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# Sexuality and power



'All Java knows this – how the Dutch allowed the *kraton* [of Yogyakarta] to be turned into a brothel and how [Prince] Dipanagara [1785-1855] has sworn to destroy it to the last stone'.

Peter Carey

Below: The mystic prince and his family.
Coloured drawing of Dipanagara in exile
in Makassar (1833-55) reading a text on
Islamic mysticism (tasawwuf) accompanied
by his wife, Radèn Ayu Retnaningsih, and
one of his sons, 'Pangéran Ali Basah',
who is having a vision of a Javanese spirit.
Leiden Codex Orientalis 7398 (Snouck
Hurgronje collection). Photograph courtesy
of the Universiteits Bibliotheek. Leiden.



THE WORDS OF THE LEIDEN LAWYER, Willem van Hogendorp (1795-1838), then serving as a legal adviser to Commissioner-General L.P.J. du Bus de Gisignies (in office, 1826-1830), could not have been more blunt. Writing to his father Gijsbert Karel (1762-1834) during the second year of the Java War (1825-30), the 32-year-old Willem confided that the liberties that the Dutch government representatives in Yogyakarta had allowed themselves on the eve of the war 'could never see the light of day' and had 'rightly provoked Dipanagara's just rage' (Van Hogendorp 1913:40). Reflecting that it was not 'the war as such or the number of our enemies' which constituted his greatest concern for the future of Dutch rule in the Indies, but rather what he termed 'the spirit of the whole population of Java from one end to the other [...] They are fed up with us' (Van Hogendorp 1913:170). He then offered this pithy summary:

'The feeling of unrest is extremely great throughout Java [...]. As concerns the cause [of this] it is nothing else than that the Dutch Government [...] has made itself over the past ten years most vile in the eyes of the Javanese.' (Van Hogendorp 1913:142)

The Leiden lawyer's words were echoed by the Java War leader following his capture in Magelang on March 28, 1830. During conversations with his German officer escort, Lieutenant Julius Heinrich Knoerle (?1800-1833), at the time of his voyage into exile in Manado in May-June 1830, the prince launched

a torrent of abuse against the Dutch officials of the pre-war period and their inability to speak anything but market Malay, complaining that 'Chevallier [P.F.H. Chevallier, Assistant-Resident of Yogyakarta, 1795-1825, in office, 1823-1825] and other Dutchmen had trotted into our [Yogyakarta] *kraton* as though it was a stable and had shouted and called as though it had become a market' (Van der Kemp 1896:313-4). So offensive was the conduct of the Dutch in the eyes of the Javanese at this time that one of the prince's relatives, the chief *pěngulu* (senior religious official) of Rembang, would later cite the sexual conduct of Java's post-1816 colonial masters as amongst the four key issues that would need to be addressed before the Java War could be brought to an end (Louw and De Klerck 1904, III:494).

### Plus ça change?

But were these issues really so new? Surely, the behaviour of Dutch East India Company (VOC) officials in the 18th century had hardly been characterised by respect, especially when it came to relations with indigenous women? The Dutch Indies was a slave-owning society and would remain such well into the 19th century. In Surabaya, Semarang and smaller VOC posts outside Batavia, it was common to find Company officials maintaining harems of female slaves. Willem van Hogendorp's uncle, Dirk (1761-1822), like his nephew newly arrived in the Indies and then serving as *Gezaghebber* (Commissioner) of Surabaya and the Oosthoek (in office, 1794-98), expressed

## Towards an intimate history of the consolidation of Dutch rule in early 19th century Java

Right:

Herman Willem

of the Stichting

The Hague.

Photograph courtesy

Iconografisch Bureau,

his horror at the 'scandalous behaviour' of his superior Johan Frederik van Reede tot de Parkeler, the Governor of Java's Northeast Coast (1757-1802, in office, 1796-1801), who could be seen 'reading the Bible and praying in the midst of a dozen Makassarese and Javanese harlots who encouraged his lechery' (Bosma and Raben 2008:70). With the flow of European women cut off by the disruptions caused by the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-84) and the subsequent Revolutionary and Napoleonic conflicts in Europe, concubinage, or the sexual exploitation of local women, became increasingly the norm for VOC officials, especially for lower-ranking military personnel who were not allowed to marry (Bosma and Raben 2008:70).

