



J. Talens

Ritual power; The installation of a king in Banten, West Java, in 1691

In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 149 (1993), no: 2, Leiden, 333-355

This PDF-file was downloaded from <http://www.kitlv-journals.nl>

RITUAL POWER: THE INSTALLATION OF A KING IN BANTEN, WEST JAVA, IN 1691¹

Introduction

This article deals with the ritual installation of Zain al-Abedin as king (sultan) of Banten in 1691. Various observers of royal rituals have noted that there is a special relationship between the pomp displayed in such rituals and the exercise of power. The nature of this relationship has prompted a questioning of traditional concepts of power, especially those whereby power is seen exclusively in terms of force or violence. David Cannadine (1987:17, 19), for example, asserts that ritual is a type of power in itself, but, at the same time, admits that it is hard to determine what sort of power this precisely is.

Ritual studies are not a new phenomenon, of course. Since the early days of anthropology, it has been assumed that ritual, like myth, provides a specially useful key by means of which 'other' cultures can be understood. In recent years, an interest in the power of rituals has arisen and investigations into this phenomenon have multiplied at a rapid rate. In this respect the research on Banten in the 17th and 18th centuries clearly represents an exception, because very little attention is given here to the role of ritual in politics. Rather, there is a strong preference for analysis of the relationship between trade and power (Colombijn 1989; Guillot 1989, 1992; Kathirithamby-Wells 1990). The only thing to be found concerning the relationship between ritual and politics in these studies is the remark that the state ceremonies probably grew more impressive in the course of the seventeenth century (Colombijn 1989:8).

Much of the discussion on the subject in general is inspired by Clifford

¹ This paper was presented at the 10th KOTA conference in Amsterdam in 1990. I would like to thank the participants in this conference for giving me a sense of orientation in the analysis of the relationship between 'Ritual and Politics in Asia', the theme of the conference. I am also indebted to two anonymous referees of *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* for their helpful comments.

Geertz's 1980 essay on the Balinese theatre state, *Negara*. One reason for the overwhelming success of *Negara* may be the fact that it criticizes the concept of politics which we usually apply, that is, of politics as being instrumental, a means towards an end. Geertz arrives at the conclusion that the pomp of rituals was far more important as an expression of order. He even suggests that Balinese *raja* cannot be conceived as possessing power in the instrumental sense, because they hardly controlled men and/or economic resources. They were rather 'icons' presenting a sacred image of kingship itself. Pompous rituals did not serve to support petty tyrants, but were aimed at the 'public dramatization of the ruling obsessions of Balinese culture'. To quote an already classic phrase: 'Power served pomp, not pomp power' (Geertz 1980:13, 130).

Geertz undeniably offers a fresh and provoking insight into the role of ritual and symbols in political organizations in Southeast Asia. As regards Banten, a departure from the importance of state rituals may help us to overcome the rather mechanical interpretation of the relationship between trade and power in which economic resources are invariably equated with power. To be sure, there is nothing wrong with assuming that there is a relationship between trade and power; the problem is rather that it tells us little about how power was actually exercised.

On the other hand, however, Geertz must be criticized for concentrating too much on the expressive at the expense of the instrumental aspect. Schulte Nordholt points out, for example, that Geertz's distinction between power and pomp 'is largely a false one. In the Balinese state pomp was an essential part of royal power, but not the opposite of it.' In order to gain a better understanding of the theatre state, he advises us not only to study the symbols that were employed in state rituals, but also to investigate how the state system actually worked. Such a study would reveal that Balinese kings were engaged in very practical activities after all, especially because they needed revenue to be able to stage their theatrical rituals (Schulte Nordholt 1981:474-76). Gailey, treating this subject from a more Marxist point of view, observes that Geertz separates the theatre state entirely from its socio-economic basis, that is, from 'the extraction of goods and labour that supported both ritual and ritual-makers' (Gailey 1985:84).

Geertz, of course, is not wholly ignorant of the fact that political rituals are in a certain way related to social inequality. He tells us that the rituals of the Balinese theatre state were aimed at expressing 'social inequality and status pride' (Geertz 1980:13). At the same time, however, these rituals had the 'power' of ordering Balinese society. In an earlier contribution, first published in 1977, Geertz tried to indicate what sort of power this might possibly be. Rituals in the political centres of states, for example, are viewed by him as symbolic forms expressing the fact that there is indeed a governing elite. These rituals give a political centre 'its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built' (Geertz 1983a:124). This argument is central to his analysis of the

theatre state. The state rituals, for example, are characterized by him as 'metaphysical theatre: theatre designed to express a view of the ultimate nature of reality and, at the same time, to shape the existing conditions of life to be consonant with that reality' (Geertz 1980:104).

Catherine Bell calls this the 'definition-of-reality' theory of ritual. Adherents of this theory generally assume that rituals give a very strong and psychologically effective representation of the social order. Bell warns us, however, not to confuse the capacity to define reality with social control. It is wrong to think that the symbolic representations embodied in a ritual direct the actions of the participants and spectators completely, or even eternally (Bell 1992:171, 175). As Schulte Nordholt puts it, '... men were the real actors, who deviated from their symbolic order as often as they tried to actualize it' (Schulte Nordholt 1981:476).

In our analyses of ritual we generally tend too much to separate cultural structures from what actually happens. A popular strategy is to render 'a' culture intelligible on the basis of ritual. The elements which do not easily fit in with these structures are then deemed insignificant or redundant; indeed, they may be regarded as deviating from the real thing and, consequently, passed over in silence. But generalized cultural structures almost invariably display too much uniformity and cannot account for social and cultural change. Finally, the issue of the exercise of power is not illuminated in an approach that focuses on general cultural meanings.

In this article an attempt will be made to analyse a political ritual in a specific historical setting. I do not deny that cultural structures are irrelevant to this approach. My point is rather that these structures do not exist in their own right, but are expressed in social action. However, social action is also located in time and space. I hope to demonstrate that a ritual contains both structural and historically unique features, but that the meaning and power of such a ritual can only be grasped if one is prepared to study the course of events in which it is embedded.

The source

A description of the ritual installation of Sultan Zain al-Abidin (reigned 1690-1733) is included in a report written by an administrative officer of the United Dutch East India Company (hereafter referred to as 'the Company'). It is entitled *Daegelykse Aantekeningen van het notabelste voorgevallene op de reijs, mitsgrs. in en gedurende de Commissie van de Ed.e hr. Isaak de Sainct Martin Raad ordinaris van India major, Expres Commissaris afgesant van wegens de Edele heer gouverneur generael ende d'E. E. Heeren raden van India, aan den Paducca Sirij Sultan Mahassin Machomet Sienol Abidien*

*Coning van Bantam.*²

The ambassador mentioned in the title of this report, Isaac de Saint Martin, had been sent to Banten by the Supreme Government³ to attend the installation of Zain al-Abedin. Taking notes of what happened during an embassy was a normal Company practice. The resultant reports served the Supreme Government as a check on the activities of the relevant ambassador and as a source of information on the situation in the region concerned. The report of this particular embassy commences on December 20, 1690, when De Saint Martin was about to leave Batavia for Banten, and ends with his return to Batavia on May 14, 1691. In the course of the embassy, 358 pages were covered with detailed information. Nine of these pages are dedicated to the actual installation of Zain al-Abedin. Since up until now detailed information on ritual installations of Bantenese kings has only been available for the beginning of the nineteenth century (Van Heekeren 1856), the value of this particular description is beyond any doubt.

The report of De Saint Martin's embassy was written by Thomas van Son, a junior functionary (*onderkoopman*), who acted as the ambassador's secretary. It is based mainly upon his own observations, though in some cases it seems very likely that De Saint Martin provided him with additional information. Van Son's notes on the installation are not mixed up with fantasies or speculations. He seems to have felt at home in his role as spectator, and there is little ideological bias in the description. For example, Islam is not criticized or ridiculed, as one might expect, and *gamelan* music is judged to be quite agreeable ('*geen onaangenaam geluit*'). Nevertheless, his report is open to criticism in some respects, especially as regards its incompleteness. He was not able to attend the part of the inauguration that took place in the mosque, and so we have no information on what went on inside the mosque. He was not the only person to miss this part of the ceremony, however, for not even the greater part of the Bantenese elite were present at it. Even so, it must have been clear to everyone that the king went to the mosque in order to receive God's blessing.

² 'Notes of the principal events on the journey and during the commission of the honourable Isaac de Saint Martin, Ordinary Councillor of Greater India, special commissioner and ambassador on behalf of the honourable Governor-General and the honourable Councillors of India, to the Paduka Siri Sultan Abu'l Muhasin Muhammad Zain al-Abedin, King of Banten' – hence basically a political diary. The manuscript is part of the VOC archives kept in the Algemeen Rijks Archief in The Hague (inventory 1.04.03, VOC 1500; the description of the ritual occurs on folio 199^v-204). Other VOC sources cited in this article, including translated letters from Bantenese persons, originate from the same archives.

³ The Supreme Government (*Hooge Regeering*) had its seat in Batavia and consisted of the Governor-General and Councillors of the Dutch East Indies.

The ritual

On January 2, 1691, Zain al-Abedin and a group of *punggawa*⁴ were gathered in the *dalem* of Surasowan. During this assembly one of the *punggawa*, *pangeran*⁵ Natawijaya, proposed holding an installation ritual for the king. All the *punggawa* agreed with him. *Pangeran* Muhammad Salim, a brother of Zain al-Abedin, was designated to make the necessary arrangements for the ritual. One of the things he had to do was to summon all the king's *punggawa* to the royal court, no matter what distance they would have to travel. They had to be there on January 15, the day of the installation.

Rainy weather in the morning and early afternoon of January 15 seems to have delayed the installation. This delay was used by Zain al-Abedin to have some last-minute instructions carried out. By 3 p.m. the sky had brightened up. The Company delegation was ceremonially conducted to a *bale* (kind of pavilion) at the *paseban*⁶ in front of Surasowan. This *bale* was only one of a larger number of *bale* erected along the edge of the *paseban*. A *bale* in the centre of the *paseban*, referred to by Van Son as 'theatre' and 'stage', was intended for the king's use. It was draped with precious cloth adorned with white and yellow flowers. On either side of it the *punggawa* (*prawatin*) of Lampung (South Sumatra) were seated on the ground. On the edge of the *paseban*, another *bale*, adjacent to the one occupied by the Company delegation, was also designated for the king. The remaining *bale*, decorated with banners and red cloth on top, were intended for the Bantenese *punggawa* and *gamelan* musicians. The common people crowded the area in the immediate vicinity of the *paseban*.⁷

Two groups of *suranegara* (members of the royal guard) marched from the

⁴ '*Punggawa*' is a term that is hard to translate. It denotes the Bantenese nobility as a group as far as the authority and possessions of its members are dependent on the sultan. One should certainly not interpret '*punggawa*' as a title or as the name of an office. Nor does '*punggawa*' refer to individuals. An individual cannot be called *punggawa* Natadiraja, for example. For these reasons, it is wrong to use the word *punggawa* in opposition to *pangeran*, which is a title (see for an opposing view Guillot 1992). Probably the *punggawa* did not include members of the royal family, who, as a group, are referred to as *warga* or *nayaka*. What was said of *punggawa* also applies to *warga* and *nayaka*: these words designate the group as a whole, not individuals bearing the same title.

⁵ 'Prince', not necessarily of royal blood.

⁶ The public area in front of the *dalem*, elsewhere in Java usually referred to as *alun-alun*.

⁷ Van Son does not mention the total number of spectators. There must have been a large number of them, however. During a visit to the *dalem* on December 27, 1690, a Company party saw 'thousands of people' sitting along the road from the Dutch fort to the *dalem* (VOC 1500 f. 172^r). It seems very likely that there was an even larger crowd present at the installation ritual.

paseban to the main gate of Surasowan, where they took up their positions. The king was to be conducted in procession from the *dalem* to the *paseban*. At the head of the procession were the eight bearers, dressed in yellow cloth, carrying the royal palanquin. They were followed by three horn-blowers, clad in scarlet cloth, and two horses. Next there were twenty-four ladies-in-waiting, arrayed in yellow garments, wearing flowers in their hair, jewellery, and golden belts. They were bearing some of the royal regalia (*upacara*), including a golden cock, another gilded bird resembling a peacock, fire-arms, a *sirih pinang* box, a spittoon, and so on; all these regalia were lavishly ornamented with gold and precious stones. After them came the king. He was wearing a costly *sarong*, a *kris*, and slippers encrusted with diamonds. The upper part of his body was bare and had been rubbed with sandalwood and saffron. On either side of him walked six priests. Three of them served as bearers of the royal standards – two of white silk and the third, the so-called *tunggal pusaka*, of green silk with a representation of the *ka'ba* on it. The rear of the procession was made up by Company soldiers and groups of Bantenese *suranegara* and pikemen.

When the procession approached the king's *bale* (the one on the edge of the *paseban*), cannon shots were fired from Surasowan. At this sign, the Bantenese *punggawa* took their seats in the *bale*. When the king had taken his seat as well, groups of *suranegara* and pikemen began to display their marching skills, marching around the 'theatre' in the centre of the *paseban*. Apart from this, nothing noteworthy seems to have happened for the next fifteen minutes. Then the king rose to go to the mosque, just to the west of the *paseban*.

He stepped across some pieces of white and yellow silk while two *payong* were held over his head. These pieces of silk were continually lifted up behind him so that they could be spread out again on the ground before him. On either side of him walked the priests with the royal standards. These priests, in their turn, were attended on either side by groups of *suranegara* and pikemen.

Again, we do not know exactly what happened in the mosque. Van Son merely writes that 'about half an hour was spent there amid prayers and other religious acts'. As was noted above, it seems most likely that God's blessing was invoked upon the king.

After this, the king hurried to the 'theatre' in the centre of the *paseban*. He was followed there by a large number of priests. Tajuddin (the *faqih*, or chief judge), Muhammad Salim, and some priests took their seats on the 'stage' surrounding the king. Somewhat below them, the court ladies also took their places. Then De Saint Martin and two other Company officials were invited to enter the 'theatre'. The king had chairs fetched for them.

After all sorts of recitations by the priests, the legitimacy of Zain al-Abedin's succession was proclaimed. This was done by reciting a genealogical list of all the kings who had ruled the country before him and adding a new king, Paduka Siri Sultan Abu'l Muhasin Abdul Nasir, to the

list.⁸ All those present responded by cheering 'Inggihi, inggihi!!!' Zain al-Abidin's accession was hereby acknowledged.

