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Cycles of Queenship on Timor: A response to Douglas Kammen¹

Studies on the indigenous structures of rulership on Timor have tended to be the territory of anthropologists rather than historians. While works by Herman Schulte Nordholt, A.D.M. Parera and Tom Therik are useful in mapping out the ideology and practice of “traditional” leadership, they are not particularly interested in historical change, nor have they addressed the issue of female leaders in society.² This has been remedied by Douglas Kammen in an interesting article in *Archipel* 84 (2012) entitled “Queens of Timor”. From published and unpublished Portuguese materials, Kammen shows how the middle period of colonial rule in East Timor, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was marked by a great upsurge of female rulers. Of the numerous small domains (known as *reinos*, kingdoms) in the colony, which numbered from 47 to 60 in the official listings, 29 had ruling queens at some stage. Kammen argues that the phenomenon can be explained by looking at the interaction between three levels, namely clans (houses), domains (“kingdoms”) and the nascent Portuguese colonial state. The shifting political situation encouraged the enthronement of females, whether as actual rulers or as convenient figureheads for (male) elites. With the deepening of colonial penetration in the decades around 1900 the queenship pattern vanished and left few traces in the local collective memory.³

1. Research for this article was funded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), and conducted within the postcolonial project Concurrences, Linnaeus University, Sweden.

2. Schulte Nordholt 1971; Parera 1994; Therik 2004.

3. Kammen’s study is restricted to Portuguese Timor. One might add that there were several

Ages of queens

Kammen's study encourages us to look beyond hegemonic discourses of power and ritual structure. Societies in the eastern part of the Southeast Asian Archipelago may seem deeply imbued with hierarchical and structural principles, but the upsurge and disappearance of the queens is a reminder that there were alterations that were conditioned by the interplay of historical factors on the local, regional and Timor-wide level. While early Southeast Asian societies often accorded the female gender a considerable social and ritual status, this status was subject to constant negotiation according to different circumstances of time and place.⁴ A survey of the European archival material on Timor nevertheless begs for a few additions to the investigation of Kammen. The fairly comprehensive and regular Dutch sources on Timor, available from 1613 allow us to draw some further conclusions on the cycles of queenship.

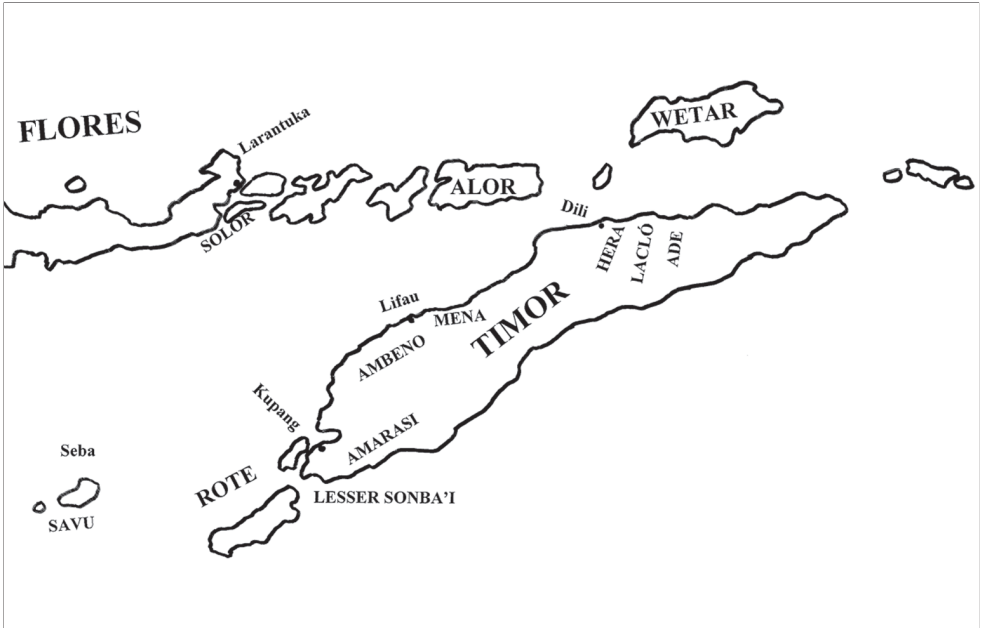
Kammen rightly observes that hardly any queen is known to have been enthroned in the course of the eighteenth century. A ponderous exception is the female "Liulai" (Liurai) of Belu who occurs in 1732. Belu in its more restricted sense is the Tetun-speaking region of Central Timor, the centre of which was Wehali on the southern plain. Wehali was known in West and much of East Timor as the cultural and ritual place of origin with a dual ruling structure based on a male-female dichotomy. The Liurai (a title subsequently used by the various minor rulers of East Timor) was in a symbolic sense "male" in relation to the passive "female" Maromak O'an, the "dark lord" who held the system in place by being immobile and resting at the centre.⁵ That the "male" Liurai title was held by a woman is therefore quite interesting. She furthermore appears as politically active since she sent ritual gifts to the Dutch establishment in Kupang and offered to withdraw her allegiance from the Portuguese.⁶ All in vain since the VOC did not wish to be involved in East Timorese affairs at this stage.

