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The Indigenous as Orthodox: Religious Evolution in Tana Toraja

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While it is a shame that we couldn't have spent more time together as a group, these types of disasters happen. We can only try to make the best of the situation given to us at any given moment. So, with my best efforts using secondary sources I researched the Toraja people as an ethno-religious project. Thank you to all the scholars who's work allowed me to get a

picture into what this unique culture and tradition has to offer. Thank you to the Torajan people who have endured decades of change and have remained resilient in their beliefs. They have shown to me and the rest of the world just how tactful and nuanced they are as religious scholars. Their contemporary example stands as an example for religious history and human perseverance as a whole. I look forward to sharing my research and conclusions with the rest of the teachers and students. I think We can make it through this emergency with perseverance and determination: two things that come quite naturally to humans under such stress.

Abstract

Within the last century, the Toraja regency in South Sulawesi has seen an unprecedented amount of social change. From their beginnings as hierarchical feudalistic culture at the turn of the 20th century to operating one of the largest tourist attractions in Indonesia, their way of life has been turned on its head. Most notably, these changes begin as religious and expand to impact cultural, political and economic life as well. This paper examines those changes from the regions blossoming of the *Aluk To Dolo* indigenous tradition to the incorporation of Christianity and finally the consolidation and preservation of indigenous beliefs through tourism and homogenization. Major outside catalysts such as the Indonesian government, missionaries, militants, and tourists have forced the Torajan people into a unique position in relation to their own beliefs. This position has indefectibly altered their course of life, but to deny that the Torajan people themselves did not have an active role in their own versions of these alteration is to deny their agency. Moreover, the Torajan people had a purposeful role in altering their ceremonies, religious identity and ways of life to meet these challenges presented from outside forces. Thus, reveling a key aspect of religion in the face of history: change is inevitable and never constant in its practice.

Methodology

To preface this section, I would like to say that even as no human subjects were used in this research, there are still a few important methodological acknowledgments to be made. Specifically, three aspects of my use of Religious studies need elucidation: 1. My definition of religion 2. The essentialization of the Toraja people and their traditions 3. Normative comparisons to other religions. Along with these it is important to discuss limitation of my research and my set of questions that I began my study with to understand which information I used chose to keep what to omit.

Regarding my definition of Religion, I will borrow from religious scholar J.Z. Smith and define religion in my own terms as I believe there can never be one definition to encompass religious practice.¹ Updated from religious scholars such as Taves and Durkheim, my definition of "religion" and "religious" are separate. Religion is that which is unified by certain beliefs/practices where aspects of life are designated as sacred and constitutes a community.² To be religious then is just to be designated a "thing" as unique, thus set apart from civil life. These broad definitions are in place to focus on Torajan contemporary practices that they often classify as purely cultural and not religious.

In terms of the second, I must acknowledge that I will be essentializing the views, traditions, and beliefs of the Toraja people. I will be doing this equally for both the Christian tradition and *Aluk To Dolo*. Torajan religion in any tradition is vastly different across each

¹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.193)

² Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: a Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), p.17)

individual community and every person may exhibit different theological practices and beliefs. For the purposes of this study however, I will essentialize these communities' beliefs because religions often recognize themselves as a collective while all participants may not share the same views.

For the third, in my attempt to analyze and compare the interactions of Christianity and *Aluk*, it is imperative to limit value judgments and not use Christianity (specifically Protestantism) as the normative definition of religion. In this way, I wish to emulate Robert Orsi in his goal of approaching religious studies by avoiding "othering" religions by both keeping academic distance and suspending my personal belief in the face of new ideas.³ However keep in mind that the "othering" that is occurring to *Aluk* is an important aspect of its change and thus will be examined.

Some of the limitations of this study include being limited to secondary research only and having no direct contact to the region itself. This reality forced me to change some of my research question midway through thus leaving with outcomes I didn't expect. However, my research questions are as follows: 1. What is the interaction between Christianity (which the majority religion) and *Aluk* (which is still a widely practiced form of animism or ancestor worship) 2. How and why did Christianity flourish in this unique culture as opposed to Islam which dominates the rest of Sulawesi? 3. What historical events forced such massive cultural change upon the Toraja and what were the impacts on life outside of the religious (because the changes first began in the religious realm)? All of these questions broadly aim to elucidate the Toraja as a case study in multireligious relations in the expansive cultural landscape of Indonesia.

³ Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007). 200-202.

Introduction

As scholars of religion, we are taught to interpret religions as living breathing things that are at the same time universal for a large group of people and completely individualized. This allows for religions to keep similar aspects such as a name and identity but develop vastly different practices and ceremonies. Over time, through no fault of their own, religions are subject to change constantly while ultimately staying the “same”. An exemplar of such an idea is Indonesia in general. The vast archipelagos history is shrouded in indigenous beliefs or animism while also claiming the identity of outside traditions as their own. While all of these religious influences and changes are varied throughout the many different islands, one thing is always constant: the ability for each culture, tradition or practice to find its own identity through what they develop. In many places the influence of “conventional religions” – religions that have a large following globally (usually one of the five accepted religions of Indonesia) – have greatly impacted or destroyed the traditions that have preceded them. But have they really? Do those earlier beliefs and practices just vanish? These are difficult questions to answer especially in the context of islands who do not have recorded history of their traditional practices interacting with outside religions. But unique to Indonesia, there are many groups of people and unique traditions that have stay almost uninfluenced until the modern era.

