

Wong Agung Wilis (1720–1780): Leadership and Symbolic Resistance in Blambangan's Anti-Colonial Dutch East India Company Struggle

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Abstract

The Kingdom of Blambangan, Java's last Hindu realm, faced repeated incursions from regional powers and European colonial forces, culminating in resistance against the Dutch East India Company (VOC). This study examines the life and role of Wong Agung Wilis (born Prince Putra II in 1720), the offspring of a strategic alliance between Blambangan and Mengwi, formed through the marriage of Prince Putra I and Princess Mengwi, aimed at thwarting VOC threats. Employing Louis Gottschalk's historical method, which involves heuristic source collection, criticism, interpretation, and historiography, the research draws on primary chronicles and secondary scholarship. Findings reveal Wilis' early exile to Mengwi, his dismissal as patih amid coup suspicions, and his leadership in the 1767–1768 uprising, where he mobilized multi-ethnic forces for initial victories, including the seizure of Ulupampang Fort. Internal betrayals led to his 1768 capture, exile to Banda, 1778 escape, and death in 1780. Posthumously, his legacy endured through "pseudo-Wilis" figures like Rempek Jagapati and his daughter Sayu Wiwit, embodying a sustained anti-colonial spirit. This research underscores Wilis as a charismatic symbol of local resistance, contributing to Nusantara's historiography by bridging personal narratives with broader colonial dynamics and suggesting events for further ethno-historical analysis.

Keywords:

Wong Agung Wilis,
Blambangan Resistance,
Mengwi Alliance, Pseudo-
Wilis, VOC Colonialism

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Introduction

The Kingdom of Blambangan was located at the eastern tip of Java Island. It was established in 1478 following the collapse of the Majapahit Empire. As a newly founded kingdom, Blambangan possessed abundant economic resources, expansive territory, and a sizable population, making it a prime target for neigh-

boring major kingdoms.¹ The Demak Sultanate, under the leadership of Prince Trenggana, launched campaigns toward Blambangan in its quest for territorial expansion. In addition to Demak, the kingdoms of Gelgel and Mengwi also threaten Blambangan to counter the Islamic influence brought by Demak.²

According to Tome Pires' report titled *Suma Oriental*, Blambangan emerged as a large, wealthy, and prosperous kingdom under the rule of Pate Pimtor from 1501 to 1531. Its territory encompassed Canjtam (Pasuruan), Lamajang (Lumajang), Pajajaran (Probolinggo), Panarukan, Besuki, and Banyuwangi. Blambangan's greatness stemmed from its control over three vital ports: Panarukan, Ulu Pangpang, and Puger.³ As a prominent kingdom, Blambangan consistently attracted aggression from other major powers.⁴ Beyond Demak, Gelgel, and Mengwi, the Mataram Sultanate also pursued large-scale expansion into eastern Java, targeting Blambangan for subjugation.⁵ Under Sultan Agung, the Mataram Sultanate launched attacks on Blambangan in 1635 and 1639. The 1639 assault proved successful, allowing Sultan Agung to conquer and control the entire region.⁶ In 1646–1647, the Mataram-Blambangan War erupted once more, with many Blambangan residents, aided by Balinese kingdoms, rebelling against Mataram.⁷ Amangkurat I, Sultan Agung's successor, failed to maintain control over Blambangan, resulting in its liberation from Islamic Mataram influence. Mataram's unstable political conditions facilitated this detachment, particularly the ongoing conflicts between Amangkurat I and his brother, Raden Mas Alit.⁸

Following Blambangan's shift under Balinese influence, numerous key figures in the kingdom emerged with Balinese royal descent, assuming leader-

¹ A. Kumar, "Historiografi Jawa mengenai Periode Kolonial: Studi Kasus," in *Dari Raja Ali Haji hingga Hamka*, ed. Anthony J.S. Reid and D.G. Marr (Jakarta: Grafiti, 1983), 77; C. Lekkerkerker, 'Balambangan,' in *De Indisch Gids II* (Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1923), 1036-1040.

