

# Of Native Concerns: Brooke, the Bugis and Borneo

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# Of Native Concerns

## Brooke, the Bugis and Borneo

Stephen C. Druce

When James Brooke set out for the Indonesian-Malay Archipelago in 1838 his main destinations were Borneo and Sulawesi, the latter being the land of the Bugis, a people that appear to have captured his imagination and the most prominently mentioned native people in his pre-departure writings.<sup>1</sup> Sarawak, however, was not on the agenda and Brooke's main destination in Borneo was Marudu Bay on the north-eastern tip of the island.<sup>2</sup> While Brooke was genuinely interested in scientific exploration of the two islands and learning about their inhabitants, the probable reason he chose Borneo and Sulawesi as main destinations was that he believed they offered the greatest potential in realising the romantic Raffles-inspired individual endeavour upon which he was about to embark: to try and extend benevolent British influence in the archipelago that would both save its inhabitants from the Dutch and their corrosive practices, and further British interests, free trade and advance native interests. Marudu Bay in Borneo was to be explored as a potential base for future British settlement where alliances could be formed with local chiefs, while Sulawesi was the home of the Bugis, a people, whom Brooke seems to have looked upon as potential allies in this endeavour. Brooke was of course aware that such an endeavour would ultimately require official government backing and support if it was to ever bear fruit. The opportunities he was later presented in Sarawak enabled him to make a start but no official support and backing followed, even when he made it known in 1842 that he was "willing to transfer the rights and interests" he had acquired in Sarawak in exchange for government assistance, as long as his views on its governance be respected.<sup>3</sup> While Brooke's views on governance probably had no bearing on the absence of any official interest, his concern for Sarawak's indigenous people was consistent and he was to establish a government that adopted aspects of native customary law and ruled with an eye to indigenous concerns.<sup>4</sup>

Brooke's concern with indigenous interests and affairs, as well as his broader political ambitions, were also evident during his six-month sojourn in Sulawesi, most of which was spent among the Bugis, before he returned to Sarawak and became its raja. While Brooke's achievements in Sarawak and his relationship with the Brunei sultanate are well documented, little attention has been given to the time he spent in Sulawesi.<sup>5</sup> While not the only nineteenth century European

visitor to Sulawesi, Brooke's accounts are by far the most detailed and insightful, in particular his descriptions of the Bugis political system, local politics and culture, all of which reveal a deep interest in indigenous affairs and governance. Brooke was evidently impressed by these indigenous Bugis institutions but, following Raffles' notion on the plight of the archipelago's indigenous polities, considered them to be in a state of decline on account of Dutch influence. Whether these institutions, consciously or otherwise, were to later influence Brooke's style of government in Sarawak is impossible to say, but Brooke clearly identified their strengths and advantages.

When Brooke arrived in Sulawesi there was discord between several Bugis kingdoms and internal divisions within others. Most of these problems were linked to a succession dispute in the kingdom of Sidenreng that had resulted in a least one still simmering civil war that had involved several other Bugis kingdoms and the Dutch. In addition, peace between the Dutch and Bone, the most powerful of the kingdoms, had only been negotiated less than two years before Brooke's arrival. There was therefore potential for Brooke to involve himself in local conflicts, as he was later to do in Sarawak. Although Brooke states that his actions in Sulawesi went no further than offering impartial advice, he was frustrated that the Bugis seemed more concerned with local disputes than uniting against the Dutch, and there are indications that he made attempts to rally them to his cause. Although Brooke did establish good connections with nobles in the most anti-Dutch Bugis kingdom, he was never afforded the same opportunities in Sulawesi as he was later to be presented with in Sarawak.

In order to understand the historical background and context of Brooke's adventure, it is useful to begin by first outlining events that took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which saw the English East India Company (EEIC) return to the archipelago. This is followed by a discussion of Brooke's prospectus written before his departure and the role of the rise of Bugis traders in the archipelago, which appears to have attracted Brooke to Sulawesi. I then discuss Brooke's initial visit to Sarawak before turning to the time he spent in Sulawesi.

### **Historical context**

The latter part of the eighteenth century saw renewed EEIC interest in the Indonesian-Malay Archipelago. This was largely driven by a growth in both private and Company trade with China from bases in India which necessitated the need to establish a strategic trading post in the region that would provide a logistical and commercial link in the India-China trade. Further aims were to gain direct access to local products for this trade, establish a local market for British and Indian goods and, in a period of increasing British-Dutch competition, divert trade away from Dutch Batavia. Initial interest focused on northeastern Borneo in the Sulu-controlled areas of Marudu Bay and the small island of Balambangan. The island of Labuan off Borneo's northwest coast was also considered after it was offered to the EEIC by the Brunei Sultan in exchange for protection

from Sulu and a monopoly on the sultanate's pepper.<sup>6</sup> Balambangan was the preferred site, which was settled in 1773 after an agreement was reached with the Sulu Sultan. However, due to bad management and local intrigue, the Balambangan settlement failed, lasting less than two years. The search for a suitable settlement became more hurried in the 1780s following increased Dutch control in the Melaka Straits, which in 1786 led to the English trader, Francis Light, leasing the island of Penang from the sultan of Kedah on the Company's behalf. While Penang became an important base that was to later facilitate the expansion of British power in the region during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), its location was too peripheral to bring major commercial success. In particular, as lamented by Sir Stamford Raffles, who became assistant secretary of Penang in 1805, the island failed to attract the all-important Bugis traders on a regular basis as they generally went no further than Melaka.<sup>7</sup>

