

LORDS OF THE LAND, LORDS OF THE SEA

Conflict and adaptation in early colonial Timor, 1600-1800

Hans Hägerdal

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Contents

LIST OF MAPS, FIGURES, TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS	IX
PREFACE	XI
1 TIMOR AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH	1
2 THE FIRST CONTACTS	15
<i>Early reports</i>	15
<i>The Solor connection</i>	21
<i>Missionary activity on Timor</i>	29
<i>Arrival of the Dutch</i>	33
<i>The hunt for sandalwood</i>	41
3 TRADITIONAL FORMS OF POWER	51
<i>Tantalizing shreds of evidence</i>	51
<i>Chiefs or kings?</i>	52
<i>Wehali – the centre</i>	60
<i>Sonbai</i>	68
<i>The elusive eastern lurai</i>	77
4 ESTABLISHMENTS AND CLASHES, 1641-1658	83
<i>Makassarese invasions, Portuguese responses</i>	83
<i>Dutch beginnings</i>	91
<i>The rise of Sonbai</i>	98
<i>The Company builds a fort</i>	102
<i>New alliances, new defeats</i>	110
<i>A later perspective</i>	126

5	THE TOPASS PHASE, 1650S-1702	133
	<i>The mestizo community goes to Timor</i>	133
	<i>The rise of the Hornays and Da Costas</i>	138
	<i>Co-opting the Atoni princedoms</i>	149
	<i>Wehali and the eastern lands</i>	162
	<i>The outer islands</i>	173
	<i>The uncrowned merchant prince</i>	180
	<i>The ethnic dynamics of the Topasses</i>	190
6	KUPANG AND THE FIVE LOYAL ALLIES, 1658-1700S	199
	<i>The formation of the five allies</i>	199
	<i>The pattern of warfare</i>	209
	<i>Kingship in the shadow of the Company</i>	216
	<i>Rote</i>	221
	<i>Sawu</i>	228
	<i>Solor</i>	233
	<i>The Alor group</i>	242
	<i>Problems of surveillance – a case study</i>	245
7	LIFE AND DEATH IN KUPANG	253
	<i>The population of Kupang</i>	253
	<i>The Chinese impact</i>	262
	<i>Slaves</i>	269
	<i>Arenas of interaction</i>	283
	<i>Room for negotiations</i>	291
	<i>The Company as mediator</i>	298
	<i>Savages</i>	302
8	THE ESTADO STRIKES BACK, 1696-1732	311
	<i>A difficult heritage</i>	311
	<i>The coming of the white governor</i>	316
	<i>The VOC connection</i>	322
	<i>A clerical peace- and troublemaker</i>	328
	<i>Anti-Portuguese movements</i>	335
	<i>The Topass leader at the helm</i>	344

9	THE COMPANY ON THE MOVE, 1732-1761	349
	<i>Dutch activism and Belu overtures</i>	349
	<i>The Meulenbeek incident</i>	356
	<i>The road to Penfui</i>	361
	<i>The map is redrawn</i>	367
	<i>The Paravicini mission</i>	376
	<i>New Company initiatives</i>	381
10	COLONIAL RETREAT AND MAINTENANCE	393
	<i>Two ports in decline</i>	393
	<i>Chaos in the west, stabilization in the east</i>	399
	<i>Conclusions: cultures in contact</i>	409
	APPENDIX 1. RULERS OF LOCAL PRINCEDOMS FROM 1619 TO APPROXIMATELY 1850	417
	APPENDIX 2. GOVERNORS OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR FROM 1696 TO 1832	423
	APPENDIX 3. DUTCH OPPERHOOFDEN AND RESIDENTS OF TIMOR FROM 1646 TO 1832	425
	GLOSSARY	429
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	433
	INDEX	463

List of maps, figures, tables and illustrations

MAPS

Timorese ethnolinguistic groups	11
The Solor and Alor Islands	23
West Timorese domains	63
East Timorese domains	79

FIGURES

Genealogy of the Sonbai dynasty	101
Genealogy of the Hornay and Da Costa families	145

TABLES

Reformed Christians on Timor, Rote and Sawu, eighteenth century	286
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ILLUSTRATIONS

A Topass or mardijker with his family	194
Kupang as it appeared to a British visitor in the early 1790s	219
Rotenese characters in 1829	225
A group of Timorese soldiers	294
The interior of a Timorese house in Kupang	303
A lady and her servants in Kupang	304
The siege of the mountain stronghold Cailaco in 1726, by the forces of the Estado da Índia	339
A letter written by Gaspar da Costa, who led the Topass community between 1732 and 1749	355
The Sonbai ruler Pieter Nube, who ruled in 1798-1821, with French visitors	404

Preface

The aim of this book is to fill a historiographical void by studying how local people on Timor fought, traded, negotiated and mixed with foreigners during two eventful centuries, from 1600 to 1800. The subject is not entirely new, for many good historians have taken up their pen and delved into the intricate history of the island. What is still needed, however, and what this book tries to achieve, is a comprehensive discussion that takes into account the entire island – what is today known as Indonesian Timor or Timor Leste. An account that traces both indigenous as well as colonial interests; a study which fully uses the rich archival sources that are available; a text that traces not only the exploitative and oppressive features accompanying the European presence and ensuing forms of resistance, but also the forms of co-operation, partnership and mutual dependence that subsequently evolved.

When using general textbooks to study the history of Indonesia, it is apparent that a non-literate and low-technological culture like that of the Timorese does not feature heavily. The same goes for works that survey Portuguese expansion overseas, where Timor is a footnote appended to discussions about Goa, Malacca and Macao. The extended arc of islands known as Nusa Tenggara, which stretches out some 1,000 kilometres from west to east, is by no means devoid of interest for the modern scholar. The islands harbour a remarkable ethnic and linguistic diversity. They are characterized by small-scale polities, a strong belief in the role of ancestors, ritual-spatial location, and marital exchange patterns between lineages. All this has engendered excellent scholarship, but scholarship that tends to sit within the field of anthropology rather than history. This is matched by the public discourse of modern Indonesia, where the central, principally Javanese, narration of Indonesia's long history has been predominant. Powerful physical symbols, such as the Javanese *kraton* and temples and the Balinese religious sites, stand out in textbooks and tourist guides alike. Unsurprisingly, much of the official six-volume textbook *Sejarah nasional Indonesia* (Marwati Djoenad Poesponegoro and Nugroho

Notosusanto 1975) is devoted to the geographical centre, although there are also a few sections on Sumatra, Kalimantan and South Sulawesi, especially in reference to anti-colonial rebellions, perhaps illustrative of modern nationalist sentiment. Coverage of Timor is restricted to a few scattered mentions in volumes I and III.

It must be emphasized that any gaps in the history of Timor are not entirely due to a lack of sources, as there have been a good number of documents during the last three or four centuries. Although the material is largely Dutch or Portuguese, with all its inherent problems of Eurocentric bias, it can still be effectively used to trace historical processes in the easterly regions of Indonesia and Timor Leste. Language, however, has been an obstacle. For the most part, texts dealing with ‘Portuguese’ Timor have not taken advantage of Dutch sources, and vice versa. Notwithstanding this, since the cataclysmic separation of Timor Leste from Indonesia in 1999, a number of interesting contributions have surfaced. A detailed study of the period 1613-1660 has been completed by Arend de Roever (2002), and I have no intention of superseding his work. One may also mention the widely used online history of Timor by Geoffrey Gunn (n.y.), and the cartographic work undertaken by Frédéric Durand (2006a).

To write a comprehensive text covering two centuries of history is a long and cumbersome yet rewarding journey, and it is hard to pinpoint a particular event that has been formative in the process. To do so would merely be a reconstruction after the fact, of the type that is often found in literary autobiographies. After years of labour, however, there are some occasions that spring to mind as being especially memorable. One such moment occurred on a January night in Ajaobaki, in the *sonaf* (residence) of the Oematan family, once the rulers of the West Timorese highland district Mollo. In the sparsely lit building from 1911 – as is often the case in these quarters, the electricity was off – I found myself talking to people whose ancestors had played important roles in the distant centuries I was studying. The *adat* (tradition) expert tied to the Oematan family, Mathias Sunbanu, an old moustached gentleman clad in a local *kain*, revealed the family history of the Oematan since time immemorial – or rather a section of it, since it is unbecoming that an *adat* expert tells more than he is allowed to according to traditional Timorese custom. Showing a good awareness of historical criticism, he told me that one must circulate among the various experts to hear the variations. He added that *sopi*,

a type of liquor, was mandatory to keep the experts in high spirits and help them relax and open up. With me in the room was Leopold Nisoni, son of the last Dutch-appointed raja of Kupang and a descendant of the Sonbai family. This family had held a position of precedence among the princes in West Timor for many hundreds of years, to such an extent that the Portuguese and Dutch colonizers heralded them as emperors. It was, indeed, one of those moments when history comes alive.

Nor were moments of fascination lacking when examining the archives. In spite of the unreflecting style of the Dutch officials, the very detailed daily records (*Dagregisters*) of Timor included data about persons and events that entice the reader's curiosity. During a sojourn at the Nationaal Archief in The Hague in March 2007, my interest was piqued by a soldier from Stockholm with the Dutchified name Roeloff Pietersz.¹ In the *Dagregisters* of the late 1670s, he appears throughout the pages as a good and trusted servant of the 'Noble Company' – the euphemistic term for the profit-driven Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*). Pietersz was described as being *taalkundig*, meaning that he was knowledgeable in at least one local language. He was stationed by his Dutch masters as their representative on Rote, just off the west coast of Timor. In the baptismal book of Kupang I found more information about this Swede, who had somehow ended up on the other side of the globe. Pietersz was married to a local woman from Kupang called Cornelia, who had previously had a son with an unnamed Dutchman – in other words, outside of wedlock. Roeloff Pietersz and Cornelia had two daughters together before Roeloff fell victim to a tropical disease, probably malaria. He was brought back to the Dutch centre in Kupang, and on 14 September 1680 he asked the bookkeeper to draw up his testament. Three days later, at two o'clock in the afternoon, he passed away. These brief notes only serve to fuel speculation. That he ended up in the East Indies was perfectly explicable, since many Scandinavians took service with the Dutch East India Company. But did he rejoice in, or, rather, regret exchanging the stench, filth and cold of the small Swedish capital for the strange life of being the sole European on Rote? Did he find beauty and charm in the dark complexion of his betel-chewing wife when comparing her to the fair, though lice-bitten ladies of Stockholm? Did they get along in spite of the cultural divide?

¹ Possibly a Dutch approximation of Olof Pettersson.

Did he learn to appreciate the juice of the lontar palm and suppress the turnips, coarse bread and mutton of his childhood from his memory?

There are also less Eurocentric aspects to fire the imagination. On the same pages on which the story of Roeloff Pietersz is told, we find numerous snippets illustrating the life that was led by the peoples of East Indonesia and Timor Leste. On 26 November 1679, a Rotenese trading party led by two regents visited Kupang and asked the Dutch authorities for food. The Dutch at first sent them mutton, but it turned out that people on Rote did not appreciate such meat; in the end the Europeans delivered two live hogs to their choosy guests. On 6 December of the same year, a slave boy called Lancke sat fishing on a rock by the sea. He must have fallen asleep and fallen into the water, as he was later found dead, floating in the waves by the rock. Lancke was unceremoniously buried that same day. On 7 September 1680, a cowherd serving under the Dutch met a lontar palm climber from Sonbai. The cowherd asked him for *tuk*, unfermented palm wine. When the Timorese refused, the cowherd lost his temper and delivered a blow to the man's chest with a sharp weapon. Upon hearing this, the Dutch authorities immediately cast the violent cowherd into a dark prison and took the injured Timorese into hospital. The following day the lontar climber ran away, which is not surprising perhaps considering the standards of European hospitals at the time. Eight days after the death of Roeloff Pietersz, at eleven o'clock in the evening, the Timorese chief Ama Neno from Sonbai, who lived close to the Dutch settlement, went back home after visiting the nearby scrubland. Some of his men were stationed there to keep watch over the paths lest an enemy approached, and in accordance with Timorese ritual-magical customs, he had spread a powerful substance, *obat*, on the paths. Back at his house he found a man of the Helong tribe called Poto fornicating with his wife. Ama Neno reacted furiously. He beat the gongs so that the Dutch-allied regents of the area came to see what was going on. The fornicators were detained, and the rulers stayed at Ama Neno's place for some time, finally agreeing that the culprits must be beheaded. The next day the local Dutch authorities approved the sentence without hesitation. The two lovers were taken to Oeba, a 30-minute walk from the Dutch fort. Their heads were chopped off and hung from a tree to serve as a deterrent to others, while their bodies were thrown into a pit. Had Roeloff Pietersz lived to witness the tragic event, he might have recalled similar punishments for adultery in his distant homeland, intro-

duced by stern Vasa kings to ensure sexual control.

Such images, saved from oblivion by the scrupulous officials and underpaid scribes of the Dutch East India Company, have to be collated and contextualized in order to make real sense to us, however interesting they might seem in isolation. Slowly, a picture emerges of a world that is certainly different from the East Indonesian societies that face us today, but still has many links with current times. The political border and the different historical experiences of Indonesian Timor and Timor Leste; the dissemination of maize as the principal food crop; the spread of weapon technology and metal utensils; the spread of Christianity to the detriment of Islam: these are all features that have their roots in the period we are studying. The organization and location of the villages has been changed in the twentieth century, but much of the traditional agricultural and livestock economy persists. The traditional ‘animist’ beliefs have been replaced by Protestant and Catholic precepts over the last half a century, but the former rituals and perceptions of the supernatural surface from time to time. The old forms of raja rule have been abrogated through bureaucratic centralization and republican sentiments, but revivalism and the preservation of hierarchical concepts have lived on. Hopefully a study of the early forms of interaction between indigenous polities and colonial groups, and of the resulting forms of hybridity, can help us understand the dynamics of history in the Timor area – an area that was geographically isolated but also subjected to external influences from a rather early stage.

A large number of people have helped me in this endeavour by providing information or commenting upon my ideas on the subject. In Indonesia, I would like to thank Don Leopold Nicolaas Nisoni and his family, Professor Hendrik Ataupah, the late Dr Tom Therik, Gideon Broery Amabi, Elcid and Anthony Li, Salmun Bislissin, the late Kanis Passar, the late Benyamin Messakh, Munandjar Widiyatmika, all in Kupang. Thanks are also due to F.H. Fobia and Doni Kusa Banunaek in Soe, Nesi Nope in Niki-Niki, Michael Bria in Atambua, the late Haji Achmad Kelake in Lohayong, the late Haji Muhammad Hasan in Lamakera, Ahmad Daud Boli Malakalu and Ibrahim Dasi in Lamahala, Leo Boli Lajar in Kalikasa, the late Edmundus Pareira in Sikka, and several further informers. Not forgotten are the staff of the Arsip Nasional (ANRI) in Jakarta. In Timor Leste, I owe thanks to *liurai* António da Costa and several informers in the Oecusse-Ambeno enclave. In the

Netherlands, Professor Wim Stokhof encouraged my work and received me as a fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). Dr Paul van der Velde, also at IIAS, arranged for my manuscript to be submitted to KITLV. Other persons to whom I would like to express my gratitude include Professor Peter Boomgaard, Donald P. Tick, Dr Arend de Roever, Dr David Henley, Diederick Kortlang and the staff of KITLV, the UB in Leiden and the Nationaal Archief, all in the Netherlands; furthermore Professor Robert Barnes and Dr Ruth Barnes in Oxford, Dr Douglas Kammen and Dr Geneviève Duggan in Singapore, Professor Leonard Y. Andaya and Professor Barbara W. Andaya in Hawaiï, Professor Douglas Lewis in Melbourne and Professor James J. Fox in Canberra. In Sweden, the present research was made possible through funding by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). Professor Lars Olsson at Växjö University (subsequently Linnaeus University) was helpful in commenting upon my draft application to the Council. At Linnaeus University, the postcolonial seminar led by Professor Gunlög Fur has been a source of inspiration, and arranged for funding for the final language check. The final polishing was done during a tenure in Leiden, funded by the NWO. In particular I wish to thank Emilie Wellfelt, who took the time to read and comment on an early draft of my manuscript.

Växjö, Sweden
14 May 2011

Timor and historical research

Timor is situated to the northwest of [Zhong-] Jia Luo. Its mountains do not grow any other trees but sandalwood that is most abundant. It is traded for silver, iron, cups [of porcelain], cloth from Western countries and coloured taffetas. There are altogether twelve localities which are called ports. There is a local chieftain. The soil is suitable for the raising of grain. The climate is irregular, hot in the day, cool at night. The habits of the natives are obscene. Men and women cut their hair and wear short cotton skirts. They tie them around with cloth from Champa. Market prices of spirits and meats are reasonable. The women are shameless. The tribal chiefs are fond of food, wine and sex, and when sleeping they do not cover themselves so that those who get infected [by diseases] die for the most part. If one has been careless while among the natives, the disease will break out with attacks of high fever once the ship has returned to China.¹

This is how a Chinese geographer presented the distant Southeast Asian island circa 1350, and it is one of the earliest known descriptions. About 450 years later, in 1801, the French explorer Péron² described the same land in somewhat more elaborate language:³

Barely two days had passed since we left the dry coasts of New Holland, and we could already behold the lofty mountains of Timor. Three sets of haughty rocks, running parallel to the length of the island, con-

¹ *Dao yi Zhi lue* (circa 1350), quoted in Ptak 1983:37.

² Not to be confused with Jean-Baptiste Pelon, a Frenchman in Dutch service who wrote a valuable study of Timor in 1778, *Description de Timor occidental et des îles sous domination hollandaise (1771-1778)*; see Pelon 2002.

³ Please note that all translations of non-English sources are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

stituted a threefold amphitheatre, whose furthest lying tiers, set back into the ground, also seemed to be the highest. The shape of these mountains, although lofty, was somehow mellow; their regular and uniform extensions and their steep summits were imperceptibly softened by the gentle waves, which died down by the seashore. The mountain slopes were completely covered with mighty vegetation; the outlines of all the valleys were marked by the green foliage of dense forests, above which the elegant tops of coconut palms, areca trees and borassus palms rose on all sides – the happy product of the equatorial climates.

Soon we had passed the coasts of Amarasi; we found ourselves at the mouth of the strait that, together with Timor, makes up the island of Rote, more famous for its beautiful women than for its copper mines. On the morning of 21 August we crossed this strait; after having passed the northern point of the small island of Landu, which, like many other islands, is often confused with Rote on the standard maps, we discovered the entrance of a second strait, formed by the island of Semau, which curves towards the western point of Timor. At two o'clock we cast anchor in the middle of this strait, opposite a pretty bay belonging to the island of Semau. It would perhaps be hard to find anywhere else more charming and picturesque than the place which we currently enjoyed; surrounded by the land on all sides, it was as if we were in the midst of a beautiful lake; fishes of all kinds, adorned with the richest colours, lived in these calm waters and multiplied in its depths; and wherever we turned our eyes, this image of pure fertility seemed to repeat itself with even more charm and interest. What a contrast to the nearby north-western coastlines of New Holland, so monotonous and sterile!⁴

The same island was therefore commented upon by short-term visitors who travelled from afar. While it is likely that the geographical features of Timor were comparable in 1350 and 1800, it is remarkable that the tone of both descriptions differs considerably. For the Chinese, Timor was an island of some importance because of its resources of white sandalwood (*santalum album*), the fragrant qualities of which made it suitable for making incense and artwork. However, the doubtful standards of its inhabitants, the intolerable heat and the unhealthy living conditions

⁴ Péron, 1807:141-2. Landu is in fact no island, but is part of Rote. In most of the quotations in this work I have rendered geographical and personal names in their modern form, in instances when there is no ambiguity about it.

made it a place to avoid if possible. For the explorer Péron on the other hand, who had no business to attend to there, Timor was a highly captivating place. Though the Frenchman soon became aware of the island's darker side, its beauty and interesting ethnographic composition added a flavour of good-natured curiosity to his account.

Ever since the days of the medieval Chinese merchants, the image of Timor has oscillated between these two extremes. This Southeast Asian island, roughly equivalent to the Netherlands in size, has been visited over the centuries by Portuguese, Dutch and British travellers among others, and is often described in rather strong categorical terms. Indeed, the viewpoints differ to the degree that one cannot help but wonder if they are talking about the same island. If the inhabitants are valiant and warlike in one text, they are weak and cowardly in the other; if they are nimble and dexterous in one account, they are lazy and primitive in the other; if the Timorese women are considered to be of high standing in one narrative, they are badly oppressed to the point of enslavement in the other.

The problem in grasping the fundamentals of Timorese society in a historical setting is obvious: the island is comparatively large, but lies far away from the western and central parts of the Southeast Asian Archipelago, which constitute a meeting point of cultures. From a historical perspective, the cluster of islands to the east of Sumbawa tends to be settled by small polities and ritual communities with a comparatively low level of (conventional) technological sophistication. In these societies clan, house, marriage patterns and ancestors become crucial nodes in what the anthropologist Jim Fox has called 'the flow of life'.⁵ While islands such as Flores, Sumba, Timor and Solor have generated a substantial amount of interest from anthropologists, the same cannot be said of historians, something which is partly due to the nature of the sources. It is not entirely true that the art of writing was unknown among the Timorese until recently, but there is only a limited amount of pre-1900 texts written or dictated by indigenous people. The great bulk of the source material from the long era of colonial presence – from the seventeenth to the twentieth century – was produced by officials and visitors of European extraction. One might say that the history of Timor is doomed to be studied through Western eyes.

⁵ For a popular introduction to this notion, see Fox 1991b; for an extended survey, see Munandjar Widiyatmika 2008.

In spite of this, the present work attempts to trace the indigenous political and social structures in Timor during an era that, for reasons soon to be explained, may be termed ‘early colonial’, thus encompassing the age of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East India Company, hereafter also rendered as ‘the Company’) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The main question addressed by this study relates to the methods of interaction between colonial and indigenous organizations, and the changes in local society brought about as a consequence of this interaction. In other words, the book will scrutinize how forms of material culture, religion, ideology, political domination and trade were adapted for or imposed on the island by external individuals, and how the indigenous populations strove to adapt or resist these influences. In order to see the Timorese development within a geographical context, I also discuss the role of surrounding islands, in particular Solor and easternmost Flores, both of which were colonial stepping stones to Timor. Postcolonial studies in their broader sense tend to focus on forms of culture influenced by the imperial process since the inception of colonialism, and several issues raised by this line of study can be applied to the early colonial context of Timor. Thus, while not denying the asymmetric and often oppressive features of the colonial relationship, one should avoid seeing it as a simplistic one-sided process. Rather, it is essential to identify the constituent roles of colonizer and colonized, and to trace their hybrid forms, that is, an insoluble intermingling, via interaction, of the (colonizing) centre and the (colonized) periphery.⁶

The case of Timor is of particular interest within the context of Southeast Asia. In spite of having been visited by foreign traders for many hundreds of years, the island is not very accessible, and regular visits need to be well planned and to fit around the monsoon pattern. The oft-repeated but untrue rumour that Timor was covered by sandalwood forests drew European traders to its shores from an early stage: the first documented visit, by the remains of the Magellan expedition, took place in 1522, and Portuguese traders visited the island from at least 1523 (Le Roux 1929; Newitt 2005:122). Regular Portuguese and Dutch establishments on the Timorese coast date from the mid-seventeenth century, and

⁶ Nünning 2005:68, 181-2. I will make no attempt here to define the ambiguous field of postcolonial studies; for an overview of this, see Gandhi 1998; Slater 1998.

from circa 1670 most princedoms⁷ on the island were subjected to an amount of European (or Eurasian) political precedence. In spite of these early beginnings, thorough colonial rule as understood in conventional terms was hardly implemented before the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁸ Self-critical Dutch and Portuguese writers readily acknowledged the limited means that the colonial establishments had at their disposal to enforce their will on the innumerable local princedoms; ‘colonial’ rule was indeed often little more than window dressing (Castro 1862; Kniphorst 1885).

‘Indirect rule’ might be a better term, though it would be more judicious to speak of an indirect implementation of a political and economic network. The small Dutch and Portuguese detachments stayed in coastal settlements from which they tried to manage the trade and deliveries of sandalwood, beeswax and slaves – their main *raison d’être* – with the little manpower available.

Clearly, this situation is not unique to Timor. Rather, indirect rule was the most common way of handling European trading capitalism in the coastlands of Asia up until the nineteenth century. ‘Early colonial’ is therefore a term that is best used for this period of Western impact on the area.⁹ Nevertheless, the difficulties faced by the colonial organizations in getting to grips with the indigenous people over the course of two or three centuries raises questions about the ability of a comparatively low-technological local society to resist highly-technological external intruders. Explanations of the maintenance of such resistance may be sought in cultural features, societal organization, ways of warfare and, not least, in geographical factors. On the other hand, the very fact that there was a degree of Timorese attachment to the Dutch East India Company and the Portuguese king suggests that arenas of interaction and exchange developed, whereby political authority was not simply a matter of enforcement. One may refer here to the ‘stranger king’ syndrome, which has been popular with scholars of Southeast Asian history

⁷ In this work, I use the terms ‘princedom’ or ‘domain’ rather than ‘kingdom’ for political units. The non-bureaucratized and indeed non-centralized nature of these units means that the term ‘kingdom’ would misdirect the reader. At the same time, I retain the European term ‘king’ (*koning, rei*) for the heads of local polities rather than the somewhat non-descriptive ‘ruler’, ‘chief’ or ‘prince’. All this will be discussed further in Chapter III.

⁸ See in particular the detailed studies of Davidson 1994; Farram 2003; Schlicher 1996.

⁹ That is, in the first place for Asia and Africa. The more intense colonization of parts of the Americas after 1492, with massive resettlement and extermination of peoples, differs greatly from the outlined pattern.

in recent years.¹⁰ Societies with a stateless or non-bureaucratic structure have often tended to refer to a ruler or a dynasty as an outsider, who purportedly comes from another geographical location, often associated with the sea. The stranger king is ideally accepted by a particular polity as a commanding force, whose foreignness puts him in a position to mediate and keep the various competitive elements of the polity in check. Various examples from the Southeast Asian Archipelago indicate that common ethnicity and matrimonial arrangements were far from sufficient to build a politically integrated society. Small-scale societies often maintained an economy of gift exchange, which may have been more significant in the construction of political networks. However, the competitive nature of such exchanges also easily made for conflicts; a stranger who had few emotional bonds with the indigenous groups would be ideally placed to act as a facilitator of conflict resolution. As will be seen, this syndrome is highly relevant to the Timorese case, where the Dutch East India Company was literally seen as a ‘prince’ (*usi*); the surrounding discussion can be elaborated on by drawing on the results of modern anthropological research.¹¹ The European outsider was, to such an extent, placed inside, localized within a system that made him indispensable and surrounded him with symbols and rites of precedence. In fact, the Dutch post in Kupang, West Timor, was surrounded by allied principedoms who stayed loyal to the foreign lords from the 1650s until the twentieth century, in spite of periods of obvious misrule. As the allies put it to a white *tuan* (gentleman) in the face of a British invasion attempt in 1797: ‘We rajas have the land and *tuan* has the sea.’¹² The lords of the land paid their deference to the lord of the sea whilst still having the means to wield power during negotiations.

Another interesting point is the presence, for some three centuries, of two colonial organizations who were within the vicinity of each other. Such an existence of two centres of colonial authority, which, for most of the time, had a mutually hostile attitude, is rather unique in a Southeast

¹⁰ The discussion about the ‘stranger king’ syndrome in this book owes much to Henley (2002), who studied a case from northern Sulawesi, both similar yet quite dissimilar in parts. For more on the stranger king, see Sahlins 1981; Fox 2008; Barnes 2008.

¹¹ Middelkoop 1952:227. Traube 1986:52-4 contains a discussion of a related theme with regard to the East Timorese views of the Portuguese.

¹² LOr 2242, UB Leiden. The VOC was not normally addressed as ‘Lord of the Sea’, but there might be an idea of an opposition between the ‘female’ land and ‘male’ sea here, in accordance with Timorese traditional concepts. ‘Stranger kings’ in Southeast Asia tended to be associated with the sea.

Asian context. Although a formal lasting peace between the Netherlands and Portugal was announced in Europe in 1663, the history of their Timorese possessions is one of suspicion, intrigue and wars by proxy. This is further complicated by the important role of the Topasses, or Black Portuguese, a mestizo group with elements of Portuguese culture, set in a localized Timorese context. Since the Topasses lived in a state of downright hostility with the White Portuguese and the Dutch for long periods of time, in effect there were three external, or semi-external, powers operating on the island. Conflicts between whites and mestizos are well known from other parts of the Portuguese colonial realm, but in the Timorese case the hostilities appear to have been more extreme. This, in turn, raises questions about how the formal and informal aspects of the Portuguese colonial complex worked in relation to each other. It also brings up issues of the workings of ethnicity and race in this period.

This brings us back to the resources available for the writing of an autonomous history of Timor. The archival material used for this study is mainly Dutch, and is found in the Nationaal Archief (Dutch National Archives) in The Hague, the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- and Volkenkunde (KITLV, Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) in Leiden, the Afdeling Oosterse Letteren (Department of Eastern Letters) of the University of Leiden, and the Arsip Nasional (ANRI, National Archive) in Jakarta. There are irregular reports on the affairs of the Dutch East India Company in the Timor region between 1613 and 1646, and regular ones after that date. In 1657, the headquarters of the VOC in this part of Indonesia were transferred from the small island of Solor to Kupang. The Dutch authorities soon came into closer contact with certain indigenous polities which sought the protection of the VOC and settled close to Kupang as subordinate allies. Due to this, certain routines of interaction were worked out in the second half of the seventeenth century. The Company regularly received information from their allies, and took pains to instruct the children of the aristocracy in Malay, the general vehicle of communication. Letters to the VOC authorities in Batavia were drawn up on a yearly basis by the allies of Timor and the neighbouring islands of Rote, Sawu and Solor. Reports written by the Dutch *opperhoofd* (commander, later also called *resident*) were likewise sent to Batavia at least once a year, with copies ending up in the Netherlands. These reports are often very verbose, encompassing several dozens of folio pages, sometimes more. The papers sent from

Kupang to Batavia also included letters and special reports on various subjects, and occasionally minutes of council meetings and copies of *Dagregisters* (daily records). The latter two are particularly valuable, since they provide an idea of how the VOC operated in Timor on a day-to-day basis. Taken together, these sources provide valuable but piecemeal data on the history and structure of the polities that came under the orbit of Dutch influence, whilst also indicating activities throughout the rest of the island. The impressive monograph of Arend de Roever (2002) has made extensive use of the VOC material up to 1660.¹³ For the later periods there are a few dated, but partly still useful articles in Indologist periodicals, mostly from the nineteenth century.¹⁴

The Dutch source material is verbose but episodic in character, and is certainly not above historical criticism. When addressing the central authorities in Batavia, the *opperhoofden* went out of their way to justify their actions and decisions. Failures and unsatisfactory economic results were regularly blamed on the Portuguese or their indigenous allies, and occasionally, on the quality of the other staff of the trading post. We also know that several persons who were sent to Timor as *opperhoofden* were considered to be among the least competent of the VOC employees, and there is ample evidence of corruption. On the other hand, the organization of the VOC as a trading institution meant that there were checks on the arbitrariness of the reports that were written. The Company needed facts, not fiction, in order to take central decisions on policy and the allocation of resources.

What about the point of view of the indigenous Timorese? As a matter of fact, there is a certain output of textual documents from the VOC allies in Timor and the nearby islands of Rote, Sawu and Solor, despite these aristocrats being almost always illiterate. Letters were drawn up on a yearly basis and sent with a Company ship to the Governor General in Batavia, together with the tributes. The letters were composed with the assistance of those people linked to the VOC who could read and write, who were, in fact, sometimes ethnic Timorese. These letters display a rather formal tone and are not always very illuminating. They do, however, provide us with the Timorese version of events spoken of

¹³ For briefer statements of his main arguments, see De Roever 1998, 2005.

¹⁴ In the first place Heijmering 1847; Van der Chijs 1872; Leupe 1877; Haga 1882a, 1882b; De Roo van Alderwerelt 1904; Fiedler 1931. More recent articles partly based on VOC materials include McWilliam 2007 and Hägerdal 2006, 2007a and 2007b.

in the more verbose Dutch reports. At times they are written in a frank and critical style, thus providing an interesting corrective to colonial narratives. It is also important to remember that the Dutch were highly dependent on Timorese informers to find out what was happening on the island. Timorese voices are therefore constantly quoted in the VOC documents, albeit in a Dutch-language version.

When compared with the Dutch records, the Portuguese materials are rather different in style, more spread out and preserved in a less regular manner. For the period under scrutiny, they largely consist of reports and letters written by colonial officials in Lifau and Dili, and of missionary – in the first instance, Dominican – texts. They are less systematic and, indeed, much less preserved than the VOC records, and usually display a profound lack of interest or insight into indigenous Timorese affairs. Nevertheless, these documents are often written in a lively narrative style and contain many ethnographic details not found in the Dutch records. It is both rewarding and illuminating to compare the Portuguese and Dutch texts, since they often present different outlooks and perspectives. In this sense, the documents of each respective group can be evaluated in light of each other. Some Portuguese letters are preserved in Dutch archives; besides these, the present study has not undertaken original research in Portuguese collections. Many Portuguese records from the seventeenth and eighteenth century, perhaps the majority of them, have been published or discussed in works issued before the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975.¹⁵

Apart from the output of the two institutionalized colonial powers, there is also a collection of travel writings and geographical descriptions by short-term visitors, written by travellers from France, England and further afield. In terms of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, though, these are relatively few and far between.¹⁶ Those writings that we do possess are, however, valuable, since they do not have the official character of the Dutch and Portuguese reports, but instead provide their own – though certainly not unbiased – viewpoints on the island and its inhabitants. Visitors include such celebrities as Captain Bligh of the infamous *Bounty* mutiny, but the most valuable contribution is the long and very

¹⁵ See in the first instance the works by Castro 1867; Faria de Morais 1934, 1944; Leitão 1948, 1952; Sá 1949, 1956-58; Oliveira 1953; Matos 1974a.

¹⁶ The published travel accounts are extensively discussed by Durand 2006a; this work also contains a very useful cartographic survey.

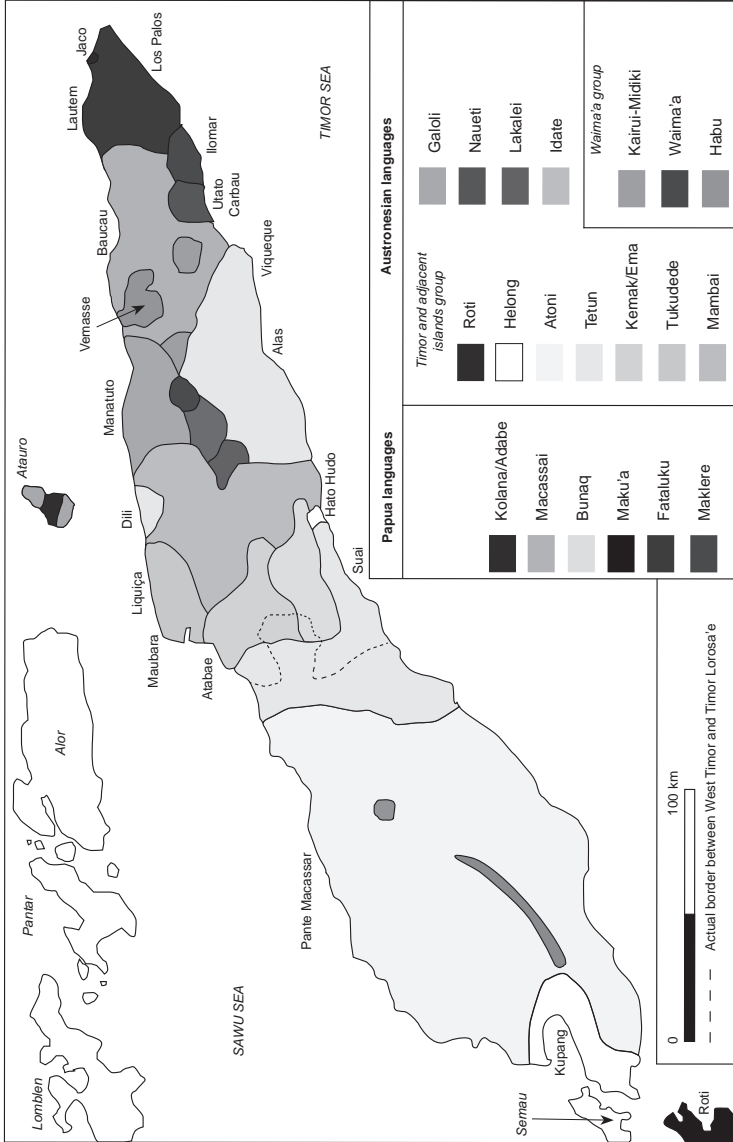
involved account by the Frenchman Pelon, who stayed for several years in Company service in Kupang in the 1770s (Miller 1996; Pelon 2002).

A fourth category of sources is the body of oral Timorese narratives. As pointed out by Gregor Neonbasu (2005), the ancestors of the Timorese constitute the roots of life. In order to perform the correct rituals and preserve community, oral tradition then becomes a key link to the past. Traditions are the trunk (*uf*, in the Dawan language of West Timor) that supports the branches (*tlaef*) and sprouts (*sufa*) – metaphors for the components of society (Neonbasu 2005:ix, 70-134, 369-73). Since the first half of the nineteenth century a number of historical traditions and legends have been recorded by Dutch missionaries, visitors and officials. After 1949, certain efforts have been made by the Indonesians themselves to record the stories, though much of the oral tradition has apparently been allowed to die out, leaving very little trace; so far, there are relatively few stories available from East Timor.¹⁷ Within a Timorese local polity there were always people who were assigned the task of keeping track of origins, lists of rulers, and important stories which would anchor the cohesion of a realm. Among the Atoni¹⁸ population, who are still dominant in West Timor, there were the spokesmen for the rulers, the *mafeŋa*, who had the task of keeping track of the body of local knowledge. Among the Belu, further to the east, the corresponding figures were called *makoan*. The *mafeŋa* were assigned to the post due to their sharp wit, though they also tended to belong to certain lineages. Several elder persons called *mafeŋa* are still found in West Timor. However, after the end of the raja system in circa 1962, interest in their bank of knowledge has declined, and several have passed away without telling or writing down what they knew for the future generations.

Let us now consider two ways in which oral tradition can be used: firstly, the extent to which it can inform us about past events; secondly, how it can help us to understand cultural and societal structures in the long term. Compared to most parts of the world that have a strong tradi-

¹⁷ The most ambitious project to date is ‘The pre-colonial history of the island of Timor together with some notes on the Makassan influence in the island’ (1999), the unpublished compilation by the late Australian scholar Peter Spillett. It contains a wealth of important oral stories of the traditional kingdoms in West and East Timor; these are in English, but the word-for-word translation from local languages is rather cumbersome.

¹⁸ In this work, for the sake of convenience, I will use the word ‘Atoni’ rather than the more complete phrase ‘Atoin Meto’ or ‘Atoni Pah Meto’ (people of the dry land). Literally, the term ‘Atoni’ (Atoin) would translate as ‘people’. The language of the Atoni will be referred to as Dawan; it is otherwise known as Uab Meto. The Atoni are also sometimes called Vaiquenos (Baikeno) or ‘Timorese Proper’.



Timorese ethnolinguistic groups

tion of oral story telling, modern scholars are in a fairly good position to evaluate the oral stories, since we possess relatively extensive European documentary records. Methods of using oral tradition have been developed in particular in the study of pre-colonial Africa, the pioneer in the field being Jan Vansina (1965). Vansina was originally very optimistic about the possibilities, and hoped to achieve a historiographical reconstruction on the basis of oral sources, achieved by comparing sources and adapting the standard means of historical criticism to the African situation. Later research has generally found these possibilities less clear-cut; there are numerous traps to take into account when dealing with events beyond the scope of living memory.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in African and in some of the Asian postcolonial societies it is essential to challenge colonial narratives with indigenous ones. Here, oral tradition becomes a difficult but important corpus of sources.

The results of my own research are, unsurprisingly, ambiguous. When compared with European documents, some Timorese princely genealogies appear to be semi-reliable as far back as the second half of the seventeenth century; others are garbled, but contain fully recognizable figures from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁰ Yet more show details from no earlier than the nineteenth century, even though the families are known to have had a longer, more prominent history. There are also stories that can be linked to historical events dating from the mid-seventeenth century, but the content of these greatly differs between versions. In his important work on the political and societal organization of the Atoni people of West Timor (1971), H.G. Schulte Nordholt provides several examples where notable Timorese altered or reinvented historical stories, not least origin stories. It would appear that the non-literate political centre wielded a certain amount of control over the transmission of stories and information, which can also be seen by comparison with African oral tradition.²¹ In Timor, the ritual language used in ceremonies was a way of preserving information over numerous

¹⁹ One may compare Vansina's classic work *Oral tradition* (1965) with his more recent *Oral tradition as history* (1985), which maintains a much more careful and sceptical approach to oral materials and their methodological possibilities.

²⁰ The pedigrees of the West Timorese princely dynasties of Sonbai and Taebenu in particular appear to be fairly reliable, despite minor variations in European sources. Other pedigrees, like those of Ambeno and Amabi, mention people who are known to have been active in the seventeenth century, but supply confusing details up to the nineteenth century. For oral tradition on nearby Rote, see Fox 1971, 1979.

²¹ Finnegan 1996. Strong African kingdoms like the Ashanti maintained a biased but substantial body of orally transmitted historical knowledge in comparison with societies with weak political centres.

generations, information that could not be passed on openly but only communicated in ritual contexts. In addition, the entire story was not always told through one performance; it is therefore a trying and detailed task to piece together the course of events from the various spokesmen (Neonbasu 2005:196-209). One cannot simply dismiss oral traditions when discussing Timorese history, though: they present a retrospective outlook on the historical landscape that contemporary reports are simply not able to provide. Without corroborating data they cannot be used for reconstructing events that took place more than a century before their recording, but they do provide information on how a Timorese polity preferred to remember particular events or circumstances.²² They also present Timorese views of the colonial entities, helping us understand how foreigners could, under some circumstances, be accepted as ‘stranger kings’, and reminding us that there were other interpretations of an event than that of peevish, impatient colonial officials.

This book does not attempt to present a general history of Timor before 1800. Although internal colonial administration and economic relations between European ports and the outside world are studied as a way of mapping patterns of policies and economic exchange in the region, they are not the focus of this study. A host of material is available in the Dutch records of the VOC period to clarify these aspects, though time and patience are required to sift through them. This work, as was previously mentioned, uses European materials to study the Timorese version of events, explaining their interaction with the Dutch and with the ‘White’ and ‘Black’ Portuguese. In particular, I will focus on the Sonbai (Sonnebay), the most prestigious dynastic group of West Timor, which has important mythical connotations. The reason for this, apart from their importance to the Timorese, is the considerable amount of information available on the Sonbai in European records and oral accounts. They tended to be involved in the dramatic crises and changes on the island from the mid-seventeenth century through to the Indonesian revolution of the twentieth century. The ever-changing fate of the Sonbai is therefore symbolic of the turbulent changes that have afflicted indigenous Timorese society since the seventeenth century.

²² Yeager and Jacobson 2002 discuss the history of the various West Timorese domains, going further than the oral tradition recorded by Parera 1994, Spillett 1999, and others. In spite of the substantial merits of Yeager and Jacobson’s work, the problems of using the oral traditions as historical sources are obvious.

The first contacts

EARLY REPORTS

In general terms, it could be said that the history of Timor began in the sixteenth century, the time of European expansion. Prior to then we only have a few Chinese notes – the most important one being the description of Timor quoted in Chapter I (Ptak 1983) – and a brief mention of the island in the Javanese poem *Nagarakertagama* (1365) (Robson 1995:34). In other words, the written history of the island begins late, though not necessarily much later than most of the rest of the Southeast Asian Archipelago. Pre-1500, apart from Java, Bali and parts of Sumatra, this part of Asia is generally obscure.

To gain a general idea of the situation before the European period, it is therefore essential to assess its archaeological, linguistic and anthropological aspects. Human settlement on Timor is documented from circa 35,000 BC, earlier than anywhere else in the Lesser Sunda Islands. Agricultural activities began circa 2500 BC or later, and after 1000 BC the island enjoyed closer contact with other parts of Southeast Asia, something which may have coincided with the arrival of new ethnic groups. In any case, Timor displays a remarkable linguistic diversity that includes both Papuan (especially in easternmost Timor) and Austronesian languages (Glover 1986:212-3; Durand 2006b:46-7). According to a still rather speculative hypothesis (Granucci 2005), speakers of Austronesian languages were present in the so-called ‘Old Indonesian heartland’ in North Maluku and North Sulawesi in around the second millennium BC. Later, a migratory wave of seafarers began to penetrate Central Maluku and the chain of islands that stretches from South Maluku to eastern Sumbawa. They belonged to the so-called Central Malayo-Polynesian linguistic group, which is quite different from

the West Malayo-Polynesian group that begins in West Sumbawa and continues all the way to Aceh in the far west.¹ Among the groups that penetrated Timor, the Tetun, possibly from the east, displayed a political-cultural preponderance on the island. There is little evidence of external influences before the sixteenth century, with almost no record of Indian or Javanese influences.²

Timorese myths and rituals have been used by some scholars to outline the prehistoric economy of Timorese society.³ According to this view, Timorese ritual language indicates that previously, crops such as Job's tears, millet and sorghum were important for peasant subsistence; however, these crops almost disappeared at a later stage. The main crops found in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources are rice and maize, the latter of which has American origins and must have been introduced around the period 1540-1650. Rituals connected to fertility usually focused on these two crops, which are often mentioned together (Fox 1991a:248-9, 254). Historically speaking, buffaloes have always been important as a source of nutrition and a measure of wealth, but flocks often roamed wild and were captured and tamed on occasion.⁴ The buffaloes were also important in the preparation of agricultural fields, trampling the ground into a sea of mud (Pelon 2002:26). Other domestic animals included pigs, goats, dogs, hens and ducks. Sheep and horses were introduced relatively later judging by their respective names: *bibi malae* (in Tetun: foreign goat) and *bikase* (in Dawan, possibly: foreign

¹ Granucci 2005:39-43. It has also been suggested that the Austronesian languages of Timor derive from the Muna-Buna-Tukang Besi zone of southeastern Sulawesi (Hicks 2007:245).

² Thomaz 1981:58, 60, Jardner 1999:277-82, referring to local scholar C.C. Punuf, posits an increasing differentiation of the political system of the Atoni of Amanuban in West Timor, with three stages traceable within oral tradition: 1. A kin-oriented society where 'big men' form influential genealogical name-groups. During this period the characteristic quadripartition of Timorese politics would have occurred, with four 'fathers' (*amaf*) of the mighty name-groups being the *primus inter pares*. 2. A concentration of power, where one name-group imposes its will on the four *amaf*: The leader of this group is entitled *nai* (from *nain*, earth), and is more dependent on wealth and retinue than charisma. 3. A principality based on military expansion where the lord appropriates the prestigious title *usi* or *usif*, purportedly from the Javanese *gusti*, meaning 'lord'.

³ The foremost scholar in this field is James Fox; see Fox 1991a.

⁴ As described in VOC 1346 (1678-79), *Dagregister*, sub 3-12-1678. The capture of buffaloes was connected with the performance of magic necessary to tame the beasts. In this and following footnotes, archival references with the abbreviation VOC refer to documents found in the Archive of the VOC, Nationaal Archief, The Hague. Likewise, references with the abbreviation ANRI Timor or ANRI VOC refer to documents found in those sub-archives in the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta. When referring to other archived documents, the reference is structured as follows: sub-archive or author, year, name document and/or entrance number and inventory number (where available), folio number, name of archive.

buffalo) (Pelon 2002:28; H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:49).

The importance of Tetun political organization makes sense in view of the first, well-known, eyewitness accounts of Timor. The Italian Antonio Pigafetta (circa 1491-1534), and the Spaniard Francisco Albo participated in the first circumnavigation of the globe with Ferdinand Magellan in 1519-1522. After Magellan was killed in Cebu in 1521, the rest of the expedition under Juan Sebastián de Elcano proceeded to the Spice Islands (Maluku), setting sail for the south-west. In early 1522, De Elcano passed the islands of Pantar and Alor and then sailed five leagues in a south-southwesterly direction until the expedition reached Timor on 26 January. There they arrived at the settlement of La Queru, the ‘Lanqueiro’ of later Portuguese records, which was situated to the east of Cutubaba.⁵ Pigafetta’s observations of Timor deserve to be quoted in full:

I went ashore alone in order to speak with the chief of a place called Amaban, to ask him to provide foodstuff. He told me that he would give me buffaloes, pigs and goats, but we could not agree since he asked many things in exchange for a buffalo. Since we had few things, and the hunger forced us, we kept a chief and his son from another village called Balibo as ransom. Out of fear that we would kill him, he immediately gave us six buffaloes, five goats and two pigs; in order to fulfil the number of ten pigs and ten goats (that we demanded), they gave us another buffalo. Thus we had established the conditions. Thereafter we sent him ashore very content with linen, Indian silk and cotton, axes, Indian knives, shears, mirrors and knives. The chief with whom I went to speak only had women to serve him. [The women] all go naked, just like the other [women on the other islands]. In their ears they wear small golden earrings with hanging brushes at the side. On their arms they wear many bangles of gold and yellow copper until the elbow. The men go about like the women, apart from that they hang certain golden objects, round like a plate, around their necks, and that they wear bamboo combs in their hair, adorned with golden rings. Some of them wear dried pumpkin stems in their ears instead of golden rings.

White sandalwood is found on the island, and nowhere else. [There are also] ginger, buffaloes, pigs, goats, chickens, figs, pisang [small ba-

⁵ A Dutch travel report from 1665 mentions Lakeru, between Tibar and Cutubaba, in present-day Timor Leste (VOC 2285 [1733], f. 200). In the Portuguese documents it is known as Lanqueiro[z] (report written after 1769, quoted in Faria de Morais 1934:26).

nanas], sugarcanes, oranges, lemons, beeswax, almonds, brown beans and other things to be found, as well as parrots in various colours. At the other side of the island are four brothers who are kings of this island. Where we were, there were settlements and various chiefs. The names of the four residences of the kings are as follow: Oibich, Lichsana, Suai and Cabanaza. Oibich is the greatest.

In Cabanaza some gold was found in a mountain, according to the information given to us, and their inhabitants carry out all their purchases with small pieces of gold. All the sandalwood and beeswax, which is traded to the natives of Java and Malacca, is negotiated in this quarter. We found here a junk from Luzon which had come here to purchase sandalwood. These people are heathens. When they go out to fell sandal trees, the devil, as we were told, appears in various shapes and tells them, that if there is something necessary, they must ask him. As a consequence of this appearance, they become sick for some days. The sandalwood is felled at a certain phase of the moon otherwise it will not be good. The merchandise which is valuable for trading sandalwood is red cloth, linen, axes, iron and spikes. This island is inhabited in all parts and stretches over a great distance from the east to the west, but it is not very broad in the north and the south.⁶

This is a most valuable text, which acquaints us for the first time with several features of pre-modern Timorese society. Certain ethnographic details, such as the wearing of bangles, combs and golden plates, correspond to usage up until the twentieth century. The alleged nudity of the women (and, apparently, the men) is more puzzling when regarding the long sarongs worn more recently, but it corroborates a Franciscan travel account from 1670.⁷ It is therefore possible that the well-known weaving traditions of Timor were introduced or disseminated at a fairly late stage, serving as a reminder that one should not consider late pre-colonial society as primeval or unchanging. The domestic animals mentioned are still found today, although we are left in the dark about the crops that were vital for the subsistence of the people.

⁶ Le Roux 1929:26-7, 30-2; Italian text with Dutch translation. See also Pigafetta 1923:234-7.

⁷ Quoted in Teixeira 1957:1-3. The Franciscan visitor speaks about women who had no other 'dress' than tattoos, although the more prominent ones wore robes. Dutch illustrations of the seventeenth century show the men wearing a kind of loincloth made of straps, not known in modern ethnographic accounts.

Like their Portuguese contemporaries Tomé Pires and Duarte Barbosa – who only wrote from hearsay – Pigafetta and Albo emphasize the quantities of sandalwood on Timor, which attracted merchants from Java, the Malay world, and even the Philippines. Unlike in many other travel accounts, we are spared the erroneous assertion that this precious wood covered the whole island; as Arend de Roever points out, it is likely that only the merest fraction of the area was ever covered by sandalwood trees.⁸ Pigafetta also attests to the ritual perceptions regarding the felling of sandalwood and its associated dangers; as late as the eighteenth century, sandalwood vapour was reputed to cause a burning fever and delirium among woodcutters (Salmon 1733:229-32).

Two other classic products of Timor, beeswax and gold, are also briefly mentioned; the former would later turn out to be infinitely more profitable than the latter. The forested parts of Timor are inhabited by a large amount of bees (*fani*), whose nests are traditionally plundered for their honeycombs by the Timorese, who drive off the bees by means of smoke.⁹ The proverbial European thirst for gold led to exaggerated rumours about gold mines, rumours which induced the Dutch to force their Timorese dependents to pan for rare, not very pure, gold dust in the rivers of the interior in the eighteenth century – both an uneconomical and very unpopular pursuit. The legends of ‘copper mountains’ offer a similar case; these were only laid to rest in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰

Furthermore, Pigafetta’s account stresses the importation of luxury goods such as textiles and metal utensils in exchange for the valuable sandalwood. As in wide areas of the eastern archipelago, early Timorese societies were typically low-technology in character, meaning that indigenous mining and processing of metals was limited.¹¹ The information gathered in Malacca by the contemporary geographer Duarte Barbosa

⁸ De Roever 2002:352. Tomé Pires (1944:202) wrote in circa 1515 that ‘there is no other wood in the forests [than white sandalwood]’.

⁹ The method is mentioned in VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 21-10-1680. It is described in closer detail in *Timor* 1824, Collection Schneither, Nationaal Archief, which states that Timorese beeswax was considered to be of high quality.

¹⁰ Ormeling 1956:4, 115-6; Brouwer 1849-50, H 731, KITLV.

¹¹ The craftsmen of the small island of Ndao, to the west of Rote, traditionally worked as silversmiths in the Timor Archipelago. As such, the individual smiths travelled around the area, offering their services in the various settlements, and were known for their skills as early as the eighteenth century (Pelon 2002:60; Ormeling 1956:151-2). In Belu in Central Timor, silversmiths were frequently found by the twentieth century; metallurgic skills apparently developed earlier there than among the Atoni population of West Timor, though the chronology remains to be established (Le Roux 1929:36).

in 1516 confirms this; ships going to Timor picked up the mainstay products of sandalwood, honey, beeswax and slaves, against the payment of an array of external goods: iron, axes, knives, swords, cloth from Pulicat in India, copper, mercury, vermillion, tin, lead and coral from Cambay in India (Le Roux 1929:42). Without doubt, the role of the white sandalwood is crucial in understanding the development of Timorese-European relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for reasons that will soon be discussed (Ptak 1987).

The other two main export commodities, beeswax and slaves, were certainly of enduring interest to traders in the archipelago, but would probably not have been enough to motivate ambitious European schemes to exploit Timor; neither did the geographical aspects of the island make colonial enterprises easy. To the trading ports of Malaya, Sumatra and Java, the sea road was long and cumbersome, and travel had to fit around the patterns of the monsoon winds. Overall, it was difficult to reach Timor from the west during the easterly monsoon season between May and October. The coastline itself was far from inviting; there were few, if any, good harbours and the south coast in particular held a sad record of shipwrecks among Western seafarers. Given these circumstances, the Timorese themselves were by no means a seafaring people; on the contrary, they tended to keep away from the sea.¹²

In spite of all this, Portuguese traders appeared on Timor at an early stage of their East Indian adventure. Exactly how this happened unfortunately remains unknown, but immediately after their seizure of Malacca in 1511 they became aware of the great potential value of the white sandalwood trade. In the first half of the sixteenth century, as the European newcomers noted, the Malays and Javanese brought some quantities of sandalwood to Malacca (Ptak 1987:97). The fragrant qualities of the wood made it sought after in India as well as in China; in South China, it was coveted for ritual purposes, since it was used to make incense sticks for the temples. It was also well known for its purported medical qualities and could be used for handicraft products. Despite this, it had the air of a luxury item, and was hardly likely to ever become a major export product of the East Indies (Ptak 1987:87, 96-7). However, the attraction of Timor grew on account of its uniqueness as a producer of decent san-

¹² De Roeber 2002:80-2. This avoidance of the sea is usually pointed out in categorical terms by anthropologists. As will become apparent, however, certain Timorese elite groups did have a certain interest in maritime affairs during the period in question.

dalwood. From time to time there were rumours of new and interesting sightings of sandalwood groves at some other island, but they invariably turned out to be untrue or wildly exaggerated at best. Candidates such as Sulawesi and Sumba (which was inappropriately called Pulau Cendana, Sandalwood Island) were rejected as soon as they were seriously investigated, and the sandalwood resources that did exist on some islands of Oceania were, as yet, unexplored in the early colonial period.¹³

Given the circumstances, it should come as no surprise that we find individual Portuguese traders on Timor as early as 1523, to the displeasure of the official Estado da Índia, the colonial apparatus in Asian waters.¹⁴ The Estado's ambition to control trade in the region meant private enterprises by the subjects of His Catholic Majesty were not encouraged; this soon proved impossible to enforce, however. When it came to geographically uninviting or distant places like Timor, the problems of monitoring control increased accordingly. For such reasons, early Iberian enterprises in these waters are poorly recorded, and the fact that we know anything at all about them is largely due to the texts produced by the Dominican missionaries who came to dominate evangelization in the region.

THE SOLOR CONNECTION

The mountainous Solor Archipelago to the north was a stepping stone to the sandalwood riches of Timor. The name Solor conventionally applies to a small scythe-shaped island tucked between Flores in the west, Adonara in the north, and Lembata (Lomblen) in the east, but until recently, the name was not known to the islanders themselves. It appears that the geographical concept originally included the area that spoke the Lamaholot language, from the easternmost part of Flores to Lembata. It is presumably this larger area that is alluded to with the name Solot in

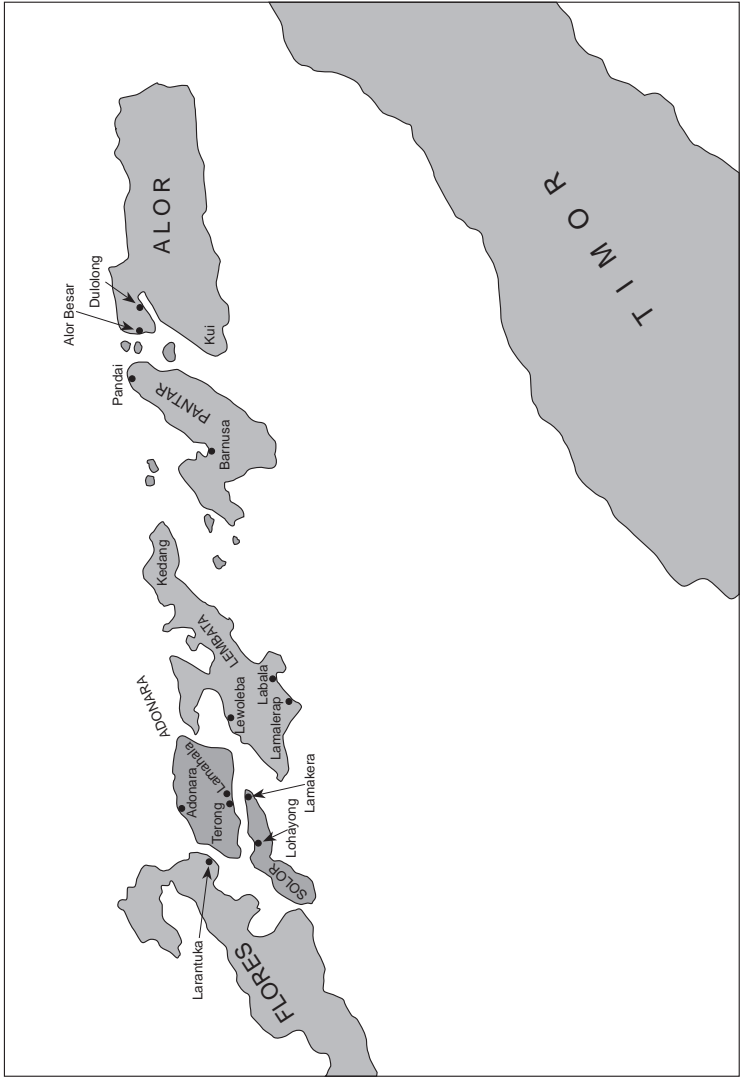
¹³ As argued in the introductory chapter, for the sake of convenience I use the term 'early colonial' to denote the European overseas exploits in the period c.1500-1800. In an Indonesian context, the dissolution of the VOC in 1799 and the age of Daendels and Raffles in 1808-16 are conventionally used to mark the transition to a new and deepened Western colonialism. In the case of Timor, it took much longer.

¹⁴ Newitt 2005:122. Timor might have been visited by the Portuguese with a Luso-Malay vessel as early as 1514 or 1515; see Loureiro 2001:96.

the Javanese text *Nagarakertagama* (1365).¹⁵ By the late sixteenth century, the Lamaholot population (or at least its elites) was divided into two groups: the Paji and the Demon. This division should not be overstressed in conventional political terms, but it entailed a ritual opposition that, at least in modern times, was founded in a legend about a set of ancestral brothers or kinsmen who had had a falling-out in the distant past (Paramita Abdurachman 1983:91). There were, however, solid historical reasons for the division. The Paji tended to orient themselves towards the sea, fishing, trade and external contact, while a substantial number of the Paji population may, judging from their legends, have emigrated from abroad at some unspecified time. By contrast, the Demon tended towards life in the highlands and living off the earth. In the course of the sixteenth century, all of this took place against the backdrop of two interconnected factors: firstly, the dissemination of Islam and Catholicism in the archipelago, and secondly, an increased interest in the region from seaborne foreign groups.

From the Portuguese point of view, the north coast of Solor, opposite Adonara, was a convenient place to stay on the way to Timor. It was not particularly fertile, but the mountainous nature of Solor and the surrounding islands offered good protection against the winds and currents; in addition, there was no state to exert pressure on the foreign visitors. The archipelago was divided into small domains headed by chiefs, known to outsiders by the Javanese-derived title of *sengaji*, while the indigenous term for addressing princes was *magu*, or elder. The Paji areas were loosely organized into a league consisting of five domains (Lohayong, Lamakera, Lamahala, Terong and Adonara) with pockets of dependencies strewn throughout the archipelago. This organization, named the Watan Lema or Five Shores, was headed by Lohayong on

¹⁵ Canto 14, verse 5, mentions places in eastern Indonesia supposedly under the suzerainty of the Javanese empire of Majapahit: 'Taking them island by island: Makasar, Butun and Banggawi, / Kuni, Galiyahu and Salaya, Sumba, Solot and Muwar, / As well as Wandan, Ambwan, Maloko and Wwanin, / Seran and Timur as the main ones among the various islands that remembered their duty' (Robson 1995:34). The reality of this alleged suzerainty is highly debatable, but may indicate that there were certain contacts between Majapahit and Solor, the Alor region ('Galiyahu') and Timor. In an unpublished research note, the Dutch indologist G. P. Rouffaer suggested that Lamaholot means 'the land of Solot'; see Rouffaer 1910b, *Kleine Timor Eilanden I*, H 673, KITLV. Indeed the *s/h* sound change sometimes occurs in the Lamaholot language. The word *holot* may mean either 'united' or 'man', and Lamaholot would then literally signify 'the region of men'. How Solot changed into Solor is less than clear (Robert Barnes, personal communication, October 2008).



The Solor and Alor Islands

the north coast of Solor, the very place where the Portuguese settled.¹⁶

At first, the *sengaji* of Lohayong tended to co-operate with the Portuguese traders who arrived, probably in the first instance at Maluku where they had been regularly based since around 1520. With the establishment of a Portuguese base in Macao circa 1552-1553, new opportunities arose to sell sandalwood directly to the Chinese. They had long since known of Timor, but seldom made the difficult trip there. There are hints in the scarce sources that by the 1550s the Iberian traders stayed the winter (wet monsoon period) on Solor in order to conduct their business on Timor. Twice a year, in late September and early January, ships would go to Solor to pick up the valuable Timorese wood, and then proceed towards Maluku or China (Kniphorst 1885:375-6). The north-western coast of Timor could be reached in a few days, but the short trip was not without peril: the waves of the Sawu Sea were rough for part of the year, a problem exacerbated by the lack of good anchorage along the Timorese coast. It is therefore symptomatic that the first geographical details about Timor in Portuguese sources in the 1560s consist of indications of the most important ports of call. The well-known Indian scholar Garcia da Orta, incidentally a friend of the poet Camões, published a medical and botanical treatise in Goa in 1563, which indicated that Timor was already of some economic importance:

The white and yellow sandalwood originated from Timor, an island that has a lot of both kinds. The sandalwood of the port of Mena is the best, although it has less wood than the others; and Matomea, which is another port, produces a lot of yellow sandalwood, but the heartwood is less though it has the best smell; and another port called Camanace also has sandalwood of less quality since it has got little heartwood; it is the same thing with the sandalwood from Cerviaguio.¹⁷

Of the places mentioned, Mena is situated by the river of the same name in the domain later named Biboki, on the northern coast; Matomea is Batumean in the domain of Amanatun on the south coast; Camenaça, already mentioned by Pigafetta, is located in the south-western corner of present Timor Leste. A more complicated geographical term is

¹⁶ The borders of the Watan Lema principdom and the Demon principdom Larantuka, as they were in the late colonial era, are shown in Dietrich 1989:59.

¹⁷ Loureiro 1995:93; see also Durand 2006a:62.

Cerviagu, the Servião or Sorbian of later sources. It refers to an area that encompassed part of north-western Timor, although the location of the particular port with that name remains uncertain.¹⁸ Camenaça is situated in the Tetun-speaking area while the other three locations belong to the Atoni people of western Timor. All the places mentioned are well known to later European sources in connection with the sandalwood trade. Sixteenth century maps include crude representations of Timor, which is sometimes represented in triangular form. The renowned Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator adds a place name to a map of Southeast Asia from 1569: Alifao (Durand 2006a:65). This place, the normalized spelling of which is Lifau, was the centre of Portuguese interests on the island until 1769. Its significance is still indicated by the existence of the Oecusse-Ambeno enclave which, politically speaking, belongs to Timor Leste, despite being situated in the western part of the island. Given that Mercator compiled his work in Europe, Lifau must have been a port of call for years, and for obvious geographical reasons. Although not an excellent roadstead, it is situated opposite the Solor Archipelago and has a hinterland that is fertile by Timorese standards: it is crossed by several small rivers and is today a site of sawah (wet rice) cultivation.¹⁹ As would be proven in the seventeenth century, Lifau was a convenient stepping stone to reach the inland areas of north-western Timor, which were rich in sandalwood.

It would seem that relations between the early Europeans and the Lamaholot population were quite healthy. Although foreign visitors occasionally denounced the Solorese as primitive and superstitious, the merchants did convert certain locals to Christianity. By 1559, a certain João Soares had 300 converts from an ‘island’ lying three leagues from Solor – in reality, the north-eastern peninsula of Flores with Lewonama as its centre. The same report pointed out that the people of Lewonama stayed inland, as pirates rendered the coast unsafe. For them, the Portuguese presence and the acceptance of Christianity apparently offered a means of protection. At the same time, Muslim ideas were also being propagated by three or four *qadi* or *faqir*.²⁰ From Java and Ternate in North Maluku came seafarers who, like the Portuguese, made little or no distinction between trade, politics and religion. Visitors from Sulawesi

¹⁸ The Servião problem is discussed in Hägerdal 2006, and will be further elucidated below.

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the environmental aspects of this region, see Yoder 2005.

²⁰ Rouffaer 1923/24:205; Kniphorst 1885:376. A *qadi* is a Muslim judge, a *faqir* a Sufi.

also seem to have been present from the late sixteenth century onwards.²¹

Clerical missionaries soon followed in the footsteps of the traders. The Portuguese church overseas stood under the patronage of the king, and therefore the entire expansion project in Asia was closely intertwined with religion (Paramita Abdurachman 1983:85). Missionaries are first documented in the Solor and Timor area in the 1550s, which is by no means a coincidence. Serious efforts to proselytize major parts of the population in Asia began in 1542 with the Jesuit Francisco Xavier, and received a further impetus when Dominicans were sent to Asia six years later. The early missionary enterprise cannot simply be seen, however, as converging with the political and economic project of the *Estado da Índia*. The Portuguese soldiers, administrators and traders were usually garrisoned in walled coastal towns with little direct influence on the surrounding territories, meaning that missionary attempts necessarily had to take place outside of colonial jurisdiction. It could very well have been to the advantage of the missionaries to carry out their work without interference from the *Estado*, which had, at times, acquired a reputation for coercion and extortion. It was also in the interest of the preachers to choose lands which were not heavily influenced by Islam or Theravada Buddhism, as this made conversion extremely difficult; the hinterlands of the Portuguese strongholds of Ormuz, Malacca and Ternate were far from promising in this respect.²² Small societies that practised traditional religion, with its emphasis on the spirits of ancestors, were far more convenient for missionaries to work with, since these societies were not bound by a universalistic *umat* or *sangha*.²³

To an extent, the Solor Archipelago was a promising prospect in terms of religious conversion, as was Timor. Among the Lamaholot speakers, issues were complicated by Paji-Demon differences, where the coastal Paji tended to be susceptible to Muslim conversion. Initially, however, neither the Paji nor the Demon group was adverse to the Catholic

²¹ De Roever 2002:72. Many ancestral legends in the eastern archipelago seem to indicate that non-Muslim Javanese fled towards the east after the fall of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Majapahit in the early sixteenth century and established positions of prominence among the low-technology people they encountered – Ende on Flores, the domains of Alor and Pantar, Sawu, et cetera. By contrast, the seaborne Javanese visitors of the late sixteenth century were clearly Muslim. A modern Makassarese tradition, referred to by Spillett 1999:331-2, alleges that the ruler of Tallo, ‘I Daeng Mannyonri’ (Karaeng Matoaya), unsuccessfully attacked Timor in 1596, a statement unconfirmed by other sources.

²² Serrão and Oliveira Marques 2006:400. For the problems of converting Theravada Buddhists and the loyalty that the *sangha* commanded from the population, see Chandler 2000:83.

²³ *Sangha* being the Theravada Buddhist monastic community.

creed. Furthermore, there was only a superficial presence of Islam in the ports of Timor in the second half of the sixteenth century at best, which made for obvious opportunities.²⁴ The Dominicans, who had founded a convent in Malacca in 1554, were quick to seize the opportunity. One source mentions an António Taveiro who supposedly flourished in 1556 and baptized as many as 5,000 people on Timor, as well as numerous converts on ‘Ende’, yet the source is less than reliable.²⁵ Until the eighteenth century, Europeans called the island of Flores ‘Ende’, rather than the islet off the south coast which actually is Ende.

That events were occurring on Timor at the time is confirmed by clerical letters from Goa, the centre of the Estado da Índia and of religious administration. A letter by Luís Frois from November 1559 expands on the recent gains made by Catholicism in Asia. Apart from the king, Dom João Dharmapala of Kotte, Ceylon, there was also ‘the king of Timor, which is the land from where the sandalwood comes’ (Wicki 1956:350). We are told that this king had sent a letter to the religious authorities in Malacca the preceding year, asking for a padre to be sent to Timor in order to receive more religious instruction. The king was by now a Christian, and so were many members of the elite of his kingdom. He sincerely hoped that the missionaries would be able to convert more people (Wicki 1956:350-1). The following year, in November 1560, the king of Timor is mentioned in another letter, alongside the Christian rulers of the Maldives, Trincomalee, Kotte, Bacan in Maluku and Inhambane in East Africa.

The inclusion of this purported royal convert seemed important, especially since the letters pretended that he was the ruler of the entire island – it is immediately apparent that there was a strong element of rhetoric in the document. When geographer Manuel Godinho de Eredia described Timor in detail forty years later, the island was divided into a large number of domains, a situation that would prevail until the twentieth century.²⁶ A ‘king of Timor’ in the literal sense of the word

²⁴ According to the Malaccan geographer Godinho de Eredia (circa 1600), the Timorese were traditionally ‘Moros’ or ‘Idolators’, Moros being a Portuguese term for Muslims. In the absence of other data it is difficult to assess the value of this remark.

²⁵ Rouffaer 1923/24:204-6. At least, this is what João dos Santos alleges in his *Ethiopia Oriental* of 1609.

²⁶ Eredia 1997:253-4: ‘The Empire of this Island is divided into two parts, that is to say, North and South; the part along the Southern coast belongs to the Imperial Crown of Camanaça.’ Later, Godinho de Eredia mentions the king of Samoro, the emperor of Mena and the king of Luca, and nineteen further geographical locations.

is inconceivable, although there was certainly a ritual system of precedence, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Presumably, António Taveiro encountered a local lord on the north coast who perceived the Portuguese connection to be advantageous, yet this obviously does not exclude a genuine interest in the Christian religion.

However, no spiritual support was forthcoming. In 1561, the recently established see of Malacca dispatched three Dominican brothers, but it is thought that their efforts were limited to the Solor Archipelago. However, they did achieve some success there when thousands of locals were baptized, including the principal *sang adipati* or *sengaji* of Solor. Equally, the competition for Solorese souls increased with the arrival of ‘Moors from Java’. A fleet of Javanese vessels assaulted the missionaries’ enclosure of lontar trees in 1563, but was driven off by a passing Portuguese ship. Realizing the dangers that beset the little colony, the missionary leader, António da Cruz, led the construction of a strong fortress in Lohayong in 1566. This time, the walls were steeply erected and made from stone and lime, and there were five bulwarks supplied with artillery. Inside the fortress were a church and a monastery. The entire undertaking clearly indicates that by this time the Portuguese were acquiring a leading political role in local society, a fact underscored by the appointment of a lay Portuguese captain, who was locally elected by the clerical leaders. The dominating role of the Portuguese foreigners can also be seen in the layout of the village of Lohayong, which was divided into two settlements: to the west lived the *sengaji* and his subjects, amounting to a thousand people, while a further community of two thousand people, consisting of lay Portuguese, soldiers and foreign Christians, lived to the east, (Rouffaer 1923/24:205-6; Visser 1925:283-5; Paramita Abdurachman 1983:94-8). Permanent white settlers were termed *moradores* or *casados* and they regularly married Asian women. Not much is known about their social history, but in due course they would give rise to the mixed group of people known as the Topasses or Black Portuguese, who would play a decisive and important role in the history of Timor.

The rapid militarization of the Portuguese presence reflects the competition from external Indonesian groups who were not primarily motivated by religious or political divisions, but rather by the issue of control over the sandalwood trade. Javanese traders from the coastal area known as Pasisir were well aware of the potential profits of the sandalwood market, and apparently so were merchants from Sulawesi

and Maluku. A solid base in Solor could have guaranteed a regular flow of the precious wood to the Pasisir ports, from where most of it could be re-exported to South China and the Coromandel Coast in India (Rouffaer 1923/24:206). For the moment, the Dominican-led, part-Portuguese congregation on Solor was able to thwart such attempts, but not to impede the influence of Islamic preachers among part of the Lamaholot-speaking population. As Arend de Roever has shown in his PhD thesis, the regularity of Asian sandalwood trade with Timor has tended to be exaggerated in some previous historiography. In the localized and politically small societies of the Solor, Alor and Timor groups, only the mid-sixteenth-century establishment of the Portuguese guaranteed a steady flow of sandalwood to the main Asiatic purchasers, although even this flow was limited to perhaps the cargo of one large ship per year (De Roever 2002:58-9, 289). Portuguese traders used the direct route between Macao and Solor instead of going via Malacca, which in turn made Makassar on Sulawesi an important entrepôt for this trade. With the intensification of Portuguese activity, the quality of the wood became ever more important. The potential profits to be made from sandalwood were considerable, standing at one hundred per cent in 1590 (Ptak 1987:103-4).

MISSIONARY ACTIVITY ON TIMOR

Early accounts of Timorese religion are not particularly illuminating. According to the Franciscan Juan de la Camara (1670), the ‘cult’ consisted of putting buffalo heads onto poles and offering them food, ‘bringing it to the Devil’ (Teixeira 1957:453). His contemporary, the Jesuit Antonius Franciscus (1670), was more positive, pointing out the Timorese belief in a High God in Heaven (in Dawan, Uis Neno; in Tetun, Maromak), which might facilitate the teaching of a monotheistic creed (Jacobs 1988:248). The French engineer Pelon (1778) denied that the islanders had any religion at all, since the customs and rites he observed seemed too far removed from the world’s religions as he knew them. He did, however, mention Uis Neno as a sun god and principal ‘motor’ of the world, and another mighty power called Ous Sincuall (Pelon 2002:41). Hidden among these scattered remarks is a comprehensive ritual system that accompanies the various stages of the Timorese

life cycle. Looking at the Atoni, the previously mentioned Uis Neno is indeed the supreme god connected with the sun and heaven, but also with water, fertility and righteousness. He is not a monotheistic god, for there are also a lord of the earth, Uis Pah, and a host of earth spirits, *pah nitu*, who are less than benevolent and need to be appeased. After the death of a person, his or her soul leaves the body, and the deceased continues to exist as a *nitu* spirit. Man is dependent on Uis Neno and other hidden forces, which makes it essential to perform the rituals correctly.²⁷ The Dutch seventeenth-century sources mention ritual experts (*papen*) who performed divination and rituals, but neither there nor in modern ethnographic texts is there mention of a distinct priesthood.²⁸

It took four centuries for Christianity to influence this complex system, in spite of the ostensibly promising start. Regarding the entanglement of religious and commercial interests, it may seem surprising that the missionary endeavour of the late 1550s was allowed to lapse. Possible reasons may be that the reality of the situation was far from promising – as previously noted, the letters from 1559 and 1560 are rhetorical in character – or that there were not enough Dominicans to send to Timor. Towards the end of the century there were attempts to follow in the footsteps of António Taveiro. From Solor, the chief cleric António da Cruz sent a padre called Belchior da Luz to the north coast of Timor in 1578, to revive the work of Taveiro. This time, the site of the missionary enterprise is explicitly mentioned as the commercially valuable sandalwood port of Mena.²⁹ In other words, the king of Mena was perceived in the missionary rhetoric of the late 1550s to be the ‘king of Timor’. That Mena was a place of considerable importance in western Timor is also indicated by Manuel Godinho de Eredia who, in his geographical writings, gave the lord of this place the exalted title of ‘emperor’. Likewise, the first Dutch conqueror in 1613, Apolonius Schot, perceived Mena as the principal kingdom of the island. Interestingly, there is only the shortest mention in the textual sources of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century of the realm of Wewiku-Wehali, which was known

²⁷ This is a very cursory presentation of religion as found in traditional Atoni society, based on H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:141-53. For Tetun religion and rituals, see Vroklage 1953, II:3-189; Therik 2004:177-215. The basic structure of a heavenly supreme god (Maromak) and a host of spirits is also found among the Tetun, who do not, however, directly associate Maromak with the sun.

²⁸ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 30-4-1681.

²⁹ Bierman 1924:37; Visser 1925:289. The arrival of Da Luz in Timor is dated as 1587 in another source, presumably in error since the initiator António da Cruz passed away in 1579.

both to Pigafetta and later sources as the foremost political centre on the island.³⁰ Wewiku-Wehali is in fact situated in southern Central Timor, and was of little or no religious or commercial interest to the early visitors.

The new missionary attempt was hardly more successful than the first. At first, the king of Mena seemed favourably inclined towards the Catholic creed. However, the polygamy that was prevalent among the Timorese elite presented a formidable obstacle to his actual conversion. Da Luz himself soon discovered what so many later foreign settlers would experience, namely that the hot coastal climate was trying, conducive to fever, and unsuitable for temporary visitors. That the early European groups preferred to stay on Solor rather than Timor itself, is therefore no coincidence. Da Luz finally had to leave Mena after six months, accompanied by the son of the ruler of Mena, who subsequently followed his mentor on to Malacca. In the Portuguese overseas enterprise, it was a common tactic to place sons of the elite in places where the Estado or the religious establishment wished to gain influence. Being brought to any of the Portuguese power centres, these young were expected to adapt Portuguese customs and religious beliefs, in other words to become ‘lusified’ during an extended stay, and would subsequently be encouraged to work for the interests of their hosts in their lands of origin. In this case, success was slim although the sources insist that the prince was treated with all due respect. He returned to Mena in due course, under his baptismal name of Dom João da Silva, but subsequently reverted to his ancestral beliefs, reasons unknown (Bierman 1924:37, 270). In a similar attempt and at roughly the same time, the king of Luca – an important Tetun-speaking domain in south-eastern Timor – was baptized by the Dominican fathers. According to Godinho de Eredia, however, ‘owing to the neglect of the latter, they [the kings of Mena and Luca] became Moros and Idolators, as they always had been’ (Godinho de Eredia 1997:254). The latter remark would indicate that Islam had gained a

³⁰ Wewiku-Wehali is not mentioned in the ‘Report on the Golden Chersonese or Peninsula’ of Godinho de Eredia, compiled in c.1600 or, in another opinion, in the 1620s. On Godinho de Eredia’s detailed map of 1613, ‘Maibico’ and ‘Vayale’ occur, although with no indication of their prominence; see Durand 2006a:80. A list of baptisms and marriages by the priest Alonce Bourgois mentions under 1621 a Cattharina from ‘Vaybico’ who married a Dutch soldier in Fort Henricus on Solor, following the VOC conquest; see ‘Memorie van de personen die alhier gedoopt en in den houwelijkcken staat bevesticht...’, transcript of a manuscript found in the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI). I am grateful to Diederick Kortlang, Leiden, who provided a copy of this important text.

degree of influence in Timorese ports by the late sixteenth century. The formulation might be merely rhetorical, but half a century later some of the leading domains on the island would indeed prove open to this religion.

The Malaccan mestizo Manuel Godinho de Eredia is, in fact, the first major authority on Timor's geography since Pigafetta. Of both eastern and western origin, his mother was a princess from Sulawesi who eloped with a Portuguese seafarer under dramatic circumstances. As was still common at the time, his treatises and maps presented an intriguing mix of fact and fiction, with talking bamboo stalks and luminous dogs alongside sober observations of civet cats and nutmeg. The 'Report on the Golden Chersonese or Peninsula', usually dated to circa 1597-1600, surveys the lands of Southeast Asia, complete with notes on their useful products and political situation. Godinho de Eredia holds Timor in high esteem, not least due to the presence of gold, always an interesting item for Iberian explorers: 'It is one of the finest and most prosperous of all the islands in the Eastern Sea; for besides containing a great quantity of white sandalwood, tortoiseshell, wax, honey, shell-fish, rice, grains of every sort, and many plants and medicine, it also has as its greatest asset many mines of gold, *tambaga suaça*' (Godinho de Eredia 1997:253-4). De Eredia identifies five sandalwood ports on the northern coast and eight in the south; a few other ports could readily provide honey, beeswax and tortoises as cargos for 'several frigates'. He perceived the political conditions as fragmentary, but with a certain hierarchy or precedence. Apart from the 'emperor' of Mena in the north, there was also the 'imperial crown' of Camenaça in the south, which had already been noted as one of the major realms by Pigafetta,³¹ and 'many powerful kings' on Timor. Godinho de Eredia believed that they had grown rich from the trade in sandalwood and the mineral deposits on the island. What does not appear in his account is any description of petty warfare and headhunting as mentioned in later sources – he does not warn his fellow countrymen of safety issues of any kind. This aspect is also missing in other texts dating from the early seventeenth century, where violent incidents along the coast of Timor appear to be instigated by rapacious European ship crews rather than indigenous chiefs. There is no reason to believe that Timor

³¹ On his 1613 map of Timor, Godinho de Eredia mentions five places in bold text, thus indicating a degree of prominence: Servião, Siciala, Lifau and Mena on the north coast, and Luca in the south-east; see Durand 2006a:80-1.

was a particularly peaceful place in 1600, as indicated by the settlement pattern documented by seventeenth-century visitors. The villages tended to be modest in size and situated on mountaintops, which served as natural defences.³² Nevertheless, it is quite possible that intra-island warfare was stimulated in the course of the seventeenth century by the intervention of foreign groups and the scarcity of resources due to a deterioration in the global economic climate.³³

ARRIVAL OF THE DUTCH

Detailed first-hand information on Timor is only to be found with the advent of the Dutch in 1613. This event has been described by other authors, and so it will suffice here to sketch the general context and outline. The Portuguese and Spanish visitors to Southeast Asia who, since 1581, had a common monarch, if little else, in common, enjoyed a virtually undisturbed existence in East Indian waters during the sixteenth century with regard to European competition. With the exception of Aceh, no regional power stood a chance of dislodging Portugal from the system of forts, dependencies and alliances that it constructed in maritime Southeast Asia after 1511. Nevertheless, the Portuguese weaknesses were apparent. Firstly, it was not a colonial 'empire' as such, despite the early establishment of the *Estado da Índia* as a paramount organization centred in Goa. Portuguese authority was shared between commanders in the string of forts along the Asian coastline, local congregations such as the *Leal Senado* in Macao, and, not least, among Catholic padres such as those on Solor. In Portugal's eyes, the sea route was long and cumbersome and the viceroy in Goa was not known for bold initiatives. The Spanish-Portuguese union had a limited effect on day-to-day affairs, in spite of the Spanish being strategically positioned in the Philippines, and did not necessarily strengthen the Portuguese positions (Winius 2002:105-6). In addition, there was a chronic shortage of manpower;

³² See for instance the missionary account of 1670 as quoted in Teixeira 1957:452.

³³ Middelkoop 1963:12-3 refers to oral traditions that explain this: headhunting was unknown prior to the arrival of outsiders who brought the secret of iron with them. It is difficult to know what to make of material recorded in the twentieth century, but it will be seen below that headhunting and petty warfare were, in effect, encouraged by the colonial rivalry between the Dutch and Portuguese. Reid 1993:291-8 argues that the 1640s-1670s were very dry in a Southeast Asian context, with socio-economic consequences.

Portugal in the sixteenth century was small and sparsely populated, and the odds of surviving the *carreira da Índia* – the passage of ships to India – were far from good. A further embarrassment was the poor reputation that the Portuguese had gained in many areas for brutality and their overbearing treatment of local grandees and populations.

In this context, the first Dutch expedition left Amsterdam in 1595 to explore trade possibilities with the East Indies. In the wake of fluctuating supplies of spices and the withdrawal of Portuguese distributors from the markets of northern Europe, the young Dutch republic ventured to explore Asia. The enterprise was initially defensive, namely to get there before their rivals did (Van Veen 2000:146). After some years of individual pioneer expeditions, trade was finally organized into a joint-stock company that would soon become an Asian power in its own right: the VOC. There are certain similarities to the old Estado da Índia, but even more obvious differences (Subrahmanyam 1993:213). The position of a Governor General operating from an Asian stronghold parallels the position of the viceroy in Goa, though he had resources of a rather different dimension. After gaining Ambon in Maluku as their first stronghold in 1605, and especially after gaining Batavia in 1619, the Company upheld a cohesive policy. While ultimately run by a representative board in the Netherlands, the Heeren Zeventien (henceforth: Seventeen Gentlemen), the Governor General and his council had a lot of leeway in taking strategic decisions, starting local wars, concluding treaties, and so on. The various VOC posts in maritime Asia were expected to present economic accounts and to report on local affairs each year; the information was analysed by the headquarters of the Company and formed the basis for strategic decisions and allocation of resources. In this way, the Company had the advantage of both financial resources and administrative cohesion and was therefore able to evict its English rivals from almost the whole of Southeast Asia by 1623. From the same perspective, it might well have seemed feasible to handle their Iberian adversaries in the same violent manner. Born out of a desperate struggle against the Catholic Spanish monarchy, the Protestant Dutch republic turned violently against the very same subjects of His Catholic Majesty with whom it had recently co-operated. The Portuguese loss of Ambon and Tidore in 1605 was the first major blow and was soon followed by other violent attacks around the Asian coastlines (Vlekke 1961:119). However, the Dutch ascendancy proved to be slower than expected: as a trading

company, the VOC had no initial interest in holding vast areas of land, although it did secure its access to trade routes in Asia through an evolving system of treaties and alliances. This, however, demanded that they broke the chain of scattered Portuguese fortresses, which proved to be easier said than done, for the Portuguese fought back with a dogged resilience that clearly frustrated their Dutch adversaries. Ideological factors should not be underestimated; it has been remarked that all members of the Estado, from viceroy to domestic servant, probably held a firm belief that God and their ancestors had won the right for the Crown of Portugal to dominate Asia, as laid down in the age-old demarcation lines of 1494 and 1529.³⁴ As will be seen, Eurasian and certain indigenous groups in Asia displayed a strong commitment to the Crown of Portugal. After all, the autonomous components of the fragmented Portuguese enterprise – individual traders, missionaries, adventurers – could develop forms of interaction with local societies during the sixteenth century. Such intermingling was initially less obvious in the Company, given the supervision of its employees and dependents (Coolhaas 1960:226). In spite of recurring Portuguese brutality, the Portuguese were tied to local rulers and traders through mutual interests, especially since the traders enjoyed military protection from the ‘white strangers’. Thus, the Portuguese were accepted in a number of places in maritime Asia because of the need of indigenous groups for protection and the elite’s interest in obtaining economic and other advantages through trade with the Portuguese (Van Veen 2000:230).

Consequently, the marked superiority of the Dutch at sea was not matched by similar success on land. The first quick victories were followed by defeat before the walls of Malacca in 1606. In the Philippines, in 1610, the Spaniards were able to drive back a Dutch squadron; two years later, they launched a successful expedition in Maluku (Van Veen 2000:187-8). As a matter of fact, the *carreira da Índia* only declined in the 1620s, because of socio-economic events in Portugal itself. It was not until 1636 that the Dutch Governor General took the initiative and waged a comprehensive aggressive attack on Portuguese possessions. In the decades following Portugal’s separation from Spain in 1640, the Estado finally crumbled, losing vital posts like Malacca, Lanka and

³⁴ Winius 2002:108. The treaties of Tordesillas and Saragossa, concluded in 1494 and 1529 respectively, divided the non-European world between Spain and Portugal through a western and eastern meridian.

Cochin until the declaration of peace in 1663 (Van Veen 2000:207, 230, 232; Subrahmanyam 1993:178-9). By that time, all that remained of Portuguese jurisdiction in Southeast Asian waters was the very region that forms the focus of this book: Timor and its surrounding islands.

Against this backdrop, Solor and Timor became hotspots soon after the beginning of the VOC expansion. A twelve-year truce between the Verenigde Provinciën (hereafter: United Provinces) and the Spanish-Portuguese crown in 1609-1621 had a very limited effect in Asia, and unabated, the Company continued to capture returning Iberian vessels (Enthoven 2002:40). It also systematically explored all profit and trade possibilities east of the Cape of Good Hope, preferably at the expense of their Iberian rivals. From this point of view, the sandalwood of Timor was an obvious lure. Spices had been a main motive for Portuguese as well as Spanish explorers, but as the Company further investigated the economic options, it was drawn into the intra-Asiatic trade in local products. Already in 1609, a set of instructions for the Governor General stated that the sandalwood from Solor and Timor was sought after throughout the Indies; under strict instructions from the VOC board, this trade was to be appropriated (De Roever 2002:110). Though not explicitly mentioned here, the Chinese connection was also significant because of the religious importance of sandalwood: it was used for making incense and could be traded for attractive commodities like white silk. Burma and India were other potential buyers of the fragrant wood. Solor and Timor also enjoyed a strategic importance. The conquest of parts of northern Maluku in 1605-1609 made it desirable to secure the sea lanes heading towards western Indonesia.

The Dutch conquest of Solor in April 1613 has been studied in detail by Arend de Roever, and so it is not necessary to repeat the details. Suffice it to say that the Portuguese – whose defeat was hastened by the absence of part of the Timor garrison – were set strangely lenient conditions by the Dutch commander Apolonius Schot. With half of their goods, the Portuguese were allowed to travel to Larantuka in eastern Flores, where they could be transported to Malacca, which was still Portuguese. This group of more than 1,500 people included some 110 white lay Portuguese and seven Dominican monks, the rest being of mixed or indigenous origin (De Roever 2002:119-26; Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:12-7; Barnes 1987:222-3). The composition of the group illustrates the way in which the Portuguese community was becoming

localized, something which was in no way impeded by their defeat. Larantuka was in the land-oriented Demon territory, which had long since tended to support the Portuguese against rebellious *sengaji* from the coast-oriented Paji group. The bulk of the Portuguese group came to settle permanently in Larantuka, which, according to an illustration from 1656, lay several kilometres to the south of the present town, opposite the islet of Waibalun (De Roever 2002:93, 129, 307). The new settlement was able to survive with little support from the Estado da Índia and thus secured a future for the Portuguese in the region. An important reason for their survival was undoubtedly due to their interaction with loosely Catholic groups, which were carefully enumerated by Apolonius Schot. On the tiny island of Solor itself, the villages of Lewolein and Pamakayu were Christian, as were a number of places in Adonara; on the island of Flores, the Christian areas were Sikka, Numba and native Larantuka. These places, totalling roughly 2,150 households, were each governed by a chief and a priest who held most of the authority. Since the cleric was familiar with the surroundings, he could incite the locals in favour of the Portuguese cause, thus depriving the Company of much of its advantage. The locals were armed with bows, shields and swords, but also possessed a few muskets (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:18).

Meanwhile the Dutch settled in the abandoned fort in Lohayong and befriended the Muslim inhabitants who were inclined towards the Company. The five Watan Lema princedoms, or at least Lohayong and Lamakera, paid lip service to Christianity in the late sixteenth century, but had obvious inclinations towards Islam, as shown in the violent rebellion in 1598-1599 (Leitão 1948:103-6; Visser 1925:293-7; Barnes 1987:221-2).

The type of Islam practised was heavily mixed with local religious traditions up until relatively modern times,³⁵ and according to the Dutch commander Schot, the country's population under the *sengaji* was completely heathen. The Watan Lema had no problems in forming an

³⁵ The Dutch *resident* W. Greve, writing in 1886, mentions that Islam was practised in coastal kampungs on Adonara, two large kampungs on Solor, one coastal kampung in Lembata, and three small kampungs on the north coast of Flores; 'however, with so little observance of customs and forms [of Islam] that one may put them in line with heathens' (ANRI Timor:91, *Algemeen rapport* (1886), f. 5). VOC sources used in this book indicate that this verdict is not entirely justified, since circumcision ceremonies, Muslim-style marriages, rejection of pork (but not alcohol), and the position of religious scholars are mentioned from time to time. Traditional belief in spirits nevertheless lived on side by side with Islamic precepts (Pelton 2002:69; Temminck 1839-44:297-300).

alliance with the Company, whose representatives had no missionary ambitions in these waters and who were themselves violently opposed to the Portuguese. Their main ally was Kaicili Pertawi of Lohayong (d.1645), who was the highest-ranking of the *sengaji* and who was in contact with the far-flung Muslim rulers of Buton, Makassar and Banten, and with Mena on Timor. The Galiyao league in Alor and Pantar, which was partly dependent on the Watan Lema, also leaned in favour of the Dutch, as did Ende on the south coast of Flores: 'These had a truce with the Portuguese when we came here; they have now risen against them, declaring to be subjects of the king of Ternate.'³⁶ The purported authority of the Ternate ruler in these waters would later support the Company's claims in Solor and Timor.

What about Timor itself? Since so few Portuguese sources are available, it is not possible to determine the exact date when the coastal domains began to consider the Portuguese, or any external power, as their superiors (Serrão and Oliveira Marques 2006:404). What we do know is that there were annual expeditions from Solor in order to trade sandalwood, and that the Portuguese did their best to exclude the Chinese and others from the trade, all of which seems to suggest a degree of interference with the prerogatives of the minor kings. More than a thousand bahar³⁷ (some 124 tons) were exported each year to China and the Coromandel Coast. These expeditions could demand a lot of manpower; when Apolonius Schot laid siege to the Lohayong fort in 1613, a force of 80 whites and 450 mestizos were in Timor to collect the wood, which was in fact the majority of Portuguese men. There is also evidence of diplomatic forays into local domains, as the king of Kupang in westernmost Timor received a letter – which he apparently could not read – from the Catholic vicar on Solor. By the time of the conquest he had already promised the Portuguese that he and all his people would

³⁶ Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:19. The Watan Lema and Galiyao leagues each contained five components. The former consisted of Lohayong and Lamakera on Solor, and Lamahala, Terong and Adonara on Adonara. The Galiyao princedoms were Pandai, Barnusa and Belagar on Pantar, and Alor and Kui on Alor. On Alor were also the princedoms of Mataru, Batulolong, Pureman and Kolana, which were not included in the league; see Van Galen, 1946, No.26, Nationaal Archief. Watan Lema and Galiyao were likened to two hands with outstretched fingers (Barnes 1995:499). A Dutch report from 1847 asserts that the ten princedoms constituted a superior league, the Sepulu Pantai or Ten Shores, which was finally broken up due to internal conflicts in 1820 (ANRI Timor:57, *Register der handelungen en besluiten*, sub 14-11-1846).

³⁷ On Timor one bahar was counted as 200 *catty*, a *catty* usually being one hundredth of a *picul*, or 0,62 kg.

convert to Christianity. That Iberian visitors were not always popular with the local population, however, is indicated by an incident during the Lohayong siege. Schot sent three ships to the Timorese coast in order to harry the enemy. The ships captured a *naveta* (minor sailing craft) carrying 250 bahar (about 31 tons) of sandalwood, and later a *galiot* (a broad, low sailing ship with oars), which was destroyed after the wood had been salvaged. The escaping Portuguese scattered and were subsequently molested and robbed by the hostile islanders (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:15), which may in part have been due to previous Portuguese attempts to regulate trade.

Whatever loyalties there may have been to the Portuguese up until 1613 rapidly seemed to evaporate in the face of the Dutch conquest, and several kings along the coast of West Timor were even overtly positive about the new situation. Schot mentions Mena and Assem, east of the present Oecusse-Ambeno enclave, whose kings both declared that they were prepared to sell all their sandalwood resources to the VOC: ‘These are the principal and most splendid kings of Timor; they are all heathen, in whom one finds more fidelity and will keep their word more than the Moors.’³⁸

In contrast with many parts of Southeast Asia, the opposition between trading coastal communities and inland groups that delivered products, was not particularly marked. In the pre-colonial system, trade was probably of limited consequence for increasing power, so that in places relatively untouched by the Europeans a simple barter system was in place. According to an account from the early nineteenth century, a merchant would arrive with his *perahu* (small ship) at the coast and place small quantities of his merchandise on the shore. The locals would then immediately come down with their own products, and negotiations using

³⁸ Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:20. Mena was apparently centred at the mouth of the Mena River, in the borderland between the later domains of Insana and Biboki. Assem or Asson is harder to place since the name does not seem to be in use today. On the map in Freycinet 1825, Plate 15, Assem is a place halfway between Mena and Atapupu, on the coast of Biboki. According to later tradition, Insana and Biboki were originally counted under the large Atoni realm of Sonbai, but separated at one stage (*Sejarah raja-raja* 2007:29-30). People in Biboki claim that their ancestors originally arrived from Mutis-Bobnain in the heart of Sonbai (Neonbasu 2005:61). That there were ancient relations is clear, as the first documented Sonbai lord in the mid-seventeenth century was in fact an in-law of the then ruling queen of Mena (VOC 1233 [1660], f. 721). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Insana and Biboki usually had a tie to the *liurai*, or executive ruler, of Wehali (Brouwer 1849-50, H 994:c, KITLV). Their status was wavering though, and in c.1832 they claimed to stand under Amakono, thus within the Sonbai complex (Francis 1832, H 548, KITLV).

gestures and signs would follow. Finally, the locals would pick up the merchandise they had bought and hastily run off into the forest, with barely a word being exchanged throughout the process (Moor 1968:8). With the increasing demand for sandalwood, which in turn required concerted efforts on the part of the Timorese to cut and assemble the wood, certain local leaders received new opportunities to shore up wealth and power via external trade.

In order to profit from the sandalwood, the aristocracies of the domains had to therefore co-operate with external groups. Once this had been arranged, political dependency would tend to follow, especially considering the small size of the local polities and their low-technology characters. Various seventeenth-century sources suggest that the aristocrats ordered their men to fell trees and bring the wood to the coast, hard and back-breaking work that drew resources from other livelihoods. At the coast the wood was exchanged via the local king for fine gold, corals, Chinese luxury goods, and so on.³⁹ The deliveries obviously required immense effort and were often subject to delays. Horses were ubiquitous on the island but wheeled wagons were not, and besides, would have been of little use in the hilly and notoriously difficult terrain. The process was relatively manageable as long as there were forest resources close to the princely centres. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, however, access grew more problematic, with political and economic consequences.

The existing conditions thus enabled resourceful external powers to gain an important advantage over local elites, yet at the same time, it was necessarily a case of reciprocity. The Portuguese, Dutch or others had no means to monitor the collection of sandalwood whilst they only visited the coast of Timor. The local rulers had developed routines by the time the Dutch arrived, something which the latter found far from convenient. To quote a report from 1614:

One finds a very strange way of doing things there. The Portuguese themselves are the reason for it, for they have made it happen for many years, and one must now follow it since one cannot wholly deprive them of this custom. The Timorese are a people with whom one must get on by showing patience. When one comes there to trade one has to give the

³⁹ Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:26. The corals were used to produce *muti salak*, strings of coral beads that were much sought after as prestigious gifts.

king and the nobles some gifts according to their old custom, which they call *sirih pinang*.⁴⁰ Furthermore one must agree with them as to what one should give to the king as *ruba-ruba*, that is, as tolls, and as *lonbebata*, that is, as an anchorage fee, and other such things that they use. One must give them to him first, before one can make any of his subjects deliver wood. Then they obtain his consent to sell it at the shore. It is then sold for a small price so that they hardly get any pay for their work. All the other profits come to the king and the foremost nobles. (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:101.)

All of this may give the impression that the upsurge in the sandalwood trade benefited the executive powers of the local rulers of coastal areas. Whether this was to the detriment of the old paramount Tetun kingship of Wewiku-Wehali, as has been argued, is harder to tell.⁴¹ It is not impossible, however, since the most accessible sandalwood forests lay outside the old political-ritual centre in southern Central Timor, in places like Mena, Sorbian, Amanuban and Batumean.

THE HUNT FOR SANDALWOOD

The conquest of Solor in 1613 was seen as a glorious and important victory for the expanding Dutch seafarers and their expansionist ambitions. It seemed to promise a bleak future for the Portuguese settlers in Larantuka, who could not compete with the resources allocated by the VOC. A cornerstone in the VOC strategy was the Helong group in westernmost Timor, with its centre in Kupang, in the bay that is today known as Teluk Kupang, or Kupang Bay. Unlike the other coastal lords, the king of Kupang had some knowledge about Christianity and he reigned over ‘a sound and capable place with an abundance of all provisions’ (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:92). Before 1613, the Portuguese had entertained plans to erect a fortress in Kupang, but the Dutch were content at this stage to maintain a close alliance with the king. However, the harbour

⁴⁰ *Sirih pinang* (*chiripinangh*, *serpinão*) literally refers to *sirih* (betel) leaves and *pinang* (areca) nuts, which are chewed together with lime to produce a mildly narcotic effect. It is a traditional gift of deference, and may actually consist of other items other than betel and areca. In present-day Timor, it is usually replaced by an envelope containing money.

⁴¹ Gunn n.y.:3; Schlicher 1996:97-8. Compare the critical stance of De Roever 2002:85-6.

was far from excellent, and the ships that lay at anchor were easily affected by adverse weather. The best shelter was in the narrow strait between the Timorese mainland and Pulau Semau (the island of Semau), not far from Kupang. The strategic solution was to maintain Solor as a permanent post for as long as the Portuguese presence remained. By keeping check on Kupang Bay, it was possible to control access of foreign ships to the southern ('outer') coast of Timor, which, moreover, was inaccessible to ships from April until November due to the monsoon season (De Roever 2002:290, 352). An interesting combination of geographical factors thus set the stage for a future relationship between the Dutch and Kupang, which was to last until 1949.

In particular, it was the commercial empire builder Jan Pieterszoon Coen who attempted to use the sandalwood resources for his larger economic strategy. If a sandalwood monopoly could be achieved, it would 'force the Chinese into the silk trade, since they are just as crazy about sandalwood as we are about silk' (De Roever 2002:144). In modern terms: it was a win-win solution for everyone, except the Larantuqueiros. The consequences for them, however, were not as far-reaching as the start would suggest, and it would take another forty years before the Company finally established its presence on Timorese soil. Meanwhile, the Portuguese positions in the Solor-Timor area recovered to the extent that they were eventually made the main arbiters of political power for much of the seventeenth century.

There are several aspects to this lack of total Dutch success. There was a lack of consistency in the Company policy on Timor, and in spite of Coen's protestations, the Solor post had to yield to other priorities. Already by 1616, with a recent defeat by pro-Portuguese people from Adonara on their minds, the Dutch stopped their efforts in these quarters and evacuated Fort Henricus, the rebuilt Portuguese fortification in Lohayong. The Seventeen Gentlemen in Amsterdam preferred to prop up Dutch positions in Maluku, which became the base for Timor trade for a couple of years (Coolhaas 1960:48; De Roever 2002:163). All this, naturally, provided the remnants of the Portuguese establishment with an opportunity to recover in their base in Larantuka. Although the Portuguese stood little chance when they encountered Dutch ships in these waters, they did wreak death and destruction on the Company's newly found Paji friends on Solor (De Roever 2002:166-7). Also, by sailing via the islands to the east of Flores, they could reach the north coast

of Timor unnoticed by the Dutch (De Roever 1998:53).

Under Coen's influence the Dutch re-established the Solor post in 1618, and this time they held it until 1629. The book of baptisms and marriages preserved from the small Dutch settlement demonstrates a social process similar to that of the Portuguese community, with frequent marriages between foreigners and the local populations. Of the 56 wives mentioned, 29 came from the Solor Islands, nine from Flores and three from Sawu. The religious identities were still not as fixed as they would later be: ladies from Muslim Paji villages like Lamakera and Lamahala bore Christian names and were united in legal marriage with Dutchmen and Christianized Asians. About eight wives were of Timorese extraction, coming from a wide array of places on that island: Assem, Ade, Suai, Tico (?), Camenaça, and even the central area of Wewiku. Likewise, a large part of the Dutch garrison consisted of *Mardijkers*, an ambiguous category, which in this case meant that free, baptized Asians served under the Company.⁴² The *Mardijkers* of Fort Henricus originated from all parts of maritime Asia – in one case Mozambique – but five were Timorese from Maucatar, Mena and Suai.⁴³ A small number of Chinese also settled in Solor; the Dutch considered them indispensable as artisans and petty traders (De Roever 2002:182).

This interesting multi-ethnic community was not destined to last as long as its Portuguese counterpart. In terms of weaponry and resources the Portuguese were no match for the Company, but nevertheless, repeated Dutch attempts to invest in Larantuka failed miserably. The frugal conditions on Solor actually made the Catholic community an alternative for dismayed VOC officials and soldiers, which is demonstrated by a number of defections from Fort Henricus. The successive commanders Jan Thomasz Dayman and Jan de Hornay, unable to explain their acts in front of their superiors, defected to Larantuka in 1625 and 1629 respectively, and enthusiastically participated in machinations against the

⁴² The *Mardijker* category is discussed in Blussé 1986:165. The term originally denoted baptized free locals from Maluku who had adopted the Portuguese language and lifestyle. In Batavia they were Asians, mostly South Asians, who had adopted Christianity and the Portuguese language, and were serving under the Company, carrying out a wide array of tasks and occupations. The name derives from Sanskrit *maharddika*, meaning 'great property'; in modern Indonesian *merdeka*, 'free' (Harrison 2007:465).

⁴³ *Memorije van de personen die alhier gedooft en in den houwelijcken staat bevesticht*, transcript of a manuscript found in ANRI, provided by Diederick Kortlang, Leiden.

Company.⁴⁴ Immediately after the defection of De Hornay, the fort was razed and abandoned, since the benefits did not cover the considerable costs of maintaining it.

The *Götterdämmerung* of the Chinese Ming dynasty drastically diminished the demand for sandalwood in China. It was thought that the Timor trade could be maintained without a fort, especially since a separate treaty between the local Dutch and Portuguese in the Solor region had been worked out in 1627 (De Roever 2002:194-8, 207). Business was however far from booming: between 1613 and 1632 the VOC traded no more than 17,000 *picul* of sandalwood, perhaps the equivalent of 2,000 trees (De Roever 1998:47).

The lack of a decisive Dutch policy was apparent during the events of the next decades. The Portuguese were able to reoccupy Lohayong in 1630 from their Larantuka base. Although a considerable Dutch squadron drove them out six years later, the Company preferred to leave the Solor-Timor region to its fate for another decade, a decade that would turn out to be a heaven-sent respite for the Portuguese mestizo community in Larantuka (Boxer 1947:4). Several dramatic events finally made the Company change its mind about the desirability of maintaining a steady presence in the area, but by then it was too late to take a resolute hold on the situation. Portugal finally severed its bonds with Spain in 1640, closely followed by the conclusion, in July 1641, of a peace treaty that had been in force for the previous ten years. This treaty also happened to coincide with an outburst of Lusitanian activity on Timor, fanning Dutch fears that their rivals wished to establish a 'second Malacca' on Solor.⁴⁵ In spite of the faltering sandalwood trade the VOC finally acted and regained their Solorese foothold in 1646 (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, III:314-24). This time they would remain in the region permanently.

Portuguese resilience is another major factor that explains the lack of total Dutch success. As convincingly argued by Arend de Roever, the vacillating priorities of the Company facilitated the steady recovery and localization of Portuguese influence in the Solor-Timor region (De Roever 2002:289-90). The small, fragile community in Larantuka was able to

⁴⁴ A later Dutch report, from 1689, asserted that Jan de Hornay was originally not a Dutchman but a Dane ('een deens inboorling'); see Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, f. 7. The legendary account in Müller 1857, II:189, on the other hand, says that he came from Amsterdam. The two statements do not necessarily exclude each other; at any rate, Hornay is not a Dutch name.

⁴⁵ De Roever 2002:244. See also Boxer 1947:4.

survive, if not exactly thrive, thanks to the Dutch failure to allocate sufficient resources to their Solorese acquisition, especially after the death of Jan Pieterszoon Coen. This can be compared to the larger picture. The official colonial organization of the Portuguese, the Estado da Índia, was dealt some severe blows in the early seventeenth century, but the bulk of its Asian possessions survived the following decades, even though the VOC soon surpassed the *carreira da Índia* in terms of shipping volume. The continuing state of warfare between the United Provinces and the Crowns of Spain and Portugal took the form of a Dutch trial-and-error approach, with a number of blockades, unsuccessful sieges and capturing of ships, but no purposeful strategy (Van Veen 2000:205-7). This was only put in place after 1636, when Governor General Antonio van Diemen initiated a new chapter in the long history of Dutch-Lusitanian hostilities. Political changes in various parts of Asia created new opportunities for alliances, which were soon taken by Protestant powers in Asian waters. The middle of the seventeenth century saw a long series of serious defeats and losses for the Estado, beginning with Malacca in 1641 and ending with Cochin in 1663 (Van Veen 2000:207, 232-3). The bulk of the losses thus occurred after Portugal's secession from Spain. There was one place, however, where the Portuguese were not only able to substantially expand their power in the face of the Dutch threat, but also repeatedly defeat military expeditions launched by the VOC. This place was Timor.

The sources for the development of the local Portuguese community who achieved this feat are not abundant, but some conclusions can be drawn. Steady intermarriage with Lamaholot and Timorese women soon made the population more Southeast Asian in character than European. Fragments of evidence from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suggest that the beliefs and customs of the region were adopted, or rather, inherited, by the mixed population. Though bearing their fathers' Portuguese name, they were still linked to their mothers' families and were accustomed to local *adat* (Paramita Abdurachman 1983:110). This included customs of warfare, such as headhunting (which may have increased among the Timorese due to foreign influences); the observance of rituals, such as the shearing of the hair at funerals; the adoption of social conventions, such as the intricate system of wife-receiving and wife-giving. While they preferred to be called Portuguese or Larantuqueiros, they were known to local populations

and the Dutch as Topasses (Topas, Tupas, Toepassen) or Portugés Hitam (Black Portuguese, Swarte Portugeezen). The two terms are used alternately in the sources, and appear to have had roughly the same semantic connotation. *Tupassi* or *dubashi* is an Indian term meaning ‘man of two languages’, ‘interpreter’, which is very likely the origin of the ethnic term Topass.⁴⁶ In India, Malacca and Batavia a Topass was someone with a Portuguese cultural background, either a mestizo or a person who had adopted Portuguese cultural markers;⁴⁷ this meant an overlapping of the category with the Mardijkers.⁴⁸ In the Solor-Timor region, however, Topasses and Mardijkers were different concepts, with the latter being partly ‘Dutchified’ and baptized as free locals in service of the VOC.

In spite of the adoption of local *adat* and steady intermarriage, the Topasses were seen as distinct from the majority of the population of Timor and the Solor Archipelago. In oral Timorese accounts recorded in the twentieth century, there are numerous references to *kase metan*, or ‘black foreigners’. The missionary and ethnographer Piet Middelkoop thought that the *kase metan* must be Africans, who were later used by the Portuguese as soldiers; however, a comparison between oral tradition and documentary materials leaves little doubt that the phrase *kase metan* in fact refers to the Topasses.⁴⁹ The denomination black (*metan*) does not allude to them having darker skin than the Timorese themselves, but should rather be thought of as an opposite category vis-à-vis the *kase muti*, ‘the white foreigners’ (in the first place meaning the Dutch). The stories, recorded in areas that later became Dutch territory, often display a hostile stance towards the *kase metan*, who are associated with overbearing and brutish behaviour towards the native Timorese and with ritual complications. If a marriage between a *kase metan* and a Timorese were to be arranged, ‘a boar-sacrifice must be offered, in order to subdue the violence and death [originating] from the divine sphere’ (Middelkoop 1968:112).

⁴⁶ See Yule and Burnell 1996:328 and *VOC-Glossarium* 2000:116 for suggestions on the etymology of the word. The term is also possibly influenced by the Persian word *topi*, ‘hat’, since the European-style hats were important identity markers of those who defined themselves as Portuguese; see Boxer 1947:1.

⁴⁷ Yule and Burnell 1996:933-4. A mestizo would, strictly speaking, be the child of a European father and an Asian mother. In a more extended sense it denotes the further descendants of such unions.

⁴⁸ The interchangeable nature of the concepts is shown in the well-known illustration of ‘a Topas or Mardick with his wife’, made from a sketch by Johan Nieuhof in the 1650s (Nieuhof 1988, between pages 278 and 279; see also Hägerdal 2007a, between pages 20 and 21).

⁴⁹ This is seen, for example, when comparing documentary sources with the legendary account of the Dutch arrival in Kupang (Middelkoop 1952:223-9); see also H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:456.

The ‘otherness’ of the Topasses is accentuated by material as well as spiritual concerns. In the low-technology Timorese society, firearms, Western methods of warfare and maritime skills had a severe impact; small detachments of musketeers would play a decisive role in armed conflicts on the island. Similarly, the Timorese were generally afraid of the sea, a fear that was reinforced or even caused by the intermittent slave-hunting and raiding operations that were conducted by foreign groups. The mobility of the seaborne White and Black Portuguese allowed them to keep large stretches of the coastland under control. The very bases of their might would set apart the *kase metan*, the Topasses, from indigenous groups.

Religion is a factor that must not be underestimated either. In the relatively isolated Portuguese community, the fathers of the Dominican Order exercised a form of leadership that was both spiritual and worldly. They led military expeditions, directed the building and defence of fortresses, regulated the sandalwood trade, and mediated – even initiated – conflicts.⁵⁰ In spite of the small numbers of padres, there is no evidence that members of the Topass group ever renounced their Catholicism, however syncretistic in character it may have been. There was obviously a degree of religiously motivated antagonism against the Reformed Christian Dutchmen, although at times there was also a sense of sharing the same religion – they were two politically significant, but small and rather fragile Christian groups. In 1767, a Topass leader made a heartfelt bid for Christian solidarity when addressing the Dutch authorities in Kupang about co-operation.⁵¹

In spite of the Timorese unsavoury legend of Iberian oppression, it is apparent that localized Portuguese groups were able to forge links with local populations, initially leaving the Dutch standing. In 1623, Governor General Pieter de Carpentier complained that ‘the Portuguese [...] have taken and occupied the ports of the north coast of Timor before our people, with four frigates’ (Coolhaas 1960:142). Three years later there was a busy trade route on the inner (northern) as well as the outer (southern) coast, with frigates from Macau, Manila and Malacca.

⁵⁰ See Biermann 1959:262-5 for the pivotal role of Frei Luís de Andrade in gathering the Portuguese *moradores* and defeating a Dutch-Solorese attack on Larantuka in 1620.

⁵¹ ‘I entreat Your Excellency to stay away and not encourage any of the Timorese to best us Christians; for their only aim is to eliminate the Noble Company and the Portuguese Christians and become their own masters’ (VOC 3215 [1767], f. 665b).

The sailing crafts approached Timor via the Muslim port of Makassar, which was noted for its commercial pluralism. But there was more to it: 'As it seems', wrote the Governor General, '[they] are able to win more inhabitants with spiritual weapons than we do with our soldiers, to which many places in India, occupied by the Portuguese or the Spanish, bear witness' (Coolhaas 1960:226). As an antidote, De Carpentier proposed the introduction of Dutch Reformist clerics to save the populations of the archipelago who were now 'the prey of the Papacy and the Moorish creed' (Coolhaas 1960:226). In spite of this, Dutch missionary efforts in Asia remained limited during the VOC period.

The Portuguese, on the other hand, made the most of their meagre spiritual resources. The missionary forays to Timor in the sixteenth century appear to have been false starts, but some years after the loss of Solor there was a new flurry of activity. The sources are highly subjective, providing a crude hagiographical image of the spread of the Word. Even so, they suggest that the Dominican padres were able to forge important, semi-lasting bonds with the local aristocracies of western Timor. In this way, their achievements appear to confirm the words of De Carpentier.

Since circa 1618, Dominicans visited the island of Rote whose inhabitants evoked mixed feelings: 'good, friendly and forbearing, easy to convert to the law of God' according to Luís Andrada, but an immoral lot according to Rafael de Veiga.⁵² Andrada speaks of an island overlord, one of those who invited the padres. However, when the Dutch approached the island several decades later, it had been divided into a large number of small princedoms or *nusak*, some of which tended to ally with the Company while others leaned towards the Portuguese side.⁵³ The Portuguese influence, traces of which lasted until the mid-eighteenth century, seems to have commenced with these Dominicans.

From Rote it was a small journey to Timor, which could be reached in less than a day. According to legend, the pioneer missionary Rafael de Veiga, fed up with the Rotenese, stepped into a boat and let the winds take him to the Timorese coast by chance. He ended up in the Kingdom of Amabi, which by then encompassed an extensive area east of Kupang

⁵² Biermann 1959:183, 1924:38. Rote was known to the Portuguese as Sabo Pequeno (Sawu Minor), while the island today known as Sawu was called Sabo Grande. This may seem surprising, since Rote is much larger than Sawu.

⁵³ The earliest detailed enumeration of *nusak* is to be found in Johan Truytman's report from 1660 (VOC 1223, f. 725a). At that time there were 19 of them; the number varied over the centuries.

Bay, known as Amabi Bay. In the next years, he and his brethren were successful in Amabi, Kupang, Amarasi at the south coast of West Timor, and Silawang on the north coast. The Dominican chronicle maintains that the kings of these places were baptized alongside large numbers of their subjects around the 1630s. In 1640, the number of churches on the island was 22, and they were served by ten clergymen.⁵⁴

It is not clear what this meant, as the sources do not have much to say about the methods of the Dominicans, or the intergration of Catholicism into local society at this early stage. What they do suggest is that the padres used the common missionary strategy of initially targeting the highest aristocracy: the king of Silawang was befriended by means of rich presents, and was eventually baptized (Biermann 1924:39; Serrão and Oliveira Marques 2006:402; Visser 1934:149). One should not deny the possibility of there being a serious interest in Christianity among the local population, and it has been argued that Timorese culture, in spite of its seemingly parochial traits, has good potential for the successful integration of foreign influences (Yoder 2005:111). It is also likely that the religion and culture of the overseas visitors were means of strengthening the position of the local ruler vis-à-vis his subjects. The ruler could also improve outward security through the friendship and alliance with the Portuguese that was a natural consequence of conversion. Once again, we must remember that the domains, although the Europeans called them ‘kingdoms’ (*reinos*, *rijken*), were small and fragile entities with little or no shipping or advanced technology. This facilitated their acceptance of Catholicism as an awe-inspiring symbol of authority, intertwined with the prestige of the Crown of Portugal. Nevertheless, there was a degree of competition for spiritual influence since Muslim visitors were also active on the island. In the first place they appear to have been Makassarese from Sulawesi, a fact also borne out by a large number of oral traditions that seem to relate to the seventeenth century.⁵⁵ The competition inevitably led to incidents: the Catholic clergyman Cristóvão Rangel was poisoned by certain Muslims in Silawang, although he survived and later died in 1633 (Visser 1934:149).

⁵⁴ Serrão and Oliveira Marques 2006:402. An account from c.1625 states that there were several Christians in Mena, Amarasi and Kupang (Biermann 1959:183).

⁵⁵ A number of such traditions, which will be discussed more fully below, have been compiled by the aforementioned Australian scholar Peter Spillett in his extensive manuscript (Spillett 1999). The work was unfortunately left unpublished at his death in 2005.

Towards 1640, therefore, Timor was an island with a still largely autonomous political structure. To all appearances, foreign goods and ideas had a limited impact on the life of the Timorese people, and what impact there was occurred mainly in the coastland. The way in which Timor was included in the global flows that combined inter-Asian regional trade with European expansion is also interesting. From the last decades of the sixteenth century, Timor underwent the transformation from embryo to global commercial system, with European shipping linking the West, Africa, the Asian coastlands and the Americas. Timor was a small component in all this, due to the importance of the sandalwood trade; Timorese wood ended up in India and South China on a scale that would have been inconceivable prior to the mid-sixteenth century. Like the rest of Asia, Timor was affected by the import of new plants from the Americas, one of which would have a fundamental importance for the economy of the island. Maize was grown in westernmost Timor by 1658, but must have been known for a long time before, since by then it was already the main crop.⁵⁶ As a dry-land crop it was suitable for the local climate, though it may at length have rendered the Timorese food economy less varied. In sum, the period before the start of direct European intervention provides an ambivalent picture of both geographical isolation and openness to the outer world. It also leaves us with the paradox of a localized Portuguese community that, due to a combination of factors, was able to expand its influence to the detriment of the VOC, in contradiction to the pattern in the rest of maritime Asia.

⁵⁶ VOC 1229 (1659), f. 854a refers to a harvest of 'jagons' (*jagung*, that is, maize) which was ripe by March 1659. According to Boomgaard 1997:419, it is possible that maize was introduced as early as the sixteenth century in a number of islands in eastern Indonesia close to the Philippines, though the references are ambiguous. According to Reid 1993:19, it was established in Maluku by 1540, from where it could easily have reached Timor by way of Ternate seafarers.

Traditional forms of power

TANTALIZING SHREDS OF EVIDENCE

It has so far been shown how external forces influenced the course of events on Timor until circa 1640, and how Timor can be situated in a regional and even global context. Before proceeding with an analysis of how Europeans established direct power in the 1640s and 1650s, it will be necessary to take a closer look at the type of society that was found on the island. What were the ‘traditional’ political hierarchies like? How was power executed before the onset of a direct European influence? In spite of all the travel accounts and colonial and missionary reports, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century source material for this region is not rich in ethnographic detail. The aim of the writers was to discuss matters related to the execution of colonial policy and trade, not to provide information about local culture. Occasionally, there are fragments about how the indigenous society functioned, but in order to progress we have to compare these shreds of evidence with later source material. Academically grounded ethnographies only developed in the nineteenth century, but we do possess a certain body of writing from the last 200 years carried out by Western and, later, indigenous observers. Nevertheless, such a comparison must be applied with caution. Society during the last two centuries was not identical to that of the early colonial period, and may have been substantially different in a number of respects. Although Timorese society was low-technology and apparently slow-changing until recently, the changing power relations, the dissemination of firearms, the introduction of new crops, and so on, all had an impact – whether direct or indirect – on the structure of society.

CHIEFS OR KINGS?

In the Dutch and Portuguese sources of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there was never any question over the status of Timor's local leaders. They were kings (*reis, koningen*) who reigned over kingdoms (*reinos, rijken*). Smaller hereditary rulers like those of Rote and Sawu, who were basically lords of a few villages, were often referred to as regents (*regenten*) but even they were sometimes endowed with regal titles. All of this must be seen in context: the early Western seafarers were quick to categorize local American, African and Asian leaders in royal terms. Japanese *daimyo*, Thai *chao* and Burmese *myowun* were 'kings' to the early chroniclers of overseas expansion. In the case of Southeast Asia, the foreign visitors may have followed the Malay use of the term *raja*, which has a much wider usage than to simply denote autonomous monarchs. In the late eighteenth century and beyond, the status of these local monarchs shrank in colonial eyes, at a time when evolutionist and Eurocentric ideas began to make an impression on the Western mind. At the same time, the increasing technological disparity seemed to render local polities increasingly irrelevant. The indigenous leaders of the Timor area became known under lesser titles such as ruling princes (*vorsten*), minor princes (*regulos*) or quite simply rajas, something that is paralleled by the structure of the source material. The voluminous VOC records highlight a degree of interest in the affairs of local Timorese domains (or 'princedom', as I will also call them) up until the late eighteenth century, at which point the material becomes sparser. After the fall of the Company, which took place between the early 1800s and the 1830s, very little information on indigenous local history is included in the official Timor records, which presents an insurmountable problem for the historian.¹

Who, then, were the persons known as 'kings' to the Dutch and Portuguese? It is obvious from a brief glance at the records that their capabilities greatly differed from the abilities displayed by those who ruled the realms of Java, South Sulawesi and parts of Sumatra, which could be just as large as European kingdoms. The sheer number of domains on Timor was stunning, not to say confusing. A Portuguese report drawn up after 1769 mentions two major provinces: Servião and Belu (Provincia dos Bellos), situated in the west and the central and east of Timor, respec-

¹ This conclusion is based on a survey of nineteenth-century records on Timor (ANRI Timor, K.43, various years) in the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta.

tively. Servião encompassed eleven *reinos* while there were no less than 43 in Belu.² Moreover, the exact names and numbers of the domains differ greatly from source to source,³ giving the impression of a complex of small and steadily shifting centres of power that become increasingly fragmentary the further east one goes. In 1867, the ex-governor Affonso de Castro calculated that the population of the Portuguese half of the island alone approximated 100,000 people, meaning there were a total of a few hundred thousand souls on the whole of Timor (Castro 1867:310). On average, therefore, a domain would have a population of perhaps 3,000 to 4,000 people, although there were significant differences in size between those domains in the east and the west.⁴ Looking at it from that point of view, ‘chiefs’ would seem a better designation than ‘kings’.

Nevertheless, the Timorese domains should not be judged solely on their size, as their functionality was not necessarily in proportion to their territory or population numbers. Their variation in structure and leadership has been sufficiently elucidated by anthropologists such as B.A.G. Vroklage (1953), H.G. Schulte Nordholt (1971), Elizabeth Traube (1986), A.D.M. Parera (1994), Andrew McWilliam (2002), Sofi Ospina and Tanja Hohe (2002), and Tom Therik (2004). All of these studies, it must be emphasized, mainly draw upon twentieth-century materials. The most ambitious attempt to uncover historical layers from an analysis of late colonial data was carried out by H.G. Schulte Nordholt. Using methods drawn from structural anthropology to support his argument, he has pinpointed the structural principles embedded within the traditional princedoms of West Timor.

One important finding of his investigation was the extent to which the ruler was tied to a ritual system of precedence and power relationships that descended to a local level: ‘The horizons of the world in which the Atoni live and within which formerly nearly all social relations were confined, excepting some trade relations via the coast or via itinerant Chinese traders, were restricted to the princedom’ (H.G. Schulte

² Faria de Morais 1934, Appendix:26. Note that Belu can also denote the Tetun-speaking area of Central Timor, the Belu language being equivalent to Tetun. Today, Belu is a *kabupaten* (regency) in Indonesian Timor.

³ Compare the lists in Freycinet (1825) and the Sarzedas document of 1811, cited in Castro 1867:202-3.

⁴ The Dutch commissioner Emanuel Francis drew up a report in 1832 in which he estimated the number of able-bodied men in the various Timorese domains; he multiplied this number by four to reach the total population size. Francis thus calculated that there were circa 439,000 people on the island, about twice De Castro’s estimate; see Francis 1832, H 548, KITLV. It is difficult to assess the reliability of Francis’s estimates, but the two sources suggest an overall population of well below half a million.

Nordholt 1971:186). The ruler was a necessary central component of the system, but his executive powers were not usually extensive. His main task was an inactive one: to eat, drink and sleep in his abode, in the centre of the realm. The domains studied by H.G. Schulte Nordholt usually had a dual structure based on a common Timorese perception of opposition between the ‘male’ (*mone*) and the ‘female’ (*feto*) element. The inactive, resting lord of the realm would be female – notwithstanding his or her actual sex – while an active, executive regent would be male. The male-female opposition, moreover, was highly situational: a component of society could be male in one respect and female in another. Furthermore, the territory or manpower of the realm was often subjected to a pattern of bipartition or quadripartition, with one aristocratic lord or regent (*usif* in Dawan) leading each division. The use of spatial terminology is important in envisioning this socio-political model.

In H.G. Schulte Nordholt’s scheme (1971:403), power was shored up fourfold within the princedoms: it was a political system that rested on ritual relationships expressed in rites and myths; it was consolidated by a network of kinship and marriage relations, which could help a ruling lineage expand its sphere of power;⁵ it was maintained by tributes and gifts of agricultural products; and it was either strengthened or weakened by the perpetual petty warfare that tended to plague the islands of East Indonesia. In line with this, Andrew McWilliam has recently suggested that groups used the ubiquitous custom of headhunting to build up a position of political centrality (McWilliam 1996). At the same time, the data for the pre-1900 period suggest that power was seldom stable. The VOC documents abound with conflicts concerning the borders of the princedoms and, sometimes, their sub-divisions. The documents also show that the smaller groups within the princedoms had a strong tendency to vote with their feet if the political leadership was not to their satisfaction. While migrations of dissatisfied groups of people are known to have taken place in central agricultural regions like Java, the lack of labour-intensive sawah cultivation presumably facilitated the numerous Timorese movements (Ricklefs 1981:500-1). Over the centuries, a large number of Timorese groups offered to submit to or ally themselves with

⁵ Fox 1999:10 notes that it was common among ruling Atoni clans to marry off their male members into various settlements within the territory. In accordance with the Timorese system, the wife-giving clan would enjoy a position of symbolic precedence, but equally, they would be politically attached to the ruling clan.

the Dutch on Timor in order to fight off an obnoxious overlord, which is illustrative of the way in which allegiances could quickly change. There are also cases of ‘men of prowess’ who built up an individual power base and went against the established *adat*.⁶ The principles of the society’s structure may suggest a self-perpetuating system, but in practice they were quite regularly violated.

H.G. Schulte Nordholt in particular based his study on Insana, a Dawan-speaking principedom in the north of West Timor, thought to display archaic features until a late date – colonial rule was only implemented in 1915. Before discussing the variation in Timorese political organization, it is worth summarizing his findings. In symbolical terms, the domain was organized according to spatial orientation, ritual opposites and kinship units. The basic territorial unit was the hamlet, known as *kuan* or *lopo*. A hamlet would be inhabited by the lineage of a clan, called *ume* (a word also meaning house, compare to Malay *rumah*). This clan worked an area of land, using it as directed by a *tobe*, or custodian. H.G. Schulte Nordholt found traces of a quadripartition where theoretically four hamlets would form a village, although the reality did not usually conform to the theory. The head of a lineage was known as *amaf*, and one of these *amaf* would also serve as the *tobe* for the whole village.⁷ Such a person was known in European accounts as a *temukung*, a term that is actually derived from the Malay-Javanese noble title *tumenggung*. Some eight to twelve villages in turn constituted one quarter of the principedom of Insana. These quarters were originally led by the so-called four fathers, each of which was titled *amaf naek*, meaning ‘great father’. They were genealogical headmen who were at the same time *tobe naek*, ‘great custodians’. This meant that they controlled land in their quarter and oversaw the rituals emanating from the princely centre. One of their tasks was to collect *poni pah*, harvest gifts for the centre. In colonial times the Portuguese gave them the title of *kapitan*, ‘captain’,⁸ but generally, VOC sources about Timor are vague regarding titles; they variously speak of grand *temukung*, regents or even sub-kings, by which they probably mean *amaf naek*, but which could also refer to *usif*, ‘noble assistants of the palace’.

⁶ Some cases from the late eighteenth century will be discussed in Chapter X. Indigenous traditions about migrations of Timorese groups are found in Middelkoop 1952 and Middelkoop 1968.

⁷ H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:186-8; Schulte Nordholt 1947. Insana is also studied in Cunningham 1965.

⁸ H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:190. *Kapitan* derives from the Portuguese word *capitão*.

These four components then formed the two halves of the realm. Finally, in the centre of the principedom, between these two halves, lay the *sonaf*, the ruler's residence. It was quite in accordance with his ascribed role that he was known as *atupas*, 'he who sleeps'. At his side he had an executive palace chief, known as *kolnel*, 'colonel', yet another Portuguese concept. Moreover, four lords or *usif*, one per quarter, also assisted the princely centre of the ruler. The *usif* originally lived at the centre, as can be seen by the placement of their sacrificial poles (*tola ana*). These items, essential to the rituals, were placed around the large sacrificial pole of the ruler. Clark Cunningham has pointed out that the lordship of Insana 'united clans in a territory but should not supersede their interests, and compensation between local lineages, not fines to the lord, resolved disputes' (Cunningham 1965:375).

After the implementation of colonial rule in the early twentieth century, much was changed in the principedom. The *usif* became district heads or *fettor* at the expense of the *amaf naek*. Meanwhile, the old *kolnel* lineage was ousted from power while a new powerful lineage, Taolin, became officially appointed rajas; the old *atupas* line faded into relative obscurity. It is evident that the Dutch of the late colonial period preferred a bureaucratic structure, and a raja with executive powers (H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:189, 212, 227-9).

This brief summary leaves out many niceties of the system, but may give a rough idea of how a 'traditional' principedom might have been organized. It is nevertheless important to remember that different domains could exhibit considerable variations. In Amanuban, another Atoni principedom that has been studied by Andrew McWilliam, there was no diarchic structure at the centre – a 'female' ritual ruler and a 'male' executive regent – at least not by the nineteenth century. Rather, the ruler controlled the ritual functions that were understood to guarantee prosperity in the realm as well as active governance. The *usif* were controlled by the ruler, and the four *amaf naek* could not secure a strong place within the domain. This variance may be due to political reshuffling; traditional stories suggest that a new dynasty of Rotenese origin seized power in the past, possibly in the seventeenth century.⁹

The system of governance was also dependent on the local inheritance system. Throughout Timor, the position of the mother is an im-

⁹ McWilliam 2002:65-6. My own findings indicate that a ruling line might have expired c.1736 when the Amanuban elite approached the king of Amabi to be their suzerain lord (VOC 2383 [1736], f. 108).

portant factor in determining the inheritance of a lordship, as is clearly demonstrated by records from the VOC period. The Helong and Atoni peoples of West Timor have a system that is basically patrilineal, but where the relationship between the bride-giving and bride-taking family (with a Malay-Tetun term, *barlaque*) is of prime importance.¹⁰ This is visible in the princely pedigrees that have been preserved; certain noble families had the privilege of providing a prince with a bride, generation after generation. As was the case in much of the archipelago, a marriage bestows a symbolic precedence on the family giving away the bride vis-à-vis the new family. The bride-price, *belis*, is a part of all this: failure by the bride-groom and his family to pay a substantial *belis* over a period of time means that the children of the marriage can be claimed back by the bride's family – in other words, a matrilineal feature within a patrilineal system. Documentary sources reveal that not even princely families were spared from such claims.¹¹ It was also a common practice that one child in a set of siblings was returned to his, or her, maternal clan as a part of the marital exchange (Fox 1999:9). Among the Tetun of South Belu, where Wewiku-Wehali is situated, the system is clearly matrilinear, but sometimes, as with the Bunaq of Central Timor, the system contains elements of both.

Can these domains, therefore, be termed 'kingdoms' or 'early states', and their lords 'kings'? A comprehensive debate has surfaced about the early state in recent years, and one may do well to refer to Henri Claessen and Jarich Oosten's discussion of the formation of early states. As they point out, the manner in which early states were governed depends on a system of delegation of tasks and power. In such a system, the central leaders and the local leaders vie for power, the former favouring centralization whereas the latter favour decentralization. This will result in the search for a balanced system, but also in competition for offices. Claessen and Oosten point out four basic conditions that enable a state organization to develop (Claessen and Oosten 1996:4-5). Firstly, there should be a sufficient number of people to form a complex and stratified society. This criterion is partly fulfilled in the pre-1900 Timorese domains, in

¹⁰ *Barlaque* derives from Malay *berlaki*, 'to be married to a man'. Note that *barlaque* was important in other parts of Timor as well. For convenience sake, the term is used in this book on a Timor-wide level.

¹¹ ANRI Timor:59, *Register der handelingen en besluiten*, sub 29-4-1850, cites a case where three princes of Amanuban became princes of Sonbai, since the *belis* had never been paid for their mother, Maria Elizabeth Nisoni of Lesser Sonbai.

respect of which there is detailed information available. Although the population merely consisted of a few thousand people, or, at the most, tens of thousands, an elaborate hierarchy of offices and lineages can be discerned. Whether the Timorese system included a 'nobility' has been debated, since not all members of a clan that produced *usif* or *amaf naek* retained a privileged status. At any rate, it is clear that genealogical factors were decisive in determining the status of an individual, so that social stratification and political hierarchy paralleled each other.¹²

A second condition is control over a particular territory. This does not mean that the territory is self-sufficient; control over an insufficient area of land may motivate expansion and conquest. Here, too, the Timorese domains partly match the prerequisite condition. As in several areas of the archipelago, the polity was based on a number of personal relationships and a greatly fragmented control over manpower, held together by a ritualized system (Henk Schulte Nordholt 1996:4-11, 149). The exact area of settlement was constantly changing in response to political and economic opportunities, but the documents also point to an awareness of the borders of the realm. The Timorese informers would, at times, describe border claims in great detail to their Dutch allies. This is also demonstrated by the existence of gate (*pintu*, *eno*) settlements that mark the boundary markers of the principedom or the smaller district.¹³ As remarked by Jim Fox, domains mentioned in the sixteenth century were still viable entities in the twentieth century, showing the ability of the polities to survive and maintain strong links with the land (Fox 2000:18).

Thirdly, there should be a system that harvests part of the production surplus and distributes it to those carrying out specialized roles and the privileged groups. Such a system indeed occurred in the Timorese principedoms, where ritualized harvest gifts are mentioned as far back as the mid-seventeenth century, as are the contributions, called *tuthais*. A

¹² H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:382. For Belu, Vroklage (1953, I:547) has noted the distinction of the noble 'estates' (*Standen*) known as *dasi* (the full-fledged princely persons) and *usi* (the lords of lower rank) vis-à-vis the broader strata of society. The bona fide *dasi* must have had princely blood on the paternal and maternal side. Likewise, in 1760, the executive regent of Greater Sonbai emphasized to the Dutch the importance of the ruler being of good blood on both sides: 'According to our laws nobody can become an emperor who is not sprung from royal blood on the side of the father and the mother' (VOC 2991 [1760], n.p.).

¹³ Compare McWilliam 2002:111. The border between the VOC-Helong complex and Amarasasi was carefully delineated in a report from 1692. From north to south, it purportedly ran via Oypahak, Icanfoty, Fattoemetan, Wanilawa, Wonnameke, Oynenopotty, Omackphenou, Tuaha, Massipalak, Fattoecheo, Waemina, Nimanette, Taymettan, Pilinaussy, Tamwenno, Poukay and Asiasi (VOC 1516 [1692]).

comprehensive system that involved the various levels of society had therefore evolved before the onset of colonial influence. The sandalwood trade generated income for the elites, which in turn encouraged a system that made the local settlements collect wood, or, failing that, beeswax, honey, gold, turtle-shell and slaves.

Last but not least, the development of a state demands an ideology that offers a rationale for the unequal distribution of wealth and the existence of hierarchies and elite groups. On the one hand, ideologies may be seen as superstructures of a material, socio-economic base; on the other hand, they can be considered a central element in the evolution of a socio-political system, highly embedded in society. In that sense, they are on a par with the economic, demographic and economic aspects of a community (Claessen and Oosten 1996:15-6). In terms of Timor, ideologies are elaborated in ways which have been explored in substantial detail by H.G. Schulte Nordholt (1971), Parera (1994) and Neonbasu (2005). As exemplified by Biboki on the north coast, the king is the centre of a symbolic complex, which sees him as the ‘trunk’, a central figure that brings good life and blessings. In this capacity, he embraces the cosmos throughout his lands and does not err in his actions. He is thus a sacred and superior figure, yet at the same time, is expected to act humbly and benefit the people (Neonbasu 2005:198-203). This suggests an imagery of lordship that goes further than the level of chiefdom.

The lack of literacy motivated a comprehensive bank of oral ‘knowledge’ about the past, what may be termed myths and legends. This body of knowledge set out the origins of the current order of society. In the parochial outlook of the subjects of the Timorese domains, such narratives explained the founding of a princedom, the origins of a ruler, the establishment of the *usif* families, the relation between the elites and the local communities, and so on. Such narratives were not fixed, but tended to alter its contents according to the circumstances; in this way, the performance of oral tradition was a highly political act. It was also institutionalized, so that particular spokesmen and tradition experts – *mafefa* among the Atoni, *makoan* among the Tetun – were entrusted the task of preserving the ‘correct’ version. The idea that the current order of a polity was founded in mythical conditions is very common in the eastern part of the Southeast Asian Archipelago (Therik 2004:77).

In sum, Timorese polities, for all their internal competition, contained elements which in certain respects placed them in the early-state

category.¹⁴ Considering their small and non-centralized character, the terms ‘princedom’ and ‘domain’ will be used throughout this work. In accordance with contemporary European usage, the heads of these princedoms will be termed ‘kings’ in order to clearly distinguish them from the executive regents. The most detailed material for the pre-1900 situation pertains to the western princedoms, which tended to be larger than the eastern ones. Whatever early Portuguese material there is at hand, however, suggests that the basic organizational framework was comparable throughout the entire island.¹⁵ At the same time, it must be emphasized that the administrative details and capabilities of the elite were altered during successive centuries. In a way, the rulers became ‘kings’ or ‘rajas’, or even ‘emperors’, because the foreigners chose to honour them as such. As mentioned earlier, the increase in the trade of sandalwood must have altered conditions in the coastal princedoms, since it provided new sources of income for the elite. The same goes for the import of Portuguese-Catholic symbols of authority, which were soon deeply embedded in collective values and underpinned the position of the elites in various ways. The Dutch influence after the mid-seventeenth century was important in defining the power capabilities of its local allies. The dissemination of firearms could either strengthen or, equally, eradicate the princedoms. Finally, with the dawn of the twentieth century, the colonial authorities deconstructed the princedoms in East Timor, and transformed them into *zelfbesturende landschappen* (self-ruling territories) in West Timor, motivated in both cases by concerns of colonial exploitation and governance. This, however, is a process that cannot be described in detail in the present work.¹⁶

WEHALI — THE CENTRE

Hitherto, we have spoken of Timorese politics as being comparatively small, a feature they share with most regions of the eastern archipelago. However, there were also politico-ideological structures that surpassed

¹⁴ In the same way, Andrew McWilliam, working with late colonial sources, argues that ‘the concept of state, or some allied form of federated political order, has a tradition in Timor that predates colonial meddling’ (McWilliam 1996:162).

¹⁵ See in first instance Ospina and Hohe 2002:17-37; Traube 1986.

¹⁶ In an Indonesia-wide context, the process is chronicled by Bongenaar 2005.

the limited area of the principedom. Like the Minangkabau kingship of Pagaruyung in Sumatra, and the Dewa Agung of Klungkung on Bali, they were 'kingdoms of words', which to the colonials seemed to be irrelevant and lacking in real authority, but which did enjoy a lasting importance in regional political culture (Wiener 1995; Drakard 1999). In terms of symbolic classification, the most important polity on the island was Wehali or, to use its double-barrelled name, Wewiku-Wehali. In the first place it represented the Tetun people who settled in Central Timor and parts of East Timor, and who enjoyed a politically and culturally prominent island-wide role. By extension, Wehali was considered the 'navel' of Timor, and its ritual origin-house is conceptually the origin-house of the peoples of the world (Therik 2004:91-3, 175).

Considering the turbulent history of the island, Wehali may seem an unlikely location for a central place. It is situated in the alluvial plain in southern Central Timor, in the modern regency of Belu, an area suitable for the cultivation of a variety of crops; it therefore has good economic preconditions in comparison with other parts of Timor (Therik 2004:33). These advantages have no doubt contributed to the prominence of Wehali in historical terms. However, the flat land is difficult to defend and lacked fortifications. It is regarded as 'female' land (*rai fetu*), which is in opposition to the surrounding 'male' mountain territories, and the likewise 'male' ocean in the south. In spite of violent interventions by the Portuguese (in 1642, 1665, 1677 and 1759) and the Dutch (in 1899 and 1906), its female character has not abrogated its great symbolic importance. On the contrary, its function as a revered ritual centre has apparently helped to preserve it, though it has certainly not emerged unscathed.

Pre-1900 data on Wehali are rare and often vague. From twentieth-century materials, however, a detailed picture can be reconstructed of the 'traditional' institutions of the realm. Unlike the common Timorese pattern, the Tetun of South Belu were matrilineal, and the inheritance of political positions was an intricate matter which has had implications right through to the present day.¹⁷ In the very centre, in the village of

¹⁷ In particular, one may refer to the conflict that arose after the death of the last *liurai* of Wehali in 2003. An early claimant to the (nowadays symbolic) position was met by counter-claims, causing him to leave the village of Laran, the centre of the realm. Personal communication with local informants, Belu, February 2008.

Laran close to Betun, was the great lord of the realm, *maromak oan*.¹⁸ The title means ‘the son of God’ and points to his role as a ritual head, watching over a set of sacred objects. He was the archetypical inactive ruler, expected to keep the system in place by resting at its centre – ‘the one who eats reclining, who drinks reclining’. He was the ‘dark lord’, a term that does not carry negative connotations, but means that he represented the earth – a ‘female’ entity in contrast with the ‘male’ heaven.¹⁹ While retaining the supreme authority in the centre, he delegated power to realms in other parts of Timor (Fox 1982:26). In early colonial documents the references to a ‘king of Wehali’ are ambiguous, and most probably refer to the executive ruler of the realm, the *liurai*. The office of *maromak oan* is only described in reports from the late nineteenth century onwards, which demonstrates the poor European knowledge of Timorese ideologies in general, and Belu in particular.

The *liurai* was the active, ‘male’ lord of Wehali. In contrast with the *maromak oan* he was the ‘visible lord’ through whom contact was maintained with the outside. The term means ‘surpassing the earth’. In modern times it has been used in Portuguese East Timor to denote rulers in general; however, its use originally seems to have been much more restricted. Before the late eighteenth century, it appears to have only occurred once, and then in the form ‘*lieuw lay*’ (*liulai*, a side-form of *liurai*). In July 1732, the ruling queen of Belu was referred to by this title when she sent an envoy to the VOC in Kupang.²⁰ In the legends of the Atoni of West Timor, the term *liurai* refers to the ruler of Wehali in particular. Liurai-Sonbai is moreover a conceptual pair among the Atoni, where the two dynastic terms denote rice and maize, the basis of the Timorese farming economy. At least by the early nineteenth century the rulers of the Atoni Sonbai dynasty were themselves known as *liurai* – but this did not apply to any other Atoni princes. A widely disseminated version of history talks of an early *maromak oan*, the father of three sons who became the *liurai* of Wehali in Central Timor, Sonbai in West Timor, and

¹⁸ A pedigree of the *maromak oan* is found in Munandjar Widiyatmika 2007:51, drawn from a document from 1928. It only encompasses eight generations and does not quite agree with the disparate Dutch materials. When I visited Laran in January 2005, Dominikus Tei Seran, the claimant to the *liurai* title, gave me a list of *maromak oan* which was at complete odds with Munandjar Widiyatmika’s. It is somewhat surprising that the essential ritual role of the title has not ensured more precise and stable traditions about its history; the contrast with Sonbai in West Timor is apparent.

¹⁹ Therik 2004:xvi-xvii. Regarding the impossibility of elevating the *maromak oan* to an effective executive function in the late colonial period, see Francillon 1980:252-4.

²⁰ VOC 2239 (1732), f. 109-10.



West Timorese domains

Likusaen in East Timor.²¹ The three *liurai* were therefore the ‘assistants’ of the *maromak oan*, who took charge of the three parts of the island. In that way, Wehali constituted the theoretical origin-point of Timorese kingship.

The origins of the prestige enjoyed by Wehali are shrouded in contradictory myths and legends. One origin myth claims that the world was covered with water in primeval times, and that Marililu, in Wehali, was the first land to appear when the water receded. This circumstance gave Wehali a status of being the central point of the lands.²² As noted above, in insular Southeast Asia, and especially in the eastern part of the archipelago, the notion of a ‘stranger-king’ is important. The exact origin of the immigrants to Belu is a moot point. An early document from 1836 argues that the Belu were descended from Jailolo (Halmahera) in Maluku (Kruseman 1836:15). This is interesting considering the hypotheses about early Central Malayo-Polynesian migrations from northern Maluku. These hypothetical migrations would have occurred over a very long period of time, and may have left an awareness of their distant origins in the collective memory of the old Indonesian heartland (Granucci 2005:41). On the other hand, stories recorded in the twentieth century single them out as Sina Mutin Malaka, ‘the White Chinese of Malacca’. This group of people supposedly set off from Malacca on one occasion in order to find new means of earning their livelihood. Bringing sacred items from their homeland, their boats eventually arrived at the fertile plains of South Belu, via Makassar and Larantuka. At that time, the land was inhabited by the Ema Melus, aborigines armed with bows and arrows. These were easily worsted and expelled, and the newcom-

²¹ Spillett 1999:344; Fobia 1984:10-8; H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:391. An early version, which speaks of kings (*yets*) rather than *liurai*, is found in a document from 1734 (Castro 1867:242-3). As discussed below, the tripartition Wehali-Sonbai-Likusaen is sometimes replaced by Wehali-Sonbai-Camenaça or Wehali-Sonbai-Luca (Francis 1838:393). In West Timor there are other enumerations, which include a variety of local Atoni ancestors among the brothers. However, the components ‘Wehali’ and ‘Sonbai’ always appear.

²² Interview, Dominikus Tei Seran, Laran, 30-1-2005; Vroklage 1953, II:140; compare Munandjar Widiyatmika 2007:37-64, 109. One of Munandjar Widiyatmika’s sources says that a woman, Laka Lorok Meak, first appeared on Gunung Lakaan, which is actually in North Belu, some distance from Wehali. Her two sons and two daughters married each other, and one pair founded Naitimu. The other pair begot ten grandchildren who were established in Flores, Biboki, Insana, Lidak, Lakekun, Maucatar and Fialaran. Wehali itself was thus left out of this North Belu origin myth. In modern times spokesmen from this area have tried to downplay the precedence of the *maromak oan* institution. Nevertheless, Dutch documents from the nineteenth century clearly suggest that Fialaran, Lidak, and so on, were subjected to the symbolic authority of Wehali (ANRI Timor:54, *Register der handelingen en besluiten*, sub 9-5-1844).

ers expanded their influence over the island (Grijzen 1904:18-9; Therik 2004:53). The exact meaning of Sina Mutin Malaka is far from clear, and at the moment there is no way to tell when the migration took place, as the pedigrees of the *liurai* and *maromak oan* vary too much in terms of their content to allow conclusions to be drawn. If the very name is assumed to reflect historical reality, it would suggest the period between the founding of the Malacca kingdom in circa 1400 and the first mention of Wewiku(-Wehali) in 1522. The Dutch writer Grijzen in 1904 believed that there was indeed substance to the claim of a Malacca connection since there were similarities in the respective *adat* of South Belu and Malacca. Nevertheless, one should note that the Tetun language is not closely related to Malay, in spite of numerous loan-words, but rather is closer to Polynesian languages.²³ If migrations did take place, it would likely have been only a small group, albeit one of potential cultural significance.

What is certain is that the Tetun-speaking population on Timor enjoyed a historical precedence. The elite of most of Timor are connected to Wehali in one way or another, and even where there was little actual contact, the oral tradition of the princedoms of the east and the west referred to Wehali as the ultimate point of reference. It has been concluded that a military Tetun aristocracy subjugated Central and East Timor, subsequently introducing their political-ritual system over the island. This conclusion is supposedly strengthened by traces of a superimposition of the Tetun-speaking aristocracy, the *datos belos*, on an earlier theocratic local nobility (Thomaz 1981:58). Among the Atoni of West Timor, too, the aristocracies claim to have descended from Belu, in particular Wehali.

In spite of the exclusive position of Wehali, its immediate sphere of power was not large. In the centre of the South Belu plain lay a nucleus of four princedoms, in line with the usual structuring principle of quadripartition. The Sina Mutin Malaka encompassed four sub-tribes, who settled in Wehali, Wewiku, Haitimuk and Fatuaruin. Of these, Wewiku was the strongest component, the foremost 'post' of Wehali, although it was not always on good terms with it. Fatuaruin was the seat of the executive lord, the *liurai*, who is usually referred to as the *liurai* of Wehali.

²³ Thomaz 1981:59. Vroklage (1953, II:153-4) assumes that the concept of Sina Mutin Malaka arose from old trading relations, where the Chinese would be associated with the colour white because of their comparatively fair skin.

Outside this ‘female’ land lay three further Tetun domains to the east and north, called Lakekun, Dirma and Fialaran. The lords of these principedoms bore the title of *loro*, or ‘sun’. All of the historical documentation that remains, implies that while Wehali had a strong claim to authority over these lands, it also had continuous conflicts with them. Further away, on the north coast, lay three other *loro*-ships that were also subjected to Wehali influence, although they were not Tetun, but Atoni or Tocodede. They were Insana, Biboki and Maubara. Even more remote, the *liurai* of Sonbai and Likusaen, alternatively Suai-Camenaça, accorded Wehali a position of precedence, although the consequences of this were both subtle and indirect.

Nevertheless, Wehali will not, unfortunately, hold a major place in a study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Timor. This is not due to any lack of importance, but rather to the nature of the source material. The Dutch as well as the Portuguese had limited interest in the traditional power structures, except when it concerned their own implementation of power. The relative lack of references in the documents shows that neither group made much effort to establish their interests in South Belu. The Portuguese did, however, instigate a rough geographical division of the island into two major ‘provinces’, namely Servião and Belu. These two terms are found in texts from the seventeenth century. In later documents, there are long lists of *reinos*, which were attributed to either province.²⁴

Roughly, Servião encompassed the Dawan-speaking Atoni lands in the west plus the Helong domain of Kupang. Although the ethnic terms Tetun and Belu are approximately interchangeable, the province of Belu did not just include the Tetun domains; it also encompassed all the domains in the east, where some fifteen different languages are spoken.²⁵ An early report from 1702 asserted that Belu constituted ‘the major part of this island’ (*a mayor parte desta ilha*) (Matos 1974a:229). This inclusive geographical concept can be partly explained through the position of Tetun as a lingua franca of the central and eastern parts of the island – a vehicular language, to quote Thomaz (1981:54). With the exception of

²⁴ The intricate question of the origins of the terms ‘Servião’ and ‘Belu’ has been discussed in Hägerdal 2006.

²⁵ Hull 1998:1-4 has identified nineteen languages on Timor and off-shore islands. Omitting Ndao, Rotenese, Helong and Atoni, which are not spoken in the eastern half, that would make fifteen. The linguistic map in Durand 2006b:47 shows seventeen languages in the east.

the Fataluco-speaking eastern tip of the island, Tetun was normally used as a second language in these areas. That must have been the case by the time the Europeans arrived, as seen from the mistaken belief that the eastern lands spoke one language. This is found in a missionary report from the second half of the seventeenth century: ‘In this island of Timor, there are only two languages, distinct from each other, which are called Vaiquenos [Dawan] and Belos [Tetun].’²⁶

The Portuguese use of the term *Belu* ultimately derived from the political and cultural prominence of the Tetun, and as such it was a colonial device. The enumerations of *reinos* in the Portuguese documents did not include the all-important Wehali. Rather, this polity was included in the other major ‘province’, *Servião*. Why this occurred, is hard to say. Perhaps the prestigious Wehali seemed more akin with the larger Atoni domains of the west than with the small *reinos* of the east. A Portuguese document from 1727 discussed possible ways of strengthening colonial dominance through the establishment of strongholds, further commenting about Wehali:

Besides, more can be done in the lands of Vayale [Wehali] (part of the *Provincia do Servião*), namely a frontier trench of that province, well settled to cool down the enemy, the Larantuqueiros; and it will be much better than any inlet that can be made, and it is not very distant from Batugade and has the best security. That government delivers more respect than other ones that conspire against it. (Faria de Morais 1934:67.)

The quotation implies that the Portuguese clearly understood the centrality of Wehali, and used this knowledge to prop up the precarious Portuguese authority. Astonishingly, Wehali was believed to have ‘the best security’, notwithstanding its vulnerable situation on the South Belu plain, something which may be explained, in part, by the great authority that Wehali still enjoyed, despite its political weaknesses. A few decades later, the Dutch *opperhoofd* in Kupang would point out Wehali as the ‘key’ to appropriating the Belu lands.²⁷

²⁶ Loureiro 1995:147; see also Hägerdal 2006:52n.

²⁷ VOC 8346 (1753), f. 43.

SONBAI

When speaking of the western province of Servião, there is an oft-quoted passage from the ‘Instrucções do Conde de Sarzedas’, a lengthy memorandum written for the incoming Portuguese governor of Timor in 1811:

The island of Timor is populated by native inhabitants, with a distinction between the Bellos [Belu] and the Vaiquenos [Dawan-speaking Atoni], in opposition to each other. They constitute, so to say, two provinces and two nations. In the eastern part the Belu inhabit the province called Belu [*a provincia denominada dos Bellos*], and in the western part the Vaiquenos inhabit the province called Servião. These two provinces are divided in kingdoms; Belu comprehends 46 more or less powerful ones, but all are free and independent among them, and have, according to lists drawn up in 1722-1725, 40,000 armed men, 3,000 [of whom carried] shotguns and the rest swords, cutlasses, assegais and bows and arrows. The province of Servião has got 16 kingdoms, which all recognize as their superior Senobay [Sonbai] with the title of emperor [*imperador*], who is king of the Kingdom of Servião, from which the province has taken its name. This province has got 25,000 fighting men, 2,000 of whom were armed with shotguns and the rest with assegais, bows and arrows, swords and cutlasses. In that way the whole island of Timor is divided into 62 kingdoms, besides the Kingdom of Kupang which is at the southern point of the island, where the Dutch have their fortress that bears the name Kupang. [...] Over the whole of the island is produced sandalwood, beeswax, cotton, tobacco, wooden containers, sea animals, kauri, rice, large corn, beans, corn, tamarinds, large cinnamon, coconuts, ginger, saffron, long pepper and salt. (Castro 1867:185.)

In this document, West Timor is an ‘empire’ where the so-called Vaiquenos, the Dawan-speaking Atoni population, all pay their respects to the overlord of Sonbai. In this way it parallels the nomenclature of other colonial texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Dutch as well as the Portuguese insisted on employing the title of emperor (*keizer*, *imperador*) for the ruler, which obviously set him apart from the other lords on the island. Up until the late eighteenth century, when the title of ‘*keizer*’ diminished in importance, there was no other ‘*keizer*’

than the lord of Sonbai noted in the Dutch documents. Likewise, the Portuguese reserved the denomination ‘*imperator*’ for the ruler of Sonbai and, occasionally, the ruler of Wehali.²⁸

There are a great number of oral narratives concerning Sonbai in West Timor. Together with the *liurai* of Wehali, the Sonbai lord is a major point of reference and holds a place in the ritual language. Liurai-Sonbai are substitute words for maize and rice, the basic crops of the peasants, and according to a widely propagated myth, Liurai-Sonbai gave the people their main agricultural crops through a human sacrifice involving a sister, or a female relative, of the two figures. The body of the woman changed into maize, rice and other useful products (H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:55, 271). The reputation of the Sonbai lords in folk tradition is somewhat ambiguous. They are culture heroes who are deeply embedded in the Atoni view of a mythical past. There are at least three sacred places on West Timor where sacrifices are performed and prayers said to the Sonbai lord, one of which is situated at the rock of Kauniki, one of the old historical strongholds of Sonbai, which is also seen as the ‘navel’ of Timor. As late as 1927, several decades after the end of Sonbai rule in the inland of Timor, a grand sacrificial ceremony was held in order to ask Sonbai for help against an invasion of mice that destroyed the harvest (Middelkoop 1938:403-4). At the same time, however, there are stories that depict the Sonbai lords as a negative force, emphasizing their cruel and despotic features.

It is clear that Sonbai enjoyed a political precedence, but this, again, must be seen in terms of status rather than conventional political power. The Sonbai lands encompassed extensive territories in the inland of West Timor, more or less corresponding to the later *landschappen* of Fatuleu, Mollo and Miomaffo. However, the realm was cohesively weak, despite a few individual rulers who stood out in the sources as being personally active. Nevertheless, the Sonbai ruler generally followed Timorese political conventions, and was seen as an inactive figurehead. He was known by the titles of *neni anan* (son of heaven) or *atupas*, or by

²⁸ When speaking about the ruler of Wehali, the early colonial records are not clear. In general, it is not obvious whether the *maromak oan* or the *liurai* is referred to – although one can assume that it is the latter – as the active component in the diarchy is alluded to in most cases. When the missionary H.A. Jansen met the *maromak oan* in 1892, the latter was also known as *kèser*, ‘emperor’ (Jansen 1893). The word is derived from the Dutch word *keizer* and must have been introduced later, after Dutch political influence began to disseminate in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

the Belu term *liurai*.²⁹ In his capacity as *liurai* or assistant to the *maromak oan* of Wehali he was ‘male’, but as the head of the Sonbai congregation he was ‘female’. The executive powers of the realm lay with the ‘male’ regents that belonged to the Kono and Oematan families. The powerful position of the first regent is denoted by the term Amakono (Father Kono), which was often used as a synonym for the Sonbai realm. The other Atoni princedoms did not usually pay homage to the lord of Sonbai, let alone obey him, although most of them saw themselves as related to the ruler in genealogical terms.

According to the extant legends, the origins of Sonbai are twofold. One version states that the first lord descended from the lord of heaven (Uis Neno). Appearing on earth, he improved the means of livelihood of the people, cementing his role as a culture hero. However, there is also a longer account of the early stages of the dynasty, which can be summarized as follows below. This version is the one told within the princely family in the twentieth century; it was committed to paper by the local scholar F.H. Fobia (1984).³⁰

The story begins with the migration of a Tetun elite group from Wehali, which was led by Nai Laban, also known as Nai Dawan. He was an eponymous ancestral figure representing the Dawan-speakers, or Atoni. He was the second of three brothers, sons of *maromak oan*. His elder brother, Nai Suri, was the forefather of the *liurai* of Wehali, while the youngest brother, Nai Taek, was the ancestor of the East Timorese *liurai*-ship Likusaen (Liquiça). There are other versions of the story, the oldest ones being those written down by Salomon Müller (1829) and Geerloff Heijmering (1847), but all emphasize that the Sonbai ancestor was the brother of the Wehali *liurai*.

Nai Laban, valiant by nature, was dispatched by the *maromak oan* in Laran to secure the source area of the rivers that flowed down to Belu. He entered the hilly area in the company of six chiefs and their followers. These chiefs then established themselves in various parts of West Timor, and their congregations were thus the nuclei of the later Atoni domains.

²⁹ These titles are only known from relatively modern writings. VOC documents only refer to the Sonbai lord as ‘keizer’. The Belu title ‘*liurai*’ for the Sonbai lord is documented from the 1820s onwards (Müller 1857, II:145-7).

³⁰ F.H. Fobia is the son of Nikodemus Fobia, who was the *majefa* for Tua Sonbai, raja of Mollo (died 1959). Fobia received information from his father and the raja, and furthermore interviewed some 30 experts on tradition in the inland of West Timor. His account is therefore a digest, and presumably representative of the extant stories. For a published, abbreviated version of this, see Wadu et al. 2003:17-65.

Having surveyed the vast western areas, Nai Laban had a meeting with his elder brother in Wehali at the river Noel Bi Lomi, where his elder brother agreed to his right to govern over the mountainous lands. After some time, the immigrant lord passed away at Noel Bi Lomi. His son, Nai Natti, took over his prerogatives and maintained the bonds with Belu by marrying a lady from Besikama, situated on the southern plain. After residing in Humusu for some time, Nai Natti fell ill, but prior to his death he commanded his adolescent son, Nai Faluk, to continue expanding in the highlands, right up to the source of the Benain River. When the *lurai* of Wehali heard that the new lord of the hills was still young, he sent two assistants to help him maintain his authority. They were Fai Bele and Ifo Bele, who arrived in Humusu with numerous retainers and cattle (Fobia 1984:14-6).

Nai Faluk grew up to become a restless warrior, at one stage leaving Humusu in order to explore the mountainous lands. He departed on his horse, Bilu Oba, whose hoof-mark can still be seen on one particular stone – Timorese legends have a propensity to name animals, and to try and prove the veracity of a story by referring to natural occurrences. On his journey, Nai Faluk carried a lance, a sword and a collar that he had inherited from his forefathers. He explored the area around the mighty Gunung Mutis, which at 2,427 metres is the highest mountain in West Timor. As a sign that he was to govern the land, he lit a huge fire, the flames of which reached the sky. However, he had still not met any people. Blackening his body and equipment with soot in order to resemble the dark-skinned inhabitants of the area, he headed towards the Noebesi River, where at a spring he saw two girls drawing water. At first the two girls shrugged at the sight of the dark foreigner; however, as he washed away the soot, they became enamoured with the handsome young man. Realizing their feelings for him, Nai Faluk subjected the girls to a test. He asked the spirits of his ancestors for help, and thrusting his sword in a tree, asked the girls to pull it out. Only one of the girls, Bi Lile Kune, managed to do so, whereupon he thrust his lance into the ground. Again, she was able to pull it out whereas her sister failed. Nai Faluk then announced that Bi Lile Kune was the woman he wished to marry (Fobia 1984:16-20).

The father of the sisters was a local chief called Nai Ke Kune. Not only did he accept the marriage of his daughter to the newcomer, but he developed such a strong relationship with Nai Faluk that he subsequently

named him his heir. The Kune family resided in Sabatu, but they also owned a residence on the slopes of Gunung Mutis, which was known as the House of Eight Pillars. Since it was situated at an altitude of 1,750 metres, it was too cool there to stay comfortably, and so the residence was given to the chiefs Nai Jabi (Amabi) and Nai Besi (Amabesi). On one occasion, Nai Faluk went together with Nai Ke Kune and his two assistants, Fai Bele and Ifo Bele, to see the House of Eight Pillars. When they stopped to rest, Nai Faluk asked Fai Bele to look for a spring to fetch water. Fai Bele failed to do so, but Ifo Bele was successful in locating the water. For that reason, Fai Bele was renamed Kono (to pass by), while Ifo Bele received the name Oematan (spring). When the party reached the House of Eight Pillars, however, Kono defeated Oematan in a spear-throwing contest, causing Kono (or Amakono, Father Kono) to become the first executive regent of the principedom, while Oematan became the second one. The two regents married sisters of Bi Lile Kune, which meant that the Sonbai, Kono and Oematan descendants were all united by blood ties (Fobia 1984:20-4).

After having received the lands of Kune, Nai Faluk sent a bamboo piece floating down the Noebesi and Benain rivers, all the way to Wehali. The bamboo contained a message in the form of a rebus, and reached the *liurai* of Wehali with the help of the ancestral spirits; the rebus message said that Nai Faluk had now created a principedom in the uplands. Perceiving this, the *liurai* was quick to send new migrants towards Gunung Mutis. They were the Timau and Belumau groups, who originated from next to the Bunaq lands in East Timor. The Timau headman was subsequently renamed Foan (Amfoan), while the Belumau headman was renamed Benu (Ambeno), and the two groups initially settled down on the heights of Paeneno-Oenam, where the House of Eight Pillars was situated (Fobia 1984:20-2, 24-6).

Nai Faluk's son and successor was Nai Lele. It was he who adopted the name Sonbai (Sona'ba'i, Sonba'i) for the dynasty. Folk etymology shows that the name derives from the name of one of the ruler's residences, which resembled a boat turned upside down (*sonaf*, princely residence; *bai*, boat).³¹ Meanwhile, Nai Lele Sonbai called his realm Oenam, after the eight-pillared residence of ritual importance that was

³¹ Müller (1857, II:151) shows Sonbai to derive from *sona* (stab) and *bai* (much). The various suggestions for the origins of the name Sonbai have been summarized in Munandjar Widiyatmika 2007:72-4. The only conclusion that we can draw from this is that the exact roots remain unknown.

considered to be the centre of the realm. Nai Lele Sonbai in particular is portrayed as a culture hero; his name means ‘plantation’. He ordered the population under his rule to settle down in fixed places, rather than roaming the mountains and forests. He also developed agriculture by teaching people to construct proper plantations, stopped erosion by using various devices, and developed ditches for rainwater. People were taught to cultivate maize, rice paddies, bananas and sugar-canes. Earth, rain, heat, and so on, were gifts from the Sonbai lord; for he was *ulan tuan*, *manas tuan* (lord of rain, lord of heat). Each year when the harvest was about to be collected, Nai Lele Sonbai, together with the people, would perform worship at Paeneno-Oenam with the following prayer: ‘The buffalo reaches Paeneno-Oenam, the horse reaches Paeneno-Oenam, the ripe banana goes to Paeneno-Oenam, the ripe sugar-cane goes to Paeneno-Oenam’ (Fobia 1984:32-6).

If Nai Lele Sonbai was the culture hero, then his son Nai Tuklua Sonbai was the warrior who expanded the authority of the Oenam kingdom by various means. He had magic properties, and could change into a stone, a tree or a python – an animal particularly associated with Sonbai. He also arranged a grand meeting at the river Noel Bi Lomi, to settle the spheres of influence of the *liurai* of Sonbai, Wehali and Likusaen. At the meeting, the various *am uf* or ‘minor kings’ of the Atoni people were present. The status between each of them and Sonbai was laid down according to a scheme which sets out the two Timorese means of defining precedence: via sibblingship or *barlaque* relations.

Sonbai and Amanatun are like older and younger brother (*tataf-olif*).

Sonbai and Amarasi are like brothers-in-law (*mone-feto*).

Sonbai and Amabi are like younger and older brother (*olif-tataf*).

Sonbai and Amabesi are like younger and older brother (*olif-tataf*).

Sonbai and Amfoan with Ambeno are like older and younger brothers (*tataf-olif*).³²

The Amabi and Amabesi groups guarded the Paeneno-Oenam Hill, but indicated that they wished to run their own affairs, causing Sonbai

³² Fobia 1984:36-40. Local genealogies and origin stories claim that the Amanatun, Amabi, Amfoan and Ambeno ancestors were brothers or close relatives of Liurai (meaning the kingship of Wehali) and Sonbai (Banunack 2007:7; Middelkoop 1952:203; Heijmering 1847:27; personal communication, Diniz da Cruz, Oecusse, 13-1-2004).

to order his Oematan regent to expel the two congregations from the hill, which he did successfully. The defeated lords led their followers to Gunung Mollo, a 2,070 metre-high mountain to the south of Gunung Mutis. The Amabi stayed on the mountain slopes, while the Amabesi group decided to move on to the west, and finally ended up in Kupang. Sonbai replaced the rebellious groups with two other communities, the Amfoan and the Ambeno, who settled at the prestigious summit. After a while, however, they too became conceited, and the Oematan regent was once again ordered to march against the rebellious groups. After some hostilities, both of them were obliged to leave the area and move towards the north coast, an area rich in sandalwood, honey and other commodities. The Amfoan settled down in the north-west, in the territory that henceforth bore their name; the Ambeno occupied previously uninhabited land, which now constitutes the Oecusse-Ambeno enclave of Timor Leste (Fobia 1984:43-5, 53-8).

The problems of Nai Tuklua Sonbai with the Amabi did not, however, end with these changes: at Gunung Mollo, the Amabi were joined by a related group from the land of Banam (Amanuban), and together, they became a formidable and expansive power. When they threatened a small domain called Lassa, the latter called for Sonbai assistance, which was readily given. After a military setback when a prominent champion was killed, the Amabi lord chose to jump to his death from the steep slopes of Gunung Mollo (Fobia 1984:46-8). With this very event, one may argue that we have moved from Sonbai protohistory to the beginnings of historical writing.

The death of the king of Amabi at Gunung Mollo is known to have taken place at the beginning of October 1657, though the circumstances described in Western documents are rather different from what is related above.³³ It is worthwhile pausing for a moment to consider this.

Naturally, the narrative above must not be seen as history in a conventional sense. Although historical particulars can survive in a recognizable shape for hundreds of years, for example when laid down in ritual language, the fabric of the story is likely to have been much altered by the process of transmission. To the Timorese mind, there was no term for ‘myths’, since ‘myths’ were considered to be the truth, the equivalent of history. In human society, myths incorporate memories of the past,

³³ VOC 1226 (1658), f. 509b. The incident will be more fully discussed below.

the experience of the present and the expectations for the future, all at the same time. In a traditional society, the future will then usually mean a return to a conceived past (Locher 1978:83). What is important to consider, therefore, is the function of the Sonbai dynastic myth as a charter of legitimacy. The elements of the narrative explain the origins of various Atoni groups, their early migrations and their relations with each other. They also explain the reasons why the Sonbai dynasty continued to be held in awe and deference, and why their political authority lasted in various forms until the 1950s. The Sonbai dynasty is also seen as the originator of West Timorese forms of agriculture, and is considered the source of the later division of power and authority among the Atoni. Finally, it is the possessor of supernatural powers that have far-reaching consequences.

There are interesting variations in the episodes preserved in various accounts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While the Sonbai genealogy recounted above talks of five generations before the coming of the Westerners, several sources assign their exploits to just one or two generations.³⁴ This is indicative of the atemporal sense of the past often found in non-literate cultures. The Sonbai lord could be one or many in the stories; there are also important variations in tone. All versions do agree that a Sonbai ancestor married the daughter of the Kune lord and took over his chiefdom in the central parts of West Timor; however, the two oldest accounts, by Müller (1829) and Heijmering (1847), disagree over whether it was a peaceful process. Müller claims that Kune was subjugated by brute force, while Heijmering roughly agrees with Fobia's version recounted above (Müller 1857, II:150; Heijmering 1847:17-27). Interestingly, the story here serves as the rationale for the peculiar position of the Kune family until the twentieth century. As the original lord of the land (*pah tuaf*), the chief of the Kune clan received a small part of the harvest from the lord of Sonbai or his regents until comparatively

³⁴ I understand from Father Gregor Neonbasu of Kupang that there is a longer Sonbai pedigree collected by Father Eric Breunig, which is different from Fobia's account (compare Parera 1994:196). Parera, who originally wrote his text in 1971, collected folk stories from Mollo, which provided a list of Sonbai rulers that corresponds to that of Fobia (Parera 1994:268). Spillett 1999:115 also gathered the same list from an old ex-*raja* of Miomaffo. Johannes Cornelis Banu, the *majefa* of Amfoan (interview, 13-6-2006), gave me another list, which contained largely the same names as Fobia's manuscript, though in a partly different order. In sum, it is hazardous to draw any conclusions about historical developments before 1650 based on the orally transmitted genealogies.

recent times.³⁵ His ritual role is illustrated by the important *leu*, ‘sacred heirlooms’, which were preserved in Miomaffo, the north-eastern part of the old Sonbai realm. The heirlooms were known as Nai Massu (Lord Smoke) and represented the original lineage of the lord of the land, Kune (Van Geuns 1927:466-7).

Maintaining the line of original owners of the land at the side of the current ruling dynasty is a well-known phenomenon in communities of the eastern archipelago. It is a part of the ‘stranger king’ syndrome which is so common in Austronesian societies, and which posits a ritual opposition between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in a given polity. The Sonbai lord is a stranger king, and his position as an outsider is an important part of his position in the system. The pattern of the ‘stranger king’ myths is often similar: an ancestral dynastic figure arrives, subdues the original lord in a contest or by other means (in this case, a marriage), is elevated to princely status, and arranges a division of the realm whereby the original inhabitants or chiefs retain particular rights with regard to the land. Moreover, Kune adopts the role of providing wives for the lords of Sonbai, Kono and Oematan, which puts him in a ceremonial position of precedence, in spite of his loss of executive powers (Fox 2006:2, 6, 8-10). There are obvious parallels here with the coming of the Dutch and the Portuguese to Timor. In both cases they were voluntarily received by local rulers (Kupang, Ambeno), who were the original lords of the land and who were henceforth maintained and, in part, honoured by the foreigners.

A peculiar problem in this context is the geographical term ‘Servião’, which is associated by the Portuguese sources with Sonbai. The first explicit mention of this connection, to my knowledge, is a letter from the first regular Portuguese governor in 1703 that characterizes the Kono lord as ‘the one who governs the Empire of Seruião for the aforementioned Sonouay [Sonbai]’ (Matos 1974a:336). As we have seen, the geographical term Servião as such is mentioned in Godinho de Eredia’s description from circa 1600, and also occurs on two maps that he drew in 1613. It is later mentioned by Dominican sources in the context of

³⁵ The theme of an original lord of the land is common in Timor and on surrounding islands. Another example is the Nubatonis clan in Amanuban, which was superseded by the Nuban or Nope family (McWilliams 2002:62-3; Müller 1857, II:214-5).

the events of 1641-1642.³⁶ The Portuguese officer Francisco Carneiro de Siqueira in 1647 mentioned Servião as the ‘centre of the island of Timor’, a place where copper could supposedly be found.³⁷ Certain modern traditions actually describe Sorbian as an ancient realm, associated with the Kune family, which encompassed Timor and the surrounding islands.³⁸ The name occurs in numerous Dutch sources as Serviaen, Zerviaen and, later on, Sorbian. The problem is that this term in the nineteenth century alluded to a mountainous area of limited political importance in the north of West Timor, which more or less overlapped with the principdom of Amfoan. This ambiguity is partly explained by looking at certain late-seventeenth-century VOC documents, which make it clear that the groups that originated from the lands of Sorbian, namely the Amfoan and Taebenu, were also considered to be included in the larger Sonbai group.³⁹ All this, of course, adds colour to the traditional narrative referred to above, which posits an original affinity between Sonbai and Amfoan. The earliest traceable history of Sonbai will be returned to in the next chapter.

THE ELUSIVE EASTERN LIURAI

While the identity of the central and western *liurai*, of Wehali and Sonbai respectively, is reasonably clear, there is considerable doubt about the *liurai* of the eastern component. The tripartition appears to have been more symbolic than real, and the details of the components changes with the circumstances. Several oral versions point out the lord of Likusaen as the *liurai* established in the territory of present Timor Leste, whose ancestral figure was the youngest brother of the Wehali and Sonbai ancestors. The name corresponds to Liquiçá, a *reino* to the west of Dili, which is mentioned from time to time in both Portuguese and Dutch documents. It enjoyed a certain local importance, but with

³⁶ Durand 2006a:76, 78, 80; Santa Catharina 1866:300. A letter by the ‘apostle’ of Timor, António de São Jacinto, in Vasconcelos 1929:78-9, mentions ‘the kings of Sertão’ (probably a slight misspelling of Servião) who rejected the name ‘Portugal’ because of the fall of Malacca. To the missionaries of the 1640s, Servião therefore appears to have been a comprehensive geographical concept including several kings.

³⁷ Fiedler n.y.:15, H 475b, KITLV.

³⁸ Interview, Johannes Cornelis Banu, Kupang, 5-2-2005 and 7-2-2005.

³⁹ VOC 1577 (1696), *Dagregister*, sub 2 and 3-1-1696.

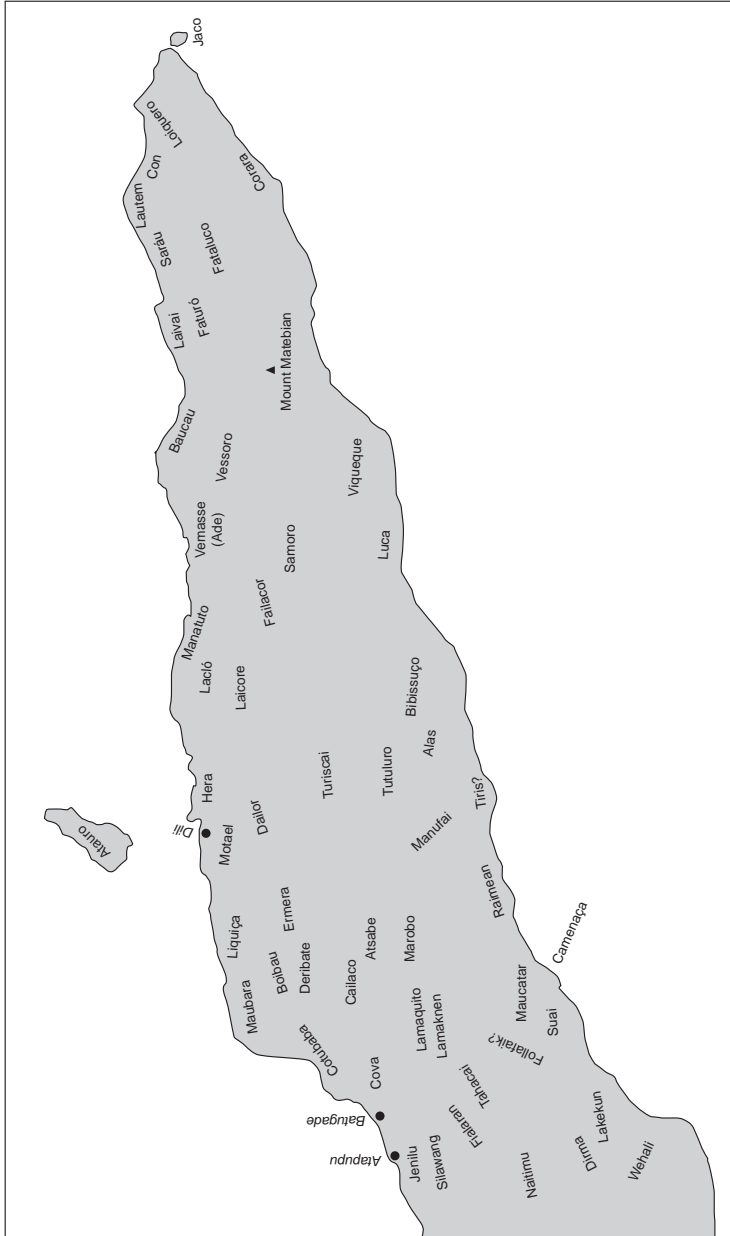
the exception of Pigafetta's account from 1522, there is nothing to suggest that it held authority over a wide area, let alone a major part of East Timor. Moreover, there are other candidates, for example, the double kingdom of Suai-Camenaça in the south-west of present Timor Leste, which is intermittently mentioned as the principal eastern realm in nineteenth- and twentieth-century accounts.⁴⁰ A third candidate is Luca, a Tetun domain on the south-eastern coast, which is mentioned as a paramount power in the east, by Müller (1829) among others.⁴¹ Some accounts emphasize that Luca was not a legitimate power, but had usurped power in the east at an unspecified time. All in all, we are left with a highly confusing picture.

This ambiguity is already apparent in the oldest documents that treat the issue. There is a letter from a Portuguese governor, written in 1734, which alludes to a revivalist and anti-European movement in the period 1725-1728, long after the introduction of Portuguese authority. This revival included 'the idea of expelling [the whites] and the enthronement of their three kings Sonobay [Sonbai], Liqueiçá [Likusaen] and Veale [Wehali]' (Castro 1867:243). The insurgents were never able to carry out their aim, but nevertheless, it demonstrates that the tripartition found in certain twentieth-century oral stories is not a new concept, if not as a political reality, then at least as a commonly held idea. However, there is another version of the movement, found in the 1811 *Instruções do Conde de Sarzedas*, and evidently based on other eighteenth-century documents. This text cites Camenaça rather than Likusaen as the third component (Castro 1867:205).

Oral narratives picked up in the late twentieth century further elucidated the issue. A Tocodede-speaking *adat* elder interviewed in 1994 in Ulumera, close to Dili, emphasized the role of Wewiku-Wehali as the demographic source of the Liqueiçá area. At the same time, the modern place called Liqueiçá was not completely identical with the historical region of Likusaen:

⁴⁰ There is a slight ethnic difference between the Tetun-speaking Suai-Camenaça and the Tocodede-speaking Liqueiçá (compare Bastian 1885:14), although Tetun and Tocodede are related Austronesian languages.

⁴¹ Francis 1838:393; Müller 1857, II:91. The map at the back of Müller 1857, II, appears to show Luca as a principality covering East Timor up to the borders of Wewiku-Wehali. This is clearly a gross exaggeration from any point of view.



East Timorese domains

Likusaen was not a kingdom but the name of a region. Mota Ain [Motael] was the centre of the kingdom, which consisted of Mota Ain, Tasitolu, Ulumera and Pissu. Likusaen means ‘the limit or end of the journey’. [...] Mota Ain is made up of three kingdoms – Mota Ain (Amu); Loro Monu, which covers the area of Suai-Camenaça, and Loro Sae, which covers the area of Maunfahe [Manufai]-Same. All beneath the government of Mota Ain. Under the Portuguese, the *liurai* was called *kornel*.⁴²

Another *adat* elder, in the kampung of Kaiteho, provided a similar story: ‘The people here in Kaiteho came from there, Wehali, to Mota Ain, Dili, to Ulumera and then to Kaiteho. Mota Ain was the centre of Likusaen. *Upeti* [tribute] was given to Mota Ain by way of Ulumera and then to Kaiteho. The language spoken here is Tocodede.’⁴³

All this seems to imply that Likusaen was a comprehensive area in the west of present Timor Leste, the centre of which was Motael, situated next to present-day Dili. Indeed, Motael was a *reino* of considerable importance, which invited the Portuguese authorities to establish their new centre in Dili in 1769 (Matos 1974a:98-9). An encyclopedic entry from the late nineteenth century characterized it as ‘the most important kingdom of the island in the Portuguese part’.⁴⁴ Motael claimed to hold precedence over Suai-Camenaça and Manufai at the south coast, although the reality behind these claims is not apparent from the extant documents. However, if the entire area was included in one hierarchical system, it would explain the varying identity of the eastern *liurai*-ship – Likusaen or Camenaça, depending on the relative strength or authority of either.

The occurrence of Luca as the paramount realm of East Timor in some nineteenth-century accounts is related to its position as a Tetun polity. While the demographic centre of the Tetun lies in Belu, in Central Timor, there is also an eastern Tetun-speaking area. This in turn is separated from Belu by an area inhabited by the Mambai-speaking people. The foremost *reino* of this eastern portion was Luca, which is

⁴² Spillett 1999:251, 253. I have changed the spelling of some names slightly, in order to keep the text standardized.

⁴³ Spillett 1999:259. Slight changes have been made in the spelling of names. Peter Spillett interviewed persons connected with Suai-Camenaça in 1992, 1995 and 1998, but the narratives do not explicitly refer to Motael or Likusaen as central places (Spillett 1999:323-5).

⁴⁴ The encyclopedic notes of Raphael das Dores, compiled in 1871-1892, are reprinted in Marcos 1995:33-66. For the reference to Motael (Montael), see pages 55-6.

already known of in the sixteenth century. In 1647, the Portuguese officer Francisco Carneiro de Siqueira characterized it as the ‘head’ of the island at the eastern coast, and a place where the Portuguese unsuccessfully tried to prevent the Makassarese and Malays from trading.⁴⁵ In 1661 it was characterized by a Jesuit writer as the best and healthiest place on Timor, inhabited by a good-natured population.⁴⁶ According to interviews with the old titular *liurai* of Luca in 1994-1995, there was a historical connection between Wewiku and Luca, the kingdom of which was actually older than the *maromak oan* institution. Luca was supposed to have been a very large kingdom in early times, before the colonial dominance by the Portuguese monarchy.⁴⁷ There were also smaller kingdoms in the region, which were branches of the larger kingdom, such as Takanar and Viqueque. The latter domain had a special connection with Wehali. The realm of Wehali in turn was defined by the *liurai* of Luca as including ‘*loro* Sonbai, *loro* Wehali and *loro* Likusaen’ – once again the old tripartite constellation known from stories found in other parts of Timor.⁴⁸

Luca was the place of Uma Bot, ‘the great house’, which was the centre of the realm. Outside of Luca itself, however, were four minor kingdoms, namely those of *loro* Ossu-Ossuroa, *loro* Vessoro, *loro* Vemasse, and *loro* Waibobo (Spillett 1999:300). Interestingly, this particular information is confirmed by early documents. As we will see, the position of Vemasse on the north coast was controversial in the seventeenth century, causing conflicting Makassarese, Portuguese and Dutch claims. The VOC argued in a document from 1668 that Portugal had no historical rights to the coastal princedoms of Manatuto and Ade (Vemasse). In previous times they had been tributaries of the Kingdom of Luca, although they had abrogated this relationship some years previously.⁴⁹ The Dutch claimed that the tributaries encompassed a rather wide territory in eastern Timor Leste, including areas where Austronesian languages like Galoli, and Papuan ones like Macassai, are spoken. Although this hier-

⁴⁵ Fiedler n.y.:13, H 475b, KITLV.

⁴⁶ Jacobs 1988:169. The praise is partly due to it being open to Catholicism.

⁴⁷ Marques Soares 2003:45 claims that Luca encompassed a vast area in the east of the island. The border ran via Ue-Hedan, Rantau by way of Mount Lihu-Wani, Laclubar, Cai-Mauc, Aituto, Mount Ramelau and Suai.

⁴⁸ Spillett 1999:301. According to another interview, with a grandee from Wehali, Likusaen had authority throughout eastern Timor; Viqueque in particular was pointed out as being under the authority of Likusaen (Spillett 1999:158).

⁴⁹ VOC 2285 (1733), f. 179-80; Hägerdal 2007b:557.

archy may have been more symbolic or ritual than executive, it explains why Luca was accorded such high consideration in certain European texts. Once again, however, it must be emphasized that the eastern domains were considerably smaller than those in the west. In spite of the theoretical partition into three Timorese *liurai* under the *maromak oan*, the eastern component(s) did not have prerogatives comparable to those of Wehali and Sonbai.

On the preceding pages we have traced the pre-modern Timorese perspectives of political power. Obviously, the late date of the indigenous Timorese accounts complicates such an investigation, but nevertheless, it will constitute a necessary backdrop to the analysis of contemporary data from Dutch and Portuguese sources. We may therefore return to the chronology approximately where we left it, circa 1640, in order to trace the earliest colonial establishment on the island.

Establishments and clashes, 1641-1658

MAKASSARESE INROADS, PORTUGUESE RESPONSES

The dual kingdom of Gowa and Tallo', commonly known as Makassar, developed as a major power in South Sulawesi during the sixteenth century. Through contacts with Malay merchants, an archipelago-wide network was forged that had both commercially and politically important implications. At the same time, a hierarchy of titles and positions developed, which created the basis for an expansive early state. Some authors have gone so far as to say that early Makassar turned into a bureaucratic state with centralized institutions, yet this is hotly debated (Cummings 2007:5, 9). At any rate, its political and commercial influence greatly increased in the seventeenth century, especially after the adoption of Islam in 1605. Islam provided an ideological rationale for taking military action against pagan territories, by way of reference to the classic juridical juxtaposition of the House of Islam and the House of War.¹ There was supposedly a latent state of conflict between those lands under Muslim rule, and those lands that were not, hence providing a degree of legitimacy for military conquest.

In 1602, Makassarese squadrons operated from the islands of Flores and Solor, making an unsuccessful request for tributes to be paid by the Solorese in 1613. The fact that kingdoms on Sulawesi had an early interest in the Solor-Timor area is also illustrated by the role of Buton, whose sultan formed an alliance with the VOC in order to take control of the Portuguese fort on Solor in 1613. Makassarese, Javanese and other Asian ships are known to have visited Timor and Maluku over the next decades, sometimes being hunted down and captured by the maritime

¹ Noorduyn 1987:314. The juxtaposition is, of course, considered obsolete by many modern Muslims, though it persists in Islamist circles. 'House' is understood here as community.

forces of the Dutch East India Company (Paramita Abdurachman 1983:100-1; De Roever 2002:121, 126, 181, 192, 213). All in all, one receives the impression that a lot of trade-related action was going on unbeknownst to the Dutch or the Portuguese.

This impression is strengthened when looking at the historical traditions of Timor, as well as those of Makassar itself. Numerous oral accounts collected in the late twentieth century by Peter Spillett show the important place of the early Makassarese travellers in the collective memory of the Timorese. Mentions of them can be found from the Atoni in the west, to the Fataluco in the east. These stories highlight both the warlike and more peaceful pursuits of the people of Sulawesi, who even crowned kings and queens of their choice. Since there has been interaction with the overseas seafarers up until modern times, the accounts need not specifically refer to the seventeenth century, but at least some of them do. One version states that the people of Wewiku-Wehali claim ancestry from Makassar and in particular from Tallo', whose raja arrived to the island riding on a crocodile. The Makassarese supposedly brought iron technology to Wehali, and taught the locals how to make weapons; intermarrying with local women, they generally remained on peaceful terms with their hosts (Spillett 1999:155-205).

Even today, the raja family of Tallo' tell stories of how Karaeng Matoaya, alias Sultan Abdullah (reign 1573-1636), had numerous contacts with Timor. Karaeng Matoaya, who introduced Islam in the dual kingdom in 1605, supposedly undertook several military campaigns on the island from 1596 onwards. In 1630 he is said to have married a princess from Wehali, and aspired to become 'the king of Timor'. His son and successor was Sultan Muzaffar who 'travelled around and governed in Timor, where he acquired land' (Spillett 1999:331-2, 335). Muzaffar married a woman called Sitti E Heriya who died on Timor: a gravestone, dated 1637, stands at Hera, east of Dili, and is said to belong to her (Spillett, Makkule and Susilo 1995:5). While Sultan Abdullah and Sultan Muzaffar are well documented as rulers of Tallo', the Timorese details about the marriage and campaigns are unfortunately not found in the authoritative Tallo' chronicle of circa 1641, and the source of the information that we do have, is not clear. For example, the name Sitti E Heriya does not occur among the wives of Muzaffar in the chronicle, so the name written on the gravestone at Hera, known to the raja family,

might have been added to the story by inference.²

What is quite clear from several sources is that Muzaffar did undertake an expedition to Timor, and that a close relationship developed between Tallo' and Wehali. At this time, Makassarese activity in the Solor-Timor waters had grown to such an extent that the Dutch became worried. In 1636, they complained that the skilful Sulawesi seafarers were able to steer their boats to Timor during the east monsoon as well as the west monsoon. Meanwhile, the Portuguese were steadily drawing ahead of their Dutch rivals, due to their long experience of trading with Macao. Once again the Dutch had to admit that their Lusitanian adversaries worked better with the native Timorese than they themselves did, thus meaning the Portuguese were in a position to occupy the best ports on the island. The islanders themselves were not allowed to trade with the Company.³ In addition, the relationship between the Makassarese and the Portuguese in the archipelago was usually good, since Gowa and Tallo' maintained a liberal trading policy that allowed Portuguese merchants to use Makassar as a base for their businesses.

Relations were, however, temporarily soured by a major seaborne expedition under the leadership of Sultan Muzaffar himself, with no less an aim than to subdue Timor and defeat the Portuguese of Larantuka. As discussed in detail by Arend de Roever, the expedition was the logical outcome of Makassar combining its long-time role as an intermediate station for sandalwood with new commercial ambitions. The Portuguese of maritime Asia – still unaware that their homeland had been recently liberated from Spain in Europe – were badly beset by Dutch blockades and hostilities, resulting in the loss of enormous quantities of cargo to the enemy. The leading Makassarese politician and prince Karaeng Patingalloang cleverly took advantage of this; he drew up an agreement with the Company that would make Makassar the supplier of sandalwood for the Dutch, who had, besides, failed to maintain a monopoly of the fragrant wood. In January 1641, an impressive fleet of 5,000-7,000 men set out from Makassar in order to eliminate, or at least subdue, the only serious obstacle to the agreement: Larantuka.⁴ The very day

² The account of the two reigns may be found in Cummings 2007:87-92. Among the names of Sultan Abdullah's conquests, which are carefully listed, there is nothing that can be associated with Timor.

³ De Roever 2002:216. A similar remark is found in the *Generale missieven* for 1640; see Coolhaas 1964:118.

⁴ De Roever 2002:234-5. The accession of João IV of Portugal took place on 1 December 1640, meaning that news of the restoration only reached Southeast Asia in late 1641.

before, the Portuguese, after a siege of five months, had been forced to lower their colours in Malacca, the nucleus of their power in Southeast Asia.

The expedition was controversial among the Makassarese elite, and was certainly no unqualified success. A Dominican account written after 1679 tells in heroic terms of how the king of Tallo' arrived with an enormous power, 'intent on destroying Christianity and to plant the cursed sect of Mafamede [Muhammad], of which he was a practitioner and grand zealot' (Sá 1958:421). Here, the clerical author completely omits the economic aspect of the enterprise. As the Larantuqueiros declined to parley with the invaders, the latter went ashore and destroyed the settlement, including the church and the holy images, while the locals fled to the hinterland. As on several similar difficult occasions, the weak Portuguese community displayed an astonishing degree of doggedness. Characteristically animated by a Catholic padre, a band of Larantuqueiros charged with their shotguns. Firearms were nothing new to the Makassarese, but after suffering considerable losses they decided to voyage to the Muslim village of Lamakera on Solor. From there Sultan Muzaffar set sail for Timor, presumably accompanied by Solorese pilots:

Closing in on Mena, he threatened the queen and other kings who had been baptized. He gave Moorish bonnets to the [lords] of Servião, and to Vajalle [Wehali] who, on this island, was treated like an emperor. He converted them to the faith of Mafamede and promised them great assistance. This did not happen, for when he arrived back in Makassar, to where he returned, his own wife killed him by poison. She feared her husband, since she had had an affair with a servant during his absence.⁵

Before his untimely death, an event not confirmed by the Tallo' chronicle, Sultan Muzaffar had ravaged the coastlands of Timor for two long months, taking some 4,000 prisoners to be sold at the slave market; if accurate, this is a substantial number. In fact, Sultan Muzaffar's actions marked the first large-scale invasion in the history of the island, something which made its mark on the Timorese collective memory. As found in later oral traditions, the near-contemporary material speaks of friendly relations between Tallo' and Wehali, which seem to have used each

⁵ Sá 1958:422. A near-contemporary account is to be found in Vasconcelos 1929:79-80.

other's authority to strengthen their island-wide position. The *Historia de S. Domingo* speaks of the exalted status of the Wehali ruler 'to whom all the kings on the island paid tribute, befitting his status as their sovereign' (Santa Catharina 1866:300). The Portuguese texts do not make quite clear whether the *maromak oan* or the *liurai* is alluded to – either of them could have been perceived to be 'like an emperor' by the chronicler. At any rate, the ruler in question accepted Islam and the protection of the foreign sea-lord, and in return made available his status as the central ruler to the ambitious Sultan Muzaffar.⁶ If there is any truth in the story of the Tallo' ruler's marriage to a Wehali princess, it would put him in a peculiar position, since as the wife-receiver, he would owe his in-laws symbolic deference.

With Wehali's powerful ally gone, however, the project soon collapsed, along with the Islamicization of Timor. The relatively unscathed Larantuqueiro community immediately launched an armed expedition to the north coast of Timor, in order to strengthen their commercial clients⁷ on the north coast. The recent Dutch-Makassarese understanding constituted a vital threat to their position, both with regard to the sandalwood trade and to the spread of Christianity. Typically, two Dominican padres followed the 150 musketeers who set sail towards the important port of Mena. With assistance from Mena, Lifau and Amanuban, the small troop turned its attention to Servião in a miniature version of Hernan Cortes' Aztek adventure:

They climbed up the vast lands of the king of Servião, who was the first object of punishment. The king retired to his mountains at the time, not entrusting the many people who followed him, with the resolution to await a battle. With that our men entered the land and went on to devastate it and plunder it without resistance. This was seen and bemoaned

⁶ The missionary account by Jansen in 1892 states it was the *maromak oan* who was the *kêser* (emperor), although this title was clearly a late Dutch-influenced import (Jansen 1893:27). Raja Serang (Tei Seran), otherwise known as the *liurai* of Wehali, was perceived by Jansen to be his assistant. Of course the details of Timorese political theory might have escaped the Dominican friars who wrote about the event.

⁷ In accordance with Dutch usage, I call the principedoms tied to the VOC 'allies'. Those tied to the Portuguese are usually referred to in Dutch and Portuguese sources as subservient ('underlings', 'subjects', and so on). I choose to call them 'clients', although in a way they can also be considered allies who had undergone the ubiquitous oath of alliance through the mixing and drinking of blood. Since blood oaths were a ubiquitous Timorese way of concluding alliances, there was a thin line between 'subject' and 'ally', which can clearly be seen from the conflicting claims made in cases of dispute (Hägerdahl 2007a:13).

by the inhabitants (who blamed the king, whose erroneous stance had reduced them to such misery).⁸

The king of Servião finally had to stop and surrender the ‘bonnet’, meaning in this instance the Muslim headgear, which he had received from the Makassarese as a token of his commitment to the new religion.⁹ In an astonishing turn of events, the king was baptized at the hands of Friar Bento Serrão, and committed himself to spread the creed throughout his kingdom – a good illustration of how political bonds were crafted through religious symbolism. However, there remained the issue of Wehali, which was still not aware of the abrupt death of its powerful Makassar ally. According to the *Historia de S. Domingos*, the ruler ‘proceeded in the arrogance of dominating the island’ (Santa Catharina 1866:302), and threatened the Atoni kingdoms whose subjects had been baptized. The Wehali ruler also sent a message to Tallo’ containing a request for a new squadron to be sent to Timor; Makassarese reinforcements would allow Larantuka no opportunity to assist its clients on Timor. Nevertheless, a new Larantuqueiro expedition with 90 musketeers and three priests arrived in Mena in May 1641 (or 1642). The Portuguese secured the Batumean kingdom as an ally; this is the area later known as Amanatun, which borders Wehali. The alliance itself was sealed by the baptism of the ruler, which embodied the political as well as the religious act.¹⁰ Both Batumean and Servião had been severely threatened by Wehali, and now offered to join an alliance against the central kingdom. The campaign is enthusiastically recorded by the *Historia de S. Domingos*:

⁸ Santa Catharina 1866:300. For a discussion of the expedition, see Fox (1982:22-3), who notes the parallels with the conquistadors’ exploits in the Americas.

⁹ According to information gathered by Peter Spillett in Wehali in the 1990s, the Makassarese bestowed a hat on the ruler of Wehali as a keepsake or memorial of their visit. This hat was still kept in the ritual building, the Uma Lulik, although in a very worn state (Spillett 1999:159).

¹⁰ Batumean, a village on the south coast of Timor, was the centre of a kingdom in the seventeenth century (compare Ormeling n.y., H 1352, KITLV). A Dutch report from 1614 says: ‘At Batomian, situated on the southern side, where wood was purchased on this trip, there are two kings; firstly, Amenato [Amanatun], who is the most powerful, and secondly, Amenisse [Amanesi]; both of them have promised to enter into trade with only the Dutch. Some years it is possible to purchase 250 bahar of wood, but always at least 200 bahar. It is an unhealthy place for foreigners; thus the Portuguese assert that entire crews have often died there, and the ships and the goods have drifted ashore and got lost, such as our people have also found out, God help us’ (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, I:92). In the eighteenth century the name Batumean disappeared and was replaced by Amanatun, its most important component. For traditions pertaining to Amanatun, see Banunaek 2007.

The whole fleet of ours (and also the clerics) was cheerful and in a festive mood, as the beginning was as fortunate as if Heaven had opened its gates for the future campaign. The captain gave orders to his people, and to the multitude of natives (who concurred, and joined in from Mena, Servião, Amanence [Amanesi] and Batimão [Batumean]), and they marched in good order, and with great effort, since the roads were rocky and the heat excessive. They arrived at the frontiers of the [ruler of] Vajalle [Wehali], who, impudent and haughty, dared to battle with a major force. The captain led the [battle-cry] ‘Santiago’ and invested such valour and flame in our men that many enemies fell at the first musket salvo. The Vajalle turned back and passed a river with many people, and made their way through the scrubland. In that way [the Portuguese] went on without meeting any resistance, letting the villages suffer the hostilities of iron and fire, until coming to the court where the army rested at night, and there was no lack of abundance at the table, which increased the joy of victory. The following day, as the recklessness of pursuing the enemy in the scrubland had been proven, it was found that the best advice was to return. Having set fire to the palaces of the Vajalle, they came to Batimião and were received with demonstrations of joy by the king, and by that of Amanence, for the bid for victory and the ensuing grand consequences. (Santa Catharina 1866:302.)

The *Historia de S. Domingos* is a problematic document due to its strongly rhetorical, hagiographical purpose,¹¹ something which is clearly illustrated when comparing events of the 1650s with Dutch sources. The image of an emperor-like figure that is venerated on a Timor-wide level might well be exaggerated, since the defeat of a powerful enemy in such a way justified the Portuguese-Catholic claim to dominate the island. Still, the words of the Dominican friars strikingly echo later claims of the lord of Wehali being the central ruler of the island. Undoubtedly, the emphatic use of musketry could have had a decisive effect on Timorese forces only armed with assegais and bows. Reading the account closer, however, it seems to imply that the Portuguese victory was far from conclusive. The chronicle carefully avoids any mention of the fate of the Wehali ruler. In addition, the 1641-1642 campaign did not seem to lead to the subjugation of Wehali or the domains to the east, something

¹¹ A similar text from circa 1679, *Summária relação do que obravão os religiosos da ordem dos pregadores na conversação das almas*, closely parallels the *Historia de S. Domingos*, but is less verbose.

which may also be deduced from a Dutch text of 1662, where the VOC representatives asked their clients on the island of Rote about their feelings towards Portugal:

Thereupon they said that they had no inclination towards the Portuguese, but that they try to maintain the old friendship with their friends who are the sworn enemies of them, like with the *negeri* of Fealy [Wehali] that was once ravaged by the Portuguese, who were however once again beaten by the inhabitants; idem Calisou, Thiris, Soufaey [Suai], Cammanassy [Camença], Bourouw, Bibeloutow [Bibiluto], Iesorouw [Vessoro] and Maccaky [Viqueque?], all situated on the south-east side of Timor where the Portuguese until this day have nothing to say and are kept out.¹²

Among the numerous oral stories that circulate about the Makassar connection, some explicitly mention a similar confrontation. Three *makoan* or *adat* elders in the 1990s told Peter Spillett how Wehali and Makassar had once joined forces against the encroaching Portuguese. A battle took place at Suai, where one of the Wehali military commanders was killed and the other fled back to Wehali. However, when the Portuguese tried to pursue them, they all drowned in one of the bays, meaning the kingdom was saved in the end (Spillett 1999:155). Another story, recorded in the Atoni lands, says that Amanatun (the 'Batumean' of the old documents) had, on one occasion, to fight off an extraordinary attack by the Nesnay family, whose historical position vacillated between Amanatun and Wehali. The Nesnay were supported by the so-called Tiy Toe tenu Lub Lubu Makasal, meaning the Makassarese.¹³ The Amanatun elite called for a champion from the island of Sawu who duly appeared on the scene and was able to stop the intruders. The final battle took place at the border between Amanatun and Belu, where the two foremost warriors of the Nesnay were killed.¹⁴ In essence, these stories show defeat for Wehali and the Makassarese, although the first story also emphasizes Wehali's ability to survive.

In spite of the obvious exaggerations of the clerical writers, the events of 1641-1642 apparently led to an increase in Portuguese influ-

¹² VOC 1240 (1662), f. 887.

¹³ The term Lubu Lubu Makasar occurs in several oral stories. It possibly combines Makassar with Luwu, another well-known kingdom in South Sulawesi.

¹⁴ *Sejarah raja-raja* 2007:39-40.

ence in some of the Atoni domains,¹⁵ including the elusive realm known as Servião. From the Portuguese accounts, it appears that it was a vast, mountainous land, close enough to Wehali to be effectively intimidated by the latter. At the same time, the early Portuguese writers did not equate Servião with Sonbai, as some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts do. In the *Historia de S. Domingos* and the account of circa 1679, Sonbai (Reino do Senovay) is mentioned as a separate entity (Santa Catharina 1866:309; Sá 1958:426). This is a problem to which we will return later. The influence of the Makassarese on Timor was not wholly abrogated through Portuguese intervention. The generally good relationship between Makassar and the Portuguese merchants was restored soon after the expedition of 1641, whose initiator Sultan Muzaffar was now dead. The seafarers from Sulawesi kept the eastern domains of Manatuto, Ade (Vemasse) and Con in a state of loose dependency, and had a continuing relationship with Wehali.¹⁶ Only in the 1660s would Sulawesi influence in these quarters be thwarted by renewed Portuguese expansion. The Makassarese were, however, unable to secure a continuous supply of sandalwood for the Company, and it was obvious that the Dutch had overrated the logistic capabilities of their partners (De Roever 2002:238).

DUTCH BEGINNINGS

The liberation of Portugal from Spain led to negotiations with the United Provinces, which finally resulted in the so-called ten years truce, yet delays in implementing the truce meant it lasted a mere eight years, from 1644 to 1652. There was no question of the Dutch returning the

¹⁵ Jim Fox (1988:269-70, 2000:19-20) has argued that an Atoni expansion took place in West Timor during the course of colonial history, since Atoni groups appropriated muskets, iron tools and maize from the Europeans or Eurasians, and were able to assimilate other groups. The process would explain the contrast between the mono-ethnic west and the multi-ethnic east. This is supposedly indicated by the relatively uniform Dawan language, which contrasts with the dialectic diversity on Rote, suggesting that Atoni dominance occurred at a comparatively late date. The hypothesis is supported by seventeenth-century VOC records, which mention numerous migrations of smaller and larger groups, and occasionally suggest different languages of the various congregations of West Timor (Sonbai, and so on). On the other hand, the missionary text *Notícias de Timor e sua cristandade*, written after 1641, argues that there were only two languages on the island: Vaiquenos (Dawan) and Belos (Tetun) (Loureiro 1995:147). While this is incorrect for East Timor, it indicates that Dawan and Tetun at least were leading, or 'vehicular', languages in the west and east respectively, on the eve of Western colonialism.

¹⁶ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 193-4; VOC 1257 (1666), f. 710.

overseas possessions they had conquered from Portugal during the reign of the Spanish Habsburgs, or during the first few years after the restoration (Winius 2002:122-5). Subsequently, Portuguese control in Southeast Asia was reduced to Larantuka and the clients in the Solor-Timor area – places that were largely outside the supervision of the *Estado da Índia*. The only true commodity of general interest was sandalwood, but the possibility of earning a profit from this item was not likely. The chaos that marked the end of the Ming dynasty in China equally deprived the merchants of their best market. This, however, was balanced by another noteworthy event. In 1639, the important Japanese market was irreversibly closed to the merchants of Macau, delivering the lively South China Sea city a blow from which it never really recovered (Matos 1974a:176; Subrahmanyam 1993:172). Interest in turning a profit from the sandalwood trade rose accordingly, although the full implications were only seen a few years after the establishment of the new Qing dynasty, when sandalwood prices again increased. A load of 40 bahar (circa 7,258 kg) which cost 40 mas in 1647, cost 50 mas in 1648.¹⁷

The trading policy of the Portuguese differed markedly from their territorial policy, where they strove to form ties with the princedoms of the Timor region rather than to govern them. While the general Southeast Asian conception was one of free and open sea roads, since the sixteenth century the Portuguese had seen the waters dominated by them closed to other seafarers (as did the VOC). Any ship that wished to trade in these waters was required to get a *cartaz*, a special permit. On the initiative of Goa in 1650, the Christian Timorese were prevented from trading with non-Lusitanian outsiders, and various domains were attacked during the following decades if they were believed to have had commercial or political dealings with the Dutch or Makassarese.¹⁸

The VOC, for their part, feared that their Portuguese rivals were intent on establishing a ‘second Malacca’ in the Solorese waters, now that the real Malacca was lost. In order to forestall a similar development, the Governor General of Batavia gave orders to once again establish a presence in the old Fort Henricus on Solor, which had been deserted for several years (De Roever 2002:243-5). The Watan Lema league on Solor and Adonara was still as anti-Portuguese as ever, and consequently keen

¹⁷ De Roever 2002:248. One mas was equivalent to 2.70 guilders. The example is complicated by the different units of bahar that were used in the East Indies (*VOC-Glossarium* 2000:15).

¹⁸ Villiers 2001:156; Fiedler n.y., H 475a, KITLV; VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 181, 200, 214-5, 218-9.

to support the return of the Dutch. At this time the league was headed by a woman, Nyai Cili, who resided in or close to Lohayong, and was styled the ruler or queen of Solor. She was one of several strong women in power in maritime Southeast Asia in the seventeenth century – according to a later story she originated from Kedah and made such an impression on the original lord of the land that he bequeathed the land of Solor to her and her kin.¹⁹

A set of new agreements were made with the five Solorese rulers in January and February 1646, which contained the usual agenda for Company clients: there were to be no dealings with any visitors other than those approved by the Company, who also had the right to buy products collected on the islands around the fort. The treaties were certainly asymmetric: the Dutch had the right to keep those Solorese who wanted to embrace Christianity, while deserters from the fort who wished to enter Islam had to be returned to the Company. A Dutch garrison of some 60 men was installed in the fort, complete with one vessel.²⁰ The event was significant: from this moment on, there would be a Dutch presence in the area that would last until the end of colonialism in the 1940s. Nevertheless, no one in Batavia or Amsterdam expected much profit to be generated from the project, which was rather motivated by political strategy.

Conditions in Fort Henricus (and, for that matter, in nearby Larantuka) were described in somber terms by the Dutch *opperhoofd*, with scarcity of provisions and lack of commercial opportunities. The Solorese had their own ideas about the treaties they had just signed. Like in many other parts of Southeast Asia, the locals probably saw the papers as an insignia of friendship and assistance, and cared less about the actual wording of the text, all the more so since the Solorese were largely illiterate. The allies then proceeded to do everything in their own interests, trading with the Portuguese, delivering insufficient foodstuff to the Company, and declining to assist with the restoration of the fort. The tiny and vulnerable Dutch post, moreover, had express orders from Batavia to win over the hearts and minds of the population using encouragement and incentives rather than brute force. Anything else would benefit the Portuguese. This

¹⁹ VOC 1728 (1706), ff. 138-40. Contemporary documents rather suggest that she was the widow and successor of the former ruler of Solor, Kaicili Pertawi (reign before 1613-1645). She could still, of course, have come from Kedah.

²⁰ Fiedler n.y.:1, H 475a, KITLV; Barnes 1987:231.

policy, which was in stark contrast to the oppressive Company policy in Maluku and elsewhere, would be used on Timor at a later stage.²¹

The next step was to extend the political network in the region. Flores was not a promising area, being partly under Portuguese or Makassarese influence, and with few ‘commodities’ other than slaves to offer visiting merchants. On the south coast, the settlement of Barai in the Ende area was loosely connected with the resolute lady Nyai Cili of Solor. Consequently, it claimed to be under the Company’s control, which did not stop its inhabitants from trading with the Portuguese when they saw fit; relations with the Dutch post were sporadic at best. Further to the east lay Pantar and Alor (alias Ombai or Malua), and the league of five coastal princedoms known as Galiyao. Galiyao, too, supposedly paid a loose deference to Nyai Cili, which meant little in practice. From a commercial point of view, Galiyao had little to offer. Nor was there much on Sumba, despite its enticing alternative name Pulau Cendana (Sandalwood Island). At the time, the island was considered to be under Makassarese control, and the slaves were excessively expensive.²²

Only Timor offered substantial supplies of sandalwood, known with obvious hyperbole as ‘sandelboschen’, or sandal forests. Contrary to some enthusiastic early reports, no more than a very small fraction of the surface of the island was covered with sandalwood trees – at the most, 0.02 percent according to research by Arend de Roever (De Roever 2002:287). What sandalwood there was, however, was an interesting proposition when the price of the wood started to rise in 1647. The Dutch of Fort Henricus saw a potential ally in the king of Kupang, the strategic location of the island perhaps serving as a stepping stone for further expansion. Moreover, the relation between Kupang and the Portuguese was far from hearty. Its ruler Ama Pono I was apparently murdered at the instigation of the Portuguese in 1619, when he concluded a treaty with the Company. In 1645, the then king, baptized under the name Dom Duarte, dictated a letter of submission to the Crown of Portugal. He approved the erection of a fortress near to the Koinino River as well as a church, and referred to padre António de Saõ Jacinto, who supported him. As it turned out, the Portuguese

²¹ Fiedler n.y.:1-2, H 475a, KITLV.

²² VOC 1180 (1650), ff. 582b-583b.

resources were only sufficient for the erection of a minor building.²³ The Portuguese may have thought the same about treaties as the Dutch on Solor: a contract was perceived to be more of a token than a set of instructions.

Kupang was inhabited by the Helong people, whose *adat* differed from that of the Atoni in several respects. According to later legends, the ancestors of the local elite migrated from Seram in Maluku. During the sojourn along the northern coast of Timor, a brother of one of the immigrants turned into a crocodile, and subsequently led the group to the estuary of the Koinino River, where they founded a principedom. Crocodiles were henceforth the totem animals of the kingdom, serving a protective function.²⁴ Like most Timorese principedoms, it was a diarchy. The ruler, Ama Pono II, was the son or grandson of the man who was murdered in 1619, which presumably made him less willing to continue supporting the Portuguese if other opportunities arose; this soon happened.²⁵ At his side was a *momboir* (executive regent) called Ama Fo, and under them ranked a number of *temukung*, corresponding to the Atoni *amaf naek*. In the nineteenth century they were four in number, but the population had probably shrunk by that point.²⁶ Even in the seventeenth century it was by no means a large principedom: the number of able-bodied men appears to have been no more than several hundred. Circa 1650, the centre of the realm lay in Attrai, some 45 minutes' journey, presumably by horse, from the present town centre.²⁷ It encompassed the areas to the south of Kupang Bay (Babau Bay) and Pulau Semau, but the central area of settlement was not particularly fertile. At one stage, possibly in the early seventeenth century, Kupang expanded its territory to the Sulamu area north and east of the bay. The Taebenu group in Sorbian fought a war against another principedom, Amabi, and received assistance from the Helong. In return, the Taebenu ceded part

²³ Fiedler n.y.:5, H 475b, KITLV; Fiedler n.y.:5, H 475a, KITLV; Leitão 1948:210.

²⁴ Interview, Salmun Bislissin, Kupang, 7-2-2005. According to Mr Bislissin, the first *sonaf* was erected at Kelang on Pulau Semau close to Kupang. Kelang was named after an island off Seram with a similar name. This is not confirmed by VOC documents, which seem to indicate that the Helong only inhabited Pulau Semau in any kind of numbers from 1653, and then only with Dutch assistance (VOC 1299 [1653], f. 114b).

²⁵ Fiedler n.y., endnotes, H 475a, KITLV. According to Fiedler the second Ama Pono was the grandson of the first, but a letter by *opperhoofd* Von Plüskow from 1760 seems to imply that he was the son (VOC 2991 [1760], f. 137).

²⁶ ANRI Timor:99, *Kort verslag*, sub 7-1857.

²⁷ VOC 1299 (1653), f. 112a.

of their land to the Kupang kingdom.²⁸ This transaction would have had consequences if the Company had stepped in, but the acquired area was in effect a forested no-man's land. Later sources spoke about the *ses-palen gebied*, a stretch of land some ten kilometres (six *palen*) along the bay, where the power of the Helong king and later the VOC was imposed.

In 1648, Dutch sights, particularly in the person of Hendrick ter Horst, the new *opperhoofd* of Fort Henricus, were firmly set on Timor. Ter Horst was an energetic and pious person who led the little Solor community through the crucial years of 1648-1654, and then again from 1655 to 1659. Having served twelve years in the Indies, he was married to an Indonesian woman, which impeded his return to the Netherlands. However, his liberality towards the local Solorese was limited, as was his patience with mediocre Company servants. Ter Horst believed that the locals had to be kept on a tighter rein, given their poor observation of the treaties of 1646.²⁹ From Timor, interesting news reached the ears of Ter Horst: the queen of Mena had been baptized by padre António de São Jacinto in 1641, placing her high up in terms of Dominican historiography. Seven years later, however, she ordered twenty-seven White and Black Portuguese to be put to death for unspecified reasons. The old and ailing padre, seeing part of his missionary project ruined, sailed from Larantuka to Timor with a number of supporters to deal with the situation, but was not to be heard of again. Next, a Company servant who had been plying the waters of the inner coast reported that the *capitão mor*, Francisco Carneiro de Siqueira, was intent on establishing a fort in Kupang.³⁰ Carneiro de Siqueira told the Kupangese king, Ama Pono II, that he would move 20-30 Portuguese families there, thus turning the small Portuguese building in Kupang into a real stronghold. All this led to a heated diplomatic exchange between the local Dutch and the Portuguese. The former threatened to open hostilities against the Larantukeiros if they fulfilled their ambitions in Kupang, since the area had held a contract with the VOC since 1619. The Portuguese, on

²⁸ This is the story told in an interview that the Dutch *opperhoofd* Willem Moerman had with the Taebenu leaders in 1693, in VOC 1535 (1693), n.p. The war took place in the time of the great-grandfather of the current king of Taebenu. In a letter from the kings who were allied to the Company (VOC 1568 (1696), f. 76), the acquisition of Sulamu was described as having taken place '200' years earlier, that is, in c.1500. It is possible that 'great-grandfather' should be understood merely as ancestor, but it is equally possible that the Timorese used the phrase '200 years' as a simple equivalent for 'a long time ago'.

²⁹ Fiedler n.y.:9, H 475a, KITLV.

³⁰ Boxer 1947:5. It never became more than a small building for three or four people, before the Dutch arrived in Kupang.

the other hand, argued that in that case, the Dutch should return Solor to them; the island had, after all, not been in Dutch hands at the time at which the ten-year peace was concluded. In the end, the Company servants decided to await further orders from Batavia.³¹

In the meantime, in 1648-1649, the Company was busy drawing up contacts with the islands to the west of Timor: Sawu and Rote (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, III:424-6, 474, 476). Both were politically divided into a number of small domains, which, combined with the limited economic resources, predictably led to continuous political unrest. The five domains of Sawu plus the small offshore island of Raijua were counted by the Dutch as being under the vague precedence of the central domain of Timu (although this precedence status is denied by modern tradition). The raja, or *duae*, of Timu used the Company to bolster his own authority, but never in too certain terms. There was hardly any other merchandise than slaves to be found there, and their fear of being sold off to the Dutch made them defect to the 'rebels' who were fighting against raja rule. Furthermore, the island was too far away from the main routes for auxiliaries to be sent in at this stage. In this respect, Rote was different, divided as it was from westernmost Timor by a narrow strait. For anyone wishing to dominate the trading routes towards the outer coast of Timor, Kupang and Rote were essential strategic components. There was no indigenous power on Rote to claim ritual or political precedence, and there were deep internal divisions on the island. Certain *nusak* in the west tended to support the Company, while others retained an old attachment to Portugal. This division would have far-reaching regional consequences until the mid-eighteenth century. The local economy was based on lontar palm juice, as well as cattle breeding and the cultivation of crops,³² and although this was sustainable under normal circumstances, natural calamities sometimes set the economy off balance. This sharpened intra-island conflicts, which in turn increased the supply of captives to be sold as slaves.

At the end of the 1640s, the uneasy truce between the two colonial powers still persisted, though it was soon to be broken. The Portuguese forbade their clients in eastern Flores, West Solor and West Timor from trading with the Dutch on threat of excommunication, while the Dutch issued similar prohibitions to their Solorese allies. Outside these two

³¹ Fiedler n.y.:10-1, H 475a, KITLV.

³² VOC 1210 (1663), f. 876; Fox 1977.

powers, a number of Javanese, Minangkabau and Makassarese traders operated along the coast of Timor, with the Makassarese enjoying a lasting influence on the north coast of east Timor (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, III:475).

Meanwhile, the sharply increasing price of sandalwood created an obvious incentive for both powers to secure the ports of Timor. So far, however, most of the trade was controlled by the Larantuqueiros, and much of the sandalwood went to Makassar under Portuguese supervision, where the Dutch could purchase it (Coolhaas 1964:374). Against this backdrop, a new protagonist entered the scene: Sonbai.

THE RISE OF SONBAI

We have already seen that Servião was an extensive inland realm in western Timor, whose ruler was forced to abandon his Muslim leanings for Catholicism in 1641. Its territory met the waves of the Sawu Sea in the north-west, where an important port for sandalwood was situated, possibly modern-day Naikliu. At this time, it was not expressly said that Servião was the most prestigious kingdom among the Atoni; on the contrary, a Dominican text from this period speaks of ‘the king of [A] manuba[n], whose kingdom is in the interior of the island, and is reputedly the foremost among all’.³³ Mena, which was previously pointed out as the principal power of the island, is henceforth only accorded secondary importance in the sources. In both cases, the European view of them might have been conditioned more by their role as a commercial outlet than their actual political status. We do not hear much more about the interior of the island until 1649, when the Atoni lands were suddenly shaken by great upheavals.

The first time Sonbai is mentioned in documentary sources is in two letters from September and December 1649. Envoys from the rulers of Servian (Servião), Amarang (somewhere in the north-west of Timor) and Mena requested assistance against their ‘brother’, Amma Sonnabaij, the ruler of Sonbai. He had waged war against the others with the help of the Portuguese, who supported his claim for a ‘roadstead’ (wherever it

³³ *Afschriften* [Dominican report], c.1650, H 697a, KITLV. I am grateful to Per Stille, Växjö University, for translating this Latin text for me.

would be situated).³⁴ Ter Horst's enthusiasm to provide assistance was fueled by the envoys' stories of gold in the land of Sonbai. A river or goldmine in 'Almeno Sonnebaij' was mentioned, possibly alluding to the Noilmina River, in the vicinity of which some gold can actually be found. The authorities in Batavia instructed Ter Horst to encourage prospectors, while investigating the actual occurrence of gold in the said river. If the story turned out to be true, one could 'pick up great and wondrous advantages from it' (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, III:476).

Ter Horst was also ordered to appear at Kupang, where the Portuguese seemed to be acting in an increasingly aggressive manner against the Dutch-minded King Ama Pono, wanting to expel the Helong and replace them with the Amabesi people. His orders were to lodge a resolute protest against the rivals, but not to undertake anything that could jeopardize the sandalwood trade. He was told to purchase the sandalwood offered by the Portuguese by any means necessary, even if the price was higher than usual, 'since the said wood presently gives tasty profits in Taiwan, and the best sort was recently sold for 50 reals per picul [60.48 kg]' (Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, III:477).

Here, however, Sonbai caused complications. The kingdom maintained an aggressive outlook, and it joined forces with Portuguese troops under the command of Francisco Carneiro de Siqueira, a group that included indigenous Catholics from Konga on East Flores whom the Dutch contemptuously called 'rice Christians'. Terrifying rumours rapidly spread among the Timorese that the aim of the campaign was to cleanse the entire land and bring it under their control. As the people of Sonbai and the *hangbroeken* (the hanging trousers, that is, the Portuguese) marched through the land of Servião in 1650, they mockingly asked the hapless inhabitants, 'Where are the Dutchmen now, the cowards that you trusted so steadfast, who would come and assist you this year?' The people of Helong greatly feared an attack on their territory, and vented their frustration on the Dutch trading officials who stayed in Kupang at the time. The Company people could barely go outside without being derided as liars or cowards.³⁵ The situation never escalated to the point

³⁴ Tiele and Heeres 1886-95, III:476; VOC 1173 (1649). The latter text also mentions the rajas of Amakono, Taebenu, Anenapy (?) and Amatoco (?), but their position is not evident from the fragmentary text. I am grateful to Arend de Roever, Heemsteede-Aerdenhout, for providing me with a transcript of this letter.

³⁵ VOC 1180 (1650), ff. 586b-587a.

of a full-scale invasion of Kupang, but the land of Servião did suffer horribly at the hands of the enemy. By May 1651, Servião and the surrounding territories were completely in the hands of Sonbai, which plundered the area for gold and slaves. The Dutch likened their devastations to the exploits of the Duke of Alba during the war of liberation – they spared neither young nor old, nor even unborn. Francisco Carneiro de Siqueira tried to stop the worst excesses by ordering that those who submitted and accepted baptism, should be spared. The enterprise also took on an interesting commercial aspect. The merchant-adventurer Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, who was mostly based in Makassar and had a great influence over Portuguese affairs in Southeast Asia, sent a vessel to Siam. There, it picked up a sizeable load of rice and then proceeded to Timor, where the boat dropped anchor at Lifau in the Ambeno kingdom, a place now seen specifically as a Portuguese port of call. A party of sandalwood was collected by the Sonbai ruler and taken aboard the boat for further transport on to Larantuka and interested European buyers.³⁶

Unfortunately, there is no Portuguese document to explain the background of this alliance. Where did the Sonbai come from, and how could they suddenly be established as major players in western Timor? Their powerful appearance indicates that they had had a long history prior to 1649, as also confirmed by their own genealogical tradition. A document from 1660 makes clear that the ruler of Sonbai was an in-law of the queen of Mena, and, as we have seen, was the symbolic ‘brother’ of the rulers of Servião, Amarang and Mena.³⁷ An outburst of activity at this time is indicated by the stories surrounding the ruler Tuklua Sonbai, which tell of hostilities with groups in western and north-western Timor. The oldest preserved story telling of Sonbai’s origins dates from 1829; it claims that Sonbai overcame the Kune family, the original *pah tuaf*, by brute force (Müller 1857, II:150). We have to conclude that after 1641, Portuguese power over areas such as Servião and Mena was far less stable than indicated by the Dominican texts. The VOC records specify that the Amarang settlement in the north-western corner of Timor was destroyed because the inhabitants had sold crops to the Company, and that the Portuguese had sworn to ruin anyone entertaining even the slightest contact with the Company (Coolhaas 1964:499). As part of their effort to secure the supply of sandalwood and negate the Dutch influence, the

³⁶ VOC 1187 (1651), ff. 626b-627a.

³⁷ VOC 1233 (1660), f. 721.

Ama Tuan I (Ama Utang) of Sonbai ?-1657/58 of Greater Sonbai 1658-c. 1680 m. sister of Queen of Mena (?)		Ama Tomananu executive regent		Ama Tabelak executive regent	
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junior king d. 1659		Ama Tuan II of Lesser Sonbai 1659-1672		a ruler of Greater Sonbai d. 1686, perhaps father of the son	
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Bi Sonbai (Usi Tetu Utang) of Lesser Sonbai 1672- 1.5.1717		Bi Sula daughter		following:	
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		Dom Pedro Sonbai (Tomenu) of Greater Sonbai fl. 1704-1726 m. Usi Bi Lalan		Ama Baki Nisnoni fled to Kupang d. after 1748	
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Bernardus (Bawa Leu) of Lesser Sonbai 1717-28.9.1726		Corneo Leu of Lesser Sonbai 1728-1748		Daniel Taffy of Lesser Sonbai 1748-1760	
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Jacobus Albertus Taffy of Lesser Sonbai 1760-1776		Bernardus Nisnoni (Baki Bena) of Lesser Sonbai 1776 (1782)- 1795		Kornel	
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		Pieter Nisnoni (Nube Bena) of Lesser Sonbai 1798-1821 later rulers of Lesser Sonbai (until 1917) and Kupang (until 1955)		Don Ber- nardo of Greater Sonbai 1752- 1.4.1760	
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		Nai Sane		Albertus Johannes Taffy (Nai Taffin Sonbai) of Greater Sonbai 1760-1768 m. daughter of Nai Lake of Bikomi Alphonsus Adrianus (Nai Kau Sonbai) of Greater Sonbai 1768-1802	
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		Nai Sobe Sonbai of Greater Sonbai 1808-1867		Nai Tua Sonbai	
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Nai Bau Sonbai of Greater Sonbai 1867-c. 1885		Nai Sobe Sonbai pretender-ruler 1885-1906 d. 1922		Nai Nasu Mollo co-ruler of Greater Sonbai 1870-1885	
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				Nai Liofi Sonbai Nai Kau Sonbai Nai Tua Sonbai zelfbestuurder of Mollo 1930-1959	

Genealogy of the Sonbai dynasty, mainly after Dutch sources

Portuguese therefore formed an alliance with Sonbai, a member of a cluster of Atoni domains with consanguineous ties. The alliance resulted in the elimination of the major recalcitrant, Servião, which was possibly headed by the Kune family, and similarly underpinned the emergence of the lord of Sonbai as the *imperador de Servião*. To the Dutch it seemed that if nothing were done, then within a short time the Portuguese would be the masters of all Timor under the guise of the Sonbai lord (*onder dexel der Sonnebayer*).³⁸

In 1693, one of the very few VOC reports documenting indigenous Timorese traditions was completed. It is in the form of an interview between then *opperhoofd* Willem Moerman and the aristocrats of the Taebenu principedom who had fled to Dutch Kupang from Sorbian five years previously. Sorbian, Sarbaong or Serviaen was by then a name for the land in the north of West Timor, later known as Amfoan. When asked about the historical position of the Taebenu in ‘Sarbaong’, the aristocrats replied: ‘Through the old heritage, since it was conquered by the Sonbai about 50 years ago. Since that time they [the Taebenu] stayed in Amarasi, and after the Sonbai abandoned the land 32 or 33 years ago, it was once again repossessed by them. However, they must usually stay in Amarasi.’³⁹ Another text from 1696, however, speaks of ‘the Taebenu who are also Sonbai and also descended from the ancestral house of Amfoan’.⁴⁰ According to these documents, Sonbai dominated the north-west from the 1640s to circa 1660, a rather short period of time. Still, there was a perceived generic affinity between Sonbai and the aristocracies of the area, again suggesting that Sonbai had historical roots that reached far back into time. Further details of the political structure prior to 1649 will presumably remain unknown.

THE COMPANY BUILDS A FORT

Some refugees fled towards the west and settled in the area considered to belong to Kupang, under the somewhat weak protection of King Ama Pono. By this time, Kupang was decidedly pro-Dutch. They accepted gifts from the Company, which kept a small trading office at the estu-

³⁸ VOC 1187 (1651), f. 637.

³⁹ VOC 1535 (1693), n.p.

⁴⁰ VOC 1577 (1696), *Dagregister*, sub 2-1-1696.

ary of the Koinino River.⁴¹ Adding to this, the ten-year peace between the United Provinces and Portugal was soon to expire, and it was only a matter of time before hostilities would resume between the colonial rivals. All this made for an explosive situation on the local scene, with the unfortunate little principedom of Helong right in the middle of it. When the Company ships paid a visit in the autumn of 1651, they found Ama Pono sitting in the Company office by the seashore with his entire family and belongings. He and his retainers dared not stay in his settlement at Attrai anymore, nor roam the surrounding wilderness, for fear of the aggressive Sonbai and Portuguese. They intended to move over to the island of Rote as there were ties between the Helong and Rotenese aristocracies, and the Helong, unlike most Timorese, were acquainted with small-scale shipping. With some effort, the Dutch were able to persuade Ama Pono to return to Attrai. At the king's request, the Dutch agreed to place six soldiers on guard at the Company office, presumably to deter any Portuguese action in that direction.⁴²

This does not mean, however, that the main actors of the Solor-Timor region necessarily grouped themselves neatly in line with the Dutch-Portuguese dichotomy. To their irritation, the Dutch found that their old Solorese allies acted in their own interests, and had little understanding of the monopoly principles of the Company. Lamahala on Adonara was one of the five Watan Lema principedoms, but it often proved recalcitrant and stubborn in its dealings with the white foreigners. In early 1652, a Lamahala ship plied the waters of Timor's inner coast without bothering to request a Company permit. For the sake of convenience, they brought a *princevlag* – the Dutch tricolour – when they traded in the coastal settlement. At Amaniap⁴³ in Servião, they clashed with the local population, killing twelve or fifteen men who tried to resist them.⁴⁴ The Dutch feared that such things could turn people in the region against the VOC. On a later occasion the Company vessel *Alkmaar* tried to stop a Lamahala captain, or *nakhoda*, called Ronga

⁴¹ VOC 1187 (1651), f. 625b.

⁴² VOC 1193 (1652), ff. 740a-741b.

⁴³ This should be Nai Niap (Nai Niab) of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources. It was then formally a part of the Sonbai realm, and situated on the Noimeno River close to Amfoan. According to later tradition, Nai Niap was ruled for a long period by a branch of the Kono family called Takaip, who governed as *fettor* or *usif* under the lord of Sonbai (Müller 1857, II:153). All this seems to reinforce the conclusion that Servião was originally a much larger area than that later known as Amfoan or Sorbian.

⁴⁴ VOC 1193 (1652), f. 742a.

from taking goods to Makassar. The captain swung his cutlass over his head while shouting ‘Mari, mari, anjing Hollanda’ (Come on, come on, Dutch dogs). Beating his breast he went on, ‘Sunggu, sunggu, Beta orang Lamahala’ (Truly, truly, I am a man of Lamahala), and then had his men shoot at the *Alkmaar* with cannon and arrows.⁴⁵ Lamahala also formed a short-lived neutrality pact with the Portuguese of Larantuka, which eventually failed due to the inability of the Portuguese to make the promised payment of coveted ivory tusks to their counterpart (Coolhaas 1964:683-5). The weak position of the Dutch on Solor meant that such incidents went unpunished.

As hostilities with Portugal resumed, it was found that the Company had underestimated their enemy. A small Dutch wood-cutting expedition to the Portuguese stronghold Konga on western Flores was resolutely eliminated by Francisco Carneiro de Siqueira. An ensuing attack on Konga by a larger naval force illustrated to the Dutch the problems of waging conventional warfare in these waters. True, the place was burnt down by the Company soldiers, but the inhabitants all took to the forest, carrying all their goods and leaving very little plunder for the ‘victors’. This matched a pattern common in parts of Southeast Asia: the temporary flight of populations from small centres often made better sense than stubbornly defending against a strong enemy. The inhabitants simply took to the forests and waited for the invaders to depart. The Dutch also noted the great influence wielded by the Catholic padres in the region, which impeded their own attempts to expand their political network.⁴⁶ In another quarter, however, the efforts of the Company were rewarded with a small degree of success: Kupang.

The Dutch squadron that attacked Konga was part of a larger strategic enterprise directed by Batavia. Before reaching Flores, the ships stopped over at Kupang between 2 and 13 February 1653. With the consent and assistance of Ama Pono, the Dutchmen erected a simple but defensible fort on the rocky heights west of the river estuary. The fortification was given the somewhat optimistic name of Fort Concordia. Nothing remains today of the old structure, on the site of which the

⁴⁵ VOC 1200 (1653), ff. 93b-94a.

⁴⁶ VOC 1200 (1653), ff. 84b-85a; Coolhaas 1964:683-5. While Anthony Reid (1988:122) sees this as a general Southeast Asian pattern, Charney 2004:74 has argued that it was not; the history of Southeast Asia is in fact full of long, stubbornly contested sieges. For parts of the archipelago, abandonment of settlements was nevertheless often preferred to sieges: the relatively small-scale architecture of the eastern archipelago meant that settlements could be quickly rebuilt in cases of devastation.

Indonesian army keeps a garrison, but it is still possible to discern its strategic advantages. Towards the sea the rocks are difficult to scale, whilst to the west stands a ravine; to the east is the river, which provides the area with fresh water. The weakest point was the rear of the fort, which lay towards a low hillside (a problem the British invaders would experience when they occupied the fort in 1811). According to the captain responsible for the building, the fort was ‘the key to all Timor’.⁴⁷ Traders going to the outer coast and back would have to take in fresh water here, always a scarce commodity on Timor. For safety reasons, the ships would have to pass the strait between westernmost Timor and Pulau Semau, meaning that the Company could control the shipping with a few minor vessels that lay in the strait;⁴⁸ at least, this is what the captain believed. At the time, everyone preferred to ignore the obvious disadvantages of Kupang: the infertile limestone ground, its poor harbour and the problems of accessing the sandalwood – the main reason for being on the island.

Fort Henricus on Solor remained the principal Dutch post for the time being. Twenty-five soldiers and four sailors was the modest number that the expedition could afford to station in the new Fort Concordia, before the fleet proceeded to Solor, Flores and finally Maluku, where they would fight the Portuguese on other fronts. Like the Portuguese expedition in 1641, the number seems ridiculously small, but the proficiency in modern weaponry – muskets, grenades, artillery – and the authority of the *princevlag* were deemed sufficient to deter the enemies of the Helong people. The first months in the fort were comparatively tranquil, but incidents did occur. For reasons unknown, two soldiers tried to catch a ‘black’; he however defended himself and mortally wounded his pursuers with his assegai. A third soldier disappeared by the river, leaving his hat and jacket at the shore. It was assumed that he had either drowned or been eaten by a ‘caiman’, the name used for the crocodiles which infested Kupang Bay.⁴⁹ Soon enough, however, startling news reached Dutch ears about unrest inland.

