

Choosing sides?
*T.D. Kundan, Indian mobility
& Indonesian Independence*



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*Indian Migration to the
Pacific & Indian Ocean States*
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Sojourners or Citizens?

- Indian populations in Indonesia 1940s were complex
 - Merchants: included Chettiars (Sumatra) & Sindhis (Java)
 - Indentured Labourers (in Sumatra not Java)
 - Sailors / unionised workers (port cities like Surabaya)
 - Soldiers (SE Asian Command after Aug Declaration of Independence)
 - Journalists (+ lawyers + doctors)
- Migration? Diaspora?
 - Safran 1991: long contested. 'Classic' diaspora: homeland orientation, boundary maintenance.
 - Rogers Brubaker: 2005: diaspora more usefully understood as a **category of practice**: to make claims, express stances & mobilise energies – not to describe the world but to 'remake' it.
 - Joya Chatterji & David Washbrook 2013: contextual & historically shaped: homeland orientation is **co-produced** by emergence of nationalist movements in homeland

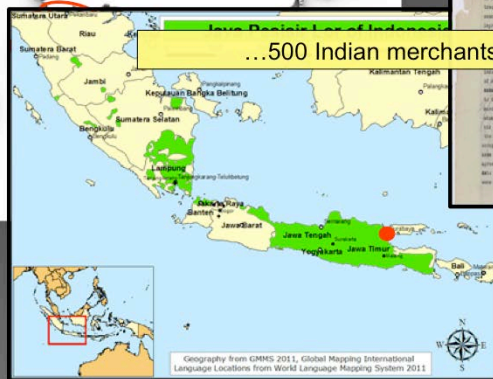
Sindhi merchants in Surabaya



A trader in Surabaya in 1911: identified now as an 'Arab' he was actually a Pathan or Afghan from the North West Provinces of India



Distribution of Sindhi merchants from Hyderabad



For further information please refer to the following link: [http://www.sindhi.com/india/india.html](#)

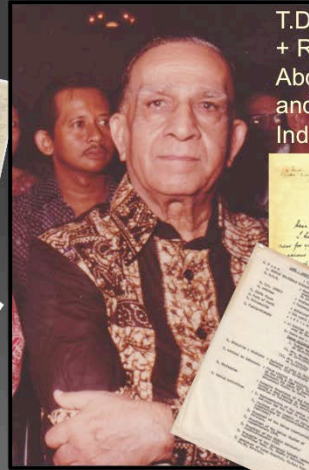
...500 Indian merchants in Surabaya...

PRs Mani's dispatch 27 Oct 1945.

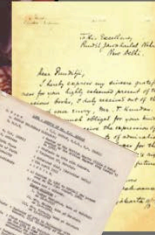
Two accounts of T.D. Kundan



PRS Mani:
A nationalist Indian
Tamil journalist
trapped in
a 'colonial army'



T.D. Kundan
+ Roeslan
Abdulgani
and other
Indonesians



Indian anger: forced to do the dirty work for the Raj



Jawaharlal Nehru: formal Congress protest on September 30 at Allahabad. Demanded an end to the use of Indian troops in Indonesia.
 'AT THE SAME TIME AS INDIANS ARE STRIKING IN COURAGEOUS STANDS AGAINST THE DUTCH IN AUSTRALIA, Indian troops are being used against Indonesians'.

In South East Asia, Indonesia and Indochina are carrying on a heroic struggle... We in India have watched British intervention there with growing anger and helplessness and shame that Indian troops should be used for doing Britain's dirty work against our friends....

More statements: 15, 28 October, then Nov & on:


Krishna Menon protested on **September 28** 1945 to the UK English Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, who headed a Labour Party Government.

'In South East Asia, Indonesia and Indochina are carrying on a heroic struggle... We in India have watched British intervention there with growing anger and helplessness and shame that Indian troops should be used for doing Britain's dirty work against our friends....'

Mrs Jai Kishoor Handoo: WIDF inaugural meeting, Paris, Nov 1945. (p137, Trans HR)

At present India is extremely moved by the events taking place in Indonesia, Indochina and Java, where our Indian troops are being used against the Indonesian people. You can imagine their indignation and their shame when they discover that their own troops are being used to repress the legitimate desire of a people to be free when they themselves are struggling for their independence.

Indian troops to Surabaya: 26 Oct



- Only city fully under control of Free Indonesian Government
- Partial disembarkation 26th October blocked by Indian merchants
- 27th Oct Brigadier Mallaby agrees with Indonesian civil leader, East Java Governor, to remain close to port area
- THEN deploys Indian troops across city in small 'packets'
- Leaflets dropped demanding all Indonesians disarm and hand over weapons

Indian Soldiers: Respect Indonesian National Uprising The Indonesians are fighting for freedom like you.

Alahabad, September 30, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Indian National Congress declared today that Indian troops must not be used to suppress the uprising of the Indonesian or other colonial peoples.


'We are interested in the freedom of subject countries and we would like to help them to achieve it', Nehru said. 'It is monstrous that our armed forces should be employed to suppress those for whom we have the greatest sympathy.'

NOTE: The Indonesian people has declared her independence and is now struggling to protect it.

**Surprise attack
4pm 28th**




Many British Indian troops die. Mani's group surrenders



Sukarno arrives 29th – negotiates cease fire with Mallaby – sets up Contact Bureau

30th Oct: some British troops (incl Indians) refuse to disarm. Contact Bureau + Mallaby outside – firing breaks out from building – Mallaby killed; car bombed. Uneasy truce ensues.



Negotiations – Kundan called in to interpret for the Indonesian governor – Mallaby agrees not to expand beyond harbour, to leave civil order in hands of Indonesians

Leaflets – demand complete disarmament of all Indonesians

Indian 'packets' of troops sent out to set up small outposts across city – intensely vulnerable

Indonesians surprise attack at 4pm

Ultimatum
9 November

To all Indonesians of Soerabaya.
 To all Indonesians of Soerabaya treacherously and without provocation.
 British Forces who had come for the purpose of war and interest
 to the fighting which ensued, British personnel were
 women and children were massacred, and
 when trying to implement the truce which
 makings.
 must go unpunished. Unless, therefore, the
 240 hours on 10th November at the latest, I
 forces at my disposal, and those Indonesians
 sely responsible for the bloodshed which must

(Signed) Maj-Gen. F. C. MANSOUR.
 Commander Allied Land Forces, East Java.




Imperial War Museum SE-6735

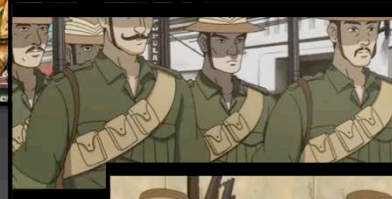
Heroes' Day
10 November

Arek Surabaya-arek carrying stakes in the battle of Surabaya

Indians in popular media



Close Combat
Demo, 2008



Battle of Surabaya: Animation 2015



Merdeka Atau Mati,
(Freedom or Death)
1990



Mani's view: Kundan the peacemaker

- Mani writes only one despatch after his release and before evacuation
- Focuses entirely on Kundan, in praise of his role as peacemaker
- It was Kundan who had intervened to avert conflict when troops arrived
- On terrible night of 28th Kundan had criss-crossed the bullet-riddled city streets in a speeding car with only white flag to protect him so he could organise the first truce at 10pm
- Described how Kundan then risked his own life trying to disarm British
- Was beside Mallaby when shot
- Was himself wounded in attack



Kundan intervenes to avert conflict when troops arrive
Kundan prominent during night of bitter fighting on 28th
Criss crossed city in speeding car with white flag through bullet-ridden streets to
organise first truce at 10pm
Mani writes only one despatch before evacuation – praises Kundan
Kundan had taken prominent role
in negotiations to disarm
British *Internatio* hold-outs
Kundan was with Mallaby and
was wounded in attack

Kundan's view: a partisan embedded in family



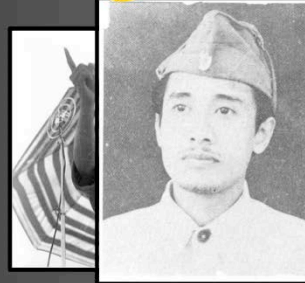
- b. Hyderabad 1911
- BA Philos (Hons) Bombay 1931
- m. Gopibai 1926
- Arrived in Surabaya 1931
- Son Vashdev b. 1935
- Daughters 1940, 1947

1911-1980

Kundan, Roeslan Abdulgani ++

Close to Sukarno from Independence & to senior Civil Authorities in Surabaya

Broadcast on Bung Tomo's *Radio Merdeka*:
'to explain and clarify the legitimate aspirations of the Indonesian Struggle for Independence to the Allied Officers.'



Interpreting for Indonesians (RA) from 26th (quote)
Tries to establish communication 28th (Mani)
Then **RINGS** Sukarno – exchange operator OH

On Contact Bureau from 29th for Indonesians
Tells them 30th Mallaby's last ambiguous order OH

Appalled by Mansergh's **Bombardment Nov 11th**
– **takes up arms** – (Kundan + Roeslan)

Mani portrays Kundan as a cautious man closest to the senior authorities of Surabaya and the nationalists, to whom Mani himself had become close friends.