Such is the case for South Sulawesi’s *Tana Toraja* or “land of the upland people” as the name roughly translates to. At around the turn of the 20th century, these people of the Sa’dan River (as they are colloquially know) still kept to a largely animistic religion that focused on the worship of ancestors.⁴ Consequently, this tradition known as *Aluk To Dolo* (or *Aluk* for short)

⁴ Jan S. Aritonang and Karel A. Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p.455)

can be traced from its first interaction with an outsiders to its modern interpretation. These interactions begin with a distinction being placed upon them from their Muslim neighbors to the south. These people lived mainly in the large city of Makassar and knew of the Toraja's "strange ways" but never attempted to convert them or intervene at that time. Next Dutch missionaries take their successful tactics practiced in East Java on indigenous peoples and bring them to Tana Toraja. With great successes these missions began converting and baptizing followers of *Aluk*. Interestingly however, the missionaries allowed these converts to keep many of their previously held beliefs and ceremonies as long as they had faith in Jesus as their ultimate lord and savior.⁵ Then as Indonesia gained its independence and the global threat of WWII loomed large, missionary ultimately abandoned their positions. But due to the great success of the missionary the tradition lived on in the hands of the new Torajan ministers.⁶ Then during the 1970's the Toraja's unique culture and traditions were displayed on a global stage. But with moderation and globalization their traditions were slowly dying out. However, because tourism made the ceremonies such as funerals and cliff side effigies famous and desired, they were preserved by Torajans. Consequently, the tourist gaze upon Torajan culture allowed them the economic platform to alter their own traditions to continue to allow people to enjoy it while also actively preserving their use of it.⁷

By tracing the religious evolution of the Toraja, from its first discovery to the outside world to its global fame as a tourist destination, it shows how religions are more flexible than we give them credit for. They can at one point dominate the socio-economic life of a village and at another be used to educate and give others an experience of their previous way of life. This does

⁵ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 459.

⁶ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 461-462.

⁷ Toby Alice Volkman, "Visions and Revisions: Toraja Culture and the Tourist Gaze," *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (February 1990), p.91)

not mean that the religion is intrinsically different or that it is dead. Rather, it means that *Aluk* is still gathering a community in reverence to a power that is greater. Today in the Tana Toraja, only about 5% of people still identify as *Aluk* (ie put it on their ID card) while 90% are Christian. But *Aluk* is far from dead. It lives on in the cultural practices of a new generation who have since moved away or in the massive encouragement from global tourists.

Pre-Colonial Torajan Religion

Society in the land of the Toraja before outside contact (with the west) was very hierarchical and used slave labor for farming as their economic mainstay. The rich and powerful dominated the lower classes and constant reminders of their power were required to show their dominance. From these aspects of their culture, religious rituals and traditions were born to reinforce their ideas and to show off their place in society. Three specific cornerstones of society give us a window into how their traditional religion shaped society. These are the funeral ceremonies (sometimes called *Ma'Nene*), the *tongkonan* (or traditional ancestral house) and the *Tou-Tou* (effigies made for dead relatives). By analyzing each of these important pieces we can build a baseline of what *Aluk* and Torajan culture was like before western influence. Then we will use this baseline to demonstrate the changes brought on by colonization, globalization and tourism.

Ancient Funeral Rites and Slavery

According to leading Toaja anthropologist Roxana Waterson, funeral rites are designed to “ensure the passage of the dead person’s soul to the afterlife”⁸. The ritual lives up to this grand cosmological purpose as Toraja families organize days long funerals with packed schedules and itineraries. The myth goes that after someone has died, their soul or *bombo* stays on earth until there is a funeral and they are sent to the afterlife or *Puya*. *Puya* is thought to be nearly identical to life on earth except there is no fire or wild animals. Without the sustenance to live, the deceased require offerings to survive their days in *Puya*. So, buffaloes and pigs are killed at

⁸ Roxana Waterson, *Paths and Rivers: Sadan Toraja Society in Transformation* (Boston: Brill, 2009), p.377)

funerals as *kinallo* or “food for the journey”.⁹ The families first and foremost want their relatives to have safe passage to the next world but there is an ulterior motive. It is believed that the more lavish and the more offerings that the body received the better it will fair in the afterlife. So, families would save their money up for years to sacrifice hundreds of buffalo during one ritual and adorn the casket with gold leaf. This is why these funeral rites were a privilege only the higher-class Torajans could afford. The excessive slaughtering of water buffalo and the gold leaf covered coffins of relatives all serve as a reminder to the lower castes that their relatives will never receive a comparable passage to the afterlife. There was even a system put in place that tells which degrees of funerals were appropriate to each family. The poorest people would only sacrifice one pig and the funeral would last only one night. For families under crisis (like those during the 1918 flu pandemic) a family member would simple whack the side of the pigsty as a symbolic offering.¹⁰

So, while theologically speaking, every family member had the right and ability for a funeral, it was intentionally not equal. It is said that in the old days, slave families (those in the lowest of classes) would build and prepare these funeral rituals for the wealth aristocrats. The slave family were generational and often worked and lived in close proximity to their masters. Of course, they would make no money for their work. However, the slaves were often tasked with rewrapping the bones of bodies in new rags every so often before the funeral rite. These sorts of jobs would often grant them large sums of meat but just enough to sustain their family.¹¹ So, while they worked tirelessly to make the great funeral better for wealthy families, there opportunities to provide a great funeral for their own family was diminished greatly.

⁹ Waterson, 377-378.

¹⁰ Waterson, 380.

¹¹ Waterson, 305.

