

1. Aceh. *bpp.*

One of the Islamic pasisir states which participated in the booming maritime trade of the 15th to mid-17th centuries. State of Aceh created under Sultan Ali Mughayat Sjah ( 1520 - 1524 ) in a region relatively little affected by the Hindu " cosmic " tradition of kingship. Aceh's prosperity depended upon domination of certain regions producing exportable commodities - notably pepper, camphor, and gold from the west coast [ of Sumatra ] and also tin from Perak. These products were channelled through the Acehnese capital, and kept as far as possible from the Portuguese at Malacca. Foundations laid by the great ruler Ala'ad-din Ri'ayat Shah al-Kahar ( 1539-71 ) who conquered Aru on the east coast and Pariaman on the west, establishing his sons as vassal rulers of these regions. Under him there was a flourishing Muslim spice trade between Aceh and the Red Sea - carried as much as the Portuguese. Formed an alliance with Turkey in 1567, and became the scourge of the Ports. in Malacca. This spectacular growth in trade must have been achieved by attracting wealthy Islamic traders from the whole area to conduct their business under his protection. The capital - Banda Aceh - was noted for its polyglot population, and the language in use was Malay rather than Acehnese.

Reid: Stage I : The gt. merchant orangkayas - to 1529 ~~[but not stark off a]~~  
After the reigns of al-Kahar and his son ( Ali Ri'ayat Shah, 1571-9 ) ~~strong~~ ~~merchants~~

however, the powerful merchants of the capital seem to have established a complete domination over the throne. Five rulers were dethroned in the space of 10 years. Western visitors give some info. on these powerful men of the capital, whom they generally refer to as the orangkaya. e.g. Beaulieu :  
" The orangkayas had beautiful, large, solid houses, with cannons at their doors, and a large number of slaves, both as guards and servants. They went out superbly dressed, with large retinues, respected by the people. Such great power very much diminished royal authority, and even safety, for the principal orangkayas had such authority and power, that when they tired of the domination of one king, they massacred him in order to install another. Thus a king was very lucky if he enjoyed his crown for two years. If he lasted longer it was with such exertion and such obligations towards several orangkayas, that nothing remained of his dignity except the title."

Reid ( p. 5 ): " A ..... a situation in which the merchant-officials of the city had considerable autonomy and power, without succeeding in establishing a stable, institutionalised basis for the state."

Period 2 ( 1589 - 1637 ); Rāval Absolutism.

After two successive foreign-born rulers had been installed by these orangkaya, an Acehese dynasty regained the throne in 1589 in the person of Ala'ad-din Ri'ayat Shah Sayyid al-Mukammil ( 1589 - 1604 ), who had already had a distinguished career as a naval leader. Beaulieu says that this ruler massacred a large no. of orangkaya at a feast, justifying this action on the grounds that: "

" in former times the Orangkays had made and dethroned so many kings at pleasure..... that since he was king, he would not be exposed to the inconstant humours of the orangkays; who, after they should have massacred him, would have relapsed into their former animosities, and made the people to suffer by their quarrells; and in fine, that all his design was to preserve the general peace, to reign in equity, and to execute severe justice upon offenders." also says:

" he demolished all the houses of the executed orangkays, and lodged their cannon, arms, and movable goods in his castle; he prohibited every one to build with stone, or to have cannons or intrenchment about their houses....." - note attempt to create a monopoly on armed force for the state/monarchy.

Al-Mukammil's centralising policy was carried to new heights by his brilliant protégé, ruling as Iskender Muda ( 1607-36 ). Mightiest of Acehese sultans, and most absolute. A series of military victories in e. Sumatra and Malaya achieved the objective of earlier rulers to monopolize the export produce of the region and destroy his major rivals. Tight control was established over the pepper-producing centres of w. Sumatra, w. Acehese governors being changed every 3 years and annually called to account. The ruler himself controlled a v. large percentage of the pepper for sale within his realm, and insisted on selling this at a high price before allowing foreigners to buy on the open market. Both Europ. and Muslim traders appear to

have become increasingly frustrated at the hard bargains the Sultan drove.

In 1620-22 the English and Dutch were ejected altogether.

(Had a permanent army of about 500 men.)

Acc. to Beaulieu, completed the extirpation of the old ruling class, and created a new class of orangkayas. Each of them was in charge of a province or district, and one of their important functions was to raise from it men for I.M.'s constant wars (cf. sit. in Mataram). I.M. kept a register of all firearms, to prevent them being used to strengthen the position of individual orangkayas. Also, acc. to Beaulieu, ea. orangkaya was required to spend every 3rd night in the palace - un-armed - so that in the event of a rebellion at least one third of the o.ks were in the sultan's hands.

Codified and enforced a complex legal system. The adat aceh acknowledges him as its originator. Beaulieu describes four distinct courts w. separate jurisdictions (debtors; criminal; religious; disputes among merchants). The scale of I.M.'s operations naturally demanded a relatively large body of officials, though progress towards a professional bureaucracy was slight. Officials appear not to have been salaried. The commercial ones, at least, had on the contrary to make a valuable annual present to the king. They drew their wealth largely from the presents they in turn demanded from merchants. "The apparent arbitrariness of their exactions from merchants, and their total dependence on royal favour, does not suggest any substantial devt. towards professionalisation of the bureaucracy." [Note however source of complaints re arbitrariness - Europeans who were certainly not above special pleading.]

