

# **Native States in Colonial Southeast Asia: Genealogies, Circulations and Comparisons**

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## **Abstract**

Systems of indirect rule were widespread in colonial Southeast Asia. The reasons for this were obvious: it saved administrative costs and it produced legitimacy since the semblance of own rule was maintained in the eyes of the majority of the population, thus reducing the risk of revolt. Although many good historical studies of individual native states exist, there have been hardly any attempts to link these histories beyond the notion of the “invention of tradition”. This paper will attempt to close the gap, by, firstly, showing that the sequence in which native states were incorporated into the British, French and Dutch colonial domains in Southeast Asia give clues about their genealogical interconnectedness. These genealogies might even transgress the boundaries of Southeast Asia, because it is not unlikely that experiences with indirect rule in India and Africa influenced the formats adopted in Southeast Asia. A second focus of the paper will be on circulation. In the course of time, colonial specialists in dealing with indigenous rulers emerged, who were transferred from one locality to the other and thus introduced standardized notions of how a native state should look like. It is conceivable that, as a consequence of this circulation, European representations of indigenous rule seriously modified the realities of indirect rule in separate local settings. The final section of this paper will address the problem of comparison when addressing the politics of indirect rule. To what extent were indigenous polities, as these were incorporated in colonial empires of different European provenience, becoming more similar or more distinct?

## **I. Introduction**

Most historical atlases of colonialism produce a false image of the world, in the sense that colonies are portrayed as homogenous areas under one system of rule. In reality, most colonial empires were, from the legal point of view, complex structures in which various forms of rule co-existed. The historical literature on modern imperialism still focuses much on the reasons and motives European nation-states possessed when expanding their power overseas. So-called peripheral explanations of imperialism, which put local circumstance and indigenous factors into the centre of the analysis, have been produced in the form of case studies that have often contributed little to imperial history theory-building. Yet, colonial empires were often so decentralized in their decision-making that events on the spot often determined how those responsible in the

colony would act and those in Europe could only afterwards condone the steps taken. Within the British Empire the principle of 'remote supervision' was formally installed, which transferred authority from the Colonial Office to the India Office to the Governor of a particular area. Although in theory the French and Dutch colonial administrations were more centralized, in practice higher officials could not restrain local colonial officers to act as they saw fit.

Within all colonial empires a fundamental discussion was conducted between those who wanted to accommodate to native forms of authority and those who wanted to adapt the colonies to the western state model, the first preferring indirect forms of rule and the second advocating direct rule. In the French case the terms used were *association* versus *assimilation*. Systems of indirect rule were introduced in order to create the fiction of a continuation of self-government and secure western predominance at the same time. Through the mobilization of indigenous forms of power, which were mostly personal, sacral and ritualized in nature and therefore utterly different from western formats of legal-rational exercise of power, colonial rule could be positioned between the fact of western hegemony and the fiction of indigenous integrity. For India this process has been labeled as the 'invention of tradition' (B. S. Cohn in Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), a term now sometimes inflated to cover colonial rule as such.

It is within these broad parameters that a history of indirect rule in Southeast Asia needs to be written. Conventional colonial histories make a clear-cut distinction between direct and indirect rule, but in reality power relations were much more complex to be reduced to this dual categorization. Direct rule in the sense of complete abolition of indigenous forms of rule or the absence of brokers between local colonial officials and the indigenous population existed nowhere. At the same time there was always some sort of formal power relationship, since indirect rule implied the existence of a treaty with an indigenous ruler, in which the details of the power sharing arrangements were regulated. Over time these treaties became more and more standardized, so that indirect rule developed from a wild array of singular arrangements between European and Asian power holders into a system with standard procedures and features. In the Dutch East Indies a uniform model contract for native states outside Java was introduced in 1875 and was replaced in 1900 by a Short Declaration of three paragraphs only (Spit 1911).

