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## Java's last frontier : the struggle for hegemony of Blambangan, c. 1763-1813

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE REBELLION OF PANGERAN WILIS IN BLAMBANGAN, 1767-1768

#### *Introduction*

The arrival of the VOC coalition forces in Blambangan encouraged the Blambangan people to free themselves from the Balinese. Expectations of a better future under the new white overlord also passed through their mind. The inhabitants gladly cleared the way for the change of regime. A massive rebellion took shape, and in less than a week, hundreds of Balinese were cruelly killed and thousands of them fled to Bali. Finally the people of Blambangan were able to liberate themselves from the Balinese overlord who had kept them in subjugation for several decades.<sup>1</sup> For the Company, it was a great surprise that the occupation of Blambangan could so easily be accomplished. The High Government of Batavia did not have to waste ammunition and risk the loss of soldiers. The co-operation offered by the Blambangan people raised hopes that the interests of the Company in the newly conquered land could be secured without having to negotiate too many hurdles. At the end of March 1767, the Dutch flag was raised for the first time in the centre of the capital city of Blambangan.<sup>2</sup> This euphoria was somewhat premature and soon dissipated. Apprehension replaced it when *Pangeran* Wilis, the Blambangan prince who had been living in exile for almost four years, returned to his homeland. Once again, the desire of Blambangan people to free themselves from a foreign invader was awoken. This time it was the turn of the Dutch to feel unwelcome. Another massive revolt broke out under the leadership of the returned *Pangeran* after only four months of VOC administration in Blambangan.

The revolt won wide support from local inhabitants and such diaspora communities in the region, as the Buginese, Malays,

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<sup>1</sup> VOC 3215, Missive from the Governor Johannes Vos to Batavia, 29 March 176, 71-2.

<sup>2</sup> VOC 3215, Extract missive from Captain Blanke to Governor Johanes Vos, 31 March 1767, 131-136.

Sumbawane, and Chinese. Rumours were rife that the Balinese Lord of Mengwi, the feudal overlord of Blambangan, was also behind this uprising. The Company took strong measures to quell the uprising, and treachery and internal dispute among the rebel themselves eventually backfired. Wilis and some other ring leaders were caught and banished to the islands off Edam, and Onrust of the coast of Batavia and to such farther away destination as Banda Island, and the Malabar Coast in India.

*Creating a Legend: The Image of Wilis in Indonesian Literatures*

Before the publication of I Made Sujana's monograph on Blambangan in 1995, the heroic figure of Wilis had only been revealed in literary works which found their inspiration from a number of *babad* (local chronicles).<sup>3</sup> There are at least six *babad* which deal with the history of Blambangan, namely *Babad Blambangan*, *Babad I Sembar*, *Babad Tawang Alun*, *Babad Bayu*, *Babad Mas Sepuh* and *Babad Wilis*.<sup>4</sup> Among these chronicles, the *Babad Wilis* is the most important because it allocates Wilis the leading part. This *babad* was written between 1773 and 1774, five years after the fall of Blambangan and the banishment of Wilis to Edam, or one year after the end of the rebellion of the Pseudo-Wilis in Blambangan in 1771-1772. Most of the events told in this *babad* are very accurate and can also be checked and compared to the Dutch sources. The writer of this *babad* was a contemporary observer, Purwasastra, a Javanese Muslim who lived in Banger (nowadays Probolinggo). This *babad* was commissioned by Jayanegara, the Regent of Banger who played an important role in the conquest of *Java's Oosthoek* by the Company in 1767-1768. In this tale, Jayanegara is depicted as a vigilant, kind, and wise man for whom the Dutch entertained a high respects as a good and a loyal vassal of the Company. In his work, the author confesses that he hovered on the brink of refusing the request of his master (Jayanegara) to write this

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<sup>3</sup> I Made Sujana is the first Indonesian historian to pioneer research on the history of Blambangan based on the VOC archives. He wrote the history of Blambangan between 1736 and 1773. His book is based on his master thesis defended at the University of Indonesia in 1990. I Made Sujana, *Nagari Tawon Madir. Sejarah Politik Blambangan Abad XVIII* [The Honey Bee State: A Political History of Blambangan in the Eighteenth Century] (Kuta: Larasan-Sejarah, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan* (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 1995).

*babad*. Why he says this is not clear. Was it just a traditional modesty? Or perhaps, he was subjected to psychological pressure. Purwasastra was a member of one of the elite families of the previous Regent of Banger, Jayalalana who was genealogically related to the King Tawangalun of Blambangan. As narrated in this *babad*, he was also personally present at a party held by the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya to welcome the Regent Jayalalana. His moral obligation towards the Blambanganese dynasty is reflected in every part of his *babad* when he describes the fate of the princes of Blambangan and the end of Blambangan itself as a kingdom with a glorious past. Now, Purwasastra was obliged to pay respect and offer loyalty to the man who had contributed to the fall of Blambangan and the tragic fate of its princes. He had to depict the loyalty of his master toward the Company, but in doing so inexorably related also the demise of Blambangan and the tragic fates of the Blambangan princes, *Pangeran Adipati* Danuningrat and *Pangeran Wilis*.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of the pressure which may have hampered the author's freedom in writing the *babad*, some nationalist authors consider Purwasastra's work 'inappropriate'. Therefore, after this chronicle was published by Balai Pustaka in 1936, it was critically received. For instance, in 1985 Soetarno published a story book [written in Javanese language] entitled *Wong Agung Wilis: Cerita Pahlawan Blambangan, Banyuwangi*. As he states in his introduction, the aim of this publication is to counterbalance the work written by Purwasastra published in the colonial period.<sup>6</sup> Soetarno argues that the image of Agong Wilis as described by Purwasastra is *mboten salaras kalian kepahlawanipun Wong Agung Wilis ingkang anti penjajaha* [incompatible with the heroism of Wong Agung Wilis who was an anti-colonialist].<sup>7</sup> In his introduction Soetarno writes:

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<sup>5</sup> Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Wilis*, (Jakarta-Bandung: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme - Orient, 1980), p. xx.

<sup>6</sup> Mas Puwasastra, *Cariyosipun Tanah Blambangan Jamanipun Wong Agung Wilis* [The Story of Blambangan in the Age of *Wong Agung Wilis*], (Batavia: Balai Pustaka, 1936). In 1996 this book republished by the Department of Education and Culture, see Muji Rahayau & Sriyanto (Transc. & Transl.), *Cariyosipun Tanah Blambangan Jamanipun Wong Agung Wilis* [The Story of Blambangan in the Age of *Wong Agung Wilis*], (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Wonten ing serat wau, ingkang dipun tonjolaken ungguling Pamarentah Penjajahan Walandi sawadyabalanipun anggenipun merangi Blambangan lan Bali ingkang satuhu anti dhateng penjajah: Malah wonten carios wau *Wong Agung Wilis* ingkang

In that book, [the author] emphasizes the superiority of the Dutch Colonial Government and its subjects in the conquest of Blambangan and Bali which were patently anti-colonial. Moreover, in that story, *Wong Agung Wilis* who was really a hero is considered oppositely. This is not surprising, because during the Dutch Colonial Era, stories of heroism were reversed. The hero was considered as a traitor but the traitor, was depicted as a hero.

A similar point of view is proposed by Samsubur who wrote a series of articles [also written in Javanese], entitled '*Wong Agung Wilis Pejuang Blambangan*' [*Wong Agung Wilis the champion of Blambangan*] published in the famous Javanese weekly magazine, *Jaya Baya*. In these articles, the author criticizes Indonesian historians who ignore the role played by *Wong Agung Wilis* in opposing the VOC invasion in Blambangan in the second half of the eighteenth century. Samsubur ends up his article with a proposal for the Indonesian Government to recognize *Pangeran Wilis* as a 'National Hero'.

Although the opposition posed by *Wong Agung Wilis*, or the prince of Blambangan, or *Pangeran Wilis* who defended his country caused the Dutch Company enormous problems, this has never been mentioned in Indonesian National History. The conclusion is that the historians of Indonesia have been unfair in their choice of national heroes. In fact, the war led by *Pangean Wilis* in Blambangan was the first war of resistance fought by the Indonesian people against the Dutch colonialists. Therefore, it is hoped that the publication of the historical materials on the history of *Wong Agung Wilis* or the history of Blambangan, will awaken the historians of Indonesia. *Wong Agung Wilis* should be awarded the status of an Indonesian Hero, because he was the man who pioneered resistance against the oppression exercised by the Dutch Company in the Indonesian Archipelago, by uniting the powers of the different ethnic groups who lived in Blambangan at that time.<sup>8</sup>

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satuhu pahlawan kanggep sanes pahlawan. Ingkang makaten wau mboten mokal, jer nalika penjaahan Walandi, carios kepahlawanan kados-kados dipun puter-walik. Ingkang pahlawan dipun anggep pengkhianat, ingkang pengkhianat kaanggep pahlawan. Soetarno, *Wong Agung Wilis Cerita Pahlawan Blambangan-Banyuwangi* [*Wong Agung Wilis, The Story of Blambangan-Banyuwangi Hero*], (Surabaya: Warga Surabaya 1985), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Sanajan perjuangan *Wong Agung Wilis* kang uga katelah *Pangeran Blambangan* utawa *Pangeran Wilis* iki anggone mbelani tanah wutah ludirane nyatane klakon muyengake Kompeni Walanda, ning geneya ing buku sejarah Nasional Indonesia ora kacathet kacarita?... Pranyata para pakar sejarah nasional kita asipat kurang adil sajroning ngormati para pejuang bangsane! Kamangka perange *Pangeran Wilis* in Blambangan iki perang kawitan minangka perlawanan bangsa Indonesia / Nusantara marang penjajah, Mula saka iku, kanthi kabukane materi sejarah

The admiration of Wilis continues unabated. In 1988-1990, Putu Praba Darana published a trilogy epic, depicting the role of *Pangeran* Wilis in the history of Blambangan.<sup>9</sup> This work has had a significant impact on the current image of the history of Blambangan, particularly in turning Wilis from an unknown figure into a national legend. For the people of Banyuwangi (the current name for Blambangan), who have long been pursuing a search for identity, the revelations about Wilis's heroic adventures in the pre-independence period have now become a source of local pride, even pushing ancient legend of *Menak* Jingga aside.<sup>10</sup> In this trilogy, Wilis is depicted as a symbol of opposition, and the inspiration behind the subsequent rebellions against the Company in the following years. Wilis is described as a man who loved his people and country and succeeded in uniting different ethnic groups in Blambangan to fight together against the Dutch invader. There are other authors who follow this nationalistic point of view. Among them are Ketut Soebandi and Sri Adi Oetomo. Ketut Soebandi published a semi-historical work describing the fall of Blambangan from the Balinese point of view. This work emphasizes the role of the Balinese in assisting the people of Blambangan to oppose the Company. Meanwhile, Sri Adi Oetomo described the life of Wilis in an epic biography.<sup>11</sup>

Many works have been produced lately, introducing the figure of Wilis and his role in the history of Indonesia, but only few of them are truly historical in form. Because these writers desperately want to bring

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perjuangan *Wong Agung* Wilis utawa sejarah Blambangan iki, biasa-a anggugah para pakar sejarah Nusantara. Wis sapantese *Wong Agung* Wilis iki diangkat minangka pahlawan Nasional Indonesia, amarga panjenengane kang kawitan wani nglawan kakejemanane penjajahan Kompeni Walanda in Nusantara. Amarga panjenengane kuwagang nyawijekake kekuwatan kabehing suku bangsa kang ana ing Blambangan kalane iku. Samsubur, '*Wong Agung* Wilis Pejuang Blambangan' [*Wong Agung* Wilis the Champion of Blambangan], *Jaya Baya*, vol 18, (2002).