"A more critical weakness of I.M.'s absolutism in comparison w. that wh. brought Europ. states out of feudalism, however, was its apparent incompatibility w. private commercial enterprise." If foreign merchants suffered, = much worse for local traders. "His intense interest in trade as the basis of his whole regime appeared to make him less tolerant of domestic commercial enterprise than even his counterparts in states Wittfogel might have called "hydraulic", like such as Ayutia."

Note the terror I.M. inspired among the merchant-official class.

Stage 3: Decline of the crown; rise of the 3 sagi.

Factors: rulers after I.M. lesser men; Dutch power at Malacca after 1641.

Under a succession of queens from 1641, the orangkaya regained their former position of strength. ( Note: first queen came to throne because of lack of male heir - I.M. had killed all his male heirs before his own death, and his son-in-law died early )- but the practice of putting a queen on the throne seems to have been continued because it was agreeable to the oligarchy ).

W. each new queen, the power wielded by the leading orangkaya became more apparent.

Last few decades of 17th century saw the emergence of a new political force - a territorial ( not merchant ) aristocracy in the interior of Aceh Besar. Reasons for this were partly economic: the relative power of the port-capital was reduced along with its trade, especially royal trade, and at the same time there appears to have been a striking increase in rice cultivation in Aceh Besar. i.e. a shift from a trade-based to an at least partly agricultural-based state w. the concomitant factors of dispersion and regionalism? Territorial aristocracy seem to have been opposed to the régime at the capital, and demanded a return to male rule. In 1699 got a letter from Mecca forbidding female rule as contrary to Islam.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries the territorial aristocracy repeatedly plunged the kingdom back into civil war as they opposed one sultan after another.

*As a result the 4th Sultan was deposed and authority passed to an Arab dynasty of Sayyids (Schrieke p244)*

Reid's conclusion: " If my categorisation can be sustained, Aceh flourished first as a centre for large merchants of foreign origin, underwent a period of royal absolutism which centred commercial, as well as political, life in the palace, and then a reaction against this absolutism by merchant-officials who sought to find their requirements of stability without tyranny in a system of female rule. Although prosperity continued, the state under this last arrangement was not strong enough to prevent either the loss of its outer dependencies, or the rise of a new, disruptive challenge from the interior of Aceh Besar. The promising movt. towards institutionalised govt. broke down.

Should the more fundamental causes of this breakdown be sought in a lack of consensus about the nature of the state; in particular administrative or financial weaknesses; in the inability of the trading city to develop a life separate from that of the state; or in the monopolistic nature of the western ec. threat, to wh. royal monopoly was the only appropriate answer? "

qns. Reid in his introduction stresses the importance for a state's commercial devt. of merchants being protected against the whim of an arbitrary sovereign. " Insofar as foreign trade remained foreign in particular Southeast Asian states, the major reason seems frequently to have been the lack of security and autonomy for the domestic merchant vis-a-vis the state "

However Aceh - also Buginese soc. - seems to show a sit. in wh. a strong monarchy and a degree of centralisation could only be established under exceptional circumstances, and temporarily. cf. role of monarchical centralisation - usually carried out w. exceptional ruthlessness towards feudal aristocracy and relig. opposition ( what about merchants???) - in strengthening Europ. nation-states. Also, wh. Asian states coped most effectively w. Europ. challenges? Those w. strong monarchies or those w. more diffused pol. power?

Aceh as the " Gate of the Holy Land ".

Aceh, the chief emporium of Moslem trade with India and the Red Sea from the archipelago ;..... was at the same time " the gate of the Holy Land". It was the point of departure for whoever wished to go on pilgrimage to Mecca from the archipelago..... Some of the pilgrims, furthermore, remained in Achin for a time for study, either before making their pilgrimage or afterward - hence Aceh during the 16th and 17th centuries was one of the main channels through which spiritual life on Java also was given nourishment from Muslim India and the Holy Land, thus strengthening Muslim inclinations there.

" The fact that such an extraordinary number of Malay writings on the teaching of Islam appeared in Aceh during the 16th and 17th centuries was merely the result of the political condition of the country, as that period embraces the zenith of the prosperity of the port-kings. Among the authors of these works or among the most celebrated mystics, heretical or orthodox, we do not find a single Achehnese name, but only those of foreign teachers. Learned Mohammedans have at all times sought countries where their attainments commanded solid advantages in addition to honour and respect. "

( Schrieke II p. 243 quoting S.H. )

During the late 16th and 17th centuries many scholars from such places as Mecca and Gujerat came to stay in Aceh for extended periods. Sultan Iskander Muda was the patron of Muslim mystics, among them Hamzah Fansuri. Under Iskandar Muda's successor, the most influential scholar was ar-Raniri, at whose instigation the sultan began the persecution of teachers of mysticism. Ar-Raniri wrote a refutation of Hamzah's teachings, wh. he considered heretical.<sup>1</sup> This orthodox reaction v. mysticism was also making itself felt at the court of Aurungzeb.

Sultana Taj al-'Alam Safiat ad-Din Shah ( 1641 - 1675 ), the first of the four sultanas, & was the patroness of the renowned orthodox mystic

<sup>1</sup> Abd ar-Ra'uf of Singkel.

1. Ref. Syed Muhammad Naguib Al-Attas, The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri.