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When Zoetmulder was surveying what he referred to as “minor kakawins of later times” in his study of Old Javanese Literature (Zoetmulder 1974, ch. XV), there was little specific information available on the dating of some of that literature. Recent research may help to fill some of the gaps.

In the kakawin Astikāyana (Āstika’s adventures — a collection of Adiparwa stories) there is mention of “a princess (sic) (naranāthakanyā), whose beauty, nobility and proficiency in the sciences and arts is praised in the manggala. ‘The name by which she is called by the great monks is sang śrī Wiryasakanta’” (Zoetmulder 1974: 396). The text further mentions this royal patron as the centre of great literary activity and the author of poems herself.

In the Babad Dalem, the ancestral genealogy of the rulers of Klungkung (East Bali), there is a record of that kingdom’s having had a queen, called in that genealogy the Dewa Agung Isteri Kanya (Babad Dalem, f. 92b). The first two words are the titles of all the rulers of Klungkung, “Isteri” merely denotes her sex, while “Kanya” means she was not married. From an interview with one of the present-day members of that royal family, Cokorda Gede Mayun, it becomes clear that her rule is now regarded as somewhat of a golden age in the recent history of Klungkung. Cokorda Mayun, himself an enthusiastic student of literature, even tells the apocryphal story that kakawin and kidung were sung every day of her reign, which he estimates to have been thirty-five years. The Dewa Agung Isteri is recorded as ruling with her brother, Dewa Agung Putra, a son of a low-status wife of the former king, Bhatara Kusamba. It seems that there were two rulers, because not all power interests would have found a queen acceptable, while others would not have accepted a ruler born from a low-status mother. The situation may also represent conflicts of factional interests.

The Babad Dalem refers to Dewa Agung Putra in some places as “Maharaja Wirya Putra”, and his sister as “Wirya Kanya” (Babad Dalem, f. 92b). The titles “Naranāthakanya” (Naranātha being the designation of a ruler) and “Wiryasakanta” of the Āstikāyana would seem to refer to the Dewa Agung Isteri Kanya. The same manggala mentions “Sri Dhatrdewya prabhu” (Zoetmulder 1974: 493; perhaps a reference to Dewa Agung Putra). The Pārthakarma kakawin also mentions “sang Nṛpakanya”, the rājadayañā (queen). At the beginning of its manggala the term “Dhatṛdewya” is used, and at the end of the text “Nṛpatiwadhu” (another term for queen) occurs in relation to the patron. Considering the rarity of references to patrons in the “minor kakawins”, it seems that this is sufficient evidence to link the patronage of these two texts. “Dhatrdewi” is another name for Saraswati, goddess of learning and literature, and wife of Brahma, who is referred
to as “Dhatṛ”. The Sakraprajaya kakawin refers also to Saraswati as a
divine patron, and to “Sri Ratneśwara nāma rājadāyiḥ hyang Dhatra-
devyāṅgadī”, “Ratneśwara is the name of the queen who becomes
Saraswati”. Although “Ratneśwara” is not used as a name for the Dewa
Agung Isteri elsewhere, the occurrence of the other elements would
seem to be more than just coincidence. Certainly the literary talents of
the Dewa Agung Isteri, mentioned in the Āstikāyana, make it likely
that she would be equated with the goddess of learning. In 18th and
19th century Bali two other female rulers are known, one in Badung,
Gusti Putu Agung, the other in Mengwi, Gusti Agung Ayu Agung
Biyang. This complicates any firm identification of the patrons of the
above-mentioned kakawin, although no specific evidence exists to link
their names with these texts.

The Prtuwijaya (Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa kakawin) mentions in its colo-
phon a “Narendradāyitā”, who is described as “kṛätīṇa ṣarg śrī Prākṛtiwiṛya nāmanīra”. The “Wiṛya” element in the
name may point again to an association with the Dewa Agung Isteri,
although its being used at the end of the title and not the beginning
could indicate otherwise. The manggala mentions that she is “brahma-
nāṅgaja”. If this is taken to mean “daughter of a Brahma”, then this is
not applicable to the Dewa Agung Isteri, whose father was a Ksātriya
and whose mother was a princess of Karangasem, Gusti Ayu Karang, a
Wesya title. If this is interpreted as a “descendant of Brahma”, how-
ever, the epithet would accord with the claim of the Klungkung rulers
that they are originally descended from Brahma (Babad Dalem 2b).

What of the queen’s brother, Dewa Agung Putra? One of the major
works of historical Balinese literature to be studied by Western scholars
this century is the kidung Pamancangah, which was assumed to have
been written soon after 1700. However, its opening words mention the
royal patron “sri Wiryatmaka”, obviously a synonym for Wiryaputra,
the Dewa Agung Putra’s other title.

The exact date of the joint reigns of these two is not known. Van Eek
says that their father died in 1809, when Dewa Agung Putra was nine
years old, and that Dewa Agung Putra ruled until 1849 (van Eek 1878-
80 III: 346). According to Cokorda Gede Mayun the “queen-mother”,
Gusti Ayu Karang, was the actual ruler after her husband’s death, until
the 1820’s, and the Dewa Agung Isteri died in 1868. Until further
research is done on the issue, we cannot date the texts mentioned above
more accurately within these time spans.

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