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## KINGS AND COVENANTS

### Stranger-kings and social contract in Sulawesi

*This paper explores the relationship between stranger-kingship and contractual authority in the history of the island of Sulawesi (Indonesia). In most parts of Sulawesi, social and political stratification were always pronounced. At the same time the power of kings and chiefs was restricted by more or less explicit social contracts defining their rights and duties with respect to the political community as a whole, typically consisting of an oligarchy of local nobles. These contracts, spelled out during inauguration ceremonies and on other ritual occasions, were backed up by realistic threats of violence against the ruler, as well as by supernatural sanctions. Besides its contractual character, another characteristic feature of Sulawesi kingship was that rulers were perceived as outsiders to the community – typically by virtue of foreign and/or divine origin, sometimes perhaps also as a result of sickness or physical abnormality. Stranger-kingship enhanced the effectiveness of the social contract by making the ruler easier for his people to discipline or depose if necessary, and harder for them to envy or hate, as well as more objective and impartial in his own dealings with them. These points are illustrated using historical and anthropological data from various parts of Sulawesi, particularly the Bugis kingdoms of the southwest peninsula, the island sultanates of Buton and Banggai off the east coast, and the chiefdoms of Gorontalo and Buol in the north.*

Stranger-kingship is usually discussed in terms of ‘political myths’, and much of what has been written on the subject is framed in the kind of anthropological structuralism which implies that it is the myths which determine the politics. Some peoples, in other words, are condemned by their own cultures to be ruled by foreigners, and every nation – as a French aristocrat said after the Revolution – gets the government it deserves. A converse viewpoint – what might be called the ‘brutal realism’ approach to stranger-kingship – is that myths in which strangers are acclaimed as kings merely serve to dignify real histories of conquest and subjugation. This paper takes a different approach, one that may be summed up (albeit with similar oversimplification) as a ‘rational choice perspective’. The predisposition to accept strangers as kings is neither a myth, nor a consequence of myth, but rather a way of maximising the advantages and minimising the drawbacks of political centralisation.

In making this argument we do not mean to imply that people always act rationally, or even that rational individuals are necessarily capable of designing effective social

institutions: a key insight of what is ironically called ‘rational choice theory’ is that because of the obstacles to collective action modelled by the ‘prisoner’s dilemma’ and the ‘tragedy of the commons’, strictly rational individuals can easily become ‘rational fools’ who fail to cooperate even in pursuit of clear common interests (Sen 1977). Nor do we mean to imply that kingship, in Sulawesi or elsewhere, did not have sacral as well as utilitarian aspects, or that people’s political behaviour was not shaped partly by their cultures and mythologies. Nevertheless we believe that scholars have often ignored the extent to which political hierarchy, and stranger-kingship in particular, were accepted as legitimate because, whether by accident or by design, they offered solutions to pressing practical problems. For this reason it is worth us simplifying reality by putting together a new schematic model of stranger-kingship which, although based on historical sources, will not correspond exactly to any particular historical example of the phenomenon.

### Myths and machinations

Our point of departure is the contractual nature of traditional political institutions. When Southeast Asianists tended to view the region through the prism of ‘Indic’ ideas such as ‘circles of kings’ (Sanskrit: *mandala*) and the ‘universal monarch’ (*cakravartin*), it was sometimes claimed that the idea of a ‘social contract’ was entirely alien to Indonesia (Anderson 1972: 47–52). But in fact Indonesians have always been concerned with the contractual regulation of conflicts between private and public interests. In Bali – the site of Geertz’s (1980) ‘theatre state’, which builds on Anderson’s Indic model – every village and hamlet has its own explicit (and often written) ‘customary charter’ (*awig-awig*). This is a contract specifying the precise duties of community members, including participation in decision-making and contribution to public goods and services, as well as the penalties for failing to perform these duties (Warren 1993: 11–3). The specimen *awig-awig* reproduced by Geertz and Geertz (1975: 187) also defines the tasks of village officials and specifies the fines to be imposed on officials who misuse public funds or, having been ‘chosen by village agreement’, refuse to take up their (evidently onerous) responsibilities. Contractual agreements and regulations, in the Indonesian past, were also important in other spheres. Rites of sacrifice in traditional Indonesian religions often involved explicit and quantified contracts of exchange with the gods (Beatty 1992: 209). Formal treaties of alliance and vassalage between kingdoms are familiar to historians of Sulawesi (Andaya 1978; Caldwell 1995), the most famous being a defensive alliance sealed in 1582 between three major Bugis kingdoms at the village of Bune in Timurang (Noorduyn 1955: 251–52). Arguably, the oldest political document from Sulawesi is a peace treaty concluded in the 15th century after an unrecorded conflict between the kingdoms of Luwu and Bone, after which the latter was reduced to the status of a ‘child’ (Salim, unpublished: 375).

The idea of a social contract as the foundation of the state reached a low point of popularity under the influence of Marxism in the 1970s, when Carneiro (1970: 733) went so far as to declare that ‘no such contract was ever subscribed to by human groups, and the Social Contract theory is today nothing more than a historical curiosity’. The origins of the state, in this view, could only lie in the institutionalised victory of a predatory ruling class over the rest of society. All claims to the contrary reflected a ‘false

consciousness' which served to conceal the exploitative nature of state power. In the 1980s and 90s, however, the rise of the 'new institutionalism' in economics and political science led to a renewed appreciation for states as providers of public goods – conflict resolution, property rights, natural resource management, social security – which are intrinsically difficult to supply on a decentralised basis. This insight, inspired by Mancur Olson's analysis of the perverse consequences of rational individualism in *The logic of collective action* (1965), has given rise to contract theories of the state in which institutions of government emerge as compromises between the need to solve collective action problems and the need to control the 'moral hazard' of elite selfishness (Barzel 2002; Greif 2005).

Olson himself, in his posthumously published book *Power and prosperity* (2000: 1–24), has revived scepticism regarding the social contract by pointing out that the fact that a state has benefits for its subjects does not necessarily mean its origins are consensual. Even an autocrat or 'stationary bandit', provided his power is secure, is automatically motivated to promote the prosperity of those he rules in order to maximise his own tax revenue. One problem with this formulation, however, is that true autocracy is in practice either unstable or impossible. A dictator who literally refuses to share any power will probably not come to power in the first place, and if he does he will probably not hold it for very long – especially not, it can be argued, if his benevolent economic policies succeed in enriching his rivals. All states, even the most authoritarian, are coalitions based on (explicit or implicit) contracts – if not with their citizens, then at least among their leaders.

