

Conflict, Justice, and the Stranger-King Indigenous Roots of Colonial Rule in Indonesia and Elsewhere¹

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Historians of Indonesia often think of states, and especially colonial states, as predatory institutions encroaching aggressively on the territory and autonomy of freedom-loving stateless peoples.² For Barbara and Leonard Andaya, early European expansion in Sumatra and the Moluccas was synonymous with the distortion or destruction of decentralized indigenous political systems based on cooperation, alliance, economic complementarity, and myths of common ancestry

Abbreviations

ANRI Manado	Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (Jakarta), Arsip Manado
ANRI Gorontalo	Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (Jakarta), Arsip Gorontalo
ARA MvO	Algemeen Rijksarchief (Den Haag), Memories van Overgave
ARA VOC	Algemeen Rijksarchief (Den Haag), VOC Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren
AV	Algemeen/Administratief Verslag
CD	<i>Corpus Diplomaticum</i> (see bibliography)
GM	<i>Generale Missiven</i> (see bibliography)
KITLV HS	Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (Leiden), Westerse Handschriften
KV	<i>Koloniaal Verslag</i> (see bibliography)
Res.	Resident (colonial official in charge of a residency)
VKI	<i>Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut</i> (KITLV)

¹ This article is largely based on a longer essay, *Jealousy and Justice: The Indigenous Roots of Colonial Rule in Northern Sulawesi*, recently published in monograph form by the Free University Press, Amsterdam (Henley 2002).

² While the examples below deal in the first place with colonial and post-colonial states, similar attitudes have coloured the historiography of their indigenous predecessors. Gullick (1958: 28–9) and Adas (1981: 227–34), for instance, both argued that the only really effective check on the rapacity of precolonial state elites in Southeast Asia was the circumstance that disaffected subjects ultimately had the option of seeking the protection of alternative masters or fleeing to uninhabited areas beyond any form of state control.

(B. W. Andaya 1993; L. Y. Andaya 1993). Anthony Reid (1997: 81) has described tribal societies like those of the Batak and Minangkabau in highland Sumatra as ‘miracles of statelessness’ which ‘defended their autonomy by a mixture of guerilla warfare, diplomatic flexibility, and deliberate exaggeration of myths about their savagery’ until ultimately overwhelmed by Dutch military power. Before colonialism, in this view, most Indonesians relied for security not on the protection of a powerful king, but on a ‘complex web of contractual mutualities’ embodying a ‘robust pluralism’ (Reid 1998: 29, 32). ‘So persistently’, concludes Reid (1997: 80–1), ‘has each step towards stronger states in the archipelago arisen from trading ports, with external aid and inspiration, that one is inclined to seek the indigenous political dynamic in a genius for managing without states’. Henk Schulte Nordholt (2002: 54), for his part, cautions against any tendency to downplay the violent, repressive aspects of colonial and post-colonial government in Indonesia, expressing the hope that ‘a new Indonesian historiography will succeed in liberating itself from the interests, perspective, and conceptual framework of the state’. An even more systematic attempt to demonize the (modern) state in Indonesia and elsewhere can be found in the work of James Scott (1998a, 1998b).

Views like these, of course, have a whole variety of distinguished intellectual pedigrees, from Rousseau through Marx to Foucault. Among contemporary Indonesians, however, their popularity is strikingly limited. That this should be the case in places where no memory survives of a time when people ‘managed without’ the state is perhaps not surprising. Yet appreciation for the advantages of life under state control is also to be found among groups which still stood outside such control less than a century ago. In the remote hinterland of Tinombo in Central Sulawesi, Lauje hill farmers recently surprised anthropologist Tania Li (2001: 50) by describing the time of their ancestors as ‘one dominated by fear’ and crediting the colonial and post-colonial state with resolving tensions and feuds which had formerly made travel dangerous and subsistence insecure.

Dutch rule [...] offered a partial solution to these problems. Hill folk recalled: ‘In the old days there was fighting because people were not afraid of the government. Now it is safe because the government is strong [...].’ [...] Conditions of violence are still said to prevail in the more distant headwaters, where government is weak, and people express a fear that violence will re-emerge [...]. [A] conception of themselves as headstrong people [...] who need outside authority if they are to form communities

and live at peace with one another, is deeply embedded in hillside identities [. . .]. (Li 2001: 51.)

This article examines the expansion of the colonial state in northern (North and Central) Sulawesi, a region where, as the above passage suggests, indigenous attitudes to incorporation into foreign-dominated state systems were often ambivalent and sometimes positive. Here, against a background of endemic competition and conflict, fears of political oppression and economic exploitation by foreigners were tempered not only by the opportunism of local elites (and would-be elites) in search of external support, but also by a more widespread appreciation for the usefulness of foreign authority as a way of controlling indigenous conflict and violence through various combinations of third-party mediation, impartial adjudication, and legal enforcement.³ Indigenous leaders, far from possessing a ‘genius for managing without states’, possessed a Hobbesian awareness of the inevitability of conflict in tribal life and the desirability of a certain amount of state intervention to alleviate this problem. At the same time, their mutual jealousy and distrust made it easier for them to accept outsiders (whose lack of local blood ties was supposed to help guarantee their impartiality) in the roles of arbitrators, judges, and enforcers of the peace than it was to create indigenous institutions with the same functions. Those functions, nevertheless, were not entirely unique to the colonial state. To some extent, historical prototypes for colonial rulers can be seen in the precolonial ‘stranger-kings’ of eastern Indonesia: paramount chiefs of alien origin or descent who, like their European successors, owed their positions partly to their aloofness from local rivalries and their ability to provide relatively impartial conflict resolution.⁴ The latter part of the article attempts some comparative analysis of the stranger-king phenomenon (in both indigenous and colonial manifestations) using parallels from other parts of Southeast Asia and from Africa. Some concluding remarks, finally, suggest further implications for the study of Indonesian states and politics (both past and present) in the

³ Other attempts to identify indigenous foundations of colonial rule, by contrast, tend to emphasize ‘collaboration’ by (typically small and selfish) elite groups among the colonized (for instance: Adas 1993: 319–23; Robinson 1972; Scammell 1980).

⁴ The phenomenon of the stranger-king is classically discussed in a Pacific context by Marshall Sahlins (1981; 1985: 73–103). Leonard Andaya (1993: 65–6, 174, 240), James Fox (1995: 217–19) and Elizabeth Traube (1986: 51–65) point out the strong parallels in eastern Indonesian political systems; Oosten (1988) and Fernández-Armesto (2000: 87–90) provide broader comparative perspectives.

context of current debates concerning civil society and the rule of law.

Northern Sulawesi and the Dutch

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Dutch East India Company expanded from its North Moluccan base on the spice island of Ternate to become the dominant power across the Maluku Sea in the northern half of Sulawesi (Figure 1). Never having produced precious cloves or nutmeg on a significant scale, North and Central Sulawesi were of economic value only for the small quantities of rice, gold, iron, turtleshell and forest products which they exported to the Moluccas.⁵ Yet by 1750 this peripheral area contained as many as a dozen VOC forts, stretched out over a distance of some 800 km from Parigi, near Palu in Central Sulawesi, to Tabukan in the Sangir islands between Manado and the Philippines. Another century later the Dutch colonial state exercised direct rule over a total of perhaps 180,000 people in Minahasa and Gorontalo, obliging 100,000 Minahasans to spend up to half of their working time on compulsory coffee cultivation and roadbuilding duties; in Sangir, Talaud, Bolaang-Mongondow, and parts of Central Sulawesi, the leaders of at least another 200,000 people acknowledged its formal sovereignty. In 1910, by which time the whole of Central Sulawesi had also been brought under its authority, the colonial administrative residency of Manado controlled and taxed a population of almost a million souls inhabiting a territory the size of Portugal.

Except for the aggressive military actions which completed the colonization of Central Sulawesi at the beginning of the twentieth century, no episode in this remarkable process of expansion was initiated unilaterally by the Dutch themselves. Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, the VOC and colonial

⁵ Another factor was the scope which parts of Sulawesi potentially offered for the spread of unauthorized spice cultivation in the future. Control of spice production, however, does not figure prominently in the relevant VOC documentation after about 1680, and the 'extirpation' fleets which occasionally visited remote parts of Central Sulawesi to locate and destroy spice plantations were organized and launched direct from Ternate. Some details are to be found in the *memories van overgave* or 'memoranda of transfer' written by many of the VOC governors of Ternate at the end of their respective periods in office; these documents have been collated and edited by Niemeijer (forthcoming).

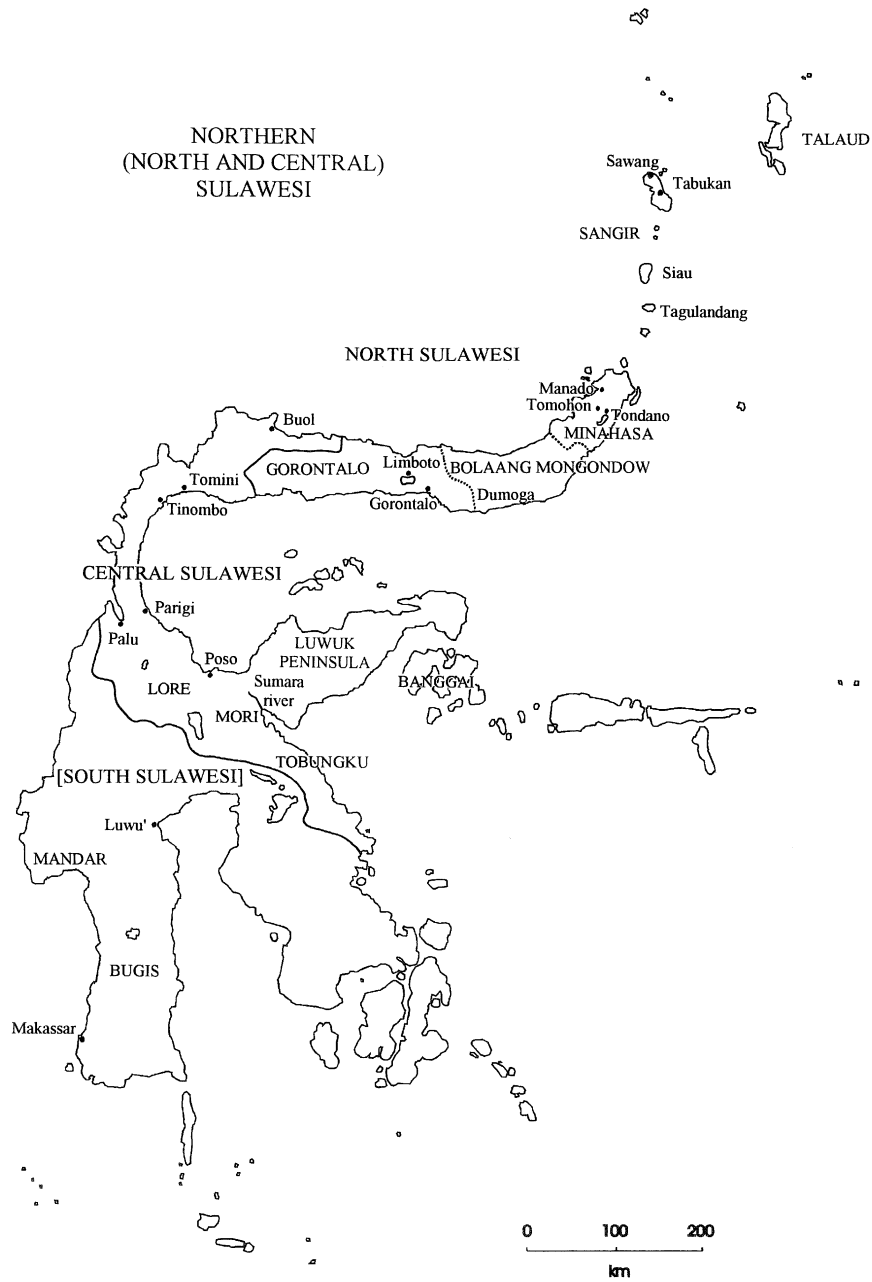


Figure 1

authorities in Manado and Ternate regularly received unsolicited invitations from all over northern Sulawesi to establish new outposts.⁶ 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 eighteenth century, consequently, fully one quarter of all the political treaties signed by the VOC anywhere in Asia were being concluded with the economically insignificant chiefdoms of northern Sulawesi (CD VI: V–XI). Indeed, the Company sometimes had more difficulty extracting itself from existing involvements than initiating new ones. In 1615, for example, its representatives in the Moluccas, learning that the sergeant in charge of their new outpost on Siau (Sangir) had complied with a request from Manado for soldiers to help protect the Manadonese against exactions by the sultanate of Ternate, promptly reversed this unauthorized decision in order to avoid antagonizing the Ternatans. The expedition despatched to Manado with orders ‘to withdraw our people from that place by one means or another’, according to its commander, was able to accomplish this only ‘with great risk to their lives, leaving behind 180 lb of gunpowder [. . .] which the inhabitants would not allow them to take with them’ (Tiele and Heeres 1886–95, I: 133). In 1795, a naval force sent to withdraw the remote and entirely unprofitable VOC garrison in Parigi succeeded by a fluke of luck in recovering the guns and other equipment from the fort despite the determination of the local population ‘to resist this by all possible means’ (Colenbrander 1898: 591), but was unable to bring home its commanding officer and two other soldiers, who were detained by angry chiefs and never seen again.

Northern Sulawesi was inhabited mostly by stateless societies in which kinship and gift-exchange were the main principles of political organization, and confederacies of intermarrying villages the largest units capable of sustained political solidarity.⁷ ‘The Dutch’, as anthropologist Mieke Schouten (1998: 72) observes, ‘did not even

⁶ In some cases, the local leaders in question explicitly added that their communities were fully prepared to pay the costs of their own occupation (ARA VOC 1775: 108; Bleeker 1856: 129).

