

The Geopolitics of Java in the 17th Century: A Case Study of Mataram Sultanate

Riza Afita Surya¹✉, Rully Putri Nirmala Puji²

¹ Radboud University, ✉ riza.surya@ru.nl

² Universitas Jember

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Abstract: Java Island had long played a significant part both in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region. Between the 16th and 17th centuries, there was a series of political forces took place on the island, from the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit Kingdom to the rise of Islamic kingdoms. Mataram is being one of the greatest Islamic kingdoms that ever existed in Java. In the 17th century, the Mataram Sultanate began conquering extensive areas of Central and East Java. Thus, it resulted in the shift of political power from the north coast of Java to the hinterland area. Mataram, during the Sultan Agung era, obtained firm relations with coastal areas and forged many marriage alliances. Thus, the Sultanate had access to other cultural traditions besides those of east Java. Eventually, Central Java under the Mataram realm became the centre of geopolitics and Javanese culture. However, after the Dutch company, aka VOC, appeared, the political disruption began. The seventeenth century in Java was mainly between VOC and Javanese and Chinese in a small part, while events in Java were primary concerns for VOC. Mataram, in particular, was a far larger kingdom than any the VOC had invaded, and it obtained a considerable interior where VOC naval power could be said meaningless. This paper presents a chronological framework of how Mataram under Sultan Agung successfully placed Central Java as the geopolitics of Java in the 17th century.

Abstrak: Pulau Jawa telah lama memainkan peran penting baik di Asia Tenggara maupun kawasan Pasifik. Antara abad ke-16 dan ke-17, terjadi serangkaian kekuatan politik di pulau tersebut, dari Kerajaan Majapahit yang beragama Hindu-Buddha hingga munculnya kerajaan-kerajaan Islam. Mataram merupakan salah satu kerajaan Islam terbesar yang pernah ada di Jawa. Pada abad ke-17, Kesultanan Mataram mulai menaklukkan wilayah yang luas di Jawa Tengah dan Jawa Timur. Dengan demikian, terjadi pergeseran kekuatan politik dari pesisir utara Jawa ke daerah pedalaman. Mataram, pada masa Sultan Agung, menjalin hubungan yang erat dengan daerah pesisir dan menjalin banyak aliansi perkawinan. Dengan demikian, Kesultanan tersebut memiliki akses ke tradisi budaya lain selain Jawa Timur. Akhirnya, Jawa Tengah di bawah wilayah Mataram menjadi pusat geopolitik dan budaya Jawa. Namun, setelah perusahaan Belanda, alias VOC, muncul, kekacauan politik pun dimulai. Abad ke-17 di Jawa sebagian besar merupakan masa antara VOC dan orang Jawa serta sebagian kecil orang Tionghoa, sementara peristiwa-peristiwa di Jawa merupakan perhatian utama bagi VOC. Mataram, khususnya, merupakan kerajaan yang jauh lebih besar daripada kerajaan mana pun yang pernah diserbu VOC, dan memperoleh wilayah pedalaman yang cukup luas di mana kekuatan angkatan laut VOC dapat dikatakan tidak berarti. Tulisan ini menyajikan kerangka kronologis tentang bagaimana Mataram di bawah Sultan Agung berhasil menempatkan Jawa Tengah sebagai geopolitik Jawa pada abad ke-17.

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INTRODUCTION

Java in Indonesia played an important role in both Southeast Asia and the Pacific region. Nowadays, it has a diverse cultural heritage involving local mysticism, Hindu-Buddhism, and Islam. The arrival of Islam in the region then became the leading religion in maritime Southeast Asia, replacing Hinduism and Buddhism religions by the sixteenth century (Nguitragool, 2012). During the early ages, Java Island was geographically and culturally more unified than the rest of the archipelago (Tarling, 2008). Hence, Java Island experienced several phases of cultural acculturation and assimilation. This made Java Island one of the archipelago's most dynamic and culturally diverse islands.

By the sixteenth century, two significant events had occurred in Southeast Asia. The first one is the increased international commerce networks, which connected the trade activities in East Asia with West Asia and Europe, caused by the increased demands for spices produced by the Indonesian archipelago. The second was the intensification of Islamic influence in various parts of Southeast Asia, especially the Indonesian archipelago in both coastal and inland areas. These two had a significant impact on economic, political, and cultural life, which then encouraged the emergence of the modern period of history of Southeast Asia and Indonesia (Suryo, 1996). Hence, the commercialization and Islamization process in Indonesia had become a united and integrated process. The history of Islamic states in Indonesia also connects strategic trade activities within Southeast Asia.

