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

Margana, S.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

KEPRUK CINA: THE DECLINE OF THE CHINESE ERA IN JAVA'S OOSTHOEK, 1770-1813

Introduction

One of the most interesting developments in Java at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century is the rise of the *peranakan* Chinese. They unquestionably played an important role in the economic sphere and as landowners, actually became part of local administration being awarded various titles such as *Rangga*, *Tumenggung*, and *Bupati*. This development aroused envy and generated ethnic conflict as has been pointed out by Peter Carey, Kwee Hui Kian, Claudine Salmon, John Bastin and also Robert van Niel. The episode analysed in this chapter has been briefly referred to by these writers, but is studied here in greater detail.¹

During the first decade of the VOC occupation, a series of rebellions which exacted a heavy toll disrupted *Java's Oosthoek*. Almost two-thirds of the population, in Blambangan and Puger (currently Jember and Bondowoso) perished. Efforts to repopulate this region by transplanting inhabitants from surrounding regions, mainly Bawean and Madura, were unsuccessful. As the Dutch failed to maximize the income from the new conquered region, they decided to extend the experiment which they had successfully made in Ulujami, and farmed out regions such as Besuki, Panarukan, Lumajang, Jember, Puger, and Bondowoso to Chinese entrepreneurs. In 1810 Panarukan, Besuki, and

¹ P. B. R. Carey, 'Changing Javanese Perceptions of the Chinese Community in Central Java', in *Indonesia*, no. 37, (1984), 1-48; Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast, 1740-1800: Elite Synergy*, TANAP Monographs on the History Asian-European Interaction, Vol. III, (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Claudine Salmon, 'The Han Family of East Java: *Entrepreneurship and Politics (18th-19th Centuries)*', *Archipel* 41, (1991); John Bastin, 'The Chinese Estates in East Java during the British Administration' in John Bastin, *Essays on Indonesian and Malayan History, Monographs on Southeast Asian Subjects*, No. 2 (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1961); Robert van Niel, *Java's Northeast Coast, 1740-1840: A Study in Colonial Encroachment and Dominance* (Leiden: CNWS Publication, 2005).

Probolinggo were sold to the Han family. This radical policy paved the way for these Chinese entrepreneurs to expand their economic and political domination. Under the new Chinese proprietors, many local Javanese chiefs were dismissed and replaced by Chinese. This domination continued until the bloody disturbances that killed the landowner of Probolinggo, Han Tik Ko and some Europeans officers in 1813.

In the 1930s, J. G. W. Lekkerkerker came across an interesting term used by the local people to recall the story of the assassination of Han Tik Ko in 1813, namely *Ketoebroek Tjina*.² He translates it as ‘the attack on the Chinese’. What he was referring to was almost certainly the *Keproeck Tjina*, as also mentioned in the *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*. It is interesting that even after more than a century the memory of this event remained alive in the minds of the people. The assassination of Han Tik Ko was the culmination of a period of social disorder which eventually flared up in a bloody uprising by the local people, and as such it was part of the broader social unrest in these regencies.

This chapter observes the origins of the social unrest in Probolinggo, Panarukan, Besuki, Lumajang, Puger and Bondowoso in 1813. In this particular case it is enlightening to scrutinize the conclusion of Claudine Salmon who discusses the role of the Han family in the local economy and its fate in integrating itself into the Javanese society of East Java. Salmon concludes:

The growing interest of Europeans in East Java since the mid eighteenth century for strategic reasons, and then from the beginning of the nineteenth century, their fear of seeing these Asian competitors develop states inside the State, lie at the bottom of their radical measures of 1813 and 1818. These measures definitely put an end to the extraordinary partnership between the Muslim administrator, the Peranakan entrepreneurs and the local *Priyayi*.³

Another important point of view is presented by John Bastin in his short article on the Chinese estates in East Java during the British

² The people remembered this event as the *Perang Kedopok* (Kedopok War). Kedopok is the name of the village located 10 km to the south of the capital city Probolinggo, near by the villages Muneng and Tongas, the centres of the uprising. See J. G. W. Lekkerkerker, ‘Probolinggo, Geschiedenis en Overlever’, in *Nederlandsch Java-Instituut* (Amsterdam: J. H. De Bussy, 1931), 19.

³ Claudine Salmon, ‘The Han Family’, 88.

administration.⁴ On account of conflicting reports from various Europeans officials, Bastin singles out Daendels' policy towards the Chinese entrepreneurs as the major source of dissatisfaction and social protest movement of 1813.

Regional Development in Java's Oosthoek up t 1800

'Banger' is the name which was formerly used for 'Probolinggo' before 1800. Besides Pasuruan, Banger was the only region in Java's Oosthoek which had been occupied immediately by the VOC after the conclusion of the treaty of 1743 between the *Susubunan* of Surakarta and the High Government in Batavia. This regency was divided into several districts, namely Paiton, Kraksaan, Jabong, Pajarakan, Dringu, Probolinggo, Sumberkareng, and Tongas or Wonosari (Tengger). There is not much information about Banger in the early stages of the VOC administration. On basis of oral sources, Lekkerkerker concluded that *Tumenggung* Jayalalana, the first regent installed there by the VOC, had a dispute with the chief of Tengger, *Panembaban* Semeru. The latter was the man who was entrusted by the *Susubunan* with the administration of Tengger and its surroundings. The dispute was generated by problems arising from the drawing of an administrative boundary between Banger and Tengger. The quarrel ended with the assassination of *Panembaban* Semeru. The Dutch sources do not give much information about *Panembaban* Semeru. Lekkerkerker assumes that he was perhaps Ngabehi Sutajaya, who was installed by *Susubunan* Pakubuwana II of Kartasura as the chief of Tengger in 1733, a decade before this area was ceded to the VOC. The assassination itself perhaps took place after 1743.⁵

In 1768, *Kyai* Jayalalana was removed from power by the VOC for reasons which remain obscure. Was he perhaps involved in the Dutch-Blambangan War 1767-8, and did he support Surapati's descendants? His successor was *Tumenggung* Jayanegara, called *Kyai Jimat* (a man who can be trusted), because he brought the people of Probolinggo peace and prosperity. Under the administration of *Tumenggung* Jayanegara, the economy of Probolinggo improved considerably. In his report, W. H.

⁴ John Bastin, 'The Chinese Estates', 92-101.

⁵ Up to now, the location of where *Panembaban* Semeru was killed is considered *kramat* (holy). It is called *Kramat Paras*. Lekkerkerker, 'Probolinggo', 7.

van IJsseldijk wrote: 'He is a *vrij stroef* (rather stubborn) gentleman; with the help of the immigrants from Madura and Sumenep he has improved his land, therefore the rice production had increased considerably.'⁶

Governor Nicolaous Hartingh wrote that Banger was a small regency and could only provide the Company 8 *kojan* rice, 6 *pikul* wax and 300 Rds sea-tolls per year.⁷ In 1771 Governor Johannes Vos also reported that during the war Banger provided only a little tribute for the Company. Outside the *pacht* to the amount of 375 Rds per year, Banger supplied 2 *pikul gaaren* (used for making ship's ropes), 8 *kojan* rice, and 6 *pikul* wax. J. R. van den Burgh explained that during the period 1767-1784, Banger together with three other regions Bangil, Pasuruan, and Blambangan was exempted from *leverantie*.⁸ Since the 1790s, Banger had also produced indigo and delivered a *pacht* to the amount of 450 Rds a year, and 140 Rds of bird's nests (from Lumajang) per annum. Under the Jayanegara administration, new rice-fields, both *sawah* (wet fields) and *tegalan* (dry fields), were opened up to increase the amount of rice production. The regent had also expanded the numbers of irrigation canals. This evident economic progress caused Ysseldijk to increase the contingent, from 8 to 40 *kojan* rice. It seems that the local people were heavily burdened by this measure. Engelhard argues that, because a large number of the Madurese and Sumanapese had fled, it was an utterly impractical idea to increase the contingent from Probolinggo.⁹

In 1805, *Tummenggung* Jayanegara resigned and was replaced by his son *Raden Candranagara*, the *Onder-Regent* of Lumajang. As regent,

⁶ W. H. van IJsseldijk, 'Verslag over de gesteldheid van Java's Oosthoek (1799)', in J.K.J. de Jonge, *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indië. Verzameling van onuitgegeven Stukken uit het Oud-Koloniaal Archief*. vol. xii, (s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1884).