⁷ A single village typically consisted of several exogamous ‘big houses’, each containing a group of matrilineally-related nuclear families which shared a common inheritance of valuable goods—textiles, brassware, porcelain, livestock, and sometimes also farmland (Chabot 1969: 95; Schrauwers 2000: 67; Van Wouden 1941: 410).

have to bother to implement a policy of divide and rule: the division existed before their arrival'. Minahasa, for instance, contained more than 20 such village federations speaking eight different languages, and during the period of heavy corvée labour impositions in the nineteenth century, several European observers commented that it was largely 'the dissention and jealousy existing between the various districts' (De Clercq 1870a: 127) which made anticolonial resistance impossible.⁸ In some places larger chiefdoms, often based on control of harbour settlements and headed by 'kings' (Malay: *raja*; in local languages: *datu*, *kolano*, *mokole*) were also present, but their influence was limited and their mutual relations, like those of their vassals, frequently violent. In 1569, a Portuguese Jesuit already identified North Sulawesi as a 'restless' area and attributed this to its division between 'so many kings' (H. Jacobs 1974–84, I: 525). 'Because of the many kings and headmen which they have in this country', echoes a Spanish description of Minahasa from 1660, 'there are diverse factions, conflicts, and feuds' (Colin 1900: 111). This kind of local warfare was institutionalized by headhunting traditions embedded in ritual and religion (Downs 1955: 40–51; Schouten 1992). 'Their greatest triumph', continues the same seventeenth-century account, 'is to hang up in their doorways the skulls of those they have killed'.

Headhunting wars, fought between shifting coalitions of scattered village communities, were typically small-scale, intermittent affairs, and their overall effects on mortality seem to have been slight compared with those of disease and poor nutrition.⁹ One reason for their limited character was that they were usually subject in some degree to 'Lawes of Honour' of the type which even Hobbes, contrary to common belief, acknowledged to exist among stateless peoples.¹⁰ Robert Padtbrugge, an educated contemporary of Hobbes who made several journeys to North Sulawesi during his period as VOC gov-

⁸ Also: Schouten 1998: 72; J. J. ten Siethoff, *Topografische schetsen Manado 1845* (ANRI Manado 46).

⁹ Henley (in press). Missionary Albert Kruyt (1895: 109), although keen to see them suppressed, likened them at the end of the nineteenth century to 'guerilla' conflicts rather than to the bloody national confrontations of Europe, and later (1938, II: 55) even characterized them in retrospect as 'a sort of sport' in which young men had participated during the agricultural off-season.

¹⁰ 'And in all places, where men have lived by small Families, to robbe and spoyle one another, has been a Trade, and [...] the greater spoyles they gained, the greater was their honour; and men observed no other Lawes therein, but the Lawes of Honour; that is, to abstain from cruelty, leaving to men their lives, and instruments of husbandry.' (Hobbes 1996: 118.)

ernor of Ternate from 1677 to 1682, gave a first-hand account of how such customary restrictions affected tribal warfare in Minahasa:

The defeated party becomes completely subject to the victors and must dance to their tune, retaining only the rice which it has stored in its houses, while any standing crops are destroyed. The winners, however, take great care not to destroy the stored rice and will therefore also refrain from burning down defeated villages, which if it does happen is usually the work of Europeans participating in the attack. Women and children, finally, are carried away as prisoners, but readily released, with or without a ransom payment, after peace has been restored. Any men who do not manage to escape, on the other hand, are all killed, regardless of age. (Padtbrugge 1866: 318.)

Other and perhaps more important mitigating factors, as a later Dutch administrator observed in Central Sulawesi, arose simply from the limited organizational and economic capabilities of the societies in question, which lacked either the centralized authority necessary to raise large armies, or the accumulated resources with which to sustain long military campaigns.

They are constantly at war with their neighbours, robbing and plundering each other, so that security is an unknown concept. Yet in recent years there have been few cases of complete conquest and subjugation of one kingdom by another. For this their military strength is insufficient, and their subjects too unwilling to engage in lengthy wars, restricting themselves instead to occasional raids and expeditions lasting a few days. (AV Oostkust Celebes 1850, in ANRI Ternate 180.)

The overall impact of violence on the life of these stateless peoples, nevertheless, must not be underestimated. However limited the scale of their wars, they still 'lived more in war than in peace' (Adriani and Kruyt 1912–14, I: 200), and in upland areas almost the only way to avoid regular violence was to avoid regular contact with any non-kinsmen by living a life of flight, isolation, and dishonour on the infertile frontiers of settlement. Among groups which chose to stand their ground in densely-populated areas of high agricultural value such as the volcanic central plateau of Minahasa, a homicide record was an essential criterion of social status for men, and every boy was encouraged from an early age to display the qualities of bravery and cunning which would make him a good killer (Schouten 1995: 13).

Even those minimal rules of honourable combat described by Padtbrugge, moreover, must be interpreted as normative ideals rather than binding restrictions; many other sources indicate that women and children were often killed by headhunters, and villages readily

put to the torch.¹¹ Most nuclear settlements, accordingly, were built in strategic locations and more or less permanently fortified, while the need for any party venturing outside them to include armed men was a constant hindrance to agriculture and commerce. Women, in striking contrast to the traditional pattern of female commercial activity in more peaceful Southeast Asian societies (Reid 1988–93, I: 163–5), could play little or no role in trade; many, indeed, never left their home villages (Adriani and Kruyt 1912–14, II: 301). Endemic violence also coloured social and political life in more unexpected ways. If the particularly warlike To Napu of Lore in upland Central Sulawesi were known as the ‘dogs’ of a lowland *raja* in the Palu valley, for example, this was not because they showed any special obedience to him on a routine basis, but because as keen head-hunters, they were always ready to act as his ‘hunting dogs’ by carrying out punitive raids in his name (A. C. Kruyt 1938, I: 256). The value which people attached to a written ‘pass’ or travel permit issued by the Dutch authorities derived not from any freedom from technical travel restrictions (which were usually impossible to enforce), but rather from ‘the conviction that the Government will avenge the death of the bearer should anyone kill him’.¹²

Indigenous violence was exacerbated by the predatory activities of outsiders, notably Bugis and Muslim Filipino slave-raiders, and in the seventeenth century also by the competitive intervention of major powers such as Ternate, Makassar, and the European spice traders themselves; one of the main reasons why the VOC committed itself to involvement in the region was in order to expel its Spanish rivals, the last of whom eventually left in 1677. Initial requests from indigenous leaders for Dutch intervention were typically inspired by a desire for military assistance, 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 (Sangir) for Dutch help in a complex conflict between himself, Ternate, Tagulan-

¹¹ Adriani 1913: 862; Adriani and Kruyt 1912–14, I: 213; II: 398; 1950–51, I: 317; Van der Crab 1875: 365; De Clercq 1870b: 5; Godée Molsbergen 1928: 124; GM III: 327; A. C. Kruyt 1899: 185; 1938, I: 56, 77, 81, 108, 129, 300, 302; Padtbrugge 1866: 319; Sarasin and Sarasin 1905, II: 90.

¹² Adriani and Kruyt 1912–14, I: 183. Indigenous chiefs sometimes also issued written passes of this kind (GM IX: 139; Ulfers 1868: 12), the function of which was comparable with that of the cloth tokens (*zettata*) symbolizing the protection by a local power of caravan traders in rural Morocco as classically described by Geertz (1979: 137–8).

dang (also in Sangir) and the *raja* of Manado on the one hand, and Siau together with some upland Minahasan groups, backed by the Spanish, on the other.¹³ The decisive Dutch attack on Gorontalo in 1681 was launched partly on behalf of Tomini and Dumoga, two small neighbouring chiefdoms which had managed to attract VOC support in their struggle against Gorontaloese expansion by declaring an intention to convert to Christianity (Van Dam 1931: 87). When Gorontalo itself requested a permanent Dutch garrison in 1729, its intention was primarily to reinforce its control of local gold production in the face of threats from Bugis and Magindanao (Filipino) interlopers (Henley 1997: 425). In 1751, the *raja* of Parigi declared himself a Dutch vassal and his kingdom a 'loan' from the VOC after a Company sea patrol brought to heel a 'rebel' who had been causing him trouble (CD V: 526).

That the attraction of Company military backing for indigenous allies was a key motor of early Dutch expansion in Indonesia is an argument familiar from the general literature on the VOC (E. M. Jacobs 2000: 213; Vos 1993: 208). Yet Dutch military strength in northern Sulawesi, at least on a routine basis, was remarkably limited. Only 32 soldiers, for instance, were permanently stationed at the main Company outpost in Manado during its early years in the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁴ A century later the whole of Minahasa was reported to be 'governed, guarded, and kept in order' by a total of 47 Company personnel, including the Dutch resident himself, two bookkeepers, a surgeon, an interpreter, a shipwright, four schoolmasters, a church warden, and 36 soldiers.¹⁵ In 1855 there were still only 43 soldiers in Manado, and the defensive works there and elsewhere in Minahasa were said to be in a 'deplorable condition'. 'And with this tiny force', marvelled a visiting official from Batavia, 'we control 80,000 natives, inhabiting a land area of 125 square [German] miles [6,800 km²]'.¹⁶ In 1821 the naturalist Reinwardt (1858: 507) wrote that with its total strength of 13 men, the military garrison in the other major Dutch 'stronghold' in the region, Gorontalo, was 'hardly sufficient to maintain a regular watch, let alone to be of any use for defensive purposes'.

¹³ ARA VOC 1211: 894v.

¹⁴ ARA VOC 1271: 589.

¹⁵ J. L. Seydelman, *Memorie Manado en aangrenzende rijken 1769* (ARA VOC 3301).

¹⁶ *Fragment* 1856: 2, 7. The first figure is an underestimate, the second a mild exaggeration; the real area of Minahasa is about 5,300 km².

If the Europeans were small in number, neither should their advantage in terms of military technology be exaggerated. Firearms, including cannon, were already present in the area in small numbers during the sixteenth century, well before the arrival of the VOC (Blair and Robertson 1903: 69), and by the late seventeenth they had become quite common.¹⁷ Not until the nineteenth century were the Dutch able, or even concerned, to limit the possession of firearms in the areas under their authority. When preparations for gun control were finally made in Gorontalo in 1824, an initial survey counted 476 small arms and 134 heavier weapons in local hands; the real numbers were no doubt larger.¹⁸ VOC fortifications were sometimes of high quality, and the one at Manado was strong enough to withstand a major attack by a Magindanao (Sulu) war fleet in 1777 (Riedel 1864: 520–2). Several of the smaller wooden forts built by the Company in remote gold-producing areas, however, were overrun by Indonesian (mostly Bugis and Mandar) enemies in the course of the eighteenth century.¹⁹ On land, the European advantage in terms of weaponry was still slighter than is generally assumed even during the final colonial conquests at the beginning of the twentieth century, when many men in Central Sulawesi possessed breech-loading and even repeating rifles (including American Winchesters) imported by Bugis traders.²⁰ At sea, admittedly, steam gunboats had by this stage made the Dutch lead overwhelming. In earlier periods, however, colonial naval forces were outnumbered, outmanoeuvred, and sometimes even outgunned by those of indigenous ‘pirates’, particularly slave raiders from the southern Philippines. During the heyday of the Sulu sultanate from 1770 to 1850, as Warren (1981: 164) has shown, ‘the Iranun and Balangingi, not the Dutch, were the true lords of the eastern seas’.

¹⁷ When Padtbrugge visited Gorontalo in 1677, his party was greeted by an honour guard including ‘twelve musketeers who were reasonably well practiced with their weapons, as was apparent from the three salvos fired upon the arrival of the Governor, which proceeded in a very good and orderly fashion’. Later in the same visit, one of the Gorontalo *raja* eagerly quizzed Padtbrugge on ‘the design, manufacture, and properties of petards, mortars, grenades, trenches, and especially siegeminig’ (Van der Aa 1867: 148, 161).

¹⁸ AV Gorontalo 1824 (ANRI Gorontalo 3). The effectiveness of muzzle-loading small arms, with their very low rate of fire, was in any case limited under Southeast Asian conditions (L. Y. Andaya 2002: 291); in Central Sulawesi the most practiced warriors reportedly viewed them with ‘contempt’, preferring their traditional javelins and bladed weapons (Adriani and Kruyt 1912–14, II: 191).

¹⁹ Again, these events are described in the *memories van overgave* of the VOC governors of Ternate edited by Niemeijer (forthcoming).

²⁰ Goedhart 1908: 537, 489; Hissink 1912: 114; A. C. Kruyt 1892: 247.

Sources of colonial power

A glance at those few instances prior to the twentieth century in which Dutch-led military actions did contribute directly to colonial expansion reveals that the decisive factors were organizational rather than technological, reflecting a more general superiority with respect to social solidarity and coordination. In 1661, firstly, one part of upland Minahasa, Tondano, defied its new Dutch masters and was attacked by the VOC. So many other Minahasans joined in this attack that with their help, just 65 Company soldiers shipped in from Ternate quickly obliged the rebel force of fully 1,400 men to surrender.²¹ In 1677, secondly, governor Padtbrugge brought together assorted enemies of the *raja* of Siau (other Sangir and Sulawesi chiefs who had suffered from Siau raiding, a disaffected noble from Siau itself, and a sultan of Ternate insulted by the *raja*'s marriage to a former wife of his) for a joint attack on Siau and its small Spanish garrison, the last in Indonesia. The island was duly conquered by 500 Indonesian warriors, nine of whom died, and meekly transferred to VOC sovereignty without the accompanying Dutch vessels having to fire a shot. The governor's main task on this expedition was one of planning and coordination: to ensure, in his own words, that his allies did not 'wander in there like a flock of sheep [. . .] or start quarrelling with each other' (Van der Aa 1867: 180). Four years later Padtbrugge and 40 Dutch soldiers, together with 1,300 Sangirese, Sulawesi and Moluccan auxiliaries, ended Gorontalo's hopes of regional dominance by capturing and destroying its recently rebuilt estuarine fort. Both sides used firearms and light artillery; this time the Indonesian allies apparently played little part in the final assault, but the defenders made the mistake of attempting to rush the advancing European infantry instead of remaining in the safety of their stronghold.²² In 1809, finally, several hundred Moluccan, Minahasan and European troops ended the last serious anticolonial resistance in Minahasa by defeating a second rebellion in Tondano. This 'Tondano War' was a longer and bloodier conflict but once again, superior discipline, greater numbers of indi-

²¹ GM III: 384–5; Godée Molsbergen 1928: 18–19, 64. The rebels, moreover, were well fortified in the pile village of Tondano on the lake of the same name.