### Contract states of Sulawesi

In peninsular southwest Sulawesi (South Sulawesi excluding the Gulf of Bone), the highest level of political organisation in pre-colonial times was a complex chiefdom or kingdom centred on a sizable area of wet rice fields.<sup>1</sup> Such a kingdom typically encompassed some tens of thousands of people, organised into dozens of smaller domains, each with its own ruling family, district headmen, and other officers (Caldwell 1995). The political community that ruled above the level of the domains was small, consisting of an oligarchy of nobles ranging in number between a handful and a few dozen. It was kept small by the wide recognition of a small number of high-status families as being descended from a divine ancestor, and by the possibility for members of these families to marry people of similar status from other kingdoms rather than 'marrying down' within their own communities. Within this hereditary ruling elite, stratification was not pronounced towards its apex; in other words, the structure of the political hierarchy was always more flat-topped than pyramidal. The king, or paramount chief (Kings tended to retain their chiefly titles) was chosen and dismissed – and occasionally even killed – by the chiefly oligarchy acting as a collectivity.

In the Bugis state of Wajoq, for instance, the king was chosen by a college of 40 persons, six of whom formed an inner council empowered to depose him if necessary

<sup>1</sup>The exception was the kingdom of Luwu, the economy of which was based until the 17th century on the smelting and export of iron (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000: 96–8).

(Matthes 1869: 6). In Bone, another Bugis kingdom, the ruling council consisted of the *aru pitu* or 'seven lords'. When it came to appointing a new king, however, a 'general assembly' was convened which included, according to 19th-century British visitor James Brooke, 'all the inferior rajahs of the country and the influential men who hold office in the different provinces'. The voice of 'this popular assemblage', Brooke continued in his journal, 'greatly influences, though it does not decide, the election' (Mundy 1848, I: 40). As we have no record of the debates and deals involved in such elections, it is impossible to determine with confidence the exact cause of any decision affecting the succession. However, Brooke's claim that a process of broad popular consultation was involved is supported by an entry in the diary of Sultan Ahmad as-Saleh Syamsuddin (r. 1775–1812), on the date of his inauguration, in which Sultan Ahmad states that he was 'appointed with the confirmation of the people of Boné as the legitimate ruler' (Rahilah Omar 2004: 52).

In other parts of Sulawesi, kingdoms tended to be based more on trade than on agriculture, and were centred on small seaports rather than inland rice bowls. Their political structures and processes, however, mirrored those of their southern counterparts. In Gorontalo on the northern peninsula, for example, paramount rulers (*raja*) were selected from a number of genealogically eligible candidates by a large constituency of village or domain (*negeri*) chiefs, 10 of whom formed a council of state which had the power to impose fines on the ruler or to relieve him of his duties. The four most senior members of this council were for most purposes equal in rank to the king and bore the same title, *olongiya* (Von Rosenberg 1865: 18, 20). The state of Buton or Wolio in southeast Sulawesi, although formally headed by a 'sultan', was actually governed by a council of some 80 officials. Within this council, a group of nine members, the *siolimbona*, were empowered to choose the sultan, while another nine formed a ruling body responsible for 'the day-to-day running of the sultanate' (Schoorl 1994: 23, 25).

In those parts of Sulawesi where literacy was widespread, the obligations of the various parties in the social contract were often laid down in writing. In Buton there was a detailed written constitution, the *Sarana Wolio*, dating in its original form from the beginning of the 17th century (Schoorl 1994: 26). In Pammana, a satellite state of Wajoq, a historical text describing the origins of the polity served the same function by specifying the terms of the original contract concluded between the population and its first ruler. These included rules regarding the taxes and labour services due to the crown, a catalogue of the fines and punishments to be imposed on criminals, a guarantee of freedom of travel and trade for all free subjects, and a warning against 'arbitrary' use, delegation, or transfer of royal power (Matthes 1869: 9–13). The Dutch admiral J.S. Stavorinus, who visited southwest Sulawesi in the 1770s, praised the kingdom of Gowa (Makassar) as a state governed by its laws rather than by the will of its sovereign.

The king of Goach is not an absolute sovereign: he is subject to the laws of the land, and may not perform any important regal functions, without the concurrence and approbation of the body of nobility. Crimes are punished according to laws, and not by the arbitrary will of the monarch.

(Stavorinus 1798: 205)

With respect to other members of the noble oligarchy, the king's authority was restricted largely to the adjudication of disputes. In Bone, as James Brooke observed in 1840, the king played a political role only when it came to issues on which the council of nobles, the *aru pitu*, was divided.

From this form of government, it is evident that the entire power rests with the *aru pitu* as long as they are agreed amongst themselves; but as it often, and we may conclude generally, happens that they are divided, the majority is not sufficient to carry a question. During the lifetime of the king, the deciding voice rests with him, should the *aru pitu* not be unanimous.

(Mundy 1848, I: 40)

The raja of northern Sulawesi, notes a Dutch source from the same period, have 'just so much influence over their subjects as is necessary in order to resolve the most minor conflicts which arise among them'; as soon as one party in a more serious dispute refuses to accept the royal judgement, 'the distinction between prince and subject disappears, and both stand as equals' (Scherius 1847: 400). It was the near-equality of power between the king and his close peers, in terms of control over armed followers, wealth, and slaves, which made the social contract both enforceable from the point of view of the political community, and necessary from the point of view of the ruler.

The contractual nature of kingship found clear expression in the rituals performed during the inauguration of a new ruler. In the sultanate of Banggai, with its capital on the island of the same name off the east coast of central Sulawesi, the inauguration ceremony was performed by a group of nobles including the *hukum tua* (supreme judge or oracle keeper) and the *jogugu* (chief minister or vizier).

The *hukum tua* positioned himself in front of the king, the *jogugu* to the king's left, and the other dignitaries stood around them in a circle. Then the *hukum tua* addressed the king, all the time menacing the head of the sovereign, as it were, with the staff which he held in his hand. He advised the king to govern his subjects justly, for in that case he would be blessed and enjoy long life; but if he failed to follow the prescriptions of the ancestors, he would know nothing but adversity, and quickly die.

(A.C. Kruyt 1931: 613)

In Buton, the threat of physical violence against the unjust king was even more explicit. Here the inauguration ceremony featured a tasselled strangling cord with which the ruler was to be executed if he 'did not prove satisfactory' (Schoorl 1994: 25–6). Today such a cord is still displayed in the throne room of the restored palace on Buton. One ruler is said to have died by it in the 17th century. While this kind of legal regicide was the exception rather than the rule, the removal of a king from office by the oligarchs was more common. The court chronicle of Gowa, for example, records that in 1593 a king, known posthumously as Tunipasuluq or 'The one who was cast out', was deposed and exiled after two years on the throne for executing people who had 'committed no wrong' and scaring off foreign traders, on whom the prosperity of the capital depended (Cummings 2005: 39). After ruling for five years, La Samaléwa, an early 17th-century Arung Matowa of Wajoq, was 'deposed by Arung

Ennengnge and the people of Wajoq, because of his arbitrary actions' (Abdurrazak 1983: 53). In 1720, according to European sources, a king of Bone was deposed and imprisoned by his nobles for maltreating his sister and imprisoning her husband 'without any shadow of reason, or legal pretence'; his appointed successor, a woman named Batari Toja, resigned in favour of her half-brother – who, however, was himself deposed in 1724 'on account of his dissolute conduct' (Stavorinus 1798, II: 217).<sup>2</sup> An origin tradition from Manuba, a tributary of the kingdom of Suppaq, states categorically: 'If the disposition of the *arung* becomes unkind towards the people then the *arung* [ruler] can be removed by the council and we [the people of Manuba] will take back our wealth' (Druce, in press).

### On the uses of kings

Many of the traditional states of Sulawesi, then, were clearly 'contract states' in which the acquisition and use of political power were systematically constrained. But why were kings, even tame, contractual kings, worth suffering at all? The most important reason has already been mentioned: the need for judicial arbitration, which in the competitive and conflict-prone societies of Sulawesi was always deeply felt (Chabot 1950: 102; van Delden 1844: 378). Political leaders were in the first place judges, and much of their income came from the share they received of the fines they imposed when disputes between two or more of their followers were brought before them for arbitration – typically on a voluntary basis by the disputants themselves (A.C. Kruyt 1938, I: 524; Riedel 1872: 512). In the northern half of Sulawesi, as in the northern Moluccas, the Malay word *hukum* – an Arabic borrowing literally meaning 'law', but often translated in Dutch documents as *rechter*, judge (Malay: *hakim*) – served as a generic term for chiefs of all kinds. In the nearby Sulu archipelago of the southern Philippines, likewise, all legitimate political authorities were 'regarded primarily as juridical officials' and the indigenous term for 'law', *sara* (from the Arabic *shari'a*), was 'used to collectively describe all headmen in Jolo, from the weakest headman up to the sultan himself' (Kiefer 1972: 88).

Wherever in Sulawesi the state was absent, or too weak to resolve conflicts between families and communities, such conflicts led to interminable cycles of violent retribution which the people involved, being unable to avoid, dignified instead with the rituals and heroics of headhunting. Although the stateless condition fell well short of a Hobbesian 'war of every man against every man', it was certainly one in which war formed a more or less permanent backdrop – and threat – to every life. The 'advantage' of submitting (and paying tribute) to a coastal raja, uplanders in central Sulawesi told Dutch missionaries at the beginning of the 20th century, 'lay in the fact that because the ruler now came between the opposing parties in all kinds of conflicts, the tribes were no longer free to fine and attack each other arbitrarily' (A.C. Kruyt 1938, I: 177). Hill farmers in the hinterland of Tinombo on the northern peninsula recently surprised anthropologist Tania Li (2001: 50–1) by describing the time of their ancestors as 'one dominated by fear', crediting the colonial state with suppressing feuds which had formerly made

<sup>2</sup>Abdurrazak (1986) gives a detailed account of Batari Toja's life. She was ruler of Bone three times between 1714 and her death in 1749.

travel dangerous and subsistence insecure, and characterising themselves as ‘headstrong’ people who ‘need outside authority if they are to form communities and live at peace with each other’.

Effective conflict resolution brought economic as well as social benefits. Royal legitimacy in Sulawesi hung partly on the success of the harvest, on which the welfare of most of the population primarily depended. In part this was a matter of the ruler’s mediating role between the natural and supernatural realms. A legitimate ruler was one believed to be descended from a divine being called a founding *tomanurung*, which meant that he or she had ancestors in the upper and lower worlds who would take an interest in the prosperity of the kingdom and help ensure a bountiful harvest (Niemann 1883: 14; Caldwell 1995: 406). In addition, however, the association between (legitimate) kingship and fertility was also based partly on a realistic appraisal of the importance of peace and order to agricultural production and population growth. The prosperity of the realm, noted one ruler of Wajoq in a written compilation of ‘lessons and prescriptions for his children and grandchildren’, depended on royal justice.

If the decisions of the judge are unjust, then it is as if his throat is cut, and he is no longer of any value. Where such a thing happens the land, too, is doomed to ruin. [. . .] There the population dies out, or is carried away in slavery. There the country is consumed by fire. There women no longer give birth, and the livestock is barren. There no rice grows, and fruits fall unripe from the trees. But where there is justice the rice grows abundantly, the judge lives long, and the people increase in numbers and wealth. [. . .] Therefore be just in your verdicts [. . .]

(Matthes 1869: 16)

With respect to trade, another important source of income in many areas (and especially for many rulers), the role of the state in generating prosperity went beyond peacekeeping and protection into the realm of contract enforcement. At its most sophisticated, in the Bugis states of south Sulawesi, this meant administering a detailed code of commercial and maritime law (Matthes 1869; Tobing 1961). At its simplest, it meant leaning on people who had taken advance payments from traders in order to make them repay. The ‘gifts’ which the captains of visiting trading vessels presented to the highest royal representative in a harbour settlement, according to a 19th-century report from Bolaang Mongondow in north Sulawesi, were given ‘less as anchorage fees than with the purpose of securing his assistance later with the collection of outstanding debts’ (de Clercq 1883: 118). The taxes imposed on traders, in other words, were partly charges for state enforcement of credit contracts – an important service given that almost all trade was based on credit. Anthropological evidence from the Philippines (Barton 1949: 167–208) suggests that the earliest origins of the state in tribal societies have to do with commerce not, as conventional wisdom among Southeast Asianists has it, because of the wealth that trade offers to men of violence who can monopolise or prey on it, but rather because the enforcement of contracts by a budding state facilitates trade.