<sup>9</sup> This trilogy is composed of *Tanah Semenanjung* [The Peninsula Land] (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1988), *Gema di Ufuk Timur* [Echo in the East Horizon], (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1989) and *Banyuwangi* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> The legend of *Menak* Jingga has been closely associated with the dubious image of Blambangan. This legend recounts that *Menak* Jingga was the antagonist figure of the Princess of Majapahit.

<sup>11</sup> Sri Adi Oetomo, *Wong Agung Wilis, Pendekar Blambangan*, [*Wong Agung* Wilis the Champion of Blambangan] (Surabaya: Citra Jaya, 1983); Ketut Soebandi, *Pralaya Tatwa: Runtuhnya Blambangan* [Pralaya Tatwa: The Fall of Blambangan], (Denpasar: Yayasan Perpustakaan Umum dan Penerbitan Bali, 1982).

out historical facts to support their writings, they tend to present them in the form of novels rather than as historical studies. Perhaps it is inappropriate to criticize them on the basis of the academic principles of historical writing. They are meant, after all, to be literature rather than historical works. I also admit that these seminal narratives have attracted historians to turn their attention to a neglected episode of Indonesian history. Yet it cannot be denied that such works tend to manipulate the historical facts.

In fact, there have been rather extraordinary efforts made since the beginning of the 1980s to stimulate historical research about Blambangan, mainly in the form of philological research. Winarsih Arifin finished a philological analysis on *Babad Wilis*; followed by Daru Suprpto who conducted research on other versions of *Babad Blambangan*. Again in 1995, Winarsih Arifin published a compilation of four Javanese and one Balinese manuscripts related to the history of Blambangan. The works of these two philologists has undoubtedly contributed to a better understanding of the history of Blambangan. Indeed, critical analysis of the original eighteen century *babad* is required if we want to consult them to balance local perspectives with the European documents.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Return of Wilis*

Immediately after the conquest of Blambangan the Company began to focus its attention on the establishment of a new administration. Local leaders were required to administrate the newly conquered land. At the beginning, the Dutch had only *Mas Anom* and *Mas Uno* (both princes had assisted in achieving an easy conquest) on their list, but later on another name came up when a letter received from Bali arrived in Semarang. The letter was sent by *Pangeran Wilis* who expressed his desire to escape from Bali, where he was confined. He sought the Company's assistance to accomplish this.<sup>13</sup> Wilis was the half-brother

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<sup>12</sup> Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Wilis*; Daru Suprpto, 'Babad Blambangan: Pembahasan - Suntingan Naskah - Terjemahan' [Babad Blambangan: Analysis, Text Editing and Translation] (Diss. Gadjah Mada University, 1984); Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*; H. J. De Graaf, P. B. R. Carey, and M. C. Ricklefs are among the prominent historians who have critically used such sources.

<sup>13</sup> In his report to the *Bewindhebber* of the VOC, Governor-General Petrus Albertus van der Parra wrote: Wilis, eerst onder voorgeven dat op Baly mede met veel klynagting behandeld wierd, 'sComps. aanneming laten verzoeken, dog sedert op

and the former *patih* (chief minister) of *Pangeran Adipati* Danuningrat, the last King of Blambangan who had offered his land to the Company in 1763. He was the only Blambangan's court member who had an immediate genealogical relationship with the late King of Blambangan. He was in fact the descendant of Sunan Tawangalun II, the greatest king of Blambangan who had tried to build a friendship with the VOC in 1691-92. Wilis also had a good reputation and had gained experience in politics and administration when he was *patih* of Blambangan. The problem was that the Company did not possess any extensive information about Wilis, and more specifically his attitude towards the establishment of the Company in this region and his connections with the Balinese. The exact reasons for his exile in Bali were not clear to the Company because there were also rumours that he was the man who had urged the Balinese to invade Blambangan. It was remarkable that the Balinese king would have confined a man who had been one of his collaborators. If the accusations were correct, he should not be appointed to administer Blambangan. On the contrary, he could be a potential thorn in the Company's side while it tried to establish itself in the new conquered region.

In September 1767, *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen appointed a special emissary to pick up Wilis in Bali. The Dutch decided to bring him to Surabaya and listen to his opinions about the establishment of the VOC in Blambangan. In the company of *Mas Anom*, *Mas Uno* and twenty-five other Blambanganese *ad-interims*, he was expected to meet the *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen to discuss the arrangement and the share of *cacah* and tribute which had to be delivered to the Company.<sup>14</sup> However, the *Gezaghebber's* envoy was unable to meet Wilis in Bali because the latter had suddenly changed his mind. Wilis had departed earlier, to Blambangan rather than to Surabaya. He landed in the Bay of Grajagan on the south coast of Blambangan, and moved on silently to the former *dalm* (palace residence) of his half-brother *Pangeran Pati*, in Kota, the capital city of Blambangan. Perhaps Wilis tried to conceal his return to Blambangan, but the Dutch finally discovered his return on the arrival of the *Gezaghebber's* envoy in Blambangan. *Pangeran Wilis*

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het onverwagts zig te Balemboangan nedergezet heft, daar aanhang maakt. Governor Van der Parra to the Bewindhebber, in J. K. J. De Jonge, *De Opkomst*, xi, 72; See also VOC 3215, Missive from Governor Vos to Batavia, 7 October 1767, 6; VOC 3215, Copy of a translated letter written by *Mas Wilis* from Blambangan to the *Gezaghebber* of Oosthoek received on 29 September 1767, 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> VOC 3215, Missive from Governor Vos to Batavia, 7 October 1767, 4.



failed to appear when the emissary visited his *dalm* in Kota, but he replied instantly the *Gezaghebber's* letter. He wrote that he could not meet the *Gezaghebber's* messenger in Bali because he was no longer there and had decided to return to Blambangan. He clearly mentioned that the main reason of his arrival in Blambangan was to obtain protection from the Company. He expressed his gratitude to the *Gezaghebber* who had provided him with a ship for his journey to Surabaya, but he had been unable to accept the invitation because he was still unwell and promised to come to Surabaya as soon as he recovered. He also said that he had informed the Dutch commander in Banyualit about his own arrival and that of his sons (actually his nephews), *Mas Weka* and *Mas Anom*.<sup>15</sup> According to the Dutch report, Wilis was actually keen to go to Surabaya but had been prevented from doing so by his adherents who suspected that this was a plot to eliminate him.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the illness was only used as an excuse. In his letter Wilis states:

The envoy you sent to find me in Bali has arrived here in Blambangan, but I decided, after the return of my envoy Puspaningrat, not to wait for him, because I could not stand it any longer in Bali. I myself looked for a way to leave and finally I landed at Blambangan [...]. The reason for my arrival here at Blambangan is to put myself under the command [and] the protection of the *Gezaghebber* and the commandant. I express my deepest gratitude to the *Gezaghebber* for sending someone to escort me. I am still ill, but I shall go to Surabaya as soon as I am recovered.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Mas Anom* and *Mas Weka* were the grandsons of *Mas Ayu Tawi*, the sister of Wilis and of Danuningrat's father, who married *Mas Bagus Banger* from Probolinggo. See The Family Tree of Tawangalun II, Appendix 1 of this chapter.

<sup>16</sup> VOC 3215, Missive from Governor Vos to Batavia, 7 October 1767, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Uw Edele Afgezondene zendeling om mij op Bali te soeken is bij mij alhier op Balemboanga wel aangekomen, maar aangezien ik na de terugkomst van mijn zendeling Poespo Ningrat niet heb kunnen wagten, vermits ik niet langer op Bali kan houden, heb ik zelfs een uitkomst gezogt om daar vandaan te komen, en ben ten dien ijnde alhier op Balemboanga aangelandt [...] De reeden mijner aankomst alhier op Balemboanga is niet anders als om mijn persoon in de heer gesaghebber zijn protectie te beveelen en die van de heer commandant, betuigende voorts ten hoogsten mijne dankbaarhijt aan de heer *Gezaghebber* voor het laten afhaalen van mijn perzoon, ik ben thans nog siekelijk, maar zodra aan de betere hand ben, zal ik mij begeven na Sourabaija. VOC 3215, Copy of a copy translate of a letter written by *Mas Wilis* from Blambangan to the *Gezaghebber* of *Oosthoek*, received on 29 September 1767, 9-10.



Grajagan Bay, in the south coast of Banyuwangi (Pic. 2003)

It is obvious certain motives had prompted Wilis to return to Blambangan but it is not easy to determine whether he contemplated fomenting the rebellion. The *Babad Wilis* gives as the main reason of his return the wish to visit his father's and grandfather's graves and to submit to the Company. Wilis had no intention of opposing the Company, although Gusti Agong of Mengwi had encouraged him to do so. The Balinese lord promised him strong support, but Wilis was not convinced. The *babad* also narrates that Wilis cautiously refused the request of the people of Grajagan to seize Blambangan back from the Company. Even when the chief of Grajagan told him about the misery of the people of Blambangan under the Company's oppression, Wilis could only express his regret. However, after two mysterious figures, Purbankara and Ularang, who announced themselves to be messengers of the Regent of Probolinggo, promised him military support, Wilis gradually made up his mind. He initiated his move by exhorting the inhabitants not to carry out the obligatory *corvée* work on the Company's fortress.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Wilis*, 1 iii, 58-1v. 31; See also the letter of Governor Vos as quoted by De Jonge, 'Het is van vry meer bedenking geworden, dat de Pangerang Willis formeel te Balemboang een aanhang makende, en veroorzaak dat er geen diensten meer van de ingesetenen aan onse logie of de besetting toegebracht worden', De Jonge: *De Opkomst*, vol. xi, 72, footnote 1.

The next step was to consolidate and organize as many elements as possible who could support his uprising, mainly the people of Blambangan themselves, and such diaspora communities, as the Buginese, Sumbawanese, Malay, and Chinese. He made a journey throughout the region, showing himself to the people to prove his presence. In order to allay any suspicion among the Dutch, he presented his journey as a religious pilgrimage. As mentioned in the Dutch sources, a village named Sangan, located nearby Grajagan on the south coast of Blambangan, was the first place he had visited after his return. He came to this place to worship the Deity who had given him a safe passage for his return to Blambangan. Some Javanese sources also mention some of the other places where Wilis spent some time during his religious journey, including Lampon, Mount Dogong, Mount Tumpang Pitu; he even established a new settlement named Prawingan on the south coast of Blambangan.<sup>19</sup> It seems that even before the return of Wilis to Blambangan, some clandestine communication had been made between the Balinese side and some members of the elite in Blambangan who were expecting his return. The Dutch reports also mention that for his prospective journey, his adherents had prepared some vessels in Panarukan on the north coast of Blambangan and at Alas Purwo in the south coast. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that his journey had been well organized and had covered almost the entire Blambangan region.<sup>20</sup> After he had been back in Kota a week, Wilis' wife and sons also returned there under the protection of *Mas Purbankara*. In Blambangan, Wilis did not occupy his own house, but chose to live in the former *dalm* of his half-brother, *Pangeran Adipati* Danuningrat.<sup>21</sup> This was a symbolic gesture to heighten the awareness of the people that the new Prince had emerged at the very same place where the throne of Blambangan had stood in the past. In the family tree of Tawangalun II, as described in some Javanese sources, Wilis is listed as the third Prince of Blambangan after his father Danureja and Danuningrat. One local source states that after he returned to Blambangan in August 1767, the Company awarded

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<sup>19</sup> According to *Babad Tawang Alun*, the inhabitants of this village were saddened when Wilis left for Bali, and they soon established a new settlement which they called Gambireng (now Gambiran) which means 'happy'. *Babad Tawang Alun*, canto viii: 12-18, in Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 78-79.