ruling queens in the Dutch half of the island during the nineteenth century, in particular in the Tetun-speaking area of Belu. The ritual centre Wehali had an unnamed queen in 1814 (ANRI Timor: 63), there were several generations of female rulers in Lakekun (Banu Lorok - Balok Lorok - Hoar Teti) (Politieke Verslagen en Berigten uit de Buitengewesten 1916, No. 1136, Nationaal Archief), and there were also well documented queens of Jenilu (Mariana Rosa da Costa 1879-1893) and Lidak (her daughter Petronella da Costa, 1901-1913) (Laan, H 1475, KITLV Archive). In the Atoni area one only finds a single documented case: Anna Elizabeth Aunoni of Amfo'an in 1880-1902 (Politieke Verslagen en Berigten uit de Buitengewesten 1924, No. 683, Nationaal Archief), along with a few doubtful cases mentioned by tradition. In most of these instances the succession appears to have been regular, and at least Petronella da Costa of Lidak was appointed although there were male siblings at hand.

4. Khan 2009: 23.

5. Fox 1982.

6. VOC 2239, f. 109-10.



The Timor area in the seventeenth century, showing the domains where ruling queens are documented

Apart from an otherwise unknown Dona Isabela of Hera (1726), Liulai stands alone in a male-dominated century.⁷ The succession in the Atoni domains of the western part of Timor can be followed in some detail through the records of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and does not feature female enthronements in 1700-1800.⁸ The Portuguese material is more scattered, but we have a number of lists of vassal “kingdoms” which enumerate male names (with the exception of the Hera queen). However, this is not the end of the issue. If we go back to the seventeenth century the situation is quite different, and it might even be tempting to speak of an “age of queens”. This is especially the case if we widen the geographical scope somewhat, to the islands immediately to the west and north of Timor. In the period 1640-1700 there are ten or eleven documented cases of ruling queens, of which eight are found on Timor, two on Solor and one on Savu. This happens to be exactly the “age of queens” in Aceh, and is partly overlapping with the corresponding age of the Patani queens on the Malay Peninsula.

It might be worth the effort to trace the circumstances of these eleven cases one by one, and then draw general conclusions about their place in Southeast Asian history. Can the types of queenship that appear through the document pages be connected and fruitfully compared to the cases of Aceh, Patani, or other regions of Southeast Asia?

Eleven queens

An unnamed Queen of Mena is mentioned in the Dominican chronicle in connection with the Portuguese expedition to Timor’s north coast in 1641, often seen as a decisive step in binding the Atoni domains to the Larantuka-based mixed-blood community of Portuguese. The principedom was situated around the Mena River between the later domains Insana and Biboki and disappears out of sight after 1703.⁹ In the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries, however, it was known as one of the most important “kingdoms” on the island. This reputation was conditioned by its position as a port where sandalwood was brought for export. It was therefore of no small consequence who headed this area. The queen that is documented in 1641 ruled for her son, baptized by the Portuguese as Dom João. Together with 2,000 subjects she received baptism from the Dominican padres and allowed churches to be constructed.¹⁰

7. Matos 1974: 152.

8. Tables showing the succession of Atoni rulers may be found in Hägerdal 2012: 417-20.

9. Matos 1974: 338. It is locally believed that Mena, mentioned for the last time as a “kingdom” in 1703, was actually a component of the Insana principedom which is known from European sources from 1741 (Alexander Un Usfinit, Maubes Insana, personal communication, February 2012).

