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The Sepoy conspiracy of 1815 in Java


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Towards the end of the period of British rule in Java (1811-1816), during the last months of 1815, a far-reaching conspiracy was discovered amongst the Sepoy (British-Indian) garrisons at the Central Javanese courts. In this conspiracy, members of the Surakarta court were themselves directly involved, and the success of the plot might have put the entire European administration of Java in jeopardy. The incident thus provides a fascinating insight into the state of kraton (court) politics in the Central Javanese kingdoms at the time as well as illustrating the laxity in discipline and widespread disaffection which prevailed amongst the Sepoy troops towards their European officers some forty years before the great Indian Mutiny of 1857-58.

Although the original documents relating to this affair are readily available in the volumes of the Bengal Secret and Political Consultations in the India Office Library (London), very little has been written about the affair in either the Dutch or English histories of the period. Some of the documents were indeed published by M. L. van Deventer and P. H. van der Kemp, whereas Raffles himself referred briefly to Sunan Pakubuwana IV's (1788-1820) connection with the Sepoys in the second volume of his History of Java, but these references provide only a very fleeting survey of this intriguing episode. This lack of information was later underlined by G. P. Rouffaer in his famous article on the Vorstenlanden (the Princely States of Central Java) when he wrote of the 'as yet highly inadequately known Sepoy conspiracy of 1815 in Solo'.

The main reason for the silence surrounding the affair in contemporary sources and memoirs was due to Raffles' own anxiety to disguise the gravity and magnitude of conspiracy from the civilian inhabitants of Java. Thus Dr. Thomas Horsfield, the American naturalist, who was resident in Java at the time, later recalled that, of this mysterious event the European inhabitants (of Java) remained almost totally unapprised, although their existence probably depended on the prompt decision of a moment, which, under Providence, was displayed by the British officers in the garrison of Yogyakarta.
The history of the involvement of Sepoy troops in Java and the state of the British-Indian army at the time was as follows. In December 1810, five new volunteer battalions numbering some 4,000 men were raised in Bengal to serve in the British expeditionary force which was then preparing in Pulau Pinang and Malacca to attack the Franco-Dutch forces in Java. Amongst these new battalions was the Light Infantry Volunteer Battalion which later saw extended service in the Central Javanese garrisons. By the time the British expedition sailed in July 1811, nearly half the entire force was composed of Indian troops from the Presidency army of Bengal. Recruits for the army of the Bengal Presidency during this period were largely drawn from Bihar, Rajputāna the Northwest provinces and Oudh, and, unlike the Presidency armies of Bombay and Madras, the northern army contained a very large percentage of high caste Hindus and men from wealthy landowning families amongst its ranks. This was particularly the case with the junior and non-commissioned officers of the Bengal army whose ranks were literally honeycombed with high caste family groups. Promotion in the Bengal army was also based on seniority and not on ability as in the southern and western armies which meant that the Sepoy officers were often old and infirm. Meanwhile, there had been a tendency after the regimental reorganisation of 1796 for European officers of Sepoy regiments to be younger and less well grounded in an understanding of Indian languages and customs for they were often seconded directly from British line regiments (King's regiments) posted in India. This meant that the relationship between officers and men was slightly looser than it had been in the late eighteenth century.

Despite these drawbacks, however, the Bengal Presidency army during the early nineteenth century was a formidable fighting force and its discipline and morale were probably at their highest by the time of the Marātha wars (1817-19). The Bengal Sepoy was renowned as an excellent soldier and in appearance he was more impressive than the Madras and Bombay Sepoys, for, in the words of a nineteenth century historian, 'he was the tallest, best formed and of the noblest presence'. He was also less docile and did not take well to long periods in canton-
ments or to garrison duty in areas far from his home province. This was partly due to the fact that, unlike his compatriots in the western and southern armies, he was not allowed to take his family with him whilst on active service, having to rely instead on remitting home a substantial part of his pay. Yet, until the period of service in Java, there were few instances of insubordination in the Bengal army and the only serious mutiny which did occur was confined to the Madras Presidency.

During the campaign in Java which led to the defeat of the Franco-Dutch forces under Governor-General J. W. Janssens in August and September 1811, the Bengal volunteer battalions acquitted themselves with considerable bravery. Indeed, they were singled out three times for special mention in dispatches and they were chosen to take part in the subsequent expeditions against Palembang (March-April 1812) and Yogyakarta (June 1812). On the occasion of this latter engagement, which led to the storming of the Yogyakarta kraton and the capture of Sultan Hamengkubuwana II (1792-1810/1811-12/1826-28), men of the Light Infantry Battalion played a crucial role in forcing the gate of the north-east bastion of the kraton close by the Crown Prince’s establishment (kadipaten), which enabled the other British-Indian forces to enter the interior of the court and take the Sultan prisoner.

Javanese reactions to the Sepoys during this early period appear to have been ones of fear tinged with admiration for their military exploits. Thus the Yogyakarta chronicler of the Babad Bedahah ing Ngayogyakarta (the history of the fall of the Yogyakarta kraton) dwelt in his work on the impressive appearance of the heavily bearded Sepoy troops during the military parade outside the Yogyakarta Residency house after the coronation of the third Sultan on 22 June 1812. But, amongst the lower order of Javanese, the Sepoys seem to have aroused unequivocal feelings of dread and dislike from the beginning. ‘So insolent and oppressive (is the conduct of the Sepoys),’ wrote the Surakarta Resident later, ‘that it constantly called for my interference.’ It was precisely this initial fear of the Sepoys on the part of the ordinary Javanese which convinced Raffles that the British-Indian troops should be kept on for garrison duty at the Central Javanese courts. For this purpose Raffles deemed that only half a battalion would be needed to garrison each of the kratons, ‘for from the fear entertained of them by the Javanese’, he wrote to Lord Minto, ‘they (the Sepoys) are hardly in any respects inferior to Europeans’.

It seems that for the next four years right up until the time of the
discovery of the Sepoy conspiracy in the latter part of 1815, the Light Infantry Battalion was kept on at the Central Javanese garrisons almost without relief.20 According to Col. N. Burslem, the commander of the eastern military division of Java, who later investigated the plot, dissatisfaction amongst the men of the Light Infantry Battalion had begun to manifest itself as early as 1813.21 In July of that year, the Java Light Cavalry Regiment, which had only recently arrived from Bengal, was withdrawn from garrison duty at the courts after a very short posting in Central Java.22 This move was naturally resented by the Light Infantry Battalion Sepoys who began to declare openly their annoyance at having been passed over in their tour of garrison duty and for having been parted from their families for so long.23 These feelings were exacerbated by the fact that the Sepoys experienced considerable difficulties in making the necessary financial remittances to their relatives in India with the result that by the end of the period of British rule some 80,000 Java rupees (1 Java rupee = f. 1.50) had accumulated in back remittances at the treasury in Batavia.24 Furthermore, military discipline in the Central Javanese garrisons had suffered because of the withdrawal of many of the European officers of Bengal regiments for civilian duties in Java and the outer islands. Thus the Light Infantry Battalion never had its full complement of seven European officers at its headquarters in Yogyakarta and for most of the time there were less than five officers present who had to divide their duties between both courts.25 Even when a Resident was appointed at one of the kratons with a military position such as Captain R. C. Garnham in Yogyakarta (1814-15) or Major J. M. Johnson in Surakarta (1813-16), he took care not to interfere directly with regimental matters.26 The command of the Sepoy garrisons thus devolved largely into the hands of the Indian junior officers and N.C.O.s who had ample opportunity to abuse their position of trust.

All these factors sowed the seeds of discontent and insubordination in the Central Javanese garrisons, but events did not begin to take a serious turn before 1814. In August 1814, news arrived in Java of the defeat of Napoleon at Leipzig (18-19 Oct. 1813) and the restoration of Dutch independence from France. In order to celebrate this event and the return of Prince Willem VI of Orange as sovereign ruler to Holland, the Dutch inhabitants in Java wore the distinction of an orange ribbon in their buttonholes. In Surakarta, the Dutch Secretary of the Residency, Sebastiaan Rauws, even gave out that the Dutch would be returning to take possession of Java within two to three
months, although confirmation of the restoration of the Dutch colonies under the terms of the Convention of London (13 Aug. 1814) did not reach the island until much later. The new confidence amongst the Dutch inhabitants and the rumours of an imminent transfer of European authority in Java caused consternation amongst the men of the Light Infantry Battalion. They began to suspect that the British were preparing to leave Java without them and that the Sepoy battalions were to be sold to the returning Dutch administration in order to ensure their protection when they resumed authority in Java. According to evidence given later to the British by the Surakarta Patih (first minister), Sasradiningrat II (1812-46), it was from this time that the first close connections between the Sepoy garrison in Surakarta and Sunan Pakubuwana IV began to develop, for the latter was persuaded to consider using the disgruntled Indian soldiers to further his own designs in Central Java.