<sup>20</sup> VOC 3215, Copy of a copy letter written by Van Rijke in Banyualit to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, 26 November 1767, 102-8.

<sup>21</sup> VOC 3215, Copy of a copy letter written by Van Rijke in Banyualit to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, 26 November 1767, 102-8.

him the title *Pangeran Blambangan* (the Prince of Blambangan), complete with *lungguh* (*apanage-land*) to support his living.<sup>22</sup> However, there is not a single Dutch document which supports this argument. On the contrary, the return of Wilis to Surabaya aroused waves of suspicion and raised apprehension among the Dutch because the reason of his return to Blambangan had never been obvious to the Dutch. In the many letters exchanged between the Dutch authorities in Surabaya and in Blambangan, their trepidation is very apparent.

### *The Dutch Response*

Wilis' refusal to come to Surabaya created more anxiety within the Company administration. The *Gezaghebber* now requested the *Panembahan* of Madura to convince Wilis that his co-operation was needed if he wanted to resettle peacefully in Blambangan. Responding to this request the *Panembahan* of Madura sent *Mas Ayu* Nawangsasi, the widow of *Pangeran Adipati* Danuningrat whom he later married, to visit Wilis bearing a short message which reads as follows:

If you really want to live at peace with the Company, you must not speak intemperately, because I have personally experienced what happened when my father opposed the Company, [...] therefore you should deliberate carefully whether it would be wise to rise against the Company; the outcome will surely be destructive.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For instance the *Babad Tawangalun* recounts, *Wong Agung Wilis wahu mantuk saking Bali ika rawuh sira ing Belambangan sampun kajunjung mangke linggihnya maring Kumpeni sireki dados Pangeran Belambangan* (*Wong Agung Wilis who returned from Bali had been appointed the Prince of Blambangan by the Company and assigned with his lungguh (apanage-land)*). *Babad Tawangalun* canto viii 55-56, in Winasrih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 87. A similar description is also give in the *Babad Notodiningratan*, *Wong Agung Wilis bingkang saweg dhateng saking Bali kajumenengaken Pangeran Blambangan, nagari lajeng rejo, sarto Kumpeni yoso loji hing Banyualit* (*Wong Agung Wilis who just came back from Bali was installed as the Prince of Blambangan; as a result the country grew prosperous and the Company built its fortress in Banyualit*). *Babad Notodiningratan*, in Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 259.

<sup>23</sup> Copy of a copy the Javanese translated letter from the *Panembahan* of Madura to *Mas Wilis* handed over to the *Gezaghebber* of the *Oosthoek*, VOC 3215: 11-12. The current prince was the son of Cakraningrat IV who did rebel against the Company. He had contributed greatly to suppressing the rebellion of his father. Concerning this rebellion, see Aminuddin Kasdi, *Perlawanan Penguasa Madura atas Hegemoni Jawa: Relasi Pusat-Daerah pada Periode Akhir Mataram, 1726-1745*, [The Resistance of

In Semarang, Governor Vos was wondering whether the Blambangan people were still keen to welcome Wilis and his Balinese followers, because it was hard to believe that they would risk inviting the Balinese back to their country again after having exterminated so many of their kin. Whatever his misgivings, Governor Vos strongly welcomed the *Gezaghebber's* proposal to invite Wilis to Surabaya in order to abbreviate any potential risk, especially after he had weighed up the opinions from the Company servants in Blambangan about Wilis' wild behaviour. They had described him as a great libertine and an arrack drinker. Wilis was also depicted as a man with a quixotic and negative character. On several occasions he promised to go to Surabaya or to the Dutch fortress in Banyualit, but he never kept his word. Moreover, his relationship with Gusti Agong of Mengwi was highly suspicious. Governor Vos expressed his concern to Batavia as follow:

I pray continually for the Lord's blessing that we may contrive to have the prince and the two chiefs accompanying him to come to Surabaya. So we can confer whether or not it would be best for the Blambanganese people, to get rid of such a prince who apart from his quixotic and negative character, according to the testimony of Van Rijcke and Walter, who are now in service here as Sub-Majors, also is a great *debauchée* and mostly drunk on *cinn* (arrack), that we also could and must discharge ourselves of the promise that we will not do him any harm.<sup>24</sup>

*Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen even responded more aggressively. Without waiting for any approval from Semarang and Batavia, he had instructed the Dutch commandant in Blambangan, Van Rijcke, to seize Wilis from his residence in Kota. However, Van Rijcke refused to carry out this order because the Dutch troops in Blambangan were too fatigued to march from Banyualit to Kota. Wilis' residence stood in the middle of the city and it was guarded strongly by his warriors. To reach

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Madurese Rulers against the Mataram Hegemony: Centre – Peripheral Relations in the Late Period of Mataram, 1726-1745], (Yogyakarta: Jendela, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Ik blijff dan altoos Gods zegen bidden, dat wij die Pangerang maar te Sourabaija krijgen en de twee hoofden sig daar dan bij bevindende, so sal men kunnen confereren of het voor de Balemboangers niet best was zij sig van sulk een prins ontdeede die buijten sijn gebleeken veranderlijke en nadeelingen aart, volgens het getuijgenis van Rijke en Walter die thans weder hier als Ondermajor sijn dienst doet een groot de bauchant en meest dronken van de Tjiuw is, dat ons ook soude kunnen of moeten dechargeren van de toeseegging die men hem nu laat doen dat niets quads. VOC 3215, Missive from Governor Vos to Batavia, 7 October 1767, 6.

Kota, the Dutch soldiers had to pass many streets and kampongs in which the inhabitant could easily warn Wilis about their arrival enabling him to easily escape.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, there were only thirty soldiers available at the redoubt in Banyualit. Van Rijke pointed out that if violence was used to force Wilis into submission, the Company should first strengthen the Dutch forces in Blambangan which were weakened daily as the soldiers succumbed to malaria. In short, more Dutch and Madurese soldiers should be detached to Blambangan.

While waiting for military assistance, a trap was laid by Van Rijke so that Wilis would fall into his hands. In order to force the hand of both princes in persuading Wilis to come to Banyualit, he took the family members of *Mas Anom* and *Mas Weka* hostage, including *Mas Ayu Ratu*, the elder sister of *Pangeran Pati* a lady whom both princes highly respected. Van Rijke guaranteed their safety, if both princes were able to carry out his order properly.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Van Rijke also still awaiting the outcome of the mission carried out by the Madurese envoys, *Citramanggala* and *Mas Ayu Nawangsasi*, who were also trying to persuade Wilis by peaceful means.<sup>27</sup>

The request for military assistance from Blambangan was difficult for the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya to fulfil because as a whole the condition of the Company's forces in *Java's Oosthoek* was very weak. Since the expeditions to Malang and Lumajang had been carried out, 150 Europeans soldiers and fifty sailors had died, excluding those who had died in Banyualit. At this fortress, fifty Europeans soldiers were still undergoing constant treatment in the hospital.<sup>28</sup> The *Gezaghebber* expected that the Dutch authorities in Semarang and Batavia would be able to convince the *Panembahan* of Madura to send another squad of Madurese warriors to Blambangan.

While the military problem was still unsettled, the Dutch authorities in Blambangan discovered some moves in support Wilis from the Balinese side. Ong Saiko, a Chinese trader who came to the Dutch fortress at Banyualit after his vessel was plundered by the Balinese, brought a message that Gusti Mura of Jembrana, a vassal of

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<sup>25</sup> VOC 3215, Copy of a copy letter written by Adriaan van Rijke in Banyualit to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, 26 November 1767, 102-8.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 102-108.

<sup>27</sup> VOC 3215, Copy of a copy letter written by Adriaan van Rijke in Banyualit to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, 24 November 1767, 101.

<sup>28</sup> VOC 3215, Copy letter from the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya to Governor Vos, 7 December 1767, 91-100.

Gusti Agong of Mengwi, had sent ships to Sumenep to sell rice there. On the return trip, these vessels were to bring weapons and ammunition to be smuggled into Blambangan. In Bali, Gusti Agong had also prepared several ships along the Balinese shore and rivers expecting the arrival of British ships during the coming west monsoon. He would combine his warriors and the British, Malays and *sepoys* (sepoys) from the west coast to support Wilis in his fight against the Company.<sup>29</sup> Another report was also received that Wilis had held up the Madurese envoys sent by the *Panembahan* of Madura, and prevented the people of Blambangan from working on the *logie* of the Company. He had also sent a Balinese, Wayan Kutang, to Malang to seek the assistance of the Regent of Malang, Malaya Kusuma.<sup>30</sup>

Responding to this information, *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen once again strongly advised Governor Vos in Semarang that military action should be carried out as soon as possible to force Wilis to submit to the Company. He was absolutely convinced that Wilis should not be given the opportunity to mislead, create clandestine movements, and disturb the Company's interests in Blambangan. In his letter to Governor Vos, *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen wrote:

My suspicions are being steadily confirmed that Wilis will never submit to the Company. By saying that he is engaged in worship, he tries to win time at Grajagan and to mislead us because he does not seem pressed to meet the Madurese envoy. Undoubtedly he is either creating designs which are still concealed from us and can be very harmful to us, or he is waiting for assistance from Balinese or Malang rebels from anywhere else. That is why I find it unwise to wait any longer before forcing him into submission.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> VOC 3215, Copy of a copy letter written by Adriaan van Rijcke to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, 4 December 1767, 141-144.

<sup>30</sup> VOC 3215, Copy letter from the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya to Governor Vos, 7 December 1767: 91-100; *See also* VOC 3215, Missive from Governor Vos to Batavia, 20 December 1767, 13-39.

<sup>31</sup> Ik worde meer en meer in mijn gedagten gestijft dat Maas Willis nooit aen de hand zal komen, maar onder den naam van offerande te doen, op Gradjagan tijd zoekt te winnen en ons te misleiden, wijl hij geen haast schijnt te hebben om den Madurees zendeling t' ontmoeten, maar ongetwijffelt desseijnen smeed die voor ons gezigt nog verborgen zijn en egter zeer nadeelig zoude kunnen werden, 't zij op adsistentie wagt en die bekoomende of van Bali of van de Malangse malcontenten dan wel van elders, als waarom ik niet langer uijtstel om hem Willis tot submissie te brengen. VOC 3215, Copy missive from *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen to Governor Johannes Vos, 14 December 1767, 119-123.