Mani states that Kundan saw Bung Tomo as a dangerous hothead and radical, and warned about his influence on youth – the *permuda*

Was Kundan deliberately portraying himself as a moderate in order to convey this message to the British authorities? The British made it clear they distrusted ALL resident Indians, as disloyal and untrustworthy (only a shade worse than the Indian troops themselves!)

Kundan not alone: 800 Indian Troops joined Indonesian Revolution

Handwritten note on lined paper, dated Tuesday 21 Sept 1945. The text is in Hindi and discusses the situation of Indian soldiers in Indonesia during the revolution. It mentions that they are being treated as 'deserters' and that they are fighting for their country. The note is signed 'Kundan'.

Among these gallant men are Punjabis, Madrassis, Pathans, Mahrattas – Hindus, Muslims and Christians, proving once again that outside British control, Indians of all communities tend to unite.

The British dub them 'deserters'

I met them often Greeting me with a 'Jai Hind' or 'Azad Hind', they always behaved with dignity and the only desire they expressed to me was that India should be told the truth about them.

**A New Unity Forged Abroad
Among Indian Soldiers**

**THEY FIGHT FOR THEIR COUNTRY
OUT THERE IN INDONESIA**

(FREE PRESS OF INDIA SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT)
BATAVIA, Oct. 29

ANOTHER Indian National Army is writing history in that it has joined the Indonesian Republic.

The story of three gallant Indian soldiers, who under the leadership of the late Subhas Chandra Bose, have been left behind in the East Indies, is being told by the Free Press of India.

The story of three gallant Indian soldiers, who under the leadership of the late Subhas Chandra Bose, have been left behind in the East Indies, is being told by the Free Press of India.

Dutch Division Arrives In Batavia
BATAVIA, Oct. 28

The division of the Dutch Army, which arrived in Batavia on Oct. 28, is being welcomed by the Indonesian Republic.

Sidky Pasha Deceives The Nation
Wald Attack On His Presidential Statement

FIGHTING FOR THEIR COUNTRY

Among these gallant men are Punjabis, Madrassis, Pathans, Mahrattas – Hindus, Muslims and Christians, proving once again that outside British control, Indians of all communities tend to unite.

The British dub them 'deserters' and the Allied HQ in Batavia allege they were enticed. But even they admit that some of the Indian soldiers were unwilling to wage war against Indonesians.

I met them often Greeting me with a 'Jai Hind' or 'Azad Hind', they always behaved with dignity and the only desire they expressed to me was that India should be told the truth about them.

Rice from Free Indonesia to Free India Apr – Nov 1946

INDONESIA OFFERS RICE TO INDIA
Half A Million Tons

DUTCH TRY TO SABOTAGE INDONESIAN OFFER

NOT ENOUGH RICE TO SPARE

Nehru Greets Indonesia

INDONESIAN RICE FOR INDIA
RADIO ADDRESS BY MOHAMMAD HATTA

Merdeka
INDONESIA MEMBAI

Kundan + Mani formulate proposal of rice trade to India to stave off famine

Mani takes to PM Sutan Sjahrir and breaks story in *Free Press Journal of Bombay*

Dutch threaten to block – British doubt is happening. VP Mohammed Hatta confirms promise in radio broadcast

During Nehru's visit to Malaya, Mani had had a private meeting to discuss Indonesia. Nehru asked Mani to assure Hatta and the other leaders of his support and gave Mani a hastily written note to convey his message of solidarity.

As he travelled to Indonesia, Mani thought of the grave fears among everyday people in India about what they believed was another looming famine. At the same time, Mani knew the Indonesians had had a bumper harvest of rice.

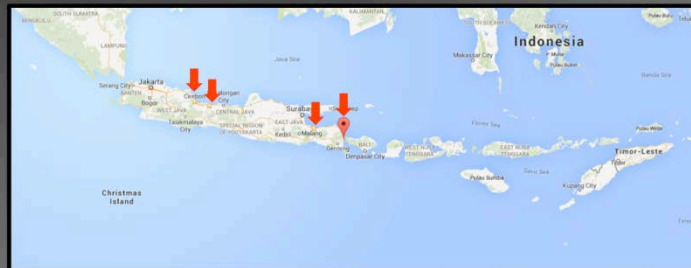
On arriving in Batavia (Jakarta) Mani first met his close friend Sutan Sjahrir, then Prime Minister. As he conveyed Nehru's message, he suggested to Sjahrir that a gift of rice from Free Indonesia to Free India to alleviate fears of famine would be a powerful symbol of the unity of purpose of the two National Independence movements. Sjahrir agreed immediately and announced the gift.