²² *Dagh-register* 1919: 587; GM IV: 514; Godée Molsbergen 1928: 83–4. A total of 29 Gorontalese and 5 attackers died. The fort, containing 900 men and 11 artillery pieces, had earth-filled stone walls 3 m thick and 2.5 m high, surmounted by a bamboo pallisade (ARA VOC 1366: 893).

genous allies, and the ability to draw reserves from relatively far afield were the main factors in the government victory.²³

To some extent these advantages resulted from advanced administrative techniques unknown in indigenous society, including bureaucratic rules which were at once systematically enforced and subject to deliberate modification as the circumstances demanded. As far as the ethnic Europeans themselves were concerned, Dutch success also reflected the fact that as members of a small foreign minority with relatively few local blood ties and a strong sense of its own superiority, white VOC personnel and colonial officials were seldom tempted to defect from their collective undertakings by siding with indigenous parties for reasons of kinship or opportunism.²⁴ In terms of the ability of the same minority to attract the allegiance of other groups, a third important factor was of course its access to economic resources. State formation in island Southeast Asia, as many historians have emphasized, was often closely associated with the control and distribution of valuable trade goods, by means of which aspiring elites were able to create debt and dependency.²⁵ Until late in the nineteenth century the Dutch in northern Sulawesi, like the chiefs of its indigenous harbour settlements, extracted the export goods which they desired (principally rice, gold, and coffee) not as a form of pure tribute or taxation, but in politically regulated exchange for imported textiles, iron, and cash. The idea that economic exchange was a key basis for political expansion in the Dutch case, on the other hand, is called into serious question by the fact that while the Dutch were often a preferred military ally, they were seldom a preferred trading partner. In order to maximize their profits and defray the costs of their military and administrative establishments, both the VOC and the colonial state which superseded it usually required that tributary exchange took place on terms which were

²³ Detailed accounts of the Tondano War based on Dutch archive sources have been provided by Eddy Mambu (1986) and Bert Supit (1986, 1991); the reasons for the defeat of the rebels are also discussed in *Jealousy and justice* (Henley 2002: 49–52).

²⁴ Compare: Nagtegaal 1996: 68. A parallel here is the way in which the effectiveness of trading minorities in Indonesia, particularly the ethnic Chinese, has benefited from their social isolation. The prospect of expulsion into a culturally alien and often hostile host society, it has been argued, makes defection from commercial agreements and conventions less tempting (Dewey 1962: 46–9).

²⁵ For instance: Christie 1995: 277–80; Houben 2002: 41–4. A particularly detailed presentation of this argument is provided by Junker (1999: 3–28, 373–86) with respect to the Philippines.

highly disadvantageous for their local subjects. In the early nineteenth century, for example, the ratio between the prices paid for gold and coffee by the Dutch government, and those which could be obtained for the same products from private traders, was typically about 2:3, and sometimes lower (Van Doren 1860: 371; Wessels 1891: 51, 56). Where possible, consequently, producers resorted to extensive 'smuggling'. In Gorontalo, where gold exports were technically subject to a Dutch monopoly, it was estimated in 1846 that three times the amount of gold delivered to the government was being shipped to Singapore by Bugis traders (Francis 1860: 339), whose lower overheads and greater responsiveness to local tastes in import goods enabled them to offer far more attractive prices.²⁶ Yet Dutch political authority in Gorontalo, at least during the nineteenth century, was never seriously threatened as a result of this formidable commercial competition. The resident Bugis community, indeed, provided part of the armed militia which helped defend the outpost, and in 1827 participated in the suppression a minor local revolt.²⁷ Far from fearing that trade wealth would enable the Bugis to usurp their own position, local Dutch officials saw themselves as helping to maintain the peace between mutually hostile Bugis and Gorontaloese elites.²⁸

This mediating role of the Dutch authorities in Gorontalo was not limited to inter-ethnic relations, but also extended to those between the five segmentary chiefdoms or 'kingdoms' (*rijken*) to which the indigenous Gorontaloese population belonged. 'The kingdoms appear to live in good harmony with each other', states one report from 1852, 'but this would quickly change if the official in charge of the division were not careful to ensure that the conflicts which now and then arise over land, tree crops, inheritances, and so forth are immediately investigated and resolved'.²⁹ That such external conflict resolution was indeed important is suggested by a source from a period at the beginning of the nineteenth century when it was temporarily unavailable. In 1805, seven years after Gorontalo was abandoned by

²⁶ The Dutch naval captain Van der Hart (1853: 244), circumnavigating Sulawesi in 1850, concluded that the Bugis were effectively 'masters of all the trade in these regions'. Sutherland (1995: 138–40) discusses the superiority of Bugis and Chinese traders over their Dutch rivals in Sulawesi during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

²⁷ AR Gorontalo to Res. Manado, 20.9.1827 (ANRI Manado 114).

²⁸ AV Gorontalo 1854 (ANRI Gorontalo 3).

²⁹ AV Gorontalo 1852 (ANRI Gorontalo 3).

the Dutch in connection with British military action in the Moluccas, high-ranking Gorontaloese envoys to the remaining outpost in Manado ‘complained bitterly about the constant disorder prevailing in their villages, of which they predicted the direst consequences’, and begged for the re-establishment of a small garrison ‘to bring some improvement in their deplorable situation’.³⁰

At first sight, it is tempting to dismiss these claims as expressions of colonial self-importance and aristocratic power-lust respectively. The functional complementarity implied here between indigenous statelessness and colonial state-formation, however, is part of a widespread and recurrent pattern. Repeatedly in the historical sources, Dutch authorities are portrayed as responding to a spontaneous demand for intervention not just from one of the parties in a local conflict, but from both or all of them.³¹ While treaties between the VOC and its vassals or allies often stipulated that serious conflicts were to be submitted to Company officials for arbitration (Alders 1955: 122–6), the number and apparent triviality of the disputes which these men were asked to resolve surprised and sometimes irritated them.³² In some cases the primary function of Dutch mediation was to guarantee the peace during negotiations between embittered enemies: in 1863, for instance, the scientist Von Rosenberg (1865: 47), visiting Central Sulawesi in an armed government sailing vessel, claimed to have prevented war between two groups which had sought his intervention simply by arranging a peace conference ‘on the seashore under the cannon of the patrol boat’.³³ More often, however, such mediation took a more active form involving the provision of formal adjudication by the Dutch themselves. In

³⁰ Resident Manado to Governor Ternate, 12.10.1805 (ANRI Manado 60).

³¹ Examples in published documents: Buddingh 1860: 345; CD III: 109; V: 51, 61, 63–4, 130, 446–7, 569, 578, 597; GM VI: 349; IX: 677; XI 512; Godée Molsbergen 1928: 64, 132; Watuseke and Henley 1994: 371–2.

³² In 1804, for instance, one resident of Manado wrote that ‘this residency gives much more work than any other in the Moluccas because of its size and the many complaints [conflicts] which occur every day, all of which have to be decided by the resident himself’ (Watuseke and Henley 1994: 366). In Roti (eastern Nusa Tenggara), likewise, the VOC found it impossible ‘not to become involved in the interminable squabbles of the Rotinese’ as local leaders ‘were able to seize upon the new modes of adjudication that the Dutch offered in order to promote their own ends’ (Fox 1977: 82).

³³ This pattern was a traditional one; in parts of upland Luzon, comparably, conflict mediators were traditionally ‘honor bound to punish infractions of the peace by either side while mediation is in process with death or wounding’ (Barton 1949: 164).

1686, the VOC outpost in Manado was already playing a thoroughly institutionalized 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 [of Ternate], who is not always able to make extensive journeys himself, as well as His Excellency [the governor-general], 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. (ARA VOC 1428: 170r.)

Three years later, the Dutch commander in Manado even opined that the Sangirese kings ‘cannot govern their own lands and villages, still less resolve their mutual 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 [*opperrigter*]’.³⁴ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Dutch dispute adjudication in Minahasa itself had assumed a routinized, almost ritualized form in which the resident was assisted by a judicial committee comprising the heads of the seven indigenous quarters (*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. (C. C. Prediger, *Verhandeling Manado 1804*, in Watusseke and Henley 1994: 371–2.)

³⁴ ARA VOC 1461: 478r.

Here the resident is explicitly preferred above indigenous arbitrators not in the first place because he is the highest or most powerful judge, 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, however, resulted precisely from abortive Dutch attempts to reduce expenses by delegating judicial authority to indigenous go-betweens: on three occasions during the eighteenth century, particular Minahasan chiefs were given special powers which they immediately employed to favour their own kin groups, thereby attracting the jealousy and anger of their peers and making their position untenable (Henley 1996: 36–7; Schouten 1998: 44–5). There is little reason to doubt that the more direct and even-handed conflict management provided by the Dutch under normal circumstances was an important element of the remarkable symbiosis which developed between the Minahasans and the *kumpania*, as they called both the VOC and the colonial state, over a period of 150 years. So completely were the Dutch incorporated into the ‘traditional’ political system that by 1804 the people of Minahasa could be described as ‘very much attached to ancient customs, and to the Company, [mention of] the word Company being sufficient to make them do almost anything’ (Watusseke and Henley 1994: 376).

The equation of leadership with law was no innovation of the colonial period, but had deep roots in indigenous society. The single most important perceived function of most traditional leaders in northern Sulawesi was neither military nor economic, but judicial.³⁵ A large proportion of the income of such leaders, accordingly, came from the share which they received in the fines which they imposed when disputes between two or more of their followers were brought before them, almost always on a voluntary basis by the disputants themselves, for arbitration.³⁶ ‘All legitimate political authorities’, observed the anthropologist Thomas Kiefer (1972: 86) among the Tausug of Jolo in the nearby Sulu archipelago during the 1960s, were ‘regarded primarily as juridical officials’. In fact the Tausug term for ‘law’, *sara*

³⁵ Christine Dobbin (1975: 78) and Barbara Andaya (1993: 31) have come to the same conclusion with respect to various Sumatran *raja*, and Fox (1977: 82) states that for the Rotinese the ‘essential feature’ of a state is a (law) court.

³⁶ Aragon 1992: 54; Godée Molsbergen 1928: 189; Goedhart 1908: 460; Hissink 1912: 99; A. C. Kruijt 1932a: 341; 1938, I: 524; *Landschap Donggala* 1905: 525; Riedel 1872: 512; Steller 1866: 27; Watusseke and Henley 1994: 370–1.

(from Arabic *shari'a*), was 'used to collectively describe all headmen in Jolo, from the weakest headman up to the sultan himself' (Kiefer 1972: 88). Until well into the nineteenth century, likewise, the Malay word *hukum*—again an Arabic borrowing literally meaning 'law', but often translated in Dutch documents as *rechter* or 'judge' (Malay: *hakim*)—served as a generic term for chiefs of diverse descriptions throughout North Sulawesi and the North Moluccas.³⁷

Judicial and executive powers, of course, were not distinct, and in order to perform the chiefly role effectively it was usually necessary to demonstrate, among other things, fighting prowess. Political leaders were effectively policemen as well as judges, and only in the most civil of civil societies (which precolonial Sulawesi emphatically was not) can policemen do without substantial access to means of violence. The Dutch were not exempt from the requirement to prove their strength before their judgements were respected: 'I do not believe', lamented missionary-ethnologist Albert Kruyt in Central Sulawesi shortly before its conquest at the beginning of the twentieth century, 'that the [colonial] government will acquire any important influence [here] until it has fought with one or other [indigenous] people' (J. Kruyt 1970: 94). The quality of the justice which a leader could offer, however, was also an important criterion of his fitness for leadership. Among the requirements for election to the rank of *pangat* or chief (also called 'peacemaker' and 'right-determiner') among the Kalinga of upland Luzon, a stateless group very similar in many respects to those of northern Sulawesi, political anthropologist R. F. Barton (1949: 148) listed both 'fairness (meaning supra-kinship vision)' and 'a reputation as a dangerous man'.³⁸ While a chief's fairness ensured that his judgements would be worth listening to in principle, his homicide record ensured that they would also be heeded in practice even by those individuals who proved insensitive to moral arguments.³⁹ A systematic problem with strictly indigenous chiefs in this context, however, was that whereas many possessed the

³⁷ Watuseke 1986: 320. The distribution of this term probably reflects the intermediate role of the sultanate of Ternate, which enjoyed political suzerainty over North Sulawesi during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Henley 1993: 56). There is little doubt, however, that its users were aware of its legal and judicial connotations (also: W. H. Scott 1994: 139).

³⁸ Other significant criteria here included wealth, lineage, and oratorical ability.

³⁹ Headhunting against foreign groups, it should be stressed, was not the only way to obtain the necessary reputation for violence; 'killing within the town', in fact, 'contributed more to a man's influence than killing outside it' (Barton 1949: 155).

necessary reputation for violence, few were strong on ‘suprakinship vision’.

The problems of conflict and justice

The societies of northern Sulawesi were notoriously competitive, with individuals and kin groups struggling constantly to improve their position vis-à-vis rivals by achieving success in agriculture, war, and the staging of potlatch-like ‘feasts of merit’.⁴⁰ Partly for this reason they were also litigious; the need for judicial authority, and indeed justice, was deeply felt.⁴¹ Yet at the same time these remained small-scale, stateless societies in which kin solidarity and gift-exchange, both principles inherently inconsistent with the impartial administration of justice, were the very basis of the political order, and within which it was consequently difficult to find individuals whose judgement in any given dispute was likely to be unprejudiced.⁴² One solution was to choose an arbitrator 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.⁴³ In his seventeenth-century description of Minahasa, Padtbrugge (1866: 315) already noted 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

⁴⁰ Chabot 1969: 65; Cuarteron 1855: 103; Henley 1993: 41, 44; A. C. Kruyt 1938, I: 524; II: 56; Kruyt and Kruyt 1921: 407; Padtbrugge 1866: 310; Schouten 1998: 22–38; Schrauwens 2000: 68–70. Schouten (1988) once chose the title ‘Eternal Rivalry’ for a popular article describing Minahasan culture through the centuries.