It seems that the military situation in Semarang was similarly weak. The bulk of the European personnel in this place had departed to Malang and Lumajang. This was also the case with the Company's indigenous troops from Surabaya, Surakarta, and Yogyakarta. The only possible solution to finding support for the Company army in Blambangan was to bring in Madurese troops and other Company troops from Batavia. On 20 December 1767, Governor Vos requested the High Government in Batavia to detach more military personnel and ships to *Java's Oosthoek* and to persuade the *Panembahan* of Madura to send his warriors to Blambangan. The ships and forces from Batavia would be used to guard the Bali Strait to prevent the Malays or Balinese from smuggling weapons which might come from the English to help Wilis in his fight against the Company.

While waiting for the response from Batavia, some emergency measures were taken to solve the military problems in Blambangan which became more and more fragile as each day passed. The Company's soldiers and the indigenous warriors who were posted in Lumajang were sent to Blambangan. In this regency there were only fifty Europeans soldiers and 200 Madurese and Bangerese warriors left under the command of Lieutenant Wipperman. Lumajang was relatively secure because the chief rebel of this regency, Kartanagara, had died. Wipperman was to depart from Lumajang to Banyualit with his soldiers, and from there on enter the capital city of Blambangan from the south coast. At the same time, a dozen sailors under *Vaandrig* Houtappel would depart from Kwanyer in Madura to Banyualit.<sup>32</sup> It was decided to move the Dutch fortress in Banyualit to Kota because it was considered unhealthy and vulnerable to the spread of contagious diseases. An investigation to find a good location for the new fortress had already been made. A small redoubt was also built in Ulupampang to guard the port and watch the arrivals and the departures of ships from and to Bali.<sup>33</sup> In order to prevent further correspondence between Wilis and Malayakusuma, *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen ordered *Ngabehi* Puspakusuma, *Mantri* of Banger, to occupy the island Nusa Barong and to capture the envoy of Wilis.<sup>34</sup> The possibility of Wilis

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<sup>32</sup> VOC 3215, Missive from Governor Johannes Vos to Batavia, 20 December 1767, 13-39.

<sup>33</sup> VOC 3215, Copy missive from *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen to Governor Johannes Vos, 14 December 1767, 119-123.

<sup>34</sup> VOC 3215, Copy letter from the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya to Governor Johannes Vos, 7 December 1767, 91-100.



escaping to Bali again was also explored, but Governor Vos believed that Wilis would stay in Blambangan because his wife and children were still there. The last place where Wilis had lived was scrutinized as thoroughly as possible for communications between Wilis and Malayakusuma and the Balinese. In Panarukan, 200 Madurese were prepared to guard the shore, preventing Wilis' slipping away to Bali. The arrests of the most suspected subjects such as the Malay, *Encik Kamis*, the Balinese Wayan Kutang, and two mysterious persons from Probolinggo, Purbankara and Wanasari, were made a priority.<sup>35</sup> A decree in the Javanese language would be published in which the use of armed force was announced if the people of Blambangan would not renounce their support for Willis. Meanwhile, Van Rijcke guaranteed the *Gezaghebber* the loyalty of *Mas Anom* and *Mas Uno* who were promised that they would be installed as the new regents of Blambangan. The Dutch had persuaded both princes to use their houses as places for the punishment of disobedient people.<sup>36</sup>

The promised decree was approved by the authorities in Batavia and announced in December 1768. By this decree, *Mas Anom* and *Mas Uno* were appointed *Tumenggung* or regents of the Company whose orders the people of Blambangan had to obey. The followers of Wilis were exhorted to turn their support to the new Regents and the Company. They were given three days to submit to the Company, commencing from the night after the decree was issued. Failing this, they would be considered enemies of the Company and subject to capital punishment. If Wilis failed to come to the Dutch fortress within three days, he would be considered an outlaw and anyone who could hand him over to the Company, dead or alive, was promised 500 Rds. as a bounty.<sup>37</sup>

### *The Rebellion*

The Company's request for more Madurese warriors was finally fulfilled by the *Panembahan* of Madura. In January 1768, around 1,000

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<sup>35</sup> VOC 3215, Copy missive written by Governor Johannes Vos to *Gezaghebber* of Oosthoek, Joan Everard Coop a Groen, 17 December 1767, 123-36.

<sup>36</sup> VOC 3215, Copy missive from *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen to Governor Johannes Vos, 14 December 1767, 119-123.

<sup>37</sup> VOC 3215, Copy of a copy decree or patent, to be proclaimed in Blambangan, 137-140.

Madurese departed from Kwanyer and arrived at Banyualit successively on 6, 8, and 10 January.<sup>38</sup> Only 300 men actually reached the Dutch fortress at Banyualit, because the rest ran away after they landed at Panarukan because they were afraid of being infected by the endemic diseases reported to be festering there. They settled down at several places on the coast of Panarukan and Besuki. On 16 January 1768, the Dutch ship the *Catharina Cornelia* with *Vaandrig* Houtappel aboard arrived at Blambangan followed by four other Madurese vessels and a few other Company's vessels carrying fifty European soldiers.

Three days after the arrival of the Madurese at Banyualit, Sirnantaka, the chief of the Madurese warriors, sent his envoy to visit Wilis in Kota asking him whether or not he would submit to the Company. If Wilis was willing to submit, he should present himself at the Dutch fortress at Banyualit. His envoy reported that Wilis was willing to appear in the Dutch fortress at Banyualit but first he would like to speak personally with Sirnantaka. Replying to this request, Sirnantaka marched to Kota accompanied by 100 Madurese warriors. Wilis told him that he would come to Banyualit as long as he was allowed to bring along two or three thousands of his people. Sirnantaka assured Wilis that this would be no problem as long as his intentions were good. Once again, Wilis promised that he would go to Banyualit within the two days. However, on the promised day, there was still no indication that Wilis would appear in Banyualit. Sirnantaka offered to lead his forces in an attack on Wilis in Kota, but Van Rijcke refused because he needed first to consult the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya. He nonetheless ordered his troops to prepare for war and instructed the captain of the ship *Borselen*, Pieterz, and the skippers of the bark *De Mossel*, and *De Fruijt*, to sail to Kota.<sup>39</sup>

On the following day, Van Rijcke and Skipper Pieterz marched to Kota with the available Madurese warriors. At the village of Kobro, they encountered *Mas Anom* and *Mas Uno* who told that Wilis was still ill and therefore was unable to go to the Dutch fortress at Banyualit. Van Rijcke decided to visit Wilis in Kota personally. Half way to Kota, it was decided to rest and spend the night on the edge of the Blambangan River. It seems that a man standing guard in a paddy

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<sup>38</sup> VOC 3248, Copy of three letters from Adriaan van Rijcke to Governor Johannes Vos, dated 4, 7 February and 2 March 1768, 9-1.

<sup>39</sup> Collectie Van Alphen en Engelhard, 19b, J. C. van Wikkerman, 'Beschrijving van Bali en Banjoewangi', 149.

field saw their arrival and informed Wilis about it. Immediately, Wilis sent an envoy to meet Van Rijcke to find out the reason for his arrival, and he simultaneously gathered a large number of his followers around his house. Through his envoy, Wilis promised that there would be no opposition when Van Rijcke came to his house. In Kota Van Rijcke lodged at a *pasar* (market) behind Wilis' residence. In the evening Wilis invited him to come into his house. In his report to *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen, Van Rijcke wrote that the visit was based on mutual trust and that he was treated properly as envoy of the Company. The matter was discussed peaceably and Wilis displayed a friendly attitude saying that he would come to Banyualit on the third of February. Sirnantaka quickly interpreted this as only another excuse and insisted that he be allowed to kill Wilis with his *keris*, but Van Rijcke prevented him because the meeting took place in the middle of the night and the rain was falling down in sheets. Under such conditions firearms could not be used. Finally Van Rijcke returned to Banyualit empty-handed.<sup>40</sup>

The first engagement between the two parties finally took place on 18 February 1768, when Captain Maurer, Skipper Pietersz, Lieutenant Diest and Lieutenant Wipperman commenced a move from the south to Kota. At the end of this battle, 150 rebels were reported dead, but after three clashes the Company's troops were unable to move on because their number were simply not enough. They withdrew to Pagon, an Islamic village nearby Kota, and burned all the settlements in the immediate vicinity down. Many inhabitants were killed and many others wounded. Further on, it was decided to abandon the battlefield because rain was threatening. They realized that during the rainy season the enemy's pike-men were very formidable in battle and their own firearms often worse than useless.<sup>41</sup> But Wilis and his followers continued to exert pressure. They cut off all the ways to Banyualit and isolated the Dutch soldiers inside their own fortress. Meanwhile, *Encik* Kamis, one of Wilis' faithful soldiers, at the head of hundreds of Malay and Buginese warriors succeeded in taking the Dutch fortress at Ulupampang which was occupied by only few Europeans and hundreds of Madurese. They also captured and decapitated some spies sent by the Dutch.

The steady rain which lasted for days forced the Company's troop to stay put inside the fortress, although short patrols were carried out

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<sup>40</sup> VOC 3248, Copy of three letters from Adriaan van Rijcke to Governor J. Vos, dated 4, 27 February and 2 March 1768, 9-16.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 9-16.

regularly. However, the combination of bad weather, lack of food and medicine, and the bad quality of the water caused the spread of disease. Many soldiers were affected by dysentery and headache, and within a very short time many of them reportedly died. Van Rijcke expressed his fears about the unhealthy conditions inside the fortress of Banyualit in these words:

Without the help of the Lord we cannot stand against the enemy. Because all the ways to the fortress are cut off, and the troops have no more rice and salt to eat, not only it is hard for those who are healthy, it is very bad for those who are ill. Since the beginning of this month, already thirty-five soldiers have died among the marines no more than twenty men are still healthy. No single European soldier under Captain Maurer is still on his feet. The same fate has befallen Lieutenant Diest, Lieutenant Wipperman, *Vaandrig* Houtappel and other officers, since 16 February. Now, forty-two Europeans are ill. We are expecting another support force of at least 100 Europeans and 2,000 indigenous soldiers. We also need two good cannon and 20 *koyang* of rice and some beef for those who are sick, and more meat and *spek* (salt bacon) for those who are well, and also some amount of cash.<sup>42</sup>

A few days later, another report came from Van Rijck saying that the situation inside the Dutch fortress in Banyualit was growing desperate. The food and medicine had run out completely and now Captain Maurer, Lieutenant Dietsen, Wipperman and Van Rijcke himself were also affected by the disease. More soldiers were reported dying.<sup>43</sup>

The position of Wilis in Kota was reinforced when *Mas Anom* and *Mas Weka*, the first two Regents of Blambangan appointed by the Company decided to join him. The Dutch estimated that Wilis' force was strengthened by another 6,000 adherents, including those down from the Chinese and other ethnic groups. Governor Vos suggested

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<sup>42</sup> VOC 3248, Missive from Governor Johannes Vos to Petrus Albertus van der Parra, Governor-General and the Council of the Indies, 21 March 1768, 1-8.

