

The blessings and perils of female rule: New perspectives on the reigning queens of Patani, c. 1584–1718

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Only in a handful of cases in world history has female rule been seen by contemporary observers as desirable and been sustained for long periods of time. Drawing on European, Malay and Chinese sources, this article investigates the reasons for the institutionalisation of female rule in the Malay sultanate of Patani (presently in southern Thailand) for most of the period between c. 1584 and 1711. It is concluded that the results of previous research, in which the Patani queens are characterised as powerless front figures and/or promiscuous, have insufficient support in the contemporary sources. Furthermore, the problems of female rule for dynastic stability are discussed comparatively. Finally, the decline of female rule in Patani after the mid-seventeenth century is explained with reference to the larger political, economic and military changes in maritime Southeast Asia at the time.

A country called Dai-ni [Patani] is especially barbaric and they have an inferior moral order. Since olden days their hereditary ruler has been a Queen who reigns nominally regardless of the actual government of the country.

– Chinese visitor to Patani, 1675.¹

Introduction

In the course of the 5,000 years of world history of which we have records, there have been but a few hundred women who have exercised formal sovereignty over an independent polity of some kind.² Before the second half of the twentieth century, by

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1 'Ship No. 13. 15 August 1675', in *The junk trade from Southeast Asia: Translations from the Tōsen Fusetsu-gaki, 1674–1723*, ed. Yoneo Ishii (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), p. 105.

2 Guida M. Jackson, *Women rulers throughout the ages: An illustrated guide* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 1999), lists around 500 female rulers from around 2600 BCE to the end of the twentieth century CE,

far most of these women owed their position to the dynastic order of succession, since in many (though far from all) pre-modern societies, the throne could be inherited by a female member of the ruling family in the event that no immediate male heir existed. Even so, instances of female rule were seen as exceptions in most cases, and although powerful women occasionally ruled successfully for long periods of time – as did, for example, the empress Wu Huo in China during the Tang dynasty or Elizabeth I in early modern England – the normal order of succession generally related to the male line after the death, abdication or deposition of the female ruler in question.

There are thus but a handful of examples in the history of mankind as we know it where female rule can be said to have been to some extent institutionalised; that is, where a line of consecutive, or near consecutive, women rulers exercised formal authority (sometimes in tandem with a male counterpart) over an independent or semi-independent state and where female rule seems to have been accepted by contemporary society as being the normal, desirable or at least acceptable order of things. Such appears to have been the case in several early civilisations in the Nile Valley (including Nubia and Egypt), the Hellenistic world and Japan up until and including the Nara period (704–794 CE) and the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other crusader states of the high middle ages. In modern history, four cases stand out: the two Southeast Asian sultanates of Patani and Aceh in the seventeenth century, eighteenth-century Russia and nineteenth-century Madagascar.³

Of these, Patani, with its seven queens, who reigned over the country for most of the period between 1584 and 1711, except for an interlude of male rule from around 1651 to 1670, is one of the least well-known and least well-researched cases.⁴ The obscurity of Patani's long period of female rule in modern historiography is due in part to the fact that the sources from the period (especially the second half) are relatively scant and patchy and in part to nationalist biases in modern Thai

but far from all of these ruled over a sovereign state or polity in their own name. The same is true for the probably most comprehensive (but somewhat unreliable) list of female rulers, historical and contemporary, available at <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/> (last accessed on 21 Sept. 2010).

3 For these and other possible instances of institutionalised female rule, see Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, 'Nubian queens in the Nile Valley and Afro-Asiatic cultural history', in *Ninth international conference for Nubian studies* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1998), pp. 1–9; Grace Harriet Macurdy, *Hellenistic queens: A study of womanpower in Macedonia, Seleucid Syria, and Ptolemaic Egypt* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1932); Michiko Y. Aoki, 'Jitō Tennō: The female sovereign' in *Heroic with grace: Legendary women of Japan*, ed. Chieko Irie Mulhern (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), pp. 40–76; Bernard Hamilton, 'Women in the crusader states: The queens of Jerusalem', in *Medieval women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 143–74; Leonard Andaya, "'A very good-natured but awe-inspiring government": The reign of a successful queen in seventeenth century Aceh', in *Hof en handel: Aziatische vorsten en de VOC 1620–1720*, ed. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Peter Rietbergen (Leiden: KITLV, 2004); Robert Coughlan, *Elizabeth and Catherine* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974); and Jackson, *Women rulers*, pp. 343–5. Several pre-colonial Southeast Asian states were occasionally headed by women, as were several Indian principalities during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

4 Jackson, *Women rulers*, for example, fails to mention any of the Patani queens. Neither are the Patani queens discussed in Fatima Mernissi, *The forgotten queens of Islam* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

historiography, which largely has worked to suppress Patani's history because of its status as a *de facto* independent polity from the fifteenth to the late eighteenth century.⁵

Against this background, the purpose of the present article is to trace the development of female rule in Patani and to investigate the reasons for and character of the long period of female rule. Why was female rule institutionalised in Patani, and why did it decline and eventually come to an end? What were the main defining characteristics of Patani's women-led governments and what difference, if any, did it make that the formal head of state was a woman rather than a man?

Origins of female rule in Patani

By the mid-sixteenth century Patani was a small trading port on the rise, strategically located on the middle of the long east coast of the Malay peninsula, endowed with a good natural and sheltered harbour. The city benefitted from the trade boom during Southeast Asia's 'Age of Commerce' from around 1450 to 1680, and it specifically benefitted from long-established trade connections with China and Japan and the relocation of the trade in spices and other luxury goods in the region after the Portuguese capture of Melaka in 1511. Like most of the other major entrepôts in the region, it was a Malay-dominated sultanate where trade was conducted mainly by foreign merchants: largely Chinese but also Japanese, Javanese, Ryukuyus, Thais and, especially from the early seventeenth century, Europeans.⁶ At its peak, in the first decades of the seventeenth century, the city's population was probably around 40–50,000 and that of the whole country three to four times as many.⁷

According to the *Hikayat Patani*, a court chronicle which probably was first recorded between c. 1690 and 1720, the accession to the throne of the first queen,

5 For a short introduction in English to the history of Patani, see A. Teeuw and D.K. Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani: The story of Patani*, vols 1–2 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), pp. 1–24. For Patani's historiography in relation to that of modern Thailand, see Davisakd Puaksom, 'Of a lesser brilliance: Patani historiography in contention', in *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic interactions on a plural peninsula*, ed. Michael J. Montesano and Patrick Jory (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008), pp. 71–9. See also Daniel Perret, 'Introduction', in *Études sur l'histoire du sultanat de Patani*, ed. Daniel Perret, Amara Srisuchat and Sombun Thanasuk (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004), pp. 9–12, on Patani's historiography.

6 Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce 1450–1680: Volume 2: Expansion and crisis* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 210–11; Francis R. Bradley, 'Piracy, smuggling, and trade in the rise of Patani, 1490–1600', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 96 (2008): 27–50; H. Terpstra, *De factorij der Oostindische Compagnie te Patani* ('S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1938), p. 3. For the Japanese influence, see also Ahmad Fathy al-Fatani, *Pengantar sejarah Patani* (Alor Setar: Pustaka Darussalam, 1994), pp. 20–1; and Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay kingdom of Patani* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2005 [c. 1950]), pp. 29–30.

7 The estimate is based on the information, given by Cornelis van Neijenrode, 'Vertoog van de gelegenheid des Koninkrijks van Siam', *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap Gevestigd te Utrecht*, 27 (1871 [1622]): 288, that in 1615 Patani contributed with 10,000 fighting men as allies of Siam against Aua (Burma). See also Reid, *Southeast Asia*, vol. 2, p. 76; and Izaäk Commelin, *Begin ende voortgang vande Vereenigde Neederlandsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, ed. C.R. Boxer, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970 [1646]), p. 16, about the size of the population of Patani.

Table 1: The queens of Patani, c. 1584–1718

Queens	Reign
The 'Inland' dynasty ⁸	
Peracau Raja Ijau	1584?–1616
Peracau Raja Biru	1616–1624?
Paduka Syah Alam Raja Ungu	1624?–1635
Peracau Raja Kuning	1635–1651?
The Kelantan dynasty	
(Raja Bahar or Bakal (male))	1651?–1670?
Raja Mas Kelantan	1670?–1698?
Raja Mas Chayam (first reign)	1698?–1702?
Peracau Raja Dewi	1702?–1711?
Raja Mas Chayam (second reign)	1716?–1718?

Source: This dynastic timeline is based on A. Teeuw and D.K. Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani: The story of Patani*, vols 1–2 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 11, and Ahmad Fathy al-Fatani, *Pengantar sejarah Patani* (Alor Setar: Pustaka Darussalam, 1994), pp. 27–8, 35, 38, who in his turn bases his chronology on the work of Abdullah Muhammad (Nakula) on the history of Kelantan; see Abdullah bin Mohamed, *Keturunan raja-raja Kelantan dan peristiwa-peristiwa bersejarah* (Kota Bharu: Muzium Negeri Kelantan, 1981). See also Francis R. Bradley, 'Moral order in a time of damnation: The *Hikayat Patani* in historical context', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40, 2 (2009): 273–6, about the problems of establishing a reliable chronology for Patani's early modern history.

Raja Ijau (the 'green queen'),⁹ in 1584 followed upon a period of extreme internal political turbulence and infighting among the members of the ruling dynasty (see Table 1). After the death of Sultan Manzur Syah (1564–1572), the nine-year-old son of his predecessor and brother Mudhaffar Shah, Patik Siam, became sultan with his aunt, Raja Aisyah, acting as regent. The year after, however, both Patik Siam and Raja Aisyah were murdered by a half-brother of the young sultan, Raja Bambang. Patik Siam

8 The term 'Inland dynasty' was coined by Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 4, based on the assumption that the dynasty originated from the inland region of the Malay Peninsula.

9 The naming of the four Inland queens after the Malay words for green (*h/ijau*), blue (*biru*), violet (*ungu*) and yellow (*kuning*) follows the *Hikayat Patani*. The chronicle does not provide any particular explanation for the names, but names of colours for noble persons were relatively common in traditional Malay society; Teeuw & Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 10, note 44. Barbara Watson Andaya, *The flaming womb: Repositioning women in early modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), p. 171, has suggested that the colour green infers that the 'queen's status is ultimately derived from Islam', but she does not provide any further evidence of her hypothesis. On the contrary, the fact that Raja Ijau did not use an Islamic royal title – as had her male predecessors – suggests that her legitimacy was not based to any great extent on the Islamic faith.

The *Hikayat Patani* also gives posthumous names for all four queens of the Inland dynasty and for these, in contrast to the colour names, explanations are given: Raja Ijau was called Marhum (i.e. 'the late') Tambangan (after a place where a major channel was completed during her reign); Raja Biru was called Marhum Tengah ('middle', probably because she was the second of the three sisters who ruled successively); Raja Ungu was called Marhum Pahang (after her late husband, the raja of Pahang) and Raja Kuning was called Marhum Besar ('great' after her husband the 'great lord' (*yang dipertuan besar*) of Johor). Contemporary European sources, meanwhile, generally refer to each of the queens by their title in European languages (*Queene*, *Coningin*, *Königin*, *Koninginne*, etc) or by the locally and regionally used Thai title *phra-cao* (*peracau* in Malay).

was succeeded on the throne by the youngest child of Manzur Shah, Bahdur, who at the time was 10 years old, thus bypassing his three or four elder sisters. In 1584, however, Bahdur too was murdered by his half-brother, Raja Bima, leaving the Inland dynasty without male heirs to the throne.¹⁰ According to the *Hikayat Patani*:

Then the ministers and officers entered the compound and gathered in the audience hall to discuss whom they would install as Sultan Bahdur's successor. Now concerning the children of Marhum Bungsu [Manzur Shah], there were no sons left – there remained only daughters. Raja Ijau was then installed, and she was the first to become queen here in the country of Patani. [...] Now as for Raja Ijau, while reigning over the country she was called Pera'cau, Queen, as Raja 'A'isyah had once been called.¹¹

The general impression of extreme political turbulence and violence after the death of Manzur Shah is corroborated by a near-contemporary (1617) Chinese account which tells us that: 'As he [the late king] was without a son, his relatives all fought for the throne, and there were killings all over the country until there was none of the relatives left. Thus, they enthroned a female chief as queen.'¹²

It thus seems likely that the origins of Patani's long period of female rule can be traced to the lack of male heirs to the throne. Apparently, there were no fixed rules of succession but the male line of succession was generally preferred to the female. In this respect, Patani did not differ from other contemporary Malay states, and the royal succession reflected the cognatic kinship of most Malays, which recognised both the male and female lines of descent but gave precedence to the male line.

Several passages in the *Hikayat Patani* indicate that women had a relatively prominent position in the Patani court even before Raja Ijau's ascension to the throne. In contrast to some courts in the region, such as Kartasura, where the genealogies did not even record all of the sultan's daughters, these are carefully accounted for in the *Hikayat Patani*.¹³ Female children, even those born by a consort, could be much appreciated and dearly loved, as illustrated by the touching description of Sultan Manzur Shah's grief over the death of his youngest daughter:

10 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 170–2.

11 Ibid., p. 173. The Dutch Admiral Jacob van Neck, who visited Patani in 1601–02, however, claimed that Raja Ijau had become queen upon the death of her husband; see Jacob van Neck, 'Journaal van Jacob van Neck', in *De vierde schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Jacob Wilkens en Jacob van Neck (1599–1604)*, ed. Jhr. H.A. van Foreest and A. de Booy, vol. 1 ('S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980 [1604]), p. 226. The information is repeated in Commelin, *Begin*, p. 18. The exact chain of events is unclear. According to a local legend, recorded by Hsü Yun-Tsiao, *Da Bei-nian shi* (Singapore: Nan Yang Press, 1946), pp. 117–21; English translation in Geoff Wade, 'From Chaiya to Pahang: The eastern seaboard of the peninsula as recorded in classical Chinese texts', in Perret, Srisuchat and Thanasuk, *Études*, pp. 75–8, Lin Dao-qian, a prominent Chinese pirate, arrived in Patani around 1578 (during Sultan Bahdur's rule) and married the king's daughter. Since Bahdur did not have any children, however, this probably referred to one of his sisters, generally assumed to have been the future Raja Ijau. If so, Lin would have been likely to have ruled jointly with Raja Ijau or at least aspired to the throne. Lin died in an accident, probably in the late 1580s, leaving Raja Ijau both the eldest daughter of Mansyur Shah, and the widow of Lin. See also Bradley, 'Piracy', pp. 40–2.

12 English translation from Wade, 'From Chaiya to Pahang', p. 56. For the Chinese text, see Zhang Xie, *Dong-xi-yang kao*, ed. Xie Fang (Beijing: Zhong-hua Shu-ju, 1981 [1617]), pp. 55–9.

13 See Watson Andaya, *The flaming womb*, p. 55.

Raja Emas Karecang died when she was only five years old; she was very dear to the king. It was for her that he had a golden gravestone made, and she was buried close to the palace, and for forty days the people were not allowed to pound rice in the town lest it should disturb the body of the young princess.¹⁴

Raja Aisyah, moreover, apparently played an important role as regent for her nephew Patik Siam, and she may, in this capacity, have set a precedent for female rule in Patani — or, at least, this may be implied by the stress in the *Hikayat Patani* on the fact that Raja Ijau took the same title as Raja Aisyah: *peracau*.¹⁵ The title is derived from the Siamese royal title พระเจ้า (*phra chao*) and was thus separate from both the Arab title of *sultan* and the Persian-derived title *syah* (*shah*), both of which were associated with Islam and the Malay cultural sphere and had been used by the previous male rulers of the Inland dynasty.

The adoption of the title *peracau* by Raja Ijau and her successors signified Patani's (largely token) tributary status to Siam, but also implied a downplaying of the rulers' claim to legitimacy based on Islam. The impact of Islam had never been very strong in Patani — in contrast to, for example, Aceh, the other major Southeast Asian state to institutionalise female rule in the seventeenth century — and neither the male nor the female rulers of the Inland dynasty seem to any great extent to have derived their legitimacy from religious sources.¹⁶ Unlike in many contemporary Malay states, none of the Patani rulers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have been particularly interested in promoting Islamic scholarship or culture, nor in the implementation of strict religious observation or *sharia* jurisprudence, and idol worship continued parallel with Islamic worship for most of the seventeenth century.¹⁷ In contrast to the more strongly Islamised Aceh, there are no indications of any significant Islamic opposition against female rule in Patani.¹⁸ Neither do we have any evidence that the queens of Patani would have practised

14 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 165.

15 Ibid., p. 169. The Dutch merchant Jeremias van Vliet, writing in 1638, asserts that this title was conferred on the princes and princesses of Patani by the Thai king; see Jeremias van Vliet, 'Description of the kingdom of Siam (1638)', in *Van Vliet's Siam*, ed. Chris Baker, Dhiravat na Pombejra, Alfons van der Kraan and David K. Wyatt (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2005), p. 128.

16 The *Hikayat Patani* (in Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 155) for example, writes that 'heathen practices such as worshipping trees and stones and making offerings to spirits were not abandoned by them [the Patanis]; it was only the worship of idols and the eating of pork which they no longer practiced'. See also *ibid.*, pp. 148–52 about the great reluctance with which the conversion of Patani's first Muslim king took place, and van Neck's, 'Journaal', p. 224, for a description of the relaxed sexual morals of the Patanis in spite of their adherence to Islam.

17 See the account by the Dutch traveller John Nieuhoff of his visit to Patani around 1660 printed in J.J. Sheehan, 'XVIIth century visitors to the Malay peninsula', *Journal of the Malay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 12, 2 (1934): 83; A.C. Milner, 'Islam and the Muslim state', in *Islam in South-East Asia*, ed. M.B. Hooker (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), p. 34.

18 On Islamic opposition to female rule in Aceh, see Anthony Reid, 'Trade and the problem of royal power in Aceh: Three stages, c. 1550–1700', in Reid, *An Indonesian frontier: Acehnese and other histories of Sumatra* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005), pp. 105–11. The forthcoming study on the Acehnese *sultanahs* by Sher Banu Khan promises to shed further light on the other major case of female rule in seventeenth-century Southeast Asia.

seclusion, as their Acehnese counterparts did.¹⁹ The relatively weak position of Islam – as well as other world religions including Theravada Buddhism and Christianity, the spread of which generally contributed to a decline in the status and influence of women in Southeast Asia (as elsewhere) in the early modern era²⁰ – thus probably facilitated the institutionalisation of female rule in Patani.

The ‘golden age’ of Raja Ijau (1584–1616)

Shortly after Raja Ijau had ascended the throne, she faced a coup attempt by her prime minister, Bendahara Kayu Kelat, who assembled an army of 5,000 men and marched on the capital.²¹ As the rebels approached, the queen was deserted by all her ministers and officers, leaving her alone to face the insurgents outside the palace. According to the *Hikayat Patani*:

The Queen immediately put on a green jacket and a ‘flower-wreath’ scarf of a yellowish colour and embroidered with gold [...] When [the prime minister] arrived in front of the staircase the Queen took the scarf from her person and threw it to the prime minister, who immediately caught it and wound it around his head. After the prime minister had put on his turban he drew his kris from his side and laid it on the ground. Then he knelt on the ground, paying homage to the Queen three times in succession. Then, after the prime minister had risen from his obeisance he bowed respectfully again and spoke: ‘Hail, Madam, may Your Majesty’s might and prosperity ever increase on this most noble royal throne.’ Then the prime minister bowed again and returned to Takih, where he halted.²²

The story, as we can see, is full of symbolism and subtlety and is thus open to several different interpretations.²³ For the present purpose, however, the story is interesting because of the way in which the queen is portrayed in her reactions to the obvious danger to her life and throne. Throughout the events, she is said to have remained calm and emotionally unscathed. For example, when informed by her aides-de-camp about the advance of the rebels, the queen smiles but does not say a word. There is no sign of desperation on her part, even as she is informed of the gradual advance and military strength of the rebels, nor as she is deserted by her ministers and officers.

19 See Andaya, “A very good-natured but awe-inspiring government”, pp. 70–1. By contrast, in Patani, when the Dutch vice-admiral Cornelis Pietersz on one occasion went to see Raja Ijau in her palace, he reportedly found the queen sleeping ‘having chewed betel nut and drunk tobacco’; see Terpstra, *De factorij*, pp. 18–19.

20 See Watson Andaya, *The flaming womb*, pp. 70–103; and Peter N. Stearns, *Gender in world history* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 64.

21 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 100–1, 173–5.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 174–5.

23 Watson Andaya, *The flaming womb*, p. 171, for example, argues that mention of the Friday prayer and the colour green might be interpreted as references to the fact that Raja Ijau ultimately derived her power from Islam, a circumstance which rendered her sufficiently powerful to fend off the rebellion in spite of the strong odds against her. Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 244, meanwhile, have speculated that the story might imply that the queen surrendered sexually to the prime minister – although there is little in terms of direct evidence in the text that supports such an interpretation. More reasonably, however, they also notice that the story probably reflects a political development in which ‘some precarious political balance was agreed upon at the time between the queen and the bendahara, which left the Bendahara Kayu Kelat in the undisputed possession of Sai’; *ibid.*, pp. 235–6.

Likewise, her demeanour when facing the *bendahara* is said to be calm, fearless and dignified, apparently reflecting an inner strength unaffected by the physical danger that she faces. Her courage stands out all the more in contrast to the obviously cowardly male ministers and officers, who failed to come to the queen's assistance.²⁴

Raja Ijau's behaviour as related by the *Hikayat Patani* corresponds to several of the ideal qualities generally expected of kings in traditional societies, regardless of cultural context. In the Malay, as well as the greater Southeast Asian context, moreover, the queen's demeanour was possibly interpreted as a sign of her charisma, spiritual power and political legitimacy. She was thereby linked to a complex set of ideas, sprung from the heritage of Hindu–Buddhist influence in the region, about divine kingship and the identification of the king with the *cakravartin* (universal monarch).²⁵ Such ideas are likely to have been influential in Patani during Raja Ijau's reign, given the still relatively recent and limited impact of Islam. Seen from that perspective and in the broader context of the *Hikayat Patani*, the story of Raja Ijau's handling of the rebellion served to establish her as a charismatic queen possessing the personal qualities associated with powerful rulers.

Contemporary European visitors to Patani were also impressed by Raja Ijau's majestic appearance. Peter Floris, an Englishman who visited the city in 1612–1613 – by which time the queen was around 60 years old – described her as a 'comely olde woman' and 'tall of person and full of majestie, having in all the Indies not seene many lyke unto hir'.²⁶ The pomp and splendour with which the queen surrounded herself were also impressive. Floris, for example, reported that when the queen went hunting, she was accompanied by a great train of over 600 boats ('prauwes', i.e. *perahu*).²⁷ A Dutch ship's doctor (*ziekentrooster*), Roelof Roelofs., who took part in a procession in Patani in 1602, wrote that the queen was greeted by around 4,000 men in arms, 'in their manner well equipped' and that the procession included 156 big elephants, 'some of which were very decoratively made up, especially the elephant on which the queen rode together with her little daughter, which was so wonderfully dazzling and decorated that one enjoyed seeing it'.²⁸ Her palace, according to a report by the Dutch Admiral Jacob van Neck in the same year, was decorated with golden panels and carved wooden decorations.²⁹

24 As Antonia Frazer, *The warrior queens: The legends and the lives of the women who have led their nations in war* (New York: Anchor Books 2004), p. 12, has pointed out, this so called 'shame syndrome' is a recurring theme in relation to politically powerful women in various historical and cultural contexts.