Besides standardization of formal relations, western rule within so-called native states was gradually deepened. What started in the British colonies as equal treaties of mutual cooperation and help developed into agreements in which the native ruler recognized British paramountcy, which implied the loss of independent foreign relations and an own army in exchange for protection. Then, usually after the death of a native ruler or incidents of some sort, British preponderance was extended to include ever more aspects of internal sovereignty. A similar long term trend could be observed in the Dutch East Indies. Whereas according to principles of international law, rulers in the Indonesian Archipelago can be considered to have maintained their position as sovereign subjects, colonial law restricted their sovereignty as 'native states of the Eastern Archipelago in amity with the Netherlands government' so that they became vassals under a suzerain or overlord (Resink 1968: 203-205, 329). Over time, both in the case of India, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies principles of good governance were included in the treaties with the native rulers as a requirement for the latter, which made intervention in internal affairs easier.

Formalized legal arrangements did not govern actual power relationships though. Relations between colonial powers and indigenous rulers developed differently at different speeds in various parts of Southeast Asia, thus making it hard to distinguish between a British, French and Dutch model. In Burma British intervention led to the Yandabo Treaty of February 1826, which secured British dominance in the provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim. This marked the beginning of a lengthy period of rivalry, which led to a second Burma War (1853-53) and finally the abolition of Burmese king and the full incorporation into the British Indian Empire as area under direct rule in 1885. France did not have an overall strategy to become involved in Southeast Asia and its engagement with what was to become Indochina was connected to developments in China, particularly the expectations of huge trading opportunities in Yunnan. Saigon was taken in 1859, which started a northward process of colonization. In 1863 a French protectorate was installed in Cambodia, in the years between 1880 and 1885 protectorates in Central (Annam) and North (Tonkin) Vietnam. Siam or Thailand remained formally independent after the Bowring Treaty of 1855 but a series of unequal treaties with various foreign powers and the presence of foreign advisers made this kingdom an 'extreme example of indirect rule' (Trocki 1992: 86).

In insular Southeast Asia three British port polities were established in Penang, Malacca and Singapore during the late 18th and early 19th century. Only after 1874 British informal influence in the hinterlands of the Malay Peninsula was extended through the residential system, with which the Sultanates were gradually all incorporated under indirect rule. This process ended in 1895. The Dutch, who had been in Java since early 17th century, put Central Java under indirect rule since the end of the Java War (1825-30) whereas the Outer Islands were gradually taken into possession later on, a lengthy process that ended only around 1910. Spanish rule in the Philippines started already in the 16th century but there no precolonial state systems existed to base forms of indirect rule upon. Only the Americans, in the early 20th century, gave the Muslim areas in the South, which were ruled by Sultans, a form of autonomy which was retreated after independence.

Summarizing the advance of western imperialism in Southeast Asia, we can see the full range of colonial options towards native state being put into practice. Whereas in Burma the indigenous ruler was removed altogether, in neighboring Siam no formal colonial rule existed. Various forms of indirect rule governed colonial power relations in French Indochina, British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies.

Establishing indirect rule in parts of Southeast Asia does not tell much about its nature. A section on protected monarchies in a standard history of Indochina describes the situation of the Vietnamese emperor as having lost most of his power by only being entitled to nominate his ministers, regulate the rituals at court, possessing to right to pardon criminals and to bestow titles upon extraordinary villagers. At the same time the ritual and symbolism which uphold the semblance of imperial function lost their social value whilst the performance of ritual and the exercise of 'real power' had been separated (Brocheux&Hémery 2001:107). Likewise, in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies native rulers retained ritual power whilst losing grip on most administrative matters. However, such a point of view raises important questions on whether the nature of Southeast Asian statehood itself can be accessed through western perceptions. The distinction between ritual and real power does not seem to be very helpful, since already before western colonization indigenous power was mainly based on status and personal

networks rather than structures of formal authority. Anthony Milner, writing on Malay political culture, and Benedict Anderson, discussing the Javanese idea of power, have convincingly shown that indigenous views of statehood were different from western ones (Milner 1982; Anderson 1990: 17-77). Therefore relegating native states, for instance as done by John Pemberton for Java, to the position of creations of orientalism robs the Southeast Asian side of its own agency (Pemberton 1994).