<sup>43</sup> VOC 3248, Copy of three letters from Adriaan van Rijcke, to Governor Johannes Vos, dated 4, 27 February and 2 March 1768, 9-16; *See also* VOC 3248, Copy of three letters from Adriaan van Rijcke to Governor Johannes Vos, dated 4, 27 February and 2 March 1768, 9-16. To his missive Van Rijcke attached the exact figures showing the condition of the Company's forces in Banyualit underlining how strongly the epidemic had affected them. It was reported that seventy-eight were ill and that fifty-nine had died. VOC 3248, The condition of Company troops in Banyualit, 30; VOC 3248, Missive from Governor Johannes Vos to Governor-General Petrus Albertus van der Parra, 21 March 1768, 1-8.

that the only way to win the battle was to find somebody from these groups who would be willing to collaborate with the Company.<sup>44</sup> Earlier Van Rijcke had reported that *Bapak* Jamia and *Bapak* Anti (later Jaksanagara the third Regent of Blambangan appointed by the Company), had come to Banyualit to work for the Dutch. Later, *Ki Mas* Sutanagara, the future Regent of Blambangan, also joined them<sup>45</sup>

The condition of the Company soldiers in Blambangan deeply worried the Dutch authorities in Semarang and Surabaya. Owing to the lack of personnel in Surabaya and Semarang,<sup>46</sup> *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen and Governor Vos personally took charge of the expedition. The *Gezaghebber* sailed to Blambangan, while the Governor went to Surabaya to take over the administration in the absence of the *Gezaghebber*. For this expedition 300 Chinese, Buginese and Malay warriors were employed.<sup>47</sup> On 24 April 1768, *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen sailed to Blambangan on the ship the *Borselen* in the company of Captain Vermehr and Captain Lieutenant Hounold. The ship also carried 102 Europeans soldiers, thirteen sailors, two *busschieters*, 150 Madurese warriors and 100 *batur* (bearers). From the same port, several Madurese vessels also set sail transporting 1,000 Madurese warriors and bearers from Bangkalan and Pamekasan, 100 Chinese from Semarang, and 480 warriors from Gresik and Surabaya. The indigenous warriors were led by *Raden Tumenggung Aria* Adikara, the grandson of the *Panembahan* of Madura and two of his uncles. A section of the Madurese soldiers was directed to Banger to support Captain Tropponegro who was now at Lumajang besieging the rebels and then attack them from the west. The Governor expected Chinese soldiers from Surakarta and twenty Dutchmen under *Vaandrig* Latterman to support the expedition as well. Meanwhile death and illness continued to scourge Blambangan. Among the victims were

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<sup>44</sup> VOC 3248, Missive from Governor Johannes Vos to Governor General Petrus Albertus van der Parra, 21 March 1768, 1-8.

<sup>45</sup> VOC 3215, Copy of a copy letter written by Adriaan van Rijcke to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, 4 December 1767, 141-144.

<sup>46</sup> In the Semarang dragoons there were only thirty soldiers left, more than fifty soldiers had been hospitalized. VOC 3248, Missive from Governor Johannes Vos to Batavia 15 April 1768, 17-29.

<sup>47</sup> VOC 3248, Missive from Governor Johannes Vos to Governor-General Petrus Albertus van der Parra, 21 March 1768, 1-8.

Captain Maurer and Lieutenant Wipperman, and not a single Madurese was left in the fortress.<sup>48</sup>

The *Gezaghebber's* fleet arrived at Banyualit at the beginning of May, and immediately rescued the Dutch commander and the Dutch soldiers trapped inside their fortress. All the surviving soldiers were withdrawn and the fortress was demolished because it was considered unhealthy. The next step was to recapture the Dutch fortress of Ulupampang which was now occupied by the rebels, mostly Buginese and Malay fighters under *Encik* Kamis. The expedition to Ulupampang was carried out on 14 May, and commanded by the *Gezaghebber* himself. From Panasan Lieutenant Hounold with sixty Europeans and hundreds of Madurese and Buginese soldiers went ashore but were met by a furious attack by *Encik* Kamis and his warriors. In this assault, the rebels employed firearms and *donderbussen*, killing six Company's soldiers and wounding six others. Then Lieutenants Dietzen and Biesheuvel with other units of Madurese and Malays soldiers landed to support the Company troops on the battlefield, and managed to drive *Encik* Kamis and his warriors into retreat. As the rebels fled away, Captain Hounold continued hunting them down. After a few hours, a number of the rebels raised a white flag and surrendered: four Buginese chiefs and thirty-two of their followers were taken captive. If the Company pardoned them, they promised to find and bring their wives and children. *Encik* Kamis succeeded in escaping although he was gravely wounded. The following morning, Captain Reuhrborn with his troops also arrived at Ulupampang but there was no more resistance. On the contrary, a swelling member of Buginese rebels and their families came to surrender. All these captives were shipped to Semarang on five *permayang*.<sup>49</sup> On 14 May, the fortress of Ulupampang was fully under the control of the Company again. The troops now headed for the capital city of Blambangan where Wilis and most of their followers had entrenched themselves.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> VOC 3248, Missive from Governor Johannes Vos to the High Government of Batavia 15 April 1768, 17-29.

<sup>49</sup> On 20 May 1768, *De Geertruijda Susanna*, *De Johannes Cornelis* and five indigenous Tegal *permayang* arrived at Blambangan to pick up the Buginese and Malay prisoners: among them four chiefs, seven Chinese, ninety-two women and forty-six children. VOC 3248, Original missive from Governor Johannes Vos to the High Government of Batavia, 21 May 1768, 1-6.

<sup>50</sup> VOC 3248, Copy letter written *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen to Governor Johannes Vos 14 May 1768, 7-8.

The attack on Kota was planned on 18 May 1768, but before it happened the Dutch suffered two heavy assaults by the rebels. The first attack, in which twelve Dutch soldiers were wounded, was made when the *Gezaghebber* was about to enter his camp. Another heavy attack was launched the same afternoon leaving six Madurese and two Dutch dead, and fifty others wounded.<sup>51</sup> Two units of Dutch soldiers under Captains Hounold and Reuhrborn were sent out to fight back and easily defeated the attackers. It seems that treachery was involved. *Ki Mas* Sutanagara, the former *patih* of *Pangeran Adipati* Danuningrat, shifted his support to the Company, and with 2,000 of his followers attacked Wilis from the back. This treachery caused a heavy defeat on the rebel side. Dozens of Chinese warriors, who formed one of the main pillars of Wilis' fighting force in Kota, were taken captive. Appendix 2 shows the number of Chinese prisoners involved in the rebellion of *Pangeran* Wilis. All of these prisoners were sent to Semarang on 18 July 1768.<sup>52</sup>

Wilis and most of the elite members of Blambanganese court family fled away. One of the prisoners informed his captors that many rebel leaders, among them Ularan, Wayan Kutang, *Mas* Uno, *Mas* Anom, *Encik* Kamis including several other Buginese and Chinese leaders had escaped to Nusa Barong via Grajagan. Kota city was burned to the ground. Not a single house was left standing, even the royal residence of Blambangan was demolished and its building materials were used to construct a stronghold for the Dutch. The demolition of the whole settlement of Kota was a political decision, designed to make the inhabitants realize that the Dutch were in Blambangan to stay. *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen wrote:

Now I am busy building a small fortress to show the people of Blambangan that we will hold possession of this place. We are looking for an especially salubrious place among small villages where we can restrain them. I suggest *Vaandrig* Guttenberger be posted here as commander, with

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<sup>51</sup> VOC 3248, Copy missive by *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen to the Governor and Director of Java's North-East Coast, Johannes Vos, 18 May 1768: 13-14.

<sup>52</sup> Captain Hounold reported that one of the Chinese prisoners had escaped at the Village Petewang, while another Chinese prisoner, Bang Hapko, died in prison. Based on the considerations given by the Chinese Captain and the Chinese members of *Kollegie van Boedelmeesteren*, and also the Resolution of Governor-General and Council of 26 July, all the Chinese prisoners captured in Blambangan were not banished to Ceylon but they were sent back to Macau on a Portuguese ship *Prade Suz*. VOC 798, *Realia*, General Resolutions taken by the Governor-General and the Council of the Indies from 1 January to the end of September 1768, 855-856.

such instruction as I mentioned in my last letter. I hope that with the establishment of the small *benting* few changes will take place. I myself have razed the whole settlement of Kota. As of now, we are still busy with the burning. I think it will cast the natives into dejection when they see that not only has a small fortress been built to curb them, they will also understand that Kota has been burned down without anymore chance of rebuilding it again.<sup>53</sup>

This destructive action had significant effect. Two Blambangan court members, on behalf of their *petinggi*, submitted themselves to the Company and promised to come to Kota with their adherents if the Dutch pardoned them. At the *paseban* (city square), a *placaat* (announcement) written in Javanese was posted with an appeal to the inhabitants to come to the Dutch camp with a piece of white cloth wrapped around their head or holding up a white flag. Thousands of inhabitants sought refuge in Bayu, a few miles to the north-west of Kota. Captain Hounold with hundreds of Dutch, Madurese, and Javanese soldiers went there to join forces with Sutanagara and his people.

Ten days after the fall of Blambangan, three members of the Blambangan court elite, Puspanegara, *Mas Anom*, and Puspaningrat, surrendered in a paddy-field. Now that most of the rebel's leaders were captured, more and more rebels came to surrender. Captain-Lieutenant Reuhrborn wrote:

Today, at two o'clock I received information that a party of inhabitants had appeared in the paddy-field whom I went to see on horse back. Three chiefs named Puspanegara, *Mas Anom*, and Puspaningrat came to me and declared themselves willing to submit to the Company. I ordered them to accompany me into the fortress and to bring their followers along. Then, three chiefs and forty-two commoners came, who all surrendered their *keris* to me. There were also seventy-two women with a few children who said that their husbands were still hiding in the woods. They said that they did not know where *Mas Wilis*, *Mas Ularan* and their followers were. I appointed a place for them where they can settle and we can guard them. I requested Puspanagara to go to his own village, Tendana, with two of his people and two of our Madurese soldiers to bring over all of its people over. He guaranteed that there were more people over there that wished to surrender. Eight more households came from the villages Gayam and Tomagara located near by village Kamapang from which the chief

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<sup>53</sup> VOC 3248, Copy missive by the *Gezaghebber* of the *Oosthoek*, Coop à Groen to the Governor and Director of Java's North-East Coast, Johannes Vos, 25 May 1768, 15-16.



Sutanaya, comes. He brought a piece of paper, put away his pike, and held his *keris* up and asked for a pass to bring in the other people.<sup>54</sup>

Not long after the capture of *Mas Uno*, Wilis himself was captured in Blimbing, a small village to the west of Banyualit. However, there is no single Dutch document left in the archives telling us how Wilis was taken prisoner. De Jonge who extensively collected VOC documents for his monumental *De Opkomst* explains that the capture of Wilis was accomplished with the help of *Mas Uno*, who was desperate to claim clemency from the Company. In his introduction De Jonge writes:

*Kiai Mas Uno and Mas Anom tried with all their might to wipe out the memory of their mistake. The former contrived a scheme to capture Wilis, a man whom he no longer feared. But, although this encouraged peace, the formerly disloyal Regents (Mas Uno and Mas Anom) had their just deserves meted out and were obliged to join the Prince (Wilis) in exile.*<sup>55</sup>

With the capture of Wilis and most of the rebel leaders, peace was restored, at least temporarily. Wilis, *Mas Uno* (Weka) and *Mas Anom* were exiled to the island of Edam (currently Damar Besar) and later to Banda. Most of their followers were sent to the island of Onrust where they were employed as labourers.<sup>56</sup>

### *Living in Exile: Wilis and the Balinese Connection*

The first step in understanding the origins of the rebellion of *Pangeran Wilis*, is to examine the figure of Wilis himself and especially his role in Blambangan politics, and his connection with *Pangeran Adipati Danuningrat* and the Balinese. Was Wilis behind the Balinese invasion and the assassination of his half-brother, Danuningrat? Was Wilis as he claimed really confined in Bali?

