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**Ahmad Shah Ibn Iskandar
and the Late 17th Century 'Holy War' in Indonesia.**

by J. Kathirithamby-Wells.

Dutch pre-occupation with politics and commerce during the 17th century was largely responsible for their neglect of those aspects of Asian activity which lay outside their direct field of interest. Even when resistance in the trade and political sphere was met from the Indonesians such expression was not viewed in the context of related social and economic forces and was vaguely interpreted as unrest and intrigue born out of mischief and intractability, for which a quick military solution could be found. For reasons of expediency the colonial power sought no deeper explanations nor attempted to relate events to broader developments within the region.

In the post-colonial era, however, efforts to reconstruct Indonesia's past within an autonomous framework have led to the exploration of fresh categories for the reinterpretation of historical events on the lines of social and traditional norms, religious and economic forces. One aspect of Indonesian history which deserves further research in the light of the new approach is the late 17th century anti-kafir movement. The present paper is intended to be a preliminary study of this movement in so far as it related to the activities of the Sumatran known as Ahmad Shah ibn Iskandar, or the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti*, who has received mention in Dutch accounts only as a troublesome pirate in the Java sea.¹

Circumstances pertaining to the anti-kafir movement were an inevitable sequel to expanding Dutch influence in the area following their capture of Malacca in 1641. After this event the once defiant Javanese powers of Bantam and Mataram compromised with the Dutch who, through meddling in internal politics and the use of highly effective local military forces, notably the Bugis and Amboinese, soon brought indigenous powers to submission. The Dutch East India Company's treaties with west Sumatra in 1663, Macassar in 1667, Mataram in 1677 and Bantam in 1684 virtually ended the political independence of these areas. But these treaties, whether secured by military force or 'voluntary' accession, by no means reduced indigenous spirit to docile proportions. The Indonesians were not slow in reacting to the unfair economic policies of the Dutch by non-compliance with treaty obligations and Company orders. Local rivalries amongst chiefs and rulers, nonetheless, continued to

* This paper is based on the British *Sumatra Factory Records* and on published sources. The wealth of Dutch archival material remain to be consulted. I am indebted to Professor Sartono Kartodirdjo and Professor R. Roolvink for their comments and criticisms and am responsible for any errors that remain.

1. P.J. Veth (Haarlem, 1896-1901) II, p. 86.

persist, often with the VOC as a partisan, so that grievances could not find a direct political expression. Instead, they found an outlet in some semblance of Islamic unity generated through anti-kafir propaganda by religious representatives and disgruntled elements at the old Muslim centres of Bantam, Giri and Hitu.

Islam's role in anti-colonial movements had early beginnings. Portuguese efforts in the 16th century to exert monopoly control over the Spice Islands created violent Islamic reaction and contributed to the intensification of religious activity and missionary propaganda centred at Hitu.² Similarly, in the 17th century in the Moluccas, religious propaganda, which was Java influenced under the patronage of Sunan Giri,³ spearheaded anti-Dutch reaction.⁴

Java on its part, in the early 17th century, witnessed a new phase of religious development through regular contacts established with Mecca both directly and via Aceh, where mystics were in their heyday. Both Hamza al-Fansuri and Abdurra'uf of Sinkel are said to have had considerable impact on Javanese Islam.⁵ The former who exerted a great influence through his writings in Aceh was well known in Bantam where the Sultan, Abulmafachir Mahmud Abdulkadir (1596-1651), appears to have been a patron of the same *Kadiriya tarika*.⁶ The ruler, who had hitherto been known as the Pangeran Ratu, received in 1638 the title of Sultan and the Arabic name from one of the many returning missions from Mecca.⁷

In Mataram the *Susuhunan*, Agung (1613-46), shared a similar anxiety for Islamic sanction of his political authority and, apart from taking on the title of Sultan in 1641, had his authority "legitimized" by Sunan Giri.⁸ In a 1622 report he was described as a regular Friday visitor to the mosque and

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2. P.J. Veth, "De heilige oorlog in den Indischen Archipel," *TNI*, I (1870), pp. 168, 172.
 3. *Ibid.*, 33-4. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies, Ruler and Realm in Early Java* (The Hague, 1957) 11, p. 239.
 4. B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies, Selected Writings* (The Hague, 1955) I, p. 73.
 5. He established the *Shattariya tarika* in Aceh after the death in 1661 of the original founder of the school, Ahmad Qushashi. It was a pupil of Abdurra'uf, Shaikh Abdul Muhji, who established the *Sattariya tarika* in west Java from where it spread to central and east Java. C. Snouck Hurgronje, (trans. A.W.S. O'Sullivan), *The Achehnese* (Leiden London, 1906), I, pp. 18-19, 216.
 6. D.A. Rinkes, "De Heiligen van Java I: De maqām van Sjech 'Abdoelmoehji'", *TBG*, LII (1910), pp. 565-7.
 7. ———, *Abdoerraof van Singkel* (Heerenveen, 1909), pp. 25-6, 94-6.
 8. This theory is presented by G.W.J. Drewes and R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka, in *De Mirakelen van Abdoelkadir Djaelani* (Bandoeng, 1938), pp. 11-2, on the basis of the last name of the Sultan, Abdulkadir, which is assumed to refer to the name of the founder of the *Kadiriya tarika*, Abdulkadir al-Jailani.
 7. L.W.C. van den Berg, "De Mohammedaansche Vorsten in Nederlandsch-Indië", *BKI*, LIII (1901), p. 22.
 - Hoessein Djajadiningrat, *Critische Beschouwing van de Sadjarah Bantèn* (Haarlem, 1913), p. 188.
 8. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, II, p. 239.

an observer of the fast of Ramadan.⁹ It is believed that the crushing defeat in 1629 of Augung's expedition against Java drove him further "into the arms of Islam;" according to C.C. Berg, "if he had been, up to 1629, a Muslim by virtue of fashion, he now became a Muslim under the laws of political tactics."¹⁰ Muslim saints and scholars gained an important place in court where they steadily accumulated power to a point where it led to their rift with the succeeding ruler, Amangkurat I (1646-77).¹¹