10. Santa Catharina 1866: 300.

This lady may have met a hasty end. In 1648 she had 27 Portuguese who stayed in her domain killed, effectively demonstrating that her enthusiasm for Christians was not unconditional.¹¹ A letter from 1656 states that the King and Queen of Mena had recently been executed by the Portuguese *capitão mor* Francisco Carneiro de Siquera on charges of collaboration with the Dutch enemies.¹² What must be another queen appears in 1660. She took an anti-Portuguese stance and had the colonial soldiers killed or expelled. We do not know how the story ended. This second queen was reportedly an in-law (*vermaegschapt*) of the “emperor” of Sonba’i whose influence encompassed a large part of West Timor, further emphasizing her political importance.¹³

The expedition from Larantuka in 1641 also touched Lifau in the Ambeno principedom, the present-day Oecussi-Ambeno enclave. Here, too, the Portuguese met an unnamed ruling queen. Her husband had recently passed away and she ruled for her son who was no more than 16 years of age. Just like her counterpart in Mena she was baptized together with four daughters and the son who received the name Dom Pedro.¹⁴ Nothing further is known about the queen, but Dom Pedro is remembered in local tradition as an ancestor of the royal Da Cruz clan.¹⁵ Portuguese from Larantuka started to settle at Lifau in numbers in the late 1650s and seem to have held the principedom closely under the thumb.¹⁶

Female rulers were also found in East Timor, where the Makassarese exercised a loose suzerainty over the north coast for many years, in rivalry with the Portuguese. After the victorious conclusion of the Makassar War in 1667, the Dutch East India Company made a diplomatic effort to bind the coastal domains to the system of alliances that they were in the process of forging. Contracts were hastily concluded in 1668 with Ade, Manatuto, Hera, Laivai and Waimaa. Hera, a domain east of Dili, was ruled by a queen called Bealou.¹⁷ It might be recalled that Hera is the only known domain with a female vassal ruler in the eighteenth century.

The contracts immediately provoked a swift Portuguese reaction. They were at formal peace with the Netherlands since 1663, and the very same Netherlands had just ridded them of a dangerous seaborne rival. In the fall of 1668 a squadron ravaged a number of places on the north coast, an event that

11. Fiedler, H 475a, KITLV Archive.

12. Boxer 1967: 65-6.

13. VOC 1233, f. 200.

14. Loureiro 1995: 150-2.

15. Spillett 1999: 136.

16. VOC 1229, f. 864r-865v.

17. Corpus Diplomaticum 1931; 397. A certain Radja Ama Lakou is mentioned by her side, but the text of the contract makes it perfectly clear that Bealou enjoyed the superior position.

inaugurated their real hold on East Timor. In early 1669 an envoy from a place called Licalo reported to the Dutch about the disaster. He had been dispatched by the queen of that place, by the name Ynalou.¹⁸ Another report specifies that Ade, Manatuto and Lacló, a region to the west of Manatuto, had been destroyed six months previously.¹⁹ The name Licalo is therefore probably a variant of Lacló.

The Dutch *Generale missiven* for the same year give some particulars about Ade, the later Vemasse principedom. The land was sparsely populated, so it would require a lot of Dutch effort to construct a fortification there and keep a garrison at the place. The trade that consisted of slaves, beeswax, etc. would not balance the costs. By necessity, therefore, the profit-driven VOC had to turn these people down with no hope for Dutch military intervention. Their queen and what remained of her people had taken refuge in the mountains since long, choosing to hide there rather than accepting Portuguese rule.²⁰ If this is not a mixing up between Ade and Lacló, it would mean that the most important domain on the north coast of East Timor was also headed by a woman. However, the contract of 1668 does not seem to mention a queen, and in other sources, various male leaders of Ade occur.²¹

Portuguese power on Timor rested on close alliances with a number of Atoni principedoms, in particular Amarasi in the south-western part of the island. Christianity made some impact among the Amarasi elite, as noted by the Jesuit missionary Antonius Franciscus SJ in 1670. Pater Antonius made the acquaintance of the *de jure* Queen of Amarasi, Dona Maria, whose character he extolled in glowing terms: an intelligent, quiet and solitary woman who spoke fluent Portuguese and showed great concern for the dissemination of the Catholic faith. She kept her residence close to Larantuka on Flores where she married a certain Portuguese through the mediation of Pater Antonius. "The constitution of the kingdom was fully applied to this woman, and as a queen she made use of the income derived from the taxes of the kingdom as she found fit, although, given the security of the kingdom, she left the governance to her uncles and her brother."²²

The VOC establishment in Kupang likewise owed its existence to a number of allied domains that surrounded the port. The most important of these was Lesser Sonba'i, a split-off from the main Sonba'i realm in the

18. VOC 2285, f. 218-9.

19. VOC 2285, f. 188.

20. Coolhaas 1968: 667-8.

21. The contract between the VOC and Ade, printed in *Corpus Diplomaticum* 1931: 395, mentions the brothers Ama Gali and Sili Saba but no queen.