Another advantage of kings lay in the efficiency with which, when subject to appropriate control, they managed certain types of public or community resources. The stockpiles of food and rice seed which leaders amassed through taxation, but made available to needy subjects in emergencies – albeit often as loans against high interest



(van Delden 1844: 16) – are arguably examples, since pressures for immediate redistribution among kin often made it difficult for individual households to save in the same way, and centralised (state) crisis insurance was in any case more effective because it spread the risks more widely. As in traditional Polynesia as described by Sahlins (1963: 296), then, ‘goods congealed by chiefly pressures on the commonality’ served partly to provide ‘succor of individuals or the underlying population at large in times of scarcities’. On occasion, this type of arrangement went beyond insurance into the domain of investment. In Wajoq, one 18th-century ruler instituted public credit funds from which traders could borrow on a profit-sharing basis – the forerunners of 20th-century state microfinance institutions (Matthes 1869: 24–5; Wellen Anderson, forthcoming). A more common type of public investment was in transport infrastructure, the provision of which is notoriously difficult for stateless peoples even when they acknowledge its potential benefits (Robarchek 1989: 40). When the first Dutch officials visited the interior of the still independent kingdom of Bolaang Mongondow in the 1860s, they were impressed to find an already extensive system of bridle paths and bridges built and maintained according to royal regulations (de Clercq 1883: 121).

Clear examples of rulers as guardians of common property can also be found in the sphere of natural resource management. Recent comparative and theoretical research on this subject stresses the usefulness, even in small communities, of hierarchy and centralisation when it comes to the monitoring and enforcement of rules for sustainable resource extraction (Agrawal and Goyal 2001; Baland and Platteau 1999). In Sulawesi this applied particularly to the stands of sago palms on which farmers depended for food when their staple crops, rice and maize, failed. The *Metroxylon sagu* palm, from the pith in the trunk of which sago was manufactured, was a uniquely reliable emergency food source, being almost completely unaffected by pests or bad weather. But because a steady commercial demand for sago also existed, for instance for the provisioning of boats on sea voyages, there was always a temptation to fell the trees faster than they could be replenished. And because *Metroxylon sagu* grew only in restricted localities, typically flat, wet areas far from the mountain slopes which offered the best conditions for dry rice and maize cultivation, individual farmers could not plant and guard their own private sago trees. This raised the spectre of a ‘tragedy of the commons’ (Hardin 1968) in which individuals would overexploit the available open reserves on the assumption that if they did not do this themselves, others would.

One common way of avoiding such a tragedy was to place the sago stands, by community consent, under royal control, and have the ruler restrict access to them by empowering (and paying) agents to keep them under permanent guard (Schrader 1941: 125; Wilken and Schwarz 1867: 40). In Buol on the northern peninsula, the anthropologist F.A.E. van Wouden (of whom more below) observed in the 1930s that the management of the sago stands was ‘an integral aspect of the institution of kingship’ and ‘one of the most important symbols of royal power’. Although the ruler was the ‘nominal owner’ of these stands, they were actually ‘the property of the whole community’ and ‘could only be exploited in times of need’ (van Wouden 1941: 378). A source from Banggai at the same period details how the benefits of the *sago tano* or ‘sago of the land/polity/community’ are shared between the state, represented by the *jogugu* or chief minister to the king, the local villagers responsible for enforcing the access rules, and the sago consumers themselves.



Near Tabulan on the island of Bangkuring there is a large sago forest for communal use. Anybody who needs to do so may extract sago here for his own use. This sago may not be sold commercially. Half of the sago extracted was for the village chief, who originally split this proportion into three parts: one for the poor, one for himself as his wage for guarding the *sago tano*, and one for the *jogugu* of Banggai. (Schrader 1941: 125)

Of course in this arrangement the motives of the *jogugu* and his agents in protecting the reserve from depletion are selfish, since for them it represents a useful source of income. It is precisely this convergence of public and private interest, however, which makes the system effective as a way of managing the common property resource.

The ‘constitutional monarchs’ of Sulawesi were not limited to a fixed maximum term of office. When they kept their part of the social contract by performing their public duties effectively, they were often rewarded with lifetime tenure. In most cases they were also given at least the hope that they would be succeeded in office by one of their children; although the succession was determined by the political community as a whole, descent was usually an important (but not in itself decisive) criterion in the selection process. In this way the risk that leaders might squander public resources (sago trees, for example) in a destructive ‘end game’ towards the end of their incumbencies or lives – *après moi le déluge* – was minimised. Hereditary privilege has been prevalent in history partly because the underprivileged understand that it gives the powerful a useful incentive to take a long-term view of their own interests – and thereby to identify these with the interests of the community at large (Diamond 2006: 305; Olson 2000: 28).

These, then, are some of the reasons why kings and states were potentially useful, and why it was worth entering into contractual relations with them in order to harness their benefits while constraining their potentially harmful effects. The remainder of our paper looks at how the contract state, and the rationale for it, relate to a second characteristic feature of traditional political systems in Sulawesi: their tendency to feature rulers who are foreigners, literally or figuratively, to the societies which they rule. Our argument will proceed partly by induction and partly by the use of historical sources. It begins with a brief summary of what we mean when we talk of stranger-kingship in Sulawesi.

### Stranger-kings of Sulawesi

The best documented stranger-kings in the history of Sulawesi are the Dutch, whose rise to power included not only decisive military conquests in southwest Sulawesi in the 17th century (Andaya 1981) and again in southwest and central Sulawesi in the early 20th century (Arts 1986; Locher-Scholten 1991), but also an early and remarkably peaceful process of expansion in the northern half of the island (Henley 2002: 13–21). In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) expanded from its base on the spice island of Ternate (in the north Moluccas) to become the dominant power in north and central Sulawesi, a region which had never produced spices on any scale. By 1750 this economically unimportant area contained a dozen VOC forts,

scattered over a distance of 800 km from Parigi, near Palu in central Sulawesi, to Tabukan in the Sangir islands between Manado and the Philippines.

Almost no episode in the VOC expansion in the north of the island was initiated unilaterally by the Dutch themselves. As a rule, the Company simply responded to unsolicited invitations from local leaders to establish new outposts. While many of these requests for garrisons were prudently refused, the Dutch did tend to extend their formal suzerainty over any polity, however small, which desired an individual alliance. By the second half of the 18th century, fully one-quarter of all the treaties signed by the VOC anywhere in Asia were being concluded with petty kings in northern Sulawesi (*Corpus Diplomaticum* VI: V–XI). By the early 19th century the *kompania*, as the Dutch continued to be known after the replacement of the VOC by the colonial state, was regarded in many areas as an integral and legitimate part of the traditional political system. In Minahasa in 1804 a single European official backed up by a book-keeper and 50 soldiers governed 100,000 well-armed people, whom he described with satisfaction (and no doubt relief) as ‘very much attached to the Company’, even adding that mention of the word ‘Company’ was ‘sufficient to get them to do almost anything’ (Watusake and Henley 1994: 376). In Gorontalo, with a population of at least 50,000, visitors marvelled at the fact that the 13-man military garrison was ‘hardly sufficient to maintain a regular watch, let alone to be of any use for defensive purposes’ (Reinwardt 1858: 507).

Migrants from the south of Sulawesi to its centre and north form a second important category of historically documented stranger-kings in the history of the island. From the late 17th century onwards, successive waves of migrants from the southwest peninsula went ‘searching for good fortune’ (Acciaioli 1989) in the sparsely populated and mostly stateless lands to the north. Besides making themselves ‘masters of all the trade in these regions’ (van der Hart 1853: 244), many achieved political supremacy in the areas where they settled. In the Gulf of Tomini, for instance, the royal dynasties of Tojo and Moutong were founded respectively by Bugis and Mandar settlers in the second half of the 18th century (Adriani and Kruyt 1912–14, I: 76; Riedel 1870b: 561). By the end of the 19th century, most of the coastal raja to whom the tribal upland populations of central Sulawesi professed allegiance were men of Bugis ethnicity or descent. Further north the rulers of Gorontalo, the largest polity on the northern peninsula, also reckoned themselves descendants of Bugis wanderers, including the Bugis culture hero Sawerigading (Zainal Abidin 1974: 165–67). The political success of the Bugis diaspora was not of course limited to Sulawesi: in the 18th and 19th centuries, Bugis and part-Bugis dynasties were also established as far afield as Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula (Andaya 1995: 125–36).

Other cases of Sulawesi kingdoms originally established by foreigners are known only from uncorroborated but plausible accounts in legendary or oral history. In Banggai, the royal genealogy as remembered in the 20th century began with a Javanese stranger-king invited by the population to restore peace and order in a time of anarchy when ‘one man threw himself up as king, only to be driven out by another’ (A.C. Kruyt 1931: 518). The kingdom of Buton, according to tradition, was founded by migrants from Johor on the Malay Peninsula; in the early 20th century, the sultans of Buton remained strangers to their subjects in the concrete sense that their language – Wolio, the official language of state – was spoken only in the centre of the realm (Schoorl 1994: 17–8, 52).

In the Moluccas and the Lesser Sundas the structures of traditional societies, as well as their myths, reflect a pervasive complementarity between outsider and insider groups: the former typically characterized as male and associated with the sea, the latter as female and associated with the land. While the groups of foreign origin – the stranger-kings – wield coercive power, they are constrained, and ultimately outranked, by those embodying an older, autochthonous, symbolically female element which has power over fertility and in the spiritual domain. Modern writers on these themes often take their cue from the work of the pioneer Dutch structural anthropologist F.A.E. van Wouden, whose 1935 doctoral thesis examined the relationship between cosmic dualism and structures of kinship in Indonesia east of Sulawesi. Less well known is that van Wouden subsequently also conducted field research in Sulawesi and published one article, on Buol, in which he concentrated on political institutions. Although the raja of Buol were not stranger-kings in any immediately obvious sense, van Wouden showed that they were regarded as belonging to a junior group which had received its power in a relatively recent phase of (mythical) history as a gift from the *ombu kilano*, a ‘hidden aristocracy’ of former rulers descended directly from the first inhabitants of Buol but now classed as part of the common people. Also known as the ‘owners of the land’, the living *ombu kilano* were addressed as ‘grandfather’. Among other ceremonial and ritual duties they were responsible for inaugurating each new king, on which occasion they talked to him as if he were a child and warned him against coveting his subjects’ possessions (van Wouden 1941: 336, 378).

In Gorontalo, too, the king was addressed in ritual speech as a child or grandchild. Here he was drawn from an explicitly foreign group, consisting originally of Bugis immigrants from Luwu in the Gulf of Bone. These incomers had settled on land belonging to older lineages which were divided in turn into ‘parental’ and ‘grandparental’ groups, the former being the remnants of an earlier immigration and the latter descendants of the original inhabitants (Bastiaans 1939: 33–4, 64–5). The heads of these groups formed the council of state which had the power to depose the king. In Buton, comparably, the nine *siolimbona* who elected the ruler embodied indigenous, ancestral authority as opposed to his youthful, exogenous power. ‘Certain representations’, notes Schoorl (1994: 26), ‘show the ruler like a baby who could only laugh and cry, and had to be nurtured by the *siolimbona* – fed with their knowledge of the adat and their wisdom.’

In the historically important Bugis states of southwest Sulawesi it was divine origin, rather than foreign origin, which was the main distinguishing characteristic of those fit to rule: kings were above all the heirs and descendants of *tomanurung*, divine beings sent from heaven in the distant past to assume power over mortals (Pelras 1996: 168–69). Here we might make a useful distinction between on the one hand, stranger-kingship proper – that is, the adoption of an outsider as ruler – and on the other hand, the *idea* that a ruler is essentially different from his or her subjects. The Bugis rulers of south Sulawesi were, of course, well known to the group of elite nobles who installed them, and to many of their servants and retainers since infancy. Nevertheless, strong parallels with stranger-kingship proper remained. The origins of the Bugis kings were exotic and their blood, having originally been white rather than red, different from that of ordinary mortals. High ascriptive status – the all-important condition for rulership – was expressed in terms of the purity of an individual’s descent from the kingdom’s *tomanurung*. Higher status meant whiter blood, and a correspondingly greater element of the

divine. To this extent at least the Bugis rulers were, like their counterparts in the north, strangers to their subjects.

In some cases, the distinction between god-kingship and stranger-kingship was more thoroughly blurred. This is well illustrated by an early 20th-century account of the kingdom of Mori in eastern central Sulawesi, where the ruler or *mokole* was a man of local ethnicity who nevertheless stood 'above the people and to a certain degree outside the people' (J. Kruyt 1924: 64).

We can say that a *mokole* is essentially a different type of person from an ordinary inhabitant of Mori; he is a different creature. Hence [...] the *adat* [customs] of the *mokole* must be treated quite separately from that of the common people. The basis of this otherness is that the *mokole* has his origins in another country, 'heaven' (*langi*). People's conception of this country is extremely vague [...].  
(J. Kruyt 1924: 43)

In southwest Sulawesi, as in Banggai, the advent of kingship was traditionally explained in Hobbesian terms. The *tomanurung* had descended to earth to restore order in a period of anarchy, which the indigenous chronicle of Bone describes as a time when the strong, as in a state of nature, were free to consume the weak at will and people 'just ate each other like fish do' (Macknight 1986: 220). The rise of Mori in the late 19th century, a development connected with the collection of *damar* (conifer resin) for growing industrial markets overseas, suggests that this metaphor conveyed an element of truth. When Dutch missionaries visited Mori in 1899, they were told that the king's authority over the recently founded *damar* port of Watambayoli had originated when he intervened to resolve a conflict which had broken out there between resin collectors belonging to different tribes (A.C. Kruyt 1900: 437). They also reported that the unusual absence in Mori of fortified villages was likewise due to the arbitration of the *mokole*, who 'immediately intervenes in every dispute and brings it to a peaceful conclusion' (Adriani and Kruyt 1900: 204).

### On the kingliness of strangers: Dutch rule in north Sulawesi

Effective conflict resolution, then, could under the right circumstances be provided by local kings – particularly, it seems, once they had been alienated from their own people by trade wealth and recast as semi-divine strangers. Nevertheless, there were several reasons to expect 'real' strangers like the Dutch or the Bugis, other things being equal, to play the kingly role better. The first was that if kings were in the first place judges, then stranger-kings were likely to be particularly good kings because their lack of personal involvement in the local scene tended to make their judgements impartial.

In the stateless societies of north and central Sulawesi the twin foundations of the local political order were kin solidarity and gift exchange – principles inherently inconsistent with the impartial administration of justice. Consequently it was always difficult, when a dispute occurred, to find an arbitrator within the community whose judgement was unprejudiced. One solution was to choose an individual whose blood ties with both parties were equally strong (Adriani 1916: 114), and village heads, the most common

choices for this purpose, often owed their rank partly to the way in which their genealogies united the various corporate kin groups (typically diffuse matrilineages) present in their communities. Another common approach, however, was to seek the involvement of outsiders. A 17th-century Dutch description of Minahasa notes that ‘minor and civil disputes’ between co-villagers were customarily resolved ‘not in the [home] village itself, but in another, where they believe these can be judged better, and without any bias’ (Padtbrugge 1866: 315). In more serious conflicts it was also useful to be able to appeal to a more complete and more powerful outsider: in other words, to a stranger-king – ideally one who was wealthy enough to be impervious to bribery, and strong enough in military terms to take on either one of the parties involved should it refuse, after the event, to accept his verdict.

It would be misleading to suggest that the origins of European expansion often lay in a spontaneous appeal for mediation by all parties in a local conflict. Initial requests from indigenous leaders for Dutch intervention in north Sulawesi were mostly inspired by desire for a military alliance, whether against local enemies, foreign aggressors, or both (Henley 1993: 41–6). The decision to establish a permanent VOC presence in Manado in 1656, for instance, followed a plea by the raja of Tabukan (in Sangir) to the governor of Ternate for Dutch help in a complex conflict between himself, the sultan of Ternate, Tagulandang (also in Sangir) and the raja of Manado on the one hand, and the island of Siau together with some upland Minahasan groups, backed by Spanish interlopers, on the other (NA VOC 1211: 894v). The Dutch agreed to intervene primarily in order to deny their Spanish rivals access to Minahasan rice supplies. Once established in the wear as a result of this farfrom impartial intervention, they nevertheless found that almost all local groups immediately accepted their authority – and that their presence was valued above all for the judicial services they provided, the strength of the demand for which suprised and some times irritated them. By 1686 the VOC outpost in Manado was playing an institutionalised judicial role not only for the population of its immediate Minahasan hinterland, but also for that of the Sangir islands some 200 km to its north.

Our experience is that the occupation of Manado is of greater importance than some perhaps believe, in that it enables the Governor [. . .] to be completely confident that no disorder or difficulties will arise on the [Sangir] islands. For it is well known that nearly all the petty kings and nobles of those islands frequently arrive in Manado to have their disputes resolved by the fair, modest, and impartial judgement of the commander there, whereafter the disputants return home in peace. Although such disputes are mostly of little importance, they are hereby prevented from assuming more dangerous forms. And this is to say nothing of the differences which almost continuously arise between the Manadonese [Minahasan] chiefs and villagers, and which, if not quickly settled, lead to confusion, chaos, petty local wars, and bloodshed.

(NA VOC 1428: 170r)

The Sangir kings, echoed the Dutch officer in Manado three years later, could not resolve their differences ‘without the authority, intervention, and assistance of the Honourable Company, which they constantly seek to invoke not only as mediator or referee, but also as their highest judge’ (NA VOC 1461: 478r).

By the beginning of the 19th century, Dutch dispute adjudication in Minahasa had assumed a routinised, indeed ritualised form in which the resident was assisted by a judicial committee comprising the heads of the seven indigenous neighbourhoods (*walak*) of Manado town, but always had to be represented by a symbol of his personal authority.

Whenever a dispute arising in one of the vassal districts is too serious to be resolved locally, or the chiefs cannot reach an agreement among themselves (which is invariably the case), the issue is brought before the resident, who settles it in consultation with the seven *walak* immediately surrounding this fort. Alternatively the resident sends a representative, accompanied by the deputy chiefs of the same seven villages, to investigate and resolve the case. These take with them a large staff with a silver head bearing the Company coat of arms, and when people see this they regard it as almost as good as if the resident had come in person. The natives, however, seldom wait so long, but instead come to the resident themselves because they know that he is impartial, which is not usually true of his representatives.

(Watusseke and Henley 1994: 371–2)

Here the resident is explicitly preferred above indigenous arbitrators, not because he is the most powerful authority, but because of his reputation for impartiality. Dutch dispute resolution during the VOC period was in fact less effective than this rather smug account would suggest, for tribal wars continued sporadically in Minahasa up to 1809. The most severe of these conflicts, however, resulted precisely from abortive Dutch attempts to reduce expenses by delegating judicial authority to indigenous go-betweens: on three occasions during the 18th century, particular Minahasan chiefs were granted special powers which they immediately employed to favour their own kin groups, thereby incurring the jealousy and anger of their peers and making their position untenable (Henley 1996: 36–7; Schouten 1998: 44–5).

At no point, it is worth noting, did the Dutch in Minahasa pursue a strategy of ‘divide and rule’. On the contrary: as in many other parts of Indonesia (Reid 1998: 29, 34), their ideal throughout the VOC period was to unify the country under a single indigenous leader. As one exasperated official put it in 1744:

In that case it would only be necessary to reach an agreement with one chief whenever we had to deal with these people, or they had to perform some service for the Company. At present, the situation is that even in the most trivial matter we must be content to beg and implore until all twenty [. . .] chiefs, with the same number of different opinions, arrive at a single sentiment.

(Godée Molsbergen 1928: 114)

What ultimately convinced the Dutch that they had no choice but to continue dealing directly with each local village federation (*walak*) was the intensified domestic warfare which followed every attempt to create superordinate indigenous chiefs with judicial authority above the *walak* level.

According to indigenous oral history as recorded in the 1860s, the reason why the Spanish had been forced out of Minahasa in favour of the Dutch two centuries earlier was that they had made the even greater mistake of combining political with sexual favouritism.

And in those days a woman of the line of Lingkambene [from Tondano] invited her man, the leader of the Spaniards, to elevate her [and his?] son Muntu-untu to a position of great power, making him King over Minahasa. The Spaniards accepted this proposal, whereupon a bloody war broke out with the Tombulu [of Tomohon], who absolutely refused to accept a son of Lingkambene [as their ruler]. [. . .] Later the principal chiefs of the Tombulu [. . .] heard that white men of a different nation, no friends of the Spanish, were living in Ternate. So these four chiefs [. . .] travelled there to seek the friendship and help of the Dutch [. . .]

(Riedel 1862: 51, 54–5)

The resulting establishment of the VOC fort in Manado triggered an uprising against the Spanish in which the Dutch themselves played no part, but which nevertheless led their rivals to abandon Minahasa for good in 1657 (NA VOC 1225: 393v-5r). To be successful, as subsequent Dutch experience was to confirm, stranger-kings had to maintain an equal aloofness from all of their subjects.

Dutch officials admitted that they did not always understand the details of the local conflicts which they were asked to adjudicate (Godée Molsbergen 1928: 64; Watuseke and Henley 1994: 376), and it is all too easy to assume that their ignorance of customary law was a great obstacle to their acceptance as judges; certainly they were often obliged to rely heavily on their interpreters, and on the lowland chiefs of Manado, for advice. In some cases, however, the unpredictability of Dutch adjudication may actually have been a point in its favour, for disinterested ignorance was undoubtedly preferable in an arbitrator to anything which could be interpreted as knowledgeable manipulation. Chance, after all, has its own kind of objectivity, and nothing is more impartial than a lottery. This also helps to explain the widespread conception of (stranger-)kings in Sulawesi not as wise or thoughtful men, but as irrational infants. In Buol, noted van Wouden (1941: 378), the raja were regarded as ‘children, to whom all power and pomp are surrendered simply to play with’.<sup>3</sup>

In this context it is also interesting that one 17th-century account attributes the effectiveness of Dutch conflict mediation in Minahasa to the fact that ‘the judgements of the Company are regarded here as oracles [*Godsspraken*]’ (Godée Molsbergen 1928: 64). The phenomenon of stranger-kingship is often discussed in terms of cultural assumptions regarding the divinity of the exotic, and the fact that Minahasans regarded the pronouncements of VOC officials as oracular indicates that religious connotations were indeed present. Part of the reason for this, however, may well have been that the ability to dispense impartial justice was itself perceived as something approaching a divine virtue. ‘Impartiality in the strict sense of the word’, noted the missionary-linguist Adriani (1916: 114) more than two centuries later in central Sulawesi, ‘is not something which the Toraja expects from his fellow human beings; if he could imagine such a quality, he would find it superhuman.’

In addition to their impartiality, a second reason why strangers made good kings is that an imported king inspired less jealousy than did an insider, whose ascriptive status

<sup>3</sup>‘The Chronicle of Bone’ describes how, as a baby, the third ruler of that kingdom already played a role in legal cases, seated on the lap of a judge who pronounced verdicts in his name (Macknight and Mukhlis, unpublished).



might be no greater than that of his peers. Elevated artificially above them, he could, in theory, be replaced by any one of them. Intense competition for power, wealth, and above all, status, was always a characteristic feature of Sulawesi societies (Chabot 1950; Schouten 1998). Even in Bugis-speaking areas of south Sulawesi, where an individual's status was in theory fixed at birth, royal genealogies could in practice be rewritten and awkward memories silenced.<sup>4</sup> The pervasive importance of jealousy in Minahasa, both as a levelling mechanism and as a source of conflict, can be inferred from the role it reportedly played until the early 19th century in the practice of hunting enemy heads in connection with the funeral ceremonies of prominent people.

[Headhunts] occurred mainly on the death of certain individuals, when another person always had to be killed and his skull (*takin*), after his blood had been drunk from it, hung up in the vicinity of the grave. [. . .] In no way was revenge the underlying motive here; this was done only in order to comfort the blood relatives of the deceased, who no longer had to bear their pain alone now that others too had been plunged into grief by the loss of one of their kin.

(De Clercq 1870: 5)

In the 1920s a colonial schools inspector, noting the jealousy with which Minahasan villagers responded to any advantage in educational opportunities enjoyed by their neighbours, quipped that the slogan *Waarom ik niet?* 'should have been inscribed in the Minahasan coat of arms' (de Nes 1925: 503). In earlier times, it seems, the principle 'Why not me?' as applied to the good things in life also had a sinister correlate when it came to pain and loss: 'Why not you?' A written tradition from southwest Sulawesi relates that the rulers of two Bugis kingdoms, Sidenreng and Rappang, made an agreement that 'what dies in the morning in Rappang, dies in the evening in Sidenreng'. When a messenger arrived in Rappang to report that Sidenreng's palace had burnt down in an accidental fire, 'that very morning' the queen of Rappang and her household left their own palace and deliberately set fire to it in accordance with the treaty (Caldwell, in press).

With such a virulent egalitarianism at play, it is hardly surprising that all attempts by the Dutch – and the Spanish before them – to elevate indigenous Minahasans to positions of power over Minahasa as a whole ended in bloodshed. But the Europeans themselves, standing largely outside indigenous society and its rivalries, were less often targets of jealous subversion, and under most circumstances their authority was more acceptable to any single Minahasan leader than that of any of his peers. Foreign interlopers, like pagan gods, were seldom loved. As kings, however, they enjoyed the important advantage of freedom both from the kin-based obligations which made impartial conflict resolution so hard to achieve in the societies which they colonised, and from the local jealousies and hatreds which made it so desirable.

