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

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CHAPTER SIX

NUSA BARONG AFLAME: FREE TRADING AND RESISTANCE ON THE ISLAND OF EVIL, 1772-1800

Introduction

The advent of the Company in Blambangan, followed by the rebellions of *Pangeran* Wilis and the Pseudo-Wilis in 1768 and 1771-1773, irrevocably changed the regional trade network in and around the Bali Strait. The involvement of such diaspora merchant communities as Malays, Buginese, Mandarese, and Chinese in these rebellions inevitably had repercussions on their position in this region. Many members of these communities were banished with the rebel leaders. Not one of their settlements in Blambangan survived after the war. The main port of Blambangan, Ulupampang, was abandoned after the spread of the epidemic which had killed most of its inhabitants. Ineluctably commercial activity in Blambangan collapsed. At the end of the rebellion of the Pseudo-Wilis in 1773, the Dutch authorities had their hands full reorganizing the administration in Blambangan. A new Regent was selected and the capital of Blambangan was moved to Banyuwangi, a few miles to the north of the old capital: but despite their best efforts, the economic activity was still stuck in a rut. The dearth of population was the main obstacle confronting the Company in its attempt to exploit the newly conquered region. A large area of the rice-fields in the region still lay desolate and abandoned. The only valuable resource from Blambangan which could be exploited was the bird's nests found principally in the many caves on the south coast of this part of Java, stretching from Wedi Alit in the west to Gunung Pagger in east. If it were to have any say in the matter, the Company had to contend with yet another problem in asserting its rights to this valuable commodity. Certain groups from the diaspora merchant communities had been controlling the region since the decline in local resistance in Blambangan. In 1773, a motley collection of Buginese, Mandarese, Wajorese, Balinese, Chinese, Sumbawanese, and Malay,

reorganized the trade networks in and around the Bali Strait which had crumbled during the Blambangan wars. They chose Nusa Barong, a small island located to the south of Jember, as their main port and rendezvous. Evidence strongly suggests that this alternative trading port was also used as the base for a political movement against the Company and its trade monopoly. In this alternative trading group, the Mandarese *juragan* assumed the leadership.

This chapter explores the role played by the diaspora merchant community in the trading and in the political movements launched as a protest against the Dutch presence in *Java's Oosthoek* in the second half of the eighteenth century. The discussion focuses on three issues which are linked to each other. The first part examines the networks and characteristics of the mercantile community in this region and its relationship with the local and the European authorities. The second section investigates the rise of Nusa Barong as an alternative trading port and centre of resistance following the conquest of Blambangan by the Dutch in 1767. The last issue reveals the fate of the diaspora merchant community in East Java after the conquest of Nusa Barong in 1777, with special reference to the rise and decline of the Mandarese community on the south coast of Java.

The Trade Network in and around the Bali Strait up to 1767

Trade activity in and around the Bali Strait during the eighteenth century was concentrated on three main ports: Buleleng, Kuta, and Pangpang or Ulupampang. The first two ports are located in Bali: Buleleng on the north coast and Kuta on the south. Pangpang Bay is situated on the east coast of Java.

Foreign trade in Buleleng and Kuta was organized on the basis of a *bandarship*-system. Balinese sovereigns, known as *raja*, controlled the foreign trade but they generally refrained from direct participation in the commerce. The *raja* possessed neither the marketing networks nor the indispensable overseas connections to run this trade effectively. They mediated in foreign trade through non-Balinese agents, usually Chinese, but sometimes Buginese, Arabs, or Europeans – who were known as *bandar*. In exchange for an annual fee and occasional gifts, a *bandar* was granted various privileges, such as the right to establish himself in the busiest trade centre of the principality, the right to open shops and set up storage facilities in other, less busy centres, and the

rights to certain export and import monopolies, to trade in other commodities, and to collect trade duties.¹

The *bandar*-ship of Kuta was the most thriving, lucrative, and hence the most desirable trade farm to which a foreign merchant in this area could aspire. This prosperous situation could be attributed to Kuta's favourable geographical location. The village is situated on the narrow, two-mile-wide isthmus which connects South Bali to the desolate Bukit Peninsula. It has two anchorages which were suitable to all types of *perahu* and junks as well as schooners and square-rigged barks; one on the west of the isthmus and the other in the east. Hence, Kuta was little affected by the direction of the monsoons and able to accommodate shipping all year around. All the commerce of South Bali, Tabanan, Gianyar, Mengwi, and Badung had of necessity to pass through the port of Kuta.²

Bapak Dia, a Buginese emissary who was sent to Bali by the Dutch in 1764, described the thriving situation in the port of Kuta which was always busy, even in wartime. Every day, some eighteen ships visited the port. On the first day of his arrival in Badung, he spotted fourteen vessels from different places in the Indonesian Archipelago: five from Banjarmasin; two from Bengkulu; two from Palembang; and six from Batavia. Ten days later, a few Mandarese merchants arrived aboard four vessels.³ Most of them sailed under British or Dutch flags. Among the miscellaneous goods usually brought to Bali were iron, porcelain, gold thread, rattan, *cartas caijli* (paper), *gum benzoin*, cloth, and slaves. Muslim merchants also visited this place regularly, and brought white, black, and red textiles. The merchants from the west, among them those from Batavia sailed to Bali during the west monsoon, and when they arrived, the Buginese and other merchants from eastern islands of the Archipelago left Bali. Most of the Buginese merchants who visited Bali actually came from Bengkulu, carrying opium and returned with *cartas caijli* and foodstuffs. They sold the opium at a low price; each *kati* (2 ½ packets) of opium was sold for 7½ *real*. There were also some

¹ Alfons van der Kraan, 'Trade, Rajas and Bandars in South Bali', in John Butcher and Howard Dick, *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming: Business Elites and the Emergence of the Modern States in Southeast Asia* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993), 103.

² *Ibid.*, 105-6.

³ Collectie Engelhard 19a, Report by a Buginese *Bapak* Dia, the Dutch emissary for Gusti Agung Dewa Made to the King of Mengwi, Bali, 26 July 1764, 152. *Bapak* Dia was a Buginese who was sent to Mengwi by Governor Willem Hendrik van Ossenberch but he could not complete his trip because at that time Badung was at war with Mengwi. He remained in Badung until the war was over.

merchants from Eastern Indonesia, mostly Ceramese who came with nutmeg and mace. These merchants were not interested only in such local product as rice, oil, and coconuts; They also took the opportunity to purchase other goods brought in by other foreign traders, including textile, cotton, and opium. They used Kuta as an *entrepôt* for the exchange of goods.⁴



The Bay of Pampang in Muncar Banyuwangi (Pic. 2003)

The port of Pampang on the east coast of Java benefited from the increase in trade of the *bandar*-ships in Kuta and Buleleng, but the direct connection with Kuta was more intensive than with that Buleleng. Geographically the port of Pampang was poorly located. It lay deep within the confines of narrow Pangpang Bay, behind Cape Sembulungan. Big ships, especially those which sailed from the west through the Madura Strait, had great trouble reaching the port on the west monsoon. Therefore, most of the merchants who visited Blambangan first visited Buleleng or Lombok and then sailed back to the west via the Southern Ocean and visited Kuta before pushing on to Pangpang Bay. Despite its unfortunate location, Pangpang Bay did offer some advantages as witnessed by a British sailor, who reported

⁴ Collectie Engelhard, 19a, Interrogation of the Buginese *Bapak* Dia, Semarang 29 August 1764, 152.

that it was a well-sheltered anchorage where small ships could be launched.⁵

Up to the Dutch occupation in 1767, Blambangan had been under the sovereignty of Mengwi, but the Balinese had authorized its inhabitants to pursue their own trade. *Pangeran Adipati* Danuningrat or *Pangeran Pati*, the last King of Blambangan, had established a regular trading connection with a British merchant named Gordon, who lived in Batavia. Gordon regularly sent his commercial agent, a Chinese, to do business with the King. As the local market was hampered by a lack of cash, the trade was conducted on the basis of barter. *Pangeran Pati*'s other commercial partners were the Sultans of Palembang and Banjarmasin. These rulers had also been active in sending their agents and merchants. Despite these well-established contacts, the Blambangan people themselves did not sail abroad. All trading activities with foreign merchants were entrusted to brokers who came to pick up and handle the goods in and out of Blambangan.⁶ There is not much information about the *bandarship*-system in Blambangan before the Dutch occupation in 1767. Sutanegara, the former *Patih* or Chief Minister of Blambangan, explained that *Pangeran Pati* preferred to engage himself in trade negotiations with the foreign merchants. There were intermediaries but they did not have the same authority to act as did the *bandar*, who was accorded certain rights to organize trade and establish a permanent settlement in the ports of Bali. These intermediaries were agents who were sent regularly by their merchant lords to make contact directly with the King.⁷ In his report to the High Government in Batavia, the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, Breton, described that *Pangeran Pati* was an intelligent man who read and spoke Malay and Chinese fluently. This ability allowed him to communicate directly with the foreign merchants. His links with the many Chinese merchants who did business with him had influenced his attitude. He invariably wore a Chinese dress, and even behaved as a Chinese.⁸

⁵ These difficulties in visiting Blambangan directly are often reported by the Dutch emissaries who were sent there. See VOC 3186, Report by indigenous *Vaandrig*, *Bapak* Banjer, 16 August 1766, 673-7 Basset, 'British Trade and Policy in Indonesia', 1760-1772, *BKI*, (1964).