Bantam, too, came under the influence of Islamic scholars. During the reign of Abdulfath Abdulfattah or Agung (1651-82), who likewise received the investiture of Sultan from Mecca,¹² the state became a centre of religious orthodoxy.¹³ Religious authorities were held in high esteem and many discarded Javanese dress in favour of the Arab garb. Prohibitions were also made against opium smoking and the consumption of tobacco. The Sultan's son, the Pangeran Ratu, himself made the *haj* twice and returned on the first occasion in 1671 with the title of Sultan Abunnasr Abdulkahar.¹⁴ By now anti-kafir feelings ran high not only in Bantam but also elsewhere in the Archipelago. In the late 1670's flags and pamphlets renouncing the Dutch were distributed at Malacca, east Sumatra, Bantam, Batavia and Cheribon by Islamic preachers, some local, others from Arabia and India. Not all were true representatives of the faith but they swelled the tide of anti-kafir sentiment.

In 1677, a Minangkabau, Raja Ibrahim, who claimed to be a saint and who is described in Dutch records as a "magician" and miracle worker, appeared in the Malacca environs to raise an anti-Dutch movement.¹⁵ He was accepted as ruler by the Minangkabaus of Naning, Rembau, Sungai Ujong and Klang and, with a force well over 3,000 strong, is said to have launched an unsuccessful attack on Malacca.¹⁶ In 1679, however, he is reported to have been murdered and his movement forthwith collapsed.¹⁷

Another, described as a "Moorish sailor" and a *haji* who earlier had been expelled from Malacca, appeared in 1684 at the Minangkabau court of Pagar-Ruyung and demanded that the ruler unite with him in expelling the Christians from the region. Due, perhaps, to the ruler's anxiety to open trade with

9. C.C. Berg, "The Islamisation of Java," *Studia Islamica*, IV (1955). p. 125.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
11. Refer p. 8.
12. Djajadiningrat, *Sadjarah Banten*, p. 187.
H.J. de Graaf, "De Regering van Sunan Mangku-Rat I, Tegal-Wangi, vorst of Mataram, 1646-1677, I," *VKI*, XXXIII (1961) p. 8.
13. G.W.J. Drewes, "Sech Joesoep Makasar," *Djâwâ*, VI (1926) pp. 84-5. De Graaf, "De Regering van Sunan Mangku-Rat I ..., II," *VKI*, XXXIX (1962) pp. 241-2.
14. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies* II, pp. 241-2.
Djajadiningrat, *Sadjarah Banten*, pp. 175, 177.
15. *Daghregister*, 3 July 1677.
F. de Haan, *Priangan: De Preanger-Regentschappen onder het Nederlandsch Bestuur tot 1811* (Batavia, 1912) III, p. 324.
16. *Daghregister*, 22 August 1677.
17. R.O. Winstedt, "A History of Negri Sembilan," *JMBRAS*, XII (1934) iii, pp. 53-5.

Malacca through Patapahan, Indragiri and Siak and to the coincidental presence at the court of the Dutch Ambassador, John Dias, the "haji" was dismissed as a drunken imposter and put to the sword.¹⁸ Such treatment of claimants to religious authority was, however, rare. Generally they were treated with much veneration and readily received without their credentials being put to scrutiny.

There is more to be learned of these 'holy men'. Nonetheless, their activities seem to have fostered the general climate of discontent amongst local chiefs and rulers, adding to it a religious tone. Internal and regional rivalries for the greater part precluded united indigenous resistance but the movement was lent a semblance of unity, for a brief period in the 1680's, through the person of Ahmad Shah ibn Iskandar who attempted to establish a wide network of alliances through the Archipelago. His alleged credentials as the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* of Minangkabau, descendant of Iskandar Dzu'l Karnain,¹⁹ and a saint destined to lead the 'holy war', had a charismatic appeal for the Malay-Javanese world which shared a common tradition of legend and belief dating from pre-Islamic times. Indonesian Islam, with its mystical character, had readily absorbed indigenous and Hindu-Buddhist syncretist beliefs and traditions²⁰ and in this sense served to deepen the cultural substratum. That the leadership claims of Ahmad Shah were drawn from this common heritage and found such ready and wide acceptance, is striking.

Even before Ahmad Shah set out on his mission, the idea of expelling the Dutch from the Archipelago had been promulgated by religious representatives and political leaders whom, in many cases, the Dutch succeeded in bringing to terms through diplomacy and military means. With the Macassarese, however, the Dutch were less successful and the final defeat of the Sultanate in 1669 only spelt more trouble. The event sparked off a tremendous burst of Macassarese adventurism overseas and large numbers left their homes to establish commerce and influence overseas. In the 1670's the north Java coast was harassed by hundreds of roving Macassarese ready to espouse any political cause which would give them local influence.²¹ They were soon operating in

18. F. de Haan, "Naar Midden-Sumatra in 1684", *TBG*, XXXIX (1897) pp. 332-52. For an English version see F.M. Schnitger, *Forgotten Kingdoms in Sumatra* (Leiden, 1964) p. 58-63.

19. Refer pp. 11-12.

20. A.H. Johns, "Sufism as a category in Indonesian Literature and History," *The Journal of Southeast Asian History*, II (1961) ii, pp. 15, 23.

H.J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun* (The Hague, Bandung 1958) p. 12. C. Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois, 1960) pp. 124-5.

G.W.J. Drewes, "Indonesia: Mysticism and Activism," *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, (ed.) G.E. von Grunebaum (Chicago, 1955) pp. 287-8. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II, article "Islam," p. 497.

21. J.K.J. de Jonge, *De opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indie* (The Hague, 1862-88) VIII, p. CXV.