A dozen years after their first forays into Timor, the Portuguese ex-

⁴⁷ VOC 1200 (1653), f. 83b.

⁴⁸ De Roever 2002:253.

⁴⁹ VOC 1200 (1653), f. 87a. The term ‘caiman’ is probably derived from a Central African word that was spread through the Portuguese maritime expansion in the sixteenth century. It is nowadays reserved for several species of *Alligatoridae* in the Americas. The latter are related to but different from the family *Crocodylidae*. The ‘caimans’ were a great scourge for the locals, and sometimes attacked Company slaves who left the Dutch fort chained two-by-two.

perienced difficulties in mobilizing their Atoni clients. A captain from Larantuka, Diogo Fernandes, stayed on Sonbai with his 150 musketeers, termed *canaille* by the Dutch. The captain wished to lay siege to Fort Concordia, but the Sonbai bluntly refused to go along with this, having no interest in such a venture. The troop marched on to Amabi, an extensive principedom lying further south, which likewise declined to support the Portuguese. There were many marital and friendship ties between the Helong and the Amabi, and the latter were maybe unwilling to come into conflict with the Company. Impatient, Diogo Fernandes trapped the king of Amabi and his retinue, which included the wife of the Helong heir to the kingship. The prisoners, some 200–300 people, were brought to Amanuban, a reliable ally of the Portuguese, in order to guarantee the good conduct of Amabi. The event showed the difficulties that even sizeable Timorese domains faced in staging effective resistance against determined Portuguese (more specifically, Topass) detachments; this was possibly due to the awe in which firearms were held rather than Portuguese martial efficiency. It aroused great consternation in Kupang, where rumours spread of a Portuguese attack, supported by troops from Amanuban, Amarasi, Amasolo and Amabesi.⁵⁰

Amabesi was a little entity of its own, which oscillated between alliance and enmity with the Kupang principedom whilst maintaining matrimonial ties with the latter. The main settlement was situated on a peak, less than a day's journey from Kupang, and it was so strategically placed that ten defenders were believed capable of resisting 1,000 troops. In response to the renewed threat, the Helong and Dutch agreed to approach the little domain, weapons in hand. After sealing the decision by eating the raw meat of a buffalo, the Helong marched to Amabesi alongside the Dutch in May 1653. Negotiations followed with the locals, with considerable success. It was agreed that Kupang and Amabesi should support each other against the Portuguese. The treaty was confirmed by a macabre act: eighteen Topasses, including a young woman, who were unfortunate enough to be staying at the place, were slaughtered and beheaded. When the Helong returned to Kupang they brought the heads to King Ama Pono. A feast for the heads was planned, complete with singing and dancing and great rejoicing until midnight.⁵¹ The Dutch also persuaded the chief of Amabesi to hand over the influential

⁵⁰ VOC 1200 (1653), ff. 87a–87b. The identity of 'Amasolo' is not clear.

⁵¹ VOC 1200 (1653), ff. 88b–89a.

padre Frei Jordão de São Domingos, but the priest was warned by a local Christian and managed to escape to Sonbai.⁵²

This is one of the earliest references to a dark aspect of Timorese warfare: headhunting. Native tradition suggests that the custom was not indigenous to the island, but rose under the influence of the Makassarese or other foreign influences. This remains uncertain, considering that the custom was widespread in Southeast Asia, in particular in the low-technology areas.⁵³ As it occurs in modern ethnographic literature, the act of headhunting and the ensuing preparation of the severed heads is highly ritualized and based on the belief that the heads join the protective spirits of a settlement.⁵⁴ Raids were led by prominent warriors called *meo*, who were adorned in a peculiar fashion; in the VOC records they are known as *voorvechters* or *orang berani*. On the basis of nineteenth-century materials it has been argued that the rituals served as a creative basis upon which political groups could strengthen positions of power (McWilliam 1996:129-30). The VOC records from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries do not contradict this, indicating petty warfare as a contest in taking sizeable numbers of heads. The colonial powers did little or nothing to stop the practice, and it is conceivable that their rivalries actually underpinned it. To reduce the custom to a question of primitive blood-thirst (as the Dutch writers of the VOC period did) is too simplistic. It disappeared quite rapidly after the full implementation of colonial rule around 1900, when the old syle of warfare was suppressed.

The Portuguese reply to the Dutch foray was swift and ruthless, and proved their ability to improvise. No officer was available on Timor at the time, but a number of soldiers stayed among their Sonbai clients. They gathered at the news of the Dutch foray and demanded that the elderly padre Frei Jordão be their captain. The priest protested, saying that he was a poor old man and not used to bearing arms, but he was appointed nonetheless (Santa Catharina 1866:309-10). One and a half

⁵² Santa Catharina 1866:309; VOC 1200 (1653), f. 89b. The Dominican chronicle speaks of 'Amanence', which would normally allude to Amanesi in Amanatun on the south coast. There is apparently a case of confusion in this rather unreliable and careless text. Dutch reports leave no doubt that Amabesi is the place in question.

⁵³ A comparative study of the phenomenon in various parts of Southeast Asia, with a gendered perspective, is found in Andaya 2004. See also Hoskins 1996.

⁵⁴ H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:345-53 is a useful survey of the headhunting custom, as is McWilliam 1996. A number of important, but partly cryptic, traditional accounts involving headhunting are given in Middelkoop 1963.

months later, a mixed troop approached the dry coastlands of the west. It consisted of 700 men, 100 of whom were classified as Portuguese. The latter included whites, Topasses and a category that the Dutch contemptuously called ‘rice Christians’, thereby suggesting that their conversion was due to material benefits.⁵⁵ The others were Taebenu from Servião, and Amarasi from the south coast. The invaders did not care or dare to attack Fort Concordia, but they ravaged Attrai and Oletta, the villages of the king and the executive regent of Kupang. In the process they slaughtered 206 people, mostly women and children who could not run away quickly enough due to the heavy copper bangles around their legs. Nothing was heard but bitter crying and tears, which, according to the Dutch, could have made a stone heart feel pity.⁵⁶

A small Dutch fleet arrived just as Frei Jordão proceeded to attack the Company’s new-found ally, Amabesi; allegedly, he swore that he would not even spare a newborn at its mother’s breasts. In order to thwart them, a Dutch-Helong expedition of 250 men was sent inland. At midnight the troops arrived in the vicinity of the abandoned Amabesi, where the enemy camped. The soldiers moved slowly forward through the stony terrain without being discovered. Suddenly, a careless soldier accidentally set off his shotgun. In an instant, the Portuguese camp was on its feet. For lack of an efficient officer – which Frei Jordão apparently was not – a valiant Larantuqueiro landowner called Matheus da Costa led the charge.⁵⁷ From the heights of Amabesi, he and his comrades raised the battle cry and rushed down on the Dutch. The latter hastily retreated to a fence of tuak palms that they had prepared. After a hotly contested fight, where the adversaries stood less than a pike’s length from each other, the Dutch found that they could gain no advantage over their enemy. In the dark of the night they withdrew through the scrubland, losing several more men to the Portuguese in the process. The next day,

⁵⁵ The expression ‘rice Christians’ is still sometimes heard in present-day Indonesia in Muslim circles.

⁵⁶ VOC 1200 (1653), ff. 112a-112b.

⁵⁷ Santa Catharina 1866:310. The Dominican chronicle contains gross rhetoric exaggerations, alleging that all the Dutch were slaughtered. The Dutch, similarly, tried to gloss over their defeat by claiming considerable losses on the Portuguese side. Matheus da Costa, according to a VOC report, was actually a Papanger, meaning he came from or was descended from a native of Luzon in the Philippines (VOC 1246 [1664], f. 1577). Such Papangers were used as soldiers by the Spaniards in North Maluku, and Christianized members of the community may easily have moved over to the Portuguese possessions. The words of the chronicle, *capitão de huma estancia*, appear to imply that Da Costa had acquired a sizeable farmland on Timor. His descendants are the Da Costa family that has held the position of *liurai* of Oecusse until modern times.

the latter set fire to the Amabesi settlement and withdrew. The population, which stayed in the neighbourhood, was escorted by the Company force to Kupang. Ama Pono had no objections to receiving this addition to his manpower, but asked that part of the population be shipped over to the nearby island of Pulau Semau, as not everyone could make a living in the lands around Fort Concordia, which were far from fertile. This was done, and subsequently the permanent Timorese settlement of Pulau Semau may have started.⁵⁸

The beginning of Dutch colonial rule in Kupang, such as it was, was far from auspicious, especially for the locals who had hoped for protection. During 1654, the Portuguese clients Amarasi and Takaip exerted great pressure on the population. By this point, the Helong appear to have abandoned their main settlements, Attrai and Oletta, which disappear from the records, and to have moved to a *negeri* (settlement) closer to Fort Concordia. Nevertheless, the situation was abominable by any standard. A sizeable enemy troop robbed nine Helong leaders right outside the fort, apparently without the Dutch lifting a finger. No local or Dutchman dared to stroll far from the fort. The dry ground in the immediate vicinity could not sustain the population, and the result was a severe famine, against which the Company was unable or unwilling to take measures (Coolhaas 1964:749-50). Meanwhile, the Dutch-Portuguese war proceeded on a small scale in the eastern archipelago. In Rote, the Dutch supported the small allied *nusak* against those *nusak* who supported the Crown of Portugal, with some success. In the main Dutch fort on Solor, on the other hand, not much could be achieved apart from the seizure of an enemy ship here and there. The garrison and the sailors were sickly and could not pose a serious threat to nearby Larantuka, which was, nonetheless, dependent on supply lines to feed its population, and could not have withstood a blockade. Larantuka housed around 1,000 able-bodied men, but it was not fortified – in case of attack the population would be content to withdraw to the steep volcano Ili Mandiri situated behind them.⁵⁹ Batavia and the Estado da Índia were fully occupied with affairs in other parts of Asia and let the little worlds of Solor and Timor manage their sliver of the global conflict as well as they could. The Dutch project returned no economic profits, and perhaps none were expected. As little sandalwood could be bought directly

⁵⁸ VOC 1200 (1653), ff. 113a-114b.

⁵⁹ Fiedler n.y.:22, 26, H 475a, KITLV.

from the locals, the European rivals, despite their differences, needed each other to maintain their important economic networks.

NEW ALLIANCES, NEW DEFEATS

The lack of enthusiasm in some Timorese circles for the Portuguese enterprise on the island was already visible in 1653. Both Sonbai and Amabi were averse to participating in military enterprises beyond their immediate interest, especially if their enemies possessed the much-feared firearms. Finally, in 1655, there was a major falling-out between the Portuguese and some of their clients. The exact background is not clear from either Portuguese or Dutch sources, but it appears to have been the culmination of accumulated grievances, including objections to the levying of taxes and other contributions. Larantuka could only survive by importing provisions, and the soldiers staying on Timor apparently made demands for their maintenance. In April 1655, a number of rulers island-wide started to kill any Portuguese they could lay their hands on, plundering their belongings and burning their churches and houses. More than one hundred foreigners perished, of whom ten or twelve were whites. The anti-Portuguese movement took place in Sonbai, Amanatun, Pienrey (Pitai?), Ade-Manatuto and Takaip – the latter soon reverting, however, to the Lusitanian suzerains.⁶⁰ The simultaneity of the rising suggests clandestine contacts between these various quarters of Timor, and the movement took on a symbolic aspect; by targeting churches, the Timorese targeted the spiritual identity of the foreigners. Sonbai was joined by the nearby Amabi principedom, and together they resolved to forswear the Crown of Portugal for all eternity. An embassy was dispatched to parley with the Dutch in Kupang. The envoys declared that they wished for the protection of the Company and to submit to its authority as honest allies and subjects.⁶¹ There is a slight semantic problem here, since an ally is not a subject. This ambiguity would have consequences for Dutch-Timorese relations in the future.

⁶⁰ VOC 1209 (1655), ff. 196b-197a. Ade and Manatuto, on the north coast of East Timor, were still loosely under the domination of Makassar, but the Portuguese claimed to have rights there since long before.

⁶¹ VOC1209 (1655), f. 186a; Coolhaas 1968:3.

At this time, the efficient but careful Hendrick ter Horst had stepped down as *opperhoofd* of Fort Henricus, and been succeeded by the somewhat rasher Jacob Verheyden. In Verheyden's mind, this was a golden opportunity to finally expand the Company interests at the expense of their Lusitanian rivals. In late June, the rulers of Sonbai and Amabi and some subordinate 'kings' (in this case, more so chiefs) camped with a grand retinue at Amabi Bay, or Kupang Bay on modern maps. In order to show their good intentions, the rulers came wading through the water to meet Verheyden when the Dutch ships arrived. Verheyden tried to impress his new friends by firing salutes with the cannon and muskets, but the Timorese seemed more curious about the Dutch hand grenades, still uncommon even in Europe. After a number of parleys, a contract was drawn up on 2 July 1655. The two kings and the *opperhoofd* mixed their blood in a cup and drank it to confirm the significance of the document. This was the traditional Timorese way of establishing alliances, especially when preparing to declare war against mutual enemies. The rulers would hence be considered of the 'same blood', and classified as younger and elder brother – allies but still with a ritual order of precedence. The kings also presented two severed Portuguese heads to Verheyden as an additional token.⁶² The non-Christian aspects of the proceedings did not disturb Verheyden any more than it did other VOC officials who dealt with Indonesian princes, as long as the contract came into force. It was a rather rudimentary agreement, which stated that the kings were henceforth to keep the peace and remain loyal to the 'Noble Company'. The enemies of the Company were henceforth the enemies of the kings as well. No gold, silver, copper, beeswax, turtle-shell or slaves were to be sold to the enemy. Company servants should be treated well and provided with any essentials whilst in the kings' lands.⁶³ The names of the kings are given as Ama Nasse of Sonbai and Saroro Neno of Amabi, together with the chiefs of the otherwise unknown districts of Sigy and Roury. Ama Nasse is not known to the later pedigrees, but his career partly parallels Nai Tuklua Sonbai of the oral tradition. Saroro Neno corresponds to one of the first names in the royal genealogical

⁶² VOC 1209 (1655), ff. 186b-187b. On blood-oaths, see Ospina and Hohe 2002:22-3.

⁶³ Stapel 1931:75-7; Fox 1977:71. See also ANRI Timor:36, *Contractenboek Timor 1616-1750*. I thank Diederick Kortlang, Leiden, for providing a transcript of this text.

tradition of Amabi, namely Salolo, son of Neno.⁶⁴

Contracts had previously been drawn up with the Watan Lema of Solor in 1646, and in 1648, a contract-like agreement was made with the rajas of Timu on Sawu.⁶⁵ As for Timor itself, strangely there is no proof of a contract with the Helong of Kupang, although there must have obviously been an agreement similar to the one concluded with Sonbai and Amabi. The Company anchored its political and commercial network in maritime Asia with a comprehensive system of contracts that could be very detailed, but the lack of substantial details in the document of 1655 points to the tentative nature of the new-found Dutch-Timorese friendship. Actually, Verheyden found out soon enough that he had entered a morass. Sonbai, which had recently seemed set to dominate the island, was actually confronted by numerous enemies. The image of Portuguese oppression was much less clear-cut than the Dutch had first thought, since several Atoni domains kept their foreign suzerains: Amarasi, Amanuban, Ambeno, Amakono, Takaip and Pitai, apart from the unidentified Ammatasie, Ammasene (Senak?) and Ammatabo. Taken together, these places were considered to be much stronger than Sonbai and Amabi.⁶⁶ The list appears to illustrate the elusive nature of political power on Timor. Amakono, Takaip and Pitai are included as components of the Sonbai realm in later texts, but preferred here to stay outside the recent events.

Verheyden may have felt that it was now too late to back out, and promised the kings he would assist them. After having undertaken a

⁶⁴ The name of the Sonbai ruler who signed the contract is rendered in various forms in the VOC papers: Ammasse, Amanasse, Ammanasj, and so on. It is perhaps to be restored as Ama Nasu, Nasu being a common name in the Sonbai dynasty, or as Am Manas – tradition mentions Nai Manas as ruling Sonbai at the time of the initial Portuguese invasion. Being illiterate, he signed with his mark. It is reminiscent of the modern mark of the Nisoni family of Kupang, a side-branch of Sonbai, and depicts two *keladi* leaves. In the opinion of modern tradition it represents the *keladi* leaves with which the daughter of Kunc made a simple water vessel for the Sonbai ancestor when they first met (interview, Alex Kunc, Kupang, 29 June 2006). An unpublished pedigree by Jacob C. Amabi from 1964 gives the first names in the Amabi king list as Neno, Salolo, Balas (reign 1732-1755), Baltasar (reign 1755-1790), and so on. It omits a few generations between Salolo and Balas (Amabi 1964). Another Amabi pedigree from 1901, reproduced in Middelkoop 1952:216-7, has the list Fini Amabi, Banao, Funan, S[a]lolo, Balthazar, and so on. From this it can be seen that the king-lists tend to build on largely genuine names but can contain gross omissions and distortions.

⁶⁵ This little-known document may be found in *Contractenboek 1616-1759*, 1a E, ANRI. Again I am grateful to Diederick Kortlang, Leiden, for sharing this document with me.

⁶⁶ VOC 1209 (1655), f. 187b. Amatasie might be Amentassi or Amatassy, a river and also the name of a settlement mentioned in 1665 as lying on the north coast of Timor, in the later principedom of Harneno (VOC 2285 [1733], f. 200).

scouting expedition to Larantuka, he gathered a force of 700-800 men, including Solorese, Helong, Rotenese and 62 Europeans. At a time when the able-bodied men of some princedoms could be counted in their hundreds, this was a considerable force; furthermore, the ruler of Sonbai could allegedly muster 10,000 to 12,000 soldiers as a back-up. In the wars fought by the Company in South and Southeast Asia, the participation of Asian soldiers was essential and contributed substantially to the great Dutch successes of the seventeenth century, as providing large armies of European soldiers for individual campaigns was too costly and risky as it depleted other garrisons (Raben 2002:188; Andaya 2002). Verheyden marched into the land of Sonbai in September 1655, believing that the Dutch only had to show their presence and perhaps accompany the Sonbai lord into action if the opportunity arose.⁶⁷

Indeed the first reaction of the Portuguese remaining in the friendly princedoms of the island was one of fear. It was suggested that everyone should move to Larantuka rather than face this excessive power. Once again, however, the role of the Dominicans as leaders of the community won the day. The padre Francisco da Conceição persuaded the soldiers to stay. After further council it was agreed to dispatch two captains with 60 musketeers to apprehend the Sonbai lord and stop his forces from joining the Dutch. The captains were the hero from 1653, the Papanger (Luzon-descended) Matheus da Costa, and the half-European António Hornay, son of the VOC renegade Jan de Hornay. This odd pairing, one of Filipino and one of North European extraction, would play a major part in the history of the island in the decades to come (Santa Catharina 1866:310-1).

Arriving in Sonbai, Jacob Verheyden proceeded to attack the stockade of Uis Kono, the lord of Amakono in the mountainous eastern Atoni territory. The stockade was taken by storm, and as the settlement was consumed by fire, Uis Kono handed over his sword to Verheyden via Ama Fo, the executive regent of Kupang, asking to be pardoned by the emperor – this is the first time this lofty title is used for the lord of Sonbai. Verheyden replied that a rebel acting against his emperor had forfeited his neck, but that he pardoned him in the name of the emperor. Then, however, a tumult ensued. The Helong, assisted by a few Sonbai, scaled the rock where Uis Kono was held. They killed him and everyone

⁶⁷ VOC 1209 (1655), f. 189a; Coolhaas 1968:14-5. Santa Catharina 1866:311 puts the number of the Company troops at 18,000 men.

in his retinue, not even sparing the infants. Apparently the Dutch did nothing to stop the massacre, which cost some 500 lives.⁶⁸

It appears that a small local Portuguese force held out against the VOC expedition for the next few days. Then, a lucky meeting between them and the expedition of Da Costa and Hornay enabled them to strike a blow against the Company forces. In the early hours of 17 September 1657, they and their Timorese clients made a furious assault against the encampment of the Dutch, who first did not understand that it was their enemies. The Company troops retreated to a hill, dragging a small cannon with them, but were unable to withstand the steady charges. Verheyden stood with pistol in hand, shouting ‘Stand by me, pious soldiers, and do not leave me!’⁶⁹ His words fell on deaf ears, however, and several Europeans dropped their shotguns and ran in order to escape the frightening shower of assegais. Verheyden had placed great trust in the qualities of the Solorese, but the *sengaji* of Terong, Lamahala and Lamakera were all killed, along with many of their men. According to the official VOC report, Jacob Verheyden himself met a warrior’s end, still clutching his pistol. A Topass soldier – in one version, António Hornay himself – cut him down with a blow to the shoulder. Even the Dominican chronicle praised Verheyden’s fearless stance in the face of the Portuguese onslaught.⁷⁰

It was not the last time that a Dutch *opperhoofd* lost his life in conflict with the locals. With Verheyden fell 22 white and 400 indigenous soldiers, including many prominent grandees of Sonbai and Solor. When the authorities in Batavia investigated the matter they found that the responsibility for the fiasco lay with Verheyden himself. The Company argued that he should have scouted the area carefully before engaging in such a rash expedition. Also, he should have been more familiar with the fighting styles of his local allies, who were not suited to conventional warfare (Coolhaas 1968:253-4). One consolation was that the Timorese stood by the Company in spite of their consternation over the defeat,

⁶⁸ VOC 1209 (1655), f. 189a.

⁶⁹ VOC 1209 (1655), f. 189b.

⁷⁰ VOC 1209 (1655), ff. 189a-189b; Santa Catharina 1866:311. That António Hornay killed Verheyden is stated by François Valentijn (1726, III:125). According to De Roever 2002:260, the slayer of Verheyden was Gonsalvo de Hornay, a son of the renegade Jan de Hornay. Gonsalvo established a strong position as merchant-prince around Mena in the mid-seventeenth century (De Roever 2002:240). The position of this man is somewhat unclear in the extant sources. According to François Valentijn (1726, III:124) Gonsalvo was in fact the same person as Jan de Hornay, and the father of António Hornay.

declaring that they would not rest until the Portuguese were expelled from the island. The colonial and indigenous groups desperately needed each other, and to the hounded allies, Dutch authority appeared to be of a much higher order than suggested by the modest resources Batavia put into the Timor project. Regarding Fort Concordia, an employee sternly commented that he ‘had been to many countries, but still not seen any worse fortification’.⁷¹ While the fort in Kupang was defended by 18 men, the garrison on Solor – still the hub of VOC activities in the area – consisted of 39 men.⁷² The numbers verge on the pathetic, a symbol of deterrence rather than illustrative of an active force.

At this time, the Company still hoped to clear Timor of the enemy. Its greatest asset was Arnold de Vlaming van Oudshoorn. This commander, who bore the less than martial title of superintendent, led the Company troops to victory in the Great Ambon War of 1651-1656. The great dissatisfaction that the Dutch policy on Ambon generated, led to an outdrawn and merciless conflict that ended with complete suppression of the island and the resettlement of large strata of the population (Keuning 1988:391-3). After the conclusion of the affair, the superintendent was ordered to take an armada to Timor to deal with the situation there. He arrived at Solor in June 1656, where he met Hendrik ter Horst, who had once again been appointed to the danger-ridden position of *opperhoofd* of Fort Henricus. This time, De Vlaming would be less fortunate.

The beginning of De Vlaming’s Timorese expedition did not bode well. He sent threatening summons to the peoples of Solor, Serbite (meaning Adonara), Loubale (meaning Lembata) and Pontane (meaning Pantar) to provide auxiliary manpower, but did not get a single person from the last three islands, and only a few from Solor. ‘They are’, he wrote, ‘a very slow, cowardly and disobedient people.’⁷³ On Solor, a crude plan was drawn up for the subjugation of Timor. The basic idea was to march from Kupang, with the aim of breaking the Kingdom of

⁷¹ Fiedler n.y.:27, H 475a, KITLV.

⁷² Coolhaas 1968:15; Fiedler n.y.:27, H 475a, KITLV.

⁷³ VOC 1217 (1656), f. 323a. Regarding the peculiar names of the islands: Serbite comes from Sarabiti, a component of the principdom of Adonara; Loubala is Labala, the only traditional principdom on Lembata, situated at the southern coast (Boli Lajar 2007). As they were associated with the Watan Lema bond, Labala would technically be duty-bound to support the VOC suzerain, despite their lack of enthusiasm. The Galiyao bond on Alor and Pantar similarly had a connection with the Watan Lema, but this meant very little in a situation like this.

Amarasi on the outer (south) coast, which by now had emerged as the main prop of Portuguese power on the island. Amarasi had recently devastated certain villages belonging to Amabi, and had even threatened to march on Kupang itself. Then, one way or another, the Dutch expedition should march via Amabi to assist Sonbai, attacking Amanuban and Batumean in the southern Atoni lands. Lifau at the northern coast was also a primary objective for attack. With that, De Vlaming presumed that the other Portuguese clients would submit of their own volition, so that the whole of Timor would be subjected to the Company. Nevertheless, the superintendent noted the parochial outlook of the indigenous grandees, who could only provide very vague geographical information to the Dutch.⁷⁴ When De Vlaming speaks of ‘Timor’ he appears to think mainly of the Atoni lands – the central and eastern areas were almost *terra incognita* to the white strangers.

The expedition commenced on 15 June 1656. It was apparently the largest concentration of white troops on Timorese soil prior to World War II. A total of 600 Europeans and about as many ‘blacks’ marched from Kupang. Five days later they approached the main settlement of Amarasi via a ridge. However, just as De Vlaming took advice to assault Amarasi, his troops were surprised by torrential rain, in spite of the dry season. Since the equipment was soaked and the dark skies did not seem to break up, the Dutch decided to fall back. The retreat caused consternation among the locals, who thought that the Dutch fled the enemy in fear. Under the circumstances, De Vlaming found it best to return to Kupang in order to take in more provisions.⁷⁵

A few days later the VOC troops marched anew towards Amarasi via Babau. Approaching Amarasi, De Vlaming was astonished to find such a desolate place:

It had no more likeness with a *negeri* than if we had been placed on a dune behind Haarlem, and then been told: ‘Here you are in the village De Bresaep.’ Here and there was a hut on a hill; three or four, or at the most five or six beside each other; a musket shot’s distance from there, on another hill, there would be another two; and such was the case with almost all the heights, ridges and hills, without there being any palisade, let alone fortification. It is the poorest kind of houses that we believe humans

⁷⁴ VOC 1217 (1656), f. 324a-324b.

⁷⁵ VOC 1217 (1656), ff. 326a-327a; Bor 1663:350-1.

inhabit in the whole world. They are not unlike beehives but somewhat larger; or like a *noopehuys*⁷⁶ that one sees standing in the fields of our lands in the summertime.⁷⁷

The houses were, moreover, deserted and there was not a penny to be had for the Company. De Vlaming seriously doubted that any Portuguese would want to stay in a beehive like that, although his guides told him that this was indeed the case. At this stage the Dutch and their allies were not optimistic, considering the efforts and costs required to bring the expedition along these faraway and wearisome roads. Their fears were well founded, for the Portuguese had sprung into action at De Vlaming's approach. The padres on the island sent the seventy-year-old captain Balthazar Gonçalves with sixteen musketeers to assist their Amarasi clients, who by this time had taken on a fervent Catholic identity. Amarasi was governed by a set of brothers of whom the most notable was the executive regent Dom Agostinho, mentioned in respectful terms in Dutch and Portuguese sources alike.⁷⁸

From afar, the Dutch eventually saw a rock with huts on it, which seemed to be the main *negeri*. Some people were seen descending, shouting like a party of ghosts. De Vlaming ordered six companies, half of his force, to move forward in three columns. One of them marched via a narrow path. After a while they found a simple fortification made of stones, bamboo and thicket. It was so well placed that one could only reach it by climbing up man by man. With their wide-muzzled muskets, the few Portuguese inside the fortification, none of whom were apparently white European, fired grapeshots into the Dutch column with deadly effect. Finally the Dutch had to fall back, having lost 54 men, dead or wounded in the encounter. De Vlaming was deeply grieved over the failure, but found that he could not blame his Dutch subordinates, instead deferring to God's will. Finding themselves in an unknown land

⁷⁶ The meaning of the word *noopehuys* is not clear. It is perhaps a scribal error for *poepehuys*, a hut for *poepen*, who were poor German agrarian workers in the Netherlands. I owe this suggestion to Perry Moree, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

⁷⁷ VOC 1217 (1656), ff. 332a-332b.

⁷⁸ Santa Catharina 1866:313. The king of Amarasi at this time was called António, his brothers being Dom Tomás, Dom Agostinho and Dom Rodrigo. The Dominican chronicle erroneously says that Dom Agostinho was the king, missing one aspect of the Timorese system of governance. Compare VOC 1252 (1665), f. 676; Fiedler n.y.:36, H 475a, KITLV; Jacobs 1988:241. Valentijn (1726, III:125) alleges that António Hornay was a leading officer during the fight, which is plausible but not clear from contemporary sources.

with many wounded and ill soldiers, there was nothing more that the expedition could do in Amarasí.⁷⁹

The expedition treaded the path back to Kupang carrying the disabled in mats, but all the while closely pursued by enemy warriors. Due to the difficult terrain the expedition could only march in single file, and the Company troops managed to keep good order for some time; however, when they marched through a dense forest, the Amarasian war parties suddenly appeared from all sides.⁸⁰ The Dutch had difficulties using their muskets properly, and the Amarasians feared them no more than if they had been sticks. Under the rain of enemy assegais discipline broke, and the soldiers trampled their own officers underfoot. The enemy stood so close to the Dutch column that they attacked the soldiers using their assegais as pikes, grabbing the muskets out of their hands. Luckily for the Dutch, the Portuguese clients did not pursue the attack at length, and De Vlaming and Ter Horst were eventually able to reach safety after 80 more of their men were left dead or wounded. ‘It strikes our heart’, wrote De Vlaming, ‘that we were so stunningly blessed in Amboina by God the Lord, but were so shamefully humiliated by a party of effete blacks here at the Timor post, where we however can see no advantages for the Company.’⁸¹

Back on Solor, De Vlaming suggested to Batavia in a letter that the Company would do better to establish a post on the small but well-provided island of Rote. Timor could certainly be subdued, but it would cost an undue number of men and amount of money; the lack of Timorese profits made him unsure if it was worth the effort (or, as he put it with a salty Dutch expression, ‘if the juice was worth the cabbage’).⁸² The superintendent made a last attempt to conclude a local armistice with the Larantuqueiros, offering them the opportunity to sell all their sandalwood, turtle-shell, and so on to the Company. The latter, however, wished to maintain a policy of free trade, not least by maintaining the vital link between the still-independent Makassar and Solor-Timor. This, of course, was in opposition to the monopolistic aims of the Company and could not be accepted. De Vlaming dared not attack Larantuka

⁷⁹ VOC 1217 (1656), ff. 332b-336a; Bor 1663:353-4.

⁸⁰ An investigation of the terrain by Professor Hendrik Ataupah, Kupang, suggests that the assault took place at Noi Kasemuti, in the district Amarasí Barat (interview, Hendrik Ataupah, 24-11-2009).

⁸¹ VOC 1217 (1656), f. 338b.

⁸² VOC 1217 (1656), f. 341a.

where there were 800-1,000 men armed with shotguns, and the potential refuge Ili Mandiri at the rear. An attack would not earn the VOC a penny, since the wives, children and valuables of the inhabitants would be brought to the mountains in good time. The Dutch, moreover, heard a rumour – only partly true as it turned out – that the Portuguese intended to abandon their settlement and move to Lifau on Timor's northern coast.⁸³ On 17 July, the frustrated De Vlaming left Solor, leaving Ter Horst in charge of a sizeable force.

The immediate effect of the monumental Portuguese-Amarasian victory was that the leading Larantuqueiro officer, Francisco Carneiro de Siqueira, sailed to Timor in the company of a padre to confirm Portugal's authority among the client princedoms. The queen of the sandalwood-producing island of Mena, one of Portugal's early clients, was found to have colluded with the Dutch enemy. Carneiro promptly ordered both her execution and that of the king. That there were Dutch designs on Mena can also be gleaned from Dutch records. Hendrick ter Horst arrived at Mena in October 1656 to parley with the leaders, but found that the main settlement – a good walk from the coast – had been deserted. Ter Horst, moreover, was not ashamed to steal as much sandalwood as he could before he left. The merchant and politician Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, who had a great influence on Portuguese affairs in the East Indies, wrote that it was alright to eliminate the king and queen, but that it would have been better if Carneiro had managed the situation clandestinely. It would be a great scandal among other kings if they saw a private individual passing a death sentence over royals.⁸⁴

The new Timorese allies Sonbai and Amabi did not contribute much to the expedition of De Vlaming, nor did they show any sign of wavering in their loyalty. This was the more so since the local VOC authorities under the direction of Ter Horst finally decided to desert Fort Henricus and Solor. On the advice of De Vlaming, the local Dutchmen were ordered by Batavia to erect a new stronghold on Rote or possibly on Pulau Semau. In other words, the general idea was to manage the affairs of the region from the relative safety of a small island. However, none

⁸³ VOC 1217 (1656), f. 344a-345a.

⁸⁴ Boxer 1967:65-6; VOC 1221 (1657), ff. 310a-310b. Vieira's letter is dated 12-6-1656. It is apparently misdated since the defeat of De Vlaming, mentioned in the letter, took place later in the same month. The queen of Mena is probably the same as the one who was baptized in 1641. Another queen of Mena is mentioned somewhat later, in 1660, as rebelling against Portuguese authority. This second queen was an in-law of the Sonbai ruler (VOC 1233 [1660], f. 721b).

of Batavia's alternatives seemed appealing to the Company servants on Solor, who instead decided to move the garrison to Fort Concordia awaiting further orders. It was felt that Kupang was, after all, the most advantageous place at hand.⁸⁵ The move took place in August 1657, to the discontent of Nyai Cili, the queen of Solor. In a Malay letter to Governor General Joan Maetsuiker, she vented her misgivings in faintly ironical terms:

The [Governor] General says that we should go and live together on the island of Rote. However, we from Solor are not accustomed to living in another land, since our forefathers have lived and died here, and we will not stay somewhere else. And the island of Rote is the land of the Company. Solor is also the land of the Company, there is no difference [...] Furthermore, when Governor De Vlaming went from Ambon to Timor, who followed him there apart from three of our *negeri*, namely Lohayong, Lamakera and Terong? The *sengaji* of Adonara arrived with two *perahu* but did not find Admiral de Vlaming and withdrew. Now, however, when Mr De Vlaming saw who did not follow him, why did he not punish them at once? For Mr De Vlaming is a great man, but I am only a woman. What wit or power do I possess at the side of such a great man? Of those who followed Mr De Vlaming on the expedition to Timor, who carried the gunpowder and bullets? Who carried the matches? Who carried all the goods? Was it those from Rote, or from Sawu, or from Amabi, or from Sonbai, or soldiers or sailors – or who were they, who carried these items and were wounded on [the road from] the mountains to the sloops? Always, it was my people who carried it. Also, all those who remained together [fallen in battle] on Timor with Jacob van der Heyden [Verheyden] were the offspring of *sengaji* and grandees. And that was only because of an issue concerning the Company; not an issue concerning us on Solor.⁸⁶

The queen was not the only one to dislike the transition from Solor; several Company servants felt the same. Five Dutchmen and three slave women deserted, indicating that Timor was not an attractive alternative. A boatswain was caught in the act of escaping and condemned to death, but was spared on the intervention of the kind-hearted queen. However,

⁸⁵ Fiedler n.y.:31, H 475a, KITLV.

⁸⁶ *Dagh-Register* 1887-1931, the year 1657:226-7.

the transition proceeded as planned, and on 11 August 1657, Kupang became the new residence of the *opperhoofd* and his garrison. A new palisade was erected with the help of the Helong. One of the gates led to the Koinino River, one of the main benefits of the post, while the other one led to the principal settlement of the Helong people, who had by now moved close to their would-be foreign protectors.⁸⁷

For a moment it seemed as if the lord of Sonbai would succeed where his Dutch allies had failed. Sonbai forces consisting of 250-300 men overran the minor domain of Pitai and the important Amanuban, one of the mainstays of Portuguese authority, and in one version ‘the foremost of all’ among the Atoni.⁸⁸ As the main settlement of Amanuban went up in flames, the population of the other Atoni princedoms began to fear for their lives. An embassy from Batumean at the south coast appeared before the lord of Sonbai and asked for the support of him and the Company ‘like in the old days’.⁸⁹ The envoys were introduced by the executive regent (*veltoverste*) of Sonbai, Ama Tomananu alias Dom Luíz, when the latter paid a friendly visit to Kupang in September 1657. The envoys asserted that they would be happy to follow the examples of Sonbai and Amabi, remove the Portuguese and open their shores to Dutch traders. At the time, warfare had ruined Batumean’s trade, traditionally known as one of the main sandalwood ports of the outer (south) coast, and the local rulers were keen to attract Dutch merchant ships once more.⁹⁰ Incidentally, Ama Tomananu is a figure who is well known in later oral tradition, and not without reason. During his long life – he died only in 1685 – he would prove to be among the most important Timorese individuals for the VOC, laying the foundations for a functional, co-operative relationship with the Company. He belonged to the extensive Oematan clan, but was at the same time known in the Dutch texts as the ‘brother’ of the so-called emperor of Sonbai.⁹¹

A man of no less legendary stature, however, was already attempt-

⁸⁷ Fiedler n.y.:32, H 475a, KITLV.

⁸⁸ Dominican report from c. 1650, in H 697:a, KITLV.

⁸⁹ VOC 1221 (1657), ff. 322a.

⁹⁰ VOC 1221 (1657), ff. 322a-322b.

⁹¹ On Ama Tomananu, see Heijmering 1847:37 and Middelkoop 1952:243. The account of Middelkoop says that ‘the [two] *fettor* [of Sonbai] were Kono-Oematan, but his younger brother was Baki To Amnanu [Tomananu]’. The text thus asserts that Fettor Oematan was another person than To Amnanu, and confirms that the latter was in a (symbolic) sense the ‘brother’ of the Sonbai lord. Nevertheless, Dutch memorandums from 1698 and later explicitly make clear that any sons and further descendants belonged to the house of Oymatta (Oematan); see VOC 1609 (1698), f. 49.

ing to ruin any gains that the Company's allies had achieved. In the highlands of West Timor, the *majefa* or *adat* experts were, in the late twentieth century, still recalling the exploits of Simão Luís, *capitão mor* of the Larantuqueiros (Ataupah 1992:160-1). This resolute Portuguese officer, they said, issued a summons to the Timorese rulers to submit to Portugal. In the ritual language of the Atoni, with its typical parallelism, the summons was known as 'Sulat Lifau ma Nainonot, Atu Lifau ma Nainonot', meaning 'message of Lifau and Nainonot, writing from Lifau and Nainonot'. The early nature of this particular tradition is indicated by the name Lifau, a Portuguese stronghold that was abandoned after 1769. The princedoms that submitted to the Portuguese were given a *tongkat* (staff) with a lion's head and a gong. This was known to the *majefa* as 'Uel Simão Luís, sene Simão Luís', that is, '*tongkat* of Simão Luís, gong of Simão Luís'.⁹²

As a matter of fact, Simão Luís was a controversial figure. The *Historia de S. Domingos* characterizes him as 'a person of experience and valour' (Santa Catharina 1866:315), and there is nothing in the sources to alter this judgement. At the same time he appears to have been ruthless, verging on the macabre in his dealings with the Timorese, something even acknowledged by the Portuguese themselves. These were difficult years for the Portuguese in Asian waters, and the ethnically mixed community on Flores and Timor fought with their backs against the wall, engendering desperate courage coupled with stern measures against anyone who opposed Portugal's cause. The Dutch would realize the consequences in 1657 when Simão Luís managed to slip over from Larantuka to Timor without the VOC crafts being able to intercept him.

On 25 September 1657, Luís invaded the Sonbai lands with hundreds of musketeers and 'innumerable' Timorese auxiliaries. He was opposed by 42 Company soldiers under the command of the Dutch sergeant Lambrecht Heyman, and the forces of Ama Tomananu and the king of Amabi. On the advice of Ama Tomananu the allies retreated to Gunung Mollo, a lofty massif of 2,070 metres in the centre of West Timor. The next day the forces of Luís arrived at the mountain and

⁹² Fobia 1984:63-4. The significance of the other place, Nainonot, remains unknown. On the importance of *tongkat* or rattan staffs as symbols of authority in an East Timorese context, see Ospina and Hohe 2002:34-7. Like the Portuguese flags, they became sacred objects kept by the various domains. A Simão Luís *tongkat* is kept by the princely Kono family in their old *sonaf* in Noetoko (Silab et al. 2005:64, 67).

proceeded to besiege the allies for five days. As the fighting spirit of the Dutch dwindled, they began to think about saving their own skins. The whites clandestinely negotiated with a certain Ambrecht Lambrechtsen, who had once deserted from Fort Henricus to Larantuka 'like a rascal' and now served under Simão Luís. Ama Tomananu and the king of Amabi realized this and reproached Sergeant Heyman for his conduct. In the ensuing quarrel the sergeant slapped the face of Ama Tomananu and said, 'We do not wish to fight. We have been granted good quarter. Run and look for a good escape route, for the both of you are finished.'⁹³ As the Dutch hoisted the white flag, the soldiers of Simão Luís climbed up and rushed inside the allied camp, meanwhile shouting loudly. The Sonbai regent managed to flee, but the enemy attacked the corpulent king of Amabi and his brother, who valiantly stayed by his side, with cutlasses. The king was chopped into pieces, while thousands of allied Timorese were driven over the edge of the steep mountainside and fell to their death. The tragedy was as complete as the Dutch disgrace; the mountain was impregnable to any enemy attack if resolutely defended, and it was believed that ten soldiers with shotguns could have resisted the siege – the contrast with the successful Portuguese defence against the troops of De Vlaming itself was obvious.⁹⁴

The three Dutch defeats in 1655, 1656 and 1657 were decisive for the political history of Timor for almost the entire century that followed. The rumour of the Gunung Mollo tragedy spread far and wide, and caused serious unrest on Rote where the Portuguese still had friends among the small *nusak*. In the interior of West Timor, meanwhile, the importance of Sonbai and Amabi quickly decreased. The lord of Sonbai himself, Ama Tuan, was captured by the Portuguese circa 1657-1658, although some members of his family were able to escape his fate and were kept under the protection of his executive regent, Ama Tomananu.⁹⁵ For the Portuguese it was a lucky strike: with the central lord in the hands of his enemies the system could no longer be maintained.

⁹³ VOC 1226 (1658), f. 509b.

⁹⁴ VOC 1226 (1658), ff. 509b-510a; Santa Catharina 1866:315. The losses of the VOC allies were 4,000-5,000 in the Dutch version, 1,800 in the Portuguese.

⁹⁵ The captivity of the Sonbai ruler is referred to in VOC 1233 (1660), f. 721. A missive in Coolhaas 1971:529 indicates that Ama Tuan had been under the control of the Portuguese since before the coming of Ama Tomananu to Kupang in 1658. The capture of the ruler therefore must have taken place in 1657/58. The name or title Ama Tuan (in other documents, Ama Utang) is not known to later Sonbai tradition. Helong tradition, on the other hand, recognizes it as a royal name. Am Tuan alias Koen Bissi was the first, legendary king of Kupang (Detaq 1972:15).

In Kupang, meanwhile, the thrifty Hendrick ter Horst finally stepped down from his post as *opperhoofd* after a dozen eventful years serving in East Indonesian waters. He was escorted to Solor by the new *opperhoofd*, Joseph Margits, for further transport back to Batavia. Ter Horst did not get along well with his successor, whom he characterized as a drunkard who played around with the garrison and someone who was completely unfit to be a leader. On Solor, some Muslim merchants came aboard the ship of Margits and asked to receive merchandise to the value of 1,244 reals. This they would trade for sandalwood and beeswax on the inaccessible outer coast of Timor, an amount of which would then be delivered to the Company authorities in Kupang. Margits promised to consider the offer. With these routine matters in mind, he returned to Kupang. When he arrived at the roadstead, the bookkeeper Philip Boels came aboard the ship to confront him with startling news about events that had occurred during his absence.⁹⁶

Ten days earlier, on 11 September 1658, the modest colony had been flooded by many thousands of refugees: 8,000-9,000 in one estimate, 18,000-20,000 in another. Substantial parts of the leaderless Sonbai and Amabi communities had left their homes in the interior of Timor, unable to cope with the pressure from the Portuguese clients. Taking their women, children, cattle and all they could bring along, they had marched down to the coast while their enemies swarmed around them and shouted that they would sit no safer in Kupang than they had in their previous lands. The destitute refugees camped a few kilometres from Fort Concordia like a swarm of bees, as a witness put it, and the Dutch found it a truly miserable sight. Ama Tomananu was the spokesman for the newcomers. Together with some Amabi princes he met Philip Boels on the hillside above the fort. Wearing sombre expressions and with tears in their eyes they complained to Boels about their hunger, claiming they had nothing left to eat. The bookkeeper had no means to feed so many people, but he finally gave each of the foremost aristocrats 100 pounds of rice, for which they seemed very grateful.⁹⁷

He also provided the Sonbai and Amabi with cutlasses and axes so that they could begin to cultivate the soil at once. Furthermore, the Dutch asked their allies on Rote and Solor to bring in provisions to Kupang on a daily basis, in order to feed the refugees. There seems to

⁹⁶ VOC 1229 (1659), f. 851a-b.

⁹⁷ VOC 1229 (1659), f. 851b-852a.

have been no animosity between the newcomers and the Helong at this stage. Land was plentiful, and was worked through the usual Timorese method of slash-and-burn cultivation. The earth was dry and not very fertile, however, and the allies planted *jagung* (maize), which requires much less water than rice. This is an interesting point, since it is the first explicit mention of maize being grown as a crop on Timor. It is known to have been cultivated with success in several places in the eastern part of the archipelago around 1670: Ambon, Ternate, Tidore and various parts of Sulawesi.⁹⁸ The beginnings of the Sonbai and Amabi refugee communities on the coast were at any rate grim, and reminiscent of the worst conditions of a modern famine-stricken third-world country. By March 1659 they could present the first cobs to Margits as a harvest gift, following old Timorese traditions. Nevertheless, these were very dark days and many succumbed to starvation; in one period it was common to find 20 or 30 corpses each day along the roads or under the palisade of the fort. The allies also had to take the utmost care when going out of sight of the fortress. Headhunting parties from Amarasi sometimes captured those who wandered too far, and they had little regard for the weak VOC garrison.⁹⁹ Eventually the refugee communities managed to survive the transformation from highlanders to coastal dwellers, and even thrive upon it. It was, in fact, one of many historical cases of extensive migrations of Timorese groups, the latest of which occurred after the East Timorese vote for independence in 1999.

It remains to relate the fate of the Muslim merchants who had approached Margits on Solor. Theirs was a hard fate; having received the merchandise they had asked for, they set sail for the eastern shores. As they anchored at Matayer in East Timor with the intention of purchasing sandalwood and beeswax, they were attacked by Portuguese vessels coming down from Makassar. Two ships were destroyed and fourteen men lost their lives, while the captain and fifteen men managed to save themselves and sail back to Solor, 'which', to quote a VOC report, 'did not give us any pleasant tidings'.¹⁰⁰ The disaster afflicting the merchants

⁹⁸ Boomgaard 1997:419-20. According to Boomgaard the word *jagung* for maize is first mentioned in the year 1682 in a Dutch source, a date that can now be corrected to 1658. Maize is also mentioned as being planted in Lembata and Pantar, in a Portuguese missionary report written shortly after 1641 (Sá 1956:488).

⁹⁹ VOC 1229 (1659), f. 858a.

¹⁰⁰ VOC 1229 (1659), f. 859a. Matteyer or Mattayer is often mentioned in Dutch documents from the 1650s and 1660s. It was situated between Dili and Tibar, making it modern-day Motael (Mota Ain).

was yet a reminder that the VOC and their few remaining allies were stuck together on a small piece of land for the foreseeable future.

A LATER PERSPECTIVE

The period 1641-1658 was indeed a formative one for the political structures of Timor and the establishment of an early colonial presence, which justifies the detailed study of the process described above. On the eve of the Makassarese invasion, relations between the external groups and the Timorese communities were mainly economic, but from that time onwards, they became increasingly political. At the end of the period a Portuguese network encompassed much of western Timor, while the Dutch positions were reduced to Kupang, Rote, Sawu and parts of Solor and Adonara. The trend therefore ran completely contrary to the general pattern, where the Portuguese were defeated in Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka and much of India. The Larantuqueiros were not full members of the *Estado da Índia*, but rather a hybrid community that managed its own affairs, albeit strongly attached to Portuguese symbols. It was probable that it was precisely their localized position that was decisive in their effort to build up their network among indigenous groups, a pattern that is paralleled by the role of Portuguese mestizo groups in several other parts of the world. In a lusophone mestizo context, the Larantuqueiros are nevertheless unusual in terms of the politically independent stance they took from an early stage, the result of them having to fend for themselves for lengthy periods of time. It is indeed striking how inefficient the VOC efforts were, and how quickly the networks that the Dutch attempted to forge actually crumbled. From the official Dutch *Generale missieven* it appears that Batavia, discouraged by the successive defeats, did not find it worth the effort to send forces large enough to deal with the Larantuqueiros once and for all. The Company were fully occupied with other commitments, and the commercial prospects were doubtful – the profits from the Kupang post were always much smaller than the costs. By 1655, cheap sandalwood was reportedly found all over India, and its value had decreased. Still, it was imperative to maintain a post in the Solor-Timor region to secure the lines of communication with the important possessions of Ambon and Banda in Central Maluku (Coolhaas 1968:253-4; Leupe 1856:145-6). Clove and nutmeg found

on Maluku had once tempted European ships to sail to this part of the world, and it was imperative for the Company to maintain the monopolies it had imposed. An expansion of Portuguese might and activities in the eastern archipelago could disturb the Dutch positions and had to be checked.

During this eventful period foreign soldiers interfered in the affairs of Timor, not only in the coastland, but also in the very interior. They supported the rise and fall of princedoms, manipulated thrones and imposed their own commercial conditions on the local communities. At the same time, the clashes cannot simply be seen as a colonial-versus-indigenous dichotomy. The small foreign detachments always fought together with larger bands of allies or clients.¹⁰¹ Firearms often played a decisive role in battles on the still low-technology island, but this was no general rule; much of the Portuguese-Timorese military success against the well-armed soldiers of the Company in the 1650s can be attributed to the conduct of Timorese troops. To what extent political changes influenced economic conditions at a local level, or indeed the everyday life of the Timorese, is harder to tell. What we can tell is how the historical landscape was viewed with the benefit of hindsight.

The Dutch-Portuguese struggle of the 1650s did not fail to make its mark on oral tradition. A considerable number of stories centre on the coming of the Portuguese to the island, the establishment of the Dutch in Kupang and the interconnected events. In other words, there was a distinct notion among later Timorese that the foreigners had not been present since time immemorial, but had arrived under particular circumstances. Unsurprisingly, there are considerable differences in perspective between various parts of Timor. The Atoni lands in the west display a markedly hostile view of the Portuguese, who are mostly identified as *kase metan*. The stories tend to focus on their oppressive and aggressive stance, which should also be seen in the context of the inclusion of the western princedoms in the Dutch sphere after the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁰² By contrast, stories told in East Timor often mention a generic affinity between the Portuguese and Timorese. The Mambai people south of Dili see themselves as senior in a Timor-wide context, but at the same time

¹⁰¹ The line between 'ally' and 'client' is moot.

¹⁰² In this book, the phrases 'the Dutch sphere' and 'the Portuguese sphere' pertain to the areas that fell respectively under Dutch (VOC) or Portuguese (Estado da Índia) influence or control.

the power of the *grandees* is thought to emanate from the Portuguese, who are incorporated into a mythologized system. The Portuguese are no unqualified strangers to the land; rather, they are younger sons returning to the land. In other cases, the local rulers claim descent from the Portuguese strongholds of Larantuka and Oecusse (Traube 1986:52-4; Forman 1977:107).

It is striking how some events that must have made a great impression on people at the time have fallen into oblivion, while others have survived until modern times. There are no stories reminiscing of the defeats of Verheyden and De Vlaming, but a good number about the Battle of Gunung Mollo. The reason for this is obvious: the slaying of the Amabi ruler and the relocation of his kin to Kupang gave the event a dynastic dimension. It is also interesting to see how the perspective of the stories is changed over time. In the earliest recorded version from 1847, the conflict is caused by the offensive conduct of the Portuguese, who try to approach the women of the Amabi ruler Aiputu. In the ensuing war, Aiputu is besieged on a high mountain in Mollo by the Portuguese and their clients, including Sonbai. Aiputu's nephew, the king of Amarasi, sends a party to rescue the old man. They nearly succeed until they begin to accompany Aiputu down the mountainside, at which point he slips and falls to his death. As was customary, his head was taken as a ritually laden trophy by the lord of Sonbai. Later, however, the skull is returned to the son of Aiputu when it proves to have an adverse effect on rainfall in the area. Aiputu's son, Saroro, rebuilds the Kingdom of Amabi on a smaller scale and marries princesses from Kupang and Sonbai.¹⁰³

At this stage the Dutch are already out of the picture, and Sonbai has become Amabi's foe rather than its ally. Later versions, recorded in the twentieth century, omit the Portuguese completely from the account and instead concentrate on the enmity between Amabi and Sonbai. Some versions attribute the conflict to the Sonbai ruler Nai Tuklua Sonbai, who expands his power by waging aggressive warfare against a number of Atoni domains (Fobia 1984:46-8; Middelkoop 1952:209; Parera 1994:192-3). A conflict that involves foreigners on both sides is thus transformed into a purely indigenous affair.

Instead, the impact of the Portuguese is expounded in stories involv-

¹⁰³ Heijmering 1847:40-3. Saroro clearly refers to Ceroroneno (Saroro Neno), named in the 1655 contract. Either the contract was signed by the junior king, the son of the one who was killed in 1657, or else tradition has mixed up generations.

ing another Sonbai ruler, Nai Manas Sonbai. One version makes him the son and successor of Nai Tuklua Sonbai, while another sees him as the first ancestor of the line. In his time, Portuguese merchants appear in the land and behave in a rapacious way to secure the sandalwood and beeswax that they take aboard whilst anchored in the port of Oecusse (near Lifau). Nai Manas Sonbai summons the people of the land to a meeting in Nunuhenu, later known as the residence of the rulers of Ambeno. It is agreed that they will wage war on the Portuguese and expel them. Indeed, the latter have to flee Oecusse due to the furious Timorese attacks. Later, however, they return in full force and establish their authority once and for all (Fobia 1984:62-3). In one version, Nai Manas Sonbai has to flee his land and move to Oecusse where he dies after several decades; meanwhile, the relatives he has left behind are killed by the Portuguese.¹⁰⁴ These details are vaguely reminiscent of the violent Sonbai uprising against the Portuguese in 1655 and the subsequent capture of the ruler.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the stories tend to associate the Portuguese presence with economic oppression. They suggest that efforts to regulate the trade and the supply of sandalwood and beeswax were burdensome enough on the local level to engender stories that circulated long after the lapse of Portuguese power in West Timor.

Another set of stories speak of the Dutch establishment in Kupang. The most elaborate version dates from 1901 and was written down by a member of the regent family of Amabi. This text traces the ruler and regent lines of Amabi back to Wewiku-Wehali, the conceptual centre of Timorese political culture, therefore also relating them to Sonbai. After successive migrations over the island, the Amabi end up in Kupang, long before the coming of the white strangers. After some further political reshuffling the *kase metan* arrive – the ethnically mixed Portuguese. They

¹⁰⁴ *Riwayat singkat* 1983.

¹⁰⁵ Dutch evidence suggests that Ama Tuan, or Ama Utang, reigned under the watchful eyes of the Portuguese until circa 1680. Two of his sons fled to Kupang with Ama Tomananu, while two others were kept by the Portuguese in Lifau as dynastic hostages. At least one of the captive sons seems to have been raised to the Sonbai lordship after 1680, possibly dying in 1686. Dom Pedro, alias Tomenu, who is documented in the period 1704-1726, belonged to the next generation again, since he was the ‘brother’ (cousin) of Ama Tuan’s granddaughter, who reigned over the Sonbai community in Kupang. This Dom Pedro may be identified with Nai Neno Sonbai or Nai Talus Sonbai of the later genealogies. Fobia 1984 gives the filiation Nai Tuklua – Nai Manas – Nai Talus. Both Nai Tuklua and Nai Manas seem to correspond to different aspects of the historical ruler Ama Tuan, and it must again be stressed that oral tradition has a tendency to mix up generations. The forced stay of Nai Manas in Oecusse is reminiscent of the Ama Tuan’s (unnamed) sons being kept captive in Lifau in the Oecusse enclave. In summary, it is an exceedingly tricky matter to collate the orally transmitted pedigrees with European data.

establish Fort Concordia in Kupang with the assistance of the local chiefs Nai Besi and Nai Lasi, whereupon a number of native groups subsequently arrive in the Kupang area: Funai, Sonbai, the Amabi lord who returns after having been absent for a period of time, and the *Mardijkers*, the partly Europeanized group.

One day a ship from Solor turns up at the roadstead of Kupang, having been driven to Timor by adversary winds. The curious Timorese *grandees* approach the captain, asking conventional Indonesian questions: ‘What news do you bring? What is your name? Where do you come from?’ ‘My name is Mau Dasi’, replies the captain. ‘I catch fish using a hook. I come from Lamakera.’ He also has interesting things to relate about conditions on Solor: ‘Over there we are ruled by the white foreigners [*kase muti*]. They are our friends [...]. All is good, nothing is missing.’¹⁰⁶

To the Timorese of Kupang, this is a tempting opportunity to improve their lot. The regents of Sonbai and Amabi accompany Mau Dasi on his way back to Solor and invite the white strangers to Kupang. After two months, a Dutch expedition appears at the roadstead to parley with the local *grandees*. Suspiciously, the black foreigners of Fort Concordia ask the whites what they are doing, and are told in reply that they are only here for trade. As a matter of fact, the Dutch take the *grandees* aboard the ship. They eat, drink and discuss, and soon reach an agreement. The Timorese chiefs take it upon themselves to ‘acknowledge them [the Company] as father and mother, as prince and chief, from the rising to the setting sun’ (Middelkoop 1952:227). One may note that the Timorese text uses the word *usi* (*usif*) to denote the Company. Understandably, the black strangers do not accept the Timorese-Dutch treaty, but on the contrary make threatening gestures against Kupang. A decade after the arrival of the Dutch, they attack the town with enormous force but are completely wiped out by the Company’s allies at the Battle of Penfui. The text draws the conclusion that the lord of heaven

¹⁰⁶ Middelkoop 1952:223. A similar story can be found in Heijmering 1847:46-9; it tells how big fish dragged the Solorese ship to the roadstead of Kupang, thereby making the encounter between the captain and the Timorese locals ‘fated’. Mau Dasi was a historical *sengaji* who ruled Lamakera in from 1721 to 1733. A traditional list of rulers of Lamakera, related to the author in June 2006 by Haji Abdul Gafur, a member of the *sengaji* line, starts with Mau Dasi and then jumps directly to the late nineteenth century. Mau Dasi’s historical fame apparently caused later generations to associate him with the establishment of Dutch power; it should be noted that there had been a Lamakera community in Kupang for years, which could have provided the name to the local Timorese.

loves and assists ‘*Father and Mother Holland*’ and all the Timorese grandees and the Mardijkers (Middelkoop 1952:229).

Many details in this story are confirmed to a lesser or greater extent by European documents. What is altered, in the first place, is the chronology of events. The Amabi lord is the original settler of Kupang and the lord of Sonbai also arrives to the place prior to the coming of the Dutch. So do the Mardijkers, although they are actually people of colour in the service of the Company. By inviting the Dutch to be their *usi*, the Timorese are calling for a ‘stranger king’, an outsider whose foreignness enables him to keep the system of several minor, and potentially rival, polities in place. By altering the succession of events, the story conforms to a mythic theme found in many parts of Southeast Asia and Oceania. Jim Fox has highlighted similar historiographical processes on Rote, where chains of past events tend to be reduced to simple vignettes, which are then assimilated to models taken from folktales and eventually retold as historical narratives (Fox 1979:23). In spite of their obvious lack of factual reliability, oral traditions point to important perspectives and themes that can be hidden in contemporary colonial documents.

The Topass phase, 1650s-1702

THE MESTIZO COMMUNITY GOES TO TIMOR

The Larantuqueiro community in easternmost Flores presents a very interesting case of hybridity, to use a term popular in postcolonial studies.¹ Mestizo populations were a ubiquitous phenomenon among the Portuguese overseas bases and played an important role in binding local groups to Iberian interests.² Some parallels can be drawn between the Portuguese of Timor and the Afro-Portuguese or Afro-Indian *muzangos* who spearheaded the early colonial infiltration of Mozambique from the sixteenth century onwards, and established territorial chieftaincies called *prazos*. Like the *muzangos*, the Timorese mestizos wielded great autonomous power, which eventually worried the Portuguese authorities. Nevertheless, the vital importance of Mozambique in economic terms for the Estado da Índia contrasts with the modest profits of the Timor trade. Furthermore, while the Portuguese on Timor dominated the local princedoms, they did not set up *prazos* with thousands of enslaved retainers, as was the case in Africa (Disney 2009, II:198-200, 351-3).

Moreover, in the case of Timor, the entire Portuguese establishment was mestizo up until 1702. During the period under scrutiny, they retained a strong Catholic and Portuguese identity, even speaking a creolized version of the Portuguese language. Although they took over the local customs of East Flores and Timor, they were always looked upon as being quite distinct from the local peoples. On the other hand, the White Portuguese element was quickly mixed through constant intermarriage, and after a few generations the community was more East Indonesian or Timorese than European. Exactly how this happened is not known,

¹ On diaspora and hybridity as analytical concepts, see Gandhi 1998:131-2.

² As argued in Newitt 2005.

but any additions of White Portuguese blood must in any case have been minute after 1613, when the community was left to fend for itself. A significant European addition came from the sailors and soldiers serving under the VOC. The Larantuqueiro community was marked by an open attitude in terms of ethnic mixing, and a more flexible way of life than the stricter conditions imposed on the Company premises. Larantuka was therefore an attractive alternative for individuals who felt threatened by, or dissatisfied with, their Dutch superiors, or wished to escape the monotony or miserable conditions of their service. Desertions from Fort Henricus on Solor, or from Dutch ships sailing the region, did occur from time to time in spite of the severe penalties that would be imposed if the runaways were caught.³ Other groups who made up the mestizo community during the seventeenth century included prisoners from Portuguese India, Papangers from Luzon in the Spanish Philippines, and Christians from Maluku, besides the Florenese and Timorese. Unfortunately we know little about marriage patterns among the Larantuqueiros of the seventeenth century, but it is known that there was marital exchange with local aristocracies. The Larantuqueiros could take the role of wife-receivers, receiving high-status brides, which entailed a commitment to support their in-laws. If later Timorese pedigrees can be trusted, they could also act as wife-givers, obviously on the condition that the local king was, or became, a Catholic in name.

The Spanish Franciscan Juan de la Camara travelled with a companion from Manila to Larantuka in 1670, noting the ethnic mix and the role that language played in upholding the Catholic Lusitanian identity:

In this port of Larantuka live some Portuguese, and in addition, many indigenous Christians, to whom the clerics of the Order of Our Father Saint Dominicus give their service. We were accommodated in their convent and received with much warmth and charity. And during this Lent we preached the gospel, not only to the Portuguese but also to the natives of the land, who understood us since they know Portuguese. Because of that we had some work to carry out at this port. (Teixeira 1957:447.)

The situation was not as promising as it seemed, however, for the two Franciscans were stunned by the lack of respect shown to the church ser-

³ Dutch desertions to the (White or Black) Portuguese can be traced until the mid-eighteenth century. Most of the defections appear to have taken place in the seventeenth century.

vants and to themselves. This may have been due to their Spanish origins (it should be remembered that the Larantuqueiros prided themselves on their Portuguese identity), but also because the Franciscans denounced the moral laxity of the Larantuqueiros: in other words, they criticized the tolerant lifestyle that had made the town an attractive refuge for VOC deserters.

The Dutch establishment in Kupang in 1653, and the move of their regional headquarters from Solor to Kupang in 1657, worried the Larantuqueiros. Francisco Carneiro de Siqueira and Simão Luís were the first *capitão mor* to reside on Timor part of the time, and not just in East Flores, and it was under Luís that a sizeable permanent community was established on Timorese soil. Although they did not abandon Larantuka altogether, a large number of Black Portuguese or Topasses – as we may call them from now on, in line with usage in contemporary documents – sailed over to Lifau in the late 1650s. Portuguese sources are reticent in describing the process, but there is an important VOC document from 1659 that contains a relevant description:

The Portuguese are all ready to come over to Timor from Larantuka to settle there and perpetrate their trade [...] The *capitão mor* has settled at Lifau with 200 people and 20 of our Dutch [renegades] who are still alive. In Amakono there is a company of 30 men, in the *negeri* of Amanuban two companies with 20 members each, which makes 40 men; in Amarasi 30 in one company and in Amfoan (alias Snicksnack) simply a priest. Together this makes 300 people among whom there are a few whites and mestizos, but mostly blacks with shotguns.⁴

The passage stresses that most of the Topasses were not even of mixed blood, but rather Asians with a Portuguese identity, *casados pretos*, or, in Dutch eyes, ‘blacks’. There is a casual reference in 1679 to a group of free ‘Kaffers’ (Kaffirs) in the service of the *capitão mor* (Coolhaas 1971:273). This might refer to Africans from Mozambique, who are otherwise absent from the early sources; however, they certainly became a common feature in Portuguese Timor in the late eighteenth century and beyond. Occasional references to ‘negroes’ might not be taken as absolute ethnic markers, but rather as general branding of dark-skinned people. Sources

⁴ VOC 1229 (1659), ff. 864b-865a.

like the *História de S. Domingos* do not hesitate to characterize non-whites as Portuguese without further distinction, which points to the situational perception of ethnicity and race at this stage. In a Southeast Asian context, such matters were hardly fixed in the seventeenth century, and ethnic identity could change with the circumstances. In legal terms, Asian Christians were on an equal footing with white co-religionists, although this was not always implemented in practice (Paramita Abdurachman 1983:86). White Portuguese would pride themselves on their ‘pure blood’, showing that racist thinking based on physical features did indeed exist; religious affiliation was, however, a more obvious identity marker.

The passage quoted above also shows how the Portuguese were able to keep large tracts of land in West Timor in check. This situation would be reversed in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the focus of Portuguese dominance was moved to East Timor. By placing small detachments armed with firearms in the various princedoms, and in one case ‘simply a padre’, they were able to keep the local rulers under a degree of control. At the same time, the tactics testify to the ability of the Topasses to adapt to local circumstances. This is somewhat uncharacteristic with regard to the usual Portuguese policies of keeping a chain of coastal *fortalezas*, and not keeping close supervision over larger areas. It likewise differs from the Dutch policy of maintaining a closely controlled system of trading offices and avoiding direct interference outside of these offices.

The only location approximating a coastal stronghold was Lifau, a name that coincided with the princedom of Ambeno (Ambenu). When the missionary Frei António de São Jacinto and his companions arrived there in 1641, they found that the royal *sonaf* was not situated at the coastal place bearing that name, but at some distance inland. It was, however, close enough to walk to by foot (Loureiro 1995:150-2). This seems to be a reference to Nunuhenu, in later times known as the royal residence. It was very well chosen from a strategic point of view: three river branches departed from there and it also lay at the conjunction of the roads leading inland.⁵ A Dutch notice from 1673 says that Nunuhenu was ‘the place of residence of the Portuguese in Lifau’.⁶ In the early phase of their presence, the Portuguese therefore preferred to stay in comparative security several kilometres from the coastline.

⁵ Rouffaer 1910a, *Dagboekantekeningen*, H 677 II, KITLV.

⁶ VOC 1301 (1673-74), *Dagregister*, sub 5-8-1673.

Lifau itself, according to the Dutch descriptions of the 1670s and 1680s, was a sparsely populated trade site with very few commodities. Later, a small coastal ‘town’ developed, the rudimentary qualities of which were commented on by the Englishman William Dampier in 1699 (Dampier 1939:171-2). Oecusse, a place several kilometres east of Lifau, which in later times became the centre of the enclave, is already mentioned in 1673. At that time, it was a place settled by the Portuguese who had business with the Company; its prominence as a political and commercial centre, though, only began after 1759.⁷

How, then, did the mixed Portuguese population earn a living on Timor? The case of Matheus da Costa, referred to in connection with the events of 1653, indicates that some of them ‘owned’ land, probably in line with the usual Timorese tradition of usufruct: land was relatively plentiful and was considered to ‘belong’ to the person who used it (Davidson 1994:127). Trade was another pursuit. Materials from the end of the seventeenth century show that by then, the *capitão mor* had given permission to the Portuguese officers to appropriate certain quantities of the precious sandalwood, which they could sell to traders at the coast. The officers also received an annual pension or fee from the local kings. This fee, the *tuthais*, consisted of a number of baskets of rice, pigs and other products which would cover their subsistence and the upkeep of their residences.⁸ The *tuthais* was actually a traditional Timorese tribute or gift that was brought by the local populations to their kings, a device that was quite simply adapted to the early power network maintained by the Topasses.

Dutch documents sometimes made a distinction between Portuguese and ‘blacks’ (*swarten*), which may correspond to the Portuguese distinction between *casados brancos* and *casados pretos*. The former could be either whites or mestizos, while the latter were Asians who had adopted Portuguese ways and customs (Schlicher 1996:83). A detailed enumeration from 1665 mentions that there was just one Portuguese staying in Sonbai (Amakono), together with 16 or 17 blacks, who had the exacting task of monitoring the behaviour of the curbed Sonbai lord. Amanuban and Lifau had six or seven Portuguese inhabitants each, and larger

⁷ VOC 1301 (1673-74), *Dagregister*, sub 23-12-1673.

⁸ Matos 1974a:216. Taken from a description of Timor in 1697, these features do not need to have been fully developed at the early stages of Portuguese residency, but may have been implemented in full during the long governance of António Hornay (1664-93).

numbers of blacks. The detachments in Amarasi, Ade and Amfoan contained no whites whatsoever, although a man from Macao, probably a Chinese, had found his way to Amfoan.⁹ By this time, therefore, local people had been incorporated in the Portuguese enterprise, to the extent that they filled important positions in the Portuguese network. Some of these ‘blacks’ were involved in local elite circles, at times even through marital ties. Amarasi, one of the closest allies, was ‘occupied’ (*beset*) by 15 blacks, whose captain was a Dom Diogo Rodrigo, an in-law of the king. Matheus da Costa, contender for the position of *capitão mor*, was married to a daughter or sister of the king of Amanuban.¹⁰ The Portuguese may have been harsh masters, as attested to by numerous Timorese complaints heard by the Dutch, but they managed to strike a balance between being foreign and acculturation, something that was functional in securing their dominance for more than 300 years.

THE RISE OF THE HORNAYS AND DA COSTAS

All over Timor there are still people with the surname Hornay or Da Costa. This may imply that they are descendants from the original seventeenth-century families which bore these names, but it also testifies to the wide prestige enjoyed by the two families: local Timorese kings often took up the surname as a matter of status. In line with the Timorese dualism in speech, Hornay-Da Costa is a conceptual pair that often occurs in oral tradition, representing the power and authority of the *kase metan*.

The actual circumstances surrounding the coming of the Hornays and Da Costas to Timor were soon forgotten by the generations that followed. Instead, they were retold in a variety of legends that bore little or no resemblance to documented history. A Portuguese document from the 1760s relates an indigenous legend that combines the first coming of the Portuguese, the founding of the port of Lifau, and the arrival of the two clans. In this version, Timor was ‘discovered’ by a Portuguese merchant ship bound for Maluku, which encountered the island due to contrary winds. The two principal merchants on board were Malays from Malacca, who had been raised in the Catholic faith. They went ashore at a spot on the coast, curious to see the land, and having met with

⁹ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 682. Ade was in fact still contested, and owed tribute to Makassar.

¹⁰ VOC 1252 (1665), ff. 672, 682.

no resistance, proceeded to take occupation of the place. The merchants subsequently founded a number of settlements on the island, one of which was stocked with artillery and made into the principal port, where the Portuguese banner of the *quinas* was hoisted. This was the beginning of Lifau. Since then, Dominican padres had been working on the island, with the document specifying that the current Topass leader, Francisco Hornay, was a descendant of one of the founding merchants – the other one apparently being Da Costa (Silva Pessanha 1902).

There is another, less peaceful version, recorded in the late nineteenth century. In this case, the originator of the two families was no less than the king of Malacca, who had two sons with the unlikely names Djogo Warilla (Diogo Varela) and Agostinho da Gama. Due to a family quarrel, Djogo Warilla left Malacca for an odyssey among the islands of the east, finally settling in Delan in East Flores. He had a son, Domingos da Costa, and a nephew, António Hornay, who were brought to Timor due to contrary winds en route to trading in Ambon. There, they got into a fight with the king of Ambeno (the hinterland of Lifau). Domingos da Costa was wounded and left among the enemy. Later, when Djogo Warilla sailed to Ambeno with a new expedition to investigate the fate of his son, he discovered that Domingos da Costa had not only survived, but had been given the hand in marriage of the daughter of the Ambeno lord. Djogo Warilla and his family and followers stayed at Oecusse, which was the beginning of the Topass presence on Timor. In line with the ‘stranger king’ concept, an outsider was welcomed by the original lord of the land, and his arrival was sealed through a marriage. The dynastic picture is complemented by the younger son of the king of Malacca, Agostinho da Gama, becoming the first ruler of Sikka, a principedom in East Flores closely allied to Portuguese interests.¹¹ Again, the ties to the old Malacca kingdom are emphasized, and one cannot help but see a parallel with the Sina Mutin Malaka of the Wehali legends, which likewise testifies to the prestige of this place as a (pseudo-)historical point of origin. In a third legendary version, recorded on Timor, the pair Kosat-Ornai (Da Costa-Hornay) were brothers of Liurai-Sonbai, and thus Timorese people who

¹¹ Heynen 1876:74-85; Kleian 1891:514-22. Agostinho da Gama is not the ancestor of the later Sikka rulers, though, since he left the principedom to Dom Alesu, a local. The story was picked up in Maumere in East Flores. The early history of the Sikka principedom is described, based on accounts recorded in the twentieth century, in Lewis and Pareira Mandalangi 2008:103-38. In this version, Agostinho da Gama is not literally the founder of Sikka, and is not a raja in his own right; rather he introduces Catholicism and acts as caretaker of governmental affairs under Dom Alesu.

formed an alliance with the Portuguese when the latter arrived at Lifau. Still, in this version the Portuguese seafarers are referred to as Black Strangers or Black Hats, in symbolic opposition to the White Strangers or White Hats, that is, the Dutch (H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:454).

The contemporary documents relate a different story again. The Hornays descended from Jan de Hornay, a European – in one version a Dane – who was commander of Fort Henricus on Solor. Having embezzled large quantities of money from the VOC, he escaped to Larantuka in 1629, where he married a Timorese woman who had been the slave of the Dominican padres. De Hornay built himself a new future as a merchant in the more relaxed conditions of the Portuguese sphere, dying some time after 1644, and leaving behind at least three children: Sara, António and Francisco.¹² His Timorese widow remarried a Eurasian from Macao. António Hornay, a man who would exercise a decisive influence on the development of the Topass community on Timorese soil, was born in Larantuka around 1630-1635. He was trained in the use of weapons from an early age, and began to participate in campaigns on Timor when he reached maturity. Through his remarkable feats of arms he became highly regarded, but he also made quite a few enemies among his compatriots. In particular, he came to enjoy a strong following in the important allied principedom of Amarasi.¹³ By contrast, his younger brother Francisco Hornay was a man who inclined towards religion and who loyally assisted António in his long career, as his lieutenant (*tenente*) and representative.¹⁴ When at last Francisco tried to take hold of the Topass community himself, the result quickly proved disastrous.

Regarding the other Topass genitor, Matheus da Costa, there is an unambiguous Dutch statement from 1664 which declares that he was a Papanger, thus descending from the island of Luzon.¹⁵ He or his ancestors had presumably come to Timor from the Philippines via North

¹² Leitão 1948:237, 251; De Roever 2002:186-97, 239-40. De Roever (2002:256) concludes from his sources that António [de] Hornay was a grandson of Jan de Hornay, and the son of a Gonsalvo de Hornay who was established as a merchant prince on the north coast of Timor. However, the original sources seen by the author strongly suggest that António and his siblings were the children rather than grandchildren of Jan. The eldest sibling, Sara, was born on Solor to Jan's baptized wife from Lamakera. Not much is known about her life, but she briefly visited Kupang with her daughter in 1677 (VOC 1327 [1676-77], *Dagregister*, sub 15 to 17-2-1677).

¹³ Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, ff. 6-7.

¹⁴ Tange 1688, H 49:u, KITLV, f. 6.

¹⁵ VOC 1246 (1664), f. 1577. There were also Papangers in the Dutch ports of Southeast Asia. On Timor they are mentioned as a distinct group as late as 1877 (*Staatsblad* 1877 No. 105).

Maluku, where there was a Spanish outpost up until 1663. He was certainly not alone, for Papangers were not uncommon in the Indonesian Archipelago. According to later storytellers (this story has not been documented in written sources) in neither of the families is there any discernable connection with Malacca. The fact that the Hornays and Da Costas had different ethnic backgrounds, neither of them Portuguese, proves once more that racial features did not determine one's position in the Larantuqueiro community – anybody with ambition could rise to a position of importance.

The rise of the 'twin families' is connected with the machinations of the merchant-adventurer Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, who took responsibility for co-ordinating the precarious Portuguese positions in Southeast Asia in the face of the Dutch onslaught. A man of great wealth and influence, he enjoyed a strong position in Makassar until the Dutch forced the king to expel him and other Portuguese after their victory against the kingdom in 1660. In the following years, Vieira devoted much attention to the affairs of Larantuka and Timor. His task was facilitated by an event in Europe that was to be of the utmost importance for the future of the region: a peace treaty between Portugal and the United Provinces of the Netherlands was finally agreed in 1661, and publicized two years later. The treaty stipulated that each part were to keep what they possessed at the time of the treaty's publication, meaning that Malacca, Sri Lanka, Cochin, and so on, were irretrievably lost for the *Estado da Índia*. As it stood, it confirmed the Portuguese preponderance in the Timor area and opened up new trading opportunities. Francisco Vieira conducted a skilful piece of propaganda when he invited the Dutch in Kupang to send ships to Amanuban on the south coast of Timor in 1664, soon after the treaty became known. As three vessels arrived in Amanuban, Vieira cordially treated the Dutchmen to a sumptuous dinner and various courtesies, allowing them to obtain sandalwood in the ports under his influence under very favourable terms. In this way Vieira made it seem to the Timorese that not only was there peace, but that the Dutch were under his control and that he had ordered them to come from Kupang to fetch the wood.¹⁶

At the same time, Vieira was faced with a situation fraught with trouble. The allies in powerful Amanuban did not salvage a good harvest and

¹⁶ Boxer 1967:40, 88-9; VOC 1246 (1664), *Dagregister*, sub 13-3-1664 to 26-4-1664.

whatever provisions there were, were stored in the *lopo*, or assembly halls, of the villages. Nothing was delivered to the Portuguese of Lifau, who would have starved to death, had not Vieira personally sent them a galley of rice. The *capitão mor*, Simão Luís, was by now an obvious liability; he made many enemies due to his ruthless behaviour, and appears to have held little authority in Larantuka.¹⁷ With the move of part of the population to Timor, tensions surfaced that proved critical during the next decade and beyond. Vieira drew bitter parallels with India, where similar unreasonable behaviour towards the natives meant the Portuguese lost the allegiance of the Indians. Vieira mentions an illustrative case. One night the king of Amanuban found his wife having sexual intercourse with a Portuguese Solorese. The enraged king killed the adulterous wife but dared not lay hands on a Christian, instead leaving it to Simão Luís to ensure that justice prevailed. The *capitão mor*, however, failed to react, subsequently allowing the culprit to go. It was left to Francisco Vieira to take action and issue an order to hang the fornicator from the mast of a ship. As he explained, it was a necessary act so that the Timorese were not given reason to rise up in revenge for the affront to their king. Vieira subsequently met with the aristocracies of Amanuban, Amakono and Amarasi, showed them great honours and bestowed large pieces of defeated territories on them. These three kingdoms would constitute the main axis of support for the Portuguese for a very long time to come (Boxer 1967:87-90).

Early in 1664, Simão Luís suddenly passed away. There was no lack of candidates for the post of *capitão mor*: three officers in Lifau were brought forward, among whom was Matheus da Costa. People turned to Francisco Vieira, asking him to decide upon a successor in this precarious situation. Styling himself ‘major of Timor’, he was the obvious arbiter in the absence of the Estado da Índia. Vieira however ignored the Lifau candidates and instead promoted António Hornay to the position.

The decision was not a popular one, neither in Larantuka nor in Lifau. The Topasses were suspicious of a man whose father had been in Dutch service, and several officers believed they could stake a better claim than Hornay.¹⁸ Some of the resentment was also related to Vieira himself. With his considerable financial resources and Southeast Asian

¹⁷ VOC 1243 (1663), f. 1583. At least, this is what Lagadoni, the *sengaji* of Pamakayu on West Solor, told the Dutch.

¹⁸ VOC 1246 (1664), f. 1587.

network, he had a strong hold over various forms of trade; after peace was established, the Lifau community wished to open trade routes with the Company, but had to wait for his permission. The Larantuqueiros, on the other hand, disliked Vieira's favouring of Jesuit missionaries. Jesuits were known to be well-educated and devoted men, the elite forces of Roman Catholicism. Nevertheless, the Larantuqueiros were used to obeying their Dominican padres in both religious and, sometimes, secular matters. The fact that Dominicans in general had a reputation for being less 'professional' was not so important in this respect. Later the Larantuka community even lodged an official protest with the viceroy in distant Goa against the machinations of Vieira and his protégé (Boxer 1967:92-5).

The result was a series of internal clashes and coups among the Portuguese community that lasted until 1673. Civil war was a new phenomenon in the community. The Portuguese had previously been under siege from the VOC, which had obviously fostered unity in the ranks. It is apparent, though, how quickly this relative cohesion broke down after the publication of the peace treaty, as António Hornay and Matheus da Costa began to manoeuvre against each other. It was also very much a Timorese affair. Hornay and his family stayed in Amarasí, where he enjoyed the bulk of his support, and he also gained a foothold in Sonbai. An early raiding expedition turned out for the worst when in the summer of 1664, Hornay and his men – for reasons unknown – assaulted a large *negeri* at Liley, probably near the north coast, to gain booty. When they marched back towards Amakono (Sonbai), they had to pass between Mena and Biboki, east of Ambeno and Lifau. Suddenly, the locals attacked the Portuguese with stunning success. António Hornay only just escaped on horseback, while his followers were defeated in large numbers, with the war spoils falling into the hands of the men of Mena and Biboki.¹⁹ The Timorese were therefore not necessarily helpless against Topass forces, especially when the circumstances were right. By 1665, Hornay nevertheless had 80 to 100 men under his command. It was a small but far from harmless force, especially since his men were

¹⁹ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 1251. As seen above, the king and queen of Mena had been executed by the Portuguese in 1656, and in 1660 the next ruling queen was engaged in rebellion against them, with partial success (VOC 1233 [1660], f. 721). In 1665, a Dutch scouting expedition characterized Mena as a loyal friend of the Portuguese, meaning the faction belonging to Hornay's rival, Matheus da Costa (VOC 2285 [1733], f. 200).

largely equipped with firearms. On the other side, Da Costa was supported by his in-laws in Amanuban, which Vieira characterized as the most powerful kingdom on the island at the time. As a wife-receiver, he was in a symbolically subordinate position to the Amanuban ruler, who on the other hand worked tirelessly to see Da Costa installed as *capitão mor*. He was also supported by the *moradores* of Lifau, who looked for a way to assassinate Hornay.²⁰

As could be expected, the struggle entailed a substantial amount of violence between Timorese pryncedoms. A party of Amarasi envoys went to Amanuban but were assaulted and then burnt to death by the Amanuban, a deliberately provocative incident that ignited the flame of war. Batumean likewise became embroiled in the struggle when its troops attacked Amanuban. In a way, it was a war by proxy directed by the respective Topass strongmen.²¹

In October 1666, the two Topass leaders met on the field of battle. Hornay lost some men and artillery and had to withdraw to his allies in Amarasi. The victorious Matheus da Costa was characterized by the Dutch as a brave soldier, but no politician: he allowed Hornay to remain undisturbed in Amarasi on the condition that he kept the peace, which Hornay gladly agreed to.²² In the following years the two rivals appear to have lived in a state of hostile balance. Meanwhile, Francisco Vieira kept his base in Larantuka, where his opinion of the combatants vacillated. Finally, however, he decided to place his money – a lot of money – on Hornay, who was promptly picked up in Amarasi by orders of Vieira and shipped over to Flores. His arrival on Larantuka, on the Pentecost Day of 1667, was apparently without choice, since a VOC source specifies that he travelled in fetters. Nevertheless, the day ended in triumph for Hornay. In a public ceremony, Francisco Vieira held an ‘exceedingly ugly-looking’ crown over the head of the Topass strongman, and then knighted him in the name of the viceroy of Goa. Thereafter he was led in great state to his house, accompanied by the loud cheers of the *moradores*.²³

This was one of the last acts carried out by the remarkable merchant-adventurer. His power over the Larantuqueiros was waning, primarily

²⁰ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 202-3.

²¹ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 1223.

²² VOC 1264 (1667), f. 74a.

²³ VOC 1267 (1668), ff. 478-9.

<p>Jan de Hornay d. after 1644 m. 1 Ester from Lamakera m. 2 Timorese woman</p>					
<p>Sara Hornay [by #1] d. after 1677</p>		<p>Antônio Hornay [by #2] capitão mor 1664-1690 on Timor from 1673 capitão geral 1690-15.6.1693</p>		<p>Francisco Hornay I [by #2] tenente in Lifau 1673-90 capitão mor 1690-96 d. 1.6.1697</p>	
<p>Pedro Hornay d. 1696/97</p>		<p>Francisco Hornay II tenente general 1719-30 m. daughter of Domingos da Costa I</p>		<p>daughter m. Alvare de Sousa</p>	
<p>Daniel de Cock daughter m. a Hornay</p>				<p>daughter m. João Cave, tenente general 1730- 1731/32</p>	
<p>João Hornay tenente general 1749-1755/57</p>		<p>Maria Hornay dame of Larantuka m. Matheus da Costa</p>			
<p>Francisco Hornay III lord of Animata 1757-59, lord of Oecusse 1759-77</p>		<p>Pedro Hornay lord of Oecusse 1777-c. 1795 José Hornay lord of Oecusse c. 1795-after 1817</p>		<p>Tomás Hornay d. after 1788</p>	
<p>Matheus da Costa capitão mor in opposition 1665-30.11.1672 m. 1 Amanuban princess, m. 2 concubine</p>					
<p>daughter [by #1] m. Lourenço Lopes</p>			<p>Domingos da Costa I [by #2] capitão mor 1697-23.2.1722</p>		
<p>Gaspar da Costa tenente general 1732- 9.11.1749</p>		<p>Domingos da Costa II tenente general 1757-after 1772</p>		<p>Pascal da Costa Antônio da Costa lord of Noimuti d. after 1769</p>	
				<p>dau- ghter d. 1711</p>	
				<p>daughter m. Fran- cisco Hornay II</p>	

Genealogy of the Hornay and Da Costa families. The family relations of the two families are not entirely known from the sources.

because the latter were keen to open up trade negotiations with the VOC against Vieira's wishes. The exact rationale behind Vieira's trade policy is not clear, but he presumably wished to strengthen the Portuguese enterprise with other components of the Estado da Índia, rather than to be increasingly dependent on his former Dutch enemies, to whom, more importantly, he owed a lot of money. Regardless, the situation would not last for long. Vieira soon passed away from a sudden fever, and both the Dutch and Portuguese sources make it explicit that he was helped on his way by his adversaries.²⁴

The official institution of Portuguese Asia, the Estado da Índia, normally had very little to do with Timor, but after the peace treaty it eventually began to show a degree of interest in this remnant of its Southeast Asian possessions. Possibly as a reaction to the disappearance of Vieira, one Fernão Martins da Ponte was appointed *capitão geral* (captain-general) of Solor and Timor by the authorities in Goa. Upon arrival to the region in 1669, he was readily acknowledged by Matheus da Costa and the *moradores* of Lifau – Da Costa was known to be a loyal person, devoted to the Crown of Portugal. However, Hornay and the Larantuqueiros bluntly refused to follow the commands of Martins da Ponte (Coolhaas 1968:681). The new *capitão geral*, who was described as a strict and impetuous figure, resolved to force the would-be subjects to yield to his authority. He gathered together the available manpower in Lifau and sailed over to Larantuka, approaching the port with some large ships, accompanied by the beating of drums and blasting of trumpets. However, the Larantuqueiros were not so easily impressed. Six hundred men strong, they immediately grabbed their firearms and effectively prevented Martins da Ponte from coming ashore. Afterwards, a Dutchman who visited the house of António Hornay reported that the *moradores* laughed heartily at the sorry figure of Martins da Ponte, saying: 'We have not heard a single word from his mouth, but we have long since resolved not to heed him as our headman.'²⁵

The Estado's early attempt to interfere in Timorese affairs thus met with the first instance of open resistance against them. During the preceding century, the localized Portuguese community had grown accustomed to following their own captains and their own Dominican padres. While there was not exactly a Topass 'democracy', the elevation of new

²⁴ VOC 1267 (1668), f. 479; Jacobs 1988:243-4.

²⁵ VOC 1271 (1669), ff. 719-20.

leaders in their communities depended on the number of men among the *moradores* of the main settlements that were prepared to back them. In this way, they were ‘men of prowess’ rather than officials of the Crown of Portugal, and leaders from the outside were a threat to their way of life and the local economy. Hence, resentment against Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo turned to open resistance against Fernão Martins da Ponte.

Humiliated, Martins withdrew to Konga on Flores, not far from Larantuka, and ordered Matheus da Costa to bring reinforcements, whereupon Da Costa excused himself by alleging that the *moradores* of Lifau would not allow him to leave. The bad temper of the *capitão geral* was demonstrated when he had the chief of the fleet, *capitão mor da mar*, hanged for some perceived shortcoming. The Dutch at the time wrote that such strictness could seldom last long among the Portuguese. Martins, they commented, was a man who did not reflect on what he said, and who imagined a lot. From his base in Lifau he led a few successful military enterprises against Timorese princedoms, but nevertheless made enemies everywhere among the Topasses. Martins finally had to escape on a small boat in May 1670, fleeing for his life. Travelling via Java he eventually made it to Portuguese India, where he was subsequently punished for his poor performance.²⁶ For the next 26 years, no appointee of Goa would hold authority on Timor. With more pressing problems to deal with, the viceroy had to accept the self-willed actions of Hornay and Da Costa.

With Martins’ exit, power over Lifau was left in the hands of Matheus da Costa, whose loyalty to the Crown apparently had its limits. His tenure as *capitão mor* of the Timor Topasses lasted for two and a half years, during which time he continued the military expansion towards East Timor, as will be discussed below. His relations with the Dutch in Kupang were strained but peaceful, and António Hornay bided his time in Larantuka, where he was now the undisputed master. His chance came when Matheus da Costa died prematurely on 30 November 1672. He was succeeded by Manuel da Costa Vieira – apparently no relation – who had already been brought forward as a candidate in 1664 but declined the post due to his advanced age. During his short term as *capitão mor* in Lifau, Manuel da Costa Vieira met with resistance from the usually pro-Portuguese Atoni domains of Mena and Assem on the

²⁶ VOC 1271 (1669), f. 720; VOC 1275 (1671), f. 664; Matos 1974a:83-4.

north coast, and also from the rulers of Belu, which by then appeared to be a vague term for Central Timor or Central and East Timor. Assem fared badly; the Topasses of Manuel da Costa Vieira ravaged the place and killed or enslaved its population. From this point onwards there is not much mention of Assem in the records. Meanwhile, the conflict involved a considerable part of the island, a precarious situation for the new leader. His only ally was the Sonbai lord, who had been forced back into the Portuguese fold fifteen years previously. Manuel da Costa Vieira greatly feared that Hornay might be planning something.²⁷

In actual fact, he was. Hornay had a network on Flores that stretched as far east as Numba, close to present-day Ende, and he was busy collecting together a fleet. In June 1673, he set out from Larantuka with a considerable armada of 37 armed vessels and 700 followers with shotguns. The ground was well prepared; he was welcomed by the Timorese, who resisted Manuel da Costa Vieira and accused the Lifau leader of unjust behaviour with regard to Assem, which had been attacked on unproven allegations of having been working with the VOC. Moreover, there was a split in the ranks of the Lifau Topasses. Given these circumstances it turned out to be a swift affair. Hornay's armada sailed into the roadstead of Lifau while Manuel da Costa Vieira lay sick. The local Topasses gave battle, but when three *moradores* had fallen, they had had enough and surrendered. Immediately after his victory, António Hornay was appointed *capitão mor*.²⁸ With this event, the Portuguese complex of Solor-Timor was once again united under one person. Hornay would rule the lands and peoples under his sway with an iron hand until his death twenty years later.

Meanwhile, the Dutch in Kupang maintained a pragmatic position. Since the publication of the peace treaty, they had had irregular agreements with Portuguese traders, which included Manuel da Costa Vieira himself. When a Company servant was sent to Lifau to settle economic affairs in mid 1673, the *opperhoofd* in Kupang provided him with two letters, one for Hornay and one for Da Costa Vieira; the victor of the conflict was to receive the appropriate letter! On arrival, the envoy found that Manuel da Costa Vieira had taken a priest's robe in order to escape the hand of Hornay, whom he greatly feared. Before the Dutchman, Da Costa Vieira complained about the faithlessness of his people. They had

²⁷ VOC 1294 (1673-74), *Dagregister*, sub 5-8-1673, 10-8-1673..

²⁸ VOC 1294 (1673-74), *Dagregister*, sub 22-7-1673, 10-8-1673.

enthusiastically bestowed upon him the title of *capitão mor*, with promises to support him, and when he understood that Hornay was about to attack him, he had kept the *moradores* gathered together for two months during which he had handed out generous provisions to the value of 6,000 reals. All this was in vain, however, for when Hornay arrived, they had allowed him to enter Lifau without resistance as Viera lay sick in his house. Realizing the way in which his world had changed, he decided to become a man of religion, the more so since he had no wife or children. He just wanted to live in peace and quiet.

The Dutch envoy replied consolingly that such things did not only happen to him but also to the grandest of princes and kings, and that he should try to seek comfort in the fact that it was God's will. He then went on to remind the fallen leader about a debt of 154 rijksdaalders that he owed to the Company. Da Costa Vieira replied that Hornay had squeezed 9,000 reals from him, and that he did not have enough gold at hand. However, there were 60 bahar (approximately 10,900 kg) of sandalwood in Batumean on the south coast. He promised to send a message to tell the locals to prepare it for the arrival of the Company ships.²⁹ The conversation suggests how essential it was to gather popular support in order to wield authority over the Topass community. In the Timorese environment, an official European title became a token of personal authority, to be appropriated by a man of prowess. The record also provides some insight into the peculiar economic relations that evolved between the Dutch and the Portuguese, where the latter forced autonomous princedoms to deliver sandalwood to the Company that could not be obtained in the hinterland of Dutch Kupang. In terms of this commerce, there was little or no distinction between the Portuguese leader's capacity of official and private trader. This system would come to full fruition during the long tenure of António Hornay.

CO-OPTING THE ATONI PRINCEDOMS

As previously mentioned, it is unclear at which point the Timorese princedoms began to consider themselves to be submissive to the Crown of Portugal. The great, albeit superficial, strides made by Catholicism in

²⁹ VOC 1301 (1673-74), *Dagregister*, sub 20-9-1673.

the first half of the seventeenth century were very likely an important catalyst for political dependence. Acceptance of the new religion implied a degree of deference to Portuguese symbols of authority and prestige. The expeditions of 1641-1642 and the notable successes against the Dutch in 1653-1657 made a deep impression on the local societies and clearly underpinned the whole process. The image of warlike Topass exploits was very probably linked to indigenous perceptions of *leu musu*, meaning sacred spirit power (*leu*) used against the enemy (*musu*) (H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:333-4; Munandjar Widiyatmika 2008:266-7). Timorese warfare is accompanied by ritual preparations invoking supernatural powers to aid the fight, and indeed the Portuguese seemed to make good use of these invisible forces against Makassarese, Dutchmen and local groups.³⁰ The outcome of the conflict with the mighty Company was that the latter was left in possession of a tiny piece of territory in westernmost Timor, while the Atoni lands fell or were confirmed as being under Portuguese influence – interestingly, these were lands that mostly lay outside Portuguese East Timor in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Some observations on the most important Atoni princedoms serve to illustrate the process. As already noted, the source of Portuguese power, Lifau, lay in the princedom of Ambeno, positing the Ambeno ruler as the original lord of the land in relation to the warlike ‘male’ outsiders, the *kase metan*. Looking at the sources of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Ambeno does not seem to have been particularly powerful, though its geographical situation rendered it suitable for a colonial establishment. It was within easy reach of Larantuka, and at a strategic location for the collection of sandalwood. Ambeno royalty was later on tied to the Topass leadership through a complicated web of marriages, although this is only documented from the late eighteenth century. That the inhabitants were remarkably susceptible to Christianity is asserted in glowing rhetorical terms in a near-contemporary text, *Notícias de Timor e da sua cristiandade*. According to this document, Frei António de São

³⁰ Since the ethnic composition of the Topasses had developed to be predominantly Timorese or Florenese by this time, indigenous ritual perceptions of warfare quickly became familiar to them, although there is little that is explicitly said about this in the old documents. In highland Noimuti, traditional rituals of war were performed by lineages with the Portuguese names Melo (Meol) and Da Cruz (La Krus) (Munandjar Widiyatmika 2008:267). Active Topass participation in feasts honouring captured heads is documented during the eighteenth century (Fiedler 1931, 9:3). On the Topass acculturation, see also Andaya 2010.

Jacinto baptized the queen of Mena in 1641. At this time, the king of Lifau or Ambeno was dead and his widow governed in his place, and the Portuguese expedition decided to proceed there. They bade farewell to the queen of Mena with displays of amity and tears, embarked on the ships and set sail towards the west. As the Portuguese arrived on Lifau the inhabitants came to greet them at the shore with grand festivities, saying: 'Padre, padre, we want to become Christians.' Among them was the queen herself with her four daughters and sixteen-year old son. The Portuguese built a few dwellings on the coast, and then Frei António and his assistants were led by the hand to the royal residence inland, apparently to Nunuhenu. Over eleven days the priests instructed the people at the residence – whose language they probably did not speak – in the mysteries of the holy faith. Then, in the second half of July 1641, the royal family were baptized and the heir to the realm received the name Dom Pedro. Many aristocrats and commoners alike followed suit, carrying their small children in their arms, and so eager to arrive at the font first that they trampled over each other – or so the Dominican account states (Loureiro 1995:150-2).

One need not doubt that the details in the text are exaggerated, since they evoke stereotypical images of devotion and missionary success. Nonetheless, the episode was remembered as a key event in the oral version of Ambeno history recorded in the late twentieth century. In this version, a ruler called Pedro da Cruz was baptized at the arrival of the first Catholic preacher, who is here called António Taberu (Taveiro). This Pedro da Cruz is said to have been around about nine generations before 1900, which is not inconsistent with the year 1641 (Spillett 1999:152). The dignity of the event is underscored by including the name António Taveiro, who was actually the first known preacher on Timor circa 1556 – this detail might however come from a Portuguese textbook rather than oral tradition. The arrival of a first Christian king and the first missionary were combined into one single significant event, despite actually occurring almost a century apart.

The early Ambeno submission to Portuguese interests was not, however, without its problems. The oral account states that the Portuguese soldiers later mistreated the people, and that Pedro da Cruz therefore led his kingdom in revolt and expelled the whites. After a while the Portuguese came back by sea and ravaged the land, causing all the people to flee their homes. The king subsequently submitted once more, and henceforth

co-operated with the white strangers (Spillett 1999:153). Contemporary sources, too, mention a crisis that casts some light on the fragile state of Christianity in Ambeno. In 1670, a king called Dom Paulo passed away, at a time when an uncompromising priest called Duarte Travassos was the vicar of the Lifau church. The nominal Catholics indulged in 'various superstitions' during the funeral ceremonies, whereupon Frei Duarte gathered twelve native Christians and tried to impede the ceremonies. His zeal was not appreciated: he was pierced by assegais and his body thrown into a well, and his companions were dealt with in the same manner. Only the horse of Frei Duarte survived and galloped back to the settlement of the Portuguese, who figured out what had happened. The *capitão geral*, Fernão Martins da Ponte, assembled the people at hand and tracked down the culprits, who, despite their substantial numbers, fled; many were subsequently killed. Afterwards, the Ambeno people maintained that they had fled out of fear for a Dominican who walked among the men of the *capitão geral*. Since there was no cleric in Lifau apart from the slain Frei Duarte, it was assumed that Saint Dominic himself had descended from heaven to revenge the slaying of his spiritual son (Sá 1958:443). Either before or after the battle, the new king of Ambeno sent his sons to Dutch Kupang to ask for protection and assistance, while his people desperately fled to Amarang in the west. The VOC refused to consider military support but were not adverse to an exodus of people to their own territory.³¹ This, however, did not materialize, and Ambeno led a rather passive existence for the next 80 years. The great responsibilities of individual Dominicans are obvious from the incident: even in the hub of Portuguese power on Timor, there was no more than one single priest. The great awe in which the locals held the priests, embodied in supernatural stories, was equally quite apparent.

A principedom of quite another magnitude was Amarasi, for many years the prime Portuguese instrument used to counter the VOC allies. It is first mentioned in the 1630s, when it was brought into the Catholic fold by the Dominicans. The principedom was held in high regard by Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, since its king 'always was and remains our faithful friend' (Boxer 1967:88), and it was currently the only domain besides Amakono that the Portuguese could trust. The meeting between Vieira and the Amarasi royalty led to a win-win solution, where

³¹ VOC 1275 (1670), f. 678.

the loyal stance of the latter was rewarded with the bestowal of most of the Amabi domain. Amabi was an extensive land that was left leaderless after many of its men fled to Kupang in 1658. While some of the area was handed over to Amanuban, the bulk of Amabi was officially placed under the king of Amarasi – in other words, Vieira acted in a very wilful manner in the name of the king of Portugal. The only condition was the annual payment of ten bahar of sandalwood, slightly more than 1,800 kilograms (Boxer 1967:88, 90). From other sources it appears that a sub-division of Amfoan, called Taebenu, was also tied to Amarasi after the contraction of the Sonbai realm around 1658. The king of Amarasi placed the Taebenu regent at Kupang Bay, where he acted as a buffer against the VOC allies.

The Dutch in Kupang rightly perceived the potential of Amarasi, whose manpower consisted of 6,000 besides Taebenu. The ruler sat well guarded in his main settlement, which was surrounded by a threefold palisade made of heavy wooden trunks.³² There were sandalwood resources, and copper was reputed to have been found on two places on an elevated plain. The rumour should be taken with a pinch of salt; stories about copper deposits recurred from time to time over the next two centuries, but the valuable metal always proved elusive to find. Minor deposits seem to have been exaggerated out of all proportion. As Hornay and Da Costa were at each other's throats in 1665, the VOC *opperhoofd* Hugo Cuylenburgh took the opportunity to sail to Timor's outer coast to parley with King António, whose *sonaf* lay close to the shore. The account of Cuylenburgh provides geographical details on the situation of Amarasi. From Kupang, the Company ship went along the south coast past Oysain, and then arrived at Amatiran at Hoogen Hoeck (High Cape), which marked the beginning of the Amarasi principedom. Passing by a river and a waterless place called Peu, the ship finally reached the main settlement of Amarasi, just before Witten Hoeck (White Cape, Tanjung Batuputih). In all these places it was not possible to cast anchor, due to the breakers and rocks.³³

Cuylenburgh suggested that António should tie his interests to those of the Company: 'I then spoke about the great might of the Noble

³² VOC 1426 (1684-85), *Dagregister*, sub 18-7-1685.

³³ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 681. The *sonaf* was not in Baun, as in modern times. According to later tradition, Baun was established by the tenth ruler (mid-nineteenth century?), having been preceded by Buraen and Ruantef. Buraen is mentioned by Salomon Müller in 1829 (Müller 1857, II:113).

Company, which would be able to protect him sufficiently, and said that if he did this, he could become the emperor of the whole of Timor.³⁴ The king seemed interested, but nothing was to come out of the proposal. Shortly after the Dutch visit, King António died a sudden death, and it was rumoured that António Hornay took the precaution of having him poisoned.³⁵ The king was succeeded by his brother Dom Tomás, who was kindly disposed towards the Portuguese. In fact, the next generations would see a small-scale war between the Amarasi and the Timorese allies of the VOC. Smaller and indeed bigger war parties would be sent out from either side to conduct headhunting raids. The Dutch books of daily annotations (*Dagregisters*) meticulously record the circumstances of the raids, and how many heads were taken or lost each time. It was a type of warfare that conformed with traditions of the eastern part of the Indonesian Archipelago. Although war was surrounded by rites and ceremonies as well as a martial code of conduct, the antagonists preferred ambushing weaker adversaries, often civilians, thus avoiding larger-pitched battles.

When explaining the close ties between the Amarasi and the Portuguese, religion is certainly important and cannot be reduced to simply a factor of political convenience. In the case of the Amarasi elite, Christianity was more than just a thin veneer. A valuable Jesuit report from 1670 emphasizes the piety of the royal family. A niece of Dom Tomás, called Donna Maria, stayed in ‘Solor’ (probably Larantuka) with a large retinue of servants and slaves of both sexes. The Jesuit writer of the report, Antonius Franciscus SJ, found her to be a very wise woman, admirable in her silent and modest way of living and her zeal for the holy creed. Later, the priest found a suitable Portuguese husband for the lady, who, it seems, was the actual heir to the Amarasi principedom: ‘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.’³⁶

Another figure of some standing was Dom Rodrigo, one of the

³⁴ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 676.

³⁵ VOC 1257 (1666), f. 609.

³⁶ Jacobs 1988:241. I am grateful to Erik Wiberg, who helped me translate the Latin text. Donna Maria’s husband was possibly Dom Diogo Rodrigo, who was an in-law of the king of Amarasi and was appointed by the Topasses as captain of that principedom (VOC 1252 [1665], f. 682).

brothers of the king. At the time when Pater Antonius met him he was an old man of 60 years who had been a Christian since his youth. He did not know Portuguese and therefore could not communicate with the Dominicans, who had not learnt to speak Dawan. However, his kinsmen Dom Agostinho and Dom António da Veiga could both speak and read the language of the foreigners, and they taught Dom Rodrigo the fundamentals of Christianity. The prince, paying a visit to Donna Maria, was joyous to find a priest who had actually learnt Dawan; the Jesuits garnered ambitions on quite another level than their Dominican brethren when it came to learning the local language and conditions. Dom Rodrigo made a stunningly frank confession before Pater Antonius, which seemed to cast the local Europeans in a doubtful light. After this he returned to Amarasi, filled with a missionary zeal. Pater Antonius commented that the Amarasi princes had hitherto declined to keep Dominicans in their land for more than short periods. Now, however, they ostensibly wished to see friars clad in black and wearing black caps, that is, Jesuits. In spite of the stereotypes, the Jesuit account indicates that Catholicism was in a way ‘self-perpetuating’ though perhaps mostly restricted to the elite, and that enthusiasm for the rather untutored Dominican priests was in no way unlimited (Jacobs 1988:242).

A third case of co-opting an Atoni realm is presented by the powerful realm of Sonbai, which fell apart during the defeats in 1657-1658. There is no good geographical description that clarifies the scope of this domain in the period under scrutiny, but one has to assume that it encompassed roughly the later self-ruling territories (*zelfbesturende landschappen*) of Fatuleu, Mollo and Miomaffo (Amakono).³⁷ Needless to say, borders were constantly fluctuating over the centuries, but it was a highland principedom endowed with considerable resources in sandalwood and beeswax. When part of the population fled to Kupang in 1658, the elite were split. The executive regent, Ama Tomananu, went to the VOC taking with him two sons of ‘Emperor’ Ama Tuan, while their imperial father was forced to remain in the land of Sonbai, attentively watched by a Topass troop (Coolhaas 1971:528). Two further sons are known to have been kept under surveillance in Lifau in 1673 on suspicion that they might be used by the community that had settled alongside the Dutch in Kupang.³⁸ Sonbai was therefore suddenly split into two branches. The

³⁷ For the twentieth-century borders of these, see H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:154.

³⁸ VOC 1294 (1673), f. 307.

inland branch would later become known as Greater Sonbai (Sonbai Besar, Groot-Sonnebay), while the branch in Kupang was consequently termed Lesser Sonbai (Sonbai Kecil, Klein-Sonnebay). Although these terms are not documented in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they will be used in this book for the sake of convenience.

Ama Tomananu of the Oematan family had so far been the effective ruler of the realm, since Emperor Ama Tuan was ‘female’ and was not expected to take an active role in governance. With the regent out of the picture, a new strong leader was needed, and the Portuguese put forward Ama Kono, the Kono lord, or Uis Kono. In oral tradition, Kono and Oematan had held their positions from the inception of the realm, as the first and second regent or *usif*, but European sources tell another story. We have already met Kono as a rebellious local lord under the Sonbai realm, who met a grim end in 1655. His successor fared better, according to a VOC report: ‘the king of Amakono was installed by the Portuguese as the field commander [*veltoverste*] over the entire Sonbai [domain], in the place of of Ama Tomananu who had fled hither [to Kupang].’³⁹ Francisco Vieira de Figueredo met the man in 1664 when he marched down to Amanuban with 3,000 armed followers in order to parley with Vieira. The merchant-adventurer noted that Ama Kono had been defeated by the Portuguese years before, probably in 1657-1658. Afterwards, however, he became so faithful to the Portuguese that he risked his life many times on their behalf. Still, he was embittered by the way in which Simão Luís treated him, as if he was still a prisoner. Now, however, Simão Luís was dead and the pragmatic Vieira consoled Ama Kono by adding Batugade on the north coast to his domains – a place outside the Atoni area that nowadays belongs to Timor Leste. In return he was expected to pay 30 bahar of sandalwood from Sonbai and Batugade each year to His Majesty Afonso VI – in reality, to the local Portuguese elite. It was also agreed that the captains staying in Sonbai were exempted from providing *tuthais* to Kono, and that all the sandalwood in the area was intended solely for the Crown of Portugal. Otherwise, Vieira declared that the Kono lord could trade things as he wished since he was a free ruler – no prisoner in fact, but a proud vassal under King Afonso VI himself (Boxer 1967:89-90). The Kono lord seemed very pleased with this arrangement, and not without reason.

³⁹ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 672.

He was now, as the Uis Kono, the executive regent of Sonbai. In the VOC reports of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Sonbai domain is usually called ‘Amakono’ and the regent himself is termed ‘king’ of that realm.⁴⁰ A Dutch report from 1665 summarized the situation:

The Sonbai [lord] sits sorrowful [...] since he is not under the [command of the] Dutch; and the Portuguese keep good watch over him so he cannot escape to Kupang. The king of Amakono and his people in particular perform the service [of monitoring him]. He should be done away with, as a great enemy of the Company. In order to do so a person has come to me, and explained to me that he wished to murder him by means of poison, and go to him as a friend since he was an acquaintance of him. Otherwise he cannot be overcome, since he resides on the high rock.⁴¹

The assassination project came to nothing, and Uis Kono himself proved much less hostile to the Dutch than the quotation might suggest. According to what they heard in Kupang, Uis Kono seemed prepared to lean towards the VOC side if the opportunity arose. His attitude to the Portuguese might therefore have been more one of political necessity than Vieira’s account would suggest. As it turned out, the opportunity to switch sides never came, and Uis Kono remained an important prop for the Topass authority for several decades. Amakono became a strategic base for the Topass leader Matheus da Costa when he expanded the Portuguese sphere of power towards the east around 1670. Part of the regent’s family accepted Catholicism at some stage prior to 1702, while other members remained ‘heathen’.

The Sonbai emperor was too important a symbol to dispense with, particularly since his descendants became rival rulers in Kupang. The captive lord Ama Tuan (also called Ama Utang) lived on until at least 1680, and occasionally managed to play a political role in affairs. He at-

⁴⁰ In the nineteenth century, Amakono usually denoted the north-eastern third of the Sonbai realm, which was called Miomaffo in the twentieth century after Mount Miomaffo. This was the immediate sphere of power of Uis Kono, while Mollo was governed by an Oematan branch that functioned as second regents of the realm. The westernmost part, Fatuleu, was dominated by the Takaip and some other minor aristocratic families. Oral tradition knows of two pairs of *usif* that were the backbone of Sonbai: Kono-Oematan and Taiboko-Ebnoni (Fobia 1984:89, 91). This mirrors the Timorese structural principle of quadripartition.

⁴¹ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 679.

tempted to enhance his position by taking sides in the internal Portuguese troubles, backing Matheus da Costa against António Hornay. Later on, in 1673, the emperor supported the short-lived *capitão mor* Manuel da Costa Vieira, again against Hornay. When victory came to Hornay through a swift coup, the position of the emperor was in serious danger, since he expected an attack from the Topasses at any minute. Through a man from Lesser Sonbai he asked the Dutch if he might be allowed to flee to Kupang in case his lands were overrun by Hornay's forces. The *opperhoofd* in Kupang was doubtful, since the Dutch policy after all the defeats and the ensuing peace treaty was to remain restrained when it came to affairs in the Portuguese sphere. The matter anyway soon took a new turn. Later in the same year Ama Tuan submitted to Hornay, together with some other Timorese chiefs. Even after such an act of submission, many Sonbai were suspicious of Hornay's intentions, since he was the son of a former VOC employee. Maybe, they thought, his ultimate goal was for the entire island to be under the power of the Company – an assumption that would be completely falsified by Hornay's policies in the following twenty years.⁴² The action taken by Ama Tuan can be seen as a resumption of the policy he had pursued back in the 1650s: an attempt to use the rivalries between the Dutch and various Portuguese factions to further his own interests. This kind of endeavour would become a common feature among Timorese leaders over the next few centuries, and some developed considerable skill at steering a path between the foreign centres of power.

References to Sonbai or Uis Kono are very rare in the Portuguese records of the late seventeenth century, which are not much concerned with indigenous Timorese affairs. In Dutch sources, the emperor and the Kono regent appear from time to time in a context that strongly suggests the extent of their importance. Their relationship with the Timorese allies of the VOC in Kupang presents a puzzling oscillation between hostility and feelings of amity. One may even talk about a Timorese network of relationships that partly ran counter to the 'colonial' order of things, and did not conform to the interests or dispositions of either the Dutch or the Portuguese.

The Kono lord who was appointed by Vieira finally died circa August

⁴² VOC 1301 (1673), *Dagregister*, sub 5-8-1673, 16-10-1673.

1687. The regent had probably developed a close relationship with António Hornay, who seemed shaken at the news of his death. At the same time, some Dutchmen happened to be present in Lifau trading in sandalwood, but the regent's authority was such that his death immediately prevented the sandalwood from being delivered to the area above Lifau, due to the grief of the population. Soon after the news was made public, Hornay marched to Sonbai accompanied by his armed retainers, intending to take a firm hold of the situation. Timorese funerals were often postponed for a lengthy time in order to wait for the right occasion, and it was only in November 1688 that the funeral rites for the 'king of Amakono' were carried out. It was an event of the utmost importance, and almost all the kings on Timor reportedly attended it; António Hornay rightly sensed its significance and appeared in person. The ambiguous stance of the indigenous elite towards the VOC enclave is illustrated by a rumour circulating at the occasion. The VOC allies had recently suffered a military setback, which was magnified out of all proportion. Hornay and the other funeral guests were told that one thousand enemies and five kings had been slain by the Amarasi, and that it was now possible to march into the Kupang territory and capture the surviving women and children. Some of the Timorese kings were joyous at the news, while others seemed truly sorrowful about it. Hornay himself, perhaps sceptical about the news, refused to send his men towards Kupang on the pretext that he needed his manpower to remain in East Timor. Afterwards, Sonbai anxiously sent a delegation to Kupang to find out the truth about the defeat, which turned out to be of much smaller proportions than was feared.⁴³ Later on, in 1689, it is recorded that the female ruler of Lesser Sonbai, a trusted VOC ally, had been celebrating a mortuary feast for three years in succession in order to commemorate her uncle, the 'king of Amakono' – either Uis Kono or, and more probably, a Sonbai lord.⁴⁴ Envoys and groups of people constantly moved back and forth between the two Sonbai congregations, crossing the border between the colonial spheres.

These displays of concern for each other should not overshadow the fact that Greater Sonbai was frequently an outright enemy of Lesser

⁴³ VOC 1460 (1688-89), *Dagregister*, sub 11-12-1688.

⁴⁴ VOC 1481 (1689-90), *Dagregister*, sub 2-12-1689. The text indicates c.1686 as the date of her uncle's death. Since the Kono family did not belong to the Sonbai dynasty, the Uis Kono was presumably not the person being alluded to here.

Sonbai and the other VOC allies. The Dutch *opperhoofd* complained in 1682 that the troublesome Amarasi could well have been brought to their knees if Amakono (Sonbai) and others had not constantly backed them up.⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, the internal cohesion of Sonbai was poor, as exemplified by numerous instances. In 1695, Uis Kono spoke to an envoy from Lesser Sonbai who had arrived inland to discuss the restitution of stolen cattle and the bride-price to be paid for an abducted noblewoman. His words illustrate the extent to which local rulers sometimes adopted the pretensions of the foreign suzerains: the Sonbai community in the VOC area, he said, must no longer stay in Kupang, but rather return to live under the authority of Portugal. Uis Kono furthermore asserted that the entire island belonged to the Portuguese. The authority of the VOC and the king of Kupang, he alleged, extended no further than a carbine's shot from Fort Concordia. The great Dutch defeats were still remembered by the Timorese elite, for Uis Kono pointed out that the various Dutch forays on the island had each time been kept in check by the might of the Portuguese. Therefore, the sandalwood that the Helong had delivered to the VOC over the last few years actually belonged to the Portuguese.

The Lesser Sonbai group did not comply with Kono's summons, but some months later, matters took on a more serious tone. A considerable number of soldiers from Greater Sonbai arrived at Ponai and Bisepu, some 30 kilometres from Fort Concordia. They were led by 'black Christians' and were clearly enjoined by the current Topass leader, Francisco Hornay, to attack the Company lands. Although their feats were restricted to the destruction of some outlying houses and plantations and the harvesting of sandalwood to bring to Lifau, they proudly asserted the might of Portugal in almost mythical terms, professing that they would send 'an iron-clad ship with iron-clad people from Portugal in order to shell and demolish the Company's fort in Kupang'.⁴⁶ However, the Sonbai effort was far from whole-hearted; the then emperor of Greater Sonbai sent a secret message to his cousin or niece (*nigt*), the female ruler of Lesser Sonbai, explaining that she must no longer stay in her *negeri*. She should leave at once for the safety of the Dutch fort

⁴⁵ VOC 1376 (1682), f. 391.

⁴⁶ VOC 1577 (1695-96), *Dagregister*, sub 13-6-1695. The idea that a vessel with extraordinary powers would one day eradicate the might of the white foreigners circulated in Timor from time to time. A politico-religious resistance movement centred in Wewiku in Belu surfaced in 1920, and a rumour spread that a warship would soon arrive, providing assistance to the Belu, who would then expel the 'Company', that is, the Dutch authorities (*Politieke Verslagen van de Buitengewesten* 1895/20, Nationaal Archief).

since Uis Kono and the Topasses wished to bring the VOC allies under their rule, against his own wishes.⁴⁷ Moreover, there was little love lost between the Topass clients; a conflict arose between Greater Sonbai and Amanuban, whose men had raided their neighbours for cattle. At any rate, the invading troops suddenly turned back at the Maniki River, just a three hours journey from Kupang, and were unheard of again. The structure of the Timorese domains made them unreliable to use for offensive action, something that would be a thorn in the side for both the Dutch and the Portuguese over the centuries.

The other Atoni princedoms may be summarized in briefer terms. Amanuban, although hailed by some early observers as the most powerful domain of the island, assumed a relatively modest position after the accession of António Hornay, possibly in part because of its association with his enemy, Matheus da Costa. The same may be said of its eastern neighbour Batumean, which made brief overtures to the VOC in the 1650s but in the end remained a Topass client. The name 'Batumean' fell into disuse in the late seventeenth century, possibly due to now unknown political changes. In its place, the name Amanatun, Batumean's most important component, occasionally appears in the records. The other, smaller geographical part, Nenometan or Amanesi, was appropriated by its Tetun neighbour Wewiku-Wehali at some unknown point in time.⁴⁸ The former Sonbai dependency Amfoan or Sorbian in the northwest was badly ravaged by the Portuguese prior to 1673. The population was to a large extent depleted by death or migration, and then a further split took place in 1683, when a brother of the king at that time, fearing the jealousy of the latter, left Amfoan with hundreds of subjects to join the VOC in Kupang. All these places produced sandalwood, and Sorbian in particular was reputed to yield the largest amount of high-quality wood on the island, which was brought overland to Lifau with great effort and hard work.⁴⁹ The relative strength of Amarasi was felt among its weaker neighbours; migrants from the defeated Sorbian stayed in the land of the Amarasi king, and people from Amarasi were harvesting the sandalwood in Batumean and Taebenu in order to bring it to Lifau on behalf of

⁴⁷ VOC 1577 (1695-96), *Dagregister*, sub 3-8-1695.