² Gilang Hasbi Asshidiqi and Irma Agustiana, "Suku Osing: Bentuk Perlawanan Budaya Masyarakat Blambangan terhadap Mataram Islam," *Jurnal Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya* 8, no 1 (2022): 92, <https://doi.org/10.36424/jpsb.v8i1.290>.

³ Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*, 2nd series no. 89-90 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944), 198, <https://mccgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/10870283>.

⁴ M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962), 152; W. P. Arifin, *Babad Blambangan* (Yogyakarta: Bentang & École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1995), 309; Nawiyanto, *Perekonomian Keresidenan Besuki Masa Pendudukan Jepang* (Yogyakarta: LaksBang PRESSindo, 2019), 28-29.

⁵ Asshidiqi and Agustiana, "Suku Osing," 94.

⁶ H.J. de Graaf, *Puncak Kekuasaan Mataram: Politik Ekspansi Sultan Agung* (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers, 1990), 262-271.

⁷ W. L. Olthof, *Babad Tanah Jawi: Mulai dari Nabi Adam sampai Tahun 1647* (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2009).

⁸ H.J. de Graaf, *Disintegrasi Mataram di Bawah Amangkurat I* (Jakarta: Pustaka Grafiti Pers & KITLV, 1987), 29-30. H.J. de Graaf and Theodore Gautier Thomas Pigeaud, *Kerajaan-kerajaan Islam Pertama di Jawa: Tinjauan Sejarah Politik Abad XV dan XVI* (Jakarta: Grafiti, 1985), 207.

ship roles. One such figure, whose biography is examined in this work, is Wong Agung Wilis. Previous research on Wong Agung Wilis includes Nurmaria's article titled "Gerakan Sosial Politik Masyarakat Blambangan terhadap Kompeni di Blambangan Tahun 1767-1768,"⁹ which discusses Wilis' struggles against the VOC during that period. Another notable work is May Rawan's thesis, "Perjuangan Wong Agung Wilis Melawan VOC Belanda di Banyuwangi 1767-1769," which focuses on Wilis' efforts alongside his people to resist VOC influence in Blambangan. Scholarly inquiries into Blambangan's history and resistance against colonial forces have provided valuable insights into the region's geopolitical struggles. For example, Margana's comprehensive study, *Java's Last Frontier: The Struggle for Hegemony of Blambangan, c. 1763-1813*, delves into the interplay of VOC expansion, Balinese alliances, and local rebellions, highlighting how figures like Wong Agung Wilis contributed to the broader contest for control in eastern Java.¹⁰ Additionally, research by Arps in "Osing Kids and the Banners of Blambangan: Ethnolinguistic Identity and History in an East Javanese Seminary" explores the cultural and linguistic legacies of Blambangan's resistance, noting Wilis as a pivotal organizer of anti-VOC efforts in the 1760s and his enduring symbolic presence in local narratives.¹¹ Another relevant work is the article "19th-Century Blambangan Society: The Dynamics of Religion and Culture in the Perspective of Islamic Historiography" by Rahman et al., which examines how 19th-century resistances, including Wilis' uprising, influenced subsequent religious identities and social dynamics in the area.¹²

Despite these contributions, a notable research gap remains in the in-depth biographical examination of Wong Agung Wilis and his enduring role as a symbol of popular resistance. While prior studies emphasize military campaigns, political alliances, and cultural impacts, they often overlook the personal motivations, life trajectory, and posthumous symbolic reincarnations (such as "pseudo-Wilis" figures) that amplified his legacy. This study addresses this gap by offering a detailed biographical analysis, drawing on historical methods to illuminate

⁹ Nurmaria, "Gerakan Sosial Politik Masyarakat Blambangan Terhadap Kompeni di Blambangan Tahun 1767-1768," *Patanjala* 9, no. 2 (2017): 407–422, <https://doi.org/10.30959/patanjala.v9i3.26>.

¹⁰ Sri Margana, "Java's Last Frontier: The Struggle for Hegemony of Blambangan, c. 1763-1813," (Diss. thesis, Leiden University, 2007), <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/12547>.

¹¹ Bernard Arps, "Osing Kids and the Banners of Blambangan: Ethnolinguistic Identity and the Regional Past as Ambient Themes in an East Javanese Town," *Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 11, no. 1 (2009): 1-38, <https://doi.org/10.17510/wjhi.v11i1.142>.