Wilis is mentioned in Dutch reports for the first time in 1763, precisely after the political turmoil at the court of Blambangan which was followed by his exile and then the assassination of Danuningrat by the Balinese one year later. The report comes from *Gezaghebber* Breton

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<sup>54</sup> VOC 3248, Copy of a copy letter written by Captain-Lieutenant P. Reorhborn to the *Gezaghebber* J. E. Coop à Groen, 29 May 1768, 17-18.

<sup>55</sup> De Jonge, *De Opkomst*, vol. xi, pp. xiv-xv.

<sup>56</sup> Name list of prisoners on the ships *De Paarlmoer* and *De Vrijheid*, Semarang 6 September 1768, VOC 3248: 45-48.

who had met Danuningrat briefly, the deposed king of Blambangan who was desperately seeking Dutch assistance.<sup>57</sup> In this report Wilis is mentioned as the man who had provoked the Balinese to invade Blambangan. Later, the Dutch authorities in Batavia received another haphazard report from Surabaya asserting that Danuningrat had been assassinated by the Balinese and that Wilis was confined in Bali. It seems that Breton's report came at the wrong time; Batavia was still reluctant to become involved in any political trouble in the *Oosthoek*. It did not pay as much attention to Blambangan, as it did to other regions in Java. Breton's report was not acted upon and the Blambangan affair was left to follow its natural course.<sup>58</sup> That is why hardly any information about this region can be discovered in the VOC archives prior to 1767. Fortunately, Purwasastra and some other authors of the *Babad Blambangan* have recorded some prominent events during the period quite extensively. So, a rather complete sketch about the political dispute at the court of Blambangan can be outlined from their works.

Wilis was the second son of *Pangeran Adipati* Danureja and his *selir* (second wife). His mother was a Balinese and according to the *Babad Sembar* she was the daughter of *Gusti Agong* Kabakaba of Mengwi.<sup>59</sup> Most of the local sources describe Wilis as a kind and wise man, ruling his army with an iron hand and being close to the ordinary people. He regularly toured the country side to inspect the living conditions of his subjects. Therefore, he was very popular among the people of Blambangan, even more popular than their own king who lived exclusively inside the court. Because of his populist attitude, Wilis was accused of endorsing a clandestine movement and mobilizing people from the villages to revolt against his own brother Danuningrat; a move which he actually never made. This suspicion led to his suspension from the office of *patih* in 1763.

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<sup>57</sup> Engelhard Coll. 19b, Consideration by Hendrik Breton, Surabaya 30 October 1763.

<sup>58</sup> Memorie opgesteld door den Raad Extraordinaris van Nederlands-Indie en afgaand Directeur van Java's Noord-Oostkust, Willem Hendrik Ossenberch, om te strekken tot narigt van zynen successeur, den Heer Johannes Vos, aankomend Gouverneur en Directeur van Java's Noord-Oostkust, in De Jonge, *De Opkomst*, vol. xi, 24.

<sup>59</sup> *Babad Sembar* in Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 23-52. According to a Balinese chronicle, Wilis' mother was a Balinese from Kapal, the sister of Nglurah Anom, the King of Kapal, *Babad Mas Sepuh*, in Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 119.



The Court of Mengwi, Bali (Pic. 2003)

The exile of Wilis to Bali actually was not a confinement imposed by the Balinese side but was more a voluntary retreat by Wilis in favour of his brother. The *Babad Tawangalun* states that Wilis went to Bali at the request of Danuningrat who finally acceded to *Gusti Agong's* appeal to come and visit him in Bali. Wilis decided to go along with his brother because he had had a portent that some calamity would happen to his brother.<sup>60</sup> A similar premonition is described in the *Babad Wilis*: soon after Danuningrat arrived in Mengwi, Gusti Agong also invited Wilis to come to Bali to attend a party, but Wilis was fully aware what Gusti Agong actually planned. He departed to Bali, dressing completely white (symbolizing mourning). From this it can be deduced that Wilis realized that Gusti Agong would punish his brother and he came to Bali to pay his brother his last respects. He promised his family to return to Blambangan after three days, a promise which he never kept.<sup>61</sup> The author of the *Babad Wilis* also narrates that Danuningrat and Wilis actually liked each other. When Danuningrat heard the rumour that Wilis was eager to usurp his throne he voluntarily offered it to him but the latter refused it. Conversely, Wilis

<sup>60</sup> *Babad Tawangalun*, in Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 111.

<sup>61</sup> Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Wilis*, (Lembaga Penelitian Prancis untuk Timur Jauh: Ecole Francaise d'Extrême-Orient, Jakarta, Bandung, 1980), p. xxxvi.

always treated his brother greatest respect. He was fully aware that his dismissal and the political turmoil at the court of Blambangan were caused by Sutajiwa, the son of Danuningrat, and his uncle Tepasana who always wanted to see Blambangan freed from Balinese influence.



The Beach of Seseh viewed from the front gate of *Pangeran* Pati's Grave in Seseh, Bali (Pic. 2003)

The assassination of Danuningrat in Bali was triggered by a misunderstanding made by Gusti Agong in interpreting Wilis' answer when Gusti Agong made him an offer to take over the Blambangan administration. Being disappointed in Danuningrat, Gusti Agong offered the position of first *Pangeran* of Blambangan to Wilis, but the latter refused saying that he had no desire to administer Blambangan as long as his brother was still alive. This repudiation was actually an expression of his respect to his brother. But Gusti Agong misinterpreted it, believing that Wilis, as he himself, actually desired the death of his brother. However as Gusti Agong did not want to commit the murder openly, he spread a rumour about an attack on Bali by the Company and all the people who lived on the west coast, including Danuningrat and his family were ordered remove to a safe place. Gusti Agong sent 800 people to Seseh to despatch Wilis and his family back to Blambangan. All women and children were sent away first, and soon after their vessel had left, Danuningrat and his

followers were brutally assassinated and his body was thrown into the sea.<sup>62</sup>



The Grave of *Pangeran* Pati in Seseh, Bali (Pic. 2003)



The Grave of *Pangeran* Pati in Seseh, Bali (Pic. 2003)

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. xxxvii.

A different version is found in the work of Van Wikkerman, the former Resident of Banyuwangi who wrote a brief history of Blambangan and Bali based on Dutch reports and the local oral tradition. He interviewed the second generation of Javanese and Balinese in Bayuwangi after the period.<sup>63</sup> He says that the assassination was carried out very brutally, and that it was portrayed as the result of mass outrage. Danuningrat was accused of having caused a widespread epidemic which had killed many inhabitants in Bali. Gusti Agong had said that the epidemic had erupted because of the appearance of the foreigners (Danuningrat and his followers) in Bali. The credulous people of the village of Munggu where Danuningrat was living, were outraged and dragged Danuningrat, including his eighty followers, out of his shelter to the beach, at Seseh, where they killed them off brutally with lances, daggers, and cudgels. This massacre was carried out under the command of Gusti Ngurah Batu of Jembrana. Danuningrat himself was killed by Ki Dubur and his body was flung into the sea.<sup>64</sup> This last version corresponds with Lekkerkerker's work and one Balinese chronicle, the *Babad Mas Sepuh*. This chronicle states that Danuningrat had never succeeded in meeting Gusti Agong of Mengwi, perhaps because the latter was reluctant to meet him. Nevertheless, he allowed him to live in Tegal Balumbungan, a small village which had been deserted by its inhabitants during a period of warfare. In this village, Danuningrat built a *puri* (house) which was called *Puri Tanah Ayu*, and his followers established their own houses around the *puri*. Gusti Agong had forbidden his people to trade or visit to that village. However, one Balinese family, that of Gusti Agong Kamasan Dimande, secretly provided him and his followers with food and daily necessities. When Gusti Agong eventually found out about this, Danuningrat and his followers were forced to move to the village Munggu where the villagers were forbidden to feed them.<sup>65</sup> Danuningrat realized that Gusti Agong wanted to end his life, and asked his followers whether they dared to face death together with him. From Munggu, Danuningrat moved to Seseh followed by only three men, while the rest left and lived dispersed in other villages. In

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<sup>63</sup> Collectie Van Alphen and Engelhard 19b, J. C. Wikkerman, 'Beschrijving van Bali en Banjoewangi', 149.

<sup>64</sup> Up to the present day, the Balinese people of Seseh consider this place to be *panas* or *sebel* (accursed). C. Lekkerkerker, 'Blambangan', *De Indische Gids* 45/2, (1923), 1030-1067.

<sup>65</sup> *Babad Mas Sepuh*, in Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 124 and 129



Seseh, Danuningrat and his followers were sheltered by a villager named I Karsi. Danuningrat bequeathed his *pusaka* (heirloom weapons): a *keris* named *I Baru Sangkali*; a pike named *Si Barong*; a ring named *Manduka Ijo* and a *tempat sirih* to this man. He also gave his house in Tanah Ayu to Gusti Agong Kamasan Dimande and Sahibang Sri Jati. Danuningrat spent only one day in Seseh, because on the second morning the villagers of Munggu came to kill him and his followers. Before he died, Danuningrat asked his followers to face the villagers of Munggu bravely, while he tore his robe to shreds and vowed that Mengwi would face a fate like his ripped robe.<sup>66</sup>



The House of the Jurukunci (Caretaker) of Pangeran Pati's Grave in Seseh, Bali  
(Pic. 2003)

Another motive for the assassination of Danuningrat, proposed by Pigeaud, may have been that Danuningrat had declared interest in Islamic teaching. This assumption is supported by the fact that his body was not cremated, but was buried. His grave in Seseh was built and decorated in Islamic style. One Dutch researcher, L. C. Heyting, who visited the grave at the beginning of the twentieth century, was

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 124 and 129.

convinced that the grave was an Islamic tomb.<sup>67</sup> The *jurukunci* (caretaker) of the grave was Hindu but he did not eat pork. This tradition was still adhered to in 1932.<sup>68</sup> Interesting, when I visited this grave in February 2005, the *jurukunci*, who is the seventh generation from the first *jurukunci*, explained that Danuningrat's body was buried because he was a Javanese; the Balinese consider all Javanese to be Muslims. No doubt Islamization had reached Blambangan and a Dutch document clearly mentions that Pagon, before it was ruined during the war, was actually an Islamic settlement.<sup>69</sup>

Perhaps the rumour in local tradition about the spread of an epidemic is a symbolic metaphor of the dissemination of Islam brought by Danuningrat in Balinese Hindu society. Such symbolism was commonly used by *babad* writers to obscure the real facts. The Balinese source, the *Babad Mas Sepuh*, describes Danuningrat as a holy man who possessed supernatural powers, similar abilities which were possessed by the nine Saints of Java who are believed to have propagated Islam in Java, because he could walk on the water, sit on a floating lotus leaf, and build a house only in a single day. The *Babad Mas Sepuh* also describes that some local inhabitants suddenly offered to attack the people of Kabakaba, where Wilis was living, after they saw Danuningrat display his supernatural powers, roasting a piece of maize on his sarong.<sup>70</sup> All of these supernatural abilities attributed to Danuningrat suggest that even in Bali he remained an influential and attractive figure. As described in local sources, Danuningrat was assassinated with eighty of his followers, one of them being a Muslim teacher. In addition, the *Babad Wilis* mentions that on his arrival in Bali Danuningrat was accompanied only by his family and eleven *beke*.<sup>71</sup> This suggests that the rest of his adherents were probably local people who became his adherents during his exile. It is reasonable to believe that such a powerful influence invited apprehension in Gusti Agong, and that such influence could only be ended by deceit. His brother, Wilis, was probably also inclined to Islam. The *Babad Tawang Alun*

<sup>67</sup> He described his discovery in the *Koloniaal Weekblad*, 2 July 1925.