Mani broke the story in the *Free Press Journal* around Apr 10 and it ran in the Indonesian papers on Apr 12

But within days, the Dutch – who were blockading Indonesia's ports – had said they would not allow the rice out. Then the British failed to respond for some time, leading to fears they would not defy the Dutch by letting it into India. Vice Pres Hatta made a moving radio speech (translated by Australian Molly Bondan) to assure Indians that the offer from FREE Indonesia would be fulfilled. The rice eventually DID reach India – where it supported both the people and the Independence struggle.

Kundan makes it happen

- Kundan given full carriage of transfer – both sending rice to India and bringing textiles back to Indonesia
- Uses four ports in West and East Java
- Dutch shell Indian ships but all cargoes delivered in both directions.



Kundan is very clear in his statement that the Dutch bombed the Indian ships. So far, the recorded history confirms the port of Banyuwangi was bombed prior to the arrival of the Indian ships.

However, given Kundan's precision in other matters, this remains an open question.

For broader context to this specific sector of the rice trade, see Robert Cribb, 2015: 'The External Rice Trade of the Indonesian Republic, 1946-1947' in Schrikker, A and Touwen J (eds) *Promises and Predicaments*, NUS Press, Singapore. Pp181-197.

Kundan: Ambassador of & for a multi-faith & transnational Indian community

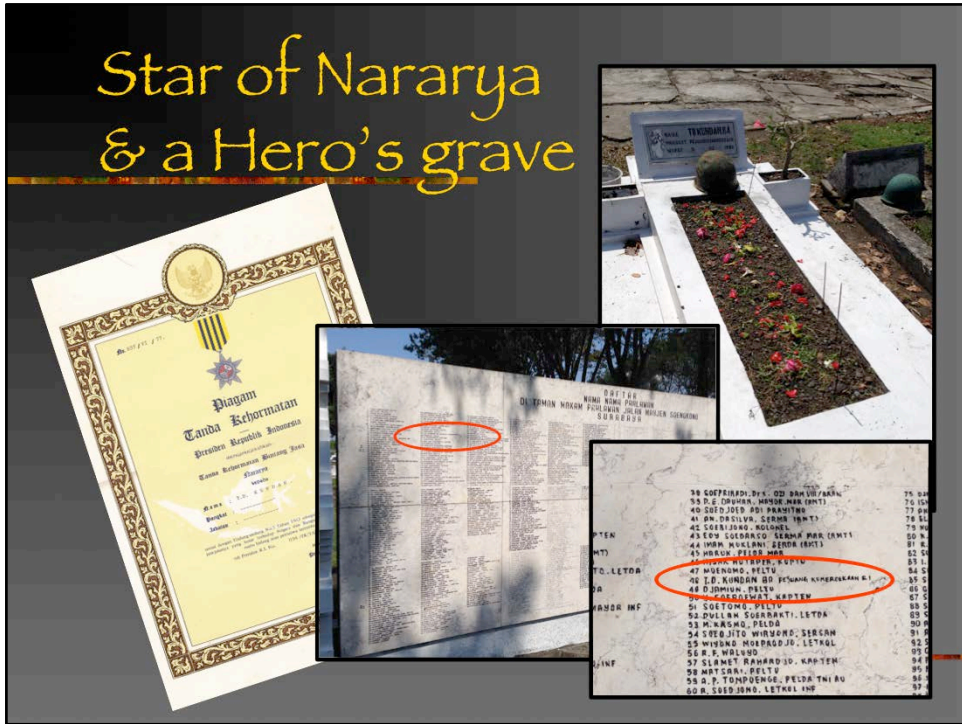


'...We are all
Arek Surabayao....'

Memories held by his son-in-law, Vashdev Lachmandas, recall Kundandas calming conflicts between Indonesians and Indians in Surabaya over a sporting game, some time after Independence, with the softly spoken words in Indonesian, to the effect that: 'we are all Arek Surabayao....' ie we are all people of Surabaya.

Dies March 1980

Star of Nararya & a Hero's grave



Dies March 1980

Migrant or Citizen? - of which nation?

- How useful is the concept 'nation' and nationalism?
- But how useful also is that of 'diaspora'?
- Might the 'Indian Ocean' be a more helpful concept?
- Not racially or culturally exclusive – NOT 'diaspora'
- Instead: politically and socially inclusive
 - Kundan shaped by **a moment** when solidarity between colonised peoples was possible
- Tensions of decolonisation, partition and the Cold War act to make this moment pass