⁷ Nicolaus Hartingh, 'Memorie opgesteld door den Heer Nic. Hartingh als aftredend Gouverneur en Directeur van Java's Noord-Oostkust, voor zijn vervanger en opvolger den Heer W.H. van Ossenbergh, dd. Samarang, 26 October 1761,' in De Jonge, *De Opkomst*, vol. xiii, (1878), 330-373

⁸ Johannes Robert van den Burgh, 'Memorie tot naright voor den Heer Johannes Siberg, aankomend Gouverneur en Directeur van Java's Noord-Oostkust, ingerigt en overgegeven door Johannes Robert van den Burgh, Raad extraordinair van Nederlands Indië, afgaande Gouverneur en Directeur bij deselvs vertrek naar Batavia in anno 1780', in De Jonge and Van Deventer (eds.) *De Opkomst* vol. xi, 375

⁹ Nicolaus Engelhard, 'Verslag der reis van N. Engelhard naar de Hoven van Soeracarta en Djocjarta, naar Oosthoek en de Residentien Japara Rembang and Joana (1802), in De Jonge, *De Opkomst*, vol.xiii (1888), 118-233.

Candranagara was granted the title of *Tumenggung* and was given a new name *Panji Jayadiningrat*. Under his administration, the economy of Probolinggo gradually declined. In 1806, many people complained about the lack of farmland. Thomas Horsfield who visited Lumajang 1804, said that in this area there was still lack of population. He built a *pasanggrahan* (a rest place) in Parasgowang, at a location which was still waste and largely covered by woods.¹⁰ Two years later Johannes van den Bosch stated that Probolinggo had almost turned into a wilderness, but he blamed this on Daendels.¹¹ The new regent, *Panji Jayadiningrat*, entertained ideas of building a sugar mill, but he received no permit from the Dutch Government. In 1808, the Dutch administration still demanded Banger and Lumajang deliver a contingent of 3,000 Sp. *matten*, 70 2/3 *koyan* of rice, and 140 Sp. *matten* of bird's nests. After he had administered Banger and Lumajang for two-and-a-half years only, Jayadiningrat was removed to Sedayu in 1810 when Probolinggo was sold to Han Tik Ko. Under his control, for the first time two *Peranakan* Chinese, named *Babah* Koyan and a Chinese Muslim named *Babah* Daya, were installed as *Rongga* or district chiefs.¹²

Lumajang was conquered in 1768 and united administratively with Banger. This regency was located on the south-east coast of Java, between Puger (currently Jember) in the east and Malang in the west. Its total area was around 1,081 square *paal* and the population was around 4,000 souls. During the administration of Jayanegara, Lumajang was run by his son *Raden* Candranegara who lived in the district Klaka. In 1791, a military picket was still maintained there, occupied by one sergeant, two corporals and fifteen soldiers. Their main duty was guarding the southern coastal areas against pirates who often robbed the bird's nest caves along the shore. Since 1784, Lumajang had delivered a contingent to the VOC of two *pikul* of rice and two *pikul* of *gaaren*, and in 1799 this was increased to eight *pikul* of rice or around 602 guilders. Thirty thousands pepper vines were planted here and according to a report of the commandant of Pasuruan, Hesselaar, three new villages were developed in the regency Banger and Lumajang in a five year period (1800-1805). The rice production from this region in 1805 amounted to 13,680 *amat* or

¹⁰ (KITLV) H 19, Unpublished manuscript of J. Hageman, 'Oostelijk Java en Madoera: Historisch-geografische Beschrijving 1746-1816', 170.

¹¹ Ibid., 170 and 182.

¹² Ibid., 182.

82,080 *pikul*, of which 40 *koyan* of 4,000 pounds had to be delivered to the Company.¹³

Panarukan on the northeast coast of Java stretches out to the east as far as Kalitikus, to the south as far as Prajekan, and to the south-east to Gedongdawa. Before the occupation of the VOC in 1768, a *peranakan* Chinese, named Han Tjien Kong or Surapernala was installed as district chief in Panarukan and granted the rank of *Ngabehi*. During the Dutch-Blambangan War, Surapernala played a very important role as informant to the VOC. In 1772, his son, Han Sam Kong, popularly called Baba Sam, was installed as the first *Rongga* of Besuki with the Javanese name Sumadiwirya. He administered Besuki until 1776, when he was succeeded by his younger brother, named Han Mie Joen alias *Babab* Midun (also known by the Javanese name of Sura Adiwikrama), who remained in charge of Besuki until 1796. In 1776, the Dutch Government in Surabaya decided to farm out Besuki to the Chinese Captain of Surabaya, Han Bwee Kong (Han Boeij Ko), and five years later, Panarukan followed. Besuki was rented out for 1250 Rds per year plus 10 *koyans* of rice and Panarukan for 625 Rds per year. In 1794 the lease was extended by Han Chan Piet, the son of Han Bwee Kong. There were two other districts which fell under Besuki administratively, namely Paiton and Pajarakan, which were located in the western part of Besuki and the eastern part of Banger or Probolinggo. This land was also rented by Han Chan Piet for 2,000 Rds per year.¹⁴

In 1800, Pananarukan and Besuki produced 2,000 *koyan* of rice. During the period 1800-05 the rice-field area was extended, and a new village of around 409 *jung* (4,507 *bahu*) was created. The financial benefit reaped from this land was around 3.000 Rds per year. The Chinese tenant was expected by the Dutch Government to provide rice, oil, salt and firewood. Approximately 10,000 pepper vines were planted. The pepper was sold to the Colonial Government at half price or around 3 ½ Rds, per 130 pound. General Tombe, who visited Panarukan in 1805, said that although the rice-fields were quite extended there was still a large amount of wasteland in this region. In Kalitikus a large numbers of tigers and monkeys still freely roamed the countryside. The Chinese *pachter* lived in a house which was provided with a pavilion set up to welcome guests and travellers. There was a

¹³ Ibid., 180.

¹⁴ Ibid., 169 and 181.

military presence but this was a little on the old side. Sergeant Reichman, the local Dutch military commander, was almost eighty years old while the youngest Dutch officer was fifty-five years old. The local redoubt was armed with two cannon and surrounded by a wide ditch crossed by a swing-bridge. One-third of the inhabitants of Panarukan were Chinese, and the remainder were Madurese, Malay, and Javanese. Each ethnic group had its own temple. In 1803, the population of Panarukan numbered 16,333 souls, whereas Besuki had 25,201 people.¹⁵

Under the Chinese *pachter*, Han Chan Piet, the pace of development in Besuki was better than in Panarukan. Ysseldijk called Besuki *de tuin van Java* (the garden of Java). The population of Besuki consisted of 6,000 families or around 32,000 people (these data are a little bit higher than figures estimated by General Tombe). The road from Panarukan to Besuki led through a forest. During the war this area had been depopulated, but under Han Chan Piet it was turned into *een aards paradijs* (a paradise on Earth). The immigration of people from Madura and Sumenep made a great contribution to the development of Besuki.¹⁶ Han Chan Piet earned a considerable profit from this land; in 1799 around 85,000 Rds rising to 80,000 Rds in 1810. The rice production from Besuki in 1799 amounted to 360 *koyan* and six years later, in 1805 to 2,000 *koyan*. The people of Besuki were obliged to pay a poll-tax 1 *rupiah* per family, one-tenth of the harvest of fruit and had to pay a tax 2 Rds per *jung* of farmland to the Chinese *pachter*. Twenty thousands pepper vines were also planted in Besuki.

In 1798, Besuki was united administratively with Bondowoso and Puger, and it was headed by a *peranakan* Chinese, named *Tumenggung* Sura Adiwikrama. Tombe described the regent as a man who was acquainted with the physical sciences and mathematics and dressed in a half-Chinese half-Javanese style. When Tombe came to Besuki, he was welcomed by the *patih* because the regent was on the way to Sumenep to meet his father-in-law, the regent of Sumenep, Natakusuma.

The district stretched out northwards to Panarukan and Besuki, southwards to the Southern Ocean, and eastward to Blambangan and

¹⁵ J. J. Stockdale, *Island of Java*, (Singapore: Periplus, 1995). Republication of the classic work of the author entitled, *Sketches, Civil and Military of the Island of Java and its Immediate Dependencies: Comprising Interesting Details of Batavia, and Authentic Particulars of The Celebrated Poison-Tree*, (London: 1811).

¹⁶ IJsseldijk, 'Verslag over de gesteldheid van Java's Oosthoek,' 501-2.

in the west ended in Lumajang and Banger. Van den Bosch estimated the area covered 2,722 square *paal*. In 1792, the population of Puger amounted to no more than 1,230 families or 6,150 souls, and in 1815 this had risen to 10,891 souls. Mountains and deep forest separated Puger from Banyuwangi, and the River Gitem (later River Gantung) was the border between Puger and Lumajang. This area was controlled by a regent and four more indigenous chiefs (*pembekel*) from Sabrang (including Nusa Barong), Jember, Sentong, Prajekan, Wringin, and Pekalangan. In 1795, more districts were formed: Puger, Tanggul, Jember, Sukowana, Maisan, Bondowoso, Wanasari, and Pradjekan. The Jember District was the responsibility of *Wedana Mantri* Tirtawiguna, Bondowoso of *Mantri Perdana* Kertanagara, who in 1808 held the title *patih*, and Prajekan was *Wedana Mantri* Pak Oneng or Reksawana. During the VOC period, there were some military posts located at Jember, Biting, Picara, and Klatak. The first European officer stationed in this district was *Opziener* Steven Tandie, who introduced the planting of coffee in this region.¹⁷

The region as a whole was controlled by Regent *Tummengung* Sura Adiwikrama or Han Mie Joen (1796-1806) who lived in Bondowoso. This Chinese regent was a diligent landlord, but he did not enjoy the full confidence of the VOC. His successor was his adopted son, named *Babab* Panderman, who also had the Javanese name *Tumengung* Sura Adiningrat. He died in Surabaya in 1862. The people remember him as *Dipati Kendang*. From 1796, the regent moved to Besuki, because Bondowoso was unhealthy and had been the target of piracy. Van IJsseldijk considered that as Besuki was closer to the north-west coast, it held more promise of prosperity than Puger, which was located on the south coast.¹⁸ A similar report is given by Horsfield who made a journey throughout Puger, Jember, Sabrang, and Bondowoso in 1805. He says that Puger was an unhealthy place largely covered with forest. The inhabitants were still few, around 7 or 8,000 souls only, but they occupied an area of 2,653 square *paal* in number, from the District Tanggul in the north to the south as far as Sukakerta on Mount Yang, and most of them were Madurese. This land used to be a wasteland but was being gradually cleared by the immigrants who had come from Eastern Blambangan and Grajagan during the war (1768-1773).¹⁹

¹⁷ Hageman, 'Oostelijk Java', 179.

¹⁸ IJsseldijk, Verslag over de gesteldheid van Java's Oosthoek, 506.

¹⁹ Hageman, 'Oostelijk Java', 268.

In 1799 the area of Bondowoso was still virgin forest, but it was later cleared in the wake of people from Madura and Sumenep. The regent enjoyed no benefits from his land apart from deliveries of tobacco. Nevertheless he was expected to deliver *gaaren* to the Company, which he was supposed to buy himself. According to the report of Hesselaar, in 1804 Puger and Bondowoso delivered 1,400 *amat* paddy, 50 *bossen* a 2 ½ *katti*, or 175000 pounds of rice. Between 1795 and 1805 rice was planted in 29 ¼ *jung* and twenty-two villages. A large number of inhabitants had moved there from Blambangan and Madura. Consequently the Madurese element dominated the population. Daendels reported that before 1800 16,100 coffee shrubs had been planted in Puger and Bondowoso, and in 1808 their number had increased to 194,250. In 1808 there were 280 families working on the coffee plantations.²⁰

The bird's nests caves were located along the south coast of Malang, Blambangan, and Nusa Barong. The grottos were found on Pulo Sempu, the island Rante, Tanjung Merah, Grajagan, Sekamar, Frusan, Petan, Lengkong Kukuran, Karangbali, Gabus, Pager, Tagelang, Dali, Bande Alit, Pandan-Kalapa, Manuk, Tanjung Kalapa, Klapa Goa, and Blandong; all of them on the coast of Java and eight more on Nusa Barong. H. I. Domis, Resident of Pasuruan, said that there were 17 caves to be found in Sempu and Kambang, but perhaps they had already been spotted in 1798.²¹ During the period 1790-1793, the bird's nest's management was entrusted to Captain Buton, the chief of Mandarese people in Puger who was killed by accident. By 1793 all the Buginese and Mandarese settlers had left Puger for Bali. This was a disaster because of the departure of the Mandarese people from this area, the south coast again became a dangerous place where pirates swarmed to rob the bird's nests. After the death of Captain Buton, no one any longer harvested the nests and some caves were even contaminated by sulphur. Governor Greeve praised Captain Buton highly for his meritorious services and the delivery of bird's nests.

Realizing the magnitude of the calamity, the Dutch tried to persuade Captain Buton's son who had fled to Bali after the death of his father, to return to Puger. Van IJsseldijk promised to stand his friend and to provide with necessities of the people along the south

²⁰ Ibid. 268.

²¹ H. I. Domis, *De Residentie Pasoeroeang op het Eiland Java*, ('s-Gravenhage, H. S. J. de Groot, 1834), 5.

coast. This policy was designed to attract people to live in this area again and to encourage the pirates to give the coast a wide berth. As this appeal fell on deaf ears, Van IJsseldijk proposed to farm the bird's nests in this region out to the Chinese. To convince the *pachter*, Van IJsseldijk sent some people out to Karang Bolong to investigate and to harvest the nests in the western part of Blambangan. He also undertook an inspection tour of all of the cliffs and grottos, leaving all the management to the *Gezaghebber* of the *Oostboek*, and put out an offer for 800 Rds per year for a three-year tax farm.²²

Daendels's Experiment and its Legacy

At the end of the eighteenth century, the VOC was liquidated and the revolutionary *Bataafse Republiek* (Batavian Republic) took over its former territories, but because of the war with England all ties with Europe were cut off with disastrous effects for the colonial treasury. The lack of finance encouraged the Netherlands East Indies Government to seek out various new sources of income. The sale of large tracts of state-owned land was initiated as one of the prominent political measures to swell the treasury. Marshall Herman Daendels who was appointed Governor General of the new colony when Napoleon's brother, Louis Napoleon, was made king of Holland in 1807, sold estates and territories including ten thousands of inhabitants to private landowners. In *Java's Oostboek*, first Panarukan and later Besuki were sold to the Chinese Captain of Surabaya, Han Chan Piet, who had been the *pachter* of these lands in the past. To finance this deal, Daendels repeatedly lent his own money to this Chinese, on the collateral of the purchased land, so there was only little left from the proceeds of the lease. Finally, Panarukan and Besuki were sold for 400,000 Spanish dollars. The remainder of the purchase price had to be paid in six months. Because progress in Besuki went ahead by leaps and bounds, Han Chan Piet was able to fulfill his obligations.

Prompted by these financial benefits, Daendels pursued the same course in Probolinggo (including the regencies of Lumajang and Kraksaan). In 1811, he found a buyer for this land, Han Tik Ko, the Chinese Captain of Pasuruan, the brother of Han Chan Piet.

²² Hageman, 'Oostelijk Java', 77; IJsseldijk, 'Verslag over de gesteldheid van Java's Oosthoek', 506.

Probolinggo was selected by Daendels because its annual yield to the Government was only 2,000 Spanish dollars, some 70 *kojan* of rice, some bird's-nests, and trifling amounts of coffee and teak wood. Han Tik Ko made an offer of 600,000 Spanish dollars. As this exceeded the current valuation, Daendels ordered his committee-of-sale to dispose of the land to the Chinese. It was agreed finally that the buyer would pay one million Rds for Probolinggo in twenty half-yearly instalments of 50,000 Rds.²³

Some reports indicate that the regencies developed considerably under the control of the Chinese proprietors. One British officer, William Thorn wrote that, 'the lands, which measure about forty miles in length and breadth, were at that time mostly lying waste; but so rapid was its improvement, and so productive its soil when private interest was concerned in its advancement, that in only ten years the purchase was cleared; in consequence of this, it has now become one of the richest provinces of Java, and is very populous'.²⁴ There are some different dissident reports which suggest all this advancement was at the cost of atrocious extortions. P.A. Goldbach, who had lived in Java for twenty-two years, gave the British Civil Commissioner at Semarang, Huger Hope, the following warning on 1 December 1811:

If there be a place where rebellion may be apprehended, it is at Probolinggo, where there are still a number of relatives of the former Regent, who (through his removal) have been deprived of the best *desa's* and rice fields and whose discontent with the Chinaman-landholder has been very evident.²⁵

Goldbach was convinced that rebellion was likely to erupt in Besuki and Panarukan, and one-and-a-half years later, this prediction became true.