<sup>68</sup> Th. Pigeaud, 'Aanteekeningen betreffende den Javaanschen Oosthoek', *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. lxxii, (1932), 251-252.

<sup>69</sup> VOC 3248, Copy of three letters from the commandant of Blambangan Van Rijke to Governor J. Vos, dated 4, 27 February and 2 March 1768, 9-16.

<sup>70</sup> Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 15.

<sup>71</sup> Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Wilis* (Naskah Dokumen Nusantara), Lembaga Penelitian Prancis untuk Timur Jauh: Ecole Francaise d'Extrême-Orient, (Jakarta - Bandung, 1980).



describes that during his exile at Pasisir Manis, Wilis had been studying an Islamic book, the *Suluk Sudarsih*.<sup>72</sup> All these assumptions lead me to suppose that at the advent of the political crisis in Blambangan, Islam once again had been introduced into the court by several members of the court elite. Although a definite conclusion is still hard to draw, Danuningrat made efforts to liberate Blambangan from Bali with the help of the VOC, but there is little evidence that Danuningrat's inclination towards Islamic teaching was one of the reasons for his assassination.

In fact, there is little information about Wilis during his four-year exile in Bali. The Balinese chronicle, the *Babad Mas Sepuh*, does not even mention that Wilis ever rebelled. The *Babad Mas Sepuh* only mentions that Wilis returned to Blambangan to visit his family but was unable to enter his own house because the people of Blambangan prevented him to do so. Later, he returned to Bali and died there.<sup>73</sup> The *Babad Wilis* describes that in Bali Wilis was living in Kabakaba and married the daughter of the *Patih* of Mengwi. After the death of Danuningrat, Gusti Agong never repeated his previous offer to Wilis to replace Danuningrat as first Prince of Blambangan. On the contrary, he appointed his own subjects *Gusti Ngurah* Ketut Kabakaba and Kotabeda to administer Blambangan, and Wilis himself remained in Bali until 1767.

### *Anti-Balinese Sentiment at the Court of Blambangan*

Two months after the capture of Wilis, *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen held a conference with Sutanegara in Surabaya to discuss the establishment of a new administration in Blambangan. The first question addressed to Sutanegara was about the prevailing sentiment among the people of Blambangan. Would they remain loyal to the Company or would they

<sup>72</sup> *Babad Tananggalun* in Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 80 canto vii, 25, and 110.

<sup>73</sup> *Babad Mas Sepuh*, in Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 125 and 129. Winarsih Arifin, who visited Bali in the 1980s, says that Balinese people are not familiar with Wilis although in Mengwi there is a *pura* (temple) named *Pura Mas Wilis*. They confuse him with his half-brother Danuningrat who was recognized in Bali as *Pangeran* Mas Sepuh. They consider both to be the same person. Balinese have also inherited a tale that the king of Mengwi was actually also planning the death of Wilis, but the king did not want to contrive this openly. To reach his goal, *Gusti Agong* sent Wilis to the battlefield, first in Lombok and later in Blambangan to fight against the Company. Winarsih Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 16.

support the Balinese after the peace was restored? Sutanagara was convinced that they would remain faithful to the Company and would never ally themselves with the Balinese who had killed their prince, Danuningrat.<sup>74</sup> This answer explains two things; firstly his deceitful attitude against Wilis and secondly that an anti-Balinese movement had been fostered among the Blambangan people. Both elements provide a useful explanation for one of the most important motives for the rebellion. The failure of Wilis' rebellion was caused by the treachery of some member of the court elite, known as the Blambanganese faction, which had been struggling to maintain its domination for some decades, and had tried to eliminate the influence of the elite of Balinese origins, the *peranakan*-Balinese. There was undisclosed ethnic prejudice among the court elites, particularly those of Blambangan descent against the *peranakan*-Balinese ever since Mengwi had taken Blambangan over from Buleleng in 1726.<sup>75</sup> Mengwi exercised an influence on Blambangan by creating marital alliances rather than by putting its own subjects in the administration. Gusti Agong offered a Balinese princess to the prince of Blambangan, Danureja (1720s-1736), as a *selir* (second wife) and at the same time Gusti Agong married Danureja's daughter, *Mas Ayu* Ratu. Such alliances were also entered into with other members of the Blambangan court elite members and gradually by the common people as well. As a result, a new ethnic group was shaped inside and outside the court. After several decades it had clearly began to mark Blambangan demographically and culturally.<sup>76</sup> During the reign of Danuningrat (1736-1763), a faction of elite members of Blambanganese origin was formed inside the court of which the main purpose was the elimination of the elite of Balinese

<sup>74</sup> VOC 3248, Annotation of a conference between Sutanagara the former *patih* of *Pangeran* Pati and *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen held in Oosthoek, in August 1768, 69-80.

<sup>75</sup> I Made Sujana point outs that political dispute in the court of Blambangan was an incessant competition between the descendants of Tawangalun's *prameswari* (first wife) and *selir* (second wife). He does not examine further that both wives were also came from different ethnic. The *prameswari* was Javanese and the *selir* was Balinese. It was also interesting that the descendant of Tawangalun, King Danureja dan Danuningrat, had taken Tawangalun's footstep by taking Javanese woman as *prameswari* and Balinese as *selir*. See I Made Sujana, *Nagari Tawon Madu*.

<sup>76</sup> This is an important period in the cultural history of Blambangan, in which the *Wong Osing*, who are considered by some anthropologists to be the *orang asli* (natives) began to take shape as a group De Jonge calls them *punakawan* which in the VOC sources is also commonly used to name a group of people with a common profession such as servants of the elite often employed as fighters.

*peranakan* origin (Appendix 4, shows the list of Blambangan court families of Balinese origin, as given by Biesheuvel and Schopff). This faction consisted of several elite members descending from *Mas Ayu Tawi*, the sister of the late Danureja, who had twice married Muslim noblemen from Banger and Lumajang, namely *Bagus Banger* and *Bagus Lumajang*. Both of them had a genealogical relationship with the founder of Blambangan, Tawangalun. (See the family tree of Tawangalun: Appendix 1). Some of the others who displayed obvious anti-Balinese sentiments were: *Mas Tepasana* and *Mas Wasengsari* (both the sons of *Mas Ayu Tawi* with *Bagus Lumajang*), *Puspanegara* (the son of *Mas Ayu Tawi* with *Bagus Banger*), *Mas Weka* (Uno) and *Mas Anom* (both the son of *Puspanegara*). Their genealogical relationship with the mentioned noblemen suggests that they were members of the elite who had to some extent been influenced by Islam and had been the mediators in introducing Islam into the court of Blambangan. This assumption is buttressed by the fact that in the end of the rebellion of Wilis, these people were the first to propose the Company to islamize Blambangan in order sever off the political and cultural relationship with the Balinese. The dismissal of Wilis as *patih* and the assassination of Ranggasatata, Danuningrat's Balinese guardian, are obvious manoeuvres of this movement inside the court. Sutajiwa, the crown prince who later replaced Wilis, also gave this faction strong support.

After the death of Danuningrat, Mengwi sent two Balinese leaders, Kotabeda and Kabakaba, to take over the administration. The establishment of the two Balinese leaders brought significant changes within the administration. Most of the elite members of Blambanganese origin were ousted from their posts. After this was accomplished, Blambangan was completely under the administration of the Balinese and the *peranakan*-Balinese. The Blambangan faction seized their moment to react when the Dutch came to claim the land. The arrival of the Dutch encouraged competition between the elite members in the faction, dividing it into two parties. The first party was led by *Mas Puspanegara* (in Dutch sources *Puspaningrat*), the son of *Mas Ayu Tawi* from Probolinggo, and the second party was under *Mas Wasengsari*, the son of *Mas Ayu Tawi* from Lumajang. Both parties competed with each other to succeed Danuningrat, especially after the rumour of the Dutch invasion showed signs of materializing. *Puspanegara* who was keen to see one of his two sons, *Mas Anom* and *Mas Weka*, become the first Prince of Blambangan took the initiative

by making an alliance with a mysterious figure from Probolinggo named *Mas* Purbankara. The latter confessed that he had brought a message from the Regent of Probolinggo who was eager to see him collaborate with the Company if it were to invade Blambangan. Purbankara induced *Mas* Weka and *Mas* Anom to write to the Company offering their collaboration to force the Balinese out of Blambangan. He expected that this would pave the way to reach their goal. When the position of First Prince of Blambangan was secured, Purbankara was promised he would become *patih*. The letter was never written, but when the Dutch troops entered Kota, both princes welcomed them with a package of weapons from their own arsenal and promised to bring the heads of Balinese leaders. Eventually, this party accomplished its goals when the Company decided to install *Mas* Anom and *Mas* Weka as the first Regents of Blambangan. It seems that Purbankara was disappointed because neither prince kept his promise to promote him to *patih*. This led him to transfer his support to Wilis.

Meanwhile, Wasengsari allied himself with Sutanagara, the former *Patih* of *Pangeran Adipati* Danuningrat, gathering a large number of people. They saw the opportunity to win the competition after Purbankara, *Mas* Anom, and *Mas* Weka transferred their support to Wilis. It was the right moment to eliminate the Balinese elements and simultaneously beat their competitors in the race for the position of First Prince of Blambangan. They approached *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen, offering their forces to capture Wilis and his adherents and afterwards Sutanagara succeeded in enticing *Mas* Weka into betraying Wilis. These shrewd moves by Sutanagara and Wasengsari reaped the hoped for result: they were promoted to be the second Regents of Blambangan, an office to which they were inaugurated in the Islamic way.

With the appointment of *Mas* Anom, and *Mas* Weka and later Wasengsari and Sutanagara, the faction met its goal of eliminating the influence of the Balinese elements despite of the rivalry among themselves. However, it was not the end of story because the Balinese *peranakan* were still very much in evidence, both the elite and the grass roots. After the banishment of Wilis, they retreated from the political stage but consolidated their power silently, waiting for the right moment to return to the political stage of Blambangan.