Nor was it just amongst Europeans that such practices of concubinage and sexual exploitation were noted. The practice of allowing European and Chinese visitors to the Javanese and Balinese courts access to lower-ranking court women who functioned as prostitutes was apparently common in precolonial Indonesia (Andaya 1998:16; Creese 2004:70). In the mid 18th century, there is an interesting example of the use of such women to cement a political relationship between wellborn Javanese and senior European officials. In the Chronicle of the Fall of Yogyakarta (1812-16), the princely author, an uncle of the third sultan of Yogyakarta, Hamengkubuwana III (reigned, 1812-1814), relates how his mother, a woman of Balambangan origin from the eastern salient of Java, came to the court of the first sultan, Mangkubumi (reigned, 1749-1792), as one of the ruler's wives. She had apparently been given to the sultan by the Governor of Java's Northeast Coast, Nicolaas Hartingh (in office, 1754-1761), in return for Mangkubumi's personal gift of his own favourite unofficial wife, Radèn Ayu Sepuh, whom the Yogya monarch had presented in recognition of the Governor's skill in brokering the Giyanti treaty (13 February 1755). The treaty had divided south-central Java between the courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, thus paving the way for the foundation of Mangkubumi's kingdom (Carey 1992:5-6).

Whatever one may think of the use of women as pawns in an elaborate system of exchange between powerful 18th century men, at least in this case a degree of respect appears to have existed between Mangkubumi and the Semarang Governor. In the years preceding the Java War such feelings were no longer evident. At the political level, the coming of Herman Willem Daendels (1762-1818), Napoleon's only non-French marshal, as Governor-General (1808-1811), and the subsequent British-Indian invasion of August 1811, ushered in a new era. Gone was the element of inter-dependency between Europeans and Javanese. When Daendels intervened militarily against the rump Banten sultanate in November 1808 and decreed its abolition, one of his war trophies was the daughter of the deposed sultan, Aliyuddin II (reigned, 1803-1808), who followed the marshal to his new palace at Buitenzorg (Bogor) as his 'ladyin-waiting' (Engelhard 1816:157; Bosma and Raben 2008:84).

The relationship between Europeans and the Javanese was now increasingly one of exploitation: the raiding of *kraton* treasuries and archives, which the British had down to a fine art when they stormed and gutted the court of Yogyakarta in June 1812, now had its counterpart in the raiding of the bodies of the Raden Ayu (court princesses). Tellingly, the only British officer to die in that assault had his throat cut by a court lady whom he had unwisely tried to carry away as booty.<sup>2</sup>

Daendels (1762-1818).

Reflecting on this event, the post-Java War Dutch Resident of Yogyakarta, Frans Valck (1799-1842, in office 1831-41), himself intimately involved with the sexual politics of the court in the 1830s. 3 wrote that the decline in the morals of the women of the Yogyakarta kraton could be dated back to the British attack (Carey 2008:440). Although none of the Yogyakarta Residents during the British interregnum (1811-1816) appear to have taken advantage of their position to have such liaisons – the scholar-administrator John Crawfurd (1783-1868, in office, 1811-1814, 1816) and his military and civilian successors were either exemplarily uxorious or skilful in hiding their intimate affairs<sup>4</sup> – this was not the case after the Dutch return in 1816.

#### The returned Dutch Administration 1816-1825

The period which followed the formal British handover of Java and its dependencies on August 19, 1816, witnessed a tide of former Napoleonic war officers and fortune seekers descending on Java to make a career for themselves (Van den Doel

1994:49). The majority of these newcomers had no prior experience of the Indies (Van den Broek 1893:3). Indeed, 'instead of knowledge of Indies affairs,' one keen-eyed traveller wrote shortly after the hand-over, 'they brought over a numerous and needy progeny, and had no other intention [...] than to restore in the shortest possible time [...] their dilapidated affairs in the mother country so that, without having to trouble themselves further with the Indies, they could return home with their nests nicely feathered' (Olivier 1830, III:425; Van den Doel 1994:49). They also brought with them the values of post-Revolutionary Europe, what M.K. Gandhi would later describe as the 'moral righteousness which looks down on people outside Europe' (Gandhi 2000, V.22:158).

