During interviews in South Sulawesi the political system of the various states was always described in full detail, with accounts of the functions attached to various offices, and the whole panoply of ranks. When asked, for example, how many members were in the *Bate Salappang* during the colonial period, the answer was always 'nine', although in fact there were not nine but six during this period. Similarly, if asked about the *Makkadanngé Tana*, most informants would identify it as an ancient office, without mentioning that it had been in abeyance for over a hundred years before it was recreated by the returning Dutch in 1946. Such mistakes are simple enough, but are indicative of a more significant trend: a tendency to see the theoretical state structure as proper, as what a state should have, without enquiring too deeply whether in fact these offices did exist, or whether or not they functioned as theory specificed.

We return then to the central distinction between the image of the ideal order, the actual political system and power relationships. If the ideal expressed in the *tomanurung* 'contract' (and reinforced in such politico-moral classics as the *Latoa* (Mattulada 1975)) depicted a relationship between *hadat* and rulers centred upon co-operation and the sharing of burdens, with mutual respect for each other's separate spheres, the reality of power relations was one of tension and competition. Nevertheless, the basic truth was there, in that power sharing between the two elements - king and *hadat* - remained central. In Bone, however, the power struggle was resolved by Aru Palakka's centralization of power by the end of the seventeenth century and *hadat* and ruler began to fuse into one (Andaya 1975). Despite this growing together the two elements of the ideal image were retained, although the power equilibrium altered.

Colonial manipulation of South Sulawesi political systems was obvious, because the demands made upon them by the Dutch regime were far in excess of indigenous expectations. This does not mean that manipulation was new, but simply that it went beyond the normal boundaries and was more clumsy and ill-informed. Within the highly competitive world of indigenous politics there was a continual flow of feed-back and translation as changing power concentrations were reflected in shifts in position within the political system and legitimized by rank or titles which referred to the ideal order. The Netherlanders, however, were outside the cultural consensus and moral community of the indigenous elite, and often used apparently traditional elements or titles to mask innovations drawn from a very different culture, that of Europe and colonial *realpolitik*.

During the first two decades of Dutch rule use of the indigenous political system was fairly crude and simple, a local application of the well established principle of working through the *volkshoofden* (people's chiefs). But by the late 1920s manipulation was much more thoroughly grounded and intelligent, drawing as it did on the accumulated expertise of officials and students of *adatrecht* (customary law). The procedure seemed to be one of gathering accounts of the political system - primarily from aristocratic informants depicting the ideal image - and then selecting elements from that model for either alteration or introduction. Thus, the *Aru Pitu* were recast as district officers, with no success, but later built into effective ministers with specific central responsibility. The *Tomarilaleng* were, in the 1920s and 1930s, intended to be useful aids for the rulers, while the reintroduction of assorted ranks (*Paccalaya, Makkedanngé Tana, Tumabbiccarabuta*) in the 1940s was intended to stimulate the state's new democratic impulses. These stratagems were, in the first two cases, attempts to make use of old elements by giving them new roles; in the last instance it was the introduction of new elements into the political system, but with the hope of legitimizing them by calling on the *lontara* accounts of ancient states.

But one of the problems inherent in such redefinition of the elements of a structure is that the very process of redefinition, of allotting new content, can so disturb the relationships between elements that the structure itself begins to change. In a colonial situation there is also a more general and fundamental threat to the political structure, because power is appropriated by the alien overlords, while they may prop up or reorganize the state organization. In South Sulawesi it seems that the initial Dutch destruction of the states nucleus - the ruler and his household - may have had little permanent effect, as it was a mere twenty years before the kings returned, with their panoply carefully recreated. It is possible that a more serious disturbance was the colonial re-inforcement of royal authority and attempts to isolate the court from the free interplay of political growth and competition. The period of the 1940s was particularly destructive, where Dutch attempts to co-op members of the various royal dynasties and rapidly polarizing loyalties added to the demoralization of occupation and an especially violent revolution.

The legacy of the colonial use of the South Sulawesi political systems seems to have been a movement away from the personal, decentralized indigenous states towards a more authoritarian and functionally

arrangements were always the same, depending on the position of the district, not on the birth of the incumbant.