In the late 16th century, the political force of Javanese Majapahit (1290-1527) declined in the wake of the new city-states of Java's northeast coast and the northern littoral of the Oosthoek. After the late 15th century onwards, the Demak kingdom adopted many traditions of Majapahit. Even though Islamic law was dominantly implemented, the older Hindu-Javanese customary law still existed side by side. In addition, in military terms, many of the elite bodyguard armies had Majapahit precedents, with Islamic law being more apparent in the armed religious corps. In cultural terms, the old Javanese puppet-play (wayang), gamelan orchestra and keris were passed by and improved by the coastal rulers and the local rulers (Carey, 1997). The Muslims replaced the Hindu great tradition, which was considered the cultural symbol of both the political centre and commercial zones of the prior decade. Islamic influence towards Javanese culture is very

palpable today.

One of the famous relics of the Mataram Sultanate is the Mataram Mosque in Kota Gede. This mosque has now been designated as a cultural heritage building. The mosque still functions as a place of worship for Muslims. The tombs of the Mataram kings are located around the mosque complex. Mataram became one of the kingdoms that had a major influence on the spread of Islam in Java. The architecture of this mosque has the nuances of Javanese tradition with a multi-storey *umpak* roof. The mosque also used traditional communication tools during the call to prayer (adzan), such as using a *kentingan* followed by a *bedug*. This mosque also became the education center and social activities of the Mataram sultanate.

Islam's appearance also brought the fundamental processes of social, economic, and political change. In addition, there was also the establishment of Islamic kingdoms, which were previously influenced by local culture. The Java kingdoms, such as Demak, Banten, Pajang, Mataram, Cirebon, and Madura, appeared between the 16th and 17th centuries (Syawaludin et al. 2019). This indicates that Java, in term of culture, politics, and military had inherited the prior dominant power, namely Majapahit. After the Demak kingdom's appearance as the first Islamic power in Central Java, the period after that began with a series of emergence of Islamic kingdoms within Java. However, the new era of Islamic states is generally poorly documented. Hence, reconstructing some facts about Java in the Islamic era is very important.

Like other great kingdoms, the Mataram Sultanate was dominated by spiritual belief. The powerful kings were able to control cosmic power, and all authority was in his hands (Reid, 1988). For instance, Panembahan Senapati Ingalaga of Mataram was associated towards the Goddess of the Southern Ocean, Kanjeng Ratu Kidul (Pigeaud & De Graaf, 2012 & Ricklefs, 2008). In addition, there was also *pulung*, which means revelation; it is described as a ray of light that irradiates whoever deserves it, such as Senapati. These two events prove that spiritual belief was extremely dominant within the Mataram Sultanate.

Mataram Sultanate is one of the greatest Islamic kingdoms ever in Java, and in fact, it is in Southeast Asia. Under Sultan Agung's reign, Mataram applied the *Ostpolitik* pattern to the conquest of many lands within the archipelago. Mataram started to conquer massive areas of

Central and East Java, which made the hinterland of Central Java the centre of geopolitics and Javanese culture (Wardani et al., 2013). The shift of political power from the north coast of Java to the hinterland brought significant changes towards Javanese civilization during the 17th to 19th centuries and extensive territory stretching across Java and Madura (de Graff & Pigeaud, 1976). This paper examines how Mataram attempted to establish its position as the geopolitics of Java in the 17th century by expanding its connection towards other Islamic kingdoms within the archipelago.

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OF MATARAM

This part briefly describes the political and economic situation of Mataram in the 17th century, mainly under Sultan Agung's reign. While there was a chain of events that occurred during the period, this paper only identifies the circumstances stimulated by VOC and the Chinese minority that affected Mataram.

Under Sultan Agung, the civilians had several jobs: officials, soldiers, merchants, artisans, peasants, etc. Besides the locals, foreigners occupied Mataram territory, mainly the Chinese (Munawar, 2020). The commercialization process in the coastal states of Java achieved its peak in the seventeenth century and established a maritime economic society in a global trade network. However, commercial ports in coastal Java eventually declined due to some endogenous and exogenous forces. Conflicts and competitions between coastal areas and political power centre in agricultural land inland in Java, namely Mataram Sultanate, were considered a significant effect for the decline. At the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the commercial ports in coastal areas of Java were seized by Mataram one by one, and later, they were taken over by the VOC (Suryo, 1996).

