Like many other Southeast Asian peoples, Toraja society has traditionally been divided into ranks of nobles, commoners and slaves. Here I describe one of the myths that places the origins of slavery far back in time, among the sky-beings, before humans had even descended to earth. This tale serves to naturalise the status of *kaunan* (slaves, the unfree) as a category already present in the very beginnings of society. But in the picture I will then sketch of the ranking system, I am at pains to emphasise how far the application of status differences varies from district to district, giving each its own particular ethos. I also seek to provide at least some anecdotal evidence (since that is really all that is available to the ethnographer) of how the system has been strained, although not overturned, by the social transformations of the twentieth century. There were several kinds of unfree status in pre-colonial Toraja society, as was often the case in other societies of the archipelago (Reid 1983a). In earlier chapters we saw that it was only in the late nineteenth century that this ‘closed’ system of slavery began to co-exist with a much more brutal ‘open’ system of commercial slave trading. They were not necessarily connected, however. Those who kidnapped people for sale were no respecters of rank, but preyed upon people who lived in remote and weakly defended areas. So those who were sold (*to dibatuk*) were not the same as *kaunan*, and were by no means always of humble origins. Disruptive as this period was to social relations, during the course of the twentieth century there were to be other forces of change, less violent but perhaps more far-reaching, that would pose a challenge to social assumptions about rank as a natural quality of birth. Efforts legally to abolish the status of *kaunan* were one thing; another was the way in which education, and the at first limited opportunities for white collar careers, began to create a small stratum of the urban middle class, who seem to have come quite often from middle-ranking families, and sometimes used the Church to oppose certain aspects of ritual by means of which the aristocracy asserted their superior status. Then there were the heady days of left-wing politics in the 1950s, and the struggles over land reform led by peasant organizations which, as we saw in Chapter VI, eventually came to very little, ending in the violent suppressions of 1965. In more recent decades, since the 1970s, it has been the influx of new
wealth from migrant Toraja working outside their homeland that has posed the challenge to the old status distinctions as expressed in ritual privileges. To sum all this up and conclude just how much rank means to people in Tana Toraja today is far from easy. But I aim here to give at least an impressionistic account of relations between the free and the unfree in the not so distant past, since this is important to an understanding of the bonds that tied villagers to a local nobility and their ruling origin houses or tongkonan. I shall also give some examples of how those relations have at least in some instances, if by no means everywhere, been effaced.

On the mythical origins of slavery

In Bua’ Sarungallo’s account of the origins of life in the upperworld, an episode is described which accounts for the rules preventing marriage between ranks, and also for the tarian pemputu or ‘Seven Ordeals’ which were in pre-colonial times a means of settling disputes between two parties who could not agree. Pande Nunu, an ancestor whose name means ‘Skilled Carpenter’, is described as choosing a wife from a place called Padang di Illin, which was where slaves lived in the sky. His wife, Tumba’ Ballan (‘Weaving Woman’) is described as ‘wearing bracelets of clay, one whose anklets were of mixed metals’. Women used to wear very heavy anklets of brass – I was once shown a few that had been preserved by villagers in Buttang, and elderly people in the 1970s could remember the time when women still wore them. The description implies that she herself was of ‘mixed’ blood, having slave ancestry. Two sons were born of their union, Datu Bakka’ (Lord Red-White-and-Black’; bakka’ describes the colour of a cock with red, white and black feathers), and Pong Malaliong (‘Mr Empty-headed’). When they were grown up, they wanted to marry their cousins, but were refused, on the grounds that although on one side of the family they shared ancestors who had been fashioned out of gold by Puang Matua in his forge called the ‘Twin Bellows’ (the sauan sibarrung), on the other side they were descendants of the lowly inhabitants of Illin. The two brothers then refused to work; they refused their ceremonial tasks of cutting bamboos for roasting-spits, and planting sugar-palm branches for shade, and they refused to ‘plough the rice fields like buffaloes’. Then Puang Matua fell to thinking deeply, in the heavens, and created the Seven Ordeals as a means of settling their quarrel. In these ordeals, disputants contest against each other to see who can remain immersed under water longest (siuukkunan); who can plunge a hand into boiling water and pull out a needle without scalding (sipakoko); or who can endure having stones dropped on their hands (simala’). If these fail to settle a dispute, one might progress to a cockfight (bulangan londong); hand-to-hand combat (silondongan); a ritualised
battle, commencing before dawn, and halted when the sun came up or when one side had incurred a fatal injury ("sira"); and if all else fails, pitched battle without restraint ("sirari"). The brothers underwent all these ordeals and lost, but refused to admit defeat. Refusing hand-to-hand combat, they agreed to "sira", the ritualised confrontation at dawn. There as the sun came up, one whom the brothers loved deeply was killed; his name was Tarasui Langi’ (‘Fury of the Sky’). Then at last the brothers knew they had lost, and wearily went back to work. But Puang Matua fell to thinking again, and made two women out of clay, women with bracelets of earth, for the two brothers. But they couldn’t breathe or talk, so he sent the swallows to catch the Lord of the Winds in an all-encompassing net he had made, and asked him to enter into the two women and give them breath. The Lord of the Winds’ reply was that ‘he refused to be eaten by worms, to be devoured by birds’. Puang Matua then swore an oath that when the women died, the Lord of the Winds would be allowed to depart by the crown of their heads ‘and return to his brothers at the edge of the sky, in the high mountains’. Then the Lord of the Winds consented to enter the clay women; they came to life, and married Datu Bakka’ and Pong Malaliong, and they all lived happy and contented.