Such 'moral righteousness', however, went hand-in-hand with a permissiveness in sexual matters which the Javanese found highly offensive. The sexual mores of senior Dutch officials soon became a source of comment in the principalities, and nowhere more so than in Yogyakarta where Dipanagara and his kraton contemporaries were shocked by the behaviour of the new Resident, Major Huibert Gerard Nahuys van Burgst (1782-1858, in office, 1816-22), whom the prince described laconically as someone 'who [merely] enjoyed eating and drinking and the spreading of Dutch ways (karĕmanya mangan-minum lan anjrah cara Walandi)' (Carey 2008:108). One of the new Resident's 'Dutch ways' was his maintenance of a curious ménage à trois in which both he and his deputy, R.C.N. d'Abo (1786-1824; in office, 1817-1823), shared the same woman.<sup>5</sup> Another was his penchant for liaisons with professional women, such as the well-endowed 'dame de Pekalongan (lady from Pekalongan)' whom Nahuys described as making the demie-mondaines of the Palais-Royal entertainment centre in Paris look like amateurs (Houben 1994:108). The gallant major, though, never quite reached the level of his opposite number in Surakarta, Diderik Willem Pinket van Haak (1779-1840; in office, 1816-1817), a strong supporter of the former Franco-Dutch regime, who went through a whole series of relationships with Eurasian mistresses <sup>6</sup> and left behind a bankrupt estate and ten illegitimate children by the time of his death in Surabaya in 1840 (De Haan 1935:558-9).

Eurasian mistresses and dalliances with the wives of junior officials were one thing, seducing and appropriating the womenfolk of well-born Javanese quite another. Yet this appears to have been increasingly the norm amongst Dutch officials in central Java in the years leading up to the Java War. In Willem van Hogendorp's words, 'the hatred and contempt' which the Javanese felt for Europeans in these years 'were certainly quickened by what both senior and junior officials permitted themselves with regard to native women: a number of Residents known [to me] by name forced the [Javanese] chiefs under their authority to surrender their legal wives [and daughters] to them' (Van Hogendorp 1913:40).



Left: War Javanese style. Local sketch of the fighting between Dipanagara's followers and Dutch troops at the prince's cave retreat at Selarong in October 1825. Dipanagara's personal battle standard with his 'Just King' (Èrucakra) symbol of crossed arrows and solar discus can be seen on the left. From Koninkliik Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (Leiden) Oriental MS 13 (Buku Kedhuna Kebo). f.136r-v. Photograph courtesy of the KITLV, Leiden.

## Sexuality and power (continued)

In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Java War, the sexual conduct of the Dutch Resident of Yogyakarta Anthonië Hendrik Smissaert (1777-1832, in office, 1823-1825), and his senior officials –namely Assistant-Resident Chevallier, and the official Residency Translator, Johannes Godlieb Dietrée (1782-1826, in office, 1796-1825) –was cut from the same cloth. Aided by the Yogyakarta prime minister (*patih*), Danureja IV (in office, 1813-47) –a serial philanderer <sup>7</sup> –as well as Dipanagara's stepmother, Ratu Ibu (post-1820, Ratu Ageng) the mother of the fourth sultan, Hamengkubuwana IV (reigned, 1814-1822), and her lover, the commander of the royal bodyguard, Major Tumenggung Wiranegara, acted as 'procurers' of court women for European officials (Carey 2008:440); the senior representatives of the Dutch government in Yogyakarta engaged in a debauch.



It would be hypocritical to pretend that in a land where it was generally known that there was more laxity over the rules of decency towards women than in the Netherlands, and where the [local] women themselves were not of the highest virtue, he [Smissaert] had excelled over his predecessors and contemporaries in his [sexual] conduct [...].'

who presided over a debauch Jonkheer Anthonië Hendrik Smissaert (1777-1832). Portrait attributed to the Dutch artist W.G.F. Heymans. From the private collection of Baron van Tuvll van Serooskerken (Kasteel Heeze). Photograph courtesy Iconografisch Bureau, The Hague.

mystic warrior. Nyai Ageng (aka Radèn Ayu) Sérang (?1766-1855) of the Yoqyakarta court led a cavalry squadron for Dipanagara in the Sérang-Demak area during the first months of the Java War and achieved of unusual spiritual power (kasektèn). Painting by Anyool Subrata (Institut Teknologi Bandung). Photograph courtesy of the late Radèn Mas Boedi Oetomo, Nataprajan, Yogyakarta (DIY).