¹² Abdur Rahman et al., "19th-Century Blambangan Society: The Dynamics of Religion and Culture in the Perspective of Islamic Historiography," *Proceedings of International Conference on Islamic Civilization and Humanities (ICONITIES)* 3 (2025): 1282-1305, <https://proceedings.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/iconfahum/article/view/3328>.

Wilis' leadership as a catalyst for sustained anti-colonial sentiment in Blambangan, thereby enriching the historiography of local resistance in colonial Nusantara.

Methods

This study focuses on exploring the life history of Wong Agung Wilis and the reasons he led the Blambangan people in their resistance against the VOC. Therefore, it employs a historical research methodology as outlined by Louis Gottschalk in *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* (1950).¹³ The approach is structured into four sequential stages: (1) heuristics, involving the systematic collection of sources; (2) source criticism, which verifies the authenticity, reliability, and relevance of the gathered materials; (3) interpretation, encompassing analysis and synthesis of the data to derive meaningful insights; and (4) historiography, the final presentation of findings in a coherent narrative form.

Sources were primarily drawn from archival and scholarly materials, including primary texts, research monographs, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Key primary sources include historical chronicles, such as the *Babad Blambangan*, and reports from European travelers, like Tome Pires' *Suma Oriental* (1944). Secondary sources comprise academic works, such as C. Lekkerkerker's *Blambangan* (1923) and Sri Margana's *Ujung Timur Jawa 1763-1813: Perebutan Hegemoni Blambangan* (2012)¹⁴, as well as journal articles, including Nurmaria's "Gerakan Sosial Politik Masyarakat Blambangan terhadap Kompeni di Blambangan Tahun 1767-1768" (2017)¹⁵ and Abdullah's "Perlawanan Rakyat Blambangan terhadap VOC Tahun 1767-1773" (2019)¹⁶. These were selected for their direct relevance to Blambangan's history, Wong Agung Wilis' biography, and anti-VOC resistance, ensuring a balanced perspective from both indigenous and colonial viewpoints.

Data collection involved library and digital archive searches, with cross-verification against multiple accounts to mitigate biases inherent in colonial records. Source criticism evaluated internal consistency, external corroboration, and potential authorial prejudices, such as those in VOC documents. Interpretation synthesized biographical details, geopolitical contexts, and socio-political

¹³ Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1950), 52.

¹⁴ Sri Margana, *Ujung Timur Pulau Jawa, 1763-1813: Perebutan Hegemoni Blambangan* (Pustaka Ifada: Yogyakarta, 2012).

¹⁵ Nurmaria, "Gerakan Sosial Politik," 407-422.

¹⁶ Ahmad Ferdi Abdullah, "Blambangan People's Resistance to VOC Year 1767-1773," *Santhet: Jurnal Sejarah Pendidikan dan Humaniora* 3, no. 2 (2019): 46-55, <https://doi.org/10.36526/jsh.v3i2.695>.

dynamics, while historiography aimed to construct an objective, chronological narrative supported by evidence. Ethical considerations included the accurate representation of historical figures and the avoidance of anachronistic interpretations, aligning with the standards for historical scholarship.

Results and Discussion

Wong Agung Wilis was born in 1720 under the name Prince Putra II. He hailed from a noble family; his father was Prince Putra I, and his mother was Princess Kabakaba from the Kingdom of Mengwi. The marriage between Prince Putra I and Princess Kabakaba represented a political alliance between Blambangan and Mengwi aimed at countering threats from the VOC trading company.¹⁷ As Wong Agung Wilis reached adulthood, Prince Putra II – commonly known as Wong Agung Wilis – traveled to Bali, specifically to the Kingdom of Mengwi, accompanied by his uncle, Ki Gusti Ngurah Ketut Kaba-kaba.¹⁸ The reason behind Ki Gusti Ngurah Ketut Kaba-kaba's decision to take Wong Agung Wilis to Bali was the impending instability of Mangkuningrat's rule. When Mangkuningrat and his family fled to Bali, they were safeguarded and brought to Mengwi.¹⁹