⁶ Collectie Engelhard 19a, Interrogation of the Buginese *Bapak* Dia, Semarang 29 August 1764, 152.

⁷ VOC 3248, The conference between Sutanegara, and *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen, August 1768, 78-9.

⁸ Collectie Engelhard 19a, Consideration about Blambangan by Hendrik Breton, Surabaya 30 October 1763.

During the 1763-1765 period, Blambangan lost control of its foreign trade in the confusion caused by the political crisis there. In 1763, *Pangeran Pati*, who had tried to liberate Blambangan from Mengwi, was expelled from his palace. He sought assistance from the VOC, but met with refusal. A year later, he was exiled to Bali in the company of his brother, *Pangeran Wilis*. By that time, Blambangan had been occupied by Balinese troops and two Balinese, Kotabeda and Kabakaba were posted to take over the administration. From that moment, the trade in Blambangan fell into the hands of the Balinese and the free traders (mostly Buginese, Mandarese, and Chinese). In this chaotic situation, the British visited this region sniffing out any possibilities of establishing a commercial post.

The British presence in this region was intimately connected with their trade with Canton. The British had difficulty in paying for the expanding exports of silk and tea from China and were anxious to find ways to limit their shipments of silver to Canton by using South-East Asian produce as an alternative form of payment. They also hoped to attract Chinese junks to an *entrepôt* beyond the bounds of the monopoly of the Co-Hong, where the terms of exchange would be more favourable to them. This solution to the China remittance problem involved the establishment of a British settlement in the China Sea area or in the Indonesian Archipelago. Both the British Company and the British Country Traders had an interest in the scheme. In 1765, the Council of the British East India Company had recommended some ports which deserved to be investigated with an eye to effectuating this plan. Among them were Pasir, Sumbawa, Bali and other ports farther eastwards.

In August 1766, three big British ships, followed by indigenous and Chinese vessels: fourteen *chialoups*, twenty-five *pancalang* and a hundred smaller vessels arrived at Blambangan under the command of Edward Coles.⁹ He sought out one particular Chinese merchant named *Encik Lok*, soliciting his help to open negotiations with Gusti Agong of Mengwi. Presented with two pieces of green *laken* and two rolls of *armasijn*, *Encik Lok* was asked to assist in obtaining a permit to purchase rice from Gusti Agong of Mengwi. Through the mediation of *Encik Lok*, the English succeeded in exchanging one package of opium, twenty-one firearms, and two barrels of gunpowder for ten

⁹ VOC 3186, Report by indigenous *Vaandrig*, *Bapak Banjer*, 16 August 1766, 673-677.

keoyan of rice.¹⁰ The British had brought twenty firearms in Blambangan and eight of them had been sold. They also purchased rice, buffaloes, and cows from the Blambangan Ruler, Kota Bada. During this visit ten buffaloes, some *kati* of rice and a large amount of timber of different sizes were acquired from Gusti Ngurah Ketut, Gusti Kota Bada, and Gusti Pasekan.¹¹

The British presence in the Bali Strait encouraged 'free trading' or what was usually called as *smokkelhandel* (contraband trade) by the Dutch, and this kindled local resistance. The Governor of Semarang, Johannes Vos as well as the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, Coop à Groen, reacted instantly to the British intrusion. In 1767, the Dutch dispatched a military expedition to Blambangan and with the help of Madurese troops succeeded in putting down the local resistance. During this invasion, two British merchants were found in Blambangan, and both were arrested.¹²

The first five years of the Dutch occupation of Blambangan (1767-1771) proved a hard time for any trading activity there, because they were overshadowed by conflict and rebellions. The regional trade network which had been functioning for almost half a century gradually deteriorated. Even so, the local mercantilist spirit was not quelled. By the beginning of the 1770s, a group of the diaspora community had re-organized its network and established an alternative trading-post on the Island of Nusa Barong.

The Rise of Nusa Barong

Nusa Barong is a small island (6,100 ha.) situated some three miles to the south of Puger (currently under the Jember Regency), East Java. The island is composed of limestone with spectacular cliffs rising to 325m and some coastal mangrove swamps. Most of the island is mountainous: there are several deeply indented bays on the north-east coast which provide sheltered anchorages for visiting fishermen.

¹⁰ VOC 3186, Report by Bagus Mida, 4 September 1766, 699-704.

¹¹ VOC 3186, Report by the Banger Mantri Sastro Yudo, 15 August 1766, 677-9.679.

¹²There is no further information about either merchant, but according to Bassett, the British company official from Bengkulu, denied their involvement in Blambangan. He believes that those who were involved in the Blambangan affair were British Country Traders. See Bassett, 'British Trade and Policy in Indonesia'.

Because of its limestone substratum, the island is almost completely arid with no rivers and only at a few natural ponds animals may find standing water. The climate on Nusa Barong is dry with an average annual rainfall of 1,600 mm. There is only a short rainy season, and the southern shores are often exposed to strong winds.

The Blambangan people look upon Nusa Barong as a 'Dark Island', inhabited by demons and other dark spirits.¹³ The Dutch adopted this idea with a somewhat transposed meaning. Nusa Barong became the 'Island of Evil' in which rebels and smugglers and other rough elements assembled and brewed their schemes to foil Dutch interests. During the war between the VOC and Blambangan in 1767-1773, many Javanese and Balinese warriors concealed themselves on Nusa Barong. Traders from Bengkulu, mostly Buginese and Mandarese who sailed across to Bali and eastern Indonesia, used the island as a rendezvous with their partners from Bali, Java, Sumbawa and others places. The British merchants also followed this route, and frequently visited the island in search of firewood.¹⁴

Before the conquest of Blambangan by the VOC in 1768, the island of Nusa Barong had been an important economic resource to the area, as it produced quite a significant amount of bird's nests and wax. During the administration of *Pangeran Adipati* Danuningrat (1743-63), the collection of bird's nests on this island was farmed out to the Chinese.¹⁵ Although Nusa Barong did not produce much food the island had a significant population. In 1772, 250 families or around one thousand souls were settled there in seven villages, and five years later this number had doubled.¹⁶ Initially, most inhabitants were Javanese refugees, particularly from Lumajang and Blambangan, who had fled to the island during the Dutch-Blambangan War in 1767-1768. However, after 1772, the Buginese-Mandarese dominated the population on Nusa Barong. The remainder were composed of Wajorese, Balinese, Sumbawanese, Manggarese, and Malays. In 1768, the VOC built a redoubt there which was placed under the command

¹³ Similar attributes are also ascribed to the Island Nusa Kambangan which is located to the south of Cilacap, Central Java and the Island of Nusa Penida, to the south of the island of Bali.

¹⁴ VOC 3186, Governor Johannes Vos to Governor-General Petrus Albertus van der Parra, 12 March 1766, 617.

¹⁵ VOC 3248, The conference between Sutanagara, and *Gezaghebber* Coop à Groen, August 1768, 78-79.

¹⁶ VOC 3389, Report by *Mantri* Kanduruan of Banjer to Pieter Luzac, 12 January 1773, 83-84.

Vaandrig Jan Smit. The main objective of this small defensive work was to discourage the arrival of 'smugglers' and pirates who regularly raided the island and plundered the bird's nests.

The arrival of the Dutch on the island of Nusa Barong sparked off a local conflict. Most of the inhabitants were in fact reluctant to be subjugated by the VOC, but they were too weak to resist. The chief of the island, Sindukapa decided to submit but the second chief, Sindubrama, protested. He contrived a secret plan to take over the island, but initially the resistance did not produce any violence. After the end of the rebellion of *Pangeran Wiilis* in 1768, the Dutch decided to withdraw Jan Smit and his troops from Nusa Barong. Not a single soldier was left there and the redoubt was abandoned. The departure of Jan Smit encouraged Sindubrama to act. He killed Sindukapa, who was actually his own stepfather, because had co-operated with the Dutch.¹⁷

In 1771, when another rebellion broke out in Blambangan, led by Rempeg or the Pseudo-Wilis, many outsiders, such as Buginese, Balinese, and Chinese, mingled with the rebels. In October 1772, the rebel headquarters in Bayu were destroyed by the VOC, but this did not spell the end of the war. The main leaders, among them *Bapak* Endo, Larat, Rupa, Wilonda, Simprong, and Kapulaga escaped, and concealed themselves on the island of Nusa Barong. In August 1772, the Dutch Commander of Gitem, Steenberger, sent three spies to the island to investigate rumours that two of the above-mention rebels were hiding there, but they never returned to Blambangan.¹⁸

After the murder of Sindukapa, the new chief of the island, Sindubrama, did his utmost to rebuild the old trade network which had declined following the Dutch occupation of *Java's Oosthoek*. He set about sending his people to Bali to convince the merchants there of the new commercially favourable situation on Nusa Barong. He offered his island as an *entrepôt* for the exchange of products between the merchants from the West (especially Mandarese or Buginese from Bengkulu) and from the East (mainly Balinese and Sumbawanese). Gradually, some Balinese and Mandarese merchants began to visit Nusa Barong again. A Dutch report mentions that one of the major *Juragan* from Bali, named Sinto, frequently visited Nusa Barong, and

¹⁷ VOC 3389, J. A. Steenberger, the post-holder of Gitem, to Commander Van Rijkje of Pasuruan, 25 December 1772, 67-68.