A fuller account is provided in H.J. de Graaf's "De Regering van Sunan Mangkurat I Tegal-wangi, Vorst van Mataram, 1646-1677, II," *VKI*, XXXIX (1962).

the Straits of Malacca and large numbers congregated at Billiton, then a notorious haunt for marauders.²²

In Java itself the Macassarese found easy access to internal power politics because of the growing tensions between the Dutch protégé, Susuhunan Amangkurat (1646-1677) of Mataram, and the clerical anti-Dutch party in the state.²² Amangkurat's alliance with the Dutch and his efforts to check the influence of the religious authorities in internal politics and reinforce control over the vassal states led, in 1674, to a revolt under Trunajaya, a prince of Madura. The movement received the religious sanction of Pangeran Puspa Ita, the religious head of Giri, who had become *Panembahan* after the murder of his predecessor, Mas Witana, at the instigation of Amangkurat.²³ A prominent Macassarese, Karaeng Galesong, who had been active with about 70 vessels off the coast of Madura, joined forces with Trunajaya.²⁴ Full support was also lent to the movement by Sultan Abdulfath Abdulfattah (1651-83) of Bantam, a rival of Sultan Amangkurat I and his Dutch allies. Bantam had become a haven for anti-Dutch elements, including the Macassarese mystic, Skaikh Yusuf of Goa, known amongst his followers as Tuanta Salamaka.²⁵ He had made the *haj* in 1644 and was an adherent of the *Khalwatiya* order, which together with the *Nakshabandiya* order, aimed at reforming Sufism from within.²⁶ Reputed to be of royal birth he married a sister of Sultan Abulfath Abdulfattah and, as De Graaf suggests, most probably lent inspiration to the orthodox movement at Bantam. The Macassarese who deeply respected their Shaikh thus found even more reason to join the anti-kafir movement to which he lent his spiritual sanction.²⁷

Sultan Abdulfath Abdulfattah did not himself take a direct part in Trunajaya's revolt, but shipped weapons to him, provided vessels for transporting his forces from Madura to Java, and incited Pangeran Puger, the

22. N. MacLeod, "De Oost-Indische Compagnie op Sumatra in de 17e Eeuw," *De Indische Gids*, (1907) i, p. 787.

23. Veth, *Java*, II, pp. 17-20.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

For a fuller account of Trunajaya's movement refer: De Graaf, "Gevangenneming en dood van Raden Truna-djaya," *TBG*, LXXXV (1952) pp. 271-309.

25. G.W.J. Drewes, "Sech Joesoep Makasar" *Djawa*, VI (1926) pp. 93-7.

De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VII, pp. cxlii-cxliii.

26. H.A.R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism* (London, 1953) pp. 162-3.

It is not known as to what extent the mystical brotherhoods were directly involved in the anti-kafir movement. Generally, they are believed to have espoused peaceful methods without associating themselves with militant conflicts but, according to Professor Johns, the Sufis did not disown "the principle of the Holy War when it appeared necessary," and this is confirmed by the 17th century biography of a certain Jamaluddin, a Sufi from Pasai, which mentions the anti-kafir activities of the Sumatran Sufis.

Johns, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

Ph. S. van Ronkel, "Een Maleisch getuigenis over den weg des Islams in Sumatra," *BKI*, LXXV (1919) pp. 366-71.

27. A.A. Cense, "De Verering van Sjaich Jusuf (Shaikh Yusuf) in Zuid Celebes," *Bingkisan Budi* (Leiden, 1950) pp. 50-1.

Susuhunan's uncle and rival, to join the ruler of Giri in spreading anti-Dutch propaganda. The Dutch who took up arms to crush Trunajaya's rebellion did not succeed in doing so until the forces of Captain Jonker and the Aru Palacca of Boni were called in. In 1680 both Trunajaya and Karaeng Gale-song died.²⁸

After Trunajaya's defeat Sultan Abdulfath Abdulfattah, who considered himself defender of the faith, continued his anti-Dutch activities from Bantam and supported similar movements elsewhere in the Archipelago. He is reported to have had a hand in the 1677 rebellion of the Peninsula Minangkabau against the Dutch in Malacca; to have plotted with Kitjili Siberi, the ruler of Ternate, in the 1680 insurrection against the Dutch in Ambon;²⁹ and to have supplied arms in 1681 to Panglima Dato Gedang, leader of the anti-Dutch revolt in west Sumatra.³⁰ Unfortunately for the Sultan of Bantam, he came up against internal opposition from his eldest son, who though of an extremely religious disposition, did not share his father's anti-Dutch feelings. Sultan Abdulfath Abdulfattah's inclination under these circumstances, to favour as his successor a younger son, Pangeran Purbaya, offered the Dutch opportunity for an alliance with the elder prince, Haji, against the ruler. When fighting broke out between the two parties Captain Jonker's Buginese forces were again called in; Sultan Abdulfath Abdulfattah was defeated and taken prisoner despite the strong support he had from the Macassarrese and many of his own subjects.³¹

By a treaty signed in 1684 the Dutch gained substantial concessions from Sultan Abunnasr Abdulkahar (1682-87). Similarly, they had improved their position in Mataram but by no means had scotched the Islamic alliance. In fact, it subsequently assumed even more dangerous proportions through the cohesive force lent to it by Ahmad Shah who gained fame in the Archipelago as a saint and defender of the faith.

The actual background of Ahmad Shah, before he appeared at Billiton in 1685 to rally support for the 'holy war',³² is difficult to establish and so is even his real name. Sometimes referred to as Raja Ibrahim, he was known more popularly as Paduka Ahmad Shah, Ahmad Shah ibn Iskandar, or under the assumed title of *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti*, ruler of Minangkabau,³³ who in common with the rulers of Palembang, Malacca, Aceh and Deli, claimed holy descent from Alexander the Great,³⁴ or Iskandar Dzu'l Karnain. The

28. De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VII, pp. cxv-cxvi; cxlii.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. cxvi-cxvii.

30. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1905) ii, pp. 477.