Raffles believed that the occupation of territory and full political engagement with local inhabitants under a progressive and reforming British colonial power could not only further British interests but also reverse the fortunes of the archipelago's declining and decaying polities and foster native welfare. While his views were in opposition to the prevailing British policy of the time that was concerned only with trade, the Napoleonic Wars did allow Raffles to put some of his ideas into practice when Dutch territories in the archipelago were seized and he became Lieutenant-Governor of Java. Despite his protests, Java and other Dutch territories were later returned under the terms of the 1814 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. Ten years later the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 was signed that aimed to set out respective British and Dutch spheres of influence in the archipelago. While this treaty did provide a solution to several areas of contention between the two European powers, it left the status of much of archipelago somewhat ambiguous, particularly Borneo.<sup>8</sup> While the Dutch were to later claim that the treaty placed all of Borneo under their sphere of influence and launched an official protest at Brooke's actions in Sarawak, Brooke's opinion was that "there never has been a question about Borneo and Celebes being open" to the British.<sup>9</sup>

### **An archipelago of opportunity**

Despite the 1824 treaty, in the years that followed the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), the British, Dutch and other European powers continued to focus their attention more on commercial advantage rather than establishing direct colonial control over land and populations, a policy that was not to change until the 1870s with a rising demand for raw materials for industrialization. Outside of Java and the Philippines, direct European control of territory remained mainly confined to port towns, while most of the sparsely populated archipelago remained in local hands. Changing commercial patterns during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - in particular, Dutch trade practices - had, however, facilitated the decline of the archipelago's many polities. This was compounded in 1819 by the founding of Singapore as a free port, which further directed trade

away from local ports and “signalled the end of the entrepôt under Malay rule” as there was no longer a need for British traders or Chinese junks to visit these ports.<sup>10</sup> This short period before the onset of direct European colonial control over territory in the archipelago was one of opportunity for adventurous individuals to seek fortunes or, as was attempted by a number of Europeans, establish their own private kingdoms, particularly in areas where local centres of authority were weak.<sup>11</sup> James Brooke was one of the very few individuals who succeeded in establishing his own kingdom but, as is clear from his prospectus, this was not his intention when he left England in 1838.

### The prospectus

Shortly before his departure, Brooke submitted the same paper to *The Athenaeum* and the *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, both of which were published in 1838 and served to announce his expedition to the scientific community.<sup>12</sup> The paper was largely non-political, and while it began by lamenting that, the “enterprising spirit of Englishmen” and the British government showed a lack of interest in “the Asiatic Archipelago”, the focus is on more practical matters and sets out his main destinations: Marudu Bay in the extreme northeast of Borneo and Sulawesi, the home of the Bugis, whose merchants Brooke hoped to meet and befriend when he arrived in Singapore.<sup>13</sup> This published paper represented the last few pages of a longer prospectus written by Brooke that was privately circulated but not published until its reproduction by John C. Templer in 1853.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the short published paper, the prospectus is highly political and presents a clearer picture of Brooke’s opinions, ambitions, the influence of Raffles on his thinking, and his considerable self-confidence. Like Raffles, Brooke was highly critical of Dutch trade practices and their management of colonies, which he states had reduced the archipelago “to a state of anarchy and confusion, as repugnant to humanity as it is to commercial prosperity.”<sup>15</sup> He also repeats Raffles’ belief that the occupation of territory was essential to commercial success and that it should be “directed to the advancement of the native interests and the development of native resources, rather than by a flood of European colonization to aim at possession only, without reference to the indefeasible rights of the Aborigines.”<sup>16</sup> Brooke further accepted Raffles’ somewhat romantic notion that the archipelago’s decaying kingdoms could be restored to their former glory and modernised under benevolent British tutelage for the benefit of natives and British exports and trade. Like Raffles, Brooke’s vision was one in which British settlements and direct engagement in the archipelago would restore these kingdoms, “protect the trade of the natives”, establish “free ports, where the best principles of commerce and good government might be disseminated and our interests best promoted, by general prosperity of the countries under our sway, or in our own vicinity.”<sup>17</sup>

Brooke also argued that the lack of interest in the archipelago and indifference of the British government stemmed “from the want of information, or its incorrectness,” as its countries are “equal in riches, and superior in commercial

advantages to the new world,” while “the tender philanthropy of the present day” had yet to touch the archipelago where its rich lands have “become degraded by a continuous course of oppression and misrule.”<sup>18</sup> To counter this indifference and ignorance of the archipelago, “individual exertion may be usefully applied to rouse the zeal of slumbering philanthropy, and lead the way to an increased knowledge of the Indian Archipelago.”<sup>19</sup> Brooke, then, would lead the way through his own “individual exertion.” While fame, but not fortune, were to follow, his continual calls for greater British involvement in the archipelago generally fell on deaf ears.

### **The Bugis traders**

In his prospectus, Brooke made a number of references to the Bugis and appears to identify them as the most important group in the archipelago, particularly in relation to trade and their opposition to the Dutch, describing them as “hardy, active, enterprising, and commercial; and it is seldom that a people possessing such characteristics are deaf to the suggestions of self-interest or kindly feeling.”<sup>20</sup> Brooke further notes that these “traders of the islands” are constantly “checked and hampered by Dutch restrictions” and are therefore hostile to them.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps romantically, from the outset Brooke seems to have viewed these Bugis traders as potential allies in his vision of establishing British tutelage, free trade, and eventually ridding the archipelago of the Dutch.

Brooke’s impression of the Bugis as great traders, sailors and adventurers was typical of many Europeans at the time and derived mainly from encounters with them outside their homeland of Sulawesi. As Brooke was to later discover, this perception was only true of some Bugis, mainly those from Wajo, while the majority were predominantly rice farmers. Their rise as archipelagic traders was also historically late, with the major momentum dating to shortly after the Makassar war in 1669 in which a joint Bugis-Dutch alliance brought an end to the Makassar Empire and its rule over the Bugis kingdoms.<sup>22</sup> One Bugis kingdom, Wajo, fought on the side of Makassar and in the aftermath suffered large-scale retribution at the hands of Arung Palakka, the Bugis war leader and principle Dutch ally. This led to a major Wajo-Bugis diaspora led by a number of its noble families along with their dependents and followers to other parts of the archipelago.<sup>23</sup> Many of them, initially at least, retained links with their homeland and Wajo and its people became the principle Bugis traders.

From his pre-departure readings, including the work of Raffles, Brooke would have been aware that for many years these Bugis traders had been “the natural partners for the English.”<sup>24</sup> They operated outside Dutch control, had specific trade specializations, and their networks linked the eastern part of the archipelago with the Melaka Straits. Since the seventeenth century, Bugis traders had worked with those English country traders who had continued to frequent the archipelago from bases in India after the EEIC had been forced out by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. Both had proved to be a constant irritant to the Dutch as they undermined their trade monopolies, particularly in Indian

cloths, which they sold at considerably lower prices than those “officially” purchased by traders in Batavia.

During the eighteenth century, further Bugis commercial expansion was accompanied by increased migration to Borneo, the Malay peninsula and other parts of the archipelago, which was facilitated by strong familial networks. In the peninsula, they involved themselves in local conflicts, carved out their own centres of power and influence at the expense of local Malay elites, and came into conflict with the Dutch. By the 1770s they were the dominant force in Johor and controlled Riau, where in 1773 they offered the English trader Thomas Forrest the opportunity to establish a base for the EEIC in an attempt to enlist English assistance against the Dutch.<sup>25</sup> The following year, together with local allies, they laid siege to Dutch Melaka for six months, which was finally brought to an end by the arrival of a Dutch fleet from Europe that was diverted from Batavia.<sup>26</sup> The Bugis traders continued to be an important trading force and were fundamental to the commercial success of Singapore, with records showing that at least 90 Wajo-Bugis ships arrived in there in 1824 and about 120 the following year.<sup>27</sup>

### **Singapore and Sarawak**

Brooke’s initial intention to sail to Marudu Bay changed after he arrived in Singapore when he learned about Sarawak and a certain raja who was there called Pengiran Muda Hashim. Brooke seems to have been impressed by accounts he was told of the “*civilized* and proper way” Hashim had acted in assisting a British crew shipwrecked off the Sarawak coast and agreed to the Singapore governor’s request to take a message and gifts to him.<sup>28</sup> Clearly intrigued to meet this apparently pro-British raja, Brooke wrote that he “may be made by good management and presents, subservient to my views” but if he could not be then Brooke would continue with his original intention of sailing to Marudu Bay.<sup>29</sup> Hashim, however, was not the raja (governor) of Sarawak or Borneo proper (Brunei), but the uncle of the Brunei Sultan, who had sent him to Sarawak to put down a revolt against Brunei rule by local Malays and Dayaks. The revolt, which had broken out in 1835, was linked to the mining and trade in antimony and the harsh rule of Sarawak’s Brunei governor, Pengiran Mahkota, who had used forced labour to extract the ore. Another causal factor was that another Brunei noble, Pengiran Yusuf, was in the pay of the Sambas Sultanate, and had encouraged the revolt.<sup>30</sup> While it was this revolt that later provided Brooke with the opportunity to establish himself in Sarawak, he paid little attention to it in his first visit, referring to it simply as “unfortunate” as it prevented further travel into the interior.<sup>31</sup>

Brooke’s writings pay much more attention to Hashim and Mahkota, both of whom impressed Brooke and, probably believing Brooke to be some kind of official representative, expressed a desire for closer relations and trade between Brunei and Britain, which Brunei, or at least factions in the sultanate, had pursued since the 1770s. At the time of Brooke’s first visit to Sarawak there also

was concern in Brunei about increasing Dutch influence in the sultanate of Sambas.<sup>32</sup> Brooke responded positively to Hashim and Mahkota, but surely exaggerated his achievements in Sarawak when he wrote in 1839 that he had attained “free permission that English vessels may trade with Borneo (Brunei)” and that he had ensured that the Dutch “are positively excluded now.”<sup>33</sup> He also hinted to Hashim and Mahkota that the British may be willing to enter into a treaty with them. Whether or not Brooke had exaggerated, the Singapore governor was less than pleased that Brooke had meddled in local politics while in Sarawak, but Brooke was unrepentant.<sup>34</sup> The conversations with Hashim and Mahkota, particularly in relation to trade and the British and Dutch, feature prominently in Brooke’s writings. Arguably, it was his meetings with these two apparently pro-British representatives of Brunei, rather than the on-going rebellion, that was the main reason he later decided to return to Sarawak, an area that was still free of Dutch influence and, somewhat fortuitously, was to present him with an opportunity to stay and begin pursuing wider ambitions.

Brooke was never afforded such an opportunity in his next destination, Sulawesi, where he tells us that he intended to learn more about local politics, the extent of Dutch influence, and survey island’s coasts. Several Dutch accounts, however, claim that Brooke aimed to incite a Bugis insurrection against the Dutch, which included providing armaments to a contender in a succession dispute who the Dutch and their allies had opposed. While there is not sufficient evidence in Brooke’s writings to substantiate these allegations, it is doubtful that his actions in South Sulawesi were as innocent as he would have us believe.