Upon returning to Blambangan, Prince Danuningrat dismissed Wong Agung Wilis from his position as *pathih* due to rumors circulating about a coup. This dismissal did not provoke Wilis to seek revenge against Prince Danuningrat; however, he felt deeply offended by the decision. In response, Wilis retreated to become a hermit on the southern coast but maintained collaboration with his siblings. The Babad Balambangan also records that he expelled 800 Bugis colonists from Pakem under the leadership of Daeng Pagersah Pagarroejoeng. Additionally, he dispatched the Balinese envoy Rangga Satata, sent by Mengwi, but it is noted that Mas Soetadjiwa killed Rangga Satata during a dispute in battle.²⁰

Leading the Blambangan People Against the VOC

The British had established trade relations with Blambangan's rulers before the VOC assumed control of the region. The arrival of British traders is estimated to have occurred during Danuningrat's reign. Blambangan's agricultural products, such as tobacco, cloves, and nutmeg, were highly prized by the British. In exchange, they offered gunpowder, bullets, rifles, and silk fabrics. Blambangan's

¹⁷ Lekkerkerker, "Balambangan," 1044.

¹⁸ Lekkerkerker, "Balambangan."

¹⁹ Lekkerkerker.

²⁰ Lekkerkerker, "Balambangan," 1046.

rulers and Balinese leaders welcomed the British traders, who sought monopoly rights to purchase all of Blambangan's produce.²¹

Van Rijke became aware that an increasing number of people were refusing to participate in transactions or cooperate with the VOC. He realized that Wong Agung Wilis was forging ties with Malaja Koesoma in Lumajang, distributing money and weapons obtained from the British, and assembling troops from various ethnic groups, including Balinese, Mandarese, Chinese, and Bugis. To address this, Van Rijke recruited 1,000 troops from Madura and Bangkalan. Peranakan individuals (of Balinese and Blambangan descent) deemed disloyal to the Company/VOC were treated as slaves and handed over to the Company for sale at 35 rijksdaalders per person.²²

Wong Agung Wilis, also known as Gusti Agung Dalem Dimade, led the forces. Both his daughters and all his soldiers were summoned to assemble. According to *Mas Purwasstra*, his family members included Ki Surantani, Gajahnasar, Ki Tambagan, Pasekan, Ki Tambaayu, and Ki Gajah-ailingan. The king ordered Ki Tambakbayu to construct a sturdy fort. The people and Mengwi troops promptly built a robust fortification 23 spear-lengths wide along Seseh Beach. Numerous cannons were positioned in every embrasure along the ramparts. They were trained for warfare on the open plains of the beach. The king stated that the Mataram ruler (from Java) also intended to attack Bali at the VOC's instigation. The VOC enlisted Prince Jingga's aid to seize Blambangan, so it was unsurprising that Prince Danuningrat was promptly executed at Seseh.²³

Rijcke reported to Governor Vos that Wilis launched his first attack on February 18, 1768. The target was to capture the Company's fort at Ulupampang. Wilis and his troops confronted Captain Maurer, Skipper Pietersz, Lieutenant Diest, and Lieutenant Wipperman, along with their forces. The battle took place during the rainy season, putting pressure on the Company forces from Wilis and his allies. The Company troops retreated in an orderly fashion to Pagon, an Islamic village near the town, and burned surrounding settlements, rendering firearms ineffective. Rijcke claimed that 150 of Wilis' troops were killed, while the number of Company casualties on the battlefield was not specified. In this initial battle, the Company forces were defeated, but hundreds of Wilis' troops under Encik Kamis' command successfully captured the Ulupampang fort and executed spies there by beheading.²⁴ For a time, Wilis enjoyed success as *Mas Anom*

²¹ Abdullah, "Perlwanan Rakyat Blambangan," 49.

²² Lekkerkerker, "Balambangan," 1052.

²³ Abdullah, "Perlwanan Rakyat Blambangan," 50.