Then the king held out his hand to De Saint Martin to receive his congratulations. De Saint Martin took the proffered hand and congratulated him with a handshake. He hoped, he said in Malay, that the king would reign over his country in peace and prosperity for a very long time. The king replied that he was most grateful for the honour of receiving this felicitation. Throughout the offering of congratulations, the priests continued their incantations, praying for the prosperity of the king and realm. Now and then the audience would join in in the prayers. Meanwhile cannon shots were fired from Surasowan, Fort Speelwijk, Karangantu, and Company ships in the Bay of Banten. The *suranegara* once again displayed their marching skills. By now the spectators' enthusiasm had really been aroused.

Then the king decided to grant the *punggawa* of Lampung the opportunity to pay their respects, or more precisely, to pay homage to their new king. He ordered a passage to be cleared for them, so that they might receive pieces of silk (yellow and red-and-white). Originally, the *punggawa* used to have to show their allegiance five at a time, while later larger numbers were called to the front, apparently so as to save time. Van Son notes that the *punggawa* of Lampung conducted themselves in a very humble way.

After this part of the ceremony was concluded, the king rose, with the intention of proceeding to the *bale* on the edge of the *paseban*. Surrounded by *punggawa* and *mantri* (Bantenese officials), he once again stepped over pieces of yellow and white silk. He allowed De Saint Martin, whom he had taken by the hand, to accompany him. The king created a very satisfied impression, according to Van Son. In the *bale*, the king sat down near a group of priests. De Saint Martin was offered a chair. He protested that it was unfitting for him sit on a higher level than a king, but the king would not listen to his protests.

The priests resumed their recitations. Meanwhile a set of large wooden scales was prepared and covered with white cloth. On one of the scales was placed a pile of cloth – *tapi serasa* and *geber*. When the recitations had ceased, the king sat down on this scale. In order to get the scale into balance, a quantity of lead (*picis*), silver and gold was placed on the other scale. The precious metals were later distributed among those present. Everyone received their due share according to rank: each *pangeran* 1 Spanish *real*; the *kyai arya* 0.75 Spanish *real*; the *ngabehi* 0.5 Spanish *real*; and so on. Even the most humble of the common people could rest assured of a

⁸ This part of the proceedings is called 'khutbah' (VOC 1455 f. 1766^v-67). Five weeks after the installation, the king announced that the name 'Abdul Nasir' was to be replaced by 'Zain al-Abidin' (VOC 1500 f. 241). The reason why he had changed his mind is not clear to me.

tiny piece of silver thread. The weighing of the king and distribution of his gifts marked the conclusion of the ritual.⁹

The structure of the realm

Banten – or Surasowan – is a specific illustration of the concept of *negara*. Like '*negara*', the name Banten denotes a town, a capital, and a realm. As Geertz rightly argues, *negara* in Southeast Asia also is 'the word for (classical) civilization, for the world of the traditional city, the high culture that city supported, and the system of superordinate authority centered there'. In *negara*-like states, political sovereignty finds its formula in the so-called doctrine of the exemplary centre, in which kingship is sacral, and the royal court is a reflection of supernatural order and the embodiment of political order. This implies that 'by the mere act of providing ... a faultless image of civilized existence, the court shapes the world around it into at least a rough approximation of its own excellence. The ritual life ... is ... thus paradigmatic of social order' (Geertz 1980:13). Perfection was to be found more or less only in the court, and more especially, in the figure of the king, who was the axis around which the political order revolved and, in fact, the precondition for the actual existence of the state. As one moved further away from the court and the king, the degree of perfection diminished. One might say that the doctrine of the exemplary centre implies a conception of hierarchical order in terms of perfection.

Tambiah has noted that this kind of state usually exhibits a galaxy-like pattern. A state had a definite centre – Banten as the royal court – and one or more circles of 'satellites', each of these taking the centre as its example. A state thus was determined by its centre, not by its perimeters (Tambiah 1985:259-61). In the region around the Sunda Strait, the geography did not allow of perfect geometry. So it may be better to speak of spheres rather than circles. First, there was the sphere of settlements in the immediate vicinity of the royal court, such as Serang, Kenari, Markasana, and Kelapadua, where the king owned some country seats. Next, there was the sphere in a more remote, but still Javanese, part of the realm, for example, Tangerang, Tanara, Pontang, Anyer, and Caringin. And finally, there were the overseas dependencies in Lampung (e.g., Semangka, Telukbetung, Sekampung, and Tulongbawang).

The closest resemblance to the court was displayed by the first sphere of

⁹ Afterwards, there was a communal meal in the *dalem*. The king ate with some priests in a separate room, De Saint Martin with a number of courtiers in another.

A weighing ritual was also performed on other occasions, such as the pregnancy of one of the king's official wives and the birth of a prince (VOC 1539 f. 280^f, 282^v, 334^r; VOC 1560 f. 363^r).

the realm. So Markasana was almost a planological replica of the court. It had a mosque, a *paseban*, a surrounding wall, and an embellished house with a *bale* (Fruin-Mees 1931:1265-67). Along the coasts of Banten and Lampung several such settlements were located. In the Company's correspondence these settlements are usually referred to as '*negeri*' or '*negorij*'. In these *negeri*, the king's vassals enjoyed a limited autonomy whereby they could manifest themselves as petty kings. Sometimes they even made so bold as to ignore the commands issued from the centre of the realm. In Tangerang, for instance, commands from the centre were repeatedly disobeyed (VOC 1520 f. 519^r, 522^r). The influence exercised by the royal court over the *negeri* was not only cultural, but also political (in the instrumental sense), however. Special care was taken to see that the existing hierarchy was strengthened. This was achieved by regularly replacing *punggawa*, by taking them or their kin hostage, and by summoning them to the court to attend state rituals. There was at least one court ritual each year which the *punggawa* had to attend. This was the ritual performed on *hari raya*, the day on which the *puasa* (the fast) was ceremonially concluded. A *punggawa* who stayed away from this ritual without a good reason was probably considered a renegade.

Because of its emphasis on hierarchy, the doctrine of the exemplary centre also implies a considerable preoccupation with rank. This is true above all of the king as a source of authority, as the whole constellation was ultimately dependent on him. As the personification of the centre of the realm, he had to demonstrate continually that he was in total command. The emergence of a second centre in the realm was a sign of disputed power, indicating that the realm was in disarray. Such a state of disorder occurred in 1682, when a war was fought between Banten and Tirtayasa. Both settlements claimed to be the centre of the realm, each having its own king and *dalem*. That a state could only have one centre is apparent from a contemporary metaphor, according to which 'There cannot be two suns in the sky at the same time, and if there is but a single one, it must not be prevented by clouds from shining' (VOC 907 f. 552^r; VOC 1381 f. 4049^v-50^r).¹⁰ The usual way in which a king could demonstrate that he was in complete command involved an expression of this by ritual means. Such rituals consequently always revolved around his person. Thus he became, in fact, the focus of the Bantenese world, a sun in the centre of a galaxy.