During the period of Dutch rule in South Sulawesi the existing political system had to adjust to drastic changes. In some cases, innovations could be absorbed, in others not. In 1905, for example, just after the conquest of Bone, the new regime decided to rationalize administration by making the *Aru Pitu* of the *hadat* into district heads. The step was a failure, because the *Aru Pitu* had no territorial authority beyond the cluster of villages around the capital. In the course of time they had fused into the centre, and their power lay in their relationship with the *Arumpone* (king), not in any local power base. So they were impotent when confronted by the entrenched authority of the existing village chiefs. But the same step in Gowa turned out to be a success. The *Bate Sallapang* (in theory nine, in fact six, *hadat* members) had remained purely territorial chiefs, with great authority in their extensive districts, but separate from the royal family. When they were appointed as colonial district chiefs, it was more or less a recognition of their status, and they were of course effective.

By 1927, however, a reassessment of colonial administrative policy had occurred, and the *Aru Pitu*, who had proved such weak district officers, were brought back to the centre and given specialized functions, a quasi-ministerial responsibility. Once again they formed a governing council in the capital, and proved to be able and respected. But such a step was not possible in Gowa, where the relatively low birth and territorially restricted prestige of the *Bate Sallapang* precluded any attempt to establish them as an over-arching superstructure governing the local chiefs.

An example of elementary miscalculation also occurred in 1910, when the Dutch failed to observe the simplest rule of South Sulawesi politics: that blood hierarchy parallels the ranking of power. In 1910 the colonial regime decided to improve administration by creating a new district around the Gowa capital, and appointed quite a high born man, Karaeng Karuwisi, as official. The scheme was a total failure, as there was such a concentration of pure nobility around the court that the Karaeng was always being confronted by people of 'whiter' blood, to whom he must defer. Another clear failure to appreciate the realities of the political system occurred in Wajo, where chiefs of great prestige, the *Ranreng*, were chosen as the leaders of a new territorially defined bureaucratic organization. But while the *Ranreng* had spheres of influence, personal

followings, land, and prestige, they had never had a territory they ruled directly. Their followers were scattered through the land. Consequently, they never succeeded as 'district chiefs', the Dutch were simply calling upon an authority that was not there.

During the 1930s colonial policy was directed towards tightening control and preventing any nationalist challenge by strengthening and recreating the traditional states. In 1931 a king was appointed again in Bone, the last one having been deposed after the war of 1905-1906, and in 1936 Gowa also received a ruler, the first since 1906. The general thrust of Dutch concern was to prevent any challenge to these kings. In effect this continued a trend noticeable in colonial policy since the political intervention of the Netherlands became effective - if indirect and partial - after 1860. For, partly because they were unaware of the checks and balances and moderating influence of indigenous political ethics and kinship within the South Sulawesi systems, and partly because an autocratic state was easier to control, the Dutch strengthened kings and queens and gave them more power over their chiefs and people, widening the gap between the rulers and the ruled, and so indirectly encouraging arrogance and insensitivity.

In 1942 Netherlands rule in South Sulawesi was interrupted by the Pacific War, and the Japanese occupation lasted till 1945. Then the Dutch returned, and their attempts to reestablish their rule in South Sulawesi were both ruthless and bloody. But among the more peaceful efforts to ensure stability was a belated attempt to make the political system more responsive to popular needs, more democratic. Here the Dutch found that they had to contend with the legacy of their earlier policy, their strengthening of the authoritarian character of the South Sulawesi rulers. Just as they had appealed to tradition to legitimize changes in administration before the war, so too in 1946 did the Netherlanders turn to the old chronicles (*lontara*) to justify further innovation. They wanted to soften the rulers' power by introducing a sort of prime minister, so, using old titles from the *lontara*, in 1946 they introduced in Gowa the *Paccalaya* and the *Tumabbicarabutta*, and in Bone the *Makkedanngé Tana*. But once again this manipulation of the political traditions was somewhat imposed and artificial, for whereas the dynamic of the old system was a decentralization of power, remodelled by the Dutch into an authoritarian bureaucratic 'feudal' state, the 1946 changes aimed at creating a centralized constitutional monarchy (Chabot 1950, Friedericy 1929, Andaya 1975, archive material and interviews).

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differentiated form of government. The apparent specialization of the pre-colonial states existed more as an image of a representative, balanced system, where each element had its place, rights and responsibilities than as an institutionalized reality. Many people in South Sulawesi today, following the usual pattern of feedback between image, system and power give an account of the ideal model which reflects the theory of today's politics. So stress is laid on the idea of contract, on democratic representation within the old states, while there is a tendency to doubt the implicitly divine origins of the *tomanurung*.

The political system of South Sulawesi was, like most systems, a flexible container which could accommodate changing power relations and legitimized them by referring to an ideal image of how states should be organized, how political leaders should behave. For a true understanding of the history of the region it is necessary to take into account not only the fluctuating competition of power politics, and not merely the ideal model or array of titled offices, but the interaction and mutual influence between all three because they are, ultimately, different facets of the same phenomenon. Idealized models of proper states, encompassing elements of contract, representation, consensus, balance, the division power and so on are interesting in themselves, but a historian - by definition interested in process - should test the model against events and examine its effect on actual behaviour. Conversely, the influence of conceptions of political life and behaviour, categories of thought, can only be ignored at the risk of making one of the misinterpretations outlined at the beginning of this essay.

In his study of *The Political System of the Atoni of Timor* Professor Schulte Nordholt displays a continuing interest in the historical dimensions of Atoni life and thought. Indeed, he remarks that the book 'aims to be a sample of the type of historiography with which for the greater part a start still has to be made, namely Indonesian historiography on the basis of colonial sources' (Schulte Nordholt 1971: 159). He has succeeded in fulfilling his aim, as the book presents the Atoni in centre stage; they could be placed there so surely because of the author's intimate knowledge and understanding of Atoni culture, which in turn was given the essential diachronic dimension through extensive study of the colonial sources. Because of his sound scholarship, in both the disciplines of anthropology and history, and because

of his freedom from that 'enormous condenscension' which so often limits accounts of the history of 'little people' (Thompson 1970:13), Professor Schulte Nordholt has written a book in which both the dignity of his subjects and the enlightenment of his readers are given their full weight.

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> buy; you trade what is suitable for you to trade, and you ask for things that is correct for you to request, and we will give it to you, but you are not to take things away from us. The king is not to decide on any matter concerning domestic affairs without the *gallarang*, and the *gallarang* are not to decide anything concerning war without the king" (Mattulada 1978:174, slightly paraphrased here).

Such a tradition, with its strong emphasis on the mutual dependence between ruler and chiefs, and on the limitations of power, is an interesting insight into a state as a balancing of interest groups. The *tomanurung* stories are also fascinating in that they seem to give a glimpse of the process of state formation - at least in a dramatised form. Moreover, the division of responsability and power between ruler and headmen is also the key to the central element in South Sulawesi political structure, the relationship between the *hadat* (council of headmen, such as the *gallarang* described above) and the king.

A schematic representation of a typical South Sulawesi kingdom is of a ruler at the apex of a state which is a confederation of units, often a confederation of confederations. The king governs by consensus, following consultation with the *hadat* on internal matters affecting the core of the kingdom, usually the cluster of original villages (or small village federations) whose headmen made the contract with the *tomanurung* and comprise the *hadat*. If the state has grown at all, it has usually done so by a process of conglomeration. As the power of the ruler grows, neighbouring kingdoms, federations or villages join in, either as a result of conquest or because their leaders choose to ally themselves with a waxing force. In each case, the original rulers or chiefs remain in charge of internal affairs, but fall under the authority of the dominant king in the event of war or 'international' confrontations.

This is the typical pattern for Buginese Bone, where the seven original headmen formed the *hadat Aru Pitu* (seven princes) of Gowa, with its *gallarang* joined in the *Bate Sallapang* (the nine banners, a *hadat* of nine), while in ethnically more complex areas such as Luwu, the confederate nature of the state includes representatives of the ruling elite (basically a Buginese ethnic variant) in the *hadat* as well as Toraja headmen representing the bulk of the population. Alongside the central power holders of ruler and *hadat*, in each state there were also various officials, such as the chief minister the *Tomarilaleng* (Bone; in Gowa *Tumailalang*), a considerable figure in all states. In some kingdoms, such as Soppeng, the leading official, the *Aru Bila*, had most power, and the ruler was referred to as 'sleeping' (archive sources and

interviews).

Since most South Sulawesi kings were of *tomanurung* descent they had the 'white blood' of the high nobility, and a continuing preoccupation of all members of the nobility was to preserve or increase their level of this 'white blood', the expression and proof of their right to command. Consequently, there was a constant struggle for men to acquire wives as well-born as possible, and to ensure that their women did not marry beneath themselves, since in the Buginese/Makassarese bilateral kinship system the mother's birth counts as much as the father's in calculating the precise degree of nobility of the child. A result of this was that, by the early twentieth century at least, the aristocracy and ruling houses had such an elaborate network of marriage and blood ties knitting them together, that they formed one great family. Parents looked outside their own kingdoms to find a spouse of suitable birth. Since the *gallarang* or headmen, and many of the vassal rulers, were not of *tomanurung* descent or high nobility, rulers did not marry with the *hadat* families, or at least this seems to have been the original practice. In some kingdoms, however, or at any rate in Bone, the line between ruler and council blurred. A combination of factors (including the relative smallness of the land area and population controlled by the *Aru Pitu*) enabled a seventeenth century Bone king to centralize power and overcome the *hadat*'s separate identity. His descendents intermarried with council families, so that rulers, *hadat* and ministers were all related and all noble. But in other states, such as in Gowa, Mandar or Soppeng, there was no intermarriage; it was discouraged or even explicitly prohibited. Here the balance was maintained, and one result - in Gowa at least - was that the ruling family jealously preserved its purity and enforced its special privileges with iron determination.

This discrepancy in marriage alliances is a clue to the flexibility with which these apparently fixed systems could alter in order to accommodate change. The shifts were also expressed in the seating arrangements at ceremonies: in Bone, where birth was similar and family ties united *hadat* and ruler, the stress in ranking was on the degree of 'white blood', and the *Aru Pitu* of the *hadat* had no fixed places. If the head of one of the villages who formed the core area died, his successor's place in ceremonies was not necessarily the same - it depended on blood, not on his place in the *hadat*. But in Gowa, where no intermarriage had occurred, the seniority of *Bate Sallapang* members depended on their ancient ranking and did not change: seating

but the relationship between image and reality is much looser in the more complex and cosmopolitan Buginese/Makassarese society than with the Atoni. Moreover, in South Sulawesi relatively large scale states developed long ago, probably in the fourteenth century; there was contact with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, followed by conversion to Islam after 1605 and then the expansion of Dutch power out of their base in Makassar (after 1667). For most of the peninsula Holland was a power to be reckoned with during the nineteenth century, and the formal imposition of colonial rule came after the 1905-1906 conquest (Harvey 1974, Couvreur 1929, archive material). As a result of all these contacts and parallel internal development it is not possible to make a direct comparison between the Atoni and the Makassarese/Buginese.

Nevertheless, it is possible that research directed towards this goal might produce interesting results. For South Sulawesi is in East Indonesia, and during casual conversations remarks were made which had intriguing suggestions of implicit categorization: elaborate accounts of old Makassarese state organization with male and female elements in reciprocity and balance, division of power within Soppeng between a dynamic active leader and a passive female ruler. But since my research was directed towards events during the colonial period any comments on this deeper level of meaning would be purely speculative. In the following pages I hope to show how Dutch attempts at administrative reorganization were limited by the indigenous political structure, which in some cases permitted the desired changes, and in others ensured their failure.

Directly after their defeat of the South Sulawesi states (which resulted in the death of the ruler of Gowa and exile of Bone's king) military rule was introduced. The emphasis during this period was on establishing and maintaining control, little attention was paid to the niceties of administration; the general idea was that the states would eventually come under Dutch direct rule, once the various bands and guerilla groups had been crushed. But by 1916 colonial thinking had changed; it was decided to rule through the 'native chiefs', but without a central court. The state remained, but the ruler was replaced by the colonial *Controleur*. This was economical, and ran less risk of political upheaval. In 1926, again following general policy which was veering towards a hard conservatism, a further change took place. The old states were to be re-created; their central establishments of king, ministers and council were gradually reborn with the Dutch as midwife, in the hope

that they would form an alliance with the colonial regime against trouble-making nationalists, democrats or religious leaders. The next major shift in colonial policy came after the second world war, when the returning colonial officials tried to create a more democratic and responsive indigenous regime (archive material).

This is the general background in colonial policy. In South Sulawesi itself there is little interest in this aspect of twentieth century history. For local historians it is only the story of the struggles against the Dutch which form a worthy successor to the accounts of the rise and fall of rulers and kingdoms given in the well developed classic and modern historiography of the region. But in fact the mundane details of colonial administration also contain hidden insights and comment on the indigenous development of the region's political history. The thread can be followed through from the traditional histories to the documents of the Dutch officials.

