropriate languages and scripts. But historians have often used these sources to construct seamless narratives of the complex life of the courts, and these have reinforced the centrality of Java and the marginality of the other polities, peoples and individuals. When the British invaded Java they were engaged not only in a military campaign but an intensive construction of knowledge about the region, its peoples and its history. Indeed the Madurese princes were astute in their understanding of European politics, as the British first sought to claim what a mess the Dutch had made of ruling Java and what unjust tyrants they had been.40

British officers, who were constructing their own authority not only as honorable military men but also as experts on the “natives”, engaged in intensive writing campaigns alongside their military campaigns. John Crawford, who wrote a three volume History of the Indian Archipelago: Containing an Account of the Manners, Arts, Languages, Religions, Institutions, and Commerce of its Inhabitants, published in 1820, simultaneously fixing the “character” of the Dutch and of the various indigenous peoples of the archipelago. In assessing the longevity of Dutch influence Crawford dismissively concluded: “they owed less to the superiority of their own genius and resources, than to the imbecility of their adversaries. [The Dutch] appear always to have been deficient in military skill, and very frequently in common courage.” He claimed that desertion of European troops under the Dutch was common who then fought “under the banner of the native enemy.”

Crawfurd also fixed the character of the Madurese and the position of Madura in the history of the region:

The inhabitants of Madura are of the same race as the Javanese, and generally in the same state of civilization, with a little less refinement, and a little more
Thomas Stamford Raffles, the so-called “founder of Singapore,” was also engaged in an intensive writing campaign about Java and the Malay states. Pre-empting what would become a lasting engagement with the region that centered on the Malay Peninsula, he stated “there is something in the Malay character which is congenial to British minds.” Raffles’ own multi-volume History of Java likewise recreated a narrative history of the Javanese empire predetermining the center of rule and the “character” of the peoples of the region. Raffles acknowledged that his “native” sources were provided by the “Panembahan of Sumenap [on the island of Madura], the Secretary of the Pangeran Adipati of Surakarta, and the late Kyahi Adipati of Demak (Sura Admengalla).” Both Crawfurd and Raffles were also simultaneously engaged in the purchase and looting of Javanese manuscripts as “prizes,” and these now form the basis of archive collections in Britain and other libraries in Europe. One of the first enquiries made upon the conquest of the Javanese court was for the royal manuscripts and genealogies to be brought forward for inspection, and possible confiscation to add to their growing collections. Mary Quilty has analyzed these writings in terms of how they reinforced the status quo and created a semblance of stability and legitimacy to indigenous rulers, as well as de-legitimizing the Dutch, in order to create the circumstances whereby the British could intervene and bring “order” to the region.

Peter Carey has pointed out that this was a joint project of narrating the history of the British into the history of Java that was also engaged in by members of the Javanese court. A Javanese babad (poetic historical narrative) account of the British in Java between 1811–16 portrayed the series of events from a Javanese perspective but, unlike other indigenous babads, not entirely for an indigenous audience. It was written by the uncle of the third Sultan of Yogyakarta (Hamengkubuwana III r. 1812–14) recounting events from the British attack on the kraton on June 18–20, 1812 up to the marriage of the boy Sultan, Hamengkubuwana IV (r. 1814–22) in May 1816. The manuscript was purchased by John Crawfurd to add to his manuscript collection. Carey speculates that the author, Bendara Pangeran Arya Panular, actually wrote the account with John Crawfurd in mind as the eventual purchaser as Crawfurd was resident at the court and clearly in the market for manuscripts. The manuscript was unique in having actually been purchased rather than plundered and in its contemporary writing of events not long after they occurred. This may be confirmed by the favorable account of the conduct of the British in the conquest of the court compared with the Dutch. In particular the babad noted that there was no wholesale rape of court women and plunder of the nobility accompanying the British invasion but that the violence underpinning British authority was clearly demonstrated and performed in various ways. As Carey states:

The ‘moral ascendancy’ of the British over the Javanese is [in the babad] shown to have been based unequivocally on the use of superior military force… Thus the British confiscation of the Javanese defenders’ krisses is referred pointedly as constituting a loss of manhood, for the Javanese term used to describe the
disarmed Javanese *abedhogolan* also has the basic meaning of being deprived of one’s male member.⁴⁶

Panular’s narrating of the series of event that acknowledged British ascendancy in the region also included instances where the adoption of European military uniforms, manners and even languages enabled junior Javanese rulers to consolidate their own power by distancing themselves from the previous court order and cliques. Scots broadsword dance was adopted and adapted as part of court cultural repertoire apparently having been taught by Scots cavalrymen who served in Java at the time.⁴⁷

The Madurese nobles in Bencoolen were also commentators of their contemporary situation and one of the most informative set of documents were a collection of histories written by another of Cakraningrat IV’s grandsons, Raden Anom Zainal Abidin, who would have been the cousin of the three princes making their claim to the Madurese throne. These sources also outline the intricate marital and familial relationships between the Madurese and Bugis over several generations. Underscoring their intimate cross-generational ties was the fact that they often had both Madurese, Buginese and Malay noble titles. Kathirithamby-Wells and Hashim have designated Raden Anom’s writings as typical Malay court chronicles that “belonged to the cosmopolitan trading communities of the archipelago … Their motives for writing were less the need to record accurately as to bolster the Malay negeri (kingdom/state) and its traditions.”⁴⁸