The story does not, then, explain how slavery came into being – it simply is already there, even in the upperworld. There is no account of who first populated the slave village of Padang di Illin; Puang Matua’s creation of wives for the two brothers is a secondary event. But the impossibility of a change of status, and the rejection of mixed marriages, is the message of the tale. In some districts the more feudal of the old aristocracy may still voice such opinions, but the forces of social change have to different degrees eroded the system.

Regional variations in the ranking system

Rank remains a significant social concern today, in spite of the considerable strains which have pulled at the fabric of Toraja society, weakening without overturning the formerly rigid hierarchy. But to say just how significant it is, is not so straightforward. That it is important is discernible at times from people’s actions and deportment, as well as from the frequency with which concerns with rank are expressed in conversation. Yet there is considerable variety from district to district in the extent of social differences, and the degrees of obsession with rank. Hierarchical attitudes are deeply ingrained in some regions, less so in others. The aristocracy continue to enjoy positions of

1 Compare Kuipers (1998) on the dispositions and deportment expected of nobles as opposed to those of humble rank in Sumba. Similar differences can be observed from time to time in Tana Toraja, though much more so in some areas than others.
privilege and respect, and have occupied a high proportion of roles in the local administration. While education has opened a new route to jobs and career positions in the modern administration, noble families have been able to use their wealth to ensure their children an educational advantage. Although since colonial times an educated, Christian middle class has to some extent developed a more meritocratic and egalitarian ethos, in Toraja society today one can find a wide range of opinions about the significance of rank. In local elections for desa or lembang heads in Saluputti, almost invariably the votes continue to go to candidates of noble rank, who would have been entitled to leadership positions in the past. When asked about this, people often observe that the commoners, as much as the nobility, still prefer to choose someone of high rank to lead them; or (which is not quite the same thing) they think that even a talented, highly educated person of low rank will experience difficulties in carrying out his duties if he does not also enjoy the respect due to a person of high birth. (The great majority of candidates are male, though in the past few years I have heard of more women standing for election as desa heads; to my knowledge, they have invariably come from aristocratic families.) Public speaking, which involves a certain elegance in the use of poetic and symbolic turns of phrase, as well as the ability to sound authoritative, has traditionally been a noble accomplishment; and, just as the priests of the indigenous religion, the to minaa, were traditionally always of high birth, some people today claim that aristocrats make better pastors, because their sermons are more likely to demonstrate a mellifluous control of the higher registers of the language.