The archetypical Buginese/Makassarese state history begins with the arrival on earth of a *tomanurung*, one who 'descended' and so was, at least by strong implication, of divine descent. In a typical story, a group of village heads, attracted by signs of cosmic disturbance such as great storms, hear of a marvellous yellow clad being, usually accompanied by followers bearing attributes. The village heads beg this marvellous being to become their ruler, and an agreement is made between the two parties. It is this element of agreement, often called a 'contract', which is one of the unique elements in South Sulawesi political traditions (Andaya 1975, Friedericy 1929, Abd. Razak Dg. Patunru 1964, Abd. Razak Dg. Patunru 1969).

An example will serve to make this clear. In Gowa accounts the local headmen (*gallarang*) speak thus to the *Tomanurung*:

> "We have made you our king, and we have become your slaves. You become the cord onto which we hold, and we become the *labu* (water container) that hangs from you. If the cord breaks but the *labu* does not fall and shatter, then we become traitors; your weapon cannot stab us, nor can you die by our weapons. Only the gods can take our lives, and only the gods also can put you to death. You order and we obey, but when our hands carry a load our shoulders will not take any, and if our shoulders are already burdened our hands will no longer carry a load. You are the wind and we the leaves of the tree, but you can shake down only the dry and withered leaves. You are water, and we are a floating trunk in the stream, but only a flood is able to carry it away. Our children and wives, if not in favour with the state, will also find no favour with us. We make you king over us, but you are not king over our possessions. You are not to take our chickens from their perches, nor our eggs from our baskets. If you wish to purchase something from us, you buy what is fitting that you

indigenous categories of thought will influence acceptance or rejection of new elements, depending on their congruence with the existing system.

The purpose of this essay is to consider aspects of political organization in South-west Sulawesi (Celebes) and their relationship to colonial administrative change after the Dutch conquest of 1905-1906. It must be stressed at the outset, however, that this is an exploratory paper on work in progress; my accounts of indigenous structure and administrative politics are based on a preliminary survey of archive material and an orientation visit to the region of four months duration. Consequently, my conclusions here are tentative, and intended more to indicate possible research directions than to attempt a final comment on the complex interplay of indigenous political structure and colonial regime.

South Sulawesi's image is based on the reputation of its predominantly Makassarese/Buginese population. Although not particularly numerous - they totalled about two million in 1930 - the Makassarese and Buginese were renowned for their aggressive character, reflected in their individual willingness to use violence to defend their honour, their frequent collective recourse to arms in the competitive inter-state rivalry typical of the peninsula, and also in their success as sailors and traders. The stereotypic Buginese or Makassarese was a fierce warrior, brave sea-farer and fanatical Muslim who would tolerate no check upon his pride and freedom. But at the same time, the region was regarded as extremely 'feudal', as its kings and princes seemed to have tremendous power over their passionately loyal followers. It was, then, a region of organized states, of which Makassarese Gowa and Buginese Bone were the two best known. It was also characterized by interaction, competition and participation in politics, trade and religion (Chabot 1950, Kooreman 1883, Errington 1977). As such, it presented a very different face to the world than did the small communities of Timor.

Historiographically, too, South Sulawesi stands in strong contrast to the a-historical Atoni. It is well known for its relatively rational and objective indigenous historical tradition. Diaries giving careful chronological accounts with precise dates were held by courts, chronicles record possible explanations but reserve judgement. The atmosphere is of reasonable men tracing the past, and as such provides the Western reader with a reassuring sense of familiarity, a relief compared with the charged symbolism and sacred forces concentrated in other Indonesian historical literature, such as the *babad* of Java (Noorduyn 1955,

Noorduyn 1965, Zainal Abidin 1971). Even in conversation, the direct frankness and willingness to express strong opinions of the Buginese and Makassarese seem to indicate a straightforward commitment to the world of men and material things.

Such a commitment does of course exist, but it would be a mistake to assume that this means that the western student can simply ignore the cultural differences. An interested observer's first enquiry about political organization produces a detailed account which seems complete and factual (supported as it often is by a diagram). But further investigation shows that what is usually given is not necessarily an existing system at a given time and place, but rather an account of how that particular state should always be. Whether it is Gowa or Bone or Soppeng or Luwu or another kingdom, a description of political organization is a depiction of the formal ideal of the state. More questions may eventually reveal all sorts of deviations, but they are regarded as intrinsically less important and less interesting than the structure as it should be.

During my research it became apparent that it would be useful to differentiate between three levels of political organization. At the most abstract, there was the image of the ideal order; this was usually the first account given, it was often felt to be enough, and people often spoke as if it were reality. The second level, which I will call the political system, was the actual institutionalized constellation of offices and ranks which provided a rudimentary central organization and base for the royal household, as well as formalizing the ties to subject villages, vassals and allies. The third level was that of actual power relationships, the concentration and dispersion of power within various offices and under different titles. All three levels were inextricably related: the political system was a partial realization of the ideal, an extrapolation from the theoretically complete, and the image served to express relationships and legitimize the system. The power relationships too were articulated and legitimized by their recognition through absorption into the system and hence by linkage to the ideal. The existence of such levels is not, of course, peculiar to South Sulawesi, but occurs in many societies - including the Netherlands or the United States.

The image of the ideal order provides a frame of reference for the organization and evaluation of political behaviour in South Sulawesi. As such, it is perhaps comparable to the Atoni classificatory system,

Sutherland 1980

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POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND COLONIAL CONTROL IN SOUTH SULAWESI[+]

In his discussion of the synthesis between old and new in Noimuti (north west Timor) Professor Schulte Nordholt remarks: "Everything is new: the political community itself, the religion and the ruler, but it has all been fitted into the existing categories of Timorese thinking" (Schulte Nordholt 1971:451). This observation must cause a certain uneasy self-questioning in anyone who presumes to try and write the history of people from other cultures. For it is clear that in Noimuti it would be all too easy for an unwary observer, ignorant of 'the categories of Timorese thinking', to fall into serious error. He could see the settlement as a totally 'new' community, a product of the Dominican mission. This would be the most likely misinterpretation, because the elements of European origin would be immediately recognizable to most outsiders, and hence dominant. But in theory the opposite mistake could also be made, of noticing only the Timorese pattern, not the new elements, so that Noimuti would be seen as typical of the region.

Protection from this kind of error can only come with an awareness of the pitfalls inherent in cross-cultural research. Most historians will never feel called upon to analyse classificatory systems or even kinship, but they must be aware that these and other elements of social and political structure can also be highly relevant variables. Much historical writing on Asia has been placed within a common and easy framework of simple dichotomies: 'continuity and change', or the now less fashionable 'modernity and tradition'. The problem with such analyses is, that they demand a clear base line: if the historian is to discuss change, where is his starting point? Usually, it is a short and static account of 'the traditional situation' on 'the eve of colonial

[+]This article pulls together material collected from the various colonial archives (particularly the Ujung Pandang collection of the Indonesian Arsip Nasional) as well as interviews conducted in South Sulawesi from May to September 1975.
I would like to express my gratitude to the Director and staff of the Arsip Nasional for their permission to use these collections, and for their generous assistance.

rule', with very little, if any, information on the flexibility, dynami of change and possibilities for growth which did or did not exist in th indigenous system. When the first European ships sail into the bay the switch is thrown and the dead mechanism comes to life: history begins.

The consequent 'change', or 'modernization' is seen in terms of the addition of new - mostly Western - elements or their replacement of old ones. The individual elements accumulate and, presumably when there ar enough of them, the group, place or state is sufficiently 'modern' or 'Europeanized' to be comfortably discussed within the terms usual for Western social and political analysis. Occasional reference may be made to persisting traditional elements, but they are often seen simply as survivals, and their continuing existence is not placed properly in context and examined for function and relevance. In other words - thoug it seems to be stating the obvious - any community, society or state should be studied as it is, as a structure of relationships, on several levels, which provides an organizational and interpretative framework.

While most historians now working on Indonesia, for example, do try to understand the principles of social and political organization, very few attempt to discuss the deeper structures. In his discussion of the classificatory system of the Atoni Professor Schulte Nordholt describes the ways in which they organize and express their view of the society in terms of the categories of their own system of symbols. In his accou of Noimuti, referred to above, Professor Schulte Nordholt demonstrates the flexibility of the Timorese system, its ability to incorporate and absorb new elements. At the same time, he observes that the Atoni lack historical perspective, and see their own culture as static; "it is only fit and proper that it should remain constantly the same now and for ever, from primordial times until all ages to come" (Schulte Nordholt 1971:448).

Several points emerge from this section which are of great interest to the historian. One such point is that an apparently unchanging society, with a long established and persisting structure and an a-historical view of the past, may nonetheless have adjusted to change and accepted new elements by incorporating them into the existing structure. From this follows also that within an apparently fixed and balanced structure, where nothing may change, a lively political life can continue, with competition, victory and defeat being translate into shifts in rank and status for individuals, as winner replaces loser, but in the same place in the system. Another point is that