⁴⁸ Amanesi acknowledged the VOC after 1749, but in the records from the second half of the eighteenth century there is still no hint about its dependence on Wewiku-Wehali. Nineteenth-century records relating to Amanatun are extremely scarce.

⁴⁹ Tange 1689, ff. 4-5, H 49:v, KITLV.

António Hornay.⁵⁰

To conclude, the Portuguese were able to bind the Atoni domains to their cause through an interesting mixture of military superiority and agreements made with local elites. From a Timorese perspective there was often tension between allies because of blood-oaths and dependency, meaning that the network was not very stable.⁵¹ The Dutch observers in Kupang did their best to create a dark image of Iberian cruelty and oppression, worthy of a Bartolomé de las Casas, and it can indeed not be denied that Timorese groups who opposed the Portuguese strategy were often treated very severely. At the same time, the examples provided above clearly indicate that there was a sincere commitment to the cause of Portugal, a commitment that could be channelled through the image of the distant figure of the king of Portugal and the Catholic creed. The position of the Portuguese authority as ‘stranger king’ inevitably comes to mind again. The Portuguese did achieve something that in all likelihood nobody had managed before, namely holding executive (if tenuous) authority over the bulk of the Atoni domains. In spite of the annuities and forced deliveries of sandalwood, the system did offer real advantages. Apart from strengthening the internal position of several local leaders, the Portuguese achieved a degree of strict stability. In times of strong Topass dominance, there were relatively few recorded instances of warfare between the clients, although disturbances inevitably occurred from time to time.⁵² Through his *capitão mor* in Lifau, the Catholic Majesty in distant Lisbon held the system in place in his own way – a system of which he himself was probably only vaguely aware.

WEHALI AND THE EASTERN LANDS

It is apparent how little the Portuguese writers care about the traditional heart of the island, Wewiku-Wehali. After the defeat (or, at least, setback) of the *liurai* of Wehali in 1642, this realm is not mentioned in the published Iberian sources until well into the eighteenth century. In a way,

⁵⁰ VOC 1516 (1692), f. 771b.

⁵¹ For example, Taebenu claimed to have sworn the oath as an ally and not a subject, while the Topasses claimed that the principedom had been subdued through violence; see VOC 1535 (1693), n.p.; VOC 1577 (1695), n.p.

⁵² For example, in 1692 Hornay was able to avert a brawl between Sonbai and Amanuban about the payment of *belis* (VOC 1531 [1692-93], *Dagregister*, sub 19-7-1692).

the position of Wehali was exactly the opposite of the Topass establishment. The great lord, the *maromak oan*, managed his authority by resting in the centre, eating, drinking and sleeping, while the Portuguese *capitão mor* managed it through military force. In the eyes of the Portuguese priests and officers, Wehali apparently did not merit official attention, being an empire constructed from words and ritual deference rather than a political power as they knew it. In an age where absolute royal power was a common (if contested) notion in Europe, Wehali simply did not conform.

Dutch sources at least contain a minimum of information about Wehali in the second half of the seventeenth century. During the years of rivalry between António Hornay and Matheus da Costa, the two leaders maintained highly mobile forces who ran amok when faced with any Timorese groups in pursuit of plunder. In the autumn of 1665, it came to the attention of Da Costa that the Makassarese were in contact with persons of some standing from Wewiku-Wehali and Cailaco, another principedom of Central Timor. These persons presented daggers and assegais as a token of their submission to the mighty kingdom in Sulawesi. In other words, Wehali pursued a policy of relations with Makassar dating back to before 1642. Such a thing was utterly unacceptable to the Topasses, for Makassar was still a powerful and independent entity that must be kept out of Timor. In November, Da Costa and his Timorese clients successfully attacked the two defiant principedoms. There was much booty to be had and any inhabitants who were captured were sold as slaves.⁵³

The destruction of the Makassar realm in 1667 further eroded any possibility of receiving assistance from that direction. Nevertheless, Wehali was not permanently subdued. It lay in an area where foreigners seldom ventured, and anyone wishing to claim authority over the land had to periodically reaffirm his might. The Company servant Reynout Wagenburgh met the ruler of Wehali in January 1673 and noted his deep resentment towards the Portuguese. The king exclaimed: 'If I am not able to witness the time when I see you in my oppressed kingdom with assistance, then I would rather die.' Wagenburgh consoled the dejected prince, saying that God would presumably change things if they were not to his satisfaction. If there were a new Dutch-Portuguese war, he

⁵³ VOC 1257 (1666), f. 710.

noted, many local princes would no doubt assist the VOC in order to rid themselves of the Portuguese yoke.⁵⁴

Wehali was as defiant against António Hornay as he was against his late Da Costa rival. While Hornay prepared ships and men for an expedition to East Timor in 1677 – explained in more detail below – he welcomed Uis Kono from the Sonbai realm. The two of them drew up plans to march and destroy Wewiku-Wehali, and provisions were collected for this very purpose.⁵⁵ As in 1642, it turned out that the Atoni had no qualms about violating the land of the *maromak oan* – despite the fact that Wehali was highly respected as the imagined point of origin of the Atoni royalty. The invasion began and was apparently not resisted by the Belu. Hornay spent several months in the Belu area collecting various debts or impositions from the local population, and the Wehali court sent a submissive embassy to the fearsome Topass leader.⁵⁶

In spite of the initially belligerent attitude of Uis Kono there was soon a rapprochement between the related princedoms Sonbai and Wehali. In 1687, the Kono lord agreed to give his niece, Lady Taebenu, in marriage to the king of Belu – either the *liurai* or the *maromak oan*. A curious episode followed the marriage agreement. It goes without saying that marriages of such magnitude were carefully arranged, but in this case the bride-to-be proved surprisingly independent of thought. Finding her future spouse too old for her liking, she escaped with a female slave and two male retainers, and finally ended up in Dutch Kupang where she asked for asylum. The local rajas deliberated with the *opperhoofd* and it was agreed that the Lesser Sonbai congregation would tend to her. They were admonished by the Dutch to be very discreet about the affair – if António Hornay were to receive word of it, trouble might flare up between the VOC and the Portuguese.⁵⁷ Two months later Uis Kono died, which probably reduced the sensitivity of the matter. In spite of the mishap, the incident indicates an intention to bind the two ritually superior realms of the Atoni and Tetun together, presumably with the support of Hornay who must have understood the central position of Wehali well. For the next twenty years there is no information at all about the princedom, which probably ran its own affairs.

⁵⁴ VOC 1301 (1673-74), *Dagregister*, sub 15-12-1673.

⁵⁵ VOC 1327 (1676-77), *Dagregister*, sub 20-5-1677.

⁵⁶ VOC 1335 (1677-78), *Dagregister*, sub 16-7-1677.

⁵⁷ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 11-6-1687.

The numerous small and ethnically diverse princedoms in East Timor had largely stayed outside of the Portuguese orbit up until the 1660s. Although it is alleged that some coastal places were dominated by seafaring Portuguese as early as 1623, they had no documented permanent presence there, and there were surely rivals who vied for influence.⁵⁸ After their sea expedition of 1641 the Makassarese kept contact with some of the eastern domains they had once defeated. This applied in particular to three territories on the north coast, Manatuto, Ade and Con, of which the first two had a close mutual political relationship. Little sandalwood was accessible to foreigners there, but one could find beeswax and slaves, second-best commodities that could possibly motivate the establishment of an economic post. Turtle-shell, also known as *karet*, was a third, equally valuable product which could, however, never be more than marginal considering the limited supply of turtles.⁵⁹ There were also attractive but tantalizing stories about rich deposits of copper, in particular the fabled copper mountain of Ade. The internal structure of the coastal princedoms was not very centralized, as can be gathered from a Dutch report dating from 1665. The most important of them, Ade, consisted of a number of settlements under the control of minor chiefs; nothing could be undertaken without the consent of the others. At a higher level, there were two prominent rajas, or *orangkaya*⁶⁰, namely those of Watte Soul and Vemassee, who thus constituted a sort of double princedom, a common political feature in the eastern archipelago. They had a tributary relationship with the Luca princedom at the southern coast, but had recently withdrawn from this relationship. The two components of Ade were not able to act in unity, however. In 1665, Watte Soul refused to trade with the visiting Dutch out of concern for the Makassarese, while Vemassee was inclined to welcome the VOC in order to get rid of the seafarers from Sulawesi. The Dutch visitors found the Ade to be good-natured fellows; unlike some of the Atoni groups they were, however, not warlike people.⁶¹

After 1641, the Makassarese, and in particular those coming from Tallo', sent five or six or perhaps even more ships to the north coast of

⁵⁸ A Jesuit document refers to missionary activity in Luca c.1657, but it does not seem to have been implemented on a continual basis (Jacobs 1988:169-71).

⁵⁹ In modern Bahasa Indonesia, *karet* means rubber.

⁶⁰ The term *orangkaya*, 'rich man', usually denotes a village or district chief in the Southeast Asian Archipelago (*VOC-Glossarium* 2000:83). In this case it is used to denote a petty ruler.

⁶¹ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 176, 179-80, 194-5; Hägerdal 2007b:556-7; Veth 1855:604-5.

East Timor each year. Their presence deterred the Portuguese from acting too heavily in these quarters. A missionary foray undertaken in the late 1650s proved fateful for some of its members; an Ade ruler poisoned two Jesuits and a Portuguese captain at a reception simply because he coveted their ship. (Polenghi 2007:68-9). There was a tributary relationship between the Makassarese and Ade, the latter of which had to make an annual delivery of 50 slaves and a few picul (circa 61 kilograms) of beeswax. Apart from that, the Makassarese traded cloths against beeswax, sandalwood, turtle-shell and ambergris (Coolhaas 1968:929-31). An amusing story tells how the locals of Ade did not know at first the value of ambergris, and so used it to make their small boats watertight. As a matter of fact this substance from the sperm whale was very valuable for making medicine and perfumes. When the Makassarese found out they immediately proceeded to scrape away the ambergris from the boats (Rumphius 1999:290).

Another important player in the area was the VOC, whose ships began to explore the possibilities of trade in East Timor after the peace treaty was concluded with Portugal. They found that the locals feared both the Makassarese and the Portuguese, but that many seemed positive about a VOC establishment. In 1666, for example, a Portuguese ship from Lifau went to Ade and Manatuto with three Dutchmen on board, in order to purchase beeswax. Since the ship flew the Portuguese flag they were regarded as enemies. The locals stood on the shore, weapons in hand, and forbade them to step ashore. The Dutch sailors upon seeing the tricolour of their homeland among the crowd, explained that they were Dutch subjects and that they were on board a private ship that was neither Portuguese nor Makassarese. In a moment the tense atmosphere changed and the three sailors were generously treated and offered water and refreshments. The Portuguese sailors, however, had to stay aboard. The locals asked the Dutchmen to request that their authorities send assistance since they could not probably hold out against the Portuguese or Makassarese for more than another year. The sailors promised to do this.⁶²

A VOC report from 1665 provides a valuable enumeration of the north-eastern princedoms and their status, going from the east to the west. After Ade and Manatuto, which were lightly dependent upon

⁶² VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 214-5.

Makassar, Lacló and Hera asserted their independence from Portugal, although the latter was attacked and burnt down around 1660 after a Batavian ship arrived there. After Lacló followed the shores of Dili – the first mention of this place – and then Mateyer (probably Motael), which secretly kept a Dutch tricolour. Then there were Tibar, Nussepoko (not identified), Lanqueiro and Cutubaba, which were all occupied by the Topasses. Cailaco, further inland, was an enemy of the Portuguese and did not trust anyone. The next four places, Balibo, Silawang, Batugade and Joanije (Jenilu⁶³), had been destroyed by the Topasses, and the following place was Amatassy, probably Amentasi in Harneno, where traces of a population were found, but no people. The king there had been hanged by the Portuguese since he had sold sandalwood to the Makassarese. There thus remained Assem and Mena, which were seen to be loyal friends of Portugal, and where the Company had consequently few opportunities.⁶³ All in all, it was a highly turbulent situation where three external powers – European, Eurasian and Asian – contended for influence.

What has been said may give the impression that the Company was perceived as a benevolent power in comparison with the others. Nevertheless there were also reports of Dutch conduct being similar to that ascribed to the Portuguese. In 1668, the crew of two Dutch sloops travelling along the north coast made a few armed landings in the vicinity of Mateyer. They destroyed some settlements and chased off the Portuguese who stayed there, shouting: ‘You dogs, this is just the beginning. In the coming year we will also chase you out of Lifau.’⁶⁴ By this time, Makassar had been thoroughly defeated by the Company and its allies and its archipelago-wide position was ruined by the subsequent Bungaya Treaty. The Dutch looked to expand their influence in the resulting power vacuum in East Timor. The Kupang post was too weak to carry out much expansion, but north of East Timor lay the so-called South-Western Islands, which were monitored by the Dutch governor of Banda. Islands such as Kisar, Wetar and Leti traditionally welcomed contact with the Timorese, and Timorese slaves were used by the Dutch *perkeniers*, or planters, on Banda.⁶⁵ The local VOC office therefore cast a

⁶³ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 194-200.

⁶⁴ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 178-9.

⁶⁵ For linguistic connections between East Timor and the South-Western Islands, see Engelenhoven and Hajek 2000; Hull 1998.

watchful eye in this direction.

When the *orangkaya* of the island of Kisar made overtures to purchase slaves for the Company on Timor, veritable Dutch-Portuguese hostilities broke out. The ‘reckless’ António Hornay, still only in charge of Larantuka, used the news as a pretext for a private pirate expedition. In early 1668, he gathered 12 vessels and made inroads on Kisar and Leti, which both belonged to the South-Western Islands and therefore stood under Company suzerainty. According to the Dutch version, Hornay killed a multitude of cattle and people on Kisar, enslaved a good part of the population, and forced the remainder to deliver gold and other goods. As a particular speciality, a VOC record alleges that he boiled the fat out of human bodies and used it to polish the weapons, commenting: ‘This we will do to you all since you go to Banda and mingle with the Noble Company.’⁶⁶ The Dutch in Banda, however, proved somewhat more agile than their brethren in Kupang. Three VOC vessels arrived at Leti in early May while the pirates (as we may well call them) were still anchored there. Eighty Dutchmen were commanded to advance by boat and ruin the Topass ships. As they approached they were met by musket fire from the ships as well as from the encamped Topasses on the shore. The Dutch were defeated and had to fall back, suffering losses of twelve men, either dead or wounded. The following day, a VOC flute (*fluyt*, a type of ship), well equipped with artillery, approached the pirates, who now preferred to negotiate, and began to restore the prisoners. It so happened that the following night it was dark and rainy, and the Topass fleet slipped away in spite of the Dutch crew being on the alert. The pirates left most of the captives behind, miserable, but alive (Coolhaas 1968:619-20).

The Dutch squadron now proceeded to the Timorese coast. A few days later, in late May and early June 1668, they concluded six formal treaties with the *orangkaya* of Ade, Manatuto, Hera, Laivai and Waimaa. The treaties were reminiscent of the pact made with Sonbai and Amabi thirteen years previously, but were even more rudimentary: a vague commitment by the locals to deliver their products to the Company and to deny external traders access to materials. In return, the VOC was to protect its new allies (Heeres 1931:394; McWilliam 2007:227-8). However, if the 1655 contract is seen as a partial failure, the subsequent one in 1668

⁶⁶ VOC 2285 (1733), f. 179.

can only be classified as a complete disaster, in particular for the locals.

Firstly, the local population was deeply divided with regard to external alliances. The old ruler of Vemasse and his son, Ama Sili, were enthusiastically on the side of the Dutch, while several other *orangkaya* were still influenced by Makassar.⁶⁷ Secondly, Matheus da Costa angrily told VOC representatives visiting Lifau that the eastern domains had ‘belonged’ to Portugal since at least the age of the old *capitão mor* Francisco Fernandes in the early seventeenth century. One version states that the eastern lands had been Portuguese territory for more than 60 years, in other words since circa 1600. The Dutch later remarked that Da Costa’s story did not ring true; apart from their traditional dependency under Luca, Ade and Manatuto had been paying tribute to the Makassarese for a long time with the full knowledge of Da Costa. Now, however, the Makassarese seaborne empire was destroyed and from the Dutch point of view, the contract with the East Timorese *orangkaya* was consequently valid. Company servants from Kupang even made the effort to read the articles of the peace treaty with Makassar to the *capitão mor* in order to prove their prerogatives.⁶⁸

Matheus da Costa did not care in the slightest. In the autumn of 1668, a Portuguese fleet sailed to the east to assert their claims. The settlements in Ade were set alight, as was the Dutch flag that the inhabitants had received. Hundreds of people were taken away to the slave market and some of the other domains, such as Manatuto, Hera and Lacló, were treated in the same way.⁶⁹ The details are not too clear, but it appears that the fall of Makassar and the provocative Dutch diplomatic foray was a catalyst for the Portuguese to systematically take control of East Timor. In a VOC report from 1670 it appears that Da Costa proceeded to ravage Suai in the Tetun-speaking area, the dual principedom of Camenaça which supposedly stood under the authority of the Likusaen *lurái*. By this time, the Portuguese occupied all of the inner coast of Timor, and their authority stretched around the eastern hook of the island to Tiris-Serin, a coastal domain that seems to have been situated in the eastern

⁶⁷ VOC 2285 (1733), f. 178.

⁶⁸ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 179-80, 184-5.

⁶⁹ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 188-90, 218-20; Coolhaas 1968:681.

section of the outer coast, south of Manufai.⁷⁰ Shortly afterwards, early in 1671, a VOC document reported that the entire outer coast was now under Portuguese influence and that the Portuguese were busy erecting small fortresses along the coast – how matters stood inland is unclear in the sources.⁷¹ All the places where the ships of the Solorese, Makassarese and free burghers from Banda had come to trade were now abruptly closed. The locals were forbidden to trade with the foreigners on pain of death.⁷² As such, these measures were not exceptional. The VOC had long since pursued a policy of monopoly in the trade of vital products and had an ugly record of brutal enforcement; Maluku, for instance, was a case in point. It goes without saying that this was no implementation of colonial rule in the modern sense of the word, for there was obviously no interference in the inner structure of the indigenous domains. At the same time, however, the Portuguese went further than the former Makassarese overlords or, for that matter, the Dutch in the region, since they policed East Timor through small coastal garrisons.

In addition, Portuguese expansion in East Timor differed fundamentally from that of West Timor. In the Atoni area their influence was disseminated through trade, alliances and missionary endeavours. In East Timor, brute force had to be relied upon to a greater extent. The domains were smaller and weaker than in the west, and easily fell prey to a determined military effort in the course of a few years. Indirectly, the process paved the way for the later political division of the island into a western and an eastern half. The Topasses do not appear to have had legitimate power in these quarters, and if Dutch records can be trusted, the coastal garrisons behaved in a rapacious and overbearing conquistador-style, which only served to breed considerable resentment and to cause the migration of minor groups to the VOC-dominated South-Western Islands.⁷³ As a result, the East Timorese turned out to be susceptible to influence from the White Portuguese of the *Estado da Índia* during the next century, who would eventually establish their centre in Dili in 1769.

⁷⁰ A map of Timor by Godinho de Eredia, from 1613, indicates ‘Tiris Servin’ somewhere east of Camenaça but west of Luca (Durand 2006:80). Later on, Tiris occurs in pair with Mauta in the documents. According to a modern tradition from Luca, the kingdom was situated 80 kilometres to the west of Beacu, in other words close to the Manufai principedom (Spillett 1999:300).

⁷¹ VOC 2285 (1733), f. 208.

⁷² VOC 1275 (1670), f. 663.

⁷³ VOC 1426 (1685); Coolhaas 1975:30.

What did the Company do in the face of all the Portuguese aggression? The answer is: practically nothing. In the late 1660s, the price of sandalwood dropped by a half and there was an excessive amount stored in Batavia, which diminished any interests in expansion on Timor. Upon closer inspection, Batavia learned that the resources on Ade would not balance the cost of maintaining a stronghold at this sparsely populated site. Being in essence a commercial company, the VOC therefore had to turn a blind eye to the fate of the locals (Coolhaas 1968:677-8, 681). The VOC authorities were content to send letters of complaint to the leaders in Lifau, letters that were subsequently replied to with counter-claims and belligerent assertions that the Portuguese had no obligation to explain their behaviour to the Dutch.⁷⁴ A side-effect, however, was that a substantial group of people from Ade migrated to Wetar, a sizeable yet sparsely inhabited island under the jurisdiction of Banda. The Ade prince, Ama Sili, was established as raja of the coastal settlement Iliwaki and was baptized under the name Salomon Speelman. He became a very useful and loyal ally of the Company in the South-Western Islands, and a good friend and informer of the celebrated botanist Georg Rumphius.⁷⁵ Nevertheless he must have been frustrated by the continued Dutch refusal to heed his bid to be restored in Ade with their assistance. From the long-term perspective, the abortive contracts of 1668 had the effect of supporting the positions of the VOC. During the eighteenth century, the Dutch frequently referred to the contracts, which were taken as proof that large parts of East Timor actually belonged to them.

Topass power in the eastern archipelago was turning into something loosely akin to a *mandala* state, a polity where the radiation of power from the centre determined how far out the writ of a ruler would be in effect, and where the centre would be surrounded by satellite polities whose loyalty was far from assured. In this case, however, it worked without the 'Indified' elements usually associated with the *mandala* state.⁷⁶ Outside the centres of Larantuka and Lifau lay the dependent, if autonomous, Atoni domains, which showed a degree of loyalty to Portugal, and further away still were the recently associated, but still recalcitrant, coastal

⁷⁴ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 180-1, 188-90.

⁷⁵ Rumphius 1999:75, 235, 280, 290. Riedel 1886:431-2 recorded oral traditions about Silisaban (Ama Sili). After his death in 1693 he was succeeded as raja in Iliwaki by his son, Johannes Salomonsz; upon his demise in 1728 no further raja seems to have been crowned on Wetar. None of these rajas appear to have held executive power outside Iliwaki (Lamper n.y.:16; Coolhaas 1985:189).

⁷⁶ On the *mandala* state, see Henk Schulte Nordholt 1996:9-10.

domains of the east. The recent acquisitions were not secure but had to be confirmed again and again in order that they did not fall out of the Topass orbit. For years, Follafaik was a determined centre of resistance, a place in Central Timor adjacent to Maucatar, whose king was a relative of the fugitive Ama Sili of Ade.⁷⁷ Matheus da Costa attacked the *negeri* on no less than three occasions, but being situated on a rock it managed to survive the sieges despite the fact that the defenders were only equipped with bows, arrows and blowpipes. Da Costa ignominiously had to retreat each time, suffering losses.

When António Hornay united the Topass congregations in 1673 he vigorously followed the eastern policy of his predecessor. He first pressures the recalcitrant princedoms Suai, Fohoterin, Fatulete and Leteluli into paying three chests of gold as a fine and ravaged Leteluli when it did not yield quickly enough.⁷⁸ Next, he turned his attention to Follafaik. A VOC report states that in 1675 he sent a huge force of 30,000 men to deal with the defiant princedom. The numbers were probably exaggerated, but the story indicates the great effort required to root out East Timorese resistance.⁷⁹

The seriousness of the resistance is also clear from a report of the following year. By this time the easternmost areas were rioting. The inhabitants were killing all the Portuguese they could find, together with their families and slaves, and were defiantly flying Dutch flags. This time Hornay went in person with twelve or thirteen ships. He had hoped for assistance from his brother-in-arms, Uis Kono of the Sonbai realm, but the Sonbai greatly feared that their realm would be attacked by the rash Follafaik if there were no men left at home. The ambivalent nature of Hornay's personalized rule is apparent here: his charisma demanded that he lead his Topasses in person lest the conflagration would spread out of control. On the other hand, he was not strong enough to use his clients' manpower without the consent of the principal lords.⁸⁰ After such an expedition in 1677, possibly connected in some way with the simultaneous campaign against the central realm of Wehali, resistance finally petered out, with inaccessible inland areas like Matebian hold-

⁷⁷ Follafaik (Follefait, Folyfay) may have been based around present-day Fatulúlic in south-western Timor Leste (Pélissier 1996:182). In the nineteenth century it was seen as a dependency of Suai (Brouwer 1849-50, H 731, KITLV)

⁷⁸ VOC 1301 (1673-74), *Dagregister*, sub 16-12-1673.

⁷⁹ VOC 1319 (1675-76), *Dagregister*, sub 17-8-1675, 8-9-1675.

⁸⁰ VOC 1320 (1676); Coolhaas 1971:240.

ing out for at least a few years longer.⁸¹ Hornay organized rudimentary posts to monitor East Timor. A captain with 40-50 men was stationed in a fortress at Ade. Further to the west, on the so-called Belu Coast, there were two further companies of the same size. All over, there were no less than 23 banners and about a thousand men stationed on Timor in the late 1670s, all of them equipped with awe-inspiring firearms. As a mobile resource, Hornay kept people from Flores with him, which he brought over every year around March from Larantuka, Konga, Sikka and Gege. Together with Rotenese, free 'Kaffers', Timorese Christians and Portuguese slaves, they made up another thousand men, all armed with shotguns – a formidable force in the hands of a man like Hornay.⁸²

THE OUTER ISLANDS

Although the Topasses are primarily associated with Timor, it must be remembered that their political network stretched over an extensive area in the eastern archipelago. Their authority, although not exactly sovereignty, was imposed from central Flores to the eastern cape of Timor, roughly the distance between Paris and Marseilles. Their territory encompassed West Solor and much of Adonara and Lembata, and they contested interests in Sumba and the Alor group of islands. Not surprisingly their interests frequently collided with those of the Dutch and the seafaring peoples of Sulawesi. The peace of 1663 lasted to the extent that there were few, and only minor, direct clashes between Company employees and Topasses up until 1749. As on Timor, however, there

⁸¹ In this campaign, which was directed against certain mountaineers, the kings of Assem and Batumean participated along with their men (VOC 1327 [1676-77], *Dagregister*, sub 9-6-1677). The exact fate of Follafaik is not revealed by the sources, but it obviously had to surrender in the end. Ama Sili's brother Ama Saba was still holding out on a rock in Baucau, east of Ade, in March 1677; however, the best archers and spearmen had already died, and many women and children had been enslaved. It would therefore be more than doubtful if Ama Saba could maintain Baucau when the Portuguese attacked again (VOC 1327 [1676-77], *Dagregister*, sub 2-4-1677). Willem Tange's report from 1689 (H 49v; KITLV) states that Ama Saba was murdered in cold blood. The Ade-affiliated mountain area Matebian was severely threatened but remained independent in 1692 (VOC 1531 [1692-93], *Dagregister*, sub 24-12-1692). One is reminded of the fact that the inaccessible Matebian was the last major Fretilin (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente) territory to fall to Indonesian forces in 1978.

⁸² VOC 1328 (1677), f. 343b; Coolhaas 1971:273. Rote was, of course, under VOC rule. Some of the *nusak* on the island still supported the Portuguese, either openly or clandestinely, and many Rotenese ended up in the Portuguese sphere.

were continuous encounters between their respective clients, which bred mutual suspicion and led to many a diplomatic protest.

After acquiring Lifau in 1673, António Hornay found the means to control Timor and the outer islands through an annual routine. Having been born in Larantuka, he resided there for much of the year, while his reliable younger brother Francisco Hornay served as his *tenente* in Lifau. Towards the end of the rainy season António Hornay would gather a fleet of ships and travel to Lifau to attend to Timorese affairs for as long as was necessary, after which he would return: Lifau had a poor harbour and provided little protection for the ships during the rainy monsoon season. The system needed a strong hand for it to work well, and in fact, collapsed shortly after Hornay's death. There did remain a degree of tension between Florenese Larantuka and Timorese Lifau, which was temporarily suppressed but would be visible during the eighteenth century.

In Hornay's time, Larantuka was a semi-foreign military and commercial settlement where Portuguese was the main language. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the latest, a local version of Malay was spoken in the town, while the original Lamaholot language was spoken in easternmost Flores and the Solor Islands. The Larantuqueiros themselves made little or no attempt to govern the surrounding indigenous population, but left it to an indigenous ruler who was based in Lewonama, close to Larantuka, and who had been converted to Catholicism. This raja was also the overlord of West Solor; during the late colonial period he held authority over parts of Adonara and Lembata.⁸³ Oral tradition mentions a long pedigree of rajjas of Larantuka, starting with Sira Demon, from whom the Demon group take their name. The ninth generation in the line, Ola Adobala, would have been educated and baptized by the Portuguese under the grandiose name Dom Francisco Dias Vieira Godinho.⁸⁴ Traditionally, his baptism was said to have taken place during the age of the prince-regent of Portugal, that is, Pedro (regent 1668-1683), but there may be better reason to identify him with a raja of Larantuka called Olle or Olla, who

⁸³ For a voluminous discussion of traditional society in Larantuka, see Dietrich 1997.

⁸⁴ Heynen 1876:3-9. In one version the dynastic ancestor Patigolo belonged to the family of the *maromak oan* of Wewiku-Wehali (*Collectie Werftenbroek* n.y., Number 7, H 1341, KITLV). That indicates a degree of Wehali prestige far outside Timor itself, although the story was only recorded in the 1950s.

is mentioned in VOC sources of 1732 and 1759.⁸⁵ As a matter of fact Dom Francisco was not the first Catholic raja, for European sources record a Dom Constantino from at least 1625 until 1661, a Dom Luís in 1675, and a Dom Domingos Vieira in 1702.⁸⁶ At any rate, the Dias Vieira Godinho family governed as rajas of Larantuka until 1962, when the Indonesian republic abolished traditional forms of governance in the region. There is no suggestion in either oral or documentary sources as to how the Portuguese Larantuqueiro settlement merged with the indigenous Larantuka kingship. A distinct Larantuqueiro community led by a Hornay or Da Costa can be traced up to the 1760s, but then somehow vanishes. By this time the cultural differences between the Topass and indigenous elites may not have been so vast, and the raja may therefore have emerged as the natural leader of the Larantuka settlement. All the same, Larantuka henceforth retained a strong and institutionalized Catholic identity.

In terms of economic relations, the Larantuqueiros did not systematically uphold the old ideas of *mare clausum* (searoads closed to outsiders), as shown by the activities in Larantuka and Lifau.⁸⁷ Nevertheless they imposed a degree of control over the areas they dominated, as is apparent from an incident recorded in a Dutch source from 1675. When *opperhoofd* Jacob van Wijckersloot visited the VOC allies in Solor in that year, he received complaints about the behaviour of the native ruler of Larantuka, Dom Luís. A ship from Lamahala, one of the Watan Lema princedoms, had gone to Konga south of Larantuka to purchase rice and other foodstuffs, which could not be grown at home. As the sailors arrived in Konga they were promptly forbidden to trade; in addition, their merchandise was confiscated. The VOC allies claimed to have previously traded with the Portuguese without problems. Van Wijckersloot promised to speak with the Larantuka ruler, whom he met the next day through the intermediation of a Dominican padre. Dom Luís excused himself by referring to the orders issued by António Hornay: the inhabitants of Konga were now only allowed to trade with the mountain

⁸⁵ VOC 2239 (1732), f. 205; ANRI Timor:43, *Brieven Kerkenraad Koepang 1739-1779*, Letter from the Church Council of Kupang to the clerical authorities in Batavia, 5-10-1759.

⁸⁶ Barnes 2008: 348; VOC 1319 (1675-76), *Dagregister*, sub 18-7-1675, 19-7-675; Matos 1974a:230. Dom Luís is called *signadje van Larentoeque*. His predecessor Dom Constantino is called *payam* or *payão* in the Portuguese documents, a term most probably derived from the Javanese-Malay term *payung*, 'parasol', which was a symbol of authority (Barnes 2008:348).

⁸⁷ On *mare clausum*, see Villiers 2001:156.

people. In order to acquire foreign goods, the Topass dependents in the Florenese districts of Sikka, Krowe and Paga had to attend a particular bazaar that had been constructed in Konga where they were allowed to exchange goods.⁸⁸ Again, the economic policy of Hornay is visible in the VOC efforts to control the flow of commerce in their dependencies. In the Larantuqueiro settlement, there was likewise a strong dependency on the mountain people to obtain necessary items. When a Dutchman from Kupang visited Larantuka in 1681, he found that the prominent Portuguese were either in Lifau with Hornay, or else in the mountains purchasing rice and other provisions.⁸⁹

A little bit further to the west lay Sikka. According to legend, the founder of this principedom was the uncle of the first Hornay and Da Costa, and indeed the relations to the Portuguese were close.⁹⁰ Topasses from Sikka are mentioned from time to time, and in the late seventeenth century they seem to have been a highly movable group that performed long-distance sea journeys, travelling in all directions; for example, they brought sandalwood from East Timor to Larantuka.⁹¹ The Sikka had a reputation of being good soldiers and frequently served on Timorese soil under the Portuguese, being organized in particular companies.⁹² Conditions in the central parts of Flores are difficult to follow in any detail due to the dearth of sources, but it is nevertheless clear that Portuguese authority was contested there by the Ende, an ethnic mix of locals and migrants from Sulawesi, who came together after the fall of Makassar. The principal *negeri* in the Ende region, Barai, claimed to stand under the Company, although this meant little in practice. The claim was apparently the result of an old relationship that existed between the Ende and the Watan Lema league on Solor-Adonara. In general, Flores was logistically important to the Topass realm; as its very name implies, the volcanic island is, on average, more fertile than Timor, and was better suited to the production of foodstuffs. When starvation threatened on

⁸⁸ VOC 1319 (1675-76), *Dagregister*, sub 19-7-1675.

⁸⁹ VOC 1375 (1681-82), *Dagregister*, sub 4-9-1681.

⁹⁰ On Sikka, see Dietrich 1989:37-9; Lewis and Pereira Mandalangi 2008. Somewhat to the west of the *negeri* Sikka, on the Florenese south coast, is Paga, a domain that was loosely connected to Sikka. The local lords of Paga claimed to have descended from Ornay da Costa, of Topass origin. (interview with the Da Costa family, Paga, June 2006). In one version, this Ornay da Costa was the son of António Hornay (Lewis and Pereira Mandalangi 2008:147-8, 172-3).

⁹¹ VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 14-3-1693.

⁹² A document by the bishop of Malacca, in Matos 1974a:229, mentions a Sikka company loyal to the Estado in 1702. It was captained by António da Silva, a relative of the royal Da Silva clan.

Timor, surplus rice could be brought in from the south coast of Flores. A report from 1689 indicates that Hornay and the Company post in Kupang engaged in a minor competition to attract Florenese traders to their respective ports (Coolhaas 1975:262-3).

Sumba, alias Pulau Cendana, alias Sandelbosch ('sandalwood forest'), was a largely unknown entity to the outside world in the seventeenth century. A brief missionary foray was made there in 1658, but it was no more than a minor incident (Jacobs 1988:171). In political terms, it was split into a large number of small domains or chiefdoms which were often at war with each other. The Ende went there on an annual basis, in the first place to Memboro on the north coast, which had a reasonably good roadstead. They sold cotton to the local people, from which the women wove sarongs and other cloths – this is the first reference to the famous Sumbanese weaving traditions.⁹³ The sultan of Bima on Sumbawa was considered to be 'the right hereditary lord of the entire island',⁹⁴ but there is reason to believe that this was just another claim as a result of loose overlordship, a ubiquitous feature of Southeast Asian political rhetoric. In 1685, the sultan tried to enforce his would-be suzerainty over Manggarai, some further coastal parts of Flores, and Sumba. The first two areas actually acknowledged his authority, but in the case of Sumba the locals turned him away. Coolhaas (1971:800). The alternative names of the island hint at vast resources of sandalwood, and for a while, the Dutch indeed believed that sandalwood could be found in abundance on the island. A VOC visit in circa 1685, however, 'found the various things to be quite to the opposite. The truth was that there grew very little sandalwood. It was useless, and completely lost its smell after it had been cut.'⁹⁵ The Dutch report added that the Larantuqueiros would surely have profited from sandalwood forests, if there had been any, for they were already visiting the eastern part of Sumba and thus familiar with local conditions. The Sikka also played a role, and not always a peaceful one, in this early Portuguese presence. In 1693 a certain Pasqual Prego is mentioned, a native of Sumba who went on to have a dramatic career. When he was young he was captured in a Sikka raid on Sumba. He subsequently grew up in Sikka and was eventually baptized

⁹³ VOC1335 (1677-78), *Dagregister*, sub 14-6-1678.

⁹⁴ Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, f. 1. The claim was documented for the first time in 1662 (De Roo van Alderwerelt 1906:189).

⁹⁵ Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, f. 1.

by his masters. His knowledge of one of the local languages made him useful, and he participated in the Sikkane expeditions which visited Sumba from time to time. From the same source it appears that the Sikka were finally able to acquire a shipload of sandalwood at times, which they brought to Larantuka.⁹⁶ The document also describes a dark side of the history of Sumba, namely the capture of, and trade in, slaves. The anthropologist Rodney Needham has argued that the slave trade had a very disruptive effect on Sumbanese society, especially in the nineteenth century when the centre for this trade tended to move eastwards from Bali. The inaccessible location of Sumba did not save it from slave raiders originating from Makassar, Bima, Flores, the Malay world or, later on, Dutch Timor.⁹⁷

Moving to the islands east of Solor, the Topasses lay claim to parts of the Lamaholot-speaking island of Lembata, but these were highly contested. Kawela in the west remained defiant against the Portuguese authority in the late seventeenth century, and even made overtures to be acknowledged as an ally of the VOC.⁹⁸ During the late colonial period Kawela was included under the possessions of the raja of Larantuka, but there is no concrete information how this came about. What we do know is that the raja tried to expand his power via Portuguese symbols, bestowing a Portuguese flag on the Watan Lema-affiliated principedom of Labala in 1692, with unknown results.⁹⁹ In the north-east, the Kedang domain is known to have fought against the Watan Lema league in the late seventeenth century, although this does not necessarily mean that it favoured the Topasses. Later on, it was contested between the Dutch-allied principedoms Lamahala and Adonara.¹⁰⁰

Finally, the Alor group, mainly consisting of Pantar and Alor, contained a number of small coastal domains whose inhabitants lived in periodical conflict with the mountain people. Among the earliest descriptions of Pantar and Alor is one included in a Portuguese missionary text written after 1642. Galiyao, which here appears to allude to Pantar, is mentioned together with Lewotolok and Kedang on Lembata, as a place inhabited by pagans and Muslims. There was a little commerce, as the

⁹⁶ VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 13-4-1693.

⁹⁷ Needham 1983; VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 17-12-1692.

⁹⁸ VOC 1375 (1681-82), *Dagregister*, sub 26-9-1681.

⁹⁹ VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 28-10-1692.

¹⁰⁰ Barnes 2001; *Keterangan toeroenan radja* (n.y.).

locals would come to Larantuka with beeswax, turtle-shell and slaves; the latter were probably captive mountain people. The locals also had plenty of foodstuff, including rice, maize, and other edible plants. Alor, which is called Malua in the text, is described as a much less attractive place, with few opportunities for commerce and a heathen cannibal population.¹⁰¹ Presumably the distinction Galiyao-Alor should be understood as a distinction between the five coastal domains of Galiyao and the mountain people. Galiyao was partly Islamicized and had Pandai on north-eastern Pantar as the senior component, an area similar to Lohayong among the Watan Lema princedoms of Solor.¹⁰² In opposition were the stateless tribal groups in the highlands, mostly on the larger island of Alor. Considering the slave raids carried out by people from other islands, it is not unthinkable that these tribal groups cultivated a fearful reputation to ward off intruders.

Since Galiyao was linked to Watan Lema, it was consequently claimed to be within the Dutch sphere. Nevertheless, Company ships very rarely ventured there, and many Portuguese traders appeared in Pantar and Alor during Hornay's time. The Portuguese bought the local products in exchange for iron, cutlasses and axes.¹⁰³ Later on, in the early eighteenth century, they made a brief attempt to establish a base on Alor, yet this was not followed up. In nineteenth-century ethnographica, the inhabitants of Pantar and Alor acquired a reputation for ferocious savagery that again included such unsavoury activities as cannibalism. Much of this remains unproven, but the Portuguese seafarers indeed lived dangerously in certain circumstances. In 1663, two or three Portuguese ships set out from Lifau with cargoes of sandalwood. In order to avoid the Dutch, since the peace treaty was not yet in place, they sailed to the north via the Alor group, in order to reach Larantuka. There, however, the ships

¹⁰¹ Sá 1956:487-8. Barnes 1982 and Dietrich 1984:319 argue for Pantar as the most likely equivalent of Galiyao. The findings of Gomang 1993:28 and Rodemeier 1995:439 indicate that this is only partly correct, although the centre of gravitation of the Galiyao league lay on Pantar rather than Alor. Rumours of cannibalism on Malua-Alor are already mentioned in 1522 by Pigafetta of the Magellan expedition, who castigated the inhabitants as the most brutish in the Indies (Pigafetta 1923:231). Although the phenomenon of anthropophagy has been reported for Alor over the centuries, the reality behind the rumours has not been clearly documented. It is possibly explained by the custom of drinking blood from the enemies killed in warfare in order to avert retribution by the slain spirit (Emilie Wellfelt, Linnaeus University, personal communication).

¹⁰² For documentation on Pandai as the leader of the league, see VOC 1335 (1677-78), *Dagregister*, sub 11-8-1677.

¹⁰³ VOC 1335 (1677-78), *Dagregister*, sub 18-8-1677.

were crushed against the rocks just off the coast. Most of the Portuguese were then promptly killed by mountain people who had descended to the coast, and only a few survivors were able to get away to Larantuka in a small boat.¹⁰⁴ This was possibly related to the coastland-inland dichotomy where Portuguese traders would be associated with coastal dwellers in the eyes of the mountain people.

From all this it can be seen that the Portuguese or Topass group tended to be one step ahead of their Dutch rivals in exploring the economic possibilities of the outer islands. While the Company servants knew almost nothing about some of the areas they claimed belonged to the VOC, the Portuguese and their clients were well aware of the resources available that could be used to make profits through trade or slave-raiding. At the same time, it must be admitted that these resources were limited. Though there might have been sandalwood on the Solor Islands during the initial period of European presence, it was in that case quickly depleted, and on Sumba the profits derived from this wood were doubtful at best. In the end, what counted in the commercial relations with Macao and the VOC was the amount of wood to be obtained on Timor itself. Beeswax and slaves, although far from being insignificant items, could only be of secondary importance.

THE UNCROWNED MERCHANT PRINCE

António Hornay was hardly an innovator. He knew, however, how to perfect the methods used by his predecessors, and how to take advantage of the peculiar political situation that arose with the peace treaty of 1663: a globally resourceful but locally weak VOC, and a multiethnic Portuguese establishment that was 'stranded' in a corner of Southeast Asia with little or no influence from the *Estado da Índia*. Together with Matheus da Costa, he was, in a sense, the conqueror of Timor in its near-entirety. Unlike his rival he enjoyed a long and successful career that only ended with his death, at ripe old age, on 15 June 1693. He is therefore a seminal figure in Timorese history whose tenure can moreover be traced in great detail through the Dutch material, which is particularly

¹⁰⁴ VOC 1243 (1663), f. 1594.

abundant from the 1670s to the 1690s.¹⁰⁵ The Portuguese material for this period, important as it is, is less systematically preserved, no doubt due to the absence of the *Estado da Índia*.

Dutch opinion about Hornay was ambivalent, to say the least. On the one hand they noted the routine brutality that he used to quell any protests against his rule – a part of the ‘black legend’ of Portuguese Timor that the latently hostile Dutch proceeded to forge. On the other hand, they reluctantly admired his ability to create order in the Portuguese enterprise. A visitor to Lifau in 1677 commented that Hornay kept better order among his Topasses than the former officers, and provided more freedom for the Timorese themselves;

since no Portuguese do any harm to the Timorese, in the form of requisitions of foodstuff or otherwise. Instead, everything is ordained, including how much and in what way the Portuguese buy things from the inhabitants, such as paddy, *jagung*, pigs, buffaloes or anything else that they may require from them; purchases are not allowed if they do not pay. Through this he [Hornay] ties the subjects to himself in such a way that currently, he is treated by these people as if he were an idol [*affgodt*], so that little advantage [for the Dutch] can be expected in these times.¹⁰⁶

Towards the end of Hornay’s life, in 1689, the perceptive Dutch *opperhoofd* Willem Moerman summarized the situation of Portuguese Timor in terms that indicated the great skills of the *capitão mor*, but also the fragile balance that he had managed to maintain over many years and which could easily be disturbed under a less capable leader. Moerman noted that there was no paid servant of the Crown of Portugal in the entire region, and that the number of White Portuguese in Lifau and Larantuka did not exceed 30.¹⁰⁷ In addition to that there were a number of men who originated from Macao, Goa, and Malacca, apart from all the mestizos and ‘Portuguese Christians’, that is, indigenous people who had adopted Portuguese religion and selected customs.

Three hundred kings were claimed to have stood under Portuguese

¹⁰⁵ In the first place, this is due to the *Dagregisters*, most of which are preserved for the period 1673-96. These valuable books of daily annotations offer a multitude of details about Dutch affairs with the Topasses not found in the ordinary VOC reports, let alone in the scattered Portuguese documents.

¹⁰⁶ VOC 1327 (1676-77), *Dagregister*, sub 10-6-1677.

¹⁰⁷ Fifty men according to Tange 1689, H 49v; KITLV, f. 7.

authority. The number seems excessive, even for Timor with its many domains, and obviously includes sub-rulers. By this time, says Moerman, the kings had adopted Christian names and wore outward symbols of Christianity, like crucifixes. However, the mass of people followed their native customs. Moerman furthermore asserts that Hornay had divided Timor into provinces, and had put a lieutenant in charge of each of them. This information may refer to the division into the two large ‘provinces’ known from later sources, namely Servião and Belu. If the division was originally the initiative of Hornay himself, it might explain why Servião encompassed more than just the Atoni lands, and why Belu did not include the all-important Belu centre Wehali – it would have been a case of political expediency. The captains that Hornay placed on the island were mostly indigenous Christians, thus people who were not even mestizos. The native Catholics on the island, disapprovingly called ‘rice Christians’ by Moerman, numbered approximately 10,000.

Hornay himself was a veritable authoritarian leader who would allow nobody else to issue orders. He knew how to keep Timor in strict deference with the little resources available. Like the Dutch in their corner of the island, he had practised the custom of bestowing gifts of cloths and such things upon the more powerful kings in order to keep them happy. When there was a rebellion in one or various of the innumerable princedoms, he could then use Timorese clients to wage war upon them, without having any excessive costs himself. Those who had benefited from Hornay’s generosity would take up arms on his demand and attack the rebels. The spoils of war, large and small, would subsequently be shared among the warriors who participated on the Portuguese side, which of course increased their ties to the *capitão mor*. Hornay could therefore manage Timor without the assistance of any white compatriots, as long as there were no attacks by an external power.¹⁰⁸

Moerman’s account may raise the question of whether this was colonial rule at all. White Portuguese might have been present as scribes, traders and padres, but they had relatively little say in relation to Hornay, himself a half-Timorese by birth. The affairs of the Topass complex were to a great extent run by people without a drop of European blood in their veins.

As explained before, a system of traditional Timorese *tuhais* or gifts

¹⁰⁸ VOC 1461 (1689), ff. 553-4.

was applied to the power network operated by the Topasses, a rough tribute system more than a bona fide colonial rule. The pre-colonial political economy of Southeast Asia included slave-raiding and coerced trade as its foremost components, where coastal polities would compel inland groups to deliver local products (Hoskins 1996:3). In these respects, the Topass establishment slots well into the pre-colonial pattern. However, we should not underestimate the importance of elements of Portuguese culture. In spite of the local character of daily life and governance there was a Portuguese identity that gave the system a certain colonial taint (Dampier 1939:164, 171-2).

In the same way, the inclusion of Portuguese Timor in a commercial network offers a somewhat ambiguous picture. On the one hand, an early colonial system was at work, where the Portuguese traders of Macao tried to make up for the loss of the Japanese trade by purchasing sandalwood for the South China market. The Topass complex depended upon the Macao connection to prosper, although the sandalwood was also sold to the VOC and private traders. On the other hand, there was, up until 1702, no external system of extracting produce from Timor – in other words, no colonial rent-seeking system. The Topass leaders managed their affairs as local merchant princes, akin to many a native Southeast Asian coastal ruler: ordering deliveries of sandalwood to be brought down to the coast so that they may be picked up by foreign traders; they did not yield anything of consequence to the Estado da Índia as such. True, António Hornay would sometimes send donations of sandalwood to Goa in order to keep the viceroy in a good mood.¹⁰⁹ He also promised to donate his possessions to the Crown of Portugal upon his death, thereby emphasizing the temporary nature of his hold over Portuguese authority. This, however, seems to have been an attempt to show an amenable face to the Estado rather than a sign of true submission: if the Estado should miss this point, an event in 1677 illustrated the true notion. One João Antunes Portugal arrived with a patent from the king and the viceroy to be installed as *capitão mor* after Hornay. As it turned out, Antunes Portugal was ‘quite contemptibly’ insulted by Hornay, and was so badly treated in Lifau that he soon set sail and left again (Matos 1974a:135; Coolhaas 1971:612). In spite of such incidents, the viceroy implicitly recognized the state of things

¹⁰⁹ Tange 1689, H 49v; KITLV, f. 6; Leitão 1948:244.

by endowing the redoubtable Topass leader with the title *capitão geral* in 1690, while his brother Francisco Hornay received the dignity of *capitão mor* of Lifau.¹¹⁰

Threats to the rule of Hornay came from other directions. In his conversations with the Dutchmen, he often complained that the mighty Amarasi had grown to think independently and that they cared little for the Topass leader's decrees. Partly, this should be regarded as a façade to avoid responsibility for the aggressive stance of Amarasi vis-à-vis the Company allies. However, it also aptly highlights the problem of maintaining continuous surveillance over the Timorese domains through the indirect and informal system of 'colonial' dominance that was available. In East Timor there were disturbances in 1686-1687 and 1691, which were bloodily suppressed by pitting loyal Timorese troops against the rebels (Coolhaas 1975:30, 116; De Roever 2002:286). More vital threats appeared to derive from Arung Palakka, the king of Bone on Sulawesi. After the fall of Makassar in 1667, he was the principal ally of the Company in an area previously dominated by the Makassarese.¹¹¹ In 1682 it was suddenly reported that one of Arung Palakka's captains was preparing to sail towards Larantuka and the Solor and Alor groups, accompanied by fourteen *perahu*, with the intention of forcing them to pay tribute. Hornay hastened to reinforce Larantuka, which normally had no fortifications, and placed artillery at the shore.¹¹² As it turned out, the invasion never took place, and the question remains as to whether such a project had ever been endorsed by the judicious and diplomatic Arung Palakka, who would hardly have risked his working relationship with the Company for these little-known quarters. There was nevertheless a degree of Sulawesi-related piracy off the coasts of Flores in the 1680s. By 1675, Ende, on the central south coast, served as a base for seafarers from these quarters; this region had a nominal connection with the Watan Lema of Solor and hence with the Company, and some of the inhabitants were Muslim, as were the newcomers from Sulawesi. Finally, in 1686, Hornay sent a message to Arung Palakka and suggested that he should only allow those ships with VOC passes into Timor. In that way one could counteract the adventurers at sea who misused the name of

¹¹⁰ VOC1481 (1689-90), *Dagregister*, sub 14-3-1690.

¹¹¹ For Arung Palakka, see the detailed monograph of Andaya (1981).

¹¹² VOC 1375 (1681-82), *Dagregister*, sub 11-2-1682.

Arung Palakka in their dubious business.¹¹³ As a matter of fact, the unofficial Bugis-Makassarese activities were not stopped that easily.

The system maintained by Hornay ran counter to the ambitions of the VOC in maritime Southeast Asia to achieve a monopoly on the most lucrative products, since trading ships from a variety of geographical places were allowed to take in sandalwood and other commodities. The sandalwood, beeswax, slaves, and so on that were acquired in the Portuguese sphere, were brought to Lifau for sale, although trade with the outer coast also continued from Amarasí, Amanuban and Amanesibatumean.¹¹⁴ The Dutch were not prepared to enter into conflict with Hornay in spite of the latter's support of the enemies of the Company allies. There were regional as well as global reasons for this passive stance. The weakness of the VOC positions in Kupang and Solor was apparent, and Hornay was, after all, a nominal subject of the king of Portugal. Portuguese diplomatic overtures to France and England, where King Charles II married a Portuguese princess, did not encourage the 1663 peace to be broken. Timor was too marginal to be worth risking a diplomatic crisis in Europe, something pointed out repeatedly by the VOC authorities in Amsterdam and Batavia. In a report from 1689, the official, Willem Tange, told about his experiences with Hornay, which were not of the most amicable kind. From his discussions with the Topass leader, Tange could see that Hornay was prepared to confront the VOC when the time was right. His ambitions seemed to stem from a firm belief in his own courage. Tange cautiously suggested that Hornay should be kept content, so that he should have no reason to create trouble and impede the Company.¹¹⁵

Rather, Dutch envoys from Kupang regularly asked the mighty *capitão mor* in humble terms to be allowed to purchase the valuable wood. António Hornay would thereby decide the trading quota and the prices. From the 1670s to the 1690s, VOC officials, and occasionally the *opperhoofd* himself, stayed for long periods in Lifau as the guests of the Portuguese in order to wait for the sandalwood to be brought down to the coast. The wait was often long, and the reports frequently complain

¹¹³ Andaya 1981:163; Coolhaas 1975:36. A number of Makassarese sea migrants placed themselves under Hornay's command circa 1681 (VOC 1367 [1680-81], *Dagregister*, sub 9-4-1681).

¹¹⁴ Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, f. 3.

¹¹⁵ Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, f. 9.

about the delays before the precious wood was actually delivered.¹¹⁶ Willem Tange contemptuously wrote that the arrangement was unworthy, for in case of trouble with the Topasses:

that bastard, conceited, tyrannical and filthy rabble would stand, looking down their noses, since the servants of the Noble Company stand there as nothing less than cowards and with uncovered heads. Nay, they are begging to collect the small amount of sandalwood and beeswax, which is a half or a quarter of a picul, in order to keep the Supreme Government here [in Batavia] content with their service; which is quite absurd, given the respectful status of the high and honoured government of the Noble Company.¹¹⁷

A good example of the commercial vicissitudes that the Dutchmen suffered in their trade with Hornay is the prolonged visit that the official Willem van Couwenhoven paid to Lifau between May and July 1681. In early April he arrived in Larantuka where Hornay kept a residence, and asked him for permission to buy sandalwood in Lifau. Hornay replied that it was too early for him to go to Lifau, and that the sandalwood had not yet arrived there from other parts of Timor. However, he encouraged his Dutch colleague ‘after old habit’ to purchase sandalwood in his domain. He told him that there were no less than five other ships waiting to buy sandalwood, and that the large ship from Macao had already received its share. Van Couwenhoven was about to ask Hornay if he had forgotten about his previous, considerably more generous promises but at that very moment, Hornay had to attend the church service and left the Dutchman standing in embarrassment. Later discussions gave no better result than that Hornay provided Van Couwenhoven with a licence to trade freely at Lifau – as he pointed out, the inhabitants were not allowed to sell any sandalwood without his approval.¹¹⁸

The Dutch official set sail and made the brief trip to Solor where the allied princes turned out to oppose the dispositions of the Company in various ways. At Lamahala, he became suspicious when he found Portuguese, Makassarese and Florenese ships, but had no time to investigate their business with the VOC allies and see if there was any illicit

¹¹⁶ See for instance VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, ff. 194-221.

¹¹⁷ Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, f. 9.

¹¹⁸ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 3-4-1681, 8-4-1681.

trade involved. Armed Solorese detachments marched intermittently along the seashore and deterred the Dutch by shooting in their direction.¹¹⁹ Van Couwenhoven left Solor in a bad mood and finally arrived in Lifau on 2 May 1681. At the roadstead lay ships from Banten, Batavia and Makassar, all with official VOC permits to trade in these waters. The Dutch searched the beach for a house where they could stay during their wait for the precious wood, but with no success. Finally, they managed to rent a ramshackle hut with large holes in the *gewang* roof from the Makassarese who had stayed there. They soon found out that little could be done without the presence of Hornay, and that several traders had attracted the attention of the locals by offering better prices than the Company servants could do. Hornay himself only arrived with his fleet forty days later, but even his presence did not bring Dutch difficulties to an end. In the meantime, some Company sailors had died; they were buried at the edge of a forest so that their graves would not be desecrated by the Catholic-minded locals. The hands of Van Couwenhoven turned lame so that he could hardly write his *Dagregister* – he was the only fully literate person in the crew. Nevertheless, Hornay was in a cheerful mood towards his Dutch guests and even paid a friendly visit to the frugal hut of Van Couwenhoven. Trading was finally able to begin when Hornay ordered the local free traders to sell whatever sandalwood they had to the Company servants, against cloths at the standard VOC price. The last part of the order aroused dissatisfaction among the purveyors, since that price was much less than they were used to.¹²⁰

Their Dutch rivals turned out to be just as annoying to the VOC servants as any other competitor. While commerce was in progress, the free trader Johannes de Hartogh arrived with two ships, without lowering his colours or firing a salute. At first Hornay was furious and barked at the Dutch representative, Van Couwenhoven: ‘Do you honour me so little that it is too much for you to lower your flag in my roadstead? Then I will have to withdraw my favours.’ The Dutch official managed to calm down the *capitão mor*, but he later had his own quarrel with De Hartogh who had not bothered to acquire a proper VOC permit to trade. De Hartogh came ashore with sixteen armed men and snapped at Van Couwenhoven that he would like to see who would stop him from selling his cloths. The two Dutchmen were nearly at each other’s throats when Hornay

¹¹⁹ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 13-4-1681, 15-4-1681, 16-4-1681.

¹²⁰ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 2-5-1681, 12-5-1681, 12-6-1681, 17-6-1681, 23-6-1681.

intervened with the words, ‘this is a free roadstead for everyone, and I do not want a brawl for that reason.’ Two days later Van Couwenhoven saw to his great irritation how De Hartogh’s men carried a bass, violin and other instruments ashore and performed chamber music before Hornay to get him in a good mood. The following days, the strong-willed merchant sold lots of cheap *guinea* cloths while the pricier Company cloths remained unsold. Finally, the frustrated Van Couwenhoven set sail on 30 July and arrived back in Kupang four days later, after an absence of more than four months.¹²¹ The trip had not been an unqualified success. The main commodity that the Dutch could offer the Topass community was cloth, but in this respect they were largely outsmarted by the traders from Macao. In spite of numerous complaints about the arbitrary behaviour of António Hornay, and the increasing difficulties experienced in acquiring enough sandalwood from the dwindling resources, the visits recurred year after year.

In 1668, when the Hornay-Da Costa rivalry was still in full swing, sandalwood was being transported to Goa, Macao, Vietnam, and Siam; from Siam it was brought via Tenasserim to the Coromandel Coast in South India (Coolhaas 1968:621-2). The main economic partner within the Estado da Índia was Macao, whose traders sold their cargoes to the Chinese of the southern provinces. As the Dutch noted, ‘the Chinese cannot miss this wood, especially if it consists of large and fine pieces’.¹²² After the loss of the Manila market and above all the important trade with Japan (1639), the Crown monopoly on voyages from Macao ceased for some time. From 1672 until 1678, then, Macanese trade on Timor was perpetrated on behalf of the Royal Treasury of Macao. However, the Estado da Índia soon realized that this new attempt at a monopoly aroused anger among the Topasses and Macanese alike. The providers on Timor would rather sell their sandalwood to the VOC under the conditions that the Estado tried to implement. Trade was therefore opened up to Macao merchants under a system called *paula-bague*, which remained in place until 1784 (Souza 1986:170-1; Matos 1974a:176). In 1689, Willem Tange noted that no royal ships went to Timor, but only private Macanese ones.¹²³ That Timor was relatively important for the

¹²¹ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 2-7-1681, 18-7-1681, 20-7-1681, 22-7-1681, 30-7-1681, 3-8-1681.

¹²² Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, f. 4.

¹²³ Tange 1689, H 49:v, KITLV, f. 6.

Macanese economy is also suggested by an enumeration in 1685. At that time the city dispatched ten ships, four of which went to Goa and Diu, three to ports in the western part of the archipelago, and three to Timor (Coolhaas 1971:760). The Macanese traders brought substantial quantities of textiles to Timor, a commodity that was in great demand among the local elites (Coolhaas 1971:529). Ships from Goa are mentioned in the era of Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, but later, such references become very rare (Coolhaas 1968:582).

Tonkin in northern Vietnam was likewise an eager buyer; by this point it was governed with a steady hand by the Trinh family, who kept some trade open with the outside world. In Tonkin, Buddhism experienced a renewal in the seventeenth century; this would have created an atmosphere conducive to the increased production of incense for religious purposes and hence, the import of sandalwood. Another point was the importance of ships from Siam, the Thai Kingdom of Ayudhya. Siam was an economic semi-peripheral country in relation to China, but it was the centre of a regional trading sphere of some importance. The ships arriving in Timor were both Portuguese ones stationed in Siam, and indigenous ones, which were appearing in the sources from at least 1668. Occasionally there were also Larantuqueiros who sailed the Siam-Timor route.¹²⁴ The king even dispatched ships to make the long and arduous route to Lifau, which seems to suggest an interest among the Thai elite in acquiring the precious wood.¹²⁵ When the *opperhoofd* Arend Verhoeven visited Lifau in 1687, he noted that the ships lying at anchor at the roadstead included three Portuguese crafts from Macao, Batavia and ‘the coast’, and two ships from Siam. One of the captains of the Thai ships had a Christian name, the other a non-Western name (‘Pattasje Saara’).¹²⁶ Trade could hardly have been described as comprehensive, although it was characterized as lucrative. Siam experienced a period of openness towards the Western world during the reign of king Narai (reign.1656-1688), which would have been advantageous to far-flung trading connections. This policy was abruptly terminated by the revolution of 1688, which brought an end to much of Siam’s contact with the outside. There are a couple of references to trading relations with Siam during the first years after the revolution, but then they fade.

¹²⁴ VOC 1403 (1684), f. 224. On Vietnam and Siam in a larger economic context, see Frank 1998:101-4.

¹²⁵ VOC 1287 (1671), f. 1276b.

¹²⁶ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 19-6-1687.

THE ETHNIC DYNAMICS OF THE TOPASSES

By now, it should be clear that the answer as to how the Portuguese managed to maintain power in Timor for several hundred years is to be found in the dynamics of the Topass group. With very little support from the central Portuguese colonial possessions, and with few Catholic priests to administer their spiritual needs, the Topasses were still successful on a local basis, and displayed interesting dynamics. They clung to a Portuguese identity and expanded their area of influence at the same time as the *Estado da Índia* was badly crippled by the VOC and through other factors. To understand how they were able to do so, it is necessary to look at ethnicity as a dynamic factor, and relate it to religion, political structure and the early colonial system.

The ethnic composition of the Topass group was constantly changing, and this relates to ethnic perceptions prevalent in Southeast Asia up until fairly recent times. It goes without saying that the idea of ‘belonging’ in ethnic terms was not perceived as it would be today. While a European-born Portuguese would always take pride in his whiteness, there was no propagation of a racial hierarchy based on intellectual, or indeed any other properties. It was therefore fully possible to alter one’s ethnic belonging (Ricklefs 2002:362). In line with this, people of all skin colours were entitled to be part of the Topass community. As we have seen, the founders of the twin dynasties Hornay and Da Costa were North European and Filipino respectively, which itself exemplifies both the breadth of their ethnic origins and the possibilities for advancement regardless of skin colour. This can be seen in the demographic reinforcement of the Topass group during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

One such source of reinforcement was, oddly enough, the VOC itself. The case of Jan de Hornay has been already highlighted, but there were in fact many other defections from outposts and Company ships in the eastern archipelago. Such desertions took place both in times of war (up until 1663) and peace (at least up until circa. 1750); in both cases the Portuguese usually provided a safe haven. It was a one-sided affair; it very seldom occurred that Portuguese soldiers and sailors absconded to the VOC, although dissatisfied Timorese clients of Portugal sometimes did. Miserable conditions on the forts and ships were apparently conducive to Dutch defections, as was the natural anguish for a likely premature death. Malaria and other diseases took a terrible toll among

the Dutchmen in Kupang and on the South-Western Islands, which was in direct contrast with the Portuguese or Topasses, whose localized lifestyle potentially made them less vulnerable. The VOC records speak of many attempts made by the authorities to rescue refugees from the Portuguese, usually without success. Even prisoners of war often refused to return under the Dutch tricolour. For example, the *opperhoofd* Hugo Cuylenburgh appeared in Lifau in 1664, after the peace treaty had been concluded, demanding the restitution of the prisoners that the Portuguese had taken. He got the discouraging answer that one of the prisoners had recently died, while the other five had long since taken up Portuguese service. Cuylenburgh also demanded the goods belonging to another defector called Thielman, and asked to see the man. The *moradores* of Lifau replied that Thielman was not there. He had gone inland on Timor in order to obtain foodstuff and cloths, which the inhabitants must do since conditions were scarce. Cuylenburgh had to withdraw without success, seeing no possible way to win the people over to his side.¹²⁷ The story suggests that the mixed community, despite being politically dominant in the area, led a rather frugal existence. In spite of that, the defectors preferred to stay on in their company.

The informal and open aspect of the Topass community is also underlined by the social position of the White Portuguese who joined their ranks. A report from 1689 characterized the 50 or so whites on Lusitanian Timor as ‘penniless people and runaways’, implying that they were people somewhat on the margins of society in Portuguese Asia.¹²⁸ Another report from 1665 mentions prisoners from Cochin and Cannanore in India, who ended up in Lifau.¹²⁹ Most of these were presumably Indian Christians or people of mixed blood, but regardless, it is apparent that those persons who the Estado da Índia wanted to be rid of, were sent to the Timor area.

The locals who joined the Topass ranks became a separate grouping away from the majority of the Timorese and Florenese population, which is also implied by the ethnonym *kase metan*, the black foreigners. The Spaniard Juan de la Camara, who visited Larantuka and Timor in 1670, encountered the following situation:

¹²⁷ VOC 1246 (1664), f. 1584.

¹²⁸ Tange 1689, H 49:v; KITLV, f. 7. As seen above, another report from 1689 mentions 30 whites; in both cases their low number is accentuated.

¹²⁹ VOC 2285 (1733), f. 200.

In the month of April of this year we were taken to the island of Timor. They are all heathen there. The principal part is dominated by people who, being natives of the land, take the name of the Portuguese since they are educated among them. The way that they sustain themselves using this land is by declaring war on the indigenous people, and by looking after those who are under their yoke, assisting them in the war against the others, and allowing them access to their land for sustenance, without caring about the rest. (Teixeira 1957:447.)

The domination of the Timorese lands was thus highly indirect, and did not interfere with the traditional customs of using the land. The account confirms what Willem Moerman wrote in 1689, namely that the local policing was done by people who were actually indigenous Timorese (and maybe Florenese). Still, they professed to be Portuguese, and were even educated as such. This is a point that is also stressed by a later visitor, the Englishman William Dampier, in 1699. In his view, the Portuguese of Timor were so racially mixed that it was hard to distinguish whether they were Portuguese or ‘Indians’ (indigenous).

[T]ho’ they are ambitious to be called Portugueze, and value themselves on their Religion, yet most of the Men and all the Women that live here, are Indians [indigenous]; and there are very few right Portugueze in any part of the island. However, of those that call themselves Portugueze, I was told there are some thousands; and I think their Strength consists more in their Numbers than in good Arms or Discipline [...].

Their Language is Portugueze; and the Religion they have, is Romish. They seem in Words to acknowledge the king of Portugal for their Sovereign; yet they will not accept any Officers sent by him. The[y] speak indifferently Malayan and their own native Languages, as well as the Portugueze; and their chiefest Officers that I saw, were of this Sort; neither did I see above 3 or 4 white Men among them; and of these, 2 were Priests. (Dampier 1939:164, 171-2.)

By joining the Topasses, the locals entered a military elite where proficiency in the use of muskets was a status marker. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, firearms became increasingly widespread on Timor and it would appear that they led to the disappearance of tra-

ditional weapons such as blowpipes, bows and even shields; however, in the seventeenth century there were still fascinating weapons whose circulation was closely restricted. The educational aspects were further-reaching than military training; knowledge and even adoption of the Portuguese language was one essential part of the Lusitanization of the new ethnic elements. Orders and letters were issued by the Topass leaders in Portuguese and sent even to faraway princedoms inland.¹³⁰ Proficiency in this language was therefore necessary among the Topass functionaries. The upper elite occasionally learnt how to read and write. This was the case with two Amarasi princes, Dom António da Veiga and Dom Luís, who were both killed in a battle against the VOC allies in 1679, and who were characterized by the Dutch as Topasses.¹³¹ Clothes were likewise a marker; there are very few illustrations preserved from the Timor area in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but Dutch archival sources suggest that a European-style dress was worn. For example, three weeks after the abovementioned battle of 1679, the VOC allies found a dead soldier lying some distance from Kupang. He was immediately recognized as a Topass from his Portuguese clothes, and his shotgun which lay at his side.¹³² The standard dress was probably similar to the well-known illustration of a ‘Topass’ or ‘Mardijker’ by Johan Nieuhof, who visited the East Indies between 1653 and 1670. This implied a thin, short jacket, long hanging trousers and a wide-brimmed hat – compare the Dutch nickname ‘hanging trousers’ (*hangbroeken*) for the Portuguese on Timor.¹³³ Helmets of a morion design were used and could be worn as status objects; one well-known example is the golden morion that is an heirloom of the Sikka princedom, dating from 1607 or 1647.¹³⁴ The adoption of certain markers of outward appearance in order to join an ethnic community is characteristic for Southeast Asia, and finds parallels in some early European societies.

¹³⁰ Especially, one can refer here to the several letters issued by the later Topass lord Gaspar da Costa in the 1730s and 1740s and preserved in the small inland princedom of Maucatar as valued heirlooms. They are now kept in Leiden (*Stukken n.y.*, H 693, KITLV).

¹³¹ VOC 1358 (1679-80), *Dagregister*, sub 30-10-1679, 4-12-1679.

¹³² VOC 1358 (1679-80), *Dagregister*, sub 21-11-1679.

¹³³ Nieuhof 1988, between pages 278-9.

¹³⁴ Fox 1991b:31. The iron helmet of a Topass leader, probably also a morion, was reportedly captured by the VOC troops at the Battle of Penfui in 1749, and kept as a trophy for many years (Müller 1857, II:116).



A Topass or mardijker with his family. Illustration made from a sketch by the traveller Johan Nieuhof (1618-1672), published in *Voyages and travels into Brazil and the East-Indies, 1640-1649* (1732).

The foreignness of the Timorese-born Topasses in a native context is accentuated by their disregard for aspects of the *adat*. In 1693, the Helong prince, Korang, who had been staying in Amarasi for many years, returned to his native Kupang, leaving the Portuguese sphere for that belonging to the Dutch. However, to set things straight he then resolved to again pay a visit to Amarasi with a sizeable Helong embassy, and to parley with the king. On the way to the king of Amarasi he arrived at the *negeri* Amatiran, whose inhabitants shouted and threatened him with their weapons. The prince approached the chief of the *negeri* and explained his intent; he also gave the chief a silver disc to calm down his subjects. Korang was then invited to stay overnight in Amatiran, which he accepted. The next morning, however, the brother of the king of Amarasi, Dom Francisco, approached the settlement with his retinue. Although a prince, he was ‘the captain of the Portuguese Topasses’. He looked at the Helong prince and sternly asked who had allowed him to come here from Kupang. Korang began to explain that he had come in peace, but Dom Francisco interrupted by driving his assegai through the chest of the prince, and proceeded to kill most of his retinue. This behaviour was clearly shocking to the Timorese, since the lives of the envoys were protected according to Timorese custom. Thus Dom Francisco violated indigenous codes of conduct in spite of being the brother of the king, apparently acting according to the wishes of the Topass leader.¹³⁵

The fluent ethnicity of the Topasses can be related to another element of Topass identity: religion. More so even than blood, religion would seem to have been an identity marker. One is reminded that the very word ‘ethnic’ in early modern European dictionaries referred to a pagan, non-Christian concept, rather than a notion to do with racial origins and material culture (Kidd 2004:261). The great influence of the Dominicans among the local Portuguese group has already been noted. Franciscans likewise stayed in the region from time to time, but the Dominicans were generally opposed to sharing their field with others (Meersman 1967:145-54). However, after the rise of Hornay and Da Costa in the 1660s they appear more restricted to their religious roles than before, a pattern that would once again change in the early eighteenth century. António Hornay’s attitude towards the priests was ambivalent. Before the Dutch he sometimes emphasized the Catholic

¹³⁵ VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 24-12-1692; VOC 1553 (1693-94), *Dagregister*, sub 8-12-1693.

identity of the Portuguese community; thus it was out of the question to extradite VOC deserters to the Kupang authorities if they had already converted to the papal creed. In such situations, Hornay would defer to the great authority of the padres whom he did not dare to go against, yet he could also behave in a brutal and arrogant way against individual priests. In 1668 Hornay settled a score with some padres in the Florenese villages of Lewonama and Gege with whom he bore a grudge. He resolutely went there with two Portuguese and a number of armed villagers to attack the hapless clerics. It also appears that the priests would sometimes meet with pronounced disrespect if they ventured to denounce what they conceived as moral laxity among the locals (Visser 1934:159; Meersman 1967:179).

The process of joining the Topass ranks naturally required one to be baptized, but according to a Jesuit report this was facilitated by certain parallels between Christianity and the traditional religion. Pater Antonius Franciscus pointed out in 1670 that ‘apart from all the qualities that the natives possess, there is particularly one that the Timorese have, namely that they do not acknowledge or worship anyone but the God of Heaven. They identify him as the creator of heaven and earth; thence almost all wish to be Christian. May the Lord himself support them and help me to serve Him’ (Jacobs 1988:248). The statement refers to the deity that is known among the Atoni as Uis Neno, which indeed means lord of heaven. Unlike what the Jesuit pater asserts, however, Uis Neno is not a monotheistic god, but rather, the supreme godhead among other supernatural beings. Uis Neno could serve the missionaries as a point of reference when adapting or translating Christianity in a way understandable to the local mind. At the same time, the small number of padres on Flores and Timor ensured that local belief customs were not overly disturbed by baptism. Juan de la Camara in 1670 complained that the church service was restricted to Lifau, Amanuban and two or three other places, and that Christians generally lived like pagans (Visser 1934:159). In spite of this critical remark, it is clear that Catholic symbolism remained important on the island, not only among the Topasses, but also among the various princedoms affected by the Portuguese. This symbolism was tied up with the image of Portuguese kingship in spite of its obvious distance.

This observation leads us neatly to the role politics played on Timor in the period under scrutiny. The king of Portugal may have been the

revered overlord, but a Topass dynastic dynamic evolved in the second half of the seventeenth century, where the Hornay and Da Costa families henceforth monopolized leadership of the community. The genealogies of the two families remain insufficiently known, but it is certain that they intermarried after circa 1700 and that relations by that time became quite convoluted. Later still, at least from the second half of the eighteenth century, the twin dynasties intermarried with the royal family of Ambeno, which further confirmed their inclusion into the local Timorese elite. By the eighteenth century, the sources begin to attribute occasional princely nomenclature to the Topass leaders; thus the son of Matheus da Costa, Domingos da Costa (d.1722), was characterized as ‘the black prince’ (Pinnell 1781:55).

Regarding the turbulent politics of the Timorese domains with their frequent inner crises and defections, the Topasses appear as a relatively stable group. In spite of their ethnic diversity, they were able to achieve a degree of inner solidarity. In the prevalent literature on Timor the Hornays and Da Costas are sometimes described as rival families, but this is not quite borne out by the contemporary documents. After 1666 there are few, and only very brief, instances of Hornay-Da Costa clashes that we know of. The establishment of the *Estado da Índia* on Timor in 1702, which was detrimental to Topass interests, seems to have helped them bond as a coherent group.

In sum, the Topass community, in spite of its darker aspects such as arbitrary behaviour towards local societies, constitutes a fairly successful case of identity-formation among a congregation forged by manifold ethnic elements and unique economic and political opportunities. From an early stage, in the seventeenth century, it was the sole Portuguese executive authority on the islands, which made its inclusion in an imagined Portuguese nation unproblematic. It was a community that both was and was not ‘colonial’ in character, and it was decidedly less so after the dramatic events of 1702. The foundations of Topass authority on Timor and Flores would be reversed with the coming of the *Estado da Índia* less than a decade after the death of its great architect, António Hornay.

Kupang and the five loyal allies, 1658-1700s

THE FORMATION OF THE FIVE ALLIES

The Dutch post in Kupang was typical of the fortified trading offices that dotted the map of maritime Southeast Asia. It was a coastal stronghold situated by a river, which had an inter-dependent relationship with the local inhabitants populating the hinterland. A fortress strong enough to deter local adversaries housed a rudimentary administration staff that attempted to follow the statutes and orders from Batavia as well as it could, considering the limited resources available. The commander, or *opperhoofd*, headed a council consisting of four trusted Dutchmen, and managed both the administrative and purely commercial affairs. The commercial side of his duties was accentuated by the fact that along with his position as *opperhoofd*, he was also *onderkoopman* (under-merchant). The *opperhoofden* were normally appointed by Batavia, and for the most part were people with no previous experience of Timor. However, mortality rates were high at this distant post as there were illnesses from which the Dutchmen were unable to protect themselves. Many *opperhoofden* died in office after a few years or even months, and were succeeded by a locally residing Dutchman, the second in command, on a temporary basis. All this did little to foster continuity in Fort Concordia, whose soldiers could usually be counted in numbers of two digits. Rather, such continuity would be found among the allied princes on Timor and Solor.

In line with the usual lines of development for VOC offices, a small settlement slowly evolved around Fort Concordia, which hardly seemed to merit the name ‘town’ until late in the eighteenth century. The settlement was not predominantly a European affair, or at least, not a ‘white’ one. In the early decades of the Kupang post there were small congregations from the allied islands of Rote and Solor. European soldiers and

sailors who had ended their service would sometimes obtain a permit allowing them to settle as free burghers and make use of the limited trading opportunities. Timorese were occasionally included as free people or slaves. The ethnic picture will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Interestingly, there was some minor trading activity by Timorese aristocrats from the allied principedoms. A few princes even owned ships and plied the waters for trade between Kupang and Pulau Semau, Rote, and the Solor and Alor groups. They used mixed Solorese and Timorese crews, the former having a reputation as good seamen, something which evidently does not endorse the commonly received notion that the Timorese always avoided the sea.¹

From Batavia's viewpoint, Kupang was definitely not a place that was financially viable. The financial accounts for the Company, which are noted year by year in the documents, almost always indicate a loss in the course of the VOC period. The sums involved, however, were very modest in relation to other eastern posts like Banda and Ambon, the deficit usually being several thousand guilders, but sometimes more than 10,000. In spite of the interest in sandalwood, the actual volume of trade was hardly sufficient to hold the attention of Batavia and Amsterdam and thus make them maintain the small and unprofitable post; neither were the doubtful ersatz commodities, beeswax and slaves. Rather, there were strategic aspects at play. As argued by Governor General Joan Maetsuyker in 1659, Kupang must be kept because of its proximity to the more valuable islands of Banda and Ambon. Another professed reason was that only a Dutch stronghold could prevent the Portuguese from overrunning the VOC allies in the area (Coolhaas 1968:255; Van Dam 1931:258).

Dutch outposts usually depended upon agreements and contracts forged with local polities in the hinterland. These could be comparatively strong sultanates like Palembang on Sumatra or Banjarmasin on Kalimantan, or perhaps a system of medium- or small-sized kingdoms like those in South Sulawesi, close to the Makassar trading post. Yet another possibility was that the inhabitants of the hinterland had formed tribal communities or chiefdoms, which would normally mean a low-technology and illiterate society. Examples of this were the Minahasa in

¹ VOC 1375 (1681-82), *Dagregister*, sub 26-9-1681; VOC 2133 (1729), Resolutions, sub 2-11-1728. A ship owned by the Sonbai regent Nai Sau in 1728 was manned by eight Timorese and six Solorese. Small-scale shipping is also mentioned in relation to the Helong people of Kupang.

North Sulawesi, and part of Taiwan. The Timor example lies somewhere between these two types: a system of polities exhibiting certain features of early states, but lacking the characteristics of the more sophisticated Muslim and Hindu states elsewhere in the archipelago.

For the allies around Kupang, ‘the Company’ was a concept that remained long after the VOC was formally dissolved in 1799-1800. Up until the early twentieth century, Timorese stories would refer to the Dutch colonizers as *Mother and Father Company*. The idea that the VOC was the mother and father of its allies, is found in documents that were written as early as the seventeenth century.² While the contracts themselves were quickly forgotten, the acknowledgement of the polities as subordinate allies was keenly remembered up to the twentieth century in words that at least vaguely referred to historical events. Individual *opperhoofden* were also forgotten by posterity with just a few exceptions, and the VOC was referred to in just the same way as any other dynastic polity – Sonbai, Kono, Takaip, et cetera. In other words, the VOC was set in a vague, de-historicized past, where the concept of the Company included the totality of the successive *opperhoofden* and their followers, who in turn represented a Batavian kingship of sorts. The allies used the Dawan term *usif* when referring to the VOC. Documents from the VOC period reveal that the Governor General and his council in Batavia were a main point of reference, and seemingly above criticism, in contrast with the individual *opperhoofden*. In their relations with the Timorese, the local Dutch officials sometimes referred to the Prince of Orange as the ultimate symbol of authority, but the latter remained a vague figure, nothing remotely comparable to His Catholic Majesty in the Portuguese sphere. Nevertheless, a stranger king was precisely what the Company was – an arbiter of power whose foreignness was an asset rather than a problem in its efforts to mediate between the local princedoms.

By 1658, there were three allies inhabiting the modest Dutch coastal strip: Kupang (the Helong princedom), Lesser Sonbai and Amabi, whose populations lived a far from affluent existence based on animal husbandry and slash-and-burn agriculture. Showing perhaps conscious disregard to traditional concepts of hierarchy, they were ranked after the date upon which they concluded an alliance with the Company. In that way Kupang held the first place. On the other hand, the king of Kupang

* VOC 1414 (1685), f. 157.

was the original lord of the land (*Touwang Tana off heer van 't land*), with some parallels to the Kune lord of the original Sonbai lands.³ He had freely received first the Company and then the other allies, and even gave a princess in marriage to two Dutch employees in succession.⁴ Sonbai and Amabi allied simultaneously, but Sonbai was seen as more important, probably since it enjoyed the greatest resources of the two. In general, Amabi does not appear as a particularly active political protagonist; it tended to follow Sonbai in most issues and seldom created any problems for the Dutch administration.⁵

The Helong principedom, on the other hand, often caused headaches for the *opperhoofden*. Like most Timorese domains it had an immobile king and an active regent at the top, but the two positions were constantly wracked by succession disputes up until the early twentieth century. The old Ama Pono dynasty was mostly headed by minors after 1660, and died out in 1731. New branches ascended the throne in 1733, 1760, the early nineteenth century, 1858, with regular intervals in the late nineteenth century, and finally in 1908, before the Dutch authorities abolished kingship in 1917. Every dynastic change was accompanied by squabbling between rival branches and attempts to convince the Dutch arbiter of their rights. In the late colonial period the colonial officials would compile extensive pedigrees and check local *adat* before making judicious decisions on such inflammatory issues. During the VOC period, however, such information was only acquired piecemeal by the authorities, and the data contained all the traps of oral tradition. The records show the difficulties the Dutch had in grasping the dynastic picture, and how they sometimes accepted patently incorrect versions of history.⁶ Nevertheless, the Dutch almost always managed to stop the conflicts from turning violent.

³ VOC 2991 (1760), Resolutions, sub 26-1-1760.

⁴ This was Pieterella (d. after 1714), a daughter of King Ama Pono II (d.1660), the king who first accepted the newcomers. She was married first to Thomas Jacobsz, and later to Floris Jansz.

⁵ Part of the Amabi population remained in the Portuguese sphere, around the *negeri* Oefeto, and were considered to fall under the king of Amarasi. They had occasional contact with their compatriots in Kupang (VOC 1437 [1687], f. 313). An oral tradition recorded in 1948 says that Amabi originally consisted of two tribes under two brothers. After being defeated by the Oematan clan and Amanuban, they moved from Mollo to the west. One group headed by chief Loe Mananu settled south of the Siki River and founded the Amabi-Oefeto domain, while the other proceeded to Kupang where they received land (*Nota van toelichting* 1948, H 1025, KITLV). In this tradition the Portuguese impact has been phased out of the story.

⁶ See especially VOC 2991 (1760), Resolutions, sub 9-4-1760, where an incorrect version was brought forward by the rival Pulau Semau branch in order to dispute the legitimacy of the then king Karel Buni.

The reputation of the Helong was not the best among the Dutch officials, and they were perceived as quarrelsome people. When the refugees from Sonbai and Amabi arrived in 1658 they appear to have settled down unopposed, and the Helong very likely understood that this new source of manpower could guard the area from the Portuguese clients in a way that they could not do themselves. During the VOC period, both the Dutch and the Portuguese acknowledged that the Kingdom of Kupang fell under Dutch jurisdiction. No formal usurpation of territory had therefore taken place, but rather, a functional relationship developed between an original insider lord and a new stranger lord, the latter of which had supervised the settlement of immigrant groups. The Timorese tradition of usufruct was decisive here: the Helong were few in numbers, while the Sonbai and Amabi groups numbered many thousands. The newcomers started cultivating the available plots of land, as the size of the land was sufficient, although not too fertile. Although they did occur, land rights were seldom an issue in the VOC documents; wielding power over the people was more important.⁷ That relations were far from friendly between the Helong and the newcomers is nevertheless apparent from time to time, with the Helong believing that they should have earned privileges as the original residents. In the early years of Fort Concordia they were unwilling to contribute to the construction work, which they considered to be the responsibility of the new Atoni immigrants. One of the main duties of the Helong themselves vis-à-vis the Dutch was to deliver pigs to the fort at a fixed price. In the early nineteenth century, it was the duty of the Helong king to check that every household kept at least three pigs and 30 hens to be sold to the Dutch if needed. For the same reason, every household had to plant 25 coconut trees.⁸

For years, the Kupang principedom had a relationship with Amabesi which seems to have been centred on Kreba to the south of the settlement. In the mid-seventeenth century, relations vacillated between friendship and enmity, but this changed in 1653, when the entire Amabesi population moved to Kupang and relations became more friendly. Members of

⁷ In the late colonial period, B.A.G. Vroklage (1953, I:21-2) did an anthropological study in Belu, which was less influenced by European administration. He found that land was attributed to those who cultivated it, or more precisely, to the ancestors of these cultivators. Similar concepts prevailed in Portuguese Timor before the onset of true colonial rule (Davidson 1994:127). Land issues in Kupang occur in the documents in the second half of the eighteenth century, but more in connection with European demands than between the various princes.

⁸ *Timor* 1824, Collection Schneither, Nationaal Archief.

this group settled partly on mainland Timor, and partly in a village on Pulau Semau, an island that was mostly used by the Dutch as a source for wood. The ethnic mix was not entirely happy, at least at the level of the elites. The Amabesi leader, known as Ama Manis or just Ama Besi, had pretensions to power that were incompatible with those of the Helong king and his executive regent, which soon made for serious conflict.

Sonbai was regarded as the most important VOC ally, although it was only the second in rank, since it had allied with the VOC after the Helong principedom of Kupang. Sonbai was, however, strongest in terms of manpower and was considered to be the most warlike congregation in Kupang. The Sonbai settled down at a number of places outside Fort Concordia.⁹ A later enumeration of settlements from 1832 listed ten *temukung* who lorded over places that were named ‘Miomaffo’, ‘Mollo’ or ‘Nai Bait’ (Manubait) – actually names of parts of the Greater Sonbai realm.¹⁰ That probably means that the settlement structure of the immigrants followed their areas of origin inland. The rulers’ residence was initially situated on a peak to the east of Kupang, close to Oeba, which was known as the Rock of Sonbai. Much later, around 1740, the Sonbai ruler moved his *sonaf* to Bakunase on the top of the hill south of Kupang, where his descendants still reside. The polity was in effect led by Ama Tomananu from its establishment in 1658 until Tomananu’s death in 1685, and then by his kinsmen in the Oematan family. After his death there were usually two regents, one senior and one junior, in accordance with the structural principles of the Atoni domains. At the beginning, the individual regents could shift their position from junior to senior, but during the late colonial period the two positions were fixed to two branches of the family, Saubaki and Loewis.¹¹ To complicate matters further, the regents were sometimes considered as mere caretakers for the adolescent

⁹ A note from 1736 included the Sonbai district of Fatuleu, east of Kupang Bay, as part of the sphere falling under the Company’s control (VOC 2883 [1736], f. 141). This was probably no more than a weak claim. The true area of the Lesser Sonbai settlement was limited to scattered places within the *sespalen gebied*.

¹⁰ Francis 1832, H 548, KITLV. The ten *temukung* lorded over seven settlements, of which four were Mollo, two Miomaffo, and one Manubait. The preponderance of Mollo settlements is not surprising since the Oematan, the family to which the executive regents of Lesser Sonbai belonged, were associated with Mollo. The Manubait settlement might have arisen as a consequence of the coming of the Manubait lord and his followers to Kupang in 1711.

¹¹ The Saubaki family today claims to belong to another family than Oematan, but VOC records are quite explicit on this point (interview, Marthen Saubaki, Kupang, 6-2-2005). The Loewis family appears to have lapsed into complete obscurity, and I was unable to trace its whereabouts during my visits to Kupang.

heirs of a former regent. For example, Ama Tomananu's son Ama Babu governed as second regent until his death in 1700, when he was in turn succeeded by a brother called Nai Sau. When the senior regent, Ama Baki, died in 1708, Nai Sau took over his position, and left the junior post to a kinsman called Domingo. The two regents were then in charge until 1739, when they both passed away. In their place, a senior regent called Sau Baki, who had actually been the right heir during the long tenure of the predecessor, was appointed. In spite of this intricate system of governance, there is very little evidence of serious internal divisions among the Oematan. Relations between these regents and the Dutch authorities were usually constructive, if not always cordial. Long-serving figures like Ama Tomananu and Nai Sau governed for several decades and served as trusted advisors to the *opperhoofden*, inducing a sense of continuity when it came to handling affairs in colonial Kupang, where the white man usually did not live until old age.

There would be no Sonbai without Sonbai royalty. As symbolic ammunition, Ama Tomananu brought members of the Sonbai dynasty to Kupang in 1658. Foremost among them was the junior king, who was obviously the son of the old captive emperor, Ama Tuan. In the economic system that the Company tried to cultivate, the Sonbai and Amabi were expected to collect and deliver sandalwood in spite of the unstable conditions outside Kupang. The Dutch appetite for the precious wood soon cost the life of the prince: when he led a party to the area east of the fort to collect the sandalwood in 1659, his party was attacked by the Amarasi and he was violently killed.

The Sonbai mourned him by tearing their clothes and cropping their hair. Since the body of the junior king was kept by the enemy, they had to bury a piece of wood instead, dressing it in his own clothes and adorning it with valuables.¹² In his place, a younger son of Ama Tuan I was made the symbolic head of the Lesser Sonbai community. He was likewise known by the name or title Ama Tuan II, but was an anonymous figure who passed away in 1672, leaving few traces in the official records.¹³ The VOC records are more detailed regarding his successor, who was actually a female ruler, an empress (*keizerin*) in Dutch parlance. Ama Tuan II had three daughters, the eldest of which, Usi Tetu Utang or Bi

¹² VOC 1229 (1659), ff. 862a-863b.

¹³ VOC 1294 (1673), f. 307a. In later tradition he was called Nai Utang, Baki, or Nisoni – possibly due to confusion with a later royal refugee called Nisoni, mentioned in 1748 (VOC 8341 [1748], f. 8).

Sonbai, would head the kingdom-in-exile until her death in 1717 at the age of 51. Female rulers are not uncommon in Timorese history, either as widows or as monarchs in their own right. They were probably not acceptable as executive ‘male’ regents (there is in any case no evidence for this in the sources), but as inactive, notional ‘female’ rulers they could be appointed when there were no male relatives (Pelon 2002:36; Castro 1862:478). Bi Sonbai normally adhered to the passive role assigned to her by Timorese *adat* and Dutch policy, but on a few occasions she acted as a peace broker and a stern critic of Dutch abuses – in both capacities with some success. Her exalted position apparently made her unfit for marriage, which was otherwise a universal institution in the social world of Timor. Her death therefore necessitated an exchange with the Greater Sonbai group in the Portuguese sphere in order to find suitable princes, a gesture that seemed to be in complete opposition to the colonial division.

The VOC gained a fourth ally in 1683. This was a minor part of the Amfoan group that inhabited the land of Sorbian-Servião on the north coast. Some sources suggest that ‘Amfoan’ and ‘Sorbian’ are interchangeable concepts, but in fact it appears that the former is originally a dynastic term, while the latter is a geographical term. Amfoan had a close relationship to Sonbai, and its king was described as the brother of the Sonbai lord in a document from 1665, perhaps meaning no more than a perceived relative.¹⁴ Later oral stories mention a conflict between two royal brothers over a woman. When the elder brother went to visit Kupang, the younger brother seized his prospective bride. A battle ensued in which the younger brother was victorious; he then went on to rule most of the land, known as Timau. The elder brother had to be content with a small settlement on the coast called Naikliu (H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:315). The story can be checked against VOC records, which confirm that the division arose because of fraternal strife. On 16 August 1683, Prince Nai Toas appeared in Kupang with 154 followers and requested asylum, explaining that he was the brother and regent of the king of Amfoan. Thanks to his good and fortuitous governance he came to be held in higher esteem among the subjects than the king himself. When the king became aware of this, he tried to capture Nai Toas in order to put an end to his career, and the prince was forced to flee for his life. At a general meeting, the Dutch *opperhoofd* noted that Nai

¹⁴ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 677.

Toas was accorded great honours by the allied regents, in particular by Ama Tomananu of Sonbai. In this period the Company was not averse to strengthening the manpower of the allied Timorese by accepting refugees from the Portuguese sphere. They therefore let Nai Toas and his people stay. Nai Toas speculated that his other subjects, some 1,000 people, would follow when they heard about the positive reception given to him.¹⁵ This did not happen, and the VOC-allied Amfoan community remained relatively small, settling at Oesapa, east of Kupang – there is no mention of Naikliu in the early sources.¹⁶ To the Dutch understanding, this ‘nation’ was also a kind of Sonbai, but with their own ruler.

As in the case of Sonbai and Amabi, there was therefore a division between a Portuguese-affiliated group that remained in the old homeland, and a splinter group that migrated to Kupang. In a Timor-wide context, such splinter movements were common, due to internal conflicts, colonial pressure, collisions between means of livelihood, et cetera. The relationship between the two Amfoan groups was rather ambiguous. The junior line in Oesapa sometimes referred to the old Amfoan land as its property, but this was little more than a pretension. The Dutch, for their part, anxious not to antagonize the Portuguese, made no forays in this direction until much later in the 1740s.

The fifth and last of the five loyal allies was Taebenu, which is sometimes confused with Ambeno. Like Amfoan, this group originally settled in Sorbian. The leaders held the status of *siko*, ‘executive regents’, in their land. In an interview with the Dutch *opperhoofd* Willem Moerman in 1693, the aristocrats of Taebenu explained aspects of their own history. Half a century before, in the 1640s, their land was conquered by Sonbai, and they moved to the land of Amarasi. Around 1660, the Sonbai again abandoned Sorbian, clearly as a consequence of the Portuguese onslaught. Subsequently, the Taebenu regained possession of the territory they had once lost. They were still dependent on Amarasi, however, and spent much time there. One of the Taebenu princes married a relative of the Amarasi ruler, who also made the aristocracy swear a blood oath to the Portuguese. They also had to agree to make periodic sandalwood deliveries to the Portuguese.¹⁷ As early as the 1670s, they made overtures

¹⁵ VOC 1385 (1683), f. 439.

¹⁶ In nineteenth-century sources, the king stayed for much of his time in a residence in Maniki, also situated some distance to the east of Kupang.

¹⁷ VOC 1535 (1693), n.p.

to the Company, and some Taebenu aristocrats visited Kupang along with a large retinue.¹⁸

Tradition holds that the Taebenu moved to Kupang after a conflict with neighbours over a cattle theft. Interestingly, this detail is confirmed by VOC records. In 1686, a party of Taebenu was hunting buffaloes when they encountered some Topasses and their Timorese clients. A fight ensued, probably over the ownership of the buffalo, and some Taebenu were killed. King António II of Amarasi and the Portuguese leader António Hornay tried to settle the conflict by offering golden discs as compensation, but the attempt at mediation failed.¹⁹ The Taebenu royalty had already maintained close but clandestine contacts with the VOC for some years, and part of the domain now opted for migration to Kupang. In 1688, hundreds of Taebenu under the regent Tanof arrived in the Dutch area of influence, where they were allowed to stay. Meanwhile, another part of the congregation, under Tanof's nephew Manaffo, moved to his in-laws in Amarasi. These two exoduses virtually depopulated the land of Sorbian. Tanof and his *temukung* officially declared Sorbian to henceforth belong to the Company.

There were indeed reasons for the VOC to desire Sorbian. The eastern side of Kupang Bay lay close to this territory, where the most usable sandalwood was to be found. If the area could be secured, the wood could easily be brought down to the bay and loaded onto Company ships during the west monsoon. Nevertheless, this gesture was as empty as that of Amfoan: the small VOC post had no means to penetrate the rather inaccessible lands to the north-east of Kupang Bay, and the allies proved unwilling to take the risk.

As it was, the Taebenu were officially confirmed as 'friends' of the Company in 1694. They mostly resided at Baumata outside Kupang, but also restored ravaged crop fields in the Faffome area. Together with other VOC allies, some Taebenu settled at the Maniki River, where they built settlements and gardens, which, however, were destroyed by Portuguese incursions. The Taebenu royalty was considered to have Sonbai origins, but in spite of that, an atmosphere of bitterness existed

¹⁸ VOC1346 (1678-79), *Dagregister*, sub 28-10-1678.

¹⁹ Müller 1857, II:203-4; VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 13-9-1686.

between Taebenu and Sonbai.²⁰ The king of Taebenu was expected to perform ritual submission before the Sonbai ruler but bluntly refused to do so, in contrast with the more complaisant king of Amfoan, who saw the Helong kingdom of Kupang as a friend and ally, possibly for historical reasons.²¹ The Dutch perceptively noted this latent conflict, which served a *divide et impera* purpose: Kupang and Taebenu were a counterweight to the two stronger princedoms of Sonbai and Amabi.

Therefore, by the late 1680s, a system had evolved whereby Fort Concordia was surrounded by five allies who functioned as a loyal *cordon sanitaire* against the Portuguese clients. The allies' land was surrounded by hostile Portuguese clients, in particular Amarasi, and a low-scale state of warfare prevailed from the 1650s until the demise of the Topass system in the mid-eighteenth century. The weak Dutch garrison did not engage in the hostilities, and the Portuguese clients for their part claimed to live in peace with the Company, in spite of the latter being the suzerain of the five allies. It was a contradictory and fragile situation, especially since the peace between the United Provinces and Portugal was not to be disturbed. For the five allies, the tiny Dutch fort was nevertheless a guarantee for their survival, and their basic loyalty to the Mother and Father Company would last as long as the period of colonialism.

THE PATTERN OF WARFARE

The pattern of Timorese warfare, which was typically a low-scale affair, is clearly set out by the *Dagregisters*. At the end of the seventeenth century, the five allies could muster as many as 8,000-10,000 able-bodied men with more than 200 muskets and pistols for defence, but such large gatherings of people only occurred in times of the utmost danger.²² Led by their *meo*, parties of warriors from one or several of the five allies would set out in the direction of Amarasi, with or without the approval of the

²⁰ The idea of a Sonbai connection is also found in certain later traditions. According to a story rendered in a Dutch memorandum from 1912, the Taebenu group originated from the Oematan of Gunung Mollo and was later established in Lelogama in Amfoan. Due to disputes the group moved to Kupang, and its old territory was occupied by the Anpupu Po U tribe from Pitai (*Memorie van het eiland Timor* 1912:46, KIT 1272, Nationaal Archief).

²¹ One is reminded that the grandfather of Tanof had allied himself with Kupang against Amabi, and subsequently ceded the area east of Kupang Bay to the king of Kupang as a reward for his assistance (VOC 1535 [1693], n.p.).

²² VOC 1579, ff. 3-4.

opperhoofd. If they were lucky, they would trap a small group of adversaries and take as many heads as possible. If they were less fortunate, they would encounter determined resistance and would have to flee the field with losses of their own. If they managed to bring a number of heads to Kupang they would be cheerfully received, and the heads would be made the centre-pieces of a ritual feast. An early account of victorious head-hunting champions was penned by the VOC commissioner Paravicini in 1756. A party of VOC allies came back from the inland in triumph,

all cheering and jumping, carrying two severed enemy heads of so-called *orang berani* [*meo*] on long pikes, which were brought to the dwelling of His Excellency. There [the regent] Don Bastian picked the aforementioned heads and offered them to the commissioner with deep reverence and a dignified speech, as proof of the bravery and valiant character [of his men]. However, the heads were a grisly sight and His Excellency refused to receive them. They were therefore impaled again. A ring [of people] was formed around them, and they sang and danced and made several fearsome and threatening gestures with their bodies and swords against [the heads]. All these warriors were very beautifully adorned in their way. On their head they had a white linen cloth instead of a handkerchief, adorned at the top with peacock feathers, and on their feet they had bound small silver bells which [...] caused a not unpleasant sound.²³

Thus the Company was part of the ritual of headhunting, whether it wanted to be or not. After a raid, the allied regents invariably occurred at the *opperhoofd's* residence and reported back details about the enterprise, stating how many heads had been taken or lost. If successful, they would ask the Dutch for arrack, a highly appreciated drink among the Timorese. There is almost no evidence that the Dutch officials tried to prevent the custom, which is stoically reported in the *Dagregisters* without sign of either approval or disapproval. At the most they tried to stop the worst excesses, since women and children were often targeted in the raids. In a letter to Batavia dictated by the regents in 1682, we read: 'Meanwhile, Your Excellencies [the Governor General and his council] have [ordered] that henceforth neither children nor women are to be killed when the fury of war happens, which is the Dutch manner; that,

²³ VOC 2941 (1756), f. 533. Paravicini wrote about himself in the third person.

too, shall be complied with.²⁴ In this context, the Dutch concern was probably less about the civilians living in the Portuguese sphere than about the population of Rote, where the Company used Timorese auxiliaries to subdue the rebellious domains.

A detailed case from January 1679 indicates the degree of violence that accompanied the pursuit of headhunting even among acquaintances. A Helong called Ratty Sassy worked as a messenger during the negotiations between Kupang and Amarasi, and when the negotiations broke down he became a target for revenge. Together with his wife he worked the fields outside of Kupang where he built a hut in the trees for reasons of security. Three men approached the field, and asked Ratty Sassy for maize to eat. Ratty's wife provided them with some food which she tied to a rope that was lowered from the tree hut. The three men ate it together with some buffalo meat they had brought with them. They then asked Ratty Sassy to come down and bring them a piece of tobacco. His wife begged him not to climb down, but Ratty Sassy knew the three men, who were defectors from Kupang, and descended from the tree. Hardly had he joined the men when they attacked their defenceless host and cut off his head. They grabbed the severed head and rushed off so hurriedly that they forgot the buffalo meat and their assegais. Watching the horrendous scene the wife screamed loudly, thereby causing the three murderers to hurry away even faster. No Helong people were in the neighbourhood, but she finally descended from the tree and ran to the main *negeri* by the fort, still screaming in grief.²⁵

These skirmishes and attacks alternated with some larger battles, but they were few and far between; such battles were not the Timorese style of warfare. In small-scale societies like the Timorese domains, the aim was not to take a calculated risk of losing many warriors in a single large encounter, and what the Europeans condemned as cowardice, was completely logical from a Timorese point of view. In a polity where manpower might be counted in the hundreds rather than thousands it was essential to avoid losses or serious risks, especially if the adversary possessed firearms.

One of the few major confrontations on Timor took place in August 1664. At this time 400 refugees from the old Sonbai land journeyed towards Kupang; in their way lay the territory of Amarasi, which consid-

²⁴ VOC 1376 (1682), f. 406b.

²⁵ VOC1346 (1678-79), *Dagregister*, sub 29-1-1679.

ered these people a free-for-all target. When he heard that the refugees were approaching, Ama Tomananu's son, Ama Pot, went out with as many people as he could gather in order to protect them. His men encountered the Amarasi army and after engaging in heavy fighting with them, they managed to drive them off the field while the refugees took another route to safety. The Sonbai pursued the fleeing Amarasi into their own territory and captured no less than 73 heads. Their joy did not last long, however, as they suddenly noticed some detachments approaching. The troops were marching under red flags with white crosses, and some Portuguese were among their ranks. The psychological effect of this scene was devastating. As bullets started to whistle past their ears, the Sonbai took flight. In the end they lost 63 men in addition to 34 of the refugees they had tried to protect. It was clear that traditional Timorese troops could not stand up to organized and well-equipped detachments.²⁶

In 1678, a reconciliation seemed to be underway. The king of Amarasi claimed via envoys that certain incidents in the recent past impeded the conclusion of a peace treaty: a Sonbai called Ama Thoos had slapped the face of the king seven years before, a truly terrible insult. Moreover, the Dutch allies had taken away sandalwood that actually belonged to the Amarasi. Nevertheless, the conflict could be settled if Ama Thoos lay his shield and assegai before the feet of the *opperhoofd* as an admission of his guilt, and the allies paid 200 golden discs and 1,800 buffaloes in compensation – an expensive fine indeed.²⁷ It was in some respects fortunate that one of the Amabi regent's sons had recently been killed by the Amarasi, a hideous act that nonetheless meant that counterclaims could be lodged.

Ama Besi, the most active prince in the Helong kingdom, was chosen as the main peace broker. The Dutch were not entirely happy about this, as they perceived Ama Besi as a troublemaker, but Ama Besi maintained that he alone would be able to bring about a peace deal. After some diplomatic trafficking, a sizeable troop of Amarasi approached Kupang in October 1678, headed by a prince. The Dutch account of what subsequently happened sketches a lively picture of ceremonial interaction between Timorese domains at this time. A meeting was arranged on open ground outside Bakunase, which at this time was the residence of Ama

²⁶ VOC 1252 (1665), ff. 1250-1.

²⁷ VOC 1346 (1678-79), *Dagregister*, sub 14-10-1678; Coolhaas 1971:275.

Besi. The Amarasi troop was met by the Helong, Sonbai and Amabi, who stood with their weapons in their hands, within firing range. There was resentment and discontentment among the Helong that Sonbai took the foremost position in the negotiations, since Helong royalty took pride in their role as lords of the land, a notion reinforced by the official Dutch ranking. The Sonbai, however, pointed out that this was the fairest arrangement, since the Amarasi War had come about because of them. Now, the leaders from Amarasi and Sonbai went towards each other and greeted their counterparts with loud shouts and hugs. After standing there for a quarter of an hour, a dog and a buffalo were brought forward, slaughtered and cut into pieces. The Sonbai aristocrats then withdrew and made place for the Amabi and finally the Helong, who also performed their ceremonies. The Dutch found it remarkable that not a word was uttered during the procedure; the only sounds they heard were shouts. After the ceremonial part of the affair, all the aristocrats parleyed inside Bakunase, and it was agreed that the Amarasi troop would come to Kupang the following day.²⁸

At the appointed time the Amarasi arrived at the fortified settlement of Pono Koi, the young king of Kupang. There was no sign, however, of the peace broker, Ama Besi, which made the Dutchmen suspicious. The garrison of Fort Concordia was on alert, their fingers on the trigger, and backed up by reinforcements of sailors. The Helong troops welcomed the visitors with flying banners and the beating of drums. A Helong man walked forward, drew his cutlass and cut one ear from a pig that was stood there, tied up. The blood was collected in a young coconut. The man then broke off a branch of wild fig and walked among the rows of Amarasi, sprinkling the mixture of blood and juice over them – not unlike the holy water sprinkled over believers by Catholic padres, as the Dutch later remarked. When this was done, the principal Amarasi went to a *balai* (assembly hall), while the Helong fired musket salvos in the air. The hosts brought the indispensable *sirih* and *pinang* (betel and areca) and some chairs to sit on – like muskets, drums and banners, a European import for a privileged few – and negotiations followed. Towards the evening the king of Kupang sent his ceremonial staff to the *opperhoofd* as a sign of authority, with a request for arrack: alcohol, too, was a standard ingredient in such congresses.²⁹

²⁸ VOC 1346 (1678-79), *Dagregister*, sub 11-10-1678.

²⁹ VOC 1346 (1678-79), *Dagregister*, sub 12-10-1678.

Over the following days the situation looked promising as the amicable Amarasi roamed around the settlements of their VOC allies, consuming many pigs and buffaloes during the course of grand feasts. Then something went awry, for the Amarasi prince suddenly stole away without bidding farewell to either the *opperhoofd* or the regents, an insult in both European and Timorese eyes. Shortly after this, Ama Besi secretly left his *sonaf* at Bakunase during the night. He took with him not only his own men, but also some of Pono Koi's subjects, a total of 250 men plus women and children, cattle and provisions. This number may look small but in a local Kupang context it was a very considerable loss of manpower; as a result, Pono Koi had no more than one hundred fit men left under his authority.³⁰ Ama Besi now openly took the side of Amarasi and henceforth supported his new suzerain against the VOC allies. The only explanation that the Dutch *opperhoofd* Jacob van Wijckersloot could find for the conduct of Amarasi and Ama Besi was pure ambition. Amarasi entertained great hopes of making Ama Besi the paramount king of Kupang, Sonbai and Amabi, an utterly unacceptable idea considering the strict aristocratic hierarchy. A partial explanation for the defection might be found in the person of Jacob van Wijckersloot himself: his high-handed conduct had engendered much dissatisfaction among the allied regents a few years before, and Van Wijckersloot displayed a hostile attitude towards Ama Besi.³¹

The usual state of hostility between Amarasi and the VOC allies was therefore resumed. By August 1679, it was clear that a comprehensive army of Portuguese clients had gathered under the leadership of the king of Amarasi, at a time when the VOC and their allies were crippled by sickness and death. The role played by António Hornay in all this is unclear; while the Dutch were visiting Lifau, his brother and stand-in, Francisco Hornay, at the same time received the VOC servants, displaying an attitude of 'business as usual'. At times António Hornay complained to the Dutch that the Amarasi were slow to follow his decrees; indeed, the very structure of the Timorese domains must have made it difficult to take full control of everything that happened there. Nevertheless, the circumstances indicate prior knowledge on Hornay's part. The Amarasi army also consisted of men from Taebenu, Amanuban, Batumean, Amabesi and other principdoms, and also in-

³⁰ VOC 1346 (1678-79), *Dagregister*, sub 21-11-1678, 28-11-1678.

³¹ Compare *Dagh-Register* 1887-1931, the year 1674:224-6.

cluded a number of Topasses.³² Hornay may well have adopted a wait-and-see policy at his base in Larantuka; he could always plead ignorance of the affair, and besides, the conflict was with the VOC allies rather than with the VOC itself. If the allies were crushed, the position of Fort Concordia would be untenable or, at least, it would be at the mercy of the Topasses.

On 30 October, the army approached Kupang, split into two divisions, one of which was headed by the king of Amarasi and his literate Topass brothers António da Veiga and Luís. The tiny weak Dutch garrison hid behind the walls of the fort, which was well equipped with artillery. They had received no orders from Batavia to engage in Timorese wars unless they were directly attacked, but Jacob van Wijckersloot nevertheless felt that he must do something for his allies. He therefore sent a mounted trumpeter into the forest where the Timorese forces were gathering, to play the *Wilhelmus* and a Dutch military marching song. To an outsider the scene may seem ridiculous, but the allied leaders were probably familiar with the rousing tones of the Dutch anthem, an authoritative symbol for the white stranger kings upon whom they could count for moral support.

Smaller in number, the allied forces first searched out an enemy detachment that was encamped on the lowland, near to the sea. From the surrounding heights they rushed down and managed to kill and behead seven Topasses, dealing a psychological blow to the mixed Amarasi army, as the Topasses were considered to be the elite soldiers of the island. A second attack took place, targeting the core troops of the enemy, and this time António da Veiga was killed. The headhunting ritual was grotesquely complemented by one of arm-hunting; the arms of the slain Amarasi prince were severed and made into pipes. The left flank of the attacking army mostly consisted of subjugated Taebenu and Amabi, who were reluctant to participate in the campaign, especially since the Taebenu ruler had undergone the all-important ritual of mixing and drinking blood with Ama Tomananu of Sonbai. Before a shot could be fired, the king of Taebenu suddenly opened his arms in full sight of his troops, holding his shield in one hand and an assegai he had received from Ama Tomananu in the other. This was a sign to his men to flee as fast as they could, which

³² A note from 1680 mentions that António Hornay ordered 30 Topasses to act as personal bodyguards for the king of Amarasi (VOC 1367 [1680-81], *Dagregister*, sub 16-9-1680), illustrating that he probably had a degree of insight into the affairs of this principdom.

they did, leaving only the half-beaten core troops to the right, who tried to defend themselves behind the fence of the burnt-out settlement. The allies had few shotguns but repeatedly attacked with their assegais; in time, their adversaries ran out of musket ammunition and resorted to using their firearms as clubs. When the king of Amarasi was shot through the legs and carried off the field, the remaining troops finally fled. The victors took 103 heads and 53 shotguns by way of trophies, and joyfully marched to the seashore by the fort, brandishing their spoils.³³

The battle showed that the VOC allies were better in combat than had previously been presumed, and that they were even able to conquer Topasses in moments of danger. It also highlighted the problems created by gathering soldiers from many domains for extended campaigns, something which ran counter to the Timorese way of warfare. The defeat inspired fear in the Amarasi ruler and in Ama Besi.³⁴ No direct attack of this kind would be undertaken against Kupang for a third of a century, and the low-scale enmity with Amarasi became permanent. The moral consequences were soon obvious, since the defection of Ama Besi was more than compensated for by the arrival of new refugee groups from the Portuguese sphere. By the end of the seventeenth century, this resulted in the completion of the association of the five loyal allies.

KINGSHIP IN THE SHADOW OF THE COMPANY

Chapter three illustrated the general structure of Timorese kingship. It now remains to be seen how this kingship was perceived by the Dutch and how it was altered by the early colonial presence. Although the *opperhoofden* interacted with the Timorese kings and regents on almost a daily basis, there are very few straightforward descriptions of their prerogatives and functions. Information has to be gleaned from a broad range of seventeenth- and eighteenth- century sources and carefully compared with later ethnological literature. In general, the Dutch sources present

³³ VOC 1358 (1679-80), *Dagregister*, sub 30-10-1679; VOC 1359 (1680).

³⁴ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 20-12-1680. According to a Timorese witness, 500 Amanuban arrived in Amarasi in November 1680, commanded by some Portuguese from Lifau. The general intention was to storm the enclave of the VOC allies together with Ama Besi. However, as the Amanuban became aware of Ama Besi's self-doubt, they promptly returned to their own land.

two images of local kingship: either despotism or a lack of executive power and state. According to Jean-Baptiste Pelon, writing in 1778,

The one who carries the name of king would have too much power over his subjects to be called despotic, and not enough to be called monarchical. He is surely the only one with an arbitrary will, but his powers are so restricted that he never dares to encroach on the liberties, goods or lives of his subjects, at least in instances where he is not able to conceal his conduct from direct or indirect accusations. (Pelon 2002:33.)

He also noted that all matters rotated around one or two ‘ministers’ (*usif*, ‘regent’) who were likened to the *major domus* of late Merovingian France.

In 1756, the VOC commissioner Johannes Andreas Paravicini considered it a bonus for the Company that the executive regents were hereditary and in some aspects like kings; he believed they were viewed like fathers by their subjects. In strained situations the people would not take up arms against the regents or *temukung*, but rather against the king. According to Paravicini, the best way to therefore keep the allied kings in check, was to maintain good communications with their regent. A case in point was the then king of Kupang, Karel Buni (reign 1749-1760). Karel explained to Paravicini that when he was a minor, his regent sold a piece of land to the corrupt *opperhoofd*. This was plainly against the old *adat*; neither the king nor the regent or *temukung* had the right to dispose of land or the heirlooms of the realm. Paravicini replied that the regent in that case had to be arrested and sent to Batavia to be sentenced. Karel shuddered and spoke in a different tone, ‘Milord, do not do that. Otherwise my people will rebel because of that and maybe take my life.’³⁵

The outward appearance of the allied kings and regents is seldom mentioned in the VOC reports and there are almost no illustrations preserved.³⁶ The Spanish missionary Juan de la Camara wrote in 1670 that the aristocrats of the island wore a large, round golden plate around their neck. In their hair they fastened a bamboo comb with cock’s feathers and flower adornments. On their forehead they wore a golden crescent. From top to toe the aristocrats would wear wooden bangles, and below

³⁵ VOC 2941 (1756), ff. 259-62.

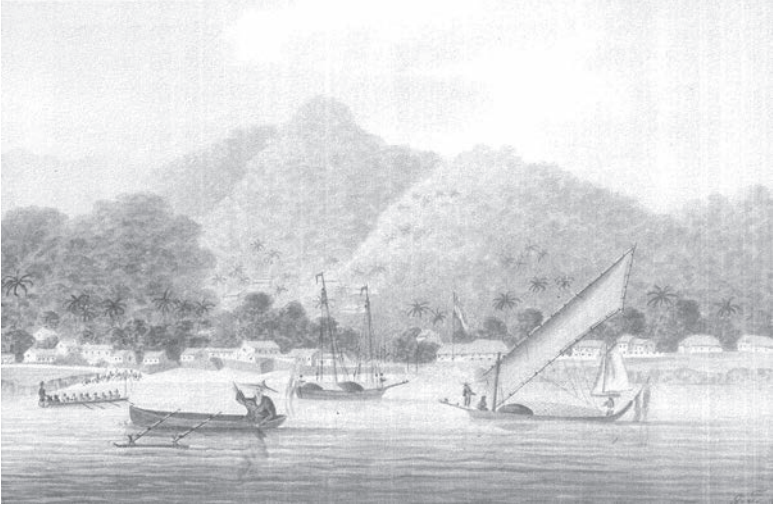
³⁶ See, however, the two aquarelle paintings illustrating the formal meeting between Paravicini and the princes in 1756. The Timorese lords seem to be dressed in European-style clothes (Lecuwerik 1992).

the knees they tied goat's beards that fell to below the shin. De la Camara also noted their appreciation for coral collars, *muti salak*, which were even more valued than gold (Teixeira 1957:452). The discs, crescents and *muti salak* are occasionally mentioned in Dutch texts as well, and the account shows that the well-to-do attire was not dissimilar to that which was documented in nineteenth-century ethnographic literature and illustrations. Many visitors also commented on the frugal conditions in which the allied kings lived, and it would perhaps be prudent to quote the best known of them, Captain William Bligh of the Bounty mutiny.³⁷ During his stay in Kupang, in 1789, Bligh paid a visit to the *sonaf* of Lesser Sonbai where he met the ruler, Bernardus Nisoni (reign 1776-1795).

The chief of the natives, or king of the island, is by the Dutch stiled Keyser (Emperor). This prince lives at a place called Backenassy [Bakunase], about four miles distant from Coupang. [...] His dwelling was a large house which was divided into only three apartments, and surrounded by a piazza: agreeably situated, but very dirty, as well as the furniture. The king, who is an elderly man, received me with much civility, and ordered refreshments to be set before me, which were tea, rice cakes, roasted Indian corn, and dried buffalo flesh, with about a pint of arrack, which I believe was all he had. His dress was, a cheque wrapper girded round his waist with a silk and gold belt, a loose linen jacket, and a coarse handkerchief about his head. (Miller 1996:65.)

It was nevertheless in the interests of the Company to provide a certain amount of royal luxuries, not least in the face of visitors to Kupang. The kings and regents received cloths, weapons and other valuable items as annual gifts, besides tokens of dignity such as drums, ceremonial staffs and flags. The Dutch also respected the Timorese concerns about the right of succession, where a ruler had to be of princely blood on his father's as well as on his mother's side. Both the Dutch and the Portuguese recognized the importance of keeping control over the Sonbai royalty as

³⁷ A note from 1680 gives some insight into the frugal standards of Timorese royal households in the Portuguese sphere as well. The wife of the Taebenu lord, who still resided in the north-west, quarrelled with the co-wives of the lord. A few ceramic objects, saucers and plates (*piring*) were broken in pieces during the tumult. The lord threatened his wife, saying she must acquire similar objects or else she would pay with her life. Since she could not obtain the saucers and plates, she ran away out of desperation. After four days of roaming the wilderness, she arrived in Kupang and sought refuge among the Sonbai elite (VOC1367 [1680-81], *Dagregister*, sub 17-8-1680).