The majesty of the king needed to be given expression by the appropriate symbols in rituals, a capacity for generosity, and a display of strength. Coloured cloth and garments – 'tracers of rank', as Jane Schneider aptly puts it (1987:412) – were some of the means for expressing royalty. White and yellow were the royal colours, and most of the courtiers were dressed in

¹⁰ The sun as a political metaphor is also found in the *Sejarah Banten* with reference to the struggle for supremacy between Banten and Mataram in the seventeenth century (Djajadiningrat 1913:58).

clothes in these colours at Zain al-Abidin's installation.¹¹ Likewise, the royal *payong*¹² and two of the royal standards were white. Such royal symbols not only indicate that their possessor claimed to be a king, but also tell us something about the idea of kingship.¹³ Above all, the symbols of masculinity attract our attention. In this connection one might think of the golden cock (Geertz 1973:419-21) and the *kris*. Even the court ladies served to give expression to this quality, testifying to the notion that the king was 'the husband of the realm' (Tambiah 1985:324). De Bruin notes that there were almost nine hundred women living at the royal court (De Bruin 1711:311).

The possession of the symbolic attributes of a king by itself was not enough for the person concerned to endure as king. After all, as is amply testified, these symbols could be transferred to others (Tambiah 1985:327-336).¹⁴ At least as important was the king's ability to show force and generosity. The display of force, which was symbolically referred to by the presence of *suranegara* and pikemen during the installation, indeed was part of the very substance of kingship. The king's use of force served to protect him against rivals, to mark the court as the centre of the realm, and to bind the dependencies in the second and third spheres of the realm to the centre.

Although it is hard to imagine how the hierarchical order could have been maintained without resorting to violence and coercion, it was not based entirely on this. A more regular means for the king to bind *punggawa* to himself consisted in giving proof of his generosity, which was done by lavishing presents both in cash and in kind, especially in the form of such luxury goods as cloth and garments (VOC 1455 f. 1763^v-65^f; VOC 1500 f. 232-33^r). It was not only the material value of the gifts in kind that counted. Gifts are vehicles of the soul of the person who has presented them, as Mauss has pointed out (1990:66), and it was in this way that something of the king's very being was conferred on the *punggawa*.¹⁵

The display of force and of generosity did not constitute elements of a cultural idocracy marked by a rather shallow concept of kingship. On the contrary, both qualities had to be exercised throughout the king's reign, and this was only possible if the king controlled the required economic resources. He had rights to much of what was available within his realm: the land, goods, and services. His main sources of revenue were the

¹¹ The 'red' hornblowers were a notable exception. The colour of their clothes is a symbol for warding off danger (Watson-Andaya 1989:34).

¹² Four for a ritually installed king, two for a king who had not yet been inaugurated.

¹³ See De Bruin (1711:311) for a complete list of the Bantenese regalia.

¹⁴ There was also the possibility of 'inventing' new regalia. De Bruin (1711:311) observes that the king sometimes introduced new ones. It seems unlikely that this also applied to the major regalia.

¹⁵ The same point can be made with regard to the titles, names, and offices conferred on them.

exploitation of the port and the trade in black pepper. Of the total quantity of pepper flowing into the port of Banten, approximately eighty percent came from Lampung. The remaining portion came from the hills in northwest Banten. If one considers that the average annual quantity of pepper traded came to about 10,000 *bahar*¹⁶, then the vital importance of the profits from pepper will become clear. 'Without Lampung there would be no pepper, without pepper no Banten', a *mangkubumi* once said (VOC 1487 f. 34^v). Consequently, the king took care to consolidate his relationship with the *punggawa* of Lampung. It goes without saying that the Bantenese *punggawa* in their turn tried to obtain a part of the pepper profits for their own ends; at times, they succeeded in doing so. The king's suzerainty over Lampung, of course, redounded to the splendour of his majesty. Although the relationship was founded on economic interests, it was solidly embedded in contemporary social life. After all, it was a relationship in which *punggawa* were involved. They had to present themselves to the king from time to time, for instance on such occasions as a royal installation, a royal wedding, or weddings that were of political importance in their own group. Sometimes the king also settled disputes between them (VOC f. 3799^v-3800^r).

In conformity with the doctrine of the exemplary centre, the Bantenese judgement of Lampung and its inhabitants was quite negative. Lampung was considered to be no fit place to live in. It was for this reason, amongst others, that the king sometimes banished Bantenese *punggawa* to Lampung. The judgement of the *punggawa* of Lampung was not very flattering, either: they were said to be neither very devout nor good fighters (VOC 1381 f. 3798^v-3801^r).¹⁷ The Bantenese considered themselves far superior to the inhabitants of Lampung. This opinion more or less found expression in Zain al-Abidin's installation, where the Bantenese *punggawa* were comfortably seated in *bale*, while those from Lampung just had to squat on the ground.

The doctrine of the exemplary centre is most convincingly illustrated by politics in which the kings present themselves as approximations of the divine principle. An example of this is provided by Bali, where 'a king was constructed by constructing a god', as Geertz puts it (1980:124). As Islam had left its imprint on the Bantenese polity, this possibility was ideologically excluded in Banten. Given the existence of an exemplary centre there, however, there is a certain syncretism to be detected, in which there was ample room for the continued existence of sacral kingship.¹⁸ The

¹⁶ One *bahar* equals 3 *pikul* or 375 *Amsterdamse ponden*.

¹⁷ The statement to this effect was actually made by a Company employee. It is clear, however, that he had been prompted by a Bantenese *punggawa* accompanying him, Lampung still being *terra incognita* for the Company at this time.

¹⁸ It is traditionally assumed that there was something of an 'undiluted' form of

Bantenese kings would have been guilty of heresy if they had presented themselves as approximations of the divine, but they easily succeeded in remaining more than ordinary earthly beings. During Zain al-Abidin's installation, for example, the new king stepped along pieces of cloth, so that immediate contact with the earth was prevented. Part of his *dalem* indeed was a sacred area where foot-wear was forbidden (De Bruin 1711:381). The meaning of kingship may also be elucidated by placing the king in opposition to the *mangkubumi*, 'the administrator of the realm. *Mangkubumi* literally means 'he who takes care of the land' (land as opposed to sky). The *mangkubumi* is alternatively referred to as *bumi* (land, ground) and as the king's *suwan* (VOC 1500 f. 301^r), a *suwan* being an instrument for tilling the soil. If it is correct to associate the *mangkubumi* with the land or ground, then the king must be associated with something above the ground. The Bantenese king was not a god, but was a link between the celestial and terrestrial spheres, an intercessor between the two planes with God on his side, as is apparent from a definition of a king by a king, according to which He, Paduka Siri Sultan, rules over the realm, 'with the help of God settles all disputes, and through his fair rule guides all people towards virtue and away from evil' (VOC 1368 f. 696).

