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Tomini

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TOMINI The Tomini of Indonesia occupy the northern Sulawesi peninsula from Donggala to Gorontalo. The name "Tomini" is both a geographic and linguistic designation. Geographically, Tomini is a thin strip of land which borders the western edge of Tomini Bay; linguistically, Tomini is a subgroup of western Central Sulawesi languages which include Toli-toli, Dondo, Bolano, Tinombo, Kasimbar, Dampelas and Ndaou. Although linguists formerly thought all Tomini languages were mutually intelligible and the different names merely referred to dialects, recent research has asserted that each group forms a separate language. Supposedly these multiple languages originated from the area's many political-trading empires, which remained historically and culturally insulated from each other until Islam unified them in the sixteenth century.

Despite local differences, these empires conformed to a general cultural pattern similar to that of the Toraja and Minahasa. Even though Minahasa and Toraja were influenced by Islamic traders at the same time as Tomini was, today Tomini forms a pocket of Islam, bounded on the north by the Christianized Minahasa and on the south by the equally Christianized Poso Toraja. Both Minahasa and Poso were sites of Dutch schools and Protestant missionary training centers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because Tomini was bypassed by Dutch missionaries, it has retained its strong Islamic character and thus is quite distinct from its neighbors.

Of the 74,000 Tomini, nearly 90 percent are Sunni Muslims, the rest being animist and Christian. All of the Muslims live along the coast rather than in the mountains, which span the center of the area and are home for animists and Christians. Highlanders cultivate dry rice, grow maize and sago and gather rattan and *damar* (resin) for trade along the coast. The Muslim coastal people work on clove, copra and palm plantations, cultivate wet rice fields or work as traders, lumberers or sailors.

The cultural history of the area can be divided into four periods: 1) the coming of Islam, 2) the Dutch colonial period, 3) the Japanese occupation and 4) post-independence. Islam came to Tomini in three waves. The first arrived from the eastern Indonesian trading empire of Ternate in the sixteenth century (see Ternatan-Tidorese), the second from the southern Sulawesi traders, the Bugis and

the Mandar, beginning in the sixteenth century and increasing in the seventeenth century, and the third in the eighteenth century from Minangkabau (Sumatran) travellers (see Bugis; Minangkabau).

Islam first penetrated and unified Tomini's disparate kingdoms by converting the nobility, especially the rajas' or kings' families, who after conversion married each other rather than non-Muslims within the realm. The initial ties between kingdoms were thus between elite Muslims.

Even though all the pre-Islamic kingdoms were distinct, they shared common rules for political and economic organization, including maintenance of regional sovereignty through a system of tribute. Subjects either gave labor service or prestige objects to the ruler indicating they were willing to be of service to the stronger raja. The raja's right to rule or his sign of power was signified by a collection of sacred regalia such as gold objects, trays and umbrellas which were inherited from the former ruler (usually matrilineally). Each of the kingdoms ruled with their own particular regalia until Muslim rulers from outside the Tomini area introduced new royal symbols. In 1556 the Muslim raja, Harian of Ternate, wished to develop new trade networks on the eastern and northwestern coasts of Tomini, especially in Moutong and Buoll, which were rich in gold deposits. As a sign of friendship, Raja Harian gave a scepter and a letter written in Arabic script to each of the rajas of Buol, Mouton and Toli-Toli. The Tomini rajas regarded these gifts as sacred. In acknowledgement, the Buol raja sailed to Ternate in 1595, presenting a golden goat to Harian on behalf of these northern Tomini rajas.

This exchange of gifts signalled the beginning of an epoch in which the Tomini rajas fell under the influence of the Ternate kingdom and also accepted the ruler's religion. Tomini kings changed their official titles to Arabic ones, their families began to recite Islamic prayers in the home and they sought sons in other distant Islamic kingdoms to the north to marry their daughters and consolidate power.

The second wave of Islam actually began at the same time as the first, but rather than Ternate traders introducing Islam, the south Sulawesi Bugis and Mandar traders brought Islam and unified the southwestern coast of Tomini. This pattern was almost identical to that of the Ternate kingdom's but did not reach a peak until later in the seventeenth century. The result was an area divided into two parts, the northern influenced by Ternate, the southern by the south Sulawesi polities of Goa, Bone and Luwu.

Gradually the Bugis and Mandar realms became more powerful than the waning Ternate so that by the early seventeenth century the Tomini nobles oriented themselves towards the southern rulers, especially the Mandar rajas. During this time a strict class system emerged such that nobles were divided into two groups, both Islamic. The first were those with direct genealogical and patrilineal connections to the Mandar nobility and inheriting the right to rule. The second group of nobles were those who were not so related to the Mandar rajas and whose children could not inherit governmental office.

This second wave was significant in the bifurcation of the noble class, the

shift from matrilineal inheritance of property and right to office to an emphasis on patrilineal inheritance. In addition, funeral rites became more Islamic, especially in regard to stipulations for washing and praying over the corpse and using the white shroud over it. General house architecture (on stilts), clothing styles (sarongs) and types of gifts used in elite brideprice exchanges (coins, trays, krisses and plates) were all adopted from the south Sulawesi Mandar and Bugis society and persist to the present. Generally, however, the Muslim nobility still recited their prayers in private. There were no mosques, organized clergy or *madrasas*. Islam was for the nobility.