## II. Genealogies of Indirect Rule

Cambodia, Laos, Malaya and parts of Indonesia were all under some form of indirect rule. Does this mean that there existed, within one colony or between colonies, a genealogy of indirect rule? To answer this question one cannot limit oneself to one world region, since developments in South Asia, Africa and other parts of empire might have conditioned the formats of indirect rule in Southeast Asia. I see several concrete ways of studying genealogies of indirect rule:

First, collections of treaties with indigenous rulers in each colony show their interconnectedness within an overall process of gradually deepening western influence. Series of treaties were collected as time progressed and made available to colonial administrators everywhere. In Java, for instance, an 1832 inventory of the archive of the Resident's office of Surakarta (Central Java) shows that such treaty bundles were available on the local level. Later on these collections were compiled in the form of official publications for reference purposes (for Malaya Maxwell & Gibson 1924; for Indonesia Colijn 1907-1909).

Second, branches of the colonial administration that specialized on relationships with and supervision of native states developed a separate policy for these areas, thus creating more systemic interdependence. In British Malaya a Colonial Secretary for Native States existed, in the Dutch East Indies a Bureau of Native Affairs, in French Indochina a *bureau d'affaires indigènes*.

Thirdly, inspiration for the establishment and execution of indirect rule may have come from examples beyond the own colony or could be exported elsewhere. During their training at Hailesbury or Delft/Leiden or at the *écoles coloniales* in Paris, future colonial administrators were taught comparative colonial politics as a subject. Books in the libraries of the colonial offices in London, Paris and The Hague contained information on indirect rule in other nonwestern areas. Some colonial officers were sent on missions to neighbouring colonies on fact-finding missions, which included native state matters.

Fourthly, there existed a whole range of studies on comparative colonial politics by British, Dutch and French authors. The famous book by Paul Leroy Beaulieu, titled *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (1874), informed the French on the British system of rule in India and the Dutch system in the East Indies. More pointedly is Antonowicz French study of native states in India (Antonowicz 1931). The book by the British author J.W.B. Money, *Java or how to manage a colony* (1862), C. Day, *The Policy and Administration of the Dutch in Java* (1904) and the booklet by the Dutch professor D.G. Stibbe, *Inleiding tot de kennis der bestuursinstellingen in vreemde koloniën* [Introduction to the knowledge of administrative institutions in foreign colonies] (1924) are other examples of crossovers.

There are good reasons to assume that the format of indirect rule in Malaya was based on the Indian model, whereas the practice of indirect rule there became systematized in Africa later on (Sadka 1960: 82, 90). Indirect rule was established by the British in North Nigeria before World War I and then transmitted to other colonies in Africa. Instrumental in this latter process was Frederick Lugard, born in Madras and having been posted in Afghanistan, Sudan and Burma before becoming a Governor in Nigeria. His book *The dual Mandate* (1922) became a classic and must-read for all colonial civil servants (Iliffe 1995: chapter 9).