31. De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VII, pp. clvi-clxviii.

32. E. Netscher, "De Nederlanders in Djohor en Siak" *VBG*, XXXV (1870) p. 57.

33. *Ibid.*

De Haan, *Priangan*, III, p. 324.

MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1905) ii, p. 794.

34. According to Minangkabau legend, Sri Maharaja di-Raja, the first ruler of Minangkabau, was the son of Alexander the Great, the youngest of the 99 children of Nabi Adam (the

(Continued on next page)

legend presumably had its origins in Pagar-Ruyung with which these other royal houses claimed direct or indirect lineage.³⁵

All accounts agree that Ahmad Shah came from the ruling house of Minangkabau. It is very likely that he was one of the many contenders for the throne after the death in 1674 of the Minangkabau ruler, Ahmad Shah, though there is insufficient evidence to prove that he was either the ex-ruler's son, or his maternal nephew who had the best claims to the title.³⁶ Further, the Ahmad Shah who in 1685 was first reported at Billiton with 5 *perahu* and 200 men³⁷ had set out with a cause much greater than the gaining of a Minangkabau throne and it is with this intention that he chose Billiton as the staging point for the movement. Apart from its popularity as a base of operations for marauders and adventurers, the island was then part of Palembang which like the neighbouring state of Jambi, had strong connections with Java.³⁸ It is, therefore, logical that Ahmad Shah should have tried to gain support from the important north Javanese coast via the Jambi-Palembang rather than the Siak-Indragiri regions of east Sumatra.

Prophet Adam) and his wife Hawa (Eve). Alexander was transported to heaven by Gabriel and was commissioned there as the king of the whole earth to which he then returned as *Raja Alam*, the epithet which was applied also to the *Yang di-Pertuan Sakti* of the Minangkabau *alam*. After the death of Alexander the kingdom was said to have been divided among his three sons: Maharaja Depang who became king of a great kingdom of the east, from which sprang China; Raja Ali who went to the north and became Raja Rum (Turkey), and Sri Maharaja di-Raja who went to Pulau Ameh, the gold island of Sumatra. For further information on the Malay Alexander romance see: P.J. van Leeuwen, *De Maleische Alexanderroman* (Meppel, 1937). G.D. Willinck is probably correct in his assumption that the legend of Alexander, which had made a great impression on the Semitic east, could have been conceived of only through the influence of Islam on Indonesia. A similar view is shared by L.C. Westenenk who maintains that the legend of Alexander the Great came to Minangkabau as a Muslim *tambo*. See: G.D. Willinck, *Het Rechtsleven bij de Minangkabausche Maleiers* (Leiden, 1909) pp. 19-23; E. Netscher, "Een Verzameling van overleveringen van het rijk van Minangkabau," *Indisch Archief*, II, iii, pp. 39-43; L.C. Westenenk "Opstellen over Minangkabau," *TBG*, LV (1913) p. 243fn; *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (old edition) refer articles on "al-Iskandar" pp. 533-4 and "Iskandar-nama," p. 535.

35. Schrieke, *op. cit.*, II, p. 253.

36. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1905) ii, p. 138.

37. Netscher, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

38. The Palembang-Jambi region continued to maintain its traditional ties through commerce with the neighbouring Minangkabau and with Java. During the 17th century when Sultan Agung of Mataram inherited the spiritual role of the great *patih*, Gaja Mada of Majapahit, and launched a vigorous expansionist policy, these ties were further strengthened. The *Daghtregister* of 1642 noted that "the *Pangerans* and lords of Jambi... are completely inclined towards Mataram, more than was the case in times gone by." Both states paid annual tribute to Mataram and the *Pangeran* of Palembang was addressed as "son" by the *Susuhunan*. See: Hadji Abdul Karim Amrullah, (Hamka), *Ajahku Riwayat Hidup* (Jakarta, 1953) pp. 16-7; M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence* (The Hague, 1962) pp. 81-2; Schrieke, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 57-8; II, pp. 223-4. For an account of Mataram's relations with Palembang and Jambi during the 1650's and 1660's see: De Graaf, *VKI*, XXXIII (1961) pp. 53-66.

Despite his dubious identity, Ahmad Shah's claim as ruler of Minangkabau and a saint had an immediate appeal.³⁹ He won the sympathy of Pangeran Aria of Palembang and the ruler of Jambi⁴⁰ and soon assembled at Billiton a fleet of about 300 vessels and a force nearly 4,000 strong, consisting mainly of Macassarese and Minangkabaus with some recruits from Riau-Johore and Jambi.⁴¹ From Billiton he wrote letters to Siam, Aceh, west Sumatra, Borneo and Mataram testifying that he was commissioned by God to expel the Dutch and appealed for assistance.⁴² He had his mind chiefly on joining forces with anti-Dutch elements in east Java, Madura and south Sumatra.

News of Ahmad Shah's plans caused considerable alarm in Batavia where the Dutch position was being seriously threatened by a new rebellion under a former slave from Bali who called himself Surapati. A Balinese according to some accounts, and a Macassarese according to others, Surapati had fallen out with the Dutch after serving them as lieutenant in the army. He is believed to have come into contact with missionaries of the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* and rapidly became the leader of another popular anti-Dutch movement. Amangkurat II (1677-1703) of Mataram who was anxious to cast off the Dutch stranglehold on the internal politics of his state was quick to establish secret relations with Surapati. The *Susuhunan* even made efforts to establish connections with the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* and though he tried to hide the fact from the Dutch by sending two missions to Batavia, the first in December 1686 and, the second in June 1689 to deny suspicions,⁴³ they needed no better proof of his duplicity than two letters which they intercepted at Tegal. These were addressed by the *Susuhunan* and his chief minister, Pangeran 'Dipati Amirang Kasuma, to the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti*.⁴⁴ The letters were evidently in reply to an earlier communication by the *Yang di-Pertuan* to Amangkurat informing them of his plans to come to Madura and join the anti-Dutch movement.⁴⁵ The *Susuhunan* and his chief minister had, in turn, warmly responded to Ahmad Shah's appeal. They acknowledged him as the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti*, descendant of Iskandar Dzu'l Karnain, attributing to him the appropriate regal claims, religious connections and magical powers. The *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* was also addressed by the *Susuhunan* as "grandfather,"⁴⁶ presumably in accordance with the Malay-Javanese rulers' legendary claims of descent from Iskandar Dzu'l Karnain. (Alexander the Great), one of the 99 children of Nabi Adam,⁴⁷ which cre-

39. De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VIII, p. xli.

40. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906) i, 795.