The state of the Surakarta court at the time was peculiarly suited to the burgeoning of a political intrigue of this nature. Pakubuwana IV, who had succeeded his father as Sunan in 1788 at the age of twenty, had quickly won for himself the reputation of being a devious and intriguing ruler. In 1787-90, under the influence of some santri (religious) advisers, he had attempted to bring about a change in the balance of power in Central Java by forcing Dutch recognition of Surakarta as the senior kraton and by pressing the claims of Pangeran Mangkunagara I (1757-96) to the throne of Yogyakarta. Only after the encirclement of Surakarta by Dutch troops and contingents from the Sultanate and Mangkunagaran did the Sunan agree to forego his claims and part with his santri counsellors. Despite this setback, Pakubuwana IV never lost sight of his long term aims for the destruction of the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the restoration of Surakarta supremacy in Central Java. Thus in 1811-12, he entered into a secret correspondence with Hamengkubuwana II in which he deceitfully urged the Yogyakarta ruler to oppose the British by force in the hopes that this rash policy would encompass the ruin of Yogyakarta. In order to embolden the Sultan, Pakubuwana IV offered him Surakarta military support in the event of hostilities with the British and an undertaking between the two courts was ratified by a secret treaty in the early months of 1812. But, when Raffles attacked Yogyakarta in June of the same year, the Sunan sent his neighbour no reinforcements and held back to await the outcome of the campaign. After a short bombardment, the kraton of Yogyakarta fell to the British and the Sultan was deposed in favour
of his son. During the plundering of the court, however, copies of the secret correspondence between the Sunan and the Sultan fell into British hands and the Sunan’s handwriting was recognised on some of the letters. This proof of Pakubuwana IV’s duplicity and the fact that Surakarta troops had been placed across the British lines of communication during the attack on Yogyakarta, nearly drove Raffles to march on Surakarta and depose the Sunan. But he allowed the Surakarta ruler to purchase his forgiveness by sweeping territorial concessions and by agreeing to the dismissal of the Surakarta Patih, Cakranagara (1810-12), who had played a leading part in the intrigue with Yogyakarta. Once again Pakubuwana IV’s underhand policies had brought him humiliation at the hands of the European government, but he still did not entirely relinquish the hope of one day being able to establish Surakarta hegemony in Central Java. Indeed, this hope was quickened after 1812 by the existence of serious tensions both within the Surakarta kraton and in the relationship between the Sunan and Pangeran Prangwédana (later Mangkunagara II). Relations between the two Surakarta courts had never been very cordial, but they began to take a sharp turn for the worse in 1811 when the Sunan decided to break off the marriage negotiations between one of his daughters, the Ratu Pëmbayun, and the middle-aged Pangeran Prangwédana. The Sunan’s decision was apparently taken under pressure from the Ratu Pëmbayun’s mother, the Ratu Këncana, who was Pakubuwana IV’s principal consort. She wished to see her daughter betrothed to a son of Pangeran Mangkubumi, one of the Sunan’s younger brothers, with whom she was already allied by ties of marriage and who exercised considerable influence over the Surakarta ruler by dint of his forceful character and virulently anti-European sentiments. Prangwédana had, however, spent a reputed 40,000 Spanish dollars (1 Sp.D. = f. 3.20) out of a straitened treasury on the preparations for the marriage and its abrupt termination caused him to travel to Batavia in the latter part of 1811 to lay his grievances before Raffles. During his stay there, rumours of the Sunan’s intrigue with Yogyakarta became known and Prangwédana decided to support the British in their military operations against the Central Javanese courts in June 1812, for he rightly feared that a Javanese victory at this juncture would mean the elimination of his entire family. Thus units of the Mangkunagaran ‘Legion’, Prangwédana’s personal standing army, took part in the attack on Yogyakarta and helped to keep communications with Sémantak open. When Prangwédana returned to Surakarta, relations between the Kasunanan and the Mangku-
nagaran remained distinctly hostile and Mangkubumi began to urge Pakubuwana IV to rid himself once and for all of his Surakarta rival. At the same time, within the Surakarta court itself, the same family intrigue between Mangkubumi and the Ratu Kêncana was working to discredit the Surakarta Crown Prince (later Pakubuwana V) and to have him replaced by Pangeran Purbaya, a son of the Ratu Kêncana and a son-in-law of Mangkubumi.

In this atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue in Surakarta, Mangkubumi conceived the idea of using the Sepoys to bring pressure on the Sunan to take action both against the European government and against the other Central Javanese courts. Contacts between Mangkubumi and the Indian officers of the Light Infantry Battalion were of long standing and seem to have dated back to the early period of the battalion’s tour of duty in Surakarta. According to the Surakarta Resident, Major Johnson, initial contacts between the Sepoys and members of the Surakarta court developed out of the Sepoys’ habit of turning up uninvited at festivities held in the dalêms (residences) of prominent Javanese in the capital. In one instance Subadar (Captain) Dhaugkul Singh, the highest ranking Indian officer in Surakarta, had insinuated himself amongst the guests at a birthday party given at the palace of Pangeran Prangwêdana and this behaviour had so incensed the Pangeran that he lodged a formal protest with the Resident and ordered his sentries to keep out all Sepoy intruders. But amongst the more profligate Javanese nobles in Surakarta the Sepoys found a ready welcome and, although uninvited, they were allowed to take part in gambling and dancing parties at the princes’ dalêms. They also gained an ascendancy over the poorer Surakarta nobles by lending them money at high rates of interest. Through these contacts outside the kraton, the Sepoys were introduced to members of the Sunan’s close family and to Surakarta court officials, in particular to Pangeran Mangkubumi and to the Dêmang (head) of the gladhag (porters’ guild), Baurëksa, a close confidant of the Sunan. Once again the Sepoys seem to have cultivated these contacts in the hopes of financial gain and the Surakarta Patih later remarked that ‘it had been the constant practice of the Sepoys to squeeze from the court all the money that could be obtained’. Mangkubumi was also prevailed upon to make use of Baurëksa’s position in the gladhag to provide the Indian soldiers with a free supply of messengers to carry notes between the Sepoy garrisons in Surakarta and Yogyakarta.

Through Mangkubumi and Baurëksa the Sepoys made acquaintance with the Sunan himself. The first contact was apparently made by
Dhaugkul Singh who had gone up to the Sunan in the kraton carrying an image of Rama in his hand and had told him in flattering terms that 'if you are a descendant of a worshipper of the great Rama, then you are my master'. The Sunan was impressed by this greeting and had given the Subadar a present of 300 Spanish dollars. This initial visit was followed by that of Sepoy Ripaul Singh, 'a kind of licensed buffoon' in Johnson's words, who had delighted Pakubuwana IV and the Ratu Kencana by giving them dance performances and gymnastic displays in the private apartments of the kraton. Ripaul had likewise been rewarded by the Sunan, being given presents of gold necklaces, bangles, earrings and various kinds of cloth. Some time later Ripaul introduced the Sunan to another Sepoy N.C.O., Naik (Corporal) Mata Deen, who could speak good Malay and, as master of ceremonies for the Sepoy garrison's Hindu religious rituals, had soon aroused the Sunan's interest and admiration in Indian traditions.

This fascination on the part of the Sunan for Hindu ceremonial was later stressed by Raffles as having been one of the main reasons why such close initial contacts were formed between the Surakarta court and the Sepoys. In a letter to Lord Moira, the Governor-General of India (1813-23), he pointed out that most of the conspirators in the Light Infantry battalion were Hindus of the higher castes who 'appear to have been gratified at discovering the relics of their ancient religion and faith (in Java) and to have received without dislike a country in which they unexpectedly found themselves so much at home'. The existence of extensive Hindu remains in Central Java and the influence of Indian traditions on Javanese court culture probably contributed directly to the early intimacy between Pakubuwana IV and the Sepoys. Indeed, the Sepoy conspirators in Surakarta were at pains to emphasise to the Sunan that Java had a special Hindu heritage which in their opinion should be once again revitalised. Thus, in conversations with the Sunan, 'the Sepoys always pointed out that Java was the land of Brama. This they would say was the country in which their gods took delight; this must be the country described in their sacred books and not Hindustan, which, if ever the abode of the gods must have since been strangely altered, and that it was a sin and a shame that the land of Brama should remain in the hands of infidels (Europeans).

The fact that many of the Hindu temples and archaeological remains were in the process of being cleaned and surveyed by the British government at the time, may have also served to awaken an interest amongst the Central Javanese nobility in their Hindu past. In Yogyakarta, for
example, there is evidence that some princes took statuary away from the various Hindu and Buddhist temples around the city during this period to decorate their dalëms, and, during a visit to the temple of Prambanan in the company of John Crawfurd in 1812, Hamêngkubuwana III (1812-14) even gave instructions to one of his uncles to make a sketch of the statue of Lara Jonggrang. But, when the Sepoy conspirators in Yogyakarta later tried to capitalise on this interest to win over the fourth Sultan to their plans for insurrection against the British, they met with a rebuff. Politically the Sepoys never enjoyed much support from the Yogyakarta court even though many Indian soldiers had deserted in the Sultan’s capital and had intermarried with leading Yogyakarta families. In Surakarta, however, the Sunan immediately responded to the Sepoys’ overtures by lending them Hindu images from the Surakarta court collection and by providing money for the decoration of the statues and to light up the ghâts (platforms) on which they were placed. He also attended various Hindu ceremonies inside the fort, usually alone and disguised as a common Javanese, but sometimes also accompanied by members of his family when he would arrive by carriage. On these occasions the Sunan would be received by Mata Deen and Dhaugkul Singh.

Throughout the latter part of 1814 and the early months of the following year, the relationship between the Sunan and the Sepoys grew steadily more intimate with meetings being held both in the kraton and in the fort. Lt. Richard Hart, the Assistant-Resident of Surakarta, later wrote a somewhat overdrawn account of these meetings in the kraton to his superior, Major Johnson, and described how ‘the Sepoys were in the kraton (kraton) of the Emperor (Sunan) even in his most secret apartments from morning till night, no exception from the native officers down to the beesty Hindus, [who] talked to him of his Hindu forefathers and the Musulmen of his Prophet and present religion. In gold, diamonds and money the amount is incredible that they have received from him’. Later, after Johnson had made inquiries in Surakarta and after the court-martial proceedings at Sërondol in January 1816 had been made known, a more balanced picture of these meetings came to light. Thus it seems to have been mainly Subadar Dhaugkul Singh together with Mata Deen and Ripaul Singh, acting as his Malay interpreters, who remained in the closest contact with the Sunan throughout this early period. Johnson, for example, reported how Pakubuwana IV would sit in the evening on the Randingan, the place set aside for archery practice in the kraton, and interrogate them on the manner
and customs of India and watch their gymnastic displays. In particular, Dhaugkul Singh told the Sunan about the history of Bengal, the strength of the British army in India and their victories there, stressing that the power of the British was entirely dependent on the Sepoys. Dhaugkul himself, who was a Rajput of the kṣatria (warrior) caste and was later chosen by the Sepoys as the governor of Java in the event of a successful rising against the British, also gave out to the Sunan that 'in his country he was a great man and was treated with the same respect as pangerans (princes) in Java'. The Sunan for his part was profoundly impressed and, according to Raffles, 'he was naturally led into an admiration of their character. He was flattered by the great attentions they paid to him and in return they [the Sepoys] were not blind to the facility with which he might be brought into any [of their] plans.'

During this early period, however, neither the Sunan nor the Sepoys had devised any firm plans for a conspiracy against the British and the Yogyakarta court. The most that Pakubuwana IV hoped for at this stage was to be able to retain some of the Sepoys in his service after the return of the Dutch and to build up a connection with the inhabitants of British India, with the intention of perhaps using these connections to further the existing intrigue in the Surakarta court for the elevation of Pangeran Purbaya as Crown Prince. The Sunan's cautious and non-committal attitude at this time can be gauged from a conversation which took place between him and Dhaugkul Singh inside the fort in the latter part of 1814. During this talk, which was overheard by Baurëksa, the Sunan had apparently asked the Subadar for news from Bengal and had been told that the Hindus were opposing the British there and that unless the government allowed Dhaugkul and his battalion to return home, he would make a start with them in Java. Whereupon the Sunan had replied that he was now a child of the English and that those who wished to oppose them could do so but that he had nothing to say to it. Shortly after this encounter Mata Deen and Ripaul Singh, the two Malay interpreters, had been removed to the battalion's headquarters in Yogyakarta and connections with the Surakarta court had lapsed for a time.

Meanwhile, developments which took place during the course of the following year seem to have emboldened the Sepoy conspirators in Central Java and to have crystallized their vague plans for a general uprising against the British. Thus the withdrawal of the 59th Infantry regiment, a European regiment, from Sëmarang in the middle of 1815 and the general running down of the British military presence in Java
in preparation for the Dutch arrival, encouraged the Sepoys into thinking that they could defy the authority of the government with impunity. Furthermore, when, in September 1815, the army commander-in-chief, Sir Miles Nightingall, arrived in the princely territories to take leave of the local garrison commanders before his departure for Bengal, the Sepoys noticed that the British officers who had gone up to Sela to confer with him looked particularly dejected. This was interpreted as a sign that the island would very shortly be handed back to the Dutch and rumours spread amongst the Indian troops that the kings of England and Holland had negotiated a marriage between their children and that Java was to be given as a dowry to the Dutch ruler.

These reports once again reawakened all the old fears amongst the Sepoys that their battalions were about to be sold to the Dutch and the idea thus grew amongst them that preventive steps should be taken. Some of the conspirators suggested that the European officers should be seized and forced to take the Sepoys back with them to Bengal, whilst others put forward more ambitious plans for murdering their British superiors and those Sepoy officers who remained loyal to the government and replacing the European administration in Java with a Sepoy one. In connection with this latter plan, the conspirators proposed to build a residence for Dhaugkul Singh, the intended governor, on the heights overlooking Surakarta and expected that help might be forthcoming from the French.

At the same time, Mata Deen in Yogyakarta entered into correspondence with the Sepoy garrisons at Weltevreden (Batavia) and Surabaya to co-ordinate plans in the event of a successful uprising in Central Java. Close contacts were also maintained with the Indian troops at Klaten and Bayalali as well as with the Sepoys in Kêdhu, for, besides the small garrison at Magêlang, many of those who had deserted the battalion in Yogyakarta had settled in that region. Another Sepoy officer, Subadar Fakir Singh, promised that he would use his influence to win over the Malay battalions in Batavia and secure the capital for the conspirators. In the same month, September 1815, reports were received from members of the 4th Volunteer battalion, who had deserted in Sulawesi, that the Raja of Bone had taken them on as mercenaries and had given them command of a separate battalion with the pay of 500 Java rupees per month. News of this circulated amongst the Central Javanese garrisons and Mata Deen, who was back in Surakarta for a short visit, once again approached the Sunan with the words: ‘Now will you believe that Sepoys are fit to command armies? Give me money
and men and leave the rest to us.' According to Baurëksa, Mata Deen asked the Sunan for about 400 Surakarta troops and Sp.D. 4,000 in cash with the intention of bribing the Sepoys in Central Java and using the Surakarta levies against the British. The money was important for the conspirators in order to be able to indemnify the Sepoys for their remittances to the British treasury which had not been forwarded to Bengal. The Sunan appears to have agreed to this provided that Pangeran Purbaya was placed on the throne of Yogyakarta, and Mangkubumi gave an undertaking to the Sepoys that their monthly pay would be guaranteed until such time as they wished to return to Bengal after destroying the European administration in Java. From September onwards frequent meetings between the leaders of the conspiracy in Surakarta began to be held in Purbaya's dalêm, which were mainly attended by Mangkubumi, and the Sunan circulated letters to the Sultan of Madura and the Bupatis of Semarang and Surabaya informing them that the European officers in the Yogyakarta garrison were about to be murdered.

The Sunan's motives for implicating himself in this fashion in the Sepoy plot are difficult to decipher exactly. It is clear that he was unhappy with the plans for massacring the British officers, just as in 1812 he had wished to avoid bloodshed during the conspiracy with Yogyakarta, but it is likely that he was overruled by Mangkubumi. Furthermore, Mangkubumi played on his fears that, when the Dutch returned to Java, they would suspend the 1812 treaty signed by the Sunan with the British and end the payments for the rent of the Surakarta pasars (markets) and bandars (tollgates) which constituted an important source of income for the Surakarta court. On the other hand the Sunan seems to have entertained the hope that a successful Sepoy uprising in Yogyakarta would not only place the Sultanate under his control, but also win back for him the rich apanage area of Kêdhu, which had been annexed by the British three years earlier. The prospect of thus establishing Surakarta supremacy once again in Central Java was probably so enticing for the Sunan that he was prepared to sanction any means to achieve this end.

The question as to what would have been the relationship between the Sunan and the Sepoys after the destruction of the British administration in Java never seems to have been clarified. It is possible that Pakubuwana IX expected the Sepoys to return to Bengal or at the most establish themselves on the north coast or in West Java, which, in the view of the Central Javanese courts, had always constituted a foreign
kingdom and was not a legitimate part of the Mataram patrimony. But, from the little evidence available, it seems that the Sepoys intended to settle in Central Java and their decision to build the new governor's mansion for Dhaukgul Singh in the vicinity of Surakarta points to this fact. Indeed, as the intrigue progressed, the Surakarta court began to assume an increasingly secondary role in the eyes of the Sepoy conspirators and they would probably have had very little compunction about ridding themselves of the Sunan once he was no longer of any direct use to them. Thus, it is significant that the first evidence which led to the discovery of the plot by European officers in Yogyakarta was the report of a discussion amongst some Sepoys on 10 October 1815 as to what to do with the Sunan once the conspiracy was successful. The issue had apparently been left open and one of the Sepoys was overheard to remark: 'Never mind about that now; he may be of use to us on the present occasion and when we have established ourselves we can easily settle that point. One house does not make a bazaar.'