Mataram and VOC's relationship had been good as long as VOC had not attempted to take control of Java land. However, Sultan Agung's expansion disrupted rice cultivation, resulting in a shortage of rice production for VOC and making the relationship go south. The VOC-Javanese contradiction began. Finally, the final turning point was when J. P. Coen conquered Batavia in 1619. Coen successfully seized Batavia and highlighted the most notable event that occurred to the Dutch since their first arrival to the East (Ricklefs, 2008). It was also Coen who extended monopoly for

essential goods in some ports (Reid, 1998). Both Mataram and VOC started to seek allies within the archipelago. For Mataram, they either conquered or made trade relationships with other rulers.

After Batavia was founded, Coen then continued developing military and administrative bases in a secure place for their commerce activities. Batavia was located in the western archipelago, and it had trade networks with East Indonesia. Batavia relatively became the Dutch's territory and had no significant power close enough to compete with it (Ricklefs, 2008). Despite its geographically strategic and economical potential, Mataram Sultanate worked to seize the city also due to Dutch sovereignty that became more powerful each time. Since the 17th century, especially after Batavia was founded in 1619, Java Island seemed to witness everlasting conflict between the VOC dynamic and Mataram Sultanate's decline. The failure in capturing Batavia in 1628-1628 made VOC begin to attack and periodically extend their power by conquering the local rulers (Lombard, 2005).

In the 17th century of Mataram, the kingdom was said to exploit its peasants or those who were settled in streets and ports to gain the rice surplus. The rice was then exchanged with weapons and other requirements via Batavia-Dutch, Malacca, Portuguese, Mollucas, and other places (Reid, 1998). This means that the empire's revenue did not come from trade, but from some policies, they made toward the citizens.

For the half of the 17th century, Java was shaded by the struggle of hegemony, mainly between Mataram and VOC. VOC held monopoly power toward trade in Java, while Mataram attempted to expand its territory. The main concern for Mataram was the coastal states, which had opportunities to separate at any time and still owed some respect to Demak. This circumstance benefits VOC in implementing divide et tempera between aristocrats in the hinterland. Internal factionalism provided advantages for VOC in gaining support from certain groups.

The seventeenth century in Java it also marked competition between native states and VOC for resources and manpower. In pursuit of commercial goals, VOC became significantly involved with local affairs in Java. This involvement was made more likely by the huts and factories established wherever VOC sensed the commerce potential. In addition, another issue here was control over foreigners, notably Chinese (Tarling, 2008). The Chinese were known to have made long sea journeys westward, passing the Indonesian

archipelago.

J.P. Coen appreciated the Chinese existence in Jawa in 1619, established Batavia, and encouraged the Chinese to enter the Dutch orbit (Dobbin, 1989). Coen began establishing an Asian policy when the Dutch Company office was moved to be centred in Batavia (Sukoharsono & Gaffikin, 2019). Approximately 300-400 Chinese were living in Jacatra, and by 1627, there were 3,500 Chinese people. On his departure in 1623, Coen wrote that 'there is no people in the world who serves us better than the Chinese.' The intermediary commercial services of the Chinese in Java were important to the VOC. It is known that there was distrust from the Javanese since the early days at Batavia. Thus, it was Chinese that Coen believed to serve the new city with many roles, namely artisans, shopkeepers, fishermen and farmers (Dobbin, 1989). Furthermore, J. P. Coen tried to blockade all Chinese shipping from Manila and divert it to Batavia. Hence. The Chinese community in Batavia came to be served by an umbilical cord of Chinese shipping that connected them with the homeland in South Fujian (Blusse & Dening, 2018). Batavia also heavily depended on China junk trade. Eventually, the Chinese were eager for themselves the so-called 'distributive and collecting intermediate trade' and became the intermediaries between the VOC and indigenous Java (Dobbin, 1989).

After the establishment of Batavia, it started to reinforce its monopoly toward trading activities. The VOC succeeded in controlling the spice-producing areas within the Indonesian archipelago. The locals were forced to sell their spices and other commodities at relatively low prices to the VOC. In the Mataram Sultanate in 1677, the King was required to supply four thousand measures of rice annually to the VOC at a price below the marketplace (Sukoharsono & Gaffikin, 2019).