¹⁸ Ibid. 67.

that several Mandarese vessels, large and small also anchored off the coast of this island.¹⁹

On 8 September 1772, the Dutch post holder of Gitem, Steenberger, again sent two Javanese, *Bapak* Jumut and *Bapak* Sina, to Nusa Barong to investigate the current situation, and to take the opportunity to trace the three missing spies who had been sent there previously. Both emissaries returned with a confirmation of the assassination of Sindukapa and the detention of the three missing spies. However, they discovered not a single ship either from Bali or from Bengkulu at Nusa Barong. The local people said that *Juragan* Sinto had returned to Bali when he heard a rumour that the Dutch were about to attack Nusa Barong.²⁰ *Bapak* Jumut and *Bapak* Sina suggested immediate action be taken to arrest Sindubrama.²¹

Before the Dutch could proceed with the necessary action to deal with Sindukapa's assassination, there was a significant political development on Nusa Barong. Sometime around October 1772, one large Mandarese vessel under *Nabkoda* Sabak arrived on Nusa Barong. Chief Sindubrama who had been expecting more merchants to come for some time warmly welcomed this arrival. He even allowed the Mandarese to build a house on the island. *Nabkoda* Sabak was delighted with this offer but he did not have time to linger on. Therefore, he left the job of building the residence to one of his followers, named *Juragan* Jani, in the expectation that the house would be ready when he returned to Nusa Barong. He also left him some firearms and ammunitions. Apparently *Juragan* Jani had ideas on his own because he ignored *Nabkoda* Sabak's orders to build the house. Worse still he abused the trust that his leader had given him by pushing local Chief Sindubrama to hand the island over to him.²² In this fashion *Juragan* Jani became the master of Nusa Barong. He occupied the former Dutch redoubt and strengthened it with an arsenal of with sixty firearms, three tons of gunpowder, and four small canons. He increased his armada by fifty Mandarese vessels, one

¹⁹ Ibid. 67.

²⁰ Ibid. 68.

²¹ Ibid. 68.

²² On Nusa Barong, this *Juragan* Jani married with the daughter of Sindubrama and the daughter of Sinduongga. VOC 3499, Copy report by *Bapak* Sieman and *Bapak* Sami, two Javanese who were born on Nusa Barong and were living in Lumajang, 7 February 1777, 175-176.

pancalang, and three *paduwakan* brought more people to reside on Nusa Barong.²³

On 8 November 1772, the Dutch sent two emissaries, *Bapak* Roman and *Bapak* Trima, to Nusa Barong. Their task was to force *Juragan* Jani to hand over Sindubrama who had killed the chief of the island. However, the envoys were unable to meet *Juragan* Jani as he was on the point of leaving for Briki or Rawa, in the Sultan of Mataram's territory, together with Sindubrama, *Juragan* Baguwo, and Bolobo. Their mission was to purchase rice and other foodstuffs. *Juragan* Baguwo was bound for Badung to collect more guns and ammunition.²⁴ *Juragan* Jani also made a big effort to strengthen his stronghold with more guns, ammunition, warriors, and stocked other foodstuff. Badung had been chosen as the best place to purchase all of these needs because it was one of the favourite ports of those free traders who were reluctant to co-operate with the Dutch. In March 1773, *Juragan* Jani sent four vessels under *Juragan* Balobo, *Juragan* Sinto and *Juragan* Kolo to Badung in order to transport ammunition and more people to Nusa Barong. They returned to Nusa Barong with fifteen families (around seventy souls), from Meru on the south coast of Java. Among these families were those of the Wajorese rebels, Bagus Jawat and Bagus Benu.²⁵

Nusa Barong's growing demand for foodstuff, guns, and ammunition encouraged the local traders from the surrounding islands to step in. *Juragan* Makole, a Makassarese merchant who lived in Badung, was one of the suppliers. To collect the requisite arms and ammunitions, he co-operated with pirates from the Island Kangian. Through their mediation, *Juragan* Makole was able to buy from the Batavia merchant, *Encik* Tinaya, a *pikul* of gunpowder, one *pikul* of ammunition, and four blunderbusses.²⁶

On 22 February, *Juragan* Jani and his people, armed with pikes and firearms, plundered the bird's nests in Gunung Meru on the south coast of Punasem. Two big ships and five *jukung*, with around forty people on board were employed in this operation. Their plot was

²³ VOC 3389, Report by *Mantri* Kanduruan of Banjer to Pieter Luzac, 12 January 1773, 83-84.

²⁴ VOC 3389, Frederick Fischer to Pieter Luzac, 27 December 1772, 73-74.

²⁵ VOC 3389, Frederick Fischer to Pieter Luzac, 5 March 1773, 169-171.

²⁶ VOC 3389, Copy report by Javanese Oesin, Semarang, 22 March 1773, 243-244. Oesin is a Javanese sailor from Semarang who worked for *Juragan* Makole. He was captured by the VOC's patrol at Grajagan, on the way to Badung, Bali.

uncovered by *Bapak* Roman, the Chief of Sabrang who was hunting the rebels along the south coast of Java. When he and his brother tried to stop them, both were killed and six of his followers were captured by the robbers while the rest fled to the hills. Two days later, *Bapak* Samprit, one of the six men who were captured at Gunung Meru managed to escape.²⁷

After this incident, the Dutch intensified their patrols along the south coast of Java. Incidents involving both parties were frequent. In October 1773, a Dutch patrol was attacked by *Juragan* Jani's people who had sailed to Puger with nine *perahu*, that were heavily armed with forty firearms and fifty pikes. In this clash many people were killed on both sides. Four of *Juragan* Jani's *perahu* escaped but the rest were destroyed. Their crews either perished in the sea or managed to flee to the hills, in Wedi Alit. The next morning, thirteen ships were dispatched from Nusa Barong to trace the five missing *perahu* and the people aboard who might have survived the sea battle. On the VOC side, eight people were missing: two *Mantri* from Pasuruan, Wirakrasa and Wiraprama, chief Wirajaya and five soldiers.²⁸

The Dutch Commander of Adiraga, Fischer, believed that the continuous arrival of ships and people on Nusa Barong was a blatant proof that new seeds of opposition were sprouting. *Juragan* Jani's behaviour towards the Company was friendly (he showed his cooperation with the Company by arresting one of the escaped rebels, Kapulaga), but in the meantime, he was preparing his ships to plunder and kill Dutch subjects, and then make his escape as fast as he could.²⁹

The False Tumenggung: The Internal Dispute

In October 1776, the political climate on Nusa Barong changed yet again with the return of *Nabhoda* Sabak and the mysterious death of *Juragan* Jani. The purpose of the arrival of *Nabhoda* Sabak in Nusa Barong was to punish *Juragan* Jani who had not fulfilled his duty and had betrayed the trust which had been given him. However, before he could arrest *Juragan* Jani, the latter had run away with his two wives and a few of his adherents to the island of Nusa Barambang which was

²⁷ Ibid. 244.

²⁸ VOC 3418, Letter under separate cover from *Vaandrig* Fischer, the Commander of Adiraga to *Gezaghebber* Pieter Luzac at Surabaya 31 October 1773, 98-99.

²⁹ VOC 3389, Frederik Fischer to Pieter Luzac, 20 January 1773, 141.

located to the south of Banyumas, and was part of Surakarta territory.³⁰ In November 1776, *Opperhoofd* Stralendorf of Surakarta received a report from the Regent of Banyumas apprising him of the arrival of four Mandarese ships in Nusa Barambang. The report also mentioned that these Mandarese had brought the body of their own captain, named Jani who had died during the passage. Stralendorf suspected that the dead Captain was the Mandarese who had occupied the island of Nusa Barong. Immediately, Stralendorf sent a Javanese *oppasser*, named Merta, to arrest the Mandarese and bring them to Surakarta. However, when Merta arrived there, he was told that *Juragan* Bundu, one of *Juragan* Jani's followers, had decided to transport the body of his captain back to Nusa Barong. They had set sail for Nusa Barong with four *perahu* which they bought from the local people. Another report said that *Juragan* Bundu had returned few days later to Nusa Barambang because two of his ships had gone missing at Segara Wedi. Merta decided to pursue them but the Dutch Commander on the South Coast of Cirebon stopped him, saying that the Mandarese were merely traders, and that it was unnecessary to hunt them down. Three days later, the Mandarese continued their journey to Nusa Barong.³¹

Four years after taking over control of Nusa Barong, *Juragan* Jani had left the island, only to die mysteriously on his way to the island Nusa Barambang. There is no doubt that his fickle behaviour had undermined his relationship with *Nabhkoda* Sabak, but nothing suggests that any strenuous effort was made by *Juragan* Sabak to capture *Juragan* Jani, nor was there any mention of a fatal attack by pirates or an accident at sea. Possibly, *Juragan* Jani was betrayed by his own followers. The most likely candidate is *Juragan* Bundu may have assassinated his own *Juragan*, and used his dead body as a 'guarantee' to be able to return to Nusa Barong safely. Consequently, *Nabhkoda* Sabak indeed allowed him to land on Nusa Barong, where the body of *Juragan* Jani was buried.