As for slavery, the Dutch legislated (rather ineffectually) against it, and its abolition was reiterated in 1949 by the government of the Republic of Indonesia, but the status of kaunan (slave) has not disappeared from public memory either. Although this is a very sensitive and difficult area to enquire about, we can say that in some areas, the descendants of former slaves often continue in a position of marked dependence on their former masters, while in others, the relationship has genuinely been allowed to lapse, or has been eroded to the point where it is no longer significant. As we shall see later, the celebration of mortuary rites provides a colourful and highly competitive arena for the demonstration and reiteration of claims to rank and prestige. The vigour with which these rituals continue to be staged ensures simultaneously a means for maintaining and for contesting the ranking system; aristocrats grumble that nowadays, those of low status but new wealth often try to hold rituals of a level that would formerly have been denied them.2 We might conclude that rank remains a driving force behind the efflorescence of ritual life, accounting for some of its continued dynamism, even as certain performances may ironically enact a contestation of what it once stood for.

2 Volkman (1985) provides telling examples of this process.
With the fall of Suharto, the ensuing era of Reformasi reopened some unresolved issues about the importance of rank in societies right across Indonesia. On the one hand, the new political atmosphere has greatly relaxed the fear of authority that was a defining feature of life under the New Order; it has opened up potentials for people at the grassroots to take much greater initiative in running their own affairs. On the other, devolution, with its invitation to the regions to return to more ‘traditional’ local structures of administration, also offers to revive some dreams of faded glory among local royalties and aristocracies. Those dreams may be quite unrealistic; any such resurgence of a ‘golden age’ of feudalism is most unlikely to be welcomed by their former subjects, who doubtless have a different vision for the development of democratic politics in Indonesia. It is too early to say much about how such tensions may play themselves out in Tana Toraja, though my guess is that the characteristically high levels of Toraja education and outmigration are likely to militate against a reversion to older attitudes.

The degree of deference accorded the nobility in any case varied across different regions of the highlands. Distinctions of rank were most pronounced in the southern Tallu Lembangna, the ‘Three Domains’ of Sangalla’, Ma’kale and Mengkendek. The nobility here are addressed by the title of Puang (‘Lord’) and the area is known as the *padang diPuangi* (‘lands [where the nobility are] called Puang’). By the late nineteenth century (as discussed in Chapter I), these domains came closest to anything resembling a centralised polity in the highlands, though to call them ‘kingdoms’ would be in my opinion a definite exaggeration. The ruling Puang of each of the Three Domains was chosen from among the families of the highest elite and inaugurated by a special ceremony. They had some of the qualities of ritual or spiritual leaders; Nooy-Palm (1979:56) says of the Puang of Sangalla’ that, though he was not untouchable, as Polynesian princes were, he was treated with veneration, and his bathwater was believed to have healing properties. The Puang claimed to have white blood, and had intermarried extensively with the royalty of the lowland kingdoms of Gowa (Makassar), Bone, Wajo’ and Luwu’. Since Independence, they have no longer officially functioned as rulers, but they have retained considerable political influence. So far, the Bupati (the administrative head of the Kabupaten of Tana Toraja), when he has been Toraja (under Suharto’s New Order administration, they were alternately local and non-local), has always come from this southern region.

In the eastern part of Toraja, around Kesu’ and Nanggala, the nobility are addressed not as Puang but as siAmbe’/siIndo’ (literally ‘Father’/’Mother’), and this territory is known as the *padang disiAmbe’i*. The aristocracy here own large landholdings, and there is a relatively high concentration of land-

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3 See for example Crystal (1974).
less people, who must depend for their livelihood on sharecropping or on
day labour in the rice fields of others. In the northern district of Sesean, well
described by Volkman (1985), nobles are also called Ambe’, but the status
system here appears more fluid and more strongly tied to the competitive
politics of meat distribution. The title ambe’ is also more specifically applied to
the leaders of saroan, groups of households who both cooperate in organizing
ritual activities and compete with each other in contributing animals for sac-
rifice. In these groups, the distribution of sacrificial meat is a dominant preoc-
upation; ‘meat’, she writes, ‘is both a political medium and, at least in part,
the substance of politics itself’ (Volkman 1985:82). Rather than relying simply
on claims to high birth, ambe’ saroan must actively build reputations and fol-
lowings by being ‘bold’ (barani) in the extent of their sacrifices; they are known
as ‘big men’ (to kapua). Volkman (1985:80) characterises the ambe’ of Sesean as
being ‘a cross between a New Guinea big man and a Bugis prince’.

In the western part of Toraja, in the districts of Saluputti and
Bonggakaradeng, the nobles are called Ma’dika (‘Free’), and the region is
known as padang diMa’dika’i. Their history has it that they settled here in
order to escape from the arrogant domination of the aristocracy in the Tallu
Lembangna. They feel themselves quite distinct from the people of the Three
Domains, and are proud of it. An old nobleman of Simbuang, in the far west,
told me that they never eat bananas that grow on the south side of the trunk,
since they pointed toward the Tallu Lembangna. In west Toraja, unlike the
rest of Tana Toraja, there is no distinction between polite and intimate forms
of the word ‘you’; anyone, regardless of age or rank, may be addressed sim-
ply as iko, which would be very insulting if used to superiors in other parts of
Toraja. For this reason, people in Saluputti also like to refer to their region as
the Padang ma’iko (‘land where we call each other iko’). They claim a sense of
greater equality, and mutual caring (expressed most significantly in not forc-
ing extreme degrees of competitiveness in the payment of funeral sacrifices),
with the phrase tasikaboro’ (‘we care for each other’, ‘we love each other’) and
tae’ tasitukka’ (‘we don’t force each other’). In my experience, descendants of
slaves here have also enjoyed a fuller liberation from their former lowly sta-
tus than appears to be the case either in the southern or eastern regions.

All over Toraja, with some degree of local variation, the system of rank
was composed essentially of four groups, called tana’. Tana’ means a stake, of
the kind traditionally driven into the edge of rice fields to mark boundaries.
The highest aristocracy were called the tana’ bulaan or ‘golden stake’. The
lesser nobility (often claimed to have originated from intermarriages between
the tana’ bulaan and commoners) were called tana’ bassi or ‘iron stake’. The
commoners were called tana’ karurung (‘stakes of the sugar-palm’, which has
a very hard wood), and the lowest group was composed of slaves (kaunan),
called tana’ kua-kua, after a kind of reed. The idea of the stake, or boundary,
refers in particular to the barrier to intermarriage between the ranks. More specifically, there were severe sanctions, in the past, against a woman of high rank having relations with a lower ranking man. Exile or death was the penalty, in pre-colonial times, for the guilty pair, though whether the punishments of burning, drowning or strangling which popular memory recalls (and which are mentioned by Nobele 1926:27), were ever actually meted out, is hard to know. Nooy-Palm (1979:47) suggests that they were not, though they do feature in folk tales. Even today, a marriage of someone of the highest rank with a person of slave descent is relatively rare and may lead to complete severance, at least for some years, of relations with the parents. On the other hand, it was a common occurrence in the past for men of the aristocracy to have sexual liaisons with women from the ranks of the commoners and slaves. Their children traced descent equally from both parents (at least in Saluputti), which tended to mean that they would be difficult to order around. One woman I talked to in the early 1980s gave a picture of society that might prove shocking today to younger Toraja, more heavily influenced by Christian mores. She related how her father, a prominent noble, had been a noted womaniser, who used to stand on a hill above the marketplace to keep an eye out for a pretty young woman on market day, then send one of his followers to bring her to him:

Things were like that in the past! If someone important – a to parengnge’ (headman) for example – wanted a woman, he just took her; and she would be pleased, too, because he was someone wealthy and important. Noblewomen also used to marry many times, and people would say, ‘that’s a real woman!’ (pia baine tongan to’o!). It was considered jago (admirable) for a woman to have many husbands. She might be married already, and then someone else would come and try to take her off, and she would marry him instead. Some noblewomen used to like gambling too, like men – they often played dice, and sometimes went to cockfights. That was in the old days.

The tana’ are divided also by the different ritual privileges accorded to them; whatever the ambiguities resulting from mixed marriages, there is a clearly articulated principle that one should follow the aluk, or ritual prescriptions, of the mother’s family or region. The tana’ also determine the number of bufaloes to be paid as a fine (the kapa’) if one is the guilty party in precipitating

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4 Mixed rank has not necessarily prevented certain individuals from achieving high positions in society; it is commonly known for instance that a former Bupati of Tana Toraja is of such heritage, and although people often mentioned the fact, it did not prevent him from holding office.

5 I.: jago (literally ‘fighting cock’) is a word more commonly applied to a man who is handsome, dashing and brave. Its use in this context suggests that what is considered admirable for those of high rank may sometimes cut across the gender division, in the same way as skill in public speaking, termed ma’kada muane or ‘to speak like a man’, is not regarded as an exclusively male talent, even if it is mostly men who demonstrate it.
a divorce: 4, 6, 8, 12, or 24 for the tana’ bulaan (in the past usually 12 or 24 was the figure agreed on, out of a sense of pride), 4 or 6 for the tana’ bassi (or in Malimbong, it might be less, depending on the kind of marriage ceremony that had been celebrated), 2 or less for the tana’ karurung, and for the tana’ kua-kua, one eighth or one sixteenth of a buffalo, or a sow big enough to have littered.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what proportion of the population were formerly slaves, commoners or aristocrats. The tana’ bulaan are a very small minority, though much intermarriage has taken place between them and the tana’ bassi’, both in Malimbong and elsewhere. I was often told that most of the latter can trace some tie to the tana’ bulaan. In fact, the frequency of sexual relations across the boundaries of the tana’, at least on the part of aristocratic men, raises the possibility (as some people maintained) that most people in a village community could trace some kin tie with their ruling nobles – a fact that may well have served to strengthen allegiances to ruling tongkonan and their inhabitants in the past. Pak Tandiruru of Alang-Alang, who had followed his father and grandfather as District Head of Nonongan, once commented in typically forthright manner: ‘Most people have a slave ancestor somewhere in their genealogy. I’m not ashamed to admit it, even if others pretend not to have one.’

Slavery remains a sensitive subject, and the information I was able to gather on this subject is necessarily anecdotal and impressionistic. It is correspondingly difficult to assess many questions, such as what proportion of the population was enslaved, how often people enslaved themselves through debt, whether they were well or poorly treated, whether slaves were able to save or own property, the possibility of masters requisitioning such property if they did have any, or the relative difficulty for debtors of paying off their debts to free themselves. Allowing for the possibility of variations from district to district, there was general agreement that in the past, all or most of the nobles had slaves. One could not be a proper aristocrat without them, according to some. A noble of Malimbong explained, ‘A true tongkonan in the past had slaves in it, people who could be ordered (to disua), who could be told to go here, go there, fetch this, fetch that...’ The occasional commoner also might own slaves. A few were even slaves of slaves (the so-called kaunan tai manuk or ‘chicken-shit slaves’), though this was rare, since few slaves owned anything. These were the most vulnerable category of individuals, those most at risk of being sold. Commoners formed the bulk of the population, sometimes being referred to as to buda (‘the many’).

When I asked people from different areas to give me their estimates of the percentage of population in each rank, I found considerable differences,

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6 Some said this group only appeared in the late nineteenth century, at the ‘time of the Sidenreng people’, when Toraja was drawn into the slave trade (see Chapter IV).
though those of the north and west were agreed in saying that proportions of both the nobility and slaves were small, with commoners making up the majority. As a point of reference, Kennedy (1953:159-60) provides a rare example of figures for hamlets of a single village, Marante in Kesu’:

Table 1. Population of Marante by rank in the early 1950s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tondok</th>
<th>Bone’</th>
<th>Balatana</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Average total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% nobility</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% commoners</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% slaves</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Tallu Lembangna, a broad division is drawn between those who are free (to makaka) and those who are unfree (kaunan). The late Puang Rante Allo, the leading noble of Tengan in Mengkendek, told me that perhaps 5% of the population there belonged to ruling families and held the title of Puang (tana’ bulaan), 15% were to makaka, and an astonishing 80% kaunan. He was apparently lumping ordinary commoners, the to buda, into this category of ‘dependents’. Pak Ulia Salu Rapa’, of the ruling family of Nanggala, estimated that there, the nobility constituted 10-15% of the population, the commoners 45-50%, kaunan 30% and kaunan tai manuk 10%. Nanggala is one of the districts with the highest concentration of land in the hands of the aristocracy, with many commoners who are landless, surviving either by sharecropping or day labour. Pak Kila’, by contrast, stated as his estimation that slaves in most areas would not have exceeded 10% of the population; in his own home district of Sesean, he said, they formed as little as 3 or 4%, and not all noble houses owned any.8

There were several categories of slaves, whose degrees of servitude, or chances of redeeming themselves, varied. In Malimbong, the following categories were recognised:

Kaunan garonto’ (garonto’: ‘base, trunk, origin’) were slaves who could neither free themselves, nor be sold. Those who were born slaves, or were captured in war, as well as certain classes of debtors, came into this category. Theoretically, they could free themselves by payment of ‘one hundred of everything’ (sanda saratu’) – a hundred buffaloes, a hundred pigs, chickens,
rice fields, cats, pillows, spoons etcetera, right down to the meanest household objects. This condition was purely hypothetical, and clearly stands for impossibility, since there was no remembered instance of anyone who had succeeded in making such a payment. This category included the *kaunan bulaan* (‘golden slaves’) or *kaunan tongkonan* (‘slaves of the origin house’), hereditary slaves who had belonged to a certain *tongkonan* over generations, and who formed part of its inalienable property, or *mana*. These people acted as personal servants for their masters, and often did household chores such as cooking, though they were forbidden to eat off the same dishes or wear the same clothes. They had specific ritual duties at funerals, or at rites to celebrate the rebuilding of the house, for which they were rewarded with specific cuts of meat. Puang Rante Allo once mentioned a Puang of Mengkendek (whose name he declared could not be spoken) who at some time in the past had sold off the *kaunan bulaan* of his house. This was considered so disgraceful that the rest of his family disowned him and drove him into exile. The seriousness of this offence may have rested more in its disturbance of the proper order of things inherited from the ancestors, than in a sense of injustice to the slaves themselves. But it also has to do with the fact that he was selling what did not belong to him, for the slaves were the inalienable property of the house itself, a mark of its status and prosperity. Similar rows have been caused in other families by individuals who have tried to sell off heirloom wealth of the house without the knowledge of other family members.

*Kaunan to mengkaranduk* (to *mengkondok*) were those who, out of hardship, threw themselves on the mercy of a nobleman and asked him to feed them. Such a man, and his wife and children, would then enter the noble’s service for an unspecified length of time, but could redeem themselves by payment of at least four buffaloes and a pig. To free oneself in this way is called *ma’talla*, or *usseroi kalena*, ‘to clean oneself’. *To sandang* were those who became slaves through debt, often incurred because of funeral expenses or by gambling. If one fell into debt one could also ask a member of one’s own family to pay it off, and become a slave to them, provided they were not more closely related than third cousin, the degree within which marriage is prohibited. It was forbidden to become the slave of any relative closer than this; presumably, if they undertook to pay one’s debts, it was done in the spirit of siblingship (*kasiunuran*) which ideally characterises kin relations. It is of some interest that the same cut-off point was apparently used to define one’s closest kin with regard to the institutions of both marriage and slavery. *Kaunan dilaak* were those who, captured in inter-village wars, were rescued by some other warrior (*pa’barani*) who, just because he liked the look of someone, might say to his captor, ‘You can’t take him; that’s my friend’. In such a circumstance one became the slave of one’s protector, but could redeem oneself on payment of four buffaloes, like the *to mengkaranduk*. 
Changing relationships between nobles and their dependents

Slaves did not always live in the same villages as their masters, but in nearby hamlets, coming to work whenever summoned and being rewarded with food. At ceremonies, they had to help build shelters for the guests, and roasting-spits for the sacrificed animals. A noble rarely went anywhere without being accompanied by a group of retainers, and when he went to a funeral, he took along a large crowd of villagers in order to impress other guests, as is still often the case today. But an older nobleman of Malimbong stated that in the past, when villagers knew that their headman would be attending a funeral, they would save up their own pigs and offer them to him to take, which suggests a far higher degree of interdependency than exists today. His slaves would carry his pigs, and help to cook the meat, being rewarded with meat from the head, belly or ribs. The host’s slaves in the past would serve betel to the guests, a task now performed by young people of the family. Some slaves sharecropped rice land from their masters, the harvest being divided equally between them. Or a slave might be allotted a portion of garden land belonging to the tongkonan to work. He was then under obligation to sacrifice a pig (mangiu’; literally ‘to pour out’) at the master’s funeral, without its being considered as a debt by the master’s family; this applied even if there were relations between slave and master, as when a noble had taken a slave woman as mistress. Conversely, the master was expected to provide the sacrificial pig for a slave’s wedding or funeral. A female slave might be selected to perform a special ritual function in a high-ranking funeral, as the to pangulli’, ‘one who removes maggots’ from the corpse, while it was stored in the house prior to the celebration of the funeral. That person would be rewarded with a small piece of rice land for her dedication. It is said to be mabusung (a breach of taboo, liable to incur supernatural punishment) for nobles ever to take back land thus given, but I heard of several court cases resulting from their efforts to do so, which the recipient’s family had resisted. Nobles who find it hard to accept the loss of their dependents typically make remarks to the effect that any slave wishing to be free should first pay back their debts; but clearly, the official abolition of slavery, first by the Dutch and then by the government of independent Indonesia, long ago rendered any such demand untenable. For their part, I encountered several examples of nobles reneging on their customary obligations of noblesse oblige toward their former dependents. The desire to be free of these relationships, then, can cut both ways.

The Dutch attempted to ban this practice, along with various other aspects of the funeral rites. Nooy-Palm (1986:177) and Volkman (1985:87) give details of other mortuary ritual functions formerly carried out by slaves.
Most of the time, slaves worked on the land allotted them. Not all of them worked every day for their masters, but they had to come when called to perform chores such as fetching wood or water, looking after livestock, and preparing food. Slaves were often given pigs to tend, and they were entitled to half of a sow’s litter. Slaves who herded buffaloes might eventually get to own one, for the reward for this was one calf in eight, or one in four (though I was told that in Malimbong, the rate for slaves might be as low as one in sixteen, and in any case the nobles’ small sons often acted as herders, so that the services of slaves could be dispensed with, especially in the days before the Dutch introduced schooling). While some people stated that a slave (especially in the Tallu Lembangna) was always at risk of having any livestock requisitioned by his owners, others insisted that slaves did have the right to own property, and that it was wrong of masters to take it away from them. A friend recalled how in his childhood, when visiting his uncle at Singki’, he would often see his uncle’s slaves busy pounding rice or tending the buffaloes. Slaves would be diligent in helping with the rice harvest, earning a share of the rice for their work, and their labour would certainly be called upon whenever preparations for a ritual were in progress. Nowadays, he added, former kaunan can no longer be forced to provide this labour, but people still hope that they will ‘know their place’ and come to help. These days, however, they are more likely to work for wages, or to help in communal labour simply in their role as pa‘tondokan, or fellow-villagers, who traditionally work together as a community obligation, either for ritual preparations or in roofing a house.

Slaves could be inherited like other property. Sometimes when an inheritance was divided, if there was not enough rice land for all the siblings, some might be given slaves as their share instead of land. The slaves thus inherited were exempted from service to the other siblings. Kaunan bulaan, or slaves attached to an origin house, were viewed as the property of the rapu, the whole group of its descendants. They might have to serve any of them, but especially those actually resident in the house. If a noble changed residence at marriage, he would not take house slaves with him, but would make use of his wife’s for daily requirements, and send for his own family slaves only when their work was needed for special occasions. Slaves could only marry or divorce with the permission of their masters, and if the slaves of two different owners were given permission to marry, then they and their children had to serve both of them. Over time, rights in slaves might be shared between many people and the slaves and their offspring had many potential masters to serve – though they were more likely to be willing to work for those who were generous.

Nobles like to claim that the kaunan relationship, which in some areas seems to have evolved into one of clientage, is more costly to them than to
their dependents. Pak Ulia Salu Rapa’ of Nanggala related how he had once seen a family slave come to his mother in Nonongan and ask for rice because someone had died. Ulia told him to take 200 \textit{kutu}’ (sheaves), but the man was angry and said, ‘I want 1,000, or I won’t be your slave any more!’ So in the end he was given 800. According to Ulia, while some descendants of \textit{kaunan} would now rather go off elsewhere to seek a living, others, rather than risk destitution, prefer to stay and continue in a relationship of clientage. Donzelli (2003:279), while living in Mengkendek, learned that members of the nobility there could still count on former dependents being willing to work for them.