The Probolinggo Uprising

At the beginning of 1811, Han Tik Ko took possession of Probolinggo, and on that occasion he was granted the title *Majoor der*

²³ Lekkerkerker, 'Probolinggo', 12

²⁴ Major William Thorn, *The Conquest of Java: Nineteenth-century Java seen through the eyes of a soldier of the British Empire*, (Singapore: Periplus, 2004), 305

²⁵ As quoted by John Bastin, 'The Chinese Estate', 94; Lekkerkerker, 'Probolinggo', 17, and Salmon, 'The Han Family', 63.

Chineezen en landbeer van Probolinggo (Major Chinese and landlord of Probolinggo). To make way for him, the former regent *Tumenggung Jayadiningrat* was removed to Sedayu.²⁶ The people of Probolinggo called the new landlord *Babah Landbeer* or *Babah Tumenggung* or perhaps Han Tik Ko himself assumed the regent's predicate *Tumenggung*.

Since the purchase of the estate Probolinggo, Han Tik Ko had enjoyed peace and the benefit from his land, but change was in the air. In the middle of May 1813, many people gathered in the house of the Chinese landlord at the occasion of a grand party. Even such European officers from Pasuruan and Surabaya, as Colonel Fraser from the 78th regiment of Surabaya, and Lieutenant Robertson were expected to attend. Meanwhile, about 30 *paal* away to the south-west of the capital city of Probolinggo, at the village Wanasari, another crowd congregated but in a totally different atmosphere. One month earlier, this village had been flooded with people from surrounding areas. At that time it was inhabited mostly by Tenggerese (the Javanese Hindu population of Mount Tengger), but there were also a few Muslims who had still not shed all their superstitions. Among the crowd a young Muslim cleric from Ampel, Surabaya, stood out. The people called him *Kyai Mas*. He had made a journey through Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Panarukan, Besuki, and had finally found shelter in this village. He declared himself to be empowered to establish Islam throughout the Oosthoek districts, abolish the taxes, and drive the Europeans and the Chinese away from East Java. One local chief, named *Demang Muneng*, who had lately suffered punishment at the hands of the Chinese proprietor and the inhabitants of the village Kedompo, Posangit, and Ketapang were the first to come forward and give their allegiance to the self-proclaimed saviour.²⁷ In a short time,

²⁶ Rather peculiar was the way in which the ownership of the regent's residence passed to Han Tik Ko. By the decision of 15 January 1811 (in which the name Probolinggo was used for the first time to replace Banger), this *dalm* should be handed over for 3,000 Spanish dollars or 4,000 *Rds.* of which half should be paid by the Government and the other half by the landlord. The 4,000 *Rds.* had to be paid to the former regent of Banger or the later regent of Sedayu, who could use the money to finance the construction of the new *dalm* in the regency Sedayu. See Lekkerkerker, 'Probolinggo', 16.

²⁷ Muneng is the name of a village located between Probolinggo and Sukapura or around 9 km to the south-west of the city. About a year earlier the proprietor of Probolinggo had punished the *Demang* for some trivial offence by confining him to the stocks, a disgrace which seems to have made a deep impression on the mind of that minor chief. See (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawford to the Hon.

thousands of people joined the new movement.

Even before the first stirrings of this movement of *Kyai Mas*, the people of Probolinggo had already been shaken by a *pralambang* (a sign) and mentally prepared by a prophecy in the form of a dead buffalo and the shape of a vagabond. Later, the local people were to say that the disturbance had been initiated by the former regent of Probolinggo, Jayadiningrat. The 'dead buffalo' was construed as the powerless Javanese regent, who had been forced out of his territory by the Chinese landlord.

In fact, the region of Probolinggo was far from thriving. In order to pay off the debt of 50,000 Rds which he had to meet every half year, the Chinese landlord resorted to extortion. It seems that the rough conduct of the Chinese landlord towards his subjects became an urgent matter of concern to the British Government in Java, especially after Goldbach had also drawn attention to the particular situation in Java's Oosthoek. Lekkerkerker claims that the aim of Fraser's visit to Probolinggo was actually to warn the Chinese landlord for possible trouble elicited by his behaviour. Fraser reminded Han Tik Ko of the fact that no garrison was stationed in Probolinggo. The swelling rumour could easily spread among the oppressed people and might encourage them to launch an uprising. The arrival of *Kyai Mas* was indeed perceived as the answer to the prophecy: the promised prophet who would bring prosperity and free them from oppression had finally arrived.

Supported by *Kyai Mas*, *Demang Muneng* led around 2,000 people down to Probolinggo in the middle of May 1813. Their principal goal was to do away with the Chinese landlord. On 18 May, some of the multitude took over a kampong located only a few *paal* from the house in which he lived. Meanwhile in this unfortified residence, the party had just finished. In the evening, several *Mantri* came to report that they had met a body of about 300 men who had come down from the mountains, and had taken possession of a village about 2 or 3 *paal* from the house of the Chinese landlord. They had not molested the inhabitants but had declared they came to take possession of the country by command of Mohammed.

In fact, just before the party Han Tik Ko had been informed about the movement of *Demang Muneng* and his followers in Mt. Tengger by one of his village chiefs from Kandangan, and he had forwarded this

news to Captain Davy in Surabaya. However, he had not realized that the movement had grown so rapidly and extended to Probolinggo.²⁸ Captain Cameron suspected that the rebels were merely a smallish group of religious fanatics, and he determined to inspect them personally to ascertain their intentions.²⁹ With this view in mind Han Tik Ko collected some of his people, amounting to about 200 men, armed with pikes, accompanied by the British officers about 6 *paal* until they came within sight of the rebels who made camp on a coffee plantation. Some people were ordered to go forward and parley with the rebels to find out their intentions, and, if possible, to disperse them. While they were deliberating, the rebels suddenly unleashed a furious attack upon the British and Han Tik Ko, preceded by a most dreadful yell. The followers of the Chinese landowner scattered in all directions, so that Captain McPherson and Captain Cameron, who happened to be in front (Captain McPherson armed with a pistol and Cameron with a fowling-piece in the hand) found themselves abandoned. They hurried back towards Colonel Fraser and the other officers, who still stood by Han Tik Ko with a few of his relatives.³⁰ Having made their escape with great difficulty and danger, and having been closely pursued to Han Tik Kok's house, they arrived there rather worn out around ten o'clock at night. They immediately made the house as defensible as they could. It was no easy task as they had a large square of houses to defend, and only a few Chinese and slaves to assist them. Constantly on the alert, they remained awake all night,

²⁸ In his letter he writes, 'a report received by me from the *Demang* of Tengar Kandangan, called Raga Yuda, stated that 6 *orang kraman* or wanderers appeared in Tengar Adas. He furthermore stated that the people of the Adas under Tengger have submitted to them, of which I hurry to inform you, and to request your further orders thereon; in the meantime I did not fail to order the Papaty and several Mantries to go in search and if possible to seize them'. (ANRI), Probolinggo, 56, Han Tik Ko to Captain Davy, Probolinggo, 18 the *Jumadilawal* 1740, or 18 May 1813, 7.

²⁹ A detailed description of what happened in the house of the Chinese landlord is given by Captain Cameron, one of the English officers who escaped the bloodbath of Muneng and who also took part in the suppression of the uprising. Extract of a letter from Captain Cameron to Major Forbes, of His Majesty's 78th regiment. This letter was published in the official magazine *The Java Government Gazette* (Saturday, June 5, 1813, Vol. II, No. 67). Part of the letter was published by Lekkerkerker, 'Probolinggo', 20-4.

³⁰ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, Resident Holst de Weerth to Captain Davy the acting Resident of Surabaya, May 1813, 5; *See also* ANRI, Probolinggo 56, Vos to Resident Holst de Weerth, 19 May 1813, 19.

expecting an attack at any moment. Unsurprisingly their muke-shift exertions were far from adequate to defend so large a space with so few people. During the night some slaves were sent out to collect the followers of Han Tik Ko, and if possible, to rally them. Towards the morning they were able to muster about 150 men, some of whom were sent out to gather intelligence. None of these returned, and Captain Cameron had every reason to suppose they had joined the *Demang* Muneng's people. Disheartened the Captain had no other option but to keep the rest together by confining them within the square and placing the more trusty slaves at all the gates and outlets.

Meanwhile, in the town more and more people hastened to join the rebels. The matter of the desertion of Han Tik Ko's people was no longer a rumour; eleven of Han Tik Ko's coachmen were discovered to be turncoats. One of them was captured on the way to Pasuruan.³¹ The uprising itself spread rapidly and to a very wide extent. All villagers of Ketapang in western Probolinggo joined the rebels, and a group of the *blandong* (lumber jacks) from Pasuruan were also reported to have united themselves with the insurgents.³²

³¹De Weerth wrote: 'I received just now the two enclosed letters from W. Vos, who has likewise set off for Probolinggo. The Captain Chinese from here who also meant to go to Probolinggo, has returned and told me that he only went as far as Katapan[g], seeing there a great movement of people which he calculates to be very near 2 to 400 men with two flags one yellow and the other red. He stopped there and turned back. On the road he was closely followed by the coachman (the same one W. Vos mentioned of in his letter) of the regent [the Chinese landlord] coming here from Probolinggo with an empty carriage. Because the same coachman had a yellow ribbon tied to his *crisis*, a highly suspect colour, I ordered him to be seized and interrogated.' (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, Resident Holst De Weerth to Captain Davy, the acting Resident of Surabaya, May 1813, 5; *See also* (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, Vos to Resident Holst de Weerth, 19 May 1813, 19

³²W. Vos wrote: 'The robbers headed by a Tengar chief, named Jasmaka, and joined by the people of different *dessas* have destroyed the village Katapang, its environs and the place called Kota. They are in all near 1000 men. They have certainly received intelligence, because tomorrow they are inclined to take the road to Ginding.The colour of the flag of the robbers is yellow. Their plans are deeply laid, their messengers which they have dispatched to all ports wear yellow breeches. Among the robbers are the *blandong* people of Pasuruan. I do not know if the regent's coachman whom I send to you has not a commission from the chief robber for his master. I will endeavour to wait here the arrival of the European force. The people of Katapang have partly joined the robbers. I hope the troops will speedily arrive.' (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, W. Vos to the Resident of Pasuruan, 19 May 1813 at 11 o'clock at night, 11-12; *See also* ANRI, Probolinggo 56, Vos to Resident Holst de Weerth, 19 May 1813, 19; (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, Robertson to

At this moment the plight of Colonel Fraser and the Chinese landlord who had been cut off from Captain Cameron was perilous. They attempted to make a stand and discharged the few shots they had, but were immediately obliged to retire, being hard pressed and closely pursued by *Demang* Muneng's people. Colonel Fraser and Captain McPherson, who were absolutely exhausted, collapsed, and with the deepest sorrow Captain Cameron had to relate that they had fallen into hands of *Demang* Muneng's people, 'without the smallest prospect of him being able to afford them the least assistance as he was at the moment surrounded by crowds of them.' Nevertheless, he was able to dispatch a message to Pasuruan, ordering cartridges and some *Jayengsekar* to rescue him. The Resident responded to the appeal by sending the *Jayengsekar* off to Probolinggo, but he was unable to fulfil the request for cartridges because of a lack of supplies.³³

On 19 May, around 10 o'clock, Tandatrana, Kudalaksana, Serangbansa, and Kartasari, all *Jayengsekar* from Pasuruan sent by W. Vos arrived in Probolinggo accompanied by three carriages in which there were four English officers, a lady, and a slave girl. Intelligence was received that a few robbers had made their appearance in *Desa* Muneng, whereupon Colonel Fraser and the Chinese land owner had ordered a carriage and in the company of grass-cutters, had gone there. The deponents were adamant that Fraser and the proprietor of Probolinggo had done their best to fight the rebels, and twice fired their pistols, but that their followers had all run away to the town, without waiting to discover what had become of the Colonel and Chinese landowner.³⁴ At that time, about 5,000 insurgents entered

Holst de Weerth, 25; About the involvement of the *blandong see* (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, Vos and C. von Arnschildt to Resident Holst de Weerth, 19 May 1813, 21, as stated: 'The *Petingy* of the timber forest, called *Pasera*, very near 45 years of age, came from Probolinggo with a silver Tumbler and a few *doits* and bearing the signal of the robbers, which caused me to seize him, he says that the tumbler & *doits* were given to him at Probolinggo'.

³³ The Resident wrote: 'Lieutenant Colonel Fraser and his officers, who have left already to that place to make an enquiry, have requested me to send all the *Jayengsekar* to Probolinggo, with which I have duly complied. They all marched today, but to my great regret I must inform you that being unprovided with cartridges I could not furnish them any, I have written about it sometime ago to the acting Civil Commissioner Apey, but received no supply, I was induced now to dispatch the corps *Jayengsekars* without powder or bullets.' (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, Holst de Weerth to Captain Davy, 18 the light *Djoemadilawal* 1740, or 18 May 1813, 23.

³⁴ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, W. Vos to the Resident of Pasuruan Holst de Weerth,

Probolinggo. The three officers, the lady and a slave girl had made their escape by sea. Vos steadfastly refused to leave Probolinggo without orders, although the weapons he had in Probolinggo were entirely inadequate. He insisted in making a stand and waiting for the rebels.³⁵ Soon, information came that the Chinese landowner and three Europeans had been killed in the village Muneng.³⁶ This was confirmed by the Resident of Pasuruan, De Weerth.

From all reports I fear that the death of Colonel Fraser, Captain McPherson and the land owner of Probolinggo is too true. The auxiliary troops consisting of 100 Europeans and 50 *Jayengsekar* from Surabaya arrived here half past twelve o'clock in the night. After taking their supper at half past 1 o'clock they marched again eastwards, without doubt a great number of the rebels will fall into their hands if they have not fled elsewhere.³⁷

After seventy more *Jayengsekar* had arrived from Pasuruan at half-past five in the morning of the 19th, Cameron again sent out parties. He was determined to attack *Demang* Muneng's people, and if possible to rescue his fellow-officers and Han Tik Ko. Despite his resolve, he was soon obliged to relinquish his plans because he realised that he had nothing to depend on but the *Jayengsekar*, who were armed only with pikes. *Demang* Muneng's people by that time had advanced to within one mile of the place and their force had been considerably augmented. Soon after the chief of rebels sent a man to inform Cameron that he had killed the English and challenged him to come out and fight. On receiving this confirmation, Cameron abandoned every idea of attacking them, as he did not perceive the smallest prospect of success with the few *Jayengsekar* who were so badly armed. Resolutely he took every measure for a determined resistance. About 10 o'clock he found the Chinese were removing everything from the house, and preparing for their own departure, in which event he would be deprived of their assistance.³⁸

May 1813, 13-14.

³⁵ Ibid. 14.

³⁶ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, W. Vos to the Resident of Pasuruan, 19 May 1813 at 11 o'clock at night, 11-12; *See also* (ANRI), Probolinggo 56: Vos to Resident Holst de Weerth, 19 May 1813; (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, 19; (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, Robertson to Holst de Weerth, 25.

³⁷ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, The resident of Pasuruan, Holst de Weerth, to Captain Davy acting resident of Surabaya, Pasuruan 20 May 1813, 15.

³⁸ Ibid., 21.