It was not until the third wave of conversion that Islam became more popular. In the eighteenth century, Minangkabau visitors acting as Muslim missionaries travelled throughout the Tomini area introducing Islam to the commoners. Public mosques were built, and each area acquired its own *imam*. The vassals paid religious taxes to the rajas as they had always done, but now Muslim subjects paid tribute following the Shariah and not pre-Islamic law, *adat*. Although the rajas began reciting their prayers with the masses in the mosques, they still retained esoteric religious knowledge which distinguished noble from commoner. It was always the raja who started Ramadan by quoting Arabic *pantuns* passed down from Ternate and Bugis contacts. It was during this period that nobler and wealthier Tomini reportedly first made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Although Islam was firmly established in the Tomini area by the eighteenth century, its character was drastically affected by European contact, especially after the Dutch, who had been attracted by the region's gold mines, became the effective ruling power. In response to European contact, Islam became a political rallying point of anti-colonial sentiment. For instance, the Dutch East Indies Company made frequent stops in Buol and Toli-toli, trading rice for gold. Early in the 1800s, one agricultural season was particularly unfruitful so the raja raised the amount of rice imported in exchange for gold. The Dutch head officer was enraged that the raja had violated the specified trade agreement and declared that if the Buol raja were indeed so hungry he could eat pork. Naturally, the raja refused so the Dutch officer ordered his public execution. The raja was tied to two horses, which ran in opposite directions until his body was split apart. The people rebelled, gold trade in the area was suspended and Islam became the vehicle through which anti-Dutch sentiments were expressed.

In 1862 the Dutch built a fortress in Tinombo and attempted to control the island. Each raja was asked to sign a trade contract relinquishing all regional authority to the Dutch. The southern Mandar had already been defeated by the Dutch military forces and could no longer help their Tomini vassals. The Dutch did not defeat the Tominis until 1904; by then, all the Tomini rajas had been forced to sign the contracts, surrendering their authority. The Dutch let them keep their Arabic titles (and gave them Dutch titles as well) in order to take advantage of the raja's access to the people's labor service. Because the local system of religious taxes required commoners to give a certain amount of labor service (or goods, if they could afford it) to their raja, the Dutch forced the rajas

to order their own people to work on plantation and public works projects. Coffee, coconut and palm plantations were begun by the colonial government throughout the coastal Tomini area. Wet rice agriculture was introduced to supplement the traditional maize, sago and dry rice production, and an elaborate network of roads and bridges was built to connect the region and facilitate commercial transport—all using the forced labor of the commoners.

In several regions the people directed their anger at the severity of the forced labor against the rajas. In some regions, however, the rajas helped the people as best they could by covertly supporting local chapters of nationalist religious parties. For instance, in Buol and Toli-toli, a chapter of Syarekat Islam was founded in 1916; a chapter was started in Donggala and Parigi the next year. The Syarekat Islam movement spread quickly into all of the Tomini area until the Dutch arrested and exiled its leaders and threatened to execute the rajas who were suspected of allowing it to persist. In 1917 the Raja of Moutong was arrested; in 1919 the people rebelled but were quickly squelched. Some local commoners escaped into the mountains.

Persecution by the Dutch served to strengthen the Islamic Party in Tomini, its major focus being anti-Dutch and nationalistic. In 1941 in Toli-toli a large rebellion broke out in response to being forced to work a full day during Ramadan. The precipitating event occurred when several laborers, weak from hunger and exhaustion, ostensibly unable to work, escaped from the plantation to the mosque. Dutch overseers marched into the mosque and shot the laborers while they were praying. Total rebellion broke out. The Dutch eventually regained control, but the families of the rebels fled to the mountains.

In the same year, 1942, the Japanese ousted the Dutch, but the situation for the Tomini people changed little. The rajas were given Japanese names rather than Dutch names and were required to work as slaves on the plantations alongside the commoners. In 1943 another rebellion broke out in Toli-toli, again because the Japanese colonialists had violated religious mores. Underground Islamic groups grew more fanatic, culminating in the declaration of *fisabillah*, or holy war. They sabotaged the bridges and roads so that plantation products could not be marketed. In 1945, the Dutch returned but were unable to reopen the plantations as viable economic units before independence was declared.

Tomini remained quiet during the early 1950s as the people adjusted to Indonesian national concerns. Some of the former rajas and their families found positions in the new bureaucracy; others became private entrepreneurs. In the late 1950s, separatist movements against the Indonesian government of Sukarno were led by youth groups throughout the entire island of Sulawesi. In the Tomini region this reached a peak with the Permesta Rebellion of the 1960s. Reportedly coconut farmers joined the movement initiated by the "Permesta rebels" because they received so little return for their work. Without a renewed transportation system, laborers were exploited by private businessmen; farmers quit working, and for several years the area produced no marketable products.

Since these times, however, the government has made an effort to integrate the area into the national and international economic system. For instance, gov-

ernment cooperatives for poor farmers have been established to encourage continual production; new forms of transportation are subsidized by the government. The trans-Sulawesi highway, which runs along the east coast of Tomini, was opened in 1980, and on the west coast, Buol and Toli-toli have airfields in addition to their harbors. In the 1970s the cash crop sector of the region's economy blossomed. Cloves were introduced in large plantations and were successful (in the Toli-toli area, clove trees produce three times more often than in any other region). National and international lumber firms have established themselves throughout the area, and rice production has increased to the point that the area has the highest ratio of rice per person in both north and central Sulawesi combined.

Despite this economic boom, social and political problems persist, especially among the mountain animist peoples, now called *suku terasing* (foreign tribes). These are the descendants of the Tomini people who fled from the forced labor service in the colonial period and the same people who never adopted Islam. Only minimal trading ties currently exist between the Islamic and animist neighbors, even though they once recognized a common heritage and once married each other. Coastal Muslim Tomini consider themselves to be modern Indonesians looking towards a relatively bright economic future. The Indonesian government has made attempts to acculturate the *suku terasing* by moving them down the mountains into settlement camps, but so far these efforts have not been successful. As clove production in the Tomini area develops and encroaches on the mountain territory of these animists, more concerted efforts will probably be made to relocate them along the coast among the Muslim Tomini.

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