She observes that the relationship of subordination is commonly expressed by means of the verb \textit{mamali’} (‘to long for’ or ‘to feel affection for’), describing a supposed yearning of low status persons for their former masters, who for their part express their side of the relationship in terms of responsibility (the word \textit{parengnge’} (chief), for instance, is derived from the verb \textit{rengnge’}, to carry a burden by means of a strap over the forehead, as Toraja women carry their heavily-laden vegetable baskets (\textit{baka}) home from their gardens.\footnote{This expression of desire or ‘intentional tension’ toward powerful people is today carried over into the context of politics as a way of expressing people’s ‘support’ for political candidates (Donzelli 2003:280).}

How much nobles in the past may have abused their power is difficult to assess, but it would seem to have depended very much on the character of the individual, for they certainly could wield power arbitrarily within their communities. As leaders of the village councils or \textit{kombongan ada’}, which settled disputes, they could impose crippling fines on villagers for any misdemeanour. An elderly priest of Talion described to me how his grandfather had found grounds to challenge various individuals who he claimed had insulted him, and had had them fined as many as twelve buffaloes for such offences. Other nobles denied that such exploitation was common.

The \textit{kaunan} relationship was euphemistically cloaked in the language of kinship. Pak Tolele from Sawangan commented: ‘Even in the old days, people never liked to say \textit{kaunan}; they called them \textit{siunu’} (‘siblings’, relatives), because they protected them.’ Sometimes the relationship was cast in terms of the dependence of children on their parents: slaves were referred to as ‘children’ (\textit{anak}), and the master looked up to as a father (\textit{disanga ambe’}), who could be relied on to help out in times of serious need. The ideal noble was expected to be generous, as expressed in the phrase \textit{ma’tarik lindo piona}, ‘to pull on the front of his loincloth’, meaning to dispense help to those in need. For their part, slaves were supposed to ‘know their place’ (\textit{untandai kalena}, literally ‘know their body/self’), or \textit{untandai kano’koranna}, literally ‘know where they are entitled to sit’). This sentiment is one still commonly voiced by today’s nobility, more often nowadays as a complaint about former \textit{kaunan}.
who try to forget their station. The insistence on reminding people of their former status is no doubt a strong incentive to descendants of former slaves to leave Tana Toraja in search of job opportunities elsewhere. At the time of my first fieldwork, when I lived in the village of Buttang, there were four families of former kaunan living at Pasang, the neighbouring hamlet, who used to serve related noble houses in Buttang, Pasang and Kata. But their attachment to these houses, so far as I could observe while living there, has effectively been broken. Only one of these families still shows up to help on ritual occasions. Their children have done well in school, and having migrated in search of work, have prospered and helped their families build nice houses in the village. There is no reason for the families of these former kaunan any longer to show any special deference to their former masters. There was only one woman in Buttang itself who was of slave ancestry, but she had married someone from a high-ranking family, and the fact was never referred to. Her brother had lived with a branch of the former owner’s family in Rantepao for about ten years. Like many actual nephews and nieces from the village, they had paid his school fees, while he in exchange was expected to do household chores for them. He was much more diligent than many of them both with his schoolwork and the chores. Later he became a teacher at the technical school, and subsequently took a job in the Public Works Department in Palopo. When he fell in love with a girl of very high status, it was the mother of the Rantepao family who helped him to ask for her hand, and made all the arrangements for the marriage when, because of his promising prospects, the match was accepted. Effectively, this person has become an adoptive son, his humble ancestry erased by his educational achievements. He still visits whenever he comes to Rantepao, and in fact family members commented that he was more filial in his attentions than some of the actual nephews, who had received just as much help with their careers, but never came to call.

11 This situation contrasts with that described by Adams (1988:57) for Kesu’, or by Tsintjilonis (1997) for Buntao’, where it appears that ex-kaunan remain closely subordinated to their former masters, doing chores and generally still being treated as family retainers. Tondon is also often mentioned as the area where the aristocracy remain the most reluctant to cede control over their former dependents. When I interviewed an elderly nobleman of this area, he declared that nothing could change the status of slaves, who would suffer supernatural sanctions if they tried to escape their position. ‘Slaves can never be free’, he insisted, ‘and we’re not ashamed to use the word here in Tondon.’ I never heard such remarks in Saluputti.