Cameron deemed it necessary to see Mrs Fraser to a place of safety, and took her to a *perahu* which was to convey the Chinese Captain's family to Pasuruan. He returned, about 12 o'clock, taking the Chinese Captain of Juwana (between Pati and Rembang) and one of the *Majoor's* sons with him. Entering the house, he found that all the Malays and the Chinese had abandoned it. The *Jayengsekar* was in retreat, and the *Demang* Muneng's people were already in possession of the front of the building. The *Jayengsekar* escaped through the rear of the house. Although *Demang* Muneng's people were soon swarming on the beach in great numbers, the *perahu* with Mrs Fraser escaped to Pasuruan and arrived safely that same evening.³⁹

The Origins of the Uprising

Goldbach was convinced that the people of Probolinggo had risen out of sympathy for the former regent Jayadiningrat who had been removed to Sedayu because of the sale of Probolinggo. This is mere speculation because we lack the necessary evidence to support such a conclusion. Unquestionably, the role of Islam in the rebellion requires further examination. Indeed, from the mid-eighteenth century, the role of Islam in social and political movements in Java had expanded widely, but in this case it is doubtful that the establishment of an Islamic State was the main goal of the movement because most of its adherents were Hindus.⁴⁰ On the other hand, ample evidence leads us to assume that the Probolinggo uprising was rooted in the social unrest caused by the extortion of the Chinese landowner. This evidence is strikingly apparent from the close investigation which was carried out soon after the end of the violence.

Immediately after the disturbance was over, Raffles formed a commission led by John Crawfurd to investigate the origins of the Probolinggo uprising. On 3 June 1813, Crawfurd arrived there to set

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁰ Crawfurd said that Islam was used only as a 'rallying point'. Taking advantage of the discontent which pervaded the territories subject to the Chinese authority, the leader of the rebellion descended from the hills with a few followers proclaiming a holy war, and the relief of the oppressed followers of Islam". See (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawfurd to the Hon. Lieut. Governor Thomas S. Raffles, Probolinggo 4 June 1813, 29.

up some enquiries.⁴¹ In his investigation, Crawford limited himself to finding out about the grievances put forward by the local people. This was not an easy job because he arrived in Probolinggo in the midst of a difficult situation, when the people were still shocked by the violence. He said that he found it a matter of extreme difficulties to come at the truth or induce the people to come forward with their complaints.⁴²

Crawford also paid a hasty visit to the District Besuki and Panarukan. On his journey to Besuki, he passed through a large portion of the Banger or Probolinggo district where he was said to have observed every appearance of the return of confidence. The people were engaged in the reaping of the crops and their other ordinary occupations without any appearance of distrust or humility. Within a few days he issued a proclamation to inform the inhabitants of this district that he had been deputed to inquire into their grievances, and to redress their wrongs. He informed them that he had been authorized to listen to their just complaints and to make arrangements to make their condition more secure and comfortable. Crawford observed that an ample measure of punishment already appeared to have been inflicted. He deemed it better to forego any further inquiry into delinquency and suggested a general amnesty should be proclaimed to restore confidence. This measure was all the more easily adopted as the people themselves had in fact been guilty of few or no excesses. He added:

I have been listened to with satisfaction and confidence and the chiefs from the distant posts of the district have in consequences come to me without hesitation.⁴³

After having spent one day in Probolinggo, on 4 June 1813, Crawford delivered his first report directly to Raffles. After such a short while, the content of this first report was still very speculative, since the investigation had reached only its first stage, yet it gives some clues. The most prominent reason for complaint was the behaviour of the Chinese landlord which he described as 'monstrous'. He wrote:

⁴¹ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawford to the Hon. Lieutenant Governor Thomas Stamford Raffles, Probolinggo 4 June 1813, 29.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawford to the Hon. Lieut. Governor Thomas S. Raffles, Probolinggo 8 June 1813, 33-36.

Of the causes of the origin of the late disorders it will not be expected, that I should yet be able to produce any detailed proof. The cry against the oppression and maladministration of the Chinese proprietors is however so loud and uniform, that it seems beyond the reach of doubt the late insurrection has had its origin in the discontents which these oppressions have produced.The Chinese proprietors of Probolinggo, Besuki and Panarukan have all along exercised powers of a higher order, than it is consistent with either the honour or dignity of government to countenance. They exercise the incompatible and monstrous prerogative of levying taxes [...] the most grievous and oppressive of these is a capitation tax far exceeding in amount that which is exacted in other parts of the country [...]; a heavy rent in kind is demanded from the lands, the grain is purchased at arbitrary rates forestalled and monopolized by the rapacious Chinese, who are spread over the country. All ménages are taxed for the benefit of the proprietor of Probolinggo; [He] was himself a man of respectable character and moderate principles but it is impossible he could guard against the rapacity of his retainers and followers: the insolence of whose demeanour towards the natives, not perhaps less than their extortion, contributed to foment the late disorders.⁴⁴

In his subsequent report, Crawford produced a more forceful analysis, saying that although the proprietors were reputed to be rich men, they were far from possessing funds adequate to the large payments required of them. They chiefly or almost solely relied upon the profits from their estates for this purpose and the inevitable consequences were heavy demands which the resources of the country were inadequate to meet. Crawford wrote:

It maybe safely stated that the revenues exacted by the proprietor of Probolinggo exceeded by one fourth at least the uttermost measure of what could be demanded [...] and exceeded out of all bounds what common justice required should have been taken from the natives. The people were consequently oppressed and discontented, while the cupidity which is too frequently a predominant feature in the character of the Chinese had no doubt its share in rendering their administration unpopular.

Crawford also criticized Daendels' policy of selling the land, which he called 'a violation against the natural right', and he was scathing about the former Dutch Governor-General's decision to leave the implementation of the administration of the land fully in the hands of the Chinese landlord, without make any restrictions or controls. This

⁴⁴(ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawford to the Hon. Lieut. Governor Thomas S. Raffles, Probolinggo 4 June 1813, 30-31.

allowed the Chinese proprietors to act as they pleased.

The very sale of the lands alone may in some measure be considered a violation of natural right aggravated by the circumstances under which it was done. It is true that the lands were disposed of on terms similar to those on which lands have been sold to Europeans in the vicinity of Batavia, implying conditions which secure some valuable privileges to the natives. The Chinese proprietors however wilfully neglected those conditions. [It is] probable too, that those who sold the lands were not very anxious about explaining and [...] about enforcing the written conditions of the grant; the first would have diminished the price and the second the means of payment. In fact in a fertile territory of ninety miles in length along the sea shore and a breadth which embraces that of the whole island, with a population of at least eighty thousands souls, whose conditions required the fostering care and most delicate management of an enlightened government, these men acted as they pleased without restriction or control. The Dutch government established no regular police on the Chinese estates and this authority was delegated to the proprietors, to men most likely to abuse it, and who frequently did so. They fined, imprisoned and at pleasure condemned [people] to the confinement of the stocks.⁴⁵

The situation in Besuki and Panarukan was different. Crawford reported that previous to his becoming the owner, Han Chian Piet, had farmed these districts from the Dutch Government for as long as forty years. Consequently, whatever benefit therefore could reasonably be ascribed to Chinese management, ought to be most conspicuous in Besuki and Panarukan. Nevertheless, these districts were ineluctably inferior not only to Probolinggo, but also to Pasuruan, Bangil and every other maritime district possessing similar advantages. During the time the Chinese proprietor of Besuki farmed his present estate, all of these were under the administration of native regents, a type of government which Crawford deemed prejudicial enough but no worse than that of the Chinese in any respect and certainly far less dangerous. The people's accounts alleged the cultivator had been subject to disproportionately high demands for exceeding the norm. Formerly, each cultivator had been obliged to deliver only one-fifth of the produce, but now they were required to band over one-third, or one-half. Apart from these ordinary demands, Han Chan Piet, the proprietor of Besuki, for instance, at one time even levied from

⁴⁵ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawford to Lieutenant Governor Thomas Stamford Raffles, Probolinggo 21 June 1813, 57.

everyone capable of paying it, a contribution in money.

An even more extraordinary case found by Crawford in Puger:⁴⁶

The visit that I paid to Puger some days ago placed me in possession of a more extraordinary instance of the presumption of this individual, than any which has yet come to light. Without the shadow of authority or pretext he has during the last twelve months levied heavy contributions upon goods of all description coming from the territories of the British government: rice the most important article of all, paid no less a tax than 20 percent on its value. These restrictions were removed but five days previous to my visit to the district of Puger, upon the proprietor receiving intimation of my intended journey.

