

7. Jakarta History Museum, Surapati 1675

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Introduction

In 1675 the Dutch East-India Company, VOC, owned about one fifth of Java. This VOC ownership of Javanese territory included Batavia and a large VOC area between Batavia on the Java Sea in the north and the ocean in the south; as well as Semarang and Semarang's vicinity. East from the Batavia VOC area there was the Sultanate of Bantam and to the west the Sultanates of Cirebon and Mataram (Jogyakarta). East Java, called Balambangan, was ruled by Rajas from Bali. Most relations between the Dutch East-India Company, VOC, and the Balinese Rajas were very well from the founding of Batavia in 1619 until the bankruptcy of the VOC in 1799. But there was more. In 1675 the Company's influence in the Javanese Sultanates of Bantam, Cheribon and Mataram (Jogyakarta) was substantial!

In the past the population of Batavia was dominated by slaves, simply because there was not enough free, rather expensive, labour available locally. In 1670, in Batavia, the number was 13.000 slaves out of a total population of 33.000. In 1815 there were 14.000 slaves out of 48.000 inhabitants. The Dutch preferred to bring in slaves from outside Java and for good reasons. Slaves from Java and particularly those from the Sunda area were regarded as hostile.

Well, about Surapati now. Untung Surapati served as a slave in Batavia after Arab slave traders bought him in Bali. Please listen.

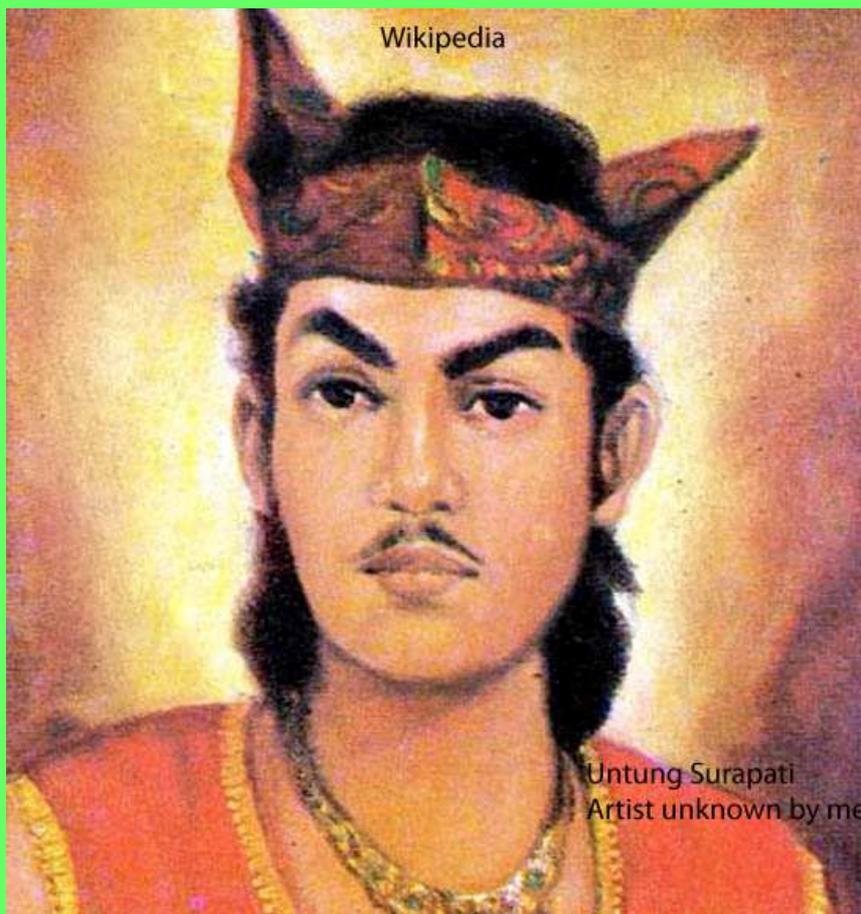
Pictures

See page 2 etc.



1. Untung Surapati, from a painting by the Dutchman Jacob Coeman, 1665; Surapati's haircut is short.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pieter_Cnoll#/media/File:Jacob_Coeman_Portrait_of_Pieter_Cnoll_and_his_familie_1665.jpg (in the public domain)



2. Untung Surapati, a 20th century impression, artist unknown by me

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Untung_Suropati.jpg (public domain)



Wikipedia
Pieter Cnoll and his family
Right: two slaves

Wikipedia

3. Batavia 1665, Pieter Cnoll, his Japanese wife, their two mixed blood daughters, two slaves (Surapati and an unknown lady)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pieter_Cnoll#/media/File:Jacob_Coeman_Portrait_of_Pieter_Cnoll_and_his_familie_1665.jpg (in the public domain)



Wikipedia
Detail
Female slave
Batavia 1665

4. Unknown lady

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pieter_Cnoll#/media/File:Jacob_Coeman_Portrait_of_Pieter_Cnoll_and_his_familie_1665.jpg (in the public domain)

Surapati 1650-1706

The loss of power of the Sultanates in Java and elsewhere in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1660 and 1700, in favour of the position of the Dutch, caused a reaction in the Muslim world. People began to talk of a Holy War. The Java Sea was made unsafe by Muslim pirates and there were local uprisings. Normally the jungles around Batavia and the Preanger Mountains, east from the city, hid hundreds of dubious characters and runaway slaves. Now they began to call themselves "patriots" and redoubled their cruel activities against loyalists. A dramatic human being among the agitators was a runaway slave, the Balinese Untung Surapati. He lived from about 1650 until 1706.

He was bought by Arabs as a slave on Bali when he was a young boy. In Batavia he became a slave in the house of the Dutch merchant Pieter Cnoll. Pieter Cnoll treated him very well. Regrettably Cnoll died and then his half-Japanese wife married Johann Bitter, an unpleasant creature. Mr Bitter's daughter Susanne fell in love with Surapati. They made love together and were caught. That was why Johann Bitter ordered to throw Surapati into the dungeons of the Town Hall. His daughter wept bitterly.

Surapati escaped in 1675 and soon he was the chief of an army of hundreds of Balinese outlaws. These desperados plundered the Preanger Mountains near Batavia. Nevertheless, in 1683, the Dutch offered them freedom under the condition that Surapati and his men would help to defeat the Sultan of Bantam. Surapati agreed and got the rank of a lieutenant in the army of the Dutch East-India Company, VOC. Belief it or not, in 1684 he was offended by a stupid Dutch officer and fled with his men to the Preanger Mountains again. After that he tried to assist the Sultan of Mataram against the Dutch. Finally this resulted in a failure and Surapati fled, now to Pasaruan in East Java. Around Pasaruan he founded a rather large realm for himself in 1687 and tried to fight the Dutch continuously. With success, sometimes. In 1706 a large Dutch army - now supported by the Sultan of Mataram, the Sultans of Madura and Surabaya - conquered the Pasaruan area. Surapati was seriously injured and died a couple of months later. His followers kept his death secret, but on June 18th 1707 the Dutchman Herman de Wild discovered his grave. Now you ask yourself: what has become of Susanne Bitter? Her father sent her to Holland, but she never arrived there. She died of tuberculosis on the island of St Helena in 1676.

Ending