Kupang as it appeared to a British visitor in the early 1790s. Illustration published by Roy Schreiber, *Captain Bligh's Second Chance* (2007).

instruments of prestige. A purported envoy from Portuguese-controlled Greater Sonbai appeared in Fort Concordia in October 1680. He asked to take the little empress, Bi Sonbai, and her sisters to their grandfather who resided inland, since he wished to see them before he died. Since António Hornay had approved of the idea, the Dutch had good reason to think that the Topass leader wished to capture the valuable girls, and angrily snubbed the envoy. What followed, however, suggests that the envoy was sincere in his deference to the name of Sonbai:

When [the envoy] Ama Naki asked to see the empress (being a girl of 14 years with her two under-age sisters), I asked her to come to the great hall (as she was already in the fort with the widow of the late Mr. Wijckersloot). They came accompanied by the baptized daughters of the field commander [veltoverste] Ama Tomananu, Anna Maria and Susanna, all adorned in their best attire according to their fashion, with silk *patolas*³⁸ around the waist and with golden crescents and discs on their head. They were politely received by all of us, and seated at the ordained place. Then

³⁸ A *patola* is a double *ikat* from Gujarat in India, a fine garment that is mostly made of silk (*VOC-Glossarium* 2000:88).

Ama Naki came, half creeping, towards the girls. With great humility he kissed the feet and hands of them, which was imitated by his entourage of seven or eight men.³⁹

Feasts and ceremonies on a principedom-wide level were recurring events that broke the monotony of life and involved the participation of Company servants. In particular, the Dutch stranger lords were strongly expected to participate in funerals, where great store was set by the salutes of the fort's cannon and by the military detachments. Arrack was a favourite Timorese drink that was not made locally, and every funeral of a person of standing would be preceded by allied demands for this costly spirit. The first detailed account of a Timorese funeral comes from June 1740, when the Sonbai regent Nai Sau was buried. According to custom, the corpse was laid out for an extended period of time, while the Timorese mourners waited for the best moment for the funeral. After eleven months, the day of the funeral finally arrived and the *opperhoofd* and council went there with other friends of the deceased, escorted by 16 Sonbai soldiers. They strolled between two rows of indigenous soldiers into the yard of the *sonaf*. Once they had arrived they sat down for about half an hour, at which point the corpse was brought out from the *sonaf* in a heavy wooden coffin. It was carried three times around the grave, which was situated within the encircling wall of the *dalem* (residence complex). While this took place, young and old wailed loudly. Eventually the coffin was lowered into the ground, accompanied by three musket salutes by the European soldiers, and a cannon shot from Fort Concordia. The soldiers returned to the fort and the tables were laid. The emperor and the allied regents now asked the *opperhoofd* to have supper with them, and the Dutch stayed at the feast until ten o'clock; when they left, both parties exchanged mutual thanks.⁴⁰ The details correspond closely to nineteenth- and twentieth-century studies on mortuary rites, but what makes the account intriguing is the way in which Dutch paraphernalia and participation were integrated in the ceremonial framework. It shows how an external entity was successfully localized in order to support the flow of life of the local Timorese polities.

³⁹ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 26-10-1680.

⁴⁰ VOC 2501 (1740), *Dagregister*, sub 16-6-1740.

ROTE

To fully understand the early colonial system forged by the Company, it is necessary to take a look at the other geographical components: Rote, Sawu and Solor. Of these, Rote, alias Lesser Sawu, exhibits many similarities with the Helong and Atoni in terms of language, culture, social structure, political traditions, religious organization, ceremonial life and legends about the island's origin.⁴¹ Nevertheless, its early colonial experience was quite dissimilar to that of the five loyal allies of Kupang. In actual fact, Rote was the place that cost the Dutch the most effort to maintain. There was not a trace of unity among the many small *nusak* on the island, which were often engaged in warfare, with the Company siding with one or the other of them. Nine different dialects of Rotenese can be identified, each displaying considerable differences.⁴² The first available enumeration of *nusak*, from 1660, contains nineteen names but the number of domains acknowledged varied over the centuries.⁴³ Like the Timorese domains, the *nusak* had a dual structure: there was a raja at its head, known as *manek*, with an executive regent (called *fettor* in late colonial texts) at his side. VOC texts often refer to these two functions as 'regent' and 'second regent'. The *manek*, however, had a more active role than his counterpart on Timor. In social terms as well, the distance between ruler and ruled was less pronounced here than among the Timorese, with weak or obnoxious lords wielding little authority over their subjects. Apart from all the inter-*nusak* conflicts that afflicted Rote, the VOC period presents an unending succession of divisions within the petty domains.

All this was closely interconnected to the ecological situation of the island. According to *opperhoofd* Cuylenburgh, writing in 1662, the Rotenese lords were generally related to each other through blood and marriage

⁴¹ Fox 1977:56. The Portuguese knew the island as Lesser Sawu (Sabo Pequeno), while the Dutch referred to it as Rote (Rotty). Neither name was traditionally used by the locals.

⁴² See the language map appended to Hull 1998.

⁴³ VOC 1233 (1660), f. 725a. This report, by the commissioner Johan Truytman, lists Ringgou, Batuisi (alias Oepau), Bilba, Thie, Bokai, Landu, Korbaffo, Termanu, Oenale, Lole, Dengka and Baä, which occur in the later enumerations; and Bondale, Dauckeya, Mede, Dekedale, Bohaydale and Horedaly, which subsequently disappear as domains in their own right. The list of acknowledged *nusak* subsequently included Ossipoka (alias Lelain), Diu and Ndao, the latter being a small island off the west coast of Rote. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a number of *nusak* split off, leading to the creation of Keka, Lelenuk, Talac and Dehla as *nusak*. By 1900, the number of *nusak* was therefore nineteen. For a map of the various *nusak*, see Fox 1977:41.

ties, ‘whereas the reason why these people could not live in peace, even if they had forgotten it, is that some years ago almost all their cattle, lontar palms and crops of the fields, were destroyed by the hard winds, so that many people died from starvation’.⁴⁴ The hard wind referred to here was a cyclone, which still hits the island from time to time with devastating consequences. Natural calamities led to intensive rivalry for scarce resources. As can be seen, the lontar palm was a cornerstone in the local economy together with agriculture and livestock; a note from 1694 specifies that the lontar palms formed their principal means of livelihood.⁴⁵ The palm was tapped of its sugar juice, known as *gula*, which constituted a principal form of nutrition and which also led to the semi-jocular characterization of the Rotenese as the ‘non-eating’ people (Pelon 2002:56; Fox 1977:1). The *gula* was preserved in jars that were exported to Timor in times of food surplus. The *Dagregisters* contain regular records of boats arriving from Rote, stocked with *gula*, which was then sold to the locals and especially to the VOC establishment. In exchange the Rotenese received textiles, which for external traders was by far the most important import product in the eastern part of the archipelago. In the late seventeenth century, this trade was worth around 100 rijksdaalders per annum, so it was a rather modest affair.⁴⁶ In addition, the boats were frequently captained by the rulers of the domains, who took advantage of the economic opportunities that were on offer, something which differed from the Timorese rulers who seldom engaged in trade. The Dutch used the *gula* for brewing sugar beer (*goelabier*), but also for feeding their slaves. Small-scale trade in *air gula* is still carried out today by the Rotenese.

In order to keep check of their Rotenese allies, the Company, like elsewhere in their far-flung Asian realm, drew up contracts with the various *manek*. Four of the more important *nusak* were approached by Hendrick ter Horst; contacts were facilitated by the bonds that already existed between the western Rotenese and the Helong, thanks to dynastic marriages between the islands (De Roever 2002:257). Unlike the Timorese in general, the Helong used boats, and sometimes sailed to Rote to acquire foodstuff. Some of the eastern *nusak* maintained ties with the Portuguese clients on Timor, and were temporarily suppressed

⁴⁴ VOC 1210 (1662), f. 876.

⁴⁵ VOC 1553 (1693-94), *Dagregister*, sub 1-5-1694.

⁴⁶ Tange 1688, H 49:u, KITLV, f. 3.

through violent Dutch interventions in 1654 and 1660. This was followed by a contract two years later. In line with general monopolistic VOC policy, the Rotenese were forbidden to receive Solorese, Bimanese, Makassarese or Portuguese traders without a permit, or to sail to the lands of enemies of the Company. In particular it was made clear that no slaves were to be sold to unlicensed foreigners – slaves were a commodity that was available on the densely populated island.⁴⁷

The Dutch never placed a permanent garrison on Rote in spite of their early plans to do so. Instead, they acquired hostages from the various petty domains in order to keep control over them, hostages who were kept in Fort Concordia and were often baptized. Furthermore, they used to keep a European interpreter stationed there, accompanied at times by a few more soldiers. The place chosen for this tiny Dutch presence was Termanu, a *nusak* on the north-western coast. The close Dutch-Termanu relationship went back to the first years of VOC influence, when the ruler Kiu Lusi formed an alliance with the Company to defeat the Portuguese-orientated *nusak* Korbaffo in 1654. Although Kiu himself was killed in the battle, his kinsmen henceforth upheld a precarious precedence with Dutch help.⁴⁸ This was a precedence that was not rooted in any traditional Rotenese concepts that we know of, and the other *nusak* eagerly looked for the means to rid themselves of what they regarded as Termanu tyranny. As a matter of fact there were repeated VOC campaigns on Rote in the late seventeenth century, when the small garrison of Kupang offered far from sufficient defence. On a few occasions, hundreds of European and Indonesian Company soldiers were brought in from other parts of the archipelago in order to deal with the situation. In spite of its small size, Rote was a difficult island to master, and it could take years to suppress a recalcitrant *nusak*. The settlements tended to lie on lofty rocks that were hard to climb, and due to the bushy vegetation interspersed with high trees, access to the settlements was restricted to narrow and slippery paths (Olivier 1833:261). Batavia issued orders in 1692 and 1693, stating that the *opperhoofden* should visit the island in person once or twice a year, and act as ‘the law’ there.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Heeres 1931:212-4. New contracts were concluded in 1690-91 and 1700.

⁴⁸ VOC 1301 (1673), f. 915b-916a; De Roever 2002:257. After Kiu Lusi, the lordship was inherited by a cousin, Kila Seni (r.1654?-1673). All the later *manek* were descendants of him and his brother Edon Seni, while Kiu Lusi’s descendants henceforth enjoyed the position of executive regents or *jeltor*. For more on the way in which this genealogy is reflected in later oral historiography, see Fox 1971.

⁴⁹ VOC 1826 (1712), f. 31.

In fact, by 1700 Rote was provisionally pacified by the Company and its Termanu ally, but the entire eighteenth century was interspersed with recurring political crises that could turn into bloody affairs.

Late colonial texts often display a marked Dutch preference for the Rotenese as compared to the Timorese and other groups in the region. Johannes Olivier, who briefly visited the island in the 1820s, alleged that ‘the inhabitants are handsomer than the Timorese. Also, their women are prettier and whiter, and their local language is much more pleasingly sounding than those of Timor and the other neighbouring islands [...] Also, the inhabitants of this island are much more steadfast, valiant and clever than the Timorese.’⁵⁰ Other nineteenth-century Westerners also characterized the Rotenese as intellectually agile and good soldiers in contrast with their neighbours, a view that was not least dependent on their openness to Christianity. In the early colonial era this positive image was largely absent from the records; not least, their courage and military qualities were drawn into question: ‘very timid people whom one could not lean on’.⁵¹ The Topass leader, Domingos da Costa, characterized them as ‘devilish and wild people’, mutinous and rapacious.⁵² Whenever there was a major crisis on Rote the Dutch would prefer to use Timorese auxiliaries, especially the Sonbai, who were regarded as the most formidable of allies. On the other hand the eastern *nusak*, which were generally adverse to any VOC involvement, tended to call in warriors from Amarasi and even Topasses, who spearheaded the anti-Dutch and anti-Termanu movements. Besides successive intra-Rotenese conflicts, the island was thus also plagued by two wars by proxy: Topass versus VOC and Amarasi versus Sonbai.

The Dutch did not always have the best of it. In 1688, the Dutch lieutenant Jan Franssen led an expedition that consisted of 221 Europeans – a large number in these quarters – and a few thousand Balinese, Makassarese, Rotenese and Timorese. Expecting the VOC troops, the men from the recalcitrant *nusak* Bilba, Ringgou and Korbaffo were

⁵⁰ Olivier 1833:261. They also, however, had a reputation for being voluptuous and shameless, and were considered to outdo the population of Maluku in that respect. It needs to be stressed that this characterization only appears in the nineteenth century, when the emergence of ethnographic categorization was combined with greater European awareness (or imaginations) of racial features. Some of Olivier’s information on Rote is taken from Pelon’s 1778 account, via Hogendorp, but his positive judgment of the Rotenese is not from that source.

⁵¹ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 28-9-1686.

⁵² Matos 1974a:309. Da Costa called them *sabos*, Rote being Sawu Minor in Portuguese parlance.



Rotenese characters in 1829. Illustration from the expedition of Salomon Müller, published by C.J. Temminck, *Verhandelingen over de natuurlijke geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Overzeesche Bezittingen* (1839-44)

encamped on the Lagai rock where Franssen's troops attacked them in March 1688. The defenders were thought to be a mixture of white as well as coloured Portuguese (although António Hornay later pleaded ignorance of this matter to keep good relations with the Company), and the VOC attack turned into a costly fiasco. Jan Franssen and the Timorese allies provided different versions of what had happened, and blamed each other for the failure of the expedition. According to the Timorese version, the lieutenant had no head for logistics: he did not consult the allies, he did not provide them with provisions and he started the attack before the chiefs had had time to gather their forces. Franssen, moreover, over-estimated the ability of the European troops to defend alone against the adversaries, and subsequently lost 56 dead and wounded in a short while, while the auxiliaries attacked on the other side of the fortification. At dusk the Timorese found it best to retreat, and the humiliated Franssen saw no other way than to conclude the expedition and return to Kupang.⁵³

The Timorese auxiliaries were much feared by the locals, and not without reason. Service on Rote promised the opportunity of gaining booty among relatively weak enemies, and the VOC expeditions were therefore popular among the Timorese allies. On one occasion, in 1681, the allied Timorese were asked to contribute 500 soldiers for a campaign against the *nusak* Dengka and Oenale. When it was time to embark at the roadstead of Kupang, the volunteers crowded onto the beach so that the Company servants and Ama Tomananu had to drive them back. Part of the volunteers had to be left in Kupang, otherwise the overloaded ship would have run aground.⁵⁴ On Rote, a VOC force of 2,300 men went out to search for the enemy, some of whom hid in caves in a mountainous part of the island. They were told to surrender, and three Rotenese came out. The others refused to give themselves up, and the Sonbai and Amabi proceeded to throw in burning torches, which suffocated another eighteen. The survivors shouted from inside the cave: 'You Sonbai hounds of hell, make any mischief you want. If you remain here for a year we will still not yield to the Noble Company.' In the end the VOC troops secured another 42 enemies, dead or alive, but were unable to clear all the caves of enemies.⁵⁵ When the resistance was finally suppressed, the *manek* of

⁵³ VOC 1461 (1689), ff. 567a-568b; Coolhaas 1975:210.

⁵⁴ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 18-4-1681.

⁵⁵ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 19-5-1681.

Oenale had to comply with the VOC's request for a certain number of slaves, to be delivered to the Company. Later in the same year the *manek* reported that he was unable to fulfil this task, since his subjects had been massacred in their settlements or murdered in the caves by the Sonbai. One third of the houses in his *nusak* were now deserted due to a lack of people.⁵⁶ It might be added that the Dutch commander of the expedition, Blanckelaar, appears to have set a bad example; he was accused by the Timorese of gross misconduct, including, among other things, the beheading of an old woman for no particular reason.⁵⁷

In the small world of Rote, neutrality was not an option, and the various struggles involved the minor *nusak* whether they wished it or not. In 1685, a chief in the important *nusak* Ringgou rebelled against the VOC and brought over his men from his hiding-place on Pulau Semau, intending to attack the Dutch clients with Amarasi help. Together with men from Bilba and Korbaffo he arrived at Batuisi, a minor domain that usually kept to the VOC system. 'Come', he said to the villagers, 'go with us! We will set our course and invite the Amarasi in order to fight the Noble Company'. The Batuisi reportedly replied, 'Why should we rise against our father and mother? For the Noble Company is our father and mother.'⁵⁸ When the others heard this defiant answer, they attacked the Batuisi and killed six men. Half of the population then chose to follow the pro-Amarasi forces, while the other half was forced to resettle in the VOC-friendly *nusak* Landu.⁵⁹ This state of unrest dragged on until circa 1690, and cost the tiny *nusak* dearly.

Rote, in sum, was a place that was richly equipped in terms of foodstuffs and that was of strategically vital importance. However, of all the VOC dependencies in the Solor-Timor region, it suffered most in terms of colonial intervention, which sometimes resulted in very severe massacres of the local population. One cannot escape the impression that some of the conflicts were deliberately fueled by the Company and its supporters in order to acquire slaves, a commodity to which we will return later. The methods of some of the Company servants connected with Rote were such that even the Supreme Government in Batavia

⁵⁶ VOC 1375 (1681-82), *Dagregister*, sub 24-10-1681.

⁵⁷ VOC 1368 (1681), f. 468. On the misconduct of Blanckelaar, see also VOC 1376 (1682), ff. 406a-406b.

⁵⁸ VOC 1414 (1685), f. 157.

⁵⁹ VOC 1414 (1685), f. 157.

found that they had overstepped the boundaries. Thus the trouble that flared up in 1685-1690 was considered to be a consequence of the behaviour of the notorious temporary *opperhoofd* Willem Tange, whom Batavia thought it necessary to sack from his position. The government decreed that no unnecessary blood should be spilled, and that the conquered *nusak* should not be subjected to unbearable fines (Coolhaas 1975:166). These were admonitions that were more easily issued than implemented, but indeed the worst of the violence had receded by the end of the seventeenth century.

SAWU

In the middle of the unruly Sawu Sea lies a small island, known by its inhabitants as Rai Hawu, or by the outer world as Sawu, Savo or Sabo. While Sawu is often mentioned as a counterpart of Rote, it differs from the latter island in many respects. While Rote is culturally and linguistically related to western Timor, Sawu has more in common with Sumba and the small island of Ndao, west of Rote (Fox 1977:56). The consequences of this affiliation are seen throughout its history during the period in question. In linguistic terms, it is also more coherent than Rote, where there are no less than nine dialects; on Sawu and the adjacent island Raijua there is only one language. The Sawunese believed that their island was basically uniform in nature, while the Rotenese prefer to emphasize the differences between their various *nusak* (Fox 1977:81). What is similar between the two islands, however, is the ecological adaptation that the Rotenese and Sawunese managed to achieve on their deforested lands.

In contrast with Rote, Sawu could not, and indeed still cannot, be easily reached from Kupang, and military interventions were consequently rarer since they demanded extensive logistical planning. The VOC records show that the Dutch kept a regular check on what was going on and visited Sawu at regular intervals after the inception of friendly relations in 1648. Other than that, the island was largely left to tend to its own affairs, and it was only in the 1750s that a Dutch interpreter was permanently placed there. It has been argued that the Company only had to intervene very rarely because the Sawunese had little reason for rebellious conduct. Moreover, the island was of limited strategic value

due to its location – ‘a lump of stone in an immense sea’, according to one Dutch visitor (Fox 1977:126).

Like Rote, Sawu was divided into a number of small domains. A study of oral tradition, which displays an amazing degree of reliability as far back as comparisons can be made, suggests that hereditary rulers were only appointed after the arrival of the Portuguese at some point in the sixteenth century (Duggan 2008:70, 206, 225, 287, 326). On the main island there were five domains (Timu, Seba, Menia, Mesara and Liae), while the tiny island of Rajjua off the western cape was a domain of its own. Unlike Rote, however, there was a political hierarchy among the domains. The easternmost domain of Timu was considered the highest in status, and its ruler was known to the Company as ‘the regent of Sawu’.⁶⁰ In the central part of the island lay Seba, which at times was engaged in political rivalry with Timu. In the late colonial period it was Seba that held most of the political power, and in 1915 its ruler, or *duae*, was eventually appointed Raja of Sawu by the Dutch. In the early decades of VOC suzerainty it was not always clear who was the actual ‘raja’ of a particular domain. Confused Dutch officials might mention two people, both of whom had ruling prerogatives, without being certain who was the highest in command. As a matter of fact, a domain would have its own hierarchy with various ritual functionaries, the highest being the *deo rai* (lord of the earth) and *apu lodo* (descendant of the sun). They were associated with the agricultural cycle of the year. Since the ritual obligations of the *deo rai* made them unfit for conventional lordship, the VOC acknowledged the *apu lodo* as their counterparts in political affairs, or in other words ‘rajas’; in the VOC records they are also variously known as kings, *penghulu*⁶¹ or regents. Since the *apu lodo*-ship, too, was incompatible with political rule, separate raja branches of the respective families gradually emerged.⁶²

Early Dutch opinions of the Sawunese were far from positive. They were described as savages, and their rulers were characterized as stub-

⁶⁰ Pelon 2002: 61. Curiously, there is no trace in modern tradition of the precedence of Timu (Geneviève Duggan, National University of Singapore, personal communication).

⁶¹ *Penghulu* is an old Malay princely title, later used for village chiefs or the leaders of mosques (VOC-Glossarium 2000:89).

⁶² Fox 1977:85-7. The various clans (*udu*) that provide rajas are extensively traced in Duggan 2008. Judging from her investigation, shifts of ruling clans occurred among some of the domains in the seventeenth century.

born and untrustworthy.⁶³ Later on, the image of the islanders improved considerably. Both James Cook (writing in 1770) and Jean-Baptiste Pelon (writing in 1778) lauded them as industrious and courageous people with comparatively high morals; for example, they took no more than one wife. In Pelon's view, they were an improvement on the Rotenese (Fox 1977:115-26; Pelon 2002:61-4). It is hard to say if something in particular changed between the seventeenth and the late eighteenth century; most likely, the variations in description depend on the attitude of the European observer rather than the behaviour of the locals. Nevertheless, there were certainly events in the early decades of the Kupang post that made the Dutch distrustful of the Sawunese – and vice versa.

The Company post in West Sumatra needed slaves to work in the goldmines of Salida, since the locals were considered 'too lazy' to work for a wage. This was a rare opportunity to make the Kupang post pay for itself, and Batavia requested slaves from the Timor area. On Sawu, the Timu domain promised to deliver this commodity to the Dutch, if they, in exchange, would then mediate between the Timu and Mesara. In July 1672, the Company servant Reynout Wagenburgh therefore went to Sawu to settle the affair. After some preliminaries, the Mesara attacked the Dutch and their companions, but were driven back by the musket fire of the Europeans. Wagenburgh proceeded to set the *negeri* of Mesara on fire, and then returned, after Timu had promised him 100-150 slaves, who would be available on the occasion of the next VOC visit (Coolhaas 1968:845-6).

In early 1674, the same Reynout Wagenburgh accepted the delicate mission to sail from Kupang to Batumean on Timor with a delegation of allies. The idea was to engage in diplomatic talks with the Amarasi ruler and António Hornay. When they arrived at the outer coast of Timor, the Dutch encountered a hornet's nest of intrigue. At precisely this time certain Atoni were conspiring with the malcontent Portuguese to murder Hornay. Adherents of Hornay warned him about what was going on, and the stern Topass leader proceeded to take the plotters into custody. Under these circumstances Hornay had no time to travel the long way to Batumean, so there was nothing more to do for Wagenburgh, who turned back again. On the return trip his vessel encountered a storm and was driven off course. The crew was forced to seek shelter in Timu, but Wagenburgh found out too late that he was not welcome there. When the

⁶³ VOC 1428 (1686), ff. 274b-275a.

Dutch and their Timorese allies came ashore they were butchered by the Sawunese, who were led by two persons, Talo and Lifkone.⁶⁴ The reason, according to what was later said, was the excessive number of slaves that Wagenburgh had demanded on his first visit, an act which had enraged people in this small community.⁶⁵

When the news reached Kupang, the reaction among the Timorese allies was one of fury since several aristocrats were among the victims. It was not until 1676, however, that Batavia was able to provide the men for an expedition forceful enough to punish Timu. With 220 Dutchmen at hand, the VOC demanded 700 warriors from Kupang, Sonbai and Amabi. The desire to take revenge for the massacre, and the opportunities for a good booty, ensured that there was no lack of recruits, and in the end 1,100 Timorese crowded onto the Company ships. After having subdued four refractory *nusak* on Rote on the way, the armada proceeded to Sawu. It is significant that the Dutch brought Minggu, the *manek* of the small island of Ndao, with them. The language and culture of Ndao is close to that of Sawu, and Minggu was useful as an interpreter in the negotiations that were to follow. Arriving on Sawu, the expedition was welcomed by the leaders of the domain of Seba, who saw an opportunity to ingratiate themselves with the Dutch to the detriment of their rivals in Timu. The allied army thereupon marched against Timu. At first it seemed that Ama Rohi, the *duae* of Timu, wanted to negotiate with the Dutch, but it soon became apparent that this was but a common stalling tactic. The population withdrew from the main *negeri* to a fortification strengthened with no less than three walls, one outside of the other. They announced that they did not want peace, but would instead wait for the Dutch to come. The Company forces attempted to storm the first wall but were halted by the furious resistance put up by the defenders. On the next day they fared better, but only by applying the latest in European military technology. While two Dutch companies charged the fortification at one point, a group of VOC sailors, using grenades, fire jars and fire pikes, scaled the first wall. The second wall soon fell too, but the defenders of the innermost wall still fought back desperately. An officer spoke to the Sawunese, and Ama Rohi appeared on the parapet with a peace flag, shouting ‘*Sudah berkelahi*’ (Enough fighting).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ VOC 1311 (1675), f. 246.

⁶⁵ VOC 1319 (1675-76), *Dagregister*, sub 15-5-1676.

⁶⁶ Coolhaas 1968:108; VOC 1319 (1675-76), *Dagregister*, sub 9-5-1676.

Under the cover of negotiations, a new power game now ensued. Ama Rohi promised to deliver 300 slaves – men, women and children – as a fine for the massacre, and to extradite the instigators, Talo and Lifkone. Moreover, Timu would have to pay 150 taëls (5.6 kg) of gold and 150 taëls of *muti lawati* or coral beads to the Timorese auxiliaries – as we have seen, coral was greatly valued by the populations in the region.⁶⁷ Once again, however, the deliveries were delayed, following tactics employed by the Sawunese. Ama Rohi knew fully well that the Dutch were in a miserable position and could not stay much longer on the island; fever rapidly spread among the troops and the majority of the Europeans were too ill to march long distances. At last a captain was sent to the *negeri* with 20 soldiers and a lieutenant to settle the matter once and for all. He rapidly collected the people there, forcibly disarmed every man, and gathered them all on a plain outside the settlement, where they found themselves surrounded by the majority of the Company troops. The captain requested that the chiefs select who would become VOC slaves, and turn them over. The fateful selection lasted far into the evening, until 240 poor souls had been picked out. Then the chiefs told the Dutch officer that there were no more slaves in the crowd, but only free-born men. Considering what had happened to Wagenburgh, the Dutch found it unwise to aggravate the situation further and so allowed the rest of the population to go back to the *negeri*. The remaining number seemed content with the outcome since the best they had hoped for was to be brought to Batavia as slaves. Hostages were given to ensure the good conduct of Timu, and the fleet hastily left Sawu without having caught the actual murderers.⁶⁸

Never again would the Company return in full force to Sawu. In stark contrast with Rote, this remained the only major expedition to the area; given the circumstances, one can understand why. In order to give credence to what they had threatened to do, considerable European forces had to be allocated, which in this case took no less than two years to implement. Plagued by poor health and facing a spirited resistance, it was hazardous for foreign troops to stay long on Sawu (Fox 1977:113). For the next few hundred years the island was very much left to its own devices and the political problems that arose from time to time were solved by Dutch mediation as far as possible. The continuity of Dutch-Sawunese

⁶⁷ For more on these *muti lawati* or *muti salak*, see Rumphius 1999:279-81.

⁶⁸ Coolhaas 1968:108-9; VOC 1319 (1675-76), *Dagregister*, sub 9-5-1676, 15-5-1676, 16-5-1676.

relations was also sustained by two exceedingly long reigns in the leading Timu principedom. Ama Rohi was followed by his son Rohi Rano (reign 1678-1731), who in turn was succeeded by his grandson Hili Haba (reign 1731-1798), who apparently has the longest documented reign in Indonesian history.⁶⁹ None of them escaped the perennial problem of domestic struggles, but throughout their amazing 120 years in power they were referred to as upper regents of Sawu and generally maintained amicable contacts with the VOC. In the course of the eighteenth century, moreover, the Sawunese would provide a great service: they saved the skin of the Dutch in Kupang, and subsequently raised their status.

SOLOR

Considering its status as the original Dutch stronghold in the region, it is striking how the eastern half of Solor was left almost defenceless after the transfer to Kupang in 1657. Fort Henricus was allowed to fall into disrepair for the simple reason that too little manpower was allocated to Timor to allow even a very small garrison to be stationed there. The only European presence on Solor to Kupang consisted of two artillerymen (*bosschieters*), who stayed there to mark the presence of the Company. Their task was not entirely without danger, since the periodically recurring disturbances sometimes put the life of the Europeans at risk. Later on, in the eighteenth century, the Dutch interests were represented by an interpreter. The main lifeline between the Company and Solor were the visits that the *opperhoofd* occasionally undertook to Rote, Sawu and Solor, where all kinds of local issues would be vented.

Governance was therefore basically in the hands of the Lamaholot population. Among the Watan Lema principedoms, the rulers of Lohayong held the highest rank as lords and dames of Solor, at least up until 1700. The ambitions of Lohayong were strengthened by the Dutch policy. It is difficult to comprehend the exact prerogatives of these lords before the onset of early colonial dominance, but in later tradition, the seventeenth century was remembered as the age of a veritable sultanate. The historical Kaicili Pertawi (reign before 1613-1645) was known as Sultan Sili

⁶⁹ His accession is noted in VOC 2192 (1730-31), *Dagregister*, sub 11-3-1731, 7-6-1731. His son and successor Jara Hili asked the VOC for investiture in 1798, in a letter preserved in LOr 2238, UB Leiden. Oral traditions about these personages are discussed in Duggan 2008:227-32.

Pertawi and was said to have miraculous local origins; he was the alleged brother of the founder-sultans of Solo, Malacca, Gowa, Buton, Ambon and Bima.⁷⁰ His widow and successor, Nyai Cili (reign 1646-1664), was legitimized by an oral tradition that closely followed the stranger king theme which is so common in this part of Indonesia. The story is interesting since it was recorded by the Dutch as early as 1706, and was used as an argument in a succession issue in Lohayong.

The story has it that the ancestor of one of the claimants once ruled over Lohayong and all of Solor. At this time Nyai Cili, a woman from Keeda (Kedah, or possibly Kedang on Lembata), was expelled from her birthplace and subsequently sailed to Solor with a number of retainers. Arriving in Lohayong she met the lord of the land who received his guests politely. Firstly, he gave the upper part of his residence to the foreigners to sleep in. Nyai Cili felt embarrassed and pointed out that he was the chief and regent, and that this was not proper behaviour regarding newcomers. The lord insisted, however. When it was time to eat, the lord of the land served the lady a buck's head. Again Nyai Cili remarked that the host, as a headman, should have the right to eat the head. Again the lord insisted that she keep the buck's head. Nyai Cili then commented, 'If you want things that way [then so be it]. Once the upper place, once the head, then always the head.' From that point onwards, she was given the reins of power over Solor. Adherents of the old lord of the land proposed to have her killed, but the lord impeded their intent with the words 'Why would we want to have that blood upon our hands?' It was decided that she and her bloodline were to govern Solor henceforth. Only if it became extinct, could the descent of the lord of the land again stake a claim.⁷¹

The legend points towards a ritual division between an original owner of the land, and a newcomer who gains executive powers by certain abilities, a theme that closely parallels the relationship between, for example, the Kune lord and the Sonbai ancestor. Historical documents clearly depict Nyai Cili as the wife rather than honoured guest of the old Kaicili Pertawi, meaning perhaps that history may have been altered to suit the stranger king theme. The semi-detailed Dutch records also show that the historical Nyai Cili was resolute in her defence of the lands that the Dutch neglected, at the same time as being good-hearted by nature

⁷⁰ Dietrich 1984:320-1, 324. Ambon, of course, was in fact no sultanate.

⁷¹ VOC 1728 (1706), ff. 138-40.

and someone who strove to avoid the spilling of blood when possible. Even if she did not exactly match the criteria of the legend, she would be, in a way, worthy of the legend.

The closeness of East Solor to the Portuguese-dominated Demon territories made for continuous trouble. Like on Timor, Rote and Sawu, low-scale violence and regional factionalism was endemic, underpinned but not solely conditioned by the early colonial rivalries. Already in 1659, two years after the Dutch sortie, the Dutch renegade Jan van Adrichem led a Larantuqueiro raid to Solor with seven *perahu*. He burnt the Solorese ships and, performing the ultimate blasphemy, torched the mosque of Lohayong. Maintaining a state of hostilities was clearly not in the interest of local society, and the elderly but enterprising Nyai Cili proceeded to make peace with the Larantuqueiros of her own accord, without discussing the matter with Kupang. She promptly forced the other *sengaji* to sail with her to Larantuka in March 1661. Although the visit was marred by a bloody incident with a Catholic priest, the enterprise seems to have borne fruit. While the Dutch may have perceived this as a suspicious act, as the visit involved contact with a Portuguese client, to the Solorese it was seen as the most practical thing to do at that point in time.⁷²

Local and Dutch understandings of Solorese kingship were at odds with each other, as indicated by the events surrounding Nyai Cili's death in March 1664. When she felt her end approaching Nyai Cili wrote to the Governor General in Batavia and asked for five picul of white cloth for her funerary shroud, and an elephant tusk to use as her 'pillow' when she was dead, all in accordance with Solorese *adat*. Since she stood alone in the world, she said, she bequeathed her land to the Company. The visibly moved Governor General Joan Maetsuyker replied with a glowing letter in which he proposed that Dasi, the *sengaji* of the whaling village Lamakera on easternmost Solor, should be made the new lord of the league. At that moment, Dasi was visiting Batavia where he made a very good impression on Maetsuyker, who judged him to be a loyal and capable man. On Solor, however, something completely different happened when the queen passed away. After two months the Dutch *opperhoofd* Hugo Cuylenburgh – a man who did not get along well with either his fellow countrymen or the locals – arrived at Fort Henricus to take stock of affairs. To his astonishment, he heard from the gathered

⁷² *Dagh-Register* 1887-1931, the year 1661:218-9.

Solorese grandees that not Dasi but rather a young granddaughter of Nyai Cili had been appointed as ruler of the land, ostensibly according to the last wish of the deceased queen. When Cuylenburgh asked Dasi about the matter, he first kept quiet. When the irritated *opperhoofd* repeated the question, Dasi craftily replied, ‘Why do you ask me?’ Upon closer enquiry, Cuylenburgh found that the Dutch had gravely misunderstood issues of precedence and that Dasi certainly was appreciated among the Lamaholot, but held no high status. If indeed Dasi had been appointed, the only result would have been a general tumult.⁷³

The Solorese kingship was upheld by the new female ruler Nyai Cili Muda (reign 1664-1686), and then by her nephew, *sengaji* Cili (reign 1687-1700). Neither of them had the authority of their illustrious forebear, and in particular Nyai Cili Muda had problems keeping internal peace among the individual members of the Watan Lema league.⁷⁴ When *sengaji* Cili succumbed to an epidemic that ravaged the islands in 1700, the idea of having one paramount power weakened. Two families competed for governance and attempted to draw in the Company as arbiter. In the end, this led to a split where one faction governed Lohayong and were recognized as *sengaji* by the VOC, while the other faction governed the nearby village of Menanga. The *sengaji* of Lohayong kept the first rank in the political hierarchy, but they were no longer referred to as ‘lords of Solor’.

The other four princedoms included in the Watan Lema league (Lamakera, Lamahala, Terong and Adonara) were often at each other’s throats. For long periods, they constituted a graver danger for each other than the Demon territories under Portuguese influence did. Lamakera warred with Lamahala directly across the strait, and Lamahala in turn lived in periodical hostility with the neighbouring village of Terong. Adonara, on the north coast of the island with the same name, usually took no part in these troubles but was occasionally drawn into them. When the Dutch officials made their regular visits they summoned the various *sengaji* to Fort Henricus (although Adonara usually failed to appear) and

⁷³ VOC 1246 (1664), ff. 1585-6. The *sengaji* dynasty of Dasi might have been recent at the time; at least, modern tradition points out Dasi as the ancestor of the later *sengaji* (interview, Haji Muhammad Hasan, Lamakera, 16-6-2006). The first *sengaji* of Lamakera, according to tradition, was Juang Meto, an immigrant from Sikka on Flores, whose family was subsequently replaced by that of Dasi. Possibly this Juang Meto refers to Dom João, known to have governed Lamakera in 1598. Compare with Abdul Kadir Sika, n.y.

⁷⁴ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 18-11-1680.

admonished the aristocrats to obey the lord or dame of Lohayong.

From a Dutch point of view, Lamakera was the most reliable of these domains to prop up VOC authority on Solor. However, looking at it from a different point of view, *sengaji* Dasi and his descendants pursued a consistent policy of leaning towards the Dutch side in order to strengthen their regional network. Dasi himself enjoyed a long reign from circa 1655 to 1701, and therefore became a symbol of continuity during the first formative half-century of VOC influence. While he was not always popular with the individual *opperhoofden*, he knew how to make himself indispensable. He repeatedly travelled to Batavia on Dutch keels, something that very few other rulers in the region did. In later oral tradition this was even given a mythologized slant, as the *sengaji* was alleged to have walked across the water to Java where he exchanged ceremonial *tongkat* with a sultan.⁷⁵ Since the Solorese were considered to be the only truly skilful seamen in this part of the archipelago, they were useful to the Company in a number of ways. In the early years of the Kupang post, it was agreed that a community of Lamakera could stay in the area henceforth known as Kampung Solor, a few hundred meters east of Fort Concordia; there they caught fish at the behest of the Company. The *sengaji* of Lamakera sometimes stayed in the kampung too, to the irritation of the Dutch, who believed that the *sengaji* were more useful back home. The Solorese were able to sail great distances with their small boats: when the Dutch *opperhoofden* suddenly passed away in 1714 and 1740 respectively, at times when it was not possible to send Dutch vessels to Batavia, the *sengaji* in person undertook the demanding (but creditable) trip to communicate the news to the Governor General.⁷⁶

Lamakera's relations with its neighbour Lohayong were not always positive, as they both competed for the overlordship of Solor (Coolhaas 1976:73). The Lamakera nevertheless carefully avoided direct confrontations – after all, Lohayong was home to Fort Henricus and the two Dutch artillerymen. In 1682, Dasi made a rash attempt to persuade the Dutch to make Lamakera their new Solorese centre. In a letter to Governor General Cornelis Speelman, he tried to cast Nyai Cili Muda in a dubious

⁷⁵ Interview, Haji Muhammad Hasan, Lamakera, 16-6-2006. Oral tradition refers to him as Nene Dasi. That this must be the same figure as the historical Dasi is shown by the enumeration of his five sons, four of which are also found in VOC documents: Kana Puis, Karaeng Barang (d. after 1693), Abu Bakar (reign 1701-21), Subang Pulo (Jacob alias Pulo, d. after 1694), and Bajoamang (Jan Rotterdam alias Bayama, d. after 1688).

⁷⁶ VOC 1853 (1714), ff. 9-12; Van Goor 2004:645.

light, and declared that he had built a new fortification in Lamakera that he had given the glorious name ‘Groot Hollandia’. He was only waiting for the Company to come and live there, he said, and he strongly suggested that Speelman should allocate a scribe, four soldiers and some merchants.⁷⁷ The Company was obviously not taken with the idea, but Groot Hollandia is occasionally mentioned in the documents from this time. The fortress was presumably made of wood, for unlike Fort Henricus, nothing remains of it today.

Dasi forged a comprehensive network in the region. With his seaborne villagers he assisted the Dutch in their dealings with Alor and Pantar, where he had economic interests. He was also given an official trading pass that enabled his ships to frequent Rote, Sawu, Bima and Wetar – in other words, a rather extensive area. The condition that was imposed, was that the trade should not be harmful to Company interests. After some years, the Dutch authorities changed their minds and forbade Dasi to go to Wetar, which lay within another VOC residency.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the *Dagregisters* of Kupang frequently mention Lamakeran trading expeditions that went to Rote via Kupang. These expeditions were fully approved by the authorities, and were usually headed by members of the *sengaji* family. They offered Rotenese items such as coconuts, beans and trai oil, and sold it for *gula* and salt.⁷⁹ Among Dasi’s several wives was an aristocratic Rotenese lady, possibly from Ringgou, and indeed, Dasi was used by the Dutch in their complicated dealings with the Rotenese. Due to his personal network of contacts, Dasi could speak with recalcitrant princes on behalf of the Company, and he took an active part in the expedition to Rote and Sawu in 1676. His dynastic network even extended to Timor, since his son Jacob was married to the daughter of the Helong regent, Ama Susang.⁸⁰ How these marriages with non-Muslim spouses were compatible with the Muslim creed of the Solorese is not specified, but it is likely that religious differences were still of limited importance in a context like this; Dasi himself moreover gave two of his sons the Christian Dutch names Jacob and Jan Rotterdam. It is significant that oral tradition was not content to retell his prosaic death in March 1701

⁷⁷ *Dagh-Register* 1887-1931, the year 1682:1188-90.

⁷⁸ VOC 1609 (1698), f. 62.

⁷⁹ VOC 1481 (1689-90), *Dagregister*, sub 24-9-1689.

⁸⁰ Coolhaas 1971:105-10; VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 27-5-1687, 20-8-1687; VOC 1553 (1693-94), *Dagregister*, sub 26-11-1693; VOC 1663 (1702), f. 72-3.

at a ripe old age, but instead gave it a supernatural aspect connected to his frequent travels overseas. After visiting his Dutch allies in Kupang, his craft returned to Solor, but had an accident at sea, just off Lamakera. The ship capsized, but Dasi was a good swimmer and managed to reach the shore. Meanwhile, the Lamakera assumed that their lord had drowned and prepared a mortuary feast. When Dasi approached Lamakera, alive and well, he perceived that something unusual was going on. He asked a fisherman why they were organizing a feast, and got the answer that it was for him. On hearing this, the *sengaji* was overcome by shame and disappeared in a moment without leaving a trace (*hilang*).⁸¹

One might expect the Dutch-Portuguese peace of 1663 to have ensured that there would be no more aggression from the Larantuqueiros against the Watan Lema. As it turned out, this was not quite the case. There were in fact continuous raids and counter-raids between the coastal Paji and land-oriented Demon territories, which were carried out with varying degrees of success. In the 1670s, a vendetta arose when the Larantuqueiros attacked and burnt the *negeri* Adonara, abducting two women in the process. It appeared that António Hornay had no hand in this raid, yet nor did he care to punish the perpetrators. However, the princes of Lamakera and Terong decided to exact vengeance of their own accord without asking for permission from the *opperhoofd* in distant Kupang. In 1679, they set forth with five *perahu* and sailed over to Kawela on the nearby island of Lembata, which was under Portuguese control. Kawela probably had nothing whatsoever to do with the raid, but for the *sengaji* this was less important. The Solorese were fiercely resisted and the *sengaji* of Terong and his son were killed on the shore, while the Lamakera commander only barely escaped, thanks to his loyal retainers (Coolhaas 1971:407). Years later, Dasi of Lamakera reportedly created trouble on Ataúro, an island north of Dili that belonged to the Portuguese sphere. In 1689, Hornay complained bitterly about the Solorese when he met the Dutch *opperhoofd* Willem Moerman in Lifau, and demanded Dutch consent to take revenge on the troublemakers of Lamahala and Terong. Moerman replied ‘that His Excellency was more than well acquainted with the character of these people, and their thievish nature and inborn villainy’. This villainy, he pointed out, pertained not only to theirs but also to Hornay’s clients.⁸² Hornay made no further

⁸¹ Interview, Haji Muhammad Hasan, Lamakera, 16-6-2006.

⁸² VOC 1481 (1689-90), *Dagregister*, sub 14-6-1689.

comments but switched subjects to discuss trade, and the conversation indicates the very negative generalizations that were made about non-Christian populations. Although they were long-time allies, the Solorese were little more than an innate problem in the eyes of even an able official like Willem Moerman.

As for the obnoxious Lamahala and Terong, they were dealt with six years later when António's brother Francisco Hornay was in charge of the Topass community. Forty-eight *perahu*, manned with Timorese, Dutch deserters and other Topass clients, departed from Larantuka in September 1695. They stormed the two coastal villages after facing only weak resistance, and returned to Larantuka with a booty consisting of ships and artillery. The Dutch did nothing about this apart from issuing mild requests to cease the hostilities and extradite the Dutch renegades.⁸³ As in the case of the Amarasi invasion of 1679, it was implicitly understood that the acting combatants were the Larantuqueiros and Lamahala-Terong, not Hornay and the VOC.

Dutch anxiousness also extended to other areas. From a VOC point of view at least, there were distant threats against the balance they were trying to achieve in the Lamaholot world. Although the double kingdom of Gowa and Tallo' had been ruined through the campaigns of 1667 and 1669, the defeated populations of South Sulawesi were far from cowed. Makassarese and Bugis refugee groups went overseas in all directions, from Sumatra to Maluku, and were even able to found new kingdoms and dynasties. There were also a large number of traders from Sulawesi, collectively known as Makassarese, who plied the waters of the archipelago to seek their fortune with or, especially, without, Company passes. Trade without passes was of course considered highly detrimental to Company interests, and one professed aim of the Timor post was precisely to stop the Makassarese network from expanding into this part of the archipelago. The matter was complicated by the weakness of the garrison of Fort Concordia. The local Company authorities had very few ships to hand, and were consequently unable to perform the type of policing expeditions that the posts in Makassar and Maluku undertook. The result was that they had to trust the more loyal Solorese allies, in particular Lohayong and Lamakera, to keep watch against suspect seafarers. The arrangement was not always successful, however,

⁸³ VOC 7905 (1696), ff. 12-4.

for unauthorized ships did arrive from time to time.

The sultan of Buton, a VOC ally since many years, had a stake in the conquest of Solor back in 1613, and still cultivated interests in the Lamaholot area in the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1681, Sultan Zainuddin dispatched a fleet that carried letters to António Hornay, Lamahala and the *sengaji* of Belagar on Pantar. The Solorese allies used the Buton connection to complain to the sultan about the hostile Portuguese attitude.⁸⁴ The protection granted by the VOC and laid down in the various contracts and agreements apparently did not suffice. Solemn assertions that the land of Solor was the land of the Company turned out to be worth very little when the Larantuqueiros and their clients on Adonara and Lembata staged violent forays. The shared identity of Islam was a factor in these contacts. Curiously, in the letters that Sultan Zainuddin sent to António Hornay, he appears to have conferred the Solorese lands to Hornay. On receiving these letters, Hornay employed his usual policy of ambiguity: he announced their existence to the Kupang authorities, who were naturally incensed about the impertinent declaration of the sultan, but then declined to show one of them to the Dutch officials under the pretext that he had lost it.⁸⁵ From other sources we know that Buton competed for influence over various spots in the archipelago with the sultan of Ternate. As the defiant Ternatean ruler Sibori Amsterdam was apprehended by the Dutch in 1681, the Butonese attempted to strengthen their positions. In 1683, Sibori Amsterdam had to sign a contract that turned Ternate into a VOC fief, where it was specified that the old and ostensibly unfounded claims on ‘Solor and so on’ were nullified.⁸⁶ As a matter of fact, the Butonese did occasionally support the Solorese over the next decades, much to the resentment of the VOC authorities but with very limited consequences for the political status of the area.⁸⁷

From an economic point of view, Solor and the adjacent VOC allies had little to offer the colonial apparatus. The merchandise brought to

⁸⁴ VOC 1375 (1681-82), *Dagregister*, sub 11-11-1681; VOC 1400 (1683-84), *Dagregister*, sub 10-10-1683. On Sultan Zainuddin, see also *Sejarah dan adat*, II, 1977:67-9. Indigenous Butonese sources say nothing in particular about the sultan’s interest in Solor.

⁸⁵ VOC 1400 (1683-84), *Dagregister*, sub 7-3-1684; Coolhaas 1971:612.

⁸⁶ Stapel 1934:310-1. In the same contract it is specified that the Butonese were officially forbidden to frequent Solor from the beginning of 1683. Limited possibilities to police the seas made the prohibition ineffective.

⁸⁷ Sultan Liauddin Ismail of Buton was deposed in 1697 as a consequence of his poor conduct during a relief expedition against Lifau and Lantuka (Coolhaas 1975:786). Butonese sources allege that he stepped down due to old age (*Sejarah dan adat*, II, 1977:74).

Kupang was mainly intended for local consumption, and only a limited number of slaves were acquired by the Solorese on the coast of Flores and on Lembata and the Alor group, either through trade or petty warfare. When the customary gifts of the allies were collected to be transported from Kupang to Batavia, the contribution from Lohayong and Lamakera would consist only of a few slaves. The internal Solorese economy is only patchily documented in the VOC records, since it was of little interest for the Dutch. What we can tell, however, is that this seafaring people had an area of activity that stretched from mid-Flores to Wetar in Maluku, where fishing, whaling and petty trade played an important part. The relations between the Paji and the Demon and Portuguese were not just marked by constant hostility, but also by amicable commercial intercourse – what the Dutch *opperhoofden* would frequently castigate as ‘smuggling’.

THE ALOR GROUP

A letter from the queen of Solor in 1682 presented her claims in the following words:

The headman, Johannes van den Broeck, in your fortress in Kupang is my witness that Nyai Cili Muda reigns with honour and respect over the land of Solor from the mountains, to the shores of Alor and through to Ende; and that all this stands under the government of Nyai Cili Muda, with any good or bad, right or wrong that Nyai Cili Muda commits. But all this is under the control of the Company, since the land and waters of Solor are Company land. (De Roever 2002:284.)

The idea that the queen ‘reigned’ over the Alor group, let alone Ende, was exaggerated, but not entirely plucked out of thin air. Other records show that there were indeed forms of exchange between the Solorese and Alorese, epitomized in the twentieth-century tradition that the two leagues of Watan Lema and Galiyao, with five members each, were like two open hands with their ten digits. The complicated nomenclature is indicated by the reference in a VOC source to ‘Pantar, otherwise called Alor’.⁸⁸ Alor re-

⁸⁸ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 667.

ferred to a domain in the north-western part of the island that today bears the same name, but it was also understood as a general name for Pantar and Alor, the latter of which was usually known as Malua or Ombai.

That the Solorese actively intervened there is first stated in a VOC report from 1665. The enterprising Dasi of Lamakera promised the Company he would deliver sapanwood, a wood used for dyeing and as a ballast on European ships. Solor did not have any sapan forests, so Dasi led an expedition to Pantar, where he stayed for three months, and enjoyed good relations with one of the Galiyao rajas whom he offered armed assistance. The sapanwood only grew far up in the highlands, and when the Solorese marched uphill with some local pathfinders they were met by stout mountain people – Alphoeren in the Dutch terminology. The mountain people proved hostile to foreign visitors and attacked Dasi's men, causing some of the pathfinders to be injured and the expedition to retreat to the coast. Dasi later commented that the valuable sapanwood could be readily acquired if only the Solorese were accompanied by a few Company soldiers carrying muskets. The *opperhoofd* was not taken by this idea, however.⁸⁹

Apart from a brief visit by a free burgher in 1675, the first foray undertaken by the Kupang post occurred in 1677. It had all the characteristics of a voyage of discovery to the islands over which the VOC claimed indirect suzerainty. The official Johannes van den Broeck – born in Taiwan and thus probably a Eurasian – sailed to Solor where he joined forces with Dasi, who wanted to purchase warships (*backaleys-prauwen, perahu berkelahi*) at Alor. After a few days travel the expedition arrived at Pandai on north-eastern Pantar. Its ruler was characterized as the overlord of the surrounding *negeri*, and also of the *negeri* Alor on the opposite coast. The local ruler, Sako Mede, appeared overjoyed at the Dutch visit, which he had long been waiting for.⁹⁰ He said he would be happy to sell

⁸⁹ VOC 1252 (1665), ff. 667-8. The term 'Alphoeren', Alfurs, was used for various low-technology groups in eastern Indonesia, especially in Central Maluku.

⁹⁰ There was already a history of diplomacy concerning the Alorese leaders. The Dutch *opperhoofd* Jacob van Wijckersloot met a certain Nae Saku 'of Alor', who visited Kupang in 1673. This is a different figure than Sako Mede; he governed as Kapitan of Dulolong close to Alor Besar and is a legendary figure on Alor to this day. Nae Saku asserted that the *negeri* Alor, Pandai, Belagar and Barnusa had stood under the authority and protection of the Company for years, and even kept Dutch flags. For some reason Kui, in modern accounts described as the fifth component of Galiyao, is not mentioned here. Later in history, Kui sometimes claimed to be an adherent of the Portuguese. The composition of the Galiyao bond may have fluctuated over time. Reynout Wagenburgh later met Nae Saku on Solor and noted his enthusiasm at receiving a Dutch delegation (VOC 1301 [1673-74], *Dagregister*, sub 2-10-1673, 15-10-1673).

beeswax and slaves in return for cloths; upon closer inspection, however, the goods he could offer turned out to be rather modest: three picul of beeswax and three slave girls. Van den Broeck handed over a Dutch flag as a token of vassal-ship and sailed over the strait to the *negeri* Alor. The merchandise there turned out to be just as frugal, but the chief explained this was due to the fact that the mountain people preferred to ignore the coastal rajjas in the west. Instead they brought the beeswax to the eastern coast, where the Portuguese bought it. The chief suggested the Dutch bring 5,000-6,000 cutlasses and axes to Alor next time to use as objects of exchange. In this way, the coastal dwellers could perhaps attract the mountain people and persuade them to deliver the beeswax to them.⁹¹

In the seventeenth century, there was no more peace between the Galiyao domains than between the Watan Lema components. At the time of Van den Broeck's visit, Alor had been at war with Belagar in south-eastern Pantar for five years. The circumstances shed an interesting light on the role of the ruler of Lohayong in relation to Galiyao. Alor declared that it would not make peace with Belagar unless Nyai Cili Muda herself came there and mediated. The queen had already sent a peace flag (a symbol of peacemaking) to the chief of Belagar, but this was not deemed sufficient.⁹² Thus, while the queen of Solor had no governing authority in these quarters, her position was still very significant when it came to the resolution of conflicts. Her functions thereby partly parallel those of the *maromak oan* of Wehali on Timor, and certain other ritually revered, but politically weak, paramount lords in the archipelago.

The Alorese maintained sporadic contact with the Company during the following generations. Enterprising rajjas sailed to Kupang in person in order to sell coconuts, areca nuts and other items of little consequence.⁹³ During certain periods in the first half of the eighteenth century, Pantar and Alor were often visited by merchants from Kupang, a trade that only seems to have taken off when Chinese people began

⁹¹ VOC 1335 (1677-78), *Dagregister*, sub 11-8-1677, 15-8-1677, 18-8-1677. The famous *moko* (drums) of Alor, which were essential objects in marital exchanges, are not explicitly mentioned in the VOC sources. In the late colonial period they were imported by Makassarese traders together with gongs. There is a reference in VOC 1663 (1702), f. 7, to the Makassarese import of gongs to Alor, and the Dutch term *gommen* may loosely include both gong and *moko*.

⁹² VOC 1335 (1677-78), *Dagregister*, sub 18-8-1677.

⁹³ VOC 1358 (1679-80), *Dagregister*, sub 6-7-1680, 17-7-1680. It was noted that the Alorese princes extended their trading activities to Wetar and Atauro to obtain slaves and beeswax for the Company.

to settle there. On the other hand, the Alorese had no real intention of sustaining the monopoly policy of the distant Company whose flags they had received; Dutchmen who visited the Portuguese ports of Lifau and Tulang Ikan in the eighteenth century sometimes found Alorese boats at the roadstead. The authorities of Kupang had an interest in keeping Makassarese and Portuguese visitors away from the island group, but otherwise had no intention of intervening. From the mid-eighteenth century there is very little information available on Alor, but what little there is suggests that the Company no longer had any insight into local affairs there. In 1785 the governor of the Banda Islands complained to Batavia that the people of Wetar were harassed by marauders from Galiyao.⁹⁴ The complaint was forwarded to Kupang, whose *opperhoofd* came to the conclusion that ‘this place [...] does not belong to the island of Great Timor, but is situated on the island of Alor on [read: opposite] the north coast of Timor, and has no connection with the Company; for that reason it is outside our capabilities to impede these people from going to Wetar or elsewhere.’⁹⁵

PROBLEMS OF SURVEILLANCE — A CASE STUDY

For a garrison consisting of far fewer than a hundred Europeans, it was a demanding task to monitor the various dependencies or semi-dependencies, especially considering the rough and tricky sea roads. A detailed case from 1686-1687 may illustrate how matters could easily slip out of control for the Company, and how the problems of surveillance were aggravated by the failure of the European staff to adhere to the rules and regulations.

Floris Jansz was a sailor from Katwijk who was established in Kupang by the 1670s and later on served as an artilleryist at Fort Henricus. After

⁹⁴ Today there are still disputes between Alor and Wetar over access to mother-of-pearl resources.

⁹⁵ VOC 3810 (1788), f. 50. According to a Dutch report from 1847 (ANRI Timor: 57, *Register der handelingen en besluiten*, sub 14-11-1847), the comprehensive Sepulu Pantai league, comprising the five Solorese-Adonarese and the five Alorese-Pantarese princedoms, was split up in 1820 due to internal conflicts. After that, a Dutch *posthouder* called Evers was placed on Alor-Pantar. Finally, this post was liquidated by the commissioner Emanuel Francis in 1831. By the 1840s, some of the Alorese domains were susceptible to Portuguese political influence, especially via the old Topass stronghold of Oecusse. The Alor issue was one of the factors in the diplomatic discussions which eventually, in 1851, led to a first division of areas into a Dutch and a Portuguese sphere of influence; the division was confirmed in 1859 (Pélissier 1996:27-9).

his service for the VOC had ended, he remained in Kupang as a free burgher. One set of circumstances made him a person of note in the small port community that evolved around Fort Concordia: in 1679 he married the widow Piernella, who was nothing less than a Helong princess, and the daughter of King Ama Pono II. Marriages between local aristocrats and Europeans were not uncommon in seventeenth-century Kupang, and similar marriages were conducted by the Portuguese. It was clearly a strategic choice made by the royal and regent families to secure matrimonial ties with the stranger lords, thereby improving their bargaining position. The European husbands were important channels of interaction, even if they were roughshod characters as was the case here. In the extant documents, Floris Jansz usually appears as a troublemaker who regularly violated the rules set up by the Company administration, and who could behave quite rudely towards his Timorese in-laws. In 1693 or 1694 he asked the Helong regent Ama Susang to let his horse graze on Pulau Semau for a while. After a while Jansz ordered the horse to be shipped back to Kupang, but since it was found to be quite emaciated, he claimed that this was not his mount. He led the horse to the door of Ama Susang's *sonaf*, and the king appeared. The Dutchman drew his cutlass and struck the animal dead with a furious blow, yelling to the regent: 'Now, eat the horse with hide and hair!' Brandishing his cutlass he rushed into the *sonaf* with the apparent intention of killing Ama Susang, who hastily escaped with his wife and child. His son-in-law Jacob, the son of *sengaji* Dasi of Lamakera, was injured, and deep scores in the pillars of the *sonaf* henceforth reminded its inhabitants of the incident. Only after a few days had elapsed, did Ama Susang dare to return to his residence. That such a matter could go unpunished indicates, of course, the liberties that certain Europeans could afford to take, even towards the local aristocracy – although in this case it is important to note that Jansz's wife was of higher birth than Ama Susang.⁹⁶

Several years before this incident, in late August 1686, three Dutch

⁹⁶ VOC 1623 (1699), ff. 72-3. The story was written down by Paulus van Coupang, a local Christian who served as a *krankbezoeker* (visitor of the sick, a low clerical position), and was one of the few literate Timorese in early colonial Kupang. Ama Susang was the uncle of Piernella, and thus a (classificatory) brother of the deceased ruler Ama Pono II. He was the regent of the Helong kingdom from before 1673 to 1698, and was known to the VOC authorities as the 'king'. Nevertheless, he was probably of low birth on his mother's side, and had no real claim to the actual kingship. As for Floris Jansz, he also traded alcohol in his own house in Kupang to the detriment of the Dutch leaseholder of such a business (VOC 1460 [1688-89], *Dagregister*, sub 2-10-1688).

ships left Kupang for Solor. After six days the sailors arrived before Fort Henricus and the Dutch leaders arranged a routine meeting with the Solorese *sengaji*. When this had taken place, two of the vessels departed from Solor again, leaving the sloop *De Steenbocq* with assistant Hendrick Tilingh as captain. Tilingh brought along his wife, the Christian Kupang-born woman Dina Cornelisz. Dina viewed the journey as a pleasure trip, an opinion she would soon have reason to alter. Floris Jansz was also on board, and as *De Steenbocq* lay at anchor off Lohayong he ordered some valuables belonging to him to be taken on board: nine slaves (eight male and one female) and a few picul of beeswax. In this period many slaves were acquired from Flores, while some originated from Lembata and the Alor group. Back in Kupang they could either be used in domestic work or sent on to Batavia for a modest profit. The artilleryist Jacob Cevelaar questioned the arrangement, but Jansz asserted that this had been permitted by the council in Kupang; Hendrick Tilingh agreed with Jansz, and Cevelaar did not dare to make any further protests. The sloop eventually set out for the return trip to Kupang on 10 September.⁹⁷

At first the slaves were kept in cages, but once the ship had reached the middle of the Sawu Sea they were allowed to stay on the deck. The sailors hid any potential weapons like axes. At daybreak on 15 September, Tilingh and his wife lay asleep in a tent on the deck, where the weapons were also kept. The cook Barent Pietersz was already awake and in the process of washing some rice to cook for breakfast, and at the helm stood his mate Isaaq Barents. Suddenly they became aware of a violent tumult. One way or another, the slaves had located the chest in the tent. Helping themselves to the cutlasses and axes, they made a concerted attack on the baffled Europeans. Barent Pietersz ran towards the tent but found nothing to defend himself with, and jumped overboard with a gash in his side. Isaaq Barents grabbed the rudder-pole, but realizing the poor odds he, too, decided to jump overboard. The entire crew, seven people in total, managed to reach the barge that was tied to the sloop. Tilingh shouted to Dina to jump overboard, but to no avail: either she was afraid of the sea or else the slaves had taken her.⁹⁸

The set-upon Dutchmen managed to steer the barge towards Solor. En route, two of them died of their wounds and were cast into the sea, and when they finally reached the coast and waded ashore, Tilingh

⁹⁷ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 9-10-1686.

⁹⁸ VOC 8310 (1686-87), ff. 4-5.

drowned in the breakers while his exhausted shipmates were unable to save him. Floris Jansz and the three others were helped by a boy and brought to the settlers in the hills, and thence back to Fort Henricus. It was now disclosed that the transport of the slaves had not been permitted by Kupang at all. In his daily recordings, the Dutch *opperhoofd* Willem Moerman later cursed the careless conduct of Hendrick Tilingh and the deception of Floris Jansz, which had cost the Company dearly.⁹⁹ As for the slaves, they brought *De Steenbocq* to Leva on a part of the coast of Flores that belonged to the Portuguese sphere. The boat was burnt by the locals, probably to avoid trouble, and the slaves headed for the highlands where no VOC force would be able to reach them. They took Dina Cornelisz with them and ended up in a village called Wolowea.¹⁰⁰

Weak as they were, the Dutch in Kupang were not willing to let an act of defiance of such magnitude go unpunished. Given the circumstances, the only option was to send the two artilleryists of Solor to Larantuka and ask their less than reliable friend António Hornay for assistance. Hornay promised to send any perpetrators that his people might catch to Kupang. Not long afterwards, the artilleryist Cevelaar heard from the *capitão mor* that one of the slaves had actually been caught by Jumat, an *orangkaya* from Barai in the Ende area, which had a nominal connection with the Watan Lema and the Company.

So far, things looked hopeful for the Dutch authorities, but then something went awry. Jumat sailed from Ende to Lohayong, carrying a letter written by the *dominee* (priest) of Barai to inform the Dutch about the capture.¹⁰¹ Arriving at Lohayong he was confronted by a grandee called Tulitamma, who took the letter and forbade the Ende to deliver the message to the artilleryists on pain of death, reportedly saying: ‘What concern is it to the Dutch dogs? If they are dead, then let them remain dead. The slaves have made a quest for their freedom.’¹⁰² Jumat was scared and hastily returned to Ende. The issue nevertheless came to the attention of the Dutch, and they called the man back to Lohayong, where he told them about Tulitamma’s threatening behaviour. On the following day the grandees of Lohayong were summoned by the artilleryists, who

⁹⁹ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 9-10-1686.

¹⁰⁰ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 2-1-1687.

¹⁰¹ *Dominee* is a Dutch term, which in this case might refer to a Muslim imam or shaykh. If so, then the letter was probably written in the Arabic-derived Jawi script, which was also used on Solor.

¹⁰² VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 24-3-1687.

questioned Tultamma over the matter. The latter could give no satisfactory explanation, and the two Dutchmen declared that they would have to send him to Kupang for further investigation. Tultamma now wished to leave since it was time to eat. ‘You shall remain here’, replied Jacob Cevelaar, ‘Your boys may bring you food.’ Tultamma then rushed away, with Cevelaar pursuing, hot on his heels. Just when Cevelaar was about to grab the Solorese grandee, another man attacked the Dutchman with a knife and cut his throat. It turned out to be Tultamma’s son-in-law, Sabon, who was the son of a *sengaji* from Lamahala. The other artilleryman, Lieve Cornelisz, hastily ran to the palisade where he spent an anxious evening. The slaves of Tultamma crept outside the palisade and threatened to treat Cornelisz in the same way as his compatriot. In the middle of the night, Cornelisz mounted a horse and galloped to the loyal Lamakera.¹⁰³

That same night a party arrived across the strait from Lamahala. Their leader was *kapitan* Assam, a chief who was well known to the Dutch authorities. Little love was lost between him and the Company, which had burnt Lamahala to the ground back in 1676 when the *negeri* did not appear submissive enough in Dutch eyes.¹⁰⁴ *Kapitan* Assam had previously quarrelled with the Company representatives, who insulted him with rudely-worded reproaches. Similar to Dutchmen like Floris Jansz, Assam cared very little about contractual stipulations when it came to economic transactions. He went so far as to declare that he would have nothing to do with the Company, but was instead his own man. Among other things, he had brought Makassarese and Malay merchants from the roadstead of Larantuka to Lamahala in front of the very noses of the Dutch, and sold slaves to them.¹⁰⁵ All this was done in the name of the prevailing spirit of the independent-minded Lamahala principedom, which was averse to the VOC-minded Lamakera and rather sought contacts with the Makassarese. Now, the Lamahala threatened to burn the Company buildings in Lohayong. The situation did not escalate

¹⁰³ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 17-4-1687.

¹⁰⁴ VOC 1319 (1675-76), *Dagregister*, sub 28-5-1676. The destruction of Lamahala was carried out by the same squadron that intervened in Rote and Sawu between March and May 1676, in conjunction with allied forces from Lohayong, Lamakera, Terong and Adonara. The scattered Lamahalans fled to Labala and Kedang on Lembata, and Belagar, Barnusa and Pandai on Pantar. (VOC 1327 [1676-77], *Dagregister*, sub 16-7-1676). The *negeri* was subsequently rebuilt and re-incorporated in the VOC-allied league, but subsequent relations with the VOC were far from positive.

¹⁰⁵ VOC 1426 (1684-85), *Dagregister*, sub 24-9-1684.

that far, however, for the rest of the Lohayong chiefs stayed loyal to the VOC. However, the new *opperhoofd* Arend Verhoeven found it necessary to allocate four sailors, all skilled in the use of firearms, to Fort Henricus in order to protect the sorely tried Lieve Cornelisz.¹⁰⁶

The incident introduced a brief spate of turbulence among the Watan Lema princedoms. A Chinese immigrant called Ziko encountered *kapitan* Assam in a Solorese kampung and shot him dead. When Sabon's father, the *sengaji* of Lamahala, tried to save Assam he received a serious bullet wound to the foot. Meanwhile the *sengaji* of Adonara delivered Tulitanamma to the hands of *sengaji* Dasi, who in turn presented him to the VOC representatives for due punishment.¹⁰⁷ All this appears to have been an eruption of simmering local contradictions among the Solorese grandees, combined with the wish of certain protagonists to curry favour with the Company.

The fate of the runaway slaves remains somewhat unclear. A letter from 1692 claims that they were still at large under the authority of Hornay and Amarasi, and had thus been brought over to Timor.¹⁰⁸ However, papers from 1689 indicate that four surviving 'murderers' who had escaped in 1686 were arrested in Amarasi on Hornay's orders and turned over to the Dutch. If these were the slaves from the *Steenbocq* incident, as seems likely, they came to a harsh end in Kupang in December in the same year. The Timorese priest Paulus van Coupang tried to effect their last-minute conversion to Christianity, and while two of them proved willing, the two others declared their wish to live and die following the beliefs of their ancestors. Two days later they were brought out to the place of execution. The Company did its utmost to state an example in the European tradition of 'complicated death penalty', lest other slaves might get similar ideas. Their right hands were chopped off, and their bones were broken with an iron from the ground upwards. Finally, they were beheaded and left on the wheel for the birds. Incidentally a comet appeared the same morning in the form of a cutlass, causing

¹⁰⁶ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 18-4-1687.

¹⁰⁷ VOC 1437 (1687), ff. 321-2. One may ask if *kapitan* Assam (alternatively Asan or Assan), who can be described as gallant or villainous depending on one's point of view, is the historical prototype of La Asan (alternatively La Asang). This character figures prominently in Solorese legend and lore. In one version, he left Lamahala when he was accused of witchcraft or corpse eating, and migrated to the *negeri* Adonara on the north coast, where he gained a strong political foothold (Barnes 2001:299). There are numerous variants of this story.

¹⁰⁸ VOC 1531 (1692-93), Letter, Batavia to Kupang, 19-2-1692.

opperhoofd Willem Moerman to make this sombre comment: ‘God have mercy in the face of the well-deserved punishment that threatens the human race.’¹⁰⁹

Although the affair ended in a moderately satisfactory way for Kupang, it indicated the weaknesses of the network that the Company had constructed. Individual Europeans on Timor built up a position of authority that sometimes ran counter to official VOC policy. An incident caused by their fraudulence, and only marginally connected to Solor, was subsequently blown out of all proportion. It quickly transformed into a Dutch-Solorese, and then into an internal Solorese affair, with connections to Flores and Hornay’s Topass complex. As it happened, the murderer Sabon remained at large for many years to come, and so did some of the slaves, without the Company being able to deal with them; moreover, a local Florenese chief kept Tilingh’s widow as his slave or mistress and refused to return her to the Dutch authorities until years later.¹¹⁰ Despite all this, however, the VOC network did not break down. This and similar incidents always ended with the Company managing to strike a delicate *beclance* in spite of its lack of force. The foreign suzerains, with their lack of insight in the local *adat* or conflict patterns, remained an entity that could engender, but also solve, conflicts among the local and deeply divided populations. In that respect, the Dutch East India Company was more than functional.

¹⁰⁹ VOC 1481 (1689-90), *Dagregister*, sub 5-8-1689, 5 to 7-12-1689. As such the executions were not exceptional by the standards of the day. The same punishment was meted out for serious crimes committed by black slaves in the British colonies in North America (Hunt 2007:78).

¹¹⁰ As pointed out by the Solorese *sengaji* in a somewhat later letter (VOC 1497 [1691], ff. 699b-700b), they simply lacked the power to carry out the arrest of Sabon, who apparently resided in or around Lamahala in defiance of the Company. In the late 1690s, Sabon was finally extradited and brought to Batavia. From there he was sent into exile in South Africa like many perceived troublemakers of the East Indies (VOC 1609 [1698], f. 12). As for Tilingh’s widow, she was eventually returned to Kupang through Hornay’s assistance, by 1693 (Coolhaas 1975:624). Although a native Timorese, she would by virtue of her marriage and religion still have been counted as Dutch. Her life after her release has not been documented.

Life and death in Kupang

THE POPULATION OF KUPANG

During the VOC era in maritime Southeast Asia, the evolving port towns were the meeting place for several different cultures, which were blended together within the very economic apparatus that was their *raison d'être*. A number of characteristics have been suggested in terms of defining the colonial port: urban concepts implemented by Europeans; a heavily fortified area; a separation of European and indigenous spheres; pluralistic features; ethnicity as a defining category; numerous migrants among the population; a male majority; a large slave population; an urban centre that was relatively poorly integrated with the hinterland (Hussin 2007:334). It should be borne in mind that these criteria – apart from the first – does not necessarily set the colonial port apart from other Asian settlements. Non-colonial port towns functioned in similar ways, as proven by such examples as Pontianak in Kalimantan, founded by a seafarer of Arab descent. In the Timorese context, the prefix ‘colonial’ nevertheless maintains a degree of relevance: there were virtually no similarities between colonial towns such as Kupang, Larantuka and Lifau, and other settlements in the region.¹ In fact, the list of characteristics above is more or less relevant for the settlement that was founded outside Fort Concordia and which developed into a small town during the eighteenth century.

During the first half-century of growth certain defining features evolved in Kupang. Compared to most Dutch port settlements it was a

¹ The term ‘externally induced settlements’ has been suggested for this type of town. Whether initiated by Europeans or others, the settlements did not develop from within the local society itself, but were founded by outside forces which needed an entry port that gave them access to the products of a certain geographical region; see Hussin 2007:335.

very small place, and although no one seems to have taken the trouble to count the population in this early period, a rough estimate for the eighteenth century can be given. In 1752, Kupang housed 62 European and 765 indigenous Christians, which suggests an overall population of maybe a few thousand.² By this time, therefore, it had developed into a modest, but by Southeast Asian standards, fairly populated place. French visitors in 1801 counted 60 to 80 houses, which may look like an understatement but it must be remembered that Kupang had been destroyed by British artillery four years previously (Lombard-Jourdain and Salmon 1998:398-400).

The number of Company employees varied greatly according to the circumstances. On the eve of the Makassar War in 1667, there were 157 soldiers, sailors and other employees. Most of these were sent to the theatre of war in Sulawesi, much to the consternation of the Timorese allies.³ Henceforth the number of soldiers usually fluctuated between 40 and 75 men, with the total being more often closer to the first number than to the second. Mortality rates were high, at least during the early phases of the fort, and at times the VOC authorities even admitted that disobedient soldiers received lenient punishments due to the weakness of the garrison – the *opperhoofd* had to be economical with his manpower.⁴ Those who survived their service could obtain permission to settle as white free burghers; this category, however, never seems to have been large, which meant the great majority of the urban population were non-European or Eurasian. At times, the government in Batavia was expressly opposed to ex-servicemen becoming new, free burghers, the reasons for which are pointed out in a missive from 1717:

when they are not married, they subsequently and at first opportunity marry one of the daughters or relatives of the allied rajas or grandees of the land. They then usually become bold and have grand pretentions. This is often very harmful for the Noble Company, and also causes a lot of trouble with [the rajas and grandees] as well as among themselves. (Coolhaas 1979:267.)

² ANRI Timor:43, *Brieven Kerkenraad Kōepang 1739-1779*, Table of Christians in Dutch Timor, 8-9-1752.

³ VOC 1264 (1667), f. 73b.

⁴ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 12-9-1686.

Here, the Governor General alludes to the Timorese marriage system. Timorese kings often took several wives from various noble lineages, which would help bind the various parts of the princedoms more closely to the central ruler. It also meant that the family who acted as the wife-giver assumed a position of precedence, as they had the right to ask the wife-receiver for assistance. In the same way, daughters of regents and even kings married Company servants in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and at least six cases are documented.⁵ These marriages were arranged – they were certainly not spontaneous love affairs – to bind the Dutch to the interests of the Timorese elite. There was even a tendency for regular *barlaque* relations to develop since at least three descendants of the Sonbai regent Ama Tomananu married Dutchmen. The difference with the bona fide *barlaque* system was, of course, that the Dutch bride-receivers belonged to different families, although they may have been seen as collective representatives of the Company, that is, the stranger lord.

Few, if any, European-born women accompanied the soldiers and sailors to Timor. Wives of the *opperhoofden* are mentioned from time to time but their ethnic background is not usually stated. What is known for sure is that inter-ethnic marriages were common, not only among free burghers but also among employees, who were able to marry with the permission of their superiors. The *Dagregisters* make regular mention of Company servants who appeared before the *opperhoofden* with their local spouses-to-be to ask for permission to marry. Such consent was regularly given, although the authorities sometimes hesitated when a Dutchman requested marriage to a girl from the highest level of the aristocracy. At certain stages, the Supreme Government in Batavia was decidedly opposed to intermarriage between Company servants and locals and insisted on approving every single marriage, although this may only have resulted in an increase in the practice of having concubines.⁶ The pattern of intermarriage can be studied by reading the baptismal book

⁵ Namely, the first marriage of Pieterrella, sister of King Pono Koi of Kupang, to Thomas Jacobsz; the second marriage of Pieterrella to Floris Jansz; Anna Maria, daughter of Ama Tomananu of Sonbai, married the surgeon Isaacq van Doorne; Eva, niece of Anna Maria, married Pieter Bruyn; Aletta, granddaughter of Ama Tomananu, married the soldier Jan Schroff; Maria, daughter of Paulus van Coupang, married Jan van Geervliet.

⁶ Such restrictions are mentioned in the *Generale missiven* under 1714; see Coolhaas 1979:49.

from Kupang that covers the period 1669-1732.⁷ Leaving out some cases of obvious liaisons with concubines, between 1669 and 1679 there were eleven clear cases of mixed parentage (Dutch father, Asian mother) recorded, which may illustrate the practice.

Marcus Danielsz – Cornelia from Korbaffo
Abraham Gabriel – Petronella from Paliacatte (in India)
Idier van de Velde – Elisabeth from Sonbai
Dirk Jansz van Aerde – Andresia Perera (presumably a Portuguese mestiza)
Thomas Jacobsz – Pieterrella, princess of Kupang (later remarried to Floris Jansz)
Isaacq van Doorne – Anna Maria, daughter of the regent of Sonbai
Leendert Welcken – Maria from Rote
Roelof Pietersz – Cornelia from Kupang
Michiel Siedelman – Janneke Marius from Kupang
Pieter Noorman – Sibilla from Ndao
Albert Gillisz Buijsman – Maria Marcus from Kupang

Of the 119 mothers of probable Asian origin in the baptismal book, no less than 53 came from Rote, which could be partly because of their reputation for being beautiful, with fair skin and Malay features. They also often came from *nusak* that had been forced to deliver slaves for the Company. Indeed, the *Dagregisters* occasionally point out that the spouse-to-be was a former slave woman, who naturally had to be manumitted and baptized before marriage. In striking contrast to the pattern of the 1620s, there were no more than two women identified as Solorese, despite there being a Solorese *kampung* in Kupang. It is possible that the Solorese and other peoples in the area became more aware aware of a Muslim-Christian dichotomy over the course of the seventeenth century, especially in family matters. Kupang is a common point of origin, as it is expressly indicated that 27 mothers out of the 119 came from there, but in most cases it is not possible to tell whether the woman in question was Helong or just born at the place. For the rest, there is a very mixed group of mothers, coming from Sonbai, Amfoan, Taebenu, Sawu, Flores, Tanah Bugis, Batavia and India, among other places.

⁷ *Doopboek Timor* (Baptismal book of Timor), 1669-1732 AD, ANRI. Transcript kindly provided by Diederick Kortlang, Leiden.

The wives and offspring of the Europeans, once baptized and integrated into urban society, had their given legal rights. Types of racialism were just as present in Dutch as in Portuguese colonial society, but in both cases they were relatively vague and ideologically undefined: rather, the phenomenon was highly utilitarian. When it suited their interests, the Dutch overseas would emphasize ethnic or racial hierarchy in order to secure privileges for their own group (Jones 2003:7, 38-9, 69-70). For example, the free burghers who stayed in Kupang would typically be characterized as *mixties burger* in official papers if they were Eurasian – a contrast to the Portuguese materials where such distinctions are rarely made. In practice, the *mixties* label in the Dutch East Indies would signify not only mixed blood but also lower class (Bosma and Raben 2008:35). Given the lack of European women, however, the inter-ethnic marriage pattern could not be avoided; this made it necessary to accept those non-whites and Eurasians who were part of the Dutch social orbit. According to Dutch law, widows and children of Company servants and free burghers were able to inherit, and the same law was applied in case of family conflicts. Normally, however, a non-white wife and her children could not travel to the Netherlands once her husband's service had ended (Taylor 1983:17), a regulation that gave rise to awkward situations. According to the British visitor George Tobin (1792), the wives were 'jealous to a degree unknown in colder regions and have been known to administer poison to their husbands on their quitting the country for Europe' (Schreiber 2007:160).

In spite of the Calvinist moral that officials in the East Indies tried to uphold, daily reality was far removed from the Calvinist ideals of family life and sexual prudency. Consulting the baptismal book one finds that many Eurasian children had mothers who were not baptized, and therefore could not have been married to the European father. Unsurprisingly, slaves were kept as concubines, but so, too, were free women. This pattern of a loose moral life is well documented in other areas under VOC control; during the initial phase of a Company post in particular, the Dutch soldiers and sailors tended to lead a 'licentious' life, much to the consternation of the authorities. Official measures would be imposed sooner or later, since the keeping of concubines and the practice of having casual sex debased both the Christian faith and Dutch prestige, and might incur the wrath of God (Bosma and Raben 2008:28). When Anthony Hurt was appointed *opperhoofd* in 1665, he

submitted a report that vividly described the immoral life of his compatriots. His predecessor, Hugo Cuylenburgh, had taken some prisoners on Rote while the latest trouble was suppressed there. Among them were relatives of a grandee called Seville. Cuylenburgh then married a daughter of Seville according to Rotenese custom, which was of course highly reprehensible from an official Dutch point of view. However, since his wife was not faithful, he put her in irons and acquired another mistress. The father, Seville, then appeared before Fort Concordia and asked for his family to be returned to Rote. When the *opperhoofd* did not respond, he furiously announced that he would walk through the various *nusak* and preach against the despicable Dutch and their Termanu friends.⁸ Anthony Hurt made some particularly poisonous remarks about Cuylenburgh:

Furthermore [the garrison] spent its time in the fort, as I was told and partly as I saw with my own eyes, with drinking and futile loose habits, that Mr. Cuylenburgh was able to engage in one day after another. They were so troublesome that it appeared difficult for him to set foot outside the fort. It is true that his impotency has impeded him somewhat, but this is hardly caused by anything else than such a way of living.⁹

With Calvinist fervour, Hurt proceeded to evict the concubines to outside of the area guarded by the sentries. The surgeon, carpenter and smith were summoned to appear before the new *opperhoofd* on which occasion they insisted that Cuylenburgh had permitted them to keep a maid. The latter, however, denied this. It came as no surprise, commented Hurt, that the more lowly Company servants indulged in a loose life, when their master behaved the way he did.

Dutch moral order was not easily implemented in the generations that followed either. The Helong sometimes sold sexual services to Dutch soldiers, as is documented in a case from 1688. One night in October, the soldier Martinus Coccus secretly left the ramshackle palisade around the fort by removing a plank. He went into the Kupangese *negeri* and had sexual intercourse with a woman, perhaps a slave girl, but afterwards refused to pay for her services. This caused much consternation in the

⁸ VOC 1252 (1665), ff. 1226-7.

⁹ VOC 1252 (1665), f. 1227. *Impotentie* (impotency) could mean both lack of power in a general sense, and sexual infirmity.

negeri and Coccius barely managed to run back to the fort. To leave one's post was, strictly speaking, an offence that could lead to death by hanging, but in the end Coccius was only sentenced to six months of hard work in chains. The fornication as such was apparently considered a minor issue here.¹⁰

Far into the eighteenth century there was still, at least from an official perspective, a problem with concubines. By 1745, there were a number of children who had been begotten by Europeans and 'black' mistresses.¹¹ After the death of their fathers they were left under the supervision of a band of 'drunken, beastly and hideously living' mothers, as one source put it.¹² Allegedly, these women tended to neglect their maternal duties, instead leaping around in the wilderness outside Kupang, amusing themselves with the Timorese. The youngsters, especially the girls, 'roamed the roads like sheep', and indulged in various immoral activities. The *opperhoofd* at the time, Jan Anthony Meulenbeek, admonished the wayward mothers, urging them to send their offspring to school, so that they would learn something or at the very least, not cause such mischief. Since his words fell on deaf ears, Meulenbeek subsequently decided to apprehend these so-called 'wild running European children' and turn them over to an Indonesian schoolmaster to be brought up properly.¹³ That previous *opperhoofden* had not taken action on this issue may, of course, imply that they did not see the upbringing of Eurasian children an issue worthy of attention.

Men who were placed under Dutch jurisdiction were known as *Mardijkers*. In VOC times, they stayed in two kampungs: one was called *Mardijka* and located outside of Kupang; the other was called *Fattu Fetto* and situated within the town. Later on, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the VOC cultivated new land in Babau, further to the north-east.¹⁴ *Mardijkers* were often Christians, but not necessarily so;¹⁵ unlike on Ambon, in Batavia, and so on, they did not have any recognizable Portuguese connection, but rather bore Dutch names and

¹⁰ VOC 1460 (1688-89), Resolutions, sub 15 to 16-10-1688.

¹¹ 'Black' could mean any native Southeast Asian, as opposed to Europeans and Chinese.

¹² VOC 8339 (1746), f. 100.

¹³ VOC 8339 (1746), f. 100, 182-4. Meulenbeek himself was killed on Rote one month after writing this report; it is unclear whether his principles were upheld by subsequent *opperhoofden*.

¹⁴ Kartodirdjo 1973:405. According to a source from the 1840s this was because the Sonbai population increasingly placed pressure on the old lands.

¹⁵ Compare Coolhaas (1979:280), who refers to 'Christense en heydense mardijkers' (Christian and heathen *mardijkers*).

had never been identified as Catholics. Mentions of Mardijkers are few and far between in the second half of the seventeenth century. The Mardijkers appear to have derived from the Timorese congregations or from the other islands connected to the VOC.¹⁶ Some are recorded as manumitted slaves, but there were also aristocrats among them.¹⁷ One case is Fredrik Hendrick, clearly named after the Prince of Orange. He was presumably a Helong since he resided in the ‘Kupangese *negeri*’. He was baptized in the early 1670s and was married to Susanna, a daughter of Ama Tomananu, the Sonbai regent. The latter bore the Portuguese name Dom Luíz for a while, but subsequently dropped it and did not henceforth appear as a Christian. Nevertheless, he did allow several members of his family to be baptized by Dutch clergymen. The fact that the transition to a Christian semi-urban status was not always easy, is seen from Fredrik Hendrick’s turbulent family life.

On 7 August 1673, Fredrik Hendrick arrived at Fort Concordia and approached the *opperhoofd*, Jacob van Wijckersloot. He complained about a certain *bijvrouw* (co-wife) whom he had kept before his marriage to Susanna, but who was now incompatible with Christian standards.¹⁸ The co-wife, however, continued to cause trouble for the pair and assaulted them verbally in a blasphemous way. Fredrik Hendrick suggested that the Company should keep her in a particular slave house for a while, where she could fetch water for the garrison. The *opperhoofd* found that he could not refuse this request, and the woman was consequently taken into custody. Her plight did not last long, however. Five days later Fredrik Hendrick came back and asked for the woman to be released, though on certain conditions: she must never again live in the house belonging to Fredrik Hendrick and Susanna, or even speak to them, and if she married someone in the future according to the non-Christian *adat*, then she should pay back a sum in gold that Fredrik Hendrick had previously given her. Moreover, if she ever again acted aggressively towards the pair, and this could be proven by witnesses, she would become a slave belong-

¹⁶ By the first half of the nineteenth century local tradition explained that a Mardijker community had existed from before the Dutch arrival. They would have built the *perahu* that the envoys of the king of Kupang used to sail to Solor to invite the Company. From this point of view, the Mardijkers were originally Rotenese and Sawunese people who had remained on Timor for one reason or another (Sartono Kartodirdjo 1973:405). Rotenese Mardijkers are expressly mentioned in 1688 (VOC 1460 [1688-89], *Dagregister*, sub 10-9-1688).

¹⁷ VOC 1553 (1693-94), Resolutions, sub 21-5-1694.

¹⁸ At least incompatible in theory, considering all the concubines kept by Dutchmen in Kupang.

ing to the Company.¹⁹ The strictly personal dimensions of the conflict remain unknown to us, but it was underpinned by the clash between the Western principle of monogamy and the Timorese *adat*. Although one wife was the norm in the traditional system, wealthy people could afford several. Marriage on Timor involved an economic exchange where a bride-price was paid to the family of the bride, often over a long period of time. When a Christian marriage was carried out and the old relation was nullified, the received wealth was in question; the *belis* had to be returned if the ‘co-wife’ remarried.

The outward appearance of the *Mardijkers* was far from stately. Although they obviously adopted elements of Dutch dress and habits like their Batavian counterparts, a notice from 1742 indicates that they were difficult to distinguish from the lowest strata of early colonial society. At that time, the slaves of Kupang did occasionally escape, yet they were seldom caught by the Timorese allies living in the surrounding area. One reason was that the *Mardijkers* were accustomed to entering the Portuguese sphere without notifying the VOC authorities, and the Timorese could simply not tell the difference between a *Mardijker* and a slave. The authorities tried to solve this problem by forcing the *Mardijkers* to carry a licence whenever they made such outings. Since both Timorese and *Mardijkers* were generally illiterate, the licence consisted of a paper with a red seal. The village leaders were to check those who passed by, and if they failed to stop the eloping slaves, they should be apprehended themselves.²⁰

Other ethnic components of early colonial society in Kupang that were mentioned, were the Rotenese, both slaves and free men. Some of the latter were hostages complete with retinue and they did occasionally undergo baptism. In the early days of Fort Concordia they were quite simply lodged in the fort’s magazine, proof that their numbers were small. Of vital importance for the Kupang community were the Solorese, who stayed in the quarter that, to this day, is still known as *Kampung Solor*.²¹ The free Solorese were either fishermen or temporary residents who carried out small trade, and during the early days of the port they complained about poor treatment at the hands of the

¹⁹ VOC 1301 (1673-74), *Dagregister*, sub 7-8-1673, 12-8-1673.

²⁰ VOC 8335 (1742), f. 19.

²¹ Nowadays the Solorese identity of this quarter has vanished.

Dutch.²² As was usual in the Dutch port towns, Malay – not Dutch – was the daily language of communication. It is doubtful whether even the *Mardijkers* understood any Dutch.

THE CHINESE IMPACT

In the early days of the Dutch establishment on Timor, the Chinese appeared to be more involved with the Portuguese than with the Company. The commercial network of the *Topasses* included Siam, where there was a sizeable Chinese population, and it is known that the Chinese worked in the sandalwood trade at Lifau.²³ Likewise, the ship that arrived annually from Macau must have been partly manned by ethnic Chinese, with individual Macanese choosing to remain on Timor. In the same way, a number of Catholic Chinese stayed on Flores where they lived as seafaring merchants.²⁴ The Makassarese connection was still important here; a Chinese junk joined Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo in 1663-1664, sailing from Makassar to Timor and also visiting Kupang.²⁵ Chinese people did not, however, settle permanently in Kupang until quite late in the seventeenth century. Under the entries for 1687, the baptismal book mentions a non-Christian woman called Anna from Taiwan, who had children with two different Dutchmen, but apart from her, no mothers in this document are indicated as being Chinese.²⁶ In the same year, as related above, a Chinese person staying on Adonara did the Company the service of shooting the troublesome *kapitan* Assam. As is well known, the overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) were an important commercial player in much of Southeast Asia during the Ming and Qing dynasties, despite official disapproval of overseas migration. They were well established in the port towns of Java long before the coming of the Europeans, and along with the rise of Dutch power, their position was

²² VOC 1428 (1686), f. 279a.

²³ Lombard-Jourdain and Salmon 1998:394; VOC 1426 (1685-86).

²⁴ The Macanese Lourenço Lopes married a daughter of Matheus da Costa and the Amanuban princess, and went on to play an important role in Timorese politics (*Leitão* 1952:11); the exact ethnic background of Lopes is not clear, however. A certain mestizo from Macao married Jan de Hornay's Timorese widow some time after 1644 (*Leitão* 1948:251). For more on the Chinese on Flores, see VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 8-4-1693.

²⁵ VOC 1246 (1664), *Dagregister*, sub 12-3-1664.

²⁶ Coming from Taiwan, Anna (also spelt Ama) could of course have been a non-Han Chinese, as a number of Austronesian groups inhabited the island.

strengthened since they were able to secure a monopoly on providing certain economic functions. Their success was not solely due to their skills, but also due to the fact that they were able to take the place of indigenous peoples whose commercial activities had been destroyed by the impact of the Dutch. In early colonial Batavia the Chinese settlers provided much of the human infrastructure, serving as merchants, shopkeepers, agriculturalists, and so on; the VOC establishments in Java would have been rather helpless without the benefit of their skills (Pan 1999:152-3; Furnivall 1944:45).

The Chinese junk trade on Batavia seems to have peaked between 1690 and 1730 (Gupta 2001:122). It is therefore not surprising that Chinese seafarers and merchants begin to appear in the Kupang records towards the end of the seventeenth century. For example, four Chinese sloops arrived in March 1694 from Batavia, duly furnished with official trading passes. Four years later six minor sloops, also from Batavia, made a stopover at Lifau. By this time, the Portuguese traders from Macao still tended to obtain the best quality shiploads of sandalwood (Souza 1986:182). By the end of the century, the available sandalwood supplies were almost depleted and in 1698, the Chinese could not acquire more than 8 to 10 bahar (up to approximately 1,800 kg). One ship ventured to go to Belu in the east and trade directly with the locals, thus avoiding the, sometimes trying, stay in Lifau.²⁷ This was typical of Chinese entrepreneurship in the East Indies: they explored commercial possibilities that the Dutch merchants and sailors declined to even attempt. Periodical shipwrecks testified to the potential dangers of their enterprises. A Chinese called Soim Ko²⁸ sailed from Batavia towards Timor in 1698. At the north-eastern cape of Flores, Tanjung Bunga, his craft was lost and all his goods were stolen by the locals. That Tanjung Bunga came under the authority of the *sengaji* of Adonara and hence nominally under the Company's authority was of little or no help. Soim Ko eventually made it to Kupang, where the authorities permitted him to go back to Batavia on another keel in the company of one of his men.²⁹

²⁷ VOC 1609 (1698), f. 42, 98.

²⁸ Without seeing the *hanzi* characters I cannot confidently restore the Chinese names to their normalised *pinyin* form. The element *ko* is an honorary suffix typical for Hokkien people originating from Fujian; compare with Mandarin *ge*, 'elder brother'.

²⁹ VOC 1609 (1698), f. 42.

Several Chinese ships henceforth sailed from Java to Timor, normally on an annual basis. Indeed, the bulk of private long-distance trade was carried out by the Chinese. While the Portuguese factions were fighting each other from 1702 onwards, the *huaqiao* merchants began to gain an advantage over the Macanese traders. Since a large part of the Timorese wood went to Batavia, and from there to China, the price of sandalwood tended to drop.³⁰ A list of incoming ships to Kupang in 1714 is illustrative of this, while also showing the rather limited volume of shipping to this port:

- Laurens Lucasz from Osbeek, free burgher on Timor with his sloop, six *lasten* [6 x 1250 kg], and furnished with Their Excellencies' pass. Leaving on 23 August 1713, via Java's east coast, arriving here on 1 September this year.
- Que Tsiam Ko, *nakhoda*, with his sloop, about 35 *lasten*, and furnished with Their Excellencies' pass. Leaving on 21 September, via Semarang and Java's east coast, arriving here in the Babau Bay on 28 December in the same year, and in the same evening appearing here with his sampan. Going directly to Batavia on 28 April this year with our knowledge.
- Tio Pian Ko, *nakhoda*, with his sloop, about 35 *lasten* and furnished with Their Excellencies' pass. Departing on 29 September 1713 from Batavia, via the east coast of Java. Arriving here in the Babau Bay on 28 December this year. The *nakhoda* Tio Pian Ko passed away in Larentuka. In the past year [the ship and goods] have been sold at a public auction to the burgher Laurens Lucasz who resides here, and is still kept here.
- Tjet Ko, *nakhoda*, with his *kunting*³¹, about 16 *lasten* and furnished with Their Excellencies' pass. Departing from Batavia on 9 October 1713, via the east coast of Java, arriving at this roadstead on 25 February 1714. Departing with our knowledge on 4 May this year, going directly to Batavia, bringing 30 picul of sandalwood.

³⁰ Souza 1986:182-3. Much sandalwood from Malabar in India was likewise brought to East Asia, forcing down prices further.

³¹ A *kunting* (*gonting*) is an open, broad ship, often used for fishing with a dragnet, but also for trade (*VOC-Glossarium* 2000:66).

- Que Pan Ko, *nakhoda*, with his *kunting*, about 14 *lasten* and furnished with Their Excellencies' pass. Departing on 23 December via Semarang, arriving here at this roadstead on 29 March 1714.³²

Like their white counterparts, the Chinese were periodically deterred from settling permanently in Kupang. In 1717, the Governor General ordered eighteen Chinese and their families to return to Batavia, stating the reason that from time to time, they were found to have stayed there without official permission, 'while this greatly self-assured and bold nation has manifold pretensions and is therefore very dangerous in various respects when they are numerous, and is never to be much trusted'.³³ Apart from the Christian and non-Christian *Mardijkers*, no more than four Chinese men were permitted to stay in the port town. This restrictive policy soon obviously slackened since references to Chinese settlers steadily became more common in the following decades. By the end of the VOC period there were twice as many Chinese as there were Dutchmen (Schreiber 2007:160). The reason is not hard to find. As the small port town developed and urban routines were becoming more sophisticated, the Chinese emerged as an indispensable element of society, regardless of the European distrust of them that can be gleaned from the above quotation. Since Malay and Makassarese merchants were not welcome in the region, the Chinese could fill their role. Much of the economic activity lay in their hands, not least when it came to merchant trips to other islands and ports in the region, and as middlemen in the early colonial structure, they could hardly be replaced. From a wider perspective, the eighteenth century saw increasing activity by overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, in spite of such incidents as the Dutch massacre of Chinese in Batavia in 1740 Furnivall (1944:46). The *opperhoofd* Elias Jacob Beynon described the situation of the local Chinese community in 1758 – a situation that was of mixed benefit for those involved – as follows:

The Chinese who stay here provide a good service as regards the commerce, and keep the shipping alive. In the same way, the leasing out [of

³² VOC 1853 (1714), ff. 13-4.

³³ Coolhaas 1979:279-80. This followed a resolution issued by Batavia on the same subject (Lombard-Jourdain and Salmon 1998:397). In the same year, 1717, the Company issued a general prohibition against marriages between Chinese and non-Chinese (Pan 1999:153).

economic activities] is favoured and kept in a good state by them. However, most of them are poor and unable [for productive work]. They have a lieutenant who is in charge of them, and pay an annual fee.³⁴

Some conclusions can be drawn about relations between the Chinese and the Dutch and other ethnic groups. Like everywhere else in the VOC sphere, the Chinese community was expected to live in seclusion from other ethnicities, and they depended on Dutch protection to thrive. The *opperhoofden* thought that the Chinese lived disorderly; they were forever coming and going with their sloops, which made it impossible to carry out the required checks on them. In view of this, the authorities decided that any Chinese who leased commercial monopolies must also be in charge of their fellow countrymen and monitor their movements;³⁵ moreover, it was ordered that the gates to the settlers' quarter must be closed every night (Schreiber 2007:160). The suspicion was mutual. In January 1741, a message from Batavia arrived at Kupang with news that a Chinese rising against the Company had failed and that most of the Chinese in the city had been killed. Upon hearing the news about the massacre, some of the Kupang Chinese panicked, gathered their most valuable items and fled into the wilderness. The Dutch second-in-command approached those who remained and told them to stay inside their houses. The local Dutch, he asserted, did not intend to do them any harm as long as they behaved properly.³⁶ Within a few days, everyday life resumed in the little port, but the incident pointed to the vulnerable position of the Chinese; at least, they were prepared to believe that their non-Chinese neighbours might re-enact the horrors of Batavia.

The Dutch authorities were in fact keen to keep the Chinese community contented. This can clearly be seen in a legal case from 1745. To the right of the Koinino River, close to Kampung Solor, lay an area that the lord of the land, the Helong king, had long ago given to the Chinese to use as their graveyard. However, in 1743 the yard was taken over by the burgher Gabriel Vent, who built a fence around it and began to plant maize. Vent did not care to remove the graves and the Chinese complained to the *opperhoofd*. Vent alleged that the land had been turned

³⁴ VOC 3033 (1758), f. 1855a.

³⁵ Van Goor 2004:507. As in Makassar, the rights to manage the trade in lucrative commodities and extract customs fees on their export were auctioned off to individual traders (Jacobs 2000:35).

³⁶ VOC 2534 (1741), f. 145-6.

over to him by a written deed, but the Helong king knew nothing about this. Closer investigation produced a document stating that the Helong executive regent and the king of Amabi had bestowed the graveyard on Vent. The validity of this paper, however, was extremely dubious, for Amabi was an immigrant community that had no right to make deeds. After a period of deliberation between the council and the allied regents, it was decided that the deed was invalid and that the graveyard was to be given back to the Chinese. If the VOC were to argue with the Chinese, they might just move out of the area completely and into the Topass stronghold, Tulang Ikan. The *opperhoofd* pointed out that this would be a major disadvantage to the Dutch; without assistance from the Chinese 'nation', they would not be able to carry out their business. Henceforth, land transfers could only take place with the consent of the original lord of the land, the king of Kupang, and with the knowledge of the *opperhoofd*.³⁷

There was also much economic co-operation, as evident from the *Dagregisters*. Partnerships between Europeans and Chinese as well as other ethnic groups were very common when it came to shipping. A Chinese might use the ship of a burgher or a *Mardijker* to sail to the Portuguese ports, possibly employing a Solorese crew, as the Solorese were known to be good sailors.³⁸ In 1737, we even have a case of a ship that was owned by the Sonbai regent Nai Sau, which was rather unusual given the Timorese distrust of the sea. The trader Lo Tam Ko obtained permission from the local authorities to use the regent's craft in order to go to Alor for trade.³⁹ In spite of the policy of separation of the nationalities mixed marriages between the Chinese and non-Chinese population did occur. In May 1732, a burgher called Dirk Tielman applied to the *opperhoofd* and council to marry the Chinese lady Tsij Nio. The council had no objections, but ordered that she must first be baptized. It was decided that the holy act should be carried out the coming Sunday and then the

³⁷ VOC 8339 (1746), ff. 209-11. Similarly, witnesses from the early nineteenth century asserted that small trade was completely in Chinese hands and that they were the best artisans (Lombard-Jourdain and Salmon 1998:409). Nation in this case is what today would be termed an ethnic group.

³⁸ VOC 8332 (1738-39), *Dagregister*, sub 25-9-1738, 12-3-1739.

³⁹ VOC 2049 (1736-37), *Dagregister*, sub 22-2-1737.

two could be legally married.⁴⁰ How much religious instruction could be given during this short period of time is of course debatable, with the marriage following a common pattern in pre-modern society of allowing the wife to follow the husband's religion by social routine.

Although they may not have been rich in terms of average wealth owned, the economic entrepreneurship of the Chinese often caused envy, which in a few cases led to murder. A particularly ugly case occurred in 1731. The victim was one Tsiong Tsay, who had been shipwrecked at Dehla on Rote and henceforth remained in Kupang. One April morning he went out with his modest merchandise, consisting of a few knives and handkerchiefs, to sell them in the neighbourhood. Later that same day he was found dead by a fountain. Beside the body were a few fragments of a cutlass and a comb with a plume, similar to those the Helong used as head decoration. For seven months nothing further was found that might solve the murder case, but in November, the Sonbai regent Domingo brought one of his subjects, Nai Loppo, to the fort. Domingo suspected that Nai Loppo, who was also a cattle thief, had killed Tsiong Tsay. By implication, the Helong comb was a deliberate red herring. After due interrogation Nai Loppo admitted to the VOC authorities that he and his friend Nai Tanes had been present on the occasion, but that they were only the henchmen of a Rotenese called Olu who stayed in Kupang as a *Mardijker*. Nai Loppo stated that Olu had murdered the Chinese, while the two frightened Sonbai had run away at the sight of the crime. Olu was taken into custody, although he denied any knowledge about the matter. Suspicions against him grew when it appeared that the fragments found at the side of the body were a fit with his cutlass. Olu claimed to have lent the cutlass to Nai Tanes, to use in a raid against the Amarasi. To the VOC council, the matter seemed a dark affair, while all that remained was to capture Nai Tanes, which was subsequently done a few weeks later. Nai Tanes confessed that he was the actual murderer, assisted by Nai Loppo, but emphasized that he and his friend had done it at the request of Olu. Olu, it transpired, owed Tsiong Tsay a sum of money, a fact confirmed by an entry in the official *Boek van*

⁴⁰ VOC 2239 (1731-32), *Dagregister*, sub 6-5-1732. She was baptized as Helena van Batavia and married Tielman, who was himself a Eurasian born in Kupang, one and a half months later. The couple already had a young daughter born out of wedlock. See the baptismal book of Kupang 1669-1732. There might be a connection to the Tielman family of the late colonial period, members of which held high positions in the Kupang administration.

gedagtes ('Book of thoughts', a legal protocol book) Olu denied the debt in spite of the evidence of the book.

In this way, the perpetrators had been identified, but Olu's role in the matter was still not clear. The allied Timorese regents, who were present at the legal proceedings, decided that little trust should be placed in the two Sonbai: if they listened to such attempts to identify accomplices, many innocent people might be drawn into the affair. They therefore gladly left it to the *opperhoofd* and his council to pass a sentence. In the end, Nai Loppo and Nai Tanes were sentenced to death, but the execution was left to the Sonbai leadership to carry out, since legal practice prescribed that the allies only punished their own subjects. The two men were thus disposed of according to the 'ancestral laws or the customs of the land'.⁴¹ The VOC authorities still had grave suspicions about Olu, and he was instructed to return to Rote and never again appear in Kupang. To all this might be added the fact that the goods stolen from the dead body of Tsiong Tsay consisted of three handkerchiefs and nine reals, far from a lucrative haul even by frugal Timorese standards. The reputation, therefore, of general Chinese prosperity crumbled upon closer inspection.⁴²

Apart from this and a few other incidents, relations between the Chinese and other ethnicities do not stand out as being particularly strained in the VOC documents. By far, the most trouble for the Chinese traders could be expected from the Portuguese of Lifau, who occasionally held up ships suspected of contravening the rules, and lodged complaints to the *opperhoofd* about matters such as the Chinese trafficking of arms.⁴³

SLAVES

Slavery is a global phenomenon, which has afflicted almost all complex human societies. One might wonder whether there is a human (or, one might say, inhuman) impulse to relegate other human beings to a state

⁴¹ VOC 2239 (1732), *Vergaderingen*, 1-4-1732.

⁴² VOC 2239 (1732), *Vergaderingen*, 22-11-1731, 12-12-1731, 8-2-1732, 1-4-1732.

⁴³ See for instance VOC 8332 (1739), ff. 23-6. The evidence, including sworn witness statements by some East Timorese kings, suggests that the accusations of trafficking may not have been altogether unfounded.

of permanent dependence, or even to the status of a commodity. Certain economic factors have been suggested as general explanations of the phenomenon of slavery. A classic theory sees it as a combination of the limited supply of labour and the availability of land, which would make for a 'rational' use of socially inferior manpower resources. More recently it has been argued that the keeping of slaves was often irrational in economic terms and instead was closely related to the status of the slave owner (Boomgaard 2003:88). Southeast Asia in general, and Timor in particular, provide plenty of evidence for these two historical rationales.

A study of slavery in Southeast Asia indicates a considerable breadth and variety in the use of dependent manpower, which questions the customary Western distinction between free and unfree. Indeed, there were degrees of dependency on patrons and masters, rather than a clear-cut set of circumstances. In much of Southeast Asia we can see a rough division between a relatively hard, chattel form of slavery, and a milder form of dependency. The latter gave the dependents certain rights that were laid down in both tradition and through a legal framework. On the one hand, in areas like Sumatra and Thailand it was not uncommon that people gave themselves up as slaves, since *corvée* labour and other hardships might prove more oppressive than being enslaved, which at least secured a measure of protection by the patron. On the other hand, there was a considerably harsher type of slavery, which involved people who had been taken as prisoners of war, those reduced to slavery due to offences committed or rebellious conduct, or those who had been captured in slave raids. This is what could be termed true Southeast Asian chattel slavery, where people became a commodity to be bought and sold arbitrarily (Reid 1988:129-36). The most menial work was reserved for these people. There were even comprehensive economic systems of slave raiding, such as those conducted by the Iranun pirates from the southern Philippines in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Similarly, the capture of slaves was a significant by-product of the expansion of the VOC in the early modern period.

From examining Portuguese documents, it appears that Timor conformed to the Southeast Asian pattern of having both milder and harsher forms of slavery. In Tetun, the lingua franca of much of the island, there was a conceptual division between the *lutu-hum* and the *ulun-houris*. The *lutu-hum* worked the fields and tended the cattle of the lords and grandees. They could not move from their current land, but neither

could they be bought and sold, and they are therefore similar to those people who were called serfs in Europe. The *ulun-houris*, however, were the chattel slaves, usually war captives. The name means ‘living head’, as these slaves owed the fact that their heads were not chopped off to their captors and subsequent masters.⁴⁴ As in other places in the world, it was far from certain that a prisoner of war was allowed to remain alive. The Timorese ritual practice of headhunting meant that defeated enemies, and even women and children, would frequently be beheaded in order that their heads be used in feasts. If you were kept alive you would owe your life to your captor and subsequent masters. On the other hand, if a master died without direct heirs, his slaves would automatically be freed and incorporated in the clan of the master – not, however, if it was a princely lineage. The early anthropologist Henry Forbes, who visited East Timor in the 1880s, did not consider the fate of the non-free population to be particularly harsh (Forbes 1884:417).

In the local VOC records, the distinction between the two categories is less clear. Their Timorese allies, newly arrived from the inland, professed to have very few slaves among them, probably meaning that there were few chattel slaves. The documents use the terms *slaven* and *lijfēigenen* (serfs) arbitrarily, although they are actually two slightly different concepts; this perhaps indicates that the Company servants had difficulties in grasping the local situation. At any rate, chattel slaves were an interesting commodity for the VOC. As the acquisition of large profits from the sandalwood trade remained uncertain, slaves became an obvious ersatz product from the Timor region. Since the five loyal allies were weak in terms of manpower and had few slaves to offer, the Company had to look elsewhere to obtain human cargo. The constant troubles which brewed on Rote, Sawu and the Solor Islands meant there was the opportunity for a supply to be brought to Batavia. As should be evident by now, life on the islands of eastern Indonesia was far from pristine or harmonious. On the contrary, no one was safe anywhere: the eastern islands were beset by internal violence and external raids for as far back as detailed records exist.

With their superior technology and ability to transport many people

⁴⁴ Serrão and Oliveira Marques 2006:396-7; Matos 1974a:190. Vroklage (1953, I:549), says that prisoners of war were regarded as the highest among the categories of slaves among the Belu of Central Timor. This, however, applies to the era of late colonialism, when slavery and slave trade had long since been officially abolished by the Netherlands and Portugal.

over large distances, the Dutch, Portuguese and Makassarese could fully take advantage of the political fragmentation of eastern Indonesia, thus changing the character and scale of the slave trade. The case of Rote may aptly illustrate the Western impact. Already in 1654 the Kupang post had sent 142 war captives to Batavia to prove that the unprofitable Timorese stronghold at least had something to give in return. One hundred and forty-two was in fact no small number for this period, given the small populations of the towns. The Governor General, however, found that the Rotenese were not a very desirable addition to the population, either in Batavia or on the plantations of the Banda Islands ‘due to their wicked and murderous character’ (De Roever 2002:257). In other words, the Rotenese seemed to be so independent, that the Company felt uncomfortable dealing with them. Nevertheless, the quest for slaves continued into the coming years, with the need for manpower and profit apparently triumphing over any doubts over the Rotenese character.

In 1660, the commissioner Johan Truytman intervened on Rote and forced Tullia, the ruler of the *nusak* Dengka, to agree to deliver slaves. At least according to the Dutch interpretation of the agreement, the ruler was to bring 100 slaves to the reliable VOC ally Termanu, from where they would be shipped over to Kupang. It was up to the ruler to decide from where the slaves would be taken. Soon afterwards the *opperhoofd* Hugo Cuylenburgh complained that Dengka did not wish to fulfil the agreement, and in spite of sending reminders, the Dutch had only acquired thirteen people.⁴⁵ At the same time, another *manek*, Sode of Lole, had promised to take charge of a number of people who had belonged to an executed grandee, and to then deliver them to the Company. Sode proceeded to gather 80 or 90 people, but then regretted it and set them free with the words ‘Should I deliver my friends as slaves to the Dutch? I would rather give them [...] humans to eat.’⁴⁶ The sequel to this story is best told by Hugo Cuylenburgh himself in a report:

Since the sailors and the soldiery had to rest idle [in Kupang] for some days, I had them gathered and pointed out to them that this was not efficient. Since King Sode had fooled the commissioner in a false and rascal way [...] one should attack him with weapon in hand in order to

⁴⁵ VOC 1236 (1661), f. 506.

⁴⁶ VOC 1236 (1661), f. 507.

inspire terror in this nation [the Rotenese]. It was then decided to take the entire force, consisting of 936 men, namely 307 soldiers and sailors and 629 Sonbai, Amabi and Kupang, who were to assault Lole. [...] On 18 October, [1660,] we marched there. On the 19th we attacked them at daybreak. We cut down about 500 people without losing a single man of our own, God be thanks, and with only two wounded. The destruction of the *negeri* Lole has inspired fear all over Rote, and made them fulfil the contracted delivery of slaves. On 2 January 1661 King Tullia came here with the remaining ones, so that the Noble Company got its 100 slaves from Dengka.⁴⁷

The obvious cynicism that appears in the related case should probably not lead us to believe that the Dutch – or Europeans, since a good part of the VOC employees came from other Western countries – were more inhuman than anyone else. Slavery was, quite simply, a phenomenon that was so self-evident that hardly anyone questioned its morality. Western abolitionism, it should be remembered, only gained ground towards the late eighteenth century (Hunt 2007:160-7, 205), and in the largely underpopulated area of Southeast Asia, slaves were the most obvious source of mobile labour (Hoskins 1996:4). Similar attitudes to slavery were found in the Portuguese sphere of influence, especially when East Timor was subjugated in the 1660s and 1670s. A number of female slaves found their way to Macao, but their import was stopped by the local bishop in 1748; this was primarily an attempt to avoid the sexual licentiousness that allegedly accompanied their presence (Disney 2009, II:349). Somewhat later, in 1772, a French visitor noted that the only commerce of the native East Timorese was the deliveries of slaves to the Makassarese in exchange for cutlasses and daggers (Lombard-Jourdain 1982:100).

Nevertheless, there were ways to obtain slaves other than through warfare and raiding. The Timorese rulers did not exactly wield absolute power, since the resources to monitor and control their subjects were limited and they had to act within the frames of the *adat*. Still, they could take measures against people whom they did not like. Pelon's initiated report of 1778 states that the rulers sometimes falsely accused a person of black magic, theft or adultery. Without any further formalities the

⁴⁷ VOC 1236 (1661), f. 507; compare Fox 1977:96.

suspect would be declared a slave, along with all his family members. The ruler appropriated the goods owned by the family, and was careful to sell the new slaves to foreigners in order to keep them out of the way. Sometimes friends of the victim could release him by paying an amount of gold. The Timorese aristocrats who lived close to Fort Concordia used to bestow the slaves on the *opperhoofd*, as a part of the gift economy that emerged between the VOC and its allies (Pelon 2002:33). The Chinese bought slaves from among the local populations in exchange for firearms, which were being increasingly disseminated on Timor. On Captain William Bligh's second visit to Kupang in 1792, the British noted the eagerness of the Chinese to purchase weapons from them for this purpose (Schreiber 2007:160).

The amount of slaves brought annually from the Timor region to Batavia and others greatly varied, with figures in the VOC records suggesting that it was not usually significant in demographic terms. In 1704, the number of slaves transported to Batavia was 20, in 1705 it was 23, in 1706 it was 14, and so on (Coolhaas 1976:299-300, 354, 423). By far the worst case of slavery occurred in 1756 when the VOC commissioner, Johannes Andreas Paravicini, attacked the disobedient *nusak* Landu on Rote and captured more than 1,000 people. Such events, however, were quite rare. When in 1758 the authorities in Batavia ordered the Kupang post to send 200 slaves to the *perkeniers* in Banda, it proved impossible to dispatch more than 30; at the time, there was no war going on of the magnitude that could have supplied the Company with such great numbers of prisoners. The *perkeniers*, on the other hand, found the slaves from this area to be of poor 'quality' and by the 1760s they were unwilling to pay even the original price for the manpower brought in from Timor. Finally, in 1768, it was decided that the trade be abolished.⁴⁸ As for Batavia, the number of slaves from the Timor region was small compared to the greater slave contingents from Bali, Sulawesi, et cetera. Out of 615 slaves brought to Batavia in 1652, there were less than 25 from this part of the archipelago (Niemeijer 2005:402-3). The French traveller Baudin, who visited Timor in 1801 and 1803, asserted that the Kupang post was able to deliver a regular supply of 200 per year to the headquarters of the VOC, being 'nothing but well-shaped children who are intended for the pleasures of the local personnel and the rich people'.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ VOC 2941 (1756), ff. 715-46; Fiedler 1931: 33-5; VOC 3249 (1769), f. 36.

⁴⁹ Baudin, quoted in Pelon 2002:13.

The words appear to suggest sexual abuse of minors, though the number of children affected is probably exaggerated. The conditions of freight transport from Kupang to Batavia were as appalling as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, with death being common on the month-long trip; being uprooted from their domestic environment, the captives succumbed to the lack of hygiene and proper food on the tightly packed ships. Due to sickness and apparent psychological stress, the new environment cost the lives of many Timorese slaves en route to Batavia. The fate of the survivors remains to be studied, but one must assume that they, like other groups, were used as house servants, artisans, shop assistants, dock labourers, and so on. Skilful slaves were taken from India to Batavia up until circa 1660, but after that the VOC preferred Indonesian slaves.⁵⁰

As in Batavia and other port towns, a large part of the population of Kupang itself consisted of slaves. How many slaves there actually were in the VOC period is a moot question, but in 1836, the number of slaves directly owned by the Dutch was 1,200. By comparison there were 800 European and ‘coloured’, and 200 Chinese households. This, it might be added, was 18 years after the official abolition of the slave trade, so the proportion of slaves would have been higher in previous years. The *op-perhoofd* Hans Albrecht von Plüskow, who died in 1761, personally owned around 140 slaves, half of which were sold after his death. Of the nearly 70 slaves which remained, about 23 were Timorese, at least 24 were Sawunese and at least six Rotenese. There were also people from faraway places like Bali and Mandar.⁵¹ The high number indicates that, as in Batavia, slaves were not only a matter of economic rationality. Rather, high status was associated with owning a large amount of people; it was a way to display wealth and resources (Boomgaard 2003:86).

While the bulk of the slaves of Kupang were owned by individual burghers, *Mardijkers* and others, there was a smaller category of Company slaves. They stayed in a particular slave house within the precinct of the fortress. Those who ended up there were often physically weak, had been rejected by the burghers, and were not fit enough to be shipped to Batavia – one might almost consider this to a fortunate turn of events considering the high mortality rate of the slave transports. By

⁵⁰ Rodriguez 1997:366. Anecdotal evidence, as in Barchewitz 1730:583-6, suggests that the girls sometimes ended up as prostitutes. The lives of a few Timorese household slaves are briefly mentioned by Jones 2003:195-202.