It affords the most conclusive evidence of the influence [that] has been ascribed to the Chinese proprietors, and the secrecy in which the terror of this influence enabled them to envelope all their transactions, that no one dared complain of so indecent an attack upon the authority of government and so unjust a one upon the rights of private persons.

In another part of the report, Crawford indicated another form of mal-administration which he calls more unjust and iniquitous among other abuses, namely the way in which trading was carried out within the district. No merchant was permitted to enter the district without permission: this was seldom granted because it was in the interest of the proprietors to exclude interlopers thereby securing for themselves all the produce of the district at their own prices. While traders were excluded on the one hand, the people were prohibited from disposing of their produce; it generally required the sanction of the petty tyrants even to sell a horse, a bullock or a buffalo. With respect to Probolinggo in particular, the administration of the district was almost entirely in the hands of the Chinese. Although there was a nominal Javanese head, he was entirely subject to the authority and the orders of the Chinese chief, who demanded from every rank of the Javanese the homage, which the latter were accustomed to pay only to persons of the first rank among themselves or among Europeans.

Above all, Crawford cynically recognized that the only improvements, which had been made on the Chinese estates, were calculated more for show than utility. They consisted of handsome roads, ornamented bridges altogether unsuited to the state of the country. The trade carried on wheeled vehicles was unknown in these parts and goods were transported, as was generally the case in other

⁴⁶ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawford to Lieutenant Governor Thomas Stamford Raffles, Probolinggo 21 June 1813, 58.

parts of the country, on the backs of horses. Mere track ways could serve equally well as the most splendid highways for the conduct of such traffic. These fine roads, instead of being an advantage, were actually a burden to the country. Most injuriously they were constructed by the forced and protracted labour of the people, and consequently at a great and real expense. Worse still they had to be maintained by the same oppressive means. Crawford wrote; 'They are sufficiently comfortable indeed for a European gentleman to travel upon, but this is the best and only praise'. Crawford also recognized that Besuki and Panarukan had been greatly improved during the same period: that a Chinese proprietor had held them, either as farmer or proprietor. But he was not blind to the fact that they were merely part of the general improvement, which could be seen everywhere, except where the forced cultivation imposed by the European Government had been peculiarly hard upon the people. In other words, the Chinese-owned districts did not even appear to have been improved in comparison to many other districts.

In his last assessment of the region of Probolinggo, Panarukan, and Besuki, Crawford still retained grave doubts about the general view held among the Europeans that the land was improved under Chinese entrepreneurships. The truth of this opinion, he said, deserved further examination. Probolinggo by far the most valuable and most highly improved of these provinces had been taken possession of by Chinese only nine months before the British conquest of the island. Consequently there had been little time for improving the state of the countryside when he first observed it. He stated that previous to January 1811 Probolinggo was under the usual management of a regent; it therefore could have received no benefit from the Chinese who until that time now specified had no manner of connection with it. Finally, Crawford advised the Government to adopt a more liberal policy and to attend to the welfare of the people in the future. The Government should take immediate measures to end the 'evil' of the Chinese landlord by replacing it with a permanent system of administration. This would relieve the people of Chinese oppression.⁴⁷ The Chinese proprietors had to be compelled to adhere to the rights of the natives, and 'any claims of an individual and a foreigner must in the nature of things at once give way to the sacred and indefensible

⁴⁷ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawford to the Hon. Lieut. Governor Thomas S. Raffles, Probolinggo 4 June 1813, 29-33.

right of the natural inhabitants of a country'.⁴⁸

Besides this evidence, pertaining to the origin of the Probolinggo uprising, Hageman stated that the regent of Besuki, Suryo Adiningrat was possibly behind the uprising. It has been suggested that the nature regent of Besuki was involved, but there is not the slightest shred of evidence. Perhaps, this suspicion was related to the immediate replacement of the regent by the Dutch government in 1818. This dismissal was based on the report given the Commissioner-General Elout, after his trip to Surabaya in 1818. In his letter to Batavia dated 16 March 1818, he stated:⁴⁹

During our stay in Surabaya, there were several complaints brought by the people against the Regent of Bangil and *Rangga* of Malang, both in the residency Pasuruan. Some Javanese had come to us and let us know their burden. ... We decided to carry out an investigation, and the result is that both had taken the coffee and rice from the inhabitants without paying, cheated (manipulated) the weight and had extorted the people. (Meanwhile) the regent of Besuki had shown improper conduct, and lay under peculiar suspicion of having taken part within the riotous movement which had occurred in Probolinggo. He oppressed his own inhabitants by taking the threshed rice and bunches of paddy to fulfil his obligation to pay the land-rent. In the light of all of this misbehaviour these chiefs must be removed.

A similar statement is given also by P. Myer in the *Kronijk van Nederlandsch-Indië*.⁵⁰

In the eastern part of Java, more precisely Probolinggo, there was an uprising in 1813. On that occasion the land proprietor of that district, Han Kiko, was cruelly assassinated. The disorder was still going on, the regent of Besuki, who was suspected of standing behind the movement, which had taken place in Probolinggo, had also misbehaved himself, and therefore should be removed and replaced.

Both statements are the only evidence which can be found so far concerning the involvement of the regent *Suryadiningrat* in the Probolinggo uprising. They appear insufficient to explain the origin of

⁴⁸ (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, John Crawford to the Hon. Lieut. Governor Thomas S. Raffles, Probolinggo 8 June 1813, 33-36.

⁴⁹ Men heeft beweerd, dat de inlandsche regent van Bezoeki hierin de hand had. Maar er is hiervoor geen schijn van bewijs. This letter published in *Tijdschrift voor Neerlandsch-Indië*, vol. ii, (1863), 290.

⁵⁰ P. Mijer, *Kronijk van Nederlandsch-Indië* in the *Tijdschrift voor Neerlandsch-Indië*, (TNI), vol. ii (1840), 288 and 1816.

the uprising because they give no clear explanation about the motive for the uprising. Moreover, the word *verdenking* implies that this suspicion still needed to be proved. In another report, dated 27 September 1819 a year after the first statement, the former Commissary-General Elout, once again explained the reason for the removal of the regent of Besuki, but he no longer mentioned the possible connection of the regent with the Probolinggo affair. He explained that his removal was based chiefly on his improper conduct. Elout wrote:

We found out which abuses were taking place (in the division of the land under the villagers, the lease, distribution, the obligation of the village chiefs, collection of land-rent, miscalculation of the report of tax and tribute, etc.). The Regent of Besuki was removed from his power, and his case is now under investigation and further findings perhaps will come out.⁵¹

In 1865, Bleeker, a man who introduced himself as a ‘friend’ of the dismissed regent, *Suryadinigrat*, made an investigation into the removal of his friend and concluded that all the accusations against him were not true. He says:

Closer research has made me doubt about the truth of Elout’s assertions, assertions he had heard from persons who are not impartial, and who were keeping hidden agenda’s of their own.⁵²

Bleeker in turn suggests that Elout wanted to replace the Sino-Javanese regent and do away with his influence.⁵³

⁵¹ *Bijdragen tot de Kennis van het Koloniaal Beheer* (s-Gravenhage: J. Roering, 1851), 35-6.

⁵² Maar nader onderzoek heeft mij doen twijfelen aan de waarheid der beweringen van Elout, beweringen, vernomen uit de mond van personen, die niet onpartijdig waren, en die andere bedoelingen hebben verborgen gehouden. *See* Bleeker, ‘De Adipatti van Bezoeki op Java, 1811-1818: Historisch Onderzoek’ in, *TNI*, vol. i, (1865) 444-52.

⁵³ He was replaced by *Raden* Sutik, the son of the former Resident Walter Merkus Stuart by a Madurese woman named *Mbok Ayu* Pijer. Bleeker witnessed that the man behaved more like a European than an Asian.

The Uprising of Aria Galedak in Bondowoso

In his long account Crawford tried to convince Raffles that the bad behaviour of the Chinese proprietor had caused the Probolinggo uprising. In this he succeeded because, soon afterwards, Raffles set up a commission which was to give recommendations what necessary action should be taken to prevent such trouble in the future. This commission recommended in its turn that all the lands sold (Probolinggo, Panarukan, and Besuki), should be repurchased and the administration should be returned to the indigenous chiefs. Finally it recommended the introduction of a taxation system.