²⁴ Nurmaria, "Gerakan Sosial Politik," 419.

and Mas Weka, the regents of Blambangan appointed by the Company, decided to join him. Alternating support strengthened his position in the town. To prevent the Company from facing food shortages in their own fort, Wilis' forces were also tasked with defending Ulupampang and the surrounding Banyualit area.²⁵

On March 21, 1768, Van Rijke received reports that the regents appointed by the Company—namely Regent Anom and Uno—had defected and sworn allegiance to Wong Agung Wilis. A sudden battle ensued, with Ulupampang once again becoming the site of the conflict. Days later, Van Rijke was besieged by Wilis' forces at Banyualit Fort. Only two former Blambangan princes remained loyal to the Company: Mas Sutanegara and Wangsengsari, both of whom were appointed as interim regents of Blambangan by Van Rijke. To confront Wilis' formidable forces, Van Rijke recruited additional troops from Madura and declined assistance from Yogyakarta. As compensation, he requested reinforcements from Batavia, along with 1,700 troops from Lumajang via the southern route toward eastern Blambangan; however, 400 of them died from dysentery. A new observation post was established at Nusa Barong. Thanks to this planning, Surabaya Governor Coop à Groen could sail with his additional 2,000 troops to Banyualit.²⁶

After seizing Ulupampang, Gezaghebber Coop à Groen planned to attack Kotalateng on May 18, 1768. However, Wilis' forces struck the Company before the assault could begin, resulting in a few Company soldiers being injured or killed in the surprise attack. The Company proceeded to assault Kotalateng, defended by Wilis' 6,000 troops. The palace proved impenetrable to the Company.²⁷ Reports from Gezaghebber Coop à Groen to Governor Vos indicated that Wong Agung Wilis' own troops suddenly betrayed him. Sukanagara turned against Wong Agung Wilis, attacking from the rear with 2,000 soldiers. This betrayal allowed the palace to be encircled by Company forces, severely weakening defenses. On May 18, 1768, Gezaghebber Coop à Groen and his troops successfully breached Wilis' fort. They burned Kotalateng, and the palace remnants were used to build a new defensive fort for the Company. This demonstrated to the Blambangan people that the Company had gained control over the region—military expeditions in 1771-1772 ensured that the VOC had complete control over this region.²⁸ Mas Uno and Mas Anom also betrayed Wong Agung Wilis by

²⁵ Nurmaria.

²⁶ Lekkerkerker, "Balambangan," 1052.

²⁷ Nurmaria, "Gerakan Sosial Politik," 420.

²⁸ E.S. de Klerck, *History of the Netherlands East Indies*, vol. 1 (Rotterdam: Brusse, 1938), 401-407; Heru Sukardi, et al., *Sejarah Perlawanan terhadap Kolonialisme dan Imperialisme di Daerah Jawa Timur* (Jakarta: Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1982), 12.

deliberately leaking information to the Company about his whereabouts, thereby enabling the Company's forces to capture him easily.²⁹

All soldiers and residents taken prisoner after Wilis' capture were released and granted amnesty. Anom, Uno, and Wilis were transported to Edam. In 1778, Wilis and his sons escaped from Banda. A Semarang envoy, Gezaghebber Van der Nieport, tasked with purchasing slaves in Bali, reported that Wilis, along with his children and four others—Mas Bagus Lumajang, Patih Malang, Antang, and Natakusuma—killed their Company guards, then met a priest and escaped via Buton to Sasak, Bali. Wilis fell ill and died shortly after arriving in Bali. Wong Agung Wilis passed away in 1780 and was buried in Blambangan.³⁰

After Wong Agung Wilis' death, the resistance of the Blambangan people continued. In 1782, resistance emerged in western Blambangan, which the Company labeled as "Pseudo-Wilis." According to Lekkerkerker, this pseudo-Wilis represented a reincarnation of Wong Agung Wilis, interpreted as a "false Wilis." The term pseudo-Wilis referred to Rempek Jagapati, who rebelled against Regent Jaksanegara and declared his allegiance with the Blambangan forces during the Puputan Bayu. In western Blambangan, resistance against the Company was led by Sayu Wiwit, the daughter of Wong Agung Wilis, who was also known as the pseudo-Wilis due to her fighting spirit mirroring that of her father.³¹ According to C. Lekkerkerker, pseudo-Wilis is not discussed in terms of beliefs like reincarnation but can be analyzed through the shared fighting spirit between Wong Agung Wilis and his successors in efforts to expel the Company from their homeland.

The Dual Resistance of Wong Agung Wilis

This study's findings on Wong Agung Wilis' leadership in the 1767–1768 rebellion, emphasizing his multi-ethnic alliances (including Balinese, Mandarese, Chinese, and Bugis), initial military successes like the capture of Ulupampang, and ultimate defeat due to internal betrayals by figures such as Mas Anom, Mas Uno, and Sukanagara, align closely with Ahmad Ferdi Abdullah's analysis in "Blambangan People's Resistance to VOC Year 1767-1773." Abdullah highlights Wilis' role alongside Mas Rempeg (Jagapati) in mobilizing diverse followers, including ethnic Chinese and Bugis support, which led to battlefield victories but ultimately resulted in Wilis' capture and Rempeg's death, underscoring the

²⁹ Nurmaria.

³⁰ Margana, *Ujung Timur Jawa*, 153-154; Nurmaria, "Gerakan Sosial Politik," 420.

³¹ Lekkerkerker, "Balambangan," 1056.

rebellion's scale and the VOC's reliance on local defections for victory. However, this study extends beyond military tactics by exploring Wilis' biographical trajectory and posthumous symbolic legacy through "pseudo-Wilis" figures, which Abdullah touches on less extensively.

In contrast, Margana's "Java's Last Frontier: The Struggle for Hegemony of Blambangan, c. 1763-1813" frames Wilis' uprising as part of broader VOC expansion in Java's Oosthoek, where Islam played a pivotal role in Dutch colonialism. Margana argues that the VOC promoted Islamization to undermine Hindu-Balinese culture, collaborating with Muslim elites to erode resistances like Wilis', which were rooted in nativism and opposition to Javanese-Islamic intrusions. This complements the current findings by providing a geopolitical context for Wilis' exile to Bali and Mengwi alliances, but differs in emphasis: while this study portrays Wilis as a charismatic unifier of ethnic groups against oppression, Margana critiques nationalist Indonesian historians for overlooking his anti-colonial heroism, instead viewing the rebellion as a Hindu-Balinese nativist response amid ethnic cleansing and depopulation efforts by the VOC--Kumar estimates that during this period the Besuki population declined sharply from around 80,000–100,000 to around 5,000–8,000.³² According to Anthony Reid, this was a consequence of colonial-era warfare,³³ including famine, misery, and other devastation.³⁴ In the *Babad Blambangan*, the high mortality rate was attributed to "evil spirits" and the spread of various diseases such as malaria.³⁵ The Besuki Residency was described as unhealthy.³⁶ Health problems were also reported in colonial records from both the 19th and 20th centuries.³⁷

³² A. Kumar, *Java and Modern Europe: Ambiguous Encounters* (Surrey: Curzon, 1997), 207; Antony J. S. Reid, "Low Population Growth and Its Causes in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," in *Death and Disease in Southeast Asia: Explorations in Social, Medical and Demographic History*, ed. N.G. Owen (Singapore: Oxford UP, 1987), 34; Antony J.S. Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, vol. I (Chiangmai: Silkworm Books, 1988), 12-13; P. Atmosudirdjo, *Sejarah Ekonomi Indonesia: Dari Segi Sosioseologi* (Jakarta: Pradnya Paramita, 1984), 130.

³³ Anthony Reid, "South-East Asian Population History and the Colonial Impact," in *Asian Population History*, ed. Ts'ui-jung Liu and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198294436.003.0003>.

³⁴ Charles Hirschman, "Population and Society in Twentieth Century Southeast Asia," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25, no. 2 (1994), 401, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463400013564>.

³⁵ Arifin, *Babad Blambangan*, 262, 286.

³⁶ Kumar, *Java and Modern Europe*, 208.

³⁷ ANRI, Arsip Residensi, Besuki 9.13, "Algemeen Verslag van Residentie Besoeki 1882"; C.J. Hasselman, "General Survey of the Results of the Investigation into Economic Prosperity in Java and Madura," in *Indonesia: Selected Documents on Colonialism and Nationalism, 1830-1942*, ed. C.L.M. Penders (St. Lucia: University of Queensland, 1977), 80.

Furthermore, the enduring impact of Wilis' resistance on Blambangan's identity, as seen in the emergence of "pseudo-Wilis" and cultural preservation, resonates with the discussion in Rahman et al., "19th-Century Blambangan Society: The Dynamics of Religion and Culture in the Perspective of Islamic Historiography."³⁸ This work posits that Wilis' guerrilla tactics and leadership fostered a resilient Osing culture, blending Hindu roots with Islamic elements, leading to a harmonious local identity by the 19th century. Comparatively, it draws parallels to broader Javanese acculturation under colonialism, akin to Mataram's resistances, where hybrid identities emerged from cultural fusion—aligning with this study's interpretation of Wilis as a symbol of sustained anti-colonial sentiment, though extending the timeline to show how his legacy influenced 19th-century social dynamics beyond immediate military outcomes.

Overall, these comparisons affirm Wilis' central role as a resistance icon, while highlighting gaps in prior works: nationalist accounts often romanticize him as a hero, whereas balanced studies like Margana's integrate colonial archives and babads for a nuanced view of ethnic and religious tensions. This research contributes to the historiography of local anti-colonial struggles in Nusantara by synthesizing biographical history with symbolic analysis.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion of Wong Agung Wilis' life history, it can be concluded that he was born into nobility in 1720 as Prince Putra II, the son of Prince Putra I and Princess Kabakaba from Bali's Mengwi Kingdom. Their marriage exemplified a political alliance between Blambangan and Mengwi aimed at mitigating VOC threats. As an adult, Wilis was taken to Mengwi by his uncle, Ki Gusti Ngurah Ketut Kaba-kaba, due to the faltering position of Mangkuningrat's rule. Upon returning to Blambangan, Wilis faced an unwelcome development: he was removed from his patih position by Prince Danuningrat amid rumors of a coup. While this offended him, Wilis harbored no grudge; instead, as recorded in the Babad Balambangan, he expelled 800 Bugis colonists from Pakem under Daeng Pagërsah Pagarroejoeng's leadership. In 1767-1768, Wong Agung Wilis declared war against the VOC under Van Rijke's command. He mobilized both trained soldiers and ordinary civilians to expel the VOC. Feeling pressured, Van Rijke requested 1,000 reinforcements from Madura and Bangkalan, while non-compliant parties were enslaved and sold to the Company at 35 riksdaalders per person. Wilis achieved early advantages, successfully

³⁸ Rahman et al., "19th-Century Blambangan Society."

besieging the fort where Van Rijke hid. However, this success was short-lived; betrayals by close associates weakened his forces and prompted retreats. Mas Anom and Mas Uno, who initially defected from Van Rijke to pledge loyalty to Wilis, later betrayed him by leaking his hiding location. Consequently, Wilis was captured in 1768 and exiled to Banda. In 1778, a decade after his defeat and capture, Wilis and his children escaped from Banda. Two years later, in 1780, Wong Agung Wilis breathed his last and was buried in Blambangan. Following his death, the Blambangan people's struggle against the VOC persisted, with the emergence of "pseudo-Wilis" figures. Pseudo-Wilis (or "false Wilis") was a label applied to Rempek Jagapati, who rebelled against the Company-appointed regent, and also to Wilis' daughter, Sayu Wiwit, who led resistance in western Blambangan.

In synthesizing these events, Wilis emerges not merely as a historical actor but as an enduring emblem of grassroots defiance against colonial exploitation. His ability to forge multi-ethnic coalitions and inspire posthumous imitators highlights the resilience of indigenous identities amid VOC hegemony, aligning with broader themes in Southeast Asian colonial studies. Future research could explore comparative analyses with other regional resistances, such as those in Bali or Sulawesi, to deepen understandings of hybrid cultural strategies in anti-colonial movements.

Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results and contributed to the preparation of the final manuscript. All authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of this work.

Statement of Interest

All authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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