Although the main plans for the conspiracy were laid in Surakarta in conjunction with members of the Surakarta court, the final details were settled in Yogyakarta, for it was there that the first uprising against the European officers in the Light Infantry Battalion's headquarters was planned to take place. Moreover, the principal Sepoy plotters were also stationed in the Sultan's capital at the time and events began to develop there after Mata Deen's return from Surakarta on 12 October 1815. Thus groups of Sepoys started meeting secretly on the ramparts of the fort at night and on 21 October, the European Sergeant-Major of the battalion heard a rumour from his orderly that there was a mutinous spirit amongst the men. The warning was repeated five days later and he was told to secure the door of his room at night. Meanwhile, on 24 October about twenty-nine Sepoy officers and men gathered in the ruins of the Taman Sari, the first Sultan's massive water palace to the west of the Yogya kraton, to take on oath of allegiance to their fellow conspirators and to pledge their support for the forthcoming uprising. During this meeting, which took place at one o'clock in the afternoon, one of the Sepoy N.C.O.s knelt down and entered a trance, declaring that the best time to begin the murder of the British officers was between 6.30 and 7 o'clock that evening. Mata Deen then also knelt on the ground and a wreath of flowers was thrown over his head as a sign that he was to be the leader of the party designated to make the murderous attack on the officers. Whereupon Subadar Fakir Singh took his tulwar (short cavalry sabre) and placed it in Mata Deen's hands as an acknow-
ledgement of the conspirators' pledge to proceed to Surakarta and to conquer the country as far as Sēmarang for the Sunan. At 7 o'clock, the conspirators convened again at the north-west bastion of the fort, but they appear to have decided to wait until more men from the battalion joined them, and the attack was postponed for two days until 26 October. Thoughout this intervening period an almost continuous meeting was held in Dhaugkul Singh's quarters in the fort to which other members of the battalion were invited. Further plans were then laid to march at 4 o'clock in the morning to the dalêm of Pangeran Paku Alam and seize the Sultan's treasure which was being kept there.

The conspirators intended to transfer this to the Residency, which was to be turned into a Hindu temple after various implements of Hindu worship had been sent over from Surakarta. After this, Paku Alam together with the Chinese inhabitants of Yogyakarta were to be murdered, the young Sultan arrested and a 101 gun salute was to be fired from the fort to mark Dhaugkul Singh's elevation as governor. At the same time as these plans were being discussed, placards in Bengali were posted all over the Sultan's capital urging the other Sepoys to join in the mutiny and messages were received from the Sunan and Mangkubumi advising immediate action.

Despite this encouragement, the conspiracy was again postponed until 29 October, presumably because the ringleaders were still experiencing difficulties in eliciting sufficient support from the battalion. By this time, Lt. Steel, the acting commanding officer of the garrison, had been informed of what was afoot and had hurriedly paraded the Sepoy troops warning the battalion that anyone involved in the plot would be executed by being blown away from the mouth of cannon, a usual punishment for mutiny in the Indian army. The threat had the desired effect, for two of the leading conspirators, Mata Deen and Jemadar Dia Ram, cancelled their plans and tried to leave for Surakarta in order to take further consultations with the Surakarta court. In the meantime, the battalion commander, Capt. Cook, returned to Yogyakarta and instituted an immediate commission of inquiry into the whole affair, which sat from the 9-16 November and during which members of the battalion gave evidence against the conspirators. The ringleaders together with about twenty others were then sent under guard to Sérondol near Sēmarang to await the convening of a general court-martial in the following January and arrests were also made in Surakarta. The prompt action taken by the British officers in Yogyakarta appears to have been entirely successful in scotching the intrigue amongst the
Sepoys at the battalion’s headquarters and in December European troops were brought in from Semarang as replacements for the Sepoy garrisons at the courts. The number of European officers attached to the Sepoy regiments was raised at the same time from five to seven which helped to ensure that discipline was more strictly enforced amongst the Sepoy rank and file.

Although the conspiracy collapsed quickly in Yogyakarta after the arrest of the ringleaders in November, Surakarta remained unsettled for some time afterwards. Part of the reason for this was the long delay of two months before the Resident, Major Johnson, could make a full inquiry into the extent of the Surakarta court’s involvement with the Sepoy conspirators. The Resident in fact appears to have been totally out of touch with the nature of developments in Surakarta before the discovery of the intrigue as he had often been absent from his duties either on sick-leave at Sela or on civilian assignments. Thus he was first informed of the conspiracy on 17 November whilst he was away in Batavia and it was not until the end of December that he was able to submit a report on the situation in Surakarta to Raffles. During this time the Surakarta court remained in a state of turmoil, fearing that Raffles would proceed with military measures against the Sunan and making half-hearted attempts to organise resistance. Thus the Sunan was reported to have sent around to all the villages in the Mataram area which were under Surakarta control and had ordered the collection of muskets. Spies were also posted around the Surakarta fort to give the court immediate information of the approach of loyal Sepoys and European troops to the kraton and various Surakarta princes and officials were said to have entered into an agreement to go to the rescue of Pangeran Mangkubumi in case the British government attempted to exile him.

Mangkubumi himself was at the centre of these preparations and was in close contact with the Surakarta Bupati of Banyumas, Tumenggung Yudanegara, to co-ordinate resistance there and to prepare a base for him in the western mancanagara (outlying) provinces in case he was forced to slip away from Surakarta. In connection with these arrangements, the Assistant-Resident of Yogyakarta described how two santris (men of religion) in Banyumas, Muhamad Ali and Mahdi Sayid, who styled themselves as Pangeran Jayakusuma and Pangeran Anom, had gathered about 200 men and were keeping a royal state with a large train of armed followers. Prangwëdana was also reported to have been gathering his retainers from Karangpandhan on the slopes of Mt. Lawu.
to the east of Surakarta on the pretext of adjusting rents, but these moves by the Mangkunagaran court were probably an attempt at self-defense in the event of a clash between the Sunan and the British.\textsuperscript{102}

Whilst these developments were taking place in Central Java, Raffles came to a swift decision early in January 1816, based on Johnson's reports, not to proceed to an attack on Surakarta but to pardon the Sunan on condition that he surrendered Mangkubumi to the British government and put an end to any further intrigues against the Crown Prince in the Surakarta court.\textsuperscript{103} The Lieutenant-Governor's decision may have been partially dictated by an awareness of his disadvantageous military position at the time, but, as it turned out, he had judged Pakubuwana IV correctly and the latter made no attempt to prevent his younger brother from being handed over to Raffles in S\textemdash marang on 7 January.\textsuperscript{104} Two days later Raffles travelled to Surakarta for a series of talks with the Sunan and the Surakarta Patih during which he uttered strong warnings that any further intrigues would not be countenanced and insisted that the Surakarta ruler should retire from his administrative responsibilities in the kraton on account of his age and delegate these to the Crown Prince.\textsuperscript{105} At the same time he gave the Sunan promises that the Dutch would not tamper with the existing treaty arrangements when they arrived to assume the government from the British in the following August. Similar promises were also extended to Ham\textemdash ēngkubuwana IV and Paku Alam when Raffles visited Yogyakarta on his return journey.\textsuperscript{106} Raffles' leniency towards the Sunan did not, however, prove to the liking of Pangeran Prangwédana who approached the Surakarta Resident with the request that the British should consider dethroning his rival in view of the fact that the Sepoy plot was the third fault he had committed against the European government during his reign.\textsuperscript{107} But, although the evidence given by the Sepoys at the S\textemdash erondol court-martial in January implicated the Sunan even more heavily in the conspiracy than Raffles had at first supposed, the Lieutenant-Governor did not go back on his earlier decision.\textsuperscript{108}

Moves were nevertheless taken to tighten up security arrangements in Central Java. In Yogyakarta, a new corps of 25 mounted troops was formed to guard the kraton and to keep an eye on the activities of the court, much in the same fashion as the small dragoon detachment which was maintained by the Sunan in Surakarta.\textsuperscript{109} These troops were recruited from Dutch and German residents in the Central Javanese court towns who had Indonesian mothers. There were also some Am- bonese troops attached to the corps which was commanded by a
European officer seconded from the European garrison. Most of these men spoke Malay and some even understood a little Javanese so that they were supposed to be able to report back any developments in the kraton to the Resident. At the same time, the ineffectual British Resident in Yogyakarta, Dr. Daniel Ainslie, was required by Raffles to hand over his post on 22 January 1816 to the much more experienced John Crawfurd, who began his fourth period as Resident at the Sultan’s court. The Sepoy conspirators were also harshly dealt with by the military authorities: 17 were shot by firing squad at Semarang after their court-martial and about 50 were shipped back in irons to Bengal.