⁴¹ Adriani 1916: 116; Adriani and Kruyt 1912–14, II: 168; A. C. Kruyt 1908: 1314–15; Padtbrugge 1866: 313, 315.

⁴² Adriani 1916: 114; 1932: 48–9; Frieswijck 1902: 374; Riedel 1872: 227. Toward the end of a 400-page treatise on the customary law of the Toba Batak, the colonial legal scholar Vergouwen (1964: 388–9) conceded that there was a fundamental problem with the administration of that law: ‘the Batak do not in general possess in their chiefs judges who are unselfish, impartial and incorruptible’. The Batak judge was both ‘susceptible to bribery’ and ‘seldom capable of being completely impartial if one of the parties is a somewhat close kinsman or affine of his’.

⁴³ Adriani and Kruyt 1950–51, I: 118; A. C. Kruyt 1938, II: 217; Ter Laag 1920: 38. Among the Kalinga, noted Barton (1949: 164), a ‘go-between’ or arbitrator ‘should preferably be related to both sides in the dispute or else to neither’.

judged better, and without any bias [*buiten alle eenzijdigheid*]. Under favourable circumstances, the same procedure could even be used to end inter-village wars:

When both sides have suffered too much either in open war or from repeated headhunting raids, or neighbouring groups begin to be affected or fear that the conflict will escalate, some people from neutral villages visit both parties and begin to calm their emotions. A peace-loving person is then appointed who listens to the story from both sides and reconciles the opposing chiefs in such a way that the guilty one must pay a fine, consisting mostly of brassware, gongs, arm rings, slaves and suchlike, commensurate with the estimated wealth of his village. (Padtbrugge 1866: 319.)

Given that intermarriage did occur between villages and village confederacies, local ‘outsiders’ like these were seldom completely immune from accusations of bias, and often risked being drawn into the conflict themselves; the memory of past blood feuds, always carefully preserved in oral tradition, also complicated their task.⁴⁴ A more radical solution was to rely on the more impartial arbitration of a more complete outsider—preferably one who was also wealthy enough to be relatively immune from bribery, and powerful enough in military terms to take on either one of the warring parties (not necessarily, and perhaps not even preferably, both of them combined) should it refuse, after the event, to accept his verdict.

In the interior of Central Sulawesi before the colonial conquest this alien third party was often the *raja*, typically a man of Bugis (South Sulawesi) origin or descent, at the head of one of the coastal trading polities to which the upland or ‘Toraja’ population professed formal allegiance (*mepue*).⁴⁵ ‘People say,’ recorded Kruyt (1938, I:177), ‘that the advantage of this *mepue* 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’.

In part this vassallage originated in the right of conquest, and later became enshrined in tradition. Often, however, it had its origins in assistance

⁴⁴ Padtbrugge 1866: 316–17. A later VOC source notes that Minahasans reckon their kin ‘to 20 degrees and more’, and that the murder of any of these leads to ‘eternal conflict, especially since the barbaric custom of displaying the heads, arms, and legs of slaughtered enemies in front of their houses, and making necklaces from their teeth, always provides fresh reason to reopen old wounds’ (Godée Molsbergen 1928: 101).

⁴⁵ Technically obsolete except as an ethnonym for the Sa’dang people of upland South Sulawesi, the term Toraja is used here for convenience in its older sense as a general designation for the ethnically diverse pagan upland populations of Central Sulawesi.

rendered. This is how the To Pebato [in the hinterland of Poso] became subject to the *raja* of Sigi [in the Palu valley], who acted as referee [*scheidsrechter*] in a war between them and the To Napu, as a result of which they were obliged to submit themselves to Sigi. (A. C. Kruyt 1895: 114–15.)

In practice, as Schrauwers (1997: 372–3) has emphasized, arbitration and conquest were seldom fully distinct, the peacemaking ‘service’ of the *raja* forming one part of a broader political strategy in which upland divisions were also exploited by more violent and less impartial means.

Every new conflict provides an opportunity for the *mokole* [*raja* of Mori, eastern Central Sulawesi] to increase his influence. For when neither party voluntarily comes to him for support, he will offer to mediate an amicable settlement. If both parties decline this, then he must wait for a more favourable moment. But as a rule one of the parties will be prepared to accept the offer; if the other then rejects the interference of the *mokole*, the latter will enter the fray on the side of the one who was prepared to accept his services. (J. Kruyt 1924: 56.)

Viewed like this, admittedly, conflict mediation seems a transparent veil for imperialism. Viewed from the standpoint of the combatants, nevertheless, the same strategy looked decidedly less sinister, and in fact the readiness of the king to offer his arbitration spontaneously, rather than only on request, could be seen as a positive windfall.

The normal procedure was [...] that a neutral chief brought about the armistice. [...] This, of course, had to be a chief with power and influence. Occasionally such a man offered spontaneously to make peace; in that case he had to bear all of the costs involved himself, because both parties always pretended to be outraged that somebody was coming between them, even if in their hearts they were delighted that peace would be restored. Each was obliged to behave as if it would rather fight on; neither could countenance the thought of having been defeated. Usually, however, a neutral chief only took steps to make peace after one or both parties had requested him to do so out of a feeling that the war could not be kept up any longer. (A. C. Kruyt 1938, II: 217–18.)

In Minahasa, where the Dutch were the apical mediators, their incentive to pursue an even-handed policy of judicial pacification was strengthened by the fact that any conflict quickly tended to interfere with the production and supply of the Minahasan rice which, purchased using Indian textiles, formed the Company’s main economic interest in the area (Schouten 1998: 42–3, 50). While the Dutch always attempted to force down prices by soliciting political trading privileges and suppressing competition, they were equally concerned

to ensure the security and continuity of that commerce which they already controlled. To quote Robert Padtbrugge again:

They fight with each other over nothing, and war, once ignited, spreads through the villages like a bush fire. Each man chooses sides according to his own notions or interests, or simply with a view to obtaining heads, even those of old men and women or innocent children. When such a fire breaks out we immediately send some of our own people, preferably those with knowledge of the local customs and languages, to douse it. Because the advice and judgements of the Company are regarded here as oracles [*Godsspraken*], even serious conflicts can be resolved by their mediation [. . .]. (Godée Molsbergen 1928: 63–4.)

Where such human ‘oracles’ were unavailable or unable to give a clear verdict, another option (particularly in disputes not involving homicide) was to turn to the real thing, usually in the form of a competitive ordeal by water (ducking) or fire for both parties or their champions, the result of which was regarded as a supernatural judgement.⁴⁶ As in the case of arbitration by foreigners, an important consideration here was that no insider had to take responsibility for a mistaken, resented, or contested decision. ‘Wise Torajas’, noted the missionary-linguist Adriani (1915: 472), ‘do recognize that innocent people have often been condemned as a result of a divine trial [*god-soordeel*], but responsibility for this was borne by the gods, and the issue was at least settled once and for all’.⁴⁷ By the same logic, the Toraja were sometimes happy to leave the execution of a criminal to outsiders in order to minimize the ever-present risk of internal vengeance killings by his kinsmen. The hated To Napu, for instance, were reportedly often called in by their enemies ‘to get rid of somebody whose impossible behaviour had made him *persona non grata* among his fellow tribesmen’ (A. C. Kruyt 1938, I: 257).

Dutch officials admitted that they did not always understand the details of the indigenous conflicts which they were asked to adjudicate (Godée Molsbergen 1928: 64; Watuseke and Henley 1994: 376), and it might easily be assumed 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

⁴⁶ Adriani 1932: 41–4; Frieswijck 1902: 475; Padtbrugge 1866: 316; *Tooe oen Boeloesch ordalium* 1864. Very similar procedures, of course, were once common in Europe (Tewksbury 1967).

⁴⁷ War itself, the outcome of which ‘was interpreted entirely as a divine judgement’ (Adriani 1921: 19), can be viewed as a still higher court of appeal in the same hierarchy of divine jurisdiction.

lowland chiefs of Manado, for advice. In some cases, however, the unpredictability and inscrutability of Dutch adjudication may actually have been a point in its favour, for disinterested ignorance was probably 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 (Elster 1989: 36–122). Here again there is a parallel with divine or magic oracles: Evans-Pritchard (1976: 158), in his classic study of these devices in an African context, described how the Azande tested their poison oracle (poison fed to chickens which might either die or survive) to make sure it was producing something approaching a random sequence of verdicts before actually consulting it for a judgement or prophesy. Just as the most authoritative oracles among the Azande were controlled by princes, nobles in Central Sulawesi adjudicated the most difficult of the disputes brought before them with the aid of royal oracles or trials by ordeal which only they had the right to stage.⁴⁸ In peninsular North Sulawesi, some myths regarding indigenous kingship portrayed the *raja* not as wise or rational men but as ‘children, to whom all power and pomp are surrendered simply to play with’.⁴⁹

Despite the ritual aspects of headhunting and the pride with which young men took part in it, there was always a countervailing sense in which war (like lesser forms of conflict) was perceived as a problem, and foreign intervention as a solution to that problem.⁵⁰ After the colonial conquest of Central Sulawesi in the years 1905–1907, the once-proud (and still pagan) Toraja warriors deeply resented Dutch corvée labour demands (Adriani 1915: 473) and many apparently suffered from mental illness when forced to move from their fortified hilltop settlements to regimented new valley-floor villages

⁴⁸ A. C. Kruyt 1931: 610; 1932b: 254–5; J. Kruyt 1924: 97–8.

⁴⁹ Van Wouden 1941: 378. Possibly this also sheds light on the strange mixture of respect and derision with which VOC officials, according to Ricklefs (1974: 27–30), were regarded on Java.

⁵⁰ Karsten (1935: 259) famously observed the same paradox among the Jibaro of the western Amazon basin: ‘These wars are the greatest curse of the Jibaros and are felt to be so even by themselves, at least so far as the feuds within the tribes are concerned. On the other hand, the wars are to such a degree one with their whole life and essence that only powerful pressure from outside or a radical change of their whole character and moral views could make them abstain from them.’ Considering that activities involving death always tend to be accompanied by ritual, it can be added, we might well ask whether the religious aspect of precolonial warfare really deserves the special attention which it has received in the literature on headhunting in Indonesia (for instance: George 1996; Hoskins 1996).

(Adriani and Kruyt 1950–51, I: 78). The prohibition of headhunting, on the other hand, they reportedly regarded as ‘fair [*billijk*], since they understood that the *kumpania* [the Dutch government] was fully capable of maintaining the peace’ (Adriani 1915: 471). The sacral logic of war, moreover, did not prove a serious obstacle to the enforcement of that peace; domestic warfare in Central Sulawesi came to a complete halt almost immediately following the establishment of a colonial military presence.⁵¹ This was an outcome which Dutch missionaries, convinced that beneath their self-consciously warlike veneer Toraja people were essentially ‘gentle, peace-loving and timorous by nature’ (A. C. Kruyt 1938, II: 55), had already predicted before the pacification (Adriani 1901: 247–8) and which in turn paved the way (as the missionaries had hoped it would) for the conversion of the Toraja to Christianity from 1909 onward.⁵²

Eighty years earlier it had been a similar story in Minahasa, where the Christianization of the upland population from 1831 onward (Henley 1996: 52–3) likewise followed, rather than preceded, military pacification. The Tondano War of 1808–1809, in which the colonial government deployed European, Moluccan and local troops in an unprecedented (and in Minahasa never again equalled) demonstration of its power, marked not only the definitive defeat of anti-colonial resistance in the area, but also the end of domestic warfare on any scale among Minahasans themselves.⁵³ In the space of a few years, the inhabitants were transformed in contemporary Dutch accounts from bloodthirsty (if ingenuous) savages into model subjects whose ‘good and peaceful nature’ made it possible to maintain peace and order throughout Minahasa with the help of just six policemen.⁵⁴ ‘It was mistaken to assume that the people were blood-

⁵¹ A last (failed) headhunt was reported from Parigi in 1914 (KV 1915: 35).

⁵² J. Kruyt 1970: 106–18. It should also be noted, however, that in the new unfortified villages in which they were forcibly resettled after the conquest, the Toraja were forbidden to build the *lobo* or ‘temples’ in which trophy skulls had formerly been preserved and headhunting ceremonies held (Adriani 1915: 469).

⁵³ By 1822, according to one contemporary source, the custom of headhunting had already ‘fallen completely into disuse’ (Roorda van Eysinga 1831: 106). Occasional headhunts did in fact continue in secret after this date (Graafland 1867–69, I: 128, 286–7; Pietermaat, De Vriese and Lucas 1840: 130), the last on record taking place as late as 1862 (De Clercq 1870b: 5), but there is no doubt that Minahasa was essentially pacified with the end of the Tondano War.