The role of intercessor was legitimated by a myth concerning the foundation of the Bantenese realm in the first half of the sixteenth century. The myth is included in the *Sejarah Banten*, a chronicle dating from 1662 or 1663 in which the history of the Bantenese dynasty is recorded. According to this myth, one Hasanuddin was the progenitor of the dynasty. He founded the realm and introduced Islam as the official religion. His descent is highly interesting, for, as the myth says, he was the son of Sunan Gunung Jati, one of the nine *wali* (holy men) who spread the Muslim religion in Java. The genealogy extends to an even remoter past. Sunan Gunung Jati is said to have been the descendant of a series of *nabi* (prophets), among whom Muhammad is also included. The genealogy commences with *Nabi Adam*, the ancestor of all mankind. The legitimacy of the Bantenese dynasty was further strengthened by a claim that Hasanuddin was married to a daughter of the sultan of Demak, an early Islamic realm located in the Javanese Pasisir (Djajadingrat 1913:31-35). The dynasty also possessed the sacred Arabic 'truth-language' (Anderson 1991:14), through which the realm was linked to the wider Islamic community. Furthermore, the *tunggal pusaka* (green standard with a representation of the *ka'ba* on it) seems to have been the most important, i.e. the most useful and effective, of the symbolic attributes of the Bantenese kings (VOC 2467 f. 729-730). It is simply

Islam in Banten, which stands in obvious contrast to other parts of Java. In some recent studies in which it is attempted to relate Banten culturally and ideologically to the wider world of Asia, especially with regard to kingship and the spatial design of the capital, this assumption is rightly questioned (Colombijn 1989:6-8; Guillot 1989).

impossible to separate the legitimacy of the dynasty from the Islamic religion. This is underscored by the fact that priests¹⁹ played a very active role in Zain al-Abidin's installation. They were the dignitaries who made a king out of him and dedicated the realm to him. Thus the ritual suggests that priests were the formal guardians of the realm in the interregnum after the demise of a king, which lasted at least forty days (see also Fortes 1967:8).

The Bantenese polity was actually a politico-religious organization and its king more than a mere political leader. He was a sacral figure engaging in ritual activities, whose religious authority was given expression by the *tunggal pusaka*. A well-known example of his ritual activities is provided by the procession around the capital on *hari maulid*, the prophet Muhammad's birthday, when the king and a retinue of *punggawa* and priests circumambulated the town along the walls praying. The aim of this ritual varied. In 1672, for example, it was designed to regenerate the centre of the realm, whereas in 1691 it was performed in order to invoke rain and a good harvest (De Jonge 1872:212; VOC 1500 f. 117^r). Despite this role of intercessor and his ritual activities, the Bantenese king did not openly claim to possess the magical power that is inherent in the Hindu-Javanese concept of kingship (Moertono 1968). It was simply believed that power was allocated to man by God, even though this also depended on professing the right faith (VOC 1340 f. 1658-59).

This mixture of politics and religion was also present in a number of other Bantenese leaders, both at the centre and in the second sphere of the realm. For the centre, this is illustrated by such examples as that of the two *mangkubumi*, Mangunjaya (ruled 1651?-1680), and Mangunsedana, better known as *pangeran* Dipaningrat (ruled 1680-1690), and the *faqih* Tajuddin (ruled 1683-1714). All of them started their career at court as *kyai*.²⁰ The *kyai* of the Indonesian Archipelago have been compared to the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) in the Arabic world.²¹ The word *kyai* hence is often

¹⁹ Van Son alternately uses the categories 'priests', 'scribes', and 'clergymen'. He writes that some of them originally came from the Arabic world. Although the actions of these 'priests' during the installation should be characterized as religious, to my mind, one should be careful not to place them in too narrow a religious context.

²⁰ Since Mangunjaya is sometimes also referred to in the Dutch sources as 'the' *kyai arya*, some confusion may arise. But 'the' *kyai arya* is really the same person as 'the' *mangkubumi* (compare here Guillot 1989:134).

²¹ Equating *ulama* with or comparing them to a genuinely Bantenese institution is not without problems, incidentally. If one insists on making such comparisons, however, the word *ulama* would have to refer to a small group of Arabic outsiders (probably not exceeding ten in number) bearing the title Sayid, which indicates that its possessor claims to be a descendant of Muhammad's tribe. During the greater part of Zain al-Abidin's reign, the leader of this group was Sayid Umar. He had not yet arrived in Banten at the time of Zain al-Abidin's ritual installation. Later, Sayid Umar was used by Zain al-Abidin to maintain the

interpreted as denoting a religious teacher or head of a *pesantren* (religious school). In Banten, however, the *kyai* were to be found in the foreground of the political scene as well. That the political and religious elites indeed overlapped is also apparent from the frequent combination of the word *kyai* with minor titles of rank or office, especially in the second sphere of the realm. So in 1691 the *negeri*, Tangerang, Tanara, and Pontang were under the command of a *kyai arya*, for example. The *kyai arya* were politico-religious leaders like the king himself.

The Dutch – from poison to patronage

A feature which still remains to be discussed is the presence of Isaac de Saint Martin, the Company ambassador, at the installation of Zain al-Abedin. De Saint Martin's role was not restricted to that of a neutral onlooker taking notes. As an official of the Dutch East India Company, he was a representative of the Dutch colonial state with a definite part in the ritual installation of the new king.

The history of the Bantenese state, even before it came to be dominated by the Dutch, was determined to a large extent by external forces, especially by merchants and missionaries from outside the Archipelago. This open character of the Bantenese state was recognized by Van Leur (1983), who spoke in Weberian terms of a 'harbour principality'. More recently, Blussé (1986:35-48) introduced the Polanyian concept of 'port of trade' into Bantenese historiography. Foreigners – Indians, Chinese, Arabs, and Europeans – have always played an important role in Bantenese history.

If one takes into consideration the fact that the Bantenese elite had a strong tendency to view the Company and its servants – 'the Dutch', as they usually called them – in a rather negative way, the presence of De Saint Martin as an honoured guest will probably seem surprising. The *Sejarah Banten*, for example, characterizes the reaction to the advent of the Dutch in Java as follows: the *punggawa* feared that the Dutch 'would be like poison [i.e., that they would have a slow, irreversible effect]. In their view it would be better to exterminate them immediately, therefore, while they were still weak. This was because a spark of fire, even if only as small as a firefly, should be extinguished immediately, they felt, for if it was given the

relation between the Bantenese dynasty and Sunan Gunung Jati's holy grave in Cirebon. Sometimes the sultan also consulted him in political matters. In general, however, it does not seem very likely that Sayid Umar wielded much power in the Bantenese political arena.

Some of these Arabic *ulama* married Javanese women. Their children bear the name Syarif (male) or Syarifa (female). The best-known of them is Ratu Syarifa, who was married to Sultan Zain al-Arifin (reigned 1733-48) and ruled Banten on behalf of the Company between 1748 and 1750. She was a daughter of Sayid Ahmad.

opportunity to flare up, it could easily destroy a large forest.' This hostile judgement, which testifies to an astonishing degree of foresight – or, perhaps, simply hindsight in reverse – was reinforced by religious differences. Indeed, a number of holy wars were waged against the Dutch infidels in the seventeenth century. Even though rewards were offered for Dutch heads and ears, these wars did not result in any decisive victories over the Dutch (Djajadiningrat 1913:44, 69-71).

After the completion of the *Sejarah Banten*, some radical changes affected the Bantenese realm. These changes related to the war between Banten and Tirtayasa and its outcome. Basically, the war represented a dynastic conflict between Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (reigned 1651-82) and his son, Abu'n Nasr (reigned 1680-87). Although hostilities only broke out in the first months of 1682, this conflict had been smouldering since the early 1670s, when the construction of Tirtayasa, the residence of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, was started and rivalry between two political centres became a serious possibility. Threatened with defeat, Abu'n Nasr asked the Company to intervene on his behalf. Under the command of De Saint Martin and Francois Tack, the Company's men gained a victory over the troops of Ageng Tirtayasa. Thus the Bantenese court's central position within the polity was consolidated.