Similarly, to the caste system of India, these lower-class workers felt no desire to elevate themselves out of their current social class. This gave the Torajan the reputation in Sulawesi of being barbaric and uncivilized. Especially to the commercial elites of the port city of Makassar. Anthropologist Toby Volkman writes about French priests in 1685 who recorded the following description of the Torajan people: “The Bugis and Makassar’s... perceived their upland neighbors as head-hunting, loincloth-wearing, pork eating infidels, but nonetheless a good source of slaves and coffee.”¹² This would suggest that even very early on the Torajan people were viewed as backwards and uncivilized. It’s important to note that even when the Dutch outlawed slavery outright in Indonesia, the practice was still used in Tana Toraja for generations.¹³ In this way, social and economic inequality were an intrinsic aspect of Torajan culture and subsequent theologies. However, these aspects of their society were poised to change especially with the invasion of western ideals. How could an ideology such as Christianity allow for such inequities? Needless to say, many aspects of this slave system will be upended during the colonial era.

The Message of the *Tongkonan*

In the Torajan highlands the *tongkonan* is a complex structure not only physically but socially and symbolically.¹⁴ It is a dwelling built with a high wooden rectangle standing on thick posts with a bamboo roof with a signature swoop. The architecture follows a strict blueprint that lists every dimension as well as appropriate material. Sufficed to say, it is a marvel of preindustrial architecture and mastery of natural resources. But much like the funeral rites, these dwellings represent a complex class and religious significance that has huge implications for

¹² Volkman, 92.

¹³ Hetty Nooy-Palm, *The Sadan-Toraja: a Study of Their Social Life and Religion* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1986), p.305)

¹⁴ Volkman, 94-95.

Torajan society at large. Regarding this topic Volkmann writes, “Once completed, it was a visible statement of the owners genealogical ties to important ancestors, and it became the locus of ritual activities that demonstrate the families extensive social network in the recent years.”¹⁵ The quotes exemplify how important these dwellings were for the family’s status and the religious celebration of those ancestors that preceded them. But they were designed to make a statement to the living as well. They put the lower classes in their place. Class structure then dominated even the living spaces. Those of the lower classes (not to mention the slaves) could never obtain a *tongkonan* which means that there is no opportunity to worship the ancestors in way that was obviously valued in Torajan society.

The fact that these homes were inaccessible to the lower classes deepens the inequality because there is a direct loss of opportunity to be reverent towards the dead. On the theological significances of the *tongkonan* Waterson writes, “To neglect the *tongkonan*, will bring misfortune and even an early death. Two other (Torajan) sayings express the twin duties of upholding one’s obligations to one’s origin house and to attend funerals.”¹⁶ Therefore these houses almost serve as a meta representation of all of your genetic blood line that requires constant attention. These duties to the house include many things such as cleaning them, furnishing them with pictures of past relatives, and buying umbilical cords facing north of the structure.¹⁷ Of course if you were among the majority of people outside the noble class then you possessed no ability to perform these rights. According to the Torajan mythology, this would cause an imbalance to one’s life and thus lead to an early death. The imbalance occurs when your ancestral life is not balanced within your life on earth thus causing your ancestors to bring you

¹⁵ Waterson, 300.

¹⁶ Waterson, 308.

¹⁷ “ “

closer to them in *Puya*. However, without the ability to socially move your family across different classes then you are stuck in cycle of ancestral torture rather than worship. This is a harsh reality that many ancient Torajans battled with and ultimately accepted as there was no other option. But the dawn of Christianity changed that. With a majority of the population opposed by a dominate minority, there was a perfect opportunity for a class uprising, all they needed was the vehicle to do so.

Tau-Tau: The Watchful Ancestor

Almost always intertwined with the funeral ceremonies and ancestral houses are the wooden effigies called *Tau-Tau* (literally “little person). Mythologically, these are considered by the *aluk* religion to be receptacles of the deceased persons *bombo* (soul) until their bodies are put into a tomb. So, During the funeral ceremonies the *tau-tau* “would be placed where it could enjoy a good view of its sacrificial buffaloes when they were made to fight each other prior to slaughter.” Additionally, these effigies are placed in the middle of circle of *ma’badong* dancers (a traditional funeral performance) where they sing songs about that decease person’s life and accomplishments.¹⁸ The process of creating a *tau-tau* begins with a *tomebalun* (ritual practitioner specializing in rituals of death) learning about the person’s life. Then an armature is crafted out of bamboo and wrapped in cloth to resemble a body. Then eyes and facial features are painted on to resemble the person the *tau-tau* is emulating. Then they are dressed in traditional clothes depending on the gender. After the effigies is created, the *tomebalun* must “awaken” the *tau-tau*. To do this he falls to his knees and spins the effigies around while chanting then leaves it facing toward the west. The west is known as the direction of death in their cosmologies and signified the souls release to *Puya*. On the following days the funeral ceremonies will be performed, and

¹⁸ Waterson, 379.

the course can take its final resting place. The *tau-tau* then (having completed its job) is stripped bare signifying the souls permeate departure into the afterlife.¹⁹

In contrast from the *tongkonan*, *tau-tau* could be built by nobles and commoners alike for their respective ancestral funerals. However, as anthropologist Kathleen Adams points out, “Non-nobles were traditionally barred from using the celebrated jackfruit wood *tau-tau* in their funeral rite. While temporary bamboo *tau-tau* were used and destroyed in traditional funerals for both nobles and commoners”.²⁰ This shows that while class inequity is present in the crafting of *tau-tau* it is not a theological hindrance like being unable to build a *tongkonan* or having an elaborate funeral ceremony. Rather these permanent *tau-tau* meant for the nobles seem to purely hold a symbolic message in the memory of a great or wealth person. Regarding this phenomena Volkmann writes that noble family’s permanent effigies are “expensive and time consuming to predict (and) demonstrate the wealth and high status of the deceased family. Offerings of betel, tobacco, cigarettes, rice, pork and wine are presented to exchange for continued blessing on the living.”²¹ These larger and more permanent tau-tau are often displayed on cliffside or intersections on the roads so that many people can observe them and give offerings. So, while the permanent *tau-tau* are seen as statue symbols first and foremost, they are shown great religious reverence. That reverence in turn grants blessings to those living from those great people of the dead. In this way, status is once again heavily reinforced in Torajan society. So much so that now the dead rich and powerful are displayed and revered almost as gods pulling the strings behind reality. Strangely enough, we will see this practice of effigies change but ultimately find a different (but still important) place within Torajan society.

¹⁹ Volkmann, 98.

²⁰ Adams, Kathleen m. *Art as Politics: Re-Crafting Identities, Tourism, and Power in Tana Toraja, Indonesia*. (University of Hawai’I Press, 2006), p.

²¹ Volkmann, 98.

Summary

The origins of *Aluk to Dolo* replicate the values of inequality and class dominance that composes so much of early Torajan society. Evident with the three aspects of *Aluk* was not only a great distinction between the rich and poor (or slave) but the rich appeared as otherworldly by giving blessing to the those still dwelling on earth. But these small villages and cultures were isolated for the most part until the 1900's. So, the people who were oppressed didn't realize that there was another option available to them in life. Because as mentioned earlier these lower-class families have keep their social position for generations. But with the impending discovery and intervention of the West and Christianity, this was all going to change. This conflict for identity will result in a clash of cultures and what will emerge will have many important implications for the Torajan's image abroad.

Colonial Christianity: A Religious and Cultural Overhaul

While the Dutch had been in control of Indonesia for quite some time, it wasn't until 1906 when they discovered the unique mountain peoples of South Sulawesi: The Toraja. On first impression the colonists were impressed by the people's resistance to the influence of Islam. For them, it meant that these people might be receptive to Christianity (particularly Protestantism). So, began the Dutch Missionary Society (NZG) interests in these incredibly isolated people (compared to Java).²² Due to the tardiness at which the Tana Toraja was discovered and gained interests, the missionaries had a lot of experience, particularly in East Java where conversions of Muslims were attempted for many decades prior. For these factors and many more, the Christian Toraja movement was largely successful compared to other missions performed by the NZG. In this section I will analyze two different missions acting in different part of Sulawesi at different periods of time to demonstrate the massive change they brought to the region. The first missions built the basis of Toraja religious thinking into the future where their identity would be consistently challenged.

Kruyt's Mission in Poso

A.C. Kruyt's was a Dutch missionary and politician famous for his diplomacy and religious work in East Java. However, after his recent missions in East Java failed it became clear that the large Muslim populations were becoming even more steadfast in their beliefs as time went on. An official of the Dutch Protestant Church mentioned that he should relocate to remote parts of Sulawesi where there were groups of non-Muslims. Kruyt's (the son of a missionary himself) complied and in 1892 established himself near the mouth of the Poso River. While only on the edges of Torajan land, these people still followed a devout form of animism.

²² Volkmann, 92.

Some of Kruyt's techniques were typical of earlier missionary including tactics such as: building schools, learning the native language, and assisting them in their daily lives. But he also employed a number of unique techniques that he learned from experience with other uncontacted tribes in East Java. For example, he did not attempt to scientifically or theologically prove that the Torajan gods were false. Instead he "argued that the God whose message he came to proclaim was more powerful than the local deities and spirits."²³ This message was not only easier for the Torajan's to understand but more effective at gaining their interest in a new deity. But he was not satisfied in simply knowing he is changing their understanding of the Christian God. He wanted them to feel the gospel and his God on a religious level. This goal leads him to study local religion and culture intimately. He even became an advocate for his village, once even fighting off warriors from other towns attempting to invade his region.²⁴ These types of actions gave Kruyt the power to criticize the Torajan customs in favor of his own brand of Christianity.

Finally, in 1898 one of the Poso's powerful chiefs declared he was ready to accept Christianity and a baptism. This chief's decision created an environment where many of the commoners felt safer to make the jump to this new religion with him.²⁵ But at this point the village is still closely aligned with their ancient religious. So, for the time being the villagers seemed to have both their feet in different traditions and identity. The Torajans and the missionaries saw no problem at first with allowing them to be fully Christian and fully *Aluk* simultaneously. But when the colonial Dutch government took greater control of the country in 1903-1905 the whole country experienced drastic changes. Aritonang and Steenbrink describe

²³ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 456.

²⁴ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 457.

²⁵ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 457.

these changes as follows: “The traditional structures of society were largely maintained but head hunting and killing of people suspected of sorcery were forbidden, slavery was abolished, the people were forced to come down from their hilltop dwellings and settle alongside the roads built by the government.”²⁶ These restrictions devastated the Torajan’s original state of being as all of these acts (as previously discussed) were intrinsic to their spiritual life. The people were so at a loss they sought guidance from the only westers who helped them thus far: the missionaries. The missionaries then happily embraced them, teaching them about the reasons these aspects of their life are being persecuted. This made their bond even stronger. Kruyt saw took this opportunity to use his depth of knowledge regarding the Torajan culture to empower their relationship with the new religion (of which was becoming increasingly popular). Kruyt listened to the frustrated chiefs and elders of the village and “did not condemn the deviancies and try to suppress them, but made them an integral part of his missionary theory.”²⁷

The process of conversion for the Poso mission was not of a clean break with the past, rather it was treated as an evolution or continuation of the previous faith. The missionaries understood that proselytizing was much more effective if it was cooperative rather than combative. An example of such an adaptation is the reforming of one traditional ceremony for the dead. After the colonial government banned traditional ceremonies where -families would be greatly intimate with the dead as discussed during Ma’Nene ceremonies – the Torajan’s had to adopt a practice where they cleaned the grave sites of a family member consistently after death instead of the body directly. Theologically speaking, failing to complete this ritual would cause damage to the harvest that season. So, in order to connect Christian practice within this ceremony, the missionaries shifted the cleaning of the graves from the harvest time to Easter.

²⁶ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 458.

²⁷ “

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Thus they connected to cleaning of the graves with Jesus's resurrection for the dead rather than the health of the crops.²⁸ Thereby showing how the goal of these missionaries wasn't to destroy their old way of life in favor of a new one but to transform their current practices to serve different significances. In contrast to Kruyt's methods the earlier Dutch Christians traditionally paid no mind to the local customs, happy to impose their own (quite successfully) unto them.

A similar act was performed by some of the first fully ordained preachers of the mission in regard to slavery. Even as the new colonial government outlawed the practice of slavery, the practice was so intrinsic to Torajan culture that many elites never stopped. But even as some slavery stopped, there existed a large divide between commoners and those whose families were of slave descent. Therefore it became customary for former slaves to be banned from positions of authority and denied admission from certain schools. So, when former slaves were educated and ordained by the missionaries they had newfound social power and influences over the new Christian society. So, they upended the rule former slaves could not hold positions of power as they themselves were already an example to the contrary.²⁹ This of course opened the door for class mobility in a way never thought possible before. These social classes were so rigid and Torajan society was built to keep each family in their respective place. However, when Christianity came along and allowed former slaves and those from the lower class to become educated society changed rapidly. No longer did these oppressed people need to choose to believe that they lacked the ability to take care of their ancestors in the proper way. Due to this belief they understood that it wasn't there theological consequence to be a slave or to be of lower class.³⁰ In this way, a new part of Torajan society was gaining power and though that power

²⁸ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 460.

²⁹ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 461.

³⁰ Volkmann, 92.

crafting a new identity that they themselves are writing through the use of Religion as a tool. Strikingly unique to the Poso mission was the missionary's ability to work with Torajan society to create a truly indigenous Christian culture. Without question the missionaries wanted to implement their idea of a conservative Christian society however, they put faith in the Poso village. They believed in giving the village the tools to embrace Christianity themselves.

Unfortunately, this strategy did bring some unexpected downsides. As Christian population grew more and more, the missionaries were considering establishing secondary schools with the region. However, at the time, the Dutch Colonial Government only allowed secondary education to be taught in Malay (or sometimes Dutch). The missionaries felt as though they couldn't force the Torajans to learn Dutch or Malay and keep their valuable relationship. Also, the Torajan were averse to the idea of learning a new language just for secondary education. So, with no initiative to establish secondary school from the Government or the missionaries, new Christian converts had no opportunity to pursue a career or life outside their native region.³¹ Eventually, the Christian of the Toraja region would reluctantly embrace Malay as the main language of their bibles and such. But before WWII the Indonesian Government did not recognize them as an independent ethnic group because they were not united through language and couldn't complete secondary school. This is an example of how the hands-off approach of Kruyt's Mission was detrimental in the short term but ended up being useful for the future of Christianity in Torajan. The missionaries could have easily forced the language upon the Poso village but by waiting, the village received the same result of education with much less pain.

³¹ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 465.

Just as Kruyt's could see his dream of creating a fully indigenous system of church government in Toraja in 1940, the news struck that the Netherlands was to join in the outbreak of war in Europe. All posts and Churches were abandoned resulting in a loss of direction for Toraja Christians. Then in 1943 the Japanese take sovereign control over the archipelago and immediate changes took place. Recounting these changes Aritonang writes that, "everybody bowed to a Japanese flag strung out on the wall at the north side of the building, people sang the Japanese's national hymn and prayed for the soldiers in the war."³² These measures of change were in direct opposition to everything that Kruty's worked to establish with the mission. The Toraja were being forced into nationalism and having their religious way of life altered. But many of the Toraja were fearful of the Japanese. They assumed that if they messed up a service that the Japanese would arrest or execute them. Another Torajan group did not join in the processions at all because the worship of the flag seemed like idolatry. Additionally, many people in the region were forced into labor camps where they worked tirelessly to build roads in the rural area. But astonishingly the church came out almost unscathed. For instance, "There were no relapse into old patterns and no conversions to Islam" rather "the availability of the New Testament and other parts of the Bible... was a great comfort in those times."³³ The oppression and the fear that the Japanese instilled within the Christian community only made their faith stronger. Consequently, after the end of the war the Christians left a more unified group. But with the Japanese occupation over and Indonesian launching a new political machine, there was once again Christian Torajans looking for more answers from the West.

³² Aritonang and Steenbrink, 462.

³³ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 463.

The Calvinist Missionaries of the Sa'dan River

While the Poso mission was denied funding to expand their territory south into the regions of the Sa'dan river, the Reformists Calvinists or GZB (supported by the government) happily took their place. In 1913 they established their first mission and encountered fully traditionally *Aluk To Dolo* – unlike the Kruyt mission whose indigenous culture was similar but lacked the same enthusiasm and social power – and their mission began. Their philosophy around conversion was similar to Kruyt but was more rooted in education. Rather than using great knowledge of their traditional values to gain trust from the locals, the Calvinists used “education as a way of entering traditional society without creating the type of resistance that would be engendered by a direct attack on traditional religious values.”³⁴ At first this tactic was successful and the mission followed the typical patterns: the missionaries learned the language and assisted the tribes.