22. Jacobs 1988: 241. I wish to thank Erik Wiberg, Linnaeus University, for help with translating the Latin text.

interior. The “emperor” of this domain passed away in 1672, leaving no sons but three daughters.²³ One of these, the six years old Usi Tetu Utang, inherited the position and was formally enthroned as “empress” in 1682. She is usually referred as Bi Sonba’i, Lady Sonba’i.²⁴ Thanks to the verbose Dutch records we have comparatively many details of her life and acts. Following the usual symbolic male-female (*mone-feto*) dualism, she was a female ruler with regard to her political position as well as her actual sex. “Male” regents of the Oematan clan took care of the governance, although Usi Tetu Utang took strong political action on a few occasions. Interestingly for a society where marriage was universal, she never received a consort. The “empress” eventually passed away in May 1717 to the immense grief of the population, and was succeeded by a son of her Sonba’i cousin who resided in the inland of West Timor.²⁵

The centre of Dutch activities in the area was initially Solor. Five Muslim princedoms on Solor and Adonara formed a bond, Watan Lema that was allied to the VOC from 1613. The *primus inter pares* among the Watan Lema was Lohayong on the north coast of Solor. After the death of the old ruler of that place in 1645, his position was taken over by his widow Nyai Cili who was now known as the queen or ruler of Solor (*vorstin van Solor*).²⁶ According to a somewhat later account she originated from Keeda (Kedah in Malaysia?).²⁷ Her career is extensively documented through the VOC records which show her as an astute politician although being old and frail. She eventually passed away in 1664.²⁸

Nyai Cili bequeathed her position as ruler of Solor to another female figure, her daughter’s daughter Nyai Cili Muda.²⁹ On the paternal side she was descended from the princes of Lamahala on Adonara Island, another member of the Watan Lema bond. Nyai Cili Muda was less effective than her grandmother in Dutch eyes. The reports frequently complain about her inability to bring the members of the Watan Lema to obedience, which in turn complicated Dutch ambitions to control the Solor Islands. She passed away in 1686 and was, after a brief interregnum, succeeded by a son of her sister.³⁰

23. VOC 1294, f. 307r.; VOC 1367, Dagregister, sub 26-10-1680.

24. In several Dutch documents she is known as Nonje Sonnebay, where Nonje might be interpreted as Nyonya = Bi = Lady.

25. Coolhaas 1979: 297; VOC 1894, f. 4.

26. De Roever 2002: 244.

27. VOC 1728, f. 138-40.

28. VOC 1246, f. 1585-6.

29. Dagh-Register 1887-1931, the year 1665: 284.

30. Coolhaas 1975: 118.

Situated between Sumba, Flores and Timor, Savu was a small but not unimportant component of the VOC-led system of alliances. The island was divided into five domains, one of which was Seba at the north coast which later became the dominating power on Savu. A female ruler (*vorstin*) called Ina Tenga headed Seba from before 1682 to her demise in 1683. She was not a widow-regent but rather belonged to the ruling lineage since a VOC source specifies that she was succeeded as ruler by a brother's son.³¹ Ina Tenga appears in the partly detailed reports as an honoured but not particularly active leader.

Figureheads or agents of change?

Of these eleven figures, several are no more than names for us, and sometimes not even that. They occur for a moment in the textual sources since their existence had some significance for the economic, political or religious ambitions of the Europeans. Then they disappear again without leaving further traces in the material. No VOC official apparently took the trouble to see how things ended for the Queen of Ade who took to the hills with her followers to evade Portuguese atrocities. The situation is quite different with the Sonba'i "empress" and the two queens of Solor whose lives after their enthronement can be followed in sometimes circumstantial detail. The scrupulous daily records, *Dagregisters*, that the Dutch headmen were expected to write, ensured that the acts of the allied rulers were recorded on a regular basis. These three cases are therefore particularly valuable in assessing the agency of female leadership in the eastern archipelago.