As a return favour for the military assistance, a treaty ('contract') granting the Company a number of privileges in Banten was concluded in 1684. The most important of these privileges was a monopoly on the purchase of pepper, which became the core of the economic relationship between Banten and Batavia. Hereby the Company purchased every *bahar* of pepper at a fixed price of fifteen Spanish reals, which was hardly less than the price of sixteen reals which had been current the two previous decades. In this respect, therefore, the interests of the king were not seriously damaged by the Company's monopolistic aspirations.

It was essential for the Company to use the king as a kind of middleman in the pepper trade. This meant that his position in the realm had to be protected, if need be with force. In the 'contract' of 1684, this possibility was still formulated in rather vague and general terms, but two years later was given more explicit expression: the Company then committed itself 'to defending the Sultan against his defecting [revolting] subjects with all its might' (Heeres & Stapel 1934:337, 393). For this reason, it would be incorrect to characterize the relationship between Banten and Batavia as a strictly economic one. Rather, it was a question of a kind of economic integration embedded in socio-political forms. For both parties, these forms rested on a recognition of mutual interests. Aside from the Company's military obligations, the socio-political character of this relationship was also given expression in the exchange of courtesies and gifts.²²

²² The Dutch usually gave luxury articles; the Bantenese gifts often consisted of a certain amount of pepper.

This radical change in the relationship between Banten and the Company of course also necessitated a change in the formal designation of the Company. Since inter-personal relationships were henceforth conceptualized in terms of kinship, the two parties seem to have become members of one big family. The relationship between the Governor-General and the king, for example, had the meaning of a bond between a father and son assigned to it. This style of designation involved an implicit recognition of the fact that Banten and Batavia were no longer equals. From the official Bantenese point of view, however, the Company was the benevolent patron of the realm, and the realm not a protectorate of the Company. Its designation as a fatherly patron implied it had certain obligations, such as the care for enhancing the prestige of the realm, for preventing it from getting into difficulties, and for looking after all the needy (VOC 1417 f. 2002; VOC 1455 f. 1753-54; VOC 1487 f. 138).

The Company was not dominantly present on the Bantenese political scene, but its presence did have certain consequences for local politics. The Company was, in fact, a very useful ally for the king. In this connection one might think of the military expeditions to Lampung and the interior of Banten. In Lampung, a political twilight zone where the East India Company²³ and the Sultan of Palembang also had ambitions, these expeditions seem to have been aimed at securing the control of the pepper crop. Furthermore, some companies of Dutch soldiers were stationed at Fort Speelwijk, Karangantu, and Surasowan. True, these troops were intended to safeguard the Company's interests in Banten, but, at the same time, they enabled the king to strengthen his position vis-à-vis the Bantenese *punggawa*. This did not entail regular armed clashes. Rather, the deterrent influence made itself felt. The Company troops gave the centre an impression of invincibility and symbolized the alliance between the king and the Company.

In very much the same way, the relationship between the king and the Company was given expression in the installation of Zain al-Abedin in 1691. De Saint Martin and his retinue had been sent to Banten as Company representatives at the installation. The role of the delegation was not that of mere spectators at the ritual, but its members played an active part in it as well.

This was not yet noticeable at the beginning of the ritual. De Saint Martin and the other Company officials just sat in their *bale* and watched the ritual unfold itself. After Zain al-Abedin had returned from the mosque, De

²³ In 1685 the English East India Company established a factory at Silebar (near Benkulen). The Dutch were not prepared to help the Bantenese king expel the English from Silebar because of the risk this involved for the political alliance between the English and the Dutch in Europe. In 1682, when the English were expelled from Banten, this alliance had passed through a rather stormy passage (VOC 321 f. 112).

Saint Martin was invited to participate in the ritual. He was directed to the central *bale* and seated near the king. Later on, he had to congratulate Zain al-Abedin on his accession. In front of all the *punggawa* and the royal princes, De Saint Martin added something that turned these congratulations into something more than just a polite phrase. He expressed the hope that Zain al-Abedin would have a very long reign. In other words, not only was the accession of Zain al-Abedin approved by the Dutch, he also had their support for the future. This clearly was a message that cannot have escaped the attention of those attending the ritual who still had ambitions to fight or intrigue their way to kingship.

If a ritual has a critical moment on which its outcome is dependent, I would say that in this case this was the moment when Zain al-Abedin held out his hand to De Saint Martin in order to receive the congratulations of the Company's representative. There can be very little doubt that, if De Saint Martin had refused the proffered hand, the ritual would have failed to confirm Zain al-Abedin's accession. Most likely, it would have been an incentive to quickly push him aside.

Thus, Bantenese kingship after 1682 was as much an expression of Bantenese culture as it was the product of the relationship between the king and the Company. This relationship had introduced new elements into the installation ritual, of which the shaking of hands was the most conspicuous one. Unfortunately, it is not possible to make comparisons with rituals performed prior to the Dutch intervention in 1682. What is certain, however, is that the Company soon started participating in royal rituals after this date. In 1685, for example, De Saint Martin was sent to Banten by his superiors to attend the wedding of Pangeran Ratu (crown prince, the later sultan Abu Fala'l Muhammad Jaya, reigned 1687-90). The most spectacular part of the wedding was the conveyance of the groom from the *paseban* to his home on the outskirts of the capital in a large litter (or *brisadi*, as this ceremonial vehicle is called in the Nagarakertagama (c. 1365 A.D.), see Pigeaud 1960:97). We read in a contemporary travel account that De Saint Martin walked with the Bantenese elite near this litter, which this author describes as a 'platform' (De Graaff 1976:192-93).

Two years later, on the occasion of the crown prince's ritual installation as king, the Company delegated Jacob Pits to Banten as ambassador. From a summary of the report of this mission it is apparent that the king had invited Pits to attend the ritual. In contrast to De Saint Martin, Pits merely observed the ritual (although he was of course noted by the Bantenese in the act of observing). Pits himself even suggests that he was not really a part of it, saying '... *after* all the rites and ceremonies had been performed ..., I congratulated this new king ...'²⁴ (*italics mine*, JT). In other words, Pits

²⁴ VOC 2440 f. 2411^v-12^r. Pits had already acknowledged the legitimacy of the succession and promised the king Dutch support four weeks previously in the *dalem*. On this occasion, at which several *punggawa* had been present, Pits had

played a much more modest role at the installation of Zain al-Abidin than De Saint Martin did a few years later. Surprisingly, however, the gradual extension of the ambassador's role in these rituals did not directly result from colonial aspirations; rather, the ambassador was drawn towards the centre of the ritual stage by the Bantenese king.²⁵

Ritual, event, power

Van Son remarks in the final part of his observations on Zain al-Abidin's installation ritual: 'Such was the presentation of this new king of Banten. It inspired admiration and respect by its grandeur, its exceptionally fine trappings, and its dignity. The Bantenese themselves testify that the installation included components unheard of up until now, and that it far surpassed the installation of his deceased brother [Abu Fala'l Muhammad Jaya in 1687]. So the king not only has gained honour but also has inspired his subjects with great awe.' The Company recognized the political value of rituals. In Batavia, for example, a ritual was organized each year to celebrate the Dutch conquest of the town in 1619. It was believed that this ritual impressed the 'natives and superstitious mahometans'. Indeed, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, this was the sole reason for keeping the event on the ritual calendar (VOC 736 f. 265-66; VOC 746 f. 592). Van Son conceptualized Zain al-Abidin's accession in the same terms as the annual reconquista ritual in Batavia: it impressed the king's subjects. Thus it constituted itself some kind of power.