GEOPOLITICS OF JAVA IN THE 17TH CENTURY

Since 1600, the Mataram Sultanate has already placed the basis for dominating the archipelago for future expansion. Under the king of Sultan Agung, Mataram extended its territory to the northern coast and the island of Madura and succeeded in conquering Surabaya in 1625. Eastern Java had not been totally subjected, and Banten was still independent. However, after the death of Sultan Agung, Mataram's realm had been confirmed across the heartland of central Java and most of the northern ports (Tarling, 2008). Its territory covered mostly Java island, except Batavia and Banten. Outer is-

lands such as Palembang in Sumatera, Sukadana in Kalimantan were also part of the Sultanate (Susilo & Asmara, 2020).

During the reign of Panembahan Senapati of Mataram the constitutional focus and center of power shifted away from the main coast of Java. This was due to the wars of conquest waged by the previous kings of Mataram. The interior of central Java succeeded in becoming the geo-political and cultural center of Java. The shift of political power from the north coast of Java to the hinterland greatly impacted Javanese civilization in the 18th and 19th centuries. This resulted in Mataram becoming the new Islamic power in Java (Wardani, et al, 2013).

In 1641, Agung Hanyakrakusuma obtained the title Sultan from Mekkah and then enjoyed the complete title Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma Senopati Ing Alaga Ngabdurrahman. Mataram under Sultan Agung envisioned rulling all Javanese islands. Mataram Sultanate authority under Sultan Agung covered Central and East Java based on military power. In addition, for the half of the seventeenth century, some regions, namely Palembang, Jambi, and Banjarmasin, acknowledged Java's suzerainty, despite agreements being made with the Dutch East India Company (Tarling, 2008). After his death, he succeeded in controlling Central and East Java, including the Eastern Salient and Madura (Ricklefs, 2008).

Mataram also tried to capture Batavia two times but failed. This failure changed the direction of the Sultanate's conquest. The early expansion directed to the West switched to the East, specifically Blambangan and Bali regions. These efforts are successful. Blambangan kingdom surrendered in 1639, and the majority of its people were moved to the centre of the kingdom, even though, in the end, it allied with Bali to resist Mataram and maintain its independence (Soekmono, 1981). After Sultan Agung's death, the throne of Mataram was held by Amangkurat I (1646-1677). He was characterized by his attempt to consolidate the empire and centralize the administration and finance. Thus, this paper identifies the geopolitics of Java under Mataram Sultanate based on linkage in the 17th century, namely Sultan Agung.

The power shifting to the Central Java hinterland from the north coast area is the main factor in the Demak kingdom's collapse as the dominant force. Mataram expansion is undeniable. Eventually, one by one, coastal states could be conquered by the end of the 16th century (Reid, 2012; Kartodirdjo, 2014). Mataram Sultanate used to de-

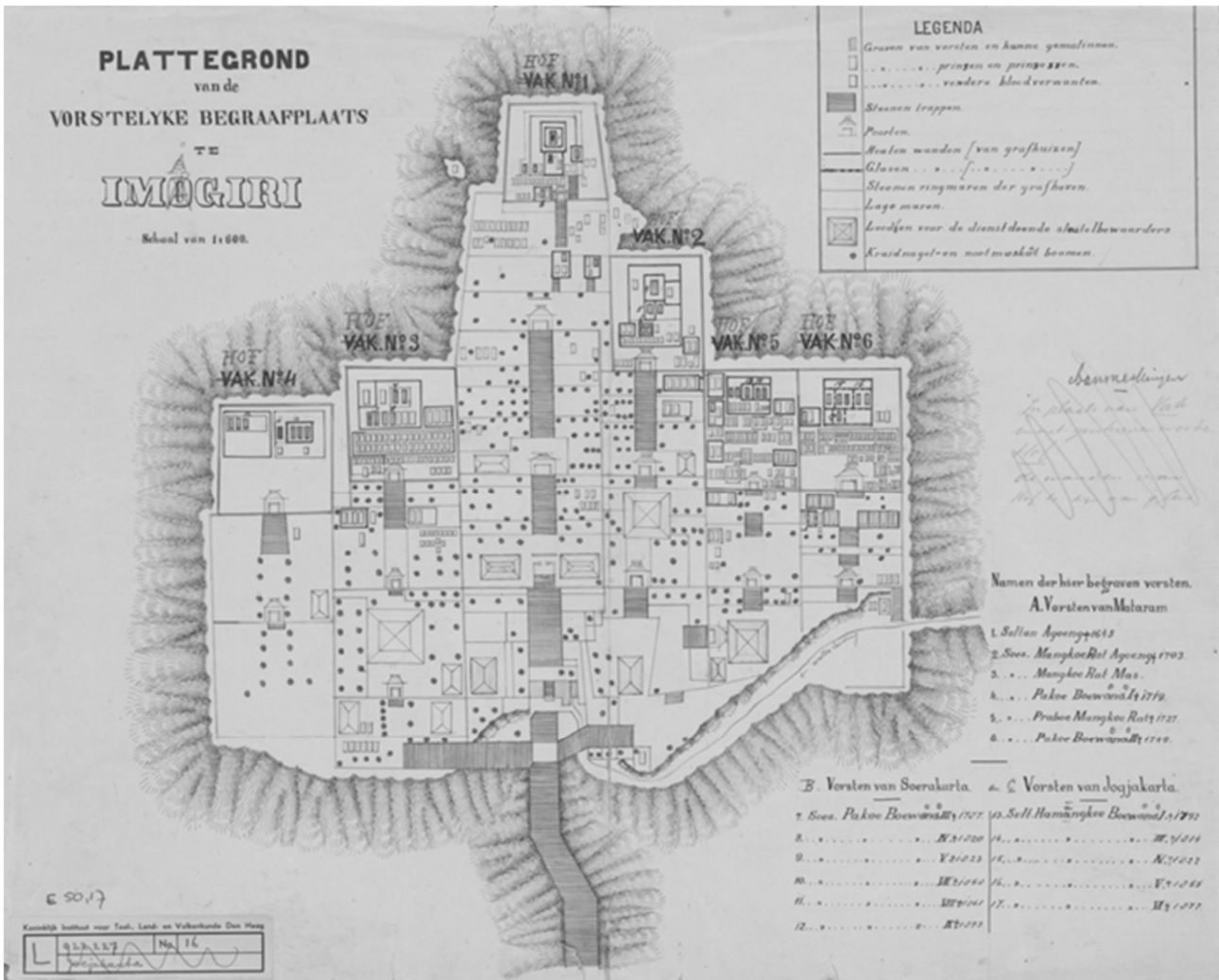


Figure 1. Map of royal cemeteries in Imogiri (Source: KITLV)

stroy coastal states, which caused half of the trade to perish. However, their position as rice's main producer and contributor put Mataram within the trade network as stable as ever. Mataram established a trade network with Malacca for the rice business. In addition, trade network relations were established decently with Jambi, Palembang, and Banjarmasin. While Mataram was against VOC, they even approached Makassar, Johor, and even Malacca to cooperate in resisting VOC (Kartodirdjo, 2014). Hence, the Mataram Kingdom participated in long-term wars with local rulers or VOC. During the process, the Mataram Sultanate established an alliance beyond Islamic connection. After 1641, the Sultanate monopolized the rice supply for VOC. Mataram Sultanate was seen as a threat to most separated states, and VOC used this opportunity to correspond as a monopolist to other monopolists without intermediaries (Reid, 1998).

Suzerainty of the Javanese interior over coastal states was not unusual. However, in the seventeenth century there was a new degree of force to

preserve the territory. Before the seventeenth century, the coastal rulers considered themselves equal to the interior kings. However, after that, the relationship between coastal kings and Mataram Sultanate continued with humiliation. The coastal rulers were obliged to present themselves at court during certain events; for instance, Grebeg Mulud, who was absent, was regarded as a rebellious act (Tarling, 2008). Mataram, under Sultan Agung, executed some coastal rulers who opposed it.

Mataram Sultanate established relations with Malacca and Goa under the Portuguese government. Portuguese representatives were sent to Mataram and received well in 1631. They promised to give support with a squadron of ships along the Java coast when it was time for Sultan Agung's second attack on Batavia. Otherwise, Mataram delegations arrived in Goa in 1631. This relation occurred between Mataram and Malacca/Goa continued until 1640 (Pigeaud & De Graaf, 1976). Malacca, under the Portuguese, was interested in establishing good relations with Mataram due to rice commodi-



Figure 2. The royal cemetery Imogiri Burial place of the Mataram kings (Sultan Agung 1613-1646) (Source: KITLV)

ties. In addition, between the two shared the same interest against VOC regarding the trade. Portuguese role became dominant after successfully capturing the Malacca report in 1511. They maintained their position in the northern part of the archipelago.