⁵⁴ AV Manado 1824 (ANRI Manado 101). Here again, however, the suppression of war as such was also accompanied by a more or less specific attack on its ritual aspects: at some point between 1812 and 1815, all trophy heads which could be found in Minahasa were brought to the fort in Manado and burned (Roorda van Eysinga 1831: 106).

thirsty, or to believe that the killing was a consequence of their [religious] feasts', declared Dutch resident of Manado J. Wenzel in 1825; 'wars between the districts, which had their origins in a lack of firm government, were viewed as episodes of assassination, and the defence of property as violent aggression' (Riedel 1872: 513–14). In Minahasa as in Central Sulawesi, then, a short period of effective peace enforcement ('firm government') seems to have been enough to jerk a whole political system from one stable equilibrium of self-perpetuating violence into another of largely self-sustaining peace. Although fear of the state's proven coercive power remained a significant element of the new order (Adriani 1919: 188; Graafland 1867–69, I: 273), the actual use of military force seldom or never had to be repeated once an armistice was imposed, the cycle of revenge broken, and beliefs in the cosmic necessity of violence undermined by the experience of peace. As a reputation for vengefulness became less and less of a practical necessity for the purpose of defending kin and property, meanwhile, the way also opened up for ethical changes, reinforced in the Minahasan and Toraja cases by conversion to Christianity, which began to undermine even the emotional roots of conflict.⁵⁵

In the days before the colonial state had conclusively demonstrated what Hobbes (1996: 117) would have called the 'Power to keep them in awe', few people were humble, altruistic, or indeed irrational enough to give up the right to revenge without any solid guarantee that their enemies would do the same. At this period the problem of violence, whatever its cultural and religious underpinnings, also tended to take the form of what game theorists call a 'collective action dilemma': even if all parties agreed that a lasting peace would be to their mutual advantage, none could refrain from taking violent revenge for past injuries without conveying 'a timidity which invited further enemy action'.⁵⁶ Under such circumstances the best that

⁵⁵ The logic of vengeance under stateless conditions is well expressed by John Crawford's admission, in his *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820, I: 65), that 'where the security of every man's honour, life, and property, depends in no small degree upon his own arm, we may almost hesitate whether to pronounce the passion of revenge a virtue or a vice'.

⁵⁶ W. H. Scott 1994: 153. Lichbach (1996) summarizes the immense game-theoretical literature on problems of rationality and cooperation. Readers familiar with this literature may wonder why, other than for cultural reasons, relations between neighbouring groups so often settled into the 'negative reciprocity' (Sahlins 1965: 91) of feuding rather than the positive reciprocity of 'live and let live' (Axelrod 1984). One reason was that the parties in any given conflict seldom agreed on who had started it, so that what was justified retaliation to one was an unpro-

could be hoped for was the negotiation of an armed truce when a particular conflict lasted too long or threatened to get out of hand. Here again, however, the Dutch state already came in useful, for while no military Leviathan, it was already capable of facing down individual players in the indigenous power game provided the others remained neutral or supportive. Equally important, it also met another criterion identified by Hobbes (1996: 109) as desirable in a peacemaking authority: as long as its vassals all continued to meet their contractual trading obligations, it was not in general a judge 'to whom greater profit, or honour, or pleasure apparently ariseth out of the victory of one party, than of the other'. The status of the Dutch as ethnic, genealogical, and social outsiders, in other words, gave their arbitration a degree of objectivity and impartiality which could seldom be hoped for from any existing indigenous authority.⁵⁷

Dynamics of stranger-kingship

In (after?) the era of nationalism, we are accustomed to regard shared ethnic identity as a factor conducive to effective cooperation, and ethnic differences as potential sources of conflict. In the past, however, the reverse was often true. In Minahasa, as Minahasan anthropologist Paul Renwarin (2000: 55) has recently pointed out, most armed conflict seems to have taken place not across the language boundaries which formed the most important local ethnic divides, but between neighbouring villages or village federations within a single language community.⁵⁸ Relations between different language groups, by comparison, were more stable, reinforced in some cases by cultural stereotypes and joint rituals which portrayed them in terms of sexual complementarity (Henley 1996: 47). Historically speaking the most peaceful relationships of all, meanwhile,

voked attack to another (Barton 1969: 69; Poundstone 1992: 254). Another was that wars tended to involve more than two parties, so that instead of being a relatively simple matter of bilateral reciprocity, peace acquired the more elusive quality of a public good (Molander 1992).

⁵⁷ Here again, we are reminded of parallels with trading minorities. The 'objectivity' which the 'stranger' is able to bring to trade relations, according to Georg Simmel's classic thesis, is one of his key commercial advantages (Simmel 1908: 685–91).

⁵⁸ During the Tondano War, accordingly, the first groups to betray Tomohon and Tondano by defecting to the Dutch side were their immediate neighbours in the Tombulu language area (Graafland 1867–69, I: 284).

were those between the autochthonous groups and the most thoroughly alien component of the Minahasan political system, the Dutch government.

In order to understand this (for us) counterintuitive pattern, it is necessary to appreciate the limitations of the two principal endogenous sources of solidarity in these societies, kinship and gift-exchange. Marriage alliances, often skirting the borders of classificatory incest in order to limit the dispersal of land and other hereditary property (Renwarin 2000: 183; Schrauwens 1997: 367), were usually sufficient to hold together the descent groups constituting a single village or group of villages, but seldom provided a strong basis for political integration on any larger scale.⁵⁹ Adultery, elopement, or divorce, moreover, could easily poison them, turning amity to enmity. The exchange of gifts, including military support and labour services as well as food, clothing and trade goods, was potentially a more inclusive source of solidarity; the competitive character of gift-exchange between parties of equal or near-equal status, however, meant that it too was liable to become a source of conflict. Kiefer provides a striking account of the volatility of exchange-based political alliances in Sulu, where warfare of a traditional kind persisted much longer than it did on Sulawesi due to the comparative weakness of state authority in the southern Philippines.⁶⁰

Now there is a very interesting characteristic of mutual gift giving [...] which bears on the problem of violence in Tausug society: usually the level and intensity of reciprocity can be increased much more easily than it can be decreased. It is possible to do more for the friend than he did for you, thus increasing his obligations when he reciprocates, but it is very difficult to do less; to break the chain of gift giving is not to go back to the earliest stages of the relationship, but to catapult it into hostility itself. [...] One can become more *of a friend* or *more of an enemy*, but one cannot decrease the level of friendship or enmity in a similar steplike manner. Only a total reversal of the relationship is possible. As a result alliances are very unstable, and today's friend may become tomorrow's enemy. (Kiefer 1972: 65.)

An outsider whose dealings with members of such a society were too tenuous to elicit their friendship, then, was also distinctly less likely

⁵⁹ Among the Pamona Toraja of the Poso area in Central Sulawesi, the ideal marriage partners were third cousins. In the Minahasan village studied by Renwarin (2000: 180), only about 10% of marriages involve partners from other villages even today. The strikingly high incidence of albinism in Minahasa was sometimes attributed by Dutch observers to inbreeding (Bouvy 1924: 377), and many contemporary Minahasans agree.

⁶⁰ Also: Foster 1977: 9–16; W. H. Scott 1994: 71.

than a neighbour to become their declared enemy, and in a context of permanent readiness for war, the political advantage of never being actively hated outweighed the disadvantage of seldom being particularly liked either. The unemotional predictability of relationships between strangers, in fact, often provided a better basis for long-term trust than did the volatile intimacy of neighbours. The outsider's advantage was further enhanced by the fact that as an uninvolved bystander, he was in a good position to provide impartial arbitration when conflicts between insiders became intractable or intolerably destructive. Social solidarity tends to be heavily dependent on the confidence that in the event of a serious conflict, some kind of justice will be done; but justice requires a degree of impartiality on the part of the judges, and in small-scale, kinship-based societies, impartial judges who were not foreigners were hard to find. The more foreign the judge, in fact, the more effective he was likely to be in providing the kind of conflict resolution which would allow insiders to live harmoniously with one another.

This is probably a key reason not only why early Dutch expansion in Indonesia was often so successful despite the economic burdens which it entailed, but also for the general prominence of 'stranger-kings' in the history of eastern Indonesia and the Pacific. The phenomenon of the stranger-king is more often discussed in terms of cultural assumptions regarding the divinity of the exotic, and the fact that VOC judgements were regarded as *Godsspraken* indicates that such 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 Adriani (1916: 114), 'is not something which the Toraja expects from his fellow human beings; if he could imagine such a quality, he would find it superhuman [*bovenmenselijk*]'. 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 colonized, and from the local jealousies and hatreds which made it so desirable. The rise of the colonial state in northern Sulawesi, then, can be regarded in part as a deliberately accepted solution to problems of mutual cooperation which were perceived by indigenous actors as difficult to solve without the aid of a powerful and impartial external party.

Critics of Hobbes' absolutist solution to those problems, of course, have often argued that in the long run, undemocratic states promote enmity among their subjects and undermine the ability to achieve peaceful cooperation on a broader societal basis.⁶¹ Schrauwens (1997: 371–6), in the same spirit, stresses that lowland kingdoms like Luwu' in Central Sulawesi deliberately sowed disunity among their vassals by using them to punish each other for acts of disobedience to the *raja*, and alleges that the Dutch also 'governed by a process of divide and rule', obliging indigenous leaders to use them as conflict mediators and thereby installing themselves as 'key players in succession disputes and wars'. But at most that was half the story. For every upland group which smarted under headhunting raids permitted by a displeased *raja*, there were others who relied on the same *raja* for protection against aggressive neighbours (A. C. Kruyt 1908: 1331). The fact that very similar patterns of feuding and headhunting were found in cognate societies inhabiting areas free from external intervention, such as the remote Cordillera Central of Luzon (Barton 1949, 1969), indicates that the motors of conflict were mainly endogenous. As for the Dutch, as often as they were able to manipulate indigenous conflicts to their own advantage, they were themselves manipulated, usually by vain promises of plentiful gold deliveries, into dangerous and expensive interventions which ended in ignominious withdrawal for either military or economic reasons.⁶² Their provision of conflict mediation was not a cunning long-term strategy to reinforce their own influence, but a practical short-term policy designed to keep down the level of violence among their allies, thereby protecting their commerce (Godée Molsbergen 1928: 125, 137; Watuseke and Henley 1994: 372) and also minimizing the risk that protagonists in local wars would invite intervention by foreign parties other than the Dutch themselves. Their adjudication 'service', moreover, was clearly popular.

⁶¹ Pagden (1988), for instance, argues that the 'amoral familism' described by Banfield (1958) and others in the south of Italy originated in the seventeenth century when the Spanish rulers of the kingdom of Naples deliberately eroded earlier habits of cooperation and trust by sowing division among the existing political elite, undermining the local legal system, and implanting cultural values of private honour in place of public virtue.

⁶² 'Mutual manipulation', as Fox (1977: 93) concluded in his historical and anthropological study of another part of eastern Indonesia, the island of Roti, is the best way to characterize relations between the Dutch and the indigenous groups with which they interacted in this period.

Except very briefly when faced with open rebellion during the Tondano War, at no point did the Dutch pursue a strategy of 'divide and rule'. In Minahasa, as in many other parts of Indonesia (Reid 1998: 29, 34), their ideal throughout the VOC period was actually 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 insignificant matter we must be content to beg and implore until all twenty village [*walak*] 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 *walak* themselves was the intensified domestic warfare which, as already noted, followed each attempt to create superordinate indigenous chiefs with judicial authority above the *walak* level. According to indigenous oral history as recorded in the 1860s, one 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 the Tondano area] 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 [*Kolano*] over Minahasa. The Spaniards accepted this proposal, whereupon a bloody war broke out with the Tombulu [of the Tomohon area], who absolutely refused to accept a son of Lingkambene [as their ruler]. [...] Later the principal chiefs of the Tombulu [...] heard that another nation of white men, themselves no friends of the Spanish, was living in Ternate. So these four chiefs [...] travelled there to seek the friendship and help of the Dutch against the aggression of Bolaang Mongondow and the Spanish, accepting the *kumpania* as their mother and father. (Riedel 1862: 51, 54-55.)

The resulting establishment of a VOC fort in Manado triggered an anti-Spanish uprising in which the Dutch themselves played no part, but which nevertheless induced their rivals to abandon Minahasa for good in 1657.⁶³ When some resentful Tondanese attempted to defy the Company four years later, as we have seen, a small number of VOC troops with a great deal of local support quickly forced them to desist, ushering in almost 150 years of unchallenged Dutch hegemony in Minahasa. To be successful, as experience in this and the

⁶³ ARA VOC 1225: 393v-5r; Waworoentoe 1894: 95.

subsequent colonial period confirmed, stranger-kings had to maintain an equal aloofness from all of their subjects.

Hierarchy is not the only potential solution to the problems of order and justice, and given time it is possible that the autonomous growth of economic exchange and interdependency, or the spread of the impersonal ethics associated with Christianity or Islam, would in themselves have been sufficient to overcome vicious circles of distrust, hostility and violence.⁶⁴ The empirical evidence from northern Sulawesi, however, suggests that in practice both trade and religious conversion were themselves closely associated with, and to some extent predicated upon, state formation—a means of pacification which was in any case easier to promote in an instrumental way thanks to the availability of foreign groups well suited to play the role of stranger-king.⁶⁵

The suppression of conflict under democratic conditions is a much tougher proposition, and the tensions between freedom and equality on the one hand, and order and justice on the other, which preoccupied European political thinkers like Hobbes and De Tocqueville are no less relevant to Indonesia today than they were to Europe in its pre-democratic past. Nowadays the state in Indonesia, while stronger in military terms than its colonial predecessor and in principle more capable of enforcing a just peace among its subjects, is also irrevocably less foreign, and in that sense perhaps less likely to engineer one among its citizens.⁶⁶ While prosperity and a complex, interdependent economy undoubtedly help in situations like these, institutional changes are also essential. One important step, arguably, is the establishment of a legal and executive apparatus insulated from soci-

⁶⁴ The argument that trade is a powerful pacifying influence in its own right (Ridley 1996) proceeds in its simplest form from the observation that in order to trade, as Mauss (1969: 80) straightforwardly put it in his famous *Essai sur le don*, ‘man must first lay down his spear’. Modern institutional economists, however, tend to emphasize the need for political authorities which can secure the safety and property of traders, arbitrate commercial disputes, and help to underwrite contracts (Barzel 2002; Bates 1983; North 1981, 1990).

⁶⁵ This evidence is presented at some length in *Jealousy and Justice* (Henley 2002).

⁶⁶ The dramatic increase in the range and complexity of social interactions since colonial times, on the other hand, has possibly compensated for this to some extent: a self-governing society large enough in geographical and demographic terms to generate a degree of anonymity in political and judicial processes, it can be argued, automatically stands a better chance of resolving conflicts impartially than does one in which most people are more or less distant blood relatives. Indeed, this may well be just as important as military factors in explaining why it was the small-scale societies of Southeast Asia which were the most vulnerable to colonial expansion.

ety at large not by ethnicity and wealth, but by bureaucratic and legal rules which protect it from the subversion of kinship (nepotism) and gift-exchange (bribery); the ultimate goal is a 'civil society' (a concept discussed at the end of this piece) in which all citizens are more or less estranged from one another by ingrained habits of impersonal civility as well as by the state-backed rule of law. Or perhaps the civil society must precede the bureaucratic state, lest the latter use its rule-based solidarity to uncivil ends; either way the endeavour is fraught with so many vicious circles of uncivility that as the Southeast Asia journalist Dennis Bloodworth (1975: 161) once observed, it 'calls for a stupendous act of faith' on the part of millions of people who 'start by regarding a hovercraft society held up by nothing but an air-cushion of civic responsibility and loyalty to the constitution as no more feasible than a flying carpet'. In the enthusiasm with which United Nations observers were welcomed to troubled East Timor in 1999, it is even possible to discern an anachronistic attempt to bring back the impartial stranger-king and his short-cut solution to the problem of violence.⁶⁷

Patterns and parallels

In the absence of either a strong civil society or a highly developed bureaucratic state, ethnic boundaries between rulers and ruled often served in the past as substitutes for legal or moral constraints in helping to promote that objectivity and impartiality of justice without which effective conflict resolution is difficult. The internal solidarity of the alien ruling group, at the same time, tended to enhance its ability to enforce judicial decisions by military means. When a powerful foreign state also incorporated an effective formal legal apparatus, its attraction was doubly strong. Jenista (1987: 242–51), drawing attention to a general pattern in late-colonial Southeast Asia whereby formerly stateless hill peoples developed close political relationships with European colonizers, concludes that among the

⁶⁷ According to Hohe (2001), UNAMET (the United Nations Assistance Mission for East Timor) was explicitly regarded by many Timorese as heir to the Portuguese colonial government in the role of 'the younger brother who comes to solve the violence', a local variant on the stranger-king. In this ideology the foreign ruler is conceived as the homecoming descendant of an exiled brother of key indigenous ancestor figures (Traube 1986: 55–6), and his intervention is essential because 'the creation of peace requires hierarchisation' (Hohe 2001: 313).

several factors involved here was a widespread appreciation for those most basic of public goods, peace, order, and relatively impartial justice.⁶⁸ Studies of the ‘white rajahs’ of the Brooke dynasty who ruled Sarawak between 1841 and 1941, for example, emphasize that their success in displacing indigenous conflicts from the military to the judicial sphere, in the form of highly popular government law courts, was an essential element (alongside the selective exploitation of local enmities for military purposes) in the pacification of the Iban and other formerly violent indigenous groups (Pringle 1970: 170–3, 190–3; Wagner 1972: 155–6, 177).

Another well documented example of the same pattern is that of the Ifugao of the Cordillera Central of Luzon (Philippines) in relation to American rule. R. F. Barton’s reconstruction of the normal state of precolonial Ifugao society, which can fairly be described as one of perpetual feuding and fear, reads like a Hobbesian treatise on the inability of ‘small Families’, however strong their concern with law and justice, to translate that concern into peace and order without having recourse to a higher judicial and executive authority.⁶⁹

The Ifugao has no tribunals to sentence, and no government to execute. [. . .] Doubtless no two nations or tribes of the world ever engaged in a warfare in which each did not consider the other the aggressor, or at least, the offender. The same is true with respect to feuds between families, which were almost as numerous as the families themselves. [. . .] We must substitute, however, for patriotism, fraternal and filial love; the sense of duty to the unavenged dead, love of vengeance, and intense hatred engendered and justified by a well learned catalogue of wrongs and assassinations inflicted on the family by the enemy family. Once started, a blood feud was well nigh eternal (unless ended by a fusion of the families by means of marriage), for

⁶⁸ While in some cases it could be argued (albeit at the cost of some insult to the intelligence of the protagonists) that these benefits were only appreciated once pacification was already a fact, in others they were certainly anticipated. The Dutch invasion of Kerinci (upland Jambi, Sumatra) in 1903, according to a study based on indigenous oral history, was actively supported by a large section of the local population which saw the colonial government as a ‘stabilising force’ and ‘hoped the Dutch would bring an end to inter-village disputes and introduce law and order into the area which was renowned for its lawlessness’ (Watson 1992: 35).

⁶⁹ This despite his own declaration elsewhere (Barton 1969: 3) that thanks to their ‘well-developed system of laws’, the Ifugao had ‘got along very well in the days before a foreign government was established among them’. The Ifugao autobiographies which he later collected (Barton 1938) do nothing to resolve this contradiction. We might also question whether stateless peoples like the Ifugao really enjoyed ‘true freedom’ as Barton (1969: xxi) claimed, or whether there is not more truth in Ernest Gellner’s memorable dictum (1995: 33) that ‘traditional man can sometimes escape the tyranny of kings, but only at the cost of falling under the tyranny of cousins’; but that is another story.

the reason that what was a righteous execution to one family was a murder (usually treacherous) to the other. (Barton 1969: 68.)

Not surprisingly against this background of violence, oral history indicated that in the late nineteenth century Spanish soldiers had been ‘invited’ into Ifugao as military allies by the people of one district, Kiangang (Barton 1969: 98–9). That neither political independence nor the freedom to kill were in themselves particularly dear to the Ifugao was confirmed a few years later during the US occupation, when despite the imposition of unpaid roadbuilding duties, two platoons of American-trained Ifugao policemen armed with single-shot Springfield rifles (Jenista 1987: 56), together with a series of large government-sponsored feasts, were sufficient to bring about the rapid pacification of a warlike population almost 100,000 strong. As in Sulawesi, another very important factor here was a new kind of impartial conflict resolution. In a later account by an Ifugao historian it is the main agent of colonial justice during the pacification period, the police officer J. D. Gallman, who appears in the by now familiar role of the peace-making stranger-king.⁷⁰

Gallman befriended the ‘chiefs’ of the villages and initiated peace pacts among them. In the peace pact ceremony (*hidit*) the feuding parties met with an arbiter and promised not to fight each other any more. [. . .] His dedication and impartiality in dispensing justice and, above all, his proven bravery and fighting prowess won the respect and admiration of the Ifugaos. The people confidently referred to him in all cases of dispute and his fast but just decisions won the support of everybody. When disagreement arose, the people would say, ‘*Na nga mong man hi Gallman*’, meaning ‘It’s up to Gallman’. They knew that the *Malikano* (American) would give the right verdict. This phrase was so popular that even recently, people would still quote it. (Dumia 1979: 35.)

‘The Americans’ lack of kin in Ifugao’, adds another ethnohistorical study in a striking acknowledgement of the tension between kinship and law as principles of social organization, ‘was frequently cited by informants as a reason for their good decisions’ (Jenista 1987: 119).

The various tiny military actions fought in this period served not to terrorize the people as a collectivity (an impossible feat under the circumstances), but rather to reassure people as individuals (and families) that if the need arose the state was capable of terrorizing their neighbours, thereby relieving them of personal responsibility

⁷⁰ In the pacification of the neighbouring Kalinga people, the administrator W. F. Hale played the same role as Gallman among the Ifugao and acquired a similar reputation (Dozier 1966: 38–40; Jenista 1987: 70, 258–60).

for this dangerous task and justifying its own claim to a monopoly of violence. When the Americans finally imposed a total ban on the carrying of weapons in 1914, there was reportedly ‘immediate compliance’ and ‘hearty cooperation’ on the part of the Ifugao (Dumia 1979: 43). Some even more spectacular instances of near-spontaneous disarmament were later to occur in parts of New Guinea under Australian rule.⁷¹

The most obvious immediate effect of the arrival of Australian patrols in the Fore region was pacification. Fighting ceased almost spontaneously throughout the entire region. Most Fore groups did not wait to be told to cease fighting by the new administration, but stopped on their own—almost as if they had only been awaiting an excuse to give it up. A few, such as some of the Kamira people, maintained a warlike stance a bit longer than the others, but without serious raiding. The Fore said among themselves that the *kiap* (government officer) was coming, so it was time to stop the fighting. They looked to his arrival as the beginning of a new era rather than as an invasion. Disputes which could not be settled by the Fore themselves were eagerly put into the hands of the patrol officers for arbitration, and an antifighting ethic quickly spread throughout the region. [...] Immense popularity was the lot of the early patrol officers [...]. (Sorensen 1972: 362.)

A surprising parallel in a much earlier period comes from seventeenth-century Taiwan, where the Dutch, facing an array of warlike tribal groups similar to the Minahasan *walak*, managed to achieve a level of political supremacy which in Minahasa would elude them for almost another two centuries. Recent studies of the Dutch period in Taiwan (1624–1662) stress that after an initial phase of continued internecine warfare with selective VOC intervention, the decisive military defeat inflicted by a force of 500 Company troops (together with local allies) on one of the most powerful local communities, Matou, in 1635 sparked off a ‘diplomatic arms race’ (Andrade 2001: 290) for VOC protection which led to the cessation of all internal warfare as well as all resistance to the Dutch.⁷²

Indeed, the aborigines of Taiwan appear generally to have been willing subjects. Many submitted of their own accord, and often readily, to Dutch

⁷¹ Berndt 1953: 117–18; Sorensen 1972: 360, 362. Diamond (1998: 277) uses an account of high homicide rates among another New Guinea tribal people to illustrate his general argument that the control of violence has been ‘a big and underappreciated advantage of centralized societies over noncentralized ones’ in human history and a key reason for ‘the acceptance of centralized authority as tribal societies grew larger’.

⁷² Andrade 1997; 2000: 78–83; 2001; Shepherd 1993: 51–62.

rule. To be sure, many were motivated to join out of fear of their fellows. Since the towns were continually at war with one another, the Company's presence brought about a great shift in the balance of forces on Taiwan: towns allied with the Company were assured protection from their traditional enemies [. . .]. (Andrade 1997: 81.)

That fear was not the only reason for accepting the *Pax Hollandia*, on the other hand, is sufficiently clear from the (admittedly not unbiased) contemporary Dutch accounts according to which the opportunity to escape the traditional vicious circle of distrust and violence was greeted by the Formosans with 'great pleasure and contentment'.⁷³

It was delightful to see the friendliness of these people when they met for the first time, to notice how they kissed one another and gazed at one another. Such a thing had never before been witnessed in this country, as one tribe was nearly always waging war against another [. . .] and if we had not influenced them, they would never have been mutually united; for formerly no one dared to address the other, no one trusted the other, and to practice deception as much as possible was the general rule. (Campbell 1903: 130–1.)

As in the Fore, Ifugao and Iban (Sarawak) cases, such serious internal disputes as continued to arise subsequent to pacification were dealt with by means of public adjudication by representatives of the foreign government (Andrade 1997: 71–2). On Taiwan this took place primarily during an annual gathering known as a *Landdag* or 'Day of State' when the leaders of the various indigenous communities took part, apparently with great enthusiasm, in ceremonies and feasting under VOC auspices.⁷⁴ In the early twentieth century,

⁷³ Andrade 1997: 80. Another difficulty with the 'shift in the balance of forces' interpretation is that even at its peak, the troop strength of the Company in Taiwan was still barely sufficient to make it what Andrade (2001) calls 'the mightiest village'. Matou alone could apparently field a force as large as the VOC contingent which spearheaded the attack against it in 1635 (Andrade 2000: 39–40; Campbell 1903: 180) and at least one other nearby 'village' was bigger still (Blussé, Van Opstall and Ts'ao 1986: 377). In Minahasa, by comparison, some of the indigenous *walak* boasted fully ten times more fighting men (Van Dam 1931: 74–5) than the force of 65 VOC soldiers which, with much local help, disciplined rebellious Tondano in 1661.

⁷⁴ Andrade (1997) is inclined to see the *landdag* mainly as a piece of theatre designed by VOC personnel to keep their subjects in awe, describing even the public execution of criminals simply as 'another means the Company used to impress the natives with its power' (Andrade 1997: 74). In my opinion this implies a degree of naivety on the part of the Formosans which is inconsistent with the political skills they had displayed when involving the Dutch as allies in their internecine wars during the period before 1635 (Andrade 2001: 289, 294).

the Dutch period was still remembered in the oral history of the Taiwan aborigines as a 'Golden Age' of 'peace and prosperity' (McGovern 1922: 53).

That effective conflict resolution was a key benefit of stranger-kingship is reflected in the mythology of many Southeast Asian peoples. According to the Mambai of East Timor, for example, foreign rule originated in a time of anarchy when people began to 'stab and slay one another', so that a powerless local chief was obliged to set out for Portugal in search of a 'heavy rule and a weighty ban'.⁷⁵ In the interior of Sumatra, oral traditions regarding the origin and function of allegiance to Malay kings likewise emphasized the need for external intervention in those local conflicts which could not be resolved by means of negotiation and compromise at the local level.

On occasion [...] it was impossible to reach a compromise, and in these cases it was necessary to have recourse to a higher authority. A familiar theme in legends throughout the area is thus the appeal to some distant ruler at a time of anarchy and discord, for the purpose of kings was to provide wise counsel when necessary and dispense judgments all would observe. (B. W. Andaya 1993: 31.)

The role of the (otherwise rather mysterious) Minangkabau *raja* of West Sumatra as arbiters of disputes and providers of justice (*keadilan*) is particularly well documented in both indigenous and European sources.⁷⁶ Here there was a strong supernatural association: the justice of the Minangkabau ruler 'emanated from God' (Drakard 1999: 230) and reflected the role of the king as God's representative on earth. The link between the divine or oracular character of stranger-kings and their judicial function is also very much evident in the literature on tribal Africa, where anthropologists have tended to be more aware of the Hobbesian problem of order and disorder than have their counterparts in Southeast Asia.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Traube 1986: 55. Besides their general task of 'maintaining order within the realm', in this ideology the outsiders are also specifically expected to 'guard the boundaries of the fields and gardens', a clear reference to their judicial function (Traube 1986: 56, 58). The peoples of South Sulawesi used a similarly Hobbesian model to explain the origin of their own kings, whom they credited with divine rather than foreign descent, in a time when people were 'like fish, with the larger and stronger consuming the smaller and weaker' (L. Y. Andaya 1981: 12). Also: Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000: 8; Pelras 1996: 32, 110.