41. Netscher, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

42. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906) i, p. 794.

43. Veth, *Java*, II, p. 86.

44. De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VIII, pp. 23-4, 31.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-2 f.n.

46. Refer: De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VIII, p. 41 f.n.; F. Valentijn, "Beschryvinge van het Eiland Sumatra," *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* (Dordrecht-Amsterdam, 1724-6) III, p. 143.

47. G.D. Willinck, *Het Rechtsleven bij de Minangkabausche Maleiers*, p. 19.

dentials readily earned Ahmad Shah acknowledgement as a servant of the Prophet. The main purpose of the *Susuhunan's* letter to Ahmad Shah was to urge him to come to Kartasura to lead the anti-Christian movement.⁴⁸ Absurd as it may seem, the *Susuhunan's* credulous acceptance of Ahmad Shah can be understood if due consideration is given to the importance of the Alexander legend in Javanese historiography. In the case of Mataram, for instance, it was the wizard, "Sekandar," or Iskandar, identified with the jinni Juru-Taman, whom Senapati, the founder of Mataram, took on "as companion, councillor and guardian spirit."⁴⁹

Dutch alarm at Ahmad Shah's collusion with the Muslim powers was further substantiated by symptoms of an anti-kafir rebellion elsewhere in the Archipelago. At Ambon, which had long been the centre of Islamic propaganda against the Dutch, the anti-kafir party found inspiration in a new religious order founded in the 1680's by an Arab. Known as the "*tasbih*" or "rosary" movement, it stressed as the name suggests, long hours of prayer and mediation. On seeing its widespread popularity and the strength it added to the rebellion as a whole in the Archipelago the Dutch banned the "*tasbih*" order and, in 1687, one of the leaders, a Gujarati by the name of Hussain, was arrested and sent to Batavia.⁵⁰ It is about the same time that a *mullah* from Surat, "a respected tutor" of the Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb,⁵¹ having visited Siam, Johore, Jambi and Palembang, made his appearance in Cheribon where he spread anti-Dutch propaganda. He was about to proceed to Kartasura when he was arrested by the Dutch and sent to Ceylon. However on the angry intervention of the Moghul emperor the *mullah* was released and returned to Surat.⁵²

In these troubled times Sultan Haji, the lone Dutch ally, felt himself far from secure especially since his father, Sultan Abdulfath Abdulfattah who had been taken prisoner after the 1682 revolt, still had supporters, mainly anti-Dutch elements. On the rumour in 1686 that a plot was underway to attack the Dutch garrison and reinstate Sultan Agung, Sultan Haji was obliged to hand over the old man to Batavia where he remained prisoner till his death in 1692.⁵³ Sultan Haji's position was even less secure in the overseas territory

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-5.

De Jonge, *Opkomst*.

49. Schrieke, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 273, 402 f.n. 13.

For further about the significance of the Alexander romance to Javanese historiography refer: Th.G.Th. Pigeaud, "Alexander, Sakéndér en Senapati," *Djâwâ*, VII (1927) (1927) pp. 321-61.

50. De Haan, *Priangan*, III, 325.

51. Schrieke, *op. cit.*, II, p. 387, f.n. 60.

52. De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VIII, pp. xl-xli, 56, 63.

53. Aurangzeb's theologians were of the orthodox *Nakshabandiya* order which with the *Kadiriya* order gained momentum during the 17th century in India. It was the popularity of these two orthodox *tarika* in India and Bantam which led to religious reforms at both places. The *mullah's* visit should, therefore, have been significant.

For the contemporary religious climate in India refer: Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian environment* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 136, 167, 196-7.

of the Lampungs where Bantamese administrative authority was traditionally weak. Here the ex-Sultan Abdulfath Abdulfattah had a large following and the area seemed an obvious target for Ahmad Shah's operations, particularly since it was in the vicinity of Billiton. Considering these circumstances Sultan Haji volunteered every assistance to the Dutch to act against Ahmad Shah.⁵⁴

The combined fleet which the Dutch and the Bantamese assembled to send against Ahmad Shah was very large. Five vessels and 8 *penchalang* belonging to the Dutch, with a total crew of 60 soldiers and about 400 sailors, were joined by 50 Bantamese *penchalang* manned by nearly a thousand Bantamese, Bugis and Balinese. On 1 June 1686 the fleet departed from Batavia. Having first scoured the coast for enemy vessels and collected additional forces at Japara it headed for Billiton which it reached at the beginning of July. From local sources they learned that the *Yang di-Pertuan Sakti's* own fleet was now 250 *perahu* strong but none of the vessels were sighted. On a suspicion that Ahmad Shah had left for Palembang or Tulangbawang in the Lampungs, one of the vessels was sent in that direction but found no trace of him. In 1688 the Dutch commander, Steven Klaerbout, returned to Batavia to report that the Bantamese chiefs on the expedition, Pangeran Tuda Negara and Pangeran Singga Ratu, had shown little enthusiasm or co-operation on the expedition. Considering the isolated stand which the Sultan of Bantam took in opposing so popular a movement against the Dutch it is understandable that the efforts of the Bantamese *Pangèran* were only half-hearted. However, Sultan Haji who deeply feared for the security of his territories in the Lampungs was anxious that the search for Ahmad Shah's fleet should be continued. At his instigation and contribution of many men and vessels the Dutch fitted out a second fleet which in October 1686 sailed to the Lampungs. Following a rumour that the enemy fleet after leaving Billiton had divided itself into three, one having gone to east Java, another to Jambi, and the third to the Lampungs with Ahmad Shah, the invading forces decided to concentrate efforts on pursuing the last.⁵⁵

Having reached the mouth of Tulangbawang in the Lampungs, part of the Dutch-Bantamese fleet sailed up the river. At a certain place called Kampong Laut it found a *pagar* lately deserted by the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* and his forces. Efforts to locate the enemy, however, proved futile due largely to the superior guerilla tactics used by the Minangkabau and Maccassarese forces of Ahmad Shah and the evident co-operation they had from the locals who withheld all information from the invading party. The closest the Dutch-Bantamese forces got to Ahmad Shah was at Penawar, further up the Tulangbawang, where 15 vessels were sighted bearing flags and colours. On the approach of the enemy Ahmad Shah's forces opened fire keeping well under cover. Later the rebels were pursued even further inland to Bakung

54. De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VIII, p. xlii.

55. *Ibid.*

MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906) i, pp. 794-6.

where 50 *perahu* were found abandoned and the village evacuated. All that came into the hands of the Dutch-Bantamese forces was some of Ahmad Shah's correspondence. It was learnt from one of these letters that Pangeran Aria, the ruler of Palembang, who earlier had given his support to Ahmad Shah, persuaded him to abandon hopes of leading a successful anti-kafir movement and to return home. To Ahmad Shah such a course was unthinkable as he felt he could not disappoint the many Muslims who so trusted his leadership. He continued to evade the advancing forces with the help of the locals who kept him well supplied with food and other necessities. Finally, on learning that Ahmad Shah was at a place called Tanjong Bendahara, near Kotabumi at the foot of the Barisan highlands, the Dutch commander, Krijn de Rande, wrote two letters to him pressing him for a reapproachment. To this the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* replied that he could not abandon his rôle as leader of the Muslim cause and had every intention of fighting the Dutch but not the Bantamese. Having sent this reply, with his remaining followers of about 300 he dashed into the hill-country. De Rande, who believed that Ahmad Shah had gone in the direction of Palembang, decided to pursue him there while a detachment remained behind to blockade the Tulangbawang river. The Bantamese, many of whom were taken ill, disapproved of the scheme and wished to return home but were prevailed upon by a letter from the Sultan to stay on. De Rande was thus able to make his way to Palembang with additional reinforcement sent from Batavia.⁵⁶

Contrary to expectation it was to west Sumatra and not Palembang that Ahmad Shah made his way. He crossed the Barisan and in March 1687 arrived in the district of Lawut Kaur, near lake Ranau, part of the south Sumatran area under Bantamese control. It was reported that the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* demanded from the people purchase of local pepper which was strictly speaking the monopoly of the Sultan of Bantam. Whether this was the beginning of Ahmad Shah's involvement in a less lofty cause than he originally had professed is difficult to ascertain. The inhabitants of Kaur who were unable to decide upon a course of action, sought the advice of the Sultan through Kiyai Aria Singga di-Raja, a visiting official from Bantam.⁵⁷

Ahmad Shah does not seem to have remained long enough at Kaur to settle the question of the pepper exports. In March 1687, with a large following he reached the British settlement of Bengkulen and the inhabitants there, who had knowledge of his reputation, received him with great rejoicing as a saint.⁵⁸ They presumably had a special regard for him due to the popular belief that the founder of the ruling family of Sungai Lemau (or Bengkulen district), Sri Maharaja Sakti, came from the ruling house of Minangkabau.⁵⁹

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 596-8.

57. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906) i, p. 799.

58. *Ibid.*

59. O.L. Helfrich, O.L., "De Adel van Benkoelen en Djambi," *Adatrechthundel*, XXII (1923) p.310.

(Continued on next page)

The British for their part were initially wary of Ahmad Shah's anti-kafir background but soon found him amenable to an anti-Dutch alliance.

After its withdrawal from Bantam in 1682 the English Company's plans for an alternative pepper collecting centre at Priaman were frustrated by the Dutch whereupon Bengkulu had been settled.⁶⁰ Even so the Priaman project was not totally abandoned. In September 1687 the authorities at Madras, who knew about Ahmad Shah's activities, instructed their Bengkulu officials to make use of his alleged claims as Minangkabau ruler and anti-Dutch leader to expel their rivals from the coast. This was followed by a letter from the Madras Council to the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* appealing for his aid in prosecuting their plans at Priaman.⁶² In the meantime, with the view to gaining his co-operation, the local authorities allowed Ahmad Shah to build up such an influence in Bengkulu that he even minted his own money.⁶³

In so far as he harassed the Bantamese at Silebar, where they still made regular collections of pepper, Ahmad Shah provided considerable help to the British. It was rumoured in Bantamese official circles that he had, in fact, been bribed with a thousand *rijksdaalders* by the British for any assistance on his part in engrossing the pepper trade.⁶⁴ Though there is nothing in the English Company records to confirm this, the British certainly gave him expensive presents including a diamond ring.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, it was not long before the British realised that far from being partner to their schemes Ahmad Shah intended using Bengkulu as a base for his own activities. From the British post he intrigued with the Silebar people against their Bantamese overlords. In August 1687 he visited Silebar and was popularly received there as a saint.⁶⁶

Ahmad Shah also had considerable influence with the chiefs of the interior, an even stronger reason why the British were anxious to win his support. His only substantive assistance in this direction, though, was to bring the Pangeran

M. Jaspán, *From patriliney to matriliney; structural change among the Redjang of Southwest Sumatra*. PhD. Dissertation A.N.U., Canberra, 1964, p. 47.

J.A.W. van Ophuijsen, "Iets over het ontstaan van eenige Regentschappen in de Assistent-Residentie Bengkoelen," *TBG*, XI (1862) p. 193.