Developments in Southern India were of particular importance for the development of indirect rule in Southeast Asia. Since 1799 the British and Rajas of Mysore in South India were bound by treaties of alliance, a subsidiary treaty with the ruler of Hyderabad in October 1800 became the standard type of such alliances (Srinivasachari 1951: iii). The relationship between Indian princes and the British Raj was seen as unique ‘without a close parallel within the British Empire or elsewhere’ (Coupland 1968: 13). British protectorates were extended rapidly in the period between 1814 and 1857 (Lee-Warner 1971), thus prefiguring events in Malaya by up to six decades. There is no time gap between India and Java but it is unclear whether indirect rule in Java was more the outcome of a long contact history between the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) and the Javanese realm of Mataram and its successors or shaped by a history of transfer between India and Java. Of particular interest for the last-mentioned scenario is the period 1811-1816, during which the British ruled parts of Indonesia. However, treaties with the native states in Indonesia since 1811 were clearly based on the formats of pre-existing alliances from the VOC period which go back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Developments in India at least influenced the Dutch indirectly. The Encyclopedia of the Dutch East Indies contains a reference that the Dutch used the term ‘suzerainty’ to extend their competences in their dealings with native states and in doing this were inspired by the British-Indian example (*Encyclopedie van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië*, Vol IV, 1921: 828). In reverse, there is evidence that, in connection with Malaya, the British also looked towards Java. The Under Secretary of State of the Colonial Office, Herbert, wrote on 20 December 1875, on the pros and cons of annexation as follow-up of a crisis in Perak, where Resident N. Birch had been murdered:

“ The system of governing a native country through a Resident may be so applied as to control it absolutely, as is done in those thoroughly subjugated parts of Java, where the Dutch Government governs through the native princes whom it appoints Regents with a Resident and Controleurs at the courts of each – or simply to influence and advise by accrediting a diplomatic officers to the independent native states, as supposed we were doing in these Malay states” (Sadka 1960: 169)

Herbert intended to juxtapose indirect rule in Malaya and Dutch so-called direct rule in Java, which implied administrative dualism in which Dutch officers worked through regional chiefs (the Regents or *bupati*). Later, the British colonial officer in Burma J.S. Furnivall visited the Dutch East Indies and also commented upon its system of rule from a comparative point of view, now contrasting directly ruled Burma with indirectly ruled Java. Furnivall argued that British and Dutch colonial policies were rooted in different traditions, the British adhering to the rule of law and economic freedom, whereas the Dutch imposed restraints on economic forces by strengthening

personal authority and conserving the influence of custom. According to him, however, the choice between direct and indirect rule was more determined by economic environment than national philosophy of empire. Indirect rule through the local chieftain was the simplest and cheapest manner in which a western power could establish economic control (Furnivall 1948: ix; 277, 279).

French genealogies of indirect rule in Indochina might have depended on developments in Northern Africa but probably also have been inspired by what the French in India saw on the part of the British there. A French book published in Paris in 1857 on the British in India contains a long list of 'étatsnatifsindépendants du gouvernement de la compagnie', illustrating the practice of the Indian government to survey 'independent' indigenous princes (Valbezen 1856). Two years later Arthur de Gobinau, a diplomat of Napoleon III and theorist of racial inequality, wrote on European-Asian relations and discussed the two principles of colonial rule. According to him a European power could either try to assimilate the people in an Asian area (such as the Romans and the Russians were supposed to have done) or follow the British system by trying to dominate them without interfering ( le systèmeanglais [...] de vouloirdominer les masses conquises sans se mêler à elles [...]) (Priollaud 1983: 165). Soon afterwards, in 1863, the French protectorate over Cambodia was installed.

From this scattered evidence it is at least clear that besides internal dynamics driving the politics of indirect rule within each colony or each colonial empire, there were elements of mutual influence between the systems of indirect rule within and beyond Southeast Asia. It is rather likely that the genealogies of indirect rule were multiple and often non-linear rather than singular and straightforward. Further archival evidence is needed to show what inspired colonial administrators to pursue a particular line of approach towards native states and in which concrete cases they were inspired by practices of indirect rule in other colonies.

### **III. Circulation of Colonial Specialists**

Indirect rule mostly depended on a relatively small number of specialists, who were circulated between so-called native states. All these were frontier administrators, who liked to travel to new places and had a keen interest in local languages and cultures. Rising through the ranks they collected experiences in several areas under indirect rule, before they were elevated to higher posts and, at least in the British case, moved between colonies within the larger Empire. The Dutch career path was differently, as normally colonial officers first served on remote posts on the Outer Islands of the Dutch East Indies, before being posted in several Residencies on Java and finally entered the higher echelons of the colonial bureaucracy with its seat in Batavia and Buitenzorg in West Java. Transfer of colonial officials between the Dutch East and West Indies, as far as I know, did not occur, with Johannes van den Bosch (the founder of the Cultivation System in Java) as an exception. In the French case colonial specialists were circulated within and beyond Indochina.

In British Malaya four administrators played a pivotal role – Hugh Low, Frank Swettenham, William Edward Maxwell and Hugh Clifford. Their career paths overlap in many ways. Swettenham (1851-1946) was first collector of land revenue, before he was sent on several missions to the native states in 1874, he was an assistant colonial secretary for native states, Resident of Selangor, Resident of Perak and finally Governor of the Straits Settlements. Maxwell (1846 - 1897) held various law and police posts ,

before he was nominated Assistant Resident in Perak and later Resident of Selangor, Colonial Secretary to become Governor of the Gold Coast in 1895. His son William George Maxwell (1871-1959) was Resident of Perak as well and British advisor to Kedah after 1909. Clifford (1866-1941) was in Perak and Selangor, before he was sent to Pahang to negotiate a treaty with the Sultan, he stayed in this area on several posts before he became a Governor in Trinidad, Ceylon, the Gold Coast, Nigeria and the Straits Settlements (Sadka 1960: 183-185). All these Residents were researchers at the same time and wrote important books, which, together with R.O. Winstedt's publications, became the basis for the academic field of Malay studies. John Bowring was a Governor of Kanton (Guangzhou) and Hongkong before he became involved in Siam as a temporary visitor to negotiate a treaty that was to become the basis for the monarchy's continued formal independence since foreigners were allowed free trade and given extraterritorial rights. Similar treaties were then concluded with French, Danish, Portuguese, Dutch and Prussians (Terwiel 2005: 147), which created a power balance between the Siam monarchy and western powers. During the negotiations for the British contract Bowring was accompanied by his son, also named John, who later played an important role in the modernization of Mysore after the Mutiny of 1857 (Hettne 1978: 34).

John Crawford (1783-1868) was a servant of the British East India Company in Northwest India, before he was transferred to Penang and then became involved in Java from 1811 onwards where he was nominated Resident at the court of Yogyakarta. In 1821 he was sent on missions to Siam, Cochinchina and in 1827 to Burma. On the basis of his experiences he wrote influential books, which were widely read at the time. His *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820) synthesised Dutch knowledge and his journals of his embassies of 1821 and 1827 laid the ground work for later British engagements in these areas.

J.I. van Sevenhoven (1782-1841) supervised the final transfer of territory by the Ceribon Sultans to the Dutch and was commissioner in Palembang in 1821 where he deposed the last Sultan. From 1824 until 1826 he was Resident of Surakarta in Central Java, to become commissioner of both the Javanese Principalities in 1830-31, after the Java War had come to an end. H.G. Nahuys van Burgst (1782-1858) had several times been a Resident in Surakarta and Yogyakarta, in 1818 he became a commissioner in coastal Borneo where he concluded treaties with the rulers of Pontianak, Sambas and Banjarmasin. In 1830 he was back in the Javanese Principalities to set up the system of indirect rule that lasted until the end of the colonial era (Houben 1994: 17-19).

Glimpses from the circulation of protectorate specialists in French colonies can also be inferred from career paths of individual civil servants. Auguste Pavie (1847-1925) came to Indochina as navy soldier and was involved in the construction of telegraph cables before he became French consul in Luang Prabang (Laos) in 1886, where he arranged a treaty with the local king. Then he became a consul as well as general commissioner of Laos in Bangkok in 1893, where he was involved in the Franco-Siamese conflict over the borders of Laos. Jules Harmand (1845-1921) was a medical doctor who travelled through unknown parts of Indochina, before being made consul in Bangkok in 1881 and then, two years later, commissioner in Tonkin. In 1885 he was a consul in Calcutta, before he concluded at the Vietnamese imperial court in Hué the 1888 treaty by which Annam became a French protectorate. Paul Bihourd (born 1846) was a diplomat, first in Tunis and then as Resident in Annam-Tonkin (1887-88).

Victor Gabriel Lemaire (1839-1907) started as an interpreter in Shanghai and was transferred to Canton in 1859. Later he became consul in several places (Kanton, Hongkong, Calcutta) before he was posted as a Resident in Hué (1884-1885) and then went onwards to Beijing. An important Resident in Cambodia was Jean Moura, who was placed there twice, from 1868 till 1870 and from 1871 until 1879. His career seems to represent another type of circulation, to be found in the Dutch East Indies too, with the same person returning back to the same place more than once. He was the author of *Le Royaume de Cambodge* (1883) which became an authoritative work on Cambodian history and culture (Osborne 1997: 189).

To establish how comparative career paths in connection with native states functioned needs extensive biographical research. The cursory impressions gained here suggest that specialists were indeed circulated and that, in the French and British case, these circuits transcended individual colonies, whereas Dutch civil servants remained within the Indonesian Archipelago. As their mutual colonial possessions Southeast Asia were safe after the Anglo-Dutch Sumatra Treaty of 1824, the British and Dutch mostly sent in experienced colonial administrators. The French operated with explorers and diplomats, since Cambodia and Laos were contested areas. Their patterns of movement went beyond Indochina proper, including China, Siam and India. It is interesting to note that in several cases the office of being a specialist of native affairs was handed down from father to son.

#### **IV. Comparative Dimensions of Indirect Rule**

John Malcolm, Resident at the court of Mysore, had a clear idea on the Resident's tasks:

‘stimulate the first minister to improve the state of country and of its inhabitants and to impress him strongly with the idea that his favour with the English Government is in proportion to the activity of his exertions in his pursuit’  
(Woodruff 1965, Vol I: 207)

In British Malaya the Resident was thought of as a mediator, a consular officer with extraterritorial jurisdiction, supposed to acquire control over external relations and defense and exerting informal influence over internal administration. His prime task was to protect British subjects and foreigners engaged in trade (Sadka 1960: 82-83). Similarly, a Dutch Resident in the Javanese Principalities was primarily a diplomat, being in charge of maintaining close contacts with the court as well as monitoring events within Javanese circles. He was an administrator to a more limited degree, including the supervision of local European administration and the exercise of justice (Houben 1994: 93).

A central mechanism of indirect rule was not only the maintenance of protocol by participation in all kinds of court rituals but also seeking a working relationship with the highest indigenous administrator or group of officials, who took care of governmental affairs instead of the King himself, whose function was mostly of a ritualised nature. In South India, the British worked mainly through the *diwan* and in Malaya through the *bendahara*. Similarly, the Dutch Resident in Central Java discussed state matters with the *patih*. The French at the Hué court were confronted with powerful Vietnamese mandarins and at the court in Cambodia with Siamese.

Within systems of indirect rule a complex juggling for power existed between the European and indigenous spheres of influence, which partly overlapped and in which the Resident, the chief native official and possibly a translator played pivotal roles. In the treaties of indirect rule, as already pointed out above, sometimes a division of labour between a domain of western and that of indigenous rule was made. The western domain included all the 'hard' aspects of statehood such as law, finances and economics, whereas the Asian domain was concerned with customs and religion. Nevertheless indirect rule implied cross-cultural consultation on all matters and the format invented for this was a body of representatives from both sides named state council.