There is always the danger of a somewhat ethnocentric slant in the interpretation of rituals. Possibly, therefore, Van Son misjudged the impact of the ritual, as he assessed it in terms of Batavian rituals. As we shall see, however, there is strong evidence that Zain al-Abidin did not have a significantly different view from Van Son's. He was not satisfied with being a mere icon, but also wanted to wield real power. It will be clear, therefore,

also suspended a gold necklace around the king's neck (VOC 2440 f. 2410^v).

²⁵ In the course of the eighteenth century, however, the Company assumed a more influential role in determining the contents of these rituals. So there are some striking differences between the ritual installations of 1691 and 1802. The Company had introduced a new symbol, a real crown, for example. Furthermore, the content and internal structure of the ritual had changed dramatically by 1802. The first part of the ritual consisted of the proclamation in Dutch of an 'Act of Investiture' by the ambassador of the colonial government. A Dutch translator subsequently proclaimed the Act in Malay. Then a Bantenese religious official delivered the *khutbah*, which included the dynastic genealogy, and proclaimed the Act in Arabic. Finally, the ambassador crowned the king. The second part of the ritual consisted of the king's visit to the mosque (where he was conveyed from the *paseban* in a Dutch coach!). The final part comprised the weighing of the new king (Van Heekeren 1856:382-88).

that 'iconic kingship' is not an appropriate characterization of Bantenese kingship in general.

The notion of an iconic kingship seems to result from the study of royal rituals in isolation. Bell argues that we usually tend to study ritual as a very special category of social action. In her opinion, it is a distinct form of social action, but not one that is totally unrelated to other forms of social action. What makes a ritual a special form of social action is its capacity to differentiate itself from other forms of social action (Bell 1992:74). A similar point may be made from a more historical perspective. A ritual then would have to be considered as a special kind of event, which is related to other events, as a special event in a flow of events. The search for the 'meaning' of the given ritual cannot, therefore, be restricted to the event itself; it is necessary to consider the historical setting in which it is performed as well.

Such an analysis will have to begin with an assessment of the consequences of the role played by the Company in Bantenese politics. Essentially, the Company supported the king, but Mangkubumi Dipaningrat, the king's *suwan*, also benefited from this. The Company considered him a reliable and useful instrument indeed in the promotion of its interests in Banten. Dipaningrat was criticized by various *punggawa* for his growing power. Some suspected him of fostering a secret desire to make a bid for the supreme command of the realm. While Dipaningrat's power increased, his authority steadily declined. This was a result not only of his political performance, but also of his covetousness. The Bantenese *punggawa*, the traders from Lampung, and the so-called *wong cilik*²⁶ all really suffered under his reign (VOC 1455 f. 1763^r-65^r). The dissatisfaction with him almost led to the disintegration of the realm into three separate parts at the time of Abu'n Nasr's demise in 1687 (VOC 1439 f. 2046).

A collapse of the political unity was prevented by the Company's support for his succession by Pangeran Ratu, who subsequently adopted the name Abu Fala'l Muhammad Jaya. Dipaningrat's position as regent for this youthful king was not weakened, however. In fact, after the crisis of 1687, he became more powerful than before. It was only the unexpected event of Abu Fala'l Muhammad Jaya's death that enabled the *punggawa* to rid themselves of Dipaningrat. One of the first acts performed by the king subsequently elected²⁷ by them, Zain al-Abedin, was to dismiss Dipaningrat

²⁶ The common people. These were sometimes referred to by the Dutch as the '*gemeente*' (congregation) or, multi-culturally, as '*orang classis*'. The words *gemeente* and *classis* both have an ecclesiastical origin, referring as they do to the members of the Dutch Calvinist (*gereformeerde*) church.

²⁷ Usually a king designated one of his sons as his successor. The unique situation of a king having to be elected in 1690 was a consequence of Abu Fala'l's lack of legitimate successors. The other candidates for the throne were Pangeran Muhammad Salim (alias Pangeran Kasatrian) and the *pangeran panembahan*.

from office. After that, he was imprisoned and his possessions were confiscated.

The dismissal of Dipaningrat placed Zain al-Abedin in an awkward predicament, as it alienated him from all sources of possible external support. The Supreme Government interpreted Dipaningrat's overthrow as a slap in its face. Furthermore, it feared that the new king would be too much influenced by *punggawa* who were not as well disposed towards the Company as Dipaningrat. There was a great deal of concern about the appointment of a new *mangkubumi* in Batavia, therefore (VOC 705 f. 475). At first, the Supreme Government endeavoured to test Zain al-Abedin's political resolve by demanding Dipaningrat's release. In order to bring pressure to bear on him, it delayed the public confirmation of his succession (VOC 705 f. 511-13). For Zain al-Abedin this implied that he might have to rule without the Company's support.

Zain al-Abedin tried to restore the father-son relationship by sending gifts to Batavia. Furthermore, he asked the Supreme Government to send an ambassador to Banten to attend his installation as king (VOC 1487 f. 184^r, 204^r), so that his succession might find public recognition by the Company and his position vis-à-vis the *punggawa* might be strengthened. Zain al-Abedin himself had to admit that this was indeed a problem. He complained that the *punggawa* showed little inclination to obey him, and compared himself to an immobile idol set up in an elevated spot (VOC 1487 f. 229-30^f). Apparently he had no ambition to become an icon. What he wanted instead was to exercise real power in order to improve the general situation in Banten.²⁸ He was convinced that a ritual installation in which the Company demonstrated its support would help him gain such power. In the end, the Supreme Government granted his request, though Dipaningrat had not yet been released, mainly because it felt that it was necessary for the influence of the *punggawa* on the king to be reduced and for the king to be convinced of the mutual interests that were at stake (VOC 705 f. 475).

De Saint Martin arrived in Banten on December 26, 1690. He was given a very respectful reception. The king had him brought ashore in the state *perahu*, which was slowly pulled forward by eight interconnected vessels (VOC 1500 f. 168^v). The king, of course, was very pleased with De Saint Martin's arrival and fully exploited its political potential. The day after, for example, the king came to meet De Saint Martin at the *paseban* when the latter was about to go to Surasowan to pay his respects. He took De Saint Martin by the hand and conducted him to the bridge in front of Surasowan. Subsequently, all the *punggawa* had to perform a *sembah*, a submissive act of kneeling with the hands held folded in front of the forehead. Afterwards,

²⁸ This was no empty promise. After the ceremony, he appointed a new administration in which Pangeran Natawijaya (ruled 1691-94) held the office of *mangkubumi*. To prevent further abuses of power, *punggawa* were forbidden to hold more than one office in the administration.

De Saint Martin pondered on this situation, not knowing what it was all about (VOC 1500 f. 172^r, 174^r). It was obvious, however, that the king was using him to strengthen his own position. He tried to manifest himself as a king with what it took to be a king, and, for that matter, the Company's support required to be manifested as well. The major opportunity for this presented itself in the course of the ritual of his installation. In the 'theatre', in presence of all the *punggawa*, the king invited De Saint Martin to congratulate him upon his succession. By accepting this invitation, De Saint Martin gave expression to the fact that the Company indeed supported the king.

In a way, reality had been defined. The notion of kingship and the structure of the realm had been presented by ritual means. The same can be said of the Company's position in Banten and of the support given the king. Thus the ritual showed the spectators what the world was like. The king was very pleased with this, and the Company was certain of the impression it had made on his Bantenese subjects.