After the death of *Juragan* Jani, *Nabhkoda* Sabak took control of the island. He declared himself the new chief of Nusa Barong under the title *Tumenggung* Mancanagara, claiming that this title had been

³⁰ VOC 3499, Copy report by *Bapak* Siman and *Bapak* Sami, two Javanese who were born at Nusa Barong and lived in Lumajang, 7 February 1777, 175-6.

³¹ VOC 3470, Report by Merta, a Javanese *Oppas* of the Surakarta *Opperhoofd*, Stralendorf, Semarang, 24 December 1776, 329-30.

bestowed on him by the Sultan of Mataram.³² *Tumenggung* is a title which was usually bestowed on a *bupati* or a Regent in outlying provinces or the *mancanegara*. *Tumenggung Mancanegara* literally means the 'Regent of the Outlying Province'. There is no single shred of evidence which mentions the relationship between the Sultan and *Juragan* Sabak with the exception of a few documents which refer to the trading relations between Buginese-Mandarese merchants and the Sultan's subjects in Rawa. The inhabitants of this district had a close commercial partnership with the Buginese-Mandarese merchants, especially in rice trading. Despite such evidence, it would be hazardous to suggest that this trading was carried out with the knowledge and under the authority of the Sultan. What can be interpreted from *Nabkoda* Sabak's adoption of his title is that he was trying to legitimize his power over Nusa Barong by making it a legal occupation in the eyes of Nusa Barong's people, the Sultan's subjects, and those of the VOC. Secondly, by claiming to be a subject of the Sultan, *Nabkoda* Sabak may have been anticipating the deterioration the relationship between the VOC and the Sultan of Mataram which at that moment was still highly ambivalent.³³

Nusa Barong Expedition, 1777

In fact, a military expedition to Nusa Barong was planned as early as 1773, when the number incidents involving Dutch patrols and *Juragan* Jani's people on the south coast of Java were increasing. But the Governor insisted that the expedition would only be carried out after the appropriate preparations had been made. At that time in Semarang there was a lack of ships to support the expedition and at the same time, the war in Blambangan was still in progress: the work of moving the capital city of Blambangan to Banyuwangi had just been commenced. The Dutch and the people of Blambangan were

³² VOC 3499, Copy report by *Bapak* Siman and *Bapak* Sami, two Javanese who were born at Nusa Barong and lived in Lumajang, 7 February 1777, 175-6.

³³ At that time the VOC was dealing with the difficult case of *Raden Ayu* Bando which involved the three Javanese rulers in Central Java, Sultan, Sunan and Mangkunegara. The Dutch were worried that this case would deteriorate the peaceful situation which so far had been reached after the long war of succession war which involved the three parties and the Dutch. See, M.C. Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkebumi: The History of the Division of Java 1749-1792* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

concentrating their energies on building the new fortress in Banyuwangi and the *dalm* (house) of the newly selected Regent.

The real move to invade Nusa Barong was not made until 1777. Hundreds of soldiers which had been assembled from Bangil, Probolinggo, Pasuruan, Malang and Blambangan, departed for Gitem and Plindo on the south-east coast of Java. Then, for no obvious reason, the expedition was postponed. The preparation of the invasion elicited a host of complaints from the local inhabitants who were forced to provide the daily rations for the soldiers. After more than half a year's delay, the expedition was finally carried out in August 1777.

On 17 August 1777, the first Dutch fleet landed on Nusa Barong under the command of Adriaan van Rijcke. In the Bay of Nusa Barong the troops were split up and sent in two directions. The first unit, under *Vaandrighs* Kregel and Martin, was sent to Kamal Bay, and the second unit, under Commander Van Rijcke himself, headed for Jurook Bay. In both places the Dutch troops engaged with *Juragan's* Sabak's people who were expecting their arrival. Attacks were launched from the ships and from the land. But the battle in neither place did last more than a few hours and Kamal and Jurook were captured by the Dutch. These battles left twenty-seven rebels dead and many others wounded the rest fled to the hills. After the fortress and houses were burned down, on 18 August, most of the Dutch army relaxed while the traps which had been set by the enemy were cleared up. In the following days the soldiers were split up in platoons and sent in several directions to hunt down the enemy in the hills and wilderness. A week later, thirty-three Buginese, Mandarese, and Balinese warriors hiding in the jungle were discovered. Most of them were wounded, and the Dutch decapitated them all including one Buginese *Juragan*, named Rakia. Nineteen rebels were arrested at another place.³⁴

During the attack on Kamal and Jeruk, *Juragan* Bundu and *Juragan* Sapu and eighteen other Buginese and Mandarese had escaped, but they were captured by the Dutch troop in Gitem when they reached the south coast of Java. Meanwhile, Chief Sinduongga and two *penghulu*

³⁴ VOC 3528, Copy missive from the leader of the expedition to the island of Nusa Barong, Adriaan van Rijcke to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, Rudolph Florentinus van der Nieport, 1 September 1777, 367. The summary of this report is published also in De Jonge, *De Opkomst* vol. xi, 293-294. See also, De Jonge, *De Opkomst*, vol. xi, Report of the leader of expedition to Nusa Barong, Adriaan van Rijcke to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, 18 August 1777, 291-293.

surrendered to the Company. They came as representatives of other like-minded Nusa Barong people, most of them women and children. Upon the arrival of these people, the Dutch arrested ninety-eight of them. From *Juragan* Bundu the Dutch heard that the Chief of Nusa Barong, Sindubrama, was still alive. He had left Nusa Barong with his followers the night before the attack on Kamal and Jurok. *Quartiermeester* Joseph Bosetiel reported that he had destroyed some *perahu* which were used by the rebels to escape from Nusa Barong, and Sindubrama may have been on board in one of these vessels.³⁵

Even if the Dutch succeeded in destroying all the rebel redoubts on Nusa Barong, most of the ringleaders escaped, quite possibly they managed to reach Pulo Sempu in the territory of Malang and regroup their movement there. From the outset, the Dutch were aware of this situation. On the same day as the Nusa Barong expedition was launched, the Dutch also deployed fifty Javanese soldiers to the island of Sempu to prevent the arrival of the Nusa Barong escapees. A few days after the conquest of Nusa Barong, the Regent of Malang, Kartanagara, reported that the Nusa Barong's escapees had landed on Pulo Sempu in fourteen vessels. Corporal Adam and some Javanese troops who were posted there failed to prevent them from coming ashore and were driven off the island. Now they retreated into the forest of Dragonco.³⁶

The Governor was highly satisfied with the outcome of the Nusa Barong expedition, but he was still circumspect about the developments on Pulo Sempu. He expected that Commander Van Rijke would catch the escapees as soon as possible. He surmised that these escapees were concealing more ships on Pulo Sempu, with which they would sail to the island of Nusa Barambang in Cirebon territory and then regroup and rebuild their power over there. Like Nusa Barong, Nusa Barambang also functioned as in-between-port for the Buginese and Mandarese merchants who sailed between Eastern Indonesia and Bengkulu. The Governor in Semarang had urged that the return fleet of the Buginese and Mandarese merchants, who usually sailed homewards to the east during the months October and

³⁵ De Jonge, *De Opkomst*, vol. xi, Report of the leader of the expedition to Nusa Barong, Adriaan van Rijke to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, 18 August 1777, 291-3.

³⁶ VOC 3499, Copy missive from *Vaandrig* J. P. Nobel to *Gezaghebber* R. F. van der Niepoort, 26 August 1777, 391-392. See VOC 3499, also, Copy missive from *Gezaghebber* R. F. van der Niepoort to Commander Adriaan van Rijke, 28 August 1777, 389-390.

November, should be anticipated. It was reasonable to assume that their ethnic solidarity would encourage them to unite with the rebels. Hence, the Governor supported the idea of making a further expedition to Pulo Sempu and Nusa Barambang. To ensure the success of this expedition, the Governor spent some of his own money to buy six small *pancalang*.³⁷

Gezaghebber Van der Niepoort agreed, but he was still waiting for a subsequent report from the Commander of the expedition, Van Rijcke. He suggested that if the expedition to Pulo Sempu proved necessary, he would send *Vaandrig* Mulder, who was currently in Pasuruan. Van der Niepoort also urged all the chiefs in the Sultan's territory, among them Kediri, Kalangbret, Rawa, and Lodalem, to guard their sections of coastline against the arrival of the rebels and to prevent the latter from passing through their territory. There was also a report from the local people that the rebels on Pulo Sempu had installed some firearms and small calibre cannons on the shore.³⁸ The military expedition to Pulo Sempu was finally carried out on 29 August 1777. *Vaandrig* August Muller was in charge of the expedition, an honour he shared with the Regent of Malang, *Tumenggung* Kartanagara, and the local chief, *Ngabehi* Jaksakusuma. The expedition involved thirty-four Dutch soldiers and 120 Javanese warriors.

The Demolition of Nusa Barong

Shortly after the conquest of Nusa Barong, *Gezaghebber* Van der Niepoort submitted a proposal to Semarang revising the management of the bird's nests on the islands of Nusa Barong, and such surrounding areas, as Gunung Pager, and Dedali, and other places along the south-east coast of Java. Van der Niepoort proposed farming out the harvesting of the nests to the Chinese. The Captain of the Chinese of Surabaya, Han Bwee Kong, and his brother, Han Tik Kong, were interested in this offer. To attract local support, a small share of the harvest would be allotted to the local chiefs. During the

³⁷ VOC 3499, Extract missive from the Governor of Semarang, J. R. van den Burgh, to the *Gezaghebber* R.F. van der Niepoort, Semarang, 25 August 1777, 385-387.