Of the recorded queens, three (Mena I, Lifau, Solor I) owed their position to marriage rather than ancestry. Four (Amarasi, Sonba'i, Solor II, Seba) were members of the ruling clan, and for the rest there are no clear indications. From an ethnic point of view the queens are spread over a number of linguistic groups with a certain emphasis on the Atoni area of West Timor (Mena I and II, Lifau, Amarasi, Sonba'i). Interestingly, no more than one single queen ruled an Atoni kingdom during the late period studied by Kammen.³² Others are Galoli (Hera, Lacló, Ade), Waimaa (Ade³³), Lamaholot (Solor I and II) and Savunese (Seba). The three East Timorese queens are moreover found within two of the six geographical queenship

31. VOC 1403; VOC 1400, *Dagregister*, sub 16 May 1684.

32. This is Anna Elizabeth Aunoni of Amfo'an in north-western Timor who succeeded her grandfather in 1880 and stayed in power until her abdication in 1902 (*Politieke Verslagen en Berigten uit de Buitengewesten* 1924, No. 683, Nationaal Archief).

33. Ade appears to have been Galoli-speaking in the first place, but at least in modern time part of the region is Waimaa.

clusters pointed out by Kammen in his article (map, page 158). Especially the Queen of Lacló, a place that has a matrilineal family system, has counterparts in the nineteenth century when at least three queens sat on the throne.³⁴ Nevertheless it must be stressed that there are large parts of Timor about which very few data is known from the seventeenth century, and that other female leaders would probably surface had regular records been preserved.

The new material begs for both synchronic and diachronic questions. First, can the prerogatives and activity shown by all these queens be accommodated within the common paradigm of male/active-female/inactive socio-political relations? And secondly, does the early pattern of queenship basically accord with the findings of Kammen in the nineteenth century? Modern anthropology shows that the “traditional” Timorese society displays a range of social structures, from patrilineal to matrilineal. The visible world which we can see and conceive with our senses tends to be dominated by men. On the other hand, the supernatural “inside world” (in Tetun, *rai laran*) is associated with women and a goddess called Mother Earth (Rai Inan). Senior women may achieve a position of authority as functionaries in social exchange and ritual.³⁵

We might therefore expect women in honoured but politically inactive positions, but this is in fact not always the case. The accounts of the Dominican chroniclers are selective and biased, but they do not hesitate in referring to the queen dowagers of Mena and Lifau as the major political force, and the persons to be approached for missionary forays. The two Mena queens and the female rulers of Lacló and Ade (unless the two latter refer to one and the same person) are moreover active players in the resistance against early Portuguese colonialism – in the case of the second Mena queen with temporary success. An amount of constructive activity is also shown by the first Solorese queen. During her 19 years in power she was used by the VOC as a tool to keep the Watan Lema bond together. Although she was not always successful in this, she took action to secure peace in the area and even made an agreement with the rivals in Larantuka beyond the eyes of the Dutch.³⁶

Queens known to have inherited their positions tend to conform to the pattern of ceremonial inactivity. Dona Maria of Amarasi is described by the Jesuit pater as highly gifted, but also dapper. An interesting detail is her marriage to a Portuguese (possibly a “black Portuguese” Eurasian). Marriages between foreigners – Europeans, Eurasians, Chinese, etc. – and

34. Kammen 2012: 169.

35. Niner 2011: 43.

36. Dagh-Register 1887-1931, the year 1661: 218-9.

females of the highest aristocracy are common in the various Timorese princedoms, in spite of the insistence that rulers and regents should have princely blood on the father's and mother's side.³⁷ Usi Tetu Utang of Sonba'i is another and better documented case of inactive queenship. In their memorandums the Dutch headmen (*opperhoofden*) noted that they seldom noticed her taking an active stance, but rather let the Oematan clan handle affairs. When the Dutch officials met with Sonba'i representatives the lady herself was seldom present. At the same time they apprehended the great reverence in which she was held by local Timorese due to her vital dynastic position. At times she nevertheless broke the narrow limits of activity accorded to her physical and symbolic gender. In 1704 she negotiated a peace agreement with the rival Amarasi kingdom, and in 1714 she sent a frank letter to Batavia where she castigated the rude and oppressive behaviour of the current *opperhoofd*.³⁸ Both actions led to positive results and showed that symbolic-ritual capital could sometimes transform into political.