We should not, however, overestimate the impact of the ritual on the spectators. To my mind it is wrong to consider ritual power as a form of total persuasion. It is true that rituals may be very persuasive, but then there is always also a moment of active interpretation involved. We should not rule out the possibility that some of those present may actually disagree with the kind of reality that is presented in a ritual. So the close relationship between the king and the Company, for example, was not accepted by everyone. A few weeks after the ceremony, De Saint Martin was informed that a group of prominent *punggawa* had criticized Zain al-Abidin for being not quite the devout Muslim they had believed him to be (this had happened at several meetings that were supposed to be kept secret). Probably this was just a way of indicating that he was too interested in the Company. More generally speaking, there always was an undercurrent of resentment against the presence of the Company in the sultanate in Bantenese politics.²⁹ In time, this group would rally around the lineage of one of the losers in the 1690 struggle for succession.³⁰

Such alternative currents tend only too easily to be neglected when rituals are only studied as isolated events or when cultural structures are discussed in general. It is useful also to look at acts that take place 'offstage'. Recently, James Scott pointed out that there is no reason to assume that such acts invariably confirm the public view of the situation (Scott 1990:4). Nevertheless, it was not a counter-definition of reality that was presented in

²⁹ In the Dutch sources the people representing this current are referred to in somewhat sectarian terms as *Ageng-gezinden* (the Ageng (Tirtayasa) party) or *oudgezinden* (the party supporting the old sect).

³⁰ Namely, the lineage of *pangeran panembahan*. A later descendant of *pangeran panembahan* was the leader of a revolutionary upsurge in 1750 (Robidé van der Aa 1881).

the ritual. Perhaps we should regard the installation ritual of Zain al-Abedin as the outcome of a competition between various definitions of reality, or, more precisely, between various views of what reality ought to be. Clearly, the ritual marked a victory for those who wanted the Company to play an important role in Bantenese politics.

To conclude this article, it may be said that the ritual installation of Zain al-Abedin constituted both a source of power and an act of exercising power (compare Bell 1992:170). That is to say, an installation ritual provided an opportunity of defining reality, and Zain al-Abedin certainly made use of this opportunity. The ritual may not have convinced all his subjects, but he was installed as a legitimate king and did initially use this power to try to improve the general condition of his realm in the interests of his subjects. But then, when the curtain has been rung down, the spectators leave the theatre and life goes on. And so did the struggle for power in the sultanate of Banten – though not necessarily by ritual means.

LITERATURE CONSULTED

- Anderson, Benedict, 1991, *Imagined communities; Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London/New York: Verso. [Revised and extended edition. First published in 1983.]
- Bell, Catherine, 1992, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blussé, Leonard, 1986, *Strange Company; Chinese settlers, mestizo women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia*, Dordrecht/Riverton: Foris. [KITLV, Verhandelingen 122.]
- Bruin, Cornelis de, 1711, *Reizen over Moskovie, door Persie en Indie*, Amsterdam: Goeree.
- Cannadine, David, 1987, 'Introduction: Divine rites of kings', in: David Cannadine en Simon Price (eds), *Rituals of royalty; Power and ceremonial in traditional societies*, pp. 1-19, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Colombijn, Freek, 1989, 'De vroege staat Banten in de zeventiende eeuw', *Antropologische Verkenningen* VIII-3:1-20.
- Djajadiningrat, Hoessein, 1913, *Critische beschouwing van de Sadjarah Banten; Bijdrage ter kenschetsing van de Javaanse geschiedschrijving*, Haarlem: Enschedé.
- Drewes, G.W.J., 1961, *De biografie van een Minangkabausen peperhandelaar in de Lampongs*, Den Haag: Nijhoff. [KITLV, Verhandelingen 36.]
- Fortes, Meyer, 1967, 'Of installation ceremonies', *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5-20.
- Fruin-Mees, W., ed., 1931, *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts India anno 1682*, Vol. 2, Batavia: Kolff.
- Gailey, Christine Ward, 1985, 'The state of the state in anthropology', *Dialectical Anthropology* 9:65-89.
- Geertz, Clifford, 1973, *The interpretation of cultures*, New York: Basic Books.
- , 1980, *Negara; The theatre state in nineteenth-century Bali*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- , 1983a, 'Centers, kings and charisma; Reflections on the symbolics of power',

- in: Geertz 1983b, pp. 121-146.
- , 1983b, *Local knowledge; Further essays in interpretive anthropology*, New York: Basic Books.
- Graaff, Nicolaus de, 1976, *Reisen van Nicolaus de Graaff Gedaan naar alle gewesten des Werelds, Beginnende 1639 tot 1687 incluis*, Introduced and edited by J.C.M. Warnsinck, 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff. [Reprint. Linschoten-Vereeniging, Werken XXXIII.]
- Guillot, Claude, 1989, 'Banten en 1678', *Archipel* 37:119-151.
- , 1992, 'Libre entreprise contre économie dirigée: Guerres civiles à Banten, 1580-1609', *Archipel* 43:57-72.
- Heekeren, J. van, 1856, 'De laatste investiture van eenen Bantamschen Sultan', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Indië*, nieuwe volgrees, deel 1:363-398.
- Heeres, J.E., and F.W. Stapel, eds, 1934, *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum; Verzameling van politieke contracten en verdere verdragen door de Nederlanders in het Oosten gesloten, van privilegebrieven aan hen verleend enz.*, Volume III, 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff.
- Jonge, J.K.J. de, ed., 1872, *De opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indië; Verzameling van onuitgegeven stukken uit het oud-koloniaal archief*, Volume VI, 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff / Amsterdam: Muller.
- Kathirithamby-Wells, J., 1990, 'Banten; A West Indonesian port and polity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in: J. Kathirithamby-Wells and John Villiers (eds), *The Southeast Asian port and polity; Rise and demise*, pp. 107-125, Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Laur, J.C. van, 1983, *Indonesian trade and society; Essays in Asian social and economic history*, Dordrecht/Cinnaminson: Foris. [Reprint. First published in English in 1955.]
- Mauss, Marcel, 1990, *The gift; The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, Translated by W.D. Halls, with an introduction by Mary Douglas, London: Routledge. [First published in French in 1925.]
- Moertono, Soemarsaid, 1968, *State and statecraft in Old Java; A study of the later Mataram period*, Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project. [Monograph Series no. 43.]
- Pigeaud, Theodore G.Th., 1960, *Java in the 14th century; A study in cultural history*, Volume III, The Hague: Nijhoff. [KITLV, Translations Series 4, 3.]
- Robidé van der Aa, P.J.B.C., 1881, 'De groote Bantamsche opstand in het midden der vorige eeuw, bewerkt naar merendeels onuitgegeven bescheiden uit het oud-koloniaal archief met drie officiële documenten als bijlagen', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, volgrees 4, deel 5:1-127.
- Schneider, Jane, 1987, 'The anthropology of cloth', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16:409-448.
- Schulte Nordholt, Henk, 1981, 'Negara: A theatre state?', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 137:470-476.
- Scott, James C., 1990, *Domination and the arts of resistance; Hidden transcripts*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Tambiah, S.J., 1985, *Culture, thought, and social action; An anthropological perspective*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Watson-Andaya, Barbara, 1989, 'The cloth trade in Jambi and Palembang society during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Indonesia* 48:26-46.