³⁸ VOC 3499, Extract missive from the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya R. F. van der Niepoort to the Governor of Semarang, J. R. van den Burgh, Surabaya 29 August 1777, 387-388.

successive wars, the local chiefs had been unable to enjoy the profits from the harvest of the bird's nests in their territory. To make matter worse, they could not secure them against robbery. Van der Niepoort assured Governor Van den Burgh that these chiefs would be grateful to him because they would be able to enjoy the profit of their own property again.³⁹ The proposal was approved by the Governor and the contract was signed at the end of 1777. The right to collect the nests on Nusa Barong was awarded to the Captain Chinese of Surabaya, Han Bwee Kong, for 1,550 Rds. and in western Blambangan to his brother, Han Tik Kong, for 850 Rds. From the proceeds of both contracts, the Dutch expected to earn 2,400 Rds. per year, of which 500 Rds. would be distributed to the Regents or Chiefs of the districts of Lumajang, Malang, Sabrang, and Blambangan.⁴⁰

The Regent of Lumajang	100 <i>reals</i>
The Regent of Malang	100 <i>reals</i>
The Chief of Sabrang	50 <i>reals</i>
<u>The Regent of Blambangan</u>	<u>250 <i>reals</i></u>
Total	500 <i>reals</i>

These two contracts were of short duration. Ten months after the conquest of Nusa Barong, Governor Van den Burgh suggested a completely different idea. Apparently, the outcome of the management of the newly conquered islands satisfied neither the Dutch nor the Chinese lease holder. The harvest of the bird's nests at Nusa Barong was very poor. Certain pragmatic considerations led the Dutch to change their policy towards the island. In 1778, the Governor submitted a proposal for the abolition of the Company settlement and the demolition of all buildings on the island. This proposal was put forward after reviewing all the costs and benefits. The Governor came to the conclusion that Nusa Barong was an *arm eiland*, poor and unprofitable to the Company.⁴¹ First and foremost, Nusa Barong provided no adequate port for big ships. On the south coast of the

³⁹ VOC 3528, *Gezaghebber* R. F. van der Niepoort to the Governor J. R. van den Burgh, 31 December 1777, 7.

⁴⁰ VOC 3528, Governor J. R. van den Burgh to Batavia 13 January 1778, 3-4.

⁴¹ VOC 3528, Governor Van den Burgh to Batavia 18 May 1778, 67-87. *See also* VOC, 3528, Report of the value and condition of the island of Nusa Barong by Rudolph Florentinus van der Niepoort Chief Merchant and the *Gezaghebber* of Java's *Oosthoek*, 17 and 18 August 1777, 99-104.

island there was only one bay and this was accessible only to very small fishing-boats. On the north coast of the island there were three bays, but all three of them were navigable only by small *perahu mayang* and light *padumakan* or *pancalang*. The island itself produced no valuable products because of its unfertile soil. In many places, the layer of tillable soil was very meagre. On the island there were sixty coconut palms, plus a few mangos, *zuurzak* (sirsale), *kemiri* and *pinang* trees. There was only one well, of poor water quality. On the hill were only a few *gogo* or dry rice and maize-fields. The local inhabitants usually planted *kapas* (cotton), tobacco, rice, *kacang buncis* (beans), and other vegetables. The rest was a wilderness with trees of no account. The only worthwhile products of this island were the bird's nests, but in the last five years, the production had declined significantly. Each year, Nusa Barong produced only 1,800 nests, so that the highest level reached was a quarter of a *pikul*. This outcome was not worth the huge and expensive efforts which the Dutch had undertaken to keep robbers away from the bird's nest sites.⁴² Another consideration was the high maintenance costs. They were extremely expensive because the position of the island itself was vulnerable to foreign attack. Any form of defence would require many troops and ships. Since the occupation began, the Dutch had expended large amounts of money to provide foodstuffs and other necessities to the troops posted in several redoubts on the island. Several Dutch ships which were regularly dispatched to provide the island with food had repeatedly failed to make landfall and had returned with food spoiled.⁴³ Finally, the expedition and the occupation of the island Nusa Barong had also had a bad effect on the surrounding districts. The *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya received complaints from the local rulers alleging that some people in various districts, such as Pasuruan, Bangil, Banger, and Besuki, had fled from their villages to escape the burden laid upon them to provide a regular food supply for the indigenous troops who supported the Company in the expedition.⁴⁴

On the basis of these considerations, the Governor concluded that the occupation of Nusa Barong served no real purpose, and hence should not be continued. Nusa Barong should be denuded of its

⁴² Ibid. 99-104.

⁴³ VOC 3528, Governor J. R. Van den Burgh to Batavia 13 January 1778, 3.

⁴⁴ VOC 3528, A separate letter written by the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya Rudolph Florentinus van der Nieport to the Governor of Semarang Johannes Robert van den Burgh, 16 September 1777, 110-111.

inhabitants and any kind of plants and goods which made it habitable. All the settlements, including the Dutch stronghold, should be extirpated. The Dutch European and 350 indigenous soldiers who were stationed there would be pulled out. The remaining bird's nests would be harvested but no one would be allowed to do this again. To guard Nusa Barong from any illegal occupation and to protect the eastern coast area of Java, more security posts would be built along the shore, at such places as Klatak, nearby the River Puger, Batu Ulu, near the River Mayang, Wedi Alit, and Batu Kajang. The post in Plindo which was located approximately half a mile from Nusa Barong would function as the main post watching shipping movements between Nusa Barong and the south coast. A routine patrol would be carried out to obstruct any robbers who might try to steal the bird's nests along the coast (Wedi Alit and Manong), Gunung Pager, and Dedali.⁴⁵

The Dutch authorities in Batavia considered this proposal the most reasonable way to reduce the Company's financial burden and to avoid more trouble in *Java's Oosthoek*. The scorched earth policy on Nusa Barong was approved. On 18 August, one year after of the conquest of the island, this was carried out under the leadership of *Vaandrig* Nobel.

The Story of Captain Buton

At the beginning of May 1789, two indigenous vessels, *padumakan*, crewed by thirteen Mandarese and two Javanese approached the beach of Batu Ulu waving a white flag signifying their peaceful intention. A smaller vessel rowed by two Mandarese launched from the *padumakan*, and two Javanese came ashore. They handed a letter over to the *Tumenggung* of Puger. The men confessed that they had arrived in Batu Ulu with their chief, Captain Buton, who was now waiting in the bay at Wedi Alit with a large number of followers in eight vessels. They had been sent to this place by the Commander of the Pasuruan garrison, Van Rijcke, to hunt down the *zeerovers* (pirates) along the south coast of Java. The *Tumenggung* immediately sent his two *Mantri* to Lumajang, forwarding the letter to the post-holder of Lumajang, Sergeant Witstein. The Dutch sergeant reacted suspiciously, fearing that the Mandarese might harbour nefarious plans because he had never been informed about Captain Buton and his mission by Van Rijcke.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 111.

Immediately, he sent Puger's *Mantri* and simultaneously dispatched troops to Puger to defend Batu Ulu should the Mandarese captain attack. The Pasuruan commander reacted in a similar fashion when he received the message from Lumajang, because he had never given any instruction to the said Mandarese chief. With the assistance of the Regent of Puger, he sent 110 soldiers to Batu Ulu from Pasuruan and Lumajang. Simultaneously, he also sent five Dutch soldiers to Lumajang to strengthen the military post there. Van Rijcke urged caution, advising that there should be no reaction or move made against the Mandarese before a meeting could be arranged with the Mandarese Captain.⁴⁶

The response of the Lumajang post holder who had dispatched the message to Pasuruan and troops to Batu Ulu immediately caused Captain Buton some anxiety. He realized that the claim he had made about his arrival in Batu Ulu were somewhat puzzling. To avoid more serious problems, he sent another envoy to hand his letter over directly to Van Rijcke. In this letter Captain Buton explained why he had come to Batu Ulu, claiming that he would help the Company destroy the Buginese, Iranum and Didong pirates, because they were also the enemy of the Mandarese people. As a proof of his good intentions, he enclosed a letter written by his fellow countryman, *Juragan* Kaboo, who expressed his willingness to join Captain Buton to carry out an expedition against the Buginese pirates on the south coast of Java. The Mandarese captain urged that it was the right time to act, for at that moment he had just accosted five vessels belonging to Buginese pirates. In order to accomplish this plan, Captain Buton requested the Dutch commander permission to live in Batu Ulu. Responding to this request, Van Rijcke replied that although he had not given him any order to carry out the said expedition, he was aware that it was a good offer and he was willing to accept it. Cautiously, Van Rijcke admonished the Mandarese that he should not make any movement without any instruction from the *Tuan Besar*, the Governor in Semarang.⁴⁷

Captain Buton's offer was one solution of the problem faced by the Company in its perpetual fight against piracy in this region. It had

⁴⁶ VOC 3862, Copy of a separate letter from the Chief Commander of Pasuruan Garrison, Adriaan van Rijcke, to the *Gezaghebber* of Java's Oosthoek, A. Barkeij, 3 May 1789, 187-189.

⁴⁷ VOC 3862, Copy of a separate letter from the Commander-in-chief of the Pasuruan garrison, Adriaan van Rijcke to *Gezaghebber* of Java's Oosthoek, A. Barkeij, 14 May 1789, 189-190.

only a very limited budget and few men to cope with this problem. A voluntary mission such as that offered by the Mandarese was a plausible alternative. This was the reason why the Company could hardly refuse this offer. After the Nusa Barong expedition, the Company had leased out the south coast of Java to the Chinese Captain, Tan Le Kong, but this had proved very costly to the Chinese lease holder because he alone had to assume the responsibility for the security for this region. It was an area rich in bird's nests which could be highly profitable to the lease holder, but since the end of the Nusa Barong expedition, it had become a prime target of Buginese pirates. The Company plan to strengthen the sea patrols along the south coast of Java after the demolition of the Buginese and Mandarese settlement on the island of Nusa Barong was never effectively implemented. Even, the few Company watch-posts in this region were abandoned, and the Company troops posted to these places were moved inland to Lumajang. Thereafter, the security of this region was entrusted to the Chinese lease holder. In 1781-1782, Tan Le Kong sent an expedition under the Buginese *Juragan*, *Daeng* Tampa, against the pirates. This first expedition was successful. The chiefs of the Buginese pirates, *Daeng* Pagala, Maliwangan, *Pak* Bacu, and Butu were reported to have perished after their vessel sank near Jurok Bay on the island of Nusa Barong.⁴⁸ But the expedition failed to eradicate the piracy in this region. In 1788, another group of pirates appeared again in Lampong, Lutong, and Kalong. The Chinese and Javanese warriors dispatched by Tan Le Kong suffered a surprised attack by the pirates while they lay sleeping on the shore. One Chinese and eighteen Javanese warriors were killed in this incident.⁴⁹ All the bird's nests in the three caves, Kalong, Lampong, and Lutong, were stolen. The Chinese Captain called on the Company for help, and the Chief of the Military Command in Banyuwangi, Clement de Harritz, sent out a few European and twenty Malay pikemen to hunt the robbers, but they

⁴⁸ VOC 3910, An extract letter from the Commander-in-chief of the Pasuruan garrison, Adriaan van Rijke to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, A. Barkeij, 20 February 1790, 465-466; See also VOC 3910, An Extract letter from the Commander-in-chief of the Pasuruan Garrison, Adriaan van Rijke to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, A. Barkeij, 6 March 1790, 467-468.

⁴⁹ VOC 3862, Copy of an extract letter written by the Commander-in-chief of Banyuwangi Clement de Harits to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, A. Barkeij, 10 November 1788, 22.

returned empty-handed.⁵⁰ The leader of the expedition, Jan Jansen and Claas Weijnand reported that the Buginese *zeerovers* had built a settlement surrounded with palm trees. To spy on their activities, they had constructed three big *pondokan* and a *panggung* or tower, on the top of Wedi Alit.⁵¹ So far the Company had made no attempt to stop them and the south coast of Java remained dangerous until the arrival of the opportunistic figure, Captain Buton, who came to this region in 1789 to seek his fortune and acquire power.

Captain Buton was a respected person who enjoyed a close relationship with the King of Buton, Raja Bara Angin. He was also called *Kapten Laut* (Captain of the Sea), but the successor to this King was treating him badly. When Captain Buton left to trade with Batavia, the young King abducted his wife to marry her. Captain Buton tried but failed to obtain justice. Therefore, he left his country, Buton, with a large number of family members and followers. His first port of call was Bali and later he moved to Lombok where he lived in an unfertile area for six months. Seeking to improve his circumstances, he moved to Batu Ulu on the south coast of Java in June 1789, but left his family behind in Lombok.⁵² In this new place he discovered a large tract of fertile land which had been deserted by its inhabitants during the series of wars which had ravaged this region. Despite its suitability, Captain Buton realized that the Company would not let him live in this region without any recompense. It was a coincidence that at that time the Company was occupied with fighting the Buginese pirates who plundered the bird's nests along the south coast of Java. After the death of the Mandarese *Juragan*, Jani, followed by demolition of the Mandarese and Balinese settlements on the island of Nusa Barong, this region was left unguarded, making it an easy target for robbery. Well-equipped with knowledge of the current situation in this region, Captain Buton began to gather partners and followers, before volunteering to action on behalf of the Company to destroy the pirates operating in the region. He began by making contact with his fellow countryman, *Juragan* Kabo, asking him to join him in Java, to assist

⁵⁰ VOC 3862, Copy of an extract letter written by Commander-in-chief of Banyuwangi Clement de Harits to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya, A. Barkeij, 5 November 1788, 21.

⁵¹ VOC 3862, Copy of report from Corporal Jan Jansen about the expedition against the *zeerovers* on the south coast of Java, 10 December 1788.

⁵² VOC 3862, Missive from the Governor of Java's North-East Coast to Governor-General Willem Arnold Alting and the Council of the Indies, 24 October 1789, 423-430.

mounting an expedition. He simultaneously informed this plan to the chief of the Buginese community in Pasir, *Daeng Terawi*.⁵³ *Juragan* Kabo welcomed this appeal and promised to support the expedition.⁵⁴

Once bitten, twice shy because of the betrayal by the Mandarese *Juragan* Jani on the island Nusa Barong, *Gezaghebber* Barkeij responded Captain Buton's offer with some anxiety. He had also received a similar proposal from the Chiefs of Kampung Lombok, *Bapak Jinjrik* and Captain Gurap, who lived in Lombok in the territory of the Balinese King of Karangasem. In their proposal, both chiefs requested the *Gezaghebber* to be allowed to live on Nusa Barong, to help the Company spy on the movements of the Buginese pirates. They said that they had discovered ruthless people who had come to this region to upset the Company interests there.⁵⁵ *Gezaghebber* Barkeij urged the Chief of Pasuruan garrison, Van Rijke, to scrutinize both offers carefully, because it was possible that they were simply pretexts used by the these chiefs to breathe new life into the anti-Dutch movement in this region.⁵⁶

There are indications that the Governor of Semarang was more in favour of Captain Buton's offer, although the memory about the Mandarese uprising on the Island of Nusa Barong a decade earlier still overshadowed this speculative proposal. Six months after the arrival of

⁵³ There is no an obvious explanation of why Captain Buton informed his plan to carry out the expedition to the Chief of the Buginese community in Pasir. It was reported that *Daeng Terawi* was of Makassarese origin but now chief of the Buginese community in Pasir and Kote, South-East Borneo, and *Pangeran Sele* was his deputy. Both Buginese were approached by *Pangeran Amir* and some other rebels to join them in an uprising against the Sultan of Banjarmasin, but the Company was able to prevent this. *Daeng Terawi* and *Pangeran Sele* had made a secret agreement with Sultan Muda or *Panembahan*. This information was passed onto the Mandarese Captain Buton, and *Daeng Maramba*. VOC 3910, Copy of letter written by the Commander of Pasuruan, Adriaan van Rijke, to the *Gezaghebber* of *Java's Oostboek*, 24 December 1789, 283-285.

⁵⁴ VOC 3862, Copy of a translated letter written by Captain Kaboo of Mandar to Captain Buton, 190.

⁵⁵ Perhaps there was a competition between Captain Buton, who used to live in Lombok and the Chiefs of Kampong Lombok, *Pak Njinjrik* and Captain Gurap. The vicious people perhaps refer to Captain Buton and his followers. VOC 3862, Copy of a Malay translated letter from the Chief of Kampung Lombok to the Commander-in-chief of the Pasuruan garrison, Adriaan van Rijke, 3 *Rabi'ul Awal, Alip*, 1209 or 2 December 1788, 191; See also VOC 3862, Governor Jan Greeve to Batavia, 24 July 1789, 147-173.

⁵⁶ VOC 2862, Copy of letter from the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya to the Governor of Java Northeast Coast.

Captain Buton on the south coast of Java, the Company began to formulate a concrete response. A unit for a military expedition was set up under the command of Adriaan van Rijcke. The main goal of this expedition was to team up with Captain Buton to attack the Buginese pirates on the south coast of Java. The main targets were Wedi Alit and Manong, where Buginese settlements had been established under the leadership of two Buginese *Juragan*, *Daeng* Pagala and *Daeng* Maliwangan.

Apparently the report of the death of the two Buginese pirates, *Juragan* *Daeng* Pagala and *Daeng* Maliwangan, had been false: both were still alive. In 1789 or some eight years after the first anti-piracy expedition, they appeared in Badung, Bali. *Daeng* Pagala, the grandson of the King of Bone, sailed to Badung with five vessels manned by a group of Buginese *Juragan*. *Daeng* Maliwangan was also among them. Their goal in Bali was trade, selling rice, mats, and sarong. While they were in Badung, they heard that the south coast of Java, which was so rich in bird's nests, was still unguarded. Because they had visited that region earlier they believed that the trade in bird's nests could be profitably revived. They set sail but on this occasion they were only able to collect half a *pikul* of swallow nests because the bulk of the nests in the caves were yet not ready to be harvested. They therefore decided to stay, biding their time until the harvest. Manong and Wedi Alit were chosen as their temporary settlements.⁵⁷ Not long afterwards, *Daeng* Maliwangan died at the age of sixty. *Daeng* Pagala and the group continued to live there until the second harvest was ready and this time everything went fine. This prompted the Buginese to make up his mind to build a permanent settlement there. More houses were built, this time reinforced with stone. Some even brought their families over so that the Buginese settlement in Wedi Alit was growing quickly. They began to lay stocks for their daily needs, such as rice, peanuts and even opium. Not long after the second harvest, *Daeng* Pagala died also.⁵⁸ With the death of both *Juragan* the leadership of this group of the Mandarese diaspora was assumed by *Bapak* Bacu and *Bapak* Butu from Buton.