60. A. Wright & T.H. Reid, *The Malay Peninsula: A Record of British Progress in the Middle East* (London, 1912) pp. 28-9.

W. Marsden, *History of Sumatra* (London, 1811) pp. 450-1 f.n.

61. E.B. Kielstra, "Onze kennis van Sumatra's Westkust omstreeks de helft der achttiende eeuw," *BKI*, XXXVI (1887) p. 520.

Van Bazel, "Begin en voortgang van onzen handel en bezittingen op Sumatra's Westkust," *TNI*, II, (1847) pp. 42-3.

62. R. Suntharalingam, "The Establishment of British Power in West Sumatra, 1685-1716," M.A. Thesis, Singapore, 1961, pp. 45-7.

63. *Sumatra Factory Records*, II, Ft. St. George to York Fort, 8 Sept. 1687, ff. 36-8. Marsden, *Sumatra*, p. 337.

64. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906) i, p. 799.

65. *Sumatra Factory Records*, II, Ft. St. George to York Fort, 8 Sept. 1687, f. 38.

66. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906) i, p. 799.

of Sungai Lemau into better relations with the British.⁶⁷ Contrary to his claim that his movement was directed solely against the Dutch, Ahmad Shah with the support of about a thousand Bugis, Macassarese and some English, launched an attack on the Bantamese at Silebar in January 1688 with the intention of ejecting them. The plan succeeded and some Bantamese officials including Pangeran Bandar, 3 *kiyai* and 5 lesser chiefs lost their lives.⁶⁸

The Bantamese subsequently failed to re-establish their hold on Silebar but Dutch vigilance prevented Ahmad Shah from following up his victory and extending his operations against them on the coast. From the Dutch view-point the explosive situation on the west coast of Sumatra made it imperative that Ahmad Shah be prevented from gaining a political foothold there. During the 1660's the west coast, from Barus in the north to Indrapura in the south, had rejected Achehnese overlordship for the protection of the Dutch only to be disillusioned by their even more exacting commercial hold. It became a hotbed of discontent; rebellions were the order of the day and by 1670 rumours were being circulated by Acheh influenced religious men that the Dutch threatened their Islamic faith.⁶⁹ How closely these religious leaders were in collusion with the rebel leaders of Kota Tengah, Pau and Priaman is uncertain. We do know, however, that during this period the coast came under strong Sufi influence via Acheh. In 1681 Shaikh Burhanuddin, who received the mystical teachings of the *Shattariya tarika* from Abdurra'uf of Singkel, returned to his birth place of Ulakan (near Priaman) which assumed proverbial fame as a religious centre on the west coast.⁷⁰ It was from Priaman that Raja Bongsu, a religious leader, wrote to Ahmad Shah inviting him to come and head the Muslim rebellion, an act for which he suffered execution in 1687 at Batavia.⁷¹

In the British occupied Bengkulu and Anak Sungai regions itself Ahmad Shah found no opportunities for an anti-kafir movement. Though there were perennial troubles in Anak Sungai they were either internal power struggles or concerned the attempts of the district to break away from the control of the Indrapura sultanate. Relations between the British and Ahmad Shah had, in the meanwhile, become strained because of the latter's failure to help promote commercial interests, and by March 1689 they broke their connections with him, burned his *kampong* and drove him out of Bengkulu.⁷²

Ahmad Shah who made his way to Manjuta joined the local rebellion against the British ally, the Sultan of Indrapura. He was no longer a leader of the anti-kafir movement and, from now on, became more and more entrenched in the internal politics of Sumatra. He took a leading role in the civil war in

67. Suntharalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

68. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906) i, pp. 801.

69. *Daghregister*, 6 May 1670.

70. Hadji Abdul Karim Amrullah, *Ajahku*, pp. 19-20, 25.

71. De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VIII, p. 43.

72. Marsden, *Sumatra*, p. 337.

MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906) i, p. 802.

Manjuta scoring several initial victories to the alarm of the British. This was followed in the latter part of 1689 by a reversal in the war situation and Ahmad Shah was forced to take refuge in Palembang.⁷³ In August 1690 he returned to Indrapura to ask the British for a reconciliation reiterating his original promise to lend assistance in expelling the Dutch from Padang. The British, who neither trusted Ahmad Shah nor wished to offend him because he had a large following, deliberated over the matter.⁷⁴ Due to a short break in the *Sumatra Factory Records*, between November 1690 and January 1692, we do not know the Fort Marlborough Council's decision on their policy towards Ahmad Shah. An English official who visited Padang in 1691 is said to have reported that the *Raja Sakti* died in an encounter with Company forces and his head had been exhibited on a spike,⁷⁵ but there is proof that he was active in Jambi for at least another 5 years. The British had presumably been mistaken about his death through the false identification of a dead man.

At the beginning of 1691 Ahmad Shah appeared in Jambi to take advantage of another civil war in which the position of the ruler, Pangeran Ratu, or Sultan Ingalaga, was challenged by his brother, Pangeran Pringabaya. Reportedly backed by an impressive force nearly 7,000 strong with about 2,000 armed men, he claimed to have support from the ruler of Minangkabau and offered to assist Sultan Ingalaga against Pringabaya but received no response. At the beginning of 1694 he returned to Jambi with 400 men whom he alleged had been provided by the "Yang di-Pertoeuan Blang" of Minangkabau. He also went to see the Dutch Resident at Tungkal with the offer to re-establish peace in Jambi and continued to pester both him and the Sultan with the same proposal.⁷⁶ In January 1695 he was reported still to be at Bukit Silantuan at Sunai, in the upper reaches of the Batang Hari in Jambi, after which there is no record of him.⁷⁷

73. Suntharalingam, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-3.

74. *Sumatra Factory Records*, II, Letters received at York Fort, 18 Aug. 1690, ff. 66-68; 26 Aug. 1690, ff. 69-73.

75. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, (1906), i, p. 802.

76. *Ibid.*, (1907) i, pp. 796, 798-800

77. *Ibid.*, p. 800.