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case unbridled lust
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Dietrée, an Islamic convert and according to one source pious about his religious duties (Carey 1981:260 note 106; 2008: 549), appears to have maintained clandestine relations with various women of rank in the court, amongst whom was a sister of Dipanagara's uncle, Pangéran Mangkubumi.<sup>8</sup> When news of these affairs between the court Raden Ayu and the patih and the Residency Interpreter was relayed to Dipanagara by his stepmother, Ratu Ibu (Ageng), he is supposed to have told her, 'I do not wish to know anything about them, I leave them all to your ordering!'9 Chevallier, meanwhile, appears to have been driven by an erotic energy which bordered on the manic. His actions were rendered doubly abusive by his overweening arrogance and contempt for the 'inlander' (native) evident in all his contacts with the Javanese. <sup>10</sup> A typical product of the brash new Europe of the post-Revolutionary era and with little understanding of Javanese society – like so many who made their way to Java in the post-1816 period – this former hussar officer and Waterloo veteran could perhaps be seen as a classic illustration of Ann Stoler's argument that sexual control was fundamental to the way in which colonial policies operated in the high colonial period (Stoler 2002:78). Except that in Chevallier's case unbridled lust rather than control seems to have been the essence of his dealings with the court Raden Ayu.

His superior, Smissaert, who later attempted to shift most of the blame onto him for the outbreak of the Java War – not so difficult given that he had conveniently died in the meantime – wrote that Chevallier had constantly engaged in love affairs with *kraton* princesses and the wives of Javanese nobles, stating that 'in general his conduct with numerous Javanese women and girls was not only extremely improper but sometimes even attended by insults.' Interestingly, Smissaert himself admitted candidly to the Dutch monarch that although he had strictly eschewed love affairs with court women,

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As for Smissaert's deputy, it seems he even boasted of his conquests (Van Hogendorp 1913:143; Van Praag 1947:266), brushing aside all his superior's warnings about the dangers of relationships with the court princesses. <sup>13</sup> According to a Javanese source, Chevallier had mistreated one of Dipanagara's



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sisters whom he had found bathing in a river and had lived for several months with one of the prince's unofficial wives. 14 When the concubine (sĕlir) in question had tried to go back to the prince's residence at Tegalreja, Dipanagara had apparently refused her entry because she had slept with a European. Chevallier himself is then said to have gone to see the prince to ask why she had not been admitted, to which Dipanagara had replied -understandably -that he did not maintain his sĕlir for the pleasure of the Assistant-Resident, whereupon Chevallier had become angry stating that 'he would do what he liked with native women' and had hit the prince over the head.<sup>15</sup> This report seems so outrageous that it would be hard to credit, but for separate evidence deriving from one of the prince's senior religious advisers, Kyai Gajali, that Dipanagara's treatment by Chevallier and the Residency Interpreter was quite unbelievably awful (Carey 2008: 550-1).

Conclusions

In the utterly altered epoch in which elite Javanese were living after June 1812, such sexual exploitation of their womenfolk by powerful Europeans may have seemed yet another humiliating aspect of their colonial status. But they might have reflected on the changes which had occurred since the late 18th

century when relations had been marked by rather greater reciprocity and respect, at least at the elite level. The reforms introduced by Daendels' Franco-Dutch regime (1808-11) and the subsequent British interim administration (1811-1816) may have changed the political face of Java forever, but it was at the personal level that their impact was most acutely felt. This was particularly the case in the aftermath of the Dutch restoration in 1816 when the racism and arrogance of post-Revolutionary Europe struck Indonesia with the force of an Asian tsunami. In the run-up to the Java War, the behaviour of the Dutch representatives in Yogyakarta proved to be a major contributing factor in the break with Dipanagara and the prince's decision to go to war in 1825.