⁵¹ VOC 3251 (1769), ff. 522-4.

the mid-eighteenth century there were roughly 50 in number, emaciated figures who had the task of serving the soldiers in the fort. The Company and private slaves were partly fed with *gula*, which was brought over from Rote.⁵²

There is reason to believe that in general, the slaves were poorly treated by the burghers, *Mardijkers* and Company servants. Perhaps this was to be expected, however, for the statutes of Batavia prescribed quite draconian measures for slaves who spread rumours about their masters or threatened them.⁵³ Black slaves in British North America in this period were castrated and mutilated for serious offences, and as late as the 1740s, they could be broken on the wheel or slowly burnt to death – all perfectly legal since the English Bill of Rights of 1689 did not cover non-free people (Hunt 2007:78). Such atrocious punishments are rarely found in the Kupang documents, but the wretchedness of life as a slave is illustrated by the very frequent attempts at escape. When going outside of the fort, the Company slaves were usually chained two by two and guarded by a soldier, which is indicative of their plight. The authorities quite correctly suspected them of trying to run off at the first opportunity. Those who managed to escape tried to pass the allied Timorese settlement and reach the Portuguese sphere. Topass strongholds like Lifau and later Oecusse were common destinations where the slaves could hope for shelter. The Portuguese leaders and the Dutch were both unhelpful when it came to returning refugees to each other; in the Portuguese case, this was especially so if the slaves accepted the Catholic religion. After the mid-eighteenth century, the stream of runaway slaves to Oecusse became demographically significant and had grave consequences for the Dutch position on the island, as will be shown in Chapter IX.

That the slaves took a great risk in attempting to escape is indicated by an event in 1694. On the morning of 3 May that year, the badly hurt slave girl Raja, 12 to 13 years of age, was brought inside the walls of the fortress. Together with her mother, Kapy from Sawu, she had tried to escape a week earlier but had been captured again. The two women were brought before the *opperhoofd* Willem Moerman. The latter observed

⁵² Fiedler 1931:27; compare Fox 1977. In the late seventeenth century the slaves are sometimes described as performing heavy tasks such as maintaining ovens for producing lime. It is therefore possible that their physical capability decreased over time, the best slaves being acquired by the burghers and *Mardijkers*.

⁵³ Harrison 2007:486; on the poor treatment of slaves in Batavia, see also Niemeijer 2005:191.

that both had wounds on their bellies, as if they had been stabbed. Kapy alleged that they had been hurt by sharp branches, falling over in their haste as they tried to escape. Moerman let someone treat the wounds. The next day, however, Raja passed away, and the surgeon found that she had a lethal wound that went deep into the body. Suspicious, Moerman interrogated Kapy as well as the Rotenese settlers who had witnessed the two women's attempt to escape. Step by step, a tragic story unfolded.⁵⁴

It all began one night in late April, when seven slaves ran away from Kupang. The exact reason for their flight is not mentioned, but one of the owners was the notoriously aggressive Floris Jansz. The Dutch immediately dispatched a party of Rotenese, who reached the refugees by mid-morning, in the wilderness outside of Kupang. The slaves scattered into the forest in order to escape from their pursuers. Raja and Kapy were slower than the rest, and the Rotenese approached them. The thought of what their master would do with them made the terrified Raja ask her mother to end her life. Kapy took her knife, 'inspired by the devil' as she later said, and stabbed her daughter and then herself. The two women fell to the ground before the eyes of the pursuers, who, terrified by the macabre scene, ran back to Kupang and fetched more people at their hamlet. When they returned they saw blood but no people, and therefore withdrew to Kupang empty-handed. The women had come round and had crawled away to hide. After hiding in caves and rocks for two or three days, Kapy was found by some Timorese who brought her to Kupang. Raja was subsequently found and handed over to the authorities despite dying in front of their very eyes. The mother recovered from her self-inflicted wound, but her miseries were not over. It was decided she would be sent to Batavia, where the authorities would investigate the case. Her final fate is unknown.⁵⁵

This event is rather unusual, since it was investigated in some detail. The tragedy, however, does suggest there was a fear of reprisals among runaway or disobedient slaves. Runaways that were caught were routinely whipped, a harsh punishment that was meted out to deter other potential escapees.⁵⁶ In view of this, suicide was seen as an attractive alternative, even for young people. At the same time, the case shows that a comparatively dutiful official like Willem Moerman took time

⁵⁴ VOC 1553 (1693-94), *Dagregister*, sub 3 and 6-5-1694.

⁵⁵ VOC 1553 (1693-94), Confession, sub May 1694; Report, sub 21-5-1694.

⁵⁶ VOC 1367 (1680-81), *Dagregister*, sub 27-2-1681.

to investigate serious incidents in a bureaucratically adequate manner. The type of slavery that the VOC dealt in was more impersonal than the traditional forms of Southeast Asian slavery, but the early colonial apparatus did, after all, adhere to a set of rules that were sometimes applied, even in distant Kupang. This is indicated by another incident involving the *opperhoofd* Jacob van Wijckersloot. Although he was accused by the Timorese allies of oppressive behaviour, he maintained some strict principles in the area under direct Dutch jurisdiction.

One late evening in March 1679, the corporal Leendert Welcken, reeling drunk, arrived back at the house where he stayed with his Rotenese wife, Maria Theunisz, and their young son when not on duty in the fortress. The corporal was hardly an exemplary husband; he was of a violent nature and Maria later claimed that she often feared for her life. As Welcken entered the house, he threw out his wife and son and grabbed the slave girl Trijntje, who was nine years old at the most. He smeared her genitals with coconut oil and then proceeded to rape her. Maria Theunisz, however, immediately took action and reported the violation to Van Wijckersloot. The surgeons of the fort had a look at the girl and found that her female organs had been badly injured. Welcken defended himself by stating that he had been very drunk, that it was the middle of the night, and that he actually believed he was penetrating his wife. Van Wijckersloot commented that Welcken deserved to be hanged, and that such a thing ‘had never been heard of even among these wild and brutal heathens, let alone in a well-ordered state of governance’. In the end he was flogged, bound to a pole and sentenced to forced labour for 99 years. Maria Theunisz was allowed to divorce him and to keep the house.⁵⁷ An indigenous woman could thus obtain a legal advantage over her European husband, as long as she was a member of the Christian community. It would appear that Van Wijckersloot wanted to make an example of him; if such behaviour were to be left unpunished, the consequences could be very harmful for the small VOC settlement.

In spite of its (more or less) urban character, Kupang was in many respects imprinted by local geography and society; after all, the great majority of the population originated from the Timor area. One may ask, then, if conditions for the slaves differed substantially among the neighbouring Helong and Atoni groups. Fragmentary evidence sug-

⁵⁷ VOC 1346 (1678-79), ff. 14-17.

gests there were both similarities as well as differences. A less benevolent system of dependency than the one prevalent in East Timor appears to emerge, at least when looking at the situation superficially. One case has survived – , presumably because a *Mardijker* family was involved, which drew the VOC administration into the issue. Fredrik Hendrick's wife, Susanna, the daughter of Ama Tomananu of Sonbai, appeared before Willem Moerman in December 1692. She complained about a Solorese man called Wuring and a relative of hers called Taly. Taly and Wuring had tied up a slave woman, some distance from Kupang, who belonged to Susanna, and they had beaten her so badly that she had died. Moerman took care to investigate the case, the more so since Susanna was an aristocrat and a Christian. The following day he asked the people involved why the slave had been treated in such a cruel way. Susanna's brother replied that the two perpetrators did not intend to kill the slave, but had only meant to chastise her, since she had been disobedient and had tried to escape. 'Now that she has died', he proceeded, 'no one has lost anything except the owner who [ordered to] chastise her, and the customs of [the perpetrators'] land gave them complete power over the life and death of their unfree.'⁵⁸

Moerman, again displaying a sense of responsibility, was not content with the reply, and the following day, summoned a meeting with the allied kings and regents. Moerman asked what punishment would be meted out in the instance of a slave being killed. The regents replied that they were not used to punishing this type of misdemeanour as everybody was able to treat their slaves as it suited them. This was true not only for slaves, but also for commoners. Every *temukung* could condemn his subjects to death or allow them to live without there being a need for a legal case. The regents told Moerman about several similar cases where they themselves had been involved. Some days previously, the regent of Amabi had beaten a woman from another domain to death, since she had married his subject but subsequently attempted to escape from her husband. The assembled aristocrats pointed out that previous *opperhoofden* had never discussed such issues in the council. The woman's fate, they assured, would not cause the least bit of commotion among the locals.

Moerman reluctantly had to set Wuring and Taly free. He admonished the princes not to treat their subjects with such cruel punishments,

⁵⁸ VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 5-12-1692.

but rather, to use discretion and kind words. That same evening he wrote in the *Dagregister* that the Supreme Government in Batavia had ordered the Kupang officials to interfere as little as possible in the business of the locals. It was therefore best to let the matter rest, since the regents were used to this cruel but ingrained custom. Moreover, the perpetrators and Susanna's family were 'heathens'.⁵⁹

Moerman's account might be biased and self-justifying, but apart from this it is possible that the princes exaggerated their own authority over the life and death of their subjects and slaves. They had an interest in keeping the Company away from their internal business, instead restricting its interventions to the mediation of larger conflicts. The *adat* may have permitted a measure of arbitrariness, but the decentralized and scattered power structure also kept a check on the range of actions undertaken by the aristocrats. Abuse of this might have easily led to the ubiquitous Timorese phenomenon of them voting with their feet.

While both indigenous and Dutch forms of slavery might appear harsh in retrospect, the system also entailed a degree of social mobility: slaves were not given their status of non-free on a permanent basis.⁶⁰ In a long letter to Batavia, Paulus van Coupang, the Helong aristocrat and Christian priest, set out to prove his rights to the regentship of Kupang by emphasizing the slave ancestry of a rival branch of the regent family:

Furthermore, Ama Tano alias Snik Snak pretends that he descends from the princes of Pulau Semau via his father and mother, but that the mother of Rasi Fo [Paulus's father] is from a simple family. However, it is not as Ama Tano pretends, but like this. Ama Tano's grandfather on his mother's side was from Sumba, and was a slave called Somma. Together with his son Tirrou he went with a *perahu* from Sumba to Dengka [on Rote]. The Dengka, however, took hold of them. They subsequently both escaped from Dengka to Termanu, and were likewise taken into custody by the Termanu. The father, Somma, died there, and the son Tirrou fled from Termanu to Pulau Semau, where he was taken into custody by Kapuli Attawanek. He remained there, and that is Ama Tano's ancestry from his mother's side.⁶¹

⁵⁹ VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 6-12-1692.

⁶⁰ As, for example, in Batavia, where a slave woman under VOC jurisdiction could end up being the wife of a low-ranking Company servant (compare Taylor 1983:16-7).

⁶¹ VOC 1623 (1699), f. 73.

Another letter by Paulus indicates that an offspring of Somma called Bare Somma (Tirrou of the first letter?) married the daughter of a minor Helong chief and begot the mother of the pretender Ama Tano.⁶² Although the letters are intended to castigate Ama Tano, Paulus presupposes that a slave could substantially climb the social ladder and marry a nobleman's daughter, finally ending up as the in-law of a princely family.

Manumission by locals is mentioned in the Dutch legal documents from Kupang, particularly in cases where it involved economic transactions that in turn led to disputes. A case from 1694 tells of how a Rotenese man called Baffy Horry fell in love with the slave woman Kilo Anak in the early 1660s. She belonged to a Helong lady who was the aunt of the regent, Ama Susang. The owner agreed to hand over Kilo Anak to the Rotenese as his wife, on condition that she was exchanged for two slaves. Baffy Horry delivered one when he received his wife, and would provide the other one at a later occasion; only then would Kilo Anak be legally free. However, after some time Baffy Horry passed away without having delivered the second slave to the Helong lady. By then, the lady had died, but Kilo Anak was reclaimed by the regent family of Kupang nevertheless; she was placed at the disposition of Ama Susang himself, residing at his *sonaf*.⁶³ In other words, the *adat* system was more regulated than the Dutch accounts usually gave them credit for, and the testimonies heard by the VOC authorities show that people went to great lengths to prove the distinction between free and dependent status.⁶⁴

To sum up, slavery in Kupang and its Timorese neighbourhood was similar to the complex of slavery and dependency that flourished in early modern Southeast Asia. Forms of dependency that were built upon a personal relationship between master and dependent occurred alongside a harsher and non-personal type of chattel slavery. The Dutchmen maintained their port under modest circumstances and had no desire to interfere in the local system. The cultural encounter, however, may have contributed to making slavery in the Dutch – and, for that matter, Portuguese – area relatively more severe. Slaves became a type of merchandise that could be bought and sold in a way that had no counterpart

⁶² VOC 1623 (1699), f. 79.

⁶³ VOC 1553 (1693-94), Resolutions, sub May 1694.

⁶⁴ The Dutch records from Kupang in the nineteenth century contain many cases describing long and detailed investigations, instigated by Timorese aristocrats, to determine to whom certain individuals and groups actually belonged. See for instance ANRI Timor:55, *Register der handelingen en besluiten*, sub 16-6-1845.

in the traditional system. One can only speculate on the impact of the firearms that were distributed among Dutch allies and Portuguese clients, which in turn had ramifications for the power resources and ability of the ruling classes to maintain control. Slave trade in the Dutch East Indies was formally abolished in 1818, and slavery itself in 1859-1860, while Portugal forbade slavery in its colonies in 1869. The actual implementation of the central decrees was, however, slow. In fact, it is fair to say that, until recent times, the Timorese have been aware of those who are descended from slaves.⁶⁵

The psychological consequences of the slavery system can be found in the deep suspicions towards foreigners harboured by local populations. The foreign congregations appeared to have as few moral doubts about trading in humans as the local aristocracy, and perhaps even fewer. This is what the French global explorer Péron discovered on his visit to Kupang in 1801, the year after the end of the VOC; Péron became acquainted with a pauperized aristocratic Helong family which had been ruined through the greed of an *opperhoofd* and now made a modest living from fishing. In particular he befriended the youngest son Cornelis, and asked if he would like to accompany him on his trip back to Europe. At first Cornelis seemed enthusiastic, but soon he was overcome with dark thoughts. With his hands he made a number of piles of sand of different sizes in order to illustrate his point to Péron. With expressive words and gestures he went on to explain the predicament that might follow on from such a trip:

In Kupang the man Péron is the friend of Cornelis; but in the country of France a man comes and tells you: 'Sell this red [brown] man to me', and he shows such a large sum of money to you [pointing at the smallest pile of sand]. You reply: 'This red man is a friend of the man Péron.' You give the same answer to those who come and offer you these other piles of sand; however, finally someone gives you a sum of money as large as the last [and biggest] pile of sand, and you say: 'May the red man become a slave.' Then I will not further see the man Péron. I am forced to work in

⁶⁵ Knaap 1995:200-2; McWilliam 2002:141-2. I understand that this is also the case in the Solor Islands (Siti Dasi, ʔ Hertogenbosch, personal communication, 2007). Riedel 1885:9 writes that the Dutch domains of Kupang, Funai, Taebenu, Amabi, Amarasi and Lesser Sonbai only had crown slaves (*leksa'in*) by the late nineteenth century, whose origins could no longer be traced. Everywhere else private slaves were found, due to ongoing petty wars which the Dutch were unable to prevent.

misery, and the poor Cornelis, who is far away from his father Neas and his brother Pone, dies from sorrow and sickness. (Péron 1807:158-90.)

ARENAS OF INTERACTION

We will now have a closer look at the forms of interaction between the VOC authorities and their Timorese allies. The VOC drew up a great number of contracts with the various rulers of maritime Asia, and were perceptive enough to grasp the importance of local ritual and custom when concluding them. The Company officials on Timor found they were able to ignore the non-Christian aspects of a blood oath that the allies promised would be ‘followed and upheld as sacrosanct, and considered by our subjects to be unbreakable’ (Heeres 1931:75-7). The durability of such agreements would have obviously been enhanced if the Dutch co-opted the local community by building upon old perceptions of alliance and precedence. The rather rudimentary contract of 1655 and the extensive and detailed one achieved by the diplomat Paravicini in 1756 were hardly remembered by the illiterate aristocracy. What was remembered was that there were white foreigners from the Company who, at some point in the past, had concluded an agreement with the five allies over the territory owned by the original lord of the land, the king of Kupang.

The *opperhoofd* and his council remained in regular contact with the allied kings and regents, who were encouraged from the start to allow their children to be educated in Malay, a language commonly understood by the *opperhoofden*.⁶⁶ The preserved *Dagregisters* reveal that meetings with the aristocrats initially occurred on an ad-hoc basis, with one or several regents appearing before the *opperhoofd* whenever there was a need to raise one issue or another, or else they could be summoned for a meeting with the council, a *vergadering*. The *opperhoofd* saw the regents several times each month and therefore had a general idea of what was going on among the allies. Or to be more precise, he heard what the regents decided to tell him. A wide range of topics were discussed: external threats from Amarasi and the Topasses; news from the inland; internal disputes; the death or subsequent accession of persons of importance;

⁶⁶ VOC 1229 (1659), ff. 865b-866a.

corvée service; agricultural issues; runaway slaves, and so on.

During the ordered term of governance of Willem Moerman (1686-1699) the routines for interaction between the VOC and the Timorese were institutionalized. Moerman decreed that the regents of all the five princedoms must appear at a *vergadering* in Fort Concordia once a month. During these regular meetings any disputes that might have arisen between the princedoms were straightened out.⁶⁷ For obvious logistical reasons the princes of Rote, Sawu and Solor were not usually present. In the assembly hall each regent or king had his particular seat, and in accordance with the dual structure of the Timorese domains, the regents would normally attend rather than the kings themselves. The plaintiffs would speak for their cause, and this would be followed by deliberation among the regents and the *opperhoofd* and his council. The VOC scribes, proficient in Malay, kept minutes of the meetings, which have partly survived in Dutch translation, and offer an invaluable insight into the political culture of an early colonial hybrid society with its insoluble mix of foreign and local perceptions. Moerman also started the valuable practice of writing a memorandum for his successor, including a systematic survey of the various Company dependencies and their characteristics. These measures, of course, were not unique within the VOC system; in South Sulawesi, for example, the Dutch authorities similarly had to maintain a grid of regional kingdoms and economic interests that demanded steady lines of communication with the local elites. But while South Sulawesi suffered endemic rivalries, minor conflicts and, at times, even major eruptions, the Kupangese situation was comparatively manageable (Knaap and Sutherland 2004:13-5).

Company-owned ships from Batavia used to appear twice a year, in spring and late summer. Care had to be taken in order that they were not hit by the monsoons, and so they were eagerly awaited by Dutch officials and Timorese rulers alike. The notes in the *Dagregisters* reveal the increasing anxiety of the *opperhoofden* if for some reason the ship was delayed. The ships were their lifeline to the outer world and brought much-needed supplies and reinforcements for the fort. They were also an important part of the economy of exchange that constituted part of Dutch-Timorese relations. In the time leading up to the arrival of the ship in the late summer, the allies of Timor, Rote, Sawu and Solor col-

⁶⁷ VOC 1609 (1698), f. 51.

lected an amount of gifts in kind to be sent to Batavia. Since sandalwood was not usually available, the gifts from the Timorese rulers consisted of a few picul of beeswax, sometimes complemented with slaves, gold, or an amount of snakewood, which was used for medical purposes.⁶⁸ In the eighteenth century, they also included a limited amount of beans; beeswax and beans were similarly the standard products given by the Rotenese rulers.

In exchange, Batavia sent luxury goods to the aristocrats that corresponded to the value of the gifts. These included shotguns, gunpowder, drums, ceremonial staffs, cloths, buttons, liquor, and the like. The kings and regents eagerly looked forward to these counter-gifts, and were quick to inform the authorities if Batavia had forgotten to send someone his due share. Communication with Batavia was maintained by means of letters, which became part of an annual routine by the 1690s. They were written in Malay by persons trusted by the kings and regents, who then signed them collectively with crosses.⁶⁹ The letters themselves paid homage to the stranger lord in Batavia, who was addressed in terms that portrayed him as an entity of standing: Tuan Bangsawan yang Mulia Gouvernadoer Djindraal dan Tuan Raden van India (The Noble Aristocrat Lord, the Governor General, and the Lords of the Council of India).⁷⁰

Another arena of interaction was the church (for an overview of Reformed Christians on Timor, Rote and Sawu in the eighteenth century, see Table 1.). As a trading organization the VOC had a limited interest in proselytizing, but in a few places like Ambon, Menado and Batavia sizeable reformed communities developed (Boxer 1990). In the Company dependencies of the Timor region, the growth of such a community was modest. Dominican sources allege that Frei António de São Jacinto baptized the king and most of the people in Kupang during the first half of the seventeenth century, but the superficial nature of these conversions soon became apparent (Biermann 1924:40). The aristocracy of the early

⁶⁸ Some years the regents did manage to obtain some sandalwood. For example, in 1709 the allies delivered 11,233 pounds of the valuable wood as a gift (VOC 1776 [1709]). Incidentally, this collection occurred during a brief period of peace between the VOC allies and Amarasi.

⁶⁹ Only a few ruling Timorese princes are known to have been literate enough to sign with their own names, all at the end of the VOC period: Jacob Liskoen of Funai (d. after 1806), Don Jacobus Albertus of Amanuban (d. after 1809) and Alphonsus Adrianus of Greater Sonbai (d.1802).

⁷⁰ For a preserved original written in Malay, see, L.Or 2238, UB Leiden, Letter from the emperor of Greater Sonbai, 1800.

VOC period generally posed as non-Christians, and so did the Sonbai and other immigrant aristocracies. The *opperhoofden* might have made disapproving remarks about the paganism of the allies at times, but they did not interfere in their domestic way of life. Christianity was also allowed to develop at its own speed. Fully ordained Dutch priests stayed on Timor for comparatively brief periods of time, and church services were therefore usually taken care of by the *krankbezoekers*. The latter were of a lower clerical rank and were often non-whites from places like Ambon.⁷¹

Table 1. Reformed Christians on Timor, Rote and Sawu, eighteenth century

	1752	1779
European council members	5	
Native council members	44	
All council members		35
Commoner Europeans	57	
Commoner natives	402	
All commoner Christians		520
Native children	257	
Native non baptized children	49	
All non baptized children		60
Timorese territories		
Sonbai, adults	24	
Sonbai, children	55	
All Sonbai Christians		210
Kupang Kingdom	35	7
Amabi	8	34
Taebenu	7	11
Amfoan	4	6
Amanuban		5
Rotenese territories		
Thie	1,212	
Thie, adults		1,420

⁷¹ The clerical persons staying in Kupang since 1670 are enumerated in Valentijn 1726, III:127.

Thie, non baptized children		25
Baã	136	
Osipoko	36	69
Dengka	213	839
Lole, adults	318	
Lole, children	190	
Lole, all baptized		1,223
Lole, non baptized children		20
Oenale	103	566
Landu		159
Korbaffo		174
Ringgou		123
Batuisi		24
Bilba		23
Diu		19
Bokai		60
Sawunese territory		
Timu		267
Timu, non baptized children		51
IN SUM	3,155	5,950

Source: ANRI Timor: 43, Letters from the Church Council of Timor

Over the course of the eighteenth century the allied kings and regents began to accept the reformed religion. The first to do so were the Sonbai co-regent Domingo (reign 1708-1739) and the king of Amfoan, Dom Manuel (reign 1708-1718). In both cases it seems that we have a Portuguese entry to Christianity. Domingo and his sister were baptized as children in 1675, being the offspring of Dom Domingos Sonbai and the pagan woman Babyllas. Dom Domingos in turn was the eldest son of the old regent Ama Tomananu, who was initially known as Dom Luíz. Looking at his name, he appears to have retained a Christo-Catholic identity, as is also indicated by the early baptism of his children.⁷² The

⁷² *Doopboek Timor* (Baptismal book of Timor), sub 16-2-1675; VOC 1579 (1695). Domingo's sister Aletta later married the VOC soldier Jan Schroff. The latter was an intermediary between Sonbai and the Company (VOC 1961 [1721], f. 5).

characteristically Portuguese name Dom Manuel likewise suggests that the princely family of Amfoan was acquainted with Catholicism since before its migration to Kupang in 1683.

Other princes soon followed suit. An important event in this respect was the baptism of the emperor of Sonbai in 1720, where the *opperhoofd* Barend (Bernardus) van der Swaan and Domingo's sister Aletta were baptismal witnesses. The nine-year-old emperor, who bore the Atoni name Bawa Leu, was henceforth known as Bernardus de Leeuw. From this point onwards the so-called emperors were baptized, either before or at the time of their accession.⁷³ The process, however, was very uneven: while the royalty of Sonbai and Amfoan opted for Christianity, the kings of Kupang, Amabi and Taebenu were only occasionally baptized, remaining attached in reality to their traditional religion until the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. There is an interesting distinction between princely and regent families in this respect. In the case of Amabi and Taebenu, the executive regents bore Christian names from the early eighteenth century onwards, in stark contrast with the kings themselves. This is hardly surprising, though, when we consider the structure of the Timorese princedoms. The 'female' kings were figures who were given the tasks of keeping custody of *leu*, and performing the right rituals (H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:371-4). Their duties obviously made them less susceptible to religious conversion than the 'male' regents who handled daily affairs – at any rate if Christianity was to become a serious practice rather than simply something to which lip service was paid.

The situation was somewhat different on Rote. Conversion of the unruly island started late, but in 1720, Benjamin, the heir to the important *nusak* Thie, was baptized.⁷⁴ When he later became *manek* of Thie (1729-1746), Benjamin attempted to take advantage of his position as a Christian prince, and with Dutch assistance, looked for the means to expand his power at the expense of Termanu. The *opperhoofden* did not always appreciate their enterprising ally, but after a series of particularly

⁷³ That is, at least until the end of the VOC era. Some of the rulers of Lesser Sonbai in the nineteenth century only appear under their Atoni name (genealogy appended to Ruychaver 1918). For example, Mesie Nisoni (reign 1839-1860) is known to have been a 'heathen' although his father, Pieter Babakase (reign early 1820s), had a Christian name (*Raad voor de zending* n.y., 1102-1:1403, Archief van Utrecht; ANRI Timor:53, *Register der handelingen en besluiten*, sub 16-6-1845). As the number of Dutch records outlining the inner conditions of the dependent princedoms declines in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to draw conclusions on this point.

⁷⁴ *Dooftboek Timor* (Baptismal book of Timor), ANRI, sub 26-5-1720.

bloody events in 1746-1749 – discussed below – the *opperhoofd* at the time, Daniel van der Burgh, decided that conversion was the best antidote to rebellion. He requested the presence of no less than ten or twelve schoolmasters who were to cover the Rotenese missionary area and educate the children in the reformed religion.⁷⁵ As studied in detail by James Fox, the Rotenese actually developed their own system and processes to aid Christianization and the spread of education (Fox 1977). Nine Rotenese domains had *manek* with Christian names in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Christian character of the Rotenese partly explains why many European visitors in the nineteenth century preferred Rotenese people over other peoples in the region. As for the Muslims of Solor, the Company avoided any attempt at introducing Christianity, and on Sawu direct Dutch interference only commenced in the late nineteenth century. An interesting detail about Sawu is that the sub-regent Dangka was baptized in 1720 at 31 years of age, due to a peculiar family set-up; his step-father was a Dutchman called Frans Brockaerd.⁷⁶

What did the conversion of rulers mean, therefore, apart from them henceforth bearing a Christian name? Not much, some would argue. Willem Morman in 1692 found that those who had been baptized seldom went to church, and he angrily admonished them at a gathering in the fort where their knowledge of the creed was examined by the *krankbezoekers* and schoolmasters.⁷⁷ The French engineer Pelon found that Christians in the late eighteenth century hardly merited having a denomination: ‘I do not think there is a country in the world where the Christians are more ignorant and superstitious than in Timor and the neighbouring islands’ (Pelon 2002:42). Among other things he noted that the aristocrats decided through divination whether it was auspicious or not to baptize their offspring. The missionary Reint Le Bruyn arrived on the island in 1819 as the first regular clergyman since 1802, and found little or nothing that distinguished Christians from non-Christians.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, evidence from the eighteenth century suggests that Christianity played a functional role in Dutch-Timorese relations; having a Christian identity was strongly associated with a particular outward

⁷⁵ VOC 8342 (1749), ff. 91-2; VOC 8343 (1750), ff. 83-6.

⁷⁶ *Baptismal book of Kupang*, sub 26-5-1720.

⁷⁷ VOC 1531 (1692-93), *Dagregister*, sub 22-7-1692.

⁷⁸ *Nagedachtenis* 1830; Coolsma 1901:823; *Raad voor de zending* n.y., 1102-1:1394, Archief van Utrecht. Le Bruyn, however, was not more unfavourable to the locals, as he married Jacoba Manoh, a daughter of the king of Amfoan (ANRI Timor:51, *Register der commissien* [1834]).

appearance that in turn tended to engender a certain kind of royal authority. In a letter from 1747, the king of Kupang asked Batavia to send a coat, camisole, trousers, hat, sword and two muskets, since he intended to convert to the Christian religion. In the same way, an emperor of Greater Sonbai who was a Christian and stayed in Kupang in the mid-eighteenth century, was remembered in later tradition as Nai Sobe Kase, 'Mr Foreign Hat'.⁷⁹

There is also ample evidence that several persons from the princely families took the new religion seriously. One example is Paulus van Coupang, pretender to the Helong regentship in 1698, who served as *krankbezoeker* and schoolmaster for many years and led the church service in Kupang at a time when there were no European clergymen in the port town. When Warnerus van Loo was dispatched by the clerical authorities of Batavia in 1732 to inspect church, school and religious service, the priest found the following situation:

He [Van Loo] has found it necessary, because of the death of the elder Johannes Tano [regent of Kupang] and the deacon Erasmus Hans, to replace them with the elder Leendert van Dijk in order to restore the church council. This has the following constitution: two elders and two deacons, so that in cases of death, there will still be one or two members of the assembly to monitor the church. To that end I [Van Loo, changing to first person] have, after the aforementioned nomination, appointed people who are good-natured, humble and lead a pious life, in order to lead in concert the true Christian reformed religion and to be church deputies; namely Raja Daniel of Amfoan as elder, and Cornelis Zegers as deacon. And regarding that the deacon Amos Pietersz Thenoe⁸⁰ has turned to debauchery, and that his character and life has consequently turned very un-Christian and bad, which is unsuitable for any deputy let alone a church servant, I have after much deliberation decided that Thenoe is unworthy to serve in this position. Therefore we have appointed Tobias

⁷⁹ VOC 8340 (1747), ff. 109-11; Fobia 1984:81. Nai Sobe Kase's place in the pedigrees suggests that he could be identified as either of the historical rulers Don Bernardo (reign 1752-1760) or his brother Albertus Johannes Taffy (r.1760-1768).

⁸⁰ Amos Pietersz Thenoe was a disciple of François Valentijn, spoke good Dutch and was proficient in the Arabic-derived Jawi script. He had served in Kupang since 1717 as *krankbezoeker* and interpreter, and performed valuable services to the VOC. He was nevertheless a wayward figure and a notorious wife-beater (Valentijn 1726, III:127; Troostenburg de Bruyn 1884; Taylor 1983:46; VOC 2239 [1732], ff. 68-70).

[regent] of Amabi as deacon in his place. This, being the church council of this place according to the maxims of the church of Batavia, which are mostly followed in the eastern churches, has been considered to be presented to the *opperhoofd* and the council for their approval.⁸¹

We can therefore see that the church organization at this time leaned heavily on the authority of individual pious aristocrats of the Kupang, Amfoan and Amabi princedoms, who were even given leading positions in the local church community. Of the other persons mentioned, Amos Pietersz Thenoe was an Ambonese and Erasmus Hans probably a *Mardijker*. Clearly, religious space was a meeting-point where important interactions took place between Europeans and Timorese – in spite of the official Dutch attempt to keep these two worlds apart.

ROOM FOR NEGOTIATIONS

We have seen that there were well-defined arenas of interaction, but did these permit the Timorese allies to successfully negotiate their duties and rights? Were they able to achieve solutions favourable to themselves and their princedoms? The minutes from the *vergaderingen* are careful to render the arguments of the regents in detail. Of course we do not know how faithful these were, especially since they tend to allow the *opperhoofd* the last word, but it is nevertheless evident that the Company officials deemed it worthwhile, and perhaps even essential, to be aware of the Timorese mindset. There are a number of cases recorded in which the five allies bluntly refused to follow the recommendations of the *opperhoofd* and his council, and the *vergadering* was dissolved without having reached a consensus.

On a *vergadering* in September 1745, Buni, the king of Kupang, unexpectedly stood up and declared that he intended to marry a princess from Taebenu. As he explained, Kupang and Taebenu had an old wife-giver and wife-receiver relationship. Everything was ready for the wedding celebration ‘in accordance with their devilish practice’ and his subjects were already gathered within his palisade. The *opperhoofd* Jan Anthony Meulenbeek, a far from tactful figure, retorted that the wedding was most untimely, especially since Buni had not yet been properly

⁸¹ VOC 2239 (1732), f. 111.

installed with regnal powers. The king must therefore wait for a licence to arrive from Batavia. Buni upheld his cause and the other four allied regents intervened on his behalf. They pointed out to Meulenbeek that Buni must be installed at once and then proceed with the wedding, or else there would be plenty of trouble from his subjects, who had delivered cattle and other necessities for the feast, and from the Taebenu wife-giver. In the end Meulenbeek reluctantly complied with the request in order to avert any calamity in 'this weird and fickle country'. Buni was triumphantly installed inside Fort Concordia and then in his *negeri*.⁸² From a Timorese point of view, this was all completely logical; the marriage had been preceded by ritually laden preparations and negotiations carried out behind Meulenbeek's back. To cancel the wedding would indeed have sparked trouble, as the *opperhoofd* eventually realized.

The *vergaderingen* were the normal arenas for discussion. In case of lasting disagreements one could, however, apply directly to the Governor General in Batavia. While the *opperhoofden* quickly came and went, the Supreme Government remained the *Father and Mother Company*, an entity with royal connotations. On a few occasions the allies managed to deliver letters directly to Batavia without them being screened by the *opperhoofd*. This was for instance the case in 1674, when the allies were fed up with Jacob van Wijckersloot, the *opperhoofd* at the time:

We kings and *orangkaya* let the Noble General know that it has pleased God the Lord to send us grasshoppers, and in such amount as the hairs on our heads. They eat all the foodstuff that we have sown and planted, so that we now suffer hunger, to the point of being on the verge of death, and have nothing at all to eat. Above that, Jacob van Wijckersloot punishes us much harder than God the Lord, and does so in manifold ways. We work day and night with our wives and children and have made three lime ovens. Above that we have to break coral stones and carry lime. 200-300 people have to carry large trunks of trees, climbing up and down the mountains without getting a mouthful to eat. He also punishes us very hard when a slave belonging to the Company or one of its associates escapes. He summons all the *orangkaya* to the fort and demands one or another of us in exchange. And when we very amicably declare that we do not want to do that, and say that we are not obliged to watch his

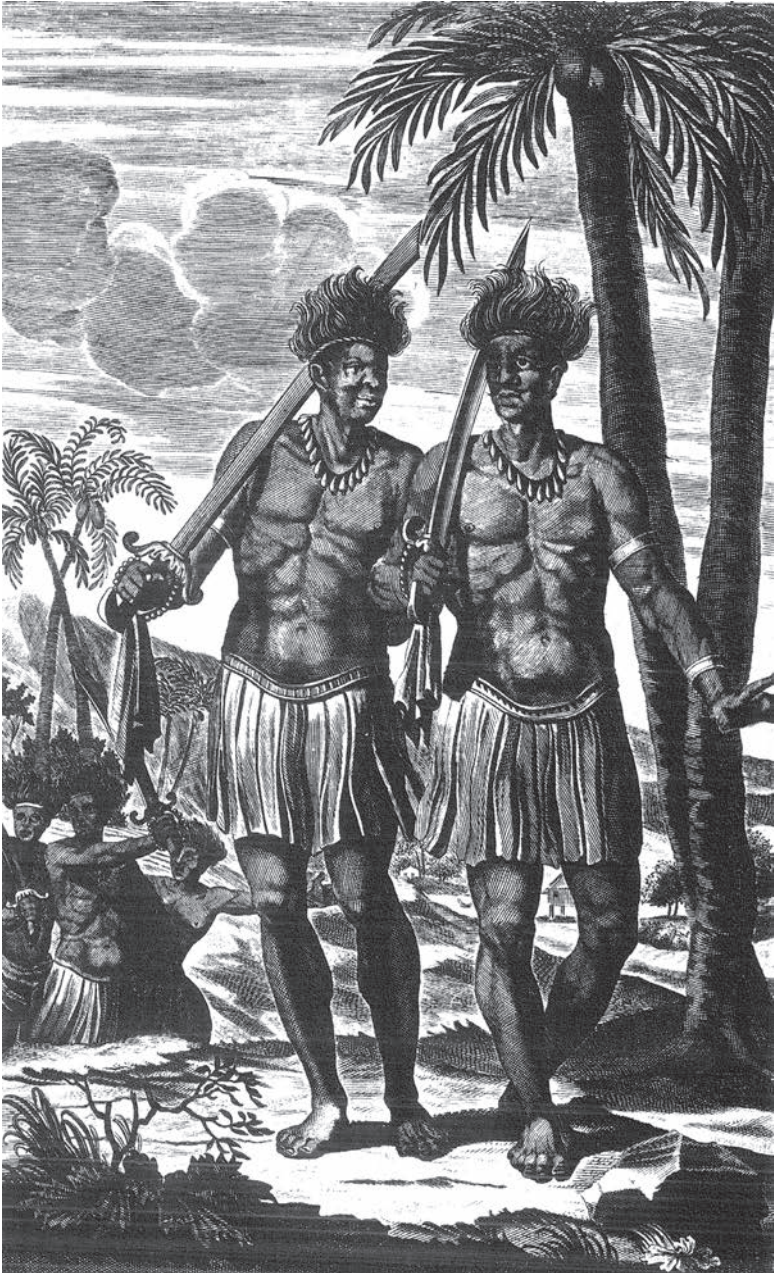
⁸² VOC 8339 (1746), ff. 39-43.

slaves, he does not listen to us, and wants us to give him another one instead. [...] Likewise he punished a certain raja from Kupang called Bissiso.⁸³ The raja made a large house. He was summoned to the fort and asked: ‘Where did you get so many spikes?’ The raja then answered: ‘O Mister Commander, the previous captain gave me all these spikes in exchange for beeswax.’ The commander did not believe him. He said: ‘I have witnesses.’ Having heard them, the commander let him loose. However, when he wanted to go to his house, the sergeant came and dragged him along to the dark hole, where he became seriously ill from sorrow. He asked to be released since he was almost dead from sickness. He would give him gold, slaves or pigs, but the commander did not accept it. However, afterwards he asked for eight picul snakewood and when he received them, he let the commander loose, who, as time passed, became sicker and died. Also, the rajas had heard that Van Wijckersloot had increased the price of rice more than the Company, asking 56 heavy rijksdaalders for a *last*. All the rajas then went to the fort and asked the commander to decrease the price and again sell it like before. He said he could not do that, but that they must pay three kwartjes for a ration. They had to go away and could not obtain any food. However, the Commander sells to the Portuguese as he wishes, and fills the bellies of the Company people. [...] Jacob van Wickersloot lets his soldiers roam around, and his slaves roam through the entire *negeri*, shooting hogs, bucks, sheep and hens. They also steal tobacco, eggs and *ubi*. They bring it away, and when the people ask for money, they stab and beat them and chase them away.⁸⁴

Van Wijckersloot partly describes the same events in the *Dagregisters*, in such a self-righteous manner that it shows him to be of stern character. In fact he remained in charge until he fell victim to the dreaded Timorese fever in 1680, and his popularity visibly increased towards the end of his term. The letter was signed by six Timorese lords, first among them Ama Besi, who might have taken the initiative for the diplomatic coup. It was the same Ama Besi who voted with his feet four years later and then stubbornly fought the Company and its allies until his death in 1688. Indeed the complaints of the allies are remarkably similar to those made by the *opperhoofden* against the Portuguese. Backbreaking corvée

⁸³ Bissiso was no upper ruler. ‘Raja’ should be understood here in a more general sense, presumably as an equivalent of the Dawan word *usif*.

⁸⁴ *Daghi-Register* 1887-1931, the year 1674:224-6. *Ubi* is an edible tuber (*VOC-Glossarium* 2000:119).



A group of Timorese soldiers. Illustration based on a sketch by Johan Nieuhof.

work, extortion, economic exploitation and undisciplined encroachment were darker sides of the asymmetric relationship of an early colonial milieu, but there were also control mechanisms in place; Batavia could not afford to let unsuitable *opperhoofden* drive the local allies to rebellion.

This is seen by the sad career of the temporary *opperhoofd* Willem Tange a few years later. Three princes from Sonbai, Kupang and Amabi travelled to Batavia in 1684 and brought a new letter of complaint to the Governor General. Tange was accused of corrupt behaviour, since he had accepted bribes and had incited Rotenese princes to take up arms against each other. He also forbade the Timorese locals to travel to the surrounding islands, forbade them to raise sheep, and demanded excessive corvée labour. Added to this, he was accused of being a particularly rude figure, who used bad language to the aristocrats. This time Batavia reacted swiftly, for obvious strategic reasons. If Tange's machinations brought unrest in Rote, the VOC system in this part of the archipelago could potentially break down. The obnoxious *opperhoofd* was therefore recalled, and spent his next years 'unhappily trudging' while writing reports on Timorese affairs, all of which were useful for later historians.⁸⁵ Three Company servants who defended Tange's conduct commented that the Timorese lords became arrogant when they were ordered to carry out some duties, saying: 'We do not want to do it! We will write to Batavia!'⁸⁶ While the Dutchmen interpreted this attitude as unbecoming and stubborn, it equally shows that the Timorese leadership was well aware of its rights, and would take action if these were contravened.

The self-assured attitude of the local princes stunned one of the next *opperhoofden*, Arend Verhoeven. In early 1687, the newly appointed Verhoeven sailed from Batavia to Solor. Aboard the Dutch *jacht* (fast-sailing vessel) was also the widely-travelled *sengaji* Dasi of Lamakera. When the ship finally reached the roadstead of his home village, Dasi asked to take his goods ashore, which Verhoeven gladly agreed to, 'the more so since we were salvaged from a great stench and filth'. Then, however, the *sengaji* insisted that he must stay for some days to be with his wife, as he had not shared a bed with her since his departure last year. A sharp exchange followed between Verhoeven and Dasi, since the *opperhoofd* needed him at once as a diplomatic presence on the unruly island of Rote. In the end Dasi stepped into the barge that would bring him ashore

⁸⁵ Now kept in Leiden as H 49:u (1688) and H 49:v (1689), KITLV.

⁸⁶ VOC 1414 (1685), ff. 158a-162b.

and snarled at the *opperhoofd*: ‘You are just a new resident and you should not act so sternly already, or else we will complain about you and see to it that you are recalled again.’⁸⁷ Verhoeven seethed with anger, but the *jacht* had to proceed to Kupang without Dasi; later, however, the *sengaji* did loyally serve the Company on Rote. In Kupang, Verhoeven heard a similar comment from Ama Kobo, a regent’s son from Amabi. For the princes, the Supreme Government of Batavia was more than an ally; it constituted a distant stranger kingship, a benevolent body of appeal to a much higher order than the sometimes unreasonable *opperhoofden*.

A further incident in this vein occurred in 1713. The allies had just suffered a devastating Topass invasion and living conditions were not easy. According to the Timorese, the situation was aggravated by the attitude of the *opperhoofd*, Reynier Leers. Eventually the empress of Sonbai repeated the strategy from the days of Willem Tange, dictating a frank letter to the Governor General and his council:

The ruler of the Sonbai nation, Nonje Sonbai [Bi Sonbai⁸⁸], with her assistant regents Nai Sau and Nai Domingo as well as the regent of the Taebenu, the loyal allies of Your Excellencies, find themselves obliged to send these few paragraphs to Your Excellencies due to dire straits. This is otherwise not at all our custom. It is only in order to make known the very bad conduct and governance of the prefect and *opperhoofd* Mr Reynier Leers. This [conduct] has never been seen among the previous *opperhoofden*, as long as we have enjoyed the protection of the Company. Then, the lack of civility of the quoted Mr Leers before the aforementioned Nonje Sonbai is unprecedented [?]. We will not tire out Your Excellencies with his story, which is too verbose. We also want to relate that about ten months ago, when there was some need of *jagung* [maize], we supplied the aforementioned *opperhoofd* Leers with this grain, as much as our subjects could manage, for 9 stuyvers per 40 pounds. When again we had to buy this grain for food, we had to buy it from the hands of the *opperhoofd* for 18 stuyvers per the same 40 pounds. This caused great discontentment among our people for, if they wished to stay alive, they had to sell almost everything in order to fill their bellies, so that a large part

⁸⁷ VOC 8310 (1686-87), *Dagregister*, sub 18-4-1687.

⁸⁸ In the documents this lady is variously referred to as Usi Tetu Utang, Bi Sonbai and Nonje Sonbay. The first compound of the latter name could be either a rendering of Nyonya, equivalent to Dawan *Bi* (Lady), or else the Dawan word *Noni* (gold).

of them, with wives and children, went over to the Portuguese. However, this is not the only reason [for discontent], but also the sharp words that the aforementioned *opperhoofd* spoke against us seven months ago: in case we once again picked up a fight with our enemies and [if we] happened to retreat under the fortress of the Company, then he would fire at us and not spare the people of the Company allies. Because of this and other atrocities that may come out of this, the aforementioned ruler asks Your Excellencies (in order to avoid such a sad occurrence), that if the *opperhoofd* Leers stays here any longer, Your Excellencies in the coming year may allow her person [the empress] to come by way of the Company ship, at her expenses, in order that she may give Your Excellencies an oral account about things, since she is not at all intending to be lodged with her arch enemies, the Portuguese in Lifau. However, if Your Excellencies do not wish to take the effort to provide the ship, then the aforementioned Nonje Sonbai asks permission to depart from here in a good Chinese vessel.⁸⁹

There are similarities between this epistle and the letters of 1674 and 1684. The price of crops is an issue, and so is the foul language of the *opperhoofd*, which offends the honour and self-esteem of the ruling elite. As in 1684, the inconsiderate acts of the *opperhoofd* have disturbed the political balance, and some people have even left for the Portuguese area. This time, the native discontent coincided with a time of serious internal conflict among the Dutch of Kupang. The members of the council refused to sign the report to Batavia penned by Leers. On a late September evening in his chamber in Fort Concordia, the desperate Leers drew up a letter to his superiors, in which he castigated his compatriots: the second-in-command and the sergeant boozed around in the Kupangese *negeri* to the scorn of the locals, the economic balance sheet had to be drawn up by Leers himself, and so on. He asked Batavia to be kept on as *opperhoofd*, but to no avail. He was considered to have mismanaged the conflict with the Topasses, which, together with the allied complaints, led to his prompt replacement by a more amenable figure.⁹⁰

There was, therefore, a certain amount of room for negotiation and complaint. The position of the Dutch community was relatively weak and could hardly survive without the five loyal allies. Conversely, the

⁸⁹ VOC 1841 (1713), ff. 1-4.

⁹⁰ VOC 1841 (1713), ff. 57-9; Coolhaas 1979:48-9.

allies leaned on the authority of the stranger lords to maintain internal harmony and deter foreign invasion. As a matter of fact, conditions in the West Timorese enclave differ markedly from Rote, Sawu and Solor, which suffered repeated crises and resistance against the Dutch order. Apart from the Ama Besi incident in 1678 and a similar case relating to the Kupang principedom in 1743-1744, there were no open rebellions against the authority of the VOC in the Kupang area. The difference with the unruly Portuguese area is stunning, as is the contrast with Dutch relations to various new Timorese allies after 1749, when the Company began to expand over a larger territory. In spite of numerous causes of discontent and outright oppression, the bonds of loyalty forged in the 1650s lasted for three centuries.

THE COMPANY AS MEDIATOR

One important factor in these lasting bonds was the Company's role as mediator. While the five allies were usually able to solve their own problems, the perceptive Willem Moerman identified a number of principal causes for disputes within and between the principedoms. Firstly, there was a real danger that chiefs and rulers knowingly violated each other's conceived prerogatives. Timorese rulers were faced with the perennial problem of keeping their people under their control. The five principedoms contained small populations, each of them numbering less than 10,000 people in total, and sometimes substantially less than that.⁹¹ Data from the late colonial period suggest that the population of each principedom lived scattered outside Kupang, so that there were no clear borders between the five, but rather, a complex of enclaves. All this made the retention of people crucial for the leaders. In fact, the most common cause of conflict in the Kupang area was attracting people from other domains and declining to return them. Other transgressions included

⁹¹ According to the local *Dagregister* of 9 August 1675 (VOC 1319), there was a census taken of the number of "weerbare mannen" (able-bodied men) among the allies. According to the Sonbai aristocrat Ama Pot, who reported the numbers to the Dutch opperhoofd, the numbers were as follows:

1,780 in Sonba'i

740 in Kupang

320 in Amabi

Altogether there were therefore 2,840 fit men. If this excludes slaves, it would suggest an overall population of perhaps 12,000-15,000 souls. The number fluctuated, however, with coming of new groups to the VOC sphere. It is also possible that the Timorese underreported their numbers to avoid excessive *corvée* service.

cattle theft and deliberate vandalism, such as the damaging of water canals. This could easily spill over into violence between the princedoms.

Secondly, mere accidents – such as the cattle belonging to one community damaging the crops in the field of another – might ignite animosity. It was also possible that the highly inflammable houses caught fire and damaged other houses in the process. Thirdly, individual family affairs could be blown up out of all proportion. Especially the *belis* was (and is) of prime importance to traditional Timorese society. The *adat* requires *belis* to be paid in full to the family of the bride before she is fully detached from her origin family; otherwise, she and her children may be claimed back. Moerman noted that the payment or restitution of such wealth sometimes caused conflicts. Fourthly, political disobedience was not uncommon within the Timorese princedoms. Although there was a clear hierarchy in terms of prestige and precedence, the actual exercise of power took place on a horizontal rather than a pyramid-shaped level, with the various *amaf* and *amaf naek* (*temukung*) wielding authority that was rarely checked by the princely centre. Thus a lesser *temukung* might refuse to obey his putative lawful overlord, either ‘abusing’ his power for his own end or with the support of some other ruler or chief.⁹² Moerman observed that the Timorese elite tended to come to the *opperhoofd* when they were not able to straighten out their own disputes, which led him to establish the aforementioned routines of deliberation. The *vergaderingen* conventionally ended by the drinking of a glass of arrack as a symbol of concord.

Not least of all these, Sonbai’s pretentious nature caused the Company great anxiety. While the Lesser Sonbai polity was only the second-ranked princedom, after the Helong lord of the land, the elite eagerly guarded the position of precedence that they claimed. The nature of this precedence is stated in rather uncertain terms in the VOC reports, but it surfaces in some cases of dispute. When parts of the Amfoan and Taebenu population arrived from north-western Timor in Kupang in the 1680s, Sonbai claimed that they had long since been its subjects.⁹³ These claims led to a serious row in Janaury 1696. Willem Moerman referred in the *Dagregister* to ‘the Taebenu who are also Sonbai and also descended

⁹² VOC 1609 (1698), ff. 50-1.

⁹³ Long before the Taebenu’s migration to Kupang they were considered to be of Sonbai affiliation. For example, a note from 1676 mentions ‘the Sonbai under-regent, Siko Taebenu’ (VOC 1327 [1676-77], *Dagregister*, sub 22-11-1676).

from the ancestral house of Amfoan'. In order to elucidate the relations between the allied groups, Moerman asked that the empress herself, Bi Sonbai, appeared in the *vergadering*, which she did. The lord of Amfoan, Nai Toas, showed his ceremonial respect for the empress in the name of diplomacy. However, the Taebenu elite remained intractable. Having a *barlaque* relationship with Kupang, they preferred to come under the complete authority of the Helong king and have nothing to do with Sonbai of Amfoan.⁹⁴ As far as Moerman could determine, Sonbai did not harbour any actual pretensions of governing the Taebenu congregation. Rather, it was a symbolic issue, since the Sonbai elite demanded that Taebenu acknowledged the empress and brought her gifts of food. The Taebenu inclination to side with the Helong created a great deal of bitterness among the Sonbai elite, who launched a Timorese *mission civilisatrice* theory. Upon their arrival from the original land of Sonbai, they said, 'they had found the land of Kupang [...] to be nothing but scrubland and wilderness. They had made it neat and habitable. Now a newcomer had withdrawn from the power and authority of his lawful mistress, to the pleasure of the regent of the land [the king of Kupang], although several times we gave word of it to Ama Susang.'⁹⁵ The dispute involved certain objects of authority, a drum, halberd and musket, which had been bestowed upon them by the Company to indicate that Taebenu was a subordinate ally. These objects, according to the Sonbai, had been wrongfully kept by the king of Kupang, who thereby interfered with Sonbai prerogatives.

The dispute was left to simmer for almost ten years but then erupted in September 1705. Visiting the main *negeri* of Taebenu, the Dutch found that the commoners were armed with shotguns, shields, cutlasses and assegais. The Taebenu leaders welcomed the white lords and bade them to sit down with them, going on to declare that the Sonbai had insulted them by decapitating a Taebenu man. The severed head underwent the usual ritual treatment; as the head had been taken by an ally, however, its ritual treatment, according to their *adat*, showed an immense lack of a great disrespect, scorn and injure for the Taebenu. They therefore now wished to take their revenge. The Dutch made them promise to wait until a *vergadering* could be held on the next day. However, once the Dutch had gone the promise was at once broken, and a Sonbai settlement was

⁹⁴ VOC 1577 (1695-96), *Dagregister*, sub 2 and 3-1-1696.

⁹⁵ VOC 1579 (1696), f. 8.

attacked. Since they were much stronger in terms of manpower, the Sonbai were able to repel the Taebenu and pursue them to their main *negeri*. When the *opperhoofd* Joannes van Alphen heard about the commotion he mounted his horse and galloped back to the *negeri*, where he was met by a grisly sight. More than 20 mutilated corpses, mainly women and children, lay scattered in the desolate settlement. Three other Dutchmen rode to the empress Bi Sonbai and asked her to command her subjects to stop. However, although the dispute originated out of perceived disrespect to her person, she was, symbolically and literally, a female lord with little executive power. She replied that any admonition from her would be fruitless, but at least supplied the Dutch with a *temukung* to accompany them. With him at their side the Dutchmen were finally able to stop the hostilities which, as they stressed, could have brought ruin to the entire VOC-led complex.⁹⁶

In fact, the dispute ended as quickly as it started. The issue was provisionally laid to rest in a *vergadering*, although clear animosity remained between the parties involved, who preferred to use the Company for what it probably was in Timorese eyes – a stranger lord whose very ‘strangeness’ ensured a reasonably fair mediation. Apart from the bloody events of 1705, the Company was generally able to stop any conflicts that threatened to erupt before they escalated into full-scale violence. In the same year, 1705, the Sonbai and Kupang principedoms were at loggerheads, again over a symbolic issue. An aristocratic Sonbai lady had been given to Ama Tomananu, the king of Kupang (not to be confused with his namesake, the Sonbai regent), but he soon ignored her. She was therefore spirited away from the royal *sonaf* by some fellow countrymen, who felt the conduct of the king to be an insult. The Sonbai later allowed her to appear wearing the attire of an unmarried woman at a feast where some Helong were present. Perhaps this alluded to sexual impotency on the part of the king (who died childless after a long reign). At any rate, a sizeable Helong troop soon marched against the Sonbai settlement to exact revenge for the mockery. The Company servants, however, took immediate action; they brought the parties to a halt and promised to bring about reconciliation at the next *vergadering*. This was fulfilled and in the end the lady stayed with the Sonbai community while Ama Tomananu got back the bride-wealth that he once paid for her.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ VOC 1728 (1706), ff. 51-2, 87-93.

⁹⁷ VOC 1711 (1705), f. 28.

What is remarkable in all this is not that tension and occasional violence spilled over, but that the Company was regularly able to stop it. The VOC reports repeatedly describe how Timorese leaders disputed with each other, or how armed troops, incited by a minor incident, stood ready to attack each other. In the end, however, they were brought to their senses by the Dutch. The relative absence of outbreaks of internal violence seems to indicate that Dutch diplomacy as such was only half the story. Surrounded by hostile Portuguese clients, the allied Timorese knew full well the consequences of a breakdown of the system, and tended to accept the Company as a mediator. In this respect the latter were truly stranger kings, outsiders who held a social and political order in place. That the five allies were sometimes self-assured and independent in their relations with the Europeans does not detract from the stranger king syndrome – one might well consider the lack of actual obedience that minor lords showed prestigious polities like Sonbai and Wehali.

SAVAGES

Visible appreciation of the allied Timorese is strangely ambivalent in the VOC records. While the *opperhoofden* seldom lauded their native counterparts, their reports nevertheless often suggested the image of a harmonious co-habitation. The individual characteristics of the kings and regents were described in rather categorical terms. Some of the rulers were praiseworthy in Dutch eyes, especially those who obeyed the Company admonitions and decrees, and readily provided products and corvée labour.

This is contrasted by another set of images depicting the Timorese as savages, in the sense of being the complete opposite of putative Dutch virtues. This is not an unambiguous trait in the texts but is highly situational, and the Dutch discourse varied markedly over time. It must be emphasized that we are not dealing with literary images – there were few printed works with Timorese themes – but solely with texts produced by administrators who were in regular contact with the allied leaders. The extant reports, moreover, only contain such information that was considered useful to the superiors in Batavia and Amsterdam.

The savage image was only loosely connected to the two primary traits usually associated with exoticism: race and religion. Racial ste-

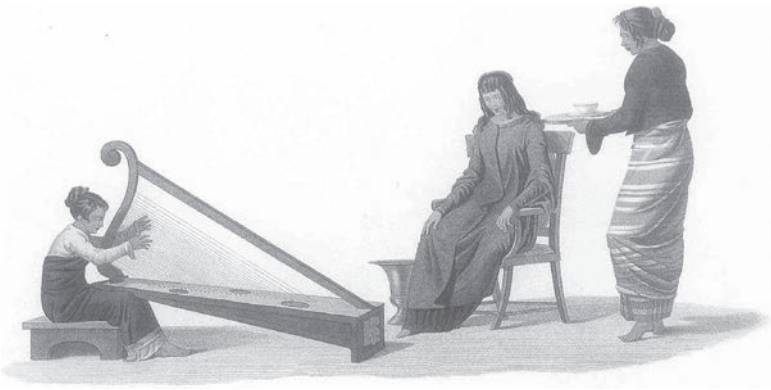


The interior of a Timorese house in Kupang. French illustration from the expedition of L.-C. de Freycinet, 1818, published in the travelogue *Voyage autour du monde* (1824).

reotypes existed in this era, but were far less fixed or ideologically grounded than they became in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The physical features of the Timorese, which often evoked comments by nineteenth-century visitors, are rarely alluded to in the VOC reports. However, one occasionally comes across rather negative descriptions of their character (*aard*), which was characterized as being wild (*woest*). An explicit but somewhat opaque denunciation can be found in the late eighteenth-century account of Pelon:

Regarding their character, one may be assured that they are lazy, superstitious, indolent, treacherous, rascally, mendacious and ignorant. However, these faults, dangerous among other nations, are not to be feared here, due to their lack of genius or courage. (Pelon 2002:16.)

In the eyes of the Frenchman, the indigenous population had many faults but did not act upon them sufficiently to threaten the Europeans. This negative judgement is not unanimously confirmed by other writers,



A lady and her servants in Kupang. French illustration from the expedition of L.-C. Freycinet, 1818.

who tend to present a wide array of views on the Timorese and their character. In 1699, William Dampier described them as dexterous and nimble, yet lazy and only alert when it came to treachery and barbarity (Dampier 1939:170). Forty years after Pelon, his fellow countryman Louis de Freycinet provided a more balanced judgement about the character of the islanders, particular points of which are at complete odds with those made by Pelon:

Good, timid and hospitable, although anxious and turbulent neighbours, such is the character of the inhabitants of the interior of the island, with exception of the eastern part and probably of the mountain people of the centre and the south-west, who are reputed to be vicious and unsociable. The Timorese is otherwise barbarian in his enmity, a skillful deceiver in war, although he generally loves the truth. [...] Their judgement is sound although narrow, and their intelligence is remarkable. [...] The Malay [native] of Kupang is distrustful, brave, an intrepid and ferocious warrior; being very attached to his customs, he hardly supports a master who forces his habits or puts a yoke on him which is too heavy to bear; but since he is lazy and without ambition he easily accepts the yoke of the Dutch, who do not extract direct taxes or *corvée* service from him. The nonchalance and near-hatred of work, the love for vengeance, the cruelty

sometimes taken to the point of cannibalism and a strong penchant for thievery, are the most characteristic traits of their nature.⁹⁸

An anonymous report written six years later, in 1824, asserted that no islanders were probably as peaceable, mild and forbearing as the Timorese, which was also shown by the Chinese traders who could traverse the land without fearing anything. Apart from in times of warfare, one never heard about murder or grave injuries through violence.⁹⁹ Unsurprisingly, the perception of the racial characteristics of the Timorese was described with a bias towards the expectations, interests and type of interaction of a Western visitor, and has very limited explanatory value in terms of the local culture and society.

In line with this, Dutch disapproval was mostly limited to the aspects that were detrimental to the Dutch position. The brutality that characterized the skirmishes between the allies and the Portuguese clients was heavily commented upon, although, as we have seen, the Timorese martial practices seem to have been tacitly accepted by the Company servants. The numerous notes in the *Dagregister* speak for themselves. On 4 September 1688, the Sonbai leader, Ama Beta, came to Willem Moerman and announced that his raiding party had taken the head of a man from Amanuban and a woman from Amarasi. He suggested that he deserved a bottle of arrack for this exploit, which the *opperhoofd* was quick to provide.¹⁰⁰ The mendacity of the Timorese, on the other hand, was strongly condemned in various reports – it complicated any Dutch attempts at mediation between the allies when there were problems of any kind.

Religion as such was usually considered to be an internal Timorese affair, though their ‘superstitions’ were strongly frowned upon when they impeded Company initiatives – such as the Timorese reluctance to dig for metals in the ground. For example, in 1756, when a Company expedition set out to look for gold-filled rivers inland, the indigenous population refused to go to work at Tepas near the Noelmina River, and could not be moved by any efforts, promises or threats. This was ‘surely

⁹⁸ Freycinet 1825:632-3. ‘Malay’ is to be understood here as any native of Austronesia stock. A partly similar judgement of the Timorese character is found in the French travel account of Francois-Étienne de Rosily from 1772 (Lombard-Jourdain 1982:95). Freycinet may have been influenced by Rosily.

⁹⁹ *Timor* 1824, Collection Schneither, Nationaal Archief.

¹⁰⁰ VOC 1460 (1688-89), *Dagregister*, sub 4-9-1688.

out of idle and blind superstition, through which they, when they thought or heard about it, were caught by a horrific fear, anxiousness and agony. They could not be made to move, saying that they must first obtain seven red hogs, of the colour of the gold, and red rice.’ The officer Giese impatiently had to wait ‘until they had found the aforementioned hogs and therewith made their laughable *pemali*’.¹⁰¹

Much scorn was reserved for the perceived Timorese laziness. Dutch complaints about indigenous inertia were occasionally heard during the early decades of Fort Concordia, but did not become a mainstay until somewhat later. Governor General Speelman stated in 1683 that

the Timorese are averse to all work, apart from what their livelihood demands. From a young age, this nation is used to handling arms and has no other inclination than warfare, and to pride themselves in victories with the conduct of lengthy amusements. And if their throat and belly curse their sluggish hands they would again violate their neighbour and unpermitted, bless themselves with his surplus. Anyway, that our Timorese are such lovers of the arms is no wonder considering their righteous hatred against the Portuguese, and they regard themselves lucky enough as long as they are called friends of the Noble Company and may live under its protection, although they also know that they must protect themselves. (Coolhaas 1971:529-30.)

Such remarks became more common in the eighteenth century for obvious reasons. During the course of this century the colonial authorities began to consider ways to make this rather unprofitable outpost pay for the expenses involved in maintaining it. Since access to sandalwood was limited (although much improved after the political upheaval of 1749), various other products were brought forward as possible cash crops: beans, indigo, pepper and cinnamon (from Flores). Even the cultivation of silk was mentioned for a while, leading to a few frustrated remarks by the Governor General Dirk Durven (1731). The idea turned out to be rather vain,

in a land where the [Company] servants themselves at closer explanation held the opinion that such a thing would have no effect. Firstly, since the

¹⁰¹ VOC 2941 (1756), ff. 206-7. *Pemali* is a Malay concept used as an equivalent to the Atoni concept *leu*, sacred spirit power. The Tetun equivalent is *lulic*. Rituals connected with the collection of gold existed all over Timor; see the nineteenth-century description in Lombard-Jourdain 2000:179-82.

land was full and crawling with ants, and because of the poor and simple dwellings of the indigenous [population], which are made of wood, covered with straw and protected with bamboo. They have their sleeping places upstairs and place their cattle below. Secondly, since the inhabitants are so lazy by nature that for the entire year they grow nothing but *jangung* (in the Netherlands known under the name of Turkish flour) for their substance. Due to that, it is unlikely that they are to change their dwellings or build houses for the purpose [of handling silk production].¹⁰²

One might add that similar views were held by Portuguese officials, who added a gendered perspective; a report written shortly after 1769 concluded, after discussing the potential resources found in the Portuguese sphere: ‘All these natural advantages are of little interest for learning more of the character of the inhabitants of these islands, who are indolent people who cultivate idleness and vices as their main passions; the wives are those who do almost all the domestic and rural work, which does not leave any more for the men to do than making holes in the ground where the same wives then go and spread the seed.’¹⁰³

Accusations of Timorese inertia have been common until the present time, and are in fact part of a modernity-oriented discourse related to evolutionism. Since the seventeenth century the idea had developed that *cultura* was an opposite to the state of nature and barbarity. Culture was understood as a state of being that surpassed the state of nature and was primarily associated with the Christo-European world (Nünning 2005:106). In the eighteenth century this idea developed into a form of evolutionist thinking where every successive (cultured) generation was understood to gain in intellectual and material advancement. In this model of continuous ascendancy, non-European cultures in general and low-technology groups in particular would fall by the way side. The stern critic of Timorese life Jean-Baptiste Pelon, observed that ‘these islanders are not at all industrious and do not even strive for the future, since they follow the old customs of their ancestors, and are content with little, be it cloths or foodstuff’ (Pelon 2002:16). Pelon was perceptive enough to

¹⁰² Van Goor 1988:264-5. Illustrations of Atoni houses built on poles may be found in Cinatti 1987:201-4.

¹⁰³ Matos 1974a:31. De Rosily in 1772 also observed that the women performed all domestic chores, leaving the men to wage war and look after the cattle (Lombard-Jourdain 1982:95). Compare Bastian 1885:15.

attribute the perceived inertia to the strength of the *adat*. Innovations in the traditional economic system were not logical or desirable for the Timorese communities, that is, not under the conditions that external powers tried to impose. The introduction of new cash crops failed in spite of the assurances of the *opperhoofden* that cultivation would increase the wealth of the local elites. On the one hand, this was to do with the primitive agriculturalist knowledge of the Company servants, who induced locals to plant crops under unsuitable conditions. On the other hand, it was probably to do with the fact that this new enterprise would entail a great deal of hard work, removing manpower from where it was previously needed and all for an outcome that was at best uncertain, and even hazardous. According to ethnographic literature of the nineteenth century, there is a belief in Timorese culture that one should only plant what one needs, since any surplus would bring sickness and misfortune (Bastian 1885:16).

These images of savages and dullards, it should be pointed out, were balanced by an image of alliance and trust that bound the Company and the Timorese together. The annual reports often contained a mantra-like formulation to the effect that the allied regents lived in harmony and peace with each other and the Company. After the British takeover of Kupang in January 1812, the official C.W. Knibbe summed up the situation: 'The native princes here have no contribution whatsoever to pay to the Government, yet they are always very much inclined in every respect, to assist the Government'.¹⁰⁴ As a collective, the kings and regents were sometimes referred to in very paternalistic terms: they were portrayed as innocent and gullible (*omnozel*) figures who had to be protected from abuses carried out by the Kupangese burghers and others. As individuals, however, they were sometimes even praiseworthy. *Opperhoofd* Barend Fockens noted in a memorandum from 1777 that

Daniel, presently king of Amfoan, although young, seems to give proof of truly good intentions for the Noble Company, and to follow closely in the footsteps of his deceased father, Bartholomeus, due to which I have treated him with the same courtesy in all the issues at hand; the more so since he, although being the weakest of all the regents, has been ready for action as often as was requested, and delivered limestone for the construc-

¹⁰⁴ ANRI Timor:21, *Engelsch archief 1812*, Letter from Cornelis Willem Knibbe to Richard Phillips, 28-3-1812. Although having a Dutch name, Knibbe was a British civil commander.

tion of Fort Concordia. Also, one should add to his praise that he is the only Christian regent whose mindset seems to have rejected most of the paganism.¹⁰⁵

Other leaders, like the long-lived Sonbai regents Ama Tomananu (died 1685) and Nai Sau (died 1739), were referred to as indispensable councilors to the *opperhoofden*, whose terms at any rate seldom lasted more than five years.

Of course the blend of ethnic stereotypes and assertions of harmony provoke questions about the real feelings of trust between the Company officials and their supposedly uncultured allies. The personal feelings of the writers are often rather hard to discern, but one example is found in the *Dagregister* from 1735, and reveals a rather ambivalent attitude. A large troop of Topasses and Greater Sonbai warriors threatened the VOC domain, and an ominous rumour spread in Kupang that some of the allied regents had actually invited the invaders. The Dutch nervously suggested that the allies bring their children inside the fort, and it was implicitly understood that they would be held hostage. The regents replied that they would gladly do so, adding that if someone proved unloyal, his offspring could, as far as they were concerned, readily be sold by the Company as slaves. ‘So it was’, wrote the *opperhoofd* Gerardus Visscher, ‘that in many minds were sorrow and worries, so that I myself began to feel troubled. However, I put my trust in God Almighty, and after putting everything in good order I chose the the parole *God is my salvation*, and then calmly went to sleep’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ VOC 3473 (1777), f. 514b.

¹⁰⁶ *Dagregister*, sub 16-3-1735, H 244, KITLV.

The Estado strikes back, 1696-1732

A DIFFICULT HERITAGE

António Hornay had built up a political system that encompassed most of Timor, eastern Flores and parts of the Solor Islands. Through his undisputed ability, and a generous use of excessive violence, he had held the system in place for a number of decades as the uncrowned true king of Timor. This system needed a man of prowess, however, if it were to last. Like the contest states that can be discerned in many parts of Southeast Asia, authority could not be automatically inherited. Rather, effective leadership had to be built up again and again.¹ In this way, problems began when the old Topass leader died in 1693; he left his inheritance to his younger brother Francisco Hornay, who was named procurator of the Crown on the Solor and Timor islands. Francisco had been *tenente* in Lifau for twenty years but was reportedly more at home with monastic life (*kloosterlijke leven*) than worldly business.² Clearly, he was a far less able man than his brother: Portuguese sources characterize him as an inert figure, while VOC documents complain about his overbearing and arrogant attitude, which, if anything, was worse than that of António. From an economic point of view, he inherited a situation that was far from rosy. The obtainable supplies of sandalwood seriously decreased during the last years that António was in power and when the Company representatives approached Francisco, he had no wood to offer them (Coolhaas 1971:685).

Internal Topass intrigues added to his unstable position. The sons of the old leaders Simão Luís and Matheus da Costa began to plot against Francisco; approaching some Rotenese captains and soldiers who lived

¹ This is partly similar to the Balinese case studied by Henk Schulte Nordholt 1996:4, 63, 149.

² Tange 1688, H 49:u, KITLV, f. 6.

in the Portuguese sphere, they enlisted them to assassinate no less than the emperor of Greater Sonbai. Through such an enormous terrorist act they intended to provoke an uprising throughout the land, which at length would help them to power. As part of the plot, the Topass pretenders made contact with the king of Amakono, the Uis Kono, whose powers were still formidable. Uis Kono was offered a ceremonial staff (*tongkat*) and a golden *keris* to actively participate in the assault. He refused the gifts, but apparently kept quiet about his newly acquired knowledge, and the objects instead went to an old Rotenese captain who stayed close to the emperor. By now, however, Hornay had received word of what was taking place. The Rotenese who lived in and around Lifau hastily took to the mountains, while Hornay's men destroyed their property. The emperor and Uis Kono marched down to Lifau with sizeable forces, to support Hornay if necessary, while the leaders of Amanuban and Belu attentively watched and waited to see what would happen next, cagily avoiding choosing sides.³

Something did happen, but from an unexpected quarter. The Estado da Índia, the official colonial apparatus with its centre in Goa, had hitherto largely left Timor to its own devices. However, after peace was concluded with its dangerous Dutch rival, it underwent a number of political, economic, military and religious reforms from the 1660s to the 1680s. These reforms contributed to a gradual stabilization of its Asian possessions, now reduced in number (Ames 2000:14). Diplomatic efforts towards the European great powers contributed to the survival of the Estado, a process that culminated with the Methuen treaties that were concluded with England in 1703 (Schlicher 1996:37-44). With António Hornay gone, the viceroy of Goa once again prepared to master the last Portuguese territory in Southeast Asia. The instrument was one António de Mesquita Pimentel, a man who was no stranger to Timor. Back in 1677 he was the *capitão mor de mar* (senior naval officer) in these waters, and had been on decidedly bad terms with Hornay.⁴ In 1695 the viceroy appointed him as the first governor of Solor and Timor, and he sailed there with a frigate from Macao in the following year. De Mesquita Pimentel was immediately accepted by the Topasses of Lifau on arrival and his dislike of Francisco Hornay gave cause for rejoicing among the locals, and Hornay's friends on Sonbai do not seem to have taken any

³ VOC 1566 (1694-95), *Dagregister*, sub 28-10-1694.

⁴ VOC 1327 (1676-77), *Dagregister*, sub 24-3-1677.

counteraction (Leitão 1948:265-6; Faria de Morais 1934, Appendix:44).

The delight in the new appointment soon dwindled, however, since De Mesquita Pimentel implemented a hard regime, which involved fleecing the local kings where he could; his old aversion to the Hornays may have played a role in this. He killed Pedro Hornay, the eldest son of the deceased Topass leader, and two other persons who were all accused of planning his assassination. The old Francisco Hornay was forced to flee to the padres in the church of Lifau. A great terror struck the *moradores* of the port, and some were thinking of fleeing.⁵ Inevitably they began to conspire with their counterparts in Larantuka, which appears to have been beyond the direct authority of De Mesquita Pimentel. In January 1697, there was a repeat of Hornay's 1673 coup when 40 armed Larantuqueiro *perahu* rashly landed at Lifau, to be met, however, by no local resistance since everyone was fed up with the rigorous rule of the governor. António de Mesquita and his *tenente* Alvare de Sousa – a son-in-law of António Hornay – were captured in their houses. De Sousa was put in irons and despatched to Larantuka, while the governor had to leave for Goa, where he was promptly jailed by the frustrated authorities. Meanwhile, Domingos da Costa – a natural son of the old Topass leader Matheus da Costa – was hastily chosen to be the new *capitão mor*. Presumably, this was the same Da Costa who had planned to assassinate the emperor three years previously. His Hornay rival quickly disappeared from the scene, since Francisco and his secretary, Tomás Duarte, both died on 1 June in the same year. Their simultaneous deaths shortly after the Da Costa takeover give some cause to the suspicion of foul play, but more detailed circumstances are not documented.⁶ After his successful coup, Da Costa sent amicable letters to Kupang with which port he wished to maintain normal commercial ties.

The following years paint a picture of chaos. Domingos da Costa would remain the principal leader of the Topasses until his own death at an advanced age in 1722, but his career was very different from that of António Hornay; during a quarter of a century he hardly seems to have enjoyed one day of undisputed authority over the Portuguese complex. This underlines the void left by Hornay, as well as the shaky economic basis of Topass authority, caused by the reckless cutting down of san-

⁵ VOC 1579 (1696), ff. 73-4; Leitão 1948:266.

⁶ VOC 1595 (1697), ff. 12-4, 75-6; Leitão 1948:266-7. The unnamed *tenente* of Belu was appointed *tenente* of Lifau by Domingos da Costa.

dalwood forests. It also illustrates the determination of a provisionally restructured Estado da Índia to come to grips with its undisciplined putative possessions on Solor-Timor. The years at the turn of the century were filled with petty fighting between Portuguese rivals, and Domingos da Costa did not always have the best of it. A would-be *capitão mor* settled in Konga at the coast of Flores where he defeated an attack by Da Costa. In Lifau still another *capitão mor* was installed by the *moradores*, although Da Costa managed to expel him in 1700.⁷

At this time there were a few visits by English seafarers to the coast of Timor. Apart from the Dutch and Portuguese, apparently no other Western nations had undertaken any previous explorations.⁸ The activities of the English East India Company in the archipelago were severely restrained by the VOC and the rise of English Bengal trade only took off in the early eighteenth century, but there were private traders and pirates who explored the possibilities for profit (Kulke and Rothermund 1998:204, 209). Though the visits had few consequences, they do provide information about conditions on Timor at the time. The well-armed *Resolution* departed from London in 1697 with a characteristically mixed cargo of wine, spirit, Spanish reals, weapons, textiles and mirrors. Via South Africa and Batavia, the traders reached the coast of Flores where they vainly searched for nutmeg, a spice normally restricted by a VOC monopoly on it in Maluku. The choice of destination was probably made because Flores and most of Timor were outside even nominal Dutch control. A month later the vessel anchored off the coast of Belu where the English obtained gold and beeswax in exchange for shotguns, hats and cloths. At this stage, however, provisions on the ship were desperately low and eight sailors jumped overboard. The *Resolution* departed without them and seems to have returned to Ende on Flores to take in cinnamon and sandalwood, the latter commodity being delivered to Flores from Sumba. Portuguese and Chinese seafarers sighted what they perceived to be a pirate ship, apparently the same vessel, which clearly illustrates the sometimes thin line between merchant and pirate.⁹ The English deserters went to Lifau, where half of them died of diseases;

⁷ VOC 1637 (1700), f. 13.

⁸ A few French and Italian merchants are mentioned as coming into contact with the area under António Hornay's control.

⁹ William Dampier wrote in 1699 that Kupang and Lifau had been attacked by French pirates two years previously. This is not substantiated by the detailed VOC sources. Possibly Dampier mixes up the sightings of pirates in 1697-98 with the attack on Lifau by Domingos da Costa in 1697.

one of the survivors though, Robert Bon, met Dutch visitors there, and it was to them that he related the story of the cumbersome expedition.¹⁰

Less wayward was the English captain William Dampier who visited Timor with his vessel *Roebuck* in 1699, where he found a complicated situation in the Portuguese complex. A native *tenente*, Alexis Mendosa, governed from a place five or six miles outside of Lifau, probably Nunuhenu.¹¹ Above him was a white *capitão mor* who had been sent by the viceroy of Goa and who resided further away at a place called Porto Novo. He supposedly stayed much of the time in the mountains with a native army, guarding the passes against Kupang. Still another *capitão mor* resided in Larantuka; he was a very courteous gentleman who would have been glad to have dealt with Dampier had he gone there. Presumably the latter *capitão mor* was Domingos da Costa.¹² Dampier describes Lifau as a rather plain place. The small church had a wall on only one side. He saw no more than two whites there, one of them being a padre, and the rest of the inhabitants he describes as being copper-coloured with black lank hair. Since most ethnic Timorese do not have lank hair, this statement is indicative of the ethnic mix of the place. Regarding commerce, Dampier noted that Chinese merchants from Macao frequented Timor; some twenty minor ships going there each year. They traded rice, processed gold, tea, iron work, porcelain and silk for pure gold, beeswax, sandalwood, and so on. By contrast, only one ship per year used to come from Goa.¹³

¹⁰ VOC 1609 (1698), ff. 42, 95-7.

¹¹ A Dutch source instead mentions an Henrique as *tenente* in Lifau in 1698 (VOC 1609 [1698], f. 94).

¹² One may also refer to the garbled account of the Scottish sea-captain Alexander Hamilton, who repeatedly visited the East Indies between 1694 and 1719. He writes that the Portuguese of Macao managed advantageous trade with Timor for many years, but ran into trouble when they tried to place the entire government of the island in the hands of the Catholic Church. The Timorese chose a native called Gonsales Gomez, who had travelled to Macao and Goa, as their leader. Gomez acknowledged the king of Portugal as the sovereign and protector of the Timorese lands, declaring that they would be loyal subjects as long as their laws and liberties were respected. The outcome, however, was a war with Macao that began c. 1688 and was still not concluded by 1703. As a result, Macao was ruined. The viceroy sent an embassy to Gonsales Gomez, asking him to accept a Governor General and an archbishop, though to no avail (Hamilton 2001:425-6). In 1698, the viceroy sent an appointed governor, André Coelho Vieira, but he too was turned down by the locals (Leitão 1948:289; VOC 1609 [1698], f. 99). Otherwise, it is difficult to know what to make of this information, which does not match the more detailed Dutch and Portuguese data.

¹³ Dampier 1939:164, 171-2. A Dutch enumeration mentions the following merchant ships in Lifau in 1698 (until August): One large Macanese ship which obtained 400 bahar of sandalwood; one minor Macanese ship that did not obtain any cargo; five Portuguese and six Chinese sloops whose success in obtaining cargo varied greatly; and one *kunting* from Batavia (VOC 1609 [1698], f. 98). All in all, trade on Timor in these years was apparently a risky business.

THE COMING OF THE WHITE GOVERNOR

The futile attempts of the Estado da Índia to impose its order on Timor in the second half of the seventeenth century had not been backed by any substantial force. In 1701, however, a new and more serious attempt was made. There were exaggerated ideas about the potential of Timor, which, together with the Zambezi river valley in Africa, was expected to engender considerable wealth for the Crown. The secretary of the Estado, António Coelho Guerreiro, a soldier who had served in the South American and African colonies for many years, was appointed as governor by the viceroy.¹⁴ Coelho was furnished with a comprehensive set of instructions which, as noted by C.R. Boxer, reveal a somewhat diffident stance. The new government was to be established as well as circumstances permitted. As for the Topasses, they should be approached in a way that gave them no reason to resort to violence (Boxer 1968:183-4). The resources of the Estado were scarce, but Coelho Guerreiro managed to secure 82 soldiers and considerable munitions.¹⁵ He eventually departed from Macao – a city that had a vital interest in seeing an orderly government on Timor – and approached Larantuka with two barks in early 1702. His demands that Domingos da Costa submit to the decrees of the Estado were met with extreme hostility. An attempted landing by the governor's men was repulsed, resulting in the loss of several men. Coelho Guerreiro had to withdraw, cutting the anchors in haste.¹⁶ After this inauspicious start, the governor sailed to Lifau which he reached on 14 February. The local authority there was Lourenço Lopes, a Portuguese from Macao who was also the brother-in-law of Domingos da Costa who mainly resided in Larantuka.

Also present in Lifau was the imposing Dominican padre Manuel de Santo António, who was soon to become the nominal bishop of Malacca. Born in Goa he arrived on Timor in 1697. Described as an uncompromising man of great missionary zeal, he drew the south-eastern part of the island closer into the Portuguese orbit through his activities. He stayed for years in the old and prestigious Tetun principedom

¹⁴ In fact a number of parallels between the colonial governance of Timor and eastern Africa have been found in this period, in terms of ideologies, experiences and missionary activities (Carneiro de Sousa 2001:181).

¹⁵ Many soldiers of the Estado sent to Timor were Kanarese from the Goa region, as apparent from Captain Pinnell's report from 1706 (Pinnell 1781:53).

¹⁶ VOC 1663 (1702), ff. 14-6; Leitão 1952:15-6.

of Luca, and also devoted himself to the spiritual needs of Viqueque and Bibiluto. Frei Manuel managed to turn the influential king of Viqueque, Dom Matheus da Costa, into what was described as a fervent Catholic. His spiritual authority apparently conformed to Timorese perceptions of ritual power and therefore meant something rather different to them than it did to the Portuguese. It was of such magnitude that he persuaded a number of belligerent princes to end their mutual hostilities and make signs of devotion to the Catholic Church and the Crown of Portugal. Among these were Dom António Hornay of Samoro, Dom Sebastião Fernandes of Luca, Dom Pedro Hornay of Fatuleteluli, Dom Miguel Tavares of Alas and Dom Domingos Soares of Manatuto. The position of the Hornays and Da Costas is indicated by the baptismal names of some of these princes, which probably does not imply physical kinship, but rather testifies to the island-wide prestige of the two families.¹⁷ It is only by this time that Christianized East Timorese royalty appears in the source material by name.

Unlike some other Dominicans, this important prelate took a firm stance for Estado da Índia. Father Manuel mediated between António Coelho Guerreiro and Lourenço Lopes, who was persuaded to accept the authority of both the viceroy and the governor; some inhabitants of Rotenese extraction also chose to support the new white master. The small force of the governor then jumped ashore and defeated the *moradores* who still resisted (Matos 1974a:309, 2001:106). A new administration was installed in the modest port, and the Lifau-Larantuka antagonism visible in earlier generations once again surfaced. The event was significant: from this day until the Japanese onslaught in 1942, Timor would have an unbroken line of officially appointed governors, although their authority was often tenuous in the extreme. António Coelho Guerreiro introduced a system of governance and a number of variations that would last until the imposition of a thorough colonial rule towards the late nineteenth century. There are both parallels and differences with the Dutch system in the Kupang enclave. Firstly, he established a ruling body called Estado Maior. In 1706 it consisted of the governor, the bishop of Malacca, a *tenente general* (lieutenant general), a *capitão mor*, a *feitor* (overseer), an attendant, two scribes, a surgeon, a barber and a drum-master

¹⁷ Leitão 1952:9-10. I therefore assume that H.G. Schulte Nordholt (1971:174) is wrong in his supposition that Topass names indicated that their sons married Timorese princesses and started new dynastic lines in certain principedoms.

(Oliveira 1948:207-8). Unlike the VOC council in Kupang it could not convene with indigenous princes on a regular basis for logistical reasons. Indeed, any extant reports made by the eighteenth-century governors have very little to say about conditions within the various princedoms.

Secondly, he established contacts with the various Timorese kings. Most of the major Atoni lords chose to support the white governor, maybe as a reaction to the unsettled conditions of the last five years. Shortly after Coelho Guerreiro's establishment in Lifau, princes and rulers from Ambeno, Greater Sonbai, Amanuban and Amanatun appeared with their retinues. The Sonbai emperor (*o emperador Sonouay*), and the head of the Empire of Servião (*o império de Seruião*), came in the company of Dom Francisco de Taenube, the king of Amakono 'who is the governor of his kingdom, since he is the supreme commander, and the Sonbai [ruler] does not have an active, nor a passive voice'.¹⁸ António Coelho Guerreiro received them with a banquet where the *tenente general*, Frei Manuel de Santo António, and other dignitaries were present. Afterwards, the Sonbai and Kono lords were given presents. The emperor came out from the governor's house clad in a *primavera* dress with gold and silver decorations, and a jacket and trunks made of *primavera*. Dom Francisco de Taenube received a dress of red cloth, a jacket and *primavera* trunks. In return the governor received hogs, rice and vegetables, which the *feitlor* divided among the infantry men.¹⁹ Dom Francisco revealed to Coelho Guerreiro that there was a rift in the Sonbai realm. His brother Dom Simão was an agent for the recalcitrant Domingos da Costa and had sent threatening letters to various kings – literacy was rare, but not unknown among the Timorese elites. Dom Simão announced that he would arrive from Larantuka with large forces and repeat the expulsion of António de Mesquita Pimentel in 1697. Dom Francisco, for his part, assured Coelho Guerreiro of the loyalty of himself and his ancestors and promised to contribute 200 armed *salauacos* (shield-bearers) to the

¹⁸ Matos 1974a:251. Leitão 1952:19, describes the emperor as being 'already old' which is not borne out by the printed documents but may have been an inferred addition. Two years later the name of the emperor was Dom Pedro Sonbai alias Tomenu, who appears to have been a relatively youthful man – two of his sons were born in c.1708 and c.1711. He was a classificatory brother (cousin) of the ruler of Lesser Sonbai, Bi Sonbai. The full name of the Kono lord is given in VOC 1691 (1704), f. 112. The traditional pedigree of Uis Kono has a Nai Taenube Kono in the sixth generation (F.H. Fobia, unpublished pedigree of the Kono family); judging from his name, he was a close relation to Dom Francisco de Taenube.

¹⁹ Matos 1974a:251, 336. The title *feitlor* or overseer is the origin for the Timorese word *fettor*, which could mean either an executive regent or the regent of a district (*kefettorán*).

cause.²⁰ The indigenous authorities were subsequently militarized by the Estado since the kings and regents were endowed with the ranks of officers, appointments which held a great ritual value.²¹

So far things seemed to have gone in favour of Coelho Guerreiro, but his authority on Timor was soon placed under threat. This is explained by Topass activity as well as by his own policy. The governor, used to conditions in India, insisted that the various princes sent manpower to Lifau to assist in the fortification of the area. Such corvée service was difficult to implement even in the tighter system of colonial-native co-operation in Kupang, and in this case it proved a failure since the labourers deserted the port at the first opportunity. Furthermore, the letters of Coelho Guerreiro reveal a lack of understanding or respect for the local elite that may have cost his cause dearly, for within them, the Timorese royalty are castigated as ridiculous or foolish figures. Not least, he fails to understand the ritual and non-active significance of the Sonbai lord, as seen in a letter written to Pedro II of Portugal in September 1703. By that time, the Amakono lord had deserted the governor and joined his enemies.

By the said list [of local kings who had received gifts from the governor] Your Majesty will see the grand number of kings who have bowed in vassalage on this island only; and for someone who has so many vassal kings it is fair that he does not entitle himself king of them, but rather emperor. To this end I am determined to make them all swear [an oath of faith] to Your Majesty in a solemn way that is repugnant to no one, since there is no reason that there is another emperor on this island, for the one here is not obeyed by any king. Nor is he capable of that, since he is a fool and is slow in the crime of rebellion since he does not join in with the [lord of] Amakono; and had he joined me, everything would now have been put to rest. (Matos 1974a:335.)

²⁰ Matos 1974a:251-2. In Maluku a *solauaco* was a large round shield (Godinho de Eredia 1997:250). The Timorese shields, however, were small and round, about 60 centimeters in diameter and made of buffalo hide (Vroklage, I, 1953:646). They disappeared in the late colonial period together with bows and arrows, probably since the proliferation of firearms made them obsolete. They can still be seen on the *Planta de Cailaco* from circa 1726 (Durand 2006a:109; Sá 1949).

²¹ Matos 2005:10-1. In somewhat later documents the Sonbai emperor of Servião bore the title of *brigadeiro*, the ordinary kings *coronel*, the executive regents *tenente-coronel*, and the *datos* (regional chiefs) and *tunengões* (settlement chiefs), *sargento-mor* or *capitão*.

In addition, the Topass network proved resilient, in particular in West Timor. Domingos da Costa had no intention of giving up his attempts of hegemony, and the arrival of Coelho Guerreiro inaugurated a struggle that was to become a leading strand in Timorese political history until the 1780s. VOC sources distinguish between the White Portuguese and the Black Portuguese, with the latter term also being used for the Topasses. The term is built on a symbolic dichotomy rather than being entirely accurate, for there were mestizos and pure-blooded European people on both sides – including even governors.²² The Portuguese documents rather use the term ‘rebels’ or ‘Larantuqueiros’ for the Topass faction. The former term is, of course, questionable, considering that the Topasses did not fight against an established order; for them it was more essential to retain the privileges they had secured during the previous century. During the skirmishes at Larantuka in early 1702, Domingos da Costa and his men sent a letter to António Coelho Guerreiro which stated the Topass claims in no uncertain terms:

They protested that they were friends and brothers in arms of the King Our Lord, denying him the name of vassals; and they wished to constitute an independent republic to decide therewith the election of a government and dispose of the fruits of the island as they wished, without His Majesty having more than the name of king. As an excuse for their intent they declared that their forebears had conquered it and not the Portuguese arms, and that they had to defend what was theirs. (Matos 1974a:235.)

The new situation meant that Larantuka was no longer suitable as the principal base for Da Costa. In order to retain his influence in the face of the white governor he established two bases on the Timorese mainland. One of these was Tulang Ikan (Tulicão, Tulaica), a short distance to the west of Lifau. Situated at a river mouth by the seashore, it had developed as a surrogate port that accommodated Dutch and other trading ships. The other place was situated in the inland, not far from the Ambeno *sonaf* Nunuhenu. Through this residence, Animata (or Ainmat), Da Costa could control the hinterland and keep the Ambeno principedom strictly under his control, whilst also having the benefit of ensuring that

²² One may refer to an English travel account from 1706 (Pinnell 1781) that mentions several White Portuguese who came over to the Topasses.

the governor's stronghold was effectively kept isolated.

Recorded oral traditions do not explicitly refer to the intense struggle between White and Black Portuguese. For the Timorese of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they all retrospectively belonged to a category of foreigners, and the main themes of the stories were their relations with Timorese groups rather than their soon-forgotten mutual differences. Nevertheless the princedoms took care to choose sides according to their own interests. Among the Atoni domains, Sonbai, Amanuban and Ambeno soon reverted to the Topass side, while the strong and independent-minded Amarasi found reason to support the governor. The old Topass-Amarasi friendship cooled considerably in the years before Coelho Guerreiro's arrival. The son of the Amarasi king was kept as a hostage by the Topasses under humiliating circumstances, and the princedom finally concluded a peace with the VOC allies in 1701 on its own initiative. The king even warned Kupang about plans by the Topasses and Greater Sonbai to attack the area under VOC influence in the same year.²³ It is also interesting to note that no less than 24 rulers of East Timor acknowledged the authority of Coelho Guerreiro and expressly claimed to be satisfied with his rule. They were spread over the map of East Timor up to Sama at the eastern point, and conspicuously included the lords of Camenaça and Luca, both of whom held serious and important positions (Durand 2006a:124). Only the (admittedly significant) domains of the Likusaen area sided with Domingos da Costa, whereas the central but inaccessible realm Wehali and its *loro* are not mentioned at all, neither as clients nor as 'rebels'.²⁴ The late, brutal but superficial Topass subjugation of the eastern lands made the East Timorese look for an alternate source of power, while Wehali simply distanced itself from the affairs of the north coast.

The strategic choice was made at great risk. Amanuban initially supported Coelho Guerreiro on an expedition to Noimuti, a highland spot that by this time was deemed to be a part of the recalcitrant Sonbai realm. The expedition failed disastrously, and the head of an accompanying Amanuban prince ended up in Larantuka; it was offered as a festive trophy to Domingos da Costa. Da Costa proceeded to lead a detachment

²³ VOC 1648 (1701), ff. 8-9.

²⁴ Matos 1974a:336-9; Matos 2005:11. By 1707 Wehali resisted the then governor Jácomo de Morais Sarmento, who ordered the levies (*arraigais*) of the loyal domains to attack it (Leitão 1952:100-1). The result is not known from the available sources.

to Amanuban, where he set about him with his sword and with fire. With a cruel irony, the principedom was newly ravaged shortly afterwards, this time by the troops of the white governor for failing to meet its commitments.²⁵

THE VOC CONNECTION

The Timorese and Topass forces of Domingos da Costa besieged Lifau for the next few years. The details of this struggle have been provided by Humberto Leitão and there is no need to repeat them here.²⁶ Suffice it to say that the Portuguese garrison in Lifau was periodically reduced to extreme straits, although Da Costa was unable to completely overcome the stronghold. The new governor had a low opinion of the fighting qualities of the locals; four Portuguese, he bragged, could resist 4,000 Rotenese, Solorese or Timorese.²⁷ The Topasses were apparently another matter, but they too had to lean on their Atoni network for support. Coelho Guerreiro and his successors were suspicious about the Company, which was believed to have supported the Topasses with munitions. The governorship of Coelho Guerreiro coincided with the early stages of the War of Spanish Succession, where Portugal initially leaned towards the French side. In 1703, however, it concluded a military alliance with England and its allies, bringing Portugal into the same camp as the Netherlands. While the European alliance prevented a full-scale confrontation between the VOC and the Estado, politics in the Timor area developed along their own lines. The accusations brought forward by the governors are not completely confirmed by the VOC sources. At this stage, Fort Concordia as well as Batavia felt that one should not meddle in internal Portuguese conflicts, but rather let both parts ‘jump in the bay’, in other words, that they should be allowed to fight it out between themselves.²⁸ They kept a watchful eye on what went on in the Portuguese sphere, however, and sent envoys to both Lifau and Tulang Ikan to explore any trade possibilities.

Two Company servants, Nicolaas de Winter and Pieter van Dielen,

²⁵ Matos 1974a:258; VOC 1663 (1702), f. 6; VOC 1676 (1703), f. 6.

²⁶ Leitão 1952. See also the letters of Governor Coelho Guerreiro, printed in Matos 1974a:218-339.

²⁷ Oliveira Marques 2001:244. Coelho Guerreiro's use of the term *sabo* seems to refer to the Rotenese, Rote being Sawu Minor.

²⁸ VOC 1676 (1703), ff. 3-4.

were dispatched from Kupang in August 1706 and arrived at Lifau after four days of sailing, where they were to meet the next regular governor after Coelho Guerreiro, Jácomo de Morais Sarmento. 'In the morning we went ashore. On the beach we were welcomed by a sergeant, and were led to the governor's place. It was situated within the palisade, on a high mountain, where the governor received us in person, and brought us inside his dwelling'.²⁹ After the talks had taken place, the envoys bid the governor farewell, 'and went out to look around the place a bit. Its fortification consisted of three palisades which each lay on a hill in step formation. Only the first one could bombard the shore and the anchorage. At the beach were some *atap*³⁰ houses, inhabited by some of their servants and free people. They did not seem to lack foodstuffs. We found no other ships here than a small Portuguese sloop that lay at anchor in the roadstead. After this tour, we went aboard'.³¹

After having concluded their affairs in Lifau, the two Dutchmen set sail and set their course for Tulang Ikan.

In the morning we went ashore and reached the house of the *capitão cabo*, who supervises the merchants who stay at the shore. He received us politely. After mutual compliment he told us that the *capitão mor* Domingos da Costa has got his residence some two [Dutch] miles from here. Today there would be no opportunity to speak with Da Costa, but tomorrow he would arrange guides and horses for us to go there. [...] We strolled somewhat along the beach. We did not see anything but some small dwellings which were mostly inhabited by Chinese people who were there for trade, apart from yet three or four small houses of *atap* and straw where some servants stayed. Otherwise the beach lay open and deserted, and there is no other fortification than a wooden palisade on a hill where some artillery is situated, by which the roadstead and the river between Lifau and Tulang Ikan can be shelled. Most of the people we met looked quite unhealthy. The Chinese traders were also not free from illness. Finally we came to the house of the [Dutch] free burgher Samuel Ravken, who was desperately ill and had committed very little. Thus, he said, he had not managed more than two or three picul of sandalwood.

²⁹ VOC 1728 (1706), f. 132.

³⁰ *Atap* is the material with which the indigenous houses were covered, made from dried leaves of various kinds of palms, especially nipa and sago (*VOC-Glossarium* 2000:14).

³¹ VOC 1728 (1706), f. 133.

The next day De Winter and Van Dielen rode to the inland residence, obviously Animata, where they met Domingos da Costa. They offered to trade sandalwood and beeswax for cloth, but Da Costa informed them that sickness among his subjects had prevented deliveries of the wood from the forests. He suggested the Dutchmen that better times may come early next year. They returned to Tulang Ikan, taking with them the hapless Ravken, and sailed back to Kupang.³² The contrast between the two rival Portuguese centres is striking from this account. Lifau was well fortified by virtue of the steep rocks behind the shore and was almost impossible to conquer without advanced equipment; although the Topasses had access to artillery, muskets and small ships, they were never able to master the place until the White Portuguese eventually abandoned the stronghold many years later. From other sources it appears that Lifau was an unhealthy place where the death toll among the reinforcements sent from Macao and Goa was of frightening proportions. The spot was also unsuitable for agriculture so that the *moradores* had difficulties supporting their families (Matos 1974a:124). The Topasses of Tulang Ikan, on the other hand, had access to a partly fertile hinterland and were not solely dependent on the simple wooden fortification at the coast. It also appears that, to a certain extent, the Topass establishment was attractive to the Southeast Asian Chinese.

To corroborate the above, we have an English account from exactly the same time as when De Winter and Van Dielen made their tour. In 1706, Captain Richard Pinnell sailed from Banjarmasin, where the English East India Company had a post, to Larantuka and then on to the Timorese coast. A limited number of English vessels were seen in Timorese waters in these years exploring the dwindling possibilities of sandalwood trade. Finding nothing of interest in Lifau, Pinnell proceeded to Tulang Ikan. There he met Domingos da Costa in a very simple dress, having just returned from the inland in the company of 30 'black' retainers. Although Governor Jácome de Morais Sarmento tried to prevent it, the Englishmen decided to purchase wood from Da Costa, and were invited to Animata:

After much discourse we embarked on the shore, took horses and being guarded by 3 men, rode up to the Captain Majore's house which is

³² VOC 1728 (1706), ff. 132-8.

about 4 miles in the Country. Here I expected to have seen a palace but it proved more like a West-country stable. Upon our first arrival we could not gain admittance therefore we stood by our horses a little while under a tree, then were desired to walk into the guard-house where we stood about one hour surrounded and gazed on by a great many black faces. Afterwards we were introduced into the Captain Majores entertaining room, which is open at the front of his old Cadjan-house. Going into it we went up a Bamboo ladder with 3 Roterds [?] and afterwards over a rail; here we were received by a great many black gentlemen who we supposed were his chief officers. This room is adorned with our Saviour on the Cross, the Virgin Mary with some other Effigies, with lighted candles before them, at the upper end round it is hung up some other Saints in painting and under foot carpets spread for us to sit down upon. In little time the Captain Majore came to us, and treated us very handsomely according to their custom.³³

During negotiations it turned out that the Topasses were mainly interested in receiving payment in arms and gunpowder. Soon, however, Richard Pinnell found out what so many Dutch merchants had discovered in the past decades: promises of speedy deliveries of the valuable sandalwood were worth little. Da Costa assured them that good sandalwood would be brought to Tulang Ikan from Amanuban very soon, but delay was followed by delay, until the Topass leader eventually had to order a Chinese trader to give his share of the wood to the English in order to provide them with at least some cargo. Da Costa was obviously anxious to get the weapons, even at the expense of bullying smaller traders. Like the Portuguese and Dutch, Pinnell presents a rather unflattering portrait of Domingos da Costa, whom he describes as an elderly, dark-skinned man of short stature. Pinnell remarks that he was more often than not drunk, sometimes to the degree that he could not discuss business with his foreign guests. In the eyes of the sea captain he was a conceited figure whose treatment of the Englishmen was not always satisfactory. Pinnell was annoyed over 'a damned sight of ill manners' when Da Costa and his associates were treated by the English to a dinner on the shore. Incidentally Pinnell indicates that the Hornay and Da Costa families had buried the hatchet by this time and

³³ Pinnell 1781:40-1. Coming directly from his log, Pinnell's text is crude and without punctuation; I have added some punctuation marks to improve readability.

were co-operating together. He met a son of António Hornay, called Chic (Francisco) Hornay, who ran Domingos da Costa's errands in Belu. This younger Hornay is described as a touchy and belligerent type, who nearly killed a Portuguese after being slighted by him in the presence of Pinnell. He would later play a leading role in Timorese politics (Pinnell 1781:60-1).

While the Dutch may have preferred to keep out of internal Portuguese troubles, the new division in the Portuguese sphere had its effects. Before the coming of Coelho, Domingos da Costa's attitude was ambivalent in the same way as Hornay's had been: on the one hand he strove to maintain commercial relations, and on the other hand he supported certain *nusak* on Rote against the friends of the VOC and planned incursions into the Kupang area (Coolhaas 1976:154-5). The establishment of a white governor, however, meant he had second thoughts. With Amarasi on good terms with both the governor and the VOC allies he found himself increasingly cornered. In early 1704, the Lesser Sonbai ruler Bi Sonbai and another princess called Bi Sulla sent their regards to the Topass leader via an envoy, and suggested they begin talks 'like before'.³⁴ Bi Sonbai in turn received a conciliatory letter from Domingos da Costa, Emperor Dom Pedro Sonbai and Dom Francisco de Taenube of Amakono, making proposals for a formal peace. This was a unique development since the Topass leaders never otherwise drew Sonbai into their diplomatic efforts within the VOC sphere. By this stage the senders both drew upon the Atoni-wide prestige of the dynasty and the lingering affection between the two Sonbai branches. The letter hints at dynastic relations not mentioned by the voluminous Dutch sources: 'The sister of Your Highnesses has received the gift that Your Highnesses have sent, and thanks them utmost for the good inclination; and sends for them a sarong from her body, as Your Highnesses have requested from her; and I [Da Costa] do not offer them anything else at the moment than a cord of *muti salak*, as a token of my good inclination.'³⁵ One of the two

³⁴ Bi Sulla is obviously Bi Sula(t) Sonbai, a Sonbai princess mentioned by later tradition. In all the versions she came to Kupang from the inland with her sister Bi Aulais Sonbai, but her exact dynastic position varies from source to source. The oldest version (Heijmering 1847:38, 44) has her marrying the Amabi ruler Saroro (*fl.* 1655), a younger version (Fobia 1984:75-8) lets her marry the Lesser Sonbai ruler Baki Bena Sonbai (reign 1776-95) – the case illustrates the problems for the historian using the traditional pedigrees! That the sisters enjoyed an important dynastic position is indicated by an alternative appellation for Lesser Sonbai: Bi Sulat 'm Bi Aobeis, Soes Las'im Bi Patbesi (Parera 1969:48). So maybe the other sister, Bi Aulais Sonbai, was reminiscent of Empress Bi Sonbai.

³⁵ VOC 1691 (1704), ff. 17-8, 114-7.

sisters of the empress must, therefore, have remained in the Portuguese sphere, within reach of Da Costa. How this could have come about, one can only speculate.

At any rate, the strategy worked. Bi Sonbai loyally showed the letter to the Dutch authorities, who checked and endorsed her reply to Da Costa and Greater Sonbai. In spite of a few bloody incidents in the next year, 1705, a real rapprochement came about and resulted in an almost unprecedented period of relative peace between the Company allies and Amarasi, Greater Sonbai and Amanuban. The peace would, however, be abruptly broken seven years later. The Dutch had a clear interest in promoting the peace process, the more so since their relations with the White Portuguese were strained. A Portuguese frigate seized the Dutch sloop *Doradus* in 1704 when it sailed for Tulang Ikan in order to trade with Da Costa. When a Portuguese frigate bound for Macao made a stopover in Semarang, it was in turn seized by the VOC resident there. Rancorous diplomatic notes were exchanged between Batavia and Kupang on one side and Lifau on the other. The Company accused António Coelho Guerreiro of violating paragraph 12 of the peace treaty of 1661, which allowed the free transportation of goods, munitions, and so on, from Dutch ports to any other place, be it enemies of Portugal or otherwise. They also honoured the old, and highly debatable, idea that the sultan of Ternate, now a VOC vassal, had held the foremost authority in Solor-Timor since former times, which by extension made the Portuguese territorial claims doubtful.³⁶ Coelho Guerreiro, for his part, accused the Kupangese *opperhoofd* Joannes van Alphen of inciting the Chinese traders to do their dubious business with Domingos da Costa. Both parties, moreover, refused to return deserters to each other (Coolhaas 1976:291-2, 299-300; Boxer 1968:185-6), and the mutual suspicion that they harboured was only increased by various intermittent incidents, which would continue for the rest of the century and longer. The ordinary relationship between the VOC and the Lifau and later Dili governments was one of barely suppressed hostility.

³⁶ *Letter Batavia to Lifau* 1704, 1.10.01:2956, Nationaal Archief.

A CLERICAL PEACE- AND TROUBLEMAKER

Much of the political history of Timor from 1702 to 1722 is centred on the bishop of Malacca, the Goan Dominican Frei Manuel de Santo António (1660-1733). A person of great zeal and devotion, he aroused widely different opinions in his lifetime – ‘one of the most curious Jekyll and Hyde characters amongst the Dominican missionaries in 18th century Timor’, according to Boxer (1968:190). António Coelho Guerreiro owed his position to the intervention of Frei Manuel, whom he referred to as a human angel, an exception to the low levels of education and application associated with the Dominican padres on Timor. In his own words, the bishop was happy to go to Timor where no sack of money awaited him, and he had no other aim than to spread the honour and glory of God. In the words of Artur de Matos, he was a missionary *por excelência* (Matos 2001:116). While there were other underlying factors at play in the political networks on the island, the bishop tended to become the catalyst for several dramatic turns.

The more benign part of his influence was shown when the governor, Jácomo de Morais Sarmiento (gov. 1706-1710), turned out to be a brusque and undiplomatic figure who nearly ruined the position of the Estado da Índia. On a military expedition to the Motael principedom, he forced the bishop to go along with the soldiers against his own will. He furthermore arrested the faithful Dom Matheus da Costa of Viqueque when the latter expressed doubts on a point of strategy. Both acts were reckless: the bishop was revered and respected by the Timorese elites, and Dom Matheus was a principal support for the Crown of Portugal in Belu (in the more extended sense of the geographical term). He was the superior headman of the Belu auxiliaries (the *arraial*) and had fought the so-called rebels since 1702. Events quickly demonstrated that the local veneration for Portuguese symbols should not be misinterpreted: the Estado was only one of several sources of authority and its local supporters quickly fell away. De Morais was soon besieged in Lifau in 1708 by overwhelming Topass-led forces. At this moment, when the White Portuguese were on the verge of total collapse, the bishop of Malacca again intervened and seems to have miraculously saved the situation. He valiantly left the fortifications of Lifau and walked to the camp of Domingos da Costa. With a dazzling show of rhetoric he persuaded the Topass leader to submit to His Catholic Majesty João V. The account

of Richard Pinnell, quoted before, indicates that Domingos da Costa had a strong Catholic identity, a factor that should not be underplayed. Another reason for the stunning success of the bishop may have been the disastrous state of trade at the time, which spoke in favour of a reconciliation among the Portuguese factions. The VOC reports complain that the war after 1702 impeded what little trading remained after Hornay's death (Coolhaas 1976:299). This is not endorsed by a Portuguese source that states that some 10,000-12,000 picul of sandalwood were cut per year, however. Of these, only some 2,000-3,000 picul reached Macao, while the rest was brought to Batavia on Chinese keels. This would actually be a lot more than in the days of António Hornay, though the figures may be debatable (Matos 1974a:178, 341). Whatever the true economic figures, the warring parties strove to block each other's lines of communication for as long as the war dragged on, evidently to the detriment of normal trade. After six years they would therefore have definitely been interested in seeing hostilities come to an end.

Peace did not reign for long, though. Under the next governor, Dom Manuel de Soto Maior (gov. 1710-1714), a curious and seemingly trivial event drew much of the island into conflict, with the bishop acting as the catalyst. This time it was not a matter between White and Black Portuguese, but rather between the Portuguese community and the indigenous population. In 1711, a daughter of Domingos da Costa passed away and was buried with solemnity in Lifau. The emperor of Greater Sonbai, Dom Pedro, attended the ceremony. For unexplained reasons the bishop of Malacca took the opportunity to order Domingos da Costa to take the wife of Dom Pedro into custody.³⁷ Later genealogical tradition knows Dom Pedro by the name of Nai Neno Sonbai and mentions Bi Manlela Kosad (Manuela da Costa) of Oecusse as one of his consorts; Domingos may therefore have held his own daughter. VOC and, later, oral sources reveal that another wife of the emperor was the non-Christian Usi Bi Lalan, mother of some of his many children.³⁸ Dom Pedro, at least nominally a Catholic, was therefore a polygamist, which may be the background for the zeal of the bishop and Domingos da Costa.

³⁷ Leitão 1952:146; Faria de Moraes 1934:131. Portuguese texts say that Da Costa's daughter died in 1712, but VOC sources clearly indicate 1711 as the year of her death.

³⁸ Weidner 1932; VOC 1995 (1723), f. 57. Oesje Bilalan in the Dutch text, Bi Lalan Mela in the traditional account. In some versions she was the mother of the later emperor Nai Bau Sonbai (Dom Alfonso Salema).

The furious Dom Pedro left Lifau and gathered thousands of Sonbai. Under a subordinate lord called Manubait they began to ravage the territories adjacent to Lifau, killing and plundering. On the orders of Manuel de Soto Maior, Domingos da Costa marched against the Sonbai, who were defeated in a skirmish. This defeat triggered one of the innumerable Timorese migrations. Parts of the population of the Sonbai lands, estimated to be 14,000 people, fled towards the west, pursued by Topasses, Belu and subjects of the Kono lord. Like so many previous dissatisfied groups they set their course for Kupang. To the consternation of the Dutch *opperhoofd* Didloff Blad they camped on the Ponai Plain, some distance to the east of Kupang, and asked Empress Bi Sonbai for help. Especially disturbing was a letter from De Soto Maior, which arrived by Chinese sampan³⁹ at the same time. The governor asked Blad not to receive the fugitives, and added that Timorese from Kupang had been active in the rebel forces. Blad replied that this was easier said than done; the Timorese here were not literally subjects of the Company but rather friends and allies, and any decision would depend on their willingness to obey the Company.

There was an inclusive idea among the Timorese that their land was open, and that they could not refuse the hard-pressed Sonbai the right to settle by the Kupang bay. Blad attempted to forbid the allies from accepting the fugitives in line with De Soto Maior's letter, but to no avail. On the contrary, the allies declared that the newcomers were relatives by blood who had no other means of survival. Out of compassion they must be accepted, and they hoped that Batavia would confirm them as new allies.⁴⁰ The refugees thus settled in the neighbourhood of Kupang. Unfortunately, this act of generosity did not pay off. One year later, in December 1712, the redoubtable Domingos da Costa appeared in the VOC territory with a Topass army. While the Dutch were still in Fort Concordia, the Timorese tried to halt him. The battle quickly became a rout for the allies and the refugees. The acting head of the newcomers, Manubait, fell together with several local grandees and a large number of commoners.⁴¹ Da Costa burnt and killed all those he came across and he pursued the Timorese up to Fort Concordia. For a while the

³⁹ A sampan is a small sailing craft with a sharp keel (*VOC-Glossarium* 2000:100-1).

⁴⁰ VOC 1826 (1712), ff. 4-7, 43.

⁴¹ Domingos da Costa claimed to have killed the king of Kupang and his son and brought their heads to Lifau as trophies (Leitão 1952:151). In fact he killed the Helong *temukung* Ponce and his son.

Topass leader encamped within reach of the cannon of the fort, thus demonstrating his contempt for the Dutchmen who were unable to protect their allies or the refugees. The foodstuffs in the area were systematically appropriated or destroyed: the crops in the fields, the fruit trees, the buffaloes, hogs and dogs. Even the dead were dug up from the graves and profaned, according to the allies. It was indeed the worst disaster to befall the allies since their arrival in Kupang, resulting in a famine that cost many lives among the Timorese. No one dared fell sandalwood out of fear for roaming Topasses. Moreover, the event ended the relative peace with the Portuguese clients, which meant that low-scale hostilities continued to the mid-eighteenth century.⁴²

Under these circumstances, people began to migrate to the Portuguese sphere. Not only did most of the refugees leave, but also families that were part of the five loyal allies. Some of them went to Amarasi, but most of them headed for the old Sonbai lands. Dom Pedro Sonbai was one of the returnees, officially since he felt discontent with the reformed creed of the Dutch and had been ill-treated for religious reasons. However, he left his remaining wife, Usi Bi Lalan, and at least two of his sons in the Kupang enclave, and the sons would later play a political role. In spite of his previous resistance to the Crown of Portugal, Dom Pedro was able to return to his old role as emperor of Servião, as seen in a letter from the Goan viceroy in 1720 (Boxer 1970:107-8). As a ritual figure he was quite simply too important to dispense with.

The years after the Manubait-Sonbai incident saw an uneasy truce between the Portuguese factions, and between these and the Company. Domingos da Costa was made the temporary governor in the period 1715-1718, but he was less than popular among his white compatriots, let alone among the Dutch. The documents complain about his alleged bad habits, debauchery and arbitrary dispositions, which disturbed trade. Nevertheless, he filled the post loyally and the Dominicans successfully mediated between him and the whites. In Kupang, it was noted that the White Portuguese retained their dominant influence in the Belu 'province' in the centre and east of the island. Da Costa, who still strongly favoured the particular Topass interests, was not pleased with this, but there was little he could do. East Timor produced most of the beeswax, and the whites could carry on their trade securely and without having

⁴² VOC 1841 (1713), ff. 7-8, 42-4; Leitão 1952:153.

to pay the usual fees.⁴³ Da Costa then ventured in another direction. According to the agreement of 1708, he was acknowledged as the *capitão mor* of Larantuka and also of Sumba – a cheap concession on the part of the governor considering the lack of real political influence the post had. As a matter of fact, a Topass expedition to Sumba was organized in 1715. Batavia regarded the island as Company land, presumably since its vassal Bima on Sumbawa had made vague claims over it. It seems that the expedition managed to bind the domain of Melolo to the Topasses, but caused some other Sumbanese chiefs to shift their loyalties to the VOC. Meanwhile Bima regarded Larantuka with hostility.⁴⁴ Another attempt was made in the Alor Islands, where a Topass captain established himself with a small troop and two padres. They built a church, and began to erect a fortress. This time the Kupang authorities reacted and sent an official who protested to the captain that Alor was Company land and hence off-limits for the Portuguese. The captain found reason to comply and withdrew from the enterprise.⁴⁵

A state of political crisis was fiercely resumed when, in 1718, a new governor arrived, Francisco de Mello de Castro. Once again the bishop of Malacca was the catalyst of the trouble, and once again a number of conflicts on different levels combined to make the following fourteen years a highly turbulent period. While the struggle is depicted in the documents as one between White and Black Portuguese protagonists, a closer reading shows that it was just as much a result of Timorese agency, where the princely elites supported one party or another as best suited their interests.

The uncompromising bishop of Malacca immediately fell foul of Francisco de Mello de Castro. He used his religious prestige to the utmost when he excommunicated the governor, while the latter stated his wish to put Frei Manuel in a small boat in the midst of the ocean where he could preach for the fishes. Meanwhile hostile movements unfolded in West and East Timor and the governor was forced to move from place to place. The situation on the island finally became so tense that De Mello de Castro suddenly left his post – *cobardemente* (cowardly), in the eyes of some – and headed for Batavia and thence for India (Faria de

⁴³ VOC 1894 (1717), f. 21.

⁴⁴ Leitão 1952:112; VOC 1867 (1715), f. 10; Coolhaas 1979:231, 336; De Roo van Alderwerelt 1906:194.

⁴⁵ VOC 1894 (1717), f. 145; VOC 1944 (1719), ff. 84-5.

Morais 1934:134-5, 1944:202-3). Afterwards he accused the bishop of having plotted to effectuate his downfall. The bishop, more accustomed to Timorese conditions, argued that ‘these rebels use, when they fight, any excuse to give their rebellion a good name’ (Araujo 1978:129-35). In other words, the local leadership would have used Portuguese conflicts to further their own interests, an important theme in the early colonial history of the island. The bishop of Malacca took over the government on a provisional basis and used Christianized aristocrats to fill major administrative posts. His old royal converts, Dom Domingos Soares of Manatuto and Dom António Hornay of Samoro, were elevated to *capitão mor* and *tenente superior* of Belu. At the same time, the Topass Francisco Hornay, who was incidentally married to a daughter of Domingos da Costa, was made *tenente general* of Servião. The arrangement seemed to confirm the vague tendency of a Servião being tied to the old Topass network, and a Belu as being susceptible to the Estado. These strategic patterns would soon be blurred, though.

The bishop and Domingos da Costa were elderly men of about the same age, whose relationship over the past decades had oscillated between hostility and co-operation. With the bishop at the helm, however, relations finally broke down completely. Frei Manuel again used the excommunication weapon in 1720, when Da Costa was denounced for a number of alleged crimes against the church and royal sovereignty. The letters of the bishop sometimes took on an explicit racist quality; thus Da Costa was ‘in appearance the most stinking negro’, and a ‘debauched and vicious’ figure (Faria de Morais 1944:212; Sá 1949:30). Da Costa’s Topass party remained defiant, but soon ran into trouble with their clients in Servião. The bishop encouraged a non-Christian lord, the Sonbai regent Nai Taupah Kono, to attack the old Topass leader.⁴⁶ The Kono family does not seem to have participated in the Sonbai-Manubait exodus of 1711-1713, but in the new political situation they found reason to turn against the semi-foreign community upon whom they had been dependent for about sixty years. A letter specifies that Nai Taupah Kono actively asked to rebel against Da Costa under the pretext that he wished to serve under the government of the king of Portugal.⁴⁷ The bishop

⁴⁶ In the Portuguese documents this prince is called Atopá or Tepá. According to the orally transmitted genealogy, Nai Taupah Kono was the seventh generation of Uis Kono, son of Nai Taenube Kono.

⁴⁷ Leitão 1952:308. VOC 1979 (1722), f. 16 gives as the reason for the defection on the part of the Topasses the violent oppression (*geweldige knevelarijen*) of Domingos da Costa.

himself departed from Lifau with a troop of auxiliaries, led by a son of his old adherent Dom Matheus da Costa of Viqueque, and set his course for the Topass stronghold Animata to the south.

For the last time, Domingos da Costa gathered the men still loyal to him. With a final, furious effort the old man sallied out with his battle-hardened musketeers and repulsed the Sonbai who suffered great losses. Nai Taupah Kono was killed and Da Costa subjected Greater Sonbai to horrors comparable to those he inflicted upon the sister domain Lesser Sonbai ten years earlier. He ordered his men to slay the male population of Amakono, probably meaning those people who immediately surround the Kono lord. About 2,000 or 3,000 died. Next, the women and children were herded together and brought to Tulang Ikan.⁴⁸ The auxiliaries of the bishop retreated to Lifau in haste, and Frei Manuel rounded up new forces in Belu, where his position was still strong. Before more could be done, however, the last effort of Da Costa took its toll. Ten days after the massacre of Amakono, on 23 February 1722, the old warrior died after 25 unruly years of contested leadership. His followers showed their grief by cropping their hair ‘according to the custom of the land’ – in that respect they were more Timorese than Portuguese in terms of cultural customs.⁴⁹ Also in accordance with Timorese tradition, his widow grieved by his unburied chest, and it was rumoured that she could hear the voices of various souls being tormented in hell – a testimony of his rather doubtful posthumous reputation.⁵⁰

His son-in-law Francisco Hornay tried for a while to deny Da Costa’s death, probably to gain time to secure his own position as the successor of Domingos da Costa. The survivors from Amakono were spared the fate of the slave market and were sent back to the Sonbai lands to collect sandalwood, beeswax and other items in what may have been a show of benevolence to strengthen his position in the Atoni domains; indeed, a strong Topass network was maintained. There is not much evidence for the presence of a White Portuguese influence in West Timor over the next few decades, given that the new Topass leader, Francisco Hornay (ruled 1722-1730), maintained a policy of confrontation with the bishop

⁴⁸ VOC 1979 (1722), f. 17; Leitão 1952:268-9, 308, 322-3. A VOC source from 1766 states that a man of the Takaip family killed the old Kono lord, and that Takaip then usurped the position of regent of Greater Sonbai for three generations, up until 1766, when Kono took over again. It is possible that the Kono-Takaip transition has something to do with the events of 1722 (VOC 8359 [1766], f. 9).

⁴⁹ Leitão 1952:308; VOC 1979 (1722), f. 17, 19.

⁵⁰ Leitão 1952:270; VOC 1979 (1722), f. 20.

and his Belu adherents. However, the long career of Frei Manuel came to an abrupt end with the arrival of a new governor to Timor, the Brazilian mestizo António de Albuquerque Coelho (gov. 1722-1725). He found the political activism of the zealous bishop to be a disturbing element and forcibly shipped him over to Macao and then on to Goa.⁵¹

The strong following commanded by the bishop of Malacca prompts questions about what he actually meant to the Timorese. There is no denying that Christian principles, disseminated in a forceful way by the bishop, could have appealed to the local society. Frei Manuel's charisma was obvious: the new governor launched an attack in Servião that proved futile, as many Timorese did not want to fight for someone who had expelled their religious leader. At the same time, he was obviously understood in a localized way, as an expert of the supernatural – like the priestly figures that in Tetun are called *dato-lulic*. A story circulated that the last illness of Domingos da Costa was represented in his throat by the shape of a cross, which was actually the cross of the bishop – the idea that curses lodged by individuals might cause somebody's death, is a common Timorese belief (Middelkoop 1960; Leitão 1952: 270).

ANTI-PORTUGUESE MOVEMENTS

Commenting on the clash between the bishop and Da Costa in 1722, a Macanese writer in Lifau referred to 'the ancient collusion that until the present day has been preserved, of a union that pretended to make the Timorese of the two provinces [Servião and Belu] go against the white Christian foreigners, and the black ones' (Leitão 1952:308). The quotation is interesting for several reasons. It suggests an early Timorese anti-foreignism, of a higher order than the occasional resentment shown against the Portuguese during the last century. It also indicates that religion was an element that defined this anti-foreignism; lastly, it envi-

⁵¹ Leitão 1952: 283. Curiously, there is an oral tradition tied to Luca, which says that the king of Luca was displeased with the missionary efforts of the bishop of Malacca. The king hid in the confessional box and, when the bishop entered, killed him (Spillett 1999:299). The occurrence of this tradition is perplexing considering the strong position of the bishop in Viqueque and Luca; possibly the memory of the bishop is mixed up with a later event, such as the anti-foreign movement in Luca in circa 1779-85 (Castro 1867:89-92, 292). At least two later bishops of Malacca resided on Timor (1740-43, 1749-59/60), but both of them appear to have died in Lifau (Matos 1974a:76). A vague assertion that a certain bishop of Malacca was buried in Luca is also found in Visser 1934:162.

sioned a Timor-wide perspective that transcended the parochialism of individual domains.

During the next decade, there is further scattered evidence of a larger movement containing revivalist ambitions grounded in Timorese tradition. There would be too much supposition involved at this stage to speak of anti-colonialism; whatever their oppressive features, the Portuguese of all skin colours strove to extract the products of the island, rather than to change the structure of the princedoms. In this respect they were similar to other Asian forms of political paramount lordship. With their Catholic religion, advanced weaponry and skill at overseas travel, the Portuguese were still not so much colonial masters as covetous suzerains, epitomized in the image of the distant stranger king in Lisbon.

The principal financial levy on the Timorese, the *finta*, appears to have been imposed in the time of Manuel de Soto Maior (gov. 1710-1714), soon after the Portuguese parties had made peace. It was calculated in pardaus,⁵² and each princedom had to pay its dues according to a table drawn up by the governor, payment mostly being in sandalwood, gold or beeswax. This was different from the Topass and VOC systems, where irregular-sized gifts were provided to the external suzerains (Matos 1974a:127). Indigenous grievances can partly be followed through tracing VOC materials. Although the Estado da Índia was at an advantage in East Timor compared to the Topasses, the *fintas* demanded by the governor aroused a great feeling of discontentment, which generally brought about the last stage of protest, that of voting with one's feet, or in this case, rather with one's boats. There remained a great deal of interaction between the peoples of East Timor and the South-Western Islands, who shared cultural and linguistic similarities. By 1714, Timorese refugees were living on Kisar; conversely, persons from Kisar and Wetar sometimes visited Timor, or even found refuge there (Coolhaas 1979:81-2, 167). The VOC authorities in Banda were opposed to such migrations and tried to prevent them via their allied rajas on the islands; this proved easier said than done, though. The refugees on Kisar were forcibly repatriated, but in 1719, three new shiploads of Timorese arrived. They were accompanied by 93 men from the Kisarese village of Oirata who had previously fled to Timor but soon found Portuguese rule to be a worse alternative. In spite of attempts to

⁵² A pardau (from Sanskrit *pratapa*) was a gold or silver coin, equivalent to roughly 300 réis.

repatriate them, a Timorese community grew in Oirata and has preserved its own identity until modern times.⁵³

A similar event was witnessed by Corporal Ernst Christoph Barchewitz, who served as VOC representative on Leti, an island close to the eastern cape of Timor. In April 1715, an *orangkaya* told Barchewitz that a ship from Timor had just arrived at his *negeri*, and that the passengers were keen to settle on Leti. Barchewitz immediately hastened to meet the newcomers. They explained that they were unable to endure the miserable treatment meted out to them by their superiors: each month, three mounted soldiers came to their *negeri* and demanded that they deliver a certain amount of corals. If they could not supply this, the soldiers would take their children as slaves, chase them from their houses and sleep with their wives. Barchewitz, who was good at recognizing faces, noted that one of the Timorese women was exactly like a Leti he knew, and upon looking into it, he found that they were indeed siblings. Before the Dutch came to Leti, he was told, the locals and people from Timor often visited each other and intermarried. Barchewitz asked how that could be since the Company had been represented on Leti for more than 50 years, while the woman was less than 20 years of age. He was told that the same Timorese persons had made an unsuccessful attempt to be allowed on Leti four years ago, and had brought the woman back with them without telling the Dutch corporal. Barchewitz resolutely took the woman into custody and returned her to her native *negeri*. He then forced the Timorese to leave, since the VOC authorities of Banda or Batavia had not granted permission for their migration; he believed the newcomers to be no more than ‘rascals’ (Barchewitz 1730:330-2).

In fact, a new spate of anti-foreignism emanated from East Timor. It was neither Sonbai nor Wehali who organized resistance against the Estado but rather Camenaça, sometimes identified as the eastern *liurai*-ship in the ceremonial tripartition of Timor. In 1719, the king of that East Timorese Tetun domain assembled several lords from Servião and Belu in his residence and a blood-oath was sworn. The idea was ‘to exclude the Christian name [faith] from these islands’ whereby they held ‘notorious and impudent negotiations’ (Faria de Morais 1934:136), as a Portuguese report has it. A black-and-white dog called Lebo – in ac-

⁵³ Coolhaas 1979:486-7, 553-4; Van Goor 1988:132. Riedel 1886:403 dates the definite establishment of the Timorese in Oirata in 1721. They would have arrived from Loikera, that is, Loiquero close to the eastern cape of Timor. For oral traditions pertaining to Oirata, see Josselin de Jong 1937:144-9.

counts from Timor, animals are often given personal names – was killed and the lords that were present mixed their own blood with that of the dog, smeared a sacred sword with some of the mixture and then drank the rest. The oath was understood to implicate loyalty until death, and was aimed at the White as well as Black Portuguese. ‘They killed buffaloes and made sacrifices, killing Christians and [performing] other diabolic rites according to their custom’ (Faria de Morais 1934:136; see also Castro 1862:470-1).

Some of the more exotic details may be attributed to Portuguese imagination, but that of animal sacrifice by a ritual expert (*dato-lulic*) and the confirmation of an alliance by the drinking of blood (*hemu-ran*), are both clearly recognizable elements of Timorese custom (Sá 1949:17). The effects of the oath were real enough. At the end of António de Albuquerque Coelho’s turbulent tenure, (gov. 1722-1725), popular resentment against the *fintas* broke out in some East Timorese domains. Camenaça seized the opportunity to co-ordinate a major rebellion that encompassed a number of domains in the province of Belu. The governorship was then taken over by António Moniz de Macedo (gov. 1725-1728), who managed to secure the nominal allegiance of Francisco Hornay. Hornay was not necessarily opposed to the Estado; on the contrary, he assisted in talking some of the rebels out of the enterprise (Araújo 1978:137-8). Others persisted, however, and withdrew to the mountainous stronghold of Cailaco.

Cailaco had been successively strengthened over the last 50 years, in other words, since roughly the time of Hornay’s attacks on East Timor in the 1670s. Every rock at the place served as a redoubt, which made access to the summit of the mountain fortress almost impossible. Moniz de Macedo rallied *arraiais* from a large number of East Timorese prince-doms, although the Topass-dominated Atoni lands did not contribute much. In spite of the logistical obstacles, the governor secured manpower for the Portuguese effort from relatively distant places: Samoro, Vemasse, Saráu, Faturó and Luca. Firearms were fairly widespread by this time, but still in a clear minority; of 1,184 Timorese or Black Portuguese soldiers in one division of the expedition, 214 were equipped with muskets, while the rest carried shields and assegais (Matos 1974a:372-3). The combined forces, a few thousand men strong, gathered in Batugade and Dili, which was already a place of some importance. From there the *arraiais* marched to Cailaco and surrounded the stronghold from all sides.



The siege of the mountain stronghold Cailaco in 1726, by the forces of the Estado da Índia. A contemporary illustration, possibly by an Indian artist, published by Artur Basílio de Sá, *A planta de Cailaco* (1949).

According to Portuguese records, 8,600 enemy soldiers stood opposite them, a number that perhaps should not be taken at face value (Matos 1974a:372-3). The operation commenced in late October 1726, and is described in great detail in the extant documents.

The first operations were relatively successful for the Estado forces, who defeated reinforcements to the enemy who suffered substantial losses. The problem of keeping a far from uniform army was nevertheless apparent; for example, the kings of Viqueque and Lolotoe declined to follow the orders of the Portuguese commander Joaquim de Matos, since they were related to the aristocracy of Cailaco (Sá 1949:48-9; Araujo 1978:140). In addition, there was still no sign that the besieged Timorese would yield. Still, the lack of water made the defenders on the encircled rocks desperate and some of them, hoping to find water, descended from the sides of the mountain by rope only to be all too often trapped and killed. Women overcome by despair could be seen jumping to their death with their children. In the face of these displays of desperate defiance, Joaquim de Matos offered the adversaries a chance to negotiate, and the ruler, Dom Aleixo, came down from the mountain with several chiefs. It was agreed that Cailaco would hand over its gunpowder and weapons, pay the *ñintas* and henceforth behave as good vassals, and in return, the defenders would be spared from the slave market. The delegation returned, leaving Dom Aleixo and some grandees in the Portuguese camp (Sá 1949:49).

Then, however, torrential rains provided a swift solution to the lack of water. The defenders refused to keep to their side of the agreement and so the siege wore on until early December. The main fortifications held out, since, to quote Joaquim de Matos, ‘our people could not do more, for it was necessary to climb up one by one and without a shotgun, giving the hand to the other person so they could also step up from the low to the high place. And the enemy threw rocks, which was like an inferno, smashing everyone who was in front of them. The sight of that stopped our people who were in the trenches and posts from gaining on the enemy below, because of the risks involved’ (Sá 1949:49-50). This heroic defence forced De Matos to lift the siege and to be content with having seized Dom Aleixo. He described the grim results of the expedition in a letter to the governor:

[T]here was neither a settlement nor a sign of one that was not burnt down. Seventy-two of their trenches were destroyed, among which were some of considerable strength. They had stone parapets apart from the large poles and thick beams on which they were built, with ditches of a good size all around, very sharp bamboo sticks full of poison, which were dug into the roads [...] And all people were brought away from them. Many provisions were burnt, without them being able to impede it, or preserving them to feed these people, although I gave orders to spare much of it. Of buffaloes, our men took more than 2,000 as booty. Of severed heads, 152 were shown to me, apart from the other dead that they buried. Concerning the 168 prisoners and the principal leaders, they confessed that in the besieged fortress, more than 300 people died from wounds and suffocation [heat exposure], including men, women and children, and some leaders; so that one can assume that the enemy had more than 700 dead. On this occasion I lost 39 soldiers. I do not speak of the wounded, of which there was a large number.⁵⁴

The lack of complete Portuguese success was typical of warfare on Timor. Well-prepared mountain strongholds were sometimes able to hold out against large forces equipped with European weaponry, such as Noimuti did in the 1740s and again in 1758-1759. The siege of Cailaco was followed by further fighting that continued until 1728. Then an agreement was made with the Timorese adversaries. There is no extant Portuguese documentation of this event, but according to the Dutch version the Belu were henceforth to stand under their 'lawful master', Francisco Hornay. They would only deliver *sirih pinang* to the Crown of Portugal.⁵⁵ It is not quite clear what is meant by 'Belu' here, but the account suggests that the Timorese were partly successful in balancing the role of governor with the *tenente general*. At the same time, the uprising and siege indicate the weakness of the traditional forms of power; in spite of Camenaça's exalted ritual position in the east, its efforts were checked by the fact that most of the East Timorese domains chose to

⁵⁴ Sá 1949:51-2; also in Araujo 1978:141-2.

⁵⁵ VOC 2100 (1728), f. 8-9; Van Goor 1985:135, 199. For the siege of Cailaco, see in particular Sá 1949. A detailed illustration of the siege of Cailaco, *A planta de Cailaco*, has been preserved; possibly made by an Indian artist, it is reproduced in Sá 1949. The siege is also covered by Araujo 1978:138-42; Gunn n.y.:42-3. The latter writer notes how, with reference to Ruy Cinatti, *A planta de Cailaco* offers insight into the botany of Timor at the time. The illustration depicts casuarina trees in the river areas, palm trees and acacias on the open savannah, and tamarinds, pandanus trees and fig trees in secondary forest zones.

support the Crown of Portugal. The method of using Timorese to fight Timorese started with the early expeditions of 1641-1642, was improved by António Hornay, and was applied by the white governors up until the twentieth century.

There was, however, also a strategy whereby Portuguese were used to fight Portuguese. For a concerted effort to expel the White Portuguese, a strong leader was needed to organize them. The original idea of the blood-oath was to expel both Portuguese factions, but as we have just seen, this idea was now modified. In the time of António Moniz de Macedo, the resistance leaders contacted Francisco Hornay, whose ambitions were not dissimilar to those of his long-deceased father. The parties reportedly agreed that they would work together to defeat the white government, 'and the adverse intent, driven by ambition, was to make truth of the feigned deception that the Timorese offered him in the idea to expel [the governor] and to the enthronement of their three kings of Sonbai, Likusaen [here interchangeable with Camenaça] and Wehali' (Castro 1867:241-2). In other words, this is a stunning piece of revivalism, which according to a later memorandum signified an expected liberation from impositions: '[The insurgents would] only obey, in conformity with their ancient rites and customs, the three unique kings Sonbai, Camenaça and Wehali, and be exempted from contributions such as royal *fintas*, pensions to the captains at the ports, rooms for the missionaries, freights, *sirih pinang* and food for the foreigners that they were obliged [to deliver]' (Castro 1867:205). The idea of an old ritual-political order was combined with very concrete grievances and aims.

As a matter of fact, the burdensome *fintas* were briefly abolished by Governor Moniz de Macedo, who declared that he would be content with the Belu presenting *sirih pinang* to the Crown of Portugal (Van Goor 1985:199). It goes without saying that such an arrangement could only ever have been a temporary measure to soothe resistance. His successor, Pedro de Mello (gov. 1728-1731), found the funds he was given to maintain the Estado on Timor to be insufficient, and so resumed the collection of *fintas* and other taxes. He also became involved in a personal brawl with Francisco Hornay, and consequently, widespread resistance against the governor flared up in 1729. The following years are some of the most chaotic in the annals of the island. Pedro de Mello furiously accused the Dutch in Kupang of supplying his enemies with gunpowder and bullets, and rashly declared them to be his enemies, although there

were no direct hostilities. Other Dutchmen, however, who had deserted from the VOC, assisted the governor against the Topasses. The failure of the annual Macanese ship to appear with basic necessities added to the hardships of the Estado, and a smallpox epidemic afflicted all sides, especially depleting the Topass manpower. The few coastal places under the governor's control appeared to be doomed as they were surrounded by the Topasses and their clients. In Manatuto, the governor and his men endured a siege for three months and suffered badly from lack of food and provisions.⁵⁶

Still, the Estado survived. The defenders of Manatuto made a desperate sortie that broke the siege and forced the adversaries into full retreat (Boxer 1937:11-2). The incoming governor Pedro do Rego Barreto de Gama e Castro (gov. 1731-1734) managed to obtain the submission of the most important rebels through the mediation of the respected padre Manuel do Pilar, thus partly repeating the old reconciliation of 1708 (Matos 1974a:94; Araujo 1978:146-51; Gunn n.y.:43). The resistance came to a halt during 1732 and the Topass leaders as well as the Timorese lords endorsed an agreement that returned them to the royalist fold. Among the latter were Dom Mathias da Costa of Camenaça and Dom Caethano da Costa who was described as king of the province of Belu. Dutch sources, which give the events from an outside perspective, hint that the survival of the Estado involved more than rhetorics and latent adherence to Portuguese and Catholic symbols of authority. From what the Dutch *opperhoofd* heard from their allies, the Belu suffered from the hostilities between the Portuguese parties. However, when peace was eventually concluded between the White and Black Portuguese in 1732, the local elites were equally worried: a unitary Portuguese power would be highly detrimental to their own powers of manoeuvre.⁵⁷ The continuing existence of three rival centres of external power, including Kupang, was not contrary to Timorese interests.

Apart from this there were obvious logistic reasons for the abrupt end of this and similar Timorese movements. As discussed by C.R. Boxer, the comprehensive leagues of resistance could not be maintained for long periods (Boxer 1968:194-5). The usually small-scale nature of Timorese warfare was not suited to lengthy campaigns or the amassment of large

⁵⁶ VOC 2133 (1729), f. 7-8; VOC 2163 (1730), f. 7, 82-3; Castro 1867:61-3; Oliveira 1948:169-78; Boxer 1968:194.

⁵⁷ VOC 2239 (1731-32), *Dagregister*, sub 6-5-1732, 16-7-1732.

troops, since the military organization for such ventures was lacking. The Topasses kept movements going for some time with vigour, but they, too, were dependent on comprehensive alliances with local domains, alliances that shifted all too rapidly. For such reasons, Lifau in 1702-1708 and Manatuto in 1730-1731 were able to survive in White Portuguese hands, despite being badly cornered.

Conditions in the Portuguese homeland were increasingly settled and even prosperous in the first half of the eighteenth century. The long reign of João V (1706-1750) saw peace, tranquility and an economy that was driven by Brazilian gold and diamonds (Disney 2009, I:249-56). This period of relative success was not entirely matched by the activities of the Estado da Índia. A degree of conservatism characterized the Estado in South Asia, which was accompanied by the loss of a few territories and increased activities by other European trading companies. The traders of Macao were able to flourish by bringing Chinese wares to Batavia and they developed a network that extended to India and Sri Lanka. As before, their network included Timor, but Macanese interest in Timor over the century waned, for reasons that will soon become apparent. There would often be no more than one single officially commissioned ship per year to the turbulent island (Disney 2009, II:317-9, 334-5, 349; Matos 1974b:334-5).

THE TOPASS LEADER AT THE HELM

The period 1732-1749 was free from major Portuguese in-fighting. These were also the years of tenure of a new *tenente general* of the Topasses. The old Domingos da Costa left a number of sons who were among those who concluded a peace with Pedro do Rego Barreto de Gama e Castro in May 1732. One of these may have been Gaspar da Costa, who is first documented as *tenente general* in October of the same year.⁵⁸ Certain oral traditions describe Gaspar as the son of Domingos and a Helong princess called Johanna, which would have given the new *tenente general* an

⁵⁸ Faria de Morais 1934:155; Rouffaer 1910a, *Dagboekantekeningen*, H 677 II, KITLV. Rouffaer found a document from 20-10-1732 in the residence of the Maubara royal family, which mentioned Gaspar.

ominous potential claim to Kupang.⁵⁹ Although the peace treaty seemed to grant the governor control over impositions and administration, the real issue is the way in which the 23 paragraphs of the treaty were implemented. From their perspective, the Dutch in Kupang understood the position of the governor to be quite restricted with the conclusion of the treaty. According to a VOC report the whites were supposed to stay peacefully in Lifau, while the Topasses were to collect an annual tax on their behalf.⁶⁰ In other words, the arrangement would have given Gaspar da Costa a large say in the affairs of the Estado. The *finta* was once again abolished by the governor António Moniz de Macedo, who returned for a second tenure (1734-1741). It was replaced by a head tax of one pardau, which the kings were to take from their subjects; besides, the rulers had to send provisions and corvée labourers for the upkeep of Lifau. The weakness of the arrangement is apparent: at that time there was no possibility of undertaking a census on Timor. The head tax was therefore soon abandoned. According to the Dutch version, Moniz de Macedo first promised the Belu princedoms that it would be a non-recurrent fee that henceforth left them fully autonomous, but he then broke his promise. Also, the money allegedly ended up in the governor's own chest without ever reaching the royal treasury.⁶¹ Statistics are largely lacking, but it is clear that the income derived from the *fintas* decreased greatly after a summit in the 1720s, thereby reducing one rationale for resistance against the Estado (Serrão and Oliveira Marques 2006:427).

A few documents from 1733 indicate the taxes that were demanded from the *Provincia dos Bellos* in that year. One list sets out how many picul of each provision every domain had to send to maintain Lifau; altogether the forty domains were to deliver 4,000 picul. A similar list determines the number of men that each domain would send to Lifau to serve as

⁵⁹ Professor Hendrik Ataupah, Kupang, interview 27-11-2009. In this way, tradition provided a rationale for Gaspar de Costa's later military attack on Kupang. Johanna would have been the daughter of a king of the old dynasty of Kupang, who was superseded by the Bisslissin family. Through his mother, Gaspar could therefore – according to the rules of legendary history – claim rights to the Kingdom of Kupang; it should be remembered that the monarch of this domain was the *pah tuaf*, the lord of the land where the Dutch settlement was built.

⁶⁰ VOC 2239 (1731-32), *Dagregister*, sub 30-7-1732. The text of the treaty can be found in Faria de Morais 1934:155-9.

⁶¹ Matos 1974a: 95, 127-8; De Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:196; Heijmering 1847:132-3; Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007:307-8; VOC 2991 (1760), ff. 36-7. The episode was later used by the Dutch to legitimize their own plans of expansion in the province of Belu; they could argue that the Estado had forfeited Belu.

auxiliaries in the garrison. These figures vary from 1 to 35, with a total number of 815. The lists also provide important indications about the dissemination of Portuguese influence in the eastern part of the island by this time. The forty domains are spread over the entire length of East Timor including the inland, with a concentration in the western section. Interestingly, the three easternmost domains of Faturó, Saráu and Matarufa were also those that contributed the most men and offered the largest deliveries of provisions. While the lists enumerate the northern Tetun princedoms of Central Timor, Fialaran, Jenilu, Lidak and Silawang, Wewiku-Wehali is conspicuously absent (Castro 1867:225-8). As we have seen, it was inexplicably deemed a part of Servião rather than Belu, and also tended to stay out of the fighting in the 1720s and early 1730s. While Wewiku-Wehali was used as a ponderous millenarian symbol, the role that it actually played in the anti-*finta* risings remains unclear.⁶²

Rather few Portuguese documents have survived from this period, but there is a group of letters which were preserved as valuable heirlooms in Maucatar in the south-west of present Timor Leste.⁶³ These letters, most of which are dated 1735-1747, show the degree to which the Topass leader was involved in local affairs, even in a relatively inaccessible corner of the province of Belu. Gaspar da Costa personally signed documents stating the appointment of regents, and it also appears that Dominican padres were frequently involved in local affairs. Thus, there is reason to question the assumption sometimes made that Portuguese power was basically confined to the coastlands (Sá 1949:14; Forman 1977:100). The fact that economic matters relating to payments and debts were committed to paper also questions the old thinking that Timor was a thoroughly illiterate society. In spite of the archaic structures, there were situations and transactions that were best served by written documentation, even in a small and hidden domain.⁶⁴ The material testifies to distant relations existing between the various ethnic groups and domains on the island in spite of their parochial character, at least on the elite level. For example, the mainly Bunaq-speaking Maucatar maintained relations with the Dawan-speaking Amanuban far to the west.

⁶² The adjacent king or *loro* of Dirma assisted the governor in 1727, contributing 241 men to the siege of Cailaco (Matos 1974a:372). Dirma was among the areas that were considered to be included in Wehali's direct sphere of authority (Therik 2004:56).

⁶³ *Stukken* n.y., H 693, KITLV.

⁶⁴ Apart from these letters, I have only found a couple of references to Maucatar in Dutch and Portuguese documents before the nineteenth century.

By this time, Costa-Hornay had become a conceptual pair in Timorese consciousness, since the term occurs in a Maucatar letter from 1747. When Francisco Hornay II (d.1730) married the daughter of Domingos da Costa (d.1722) in the early part of the eighteenth century, the rivalry between the two families turned into a close co-operation, not least through continuing intermarriages. In practice, a Hornay ruler usually tended to be followed by a Da Costa leader, so that the Topass leadership could rotate between the two; a formal agreement over the notion of a rotating succession only seems to have been forged later, being expressly mentioned for the first time in 1829.⁶⁵

Gaspar da Costa himself was generally on poor terms with the VOC and with extensive Timorese areas, but he was initially appreciated by the White Portuguese establishment. A letter commended Da Costa for his *liberalidade* (liberality), and he promised to donate funds for a Catholic seminar in the Portuguese sphere. The funds were to be taken from Biboki and Insana, two Atoni princedoms on the north coast, which had been made a part of Da Costa's sphere in the time of his ancestors, but were also counted under the realm of Wewiku-Wehali. The Estado recommended that Da Costa be ennobled and accepted into the Order of Christ, although this was postponed until the promised donation was completed – if it ever was.⁶⁶ A Timorese gentleman who ended up in Europe, Pascal-Jean-Balthazar, claimed to be the son of Gaspar who, perhaps characteristically, would have sent his heir to France to be educated and thereby be integrated into European high culture. The project failed tragically, since the accompanying Dominican padre, Ignacio, disappeared with the goods of Balthazar upon his arrival in France in 1749. The young Topass was left to pursue a modest life in the West as a ship's cook and submitted humble applications for French state subsi-

⁶⁵ Müller 1857, II:189-90. Four Hornays led the Topasses without any known break in the sequence continuously from 1749 to after 1817, so the rotation principle can only have been fully formalized long after the time of Gaspar da Costa.

⁶⁶ Matos 1974a:400, 404, 407-8. During the 1740s and 1740s Catholic seminars were opened in Lifau and Manatuto, and by 1752 there were reportedly eight churches in the Portuguese sphere. Of these, five were situated within a limited area east of Dili: Manatuto, Lacló, Laicore, Laleia and Vemasse; the others were in the Ambeno area: Tulang Ikan, Animata and Lifau (Durand 2004:41, 46; Visser 1934:162). The list suggests a very patchy dissemination of Catholicism, but may only encompass the principal churches; another text mentions as many as 50 churches on the island in 1780 (Visser 1934:162).

dies.⁶⁷ The circumstances, one might add, are not entirely clear, since Balthazar's putative Topass kinsmen in Oecusse later claimed that he was an imposter and in actuality the son of a *peranakan* Chinese.⁶⁸

In spite of Topass preponderance, and the benefits that went with it, there were, however, indications that all was not well with Gaspar da Costa's rule. For one, the Portuguese economic enterprise in Timor faltered. While the material support from the viceroy of Goa was often lacking, Macao was always prepared to send assistance to the hard-pressed white governor of Timor, since the city was dependent on the sandalwood trade. It had, however, long been a problem for Macanese traders that much of the wood was sold by the inhabitants to other merchants, in particular Chinese ones, who furnished the important South Chinese market. The authorities in Goa had a mercantilist approach to economic management, but its measures failed to remedy the situation. By the 1740s, it was reported that the Timor trade did not yield the quantities it once had. The sandalwood did not reach Macao and the clothes of the Macanese merchants no longer found a market (Matos 1974a:178-81; Matos 1974b:334-5). A Dutch *opperhoofd* reported in 1749 that the places where sandalwood used to be cut were becoming poorer from year to year. The best sandalwood forests, he believed, were untouched due to the bad treatment of the natives at the hands of the White and Black Portuguese.⁶⁹ Adding to these concerns new threats were being issued by the Timorese clients and the VOC, and it is these matters that shall be addressed in the following chapter

⁶⁷ Matos 1974a:404, 407, 410-1. The curious story of Balthazar has been traced by Lombard-Jourdain 1978 and 2001. Balthazar appears to have died poor and forgotten after 1778. Most probably he never heard the news of the violent end of his putative father less than two years after his departure from Timor.

⁶⁸ VOC 7586 (1779), ff. 281-4. The Dutch, on French instigation, sent a commissioner to Oecusse in 1779 to investigate the case of Pascal-Jean-Balthazar. The commissioner met the Topass leaders of the day, Pedro Hornay and Gaspar da Costa (Junior). The latter announced that the Chinese small trader João Balthazar had previously lived in Animata. With his concubine, the Amanuban slave Dominga, he begot three sons: Manuel, Sico and Pascal. While Manuel and Sico were raised in Lifau by a Padre Maria, Pascal went to study at the Catholic seminar in Dili in 1750, under a certain Frei Ignacio, and was never heard of again. The Topass leaders' vehement denial of Pascal-Jean-Balthazar's paternity might also, of course, have been in their own interest, since he was a potential rival for authority among the Topasses.

⁶⁹ VOC 8342 (1749), f. 15.

The Company on the move, 1732-1761

DUTCH ACTIVISM AND BELU OVERTURES

While the Topass and Estado forces battled in the Portuguese sphere, life at the VOC post in Kupang was comparatively tranquil. In economic terms, the post was trading at a loss, but this had been the case since its inception. When in 1735/36 there was a surplus of 2,421 guilders for the Company, it was seen as a remarkable event, the likes of which had not occurred for forty years (Van Goor 1988:711). The administrative reports illustrate, year by year, how beeswax, beans and slaves were brought to Batavia in modest quantities, sometimes accompanied by even smaller deliveries of gold and snakewood. Imports of sandalwood were almost nil by this time, and in 1738 a Company missive remarked that better and cheaper wood could be obtained from Cochin in South India. Nevertheless, the idea still prevailed that something useful could come out of the Timorese sandalwood resources. In the early 1730s, the grandees of Kupang and Amabi provided the *opperhoofd* with sandalwood plants in jars, which were taken to Ambon where there was stricter Dutch control of the economy. The problem was that at this time no one knew about the special conditions necessary for growing sandalwood, especially its dependence on a host tree. As a result, the plants died fairly quickly, in spite of warnings from Batavia that they should be properly tended; the plants brought to Batavia itself in the late 1730s, however, suffered the same fate (Van Goor 1988:490, 712; De Roever 1998:47).

Politically, there was no major internal threat to the Dutch position. The most troublesome conditions were to be found in the Helong kingdom of Kupang, a domain, as a VOC report complained, that 'knows

neither a cook nor an inn-keeper'.¹ The old Ama Pono line died out in 1731, and power was contested between the sub-regents of Pulau Semau and the descendants of Ama Besi, who had long since returned to Kupang. As a result of the squabbles, a Pulau Semau prince called Hilak staged an open rebellion in 1743. Together with a number of followers, he built fortifications on an inaccessible rock south of Kupang. The military weakness of the Company and its allies became apparent when they were unable to efficiently take action against him. Furthermore, the fact that some Topasses joined his ranks was worrying. By the following year, however, Hilak obviously decided that he had tired of the situation, for he unexpectedly arrived at Fort Concordia with his men.² His surrender brought to an end the only outright rebellion against the VOC system after the flight of Ama Besi in 1678.

In Lesser Sonbai, the dynasty evolved along lines that ran counter to the conventional division of a Dutch and a Portuguese sphere. When Empress Bi Sonbai passed away in 1717, she was succeeded by the son of her 'brother' (cousin) Dom Pedro Sonbai, despite the fact that the latter had returned to his former role as emperor of Servião. When the boy, Bernardus de Leeuw (reign 1717-1726), was baptized a reformed Protestant, the Dutch received serious threats from the deputy leader of the Topasses, Francisco Hornay II: if the young emperor and his mother were not returned within the year, Hornay would forcibly fetch them from Kupang.³ The Dutch rightly considered Hornay's diatribes to be mere bragging, but the event again illustrates the importance of maintaining control over Sonbai royalty and the strong Catholic identity of the Topasses. When Bernardus de Leeuw died during his teenage years, two other princes from Greater Sonbai were set up one after the other, apparently with the full consent of the Dutch and their relatives, though not with Portuguese approval. A similar dynastic arrangement that equally transcended the colonial borders occurred circa 1736. The Portuguese client Amanuban had a long-standing relationship with Amabi. Dissatisfied with their heavy-handed suzerains, the Amanuban sent a *muti salak* to King Balas of Amabi by way of acknowledging him as their own king. Although they withdrew their allegiance after a few years,

¹ VOC 2606 (1743), f. 37.

² VOC 2628 (1744), f. 9-15.

³ VOC 1961 (1721), f. 4, 9.

it indicates how Portuguese control was on the decline.⁴

Conditions on Rote in the first half of the eighteenth century continued to be turbulent, and the same situation could be found on Sawu and Solor, albeit to a lesser degree. From time to time, the *opperhoofden* found it necessary to arrest Rotenese and Solorese rulers and expel them to Batavia. In addition to this, the Dutch were worried about pirates and merchants, particularly those from South Sulawesi, who were trading without passes. In actual fact, there was a comprehensive web of maritime relationships connecting the eastern islands, and it was these people who broke the mercantilist control that the Company tried to wield over the sprawling archipelago. From the Dutch point of view, they were therefore seen as ‘rascals’. The Kupang post did not have the necessary resources to send out cruisers to intercept illegal shipping, although they did try to use the Solorese for this purpose. A comment from 1737, by the *opperhoofd* Aart Peper, says that Makassarese fleets visited the Papuan Islands and the islands around Banda every third or fourth year to hunt *trepang* (sea cucumber). These animals were dried and sold to the Chinese, who considered them to be an exclusive delicacy. For the fishermen of Sulawesi, there were therefore considerable profits to be made. The fleets, up to 60 ships strong, also visited East Timor during the eastern monsoon, since *trepang* could sometimes be found there. According to the *opperhoofd*, *trepang* hunting was often a pretext for the ‘wide-scale taking of people on various islands’ – in other words, slavery.⁵

Some examples indicate a stunning lack of respect for the Dutchmen. In 1732, *opperhoofd* Gerardus Visscher tried to mediate a conflict between the Watan Lema allies and the Pamakayu district on West Solor, which was under the control of Raja Ola of Larantuka. Arriving at Larantuka on a minor ship, Visscher found a Makassarese merchant ship at the roadstead. From a Dutch point of view, there were several indications that they were in fact smugglers and so Visscher ordered the crew to sail along with him to Solor and Kupang in order to investigate the matter. However, the sailors bluntly refused to do so. Visscher then attempted to frighten them by threatening to remove their anchors, but the Makassarese became even more aggressive and seized their spears and

⁴ VOC 2384 (1736); VOC 8332 (1739), f. 53. A long-standing connection between Amabi and the Amanuban lands is also mentioned in late traditions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Parera 1969:47).

⁵ VOC 8330 (1736-37), *Dagregister*, sub 24-6-1737.

keris. In turn, the *opperhoofd* threatened to shoot them, an action that only served to increase their anger. The Makassarese then pointed out in no uncertain terms that they intended to use their deadly weapons to kill the Dutch. In the end, Visscher lost face and had to return to Solor without chastising the recalcitrant merchants.⁶ On another occasion, in 1726, a cruiser from the Dutch fort in Makassar arrived at Lembata and sent a barge along the shoreline to look for any signs of smugglers; they were met by men armed with bows and arrows who denied the Dutchmen access. For one hour the barge rowed along the shore without the Dutch being able to disembark, since they were followed by the hostile troop. Later, the expedition discovered a Butonese in Menanga in Solor who was running a small trade in turtle-shell and beeswax, but without a satisfactory licence. He was arrested with his son, two employees and the goods, and forced to go away with the Dutch.⁷ Events such as the latter would undoubtedly help explain the way in which Dutch visitors to these waters were faced with hostility and non-co-operation from traders and locals alike. At the same time, the cases mentioned above highlight the limits of VOC surveillance, hence encouraging seafarers from Sulawesi to continue their activities. The Makassarese undertakings in fact appear to have increased in number over the century.⁸

The one major threat to the Company in Solor-Timor in the 1730s and 1740s came from the Portuguese complex, in particular the Topasses. This was not, however, a one-sided affair. VOC documents reveal various plans aimed at destabilizing the Portuguese position, so in this respect, both parties can be tarred with the same brush. In spite of the frequent trips made by Company traders to Tulang Ikan, we can follow how tension increased in the years prior to 1749.

Barely had the ink on the treaty between the White and Black Portuguese dried before the Belu turned to the Company for assistance. The female paramount ruler of Belu, known as Liulai (Liurai), sent an envoy to Kupang in 1732, explaining how she now feared the

⁶ VOC 2239 (1731-32), *Dagregister*, sub 5-6-1732, 6-6-1732; Knaap and Sutherland 2004:24, 98-100.

⁷ VOC 2050 (1726), ff. 349-52.

⁸ A letter from 1772, from Liwang Laba of Terong on Adonara, mentions that Makassarese, Bugis, Mandar and Bonerate traders came to the Solor area at that time (VOC 3366 [1772-73]). A report from 1779 says that the Makassarese tended to arrive in increasing numbers and without fear of the Dutch: so far, the VOC had only taken one single prize in Timor waters (VOC 3553 [1779], f. 8). Political crises and anti-Dutch resistance in South Sulawesi in the 1730s and later were apparently conducive to the spread of seaborne adventurers (compare Marwati Djoenad Poesponegoro and Nugroho Notosusanto 1975, IV:208-9).

Portuguese since the two of them were at peace with each other. She requested Dutch firearms and flags, an important symbol of political adherence. The Sonbai elite confirmed to *opperhoofd* Visscher that they were related to Liulai – the first recorded reference to the Liurai-Sonbai relationship. A small box containing earth, beeswax and sandalwood was subsequently taken to Batavia symbolic of the fact that the land of Belu was being offered to the Company. The province of Belu had actually been off-limits for VOC traders since 1702 and the Kupang officials were receptive to the idea of acquiring the eastern lands, for only then, they argued, could trade flourish again. In Batavia it was felt that the previous contracts from 1616 and 1668 indeed gave the VOC the legal right to the lands from Hera and eastwards, towards the south to Viqueque and Vessoro, and to Amanuban. The idea was attractive since the Dutch were still hopeful of locating the gold and copper mountains that were thought to exist in East Timor. Nevertheless, it was concluded by the Supreme Government that the Kupang post should be improved through the expansion of trade rather than through political expansion.⁹

The Kupang authorities therefore had to decline the Belu offer, which was renewed in vain in 1741.¹⁰ An instruction from Batavia, in 1735, expressly forbade Kupang to interfere in the Portuguese-Belu differences in any way. This instruction was not completely adhered to, however, for Governor Pedro do Rego Barreto de Gama e Castro claimed that Dutch and Chinese traders went to Belu in secret in order to trade cloths for beeswax, sandalwood, gold and slaves. In addition, he criticized them for providing weapons and gunpowder to the rebellious Belu. Judging from various witness accounts made public by the Lifau authorities in the late 1730s, these accusations were not without foundation. At the same time, moreover, the five loyal allies sent muskets and ammunition to their Belu ‘blood relatives’, as openly confessed in a letter to Batavia. Texts produced in both Kupang and Batavia indicate that the Dutch tried to take advantage of the unstable situation: not only would it be highly advantageous to them if the Portuguese were forced out of Timor, warfare

⁹ VOC 2239 (1732), ff. 98-9, 100-1, 109-10; Van Goor 1988:272-3, 428, 490-1. Stories of overflowing goldmines were encouraged by the Portuguese officials in the eighteenth century (Thomaz 2001:122).

¹⁰ Pedro do Rego Barreto da Gama e Castro claims in a letter to have captured, among other places, Limace in the province of Belu, shortly after 1732 (Araujo 1978:150; Castro 1867:239). Limace appears to have been situated in the Wewiku-Wehali area (compare Godinho de Eredia 1997:254; Valentijn 1726, III:122).

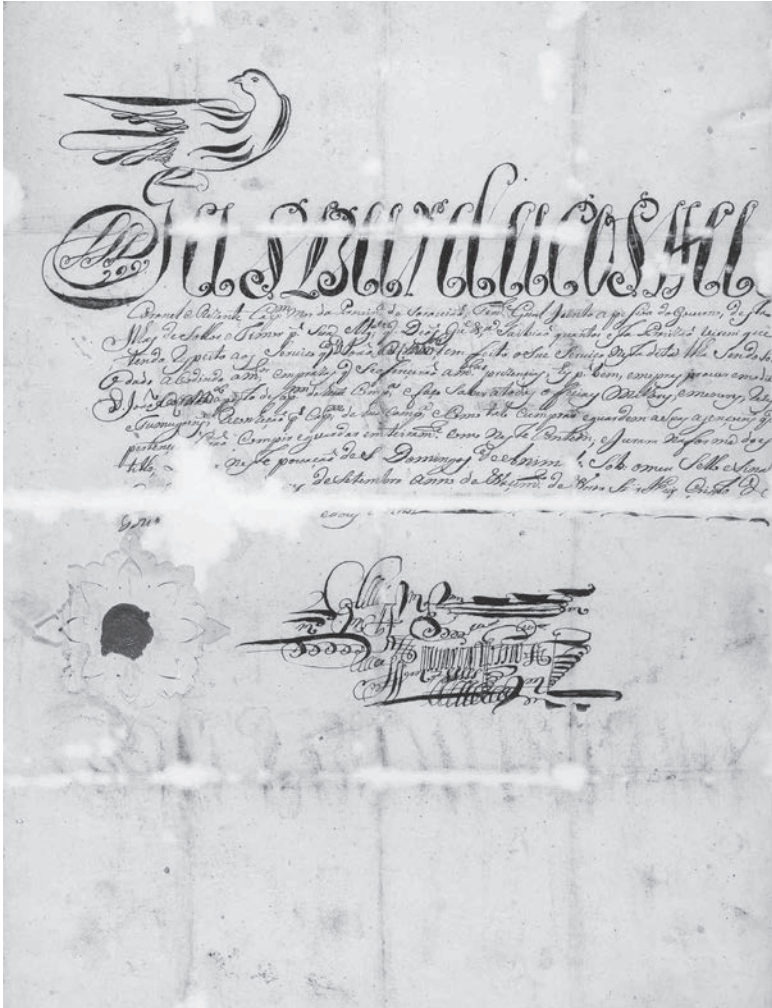
between the Portuguese and the Belu would also be an advantage for the Company. The problem was simply that hostilities could not be openly committed given the official good relations that existed between Portugal and the Netherlands in Europe.¹¹

Under these circumstances it is not wholly surprising to find the Topasses engaged in hostile action against the Company and its allies. A first incident took place in 1735 and involved the two Sonbai principedoms and their respective symbolic significance. After the massacre of 1722, there is little information to be found on Greater Sonbai, or Amakono, as the Dutch usually called it. Oral stories tell of a Sonbai ruler who was murdered in his own *sonaf* by a male dancer, possibly during this period. Instigated by his own chiefs because of the ruler's cruel practice of making annual human sacrifices, the murder was followed by a long interregnum before the ruler's son was accepted as the new lord. In some versions, this new ruler is identified as Nai Bau Sonbai, who appears in the historical records between 1749-1752 (Fobia 1984:68-74; Middelkoop 1938:428-32, 499-500). Nevertheless, the story is primarily of symbolic significance, highlighting the tyrannical properties of Sonbai as well as the ability of this indispensable lineage to arise again and again.¹²

Early in 1735, the unnamed emperor of Greater Sonbai sent an envoy to his kinsman Corneo Leu (reign 1728-1748) of Lesser Sonbai. The envoy warned him that the Topass had forced their Sonbai clients to march with them to Kupang, with the intention of forcing the Dutch Sonbai allies to resettle in the inland, thus reuniting the realm. Indeed, a troop of 450 men approached the port in March and behaved in a threatening manner, telling the perplexed locals that 'We come to devour flesh'. They demanded that the Company extradite Corneo Leu and other Sonbai who had arrived to Kupang in connection with the Sonbai-Manubait exodus in 1711. *Opperhoofd* Visscher refused point blank and asked the emperor to come to the fort late in the evening, for reasons of safety. As Corneo entered Fort Concordia, a salute of honour was fired; unfortunately, the Topasses understood this as a signal that battle was to commence, and panicked. The next day the astonished locals could see

¹¹ VOC 2285 (1733), ff. 13-6; VOC 8332 (1739), ff. 154-5; Van Goor 2004:269.

¹² In some versions, the first Sonbai ruler was also the very same figure who caused hatred through his arbitrary acts, and was consequently murdered. This is typical of the ahistorical or, rather, atemporal Timorese perspective: various stories, in actual fact pertaining to different rulers, could be told about one single figure. Nevertheless, the pedigrees more or less match the European sources back to c.1650.



A letter written by Gaspar da Costa, who led the Topass community between 1732 and 1749. It confirms the appointment of a lord of the principedom Maucatar. H 693, KITLV Archive.

abandoned baggage and utensils at some distance from the fort, for the Topasses had hastily run away to Amarasi, which they severely reprimanded for not having provided them with sufficient assistance.¹³

A new spate of hostilities took place in 1743-1744, when a number of Topasses supported the Helong rebel Hilak. The enterprise failed, but the Dutch found documents written by Gaspar da Costa on the body of a slain Topass captain. These papers indicated Portuguese ambitions in the Kupang area as well as Rote, where certain *nusak* still remembered their old Lusitanian ties. In 1744, Da Costa again gathered large forces to attack Kupang, but the undertaking failed before it began: his officers simply refused to march there since they had no intention of being killed to no avail.¹⁴

All these events suggest that Gaspar da Costa faced serious problems in enforcing his authority. The highland village of Noimuti was a Sonbai dependency that was attacked by a sizeable Topass-led army some time in the 1740s. The exact reasons for this venture are not clear, but chiefs employed by the Sonbai rulers are said to have provided effective resistance against Da Costa's forces. After a siege lasting from May to the beginning of the wet season, he had to withdraw.¹⁵ The Belu also caused him serious problems in 1732-1733 and in 1739-1743. While Wewiku-Wehali, Tiris-Mauta, Manufai and Samoro resisted his power, Amanuban in the Atoni area deserted Portugal altogether for a number of years.

THE MEULENBEEK INCIDENT

Simmering Dutch-Topass rivalries next surfaced on the island of Rote. The catalyst was a routine tour by the *opperhoofd* Jan Anthony Meulenbeek through the various *nusak* in October 1746. This incident is worth studying in detail for several reasons: the event is well preserved in Rotenese oral tradition, it indicates the extent to which locals were prepared to be patient with the Dutch foreign lords,¹⁶ and it shows how indigenous

¹³ Dagregister 1734-35, H 244, KITLV, sub 3-2-1735, 12-3-1735, 16-3-1735, 17-3-1735, 25-3-1735.

¹⁴ VOC 2628 (1744), f. 27; De Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:197; Heijmering 1847:135-6.

¹⁵ VOC 2991 (1760), ff. 132-3.

¹⁶ For more about the Meulenbeek incident in Rotenese tradition, see Fox 1979:22. Fox notes that the traditional version is similar to the contemporary Dutch account in its broad outline, but is still a perception of the past, rather than a factual record.

and European lines of conflict could become blurred. The *opperhoofd*'s lack of diplomacy and his unpopularity are evident from examining the documents. Using trickery he arrested three rebellious chiefs from the conflict-ridden *nusak* Landu, and sent them to Termanu, the mainstay of Dutch power. When it later turned out that the prisoners had escaped, Meulenbeek flew into a fit of rage and caned the *manek* of Termanu, Fola Sinlae. If the locals did not return the chiefs to him, he threatened, he would set fire to the *negeri* Termanu. Meulenbeek, with 36 Dutchmen and Mardijkers at his disposal, told the artillerists to fetch cannon from the ship and bring them inside the VOC palisade at Termanu. He also sent Fola Sinlae to look for the refugees, although Fola Sinlae did warn him that there might be trouble if he was not there to calm down the enraged locals. At Meulenbeek's side was Benjamin Messak, the Christian raja of Thie, an ambitious lord who would have gladly seen Termanu go up in flames. On Rote there was widespread resentment towards Termanu, which allegedly used its Company-backed position of importance to oppress the other *nusak*.

The following day the *opperhoofd* proceeded to arrest two chiefs. He then broke into the house of an aristocratic lady, the widow of the former *manek*, Ndaomanu, who was reputed to possess a chest of gold. He pulled off her clothes and presented her stark naked before the stunned locals. The highly respected widow then asked the bystanders if they would tolerate this behaviour any longer. The *manek* of the *nusak* Dengka, who accompanied Meulenbeek, realized that this would only cause further trouble and so attempted to calm down the hot-headed European. Meanwhile people began to crowd in closely around them, and some shouted curses at Meulenbeek. A corporal drew his sword and started to lay about the crowd with it. Meulenbeek himself cocked his pistol, but the *manek* of Dengka hit his arm so that the shot went into the air. When Meulenbeek's slaves saw this they also fired into the crowd, but by this time, many Termanu possessed shotguns, and they returned the fire. The *opperhoofd* and the rest of his men retreated towards the palisade. The official report of the incident's outcomes deserves to be quoted in full:

The wife of the *opperhoofd* gave orders to the sentry to set the two arrested *temukung* [chiefs] free. She asked them not to be angry about what had happened since her husband was crazy, and asked them to see to it that our people [the Dutch] were not harmed. The two of them promised

that. The *temukung* from Oenale still hesitated to leave without the approval of the *opperhoofd*. In this state, both the great and the small took to drinking until they were all completely drunk. Throughout the entire afternoon all of them (apart from the *opperhoofd*) were lying on the ground on all sides, although the regent of Thie in the meantime had been shot dead in the palisade. However, towards the evening the *opperhoofd* sent the bookkeeper Gonst outside to see what might be done. As soon as he came outside the palisade he was taken and disarmed and bound. Meulenbeek then hoisted the white flag and asked for mercy, offering gold and slaves. The Termanese only replied with the demand that Raja Thie should be handed over to them, and promised to then make peace with them [the Dutch]. His dead body was in fact thrown outside the palisade and was cut in a thousand pieces.

However, as [the Termanu] were not content with that, and no offers could help, the *opperhoofd* disarmed his people and locked up the weapons in the chamber. All together, they then started to drink again, until by night they were once again awake and sober. The soldiers and *Mardijkers* asked Meulenbeek to retrieve their arms so that they could try to break out of the crowd, and many of them could go aboard the ship again. His wife asked him to show mercy on her. If he himself would not agree to the request, [then at least] the men might have permission to save her and bring her on board. However, His Excellency absolutely refused to hand over the weapons. He said to his unlucky wife that where he stayed, she also must stay, without paying further attention to her tears and cries.

He furthermore promised them all that he would make peace the next morning. They would give the people as much gold as they might require, and therewith all the troubles would be out of the way. Thus, in the morning, His Excellency took all his gold and his wife even took her golden *beugeltas*¹⁷ and handed it over to [the chief] Edon through the palisade. [The Termanu] promised, through the latter, to make everything good again and to immediately send them water and rice (which they lacked). A short while after he had withdrawn, our people [the Dutch] were once again attacked. As the palisade was broken up, several people were shot and killed. Meanwhile, the *opperhoofd*, having gone inside the house, set fire to it (not out of fear, they say), and therewith everyone who was not too drunk stood up and left it – apart from Mrs Meulenbeek who never

¹⁷ A kind of handbag, common among European ladies at this time.

came out from there and was almost reduced to ashes. Meanwhile her husband rushed out like a lunatic, and was attacked, resulting in several [fatal] wounds. Likewise, the rest of the people and the regent of Lole all died, apart from a soldier, a free woman and three Mardijkers. They were tied up and prepared by Edon and Patola for slaughter, in order to perform their *pemali* or devilish services to confirm the oath that was made, to give themselves over to the Portuguese and keep the Noble Company out of Rote forever. The artilleryist (who had meanwhile come back from Thie) was destined [condemned] to be slaughtered before the regent of Landu, the bookkeeper Gonst before Bilba, and the soldier before Ringgou. [The Termanu] thus at once sent an envoy to ask the regents if they agreed to this.¹⁸

Anger towards the Dutch thus brought about a solemn ritual declaration to join Portugal, an entity with whom the Termanu had previously had little contact. The locals perceived the two foreign lords to be in direct opposition to each other, where rejection of one meant adherence to the other. Any human sacrifices that were planned – if they were not simply the product of an over-active Dutch imagination – were prevented by Fola Sinlae, and the horror-ridden survivors managed to sail back to Kupang. When news about the Rote debacle reached Batavia, the Supreme Government concluded that the only cause of the massacre was Meulenbeek himself. It was therefore not necessary to exact brutal revenge on the Rotenese if they repented (Schooneveld-Oosterling 1997:653). This, however, they did not do. Termanu and a further number of *musak* actively opposed the Company and obtained munitions and men from Gaspar da Costa. One such resistance fighter was Ndaomanu's widow, who bore a great hatred for the Europeans who had once deposed her husband and now insulted her. This coincided with her resentment towards the pro-Dutch Fola Sinlae, who had refused to marry her after the death of his brother – her husband.¹⁹

When a new regular *opperhoofd*, Daniel van der Burgh, arrived on Kupang in 1748, he found that 'words cannot describe the confusion and disorder in which this post had been plunged. Any respect or obedi-

¹⁸ VOC 8341 (1748), ff. 18-22. The story was pieced together from several witness accounts by the later *opperhoofd* Daniel van der Burgh. A rather different version is found in De Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:197.

¹⁹ VOC 8342 (1749), ff. 66-73.

ence for the Noble Company and its officials by the indigenous peoples, great or small, had gone. Any subordination and discipline had almost completely fallen into oblivion, among the Company soldiers as well as among the burghers and *Mardijkers*.²⁰ The Timorese and Solorese allies declined to assist the Company and remained resolute in their decision. It seemed as if deference for the stranger lords – or at least, its representatives in Kupang – had waned.

Nevertheless, Van der Burgh turned out to be the right man for the task. He was fluent in Malay, which enabled him to communicate freely with the allies. Furthermore, he restored discipline among the Company servants, reshaping the VOC as the commanding force, which was its main *raison d'être* in Timorese eyes.²¹ Finally, he was a man of military prowess who was not afraid to take on a fight against a strong opponent. In a society where warfare was both perpetual and indicative of status, this strengthened his leadership, especially since his tenure (1748-1754) would see an unprecedented expansion of Dutch prestige and power in the area.

His first step was to assemble a Dutch-Timorese-Sawunese army to deal with the chaos on Rote. Together with some loyal Rotenese, he closed in on Termanu in June 1749. During the fighting, Van der Burgh noted that the Rotenese and most of the Timorese held back. His rhetorical skills came into play when he summoned his troops and addressed them in an admonitory fashion, asking them frankly whether they wished to fight for their land, or to withdraw as cowards. This was definitely not a Timorese way of looking at matters, but it had the desired effect; the astounded soldiers chose to stay and fight out of shame. The foremost *negeri* of Termanu was attacked. The Timorese soldiers first shot at the enemies from afar, but egged on by the Company officers they then made a full assault, when despite a display of stubborn resistance, they overwhelmed the defenders. The destruction of the supposedly proud and arrogant Termanu was greeted with much jubilation by the Company allies (although it did remain the most important *nusak*, even after this setback). The Topass forces sent to the island by Gaspar da Costa surrendered,

²⁰ VOC 8341 (1748), f. 4.

²¹ Schooneveld-Oosterling 1997:651. One should also note, however, that Van der Burgh was a corrupt figure, especially during his last years. Among other things he forced the Helong to contribute to the construction of a private residence under the false pretext that it was to be a Company fortification (Van der Chijs 1872:214).

and Daniel van der Burgh recovered a compromising document which stated that Da Costa vowed to assist the rulers of ‘Sawu’ (here meaning Rote) in any way possible. The Rote campaign was therefore a prequel to the larger Company-Topass confrontation that would soon follow.²²

THE ROAD TO PENFUI

At the time of the Rote campaign, events had already taken a new direction in the Portuguese sphere. The Atoni lands of West Timor and the province of Servião had been under strict Topass control for a long time. White Portuguese activities outside of Lifau were largely confined to the province of Belu, and even there the hand of Gaspar da Costa was strongly felt. Towards the end of Da Costa’s tenure, however, there were major signs of dissatisfaction. The Dutch sources tend to blame the personality of Da Costa, who was described as stingy and arrogant, for this, but the deeper causes of the problems are not clear, since there are very few extant Portuguese documents from these years. To start, it is useful to look at the indigenous version of history as documented by the dissatisfied elite of Greater Sonbai, who sent a letter to the Company in 1749:

Furthermore we [...] communicate that previously, when the Noble Company first took possession of the island of Rote, the Topasses or Black Portuguese settled there in peace, and increased their number over time. Subsequently the aforementioned people became stout and recalcitrant, and persuaded us to cede a certain area of land. And since we were unable to resist them, we had to follow all their demands. Not only that, but for several years we also had to endure severe punishments. We can no longer endure this poor treatment. And since we heard that two persons, namely [the kings of] Amanuban and Timau [part of Amfoan] had fled for the aforementioned reasons, we humbly ask Your Excellency [...] to listen to our plea...²³

The idea that the Topasses were at first refractory settlers on VOC-dominated Rote is historically inaccurate and seems to be a way of placing the legitimacy of their position on Timor in doubt. The elite of

²² VOC 8342 (1749), ff. 58, 75-88.

²³ VOC 2741 (1749), ff. 183-4.

Amanuban wrote in similar terms at the same time, and made a point of mentioning their old contract concluded with the Company in the early seventeenth century. In this way, they could be seen as ‘returning’ allies of the Company who had never really been submissive to the ‘Black Christians’, ‘and who could no longer endure the rigour and tyranny under which they treat us as slaves’.²⁴ It is difficult, however, to be more precise as to why the old Topass-Atoni relation broke down. The Portuguese intention of maintaining sandalwood deliveries in spite of the diminishing stands of the fragrant wood, may have placed further demands on the princedoms – the aforementioned Sonbai letter emphasizes that the Topasses kept close control over the sandalwood at the time.

The breakdown of the Topass network started with Amfoan, which, as we have seen, was split between two dynastic lines: a VOC-allied polity in the Kupang area and a Portuguese-affiliated polity in Timau in the north-west. The king of the latter domain, Dom Bernardo da Costa, made overtures to his royal kinsman in Kupang about receiving the Company’s blessing for an attack against the Topass strongholds. Although direct Dutch assistance was refused, the signals from Kupang were positive enough for the king to pursue the enterprise in 1748. In one late version of the tale, he was assisted by troops provided by the VOC allies and by some *Mardijkers*.²⁵ If this is correct, Van der Burgh acted in precisely the same way as Gaspar da Costa had recently done with regard to Rote. Dom Bernardo da Costa rashly attacked the Topasses who were staying in Amfoan, and then turned towards their heartland in the east. This was the signal for other Timorese domains to join the fray. Amanuban, which had shown signs of anti-Portuguese sentiments in the 1730s, attacked Gaspar da Costa’s residence in Animata and co-operated with troops from Belu. The suddenness of the assault took the Topasses by surprise, and Animata was close to falling into enemy hands because of a complete lack of food supplies. Then, however, the rebellion faded away as soon as it had begun. As on previous occasions, the capabilities of the princedoms were insufficient to sustain an anti-Portuguese movement for a long period of time; in addition, Amarasi, Ambeno, Amanatun and part of Belu stayed loyal to the cause, with timely reinforcements arriving from Larantuka. The troops of Amanuban were scattered and thousands of people were slain. The Greater Sonbai

²⁴ VOC 2741 (1749), ff. 193-4.

²⁵ Heijmering 1847:138-40; Heijmering had access to local, now lost documents.

realm was divided in its loyalties as had often been the case in previous conflicts. When Amfoan and Amanuban attacked Gaspar da Costa, the latter took the precaution of taking a number of princes and grandees as hostages, including a brother of the emperor, Dom Alfonso Salema alias Nai Bau Sonbai.²⁶ The emperor – who played a far more active part in affairs than prescribed by his ritual role – led a party that attacked the Topasses and killed them wherever they could. Another party, on the contrary, supported the Portuguese and helped them to besiege what remained of the Amanuban troops at a rock called Nianama, thus turning against their Sonbai compatriots. In the end, huge numbers of Amanuban and Sonbai fled to Kupang, where they hoped to find a safe haven.²⁷

By this time, the attitude of the Supreme Government in Batavia was belligerent, as indicated by a missive from the end of 1748: ‘Although the old orders decreed that one should not cause trouble with the Portuguese, nevertheless one could not wholly turn down or decline Company protection for those who have been wronged by them and are tired of their brutal rule’ (Schooneveld-Oosterling 1997:652). At this stage it was not even necessary to act in a clandestine manner; in fact, acting in a bold manner was considered better. As a missive from the following year points out, the Topasses had made clear their hostile stance by their recent actions, and Daniel van der Burgh was given free reign to harass them by any means he deemed to be appropriate. The Company was to offer the defecting Portuguese clients a helping hand, thus totally reversing the careful attitude of the early eighteenth century (Schooneveld-Oosterling 1997:652, 779). It was understood that the conflict was with the Topasses, not the Estado da Índia, which had led a modest existence under the last governors António Leonis de Castro (gov. 1741-1745), Francisco Xavier Doutel (gov. 1745-1748) and Manuel Correia de Lacerda (gov. 1748-1751). The diplomatic situation in Europe did not encourage a direct aggressive stance towards the

²⁶ Apart from his Christian name he is known in VOC documents as Nabi Bahoe or Bau Leu Tomenu, which identifies him as Nai Bau (Baob) Sonbai of the later pedigrees. Judging from his name he was probably the son of Dom Pedro Sonbai alias Tomenu, who died some time after 1726. Dom Pedro’s wife, Usi Bi Lalan, is described in later Sonbai tradition as the mother of Nai Bau Sonbai (Fobia 1984, Lampiran I:1).

²⁷ ANRI Timor: 36, *Contractenboek Timor*, sub 1749, ff. 30, 33; VOC 8342 (1749), ff. 28-33; Stapel 1938:489-91. The chronology of the rebellion is somewhat difficult to follow from the Dutch and Timorese letters; I have attempted here to draw logical conclusions based on the available materials.

Estado. It was believed that the White Portuguese would automatically leave if their dark-skinned compatriots were expelled from the island. In addition to the strategic aims, the Company servants on Timor searched for tantalizing scraps of evidence pertaining to potential economic gains, in particular copper deposits.²⁸

In early 1749, therefore, Dom Alfonso Salema of Greater Sonbai, Dom Miguel de Conceição of Amanuban and Dom Bernardo da Costa of Amfoan-Timau were accepted as new allies, and the people of the two exiled leaders settled near Kupang. The additional numbers of able-bodied Sonbai males totalled 2,350, which probably resulted in a population of more than 10,000 men – a substantial increase in the context of Timor. For the Portuguese enterprise it was a severe blow, especially since control over both Sonbai rulers was now in Dutch hands. Gaspar da Costa put everything at stake and gathered *arraiais* from all the Timorese areas still supportive of Portugal. In spite of all the defections he was able to raise an army of tens of thousands. Dutch sources speak of 20,000 or even 40,000-50,000, though this number is perhaps an exaggeration given that the population of the entire island was probably well below half a million people.

According to later tradition, the troops gathered at Nunuhenu, the old centre of the Ambeno principedom, and then moved towards Kupang (Fobia 1984:83-4). The exact aims of Gaspar da Costa are to be guessed. Portuguese texts say no more than that he pursued Sonbai and anybody else rebelling against his rule. A witness statement from 1756, given by a number of Timorese lords and Portuguese, stated that da Costa intended to expand the area under his control. As the witnesses put it, he declared that he was not afraid of the ‘cat-eyed’ people, a term that denoted the blue-eyed Dutchmen. His intention was to invest Fort Concordia and turn the defenders into *payung*-carriers. A *payung*, or parasol, is a token of lordship in the context of Southeast Asia, and the Dutch would consequently be reduced to the status of a humble servant. After the anticipated defeat of the Company he planned to turn his attention towards the governor in Lifau.²⁹

No Portuguese or affiliated troops had ever openly attacked Fort Concordia, and one wonders whether the above statement is exaggerated. To conquer a European fort would have severe repercussions, of

²⁸ VOC 2718 (1748), ff. 110-4.

²⁹ VOC 2941 (1756), ff. 112-4.

which Da Costa was no doubt aware. Possibly, the true aim was to return the refugees to their original lands. The stance of Governor Manuel Correia de Lacerda however, is just as ambiguous. He later insisted that he had warned Gaspar da Costa several times about his unreasonable plans, telling him not to bring His Catholic Majesty into conflict with the Netherlands through his actions.³⁰ As the Dutch were quick to point out, the words of Correia de Lacerda revealed that he knew of the plans well in advance yet did not send a single word of warning to Kupang.³¹ He may well have decided to adopt a wait-and-see policy – whichever side won, he could not only claim to be innocent, but potentially even benefit from the situation.

There are several extant versions which relate the following events. It would seem best to begin by quoting an indigenous Timorese source, a letter from the five loyal allies to Governor General Van Imhoff in September 1750:

We announce that on 9 November 1749, the proud Portuguese and their might invaded our Kupangese land. They massacred a number of our people, namely: of Raja Kupang 1, of the regent of Amabi 50, of Sonbai 30, of Amfoan 1, and of Taebenu, 6 persons. They meanwhile robbed all their cattle and goods, and set two small *negeri* on fire. After that, the aforementioned Portuguese marched to a place called Penfui. Upon this action, we five kings asked *opperhoofd* Daniel van der Burgh in the name of the Company to ask the referred-to Portuguese why they had done this. These people gave a very proud reply: ‘What need do we have for the Noble Company? We come to our land as it pleases us. Why does the Noble Company ask us about this or that?’ After this speech, the *opperhoofd* sent, on our insistence, some *Mardijkers* and people from the *negeri* Sawu to assist. The aim was to do everything possible to damage these Portuguese, our enemies, and to take revenge for what they had done as far as could be. After having received assistance from the Noble Company, we united our forces with them, attacked the enemy and expelled them from their site. They left numerous dead, consisting of the following: the king of Kupang took 75 heads in the battle; the Sonbai, 360; the Amabi, 600 heads besides seven banners and five drums; the Amfoan, 20 heads; and the Taebenu, 150 heads, apart from five of their chiefs. Thus we kings of

³⁰ VOC 2941 (1756), ff. 112-4.

³¹ VOC 2892 (1756), f. 1362.

Kupang are presently living in good harmony and fraternal friendship with the three kings who arrived to Kupang last year.³²

From the point of the view of the Timorese, the Battle of Penfui was essentially their victory. A long report by Daniel van der Burgh provides quite another perspective, however, in which the leading Dutch officials barely managed to stop the allies from panicking at the approach of the great army, and where the brunt of the fighting was undertaken by a 500-strong troop consisting of Dutchmen, *Mardijkers*, *Sawunese*, *Solorese* and *Rotenese*, all under the leadership of the formidable Second Lieutenant Christoffel Lip (Haga 1882b:391-402). A third version of events was recorded by the missionary Geerloff Heijmering almost a century later. In this account the *Mardijker* chief Frans Monkana created confusion in the Portuguese camp, taking enemy heads in a show of immense bravery; in this way he laid the groundwork for the astounding VOC victory (Heijmering 1847:141-53). There are still more legendary versions, as is befitting of a battle that changed many things in Timor's historical geography.³³

What is clear enough is that the battle was an unmitigated disaster in terms of the Portuguese position on Timor. The huge army of Da Costa took up a position at Penfui, situated on a hillside east of Kupang, where the troops constructed seven or eight fortifications out of stone and earth. However, many of the Portuguese clients suffered from having little or no motivation. The *Amarasi*, often seen as the foremost supporters of the Portuguese, were ensconced in the front row of redoubts. When the VOC troops approached the camp a chief rode towards them and announced that *Amarasi* could from now on be called friends of the Company. When this declaration had been read, the *Amarasi* turned and fled towards the inland. Christoffel Lip prevented his troops from pursuing them and instead led an assault on the remaining redoubts, which were taken one by one. Early in the battle the men from *Amanatun* and *Greater Sonbai* followed the example of *Amarasi* and abandoned the *Topass* camp. When all but one redoubt had been taken, the remaining defenders began to scatter in panic but were slaughtered in a matter of

³² VOC 8343 (1750), ff. 132-5.

³³ For an *Alorese* version, see Gomang 1993:149-50. Local *Alorese* tradition mentions two warlords who participated at Penfui and slew the *Topass* leader; the story appears to have been influenced by the *Mardijker* legend referred to earlier.

moments by the five allies. As the last redoubt fell to the VOC after a hard fight, the carnage was complete. With no way of escape, since the horses of the Topass army had been taken by the Company troops, Gaspar da Costa realized that everything was lost. He rode from the battlefield with a few of his followers, but was struck by a Timorese assegai, tumbled down from his horse and was beheaded (Haga 1882b:398-400). With him fell his major officers, three kings and the new emperor of Sonbai whom he had just enthroned and taken along as symbolic ammunition.

It was, as Van der Burgh's report specifies, a 'remarkable action', but the circumstances also highlight remarkable weaknesses in Da Costa's enterprise. As an experienced soldier, the *tenente general* must have known that the Timorese *arraiais* were not suited to lengthy campaigns or pitched battles; indeed, to gather such a large Timor-wide army was in itself quite a feat. The Topass leader played with very high stakes – and lost. Hitherto loyal clients took the first opportunity to abandon his cause, while on the other hand the Company allies fought with their backs against the wall – a fortified, albeit somewhat ramshackle wall that had deterred potential attackers for the last century. The outcomes of the Battle of Penfui were therefore logical, and the Topass failure far from astonishing.

THE MAP IS REDRAWN

The twelve years following the Battle of Penfui saw the political map of Timor reshuffled. Consequently, it saw the end of a system that had its origins in a small Dutch enclave and a Topass power, which based its position on co-opting the Atoni princedoms. When looking on modern maps, two roughly equal halves of the island can be seen; this divide was in fact brought about by the battle and its aftermath. On the one hand, these were years when the very existence of a Portuguese presence was in doubt, but on the other hand, they were also years of repeated disappointments and setbacks for the Company.

Looking at the first few years after that fateful November day, it is evident that an increasing number of territories acknowledged the VOC's authority. Apart from Sonbai, Amanuban and Amfoan, the Atoni territories of Amarasi, Amanatun and its sister domain Amanesi all sent humble letters of submission. Parts of Ambeno also joined the Company

ranks. Around 1751-1752 the area of Belu began to be recalcitrant in their dealings with the Portuguese and likewise began to make approaches towards the Company. Their old hatred towards the Topasses could be seen in their message to Van der Burgh, which stated that they would be more than happy to see the Topasses exterminated.³⁴

The response to this development was an increase in the Dutch presence on the surrounding islands. On Rote, ten out of thirteen *nusak* accepted the Protestant Reformed religion by 1753 and actively requested that schoolmasters educate their children; in this way, they were able to come into closer contact with the Dutch (Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007:310). In 1751 Van der Burgh paid a visit to Sawu, where no *opperhoofd* had been for eight years. After settling local disputes he proceeded to Sumba, which had hitherto been an easy prey for anyone wishing to attack it. Ten of the innumerable small chiefdoms of Sumba had previously sought ties with the Company, and they now solemnly bestowed their land to its representative, the *opperhoofd*.³⁵ At least, this is how Van der Burgh understood the situation. He noted that Sumba was a fertile and pretty land which was largely uninhabited due to incessant warfare, and that the locals did not take advantage of the land and the trees and the trade to be made from them. In actual fact, the unsafe conditions on the coast, where the *opperhoofd* stayed, probably meant normal agriculture and forestry activities were too dangerous – Sumba had a long and dark history of coastal raids.³⁶ In fact it soon turned out that the new Sumbanese allies intended to use the VOC to support them in their war against the eastern chiefdom Batakapedu. In order to demonstrate the Company's might, Van der Burgh sent the few men at his immediate disposal to attack the unsuspecting Batakapedu, and consequently hunted a few heads. Immediately afterwards the *opperhoofd* returned to Kupang with sixteen slaves, with which the grateful new allies had provided him. Slaves were, together with turtle-shell and, to a lesser extent, sandalwood the main commercial exports of the island.³⁷

Commercially, the situation was less positive. While it was normal that the Kupang post operated at a deficit, the amount did in fact fall after

³⁴ VOC 2762 (1751), f. 597.

³⁵ Stapel 1938:510-1. Previous contact was made in 1720-25, when some chiefs asked – to no avail – for Company assistance in their domestic wars (De Roo van Alderwerelt 1906:193-4, 200).

³⁶ Compare Needham 1983.

³⁷ VOC 8322 (1751), ff. 9-14.

1730, until it finally returned a very modest profit of 20 guilders in 1752. However, external trade with the Portuguese continued in spite of all the political reshuffles. The old system where a large merchantman arrived from Macao each year was maintained, while smaller Portuguese sloops likewise supplied the coasts of Timor with cloths and did good business with the locals. Last but not least, a large number of Makassarese vessels that did not have trading passes supplied Alor, Solor, Flores and Sumba. A worrying sign was that the Makassarese began to frequent the outer coast of Timor for the first time in living memory, using the Portuguese flag as cover. In sum, the VOC traders had to watch as the sandalwood and slaves were taken to other places. In December 1753, Batavia tried to stimulate trade by relaxing the restrictions on the VOC traders who transferred textiles to Kupang, much in the same way as it had done in the easternmost archipelago seven years earlier (Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007: 311).

As a matter of fact, the Makassarese played a minor role in ensuring the survival of the Portuguese enterprise. Immediately after the Battle of Penfui, the number of areas under Portuguese domination were reduced to Lifau, Ambeno, Insana, Biboki, Sakunaba, Tunbaba, Bikomi, Ambabo and Naaiolie – in total, some 8,000 able-bodied men. These places formed a stretch of land in the north of West Timor. Meanwhile, the Belu decided to wait and see how the situation developed. The Topasses were in dire need of gunpowder, but the Makassarese traders soon supplied them with this, thus sparing them from being completely overrun by pro-VOC forces.³⁸ Moreover, the Portuguese influence outside of Timor survived intact. Apart from Larantuka, Sikka on Flores remained under their control, as did the Demon areas of the Solor Islands. In actual fact, the Dutch sphere even contracted somewhat, since the three Watan Lema principdoms on Adonara cared little or nothing for the Company (Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007:307).

The years after the Battle of Penfui saw a heated diplomatic exchange take place between the Company and the representatives of the Estado da Índia in Lifau and Goa. In particular, the viceroy complained about the acquirement of Amarasi, described as a vassal of the Crown of Portugal. The Dutch for their part could cite the disobedient stance

³⁸ VOC 2761 (1750), f. 71. Ambabo and Naaiolie are not to be found on modern maps; they can possibly be matched up with Bobo in Manamas in Miomaffo, and Olin in Oefalu, also in Miomaffo (Alexander Kono, Kefamenanu, personal communication, 27-2-2008).

of the Topass leader vis-à-vis the Estado, something which justified the revenge wreaked by the Company. They also reiterated the old fiction that the sultan of Ternate once had power over Timor and that he signed it over to the VOC in 1683. Batavia, however, did not even begin to adopt the belligerent proposals of Daniel van der Burgh, who believed it was time to rid the Timor area of the Portuguese once and for all. The Supreme Government found that the Company post in Kupang had exaggerated the amount of territory under its control, and that the White and Black Portuguese still possessed far more land than the Company. As Batavia noted, a comprehensive military operation against the Portuguese enterprise would endanger relations with Gowa and Bima who were both VOC-allied kingdoms that claimed portions of Flores as their own (Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007:307-8; Heijmering 1847:167-8).

Moreover, the Portuguese supporters in Timor fought back. The highland *negeri* Noimuti, close to present-day Kefamenanu, fell under the Sonbai ruler, but soon after Penfui there was a change in circumstances. Some ‘ill-minded rascals’, as they were called by the Dutch, rejected the suzerainty of the Sonbai ruler and established the inaccessible settlement of Noimuti as a centre of anti-Dutch activities.³⁹ It is not clear how much Topass blood ran through the veins of the Noimuti; later, there were 18 *ume mnasi* (houses of elders) where a minor part of the descent groups bore Portuguese names.⁴⁰ At any rate they were soon intensely engaged in the resistance movement together with the Topasses of Tulang Ikan and Animata, some 30-35 kilometres away. The background to the situation may partly be explained by a lingering attachment to Catholicism and the king of Portugal, but also by a certain amount of resentment harboured about the behaviour of the Company and its allies. West Timor after 1749 was a land of great disruption and devastation. The five loyal allies plundered and bullied the now defenceless lands that had recently been under Portuguese domination. Van der Burgh believed this to be the main reason why the remaining Timorese rulers declined to submit to the Company’s authority.⁴¹

³⁹ Tradition mentions a certain Richard Louis Sonbai, son of a Sonbai lord, who resided in Noimuti. His body lay unburied in Noimuti until 1956, and was the object of ritual veneration. His exact position in the Sonbai genealogy is not quite clear, but some versions place him as the son of Nai Neno Sonbai, in other words, Dom Pedro Sonbai (early eighteenth century). See Tey Seran et al. 2006.

⁴⁰ Tey Seran et al. 2006:37-40. Another enumeration has 27 *ume mnasi*.

⁴¹ VOC 8322 (1751), ff. 39-43.

Van der Burgh tried to induce a sense of Orange patriotism in both his old and his new allies, perhaps as a way of combatting the powerful symbol of the Portuguese Crown. In March 1751, a grand celebration took place in Kupang in honour of Prince Willem IV, who had acceded to the position of stadtholder four years earlier (and would die later in the same year). The allied kings attended, wearing orange roses in their long hair, and made a solemn pledge of allegiance in the assembly hall. In spite of such gestures, the *opperhoofd* faced the same problem as his fallen adversary, Da Costa: in terms of warfare, the Timorese showed little interest in large-scale military campaigns. For them, the important factor was to carry out raids in order to capture enemy heads; the higher strategic goals of the Company were not their own goals. A first attack attempted against the Noimuti in 1751 turned into a fiasco. Logistical problems and the unwilling attitude of the Amarasi, who were their new supposed allies, meant that the VOC army never reached Noimuti. A second attempt four months later fared no better. Rains, floods and a thick fog (which the astounded people from the lowlands had never seen before) halted the venture less than a day's march away from Noimuti. As hunger began to take a hold over his men, Van der Burgh once again had to retreat.⁴²

The ill-fated Gaspar da Costa was succeeded by his *capitão mor*, João Hornay (ruled 1749-1757). Any relationship to the previous Hornays is unknown, but he was the grandson of the Dutch adventurer and deserter from the VOC Daniel de Cock, who joined the Topass ranks in circa 1695 and alternated between living in Lifau and Macao.⁴³ Hornay's attitude towards the Company was ambivalent. While he distanced himself from the aggressive Da Costa, he clandestinely tried to persuade the old Timorese clients to once again be ruled by the king of Portugal. The new governor of Lifau, Manuel Doutel de Figueiredo Sarmiento (gov. 1751-1759), actively assisted him in this venture (Matos 1974a:418-20), which was partially successful since the rulers of Amarasi and Greater Sonbai began to have second thoughts about their VOC affiliation in 1751-1752. Without doubt, these two were the most important of the new allies, and their defection would surely have severe repercussions for the recent Dutch gains.

The reasons behind the allies' change of mind were varied. At this

⁴² VOC 8322 (1751), ff. 41-54, 64-6, 131-5.

⁴³ VOC 1637 (1700), f. 13; VOC 2763 (1751), ff. 596-7.

time, Dom Alfonso Salema of Sonbai lived with the bulk of his troops near Kupang. Not only was he promised a full pardon by the governor and by Hornay, but he was also promised certain privileges. The tyrannical rule of Gaspar da Costa, he was assured, would come to an end with his fall from power. The Dutch, however, do not seem to have paid heed to the fact that he was formerly the emperor of Servião, a position backed by the Portuguese; instead, they ranked the allies after their date of joining the VOC alliance, which may have decreased Da Costa's attachment to them. Harsh treatment of the newly subjugated areas, the lack of food and other daily necessities in the wake of the recent devastation, and military *corvée* service to fight Noimuti might have given the resentment a broader popular base. At any rate, part of the Sonbai population moved towards the highlands above Amarasi in early 1752, in preparation for the defection from the Company. Together with the Amarasi they were to force the Amanuban to march – or else kill them where they stood. However, the plans were leaked and the suspicious Dutch arrested Dom Alfonso Salema on 19 March, without coming up against any resistance. The emperor paid a large ransom in gold to Van der Burgh, who accepted it but nevertheless proceeded to exile Dom Alfonso and some of his chiefs to Batavia. He was placed on the island of Edam outside Batavia and at that point disappears from the history annals. According to a later rumour, he was beheaded by his captors.⁴⁴

The Amarasi elite likewise received letters from the governor of Lifau and *tenente general* which employed a mixture of religious symbolism and hard-core threats, explaining that the Dutch were likely to seize land and demand heavy impositions and contributions from the Amarasi. By going over to the Company willingly, the regent in the eyes of the Portuguese had betrayed his religion and become a 'child of the Devil', thereby throwing not only himself, but all of Amarasi into the jaws of hell. Dominican priests played a large part in winning back the Amarasi to the Portuguese fold, once again emphasizing the fact that there was a Catholic heritage among the elite dating back until the mid-seventeenth century. Stories also circulated that the Dutch were ruining the maize in the fields – the principal Timorese means of survival. In general, the Amarasi elite appear to have been most reluctant to swear allegiance to the VOC; in a message to Manuel Doutel they insisted that they

⁴⁴ VOC 2799 (1752), ff. 11-28; VOC 2941 (1756), f. 644; VOC 3779 (1785-88), f. 5707; Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007:209.

had only submitted because they had stood on the verge of destruction (Matos 1974a:419). Unlike Sonbai they refused to yield when the *opperhoofd* realized their defection. Van der Burgh had to summon a force of Dutchmen, Mardijkers, Timorese, Rotenese and Solorese, all of whom attacked the defectors in June 1752. The Amarasi first managed to fight off the Timorese allies, but were overwhelmed in the end. The allies took the opportunity to exact revenge for a century of enmity and aggression, capturing many heads. The old king, Dom Luís Hornay de Roza, agreed to a meeting to discuss the terms of surrender. However, when the allies approached the cave he was in, the king ordered his retainers to kill him and more than a hundred women and children who were with him.⁴⁵

The dramatic fates of Dom Alfonso Salema and Dom Luís Hornay de Roza were remembered in some detail until modern times. A widespread version of events depicts the *opperhoofd* and the Sonbai lord engaging in a contest of magic. The various sections of the contest are won by the ruler, who puts the Dutchman to shame. He turns into a snake and crawls through a blowpipe, puts a burning wax candle into his mouth without being hurt, and outweighs a load of sandalwood. The Dutchman, fearful of the magic powers of his adversary, finally resorts to treachery and exiles the ruler to Batavia. In this way the historiographical tables are turned, and the element of treason is transferred from the Sonbai lord to the *opperhoofd*.⁴⁶ The violent end of the Amarasi ruler is likewise commemorated in local tradition as a defining moment in the history of the polity, and is narrated in a way that is surprisingly faithful to the actual historical event (Middelkoop 1939:77-9).

The defeat of the defectors stabilized the Dutch position once more, but the killing of part of the Amarasi population turned out to be a mixed blessing. Some of the survivors were declared slaves, the usual fate for prisoners of war, while others were resettled south of Kupang (Heijmering 1847:164-5). Most Amarasi consisted of families descending from Amabi, Sonbai, Amfoan and Taebenu had been a part of the Amarasi population for many years but were now returned to their homelands and the allies. Domains like Amfoan and Taebenu almost

⁴⁵ VOC 2799 (1752), f. 87.

⁴⁶ Fobia 1984:78-81; Middelkoop 1938:441-2; Spillett 1999:85-6. The theme of a series of tests between two princely rivals is well known; it occurs in legends from other parts of Timor as well (McWilliam 2002:62-3).

doubled their populations.⁴⁷ Finally, there were many refugees who flocked to Noimuti. Meanwhile in the deserted land of Amarasi, there were spoils to be had. By 1750, Van der Burgh had already found it necessary to allow the trade in sandalwood and beeswax to be free. Now, however, the Timorese had negotiating power; quite simply, they were no longer willing to fell the sandalwood and make the supreme effort to bring it downhill, without personally gaining anything from it. Henceforth, anyone could cut the fragrant wood, as long as he delivered one-third to the Company as fee (De Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:198). With the victory of 1752, the forests of the defeated Amarasi became a free-for-all in accordance with the 1750 decree, and the Timorese allies happily took advantage of the riches to be made from sandalwood and beeswax. The stipulated fee meant little in practice (Fiedler 1931, 4:31), and it was already far too late by the time the Company realized it had little to gain from the arrangement. In the late 1750s, the Amarasi principedom was therefore provisionally restored, with a son of the fallen king at its helm. By now, however, it was an insignificant domain with only a few hundred able-bodied men. For the remainder of the colonial period, it presented few problems for the Dutch colonizers or its neighbours.

The following years saw continuing low-scale hostilities between the Company and their allies on the one hand, and Noimuti and the Topasses on the other. In 1753, Sultan Abdul Kadim Muhammad Syah of Bima on Sumbawa announced his intention to have a share of the spoils. For years, this Company ally had had interests in Flores, which was subjected to ever-changing overlordships. The sultan now prepared an expedition with the full backing of the VOC authorities in Batavia. If the Topasses could be attacked from that direction it would be of clear benefit; moreover, the inhabitants of Bima were asked to reserve the cinnamon plantations on Flores for the Company. A spate of military expansion by Bima finally did take place on Flores in the 1760s, but appears to have been restricted to Manggarai in the west and did not directly involve the Topasses (Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007:309; Toda 1999:117-51).

The most important change in the VOC sphere was the vast increase in importance of the *Mardijkers*. Since they were included in the Dutch

⁴⁷ VOC 2799 (1752), ff. 93-4.

legal system and in no way were related to the indigenous princes, they were a useful mediation tool, especially as the sphere was expanding. The leaderless population of Greater Sonbai had settled in a number of places; likewise for Amanuban and, as we have seen, Amarasari. Van der Burgh wished to have the three groups within reach of Kupang with its sizeable multi-ethnic Mardijker population. The Mardijker chiefs took liberties with the defeated populations, and the Dutch perceived them as peevish figures. However, the Mardijkers also interfered in the affairs of the original five allies. In effect, the Helong kingdom of Kupang broke up into three parts after 1749, one part being led by a royal relative called Lafu Funai, who stayed among the Mardijkers. This was the beginning of the mini-princedom of Funai that was to last until 1917. Lesser Sonbai was likewise in decline, since day by day more men left because of one injustice or another, preferring instead to stay under the Mardijkers.⁴⁸ The rise of the Mardijkers is also hinted at by the aforementioned – and historically inaccurate – legend of the Battle of Penfui, according to which Frans Monkana (Maucaan) plays the role of the hero. In reality, Frans Maucaan was a historical figure; he was a Mardijker chief who played an important role in the years after the Battle of Penfui, finally being sentenced by the suspicious Dutch for criminal acts. As they were rivals for political control, the Dutch *opperhoofden* usually maintained a negative stance apropos the Mardijkers, but it also appears that they were indispensable as soldiers and envoys. They were used for far-flung and dangerous expeditions that the Dutchmen declined to undertake themselves, and were organized into two companies, called Saudale and Oedale, which remained in use up until the nineteenth century (Haga 1882a).

Daniel van der Burgh, notwithstanding his enthusiasm for expansion in the area, was no supporter of Timor, which he referred to as ‘this disgusting place’. In spite of his requests to be allowed to step down from his post, he would never see his native Amsterdam again since he fell ill and died in 1754, sharing the fate of so many previous *opperhoofden*. His successor, Elias Jacob Beynon (gov. 1754-1758), was in many respects his very opposite, a careful merchant with little personal authority. It was at this stage that the Supreme Government in Batavia decided to investigate their turbulent dependencies in Timor.

⁴⁸ VOC 2837 (1754).

THE PARAVICINI MISSION

The Spanish-born Johannes Andreas Paravicini (1710-1771) was rather well known when he became commissioner for the VOC on Timor.⁴⁹ In 1755, he carried out a similar role with regard to Palembang on Sumatra, where he investigated illicit trading and drew up a contract with the sultan. The sultan of Banjarmasin, whom he later visited, characterized Paravicini as confident yet arrogant, a judgement that is not contradicted by any of his Timor papers (Vos 1993:31-2, 40-4). With the threat of war looming in Europe, the Supreme Government handed over a set of instructions to Paravicini in February 1756, which detailed four main tasks. Firstly, he was to renew the contracts with the princes, replacing the assortment of separate agreements, letters of submission and customary bonds that had hitherto regulated Dutch-indigenous relations. Secondly, he was to investigate the situation at the Kupang post where, as Batavia understood, matters were run in a far from efficient manner. Thirdly, he was to improve the defences of the dependencies, and fourthly, he was to secure the dependencies from any external hostile force.⁵⁰ Naturally, potential aggressors did include the local Portuguese, but also the covetous great powers of Europe, in particular France, which was looking at the potential for commercial and colonial expansion in South Asia and beyond, in the years leading up to the Seven Years' War.⁵¹ In 1755, the French horticulturist Pierre Poivre explored the opportunities for the French to make inroads in the archipelago and visited Lifau, commenting on the ostensibly good opportunities for trade in beeswax and slaves. Governor Manuel Doutel appears to have perceived the French as a useful counterbalance to the expansionist plans of the Dutch (Durand 2006a:150-2; Van der Chijs 1872:210).

Upon arriving in Kupang, Paravicini found matters to be less than satisfactory among the Company servants. He heard many witness accounts and discovered ample evidence of dishonesty, outright corruption and oppressive behaviour against the indigenous elite. At a *vergadering* on 10 May 1756, he spoke to a splendid assembly of rulers from Timor, Rote, Sawu, Solor and Sumba. He announced to the rulers that he had

⁴⁹ Brief biographical information on Paravicini can be found in Leeuwerik 1992.

⁵⁰ VOC 2941 (1756), *Dagverhaal*, sub 14-3-1756.

⁵¹ The Seven Years' War in Europe formally commenced in May 1756, during the visit of Paravicini to Timor, but unknown to the Dutch in the East Indies until later in the same year.

been sent to save the colony from the miserable state in which it had found itself in recent years, to make it flourish once more, and to protect it from outside aggression. He subsequently deliberated with the kings and regents for many hours over the draft contract. Finally, on 9 June, a solemn ceremony took place during which 92 aristocrats thronged the assembly hall. Each of the grandees made the oath by raising the right hand, while the left hand touched the banner of the Company. Afterwards a salute was fired with 25 shots for Governor General Jacob Mossel, 13 for Paravicini, 9 for the *opperhoofd* and his council, and 9 for the kings and regents. On the following day, the grandees were feted with a sumptuous banquet in a purpose-built hall. It was decorated with the colours of the Dutch flag, and the artistic Chinese assisted with the lighting. The guests were entertained with food, music and dance until six o'clock in the morning.⁵²

No doubt this was a grandiose occasion that became a life-long memory for the attending lords, but what did the Paravicini contract actually entail? The large number of signatories, representing some 77 princedoms, has raised doubts about the authenticity of the document. The very circumstantial description given by Paravicini suggests that the majority of places concerned were represented by their rulers, but there are some points open to debate. The contract is purported to be signed by 'the eight regents of the island of Sumba', but in fact only the chief of Mangili was present in Kupang; moreover, the eight regents were only a fraction of all the minor chiefs on the island. Another moot point was Belu. Already in 1753, Van der Burgh had highlighted Wewiku-Wehali as 'the key to the province of Belu that stands under the White Portuguese', which was 'of utmost importance for us'.⁵³ When the contract was to be signed the king of Wewiku, Nai Liu, appeared at Kupang. Wewiku was a 'post' of the *liurai* of Wehali, and acted as his representative. Paravicini may have sensed that this was not enough for him to be able to claim the entire province of Belu for the Company. He therefore sent a sizeable army of *Mardijkers* and *Amanuban* to Wewiku-Wehali to suggest that the *liurai* appear in Kupang in person. To demonstrate the force and strength of the Company, the troops subjugated the small Belu princedom of Banibani on the way. Almost two months after the original

⁵² VOC 2941 (1756), *Dagverhael*, sub 10-5-1756, 9-6-1756, 10-6-1756. The banquet is commemorated in a painting, reproduced in Jacobs 2000:35.

⁵³ VOC 8346 (1753), ff. 42-3.

contract had been signed, Paravicini had the pleasure to receive Jacinto Correia, ‘the grand prince of the wide-embracing Kingdom of Belu and sovereign king of Wewiku-Wehali’.⁵⁴ To quote Paravicini’s diary:

These troops had not even entered the *negeri* [Kupang] when, according to their custom, they started a horrific noise and brought forward 40 severed heads and 44 prisoners, which they had taken in a recent encounter with the Noimutians as well as in an attack on the aforementioned king of Banibani who had tried to impede them from marching through his land. [They carried the heads] through the entire *negeri* to the residence of the commissioner, where they halted and waited for a while.

When the envoys announced their arrival to His Excellency, they were immediately let in and were introduced to an audience with the [allied] kings, and were received very politely and warmly, in particular the grand prince of Belu who, although still young, seemed to the Europeans to be very polite. According to the custom of the Portuguese he kissed the hand of His Excellency, as did Nai Liu. The rightful king of Banibani, Dom Luís Pinheiro, approached the feet of His Excellency while maintaining a kneeling position. With his hand crossed over his head as a token of submission he asked for pardon and forgiveness for having attacked the men of the Noble Company and having opposed their invincible arms.⁵⁵

Jacinto Correia then made a speech in Portuguese, referred to at length by Paravicini. Correia asserted, citing rather dubious evidence, that his ancestors had once concluded a contract with the VOC, which had been brutally abrogated by the Portuguese,⁵⁶ and he now wished to return to the Company. Together with the rulers of Wewiku and Banibani he received a ceremonial staff topped with a silver knob engraved with the arms of the VOC. Their names were included in the contract, which alleged that a large number of eastern principedoms stood under Jacinto Correia: Dirma, Lakekun, Leowalu, Fialaran, Lamaknen, Maubara, Lacló, Samoro, Letululi, Fatuboro, Lanqueiro, Same, Atsabe, Raimean, Deribate, Marobo, Lidak, Jenilu, Sakunaba, Biboki, Insana

⁵⁴ Jacinto Correia (Hiacynthoe Corea) is not expressly called *liurai*, but the circumstances leave little doubt that he was. The *maromak oan* was not supposed to settle executive tasks of this kind.

⁵⁵ VOC 2941 (1756), *Daggerhael*, sub 26-7-1756.

⁵⁶ The ‘contracts’ from 1668 mention Ade, Manatuto, Laivai, Waimaa and Hera, but not Wewiku-Wehali.

and Leimea. He also exercised authority over the domains of Manufai, Suai, Tiris, Alas, Luca, Viqueque and Corora.⁵⁷ Later in the contract, Ade (Vemasse) and Manatuto were likewise mentioned as being under his control. Looking at it from the perspective of an outsider, this gave the impression that the whole of Timor, except for parts of the north-eastern coast, had been signed over to the VOC; not even the core territory of the Estado da Índia was seen as undisputed property of Portugal. Sitenoni, the deputy king of Ambeno, signed the contract and was referred to in the text as 'king of Lifau'. By extension, this meant that the governor's residence could potentially become a bone of contention.⁵⁸

In fact, Jacinto Correia's gesture of submission had limited implications. While Paravicini may have believed that the contract gave him access to East Timor, this was in fact nothing more than vain hopes, or rather, a grave misunderstanding of the Timorese hierarchy. As for the contents of the contract, it is a verbose document of 30 paragraphs. Some of them pertain to practical matters, for example military service, *corvée* service for gold mining, the capture of runaway slaves, the settling of internal conflicts and similar matters, but much of the text has a rhetorical, indeed propagandist slant, which mixes echoes of the Enlightenment with self-righteous chauvinism:

The peculiar privilege to make land and people flourish through the enjoyment of freedom, and make the inhabitants happily live calm and safely in their property without fear, may only be found among the free Dutchmen. They have shown an attitude filled with upright and noble feelings about all the nations and peoples who stand under their protection. They make no distinction between the black and white nations. On the contrary they regard all humans as their brothers, and treat humans as humans in accordance with their basic laws [...] And as one compares the miserable, destitute and ravaged main post of the Portuguese on this island, called Lifau, although situated in the best part of this island; and one on the other hand considers in what blessed state the kings, grandees,

⁵⁷ Most of these names are easily found on modern maps. Tiris often occurs in texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is now obscure, but according to an informant of Peter Spillett, (1999:300) the Kingdom of Tieres lay about 80 kilometers to the east of Beacu, perhaps close to the mouth of the Sui River. This corroborates early Dutch sources that suggest it was close to Manufai. Corora or Corara is the place called Korrara in the far east of the island on the map of Freycinet 1825, Atlas. It is called Cararol on the map in Castro 1867.

⁵⁸ Stapel 1955:88-9, 91; VOC 2941 (1756), ff. 61-3, 77; Therik 2004:57; s'Jacob 2007:12.

Company servants, burghers and further inhabitants in this place Kupang find themselves, although in the most sterile area in the entire island of Timor, then it will give the more compelling evidence of the virtues that the noble Dutchmen know. (Stapel 1955:93-4.)

Partly contradicting himself, Paravicini warned the allies in a later paragraph of the potentially dangerous consequences of intermingling with the burghers of Kupang. The lords weakened their royal authority by entering into family ties with these people; no mixed marriages should be arranged without consulting the *opperhoofd* or vicar, and no trade should be committed with the burghers (Stapel 1955:102-3). During his investigation Paravicini found that some burghers tended to treat the allies around Kupang in a pernicious manner and that the aristocrats were victims of some of the burghers' more brutal and overbearing acts. They were forced into buying goods from the townsfolk at extortionate prices, and their subjects were occasionally taken into custody as slaves for dubious reasons (Van der Chijs 1872:217). In particular, the burgher David Schrijver bullied the allied ruling families, capturing and even mistreating princes. Paravicini condemned Schrijver as somebody who could cause a great deal of harm to relations between the VOC and the locals; consequently, Schrijver was fined 4,200 rijksdaalders.⁵⁹ In the contract, Paravicini tried to protect the interests of the allies in a number of ways. They were to deliver gold, beeswax, slaves, pepper and indigo to the official VOC channels, in return for reasonable payment. They were advised to only buy goods from the Company warehouse 'at a civil price', and if any European or coloured person tried to take advantage of the allies in the name of the Company, they should be delivered to the *opperhoofd* to be punished according to what they deserved (Stapel 1955:104).

Despite his use of rhetoric and argument, Paravicini's actions did not quite match up with his goal of bringing the Enlightenment to Timor. On Rote, the trouble-ridden *nusak* Landu was divided into a number of factions, which the Company was unable to reconcile. Paravicini saw this as the ideal opportunity to make an example: he vowed to remove all the inhabitants of this 'disreputable and rebellious' *nusak*, ruin it, extinguish its very name. He actually came close to fulfilling this vow. After

⁵⁹ VOC 2941 (1756), ff. 116-9, 150-2, 172.

a bloody campaign, 1,060 Landu were brought to Batavia as slaves, out of an original population of circa 4,000.⁶⁰ Back in Batavia, the Supreme Government scrutinized Paravicini's conduct and found that he had severely berated other European nations in the contract, using terms wholly unsuitable for a diplomatic document. They were also critical of the massacre he carried out on Rote, but in May 1757, a total of 777 captive Landu were nevertheless sold on the slave market, making a total of 50,012 guilders (Leupe 1877; s^rJacob 2007:527).

In other respects, too, the very actions attributed to Johannes Andreas Paravicini are controversial. He negotiated a commercial treaty with the governor of Lifau – still not an official enemy of the Netherlands – which Batavia was unwilling to endorse, and he interfered in local governance, an area that definitely did not fall under his remit. The commissioner arrived in Timor with a sizeable military force, a fact that probably exerted pressure on the local princes to sign the contract. The impressive celebrations and feasting that took place at the time of the signing also raises doubts as to whether the rulers really thought about the contents of the 30 paragraphs, or if they were simply drawn into something they did not quite comprehend (Fiedler 1931, 4:33). Like previous so-called contracts the agreement may, in Timorese eyes, have been a confirmation of alliance akin to the traditional blood-oath, rather than a set of fixed regulations.

NEW COMPANY INITIATIVES

Two years after Paravicini was commissioned, the leadership in Kupang was assumed by a similarly colourful and ambitious figure. This was the German Hans Albrecht von Plüskow, whose short career was to see both a climax to, and sudden implosion of, Dutch ambitions to master the unruly island. Born in Mecklenburg in 1709, the nobleman Von Plüskow arrived in the East Indies in 1753 at a relatively mature age. Many Germans were employed by the VOC, also in higher positions, and most of the soldiers in Fort Concordia in the mid-eighteenth century appear to have been German. After a modest career as an administrator at the warehouses of Batavia he was appointed *opperhoofd* in Timor

⁶⁰ VOC 2941 (1756), ff. 603-4, 627-8, 674, 677, 715-46; Van der Chijs 1872:220-6.

in 1758. His energetic and scrupulous character caught the attention of his superiors, who needed a more forceful hand than that of Elias Jacob Beynon (Fiedler 1931, 4:31-3).

Upon his arrival, Von Plüskow found a complicated situation. The Battle of Penfui had led to improvements in security in the area surrounding Kupang, but in much of western and central Timor it had led to a chaotic and insecure situation in a land already ravaged by war. The Company waged war in the same manner as the Topasses once had: expeditions of *Mardijkers*, *Sonbai* and *Amanuban* were dispatched to attack one particular location or another that was considered hostile. 'Enemy' heads would be taken, settlements burnt down and cattle slaughtered.⁶¹ Some of the new supposed allies were divided in their loyalties. In particular this was the case in the Greater Sonbai realm, which stretched over a large part of West Timor. After the exile of Emperor Dom Alfonso Salema and his heir, Nai Sane, the Company at first tried to bring the various *amaf naek* or *temukung* directly under its authority. This turned out to be impractical, however, and another son of the exiled ruler was officially installed as emperor. This was Don (Dom) Bernardo, who was told by the Dutch to stay in the vicinity of Bakunase, a few kilometres south of Kupang, where his kinsmen from Lesser Sonbai resided.⁶² In choosing this location, the Company created poor preconditions for wielding control over the extensive, mountainous and isolated territories of the inland: Don Bernardo would hardly have been able to direct the components of his realm even if he had held the power to rule directly. The executive regent, Nai Takaip, remained in the interior where he confiscated gold that was extracted on behalf of the Company and also led an unsuccessful kidnap attempt on the young emperor. In Mollo, in the central part of West Timor, the *usif* of the Oematan family kept his distance from the Company.⁶³

Similar divisions beset Ambeno, where part of the population moved into the Dutch sphere of power in 1751 while others remained under another leader. The unfortunate King Dom Paulo II was incarcerated by the Topasses in 1756 and again in 1761, during which time he was allegedly treated worse than an animal. His successors upheld a very

⁶¹ VOC 8349 (1757), ff. 61-2.

⁶² VOC 2799 (1752); VOC 8349 (1757), f. 62. The Dutch used the Spanish spelling 'Don' rather than the Portuguese 'Dom'.

⁶³ VOC 8350 (1758), ff. 62-5; VOC 8351 (1758), f. 27.

ambiguous political position until late in the nineteenth century. They maintained open relations with the Dutch and were sometimes counted as tributaries, while at the same time they married into the Hornay and Da Costa families as well as closely associating themselves with the Topass authority.⁶⁴ As for Belu, not even the immediate sphere of Wehali in south-central Timor was effectively controlled by the *liurai*. The sister principedom of Wewiku had a long history of actions taken against Wehali, and kept the munitions and tokens of vassalage that Johannes Andreas Paravicini sent to the *liurai* in 1756. Faced with Wewiku's bullying, and aggression from the nearby Suai, the VOC-minded *liurai* of Wehali and his two *loro* of Dirma and Lakekun had no other recourse than to escape to the Portuguese territory in the north in 1758.⁶⁵ The *liurai* ended up in Batugade, while the *loro* of Dirma found refuge in Tolgrita, both places being White Portuguese strongholds. Furthermore, three princes from Dirma were brought up and educated by the Portuguese in Lifau. The heartland of Wewiku-Wehali was subsequently dominated by a Portuguese captain called Alesu Fernandes, who had a hundred soldiers at his disposal. The presence of Fernandes apparently reversed what was left of Paravicini's diplomatic efforts in these quarters. One of the *liurai* of Wehali in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries bore the name Dom Alesu Fernandes, which testifies to the influence of the captain.⁶⁶ In a similar fashion to Ambeno, Wewiku-Wehali oscillated between Portugal and the Netherlands over the next century, and had very limited contact with either. From a non-colonial perspective, Wewiku-

⁶⁴ Castro 1867:283, 291. Pedro Hornay (ruled 1777-c.1795) and his son José Hornay (ruled c.1795-post 1817) were both described as brothers-in-law of Ambeno rulers.

⁶⁵ VOC 8352 (1758), ff. 36-7. According to a story told in 1892, a certain *maromak oan* or *liurai* called Don Pedro was expelled by his subjects and fled to Oecusse, taking with him the heirlooms of the realm. This would have happened 'maybe 50 to 100 years ago'. He was later killed in a fight against the Dutch and his widow ended up in Dili while the heirlooms fell into Portuguese hands (Jansen 1893:28-9). This story confuses the *maromak oan* and *liurai* titles; modern Belu tradition knows Don Peur (Pedro) as an early *liurai* (Tifa and Ita 2007:232). The story may also refer to the Belu troubles of the late eighteenth century. The loss of the valuable silver heirlooms was allegedly a principal reason for subsequent Belu resentment against the Portuguese.

⁶⁶ A list of *liurai*, derived from the royal family, and several *makoan* can be found in Tifa and Ita 2007:230-4. It states Alesu Fernandes as being the grandfather of *liurai* Sasita Mean, who in turn can be placed as being around in approximately the mid-nineteenth century. A *tongkat* with the name Don Aleesoe Fernando de Wayhale is still preserved in Wehali until the present day. There are several lists of *liurai* which contradict each other; see Vroklage 1953, I:582; Spillett 1999:166-8. The lack of corroborating Dutch and Portuguese data makes it impossible to establish a historical sequence of rulers with any confidence.

Wehali remained completely autonomous until circa 1900.⁶⁷

When Von Plüskow arrived, Kupang, the hub that attempted to control the turbulent area under the Company's command, was in many respects in a poor state. Fort Concordia was dilapidated as were the warehouses and there was a lack of Company soldiers, who moreover were in poor health and often undisciplined. The *Mardijkers* were a self-confident group who allowed the indigenous people to work their fields near Kupang; the Dutch, however, believed that they had the potential to become a Topass-like entity that may threaten the European establishment.

With characteristic energy, Hans Albrecht von Plüskow brought about several initiatives to run the 'colony'. One step was to improve the quality of indigenous rule. Minutes from the *vergaderingen* show him admonishing the local princes in the manner of a stern schoolmaster, as he pointed out their duties and the qualities expected of them as rulers. While Paravicini understood the Timorese system of an inactive king and an active regent, Von Plüskow insisted on treating the former as vassal rulers in a conventional sense. By strengthening their positions vis-à-vis their subjects and by making them conform to European ideals, the numerous princedoms could be controlled more effectively.

Von Plüskow's strategy included deposing and exiling individuals who did not live up to these ideals. This notion had not been put into practice on Timor by the Dutch prior to the Battle of Penfui; previously the main idea was to preserve a precarious equilibrium in the semi-besieged Kupang enclave. Under this new regime, however, the rulers were subjected to stricter demands.⁶⁸ The young Helong ruler Karel Buni (reign 1749-1760) was a semi-educated Christian. According to Paravicini he knew 'far too much to be a Timorese kinglet, and made malignant use of it'.⁶⁹ Von Plüskow made a number of rather imprecise

⁶⁷ The extent of Wehali's influence in the first half of the nineteenth century is an area of debate. A recent East Timorese historian claims that the *liurai* of Wehali fought an unsuccessful war against the powerful Luca in 1832-33, and was killed and beheaded. When the *loro* of Tahacae subsequently attacked the *loro* of Fialaran and Lamaknen, there was no *liurai* to mediate in the conflict. Since that time the various *loro* withdrew from the writ of the *liurai* of Wehali and the *maromak oan* (Marques Soares 2003:56). This account is not entirely endorsed by Dutch reports from the 1840s, which point out the important role the *liurai* of Wehali played as a mediator in Central Timor (ANRI Timor:54, *Register der handelingen en besluiten*, sub 24-5-1844; Brouwer 1849-50, H 731, KITLV).

⁶⁸ On Solor, two *sengaji* of Lohayong and Lamakera were in fact exiled in 1715 and 1721 respectively, and a similar fate befell a *manek* of Termanu, Ndaomanu, in 1738.

⁶⁹ VOC 2941 (1756), f. 259.

accusations against the king, namely that he indulged in improper behaviour and mistreated his *temukung*. Karel Buni replied that 'he wanted, according to the ideal of the old emperor of Sonbai, to sit still, eat, drink and sleep'.⁷⁰ This is of course the predominant virtue of a classical Timorese ruler, but to the *opperhoofd* such things were bad habits. The hapless prince was put in irons and shipped to Batavia. The Supreme Government was displeased by this brutal treatment of a member of the royal family, but it did send Karel Buni to Ceylon where he remained until after 1795. A rival branch from Pulau Semau took over the kingship, but soon turned out to be just as inefficient in its rule in Dutch eyes (Schooneveld-Oosterling 2007:522).

Von Plüskow also tried to manage the complicated affairs of Sonbai. The recalcitrant regent of Greater Sonbai, Nai Takaip, was arrested and exiled, while the emperor, Don Bernardo, was severely reprimanded by the *opperhoofd* for his alcoholism and ostensibly immoral conduct. None of this made Sonbai into a unified kingdom in the Western sense of the word. On the contrary, the *usif* of the districts of Bikomi and Tunbaba followed the example of Ambeno in their ever-shifting allegiance to Portugal and the VOC. Von Plüskow found the conduct of Bikomi to be treacherous and in 1760 forced the population of the small highland district to march to westernmost Timor, where they could be better monitored. The situation was complicated by a traditional wife-giving relationship (*barlaque*) between Bikomi and Sonbai. The Sonbai lord had the duty to marry a daughter of the ruling Lake clan of Bikomi.⁷¹ At the time, Don Bernardo lay on his death-bed. His only heir was a younger brother, Usi Ana, who had had some dealings with the enemies of Noimuti, and who was offered a daughter by Nai Lake of Bikomi, his uncle. Although Usi Ana and Nai Lake were both traitors by Von Plüskow's European standards, he felt he had to be pragmatic and so pardoned the two men. Usi Ana received his Lake wife and succeeded his brother as emperor.⁷²

During his visit in 1756, Paravicini confiscated the heirlooms of the two Sonbai realms. These heirlooms consisted of golden discs and

⁷⁰ VOC 2991 (1760), Resolutions, sub 9-4-1760.

⁷¹ During the late colonial period, Bikomi was dominated by two pairs of clans: Atok-Bana and Lake-Senak. Senak was the *atupas*, the resting ruler, while Lake was the male, active counterpart (H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:292).

⁷² VOC 2991 (1760), Resolutions, sub 27-2-1760, 18-4-1760.

similar objects to the value of several thousands of rijksdaalders. In particular, there were two discs called Coneboy and Labalaba that were much revered. As seen above, such treasures (*leu*) were hugely important as protective symbols of the Timorese princedoms.⁷³ Von Plüskow inquired at a *vergadering* to whom the heirlooms rightfully belonged. The new executive regent of Greater Sonbai pointed out that Lesser Sonbai was the elder party (*bapak*) in relation to Greater Sonbai, the junior party (*anak*). The objects were inspected by the princes in the *vergadering*, and then given to the Lesser Sonbai regent. It was also stipulated that the heirlooms and the position as ruler would pass to Greater Sonbai if the elder line died out.⁷⁴ In fact, this is exactly what happened in 1776.

A further initiative was to find sources of wealth which, in the spirit of mercantilism, could make the Company a profit. Von Plüskow had heard tantalizing stories of a pearl bank on the coast of Amarasi, but upon closer inspection it only yielded small pearls and made little economic difference. More effort was put into the gold deposit that was identified by Paravicini. At Tepas in the Greater Sonbai realm, and apparently at Noelege close to the Noilmina River, it was possible to pan for gold.⁷⁵ The means of extracting it were exceedingly simple. The Timorese dug a narrow channel that flowed over a flat stone. When water had flown over the stone for a while, they diverted the channel. The heavy sand full of gold stayed on the stone and could be collected. A number of slaves were sent to Tepas to work, but their numbers were not sufficient. Instead, Von Plüskow made a deal with the regent of Greater Sonbai, who promised to keep a thousand men panning for gold on a daily basis. The Sonbai elite was to hand over one third of the gold to the Company, and to use the rest to buy supplies from the very same Company. It appeared to be a win-win situation, but the quantities of gold retrieved were modest: in the final year of Von Plüskow's tenure, 45 tael of gold were produced – approximately 1.7 kilograms. It looks as if much of the gold was siphoned off by the Sonbai.⁷⁶

⁷³ Pelon 2002:34; Van Geuns 1927:467. Labalaba was the original name of the land of Kune before the Sonbai takeover (Müller 1857, II:150). The name Coneboy also seems to be connected with Kune.

⁷⁴ VOC 2991 (1760), Resolutions, sub 26-1-1760.

⁷⁵ The situation of Tepas was explained to me by Professor Hendrik Ataupah, Kupang, 27-11-2009. Tepas is not a river in itself, as is sometimes stated in the literature; the name means 'swamp'.

⁷⁶ Prospecting in West Timor in 1925 indicated that there are gold deposits close to Kupang and in various places of the highlands of the old Sonbai realm; however, there are no prospects for profitable exploitation. Moreover, what gold there is on Timor is pale and not very pure (Lombard-Jourdain 2000:177-8).

Although an administrator by profession, Hans Albrecht von Plüskow's legacy on Timor was one of military endeavours. He attempted to keep the new 'allies' on Timor and draw more areas under Company control without openly challenging the Estado da Índia.⁷⁷ The important Maubara principedom on the north coast, in present-day Timor Leste, was co-opted and a Dutch fortress was built there. With Maubara there followed a large number of neighbouring principedoms, such as Nusadila, Lanqueiro, Fatuboro, Deribate, Atsabe and Samoro.⁷⁸ Together they constituted a large area of East Timor; but their so-called submission was hardly more than temporary strategic convenience on their part; apart from Maubara, no VOC representative seems to have set foot there.

The principal enemies were the Topasses of Larantuka and Tulang Ikan-Animata, and Noimuti in the highlands, a notorious hideaway for robbers. In 1756 or 1757, João Hornay passed away and a brief dispute arose between the Hornays and the Da Costas, which also entailed a dispute between the Topasses in Larantuka and Timor. Perhaps in view of the danger posed by the Dutch, the dispute was resolved so that João's son Francisco Hornay III (ruled 1757-1777) governed in Animata and married a sister of Domingos da Costa II who held the title of *tenente general*. A younger brother of Domingos, António da Costa, ruled in Noimuti. Larantuka was controlled by João's sister Dona Maria.⁷⁹ The Supreme Government in Batavia entertained the somewhat outlandish idea of infiltrating this intricate family web; they proposed to let an attractive Dutch official marry Dona Maria, thereby bringing Larantuka into the VOC sphere (De Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:202).

Naturally, none of this actually took place. During a time of official peace with the governor in Lifau, Von Plüskow attacked Noimuti in 1758 with a well-equipped army of 5,000 men, who marched over some 160 kilometres of hilly terrain dragging artillery pieces with them. Von Plüskow managed to conquer two fortified places outside Noimuti, but then the enterprise floundered when faced with the peculiarities of Timorese warfare. Much in the same way as Gaspar de Costa had faced

⁷⁷ In 1759 he sent a small expedition to Sumba under the command of one Hans Erasmusz, who concluded that no commercial advantage could be won for the Company as long as the petty warfare between the domains continued. In addition to this, the number of raids carried out by Makassarese pirates-cum-traders rapidly increased in this period (Leupe 1879:227, 230).

⁷⁸ VOC 3024 (1761); De Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:205.

⁷⁹ VOC 2908 (1757), ff. 9-10.

problems, Von Plüskow was also unable to use the size of his army to his advantage due to issues of cohesiveness, and he eventually had to retreat from Noimuti with its strong defences of a triple palisade.⁸⁰ The following year he made a fresh attempt, starting with the lowland strongholds of the Topasses. In July 1759, Tulang Ikan and Animata were swiftly captured in a seaborne expedition that originated from Kupang, while the weak governor of Lifau dared not lift a finger against the enterprise. Meanwhile the Larantuqueiros carried out an attack against Fort Henricus on Solor which was repulsed with losses for the attackers.⁸¹ The only thing now left standing in the way of Von Plüskow's plans was Noimuti. Once again the highland stronghold was besieged by a large VOC-led force, and once again it prevailed. Many Topasses from the lowlands joined the defenders in Noimuti, as well as a number of fugitive slaves and other runaways from the VOC sphere, all of whom flocked to the place. These people knew the harsh fate that would await them if the stronghold fell to the Dutch, and so they fought with a desperate courage. As for the Company allies, they acted in much the same way as always and not in the least bit as a military unit should, refusing to storm Noimuti. The dreaded smallpox raged throughout the area and the Sawunese contingent withdrew in the face of the epidemic. A rash sortie by the defenders completed the Dutch fiasco. In October, Von Plüskow had to admit defeat. He retreated to Kupang, leaving behind the cannon that had previously been carried with such effort. The Topasses now established a new stronghold in Oecusse on the coast, a few kilometres to the east of Lifau.⁸²

Nevertheless, internal Portuguese intrigues seemed to play into Von Plüskow's hands. After 1759, three persons acted as caretaker governors in Lifau. One of them, Vicente Ferreira de Carvalho, was forced to flee by another, the Dominican padre Jacinto de Conceição.⁸³ The padre drew upon Topass support, thus meaning the struggle was also a case of White versus Black Portuguese. When Ferreira de Carvalho appeared in Kupang in 1761, Von Plüskow thought it the ideal opportunity to fi-

⁸⁰ VOC 8352 (1758), ff. 7-12.

⁸¹ VOC 2965 (1759), ff. 12-5, 29-33.

⁸² VOC 2965 (1759), ff. 15-8; Fiedler 1931, 7:2-3. There are still oral traditions detailing the Dutch defeat in Noimuti; see Tey Seran et al. 2006:72-3. The extant stories mention a Manuel da Costa as being the war leader, and state that preparations included a blend of traditional *leu musu* rituals and church ceremonies.