Mataram Sultanate, in terms of religion, also established good relations with Islamic groups in Mecca. Mataram sent envoys to Mecca and, in 1641, were back by bringing some ulama as court advisors and a new titled Sultan Abdul Muhammad Maulana Mataram or Sultan Agung (Siswanta, 2019). Some historians argue that Sultan Agung relied on consensus and consultation to preserve the relationship between Mataram and its vassal states, but should this fail, force was the primary means of compelling obedience. He also obliged the local lords to occupy the court 'keraton', withdrawing their power from their power based. After 1669, the court assigned the agents 'umbul' to monitor the governors of coastal states. Thus, it shows that the geopolitics of Java in the seventeenth century significantly relied on a single person (Reid, 1998).

Sultan Agung also formed good relations with the English in Banten. English first came to

Banten in 1602. Like the Dutch, they took interest in Banten as the most sought-after trading network after Malacca's downfall in 1511. The English were seen as less treated to VOC than the Portuguese and Spanish. Since 1603, the VOC had been participating in trade in Banten, and since 1611, they also established a post at Jayakarta (modern-day Jakarta) (Ricklefs, 2008). Banten, also located in the Sunda Strait, acted as an alternative report for voyages from the West since the 17th century. Hence, it is undoubtedly why Mataram insisted on capturing Banten as its vassal.

Cirebon, on the other side, was located between Mataram in the East and Banten in the West. Cirebon was sometimes used by the Mataram sultanate in an unfair friendship to be a link between Mataram and Banten, which, in case of conflict, would complicate the position of Cirebon. However, Cirebon finally chose the Dutch protection (Suparman, et al 2017).

Palembang also acknowledged Central Java suzerainty. They continued sending delegations to Mataram as long as Sultan Agung lived. In addition, the Jambi kingdom was also faithful to the Mataram king (Pigeaud & De Graaf, 1976). Mataram support

for Palembang was seen when Tumenggung opposed Jambi's influence to throne king's of Palembang princess. Mataram Sultanate also successfully kept its position as a maritime force towards the Sumatran coasts, Borneo and Celebes. The South Celebes rulers preserved good relations with Mataram in 1642.

Banjarmasin was against VOC, and this situation brought Mataram and Banjarmasin closer than before. In 1641, they started sending envoys to Central Java as a vassal. Banjarmasin was interested in establishing good relations with Mataram since they were significantly dependent on food supply. But the relationship became stained after the envoys stopped being sent in 1659. However, Java's cultural influence is quite strongly reflected in Malay vocabulary and Banjar (Kartodirdjo, 2014).

By 1645, Sultan Agung built Astana Imogiri as a family burial center for the kings of the Mataram Sultanate, starting from himself. He also wrote the Sastra Gending fiber as a guide to the life of the Mataram lineage. The presence of Sultan Agung as the supreme ruler brought the Islamic Mataram Kingdom to a higher level of cultural civilization. Sultan Agung had various expertise in the military, political, economic, social and cultural fields, which made the civilization of the Mataram kingdom at a higher level.

CONCLUSION

Mataram is being one of the greatest Islamic kingdoms that ever existed in Java. In the 17th century, Mataram Sultanate began conquering extensive areas of Central and East Java. Thus, it resulted in the shift of political power from the north coast of Java to the hinterland area. Mataram started to conquer massive areas of Central and East Java, making the hinterland of Central Java the centre of geopolitics and Javanese culture. Its territory covers Central Java, East Java, and some parts of West Java. Before VOC intervention, all the territories of Mataram were divided into some large areas located in the palace as the center. Under the king of Sultan Agung, Mataram extended its territory to the northern coast and the island of Madura and succeeded in conquering Surabaya in 1625. Eastern Java had not been subjected, and Banten was still independent. The conquest of Mataram directly established many connections with Islamic kingdoms, establishing Mataram sultanate as the center of power in Java during the 17th century. The geopolitics of Java by Mataram was also accompanied by cultural manifestations such as the Astana Imogiri construction and the

Sastra Gending creation by Sultan Agung himself. However, after the death of Sultan Agung, Mataram's realm had been confirmed across the heartland of central Java and most of the northern ports. While Mataram was against VOC, Mataram Kingdom participated in a long-term war with both local rulers and VOC. During the process, the Mataram Sultanate established alliances beyond Islamic connection. Mataram Sultanate established connections with other Islamic states, namely Jambi, Palembang, Banjarmasin, Johor, Malacca, and Goa under Portuguese, English in Banten, and Cirebon.

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