Netscher in "De Nederlanders in Djohor en Siak," advanced the theory that Ahmad Shah might perhaps be identified with the mysterious personality who in 1717 emerged as Raja Kechil to capture Johore. According to the *Tuhfat-al-Nafis*, Raja Kechil was the posthumous son of Sultan Mahmud of Johore, murdered in 1699. He was entrusted by his grandfather, the *Laksamana*, to the care of a certain Nakoda Malim who took him to Pagar-Ruyung where he grew up in the court of the *Yang-di-Pertuan Sakti* and after a period of adventure in east Sumatra returned to take Johore. But since Ahmad Shah was active in Sumatra long before 1699, Netscher's speculation would seem untenable if the origins of Raja Kechil were based on the *Tuhfat-al-Nafis*.

See: Raja Ali bin Raja Ahmad of Riau, *Tuhfat-al-Nafis*, Rumi transliteration by Munir bin Ali of the Jawi text (ed.) R.O. Winstedt (Singapore, 1965), pp. 34-5, 40-41; R.O. Winstedt, "A History of Johore, 1365-1895," *JMBRAS*, X (1932) iii, pp. 54-5; W.H.M. Schadee, *Geschiedenis van Sumatra's Oostkust*, (Amsterdam, 1918) I, p. 13; Netscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-8.

That during his period of activity in Jambi, Ahmad Shah had the support of the ruler at Pagar-Ruyung is not improbable since Minangkabau had a traditional interest in the Batang Hari region, which it regarded as part of its eastern *rantau*.⁷⁸ Due, however, to the obscurity of Minangkabau dynastic history at the time it is not possible to confirm that there was, in fact, any legitimate ruler by the name of "Yang di-Pertoewan Blang." Nonetheless, Ahmad Shah's acknowledgement of another as ruler of Minangkabau confirms the dubious nature of his earlier claims to the rulership of the region.

In the meanwhile, although Ahmad Shah had abandoned his role as leader of the 'holy war', the movements in Java to which he had lent some inspiration continued to offer a serious challenge to the Dutch. Surapati kept east Java aflame and Batavia was threatened by a revolt raised in 1689 by the ex-Company servant Captain Jonker, in conjunction with locals and a large number of Balinese, Macassarese, Bugis and Amboinese living in the environs of the capital. The revolt, which stemmed from Jonker's rift with the Dutch authorities and from discontent amongst the foreign population at the Government's plan to resettle them in separate quarters, soon escalated into an anti-kafir movement.⁷⁹ It identified itself with the anti-kafir movement of the *Yang di-Pertuan Raja Sakti* of Minangkabau, who was alleged to have succeeded in binding Jonker to a blind adherence to the faith and convincing him that the time was at hand for expelling the Christians from the region.⁸⁰ It is intrinsically unlikely that Captain Jonker ever met the *Raja Sakti* and according to his biographer, J.A. van der Chijs, there is no documentary evidence of personal contact. No alliance between them could have been possible until at least 1689 when Captain Jonker fell out with the Dutch, by which time Ahmad Shah was immersed in civil war in west Sumatra. But like other rebelling Muslims, Jonker was greatly influenced by the *Yang di-Pertuan Sakti* whose name had become a watchword. About this time a Minangkabau, Nakhoda Inche Puti, in all probability identical with the important rebel leader of the same name from Kota Tengah, in West Sumatra,⁸¹ came to see Jonker at Moronda near Batavia in search of the *Yang di-Pertuan Sakti*. He was warmly received and assured by Jonker that should Ahmad Shah arrive there he would receive undivided support from all against the Dutch.⁸²

Jonker's rebellion was, however, brought to a speedier end than Surapati's. During the latter part of 1689 the Amboinese leader who had once so faithfully served the Company in suppressing some of the earlier rebellions,

78. Loeb, *Sumatra*, p. 98.

79. Veth, *Java*, II pp. 90-1.

80. De Haan, *Priangan*, III, p. 326.

Van der Chijs, "Kapitein Jonker, 1630 (?)—1689," *TBG*, XXX (1885) pp. 162-4.

81. Appointed chief in 1669 at Kota Tengah he led the 1674 rebellion against the Dutch and their local allies at Padang. A letter sent by the Sultan of Bantam to Raja Itam of Manjuta, inciting him to form a rebellion against the Dutch, evidently fell into Puti's hands.

McLeod, *op. cit.*, (1905) ii, p. 135.

82. Van der Chijs, *TBG*, XXX (1885) pp. 165-6 f.n.

including those in west Sumatra, was killed by Dutch forces and his head exhibited on a pole outside Batavia.⁸³ As for Surapati, he was defeated in 1706 and died soon afterwards. The struggle was kept up for a while by his sons and the Mataramese ruler, Sunan Mas Amangkurat III, until 1708 when the latter was forced to surrender,⁸⁴ bringing to a close an unsuccessful but highly dramatic phase of Muslim reaction in the Archipelago.

From what we know about Ahmad Shah's career between 1686 and 1695 there is little to disprove the Dutch Company's allegation that he was an impostor and political adventurer. The sincerity of his claims even as leader of the anti-Dutch movement are, in the light of his later activities in Sumatra, somewhat questionable. He did not emerge from the movement either as a political and military hero, as did Trunajaya and Surapati, or as a religious figure of veneration, like Shaikh Yusuf. Nonetheless, for about a decade he fired the imagination of the leaders of the late 17th century anti-kafir movement as a symbol of indigenous unity. In a situation where local rivalries precluded the ready acknowledgement of a leader from any specific region or political sphere, it was still possible to accept a personality whose credentials, however dubious, were drawn from the common Indonesian heritage of legend, history and religion which had a sure appeal for the people.

83. De Jonge, *Opkomst*, VIII, pp. xliii-xlv.

84. E.S. De Klerck, *History of the Netherlands East Indies* (Rotterdam, 1938) I, p. 315.