⁷⁶ Dobbin 1975: 78; Drakard 1999: 229–30; De Josselin de Jong 1951: 103, 107.

⁷⁷ One reason for this contrast is that colonial pacification was often a later event in Africa than in Southeast Asia; another may be the well-known 'Orientalist' tendency of Southeast Asianists to emphasize the exotic and aesthetic aspects of indigenous cultures. The work of R. F. Barton (1938, 1949, 1969), similar in focus to

Stranger-kings of various descriptions were a widespread feature of precolonial African societies: throughout a large part of East Africa, for instance, indigenous political systems were systematically characterized by ‘the domination of chiefless societies by immigrant aristocracies’ (Southall 1970: 229). Often, as in the case of the Alur of Uganda, these foreigners were explicitly regarded as invited guests rather than invading conquerors:

The peoples who became subject to Alur chiefs recognized the right of retaliation for wrongs and, as they now remember their own past, did not have any formal means of bringing hostilities to an end. They were not conquered in battle by the Alur. They acquiesced in the extension of Alur rule, and some of them even asked an Alur chief to give them one of his sons as their ruler; and one of their principal reasons for wanting a ruler was so that he could settle their quarrels. (Mair 1962: 58.)

The Alur chieftain was a ritual expert and rainmaker as well as a warrior, and in the eyes of his subjects his ritual power ‘sanctioned his authority as an arbitrator’ (Southall 1970: 246). Among the Ibo of southeastern Nigeria up to about 1920, a similar role was played by an allochthonous elite minority known as the Aro (Northrup 1978: 114–45; Ottenberg 1958). The authority of the Aro, who called themselves ‘children of God’, rested partly on their role as ‘agents’ of the supernatural oracle Aro Chuku, to the judgement of which the stateless Ibo often deferred when local conflicts could not be resolved by other means. It was also reinforced, however, by Aro control over vital trade routes and groups of mercenary warriors.

The Aro [...] organized trade [...] and provided as well a system of internal justice and military protection. [...] The Aro were themselves traders; they provided protection for trade; and they provided the ‘Oracle’—a judicial system for resolving disputes without taking recourse to feuds. These advantages led to their rapid expansion [...] as local communities called them in. (Bates 1983: 24.)

If for ‘Aro’ we substitute ‘Dutch’, then this synopsis is probably equally valid for large parts of northern Sulawesi up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the African context itself, perhaps not surprisingly given the late date and military character of much European expansion in that continent, parallels between traditional and colonial stranger-kings

that of politically-orientated Africanists like Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Gluckman (1965), forms an important exception here.

are seldom drawn.⁷⁸ That they sometimes existed, nevertheless, is suggested by the case of the early nineteenth-century British Gold Coast administrator George Maclean, a man whose career was compared by his biographer Metcalfe (1962: viii) to that of his contemporary James Brooke in Sarawak.⁷⁹ In the period of trading company rule up to 1822, it had already been common on the Gold Coast that ‘disputes between Africans, in which no European was involved, were brought to the castle for the Governor’s mediation’ (Metcalfe 1962: 170). Under Maclean’s direction this practice was developed into a systematic judicial institution, backed up on occasion by punitive military expeditions, which both cemented the position of the British in the area and helped to weld its diverse peoples into a single political unit. ‘I was called upon to interfere’, wrote one of his out-station commanders, ‘settling and arbitrating in palavers of all kinds, and of almost every nature, which they brought to the fort in preference to settling among themselves’. The growth of this jurisdiction was the Africans’ own doing: ‘they have forced it upon us’ (Metcalfe 1962: 178). Maclean himself, who cultivated an aloof and mysterious image, acquired an honorific title meaning ‘peacemaker’ and reportedly became the object of religious veneration.

A final and perhaps most striking example of institutionalized adjudication by strangers which deserves mention here comes not from Africa or Asia but from medieval Europe, and is described by Avner Greif in his contribution to the influential institutionalist political science anthology *Analytic narratives* (1998). In the thirteenth and fourteenth 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. 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

⁷⁸ Southall (1970: 230–4) explicitly denies the validity of any such parallel in the Alur case, arguing that (late-)colonial rule in Africa was based much more heavily on military superiority. With respect to the desire for military protection, on the other hand, the role of indigenous agency in colonial expansion is well established in the African literature, some of which characterizes the partition of the continent as resulting less from a European ‘scramble for Africa’ than from an African ‘scramble for protection’ (Caplan 1969) against African enemies—albeit often enemies rendered more dangerous than before by the backing of their own European protectors.

⁷⁹ I am grateful to Martin Klein for drawing my attention to this source.

threatened to destabilize domestic political life, but not strong enough to impose his will on the Genoese in the face of concerted opposition. 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); in other words, he was emphatically to remain: a stranger.⁸⁰

Polarities and parameters

Stranger-kings, clearly, varied greatly in the strength of their control over the means of violence. At one extreme were arbitrators or mediators who had little independent means of enforcing their decisions, and whose authority derived mainly from their perceived impartiality and/or supernatural qualities: examples arguably include the Minangkabau kings in Indonesia.⁸¹ This was the least costly and dangerous form of centralized conflict resolution, but perhaps also the least reliable.⁸² At the opposite end of the spectrum were situations in which the alien group had established a true state, in the sense of securing a near-monopoly on the use of violence and using this monopoly to enforce a permanent peace. The theatres of Dutch expansion discussed above all entered this stage at an earlier or a later date: Taiwan in the seventeenth century, Minahasa in the nineteenth, and Central Sulawesi in the twentieth. Intermediate between the two extremes (often in time as well as in form) lay diverse political compromises which, as in the case of medieval Genoa, involved elements of both arbitration and enforcement. In Minahasa prior to the military pacification of 1809, and in the Bugis-dominated kingdoms of

⁸⁰ He was further required to move his residence periodically to a new quarter of the city in order to avoid associating for too long with any single clan; peripatetic behaviour, strikingly, was also widespread among the *raja* of northern Sulawesi in the nineteenth century (Bastiaans 1938: 227; Van der Hart 1853: 113; Henley 1996: 30; A. C. Kruyt 1931: 525; Sarasin and Sarasin 1905, I: 91; Steller 1866: 36–7).

⁸¹ Institutionalized conflict mediation by relatively powerless third parties, of course, is also common in many modern contexts (Wall and Lynn 1993).

⁸² One problem with this kind of system was that as far as pagans were concerned, the mark of truly divine justice tended to remain practical efficacy (Aragon 2000: 184). Lasting faith in the divine status of a judge whose verdicts were not often seen to be enforced, then, may well have been limited to peoples which, like the Islamic Minangkabau, already believed in the inevitability of justice in an after-life and consequently had relatively less need of worldly enforcers anyway.

Central Sulawesi, private vengeance and feuding continued to be possible, the alien authorities intervening only at the active request of one or both parties in a given local conflict; to flout their judgement after they had become involved, nevertheless, was to invite military (judicial) punishment.

The stability which such compromises sometimes acquired reflects the fact that strong countervailing forces usually militated against the acceptance of more complete state control: jealousy and resentment of the powerful, scepticism regarding their ability or will to enforce a just peace, and the well-founded fear that if they obtained still more power, they would use it to increase their own wealth by imposing a heavier burden of tribute or taxation on their subjects.⁸³ What can be also discerned behind all of the stranger-king systems, nevertheless, is an equally realistic awareness of the functionality of political centralization or hierarchy, especially a hierarchy surmounted by a foreign or otherwise exotic and socially isolated group, in helping to control the ever-present threat of disorder and conflict. The progression from 'alien diviner' (Colson 1966) to colonial Leviathan remains a continuum; even at its most critical phase, the permanent disarmament and pacification of the indigenous population, people were often willing to give up the tradition of 'taking the law into their own hands' on the critical condition that the (alien) state also forced all their (familiar) neighbours to do the same. Given sufficient confidence in a successful outcome that would preclude future revenge attacks, many were even prepared to participate in the pacification process themselves by taking up arms, temporarily and for the last time, against any dissenting minority.

Not all would-be stranger-kings, of course, were equally successful; in seventeenth-century Minahasa, as we have seen, a piece of ill-judged favouritism on the part of aspiring Spanish conquistadores led to their active expulsion by the Minahasans in favour of Dutch rivals. In the lowlands of the northern Philippines the Spaniards evidently did much better, dominating millions with an occupation force that 'initially numbered about 500 and probably never exceeded a few thousand during the early colonial period'. (Newson 1998: 25) Yet the fact that other parts of the Philippines were not pacified until the arrival of the Americans more than 300 years later is a

⁸³ Pre-colonial states in Africa, notes Bates (1983: 41), were simultaneously both exploitative and benevolent: by generating public goods, such as the peace necessary for trade, ruling elites were also able to secure disproportionate economic benefits for themselves.

further reminder that despite all that has been said above about the real and perceived advantages of foreign rule to stateless peoples, colonial expansion was seldom an automatic or inevitable process. W. H. Scott (1974) has described the whole history of contact between the Spanish and the upland peoples of Luzon, from the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth, in terms of a largely effective indigenous struggle against foreign aggression in which each local alliance made by the Spaniards was immediately counter-balanced by enhanced resistance from the traditional enemies of those who had chosen the invader's side.⁸⁴ If the logic of the pacifying stranger-king is so compelling, and if it served the Americans so well among the Ifugao, why then did it fail the Spanish colonial state in the same area for so long? What factors, in other words, determine whether a given stateless group will welcome or reject the advance of a foreign power, and whether the outcome for a cluster of such groups will be collective submission, collective resistance, or simply an exacerbation of existing mutual divisions and conflicts? Given the complexity of such situations in practice, the question is perhaps somewhat naive; but given the Hobbesian argument so insistently developed throughout this piece, it clearly deserves at least a schematic and provisional answer here.⁸⁵

Two key variables can be said to affect the likely result of the encounter (Figure 2). The first is the independent military strength of the foreign power (not including potential local allies). A very weak outsider is neither attractive as an ally for individual parties in the domestic power struggle, nor credible as a means of putting an end to that struggle by helping to enforce a common peace. An alien group with too much independent military capability, on the other hand, is likely to be distrusted as a dangerous ally and a potentially oppressive ruler (although of course it may use its strength to impose its rule unilaterally). The second major variable, represented here on the vertical axis, is the extent to which the outside power is seen or believed to act with impartiality in its dealings with the various indigenous polities. Very impartial outsiders may be welcomed as arbiters of the peace even if their ability to enforce it is slight, and attractive as enforcers of the peace even if they are dangerously

⁸⁴ During the nineteenth century alone, 75 Spanish military expeditions took place in the Cordillera Central (W. H. Scott 1974: 7).

⁸⁵ Figure 2 is intended strictly as a suggestive and schematic model; no attempt has been made to locate on the diagram the specific historical situations and outcomes described above.

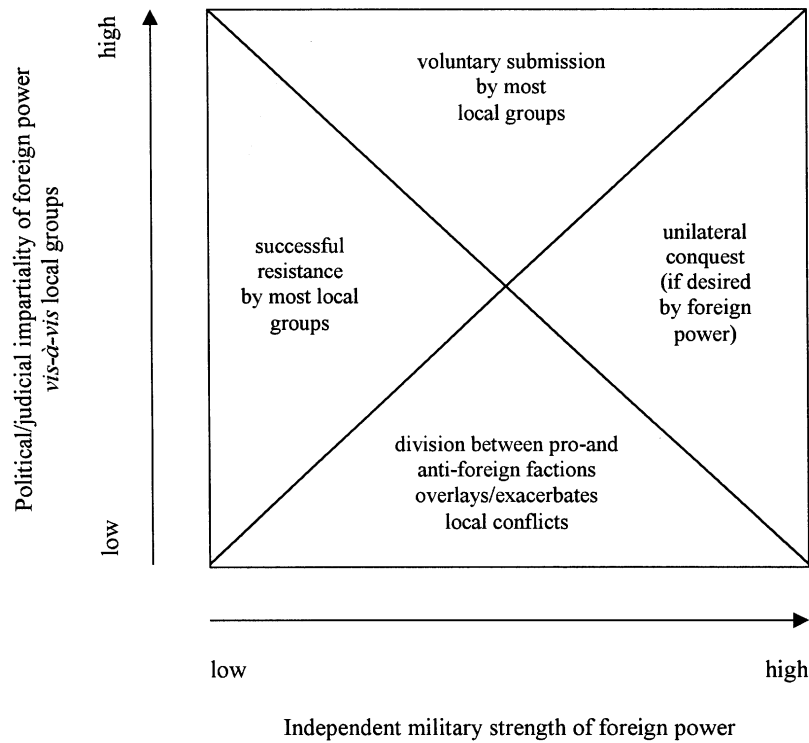


Figure 2. Likely outcomes of interaction between a foreign power and a set of mutually hostile local groups.

strong. Conversely, an outside power which—whether due to lack of foresight and political skill, or due to existing ties with particular local actors—is incapable of remaining impartial in domestic disputes will be attractive only as an ally for those parties which it happens to favour, and that only if it is strong enough to provide them with useful support; too strong, moreover, and it may instill in them a prohibitive fear of permanent domination, or decide it has no need of their help anyway.⁸⁶ Other things being equal, the impartiality of a more obviously foreign or reputedly sacred external

⁸⁶ Colson (1974: 65) proposes a systematic contrast in this respect between the processes of colonial expansion in Africa and North America respectively: 'Over much of North America, the coming of Europeans had a contrary effect and led to an increase in warfare. Native Americans viewed representatives of the federal government, not as a usable arbitrator in local disputes, but as the immediate ally of white settlers already overrunning their lands. Integration into the larger political unit came with total defeat.'

power—in the past, the two qualities often went together—will tend to be more credible than that of a relatively familiar and mundane one. A reputation for impartiality, however, can also be based on observed judicial performance in practice, which depends on demonstrated political disinterestedness and/or commitment to impersonal justice.