*The Diaspora Connection*

Wilis fired the first shot of his rebellion across the bows of the Company by exhorting the inhabitants to ignore the compulsory work on the *logie* of the Company. This is an indication that the exploitation of the *corvée* workforce had commenced soon after the arrival of the Dutch troops in Blambangan. However, the available sources do not provide enough evidence to determine who was eligible to be a *corvée* labourer or the burden which had to be borne by the inhabitants. Perhaps, the rebellion broke out too early, only three months after the occupation. The local administration had not yet been formed. The Dutch were still arranging a meeting with the local elites to discuss the filling of the vacuum of power and how the newly conquered land was going to be administered. In other words, if there was any of extortion or abuses, this cannot have been carried out systematically. A few reports indicate that local workforces were needed immediately to build the two fortresses in Banyualit and Ulupampang. There is also some strong evidence to suggest that the people of Blambangan suffered from the depredation of rapacious Madurese warriors who robbed them of their belongings when they landed at Blambangan. The decision taken by the Dutch authorities in Blambangan to ship the Madurese warriors back to their homeland was to rescue the people from more suffering. However, the Blambangan people did not blame them but did resent the fact that the Dutch had brought them to Blambangan in the first place. Both factors were cogent reasons to welcome Wilis' appeal to boycott compulsory labour for the Company. Wilis acquired significant support from the grass roots level of society, especially from the people known as *peranakan*-Balinese. They were commonly known as *punakawan* or servants who worked for members of the elite and had been subjected to serfdom and to the undertaking of any kind of compulsory work required by the state. The Company promised the Madurese a reward of 35 Rds for every *peranakan*-Balinese who was caught and handed over.<sup>77</sup>

Another significant element demanding an explanation is the involvement of the diaspora community in the rebellion. There were at

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<sup>77</sup> Governor-General Van der Parra wrote: Schoon men ook van de laatsten [de *paranakanders*], ter aanmoediging van den Madurees, de zulken (ter levering aan de Comp. tegens 35 Rds. ieder) tot slaven verklaard heeft die zig niet vrywillig onderwierpen; uit welk sort van volkje nu wel meest de aanhang van *Pangerang* Willis bestaat. De Jonge *De Opkomst*, vol xi, 74.

least five different diaspora groups involved: as the Balinese, Chinese, Buginese, Sumbawanese; and the Malays. A plausible explanation for their involvement in the rebellion should be sought in the earlier period (as explained in Chapter Three), when the British were still actively engaged in trade with the Balinese rulers in Blambangan. Before the rebellion broke out, the Dutch had captured Thee Poan Ko, a former Lieutenant of the Chinese society in Batavia, who had allied himself with the British merchants who were expanding their trading to east Java after his dismissal. For several years, he had acted as broker between the British merchants and local traders in Blambangan. Governor-General Van der Parra briefly mentions the role of Thee Poan Ko and his exile:

Some other suspect persons have been arrested, of whom some have died in prison, and two former Balinese chiefs have been exiled to Ceylon. Among the first is a Chinese, Thee Poan Ko, who used to be the lieutenant of that nation, but was discharged from this function, and in Blambangan he was known and sent for by the English to initiate the trade in the products of that region.<sup>78</sup>

Besides the Chinese who were either killed or escaped during the battle, the Dutch also had captured some thirty of them. Among them were Ong Aap Ko and Ong Too Ko who had been living in Blambangan for considerable time. Their main mission in Blambangan was to stimulate more private merchants from different ethnicities to come to Blambangan and to provide weapons and ammunitions for the Blambangan and Balinese rebels.

The Buginese had their own explanation for their involvement in this rebellion. Unlike the Chinese, who were mainly fighters, they had various professions, but the majority were merchants and traders. Many Buginese captives confessed that they had been forced by Wilis to support his rebellion otherwise they risked their family falling victim the movement. Wilis and his Balinese adherents had a strong reason to target them. When the Dutch landed at Blambangan for the first time, the Buginese had opportunistically offered to join the Blambangan

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<sup>78</sup> Dat reeds met eenige andere suspecte personen heeft plaats gevonden van welken er zelfs eenige in hare detentie overleden, and twee gewezen Balische hoofden door ons naar Ceilon verbannen zijn. Onder de eersten heeft zig bevonden zekere Chinees The-Poank, die bevorens, luitenant dier natie zijnde, van hier geonfungeerd is, en op Balemboangan bekend en van de Engelschen gezonden was om nu handel in de producten van het land op te rigten. De Jonge, *De Opkomst*, vol. xi, 74.

people in exterminating the Balinese, for the sake of their own safety. Some Buginese, especially some of the *juragan* or big merchants, joined the rebellion purely out of economic interest. In the past, under the Balinese these Buginese merchants, among them *Juragan Janie*, had been given an important role in the local trading network and such opportunities threatened to disappear after the Company occupation of Blambangan. These *juragan* were not personally involved in the fighting but they had sent many warriors led by *Encik Kamis*. Thus the involvement of the Buginese in this rebellion occurred via the Balinese connection, and the same can be said about other ethnic groups, as the Sumbawanese and Malays. Gusti Agong of Mengwi had sent a large number of Buginese, Sumbawanese, and Malay fighters under the personal leadership of Gusti Agong's own wife, *Mas Ayu Ratu*. After the rebellion, more than forty people from this group were captured and sent to Onrust to be used as potential labourers. Appendix 3 shows the various ethnic groups involved in the rebellion.

### *Conclusion*

After his dismissal as *patih* of Blambangan, it dawned on *Pangeran Wilis* that a clandestine movement to diminish the Balinese influence inside the court had been formed among the court elite. He also realized that such sentiment did not come from Danuningrat, but from certain elite members, such as Tepasana and Sutajiwa, who sought to improve their position. To avoid disintegration among the elite, he accepted his dismissal without showing any resistance, although with the influence and popularity he could command, he would have been capable to have done so. There is evidence that some members of the elite tried to bring Islam into the court life, but to postulate that the anti-Balinese sentiment embedded in the hearts of the Blambangan court elite led to the embracing of Islam is somewhat far-fetched. Having been colonized for more than a century was the most cogent reason. Culturally, the Blambanganese people had reluctantly associated themselves with Javanese and Balinese, not because of their religion but because of their political legacy deeply rooted in history. Both nations had colonized them and cast them into agony and slavery. Blambangan people had no particular problem in adapting themselves to either Islam or Hinduism, but strongly resented the imposition of any political bondage. Wilis' rebellion was directed against oppression

and disintegration and was deeply rooted in an ethnic sentiment. At the beginning, Wilis who was genealogically related with Balinese as well as Blambanganese, had no cultural or political preference which would have prompted him to take sides. On the contrary, he was trying to unite both sides believing that the Blambangan people had to accept the fact that the *peranakans* had become an integrated element in Blambangan society. He eventually made up his mind when he witnessed how this ethnic sentiment elicited violence and how this bloody movement claimed many casualties and threatened the disintegration of his people. Furthermore, some elites were quite prepared to cast the people of Blambangan into another sort political bondage. Wilis' appeal to resist the Dutch was an endeavour to reintegrate the people of Blambangan into a free and united society.

The adventure of Wilis ended in Bali. In 1778, Wilis escaped from Banda together with his sons and four other men, including *Mas Bagus* Lumajang and the *Patih* of Malang and Antang, Natakusuma. They escaped from the Company prison after having run amok on a voyage on which a few Dutchmen were killed. From Banda they sailed to Ceram where they found assistance from a Ceramese priest to sail to Sasak, in Bali via Buton. Six months after his arrival in Sasak, Wilis passed away, and his sons, Natakusuma and the other men moved to Klungkung. They planned to return to Blambangan via Jembrana. The King of Klungkung, *Gusti* Dewa Agong, persuaded them to remain in Bali, but via the King of Badung, *Gusti* Mura Jambi, he informed *Gezaghebber* Van der Nieport that the sons of Wilis and their fellowmen were still in Bali. Dewa Agong promised to hand them over to the Company if this was what it desired.<sup>79</sup> Further diplomatic efforts were made between the three parties.<sup>80</sup> The Company succeeded in

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<sup>79</sup> VOC 3528, Copy of report given by a Malay, *Encik* Saji, the envoy and *Juragan* of the *Gezaghebber* of Java's *Oosthoek*, Van der Nieport, Semarang 29 May 1778, 151-152. The report about the escape of Wilis from Banda was brought by the envoy and *Juragan* of the *Gezaghebber* Van der Nieport. In March 1778, *Encik* Saji was sent to Bali by *Gezaghebber* Van der Nieport to buy some slaves from *Gusti* Murah Jambi of Badung. In Bali, he was delayed by the Balinese king for one and halve months. There he heard that the Prince of Blambangan, Wilis, who was banished to Banda in 1768 had escaped together with his sons, and four other fellows including the *Patih* of Antang and Malang.

<sup>80</sup> Responding to the report from Bali, *Gezaghebber* Van der Nieport sent *Encik* Saji to Badung again. His aim was to get confirmation from *Gusti* Mura Jambi who had promised the Company to hand over the sons of Wilis and other Banda's fugitives. *Gusti* Mura Jambi advised the *Gezaghebber* to send his own envoy directly to the king of Klungkung, *Gusti* Dewa Agong, because those fugitives were not in Badung but



persuading the Balinese kings to hand over Natakusuma and Bagus Lumajang, but failed to bring the sons of Wilis to Surabaya, even though a packet of gifts had been sent to Bali to tempt them to take this step.<sup>81</sup>

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in Klungkung. From Badung, *Encik* Saji sent his envoy, *Bapak* Mangku, to Klungkung to confirm that the mentioned fugitives were still there. After ten days, in the company of *Bapak* Kamar, the envoy of the king of Klungkung, returned to Badung. *Bapak* Kamar confirmed that the sons of Wilis and their fellows were still in Klungkung. *Bapak* Kamar advised them if they wanted the fugitives they should write to the Dewa Agong of Klungkung. *Gusti* Mura Jambi offered to help to capture the fugitives, but he needed armed forces, weapons and vessels to fight the king of Jembrana, Mengwi, Telikup, Sukowati and Mangis who might protect the fugitives. VOC 3529, Copy of report given by the Malay *Nabkoda*, *Bapak* Saji, the *Juragan* of the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, Semarang 26 December 1778, 520-522; *See also* VOC 3529, Missive from the Governor of Java's North-East Coast, J. R. van der Burgh, to Governor-General Reijnier de Klerk, 27 December 1778, 512-513.

<sup>81</sup> According to the missive sent from Batavia, *Raden* Natakusuma and *Bagus* of Lumajang, were banished to Ceylon. In 30 January 1781, a packet of gifts consisting of one piece of *fluweel* (velvet) and *laken* (woollen cloth), *ruikende olie* (perfume) were sent to Badung to stimulate *Gusti* Mura Kalerang to surrender also the sons of *Pangeran* Wilis and their fellow captives. It does not specifically mention the names of Wilis' sons who escaped together from Banda. There are no more documents to be found about the fate of Wilis' descendants in Bali. VOC 3602, Extract of a letter written by Johannes Siberg to *Gezaghebber* Nieport, Semarang 30 January 1781, 15-16. *See also* VOC 3602, Missive from Governor of the Java's North-East Coast, Siberg to Governor-General Willem Arnold Alting, 15 March 1781, 4-8.