

Hiérarchie et pouvoir traditionnels en pays Wadjo' Christian Pelras [English Summary](#)

4) Wadjo' constituted at the end of the XVI th. century until 1906 an autonomous principality in the very heart of the Bugis country (Sulawesi). The exercise of power there was divided amongst forty dignitaries of whom the principal was Arung Matoa, but it was also subdivided into thirty small manors (wanua) each possessing their own political organization. Christian Pelras, Chargé of research at C.N.R.S., stayed for eight months in the Wadjo' country during 1967-68. Here he analyses a system which better than that of the two large states of south Celebes, Goa and Boné, no doubt represents fairly well the original form of the Bugis political organisation.

In the epico-mythical cycle of La Galigo, the social order is represented as founded since the beginning of the world, on the very clear distinction between princes of royal blood and the populous born as their servants. The first generation of princes having disappeared, the people "showed themselves completely incapable of producing a stable government" and a new generation of lords, "descended from the heavens (manurung)", is esteemed to be at the origin of the most ancient wanua. It was inconceivable for the Bugis that a country could continue to survive and prosper, without having at its head a lord of divine descent. That does not mean however that the role of the arung was to govern; rather his simple presence and behaviour assured the perennial natural and moral order. Similarly the regalia (aradjang) were not so much signs of power as symbols of the country itself.

The principle of disparity between the nobility and the people, joined with the existence of marriage bonds between the two and the bilateral character of the Bugis kinship system, is at the origin of the numerous intermediary degrees in the aristocratic hierarchy. The data gathered in 1968 by Christian Pelras differed on many points from that collected by the Contrôleur van Rhijn (and presented by Friedericy) in 1933. In fact the view one has of the hierarchical system differs according to the place occupied by the informant, and one must wary of establishing an artificial synthesis that would give a simplified image of a reality that remains very complex.

The dominant situation of the nobility is measured, above all, by the network of alliances and clientel, centered around certain leaders of nobility. It is through the need to create similar clientel that the relatively frequent marriage between men of nobility and woman of lower birth occurs, multiplying the intermediary degrees of hierarchy. The theory of Bertling (1939) according to which the Bugis hierarchy would have been arisen from the phenomenon of hypergamy, cropping up in the heart of a former system of "generalized exchange", is in contradiction with the texts of the Bugis myths of the beginning, and does not seem well-founded.

To understand the fundamental heterogeneity of the nobility and the people, and the power conferred by the people on the lord, one could reason that the manurung simply correspond to the oldest ancestors of the dynasty whose name was retained by the traditions of each wanua. Another hypothesis consists in thinking that the local lords owed their existence to an former expansion of the prestigious house of Luwuq This kingdom, located at the bottom of the gulf of Boné, was, in the XIV th. century, in contact with the Javanese kingdom of Modjopahit, and it is probably thus that the few Javanese influences still felt in Celebes were introduced.