But unexpectedly tensions were rising between rival villages in the Sa'dan. Before the missionaries came (and the Dutch took power) there was constant warfare and arbitrary rule of several different chiefs and warlords. The Torajan began to resent the new Western power in their area. Particularly, they were frustrated with the missionaries' tendency to give “the impression that God was on the side of the poor.”³⁵ As we know, the Torajans believe that power and wealth is something of a gift bestowed upon them from God or their ancestors who look out for them. All of this culminated in a plan in 1917 to coordinate an uprising against the missionaries and kill all the Europeans. The mission ultimately failed but the Torajans were able to kill a senior missionary and firmly send their message to the rest. The death of the minister

³⁴ Jong, Edwin Bernardus Paulus de. *Making a Living Between Crises and Ceremonies in Tana Toraja: The Practice of Everyday Life of a South Sulawesi Highland Community in Indonesia*. (Leiden: Brill, 2013.), (p. 133.)

³⁵ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 467.

was only a small hindered for the mission as they continued operation at an even faster rate. By 1938 the GZB had baptized 13,000 and established hundreds of congregations. What made the Calvinists so successful was not full cooperation with the locals rather a systematized education system that began its mission of conversion with establishing schools.

To complete this objective the missionaries taught religious theory and attempted to apply that to the Torajans traditional way of life. In schools they learned to understand their beliefs as “pagan” and a distinction was made “between custom or tradition (*adat*) and pagan religion (*aluk*)” that continued to inform their new view of the world.³⁶ This is an incredibly important because the Calvinists (reformers as they were) were attempting to teach nearly uncontacted tribes fundamentals ideas of the Western Enlightenment. Enlightenment religious thinking is marked by this separation of life (culture) and religion (the sacred). The purpose of this was to understand religion as something you choose to engage or as just one aspect of yourself that did not define you wholly. However, a problem arises when they attempt to teach these ideas to non-Westerns because they do not have such an understanding. For the Torajan’s *aluk* “refers to the way in which both rituals and daily life are to be conducted; it is an all-embracing way of life.”³⁷ Therefore they do not have the ability to understand these two aspects of *adat* and *aluk* as separate from one another. But they eventually grew to understand and by introducing these topics to the Torajans they were participating in the first instance of cultural editing. For example, during the funeral ceremonies, “the meat of sacrificed water buffalo... could still be distributed to the living but it could no longer be offered to the spirits.” Additionally the *tau-tau* were limited to a purely customary purpose rather than religious (i.e. the

³⁶ Volkmann, 92.

³⁷ Jong, 133.

missionaries banned the ability to pray towards these effigies).³⁸ Thus there began a division in the once unitary concept of *Aluk* which was the first major marker of the Torajan path to modernity.

These sorts of tactics used by the GZB mission appears to be very forceful (and its true that some of them were) but much of the changes still incorporated Torajan elders. A turning point came in 1923 where a committee was held with missionaries and Toraja elders. Both sides worked collaboratively to produce Christian *adat* (custom) regulation that would add written rules and regulations for treatment of the dead, harvesting of rice and the ceremonies sounding the traditional house. Regarding the changes the agreements states:

“It is up to the family to bury the dead at once or postpone burial (according to traditional custom). None of the two practices is sinful... At the burial people may slaughter buffaloes as well as pigs; singing lamentation is not forbidden. However, if you slaughter animals, you are not allowed to bring an offering to the soul of the deceased person; you must not think that the dead take along these animals to the place of the souls or to heaven... People (only Christians) are not allowed to make a *tau-tau*, nor make sacrifices to it...The Christians do not have to keep to the prohibition of eating rice during the period of mourning.”³⁹

Here we see conscious changes going beyond just that of the distinction between *adat* and *aluk*. There is an implied freedom regarding Christianity that is influenced by western values. For instance, the slaughtering of animals still has a place within Christianity because it is not theologically opposed to it. So, it is a Christians freedom to choose whether or not he wants to engage in the activity. However, activities like worshiping the dead must still be outlawed as “pagan” because it could not fit into Christian practice. (The non-Christians of the village could

³⁸ Volkmann, 89.

³⁹ The text in: Th. Van Den End 1985: 205-209. A translation in modern Indonesian in Th. Van Den End 1994:188-193. The original text has not been preserved.

of course still engage in its practice) Additionally, Western notions of hygiene are imposed for the health and safety of the Toraja and the missionaries.⁴⁰ It is this give and take mentality that defined the entire history of these missions in South Sulawesi. The missionary pushed and the Toraja would bit by bit take and revises their own rules for what they believed were for the better. Feasts of the dead are deemed too unsanitary so instead the missionaries teach hymns of the dead to replace the original purpose. In this way the missionaries were allowing the Toraja villages to cope with these unprecedented and violent changes brought on by Dutch Government.

One of the last things the things that the Calvinists (similar to the Kruyt) implemented before the dawn of Indonesian independence was establish a systematized manner for autonomy. The missionaries were all but certain that the Toraja villages favored Sukarno but would not admit it to Westerns in case of hostility or disappointment. So, as Torajans began singing *Indonesia Raya*, the missionaries laid the foundations for a bonified Presbyterian Church organization. The missionaries implemented this plan by allowing Torajans to be immediately put into a local church council who would guide them through their preliminary relationship with Christ.⁴¹ These teachers of the small councils would then eventually become ministers who could fully convert through baptism. They would also have the ability to administer the sacraments thus making the church independent from the mission. Then before the Dutch realized it, the Pacific was again in great danger from the Japanese threat. The GZB quickly ordained multiple Torajan ministers in hopes of salvaging the movement before fleeing the country. Unfortunately, the Japanese occupation of Tana Toraja was similar to the people in nearby Poso as discussed earlier. The Japanese supported the Christians faith but forced many of the citizens to contribute to the war effort. Interestingly one Japanese Presbyterian minister, Juji Seya assisted in the

⁴⁰ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 469.