<sup>4</sup>The career of La Tenritatta, Arung Palakka, the 17th-century overlord of southwest Sulawesi, is an excellent example of how a relatively minor noble could rise to high office through the acquisition of followers, strategic marriages, and the rewriting of genealogies (Andaya 1981).

## Stranger than strangers

The same logic of stabilising the polity by defusing jealousy towards the ruler also provides another part of the explanation for the portrayal of stranger-kings in myth and ritual as helpless children who, to quote Schoorl (1994: 26) again on the sultanate of Buton, ‘could only laugh and cry’. While the wishes of a child, at least in the Indonesian view, should be indulged whenever possible, few adults would think of being jealous of one. The same can perhaps be said of chronically ill people, which may in turn help explain why the ‘sick king’ is another common theme in Indonesian political myths, including some from Sulawesi (Jordaan and Josselin de Jong 1985; de Josselin de Jong 1986). Although the king’s sickness in such myths has sometimes been explained as signifying a disturbance in his relationship with the realm, another interpretation is that it served precisely to stabilise that relationship by minimising public jealousy of his status and reinforcing his separation from his subjects. Some historical kings really were chronically sick: a contemporary Dutch sketch of the Raja of Banggai in 1678 depicts him as blind and suffering from a skin disease (Figure 1).

Child kings and sick kings were not the strangest of the rulers to figure in the foundation myths of Sulawesi polities. In Limboto, Gorontalo’s nearby twin kingdom by the lake of the same name in the interior of the northern peninsula, the office of raja was said to have been occupied initially by a stone phallus, followed successively by a rattan basket and an egg (Riedel 1870a: 114). In Banggai the ancestors, before opting for a Javanese



**FIGURE 1** Raja of Banggai, blind and with a skin disease, as sketched by a Dutch visitor in 1678 (NA VOC 1345, €: 193).

stranger-king, had first tried crowning a cat (A.C. Kruyt 1931: 518). Rather than proceeding to analyse the symbolism of these strange (as opposed to stranger) kings in terms of Austronesian culture, we would instead like to point out an unexpected parallel from the contemporary USA.

‘It’s only the business leaders who don’t want a goat as mayor, and they’re wrong’, Nancy Ross told reporters in Anza, California. ‘Opie is the reason why so many people have moved out here, he’s been good for the town. He was democratically elected in 2003, and he beat three human candidates when he was voted into office. [. . .] Local businessmen say he gives Anza a bad image, but most of us would rather have a goat ruling over us than some human sitting on a throne’. Although Opie the goat was forced out of office last year (following a vote of no confidence by the Anza Valley Chamber of Commerce), many other American towns have democratically elected animals as mayors. ‘We decided to have a little truth in politics by only allowing jackasses to run’, said Celinda Kaelin of Florissant, Colorado, ‘which is how Paco Bell the donkey became our mayor’.

(*Sunday Tribune* [California], 11 December 2005, quoted in *Private Eye* 1155, March/April 2006)

If this comparison is a flippant one, it is nevertheless worth recalling that according to Ricklefs (1974: 27–8), in 18th-century Java the indigenous elite regarded the Dutch – to whom it was in the process of conceding sovereignty as a result of its own internal conflicts – as ‘clowns’ (*panakawan*), in the Javanese sense of grotesque and ridiculous but at the same time also ‘wise and even divine figures’.

### Concluding remarks

The classic example of contractual stranger-kingship comes not from Asia or Africa but from medieval Europe, and is described by Avner Greif in his contribution to the influential political science anthology *Analytic narratives* (1998). In the 13th and 14th centuries, the city of Genoa (like several other Italian city-states) routinely hired a non-local leader called a *podestà* on a fixed-term (typically one year) contract to serve as its supreme judge and administrator. In order to preserve his impartiality, he and his relatives were ‘restricted from socializing with Genoese, buying property, getting married, or managing any commercial transactions for himself or others’ (Greif 1998: 53). For the same reason, he was also required to move his residence periodically to a new quarter of the city in order to avoid associating for too long with any local group. Wherever he went, in other words, he was emphatically to remain a stranger. Each new foreign *podestà* brought with him an independent military force strong enough to keep the peace between any two of the clans which dominated and periodically threatened to destabilise domestic political life. His imported ‘police force’, however, was not strong enough to enable him to impose his will on the Genoese in the face of concerted opposition, and this was his employers’ ultimate guarantee that he would depart when his services were no longer required.

The extent to which traditional arrangements in Sulawesi approached this ideal type varied widely, and on some points there are systematic differences. Fixed-term

contracts, for example, were unknown. In the case of the European rulers whose historical records have provided much of our illustrative detail, it is not even true to say that reliable means existed to dethrone them by popular will. Would-be Spanish stranger-kings were forcibly expelled from Minahasa without direct external assistance in 1657, but this was probably feasible only because a new promise of protection by the Dutch convinced the rebels that they would not subsequently have to face a punitive expedition from Manila. The numerical weakness of the Europeans in Sulawesi on a routine basis, on the other hand, was at least a good reason to assume that beyond judicial arbitration, their interference in existing political arrangements would be limited. And many pre-colonial polities in Sulawesi, with and without stranger-kings, definitely did have effective institutional means of replacing a despotic or otherwise unsatisfactory ruler. On other points, moreover, the parallels with medieval Genoa are clearly strong. Even the peripatetic behaviour of Genoa's *podestà* was mirrored in that of northern Sulawesi's stranger-kings, some of whom periodically moved their courts from place to place within their realms (Henley 1996: 29–30; A.C. Kruyt 1931: 525).

This has been a highly selective essay both in its themes (very little, for instance, has been said about the military and commercial aspects of stranger-kingship) and in the evidence which it has adduced to support its arguments. Here and there we have no doubt been guilty of functionalism: that is, of assuming too glibly that an effect which an institution has once it already exists is also part of the reason why it came into existence in the first place. Nevertheless the argument we have presented is both sufficiently supported by the historical evidence, and sufficiently unsupported by previous writers, to make it worth presenting. The nub of that argument, to recapitulate, is that strangers often make attractive candidates for kingship regardless of the mythology or cosmology of their potential subjects. For utilitarian as well as cultural reasons, kingship, as Quigley (2005: 2) succinctly puts it, 'is essentially about separation' – and whereas indigenous kings have to be artificially isolated from their peoples by pomp and circumstance, stranger-kings come ready-separated.

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