### **Sulawesi and the Bugis**

While the Dutch had established themselves as a permanent feature in Sulawesi since the late seventeenth century, direct Dutch rule was confined to Makassar and its environs and several outposts in Makasar-speaking areas. At the time of Brooke’s visit the Bugis kingdoms remained virtually independent, and would continue to be so until the beginning of the twentieth century, but acknowledged themselves as nominal Dutch vassals in a relationship that reflected local conceptions of tributary-kingdom relations and was set out in the Bungaya Treaty signed after the Makassar War.<sup>35</sup>

The Bugis areas of Sulawesi were the first places in the archipelago that Brooke appears to have gained first-hand experience of indigenous political systems and governance, to which he paid particular attention. While it is not known whether these experiences later influenced Brooke’s thinking in Sarawak, where he later developed a hybrid system that combined European ideas with native customary law, he was evidently impressed with the Bugis institutions:

We cannot fail to admire in these infant institutions the glimmer of elective government, the acknowledged rights of citizenship, and the liberal spirit which has never placed a single restriction upon foreign or domestic commerce.<sup>36</sup>



As Raffles had argued in relation to indigenous institutions in other parts of the archipelago, Brooke considered that the cause of their decline in the nineteenth century and the reason why their practices were now not always in accordance with their laws was because of Dutch influence, which had reversed their progression:

That a people advanced to this point would gradually progress if left to themselves and uncontaminated, and unoppressed, there is every reason to believe; and in the decline of their circumstances, and the decay of their public institutions, we may trace the evil influence of European domination.<sup>37</sup>

Brooke tells us that we should therefore not be too harsh in our judgements of the Bugis and their institutions and that:

amid all the nations of the East - amid all the people professing the Mahometan religion, from Turkey to China, - the Bugis alone have arrived at the threshold of recognised rights, and have alone emancipated themselves from the fetters of despotism.<sup>38</sup>

Brooke's observations of these "infant institutions" have been shown to be largely accurate by later research. He was aware that Wajo, like the other Bugis kingdoms, was a confederation in that it "comprised of numerous rajahs, independent, or nearly so, living in their own districts" with their own people and that the position of ruler in a kingdom was not necessarily hereditary but a suitable candidate of appropriate rank was chosen by a council.<sup>39</sup> In the case of Wajo, the council consisted of six lords (Arung Ennengnge) who were drawn from the highest-ranking nobles of the six most important places in Wajo who together with the Arung Matoa (ruler), formed the supreme council of Wajo. During Brooke's time the relationship between the six had broken down because of the Sidenreng succession dispute and no consensus could be reached on the appointment of a new Arung Matoa. Consequently, governance of the kingdom had become dysfunctional. Brooke also describes the existence of another council below the Arung Ennengnge made up of 40 lesser nobles (Arung Patappuloe) that "serve to modify the feudal state, and are appealed to in all cases of importance or difficulty" and can veto the appointment of an Arung Matoa.<sup>40</sup> The kingdom also had three tribunes who "guarded the rights of free men" and had the right to call a meeting of the council of 40.<sup>41</sup>

Arguably, these Bugis institutions represented more than simply a "glimmer of elective government" Brooke credits them with, especially when one considers that it was only eight years since the 1832 Great Reform Act in Britain, before which less than 15 per cent of the adult male population were allowed to vote. In terms of female participation and representation in governance and politics, the Bugis institutions were in fact ahead of those in Europe.<sup>42</sup> As Brooke noted, all political positions, including that of ruler, were open to women and

four of six most important positions in Wajo were held by women at the time of his visit, which was by no means unusual in many Bugis kingdoms.<sup>43</sup> He further noted that these “ladies appear in public like the men; ride, rule, and visit even foreigners, without the knowledge or consent of their husbands” and “enjoy perfect liberty.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Brooke and Bugis politics**

Brooke would have been aware that the British had briefly occupied Makassar from 1812 until 1817 during the Napoleonic Wars and during this time had come into conflict with the Bugis kingdoms of Bone, Suppa and Tanete. These kingdoms had refused to acknowledge the British in place of the Dutch, arguing that the end of Dutch rule in Makassar invalidated all former treaties.<sup>45</sup> Further conflict with Bone developed over its refusal to return to the Sudanga sword, the main regalia of Gowa which the British demanded in order to install a new and compliant Gowa ruler, and its expansion into Dutch territories in Makasar-speaking areas.<sup>46</sup> Keen to check the power of Bone, several other Bugis kingdom pledged their allegiance to the British and joined punitive military expeditions against Bone and Suppa. The conflict continued after the Dutch returned and it was not until 1838 that both sides eventually agreed to renew their original treaty in which Bone was given the status of “first ally” of the Dutch. The cessation of hostilities was facilitated by the death of Bone’s queen in 1835 and the new ruler, her brother, appears to have been persuaded by Bone’s apparently pro-Dutch chief minister to normalize relations with the Dutch. When Brooke arrived less than two years later and sought an audience with Bone’s ruler, tensions in the region still simmered and he may have been aware that prior to renewing the treaty with the Dutch, Bone had appealed to the Straits Settlements for military assistance.<sup>47</sup>

Brooke makes no mention of the subsequent events and conflicts that followed the Dutch return to Sulawesi, although he would have learned something of these events in Singapore and certainly from Dain Matara, a Bugis guide and companion he procured in Singapore who was from Wajo.<sup>48</sup> Given that Bone and the Dutch had only recently resolved their conflict, it is not surprising that Brooke’s initial attempt to meet the Bone ruler was viewed with suspicion by the kingdom and that he “met with nothing but hostility, armed boats and men, ready at every point to oppose” him.<sup>49</sup> This suspicion and hostility seems to have derived from the assumption that Brooke represented an official British delegation and that his aim was to undermine the recently established peace. In addition, the loser in the Sidenreng succession dispute, who was from Wajo, had not renounced his claim, and in the preceding years had made several attempts to enlist British support.<sup>50</sup> The Sidenreng succession conflict had involved most of the Bugis kingdoms, but Bone and the Dutch, had ensured that their preferred claimant sat on the throne.

With Brooke’s arrival, the Bugis kingdoms were awash with rumours concerning his intentions, which were related to him by Dain Matara after they set

anchor at Bajue near Bone. Brooke's ship was said to be one of five heading to Bone and that he carried chests of silver in order to form an alliance with Bone to expel the Dutch from South Sulawesi or, if Bone refused, to wage war on that kingdom.<sup>51</sup> While Brooke's initial attempt to gain an audience with the Bone ruler was constantly thwarted, a brief meeting with the kingdom's chief minister was arranged on a boat outside the capital before he departed for Wajo. Brooke clearly disliked this man with his "so curious a jumble of ideas", probably on account of the cold reception he received in Bone and the minister's apparently pro-Dutch stance, and presents a somewhat disparaging physical description.<sup>52</sup> From Brooke's notes, the conversation consisted of mainly questions regarding international and regional affairs relating to the English, Dutch, French and Russians. These included the fate of Napoleon Bonaparte and whether Russia was as powerful as England and why had the English returned Java and other lands to the Dutch. As opposed to his conversations in Sarawak, Brooke appears not to have made any attempt to promote relations with the British at the expense of the Dutch.

Brooke then moved on to Wajo, where he encountered no suspicion or hostility: "nothing could be more kind and affable than our reception."<sup>53</sup> Wajo, however, was in a state of instability when Brooke arrived. The aristocracy was divided into factions and the position of Arung Matoa was essentially vacant as the incumbent had departed the capital and no longer played a part in the kingdom's affairs. These divisions and the absence of an Arung Matoa were linked to the long-running Sidenreng succession dispute, which since 1832 and had been the cause of several wars. Most of the Wajo nobility supported the losing claimant from Wajo whose mother was related to prominent Wajo nobles, while a faction had allied with Bone, Soppeng and the Dutch in support of the other claimant. Such was the bitterness between the two Wajo factions over the dispute that they were unable to agree on a new Arung Matoa and Wajo had become progressively unstable, leading to an increase in banditry and lawlessness that had led to more Wajo people leaving for Borneo and Sumatra and other areas.<sup>54</sup> Brooke is probably correct in identifying this succession dispute as "the chief cause of all the agitation throughout these states" as it served to further divide the Bugis kingdoms and strengthen the Dutch position in the region.<sup>55</sup>

The political situation explains Brooke's better reception in Wajo, where he tells us "they were glad to have it said that an Englishman was amongst them" but at the same time could not understand why Britain took so little interest in their affairs, especially when they could use the situation to their advantage.<sup>56</sup> As with Bone, the nobles of Wajo appeared unconvinced that Brooke was not a British representative but acting independently, with Brooke noting that "the rajahs of Wajo look to me for assistance, and think me able to perform far more than is in my power."<sup>57</sup> Brooke also met with the Wajo claimant to the Sidenreng throne, La Patongi Datu Lompulle, who he presented with a gift of four muskets, a small amount of gunpowder and a piece of cloth. La Patongi explained his predicament to Brooke, informing him that he had received letters from the Dutch warning about taking further military action against his brother

while Bone had threatened to invade Wajo if he did. As Brooke noted, despite his failure to oust his brother from Sidenreng, La Patongi still held the support of four of Wajo's leading nobles and had "powerful connections" in other Bugis kingdoms.<sup>58</sup>

From his writings it is difficult to gauge how much Brooke wanted to involve himself, or indeed did try to involve himself, in the political affairs of the Bugis and their relationship with the Dutch. Several times in his diary he makes a point of clearly stating that his aims were simply to find out the conditions of the kingdoms, their relations with Europeans, and offer impartial advice, but not to "interfere in their affairs" or do anything "in contravention of the measures of the Dutch government."<sup>59</sup> At the same time, Brooke appears frustrated that the Bugis seemed more concerned with wars and quarrels amongst themselves than uniting together against the Dutch. At one point Brooke decides to travel to Sidenreng in order to try and reconcile the two warring brothers but upon reaching the kingdom's outskirts abruptly abandons his plan. Then after learning of the ancient alliance between Bone, Wajo and Soppeng, attempts to bring the three kingdoms together, sending a letter to the Bone ruler urging the three kingdoms to unite.<sup>60</sup> Brooke tells us that it was this letter that eventually led to Bone changing their stance towards him and inviting him to visit the kingdom and its ruler. Just as likely is that Bone was concerned Brooke was negotiating with Wajo's nobles.