On 12 December 1789, another expedition against the pirates on the south coast of Java was launched. It involved nine Dutch soldiers

⁵⁷ VOC 3910, Confession given by the Buginese prisoners, 16 February 1790, 463-465.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 465. This confession was denied by Van Rijcke because, as far as he knew, *Daeng* Pagala and Maliwangan had died in 1781-1782.

and a dozen local soldiers and *batur*. Their march from Lumajang to Puger was disrupted by torrential rain and storms which damaged two main bridges over the Gitem and Sasak Rivers. On the seventh day, they arrived in Puger and were welcomed by Captain Buton with an eleven-gun salute. On this occasion Captain Buton handed over five pirates vessels which he had held fast since his arrival at this place. Before moving to Wedi Alit, a *pondokan* and an ammunition store were built at Puger. Another bridge was also built over the River Puger. On 2 January, they left Wedi Alit. Captain Buton with his eight best men took the sea and Van Rijcke the land route.⁵⁹ From the hill top of Wedi Alit Van Rijcke attempted to spy on the movements of the pirates, but no one was to be seen, the coast was clear except for Captain Buton's ship off shore. He therefore decided to join up with Captain Buton on the beach, and planted the Company flag as a signal that they had arrived. Shortly afterwards Captain Buton came ashore and Van Rijcke sent the Buginese, *Daeng* Marumba to invite him to enter his camp to prepare for the attack on the Buginese settlement. The assault was finally made on 8 January and the Buginese settlement which had been strongly fortified with stone was destroyed. The soldiers found two *koyan* of spoiled rice and three vessels belonging to the Buginese chief, *Daeng* Pagala. Many Buginese were arrested but a few escaped. The expedition continued to Mero, located on the border between West and East Blambangan, where seven Buginese people were still living.⁶⁰ Three of them were captured but the others escaped to Kalong in East Blambangan, joining their families there. During this expedition fifty-one Buginese were arrested and taken to Puger. Most of the prisoners behaved very frustrated and repeatedly beat their heads on stones or against trees. It seems that they were opium addicts. They were desperate, suffering from high blood pressure and trying to kill themselves. It is said they were used to smoking *ropij* and *zwarte mexico* (?). On the way to Puger two prisoners, *Nabkoda* Salatu and one of his followers died. Among the prisoners were the Buginese, *Daeng* Nimba and one Balinese trader. Both were former envoys of the Commander-in-Chief of Bayuwangi, Clemens de Harritz who had been sent to Manong to meet the chief of the Buginese *Juragan*, *Daeng* Pagala. Neither envoy ever returned to Banyuwangi. Instead they had

⁵⁹ VOC 3910, The diary of the expedition against the Buginese pirates on the south coast of Java, from 12 – 24 December 1789, 289-300.

⁶⁰ VOC 3910, The diary of the expedition against the Buginese pirates on the south coast of Java, in December 1789, 289-300.

joined the Buginese at Wedi Alit to collect bird's nests. Both prisoners had also witnessed the death of *Daeng* Pagala in Wedi Alit. On the way to Pasuruan three more prisoners died, one of them after having been attacked by a tiger.⁶¹ Below is the list of the Buginese pirates arrested during the expedition to the south coast of Java in 1789-1790.

The list of the Buginese *zeerovers* captured in the South Coast of Java⁶²

No	Name	No	Name	No	Name
1	<i>Bapak</i> Besik	15	Poa Dalong	29	Gecik
2	Si Guru Cacuruk	16	Lahua	30	To Benak
3	Guru Tabik	17	Guru Halang	31	Guru Pucuk
4	Bambuk	18	Guru Coaka	32	Baso
5	Bandik	19	Toalak	33	Dempi
6	Launak	20	To Toreing	34	Ambik Lumpi
7	Toanik	21	<i>Bapak</i> Lele	35	<i>Bapak</i> Besik
8	To Aruk	22	Dedak alias Dupik	36	Ka Sambak
9	Pak Ole	23	Kraong	37	Pak Dolak
10	Sumang alias <i>Daeng</i> Gapak	24	Babik	38	Pak Holak
11	Kandaik	25	Si Burung	39	Bunding
12	Ngaji	26	Talok	40	Si Seti
13	Bakak	27	Lakak	41	Kanda
14	Palak	28	Panaik	42	Masik

Sources: Name list of the Buginese prisoners captured in the south coast of Java, 16 February 1790, VOC 3910: 461-462.

The success of this expedition made a good impression on the Dutch authorities. The Governor of Semarang persuaded Batavia that Captain Buton was a good man who needed a piece of land on which to live. From this base he could serve the Company, delivering bird's nests from the south coast of Java and keeping the region free from

⁶¹ Ibid., 289-300.

⁶² Of the forty-two prisoners sent from Surabaya only twenty-four survived to reach Semarang. To Benak, Guru Pucuk, *Pak* Sambak, *Pak* Holak (died shortly after the interrogation), Baso, Dempie, Ambik Lupi, *Bapak* Besik, *Pak* Dolak, Bunding, *Si* Seti, Kanda, Masik, Palak, Sumang alias Daing Gapak (died in Semarang), Ngaji, Bambak, Gecik (died on the way to Semarang). Eighteen prisoners were sent to Batavia and the rest were detained in Semarang (To Aruk, *Pak* Ale, Pamaik, *Bapak* Lele, *Bakak*, Babik). VOC 3910, Missive from the Governor of the Java's North-East Coast to Governor General Willem Arnold Alting, 15 June 1790, 457-260; VOC 3910, Name list of the Buginese prisoners captured on the south coast of Java, 16 February 1790, 461-462.

the pirates and any other disruptive groups.⁶³ Batavia assented to the request from Semarang to employ Captain Buton as guardian of the bird's nests caves and that he would be bound to the Company by a formal contract. Consequently an agreement was signed between Captain Buton and the Company in Puger on 19 January 1790. Under the terms of this agreement, Captain Buton was permitted to live in the western part of Blambangan and gather his own followers who were loyal to the Company, but never more than 200 people. He was not permitted to make any kind of contract with Western people without the consent of the Company. His main job was to guard and deliver the bird's nests collected from the south coast of Java and the island of Nusa Barong, or should he so wish to convert this into an annual tax to the Company. Once a year he should pay a visit to the *Gezaghebber* of Surabaya.⁶⁴

Only five months after signing the contract, Captain Buton fulfilled his promise. Another expedition to the south coast of Java and Nusa Barong was mounted. This time not to hunt the pirates but to inspect the condition of the bird's nest caves in this region. The outcome was most astonishing. From the twenty six only six had not been robbed. Of these six caves, Captain Buton was able to collect 5,150 *pikul* or 80 lbs of nests.⁶⁵ In November of the same year Captain Buton delivered 94 lbs, followed in the beginning of 1791, by another 78 lbs. One-third of the delivery was given to the Mandarese captain as a gift.⁶⁶ The table below shows the comparison of the nest harvest and the condition of the caves during the period of Tan Le Kong and captain Buton.

Once again Captain Buton made a good impression. Now there was also appreciation from Batavia, and a reward for the Mandarese chief was discussed. In view of his reputation and loyalty, *Gezaghebber*

⁶³ VOC 3862, Missive from the Governor of Java's Northeast Coast to Governor-General Willem Arnold Alting and the Council the Indies, 24 October 1789, 423-430.

⁶⁴ The contract was presented in Malay, signed by *Vaandrig* Van Phaff, the Regents of Puger and Lumajang, the chief of Pasuruan garrison, Van Rijcke, *Vaandrig* Van Phaff, *Tumenggung* Prawiradiningrat, *Tumenggung* Jayanagara and Mertanagara, and Secretary Schelkes. The agreement was signed according to Islamic custom: with Koran upon his head Captain Buton vowed to be loyal to the Company. VOC 3910, Contract between the Company and Captain Buton, signed in Puger, Tuesday 19 January 1790, 286-288.

⁶⁵ VOC 3910, Missive from the Governor of the Java's North-East Coast to Governor-General Willem Arnold Alting, 27 May 1790, 426-428.

⁶⁶ KITLV, H-19, *Memorie van Jan Greeve*, Governor and the Director of the Java's North-East Coast, 1791.