This, however, was not the last that was heard of the Sepoys in Central Java. Ironically, the Light Infantry Battalion, which Raffles had demanded should be sent back immediately to Bengal, was one of the last regiments to leave Java because of the acute shortage of troops available to the British during the period of transfer to the Dutch. Furthermore, a detachment of about 100 Bengal lancers was taken over by the Netherlands-Indies government in 1816 for duty as Jayeng Sekars (mounted constabulary) and later proved mutinous during the fighting against Dipanagara in 1825. Some Sepoy deserters from the Light Infantry Battalion also seem to have stayed on in Central Java after 1816 and there were reports that a few had even taken service in the bodyguard regiments of the Sunan and the Sultan. Others engaged in trade, especially in dairy products between Kedhu, Bayalali and the courts. Although their numbers were never very large, they were sufficiently numerous to be of some concern to the Dutch officials in the area. Thus, in 1817, Nahuys van Burgst, the Dutch Resident of Yogyakarta (1816-22), warned the government about ‘the presence of so many of these inhabitants of Bengal in the interior of Java, which must be regarded as a danger to the local inhabitants... for their greater intelligence and ambition sets them out above the Javanese as leaders...’. Nahuys’ warning appeared well founded for, in 1822, a Bengali, Durga Singh, played a prominent role in Pangeran Dipasana’s rebellion against the Dutch government in Kedhu and later, during the Java War (1825-30), a man by the name of Nurragali, who was described in Dipanagara’s autobiographical babad (chronicle) as a dhukun Benggala, a Bengali physician and herbalist, served with the prince against the Dutch.

Thus the Sepoys continued to enjoy some influence on Central Javanese politics long after the fiasco of the 1815 plot against the British. The plot itself, despite its abortive nature, remains an important his-
torical landmark both for the history of the Indian army and for internal developments at the Central Javanese courts. As far as the Sepoys were concerned, the conspiracy drew attention to many of the factors which were later of importance in precipitating the great Indian mutiny of 1857-8. Thus there was the same paucity of European officers attached to the Sepoy regiments, the same independent spirit amongst the junior and non-commissioned officers in the Bengal units and the same heightened feelings of Indian cultural superiority which proved such a dangerous combination forty years later. In this case, however, there were significant mitigating factors. Firstly, the Light Infantry Battalion was a volunteer force and therefore lacked the discipline of the regular Sepoy formations. Secondly, the Java expedition was one of the first times that Bengal soldiers had been required by the British to serve overseas and such service was especially resented by high born Hindus since travelling away from India involved them in a loss of caste. Thirdly, the Sepoys in the Central Javanese garrisons did have genuine grievances arising out of their long tour of duty at the courts and the difficulties which they experienced in remitting funds to their families in Bengal. Finally, the vagueness which surrounded the transference of Java to Dutch rule, a consequence of the confused state of European politics during the period 1813-15, did awaken legitimate fears amongst the Sepoys about their future. The 1815 plot should thus be seen initially rather as a desperate attempt on the part of the Indian soldiers to take the law into their own hands in order to prevent their abandonment by the British rather than as a carefully organised conspiracy to topple the British administration in Java. More ambitious plans for political hegemony on the island were probably entertained by only a few of the ringleaders who had received encouragement from the Surakarta court and who were emboldened by the manifest weakness of Raffles’ government. The rest of those who took part in the plot, never a very large number, seem to have been solely motivated by a wish to return to Bengal as soon as possible. Yet, despite these reservations, the 1815 Sepoy conspiracy in Java should have been taken more seriously by the British authorities in India, for the fashion in which the Indian officers and men reacted to such a long tour of duty in the strangely familiar environment of the Central Javanese courts was not a good omen for future developments in the Indian army.

The main significance of the Sepoy plot of 1815 in Java, however, is the light which it sheds on court politics in Yogyakarta and Surakarta.
at the time. Thus it can be seen to fit in clearly with the long term rivalry between the Central Javanese courts during the period after the division of Java in 1755 and more particularly with the personal aims of the Sunan who had already tried twice before during his reign to re-establish Surakarta’s erstwhile predominance in Central Java. The 1815 conspiracy with the Sepoys was in fact the last serious effort on the part of the Sunan to achieve this goal, although in 1820, just before his death, he tried once again to take advantage of a confused political situation to improve his position in Central Java.119 Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Sepoy plot is that it was an intrigue which fitted well with the credulous and underhand character of the Sunan. For, just as in 1811-12 he had urged Yogyakarta on against the British in the hopes of benefiting from the ensuing conflict and destroying his rival, so in 1815 he appears to have tried to use the Sepoys in a similar fashion.120 The plot also underlined yet again Pakubuwana IV’s completely unrealistic assessment of the political forces opposing him. Within the Surakarta kraton, for example, most of the Sala princes and officials took no part in the intrigue and some, such as the Patih, the Crown Prince, Pangeran Buminata and Tumënggung Cakrakusuma, the army commander, highly disapproved of it.121 Indeed, it is likely that on this occasion Pakubuwana IV was carried much further than he wished, probably on the prompting of Mangkubumi, with regard to the Sepoys’ plans for a general uprising against the British and he would certainly have found himself in a difficult position vis-à-vis his Indian allies if the conspiracy had been successful. But, even at its most extensive, the involvement of the Surakarta court was limited to the small court faction around the Ratu Këncana, Mangkubumi and Purbaya. Once it was clear that the plot was doomed to failure and the British were instituting investigations, the Sunan was prepared to sacrifice his younger brother in order to save his own position in the same way that he had done with his Patih, Cakranagara, in 1812. Such misguided opportunism was the hallmark of Pakubuwana IV’s reign.

NOTES

1 Reports relating to the Sepoy conspiracy of Oct. - Dec. 1815 can be found in the I(ndia) O ffice L ibrary, B(engal) S(ecret an) d P olitical C onsultations, vol. 278 (15 Apr. 1816, nos. 29 & 34); vol. 279 (4 May 1816, nos. 24 & 26); vol. 280 (18 May 1816, nos. 7-9); vol. 282 (31 Aug. 1816, no. 17 and 14 Sept. 1816, no. 26); vol. 283 (5 Oct. 1816, no. 4).

2 M. L. van Deventer (ed.), Het Nederlandisch Gezag over Java en onder-

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The Seopy Conspiracy of 1815 in Java


J. (gemeen) R.(ijksarchief, The Hague) M.(inisterie) v.(an) K.(oleniën) folder no. 4132, P. H. van Lawick van Pabst, 'Consideratïen op de Nota van den Heer MacGillavry' (Aug. 1826), folio 23 (henceforth cited as Van Pabst, 'Nota'). Van Pabst's assertion that the British authorities left behind no documents relating to the Seopy Conspiracy after their departure from Java in August 1816, needs to be revised in view of the sources found by D. F. W. Pinket van Haak, the first Dutch Resident of Surakarta (1816-17) after the hand-over, in the Surakarta Residency archive, see Van der Kemp, Het N.I. Bestuur in 1817, Bijlage VI, pp. 324-5.

Lt. F. G. Cardew, A Sketch of the Services of the Bengal Native Army to 1895 (Calcutta, 1903), p. 110. The Light Infantry Battalion numbered 576 men, the other 4 volunteer battalions a total of 3,592 men.

Major W. Thorn, Memoir of the Conquest of Java, (London, 1815), pp. 16-17. In the figures given in the 'General Abstract of the army under Sir Samuel Auchmuty', dated Malacca 4 Jun. 1811, and reproduced by Thorn on p. 17, the British-Indian troops are reckoned at 5,777 men out of a total expeditionary of 11,121. Apart from some Pioneers and Tent lascars from Madras (839 men), the rest of the British-Indian forces were from Bengal.

H. H. Dodwell (ed.), The Cambridge Shorter History of India, (Cambridge, 1934), p. 733; J. H. Kaye, A History of the Seopy War in India 1857-58, vol. 1 (London, 1880), p. 212. In theory each Bengal Infantry Regiment numbered 800 Sepoys who were commanded by 7 European officers and the following Indian Junior Officers: 1 Subadar-Major, 10 Subadars (Captains), 10 Jemadars (Lieutenants) as well as various non-commissioned officers with the British-Indian ranks of Havildar (Sergeant) and Naik (Corporal).

Kaye, op. cit., p. 335.

Ibid. pp. 214-5.

Cardew, op. cit., p. 116; Dodwell, op. cit., p. 728.

Kaye, op. cit., p. 213.

Ibid., pp. 333-4.

This was the Vellore mutiny of 1806, which took place at the headquarters of the North Arcot district (Madras). Like the great Indian Mutiny of 1857-8, the revolt in the Vellore garrison was sparked off by a regulation about dress, particularly the introduction of a new turban. 19 European officers and 99 European soldiers were massacred before the mutiny was crushed and there were incidents in other Sepoy garrisons in the Carnatic at Nandidroog, Hyderabad and Pallamacottah. There were no movements in the Bengal garrisons at the time, possibly because there had been no attempt to meddle with the local custom and idiosyncracies of dress, caste marks and accoutrements worn by the Bengal Sepoys (on this matter see W. Y. Carman, Indian Army Uniforms under the British from the 18th century to 1947; Artillery, Engineers, Infantry (London, 1969), p. 98). An interesting feature of the Vellore mutiny which foreshadowed the later Seopy conspiracy in Java and the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8, were the intrigues of the Madras Sepoys with members of the...
princely family of Mysore and their attempt to restore princely rule in the Mysore area (see Kaye, op. cit., pp. 229-30 and for a general account of the Vellore mutiny itself see W. J. Wilson, History of the Madras Army, vol. III (Madras, 1883), Chap. XVIII).