A comparison of the actual workings of native states can be done through a study of the minutes of state council meetings in different colonies. Here again only cursory impressions can be made on the basis of the limited material at my disposal. For this reason I will limit myself to a comparison between the Malay state of Pahang in the late 1880s and early 1890s and the Javanese Principality of Yogyakarta in the 1830s on the basis of the studies by Linehan (1936/1973) and Houben (1994). The main question is whether the western Resident imposed western conceptions of rule in such a way that native states were forced to adopt a certain model of modernization, implying that its starting-point reflected only a presumed reality or orientalist vision of what being a native state meant.

In Pahang, between the establishment of a British protectorate in 1888 and the end of 1891 in total six state council meetings were held, in which senior representatives of both the British and Malay side took part. During these meetings topics were discussed and regulations decided upon that cover core elements of colonial rule – revenue and expenditure, land regulations, boundary demarcations and the question of slavery. As far as the Malay sphere is concerned the allowances for the Malay chiefs and the succession to the throne were the main issues. From Linehan's account we get the impression that the Resident was the main actor in these meetings through phrases like 'he pointed out the impossibility', 'raised the question' and 'introduced a bill'. In contrast the Sultan was more than once absent, 'expressed surprise' or 'agreed to issue an order'. The Malay verdict on the first Resident of Pahang, John Pickersgill Rodger, was rather reserved: 'he was a good man but stiff-necked' (*satutuan yang baikjugatetapilaksanataliada-lahsering-nyasedikit*) (Linehan 1973: 135; section based upon pages 127-138).

Information on the state council meetings in Yogyakarta from 1832 to 1834 can be found in minutes in the Javanese language. Council meetings were held on a weekly basis because the Sultan was still a minor and needed to be represented by three guardians. Like in Pahang later some matters discussed concerned the extension of western rule, foremost the functioning of the police, the administration of justice, the supervision of finances and the control over border areas. However, issues concerning the internal Javanese administration took up most of the time – control and distribution of apauage land, upkeep of the court and its personnel, allowances, succession in office and the preparation of the Sultan for his accession to office. Dutch Resident F.G. Valck's dominance over these affairs is disclosed in a monologue on how Hamengkubuwana V should be prepared for office, amongst others by marriage to an appropriate wife and a good education. Although his words were very diplomatic, suggesting that he was involving the Javanese guardians in a matter of confidence and

counting on their friendship, there was also an element of threat urging them to win the favour of the Dutch government and try to keep it (Houben 1994: 157-182).

The Yogyakarta and Pahang state council discussions show how dominant the European Resident was in the actual administration of a native state. Gullick labels this as 'the man on the spot who exploited the 'fiction' that he was merely an adviser' (Gullick 1992: 32). Matters brought up and the solutions in the form of regulations were all prepared beforehand, which make these meetings a curious hybrid of both ritual exchange and substantive governance. Only rarely, in the form of requests or disputes, did the indigenous side take the initiative. Their politics was a different one, concerned with competition for status and income or even resistance. For that reason at the courts western powers maintained a series of paid informants and Residents wrote lengthy reports on the character of important indigenous actors, trying to find out how pro-western they were in their attitude or to what extent secretly planning revolt.

## V. Concluding Observations

This paper has attempted to bring together elements from a huge literature on systems of indirect rule in the British, French and Dutch parts of Southeast Asia. It has been shown that colonial administrations in one colony knew about indirect rule practices in other colonies. Also, it can be argued that a complex genealogy of indirect rule, especially with regard to its formalities, existed. Native state systems in 19th century Southeast Asia were built upon the experiences of the East India and Dutch East Indies Companies in the 17th and 18th centuries. Besides chronological dimensions, there have been geographical connections, since indirect rule in India, Malaya, Java and Indochina was at least cross-referenced by colonial specialists of the time. Colonial officers, mostly named Residents, who carried out indirect rule were circulated between native states. This implies that they tried to format these on the basis of certain general notions of how indigenous states looked like and how they could be 'improved' by weeding out deficiencies of governance. This last point can be more amply shown by studying the practice of indirect rule in a comparative manner, for instance through the records of state council meetings.

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