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Right: Sketch from the life. **Charcoal drawing** of Dipanagara by his guardian Adrianus Johannes Bik (1790-1872) made during the prince's stay in Batavia (8 April - 3 May 1830) while en route into exile in Sulawesi. His pusaka kris (heirloom dagger), Kangjeng Kyai Bandayuda (Sir Duelling without Weapons) can be seen in his flowered silk waistband Photograph courtesy of the Musium

Kota (now Musium

Fatahillah), Jakarta.



**Below: Tensions boil** over. Dipanagara hitting Radèn Adipati Danureja IV (in office, 1813-47), over the face with his slipper during an argument over the prime minister (patih's) style of administration. A sentana (senior member of the sultan's family) looks on. From Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (Leiden), Priental MS 13 (Buku Kedhung Kebo), f.55v. Photograph courtesy of the

KITLV. Leiden.



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#### Notes

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 Willem van Hogendorp, 'Extract rapport betreffende de Residentie Kedoe',
 1827, 40, 143.

2. On Lieutenant Hector Maclean of the 14th (Buckinghamshire) Regiment of Foot, who took five days to die from his wounds, see Carey 1992: 414 note 78; Carey 2008:349.

Carey 2008:349. 3. Valck used his own position as Resident of Yogyakarta to force the fifth sultan, Hamengbuwana V (reigned 1822-1826, 1828-1855), to part with his favourite unofficial wife (selir) (Houben 1994:109) and, according to one hostile source, even to impose one of his own discarded mistresses on the young sultan as an official consort, Houben 1994: 199-200. 4. Willem van Hogendorp remarked that with regard to such sexual relations 'the British Administration [1811-1816] gives a completely different picture [when compared to the situation which prevailed after the Dutch return in 1816]', see Van Hogendorp 1913:40. 5. This was d'Abo's wife, née Anna Louisa van den Berg, whom Nahuys would later marry after she had divorced d'Abo in 1824, Van Hogendorp 1913:149; Carey 2008: 120, 438-9. 6. Naber 1938:45: 'Mr Pinket van Haak was a tall handsome man of about 30 years of age. He was unmarried, but had various Eurasian mistresses of whom there was always one sitting on a sofa in the rear gallery [of the Residency] [...]'. 7. According to a later Yogyakarta Resident, Johan Frederik Walraven van Nes (in office, 1827-30; 1830-31), the chief minister's conduct with the ladies of the court was 'improper', and he stated that he 'sometimes took women from the court to the villages to debauch them', Nationaal Archief, H.M. de Kock private collection 111, J.F.W. van Nes (Yogyakarta) to H.M. de Kock (Magelang), 16-12-1829. 8. Nationaal Archief, L.P.J. de Bus de Gisignies private collection 402, Van de Poll and Stavers, 'Verhoor Modjo', 11-10-1829, testimony of Kyai Rosali (Gajali), who spoke of Dietrée seducing court women and princesses 'inside and outside the court'. See further Van Nes 1844:154 note 1. 9. Nationaal Archief, H.M. de Kock private collection 161, J.F.W. van Nes, 'Korte verhandeling' (for full title see note 8 above), 28-1-1830. 10. Nationaal Archief, Van Alphen Engelhard private collection (aanwinsten 1941) 28, 'Stukken Smissaert', A.H. Smissaert (The Hague) to King William I (The Haque/Brussels), n.y. (? 9-1828), who mentioned Chevallier's 'rude and unfriendly' (ruw en onvriendelyk) manner towards the Javanese on the many tours which he did with the patih through the countryside. He would also drink alcohol out in the open on these tours (Carey 1981:256 note 89). 11. Ibid. 12. Ibid.

The author is preparing an Indonesian translation of his *Power of Prophecy*, to be published in 2011 as *Kuasa Nujum: Pangéran Dipanagara dan akhir tatanan lama di Jawa*, 1785-1855 by KPG (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia).

13. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

14. Ibid., Smissaert, reported that

the incident with Dipanagara's sister

Chevallier had forced the local bupati

for services rendered. She had later

reported the incident to Dipanagara.

to bring her to him and had then given her a diamond ring presumably in return

occurred after the outbreak of the Java

War in the period August-October 1825.