⁸³ The third party, interestingly, was a native Timorese, King Dom José of Alas (Matos 1974a:97, 139).

nally achieve domination over the island. The refugee, namely, declared Oecusse and Noimuti to be rebels against the king of Portugal, and officially ceded these places to the Company in return for its assistance in his bid to regain power.⁸⁴ Without waiting for endorsement from Batavia, the belligerent *opperhoofd* proceeded with his plans. The ensuing events are described in a letter of November 1761, written by three Company officials to the authorities in Batavia, and they are well worth quoting:

The *opperhoofd* Hans Albrecht von Plüskow went to Lifau with the ship *De Batavier* along with other private sloops and ships, on 8 October. He was accompanied by the Second Lieutenant Fredrik Karel Marlier and the scribe Willem Aadrian van Este, besides most of the militaries, Europeans as well as Balinese, and some burghers, *Mardijkers* and 400 Sawunese. The aim was to restore the governor who had fled from this place. His Excellency luckily arrived there on 17 October. First, the Lifau governor took back his power and arrested the rebellious padre-governor [Jacinto de Conceição]. The padre died a few days later in custody.

Meanwhile the Topass chiefs of Oecusse and Noimuti, Francisco Hornay and António da Costa – who were abandoned by the White Portuguese and knew that the latter had handed them over to the Noble Company for extermination – asked the *opperhoofd* by way of an envoy for a pardon. They sought Company protection under assurances that they were intent on throwing away the Portuguese flag [no longer adhere to Portugal]. The *opperhoofd* again sent envoys on behalf of the Company in order to know their true wish and intention. These came back with the message that [the Topasses] only wished to be friends and allies with the Noble Company, and to be accepted like the other allied kings. They wished for no more than to speak with the *opperhoofd* in order to swear their oath of loyalty. However, they alleged that they were afraid to come to Lifau under the eyes of the Portuguese. For a second time they sent two envoys to assure the *opperhoofd* of their good intentions, and to apply for a Company flag.

The *opperhoofd* suggested that the two envoys remain for a few days on the sloop of the burgher David Schrijver, where they would be treated with food, drink and all necessities. The *opperhoofd* thereupon sent them a Company flag according to their request. Through a letter he let the envoys

⁸⁴ VOC 3024 (1761), f. 56-8.

know that since they did not wish to come ashore at Lifau, they may rather appear at the Company ship that lay in the roadstead, in order to speak with His Excellency. He also told them to mention what day [Hornay and Da Costa] would like to come, so that the *opperhoofd* could pick them up halfway in a small craft. The two chiefs agreed on that and wrote a letter to the *opperhoofd* in Portuguese, stating that they were prepared to come aboard on Wednesday, 11 November. But instead two Oecusse arrived at the cape of Lifau that afternoon. They came aboard and made it known by signs that the two chiefs Hornay and Da Costa were arriving. The *opperhoofd*, without wasting any time, stepped into the small craft accompanied by the Second Lieutenant Fredrik Karel Marlier, the burghers David Schrijver, Hendrik d’Moucheron and Carel Cobusz, besides the two envoys Bartolomeu Dias and Salvador Pires from Oecusse, and went over there.

However, as he did not [?] see Hornay or Da Costa arriving, His Excellency and all the aforementioned people stepped ashore. He was then embraced by Hornay in person, and was received by a lot of people with tokens of honour, while the Company flag was hoisted. He [Von Plüskow] sat down and spoke to these people. Then the *opperhoofd* and his company, and all the slaves who had come with him, were, without warning, miserably massacred in a treacherous fashion. After that the motley crew rushed to the small craft, where they finished off yet six men and an under steersman in the same way. Only a sailor, a common burgher and a slave boy of David Schrijver were able to save themselves by swimming ashore. In addition, the scribe Van Este had not been able to come along due to sickness, but had remained in Lifau and thus remained alive. Upon his arrival [back to Kupang] he recounted this story.

Due to this disaster, the government of Lifau once again fell into disorder, as they could only hope for Company assistance to defend their government against the attack by the Oecusse. Thus the governor, his wife and two other Portuguese were brought back here [to Kupang] again on *De Batavier*, and once again sought Company protection. All the others fled aboard the Macao ship and turned their course towards Dili in order to seek safety there. And they left the government of Lifau as prey [to the Topasses].⁸⁵

At first glance, the massacre was a clear-cut case of Topass treachery. However, as time progressed, other pieces of information reached the

⁸⁵ VOC 3002 (1761), ff. 1734-8.

Dutch ears that complicated the situation. By this time, fugitive slaves from the Dutch sphere constituted a substantial part of the Oecusse population. The contract that was being drafted stipulated that these ex-slaves were to be returned to their former masters; it goes without saying that those concerned would do their utmost to avoid this fate. Among those present at the shore on that fateful November day was a former slave who had escaped to the Topasses and risen to the rank of captain. He was the first one to pull the trigger of his musket, firing at the hapless Dutch, whereupon others followed suit.⁸⁶ Furthermore, some days before the massacre a Dutch lieutenant had visited Oecusse in order to translate the draft of the contract for Hornay and Da Costa. The settlement was suddenly agitated, when inhabitants received the news that the ship belonging to the VOC captain Lindholm had fired at the people on the shore. The Topass leaders angrily told the lieutenant to get out quickly to avoid being lynched, which he did. As we have seen, his flight only prolonged his life by a few days. Von Plüskow was furious with Lindholm and threatened to send him to Batavia as a prisoner, but the damage was already done.⁸⁷ A third assertion was put forward by Francisco Hornay himself in 1767, during a brief flirtation with the VOC: the ungrateful White Portuguese had incited the Oecusseans to kill the Dutchmen.⁸⁸

While the circumstances remain shrouded in mystery, the consequences are much clearer. The Dutch project immediately imploded; Batavia reacted in much the same way as it did after the killings of Jacob Verheyden and Jan Anthony Meulenbeek: the *opperhoofd* had been careless and only had himself to blame. He had engaged in an adventure that was unlikely to be advantageous to the Company, and there was no need to equip a retaliatory expedition. The massacre was thus never avenged, which, understandably, was deemed to be a sign of weakness by the Timorese. For many months the Topasses and their Timorese clients celebrated by parading the head of the Mecklenburger who strove to conquer Timor for the Dutch.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ VOC 8359 (1766), ff. 17-8.

⁸⁷ VOC 3059 (1762), f. 9.

⁸⁸ VOC 3215 (1767), f. 164. A similar story was told in 1772 by the French visitor François-Etienne de Rosily, who heard that Domingos da Costa II massacred the Dutch in order to please the White Portuguese (Lombard-Jourdain 1982:93). Various rumours relating to the murder, of uncertain origins, are given by Heijmering 1847:177-82.

⁸⁹ VOC 3002 (1761), f. 1729; VOC 3059 (1762), f. 9; Boxer 1947:16.

Colonial retreat and maintenance

TWO PORTS IN DECLINE

The hectic final days of Von Plüskow were witness to the deepest humiliation yet of the Estado da Índia and the illusory triumph of the VOC. In the following years, however, both entities led a troublesome existence, exhibiting apparent difficulties in co-opting their clients. Unlike its Portuguese counterpart, the VOC port was not seriously threatened, but it was increasingly clear that its former role as the site of a stranger king could not easily be translated on a Timor-wide level given the obvious difficulties in forging an effective political network. This role, on the other hand, is one that the monarchy of Portugal had occupied for many years: a network underpinned by politico-religious symbols helped the Estado to survive against seemingly overwhelming odds.

From a Dutch as well as from an indigenous perspective, there could hardly have been a worse successor to Von Plüskow. Johan ter Herbruggen (gov. 1762-1765) seems to have easily been the most covetous and corrupt *opperhoofd* of the VOC period. The Timor documents from the mid-1760s abound with stories detailing his extortion of local princes and townsfolk. The five original allies nevertheless remained fundamentally loyal to the VOC. They now carried an official rank that was higher than the more populated domains of the interior, and when the Dutch offered the rulers the title of Don (Dom) like those of the formerly Portuguese lands, they proudly declared that they had no need for Portuguese titles. It was quite another matter, however, with the recent allies made inland. Latent dissatisfaction with the Company system came to a head with a series of uprisings during the time of Ter Herbruggen's successors.¹

¹ Ter Herbruggen also sent a pirate-like expedition to Sumba, which alienated the chiefs of that island from the Company (VOC 3251 [1769], f. 744).

The extraction of gold from the rivers was an unpopular burden for the Sonbai of the interior to carry. Accidents occurred and the sub-rulers feared for their own safety, since the kinsmen of the casualties would rather turn their anger towards them than towards the Dutch.² The project soon became loaded with danger from another quarter. The *usif* of Mollo was an Oematan, as was the regent family of Lesser Sonbai, and after the Battle of Penfui he was assumed to be subordinate to the emperor of this princedom.³ He nevertheless acted in a fiercely independent manner, carrying out massacres in various gold-mining camps in 1765 and 1767. The precise cause of these deeds remained unclear to the Dutch, but there were ominous rumours that the Sonbai dynasty itself was involved.⁴ If the intention was to guard the Sonbai inland from the covetous Dutch then it turned out to be very successful. The then *opperhoofd*, Alexander Cornabé (gov. 1767-1772), had no means to avenge the last massacre, and the gold-mining project ceased completely by circa 1770 (Müller 1857, II:138-9). Indeed, after Von Plüskow, no VOC *opperhoofd* took the trouble to travel inland, complete with all its dangers.

The weakness of the Company was similarly demonstrated by Timau, the area of Amfoan that lay on the north coast. When King Dom Bernardo da Costa died in a skirmish in 1753, he was succeeded by his brother Tusala. Whilst initially praising Tusala for a number of virtues the Dutch soon changed their opinion when he began to engage in anti-VOC activities. In 1767, shortly after he had committed some particularly bloody acts against the Company allies, he was suddenly pardoned by the *opperhoofd*. In much the same way as previous instances, the Company again realized that they had no power to punish determined opponents, as Cornabé himself admitted. One reason as to why Kupang was so powerless, was that few Dutch troops could be allocated to such an unprofitable island. After 1733, malaria killed off a large proportion of incoming Europeans to Batavia, which suddenly made Kupang the healthier place to be. All of this affected the VOC's ability to staff the outposts in the archipelago or to organize military expeditions.⁵

While Dutch power in West Timor declined, the Portuguese sphere

² VOC 3473 (1777), ff. 515b-516a.

³ VOC 3473 (1777), f. 515b.

⁴ VOC 3151 (1765), ff. 11-3; VOC 3215 (1767), ff. 665a.

⁵ Van der Brug 1994:155; Jones 2003:44. The mortality rate for Batavia in 1768/69 was 36%, for Banten 19%, for Cape Town 17% and for Timor 6%. In Indonesia, only Makassar had lower death rates.

fell into chaos, reminiscent of the situation in the early eighteenth century. In the wake of the Von Plüskow affair, a number of interim juntas attempted to govern the ‘colony’. A central figure in the somewhat confused political situation of the 1760s was the Oecusse leader, Francisco Hornay III. Through the murder of Von Plüskow, his Topasses had probably regained much of the military prestige that they had lost in 1749 (Andaya 2010). Francisco Hornay was a sly yet enterprising figure who was guided by his activist mother, Dona Agostinha. This lady was, according to the Lifau government, ‘the person who foments and has always fomented all the wicked things and machinations against this port and all the royal domains on these islands’ (Castro 1867:260). Hornay briefly joined one of the juntas in 1762-1763 but then had a falling-out with his colleagues and withdrew. In May 1766, he openly rebelled against Lifau, and in July of the following year he attacked the port.⁶ The conflicts that were apparent in these years cannot simply be reduced to the old White versus Black Portuguese dichotomy. Hornay made overtures towards Alexander Cornabé and asked for protection and assistance against Lifau, but not every Topass appreciated his venture. The Company was still perceived as the antithesis of both Portugal and the true religion, and the Da Costas preferred instead to maintain contact with the Lifau government, leading to a situation where the Topass group was temporarily split into two camps.⁷

Matters came to a head in 1768 when a new regular governor sailed to Timor. This was António José Telles de Meneses (gov. 1768-1776), who had gained much experience as an administrator in Mozambique and Macao. His arrival coincided with the death of Raja Dom Gaspar of Larantuka, who favoured the Estado da Índia. It was only by this time that the native rajás of Larantuka had become both active and resourceful rulers, at roughly the same time as the Hornays and Da Costas confined their activities to Timor. The new raja, Dom Manuel was in favour of the Topasses and sent auxiliaries to Hornay, who by now had blocked Lifau. The Dutch described the struggle as a showdown between the White and Black Portuguese that could only possibly end with the destruction of one or other of them.⁸ There was bitter personal resentment against the whites, who arrested 23 prominent Topasses when they

⁶ VOC 3779 (1785-88), f. 5730-1.

⁷ VOC 3215 (1767), f. 654b.

⁸ VOC 3249 (1769), f. 746.

came to negotiate. The Lifau fortifications were too strong to be taken by assault, but Hornay managed to block the port from the land as well as the sea. The Da Costa brothers Domingos and António joined Hornay in the enterprise.⁹

Finally António José Telles de Meneses realized the impossibility of beating the hostile onslaught. He was responsible for 1,200 people in Lifau, including slaves, and there was no way of protecting them. Subsequently he resolved to give up the post that he had endured for 67 troubled years. During the night of 11 August 1769, he put artillery and inhabitants into the available boats, set fire to all the buildings and left in haste.¹⁰ During the siege Francisco Hornay sent envoys to tell Cornabé that he may well consider turning Lifau over to the VOC. Similar words had been uttered eight years previously, with a now well-known result, and Batavia as well as Amsterdam reiterated their wish not to get involved with the internecine Portuguese troubles. Such an action would only be interpreted as trouble, trouble that was likely to outweigh the benefits of such a mission. After Francisco Hornay had taken Lifau he declined to follow up the previous offer.¹¹ His relations with Kupang nevertheless remained good, and – if a somewhat later Portuguese text can be trusted – his party swore a blood-oath with the Company and was given back the head of Gaspar da Costa, slain twenty years earlier, an important symbolic gesture.¹²

The Topass victory, however, was hollow. The reward for the lengthy siege was a burnt-out settlement with little or no booty to be had. The Topasses kept an area of land centred in Oecusse, plus the highland enclave of Noimuti, as well as concluding a symbiotic relationship with the original lords of the land of Ambeno. The Hornay or Da Costa leader was henceforth known as king or raja of Oecusse, indicative of an ongoing indigenization and a change from the early colonial economic structures. These structures, which also exhibited precolonial features, had in the past included coercive trade with local polities, and had been

⁹ Matos 1974a:438. The Da Costa brothers were among those 23 people imprisoned in Lifau. According to a Dutch source seen by Boxer (1947:16), these people were executed by Telles de Meneses. De Rosily's account from 1772 nevertheless indicates that Domingos da Costa survived (Lombard-Jourdain 1982:93).

¹⁰ Telles de Meneses's own account of this is found in Castro 1867:252-3.

¹¹ VOC 8301 (1772), ff. 25-6.

¹² VOC 3779 (1785-88), f. 5732. The issue of winning back the heads of slain rulers is a theme in Timorese oral tradition (Parera 1994:190-3).

based on political dominance over wide territories. These times, however, were now over, and the very word ‘Topass’ seems to have disappeared from usage in the nineteenth century.¹³ The Dutch impact was no doubt a principal reason for the declining Topass fortunes – in spite of the Dutch experiencing their own difficulties. While some new allies of the Company became unwilling and even defected, they did not return to the Topass network.¹⁴ The old military advantage of the mestizos was lessened by the dissemination of firearms among indigenous groups. The incomes derived from sandalwood, beeswax and slaves that co-operation with the West Timorese domains had engendered before 1749, did not reappear. Larantuka and Sikka on Flores retained a (mainly Black) Portuguese attachment, and the rajas of Larantuka had matrimonial ties with the Hornays.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the indigenous Florenese rajas rather than the Hornays and Da Costas ruled the former Portuguese stronghold after the 1760s. Trade on Timor by the late eighteenth century onwards was dominated by Chinese people whose flexible approach to business replaced the older structures. Global trade quickened during the same period and with it the Chinese junk trade in Southeast Asia. Although the junk trade to Batavia declined, the Chinese staying in, or going to, Timor stabilized their position.¹⁶

Furthermore, much of whatever influence the Topasses might have enjoyed in East Timor vanished with their seizure of Lifau. The royalist fleet led by Telles de Meneses made a stopover in Batugade and pondered upon the viability of a new permanent stronghold. In spite of the Lifau debacle, the East Timorese elites were not averse to receiving the White Portuguese in their land. While the siege was still in progress, they decided to settle at Vemasse, whose king, Dom Felipe de Freitas Soares, was attached to the Portuguese; this was the same Vemasse that was

¹³ Nineteenth-century European officials do not use the term in their reports, but rather speak of Oecusse people (Oeykoessiers). The term is nevertheless preserved in the ritual language in Amfoan and Oecusse (Hendrik Ataupah, Kupang, interview 27-11-2009).

¹⁴ At best, they entered into temporary strategic alliances with Oecusse. Thus Nai To Oematan of Mollo, an *usif* subordinated to Greater Sonbai, quarrelled with the then emperor in 1798, and briefly co-operated with Pedro Hornay (ANRI VOC:4059, Missive, Batavia to Kupang, 2-3-1802). Mollo was soon inside the Sonbai sphere once again, however. The king of Ambeno, the original lord of the land, was closely related to the Hornays, but he, too, sent periodical gifts of homage to the Dutch authorities. As late as 1851, a prince of Ambeno visited Kupang (ANRI Timor:60, *kort verslag*, sub 20-5-1851).

¹⁵ Castro 1867:212. Larantuka was still dependent on the Topasses around 1780 (Van Hogendorp 1780:97).

¹⁶ Schlicher 1996:100-2; Pan 1999:51-2; Gupta 2001:123; Lombard-Jourdain 1998.

ravaged by Matheus da Costa in 1668. Although Vemasse offered good defences, Telles de Meneses finally decided upon Dili in the territory of the important Motael (Mota Ain) principedom. Dili, it will be remembered, served as a refuge for the White Portuguese in 1761. A new Portuguese stronghold was founded there on 10 October 1769.¹⁷

Dili offered more advantages than any other feasible alternative. It was unhealthy, but little attention was paid to this at the time. Coral banks protected the beach from the breakers, which made it the only place suitable to anchor large ships on the island. Kupang, Lifau and Oecusse are ports that are open to adverse winds (Castro 1862:474-5). Dili was surrounded by a sizeable plain suitable for rice cultivation, so that its hinterland could support a considerable population, and to the south were swampy lands that offered protection against native enemies. The king of Motael, Dom Alexandre Rodrigues Pereira, enthusiastically offered gifts to the Crown of Portugal: large fields and lands for cultivation, a supply of firewood, wood for construction, horses and men (Matos 1974a:98-9). Soon after they had settled at Dili, the majority of the rulers of the Province of Belu came to offer their homage to the governor; in that way, the fact that the royalist centre had moved to the east, served to tie the East Timorese domains to the Crown. In Dili, Telles de Meneses was present along with some 40 White Portuguese and a sizeable troop of sepoys, non-white soldiers trained in Western fashion, with most of them coming from Goa and Mozambique. Only at this point in time do we find clear evidence in the sources of the presence of soldiers from Portuguese Africa in Timor.¹⁸

¹⁷ Marques Soares 2003:44 relates some details about this process that were not found in published Portuguese sources, and were possibly dependent upon oral tradition. After fleeing Lifau, Teles de Meneses would have visited Kefamenanu and Kupang, before being expelled to Dili by the ruler of Sonbai. Dutch archival sources on the other hand indicate that Sonbai was, for once, not involved in this cataclysmic affair.

¹⁸ Lombard-Jourdain 1982:94. As we have seen, there were 'Kaffers' present on Timor at the time of António Hornay. There were Goa plans to provide reinforcements to the hard-pressed António Coelho Guerreiro by way of *cafres* in the early years of the eighteenth century, although in the end they do not seem to have reached Timor (Faria de Moraes 1944:125). By 1813, out of a population of 1,768 in Dili, 688 were African slaves, which was apparently the result of the annual import of slaves from Mozambique to Portuguese Asia (Gunn n.y.:52-3).

CHAOS IN THE WEST, STABILIZATION IN THE EAST

With the stirring events of 1761 and 1769, the stage was set for almost two centuries of colonial division. It was a division that was of practically no consequence for large groups of Timorese who had little or nothing to do with either the Dutch or the Portuguese. Still, the Battle of Penfui, the murder of Von Plüskow, and the transfer of administrative power from Lifau to Dili were events that provided the prerequisites for a re-drawing of the political map in 1859, which was finalized in 1916, and again in 1999. We shall now take a brief look at the ways in which the two colonial entities managed to stabilize their respective spheres in the years leading up to the Napoleonic Wars.

The Atoni princedoms of Amanatun, Amarasi and Amfoan-Timau, and the Tocodede-speaking Maubara, enjoyed predominantly amicable relations with the Company during the last three decades of the century. Ambeno, as well as Belu (in its more restricted Central Timorese sense), continued in their vacillating stance and had occasionally written the annual native letter of homage to Batavia. Jean-Baptiste Pelon noted in 1778 that the princes on the south coast of the island would favour either Dutch or Portuguese traders, depending on the circumstances, but had not formed a steady attachment to one or the other. Ironically, this was the only area left on Timor where one could still obtain a good amount of sandalwood, the principal economic rationale behind the foreign presence (Pelon 2002:8-9). As the sandalwood stands along the coast continued to decrease in number, the price of sandalwood rose from 15 cents per pound before 1750 to 55 cents in the late 1780s. Timorese suppliers now tended to sort the wood according to its quality rather than just sell it at a single price. Under the right conditions, there were therefore still profits to be made, profits which were enhanced by the fact that the Chinese demand for sandalwood increased during this period because of the trade with China carried on by so called country traders. Moreover, in 1792 the Company tried to reduce the costs of maintaining the Kupang post by loosening the restrictions on the Timor trade (Jacobs 2000:35).

The major problem for the Dutch were the important inland realms of Greater Sonbai and Amanuban. The emperor Usi Ana, alias Albertus Johannes Taffy, passed away in 1768; according to the rumours, he

had been poisoned.¹⁹ His young son Alphonsus Adrianus, or Nai Kau Sonbai, (1762-1802) was raised in the household of the *opperhoofden* in order to avoid the problems that haunted Dutch relations with previous emperors. The result, however, was not the outcome desired by the Dutch, according to the sombre judgement of *opperhoofd* Barend Fokkens: there was reason to fear that the youngster would develop the same ostensibly bad character as his father.²⁰ To make matters more complicated, the young man inherited the lordship of Lesser Sonbai when that line expired in 1776.²¹ For the first time since 1657-1658 there was technically one single Sonbai realm, but the union was not destined to be a long or lucky one.

Later Dutch writers tended to blame the miserly *opperhoofd* Willem Adriaan van Este (gov. 1777-1789) for the Dutch-Sonbai break that subsequently followed. According to a well-known story told in the nineteenth century, the young Alphonsus Adrianus happened to overhear an ominous conversation between Van Este, an influential Chinese man and the emperor's governor and relative, Bernardus Nisoni. The three men resolved to remove Alphonsus Adrianus from power in order to further their own ambitions. The emperor immediately mounted a horse and galloped out of Kupang, never to return. Instead, he found that he had followers in the highlands where the name of Sonbai was still held in high regard (Heijmering 1847:193; B. 1852:219; Veth 1855:708). Nothing of this kind is hinted at in the reports of Van Este himself, who only admits that the emperor secretly left Kupang for unspecified reasons, and that he initiated trouble inland in 1782-1783.²² Oral Timorese tradition, however, suggests a 'pull' rather than 'push' factor by way of explanation for the flight of Alphonsus Adrianus. The highland chiefs found the absence of a monarch in their territory distressing and sent a delegation to Kupang, which persuaded the young ruler to return with them (Middelkoop 1938:435; Fobia 1984:91-2). Regardless of the details, the Timorese perspective on the story is indeed plausible, since a symbolic central figure was no doubt needed to maintain the coherence of the Sonbai realm. In Alphonsus Adrianus, the highland Atoni received a lord who was an activist figure, and therefore quite atypical

¹⁹ VOC 3779 (1785-88), f. 8707.

²⁰ VOC 3473 (1777), ff. 514b-515a.

²¹ VOC 3465 (1776).

²² VOC 3649 (1783).

of the traditional diarchy. In a sense he reinvented Sonbai and made it into an aggressive and even expansive polity that, for the first time in living memory, depended on neither the Dutch nor the Portuguese. His European upbringing may have influenced his rather intricate political manoeuvring, although he acted much like any Southeast Asian ‘man of prowess’.

Gathering thousands of followers, Alphonsus Adrianus formed an alliance with Amfoan-Timau and Ambeno, and also with a dissatisfied prince from Amanuban called Tobani. With these supposed allies of the Company at his side he attacked Mollo, a Sonbai component which over the last few decades had followed an independent route, and plundered its almost impenetrable mountain stronghold of Kauniki.²³ Adrianus’ former governor, Bernardus Nisnoni, tried to talk him out of the enterprise via envoys, but to no avail, which was hardly surprising given his previous plotting against the young ruler. The emperor nevertheless continued to send gifts of homage to Kupang year after year, so that it seemed as if he were not really working against the VOC. In 1786 he allowed his troops to attack Dirma in the Belu area, which was under the control of the Dutch. He captured the *loro* and his family along with a booty consisting of cattle, horses and people. Some captives were sent as a present to Van Este, who was not amused.²⁴ It seems that Alphonsus Adrianus made use of the simmering rivalry between Kupang and Dili, playing the two colonial entities against each other: Dili by this time had claimed Dirma as part of its territory and its governor, João Baptista Vieira Godinho, reacted angrily to the ‘Dutch’ incursion. In spite of his actions in Dirma, Alphonsus Adrianus made contact with a Portuguese padre who resided in Noimuti and who sold weapons to the Sonbai lord via Oecusse. The Dutch found out about this trade, which aroused their anger against the Portuguese. The following years saw a very heated exchange of letters between the two ports, with both sides accusing the other of acting in an outrageous and dishonest way.²⁵

By this time, a state of open warfare existed between Sonbai and the Company. In 1786, Emperor Adrianus led an attack on the very heart of the area under direct VOC control, which cost the life of the king of Kupang, Kolang Tepak. Soon after this, his troops devastated the settle-

²³ VOC 3674 (1784), ff. 5, 39; De Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:214.

²⁴ VOC 3779 (1785-88), ff. 5692-5.

²⁵ VOC 3779 (1785-88), ff. 5705-6, 5749-51.

ment of Pariti on the north-eastern shore of Kupang Bay.²⁶ Captain William Bligh, who arrived in Kupang in 1789 after his remarkable sea trip, commented that the ravages committed during the war had brought about such a scarcity of provisions that the effects could still clearly be seen at the time of his stay.²⁷ Finally Van Este took the less than heroic, but well-trying step of granting the emperor a pardon in 1788. This being done, Kupang reported to Batavia that everything on Timor was once again peaceful and in order.²⁸

This was, however, not quite true. Greater Sonbai remained an autonomous entity that managed its own affairs, and Alphonsus Adrianus was never actually punished; he continued to reside on the fortified rock of Nefo a few days travel east of Kupang, until his death in 1802.²⁹ After the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in 1780, the Company suffered an acute financial crisis, which meant that unprofitable outposts became a low priority (Gaastra 2003). In these waning days of the VOC, there were clear indications of the level of impotency of the Dutch establishment, reminiscent of the worst days of humiliation suffered by the Portuguese Lifau government. In 1792, Alphonsus Adrianus intervened in a succession issue in Amabi and ravaged land that was loyal to the Company. The Dutch *opperhoofd* Timoteus Wanjon (gov. 1789-1797) was bewildered by the ferocious behaviour of a principedom that had just 'submitted' to VOC rule, but he could do little about it. At precisely the same time, Maubara, which doggedly remained a part of the precarious VOC system, came under severe threat from Oecusse and Ambeno, and this time Wanjon reacted quickly. He gave his blessings to Alphonsus Adrianus to intervene in Maubara, on the condition that it must not be known that Kupang was behind the enterprise; the governor in Dili should not be provoked more than necessary. In other words, Wanjon cunningly used the same ruler, who had just ravaged the

²⁶ ANRI Timor:7, *Algemeene missiven* (1786); VOC 3787 (1787), f. 578a; VOC 3810 (1788), f. 41.

²⁷ Miller 1996:65. A short Dutch account of the mutiny on the *Bounty* and Bligh's adventurous sea journey to Kupang can be found in VOC 3859 (1789), ff. 4-5.

²⁸ VOC 3659 (1789), f. 76-9.

²⁹ B. 1852:219 incorrectly asserts that Alphonsus Adrianus died in 1819, while an original Dutch source actually reports his death in early 1803, implying that it took place in 1802 (ANRI VOC:4059, Missive from Batavia to Kupang, 15-3-1803). A long letter that Alphonsus Adrianus sent to the Company in 1798 contains a circumstantial story about a conflict with the Oematan lord of Mollo (LOR 2238, UB Leiden; *Raad der Aziatische Bezittingen* 1800-1806, No. 131, Nationaal Archief). Oral tradition also mentions that Nai Kau Sonbai (Alphonsus Adrianus) fell out with Kono-Oematan after he had killed two of their men, who were accused of having an illicit affair with his wife (Fobia 1984:92-3).

land belonging to a faithful ally, to solve a problem for the VOC. The Dutch to all intents and purposes, made a virtue out of necessity and improvised their shaky Timor policy as far as was possible. In this case it worked, since the commanders of Oecusse and Ambeno mismanaged the operation, and Maubara remained affiliated to the VOC for the time being.³⁰

In actual fact, Greater Sonbai held a degree of influence in Belu. Alphonsus Adrianus was reportedly the 'support and consolation' of the central Tetun regents by the 1790s.³¹ The Oecusse ruler Pedro Hornay, now at peace with Dili, attempted to tie these regents more closely to the Portuguese network by spreading a false rumour that the Sonbai lord had died. The fraud was soon discovered, and the Belu suggested that Alphonsus Adrianus join forces to attack the lands of Hornay, but Timoteus Wanjon advised against the adventure and strongly urged the emperor to keep the peace with Oecusse. Nevertheless, hostilities between Oecusse and Sonbai are known to have lasted until at least 1810, and to have had dire consequences for the Portuguese sandalwood trade.³² The contrast with the heyday of Topass rule is apparent, and confirms what is said in a Dutch report from circa 1819: the power of the Black Portuguese had receded greatly in recent times, and they were not nearly as feared as before.³³

The active stance assumed by Alphonsus Adrianus also sparked off a few other cases of recalcitrance towards the Company. The Amanuban prince Tobani claimed a new position as ruler of the principedom, and used the 1786 warfare to attack the king, despite his Dutch support. The larger part of Amanuban henceforth acknowledged Tobani, who acted with great spite towards the Dutch.³⁴ Especially under the leadership of his son Don Louis (r. circa 1808-1824), Amanuban developed into a belligerent power that managed to hold British and Dutch adversaries at bay in spite of several expeditions. In the same way, the important Belu realm of Fialaran denounced the VOC in 1786 and made contact with

³⁰ VOC 3960 (1792), ff. 55-60; Castro 1867:291. In a letter of homage from 23-11-1798, the East Timorese domains Nusadila and Lanqueiro are also mentioned, together with Maubara, as being affiliated to the Dutch (*Raad der Aziatische Bezittingen* 1800-1806, No. 131, Nationaal Archief). In a treaty of 1859, the Netherlands finally ceded Maubara to Portugal. The takeover was implemented in 1861 (ANRI Timor:104, *Kort verslag*, sub 22-3-1861; Pélissier 1996:40).

³¹ *Comité Oost-Indische Handel en Bezittingen* 1795, No. 102, Nationaal Archief.

³² *Comité Oost-Indische Handel en Bezittingen* 1795, No. 102, Nationaal Archief; Castro 1867:213-5.

³³ *Iets over het eiland Timor*, c.1819, H 245a, KITLV.

³⁴ For a legendary version of this, see Parera 1994:200.



The Sonbai ruler Pieter Nube, who ruled in 1798-1821, with French visitors. Illustration by Jacques Arago, who followed the expedition of L.-C. Freycinet in 1818. This is the only known portrait of an early Sonbai ruler.

Dili, possibly because of the perceived level of Dutch impotency in the face of the Sonbai onslaught.³⁵

During this era Greater Sonbai and Amanuban were contest realms, characterized by the atypical activism of traditionally inactive rulers. That their status was dependent on the personal qualities of their leaders is shown by their shifting fortunes during the nineteenth century. There was no real move towards state formation, but power was wielded through traditional channels, and relied upon alliances, wife-giving relations, and the Dutch unwillingness to penetrate the inland.³⁶ Sonbai was split up between various *usif* in the early nineteenth century, and power had to be reassembled in a slow and cumbersome manner by the next

³⁵ VOC 3767 (1787).

³⁶ In the early nineteenth century, the king of Amanuban was considered 'the only one who has reduced any part of his subjects to a state of discipline'. He trained a large corps of horsemen armed with muskets, like the Pindaris of India, but the rapid decline of royal power after the death of Don Louis demonstrates the fragility of the system (Moor 1968:7-8).

ruler, Nai Sobe Sonbai (reign 1808-1867).³⁷ Towards the late nineteenth century, the wide but incoherent realm once again began to break up, and this time the onset of real colonial rule prevented its resurgence. In 1906, the last emperor was captured by Dutch troops, an act indicative of the definitive end of Greater Sonbai. After circa 1824 Amanuban, too, experienced long periods of fragmentation until it was finally brought under complete Dutch domination in 1906-1910 (McWilliam 2002:55-60; Farram 2003:74-9, 90-8; Farram 2009).

In spite of all these disturbances in the interior of the island, Dutch authority in the Kupang area remained intact, with the five loyal allies still forming a protective belt. After the flight of the emperor, the Lesser Sonbai principedom continued under the Nisnoni side-branch which, like the other four loyal allies, never questioned the Company's status as stranger lord up until the 1940s. When the French Revolutionary Wars reached the East Indies in the 1790s, this was demonstrated in a remarkable fashion. As a consequence of the Kew letters issued by the exiled Dutch stadtholder, British squadrons were dispatched to secure a number of VOC posts. A small British expedition approached Kupang in 1797 and tried to pressure Timoteus Wanjon and his council into capitulating without a fight, but the Company servant Carel Gratus Greeving refused to surrender. He met with the Sonbai, Amabi and Taebenu lords and asked their opinion about the situation. They replied: 'We rajas have the land and Tuan has the sea.' In a written statement the rulers commented, 'From that statement, Tuan could then see that we rajas in the land of Kupang have the Lord Company at heart'.³⁸ The British soldiers who had been posted in Kupang were subsequently assaulted and massacred, and the expedition left after using the ship's artillery to reduce the town to rubble.

Similarly, a second British attack in April 1811 was defeated, mainly by Amabi marksmen who had been recruited by the Eurasian *resident* (commander)³⁹ Jacobus Arnoldus Hazaart. It was only in January 1812

³⁷ Although the concept of 'contest state' might be useful here, the denomination 'state' fails to cover the situation of Timorese principedoms (compare Henk Schulte Nordholt 1996:4-10). In the contest state, a complex of vertical relations between ruler and entourage had to be reconstructed with each succession. The power of Nai Sobe Sonbai as the heir of Alphonsus Adrianus was stabilized in 1808 (Timor:9, Missive from Kupang to Batavia, 10-9- 1808). However, his level of authority fluctuated greatly during almost 60 years of turbulent rule.

³⁸ LOr 2242, 1798, UB Leiden; Meursinge 1845:xix-xx.

³⁹ After the dissolution of the VOC in 1799-1800, the term *resident* is used rather than *opperhoofd*.

that a British ship persuaded Fort Concordia to surrender without a blow, several months after the capitulation of the Dutch and French in Java (Farram 2007:461-6). After the return of the Dutch in circa 1819, a witness was intrigued by the scene in Kupang of allied kings greeting a visiting commissioner. They appeared at the meeting clad in costumes from the VOC period, and ‘it was noted that when the name of the East India Company was still pronounced by them, it was done so with deep reverence’.⁴⁰ That was two decades after the rather unspectacular end of the VOC.

The old system was maintained in a modified version during the nineteenth century, meaning that it was still ‘early colonial’ and built on reciprocity between foreign lord and indigenous allies. In a friendly conversation with a Dutch *resident* in the 1870s, the ruler of Amabi expressed no qualms about the symbiotic relationship between his principedom and the Dutch local government, nor about his own strong position in the system: ‘If you are attacked yourself, and I do not assist you, then you will be rapidly put to the sword even if the other small rajas come to your help. But when I help you, you need not fear anything’ (*Schets* 1877:339). As late as in the 1890s, according to a former *controleur* (local administrative headman), ‘the interior was still almost “terra incognita”, the encounters that we had with the inhabitants were only sporadic and superficial and did not always leave the most pleasant memories. And in the 5% [of the territory] where we had a say, we did almost nothing. There was no question of roads and bridges, corvée labour, taxes, cultivation, and so on; we preserved the order as good or bad as could be, and that was that’ (Grijzen 1923:466).

Certain theories of imperialism have noted a tendency among colonial powers to expand their influence informally until a relatively late point in time. Formal control was normally only implemented in times of absolute necessity, as when indigenous groups resisted the economic and political dispositions of the colonial overlords (Ardhana 2000:5-7). Timor, in the decades surrounding 1900, would be a case in point: from an economic point of view, the Timor area during the nineteenth century was characterized by a relatively open system in which several trading networks existed, operated by Indonesian, Chinese and Arab traders. After 1891, a regular line of Dutch government shipping began to alter

⁴⁰ *Iets over het eiland Timor*, c.1819, H 245a, KITLV.

the situation, and in the early twentieth century the old trading structures were subordinated to the colonial economic system (Parimartha 2008:75-7). In the meantime, economic change was matched by political restructuring. The two halves of the island now saw the colonial powers penetrate Timor further, which meant that the functioning of the five loyal allies as a protective belt, as rightfully pointed out by the king of Amabi, no longer existed. The consequences thereof were soon visible: in 1910 and 1917 these domains merged into a few *zelfbesturende landschappen* as part of a Dutch plan to rationalize local governance (Van Dijk 1925, 1934; Bongenaar 2005:23, 73, 358). Today the descendants of the old princely families lead modest urban lives in the lower-middle-class echelons, occasionally carving a minor career for themselves as a bureaucrat or local politician.

After 1769, the Portuguese establishment in Dili led a more stable existence than the old Lifau post, but it was still not approaching anything akin to a colonial power in the modern sense of the word. Alliances shifted rapidly back and forth, and a ruler who had recently adhered to the Company's rule, could suddenly decide to offer an oath of allegiance to the Crown. Thus some of the lords of the central Belu area were persuaded to come to Batugade in 1777 and offer their loyalty to Portugal once more.⁴¹ A few cases of anti-Portuguese resistance occurred, especially in the important and influential domain of Luca during the late 1770s. Luca had hitherto usually supported the Crown of Portugal, but now a woman of prophetic qualities gathered the population, preaching that the ancestral spirits would assist the living, allowing them to shake off the yoke of the foreigners. This movement, which the Portuguese called the 'War of the Madmen', involved nearby domains and could not be entirely suppressed by the Dili administration. Nevertheless the neighbouring Viqueque stood firmly on the Portuguese side, as it had done 80 years previously. After several years the resistance ended in approximately 1785, as had so many previous anti-foreign movements, with the voluntary submission of the local elite.⁴² Missionaries were not

⁴¹ VOC 3779 (1785-88), f. 5732-3.

⁴² Castro 1867:89-91. Textbooks usually date the beginning of this rebellion as 1781, but a document printed in Castro 1867:292 suggests that it started at some point between 1776 and 1779. Oral traditions recorded in the late twentieth century are ambivalent about the exact relationship between Luca and Viqueque. While Luca was considered to have a symbolically subordinate position vis-à-vis Wewiku, Viqueque was beneath Wehali in terms of status. In one version Luca had a position of precedence vis-à-vis Viqueque, but the latter was not included among the four *liurai* who were under Luca's authority (Spillett 1999:289-305).

always supportive of the Dili government; they sometimes took the side of the locals, to the point of playing an active role in armed resistance (Visser 1934:163). This may not be so hard to understand, for the quality of colonial governance at this stage was quite poor. An ex-governor wrote in 1795 that most of the governors were lethargic people who did not have the requisite military or political skills. The officers tended to be criminal figures sent from Goa, who re-enacted their misdeeds on Timor, irritated the princes and conspired against the Estado. In spite of all this, the princes still took great pride in being vassals of Her Majesty (Thomaz 2001:122). The Count of Sarzedas, a viceroy of Goa who in 1811 wrote a set of instructions regarding Timor, had few illusions about the work of his compatriots there: ‘the vexations, injustices, stealth and despotism practised in these islands have occasioned these uprisings, and this is shown by the general insurrections of the entire establishment which are undone by the simple arrival of the new governor.’⁴³ The ‘rebellions’ in the early Dili period were, however, less frequent than during the Lifau epoch.

Catholicism had long been a binding symbolic force, but by the late eighteenth century the missionary project was dwindling. The Portuguese mission in Asian waters declined for a number of ideological reasons, and Timor was affected accordingly. The number of Dominican padres had shrunk from eighteen in 1740 to merely eight in 1804; in 1811, one single cleric remained. The results of the religious seminaries established in Lifau and Manatuto in the mid-eighteenth century are basically unknown, and no indigenous Timorese priest appears in the sources until the nineteenth century (Serrão and Oliveira Marques 2006:429-30). Under these circumstances it is remarkable that Christianity persisted at all. In 1856, two years after the lifting of a long interdict on religious orders, 22 princedoms out of circa 50 had Christian communities, which together amounted to perhaps 2% of the population of Portuguese Timor (Durand 2004: 48-50).

On the other hand, the early Dili government finally saw an end to the old enmity that had existed between White and Black Portuguese. In view of the weakened position of the latter, there was not much left to fight over, and their Portuguese identity demanded a degree of contact with the wider world of Portuguese Asia. Governor João Baptista Vieira

⁴³ Castro 1867:217. On the Count of Sarzedas, see Faria de Morais 1944:133-7.

Godinho (gov. 1785-1788) managed to make the first move, and Pedro Hornay (ruled 1777-circa 1795) was described by the Dutch as the most civilized and agreeable figure among the Topass elite. Pedro now swore obedience to Her Majesty and promised to defend Dili and provide it with provisions. In return, he was officially appointed *tenente general* of the province of Servião; as it stood, the title was by this point obvious fiction. At the same time his in-law in the Larantuka principedom, Dom Constantino Belantran de Rozari, submitted to the Estado.⁴⁴ Oecusse proved to be a self-willed but generally loyal and occasionally even helpful client of Dili for the remainder of the colonial period.

The economy of the small Portuguese establishment remained as cumbersome as ever. The principal means of taxation, the *fontas*, would be levied on Timor until 1906, but the income derived from it decreased sharply after the great rebellions of the 1720s and 1730s. After 1785, the Estado recompensed some of these losses by reorganizing the system of customs fees, but nevertheless, events in South Asia did disturb the trade. When the British conquered the lands of Tipu Sultan of Mysore in 1799, they found good resources of sandalwood, which were better and more conveniently located than the Timorese resources (Serrão and Oliveira Marques 2006:427; Castro 1867:219). Whether this decline disadvantaged the Timorese is debatable, though, as for two centuries, the precious wood had brought endless strife and probably few blessings to the inhabitants of the turbulent island.

CONCLUSIONS: CULTURES IN CONTACT

Thus, the Napoleonic Era is where we will leave our discussions of the two early colonial networks. A weakened Dutch enterprise in the west balanced a somewhat stabilized Portuguese establishment in the east, an establishment that had managed to co-opt its old mestizo enemies. Outside the restricted hinterlands of Kupang, Dili and Oecusse, the majority of the perhaps 200,000-strong Timorese population led lives that were at best (or at worst) indirectly affected by the stranger lords.

This is not to say that the Timor and Solor area remained unchanged by two centuries of early-colonial activity. Anthropologists have dis-

⁴⁴ Castro 1867:212. A Dutch report (VOC 3810 [1789], f. 73) rather credits the next governor Nogueira with visiting Oecusse and bringing Pedro Hornay over to the Estado camp.

cerned an interesting ability of the societies in the eastern archipelago to integrate foreign influence in spite of their typically ‘traditional’ character.⁴⁵ This includes very basic means of comfort and nutrition that latterly depended on overseas connections. Maize was introduced by the mid-seventeenth century and has been a staple food ever since; as such it was a mixed blessing, since linguistic evidence suggests that the Timorese diet was more varied in earlier times (Fox 1991a:254). Coffee had been introduced by 1734, although its intense cultivation only began in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁶ High-quality tobacco was grown in large quantities by 1772, probably for indigenous use (Lombard-Jourdain 1982:91). Contact with foreigners also had cultural implications, influencing for instance outward appearances: while early accounts suggest that commoner women went virtually naked, they covered up most of their bodies from at least the eighteenth century (Lombard-Jourdain 1982:97). The Christian impact, often ridiculed as superficial, should not be disregarded since selective pieces of material culture, habits and symbols trickled down via the partly Christianized elite. This coincided with trade which, it should be noted, was mostly carried out in non-European keels. Clothes from South Asia and elsewhere were in great demand and slowly changed fashions and the now-famous weaving traditions. Household utensils such as advanced pottery and iron tools could not be manufactured locally but also had to be imported.

The organization of society and warfare was also affected. The written word was restricted but not unknown, and the surviving corpus shows that letters in Portuguese and Malay were seen as important documents, detailing for instance appointments and debts owed.⁴⁷ While the basic traditional structures of governance may have changed little, they were infused with Western-derived symbols. Titles like brigadier, colonel, emperor, and so on, may not have meant that the corresponding administrative functions were actually carried out, but they were an important part of the legitimization of the indigenous elite. For example, the Dutch denomination *keizer* (emperor), originally reserved for the lord

⁴⁵ The argument has been advanced by the well-known Dutch anthropologist F.A.E. van Wouden (1968); see also Yoder 2005:111; Ospina and Hohe 2002:27.

⁴⁶ Matos 1974a:172. An attempt to introduce coffee in the Amarasi kingdom is referred to in ANRI VOC:4059, Missive, Batavia to Kupang, 17-2-1809.

⁴⁷ Apart from these so-called Maucatar letters (*Stukken* n.y., H 693, KITLV), see also the Malay documents pertaining to Pitai, a sub-division of Greater Sonbai, in Middelkoop 1968:85-7. These date from the 1760s-1790s.

of Sonbai, had been reduced in value by this time as it was appropriated by an increasing number of rulers. During the late colonial period it was used, among others, by the lords of Amfoan-Timau, Amanuban and Insana, and foreign objects of authority, such as drums, halberds, *tongkat* and flags, were kept as sacred heirlooms of the princedoms (referred to by the Indonesian term, *pusaka*).

Also, it should not be forgotten that Western technology changed the way in which warfare and conflict took place. Firearms were rare, even among the closest VOC allies, in the seventeenth century, but their presence gradually spread. There was no indigenous manufacturer, meaning that the weapons were always imported, but they seem to have been ubiquitous by the nineteenth century. Bows and arrows fell out of use, as did shields – the Atoni did not even have words for these items by the twentieth century (H.G. Schulte Nordholt 1971:346). The dissemination of modern tools and weaponry meant that new possibilities to assemble political power were opened up, and this may have strengthened the dominance of Atoni ethnicity in West Timor (Fox 1988:269). Precisely this may also be one factor behind the military upsurge of a few kingdoms, such as those of Sonbai and Amanuban, in the late eighteenth century; an atypical feature in the traditional political system that did not ultimately lead to an actual process of state-building. The taking of slaves was a further factor that depended on Western technology and presence. Sizeable numbers of slaves could be shipped away on European keels, and somewhat smaller ones on Chinese and Makassarese crafts. This action doubtlessly encouraged warfare, as did the mutually hostile alliances centred on foreign or semi-foreign establishments like Kupang, Lifau and Tulang Ikan-Animata.

What was the nature, then, of these alliances? They originated in blood-oaths which implied fraternal bonds but also precedence, and which could be perceived as, or transformed into, a lord-vassal relationship. As Timorese and foreign perceptions of the oaths differed, this could cause friction, but the outcome might also be one in which lasting bonds of loyalty were forged. The Count of Sarzedas made a sarcastic statement in 1811, quoted in Castro (1867:218), summarizing the last century of Portuguese overlordship:

the Timorese are the best vassals and the best Christians. They are the best vassals since they recognize the sovereignty of their legitimate sover-

eign, while they are governed by men who humiliate them in every way as the circumstances permit without the forces to keep them in obedience. They are the best Christians since they still recognize the evangelical truths without having clergymen who direct them. A nation which unites two such qualities deserves the particular care of our august sovereign.

The case of the Kupang sphere is similar, though even more pronounced in its characteristics. Despite the, at times, poor leadership of the *opperhoofden*, and despite numerous cases of extortion and vexations by burghers and administrators, there were almost no uprisings against the Company. Although the words of the viceroy contain rhetoric exaggeration, they do highlight a striking characteristic of Timorese history. Small, sometimes negligible European groups were able to remain in situ for hundreds of years and to exert their influence over large parts of the island. There were bonds of loyalty and deference in place that in the case of the Dutch lasted for periods of time, and in the case of the Portuguese were renewed from time to time.

This situation is defined by two characteristics that are typically Timorese. The first is the ‘stranger king’ syndrome, which has been explored in a number of Southeast Asian contexts. Shared ethnic identity was not necessarily a unifying factor (Henley 2002:53); on the contrary, one can see that the Minahasa, Minangkabau, Malays, Balinese, and so on, were engaged in ceaseless domestic hostilities during the early colonial period that has been studied here, and, therefore, did not construct a bona fide state. As the preceding chapters have clearly proven, this was the case in the Atoni and Tetun territories, and probably also among the less known Galoli, Makassae, Mambai, and so on. Shared language, kinship and *barlaque* exchange were not sufficient to construct organizations that could enable conflict resolution at the level of the principedoms, and often not even below that level. As an outsider, the Dutch *opperhoofd*, the Portuguese governor, and – albeit to a lesser degree – the semi-foreign Topass leader had the potential to foment such organization. That they, as outsiders, did not fall under the *adat* meant that they had no interest in kinship constellations, thus not making claims and counterclaims. *Opperhoofden* and governors were normally brought in from outside of Timor, would not stay for more than four or five years, and represented the distant but prestige-laden lordships of Batavia and Lisbon. Although they could be quite rapacious, their coming and going was predictable,

and the more foreign they were, the more likely they were to successfully resolve conflicts (Henley 2002:55).

This would work for as long as there were fixed arenas of interaction and negotiation between the stranger lords and their subordinate allies or clients. It was successful for the Dutch, who had a manageable area in westernmost Timor to look after up until 1749. The *vergaderingen* between the *opperhoofd* and his council and the five allies were normally held within an atmosphere of consensus, but on several occasions the allies could press Father and Mother Company to make concessions. The small Dutch community was completely dependent upon the maintenance of the system in order that they remain on Timor. Though frequently at odds with each other, the allies nearly always let the *opperhoofd* intervene in order to settle the issue before bloodshed had actually taken place. The expansion of the VOC sphere post-1749 immediately illustrated to the Dutch and the five allies that matters were not so easily resolved on a Timor-wide or even West Timor-wide level.

The situation was somewhat different for the Portuguese mestizo community living on Timor. The Hornays and Da Costas were stranger kings in the traditional Southeast Asian sense: their ancestors had once migrated from elsewhere. Still, they were born in East Flores or Timor and always remained in power until their deaths, thereby developing dynastic dynamics. Acting on behalf of the king of Portugal and in the name of Catholicism, the Topasses posed as a military Portuguese sub-tribe, while at the same time remaining securely anchored in the local Lamaholot and Timorese cultures. Up until 1702, they were able to obtain the partly voluntary deference of the various Atoni princedoms which they managed to keep in check in spite of occasional clashes. Their late and brutal subjugation of the eastern parts of the island in 1668-1677, however, meant these areas were never stabilized and they willingly defected when the opportunity arose.

Finally, the Estado da Índia was able to quickly gain a following in East Timor after 1702, helped by the mediating authority of Catholic priests. As they had wider areas to attend to than their Dutch counterpart in Kupang, their management was far more turbulent, and was aggravated by the hostilities of the rival Dutch and Topass stranger lords. Although their presence was often justified by extremely tenuous means, they always managed to prevail in their activities. Rather than being a result of the desperate endurance often shown by Portuguese outposts in

Asia, or the continuous support of Macao, this is testimony to indigenous preferences. Especially when the *fintas* dwindled into insignificance after the great rebellions, the innumerable princedoms of East Timor saw the advantage that could be gained by having an external force in control, as pointed out by the able governor José Pinto Alcoforado e Sousa (gov. 1815-1819) (quoted in Castro 1867:295): ‘The Timorese have preserved us [tolerated our presence] until now due to their interests, since when they make war against each other [...] and when they are exhausted or if one party has the advantage in the conflict, the oppressed party requests that the town [Dili] [acts as an intermediary] to make peace among them – the terms of which are almost never carried out for lack of active force.’

At this point it should be remembered that the situation between the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Timorese population was often one of near open hostility, as observed by a French visitor in 1772 (quoted in Lombard-Jourdain 1982:96): ‘They generally detest the domination of the Portuguese who make them lack everything and maltreat them through their robberies and vexations. They only seem to need a support in order to throw off the yoke; they obey them through habit and fear. They have much more fear for the Dutch because of their cruelties and do not like them at all.’ The two quotations above seem to contradict each other, but in fact they view matters on two different levels. The Estado and Company servants who ended up on Timor were not always the best ambassadors of the mother countries, but that did not detract from their important structural function. In the Timorese world of perpetual small-scale violence, what people desperately needed was support and security; in the best of situations, this is what the covetous foreigners could offer.

Apart from the stranger king aspect there is a peculiar circumstance which makes Timor unique in a Southeast Asian colonial context. There were three rival centres of foreign or semi-foreign authority on the island for an extended period of time. The *opperhoofd* and governor acted against each other with regard to trade policy and strategic concerns, although they never openly attacked each other. The Hornays and Da Costas, on the other hand, periodically fought full-scale wars with both European authorities. Nobody could secure a definite victory, and the question remains as to whether such a victory would have been desirable from the local perspective. The entire period from the 1650s onwards

sees many Timorese who had broken free from an alliance or client-ship with one external power and then submitted to another. Since such political behaviour was also a ubiquitous feature of pre-colonial Timorese polities, it does not contradict the stranger king syndrome. The existence of rival centres of authority made one centre rely heavily on alliances with indigenous princedoms, thus placing the latter in a position whereby they could negotiate an advantage. In various ways, they could pit the external parties against each other.

Do these features therefore make Timor unique in a Southeast Asian, or even wider, context? Can Timor help us to understand the workings of European expansion in the early modern period, or the potential for indigenous response? While the small and isolated nature of the European outposts is somewhat unusual, at least over an extended period of several centuries, the patterns do conform to the results of research carried out on global aspects of colonialism since the 1970s. It has been pointed out that European-Asian relations up until the nineteenth century tended to be centred on partnership rather than hostility. The story of early colonial penetration in coastal Asia and Africa, and in parts of North America, almost always has an element of voluntary collaboration by a local group or fraction, sometimes even by larger communities. As Richard White has shown with regard to the Great Lakes region, Europeans and Indians, in precisely the same period as covered by this book, constructed a system of mutual exchange where negotiations took place and the emergence of new cultural forms began. Only in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was this superseded by white domination and the suppression of native groups (White 1991). Small European outposts around the globe could survive thanks to indigenous people who hoped to benefit from their presence. Moreover, the role of European entities as arbiters or mediators in a politically complex system has been demonstrated for central and densely populated areas such as Java. The Dutch of the VOC period have been characterized as ‘reluctant imperialists’ whose expansion was conditioned as much by local demands for assistance as by economically motivated design.⁴⁸ In that way, the roots of colonial governance are to be found within Asia, Africa or, in some cases, North America as much as in Europe itself. Early-colonial social and political manifestations on Timor offer a poignant example of

⁴⁸ Kwee Hui Kian 2008. Frank (1998) emphasizes the relative lateness of European global economic leadership, the full impact of which was only felt in the nineteenth century.

historical processes that in various ways are found in many other locations where colonial power relations evolved.

To conclude, Timor in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries becomes part of a model which only partly justifies the term colonialism. The indigenous societies were only marginally, or indirectly, transformed through this lengthy period of external impact, and none of the plans for intense commercial cultivation had come to fruition by the nineteenth century. It was only in the twentieth century that the governance of the old princedoms and the traditional settlement pattern was broken up by a new and thorough colonial apparatus. Kupang, Lifau, Animata and later Dili were just some of the numerous players in the quest for power that affected the strife-torn island. They were components of shifting alliances, alliances over which the Dutch and Portuguese could not fully wield control, and many of the so-called rebellions can just as well be termed factionalism. At the same time, the external centres were colonial in nature. Due to their vastly superior technology, their modern organization, their means of physical transportation and trade, and their inclusion in larger, even global organizations of commerce and military power, they were secured a lasting role that had both brighter as well as darker implications for the peoples of Timor.

Appendix 1

RULERS OF LOCAL PRINCEDOMS FROM 1619 TO APPROXIMATELY 1850

Kupang

- Ama Pono I died 1619
- Dom Duarte mentioned 1645
- Ama Pono II before 1649-1659 (grandson of Ama Pono I)
- Mauritius Ama Pot 1659-1660 (son)
- Ama Susang regent-ruler 1660?-1698 (brother)
- Ama Besi co-ruler 1660-1678
- Pono Koi 1673-1691 (son of Ama Pono II)
- Ama Tomananu 1698-1731 (son)
- Buni 1732-1749 (grandson of Ama Besi)
- Karel Korang 1749-1760 (son)
- Lasi Tepak 1760-1770 (descended from Ama Pono II)
- Nai Manas 1770-1785 (son)
- Kolang Tepak 1785-1786 (uncle)
- Tepak Lasi 1786-circa 1795 (son of Lasi Tepak)
- Susang Manas circa 1795-after 1803 (son of Nai Manas?)
- Lasi Kloman before 1832-1858 (putative grandson of Lasi Tepak)

Lesser Sonbai

- Ama Tuan II 1659-1672 (son of Ama Tuan I of Greater Sonbai)
- Usi Tetu Utang 1672-1717 (daughter)
- Bernardus de Leeuw 1717-1726 (son of a cousin)
- Corneo Leu 1728-1748 (brother)
- Daniel Taffin Leu 1748-1760 (brother)
- Jacobus Albertus Taffy 1760-1776 (son of Bernardus de Leeuw)
- Alphonsus Adrianus 1776-1782 (of Greater Sonbai)
- Bernadus Nisoni or Baki Bena 1776-1795 (so-called brother of Jacobus Albertus Taffy)

| *Appendix I*

Dirk Hendrik Aulasi 1795-1798 (son?)
Pieter Nube or Nube Bena 1798-1821 (brother of Bernardus Nisoni)
Pieter Babakase 1821-circa 1825 (son)
Isu Baki 1820s (?) (son of Bernardus Nisoni)
Pieter Aulasi or Ote Nuben circa 1825-1839 (grandson of Pieter Nube)
Meis Nisoni 1839-1860 (son of Pieter Babakase)

Amabi

Sebastião mentioned 1652
Saroro Neno mentioned 1655
Aiputu died 1658 (maybe identical with either of the two above)
Ama Kefi I 1666-1704
Ama Kefi II 1704-1725 (son)
Loti 1725-1732 (son)
Nai Balas regent-ruler 1732-1755 (brother)
Balthazar Loti 1755-1790 (son of Loti)
Osu I 1791-1795 (son)
Slolo 1795-circa 1797
Afu Balthazar circa 1797-before 1824
Arnoldus Adriaan Karel Loti before 1824-1834 (son)
Osu II 1834-1859 (brother)

Amfoan

Nai Toas 1683-after 1698
Am Foan ?-1708 (son?)
Dom Manuel 1708-18 (son)
Daniel I 1718-48 (uncle)
Bartholomeus I 1748-76 (son)
Daniel II 1776-83 (son)
Bartholomeus II 1783-95 (brother)
Babneno 1795-circa 1800
Bartholomeus III circa 1802-06
Jacob 1806-? (brother)
Abi Aunoni mentioned 1829
Manoh Aunoni mentioned 1832
Neno 1830s
Fini Manoh Aunoni before 1845-1850

Amfoan Timau

N.N. ?-1689
 N.N. 1689-? (son)
 Nai Manubait ?-1697
 Mano Nassa mentioned 1728
 Taiboko before 1749
 Dom Bernardo da Costa before 1749-1753 (son)
 Tusala (Susale) Taiboko 1753-1779 (brother)
 Talnoni Forisa 1779-1808? (son)
 Masu Taiboko (Usi Molo) mentioned 1829
 Willem Manoh before 1847-1854

Taebenu

Tanof I 1688-1700
 Tanof II 1700-37 (nephew?)
 Tus Tanof 1737-68 (son)
 Marcus Kobe Tanof mentioned 1746-1803 (uncle)
 Enus Kobe mentioned 1832 (son)
 Salolo Kobe died 1841 (brother)
 Kobe Tus 1841-50 (nephew)

Greater Sonbai

Ama Tuan I or Ama Utang circa 1650-circa 1680
 N.N. circa 1680-1686 (?) (son)
 Dom Pedro Sonbai or Tomenu mentioned 1704-1726 (son)
 Dom Alfonso Salema or Nai Bau Sonbai before 1749-1752 (son)
 Don Bernardo 1752-1760 (son)
 Albertus Johannes Taffy or Nai Tabin Sonbai 1760-1768 (brother)
 Alphonsus Adrianus or Nai Kau Sonbai 1768-1802 (son)
 Nai Sobe Sonbai 1808-1867 (son)

Amarasi

Dom António I died 1665
 Dom Tomás 1665-after 1672 (brother)
 Dona Maria 1660s (sister, titular queen)
 N.N. mentioned 1679 (nephew)
 Dom António II mentioned 1688
 Dom Affonço mentioned 1703

| *Appendix I*

Dom Augusto Fernandes mentioned 1703
Nai Soti mentioned 1714
Dom Luís Hornay de Roza before 1749-1751, died 1752
Dom Affonço Hornay 1751-74 (son)
Rote Ruatefu 1774-1802 (son)
Kiri Lote 1803-before 1832 (son)
Muni before 1832 (son?)
Koro Kefi before 1832-1853 (brother)

Amanuban

Don Michel before 1749-1751
Don Louis I 1751-70 (brother)
Don Jacobus Albertus 1770-86 (son)
Tubani 1786-circa 1808 (cousin)
Don Louis II circa 1808-circa 1824 (son)
Baki circa 1824-1862 (son)

Ambeno

Dom Pedro mentioned 1641
Dom Paulo I ?-1670
Dom Paulo II before 1749-1761
Nai Sitenoni born 1756-1762 (nephew)
Nai Nobe Dom Paulo 1761-after 1764 (son or brother of Dom Paulo II)
Dom Paulo III before 1766-circa 1800 (maybe the same person as above)
Domingos Francisco mentioned 1817-1829 (son; ruling in Citrana,
born 1832-1836)
Dom Paulo IV mentioned 1832

Wehali

Dom Jacinto Correia mentioned 1756-1757
António de Melo mentioned 1767
Dom Alesu Fernandes circa 1800
A Queen mentioned 1814
Loro Ramaë mentioned 1832
Nai Tei ?-1858

Motael

Dom Gregorio Rodrigues Pereira I mentioned 1726-32
Dom Alexandre Rodrigues Pereira mentioned 1763-1769
Dom Cosme Rodrigues Pereira mentioned 1789 (*tenente coronel*)
Dom Gregorio Rodrigues Pereira II ?-1820
Dom António da Costa Pereira mentioned 1832-1861

Vemasse (Ade)

N.N. mentioned 1660s (father of Ama Sili or Salomon Speelman)
Dom Tomás mentioned 1720
Dom Cosme de Freitas mentioned 1726
Dom Tomás de Freitas mentioned circa 1769
Dom Duarte de Castro mentioned 1786
Dom Domingos de Freitas Soares ?-1859

Luca

Dom Sebastião Fernandes mentioned 1703
Dom Sancho Manuel mentioned 1738
Dom Sebastião do Amaral before circa 1769-circa 1789
Dom Tomás do Amaral mentioned 1789 (nephew, *tenente general* of Belu)
Dom Felix António do Amaral mentioned 1817
Dona Maria Amaral 1826-1850

Viqueque

Dom Matheus da Costa before 1702-1708
N.N. ?-1729
Dom Dire dos Santos Pinto mentioned circa 1769
Dom Joaquim de Matos mentioned 1818

Samoro

Dom António Hornay mentioned 1703-1720
Dom Bernardo Sarmento mentioned 1726
Dom Henrique Hornay Samoro mentioned 1738
Dom Simão (?) mentioned 1761
Dom Cristovão Ferreira mentioned 1761 (ruling in Samoro Kecil)
Dom Matheus mentioned 1761 (ruling in Samoro Kecil)
Dom Bernardo Tavares Sarmento mentioned 1766-circa 1769

| *Appendix I*

Maubara

Dom Francisco Xavier mentioned 1726
Dom José Xavier Doutel before 1754-1776
Dom Caletto Xavier Doutel I 1776-1794 (son)
Nyong Mas 1794-? (son)
Dom Caletto II before 1832-1859

Solor

Kaicili Pertawi before 1613-1645
Nyai Cili 1646-64 (widow)
Nyai Cili Muda 1664-86 (granddaughter)
Sengaji Cili 1687-1700 (nephew)

Larantuka

Dom Constantino before 1625-1661
Dom Luís mentioned 1675
Dom Domingos Vieira mentioned 1702
Olla mentioned 1732-59
Dom Gaspar Dias Vieira Godinho ?-1768 (son)
Dom Manuel Dias Vieira Godinho 1768-? (brother)
Dom Constantino Balantran de Rozari before 1785-1812 (regent)
Dom André Dias Vieira Godinho before 1812 (son of Dom Gaspar)
Dona Lorenza Gonsalvi 1812-? (widow)
Dom Lorenzo Dias Vieira Godinho 1812-1849 (son)

Appendix 2

GOVERNORS OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR FROM 1696 TO 1832

António de Mesquita Pimentel 1696-1697 (deposed)
António Coelho Guerreiro 1702-1705 (recalled)
Frei Manuel de Santo António (temporary) 1705
Lourenço Lopes (temporary) 1705-1706
Jácome de Morais Sarmiento 1706-1710
Manuel de Soto Maior 1710-1714
Manuel Ferreira de Almeida 1714-1715 (died in office)
Domingos da Costa 1715-1718
Francisco de Melo de Castro 1718-1719 (expelled)
Frei Manuel de Santo António 1719-1722
António de Albuquerque Coelho 1722-1725
António Moniz de Macedo 1725-1728
Pedro de Melo 1728-1731
Pedro do Rego Barreto de Gama e Castro 1731-1734
António Moniz de Macedo 1734-1741
António Leonis de Castro 1741-1745
Francisco Xavier Doutel 1745-1748
Manuel Correia de Lacerda 1748-1751 (died in office)
Frei Jacinto de Conceição and João Hornay (interim junta) 1751
Manuel Doutel de Figueiredo Sarmiento 1751-1759
Sebastião de Azevedo e Brito 1759-1760 (recalled)
Frei Jacinto de Conceição, Vicente Ferreira de Carvalho, and Dom José of Alas
(interim junta) 1760-1761
Frei Francisco de Purificação and Francisco Hornay (interim junta) 1762-1763
Dionísio Gonçalves e Rebelo 1763-1765 (poisoned)
Frei António de São Boaventura and José Rodrigues Pereira (interim junta)
1765-1768
António José Teles de Meneses 1768-1776 (moved to Dili 1769)
Caetano de Lemos Teles de Meneses 1776-1779 (recalled)

Lourenço de Brito Correia 1779-1782

João Anselmo de Almeida Soares 1782-1785

João Baptista Vieira Godinho 1785-1788

Feliciano António Nogueira Lisboa 1788-1790

Joaquim Xavier de Moraes Sarmiento 1790-1794

João Baptista Verquaim 1794-1800

José Joaquim de Sousa 1800-1803

João Vicente Soares da Veiga 1803-1807

António de Mendonça Côrte-Real 1807-1810

António Botelho Homem Bernardes Pessõa 1810 (died in office)

Frei José de Anunciação, Dom Gregório Rodrigues Pereira of Motael, and

Joaquim António Veloso (interim junta) 1810-1812

Vitorio Freire da Cunha Gusmão 1812-1815

José Pinto Alcoforado e Sousa 1815-1820 (died in office)

António Caetano Diniz, Padre Bartolomeu Pereira, and Dom Gregório

Rodrigues Pereira of Motael (interim junta 1820)

António Caetano Diniz and Padre Bartolomeu Pereira (interim junta)

1820-1821

Manuel Joaquim de Matos Góis 1821-1832 (died in office)

Appendix 3

DUTCH OPPERHOOFDEN AND RESIDENTS OF TIMOR FROM 1646 TO 1832

Hendrick Hendricksz van Oldenburgh (on Solor), February 1646-20 January
1648 (died in office)
Hendrick ter Horst (on Solor), January 1648-February 1654
Jacob Verheyden (on Solor), February 1654-17 September 1655 (killed in battle)
Cornelis Ockersz (on Solor, temporary), 1655
Hendrick ter Horst (on Solor until 1657), 1655-1659
Joseph Margits, 1659-1660
Johan Truytman (commissioner), 1660
Hugo Cuylenburgh, 4 September 1660-March 1665
Anthony Hurt, March 1665-November 1667
Jacob Pietersz van den Kerper, November 1667-25 November 1670
(died in office)
Jacob Lidema (temporary), 1670-1672 (died in office)
Jacob van Wijckersloot, March 1672-20 July 1680 (died in office)
Joannes van den Broeck, 21 January 1681-15 April 1683 (died in office)
Jan van Heden 1683-1684 (died in office)
Willem Tange, 1684-1685 (dismissed)
Gerrit Hoofd, 1685-9 July 1686 (died in office)
Willem Moerman, July 1686-April 1687
Arend Verhoeven April 1687-10 November 1687 (died in office)
Willem Moerman November 1687-1698
François van den Eynde, 1698-14 May 1698 (died in office)
Willem Moerman, May 1698-12 March 1699
Joan Focanus, 12 March 1699-1702
Joannes van Alphen, 1702-1706
Didloff Blad, 1706-1712

Reynier Leers, 1712-1714 (dismissed)
Isaac Marmer, 1714-5 October 1714 (died in office)
Leendert Grim (temporary), October 1714-1715
Willem van Putten, 1715-1717
Barend van der Swaan, 1717-1721
Hendrick Engelert, 1721-7 December 1725 (died in office)
Balthazar de Moucheron, December 1725-1728 (died in office)
Steven Palm (temporary), 1728-1729
Anthony Hurt, 1729-1730
Gerardus Bernardus Visscher, 1730-6 May 1736
Aart Jansz Peper, 6 May 1736-1739
Pieter Jacob Blok, 1739
Aart Jansz Peper, 1739-1740
Jan Dinnies, 1740-22 October 1740
Christiaan Fredrik Brandenburg (temporary), October 1740-4 July 1741
Anthony Cornelis van Oldenbarnevelt (Tulling), 4 July 1741-30 November
1742 (died in office)
Christiaan Fredrik Brandenburg (temporary), December 1742-1744
Jan Anthony Meulenbeek, 1744-12 October 1746 (killed)
Gilles Jacob Helmmuts (temporary), October 1746-January 1747 (died in office)
Johannes Steenwegh (temporary), January 1747-1747/48
Daniel van der Burgh, 1748-1 March 1754 (died in office)
Elias Jacob Beynon, 1 March 1754-1758
Johannes Andreas Paravicini (commissioner), March-Aug. 1756
Hans Albrecht von Plüskow, 1758-11 November 1761 (killed)
Johan Willem Erland Daniel ter Herbruggen, 1762-1765
Bartholomeus van Voorst, 1765-3 January 1766
Willem Adriaan van Este (temporary), January 1766-1767
Alexander Cornabé, 1767-1772
Barend W. Fokkens, 1772-1777
Willem Adriaan van Este, 1777-1789 (died in office)
Timotheus Wanjon, 1789-1797 (dismissed)
Carel Gratus Greving, 1797-1799
J. Doser (commissaris), 1799-1800
Hans Andries Lofsteth (commissaris), 1800-10 October 1802 (died in office)
Johannes Giesler, 1802-1803 (died in office)
Viertzen (Kurtzen?) 1803-1804?
Pieter Bernardus van Kruijne, 1804-1807

Frans Philip Christiaan Kurtzen (temporary) 1807
Pieter Stopkerb, 1807-1810
Jacobus Arnoldus Hazaart, 11 April 1810-22 March 1812
Cornelis Willem Knibbe, 22 March 1812-1812
Watson, 1812
Joseph Burn, 1812-1814 (died in office)
Curtois (temporary), 1814
Jacobus Arnoldus Hazaart, 1814-1818
M. Haleweijn (temporary), 1818-1819
Jacobus Arnoldus Hazaart, 1819-30 December 1832

Glossary

adat	tradition (Indonesian)
amaf	father (Timorese)
amaf naek	great father (Timorese)
arrayal, pl. arraiais	auxiliaries, levies (Portuguese)
barlaque	bride-receiving relation (Timorese)
belis	bride-price (Timorese)
capitão mor	captain major (Portuguese)
capitão mor da mar	senior naval officer (Portuguese)
carreira da Índia	Portuguese sea traffic to India
casados pretos	black settlers, Asiatics with a Portuguese identity
client	here: polity subordinated to colonial power
dato-lulic	ritual expert (Timorese)
duae	ruler (Sawu)
Estado da Índia	Portuguese colonial organization in Asia
fani	bees (Timorese)
feitor	overseer (Portuguese)
fettor	executive regent or district head (Timor), second regent (Rote)
gula	palm juice sugar (local Malay)
hangbroeken	the hanging trousers, the Portuguese (Dutch)
huaqiao	overseas Chinese (Mandarin)
kase metan	the black foreigners (Timorese)
kase muti	the white foreigners (Timorese)
keizer	emperor (Dutch)
kèser	emperor (Timorese)
kolnel	colonel (Timorese)
krankbezoeker	visitor of the sick, a clerical position (Dutch)
kuan or lopo	hamlet (Timorese)
leu	sacred heirlooms, treasure, sacred spirit power (Timorese)
liurai	‘surpassing the earth’, ruler (Timorese)

Loro	‘sun’, lord of a principedom (Timorese)
lutu-hum	serfs (Timorese)
makoan	spokesman for the ruler, expert on tradition (Belu)
mafefa	spokesman for the ruler, expert on tradition (Atoni)
manek	ruler (Rotenese)
Mardijker	free Asian under Dutch jurisdiction (Dutch-Malay)
maromak oan	‘son of God’, ritual lord of the realm (Timorese)
mco	prominent warrior (Timorese)
momboir	executive regent (Timorese)
moradores	permanent settlers, inhabitants (Portuguese)
muti salak	coral necklace (Malay-Timorese)
nakhoda	captain (Malay)
negeri	settlement (Malay)
nusak	principedom, domain (Rotenese)
opperhoofd	resident, commander (Dutch)
orangkaya	rich man, usually denotes a village or district chief in the Southeast Asian Archipelago; petty ruler, local man of influence (Malay)
pah tuaf	lord of the land (Timorese)
payung	parasol (Malay)
perahu	boat, especially small vessel (Malay)
perkenier	planter (Dutch)
picul	circa 61 kilograms
princevlag	Dutch tricolour (Dutch)
regent	assistant or executive lord of the king (Dutch)
reis, koningen	kings (Portuguese, Dutch)
reinos, rijken	kingdoms (Portuguese, Dutch)
resident	local commander of a post (Dutch)
rice Christians	newly converted Asian Christians (derogatory term)
sangha	Buddhist monastic community (Pali)
sengaji	local chief or prince (Solorese)
Sina Mutin Malaka	‘White China Malacca’, origin of the Belu (Timorese)
sirih pinang	betel and areca, voluntary gift of honour (Malay)
sonaf	ruler’s residence, house of the king (Timorese)
temukung	village head, chief (Timorese)
tenente	lieutenant (Portuguese)
tenente general	lieutenant-general (Portuguese)
tobe	custodian (Timorese)

tongkat	ceremonial staff (Timorese)
Topass	Black Portuguese (Indian-Indonesian)
tuan	gentleman, master (Malay)
tuthais	contributions, fee, customary gifts (Timorese)
ulun-houris	chattel slaves (Timorese)
ume mnasi	house of elders (Timorese)
usi(f)	lord, prince, regent, noble assistant of the palace (Timorese)
veltoverste	field commander (Dutch)
vergadering	meeting with the council (Dutch)
zelfbesturende landschappen	self-ruling territories (Dutch)

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Index

- Abdul Kadim Muhammad Syah, Sultan 374
- Abu Bakar 237
- Acceh 16, 33
- Ade 43, 81, 91, 110, 138, 165-9, 171-3, 378-9
- Adonara 21-2, 37-8, 42, 92, 103, 115, 120, 126, 173-4, 176, 178, 236, 239, 241, 249-50, 262-3, 352, 369
- Adrichem, Jan van 235
- Afonso VI 156
- Africa, Africans 5, 12, 27, 46, 50, 52, 105, 133, 135, 251, 314, 316, 398, 415
- Agostinho, Dom 117
- Aiputu 128
- Ajaobaki xii
- Albertus Johannes Taffy 290, 399
- Albo, Francisco 17, 19
- Albuquerque Coelho, António 335
- Aleixo, Dom 340
- Alesu, Dom 139
- Alesu Fernandes, Dom 383
- Aletta 255, 287-8
- Alexandre Rodrigues Pereira, Dom 398
- Alfonso Salema, Dom 363-4, 372-3, 382
- Alor 17, 22, 26, 29, 38, 94, 115, 173, 178-9, 184, 200, 238, 242-5, 247, 267, 332, 366, 369
- Alphen, Joannes van 301, 327
- Alphonsus Adrianus 285, 400-3, 405
- Ama Beta 305
- Ama Neno xiv
- Amaban 17
- Amabesi 72-4, 99, 106-9, 203-4, 214
- Amabi 12, 48-9, 56, 72-4, 95, 106, 110-2, 116, 119-25, 128-31, 153, 168, 201-3, 205, 207, 209, 212-5, 226, 231, 267, 273, 279, 282, 288, 291, 295-6, 298, 326, 349-51, 365, 373, 402, 405-7
- Amabi-Oefeto 202
- Amakono 39, 70, 72, 99, 112-3, 135, 137, 142-3, 152, 155-7, 159-60, 312, 318-9, 326, 334, 354
- Amanatun 24, 73, 88, 90, 107, 110, 161, 318, 362, 366-7, 399
- Amanesi 88-9, 107, 161, 185, 367
- Amaniap 103
- Amanuban 16, 41, 56-7, 74, 76, 87, 98, 106, 112, 116, 121, 135, 137-8,

- 141-2, 144, 153, 156, 161-2, 185,
196, 202, 214, 216, 262, 285, 305,
312, 318, 321-2, 325, 327, 346, 348,
350-1, 353, 356, 361-4, 367, 372,
375, 377, 382, 399, 401, 403-5, 411
- Amarang 98, 100, 152
- Amarasi 2, 49, 58, 73, 102, 106, 108-
9, 112, 116-9, 125, 128, 135, 138,
140, 142-4, 152-5, 159-61, 184-5,
193, 195, 202, 205, 207-9, 211-6,
224, 227, 230, 240, 250, 268, 282-3,
285, 305, 321, 326-7, 331, 356, 362,
366-7, 369, 371-5, 386, 399, 410
- Amasolo 106
- Amatiran 153, 195
- Ambabo 369
- Ambeno 12, 72-4, 76, 100, 129, 136,
139, 143, 150-2, 197, 207, 318,
320-1, 347, 362, 364, 367, 369, 379,
382-3, 385, 396-7, 399, 401-3
- Ambon 34, 115, 118, 120, 125-6,
139, 200, 234, 259, 285-6, 291, 350
- Amentassi 112, 167
- Amfoan 72-5, 77, 102-3, 135, 138,
153, 161, 206-9, 256, 287-91, 299-
300, 308, 361-5, 367, 373, 394, 397,
399, 401, 411
- Ammatabo 112
- Amsterdam 34, 42, 44, 93, 185, 200,
241, 302, 375, 396
- Ana, Usi 385
- Andrada, Luís 48
- Animata 320, 324, 334, 347-8, 362,
370, 387-8, 411, 416
- Anna 262
- Anna Maria 219, 255-6
- Anpupu Po U 209
- António I 117, 153-4
- António II 208
- António da Veiga, Dom 155, 193,
215
- António Hornay, Dom 317, 333
- Antunes Portugal, João 183
- Arabs 253, 406
- Assam, Kapitan 249-50, 262
- Assem 39, 43, 148, 167, 173
- Atapupu 39
- Ataúro 239, 244
- Atok 385
- Atoni 10, 12, 16, 19, 25, 30, 39, 53-
4, 56-7, 59, 62, 64-70, 73, 75-6, 84,
88, 90-1, 95, 98, 102, 106, 112-3,
116, 121-2, 127-8, 148-50, 155-6,
161-2, 164-5, 170-1, 182, 196, 203-
4, 221, 230, 278, 288, 306-7, 318,
321-2, 326, 334, 338, 347, 356,
361-2, 367, 399-400, 411-3
- Atopá 333
- Atsabe 378, 387
- Attrai 95, 103, 108-9
- Aulais Sonbai, Bi 326
- Baä 221
- Babau 95, 116, 259, 264
- Babyllas 287
- Baffy Horry 281
- Bajoamang 237
- Baki, Ama 205
- Baki Bena Sonbai, Nai 326
- Bakunase 204, 212-4, 218, 382
- Balas 112, 350
- Bali, Balinese xi, 15, 61, 178, 224,
275, 311, 389, 412
- Balibo 17, 167
- Bana 385
- Banam 74

- Banda 126, 167-8, 170-1, 200, 245,
 272, 274, 336-7, 351
 Banibani 377-8
 Banjarmasin 200, 324, 376
 Banten 38, 187, 394
 Barai 94, 176, 248
 Barbosa, Duarte 19
 Barchewitz, Ernst Christoph 337
 Barents, Isaaq 247
 Bare Somma 281
 Barnusa 38, 243, 249
 Bastian, Don 210
 Batakapedu 368
 Batavia 7-8, 34, 43, 46, 92-3, 97, 99,
 104, 109, 114-5, 118-20, 124, 126,
 167, 171, 175, 185-7, 189, 199-201,
 210, 215, 217, 223, 227-8, 230-2,
 235, 237, 242, 245, 247, 250-1,
 254-6, 259, 261, 263-6, 268, 271-2,
 274-7, 280, 284-5, 290-2, 295-7,
 302, 314-5, 322, 327, 329-30, 332,
 337, 344, 349, 351, 353, 359, 363,
 369-70, 372-6, 381, 385, 387, 389,
 391, 394, 396-7, 399, 402, 412
 Batugade 67, 156, 167, 338, 383,
 397, 407
 Batuisi 221, 227
 Batulolong 38
 Batumean 24, 41, 88-90, 116, 121,
 144, 149, 161-2, 173, 185, 214, 230
 Batuputih, Tanjung 153
 Bau Sonbai, Nai 329, 354, 363
 Baucau 173
 Baudin, N. 274
 Baumata 208
 Beacu 170, 379
 Belagar 38, 241, 243, 244, 249
 Belu 10, 19, 52-3, 57-8, 61-2, 64-8,
 70-1, 80, 90, 148, 160, 164, 173,
 182, 203, 263, 271, 312-4, 326, 328,
 330-1, 333-5, 337-8, 341-3, 345-6,
 349, 352-4, 356, 361-2, 368-9, 377-
 8, 383, 398-9, 401, 403, 407
 Belumau 72
 Bengal 314
 Benjamin Messak 288, 357
 Bernardo, Don 290, 382, 385
 Bernardo da Costa, Dom 362, 364,
 394
 Bernardus de Leeuw 288, 350
 Bernardus Nisoni 218, 400-1
 Besi, Ama 204, 212-4, 216, 293, 298,
 350
 Besi, Nai 72, 130
 Besikama 71
 Betun 62
 Beynon, Elias Jacob 265, 375, 382
 Bibiluto 90, 317
 Biboki 24, 39, 59, 64, 66, 143, 347,
 369, 378
 Bikomi 369, 385
 Bilba 221, 224, 227, 359
 Bima 177-8, 223, 234, 238, 332, 370,
 374
 Bisepu 160
 Bissiso 293
 Blad, Didloff 330
 Blanckelaar 227
 Bligh, William 9, 218, 274, 402
 Bobnain 39
 Boels, Philip 124
 Bohaydale 221
 Bokai 221
 Bon, Robert 315
 Bondale 221
 Bone 184

- Bonerate 352
Bounty mutiny 9, 218, 402
Brockaerd, Frans 289
Broeck, Johannes van den 242-4
Bruyn, Pieter 255
Buddhism 26, 189
Bugis 185, 240, 256, 352
Bunaq 57, 72, 346
Bungaya Treaty 167
Buni 291, 292,
Burgh, Daniel van der 289, 359-63,
365-8, 370-5, 377
Buton 38, 83, 234, 241, 352

Caethano da Costa, Dom 343
Cailaco 163, 167, 319, 338-41, 346
Camara, Juan de la 29, 134, 191,
196, 217-8
Cambay 20
Camenaça 18, 24-5, 32, 43, 64, 66,
78, 80, 90, 169-70, 321, 337-8,
341-3
Cannanore 191
Cape of Good Hope 36, 394
Carneiro de Siqueira, Francisco 77,
81, 96, 99-100, 104, 119, 135
Carpentier, Pieter de 47-8
Carreira da Índia 34-5, 45
Casas, Bartolomé de las 162
Castro, Affonso de 53
Catholicism xv, 21-2, 26-7, 31, 33-
4, 37-8, 43, 47, 49, 60, 81, 86, 89,
98-9, 104, 117, 133-4, 138-9, 143,
150-2, 155, 157, 162, 174-5, 182,
187, 190, 195-6, 201, 213, 235, 260,
262, 276, 287-8, 315, 317, 328-9,
336, 343, 347-8, 350, 365, 370, 372,
408, 413

Cebu 17
Cevelaar, Jacob 247-9
Ceylon 27, 385
Champa 1
Charles II 185
China 1, 20, 24, 29, 38, 43-4, 50, 92,
183, 189, 264, 399
Chinese 1-3, 15, 24, 36, 38, 40, 42-4,
53, 64-5, 138, 188, 244, 250, 259,
263-9, 274-5, 297, 305, 314-5, 323-
5, 327, 329-30, 344, 348, 351, 353,
377, 397, 399-400, 406, 411
Christianity xv, 25, 30, 37, 39, 41,
43, 49, 86-7, 93, 150, 152, 154-5,
182, 196, 224, 250, 286-9, 408
Cili, Nyai 93-4, 120, 234-6
Cili, Sengaji 236
Cili Muda, Nyai 236-7, 242, 244
Cobusz, Carel 390
Coccius, Martinus 258
Cochin 36, 45, 141, 191, 349
Cock, Daniel de 371
Coelho Guerreiro, António 316-23,
327-8, 398
Coen, Jan Pieterszoon 42-3, 45
Con 91, 165
Conceição, Francisco de 113
Conceição, Jacinto de 388
Concordia, Fort 104-5, 106, 108-9,
115, 120, 124, 130, 160, 199, 203-
4, 209, 213, 215, 219-20, 223, 237,
240, 246, 253, 258, 260-1, 274, 284,
292, 297, 306, 309, 322, 330, 350,
354, 364, 381, 384, 406
Coneboy 386
Constantino, Dom 175
Constantino Belantran de Rozari,
Dom 409

- Cook, James 230
 Cornabé, Alexander 394-5
 Cornelis 282-3
 Cornelisz, Dina 247-8
 Cornelisz, Lieve 249-50
 Corneo Leu 354
 Coromandel Coast 29, 38, 188
 Corora 379
 Correia de Lacerda, Manuel 363, 365
 Costa, António da 387, 389
 Costa, Domingos I da 139, 197, 224, 313-6, 318, 320-31, 333-5, 344, 347
 Costa, Domingos II da 387, 391, 396
 Costa, Gaspar da 193, 344-8, 356, 359-65, 367, 371-2, 396
 Costa, Gaspar da 348
 Costa, Manuel da 388
 Costa, Matheus da 108, 113, 137-8, 140, 142-3, 146-7, 157-8, 161, 163, 169, 172, 180, 197, 262, 311, 313, 398
 Costa Vieira, Manuel da 147-9, 158
 Couwenhoven, Willem van 186-8
 Cruz, António da 28, 30
 Cutubaba 17, 167
 Cuylenburgh, Hugo 153, 191, 221, 235-6, 258, 272,
- Daendels, Herman 21
 Dampier, William 137, 192, 304, 314-5
 Dangka 289
 Daniel I 290
 Daniel II 308
 Dasi 235-9, 243, 246, 250, 295-6
 Dauckeya 221
 Dayman, Jan Thomasz 43
- Dehla 221
 Dekedalec 221
 Demon 22, 24, 26, 37, 174, 235-6, 239, 242, 369
 Dengka 221, 226, 272-3, 280, 357
 Deribate 378, 387
 Dias, Bartolomeu 390
 Dielen, Pieter van 322, 324
 Diemen Antonio van 45
 Dijk, Leendert van 290
 Dili 9, 77-8, 80, 84, 125, 127, 167, 170, 239, 327, 338, 347-8, 383, 390, 398-9, 401-4, 407-9, 414, 416
 Dirma 66, 346, 378, 383, 401
 Diu 221
 Dominga 348
 Domingo 205, 268, 287-8, 296
 Domingos Soares, Dom 317
 Domingos Sonbai, Dom 287
 Domingos Vieira, Dom 175
 Dominicans 9, 21, 26-31, 36, 47-9, 76, 86-7, 89, 96, 98, 100, 107-8, 113-4, 117, 139, 143, 146, 151-2, 155, 175, 195, 285, 316-7, 328, 331, 346-7, 372, 388, 408
 Doorne, Isaacq van 255-6
 Doutel, Francisco Xavier 363
 Doutel de Figueiredo Sarmento, Manuel 371-2, 376
 Duarte, Dom 94
 Duarte, Tomás 313
 Dulolong 243
 Durven, Dirk 306
 Dutch East India Company xiii, xv, 4-7, 84, 251
- Ebnoni 157
 Edon 358-9

- Edon Seni 223
Elcano, Juan Sebastián de 17
Ende 26-7, 38, 176-7, 184, 242, 248, 314
England, English 9, 34, 137, 185, 192, 276, 312, 314-5, 320, 322, 324-5
Erasmusz, Hans 387
Eredia, Manuel Godinho de 27, 30-2, 76, 170,
Estado da Índia 21, 26-7, 31, 33-5, 37, 45, 92, 109, 126-7, 133, 141-2, 146, 170, 176, 180-1, 183, 188, 190-1, 197, 311-2, 314, 316-7, 319, 322, 328, 333, 336-8, 340, 342-5, 347, 349, 363-4, 369-70, 379, 387, 393, 395, 408-9, 413-4
Este, Willem Adriaan van 389-90, 400-2
Eva 255

Faffome 208
Fai Bele 72
Faluk, Nai 71-2
Fataluco 67, 84
Fatólúic 172
Fattu Fetto 259
Fatuaruin 65
Fatuboro 378, 387
Fatulete 172, 317
Fatuleu 69, 155, 157, 204
Faturó 338, 346
Felipe de Freitas Soares, Dom 397
Fernandes, Alesu 383
Fernandes, Diogo 106
Fernandes, Francisco 169
Ferreira de Carvalho, Vicente 388
Fialaran 64, 66, 346, 378, 384, 403
Flores 3-4, 21, 25-7, 36-8, 42-3, 64, 83, 94, 97, 99, 104-5, 122, 133, 135, 139, 144, 147-8, 173-4, 176-8, 184, 196-7, 236, 242, 247-8, 251, 256, 262-3, 306, 311, 314, 369-70, 374, 397, 413
Fo, Ama 95, 113
Fockens, Barend 308
Fohoterin 172
Fokkens, Barend 400
Fola Sinlae 357, 359
Follafaik 172-3
Forbes, Henry 271
France, French 1, 3, 9-10, 29, 185, 217, 254, 273-4, 282, 289, 303, 305, 314, 322, 347-8, 376, 391, 405-6, 414
Franciscans 18, 29, 134-5, 195
Francisco, Dom 195
Francisco de Taenube, Dom 318, 326
Franciscus, Antonius 29, 154, 196
Franssen, Jan 224, 226
Fredrik Hendrick 260, 279
Freycinet, Louis de 304-5
Frois, Luís 27
Funai 130, 282, 285, 375

Galiyao 22, 38, 94, 115, 178-9, 242-5
Galoli 81, 412
Gama, Agostinho da 139
Gaspar, Dom 395
Geervliet, Jan van 255
Gege 173, 196
Goa xi, 24, 27, 33-4, 92, 143-4, 146-7, 181, 183, 188-9, 312-3, 315-6,

- 324, 328, 331, 335, 348, 369, 398,
408
- Gomez, Gonsales 315
- Gonçalves, Balthazar 117
- Gonst 358-9
- Gowa 83, 85, 234, 240, 370
- Greeving, Carel Gratus 405
- Haarlem 116
- Habsburg Dynasty 92
- Haitimuk 65
- Hamilton, Alexander 315
- Hans, Erasmus 290-1
- Harneno 112, 167
- Hartogh, Johannes de 187-8
- Hazaart, Jacobus Arnoldus 405
- Helong xiv, 41, 57-8, 66, 95-6, 99,
103, 105-6, 108-9, 112-3, 121, 123,
125, 160, 195, 200-4, 209, 211-3,
221-2, 238, 246, 256, 258, 260,
266-8, 278, 280-2, 290, 299-301,
330, 344, 349, 356, 360, 375, 384
- Henricus, Fort 31, 42-3, 92-4, 96,
105, 111, 115, 119, 123, 134, 140,
233, 235-8, 245, 247-8, 250, 388
- Henrique 315
- Hera 84, 167-9, 321, 353, 378
- Herbruggen, Johan ter 393
- Hilak 350, 356
- Hili Haba 233
- Hokkien 263
- Horedaly 221
- Hornay, António 113-4, 117, 137,
139, 140-9, 153-4, 158-64, 168,
172-7, 179-88, 190, 195-7, 208,
214-5, 219, 226, 230, 239-41, 248,
250-1, 311, 313-4, 326, 329, 338,
342, 398
- Hornay, Dona Maria 387
- Hornay, Francisco I 140, 160, 174,
240, 311-3
- Hornay, Francisco II 326, 333-4,
338, 341-2, 347, 350
- Hornay, Francisco III 387, 389-91,
395-6,
- Hornay, Gonsalvo 114, 140
- Hornay, Jan de 43, 44, 113-4, 140,
262
- Hornay, João 371-2, 387
- Hornay, José 383
- Hornay, Pedro 313
- Hornay, Pedro 348, 383, 397, 403,
409
- Hornay, Sara 149
- Horst, Hendrick ter 96, 99, 111, 115,
118-9, 124, 222
- Hurt, Anthony 257-8
- Ifo Bele 72
- Ignacio 347-8
- Ili Mandiri 109, 119
- Iliwaki 171
- Imhoff, Gustaaf Willem van 365
- Insana 39, 55-6, 64, 66, 347, 369,
378, 411
- Iranun 270
- Islam xv, 22, 26-7, 29, 31, 37, 83-4,
87, 93, 179, 241
- Jacinto Correia 378-9
- Jacob 237-8, 246
- Jacoba Manoh 289
- Jacob Liskoen 285
- Jacobsz, Thomas 202, 255-6
- Jacobus Albertus, Don 285
- Jailolo 64

- Jansz, Floris 202, 245-9, 255-6, 277
Japan, Japanese 52, 92, 183, 188,
317
Jara Hili 233
Java, Javanese xi, 15-6, 18-20, 22,
25-6, 28, 52, 54-5, 83, 98, 147, 175,
237, 262-4, 406, 415
Jenilu 167, 346, 378
Jesuits 25, 29, 81, 143, 154-5, 165-6,
196
João, Dom 236
João IV 85
João V 328, 344
João Balthazar 348
João Dharmapala, Dom 27
Johanna 344-5
Johannes Salomonsz 171
Johannes Tano 290
Juang Meto 236
Jumat 248

Kaiteho 80
Kalimantan xii, 200, 253
Kampung Solor 237, 261, 266
Kana Puis 237
Kapuli Attawanek 280
Kapy 276-7
Karaeng Barang 237
Karel Buni 202, 217, 384-5
Kauniki 69, 401
Kawela 178, 239
Kedah 93, 234
Kedang 178, 234, 249
Kefamenanu 398
Keka 221
Kelang 95
Kila Seni 223
Kilo Anak 281

Kisar 167-8, 336
Kiu Lusi 223
Klungkung 61
Knibbe, Cornelis Willem 308
Kobo, Ama 296
Koinino River 94-5, 103, 121, 266
Kolana 38
Kolang Tepak 401
Konga 99, 104, 147, 173, 175-6, 314
Kono 70, 72, 76, 103, 113, 121-2,
156-61, 164, 172, 201, 312, 318,
330, 333-4, 402
Korang 195
Korbaffo 221, 223-4, 227, 256
Kreba 203
Krowe 176
Kui 38, 243
Kune 72, 75-7, 100, 102, 112, 202,
234, 386
Kune, Bi Lile 71-2
Kune, Nai Ke 71

Labala 115, 178, 249
Labalaba 386
Laban, Nai 70-1
Laclo 167, 169, 347, 378
Lafu Funai 375
Lagadoni 142
Laicore 347
Laivai 168, 378
Lakaan, Gunung 64
Lake, Nai 385
Lakekun 64, 66, 378, 383
Lalan, Usi Bi 329, 331, 363
Lalcia 347
Lamahala xv, 22, 38, 43, 103-4, 114,
175, 178, 186, 236, 239-41,
249-51

- Lamaholot 21-2, 25-6, 29, 45, 174,
178, 233, 236, 240-1, 413
- Lamakera xv, 22, 37-8, 43, 86, 114,
120, 130, 140, 235-40, 242-3, 246,
249, 295, 384
- Lamaknen 378, 384
- Lambrechtsen, Ambrecht 123
- Lancke xiv
- Landu 2, 221, 227, 274, 287, 357,
359, 380-1
- Lanka 35, 126, 141, 344
- Lanqueiro 17, 167, 378, 387, 403
- Laran 62, 70
- Larantuka 24, 36-7, 41-4, 47, 64, 85,
88, 92-3, 96, 100, 104, 106, 109-10,
113, 118, 122-3, 128, 134-5, 140-8,
150, 154, 168, 171, 173-6, 178-81,
184, 186, 191, 215, 235, 240-1,
248-9, 253, 264, 313, 315-8, 320-1,
324, 332, 351, 362, 369, 387, 395,
397, 409
- Lasi, Nai 130
- Lassa 74
- Lebo 337
- Le Bruyn, Reint 289
- Leers, Reynier 296-7
- Lelenuk 221
- Lelogama 209
- Lembata 21, 37, 115, 125, 173-4,
178, 234, 239, 241-2, 247, 249, 352
- Leonis de Castro, António 363
- Leowalu 378
- Leteluli 172, 378
- Leti 167-8, 337
- Leva 248
- Lewolein 37
- Lewonama 25, 174, 196
- Lewotolok 178
- Liae 229
- Liauddin Ismail, Sultan 241
- Lidak 64, 346, 378
- Lifau 9, 25, 32, 87, 100, 116, 119,
122, 129, 135-40, 142-52, 155, 159-
62, 166-7, 169, 171, 174-6, 179,
181, 183-87, 189, 191, 196, 214,
216, 239, 241, 245, 253, 262, 269,
276, 297, 311-20, 322-4, 327-30,
334-5, 344-5, 347-8, 353, 361, 364,
369, 371-2, 376, 379, 381, 383, 387-
90, 395-99, 402, 407-8, 411, 416
- Lifkone 231
- Likusaen 18, 64, 66, 70, 73, 77-8, 80-
1, 169, 321, 342
- Liley 143
- Lindholm, Pieter Andries 391
- Lip, Christoffel 366
- Liquiçá 70, 77-8
- Lisbon 162, 336, 412
- Liu, Nai 377
- Loe Mananu 202
- Loewis 204
- Lohayong xv, 22, 24, 28, 37-9, 42,
44, 93, 120, 179, 233-7, 240, 242,
244, 247-50, 384
- Loiquero 337
- Lole 221, 272-3, 359
- Lolotoe 340
- Loo, Warnerus van 290
- Lopes, Lourenço 262, 316-7
- Loppo, Nai 268-9
- Lo Tam Ko 267
- Louis, Don 403
- Lubu Lubu Makasar 90
- Luca 27, 31-2, 64, 78, 80-2, 165,
169-70, 317, 321, 335, 338, 379,
384, 407

- Luís, Dom 175
Luís, Dom 193, 215
Luís, Simão 122-3, 135, 142, 156, 311
Luís Hornay de Roza, Dom 373
Luz, Belchior da 30-1
Luzon 18, 108, 113, 134, 140
- Macassai 81, 412
Macao xi, 24, 29, 33, 85, 138, 140, 180-1, 183, 186, 188-9, 262-3, 273, 312, 315-6, 324, 327, 329, 335, 344, 348, 369, 371, 390, 395, 414
Magellan, Ferdinand 4, 17, 179
Majapahit 22, 26
Makassar, Makassarese 26, 29, 38, 48-9, 64, 81, 83-8, 90-2, 94, 98, 100, 104, 107, 110, 118, 125-6, 138, 141, 150, 163, 165-7, 169-70, 176, 178, 184-7, 200, 223-4, 240, 244-5, 249, 254, 262, 265-6, 272-3, 351-2, 369, 387, 394, 411
Malabar 264
Malacca xi, 18-20, 26-9, 31-2, 35-6, 44-7, 64-5, 77, 86, 92, 138-9, 141, 181, 234
Malacca, Bishop of 176, 316-7, 328-9, 332-3, 335
Malays 19-21, 81, 83, 138, 249, 256, 265, 304-5, 412
Malua 94, 179, 243
Maluku 15, 17, 24-5, 27, 29, 34-6, 42-3, 50, 64, 83, 94-5, 105, 108, 126-7, 134, 138, 141, 170, 224, 240, 242-3, 314, 319
Mambai 412
Manas Sonbai, Nai 112, 129
Manatuto 81, 91, 110, 165-6, 168-9, 317, 333, 343-4, 347, 378-9, 408
Mandar 275, 352
Manggarai 177, 374
Mangili 377
Maniki 161, 207, 208
Manila 47, 134, 188
Manlela Kosad, Bi 329
Manubait 204, 330-1, 333, 354
Manuel 348
Manuel, Dom 287-8
Manuel, Dom 395
Manufai 80, 170, 356, 379
Mardijka 259
Mardijkers 43, 46, 130-1, 193, 259-62, 265, 267-8, 275-6, 279, 291, 357-60, 362, 365-6, 373-5, 377, 382, 384, 389
Margits, Joseph 124-5
Maria, Donna 154
Marlier, Fredrik Karel 389-90
Marlilu 64
Marobo 378
Maromak 29-30
Maromak oan 62, 64-5, 69-70, 81-2, 87, 163-4, 244, 378, 383-4
Martins da Ponte, Fernão 146-7, 152
Massu, Nai 76
Mataru 38
Matebian 172-3
Mateyer 125, 167
Matheus da Costa, Dom 317, 328, 334
Mathias de Costa, Dom 343
Matoaya, Karaeng 26, 84
Matos, Joaquim de 340
Maubara 66, 344, 378, 387, 399, 402-3

- Maucatar 43, 64, 172, 193, 346, 347, 410
 Mau Dasi 130
 Mauta 356
 Mecklenburg 381
 Mede 221
 Mello, Pedro de 342
 Mello de Castro, Francisco 332
 Memboro 177
 Mena 24, 27, 30-2, 38-9, 41, 43, 49, 86-9, 96, 98, 100, 114, 119, 143, 148, 151, 167
 Menado 285
 Menanga 236, 352
 Mendosa, Alexis 315
 Menia 229
 Mercator, Gerardus 25
 Mesara 229-30
 Mesic Nisoni 288
 Mesquita Pimentel, António 312-3, 318
 Methuen treaties 312
 Meulenbeck, Jan Anthony 159, 291-2, 356-9, 391
 Miguel Tavares, Dom 317
 Minahasa 200, 412
 Minangkabau 61, 98, 412
 Ming Dynasty 44, 92, 262
 Minggu 231
 Miomaffo 69, 75-6, 155, 157, 204, 369
 Moerman, Willem 96, 102, 181-2, 192, 207, 239-40, 248, 251, 276-7, 279-80, 284, 298-300, 305
 Mollo xii, 69-70, 75, 128, 155, 157, 202, 204, 382, 394, 397, 401-2
 Moniz de Macedo, António 338, 342, 345
 Monkana, Frans 366, 375
 Morais Sarmento, Jácomo 321, 323-4, 328
 Motael 80, 125, 167, 328, 398,
 Moucheron, Hendrik d' 390
 Mozambique 43, 133, 135, 395, 398
 Muti salak 40, 218, 232, 326, 350
 Mutis, Gunung 39, 71-2, 74
 Muzaffar, Sultan 84-7, 91
 Muzangos 133
 Mysore 409

 Naaiolie 369
 Nae Saku 243
 Nagarakertagama 15, 22
 Nai Niap 103
 Naikliu 98, 206-7
 Naitimu 64
 Naki, Ama 219-20
 Narai 189
 Nasse, Ama 111-2
 Natti, Nai 71
 Ndao 19, 66, 221, 228, 231, 256
 Ndaomanu 357, 359, 384
 Neas 283
 Neno, Uis 29-30, 70, 196
 Neno Sonbai, Nai 129, 329, 370
 Nenometan 161
 Nesnay 90
 New Holland 1-2
 Nieuhof, Johan 46, 193
 Nisoni, Leopold xiii, xv
 Nisoni, Maria Elizabeth 57
 Noebesi 71-2
 Noel Bi Lomi 71, 73
 Nogueira Lisboa, Feliciano António 409

- Noi Kasemuti 118
Noimeno 103
Noilmina 99, 305, 386
Noimuti 150, 321, 341, 356, 370-2,
374, 378, 385, 387-9, 396, 401
Nope 76
Nuban 76
Nubatonis 76
Numba 37, 148
Nunuhenu 129, 136, 151, 315, 320,
364
Nusa Tenggara ix
Nusadila 387, 403
Nussepoko 167

Oeoba xiv, 204
Oecusse 108, 128-9, 137, 139, 245,
276, 329, 348, 383, 388-91, 395-8,
401-3, 408
Oecusse-Ambeno Enclave xvi, 25,
39, 74
Oedale 375
Oematán xii, 70, 72, 74, 76, 121,
156-7, 202, 204-5, 209, 382, 394,
397, 402
Oenale 221, 226-7, 358
Oenam 72-3
Oesapa 207
Oirata 336-7
Ola Adobala 174, 351
Oletta 108-9
Olivier, Johannes 224
Olu 268, 269
Ombai 94, 243
Ormuz 26
Orta, Garcia da 24
OSSIPOKA 221
Ossu 81
Ossuroa 81
Oysain 153

Paeneno 72-3
Paga 176
Pagaruyung 61
Pah, Uis 30
Paji 22, 26, 37, 42-3, 239, 242
Palakka, Arung 184-5
Palembang 200, 276
Pamakayu 37, 142, 351
Pandai 38, 179, 243, 249
Pantar 17, 26, 38, 94, 115, 125, 178-
9, 238, 241-5, 249
Papangers 108, 113, 134, 140-1
Papuan Islands 351
Paravicini, Johannes Andreas 210,
217, 274, 283, 376-81, 383-6
Pariti 402
Pascal-Jean-Balthazar 347-8
Patigolo 174
Patingalloang, Karaeng 85
Patola 359
Paulo II, Dom 382
Paulus van Coupang 246, 250, 255,
280-1, 290
Pedro II 174, 319
Pedro da Cruz, Dom 151
Pedro Hornay, Dom 317
Pedro Sonbai, Dom 129, 318, 326,
329-31, 350, 363, 370
Penfui 130, 193, 361, 365-7, 369-70,
375, 382, 384, 394, 399
Peper, Aart 351
Péron, F.A. 1, 3, 282
Pertawi, Kaicili 38, 93, 233-4
Peu 153
Peur, Don 383

- Pelon, Jean-Baptiste 1, 10, 29, 217,
 224, 230, 273, 289, 303-4, 307, 399
 Philippines 19, 33, 35, 50, 108, 134,
 141, 270
 Pieternella 202, 246, 255-6
 Pieter Babakase 288
 Pietersz, Barend 247
 Pietersz, Roeloff xiii, xiv, 256
 Pigafetta, Antonio 17-9, 24, 31-2,
 78, 179
 Pilar, Manuel do 343
 Pindaris 404
 Pinnell, Richard 316, 324-6, 329
 Pinto Alcoforado e Sousa, José 413
 Pires, Salvador 390
 Pires, Tomé 19
 Pitai 110, 112, 121, 209, 410
 Plüskow, Hans Albrecht von 95, 275,
 381-2, 384-95, 399
 Poivre, Pierre 376
 Ponai 160, 330
 Pune 283
 Poneo 330
 Pono I, Ama 94
 Pono II, Ama 95-6, 99, 102-4, 106,
 109, 202, 246, 350
 Pono Koi 213-4, 255
 Pontianak 253
 Porto Novo 315
 Pot, Ama 298
 Poto xiv
 Prego, Pasqual 177
 Protestantism xv, 34, 45, 350, 368
 Pulo 237
 Pureman 38
 Qing Dynasty 92, 262
 Raffles, Thomas Stamford 21
 Rajjua 97, 228-9
 Raimean 378
 Raja 276-7
 Ramelau, Mount 81
 Rangel, Cristóvão 49
 Rasi Fo 280
 Ratty Sassy 211
 Ravken, Samuel 323-4
 Rego Barreto de Gama e Castro,
 Pedro 343-4, 353
 Richard Louis Sonbai 370
 Ringgou 221, 224, 227, 238, 359
 Rodrigo, Dom 117, 155
 Rodrigo, Dom Diogo 138, 154
 Rohi, Ama 231-3
 Rohi Rano 233
 Ronga 103
 Rosily, François-Étienne 305, 307,
 391, 396
 Rote, Rotenese xiii-xv, 2, 7-8, 12, 19,
 48, 52, 56, 66, 90-1, 97, 103, 109,
 113, 119-20, 123-4, 126, 131, 173,
 199-200, 211, 221-33, 235, 238,
 249, 256-61, 268-78, 280-1, 284-6,
 288-9, 295-6, 298, 311-2, 317, 322,
 326, 351, 356-7, 359-62, 366, 368,
 373, 376, 380-1
 Roury 111
 Rumphius, Georg 171
 Saba, Ama 173
 Sabatu 72
 Sabon 249-51
 Sako Mede 243
 Sakunaba 369, 378
 Salida 230
 Same 80

- Samoro 27, 317, 333, 338, 356, 378, 387,
Sandalwood 20-1, 24-5, 27-30, 32, 36, 38-42, 44, 47, 50, 59-60, 68, 74, 85, 87, 91-2, 94, 98-100, 105, 109, 118-9, 121, 124-6, 129, 137, 141, 149-50, 153, 155-6, 159-62, 165-7, 171, 176-80, 183, 185-9, 200, 205, 207-8, 212, 262-4, 271, 285, 306, 311, 314-5, 323-5, 329, 331, 334, 336, 348-9, 353, 362, 368-9, 373-4, 397, 399, 403, 409
Sane, Nai 382
São Domingos, Jordão de 107-8
São Jacinto, António de 77, 94, 96, 136, 151, 285
Saragossa Treaty 35
Saráu 338, 346
Saroro Neno 111, 128, 326
Sarzedas, Count of 53, 68, 78, 408, 411
Sasita Mean, Liurai 383
Sau, Nai 200, 205, 220, 267, 296, 309
Saubaki 204
Sawu 7-8, 26, 43, 48, 52, 90, 97-8, 112, 120, 126, 221, 224, 228-33, 235, 238, 247, 249, 256, 260, 271, 275-6, 284-7, 289, 298, 322, 351, 360-1, 365-6, 368, 376, 388-9
Schot, Apolonius 30, 36-9
Schrijver, David 380, 389-90
Schroff, Jan 255, 287
Seba 229, 231
Sebastião Fernandes, Dom 317
Sebille 258
Semau 2, 42, 95, 105, 109, 119, 200, 202, 204, 227, 246, 280, 350, 385
Senak 112, 385
Seram 95
Serin 169-70
Serrão, Bento 88
Servião 25, 32, 52-3, 66-8, 76-7, 86-9, 91, 98-100, 102-3, 108, 182, 206, 318-9, 331, 333, 335, 337, 346, 350, 361, 372, 409
Siam 100, 188-9, 262
Sibori Amsterdam 241
Siciale 32
Sico 348
Sigy 111
Siki River 202
Sikka xv, 37, 139, 173, 176-8, 193, 236, 369, 397
Siko Taebenu 299
Silawang 49, 167, 346
Sili, Ama 169, 171-3
Silva, António da 176
Silva, Dom João da 31
Simão, Dom 318
Sina Mutin Malaka 64-5, 139
Sirih pinang 41, 213, 341-2
Sitti E Heriya 84
slave trade 178, 271-2, 275, 282
slavery 269, 270-1, 273-4, 278, 280-2, 351
Soares, João 25
Sobe Kase, Nai 290
Sobe Sonbai, Nai 405
Sode 272
Soim Ko 263
Solo 234
Solor 3-4, 7-8, 21-6, 28-31, 33, 36-8, 41-8, 83, 85-6, 92-7, 103-5, 109, 112-5, 118-20, 124-6, 130, 134-5, 140, 142, 146, 148, 154, 170, 173-6, 178-

- 80, 184-7, 199-200, 221, 223, 227, 233-45, 247-51, 256, 260-1, 266-7, 271, 279, 282, 284, 289, 295, 298, 311-2, 314, 322, 327, 351-2, 360, 366, 369, 373, 376, 384, 388, 409
- Somma 280
- Sonbai xiii-xiv, 12-3, 39, 57-8, 62-4, 66, 68-70, 72-8, 81-2, 91, 98-103, 106-7, 110-4, 116, 119-25, 128-31, 137, 140, 143, 148, 153, 155-62, 164, 168, 172, 200-9, 211-5, 218-20, 224, 226-7, 231, 234, 255-6, 259-60, 267-9, 273, 279, 282, 285-8, 290, 295-302, 305, 309, 312, 318-9, 321, 326-7, 329-31, 333-4, 337, 342, 350, 353-4, 356, 361-7, 370-3, 375, 382, 385-6, 394, 397-405, 410-1
- Sonbai, Bi 205-6, 219, 296, 300-1, 318, 326-7, 330, 350
- Sorbian 25, 41, 77, 95, 102-3, 161, 206-8
- Soto Maior, Manuel de 329-30, 336
- South-Western Islands 167-8, 170-2, 191, 336
- Spain 17, 33-6, 44-5, 48, 85, 91-2, 108, 134-5, 141, 191, 217, 314, 322, 376, 382
- Speelman, Cornelis 237-8, 306
- Suai 18, 43, 66, 78, 80-1, 90, 169, 172, 379, 383
- Subdale 375
- Sui River 379
- Sulamu 95-6
- Sulawesi xii, 6, 15-6, 21, 25, 28-9, 32, 49, 52, 83-5, 90-1, 125, 163, 165, 173, 176, 184, 200-1, 240, 254, 274, 284, 351-2
- Sulla, Bi 326
- Sumatra xii, 15, 20, 52, 61, 200, 230, 240, 270, 376
- Sumba 3, 15-6, 21-2, 94, 173, 177-8, 180, 228, 280, 314, 332, 368-9, 374, 376-7, 387, 393
- Sumbawa 3, 15, 177, 332, 374
- Sunbanu, Mathias xii
- Suri, Nai 70
- Susang, Ama 238, 246, 281, 300
- Susanna 219, 260, 279-80
- Swaan, Barend van der 288
- Taebenu 12, 77, 95-6, 99, 102, 108, 153, 162, 207-9, 214-5, 218, 256, 282, 288, 291-2, 296, 299, 300-1, 365, 373, 405
- Taebenu, Lady 164
- Taek, Nai 70
- Taenube Kono, Nai 318, 333
- Tahacac 384
- Taiwan 99, 201, 243, 262
- Takaip 103, 109-10, 112, 157, 201, 334
- Takaip, Nai 382, 385
- Takanar 81
- Talac 221
- Tallo' 26, 83-8, 166, 240
- Talo 231
- Talus Sonbai 129
- Taly 279
- Tanes, Nai 268-9
- Tange, Willem 185-6, 188, 228, 295-6
- Tanjung Bunga 263
- Tano, Ama 280-1
- Tanof 208-9
- Taupah Kono, Nai 333-4

- Taveiro, António 27-8, 30, 151
Tenasserim 188
Tepas 305, 386
Termanu 221, 223-4, 258, 272, 280,
288, 357-60, 384
Ternate 25-6, 38, 50, 211, 241, 327,
370
Terong 22, 38, 114, 120, 236, 239-
40, 249, 352
Tetun 16-7, 25, 29-31, 41, 53, 57,
59, 61, 65-7, 70, 78, 80, 91, 161,
164, 169, 270, 306, 316, 335, 337,
346, 403, 412
Tei Seran 87
Telles de Meneses, António José
395-8
Tetu Utang, Usi 205, 296
Thailand 270
Thenoc, Amos Pietersz 290
Theunisz, Maria 278
Thie 221, 288, 357-9
Thoos, Ama 212
Tibar 17, 125, 167
Tico 43
Tidore 34, 125
Tielman, Dirk 267-8
Tilingh, Hendrick 247-8, 251
Timau 72, 206, 361-2, 364, 394,
399, 401, 411
Timor Leste xi-xii, xiv-xv, 17, 24-5,
74, 77-8, 80-1, 156, 172, 346, 387
Timu 97, 112, 229-33
Tipu Sultan 409
Tiris 90, 169-70, 356, 379
Tirrou 280-1
Toas, Nai 206-7, 300
Tobani 401, 403
Tobin, George 257
Tocodede 66, 78, 80, 399
Tolgrita 383
Tomananu, Ama 121-4, 129, 155-6,
204-5, 207, 212, 215, 219, 226, 255,
260, 279, 287, 309
Tomananu, Ama 301
Tomás, Dom 117, 154
Tonkin 189
To Oematan, Nai 397
Tordesillas Treaty 35
Travassos, Duarte 152
Trijntje 278
Truytman, Johan 48, 221, 272
Tsjij Nio 267
Tsiong Tsay 268-9
Tuan I, Ama 123, 129, 155-8, 205
Tuan II, Ama 205
Tuklua Sonbai, Nai 73-4, 100, 111,
128-9
Tulang Ikan 245, 267, 320, 322-5,
327, 334, 348, 352, 370, 387-8, 411
Tulitamma 248-50
Tullia 272-3
Tunbaba 369, 385
Tusala 394

Ulumera 78, 80

Vaiquenos 10, 67-8, 91
Valentijn, François 290
Vasa Dynasty xv
Veiga, Rafael de 48
Vemasse 81, 91, 165, 169, 338, 347,
379, 397-8
Vent, Gabriel 266, 267
Verheyden, Jacob 111-4, 120, 128,
391
Verhoeven, Arend 189, 250, 295-6

- Vessoro 81, 90, 353
- Vieira de Figueiredo, Francisco 100, 119, 141-2, 144, 147, 152, 156, 189, 262
- Vieira Godinho, João Baptista 401, 408-9
- Vietnam 188-9
- Viqueque 81, 90, 317, 328, 334-5, 340, 353, 379, 407
- Visscher, Gerardus 309, 351-4
- Vlaming van Oudshoorn, Arnold de 115-20, 123, 128
- Wagenburgh, Reynout 163, 230-2, 243
- Waibalun 37
- Waibobo 81
- Waimaa 168, 378
- Wanjon, Timoteus 402-3, 405
- Warilla, Djogo 139
- Watan Lema 22, 24, 37-8, 92, 103, 112, 115, 175-6, 178-9, 184, 233, 236, 239, 242, 244, 248, 250, 351, 369
- Watte Soul 165
- Wehali 30-1, 39, 41, 57, 60-7, 69-73, 77-82, 84-91, 129, 139, 161-4, 172, 174, 244, 302, 321, 337, 342, 346-7, 353, 356, 377-8, 383-4, 407
- Welcken, Leendert 256, 278
- Wetar 167, 171, 238, 242, 244-5, 336
- Wewiku 18, 30-1, 41, 43, 57, 61, 65, 78, 81, 84, 129, 160-4, 174, 346-7, 353, 356, 377-8, 383, 407
- Wijckersloot, Jacob van 175, 214-5, 219, 243, 260, 278, 292-3
- Willem IV 371
- Winter, Nicolaas de 322, 324
- Wuring 279
- Xavier, Francisco 25
- Zainuddin, Sultan 241
- Zambezi 316
- Ziko 250