On March 24, 1840, Brooke eventually returned to Bone and finally met with its ruler. Frustratingly, Brooke tells us little of what transpired during his meeting apart from some small talk but intriguingly states that "the long-desired meeting which lays all the Bugis country open to me: had this happened earlier, I might have made excellent use of the advantage; now at this late season, I can do comparatively little."<sup>61</sup> Brooke then cites the beginning of an eighteenth century poem by the Italian Vittorio Alfieri: "*dopo tanti sospiri e voti tanti, Te vedo e calco libera terra*" (After so many sighs and so many vows I see and tread You, free land).<sup>62</sup>

While the poem may have been Brooke's way of expressing his appreciation and respect for the Bugis, what he meant by "lays all the Bugis country open to me" is less than clear. It could be interpreted to mean he had gained permission to conduct further scientific research but Bone, although influential, had no authority over the other Bugis kingdoms and Brooke had already visited a number of them. Speculatively, given that Brooke initially appears to have looked upon the Bugis as potential allies in his endeavour, it is more probable that he had attempted to persuade them to unite in opposition to the Dutch, and Bone, as the most powerful Bugis kingdom, would have been fundamental to any proposed scheme. This perhaps explains Brooke's persistence in his desire to visit the kingdom and meet its ruler.

There is some support in Dutch sources that Brooke made attempts to negotiate with Bone but that his overtures were rejected as the kingdom decided to remain loyal to the treaty with the Dutch.<sup>63</sup> Other Dutch accounts and reports dating to 1840 and later years claim that Brooke's principle intention was to

foster Bugis insurrection against the Dutch, with one source claiming that Brooke arrived in Sulawesi with the specific intention of meeting La Patongi Datu Lompulle, who he provided with 12 cases of rifles and 20 barrels of gunpowder, but his plans floundered when he failed to make an alliance with Bone.<sup>64</sup> These allegations were never proven and it is unclear whether these Dutch accounts and reports present an accurate picture of Brooke's actions in Sulawesi or were inflated by officials. The Dutch were, however, sufficiently concerned by his actions in Sulawesi to inquire through their London ambassador as to whether Brooke was acting on behalf of the British government and also dispatched a cruiser to monitor his movements.<sup>65</sup> The reply from London that Brooke had not been assigned any official commercial or political enterprise but was acting independently temporarily allayed Dutch concerns. The allegations against Brooke were only to resurface and be made public in 1845 when the Dutch launched an official complaint about his actions in Sarawak, which they claimed contravened the 1824 Treaty, presenting his time in Sulawesi as proof that he "was not a fit person to act as British agent in Borneo."<sup>66</sup>

### **Conclusion: Brooke, Sulawesi and Borneo**

We will probably never fully know the truth about Brooke's actions in Sulawesi. He may not have gone as far as the Dutch claim but it is certainly possible that he made attempts to rally the Bugis against them, or perhaps tried to lay the foundations for a future alliance. In Wajo, Brooke had found potential anti-Dutch and pro-British partners and he did maintain some correspondence with the Wajo-Bugis in the years that followed.<sup>67</sup> But Sulawesi was never to present him with the opportunities he came upon in Sarawak, which is to where Brooke returned. On his first visit to Sarawak he had also acquainted himself with potential anti-Dutch and pro-British figures in Hashim and Mahkota and it seems probable that this is what drew him back to Sarawak, if only to cement the relationship and "meddle" some more in local affairs. Brooke wrote to his friend Templer informing him of plans to visit Sarawak again before going on to Manila and China. It is of course well documented that Brooke never did go on to Manila but seized the opportunity presented to him by Hashim by putting down the ongoing rebellion in Sarawak in exchange for being made its governor. As Nicholas Tarling points out, Brooke was not initially aiming to create an independent state but was "setting an example" and "starting a process",<sup>68</sup> as he had perhaps attempted to do in Sulawesi but failed. This was an initial move to expand British influence and trade in the archipelago and to "introduce gradually a better system of government", which necessitated the reform of the current one, and "influence and amend the entire archipelago, if government will afford me the means and power." The British government, however, had no desire to afford Brooke with either the means or power, the sultanate of Brunei did not want to be reformed, and Sulawesi was left to the Dutch.

## Notes

- 1 Brooke also hoped to visit Manila, the Aru Islands and Timor.
- 2 Sarawak is mentioned on pages 309 to 312 of George Windsor Earl's 1837 publication *The Eastern Seas: Or, Voyages and Adventures in the Indian Archipelago, in 1832-33-34, Comprising a Tour of the Island of Java -- Visits to Borneo, the Malay Peninsula, Siam* (London: Wm. H. Allen and Co), which Brooke had read before departing for the east but does not appear to have given it any consideration at the time. Earl briefly notes the discovery of antimony in Sarawak and that this had brought renewed Brunei interest to this area of Borneo.
- 3 James Brooke, *A Letter from Borneo: With Notices of the Country and Its Inhabitants. Addressed to James Gardner. ESQ* (London: L. and G. Seeley, 1842), p.6. As Brooke later clarified in a letter to his friend John C. Templer, his views on the governance of Sarawak extended to securing "the natives a permanent good, beyond the chances of my life": John C. Templer (ed.), *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke, K.C.B. Raiah of Sarawak, Narrating the Events of His Life from 1838 to the Present Time*, Volume 1 (London: Bentley, 1853), pp. 240-1.
- 4 John Walker argues that the denial of any British support was a contributing factor to Brooke taking a more indigenous approach to government in Sarawak and identifying and engaging with "indigenous sources and concepts of power and authority", John Walker. "Ideologies of Authority: State and Society in Nineteenth-Century Sarawak", *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 18 (2), (2005) p. 157.
- 5 On Brooke's achievements in Sarawak and relationship with Brunei, see Nicholas Tarling, *Britain, the Brookes and Brunei* (Kuala Lumpur and London: Oxford University Press, 1971), Ranjit Singh, *Brunei 1839-1983: The Problems of Political Survival* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), Ooi Keat Gin, *Of Free Trade and Native Interests: The Brookes and the Economic Development of Sarawak, 1841-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Graham Saunders, *A History of Brunei*, 2nd edition (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).
- 6 Ranjit Singh argues that this was the beginning of a long Brunei policy to establish closer relations with Britain in order to preserve its declining position in the region, Ranjit Singh, *Brunei 1839-1983*, p. 41. Also, see Donald Brown, *Brunei: The Structure and History of a Bornean Malay Sultanate* (Brunei: Brunei Museum, 1970), pp. 145-6. In 1803, Labuan was again offered to the EEIC by Brunei when Robert Farquhar was sent to look into the possibility of resettling Balambangan and resume relations with Sulu and Brunei. On arrival he found Sulu and Brunei at war. Saunders, *A History of Brunei*, p.71.
- 7 C.E. Wurzburg, *Raffles of the Eastern Isles* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1954), p. 71-72.
- 8 Mary Turnbull, "Malaysia: The Nineteenth century", *South East Asia, Colonial History: Empire-building in the nineteenth century* vol. 2, ed. Paul H. Kratoska (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 243.
- 9 James Brooke and George Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes, Down to the Occupation of Labuan: from the Journals of James Brooke ESQ., Rajah of Sarawak, and Governor of Labuan. Together with a Narrative of the Operations of H.M.S. Iris*, vol. 1 (London: J. Murray, 1848), p. 344.
- 10 Barbara Watson Andaya, and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Red Globe Press [formerly Palgrave Macmillan], 2017), p. 111.
- 11 Graham Saunders presents an overview of a number of nineteenth century British adventurers who made attempts, which generally failed, to carve out kingdoms in the archipelago. Graham Saunders, 1980 "Seekers of Kingdoms: British Adventurers in the Malay Archipelago" *Brunei Museum Journal*, 4, 4 (1980, 137-154).
- 12 James Brooke, "Exploring Expedition to the Asiatic Archipelago", *The Athenaeum* (Jan-Dec 1838), pp. 744-6 and James Brooke, "Proposed Exploring Expedition to