16 Ibid., p. 125.
17 L(eiden University Library) Or(iental MS.) 2045 (Babad Bëdhah ing Ngayogyakarta) XIX. 9-14, pp. 174-5.
18 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816 no. 25, Major J. M. Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815.
20 IOL BSPC, vol. 278, 15 Apr. 1816 no. 31, Col. N. Burslem to Raffles, 5 Dec. 1815; Van Deventer, op. cit., p. 58 n. 1. For a period in 1812-13, Surakarta was garrisoned by a detachment of 63 men from the H.M. 14th Regiment of Foot, a European regiment. The garrison strengths at Klaten and Yogyakarta, where men of the Light Infantry Battalion were stationed, numbered 71 and 267 troops respectively, see IOL G. 21/68, 'General Return of the Army', 1 Oct. 1812.
21 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816, no. 25, Raffles to Lord Moira, 8 Feb. 1816; Van Deventer, op. cit., p. 62.
22 I(ndia) O(ffice) R(ecords) G. 21/33, Java Military Consultations, 28 Jul. 1813.
23 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816, no. 27, Raffles to Col. Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816.
24 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816 no. 25, Raffles to Ld. Moira, 8 Feb. 1816.
25 IOL BSPC, vol. 278, 15 Apr. 1816, no. 29, Raffles to N. B. Edmonstone, 8 Dec. 1816; Van Deventer, op. cit., p. 58 n. 1. Raffles mentioned in his letter that the complement of European officers for every Sepoy corps was raised to 7 after the discovery of the conspiracy. Before that time, in Yogyakarta at least, there were only 3 European officers (Capt. Cook, Lt. Wake and Lt. Steel). Two other officers, Lt. Taylor and Capt. Baker, had been withdrawn for civilian duties, the first as Assistant-Resident of Yogyakarta and the latter as Superintendent of forts, public buildings and roads in the Native Princes' Dominions, see F. de Haan, 'Personalia der Periode van het Engelsch Bestuur over Java 1811-1816', BKI, vol. 92 (1935), p. 492, p. 650.
26 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816 no. 27, Raffles to Col. Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816. Raffles referred to Johnson as an officer of 30 years standing in the Bengal army who had taken care to show the same indulgence to the Sepoys in Java as they had been used to in India. Thus, although the contacts between the Sepoys and the Surakarta court had eventually become public knowledge in Surakarta, Johnson had taken no disciplinary action about it. Regimental matters had been delegated to Lt. Richard Hart, the Assistant-Resident of Surakarta (1812-16), who was himself from a British line regiment (H.M. 78th Regiment of Foot) and not from a Sepoy battalion, see further De Haan, op. cit., pp. 566-7.
27 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816, no. 27, Raffles to Col. Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, enclosure no. 2.
28 Ibid.; IOL BSPC, vol. 278, 15 Apr. 1816 no. 31, report of the trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 10 Nov. 1815 and 11 Nov. 1815.
29 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816, no. 27, Raffles to Col. Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, enclosure no. 1.
western language MS. H. 503, J. I. van Sevenhoven, 'Aanteekeningen gehouden op een reis over Java van Batavia naar de Oosthoek in ... 1812', 6 Apr. - 2 Aug. 1812, p. 63 described the appearance of PB IV as being like that of a Chinese, 'his face showed guile and fear, but absolutely no courage'. Raffles wrote of him in a similar fashion to Lord Minto in Aug. 1812 characterising the Sunan as a man 'of a weak, unsteady and sinister disposition' (see IOL Eur. F. 148/23, Raffles to Lord Minto, 6 Aug. 1812) and later informed Lord Moira that 'the Sunan ... is weak and even contemptible. He is enervated and enfeebled by success, indecisive in his conduct, inclined to intrigue where he dares not act and (is) constantly under the influence of some domestic party' (IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816, no. 25, Raffles to Lord Moira, 8 Feb. 1816).


Copies of the secret correspondence and the secret treaty between the courts can be found in IOL Raffles-Minto collection, Eur. F. 148/24, pts. A-E and pt. F, Jan.-Apr. 1812. On the severing of the British lines of communication by the Sunan's troops, see Raffles to Lord Minto, 6 Aug. 1812, loc. cit.


Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816, *loc. cit.*; Raffles referred to Mangkubumi as 'a man of notorious and desperate character confined to the craton (kraton) for former misconduct' (Raffles to Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, *loc. cit.*) and Sasradiningrat told Raffles that 'Mangkubumi is a madman, always abusing the Europeans' (*Idem*, enclosure no. 1).


Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816, *loc. cit.*


Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816, *loc. cit.* According to Johnson, Prangwédana had refused to speak to the Sunan after 1812 and had treated the Kasunanan with contempt and even ridicule until Raffles had ordered him to be more civil to Pakubuwana IV during the Lieutenant-Governor's visit to Surakarta in Dec. 1813. Prangwédana had then agreed to meet the Sunan in public, but still refused to pay him the proper respects. Civilities between the two courts were not resumed.

Van Deventer, *Het Nederlandsch Gezag*, p. 59, Raffles to Lord Moira, 8 Dec. 1815. Purbaia later succeeded to the Surakarta throne in 1830 as Pakubuwana VII. General H. M. de Kock described him as a person with gentle and pleasant manners, who was loved and revered by Javanese of all classes. But he was also said to be very weak and had allowed himself to be manoeuvred into his claim to the Surakarta throne (AR, H. M. de Kock private coll.)
Raffles to Col. Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, *loc. cit.*, enclosure no. 1, ‘Testimony of R. Adip. Sasradiningrat’, who stated that the first contacts had occurred at about the time Mangkubumi’s wife died in 1813.

Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, *loc. cit.* According to Johnson, Baurëksa was typical of the sort of advisers the Sunan gathered round him at the time for, despite being a hard working man, he was also ‘a most determined drunkard and contemptible character’. On the institution of the *gladhag* see J. F. C. Gericke & T. Roorda, *Javaansch-Nederlandsch Handwoordenboek*. Ed. A. C. Vreede and J. G. H. Gunning, vol. II (Leiden, 1901), p. 593.

Raffles to Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, quoting information given to him by Sasradiningrat.

Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, *loc. cit.*, enclosure no. 2, ‘Translation of testimony given by Baurëksa, mantri *gladhag*’. Later the Sunan arranged for the Sepoy officers to be given gratis 2 porters each day and for ordinary Sepoys to receive 1, see *Idem*, enclosure no. 1, ‘Translation of testimony given by Kértadangsa, secretary of Baurëksa’.

Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816, *loc. cit.*; see also Th. S. Raffles, *History of Java* (London, 1817) vol. II, p. 5 for a rather different account of the initial meeting between the Sepoys and the Sunan. Although both Johnson and Raffles referred to the image carried by Dhaugkul Singh as being that of the mythical Indian king Rama, it is likely that the image was that of Brama, the third god of the Hindu pantheon.

Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, *loc. cit.* enclosures nos. 1-2. The role played by Ripaul Singh was probably very similar to that of the Javanese *panakawan* or court jester.

Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816, *loc. cit.* referred to the fact that Mata Deen was ‘much looked up to by the Sunan and his ascendancy over him appears to have been unaccountably great’.

See Raffles, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 5. His idea that the success of the Sepoy conspiracy might have led to the reconversion of the Javanese to Hinduism is, however, completely without foundation; see below n. 88.

Raffles to Lord Moira, 8 Feb. 1816, *loc. cit.*


On the British efforts to restore Prambanan and other temples see A(rsip) N(asiona1, Jakarta) ‘Bundel Djokjo Brieven’ no. 29, Garnham to Raffles, 19 Jun. 1815; *Id.* to *Id.*, 20 Jun. 1815. Much of the surveying of the ruins was performed by Capt. G. P. Baker, see R(oyal) A(siatic) S(ociety, London) Raffles collection ‘Java Antiquities’ and De Haan, *op. cit.*, p. 492.

AN ‘Bundel Djokjo Brieven’ no. 52, A. H. Smisenaert to President of the Antiquities Commission (Japara), 10 Jul. 1823; AR Van Alphen-Engelhard private collection (aanwisten 1941) no. 28, Smisenaert to C. Th. Elout, n.d. (? Oct. 1828); Anon. ‘Journal of an excursion to the Native provinces of Java in the year 1828 during the war with Dipo Negoro’, *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* (Singapore), vol. 8 (1853), p. 225, which mentions that the second Sultan had given instructions that two statues from Prambanan should be placed near the bridge across the Kali Opak; Peter Carey, ‘The Cultural Ecology of Early Nineteenth Century Java’, *Occasional Paper* no. 24 (Institute of South-east Asian Studies, Singapore), p. 26 n. 86 and LOR 2045 (*Babad Bëdhah*) XXXII.6, p. 295, which gives the following description of the third Sultan’s visit to Prambanan:

Nata uning gya dhawahken ingkang paman
Pangran Sumayudeki
sany a kinen gambar
bok Jonggrang sakanya
sandika kang paman nuli
gambar bok Lara Jonggrang
wau kang rumiyin

56 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816, no. 25, Extract of Proceedings in the Secret and Political Department, Batavia 4 Jan. 1816, Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, report from a spy (13 Dec. 1815) who related how a Sepoy officer had gone into the Yogya kraton to speak with Hamengkubuwana IV saying that 'the images in Java were the same as those worshipped by (the Sepoys') forefathers in India, consequently we must be from the same stock; thus, if you feel uneasy under the British let me know and I will settle the matter for you'. The Sultan had reported the matter to the Ratu Ibu (the Queen Mother) who had in turn informed the Resident.


58 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816, no. 28, 'Extract of Proceedings of the Lt.Gov. in Council', Batavia, 2 Feb. 1816, sub. C, evidence of Naik Tawari at the court-martial proceedings at Sërondol, 4 Jan. 1816; Idem enclosure no. 1, evidence of Sasradiningrat, who related how the Sunan had presented Dhaugkul Singh with a small image described as a jutcho and how Ripaul Singh had told him that the Sepoys regarded it as a pusaka (a holy heirloom) because it was a statue of their great dewa (god).


60 IOL BSPC, vol. 278, 15 Apr. 1816, no. 30, Lt. Hart to Major Johnson, 6 Nov. 1816; Van Deventer, op. cit., p. 58 n. 1. A bheesty is a universal word in Anglo-Indian households in N. India to denote a domestic servant who supplies water (from Persian Bihishti), see Col. Henry Yule & A. C. Burnell, Hobson-Jobson: a glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases and of kindred terms, etymological, historical, geographical and discursive (London, 1903), p. 92. For a list of the presents given by the Sunan to the Sepoys see Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, loc. cit., enclosure no. 3; they included rolls of red and white cloth, gold earrings, diamond rings, gold necklaces, bangles and sets of horse furniture embossed with silver.

61 Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, loc. cit. The name Randingan is not mentioned in Gericke & Roorda, Handwoordenboek, and it is unclear where exactly it was situated in the kraton.


63 Ibid.

64 Raffles to Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, loc. cit.

65 Ibid.

66 Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, loc. cit., interview with Baurëksa, 9 Dec. 1815. Baurëksa had been on duty at the Paseban (the general meeting place for officials on the northern square, alun-alun, of the kraton) when he had seen the Sunan emerging from the court in the company of Mata Deen and Ripaul Singh at about 4 a.m. The Sunan had motioned him to accompany the party to the fort where they had been met by Dhaugkul Singh who lowered the drawbridge. There were about 30 Sepoys in the fort at the time and they had greeted the Sunan with salaams. The conversation with Dhaugkul Singh took place in his upstairs room and lasted until 6 a.m. Baurëksa had overheard it as he was placed just outside the doorway of the room.
Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, loc. cit., interview with Baurëksa, 9 Dec. 1815. Daughkul Singh also seems to have been transferred to Yogyakarta during the early part of 1815.

Raffles to Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, loc. cit. After the departure of the 59th regiment, the only European regiment stationed in Central Java was the 78th Infantry regiment in Sëmarang. Although Raffles later assured the Dutch that the number of British troops in Java had never fallen below about 7,000 men, C. Th. Elout, the Dutch Commissioner-General, reckoned that there were only 3,000 men on the island at the time of the transfer, of which a mere 1,200 were Europeans; see Van der Kemp, De Teruggave der Oost-Indische Koloniën 1814-1816, naar oorspronkelijke stukken ('s-Gravenhage, 1910), pp. 195-6, p. 369. Raffles himself admitted to Lord Moira that he would have found it very difficult to mount a full scale campaign against the Sunan and the Sepoys for ‘war would have thrown the whole country into confusion and the Sepoy troops were not to be relied upon’, Raffles to Lord Moira, 8 Feb. 1816, loc. cit. The government at Fort William authorised the immediate dispatch of the remnants of a European regiment (360 men) from India and advised troops should be taken from the garrisons in Makasar and the Moluccas, see IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 15 Apr. 1816, no. 34, I. Adam to C. Assey, 15 Apr. 1816.

IOL BSPC, vol. 278, 15 Apr. 1816, report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 10 Nov. 1815. Nightingall had gone to the Surakarta Resident’s retreat at Sela on the saddle between Mërapi and Mërbabu for reasons of health.

Report of the trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 11 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. A similar garbled account of European politics during the period after the Congress of Vienna (1815) was circulated in Surakarta one year later by Raden Kaap, a great-grandson of the exiled Pangeran Arya Mangkunëgara; see Van der Kemp, Het N.I. Bestuur in 1817, p. 231 n. 2.


Report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 11 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. The ‘Malay battalions’ mentioned here were probably the Javanese and Ambonese corps which were raised by the British and numbered some 1,200 men in 1816. They were referred to then by Raffles as a well disciplined and highly paid force. See Van der Kemp, De Teruggave der O.I. Koloniën, p. 194 and IOL G. 21/65, ‘Memorandum respecting Java’ (1813), sub. ‘Military Establishment’, p. 141.

Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816, loc. cit.


Court-martial proceedings at Sërondol, 4 Jan. 1816, loc. cit., evidence of Naik Tawari; Trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 13 Nov. 1816, loc. cit., which referred to a letter written by Mangkubumi to the Sepoy conspirators in Yogyakarta urging mutiny and promising Sp.D. 100 per month for a Subadar; Sp.D. 60 p.m. for a Jëmadar; Sp.D. 30 p.m. for a Havildar; Sp.D. 25 p.m. for a Naik and Sp.D. 15 p.m. for a Sepoy. It is unclear from the evidence at the trial in Yogyka and the court-martial at Sërondol whether Mangkubumi would have been appointed Sultan in Yogyakarta and Purbaya left as Crown Prince in Surakarta, or whether Purbaya would have been appointed to Yogyakarta directly. Both were mentioned as possible Surakarta candidates for the Sultanate, see Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, loc. cit.

Court-martial proceedings at Sërondol, 4 Jan. 1816, loc. cit., evidence of
Shaikh Lal Muhammad Sepoy; Idem evidence of Ramper Saud Sepoy, indicated that Prangwédana had also signed the agreement (purwanah) guaranteeing the indemnification of the Sepoys, but Prangwédana's involvement in the conspiracy was never proved and seems most unlikely; see Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816, loc. cit.


Raffles to Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, loc. cit. enclosure no. 1, evidence of R. Adip. Sasradiningrat, and on the 1812 treaty see Van Deventer, Het Nederlandsch Gezag, pp. 327-31. Rumours were also circulating in Central Java that Marshal H. W. Daendels would be returning as the new Dutch Governor-General and this may have caused the Sunan added concern; see Van der Kemp, Het N.I. Bestuur in 1817, Bijlage VI, p. 324.

For a discussion of this Javanese political philosophy see Ricklefs, op. cit. Chap. XI, 'Jogjakarta and the Dutch', pp. 362-413.

Report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 13 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. evidence of Sergeant-Major Christ-Macdonald. Similar rumours were reported by Bugler John O'Neill in trial proceedings, 15 Nov. 1815.

Report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 13 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. The exact number of Sepoys taking part in the conspiracy in Yogyakarta is unclear, but some 40 Sepoys and 18 ringleaders are mentioned as having been implicated in the report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 11 Nov. 1815. The Taman Sari complex to the west of the Yogya kraton, which was begun to be constructed in c. 1758-9, was abandoned sometime during the reign of the second Sultan probably after extensive damage caused by the eruption of Gunung Guntur in September 1803 and a strong earthquake in March 1806, see IOL Mackenzie Private coll. vol. 2, p. 196; AN 'Bundel Djokjo Brieven' no. 49, Waterloo to Engelhard, 8 Sept. 1803, id. to id., 9 Nov. 1803 and Ricklefs, op. cit. pp. 84-6. Major Thorn on a visit to Yogyakarta in 1812 noted that the walls of the Taman Sari 'though exceedingly thick are now cracked in many places and this extraordinary edifice is fast falling into decay', Memoir, p. 292, see further Denys Lombard, 'Jardins à Java', Arts Asiatiques, vol. 20 (1969), pp. 145-54.

Report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 13 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. The conspirators also undertook to join up with the Sunan's troops who were to be commanded by Pangeran Purbaya.

Ibid. It is possible that the absence of the commanding officer, Capt. Cook, in Surakarta may have been a factor in postponing the Sepoys' plans. Two other European officers were also absent on civilian duties, see above n. 25.

Report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 11 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. Paku Alam was at that time the Regent of the young Sultan, Hamengkubuwana IV, and had control of the Sultan's exchequer; see Van Deventer, Het Nederlandsch Gezag, p. 345 and Van der Kemp, O.I. Herstel in 1816, p. 261 n. 2. The
Pangeran was a much hated figure in Yogyakarta because of his misuse of his position as Regent in financial matters.

Report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 11 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. Some of the implements of Hindu worship may have been sent over from Surakarta by the Sunan at this time because Baurëksa reported how he was constantly sending over small parcels through the gladhag; see Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, loc. cit. enclosure no. 2, report of Baurëksa. Raffles' idea that the success of the Sepoy conspiracy might have led to the 'general reconversion of the Javanese to Hinduism' may have been based on this evidence, see above n. 50.

Report of trial proceedings in Yogyakarta, 11 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. The Chinese were to be murdered by the Sepoys in order to get their money and prevent them raising a hostile force against the Indians.

Raffles to Lord Moira, 8 Feb. 1816, loc. cit. Placards bearing strange prophetic sentences had also appeared in Vellore before the mutiny in 1806, see Kaye, op. cit. p. 220. Court-martial proceedings at Sërondol, 4 Jan. 1816, evidence of Shaikh Lal Muhammad Sepoy, reported how Mata Deen had received a letter in Javanese from the Sunan at this time promising the Sepoys money and how this had been translated into Malay for him by a Yogyakarta kraton Mantri (junior official) in the Taman Sari.

IOL BSPC, vol. 278, 15 Apr. 1816, Capt. Cook to Major Nixon, 8 Nov. 1815. Lt. Steel also took care to assure the battalion that they would not be left to the Dutch when the British withdrew from Java. His actions in not proceeding to the immediate arrest of the conspirators underlined the great military weakness of the British in Java at the time. Executing mutineers by blowing them away from cannon, an earlier Mughal practice, had been used by the British after a mutiny in 1764; see Kaye, op. cit., p. 206.


Capt. Cook to Major Nixon, 8 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. On 29 Oct. 1815 another conspirator, Jemadar Raschid Khan, was arrested after coming out of the Surakarta kraton with presents from the Sunan, see Lt. Hart to Major Johnson, 6 Nov. 1815, loc. cit.; Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, loc. cit. Mata Deen and Jemadar Dia Ram appear to have been picked up at the same time. Capt. Cook reckoned that in Yogyakarta there was disaffection only amongst 15-20 men who had previously been in disgrace or had been familiar with the Sunan and his family whilst on duty in Surakarta.

IOL BSPC, vol. 278, 15 Apr. 1816, Col. Burslem to Raffles, 5 Dec. 1815. The garrisons were relieved by bringing in 100 men to each place from the 78th Infantry regiment in Sëmarang and units of the 4th Volunteer Battalion from Surabaya, but the Sepoy troops were unreliable; see above n. 68.

Lt. Hart to Johnson, 6 Nov. 1815, loc. cit. reported that the local dragoon guard had been ordered to patrol the Surakarta kraton and that none of the Sepoys were allowed outside the fort except in regimental dress and then only with a pass. On the dragoons see below n. 109 and on the European officers see above n. 25.

See De Haan, op. cit. pp. 576-7, pp. 588-9. In November, Johnson was in Batavia in connection with his former duties as Deputy Military Paymaster-General; see Raffles to Edmonstone, 8 Dec. 1815.


Ibid. The Surakarta Pangerans Purbaya and Aria Mataram together with the commander of the Sunan's forces Tumënggung Cakrakusuma were mentioned
as having assembled forces to rescue Mangkubumi on the road if he was conveyed to Sèmarang.

100 Lt. E. Taylor to Raffles, 18 Dec. 1815, loc. cit. Yudanégara was later dismissed from his position as Bupati by the British, see RAS Raffles coll. vol. 3 'Miscellaneous memorandum on Surakarta' (1816); the same memorandum mentioned that the Sunan could call up 20,000 troops from the mancanagara areas in about 3 days and that these were variously armed with muskets, blunderbusses and carbines together with pikes and kriises (daggers). They were supposed to be 'the bravest and most trustworthy of his troops' for many of them were hardy mountain dwellers.


102 Ibid.; In June 1815 Prangwédana's Legion had been reduced from 1150 to 700 men because of the great difficulties he experienced in paying for their upkeep, see Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816; AR J. C. Baud private coll. no. 306, Pinket van Haak to Commissioners-General, 16 Sept. 1816. This may have been one of the reasons why Prangwédana felt the need to call on his retainers in Sokawati in order to ensure the protection of his family.

103 Extract of proceedings in the Secret and Political Department (Batavia), 4 Jan. 1816, loc. cit.; Raffles to Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, loc. cit.

104 Ibid. Lt. Hart escorted Mangkubumi by carriage to Sèmarang (see also IOL Mack. Pr. vol. 2, p. 186) and no attempt was made to ambush the party en route by the Surakarta princes. Mangkubumi was sent on to Batavia by the British and then exiled to Ambon by the Dutch, see AR B(esluit van den) G(ouverneur)- G(eneraal) g(emein), 24 Feb. 1816, no. 1 and Lor 6791 (3) (Babad Spehi) XII.71-72, p. 366, and was later allowed to return to Java in 1824 at the same time as the exiled second Sultan of Yogyakarta, see AR MvK 2477, BGC b(witen) r(ade), 9 Aug. 1824, no. 7; 3 Sept. 1824, no. 2.

105 Raffles to Burslem, 16 Jan. 1816, loc. cit.

106 Ibid.; see also Van Deventer, Het Nederlandsch Gezag, pp. 346-7. The 1812 treaty and the existing arrangements between the courts were later confirmed by the Dutch government during W. H. van IJsseldijk's journey to the courts as buitengewoon gezant (ambassador extraordinary) in Sept. 1816; see Van Deventer, op. cit. pp. 80-104 and AR J. C. Baud private coll. no. 306, 'Rapport van W. H. van IJsseldijk omtrent de vorstenlanden', 11 Dec. 1816.

107 Johnson to Assey, 17 Feb. 1816, loc. cit. The other two 'faults' referred to by Prangwédana were probably the Pakêpung affair of 1787-90 and the secret correspondence with Yogyakarta in 1811-12.

108 IOL BSPC, vol. 279, 4 May 1816, no. 28C, Assey to Johnson, 2 Feb. 1816; see also the political arguments advanced by Raffles in his letter to Ld. Moira of 8 Feb. 1816, Van Deventer, op. cit. pp. 61-2.


110 Nahuys to Commander of N.I. Army, 25 Oct. 1819, loc. cit. Every day 6 of these troops under a brigadier (N.G.O.) an a wachtmeester (Sergeant) did sentry duty in the kraton with two soldiers guarding the door to the Sultan's private apartments.


112 Van der Kemp, O.I. Herstel in 1816, p. 45; Van Pabst, 'Nota', Aug. 1826,
folio 23. Van Pabst’s assertions concerning the discovery of the Sepoy conspiracy in Sëmarang remain unsubstantiated.


115 AN ‘Bundel Djokjo Brieven’ no. 40, Commander of N.I. Army to Nahuys van Burgst, 19 Sept. 1816. Not all the Sepoys served the independent rulers in a military capacity; in Yogyakarta some were employed as mahouts (riders) for the Sultan’s elephants; see Sana Budaya Museum (Yogyakarta) MS. A. 136 (Babad Ngayogyakarta, vol. II) IV.19-21, p. 17.


117 AR MvK 2776, BGG i(n) r(ade), 2 Apr. 1822, no. 3; LOr 6547 (Babad Dipanagara) d, XXXII. 147, p. 22; 153-7, p. 23; 195-9, pp. 28-9; 216, p. 31. The Nurngali mentioned in Dipanagara’s babad may possibly refer to a certain Ki Mas Dhaeng Nurngali (Muhammad Dhain), a pranakan Mêngkasar (a Makasarese of mixed descent) who copied a sérat Anbiya owned by W. Robinson, an English Baptist missionary active in Batavia after 1813 (see De Haan, op. cit., pp. 629-30). The MS. in question was sold at Sotheby’s in London on 27 Nov. 1974 (lot. 658); see Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts, Indian and Persian miniatures, Bibliotheca Phillippica, Mediaeval and Oriental Manuscripts, New Series, Ninth Part, London: Messrs. Sotheby & Co., 1974, p. 33. I am grateful to Dr. M. C. Ricklefs for bringing this to my attention.

118 I am grateful to Mr. A. Chapman of the Dartmouth Academy, Nova Scotia (Canada) for bringing this to my attention. Sepoy troops from Bengal were also used during the capture of Mauritius from the French in December 1810.


120 D. F. W. Pinket van Haak the Dutch Resident of Surakarta (1816-17), later put forward the suggestion that the Sunan might have betrayed the Sepoys and co-operated with the British in putting down the uprising in return for territorial concessions, in particular in Kédhu; see Van der Kemp, Het N.I. Bestuur in 1817, Bijlage VI, pp. 324-5.

121 Johnson to Raffles, 16 Dec. 1815, loc. cit. Pakubuwana IV had encountered similar opposition from members of the Surakarta court in 1790 on the occasion of the Pakêpung incident; see Ricklefs, Mangkubumi, p. 337.