



Hans Hägerdal, ***Lords of the Land, Lords of the Sea: Conflict and Adaption in Early Colonial Timor, 1600-1800*** (Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 273; Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012, xvi + 479 pp., ISBN 978 90 6718 378 9).

In the long history of scholarship and writing on the Island of Timor, numerous scribes, travellers, historians, geographers and anthropologists among others have sought to capture something of the complex shifting interactions between indigenous Timorese populations and the colourful array of traders, missionaries, and colonial officers who arrived seeking political and economic advantage. Included in this archive are the reflections of Affonso de Castro (1867), former Governor of Portuguese Timor; the observations of British naturalist, Henry Forbes (1885); C.R. Boxer's pioneering histories of early Portuguese colonialism on Timor (e.g 1948); Ormeling's influential geography of Timor study (1956); James Fox's, exploration of environmental adaptation and early colonial relations (1977) and Geoffrey Gunn's highly informative history of Portuguese Timor (1999) to name a few of the more prominent works.

Hans Hägerdal's fine new history of Timor covering the period 1600-1800, draws on the legacy of these and other archives, but expands their reach to encompass a thematically rich, island wide perspective on this formative period of Timorese history. In the process and for the first time, he brings together into one integrated narrative, much of the available historical documentation on the early colonial period of Timor; a time characterised by intense rivalries between Dutch and Portuguese interests over control of the lucrative sandalwood trade and indigenous political allegiances, the expansion of Islam and Christianity into animist worlds, a bourgeoning trade in human slaves, rifles and gunpowder, and frequent outbreaks of internecine warfare and inter-communal violence.

To manage and refine this unruly diversity of documentary detail, Hägerdal adopts two complementary discursive strategies. The first strategy is an organisational one, that presents a broadly chronological series of chapters over the 200 year time frame of interest, but which are also explicitly comparative between the shifting allegiances that characterised the multiple and often vexed relationships between Dutch, Portuguese and Timorese political interests. The result is a well-balanced analysis of these key interactional groupings as well as the range of minor players that figure in the rivalries of the time.

Hägerdal's second strategic move is a thematic one that provides an integrating framework to the monograph. As a common comparative thread, he draws on the compelling Austronesian mythology of the stranger king and applies it across categories in order to highlight the way many political domains Timorese continued to express allegiance to Dutch and or Portuguese powers, over long periods of time, despite the capricious, often incompetent and overbearing demands of the foreigners. The title of the monograph itself speaks to a Timorese formulation of their desired relationship with these external powers; one that is equally pertinent, although variously applied across the island.

Enlivening the history as a whole is Hägerdal's excellent use of the rich array of commentaries, letters and observations on rival colonial and local interests found within the compendious archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC – Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie). In the 'daily records' of VOC *Dagregister* the wealth of information available for the assiduous historian and reader of old Dutch script reaps a rich harvest and allows Hägerdal to develop many highly detailed analyses of specific events over the two centuries under consideration. Especially from chapters four through seven, he systematically builds his arguments and analysis on the details and revelations of the VOC records. They are compelling in their attention to detail and offer unprecedented insights into the events of a time when alternative records or documentation are largely absent or silent.

Hägerdal's study however, offers much more than a compendium of significant and prosaic documentation of colonial life. His insights and more speculative interpretations of the historical record contribute to new understandings of the past. An example is his contribution to the fragmentary record of Timor's engagement with Islam, especially from the mid-seventeenth century when the recently converted Makassar rulers from South Sulawesi developed imperial ambitions and were aggressively expanding their influence and trading interests the region. While acknowledging the previous forensic work of Roever (2002) on the subject, Hägerdal's detailed analysis of references to the indigenous rulers in West Timor, adds weight to the growing evidence that many Timorese political leaders and *orang kayi*, flirted with conversion to Islam to varying degree. This includes the important figures of Sonbai in West Timor and Wehali on the central southern coast.

Adding to these various strengths of the work and also as a reflection of the meticulous attention to detail exhibited by the author, is the large number of references and clarifications provided on a range of otherwise obscure points of historical interest. These are presented throughout the work in the form of asides, elaborations, speculations, corrections and footnotes. The affect is to give to the text a vibrant sense of the complexity and nuanced histories of practice and everyday life during these often tumultuous times. There are many illustrative examples such as the detailed and intricate politics in Chapter 5 that saw the emergence of the mestizo Portuguese Topass group take virtual control over the sandalwood trade and the allegiances of Timorese political

domains from the mid-seventeenth century. Hägerdal's portrayal of this period adds a wealth of previously unpublished details drawn largely from the ever productive VOC files.

Students of Timor history should be well pleased with this new work from Hans Hägerdal. His ambitious and sweeping perspectives on the two centuries of early European colonial engagement in Timor and adjacent Lesser Sunda Islands, is a work of great industry, insight and sympathy to the characters, cutthroats, heroes, thieves and fools who populate the pages of this highly readable work. Hägerdal charts with equal enthusiasm and detail the unfolding of great events and political crises that periodically shifted strategic alignments, as well the minutiae of everyday life and intricate details of social practice in seventeenth and eighteenth century Timor. The author has made a significant contribution to our knowledge of Timor and surrounding islands during a period when these remote lands became contested ground for imperial ambitions.

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