- the Asiatic Archipelago", *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 8 (1838), pp. 443-448.
- 13 James Brooke, "Exploring Expedition", p. 745.
  - 14 Brooke's prospectus can be found on pages 2-33 of John C. Templer (ed.), *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke*, vol. 1. Brooke's paper in *The Athenaeum* was thus not a summary or abstract of his longer prospectus, which some have stated.
  - 15 John C. Templer (ed.), *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke*, vol. p. 4.
  - 16 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
  - 17 Ibid., p. 14.
  - 18 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
  - 19 Ibid., p. 20.
  - 20 Ibid., p. 30.
  - 21 Ibid., p. 8-9.
  - 22 Makasar (with one "s") refers to the ethnic group of that name and their language; Makassar refers to the historical kingdom and the capital of South Sulawesi, formerly Ujung Pandang.  
The Makassar wars arose out of Dutch determination to establish a monopoly over the Maluku spice trade. This brought them into increasing conflict with the powerful Makassar Empire that had been formed in the sixteenth century through an amalgamation of two Makasar kingdoms, Gowa and Tallo (c.f. David Bulbeck, "A Tale of Two Kingdoms: The Historical Archaeology of Gowa and Tallok, South Sulawesi, Indonesia" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, 1992). After converting to Islam in 1605, Makassar had embarked on a series of successful wars of Islamization against the Bugis kingdoms, which they subsequently ruled for the next ninety or so years before defeat by the Bugis-Dutch alliance.
  - 23 There was also a major Makasar diaspora at this time, which largely ended in failure. See Leonard Andaya, "The Bugis-Makasar Diasporas", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 68, 1 (1995), pp. 119-138.
  - 24 Heather Sutherland, "Contingent Devices", *Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of Knowledge and Politics of Space*, ed. by Paul H. Kratoska, Remco Raben, Henk Schulte Nordholt (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005), p. 41.
  - 25 Anthony Webster, *Gentleman Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1890* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), p. 31.
  - 26 Mary Turnbull, *A Short History of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei* (Asian Edition) (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1981), p. 81.
  - 27 Christian Pelras, *The Bugis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 307.
  - 28 Templer, *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke*, vol. 1, p. 55.
  - 29 Ibid., p. 60.
  - 30 Ranjit Singh, *Brunei 1839-1983*, p. 48.
  - 31 Templer, *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke*, vol. 1, p. 72.
  - 32 In addition to offering Labuan Island to the EIC on two occasions, a further Brunei attempt to establish a relationship with Britain appears to have been a Brunei diplomatic and trade mission to Singapore in 1824. See Brown, *Brunei*, p. 148.
  - 33 Templer, *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke*, vol. 1, p. 76. Brooke's propensity to exaggerate can be seen in a letter he wrote to his mother following his return to Singapore after his first Sarawak visit: "I am really becoming a great man, dearest mother; the world talks of me ! the rulers of England threaten to write to me ! newspapers call me patriotic and adventurous ! the Geographical Society pays me compliments ! Am I not a great man?" (Templer, *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke*, vol. 1, p. 85-86).
  - 34 Ibid., p. 79.
  - 35 For detailed descriptions of the political structures of the Bugis and Makasar kingdoms, and kingdom-tributary relations, see Stephen C. Druce, *The Lands West of the*

*Lakes: A History of the Ajattappareng Kingdoms of South Sulawesi* (Leiden: KITLV, 2009), pp. 26-32, and "Dating the Tributary and Domain Lists of the South Sulawesi Kingdoms", *Cetusan Minda Sarjana: Sastera dan Budaya [Prompting the Scholarly Mind: Literature and Culture]*, edited by Ampuan Haji Brahim bin Ampuan Haji Tengah (Brunei: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2014), pp. 145-156.