Similarly to the pattern of collective memory observed by Kammen for the nineteenth-century queens, there is hardly a memory today of the eleven female rulers. To be honest, the great time span and the lack of literacy in the area makes it less likely that detailed historical information would have survived. The only queens who are unambiguously remembered by local tradition are the two Solorese ones.³⁹ There are possible references to Usi Tetu Utang of Sonba'i and Ina Tenga of Seba in oral stories, although this requires some stretch of imagination.⁴⁰

On average the seventeenth-century queens seem to exert more influence on the political course of their princedoms than their counterparts in the nineteenth century. This point should not be taken too far, but the material indicates that they were sometimes able to serve as the rally-point of

37. On the emphasis on princely paternity and maternity for rulers, see Hägerdal 2012: 218.

38. VOC 1691, f. 17-8, 114-7; VOC 1841, f. 1-4.

39. Nyai Cili and her husband and predecessor are mentioned in traditions discussed by Dietrich 1984: 320-1, 324. Haji Achmad Kelake, of the princely family of Lohayong (personal communication, June 2006), knew vaguely about Nyai Cili Muda, although he could conceivably have been influenced by modern historiography.

40. A Sonba'i lady called Bi Aulais is referred as an early dynastic key person in Timorese tradition, although the details are too vague to confirm the identity with Usi Tetu Utang (Heijmering 1847: 38, 44). Savunese tradition speaks extensively about a lady of Seba called Ga Lena who allied with the Dutch to fight the rival princedom Timu (letter by M. Teffer, Raad voor de Zending 1102-1: 1411, Het Utrechts Archief). This is reminiscent of the VOC expedition to Savu in 1676 in the age of Ina Tenga (Hägerdal 2012: 231). However, neither Bi Aulais nor Ga Lena is expressly characterized as a female monarch, nor do the names fit. An Ina Tenga is actually mentioned in the orally transmitted Seba pedigrees, as the consort of the assumed father of the historical Ina Tenga (Dr Geneviève Duggan, NUS, Singapore, personal communication).

political action in times of distress or crisis. As pointed out by Kammen the numerous queens recorded in nineteenth century Portuguese texts should not always be considered as mere figureheads, but with a few exceptions they do not take on visibly active roles during the innumerable rebellions and petty wars that dot the history of East Timor in this period. At least the material illuminating such roles has yet to be dug up in the archives.

A Southeast Asian perspective

A second comparison applies to the wider Southeast Asian Archipelago. It is a well-known fact that a few trade-oriented Muslim states in the western part of the archipelago saw a succession of ruling queens in the early-modern period. In Patani altogether seven queens are accounted for the period 1584-1651 and again in 1670-1718 (with dates being partly controversial). Five of these were in the line of succession with two coming from other families.⁴¹ The four queens of Aceh ruled from 1641-1699; the details of succession are obscure for three of them. A large number of reigning queens are also known from Sulawesi, especially in the Buginese, Makassarese and Mandarese kingdoms, during the early modern and modern periods. In contrast with the Patani and Aceh cases they are more evenly spread over time. For example, six female rulers are known in Bone from about 1600 to 1895, four in Tallo' from 1590 to 1850, and seven in Luwu from about 1500 to 1935.⁴²

Relatively little research has been undertaken on this proliferation of early modern queens, although those of Aceh have received quite some scholarly attention.⁴³ Anthony Reid argues that the preference for Acehnese queens after 1641 was due to relations of power between the monarch and the local elite. The stern autocracy developed by the sultan in the first half of the seventeenth century alienated the *orangkayas* and further chiefs who preferred the somewhat weaker but peaceful governance of the queens during whose tenures conditions for prosperous foreign trade were good. Meanwhile factions of *orangkayas* increasingly controlled the actual state of

41. Teeuw and Wyatt 1970 I: 247-77, imply that there were five queens, but the study of Amirell (2011) describes seven queens encompassing eight reigns.

42. For Bone, see the genealogical tables in Bakkers 1866 and IJzereef 1995; for Tallo', Ligtoet 1872; for Luwu, the unpublished manuscript of Van Lijf, H 789, KITLV Archive. There were also ruling queens in Jambi on Sumatra (1630-55), Sukadana in Kalimantan (1608-22) and Gorontalo in northern Sulawesi (four individuals in c. 1578-1677), among other places. By contrast there were hardly any female rulers in the mainland states of Southeast Asia in this period. The closest hits would be the two Thai queens of Lan Na (1545-46 and 1564-78), and three brief episodes in Cambodia in 1687, 1736 and 1747 (Jacobsen 2008: 85-7).