Barkeij invited him to come to Surabaya to discuss the security and the exploitation of the region for the benefit of the Company in more detail. This was a moment that had long been expected by the Mandarese chief. Although his health was poor after a month's illness, he insisted on going to Surabaya. Now, Captain Buton had the privilege to express his wishes in the presence of the *Gezaghebber*. He requested *Gezaghebber* Barkeij to be allowed to bring over his family and followers who were still living in Lombok. At this juncture, a coincidence occurred; the Dutch authorities in *Java's Oosthoek* received a report about the plan of assault, drawn up by the Balinese *Gusti*. Governor Jan Greeve urged Batavia to comply with Captain Buton's request, stating that the arrival of Captain Buton and his people in this region would reinforce the capability of Company to prevent the threat posed by the Balinese *Gusti* and other enemies. Adding weight to their decision was the consideration that this region was still depopulated. Were this region to be inhabited this would also increase its benefit to the Company. Jan Greeve was also proposing to award Captain Buton with a certain rank, as a Company servant.⁶⁷

Captain Buton's request was finally fulfilled. He brought over all of his family and followers from Lombok. This was followed by the immigration of more Mandarese people to the south coast of Java. Puger was gradually growing into a Mandarese settlement, and Captain Buton was elected *Kepala Mandar* or the Chief of Mandarese people in this regency. There is not much information to be found in the VOC archive about the development of this region after the Mandarese people settled there. Hageman describes the Puger area which used to be a wilderness, as now having been transformed into prosperous area. Although most of the Mandarese inhabitants were living as traders and fishermen, they also took care of the cultivation of food crops and other agricultural products. Palm trees fringed the coast. This development attracted more and more people to come to live in this region. There was also a down side, the arrival of the Mandarese people triggered conflicts with the local inhabitants. Hageman also mentions that the *Patih* of Puger, Surawijaya, was hostile to the Mandarese people.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ VOC 3910, Missive from the Governor of the Java's North-East Coast to Governor-General Willem Arnold Alting, 12 April 1790, 326-327.

⁶⁸ KITLV, D. H. 118, Unpublished manuscript, of J. Hageman, 'Java's Oosthoek, Madoera, Bawean: Historie en Aardrijkskennis, 1746-1808-1816,' vol. ii (1868), 78.

The Condition of the bird's nests caves in Western Blambangan and
Nusa Barong 1790

No	Caves	During Tan Le Kong (ps)	Captain Buton (ps)
1	Cepo Gawok	300	Empty
2	Wulu	260	Empty
3	Manong	5.000	300
4	Si Singo	160	Empty
5	Plasad	300	Empty
6	Ketapang	60	Empty
7	Jangker	50	Empty
8	Si Cepu	20	Empty
9	Cato	60	Empty
10	Wedi Alit	1.500	220
11	Samas	160	Empty
12	Jajang	200	Empty
13	Sumur	150	Empty
14	Tangalan	160	30
15	Ketapang	100	Empty
16	Apik	200	Empty
17	Legong	160	Empty
18	Pager	6.000	1.600
19	Dedali	5.000	1.700
20	Tendas	1.400	1.300
21	De Butu	300	Empty
22	Pantong	600	Empty
23	Pelawang	300	Empty
24	Pelawang Wetan	300	Empty
25	Pekarahan	30	Empty
26	Timoho	40	Empty
27	Darat	300	Empty
	Total	23.110	5.150

Source: VOC 3910, Extract letter written by the Commander of Pasuruan Garrison, Adriaan van Rijck, 11 May 1790, 431

The Decline of the Mandarese Community in Blambangan

The adventure of Captain Buton on the south coast of Java ended tragically. In 1793, one Dutch ship which had been attacked by pirates landed at Rajegwesi, on the south-east coast of Java. The captain of this ship informed the Dutch authorities in Pasuruan about this

incident. The Commander of Pasuruan, J. Coert, replied to the appeal by sending a message to Plohor, the son of the head of the Mandarese people in Blambangan. The Commander asked if he would please come to Pasuruan to discuss the problem of the rescue of the crew of the Dutch ship. The situation was extremely urgent, yet the man who was expected to come did not show up. The Commander sent *Vaandrig* Willem Phaff and the son of the Regent of Pasuruan to confer with Captain Buton in Puger. The order, which was written in bad Malay by *Patih* Surawijaya, was given to *Vaandrig* Phaff. In this written order it was stated that the Commander of Pasuruan instructed *Vaandrig* Phaff to escort the *Kepala Mandar* (the head of Mandarese people), Captain Buton, to Pasuruan. This message, owing to the poor Malay in which it was written, was completely misunderstood by the *Vaandrig*. He thought that he was ordered to bring the head of Captain Buton. Meanwhile, Captain Buton possessed of an insatiable greed for power, seemed to be very jealous of his son who was trusted by the Company to carry out such important mission. His feeling of envy spurred him on to follow after his son so as to be able to share in the commission. He was unaware that the Dutch emissaries were actually on their way to meet him. In Oro-oro Besini (swamp area), precisely in the village Kepu, Puger, both parties met each other. Actually, *Vaandrig* Phaff who was heavily under the influence of brandy failed to recognize Captain Buton. Captain Buton however recognized the Dutch *Vaandrig* and respectfully dismounted to greet him. When *Vaandrig* Phaff at last realized who this was, he immediately ordered to attack the Mandarese chief. Puzzled by this aggressive behaviour, Captain Buton retreated, avoiding the assault, but he was nonetheless hit from behind by one of Phaff's men, killed and decapitated. *Vaandrig* Phaff proudly took the Mandarese Captain's head to Pasuruan. Captain Buton's followers hastened back to Puger to inform the Mandarese of what they just witnessed. Panic broke out among the frightened inhabitants. They packed their belongings, and left the south coast of Java far behind them.⁶⁹

⁶⁹As recounted to Hageman in 1861, by the grand-son of Captain Buton and one villager from Menampu, who had helped to bury the body of Captain Buton. According to the Mandarese people in Puger, Wedi Alit and Rajegwesi, Captain Buton had had three children who died in Bone and Bali. On 4 July 1861, Hageman with the two grandsons of Captain Buton, Taru and Mangku, discovered Captain Buton's tomb in village of Kepu. KITLV, D.H. 118, Unpublished manuscript of J. Hageman, 77-78.

The death of Captain Buton occurred at the end of the administration of the Regent of Puger, Prawiradiningrat who died in 1793. The death of *Patih* Surawijaya occurred very soon afterward. The Company installed the *Rongga* of Besuki, Sura Adiwikrama, also known as *Baba* Midun, as Regent of Puger, and his nephew, *Baba* Sam, a *peranakan* Chinese who had converted to Islam, was appointed *Patih*, under the name Reksanagara. After the death of Captain Buton, the south coast of Java again became the target of piracy. Now, the Buginese robbers not only plundered bird's nests, they also stole the belonging of the inhabitants and destroyed their settlement. For security reasons, the successor to the Regent of Puger moved his *dalm* inland to Plindungan or Sentong (currently Bondowoso). His withdrawal to the hinterland was followed by the inhabitants. Puger and other Mandarese settlements on the south coast of Java gradually reverted to wilderness.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The arrival of the Company in East Java gradually but surely exercised an effect on the existing autonomous trade networks, reshaping their orientation and output. The local mercantile communities were divided on the issue how to respond the arrival of the VOC. Those who might be classified as politico-capitalistic or merchant aristocrats tended to cooperate with the Dutch.⁷¹ They were opposed by those who were reluctant to be hegemonized, and consequently created alternative networks of their own. They assumed the position of free traders, setting themselves off against the dominant party. The development of free trading and the rise of free traders both display their own characteristics and dynamics. *Java's Oostboek* was one area in which mercantile communities played a significant role in the political

⁷⁰Among the Mandarese, Patih Surawijaya was the most hot-headed. He had caused the death of Captain Buton. After the death of Surawijaya, many Mandarese returned to Puger, and in 1861 the number of inhabitants had grown to one hundred households. KITLV, D. H. 118, Unpublished manuscript of J. Hageman, 77-78.

⁷¹Van Leur introduced this term to refer the prince and his officials and nobles who engaged in commercial activities. He considers this party occupied an equal position as potential opponent of the European. J. C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society – Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*, (Selected Studies on Indonesia by Dutch Scholars, vol I, (The Hague – Bandung, 1955), 66-67.

resistance against VOC hegemony. There were merchants who had been uprooted from their homelands for a number of reasons, but overwhelmingly it was the outcome of Dutch infiltration in local disputes in various areas in the Indonesian Archipelago.⁷² The purpose of these trading settlements in *Java's Oosthoek* was to develop autonomous networks. Displaced, these traders were in search of a new *entrepôt*. Their move was an undisguised act of resistance against Dutch hegemony. Their opposition was expressed in various forms. In its most extreme manifestation this was expressed in smuggling and piracy.⁷³

⁷²Leonard Y. Andaya, 'The Bugis-Makassar Diaporas', *JMBRAS*, Vol. 48, no. 62 (1995), 119-138; See also Leonard Y. Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka: The History of South Sulawesi (Celebes) in the seventeenth Century* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981).

⁷³In his study on the Sulu Archipelago, Warren strongly supports Anne Reber who criticizes the decay theory attributing the origin of Malay piracy to the outcome of monopolistic trade practices introduced by Europeans, particularly the Dutch. Reber blames Raffles' writings on piracy in the Malay world in his *History of Java* for creating such a misleading analysis. Warren claims that such Euro-centric views neglects to take into account the nature of Indonesian society and the cultural values of the raiders. See James F. Warren, *The Sulu Zone: The world Capitalist Economy and the Historical Imagination* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1998), 7.