- 36 Brooke and Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, p. 66.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
- 39 Among the Bugis personal qualities played a role in attaining political office or becoming a ruler, as long as the candidate, either male or female, was from the higher echelons of the elite. This system thus "ensured that claims to power remained the prerogative of the small elite class while being sufficiently flexible to ensure choice." Rulers could also be removed from office. See Stephen C. Druce, "The Decentralized Austronesian polity: Of Mandalas, Negaras, Galactics, and the South Sulawesi Kingdoms", *Suvannabhumi: Multi-disciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 9, 2 (2017), pp. 7-34.
- 40 Brooke and Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, p. 62.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 In Britain it was not until 1918 that women, and only those who were over 30 years of age, were given the right to vote, which was out of recognition of their role in WW1. The same year saw the first elected women MP, Constance de Markievicz, an Irish Republican who did not take her seat at Westminster.
- 43 There were probably more female rulers among the Bugis than any other ethnic group in the Indonesian-Malay Archipelago. Bugis manuscripts provide examples of female monarchs dating from the fourteenth century who exercised real power and authority, leading the expansion of several early kingdoms and the intensification of wet-rice agriculture. Female rulers remained common in many Bugis kingdoms throughout history, up until Indonesian independence in 1945 when the kingdoms were abolished. See Stephen C. Druce, "The Bugis Queens and Female Aristocrats of South Sulawesi" (Paper presented at the Southeast Asian Studies in Asia 2015 Conference, organized by the Consortium for Southeast Asian Studies in Asia, 12-13 December, Kyoto, Japan, 2015).
- 44 James Brooke and George Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, pp. 75, 89-90.
- 45 Christian Pleras, *The Bugis*, p. 272.
- 46 Thomas Gibson, *Islamic Narrative and Authority in Southeast Asia: From the 16th to the 21st Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 113. See also Gibson's discussion on the background to the conflict over the Sudanga sword on pages 113-115.
- 47 Esther Joy Velthoen, "Contested Coastlines: Diasporas, Trade and Colonial Expansion in Eastern Sulawesi 1680-1905", PhD thesis, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia, 2002, p. 252.
- 48 *Dain* can be equated with *Daeng*, a low-ranking title for Makasar nobility but sometimes found among the Bugis. Brooke describes Dain Matara as "a man well born; and for his country, affluent and educated" and that he refused any payment for his services (Brooke and Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, p. 34).
- 49 John C. Temppler (ed.), *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke*, vol. 1, p. 84.
- 50 Brooke and Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, p. 102. Also, see Velthoen, "Contested Coastlines", p. 252.
- 51 Brooke and Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, p. 34-35.
- 52 Ibid., p. 50.
- 53 Ibid., p. 56.
- 54 Abdur Razak Dg. Patunru, *Sejarah Wajo* (Ujung Pandang: Yayasan Kebudayaan Sulawesi Selatan, 1983), pp. 67-68.



- 55 Brooke and Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, p. 79.
- 56 Ibid., pp. 82, 102.
- 57 Ibid., p. 54.
- 58 Ibid., p. 125.
- 59 Ibid., pp. 102-3.
- 60 This was the *tellumpoccoe* alliance, which was concluded in 1582 in an attempt to halt the military expansion of Gowa.
- 61 Brooke and Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, p. 130.
- 62 I am grateful to Massimo Sarappa for identifying the poem and author and correcting my translation. The poem is about Vittorio Alfieri's trip to England, a country he appreciated because of its civil and social ideals, compared to the moral and civil decay of Italy and France.
- 63 See M. T. H. Perelaer, *De Bonische Expeditien: Krijgsgebeurtenissen op Celebes in 1859 en 1860, Volgens Officieele Bronnen Bewerkt* [*The Boneic Expedition: Martial Events on Celebes in 1859 and 1860, Edited According to Official Sources*], vol. 1 (Leiden: G. Kolff, 1872), pp. 87-88.
- 64 See Esther Joy Velthoen, *Contested Coastlines*, p. 252, who draws upon the KITLV, Korn Collection (No. 435, p. 463) and Harry van Beers 1986 Leiden PhD thesis ("Boni Moet Boeten, de Nederlandse Gezagsuitbreiding op Zuidwest-Celebes ten Tijde van het Stelsel van Onthouding 1838-1858."), written from Dutch archival sources. One account also claims that the Dutch eventually expelled Brooke from Sulawesi.
- 65 Graham Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955), p. 99. Brooke and Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, p. 106. This was not the first time the Dutch had made enquiries about Brooke's intentions. The *Initial* concern over Brooke date to shortly after his departure from England, when in October 1838, an article was published in the *Gazette de France* that suggested he had official backing and that his voyage was the beginning of a British move to take over the whole of Borneo Island and later the archipelago. These *Suspensions* were initially dampened by the Netherlands Colonial Minister, who noted that the British government was unlikely to be behind a venture that was represented by a single small schooner (Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo*, p. 98).
- 66 As Graham Irwin points out, technically the Dutch could only make an official complaint against Brooke after he was made a British agent in Borneo in 1945. Before this appointment he was simply a private individual with no recognition from the British government (Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo* p. 103).
- 67 Henry Keppel and James Brooke, *The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido for the Suppression of Piracy: With Extracts from the Journal of James Brooke, ESQ. of Sarawak*, vol. 1 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1847), Appendix 3; Templer, *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke*, vol. 1, pp. 170-171.
- 68 Nicholas Tarling, "Brooke Rule in Sarawak and its Principles", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 65, 1 (1992): 17.

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