European colonial officials often acquired these manuscripts either as documents to assist in the implementation of colonial rule, or as sources of indigenous knowledge for examination by European intellectuals. G.J. Siddons, who finally became Resident of Bengcoolen in 1816 after two appointments as Acting Resident,⁴⁹ was eventually promoted to Postmaster-General in Calcutta before his retirement and was also an active member of the Royal Asiatic Society. In 1819 he presented to the Society a manuscript written in Arabic characters that was a legal code commissioned by the EIC from the village chiefs of west Sumatra because they had no written laws prior to this codification.⁵⁰

These indigenous accounts, used as “primary sources” and “archival evidence” of events by historians, including me, often serve to reinforce the center of authority at the expense of other trajectories and lost opportunities, like that presented by the dispossessed princes of Madura. It is only having approached the princes’ letter at a tangent from the perspective of the Cape of Good Hope that their web of ties across the Indian Ocean and the Indonesian archipelago became visible. National histories of Indonesia continue to assert the marginalization of regional histories in favor of the unitary state, underscored by the national motto of Indonesia “unity in diversity.” South African national histories do not recognize many of the important exiles that wound up spending their lives metaphorically looking out across the Indian Ocean from the shores of the Cape of Good Hope. Anoma Pieris shows in the next article how Bhai Maharaj Singh and Tikri Banda Dunuwilla—both local leaders exiled by the British to Singapore—have also been more or less ignored in colonial histories. In bringing to the forefront the story of the Madurese princes, and of their genealogy, I am suggesting that there are other paths and other stories to be told that shed light onto these processes of constructing these national histories rather than
naturalize them through the narratives of the victors. That marginalization is a process and not an historical fact, and that writing histories like those in this collection helps to bring these processes into sharp relief instead of fading into the background of historical obscurity.

Endnotes

1. Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI): Madura: 6b: Letter dated May 16, 1813 translated and copied to G.A. Addison, Assistant Secretary to the Governor of Java, Stamford Raffles. See also Kerry Ward, Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company (New York, 2009), 298–9.


3. Kees van Dijk, Huub de Jonge and Elly Touwen-Bouwsma, “Introduction” in Van Dijk, De Jonge, and Touwen-Bouwsma, eds, Across Madura Strait: The Dynamics of an Insular Society (Leiden, 1995). “Madura has always been considered as an appendage of Java.” Furthermore, from a different perspective, ”In comparison with neighbouring areas or even remote islands, Madura has never evoked much enthusiasm in academic circles”, 1.

4. ANRI: Madura: 6b. Letter to J. Adam, Secretary to Government and the Political and Foreign Department from G.J. Siddons, Acting Resident, Fort Malboro [sic Marlborough], July 13, 1813.

5. Mansurnoor argues that Madurese nobility, like Javanese, traced their ancestry to the first Muslim leader of Majapahit, the central Javanese empire as a source of legitimacy. Iik Mansurnoor, “Rato and Kiai in Madura: Are they twins?” in Across Madura Strait, 39. See also Luc Nagtegaal, “The legitimacy of rule in early modern Madura,” in Across Madura Strait where he stresses that an “imposter ruler” of Sumenep in eastern Madura who was a talented commoner managed to convince his followers he was of noble birth and conquered the palace. His first move was to demand to see the royal genealogies, where he inserted his own name, thus fulfilling his claim, 49.

6. Nagtegaal, “Legitimacy of rule”, 51. This is not to say that decent was not important, but that it could be claimed and “manufactured”, and was reinforced by the moral, religious, economic, spiritual and sexual power of the claimant.


12. This section is based on Ward, Networks of Empire, 220–23. See also Luc Nagtegaal, Riding the Dutch Tiger: The Dutch East India Company and the Northeast Coast of Java, 1680–1743 (Leiden, 1996), 212–13.

13. M.C. Ricklefs, Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth Century to the early Nineteenth Century (Norwalk, CT, 2006), 131.


17. See for example, Barbara Waston Andaya. To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Honolulu, 1993).

18. It is not clear whether this order was carried out. However, the tombs of powerful religious leaders and rulers were often sacred sites and venerated by the local population, which meant that their influence was felt from beyond the grave. Religious leaders who left behind Islamic texts also continued to assert their influence, as did those who were leaders of tariqas (religious orders) whose members venerated their past leaders. Julian Millie, Splashed by the Saint: Ritual reading and Islamic sanctity in West Java (Leiden, 2009), 4.


22. Ricklefs, Mystic Synthesis, 178.


26. ANRI: Madura, 6b. Letter to Minto, May 26, 1813.

27. ANRI: Madura, 6b. Letter to Minto, May 26, 1813.


29. ANRI: Madura, 6b. Letter Siddons to Addison, May 14, 1814.


45. Mary Quilty, *Textual Empires: A Reading of Early British Histories of Southeast Asia* (Clayton, Vic., 1998).