The immediate implementation of the above recommendations shows that Raffles had complete confidence in this advice. All this did not save the country from similar disorders because only a year after the repurchase of the lands of Probolinggo, Panarukan, and Besuki plus the introduction of the Landrent System another disturbance broke out in Puger.

During the British administration (1811-1816), Puger remained under the administration of *Raden Adipati Suryadinigrat*, the man who was later accused by Elout of having been involved in the Probolinggo uprising. Puger was divided into two districts. The southern part fell under the authority of *Mantri Wedana* or *Patih* Reksanagara, and the north (Bondowoso) was under Kertanegara. In Puger, the tax and other deliveries were collected by the administration of Besuki, where a European collector was located. The disturbance of 1815 originated in the village of Keting, located on the boundary between Puger and Lumajang. In this village lived three people, Durasit (or Abdurazit), *Wirasetya* and Aria Galedak. *Wirasetya* and Durasit were two *santri* (students of an Islamic school) from Cirebon who lived in Grongong in the district of Klaka, whereas Aria Galedak came from the village Tempeh, to the south of the village of Lumajang. He was a former *opziener* (inspector) of coffee plantations in Keting, Lumajang. After retiring from his job, he retreated to Mount Semeru. A few years later, he came to Puger and declared himself a *tapa* (an ascetic) and simultaneously a 'Just King' under the name *Yang Giri Nata* (The King of the Mountain). He promised to drive the Europeans out of Java's Oosthoek and abolish the taxes. Religion and worship played an important role in his plan of operation.

Durasit and *Wirasetya* were his first and most prominent adherents and both were appointed future *Tumenggungs*, Durasit in Bodowoso

and *Wirasetya* in Besuki. Within a short time, the 'King' could count on wide sympathy among the local people. Followed by a large number of devotees, he retreated from the village of Keting to Puger, 15 *paal* to the south-east. On his progress from the village Knecong to Menampu, more and more people joined the pilgrimage. At Menampu a warrior, named Derpayuda, arrived, who promised that he would remove *Patih* Reksanagara. Another fighter, *Encik* Razit, the chief of the Buginese people there, was appointed general to lead the movement. Without encountering any difficulties, the crowd marched from Puger in the north through Rambi, Jember, and Sentong (Bondowoso) where the village chiefs spontaneously joined the crowd. *Patih* Reksanagara who was a Muslim Chinese welcomed the devotees, and wrote a letter to the *Patih* of Bondowoso, requesting co-operation. However, the *Patih* of Bondowoso, Kertanagara, decided to fight them. He gathered 500 people, and marched westwards to the village of Biting, from where he retreated to the River Sentong, to where it was spanned by the stone bridge of Nangkan. Here this man installed a few cannons and waited for the rebels, who indeed made their appearance to join battle. During the heavy fighting which ensued, Durasit, the man who was thought to be invulnerable, was killed by a cannon ball. Thereupon, the chief of the uprising ran away, while Arya Galedak was hunted down and killed in the village of Jambi Arum. *Wirasetya* was killed in the rice-fields. The *Patih* of Puger, Reksanagara, was captured at the village Batrang and transported to Besuki. He was later banished to Banjarmasin with forty other rebels. In this uprising eighteen people were killed. When the uprising broke out, the Regent of Puger was in Surabaya.⁵⁴

Conclusion

Because this case study has touched only a limited number of sources, it is risky to reach a definite conclusion. At first glance, the evidence brought forward by both Crawford and Elout seems quite convincing. Both officials used similar methods, and noted down the grievances stated by the local people. The accusations of mal-administration,

⁵⁴ This story was told by the son of Kertanagara, who later became the regent, and also the older generation who lived in Bondowoso and Puger. Kertanagara was then installed as *Rangga* for Puger and Bondowoso, and died in 1828.

misconduct, and extortion were not based on any other evidence. Four reports were made by local chiefs (three *peranakan* Chinese and one Madurese), who described the extortion practised by the Chinese Major of Besuki, Han Chan Piet. According to one of the reports, extortions were made in the form of the re-implementation of a sort of tax which had formally been abolished by the Government:

This is a report from a *peranakan* Chinese, named Mertawijaya, the chief of *Mantri Gedong*, the subject of *Ki* Major of Besuki [Han Chan Piet] under Panarukan. Sixteen days ago, on Saturday, 18 Rojab, Ehe 1740 (1811) precisely, Mertawijaya heard in his own house information from the villagers, represented by a Madurese named *Pak Dani*, that the people in the village Kelampokan were being expected to pay *grabag* (a sort of tax charged upon farmland). This surprised Mertawijaya because as far as he knew such a tax had been abolished by the Government, yet these people were still charged. Mertawijaya was also informed by one of his own fellows, named *Mas Gedhong* that the amount of the delivery [*panajung*] was the same as before, for each *bau*, 4 *amat* of paddy.

... then [he] also heard that *Tuwan Petor* (Assistant Resident) would send a messenger to inspect the whole village in Panarukan. The men who were in charge of the inspection were Mr Ewen and *Mas Setrawijaya*. Carefully Mertawijaya recalculated the whole amount of farmland, the names of villages, and the cultivators who used to be obliged to pay the tax in the previous years. The currently required tax is used as a payment on the *Ki* Major Besuki's loan.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Above is a summary of the following Javanese report: Punika paturané tiyang jaler pranakan Cina awasta Mertawijaya kepala mantri gedhong ingkang dipunsèlèhaké Ki Mayor Basuki agriya ing pan Negari Panarukan bawah Negari Basuki. Sampun dumugi ing ngumuripun balèk. Inggang sampun kapriksa Kangjeng Tuwan Pétor ing Probolinggo sinaidan déning wau para jajeneng niyaka Probolinggo sedaya sarta kasaksènan Ki Yakim lan Ki Patih. Paturané kang tumemen-temen, sampun antawis 16 dinten lan mangké kala ngaleresé ing dinten Saptu tanggal ping 18, sasi Rejep tahun Ehe, 1740, kelampahan kiyambaké Mertawijaya wau, ngaleresé wonten ing griyanépun piyambek, lajeng amireng wertosipun tiyang kathah, sarta dipun béjani tiyang satungal jaler Madunten awasta Pak Dani, agriya ing Panarukan ugi, yèn midhanget wertos sinten tiyang yèn ing Dhusun Kelampokan dipun tarik grabagipun ing salebeté sasi Rejep puniki, aming Dhusun Kelampokan kémawon. Pak Dani wau gèné wawerta lan Mertawijaya, wangsulané wau Merta Wijaya dhateng Pak Dani, déné paréntah sampun kalepas, teka kénging grabag malih. Tutuk gèné aguneman Pak Dani nunten mantuk. Lan malih Mertawijaya amireng saking gedhong Penarukan sadhèrèk peripéyané piyambak wasta Mas Gedhong, bebéja yèn pantun kang malebet gudhang Penarukan, *penajung* kadi ingkang wau-wau, sabau 4 amet, wangsulané *Ki* Mertawijaya lan Mas Gedhong...lajeng amireng yèn badhé wonten utusané Tuwan Pétor, amirsani sakumasarisipun bawah Panarukan sadaya. Kang dipun utus Tuwan

On balancing the accounts, Bleeker's conclusion is also very interesting and needs to be considered. It is hard to understand how the regent of Besuki could have been involved in the violence against his own relative. The Government itself failed to present convincing evidence of this. Claudine Salmon follows Bleeker's point of view when she says that the removal of the Han family from the political and economic stage of *Java's Oostboek* was based on 'fear' rather than the political grounds of abuse and maladministration committed by the Chinese proprietor. After 1815, the *Oostboek* had lost its frontier character, and was henceforth administrated as all other territories under the Dutch control.

Ewen lan Mas Setrodiwiryo, lajeng ngatos-ngatos, sarta angrèken ing cacepengani lami ingkang wau-wau, cacahé sabin bawah Panarukan sadaya ing taun Alip kang kawingking puniki, sarta cacahé naminé dhusun pituwin utang-utang utangani Ki Mayor Basuki dhateng tiyang alit ing bawah Panarukan sadaya inggih kyambaké Ki Mertawijaya wauné kang angetrapake. (ANRI), Probolinggo 56, Reports from three *Peranakan-Chinese*, *Encik* Guru, Mertawijaya, Prawiradikrama and a Madurese, named *Patih* Secadipura.