⁴¹ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 470.

creation of new ministers in the area. Seya is famous for declaring his support of the Christian movement by writing, “The present war is a worldwide war, of great significance because it shows that (all nations involved) must return to God.”⁴² Due to the uncertainty of their future they lived in constant fear. Soon after the occupation ended and Indonesian was set for independence, in 1947 the Toraja Church created a Synod and proclaimed themselves as a fully autonomous church.

Conclusion

The Dutch missions in South Sulawesi demonstrates how religious change can operate cooperatively, even when people have no other option. The Dutch ministers could have just as easily traveled to Toraja and pressured all citizens to conversion with death threats. But they knew these tactics to be harmful to their mission. So, the missionaries learned their language and culture to participate in their lives even as dangerous as they sometime were. It was only when the Dutch Government begun to outlaw cultural practices that serious problems began to arise. Because in the beginning the missionaries found no problem with their two ways of (Christianity and *Aluk*) living operating at the same time. But the laws of the sovereign powers forced drastic change upon the Toraja people. Frustrated and confused the villagers consulted the missionaries on how to deal with these problems. This is when missionaries devised plans to teach them religious thinking and separate their spiritual life from their cultural practice. Thus, making aspects of their life sacred and other parts profane. The missionaries also helped the Toraja adapt some of the practices that were banned to still: 1. Be performed 2. Have different significance that is directed toward Jesus Christ. Obviously, this was not an ideal situation for the Toraja however at least they were involved in the adaption to bend their practices around the

⁴² Aritonang and Steenbrink, 471.

government while also embarrassing their new faith. Most importantly their practice of *Aluk to Dolo* was not eliminated but rather adapted into a new form that still fulfilled the theological meaning of the ancestral worship. Adaption is the nature of religions. Meaning that often times a religious tradition never really disappears rather it is twisted and tweaked to fit a people's current scenario. Such is the case with Christianity's first entrance into Tana Toraja. More religious change is on the horizon for Toraja with Indonesian independence, a power struggle with local Islamic movements and a globalized tourist's market.

Independence, Struggle, and the Tourist Gaze

The post-colonial evolution of the relationship between *Aluk to Dolo* and Christianity is best exemplified through three different pheromones/ events. The first is the “editing” performed by Toraja ministers who, for the first time, had the freedom to make any alterations to the rules enacted by the Dutch government and the original missionaries. The second is the outbreak of violence that swept across Sulawesi until where Christians were targeted by Islamic militant rebels. The third is the consolidation of Torajan religious and cultural identity that resulted in the mass tourism from all over the Western world. All of these events can be seen as a continuation of the same narrative of Toraja resilient and adaptation since colonial times. A number of these events could have allowed either Christianity or *Aluk* to die out completely however it is evident that these people care deeply about both traditions. It is this self-reflexivity and perseverance that makes their modern religious and culture so intriguing and important.

Post-Independence Reforms

The Toraja Church, now blessed with full autonomy, had some importance decisions to make regarding their adoption of Calvinist ideologies, their relationship toward *Aluk*, and the best way to continue growth. One of the first things that was done was to repeal a law that prevented women from entering the ministry. In addition, they also reformulated the act of confession, making it more contextual to their *Aluk* ceremonies. Six years later the Toraja Church departed completely from the original Calvinist texts, an annunciation of a new Christian identity.⁴³ In this way they largely held on to their Calvinist ideologies until they were competent in their own methods to make a large reform.

⁴³ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 472.

In terms of addressing their relationship to *Aluk*, the Christians largely followed in the footsteps of the GZB missionary. Which is to say that they treated traditional culture (*adat*) as an aspect of their identity to embrace and incorporate into their own practices. For instance, “traditional clothes were worn, traditional dances received a place” in the church and the mission of social stratification was continued.⁴⁴ In the case of *tau-tau* the Christians decided that they were appropriate to pay homage to their ancestors however, they should not be worshiped as they were in their original compacity. It was still forbidden for Christians to build a *tau-tau* for a funeral. But every once in a while, a family would commission one and its was not seen as sinful to the rest of the community.

To address the massive growth the Church was experiencing during this post-independence time the Christians need to further define their relationship to *Aluk*. When the church first became independent, their members numbered 25,000 but by the 1950’s that number had increased to over 100,000 with no end in sight. Unfortunately, this massive growth came at the cost of practitioners of complete *Aluk to Dolo*.⁴⁵ So some village elders decided to preserve the practice by petitioning the government for official recognition. Which they got in the form of a branch of Hinduism similar to Bali or Kalimantan’s indigenous religious classification. Unfortunately, this resulted in a distinction between the traditions. For instance, *tau-tau* was only appropriate as a symbol of worship for those who fully identified themselves with *Aluk*. However, Christians were still welcome to have one made at their funeral as long as they didn’t pray to and ask for blessings. These reforms had impacts for both traditions in the form of education. Due to the earlier established Christian schools values of inclusion and equity, the

⁴⁴ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 473.

⁴⁵ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 474.