25 See Robert Heine-Geldern, 'Conceptions of state and kingship in Southeast Asia', *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 2 (1942): 15–30.

26 Peter Floris, *Peter Floris, his voyage to the East Indies in the Globe 1611–1615: The contemporary translation of his journal*, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society; Ser. 2, 74, ed. W. H. Moreland (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1934 [1615]), p. 62.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

28 Roelof Roelofs., 'Journaal van Roelof Roelofs.', in van Foreest and de Booy, *De vierde*, p. 258, translated from Dutch by the author. See also van Neck, 'Journaal', pp. 226–7, for a similar description of the splendour of the queen's entourage in the preceding year. It is uncertain who Roelofs. referred to by the queen's 'little daughter'; there are no other mentions in the sources of the queen having a daughter, and her niece, Raja Kuning, was probably only born around 1608.

29 Van Neck, 'Journaal', p. 222. For an attempt to describe the main physical features of Patani in the early seventeenth century, see Wayne A. Bougas, 'Patani in the beginning of the XVIIe century', *Archipel*, 39 (1990): 113–38.

The Inland queens are often described more or less as ceremonial puppet rulers in the hands of the leading merchant-aristocrats in Patani (*orangkaya*).³⁰ As regards Raja Ijau, however, this description has little support in the contemporary or near-contemporary sources. Writing in 1604, van Neck described Patani as a country ‘governed by a woman’ who ‘ruled very peacefully together with her councillors (who were called ministers [*mentery*])’.³¹ The *Hikayat Patani*, moreover, recounts how Raja Ijau, after deliberations with her ministers and officials, decided that a channel (apparently a major undertaking) was to be built in order to secure Patani’s supply of fresh water. Her power and influence were demonstrated by the urgency with which the channel was reportedly dug. The queen continuously kept herself informed about the project’s progress, and when it neared its completion she personally travelled upstream to the digging site to inaugurate the channel.³² Floris also recounts how he dealt directly with the queen in order to work out permits for conducting trade and other activities, thereby bypassing the high officials who had initially caused him much trouble.³³ The sources are admittedly scarce, but they all indicate that Raja Ijau was an active and politically influential ruler, conciliatory rather than authoritarian, but who nonetheless was personally involved in the affairs of government.

The reign of Raja Ijau saw an increase in trade with the outside world which brought greater economic prosperity to Patani. During her reign, both the Dutch and the English were granted permission to open trading factories in the city.³⁴ Several European visitors reported that they were welcomed upon arrival in Patani by the queen’s intermediaries and had gifts of fruit and other foods sent in her name to their ships.³⁵ She also presented the visitors with precious gifts – van Neck, for example, received a golden kris – and on several occasions she entertained the European visitors at her court.³⁶

Like the rulers of other trading states in the region, the queen obviously was the major merchant of the country, and she personally negotiated and entered into business transactions, even lending money (at interest) to the European traders.³⁷ The open, mercantile-friendly attitude, the generally peaceful conditions and the acceleration of long-distance trade at the time all combined to increase the queen’s

30 For example, Cheah Boon Kheng, ‘Power behind the throne: The role of queens and court ladies in Malay history’, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 66, 1 (1993): 9. Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 12, 21, also seem to subscribe to this view. Anthony Reid, ‘Charismatic queens of Southern Asia’, *History Today*, 53, 6 (2003): 30–5, emphasises the influence of ‘mercantile oligarchs’ and their desire to curb royal power, although he does not go as far as to say that this necessarily meant that the ruling queens of Patani and other South and Southeast Asian polities in the early modern period were mere figureheads. See Andaya ‘“A very good-natured but awe-inspiring government”’, pp. 61–2, for a critique of the theme of passive queens in relation to the Acehnese *sultanahs* of the seventeenth century.

31 Van Neck, ‘Journaal’, p. 226.

32 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 177–8.

33 For example, Floris, *Peter Floris*, p. xxv.

34 Terpstra, *De factorij*, p. 9; and John Anderson, *English intercourse with Siam in the seventeenth century* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1890), pp. 48, 61.

35 For example, Terpstra, *De factorij*, pp. 5, 18–19; Roelofs., ‘Journaal’, p. 256; Floris, *Peter Floris*, p. 35; Anderson, *English intercourse*, p. 48.

36 Roelofs., ‘Journaal’, p. 260; van Neck, ‘Journaal’, p. 227; Floris, *Peter Floris*, pp. 63, 87, 96.

37 Floris, *Peter Floris*, pp. xxv, 75, 92. Floris also mentions ‘Chattis’, i.e. merchants from the South Coromandel coast, acting as interpreters; *ibid.*, p. 33.

personal wealth – and thus, presumably, her political influence and status – as well as the prosperity of the city in general. It also rendered the queen popular in the eyes of her subjects. According to van Neck, ‘all her subjects considered her government better than that of the dead king’, and ‘all the necessities that now are very cheap there were in the days of the king (so they say) one half more expensive because of the great taxes that then were imposed’.³⁸

The reign of Raja Ijau was also a period of high cultural achievement. Apart from the splendour of the queen’s processions and public appearances, Patani was a leading centre for music, dance, drama and handicraft production, including metal working, weaving and wood carving. For example, in early 1613, Floris attended a dance performance at the queen’s court by 12 women and children who danced so well that he had not seen better in all the Indies. Later the same year he was invited to watch a performance staged at a great feast to honour her brother-in-law, the king of Pahang, and, according to Floris, ‘there was playde a commedye all by women, to the manner of Java, which were apparralled very antickly [...], very pleasaunte to beholde, so as I doute not to have seene the lyke in any place’.³⁹

Raja Ijau died on 28 August 1616, after 32 years on the throne.⁴⁰ As a sign of grief, the *Hikayat Patani* tells us, all men of the country were ordered to shave their heads and all women to cut the ends off their hair.⁴¹ The mourning of Raja Ijau stands out in the *Hikayat Patani*, as no other ruler before or after Raja Ijau had been reported to have been the subject of such public displays of mourning, and the author of the chronicle obviously regarded Raja Ijau as one of the greatest – if not the greatest – ruler of the Inland dynasty.

During the reign of Raja Ijau, Patani had enjoyed internal political stability (after the prime minister’s rebellion in the beginning of her reign), largely peaceful conditions, growing trade and economic prosperity and an increasing exposure to outside influences. Anthony Reid has argued that the reverence in which the queen was held had ‘Elizabethan qualities’,⁴² and there are indeed several similarities between the two contemporary queens. Both Raja Ijau and Elizabeth I came to power following earlier periods of extreme political instability and turmoil, and they restored – not least symbolically – the social and political order of their respective countries. Both also had to deal with existential threats to their countries and their rule, including foreign invasion attempts (in England by Spain in 1588 and in Patani by Siam in 1603) as well as abortive *coups d’état*. Both adopted a deliberative style of government, allowing

38 Van Neck, ‘Journaal’, p. 226 (translated from Dutch with the kind assistance of Dr Mona Arfs, University of Gothenburg). See also the description of the prosperous trade and natural fertility of Patani in Commelin, *Begin*, pp. 16–17. Bradley, ‘Piracy’, p. 45, has even suggested that Raja Ijau was entrusted with the throne by Patani’s leading families ‘because she possessed a skill in economic bargaining that was widely attributed to women throughout modern Southeast Asia’.

39 Floris, *Peter Floris*, pp. 63, 87. The word ‘antickly’ is best translated as ‘fancifully’ in modern English. See also Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 257–8, Sheehan, ‘XVIIth century’, p. 83; and Mohd. Zamberi A. Malek, *Pensejarah Patani* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2006), p. 126, about Patani as a cultural centre in the seventeenth century.

40 Terpstra, *De factorij*, p. 93.

41 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 178.

42 Reid, *Southeast Asia*, vol. 2, p. 265; see also Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce 1450–1680: Volume one: The lands below the winds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 171.

influential aristocrats and other notables to have a word in government while retaining a significant degree of personal political influence. Finally, their reigns were both remembered after their deaths as long and largely peaceful, economically prosperous and outward-oriented ‘golden ages’ of high cultural achievement.

Queenship institutionalised (1616–1635)

Like Elizabeth I, Raja Ijau, as far as we know, left no direct descendant and obvious heir to the throne, neither male nor female.⁴³ However, whereas in England the death of Queen Elizabeth brought about the end of the Tudor dynasty and a reversion to the male line of succession under the Stuarts, in Patani the Inland dynasty retained power and female rule was institutionalised — and possibly even served as a model for the other major Southeast Asian sultanate to institutionalise female rule in the seventeenth century, Aceh.⁴⁴

Raja Ijau was succeeded on the throne by her younger sister, Raja Biru (the ‘blue queen’). The order of succession had already been established during Raja Ijau’s reign, as Floris reported in 1612 that the queen’s sister was the next heir to the throne.⁴⁵ The succession appears to have been uncontested, and it seems reasonable to assume that institutionalisation of female rule, which Raja Biru’s ascendancy to the throne implied, was supported by the influential *orangkaya* of Patani, who thereby were able to secure the continuation of political stability and the relatively open and mercantile-friendly policies that had characterised Raja Ijau’s long reign.⁴⁶

We know far less about the reign and personality of Raja Biru than about her predecessor. She was about 50 years old when she ascended the throne and in all probability unmarried.⁴⁷ According to the Malaysian historian Abdullah Mohamed (Nakula), she managed, by ‘repeated persuasion’ (*pujukan yang berulang-ulang*), to incorporate the southern sultanate of Kelantan in Patani and to have the sultan renounce his royal title in favour of the status of *datu* (approximately ‘lord’).⁴⁸

Of her achievements, the *Hikayat Patani* tells us that Raja Biru had the channel, which had been dug under Raja Ijau, improved and that she ordered her officials to go to Pahang to bring back her younger sister, Raja Ungu, after her husband, the king of Pahang, had died.⁴⁹ It seems that the death of Raja Ungu’s husband and her subsequent return to Patani affected the order of succession, since, in 1620, Dutch sources mentioned the queen’s niece – presumably Raja Ungu’s daughter with the

43 As we have seen, Roelofs, ‘Journaal’, p. 258, did mention Raja Ijau as having a ‘little daughter’ (*dochterken*), but if this observation was correct she probably did not survive to adulthood.

44 Reid, ‘Charismatic queens’, argues that the institutionalisation of female rule in Aceh from 1641 to 1699 was ‘presumably’ modelled on Patani, although he does not provide any evidence to substantiate his claim. See also Andaya, “A very good-natured but awe-inspiring government”.

45 Floris, *Peter Floris*, p. 62.

46 Cf. Reid, ‘Charismatic queens’.

47 Floris, *Peter Floris*, p. 63, tells us that, at the end of 1612, she was an ‘unmarried mayden aboute 46 yeares of age’, and it is unlikely that she would have married after that.

48 Abdullah bin Mohamed, *Keturunan raja-raja Kelantan dan peristiwa-peristiwa bersejarah* (Kota Bharu: Muzium Negeri Kelantan, 1981), pp. 21–2. Unfortunately, Mohamed does not specify his sources. The event is also, somewhat surprisingly, not mentioned in the *Hikayat Patani*.

49 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 178–9.

king of Pahang, Raja Kuning – as the heiress to the throne.⁵⁰ As Raja Ungu no longer was tied by her marriage to the king of Pahang – and the state of Pahang thus reasonably could not lay claim to the throne of Patani – she presumably bypassed her daughter to become the first in the line of succession.

Raja Biru probably died around 1624 and was succeeded by her sister Raja Ungu (the ‘violet queen’), presumably the third of Manzur Shah’s daughters.⁵¹ Again the succession seems to have been undramatic, and the known European sources do not even mention the event.

Raja Ungu stands out as a strong and energetic ruler who, like Raja Ijau, took active part in the political affairs of the country. An Austrian visitor to Patani shortly after Raja Ungu’s accession to throne in late 1624 and early 1625, Christoph Carl Fernberger, describes how the queen – apparently without consulting her councillors or other prominent Patanis – gave orders for the mobilisation of 3,000 men in order to undertake a war expedition against Siam. The queen, moreover, herself appointed officers, inspected the troops before departure and eventually, after the successful conclusion of the expedition, agreed to the peace conditions according to which the Siamese king ‘renounced for all time any claim to Patani sovereign territories’.⁵²

Raja Ungu seems from the outset to have held a strong personal antipathy towards Siam and the Siamese king in particular.⁵³ She refused to use the title *peracau*, which had been conferred upon the rulers of Patani, including her two predecessors, by the Siamese king and which signified Patani’s tributary status to its northern neighbour. Instead she took the Malay title *paduka syah alam* (‘her excellency ruler of the world’)⁵⁴ and strove to establish closer relationships and alliances with the other Malay kingdoms in the archipelago. The *Hikayat Patani* relates how the king of Johor, Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah III (1623–1677), came to Patani to ask for the hand of Raja Ungu’s daughter, Raja Kuning, in marriage, which the queen eventually, in 1632, granted him.⁵⁵

The marriage of Raja Kuning to the king of Johor caused further difficulties in Patani’s relations with Siam, as the princess was already married to the king of Bordelong (Phatthalung), referred to in the *Hikayat Patani* as a Thai official by the name of Okphaya Déca.⁵⁶ According to the chronicle, the marriage between Raja Kuning and Sultan Abdul Jalil caused the Siamese king, prompted by Okphaya

50 Terpstra, *De factorij*, p. 105. There is, however, some uncertainty as regards the chronology of event as concerns Raja Ungu and her marriage to the king of Pahang, Sultan Abdul-Ghafur (r. 1590–1614). According to Peter Floris, *Peter Floris*, p. 72, the marriage took place at least 28 years before 1612, i.e. in 1584 by the latest. According to Pahang sources, however, the marriage took place only in 1612; Wade, ‘From Chaiya to Pahang’, p. 69. It may be, however, that Raja Ungu continued to reside in Pahang after her husband’s death and that she only returned to Patani and became heiress to the throne after 1620.

51 For the problems of dating the succession, see Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 247.

52 Cristoph Carl Fernberger, *In sieben Jahren um die Welt: Die Abenteuer des ersten österreichischen Weltreisenden (1621–1628)*, ed. Martina Lehner (Wien: Folio Verlag, 2008), pp. 83–6.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

54 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 179; van Vliet, ‘Description’, p. 128.

55 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 179–80, 239–40; Terpstra, *De factorij*, p. 105.

56 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 181–2. There is some confusion about the different husbands of Raja Kuning. According to Peter Floris, *Peter Floris*, pp. 62–3, she was married already in 1612, when she would have been about four years old, to the Raja Siak, a younger brother of the king of Johor at the

Déca, to launch a military attack on Patani, although this circumstance is not mentioned by the contemporary Dutch sources. It is clear, however, that around 1630 Patani stopped sending the symbolic annual tribute—which consisted of the *bunga mas*, a ‘golden flower’ (or tree), a little valuable by-product from the process of casting metal in sand moulds for coinage⁵⁷—to the Siamese king, and initiated armed attacks on southern Siamese ports and seized two Siamese vessels.⁵⁸

The queen thus exercised considerable influence in supporting greater resistance to Siamese overlordship. According to the Dutch commissioner Jeremias van Vliet, this policy was conditioned ‘by the ambition of [Raja Ungu] to obtain the highest power and by the great authority of some mandarins, especially Dato Bestaar [*datuk besar*, the queen’s first minister] (who were not loved by most of the Orangh Cayos [*orangkaya*])’.⁵⁹ The implication of van Vliet’s assessment is that Raja Ungu pursued the anti-Siamese policy with the approval of some of her closest ministers but against the wishes of most of the city’s merchant-aristocrats – a circumstance that contradicts the suggestion that she would have been a puppet at the hands of the city’s noblemen. Raja Ungu, moreover, was personally responsible for the country’s foreign policy, as is made clear in Fernberger’s report, cited above, and in the first-hand account that the Dutch envoy Antonie Caen left of his visit to Patani in 1632. His mission was to deliver a letter from the governor-general of the Dutch East India Company containing a list of requests for the queen to restore Patani’s relations with Siam. The letter was handed over in the queen’s audience hall, where, according to Caen, all the mandarins and state officials were assembled in great numbers:

Immediately the Queen, very preciously decorated, also appeared from her palace through a great golden doorway. After the letter had been read aloud, they listened with such stillness and modesty that one could not even hear a mouse scuffle. After the letter had been read the Queen began to speak as follows: ‘I have understood the contents of the letter from the Dutch General, and shall answer in short words.’⁶⁰

The queen then proceeded to answer directly to the contents of the letter, rejecting, among other things, the Dutch request that Patani restore relations with Siam. She also called the Siamese king an ‘usurper of the Crownland, a rascal, murderer, and traitor’.⁶¹

time. This marriage, presumably, had been dissolved, or the husband had died, sometime between 1612 and 1620.

57 Thomas Bowrey, *A geographical account of countries round the Bay of Bengal, 1669 to 1679*, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, Second series, no. XII, ed. Richard Carnac Temple (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1905 [1701]), pp. 275–6.

58 Puaksom, ‘Of a lesser brilliance’, p. 74.

59 Van Vliet, ‘Description’, pp. 128–9.

60 Antonie Caen, ‘Verslag zijner zending naar Patani en Siam (31 Juli – 27 November 1632)’, in *Bouwstoffen voor de geschiedenis der Nederlanders in den Maleischen Archipel. Tweede Deel*, ed. P.A. Tiele (‘S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff 1890 [1632]), pp. 216–17 (translated from Dutch by the author).

61 *Dagh-Register* 26 Nov. 1632, cited in Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 17.

In 1633–1634, Siam, aided by its ally Ligor, dispatched a large military expedition in order to force Patani into submission, but the city did not yield. In 1635, a new expedition was being set up, but was halted after the sultan of Queda had intervened and initiated negotiations.⁶²

The decline of female rule: Raja Kuning (1635–1651?)

In the same year Raja Ungu died and was succeeded to the throne by her daughter, Raja Kuning (the ‘yellow queen’). The war had cost Patani much suffering and a serious decline in trade. Under the new queen, Patani immediately restored relations with Siam and resumed sending the tribute of the golden flower to the king of Siam. Raja Kuning, who accepted the title of *peracau*, also visited the Siamese court herself in 1641 in order to restore relations.⁶³

The change in Patani’s foreign policy was apparently closely related to the change of royal leadership, but in contrast to her mother there is little evidence that Raja Kuning personally exercised any significant influence over the political affairs of her country. On the contrary, it seems that the difficulties caused by Raja Ungu’s confrontation with Siam led to a decline in royal power in favour of the *orangkaya* who, as we have seen, had been opposed to Raja Ungu’s confrontational policies. The *Hikayat Patani*, moreover, relates how Raja Kuning, five days after her crowning, ordered her whole personal treasure – and she was ‘extremely rich’ (*terlalu kaya*), the chronicle tells us, as her fortunes had been accumulated since the Inland dynasty came to power – to be turned into royal property and thus transferred to the state. The chronicle also tells us that the queen ‘kept a merchant of her own, called Nakhoda Sandang’, which probably meant that Raja Kuning, in contrast to her predecessors, was obstructed from earning her income through trade. This interpretation is strengthened by the chronicle’s assertion that Raja Kuning ‘did not live on royal revenues; what she lived on was the income from the crops in her own gardens, feeding and clothing herself from the profit on the flowers and vegetables’.⁶⁴

Although Raja Kuning’s transferral of her treasure is portrayed as a voluntary act of generosity on the part of the queen, it certainly must have weakened her position and personal power in relation to the *orangkaya*. The queen herself, moreover, was no doubt aware that her lack of personal wealth would greatly weaken her power, and it therefore seems doubtful that the gift was made as voluntarily as implied by the *Hikayat Patani*.

A visit by the Dutch commissioner van Vliet to Patani in early 1642 further strengthens the impression that the queen was less of a political figure in her own right than her predecessors. When van Vliet, upon his arrival in Patani, requested an audience before the queen, he was given an:

... evasive answer with excuses that the main gate to the queen’s palace had fallen down and that many of the country’s greatest gentlemen presently were absent and

62 Van Vliet, ‘Description’, pp. 129–32.

63 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, pp. 17–18; Puaksom, ‘Of a lesser brilliance’, pp. 74–5.

64 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 185.

out-of-town on their estates, and that the audience would have to wait until the gate had been re-erected and the gentlemen returned.⁶⁵

Van Vliet eventually, after waiting for over a month, was granted the audience. In comparison with what Caen reported about his audience with Raja Ungu 10 years earlier, the queen seemed less independent in her negotiations with the Dutch, and she is, for example, reported to have made a declaration ‘together with her councillors after due consideration’ rather than answering directly to van Vliet.⁶⁶

Raja Kuning was married to Sultan Abdul Jalil of Johor, but the latter did not seem to exercise any direct influence over the political affairs of Patani, even though he resided there for part of the time.⁶⁷ Sometime around 1642 or 1643, however, the marriage seems to have been dissolved and Raja Kuning instead married (voluntarily or not) the sultan’s younger brother. In February 1644, the Dutch were informed that the queen was pregnant and that the younger brother had already installed himself as the ruling king of Patani, although he still recognised the suzerainty of the king of Siam.⁶⁸ The *Hikayat Patani*, meanwhile, claims that the Johor prince ‘violated’ (*mem-erogol*) the queen, but otherwise concords with the Dutch information that the prince installed himself as the king of Patani.⁶⁹ As a result of what obviously amounted to a *de facto coup d’état*, the queen had moved out of the palace and lived in a pavilion in the garden whereas the prince, who had taken a court singer by the name of Dang Sirat as his mistress, resided in the palace, accompanied by a following of boisterous Acehnese. The usurper and his followers then requested that the wives and daughters of the Patani ministers and officers wait upon them inside the palace — implying, in all probability, demands for sexual favours. At the same time the prince was having polished stocks made to put the city’s nobility in.⁷⁰

In the face of this threat and these obvious insults, the leading Patani ministers and officers asked the queen for her permission to oust the usurpers. Raja Kuning answered that they might do as they deemed fit but asked them to spare the young prince’s life because she felt great pity for his mother. The Patani nobility proceeded to attack the prince of Johor and his followers, killing a great number of them but sparing the prince’s life. At the queen’s orders he was allowed to escape on a ship which took him back to Johor. The queen subsequently initiated a reconciliation mission to Johor, ostensibly in order to take the prince’s mother, who was still in Patani, back to Johor, but probably also to avoid an impending war with the militarily stronger southern sultanate. She was not, however, able to persuade any of her subjects to

65 H.T. Calenbrander, ed., *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India Anno 1641–1642* (‘S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1900), p. 154 (translated from Dutch by the author).

66 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

67 See *ibid.*, p. 82; Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 185.

68 H.T. Calenbrander, ed., *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India Anno 1643–1644* (‘S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1902), p. 32.

69 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 186.

70 *Ibid.*, pp. 187–8; see also the commentary to the text in *ibid.*, pp. 254–5.

undertake the mission, which instead was carried out by a foreigner, a respected Malay of Minangkabau origin.⁷¹

Regardless of the details, Raja Kuning appears to have been passive, and indeed a victim, throughout the whole sequence of events. Her only active role was in the aftermath of the affair, when she took the initiative to send a mission to Johor, but as a sign of her lack of authority, none of her subjects was willing to obey her command and undertake the mission. Moreover, compared with her predecessors, Raja Ijau and Raja Ungu, Raja Kuning is portrayed as weak and lacking in power and initiative. To the extent that the queen exercised any political power at all before the usurpation by the prince of Johor, it seems likely that his ousting by the Patani nobility further strengthened their influence at the expense of the queen's power.

Both the *Hikayat Patani* and the European sources are silent about the subsequent years of Raja Kuning's rule, but based on Kelantanese sources, the Malaysian historian Ahmad Fathy al-Fatani claims the queen was ousted in 1651 by the king of Kelantan, Raja Sakti I, who thus rebelled against Patani suzerainty and installed his son, Raja Bahar (c. 1651–1670), as the first ruler of the Kelantan dynasty in Patani. Raja Kuning, meanwhile, left Patani by sea together with her entourage in order to reunite with her husband in Johor. On the way, however, she fell ill and died and was buried in Pancor, Kelantan, where her tombstone still stands.⁷²

Female rule revived: The Kelantan dynasty (c. 1651–1718)

After the mid-seventeenth century Patani experienced a prolonged period of economic and political decline, eventually leading to the city's destruction and incorporation within Siam in the 1780s. The decline of royal power that had begun under Raja Kuning accelerated after her ousting and power fell into the hands of an oligarchy of *orangkaya*. Contemporary sources are scarce after the mid-seventeenth century, but, according to an oral tradition recorded by the British officer and amateur scholar James Low in the 1840s, the country was divided into 42 districts, each controlled by a chief, who also distributed the property of the state between them. The chiefs were individually independent, but confederated for mutual defence, and one of them held the title of *datuk*, signifying the status of *primus inter pares*.⁷³ From the outset of the Kelantan dynasty, power thus seems to have resided with the Patani nobility rather than with the royal dynasty.

71 Ibid., pp. 188–91; the event is also mentioned in Dutch sources: see Cornelis van der Lijn, Joan Maetsuijker and Simon van Alphen, 'De Raden van Indië aan Bewindhebbers der O. I. Compagnie, 9–11 Juli 1645', in *Bouwstoffen voor de geschiedenis der Nederlanders in den Maleischen Archipel. Derde Deel*, ed. J.E. Heeres ('S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff 1895 [1645]), p. 231.

72 al-Fatani, *Pengantar*, pp. 28, 30, 34; see also Mohamed, *Keturunan*, p. 22. Raja Bahar was probably identical to the Raja Bakal mentioned by the *Hikayat Patani* as the first ruler of the Kelantan dynasty and the Raja Bakar mentioned by Ibrahim Syukri; see Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 197.

73 James Low 'A translation of the Keddah annals termed Marong Mahawangsa', in *The Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, vol. III, ed. J.R. Logan (Singapore: G.M. Frederick, 1849), p. 180; see also Syukri, *History*, p. 46. Few contemporary accounts of the period between 1644 and 1674 seem to have survived apart from the one by John Niehoff, who visited Patani in the 1660s; see J.J. Sheehan, 'XVIIth century', pp. 83–6, and the *Hikayat Patani* also treats the first years of the Kelantan dynasty very summarily.

Around 1670, according to Kelantanese sources, the wife of Raja Bahar, Raja Mas Kelantan, succeeded her husband to the throne.⁷⁴ The royal couple seems to have had no sons but two daughters, the youngest of whom, Raja Mas Chayam, was unmarried and destined to inherit the throne after her mother. Real power, meanwhile, was exercised by an elected member of the ruling oligarchy. In 1687, a Chinese merchant reported:

The ruler is a hereditary Queen, no male can be the head of the country. There are two women, the Great Queen (dai wang) and the Second Queen (er wang), followed in order of hierarchy by the 'Third King' (san wang) who is male and is in charge of governing the country. [...] The ruler has to be a woman. When the First Queen dies the Second Queen succeeds her.⁷⁵

The image of a powerless figurehead queen is verified by the testimony of Nicolas Gervaise, a French Jesuit and visitor to Siam, around the same time:

It is said that the people of Pattani grew tired of obeying kings who ill-treated them and threw off the yoke by dethroning the king who was reigning at the time and putting in his place a princess, to whom they gave the title of queen, without giving her the authority. They chose the most able among them to govern in her name and without her participation, for she is not privy to any secret affairs of state and has to contend herself with the respect and homage which everyone pays her outwardly as their sovereign. She is not even given freedom to choose her principal officers of state⁷⁶

Although no contemporary sources have survived that explain the reasons for the revival of female rule, if only nominally, under the Kelantan dynasty, it is likely that it served an important symbolic purpose and provided a degree of legitimacy for the existing social and political order — an order which, as Francis Bradley has demonstrated, was under severe stress due to Patani's declining political, economic and cultural influence.⁷⁷ In this context — and besides the essential legitimacy provided by the institution of monarchy (male or female) in itself — the figurehead queens of the Kelantan dynasty provided the oligarchy with an aura of legitimacy through the association with Patani's former 'golden age' of power, prosperity and political stability under the Inland queens. This interpretation is strengthened by the positive image in which the earlier queens — especially Raja Ijau — are portrayed in the *Hikayat Patani*, which probably was written down in the decades around the turn of the eighteenth century, at least in part, for this very reason.

Gervaise goes on to describe how the queen was able to abandon herself 'entirely and unreservedly' to her pleasures and how she allegedly was permitted to take as

74 al-Fatani, *Pengantar*, p. 35, claims that the reason was that the king left on a war expedition to Java, whereas Nicolas Gervaise, *Histoire naturelle et politique du Royaume de Siam* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1688), p. 316, indicates that the king was deposed because of his maltreatment of the Patanis.

75 'Ship No. 115. 13 September 1687' in Ishii, *The junk trade*, p. 112.

76 Nicolas Gervaise, *Natural and political history of the Kingdom of Siam*, trans. and ed. John Villiers (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998), pp. 196–7. For the original French text, see Gervaise, *Histoire*, p. 316.

77 Francis R. Bradley, 'Moral order in a time of damnation: The *Hikayat Patani* in historical context', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40, 2 (2009): 273–6. Kelantan itself may also have served as a model of female rule since the country possibly was reigned over by queens between c. 1610 and 1667; see Cheah Boon Kheng, 'Power behind', p. 10.

many 'lovers' (*galants*)⁷⁸ as she pleased as long as she remained unmarried. This image of promiscuity on the part of the queen, however, does not stand up to source critical scrutiny. First, the word *galants*, in classic French, did not necessarily entail sexual or amorous behaviour, but should, in this context, probably more accurately be translated into modern English as 'galants', 'courtiers', 'gentlemen' or 'favourites'.⁷⁹ Second, Gervaise never visited Patani personally, and his account is therefore less reliable than those by Chinese merchants who did visit Patani in person in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and whose accounts were recorded by the Tokugawa authorities in Nagasaki.⁸⁰ Contrary to the received interpretation of Gervaise's description, two of those reports, collected only a few years after Gervaise's account was written and presumably independently of one another, testify to the strict chastity of the queen:

The ruler there is a Queen who has no husband. Without her the country would be in disorder. Since the Queen is well aware that any immoral behaviour on her part would spell disaster for her monarchy, she is strictly chaste.⁸¹

The Queen of Pattani is expected to strictly maintain her virginity throughout her life; she has no 'husband king', according to tradition.⁸²

It should be noted that both European and Chinese observers of Southeast Asia often commented on what they perceived as the loose sexual morals and promiscuity of the peoples in the region. As the Chinese descriptions are contrary to the generally accepted image of things, their credibility is enhanced. The rule of strict chastity on the part of the queen, moreover, makes sense in view of Patani's political history in the preceding decades, particularly, as we have seen, the attempt by Raja Kuning's husband to usurp the throne in 1644.⁸³

The chastity of the Kelantan queens and the resulting lack of heirs (male or female) to the throne, may also explain why Patani, probably in the beginning of

78 This translation of *galants* is used by, for example, Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*, p. 12; Anthony Reid, 'Trade and State Power in the 16th and 17th Century Southeast Asia', in *Proceedings: Seventh IAHA Conference, Bangkok, 22–26 August 1977. Volume I* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1979), p. 409; Villiers in Gervaise, *Natural and political*, p. 197; and Bradley, 'Moral order', p. 274.

79 See Antoine Furétieres, *Dictionnaire universel contenant generalement tous les mots françois: Tome second* (La Haye and Rotterdam: Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690), s. v. 'galant': 'GALANT, se dit aussi d'un homme qui a l'air de la Cour, les matieres ageables, qui tâche à plaire, & particulièrement au beau sexe.' I am grateful to Dr Britt-Marie Karlsson, University of Gothenburg, for help with the translation.

80 Translated and published by Ishii, *The junk trade*. Gervaise's statement may also have been influenced by the account by Fernberger, who visited Patani during Raja Ungu's reign, over half a century earlier. In his diary (unpublished, however, at the time when Gervaise wrote) he claimed that the queen was known to be a passionate woman (*leidenschaftliche Frau*) and that she entertained herself with numerous galants (*Galanen*); Fernberger, *In seiben Jahren*, pp. 83, 88.

81 'Ship No. 78. 8 July 1690' in Ishii, *The junk trade*, p. 119.

82 'Ship No. 66. 28 August 1694' in *ibid.*, p. 122.

83 The three queens preceding Raja Kuning also 'had to refrain from marriage' ('auf eine Heirat verzichten'), according to Fernberger, *In seiben Jahren*, p. 83, although it is possible that they were able to take lovers, as Fernberger reports of Raja Ungu. The latter, moreover, was a widow (and thus not a virgin) when she ascended the throne, as was possibly also Raja Ijau, a circumstance which may have contributed to their greater sexual freedom compared with the latter queens of the Kelantan dynasty.

the 1690s, abandoned the dynastic order of succession in favour of electing the queen.⁸⁴ The chronology, however, is very uncertain, and the sources give an impression of strong political turmoil and instability. Raja Mas Chayam, who succeeded her mother to the throne (in 1698, according to al-Fatani), was deposed after only a few years, and in 1702 a new queen, Raja Dewi, who was not of the Kelantan dynasty, was put on the throne. She was also dethroned, however, and after several years of infighting among the oligarchs, Raja Mas Chayam was reinstalled as queen for a brief period (1716–1718 according to al-Fatani). With her death on the throne, Patani's long period of institutionalised female rule came to a definite end — more than 80 years after the last queen who exercised power in any real sense, Raja Ungu, had died.

It is uncertain to what extent Patani's economic and political decline was caused by the volatile system of oligarchic rule under nominally reigning queens. The decline was not unique to Patani but part of a general process affecting the indigenous trading states of Southeast Asia, caused primarily by the European (particularly the Dutch) advances. In Patani's case, moreover, the decline was aggravated by a series of disastrous wars and confrontations with Siam. The result was that, towards the end of the seventeenth century, Chinese merchants described Patani as a sparsely populated (and very barbaric) country with a muddy, unsuitable harbour. The town itself was described as consisting of no more than a concentration of rudimentary village dwellings surrounding the queen's 'simple' and 'weakly constructed' palace.⁸⁵

Conclusion

The examples that we have in the early modern period of reigning queens, both in Europe and in Southeast Asia, have as their common denominator the desire to preserve political stability through adhering to a regulated dynastic order of succession. In Patani and other Malay city-states, a number of deep-seated cultural factors, including the absence of strong misogynist ideologies or religious doctrines, the recognition of cognatic kinship and the relatively high status of women in the royal court, made female rule relatively easy to accept.

The Inland dynasty's lack of male heirs after the death of Sultan Bahdur in 1584 was probably a necessary but insufficient condition for the rise of female rule and its institutionalisation in Patani. In order to explain why it was retained for more than 60 years, and then revived two decades later under the Kelantan dynasty, albeit in a different form, the broader historical context — including the relatively peaceful, open, prosperous and trade-friendly conditions (especially during the first decades of female rule under Raja Ijau and Raja Biru) as well as the fact that Patani was a relatively small, maritime polity — must be taken into account. Historically, it seems to be

84 In 1690, a Chinese visitor reported that when a queen died, a female from her family was chosen as her successor. By contrast, another Chinese visitor in 1694 reported that queenship was not hereditary and that the queen could be elected from any family, including commoners; see 'Ship No. 78. 8 July 1690' in Ishii, *The junk trade*, p. 119 and 'Ship No. 66. 28 August 1694' in *ibid.*, p. 122.

85 'Ship No. 55. 15 August 1692' in Ishii, *The junk trade*, p. 63; see also 'Ship no. 115. 13 September 1687' in *ibid.*, pp. 112–13, 'Ship No. 48. 19 July 1689' in *ibid.*, pp. 115–16 and 'Ship No. 78. 8 July 1690' in *ibid.*, p. 119. For the general process of decline, see Reid, 'Trade and state power', pp. 411–12; and Reid, *Southeast Asia*, vol. 2, particularly pp. 200–325. See also the early eighteenth-century report by Alexander Hamilton, *A new account of the East Indies*, vol. II (London: Argonaut 1930 [1727]), p. 84.

a general tendency that a female ruler is more acceptable, and sometimes even desirable, under such circumstances compared with more belligerent, closed and economically scant conditions unfavourable to trade and commerce, especially as regards larger and more complex, agrarian-oriented states or empires. The relatively prosperous, peaceful and culturally prestigious period under Raja Ijau's long rule also laid the foundations for subsequent reigning queens in that it established a living memory of a 'golden age' that served as a model of an ideal society for at least a century — and even, in some respects, for Patani Malays today.

Apart from the personal qualities of the Inland queens — of which we know relatively little, perhaps with the exception of the courage displayed by Raja Ijau in facing her prime minister's rebellion and the forceful personality of Raja Ungu — the efficiency of female rule depended on the queens' economic autonomy and ability to accumulate a large private fortune based on trade with the outside world. Raja Kuning's transferral of the dynasty's treasure to the state obviously contributed to circumscribe her political influence and authority.

Female royal power, as well as political and dynastic stability, depended on the queens being unmarried or widowed and — at least as the latter queens of the Kelantan dynasty are concerned — strictly chaste. The exception was Raja Kuning, and the attempt by her husband (or brother-in-law) to usurp the throne in 1644 followed a pattern that probably was familiar to the politically astute observers and actors in the early modern world of Southeast Asia, as well as of Europe.⁸⁶ The event probably served to reinforce the demand that the queens henceforth remained unmarried (or widowed, in the case of Raja Mas Kelantan) and, moreover, strictly chaste. Royal chastity, on the other hand, led to obvious problems of dynastic reproduction and, eventually, of political stability. These problems are inherently associated with the female line of succession in dynastic politics and explain, at least to some extent, the strongly patrilineal tendencies — and relative scarcity of reigning queens — in royal dynasties around the world.

The sources give no clear indication of whether the Inland queens exercised power differently from what men would have done under similar circumstances. Their style of leadership can be described as informal and conciliatory, but in this respect they did not differ from the general pattern of most Malay city-states during the period. Raja Ijau and Raja Biru seem to have conducted relatively peaceful policies towards the outside world, avoiding military aggression, welcoming traders of different nationalities and promoting the prosperity of their subjects. Raja Ungu, however, stands out as belligerent, and under the Kelantan queens — who, of course, did not exercise any influence on Patani's foreign policy — confrontations with Siam intensified and precipitated the decline and eventual demise of the city-state.

86 For example, Jean Bodin's discussion of 'Les inconvenients de la Gynocratie', in *Les six livres de la république* (Paris: Jacques du Puys, 1583), pp. 1006–13. Bodin, whose discussion was part of the wider debate in Europe at the time about the legitimacy of female rule prompted by Elizabeth I's ascendancy to the English throne in 1558, specifically warns of the risk that a male foreigner might marry the queen, take charge over the country's army and fortification, usurp power and use this to advance the positions and interests of his fellow countrymen. Bodin also cites several alleged examples of such developments in European history.

Patani's political, economic, cultural and demographic decline after the mid-seventeenth century, however, was mainly due to structural changes in the region's political, military and economic system, caused primarily by European expansion. Female rule – which in this period was only nominal – can thus not be charged with having caused or even aggravated Patani's decline. If anything, the symbolically important monarchy, with its figurehead queens and their association with Patani's glory under Raja Ijau and her sisters, may have worked as a counterweight to the decentralising tendencies that beset the country after the last queen of the Inland dynasty was dethroned in the mid-seventeenth century.