Concluding remarks

To argue that European expansion was often powered partly by an appreciation for the peacemaking function of colonial states is not to insist that before these arrived, life was a Hobbesian nightmare of ceaseless violence. Even in undeniably violent and warlike northern Sulawesi, it was emphasized above, war was neither continuous, nor particularly bloody in terms of the actual numbers of people killed or wounded. Moreover, stateless yet peaceful (or at least warless) societies, although rare, are attested to here and there in the ethnographic record. Two examples which have played a significant role in the anthropological debate on the origins of war, both of them comprising small and sparse populations of swidden farmers, are in fact to be found not far beyond the borders of Indonesia: the Buid uplanders of Mindoro (Philippines), and the Semai and neighbouring ‘aboriginal’ groups of peninsular Malaysia.⁸⁷ When assessing the significance of these unusually peaceful tribal societies, however, it is important to note that both, as McCauley (1990: 16) bluntly observes, ‘were peaceful at the expense of living lives obsessed by violence’. Among the Semai, any lack of harmony between neighbours was invariably seen ‘in terms of its potential (*never* realized) of producing the war of each against all’ (Robarcheck 1990: 74); among the Buid, the fear of interpersonal conflict was so great that even casual conversations were routinely carried out sitting back to back in order to avoid potentially provocative eye contact (Gibson 1986: 46). ‘Anthropologists’, Elizabeth Colson (1974: 37) once wrote, ‘have a liking for paradoxes and it should therefore be no surprise to us if some people live in what appears to be a Rousseauian paradise because they take a Hobbesian view of their situation: they walk softly because they believe it necessary not to offend others whom

⁸⁷ Dentan 1968; Gibson 1986, 1989, 1990: 130–3; Howell 1989; Robarcheck 1989, 1990.

they regard as dangerous'.⁸⁸ Nor, as Colson also pointed out in an African context, is it necessary to believe in an actual 'war of each against all' in order to appreciate the attraction of state authority as an alternative to custom, self-control and mutual avoidance as a way of preventing the outbreak of such a war.⁸⁹

[P]eople felt the constraints of the self-control necessary if they were to avoid bringing their neighbors down [upon] them and also felt the strain of being on guard against encroachment. They recognized that they lived in danger that the peace would be broken and the community disrupted. [. . .] Knowing the evils of one's situation and doing something about them are very different matters. Change, as we all know, is difficult [. . .]. On occasion, the guarantee that makes people willing to experiment appears to be due to the intrusion of representatives of some external power whose support can be invoked to force compliance and so create the order that in turn legitimates itself. [. . .] We cannot understand the history of the colonial period, or indeed the history of our own time, if we do not understand that people may be prepared to accept authority, even though they find it both threatening and frustrating, because they see it as the guarantor of an overarching security which they value or as promising a security that is lacking. (Colson 1974: 62–4, 67.)

Whether it was actual violence or merely the ever-present threat of violence which contributed most to the acceptance of state authority in the past, there surely remains something naive about the search for the 'roots of violence' (Colombijn and Lindblad 2002) which now preoccupies many anthropologists and other scholars of Indonesia—the more so since writers in this genre are often inclined to lay the blame in the first place at the door of the state itself.⁹⁰ In reality there are always reasons for people to be in conflict with one another, and in all cultures, to make matters worse, there are at least some

⁸⁸ This need to 'walk softly' was, of course, a severe obstacle to effective collective action (Robarcheck 1989: 40). '[P]eople must deliberate long and carefully', observed Adriani and Kruyt (1950–51, I: 114) of village level decision-making among the Toraja, 'before they can come to a [collective] decision. They take each others' interests into account because they are afraid of each another; somebody whose interests have been damaged sets his heart on revenge [. . .]. For this reason they are on their guard against one another, and in matters involving a large number of people it often happened that no decision could be taken because nobody dared to accept the necessary responsibility.'

⁸⁹ Even Hobbes himself, as Marshall Sahlins (1968: 7) points out, did not believe that 'primitive anarchy' had ever been a 'general empirical condition'; reading *Leviathan*, in fact, it is clear that like Sahlins, Hobbes (1996: 88–9) saw 'Warre' less as the enduring condition of stateless political systems than as their underlying 'inclination' or 'disposition'.

⁹⁰ Anderson 2001; Colombijn and Lindblad 2002; Hüsken and De Jonge 2002; Wessel and Wimhöfer 2001.

people (mainly young men) who actually relish the prospect of violence. The more significant question, of course, is that of how conflicts are resolved or violence suppressed, and historians of Indonesia would probably do well to concentrate less on the origins of violent conflict than on the origins of peaceful cooperation.

Social solidarity is not self-explanatory, and in precolonial Indonesia it was a scarce, valuable resource. Groups which possessed a lot of it, including small ethnic minorities like the Dutch, could often achieve a great deal more in political or military terms than could numerically stronger but socially less cohesive rivals.⁹¹ At the same time their social isolation tended to protect them from overly partial, personal or passionate involvements in the internal conflicts of other groups, thereby enabling them to provide relatively acceptable forms of dispute arbitration and adjudication as well as effective conflict suppression, so that in the long run they also tended to promote greater internal solidarity among the groups which they came to dominate. Ultimately, of course, this derived solidarity rebounded on the Dutch in the form of anticolonial nationalism, but in its early stages colonial expansion often had much more to do with enmity and conflict among Indonesians than it did with European violence against Indonesians.⁹² In some cases this was true even where indigenous political units were relatively large and sophisticated. The proximate reason for the vulnerability of Javanese states to hesitant or reluctant VOC intervention in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, was surely that too many members of the Javanese nobility always hated each other more than they hated any foreigner, so that the Company was ‘inexorably sucked into Javanese affairs’ (Nagtegaal 1996: 16) by opportunistic requests for support in civil conflicts until finally a stable equilibrium was reached in

⁹¹ To some extent this is also true of the ethnic Chinese, who established powerful *kongsi* states in Kalimantan (Yuan 2000) and played a critical role in the Javanese wars of the mid-eighteenth century after 10,000 of them were massacred by the Dutch in Batavia because they were thought to pose a direct threat to European power (Ricklefs 2001: 120–1). Considering that it suits many historians to attribute the commercial success of the Chinese in Indonesia precisely to Dutch favouritism, it is a remarkable irony that the massacre of Batavia’s Chinese in 1740 was probably the single most destructive act of Dutch violence in Indonesia at any time prior to the Aceh War.

⁹² The Indonesian nationalists of the early twentieth century were painfully aware of this: hence, in part, the enormous emphasis on unity in nationalist ideology. The principle of counterfactuality of ideals—that people seldom idealize what they already enjoy—is probably one which deserves wider application in the field of Indonesian history.

which the Dutch found themselves playing what Ricklefs (1974: 420–1) explicitly calls a ‘mediatory role’ as ‘ultimate arbiters of insoluble disputes’ between two permanently separate Javanese kingdoms of roughly equal strength.⁹³

In the case of originally stateless societies like those of northern Sulawesi, as we have seen, it is possible to go further and conclude that from the beginning, Dutch intervention was considered by many indigenous actors not only as a useful aid to realizing their individual political and military ambitions, but also as an acceptable, if imperfect, solution to their broader collective problems of mutual conflict and political instability. This is not to suggest that the stateless societies of Indonesia were any more violent, fissiparous or fragile than their counterparts elsewhere in the world. But we will not understand the nature of those societies better if, whether out of embarrassment, disbelief, or lack of interest, we choose to ignore either the ease with which they were often brought under colonial control, or the evidence that ‘stranger-kings’ were perceived as fulfilling useful functions among them. Focusing on the indigenous roots of colonialism may also help us to acquire a more realistic awareness of the obstacles to peaceful cooperation in Indonesian (and other) societies, and a clearer perception of the usefulness of states in overcoming these.

It will be obvious that according to the model of state formation proposed here, the state is not in the first place the institutionalized victory of a predatory ruling group, but rather the product of an (explicit or implicit) ‘social contract’ between governors and governed. Among social scientists and historians the contract approach to the state reached a low point of popularity under the influence of Marxism around three decades ago, 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’.⁹⁴ After 1980, however, the theoretical tide began to turn under the influence of the New Institutional

⁹³ Besides the jealous divisions among the Javanese and the solidarity born of social isolation on the Dutch side, the rule-based bureaucratic order which the VOC was able to sustain over long, intergenerational periods was of course also crucial here. The fact that there were many Javanese wars of succession, whereas the idea of a VOC war of succession seems faintly ridiculous, reflects the incomparable advantage which the Dutch always enjoyed in this respect.

⁹⁴ This was not, of course, a universal view even at that time. Compare, for instance: Colson 1974; Service 1975.

Economics, which highlighted the role of modern states in providing the public goods, property rights, and judicial services necessary to sustain economic growth (North 1981: 20–32). Since 1990 it has become commonplace to treat even authoritarian political institutions as the outcomes of ‘games’ in which rational actors seek a balance between the need for centrally organized public services and the ‘moral hazard’ of elite selfishness.⁹⁵ Recently, legal scholars working in this tradition have argued that the triad made up of ‘two contracting parties and a dispute resolver’ actually constitutes ‘a primal social institution, a microcosm of governance’, so that the origins of the state must be sought in the need for dispute resolution (Stone Sweet 2002: 55).

Yet in reality all states do have predatory as well as contractual aspects, the two existing in permanent tension with each other. In drawing attention to the vulnerability of some tribal societies to, or even their enthusiasm for, colonial expansion, it is certainly not my intention to idealize colonial rulers or to deny their economic motives and interests. During the period of very heavy compulsory labour services in the nineteenth century, Dutch officials in Minahasa shocked even some European visitors with the single-minded way in which they ‘abused their superior position to appropriate the fruits of the sweat and toil of many thousands of their minions’.⁹⁶ Such exploitation has an inevitable tendency to undermine whatever popular legitimacy the state derives from its peacemaking and judicial functions. Any political advantage which the post-colonial Indonesian state apparatus, for example, might have derived (despite local democratic aspirations higher than in colonial times) from its outsider status in remote areas such as Aceh, Kalimantan and Papua was counterbalanced by its rapacity with respect to local resources, and often also by its sponsorship of transmigration projects which led to direct economic competition between local people and immigrants. Its military strength, meanwhile, meant that it often had little incentive to maintain a reputation for judicial impartiality which might have proved detrimental to the economic interests of its immediate beneficiaries. After the fall of Suharto in 1998, the cred-

⁹⁵ North 1990; Barzel 2002; Bates *et al.* 1998. Not much work in this paradigm, on the other hand, seems to have been done with respect to tribal societies or early states; exceptions include Bates (1983: 7–58), Ensminger (1990, 1992) and Wiessner (2002).

⁹⁶ Dumont d’Urville 1833: 444. Unfortunately others, including the much-quoted Alfred Russel Wallace (1987: 194–7), were less critical.

ibility of the central government as a neutral mediator in local conflicts was if anything further eroded when the state itself became splintered to a degree unknown in colonial times, with internal factions manoeuvring for power and elements of the military deliberately fanning some local conflicts in order to discredit the civilian authorities. If the warring parties in the Moluccas, for instance, were slow to accept central government mediation, adjudication or peace-making in the conflict which broke out there between Christian and Muslim militias in 1999, this was not least because a part of the military forces sent to the islands by Jakarta sided openly with the Muslim protagonists—while elements of the police force, conversely, took up arms on behalf of the Christians.⁹⁷

In recent years many commentators both inside and outside the country have concluded that the most lasting solution to conflicts within Indonesian society, and at the same time to the problem of the predatory state, lies in a strengthening of ‘civil society’. Notoriously difficult to define with precision, this term refers to that often elusive sphere of ‘private’ social interaction among individual citizens, located somewhere between economy and state, which includes voluntary associations and non-government organizations, and which is associated with ‘civic’ behaviour and ‘good citizenship’.⁹⁸ Even the most straightforward definitions of civil society, however, acknowledge that it necessarily complements, rather than replaces, the state.

The simplest, immediate and intuitively obvious definition, which also has a good deal of merit, is that Civil Society is that set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state and, while not preventing the state from filling its role of keeper of the peace and arbitrator between major interests, can nevertheless prevent it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society. (Gellner 1996: 5.)

The idea of civil society, in fact, is closely linked with that of the rule of law (Mamdani 1996: 14), and ultimately it is the state which, although itself bound by law, must underwrite civil society by enforcing the law against any individuals or groups which insist on behaving in uncivil ways. Even Robert Hefner, a prominent academic proponent of ‘civility’ as a remedy for Indonesia’s political problems,

⁹⁷ Aditjondro 2001; Kingsbury 2003: 107; Liem 2002: 218.

⁹⁸ For instance: Hadi Soesastro 1999; Hedman 2001: 942–9; Hefner 2000; Hikam 1993; Holloway and Kusanto Anggoro 2000; Leifer 1995. Overviews of the international discussions and debates surrounding the notion of civil society include: Ehrenberg 1999; Gellner 1996; Hall 1995; Keane 1998; Seligman 1992.

concedes that a civil society will always have to be complemented by a civilized state if order is to be maintained and justice done:

[I]n Indonesia, the culture of civility remains vulnerable and incomplete if it is not accompanied by a transformation of state. This is to say, [...] civil society is not opposed to the state but deeply dependent on its *civilization*. The state must open itself to public participation. At the same time, independent courts and watchdog agencies must be ready to intervene when, as inevitably happens, some citizen or official tries to replace democratic proceduralism with nether-world violence. As vigilantes and hate groups regularly remind us, not all organizations in society are *civil*, and the state must act as a guardian of public civility as well as a vehicle of the popular will. (Hefner 2000: 215.)

In Indonesia as elsewhere, the real challenge for the future will not be to do without the state, nor even to weaken it, but rather to tame it in such a way that it minimizes conflict—and ultimately also the potential for conflict—by providing a high quality of justice.

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