43. An early study on female reigns in the East Indies was, however, published by P.J. Veth (1870). Veth attributed the phenomenon to the localization of Islam in insular Southeast Asia that retained strong pre-Islamic features, and drew comparisons to the Berber in North Africa.

affairs.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Leonard Andaya has argued for a forceful rule by the first queen of Aceh, whose enthronement was therefore not a sign of weakness of governance.⁴⁵ In her study of the Acehnese queens, Sher Banu Khan believes that the beginning of female rule was simply due to a confluence of various circumstances, and that the success of the arrangement made for the enthronement of three further queens. In spite of the Islamic character of the state there was no *adat* prescription against such thing.⁴⁶ It was only in 1699 that a fatwa arrived from Mecca decreeing that the rule by females was against the law of God, signalling the end of the era of queens.⁴⁷ Similarly, Stefan Amirell argues for a relatively benign era of partly active Patani queens, the success of which was broken by external political and economic factors, in the first hand European expansion.⁴⁸ In general, the role of women declined in some respects with the increasing influence of world religions, not least with regard to their old religious-ritual functions.⁴⁹ But in the case of Sulawesi, the importance attached to noble (“white”) blood appears to have ensured the enthronement of queens with irregular intervals, many hundreds of years after the introduction of Islam.

Do these observations have any relevance for our understanding of the Timorese situation? The shifting power relations between levels of hierarchy in the Acehnese kingdom, as pointed out by Reid, are somehow paralleled by the practical political concerns of the Timorese domains, indicated by the findings of Kammen and the new data referred above. In both cases it motivated female rule that may not have been the norm but was also not in direct conflict with *adat*. With reference to Patani, Stefan Amirell has noted the tendency that “peaceful, open, prosperous and trade-friendly conditions” in various historical societies have been conducive to the acceptance of female rulers, in contrast to belligerent and impoverished societies with commercially unfavourable conditions.⁵⁰ While seventeenth-century Timorese polities were seldom peaceful or prosperous, they were in some cases open to commerce and external contact. An important rationale would also be the role accorded to women in the kinship structure and systems of social and economic exchange – indeed, it has been argued that Southeast Asian states used to be centred on kinship and family rather than official institutions.⁵¹ The hierarchy of social estates in Sulawesi finds an obvious

44. Reid 2005: 144-5 (chapter co-authored with Takeshi Ito).

45. Andaya 2004: 59-84.

46. Khan 2009: 55-6.

47. Veth 1870: 369.

48. Amirell 2011: 321-3.

49. Tarling 1999: 213.

50. Amirell 2011: 321-2.

51. Cummings 2007: 11.

parallel in the Timorese distinction between princely (*usif, dasi*) and lower estates; in both cases aristocratic bilateral ancestry was a crucial but apparently not exclusive criterion for female enthronements.

The discontinuation of female rule on Timor, Savu and Solor in about the same decades as the end of queenship in Patani and Aceh, can possibly be linked to the impact of global cultural and political forces. Catholic as well as Protestant monarchs and regents begin to appear on Timor in larger numbers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁵² Moreover, the Portuguese vassal rulers were endowed with martial and by implication male titles such as *brigadeiro*, *coronel* and *tenente-coronel*.⁵³ The political, diplomatic and religious networks that the white foreigners tried to construct were therefore oriented towards the male (*mone*) rather than female (*feto*) sphere. Relations between the external forces and the indigenous elites may as a consequence have discouraged female enthronements for a century, until the resurgence of the institution after 1800. The ups and downs of Timorese queens over the centuries strengthen a central argument in Kammen's article: while the body of traditions and rules (*adat*) may have been hegemonic, there were always divergent discourses and practices.⁵⁴ Quite possibly, much of the scholarly literature on Timorese culture has been overly absorbed by the structural features of society, and too reluctant to pinpoint historical change.

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52. Matos 1974: 145-161 provides lists of rulers drawn up in 1703, 1726 and c. 1769, where nearly all of the rulers have Portuguese Catholic names.

53. Matos 2005: 10-1. It should be noted that most of Timor, apart from the Dutch enclave around Kupang, was under Portuguese influence up to 1749.

54. Kammen 2012: 166-7.

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