Toraja elders decided to make people of all classes go to the same schools.⁴⁶ A policy that would have been unthinkable just a few decades ago. In this way the feudalistic system was coming to end, and upward social mobility was possible. It was precisely this social mobility that allowed for mass outmigration of Toraja people to the rest of Indonesia. These villages that gained a new rising class shortly after independence because so ubiquitous across Indonesia that Hildred Geertz named them “centripetal societies”. These were communities that migrated out of the center to expand across a large area. They were often responsible for these foreign investment projects that involved oil, palm oil and rubber.⁴⁷ With this outmigration, immense change took place as new ideas and perspectives about economics and politics were brought back and introduced within Toraja society.

The Threat of an Islamic State

The second massive harbinger of change that occurred during this period was brought by a return of local warfare in the highlands. Beginning in about 1950, “people of Sa’dan Toraja were subjected to violent attacks from the fundamentalist Muslim guerrilla group know as *Darul Islam* who were attempting to establish an Islamic state.”⁴⁸ The Islamic fundamentalists group began as a resistance organization against the Dutch but due to increased instability from the newly democratic Indonesian government, the movement gained more traction. At one point the militants controlled almost all of South Sulawesi. Subsequently seeing the Tana Toraja as a direct threat to their legitimacy. In areas that were dominated by the militants, “a number of Christians were killed. The adherents to traditional religion (by far the majority of the population) were forced to accept a religion; choosing between Islam and Christianity.”⁴⁹ While

⁴⁶ Volkmann, 93.

⁴⁷ Volkmann, 93.

⁴⁸ Jong, 140.

⁴⁹ Aritonang and Steenbrink, 472.

many chose Islam, the majority of Torajan converted to Christianity in opposition to the oppressive threat of an Islamic state in Sulawesi. Additionally, this Christian conversion closely aligned them with the *Parkindo* or the Indonesian Christian Party that soon became the most powerful in the region.⁵⁰ This event further normalized Christianity as part of the community mentality of the Toraja. But the normalization of Christianity did come at the cost of orthodox adherence to *Aluk*. But just as the connection to tradition still withstood the missionary movement, so too does *Aluk* live on in those that were forced to convert at the hands of the Islamic movement.

In political realm the Christian identity would have some unintended advantages. For instance, on the domestic end of politics the Torajans were still often considered primitive and backward people. Thus, they were not taken seriously especially due to their traditional religious which displayed many controversial aspects that were in opposition to the *Pancasila* (the Indonesia national philosophy). For instance, it is required by law that all national religions of Indonesia must have a central God, a foundational text, and a national religious center or congregation. *Aluk* would later implement all of these qualifications to gain the title of Hindu-Dharma but at this time, they were not officially recognized. So, the massive move to Christianity which had a central god, text and national congregation allowed them to gain a legitimacy on the national stage. So, the Toraja people – specifically those of the middle and lower class – began to advocate for ancestral lands that they had been stripped of by the Dutch Government and never returned. Specifically, the Dutch retook their *sawah* (irrigated rice fields) to use for themselves or to sell to wealthy businessmen.⁵¹ So a politically influential group of Toraja people join the *Barisan Tani Indonesia* which was known as the ‘peasants front’ to

⁵⁰ Jong, 141.

⁵¹ Jong, 140-141.

petition the government to return their long overdue land rights. In the late 1950's due to the legitimizing power that Christianity allowed, the government heard them out and eventually returned their land.

So, in the face of political instability and impending warfare (reminiscent of the Japanese invasion) the Torajans fell back on their Christian faith to preserve their way of life. With the orthodox among them forced to choose between the two religions, they chose Christianity because it was their own faith. They no longer identified their Christian practice with the missionaries or government who brought it to them. Christianity has become Torajan. The remaining followers of *Auluk* knew this so they picked Christianity over Islam because they knew that, at least in some compacity, that they could continue their practice of *Auluk*. In this way the indigenous became the orthodox and visa versa. Through Christianity the indigenous lives on while allowing the Toraja villages to modernize and adapt to outside threats. The new political allies that Christianity brought, allowed for national land reform that resulted in a direct improvement of past policies. Therefore, the evolution of these two religious traditions are once again working in tandem. Religious is always serving a purpose and in the Toraja case and that purpose is dictated by them and their mission. Christianity was used as a tool to preserve their ancient practice, seek refuge from the militant Islamicist, and to improve their political prowess. All the while the indigenous was still there to inform their identity of their past and their cultural values.

Cultural/ Religious Homogeneity and Ethnic Tourism

The final phenomena that brings the complex relationship between *Auluk* and Christianity into the modern era is the introduction of tourism that brought with it, a new avenue for change. In 1969, Indonesia famously commissioned their five-year tourism plan to increase tourism

domestically and abroad. Even as this plan largely focused on Java and Bali, it was only a few years after that Tana Toraja found mass appeal. In 1972, a film crew from *National Geographic* was invited to cover a *Ma'Nene* for a prominent nobleman, the last of his bloodline. This was the first ceremony ever recorded in the Toraja tradition and the first time this many westerners would see it. The main take away the westerners had was that the “funeral rites are more joyous than somber” a theme that will continue to draw a spectacle.⁵² Thus Tana Toraja gain a reputation as being an exotic, eye opening, ethnically rich, and off the beaten path experience. It was marketed to those who traveled to Bali and wanted something more unexplored and primitive. But this was an identity was often hard to live up to. The Torajans were modernized and were no longer there animistic, head hunting, spear wielding past selves. One San Francisco tourist recounts expecting an encounter with an uncontacted tribe however, “the first person they had seen in Toraja had been wearing a California Highway Patrol hat and jeans; while their first event was a Protestant funeral.⁵³ Yet ironically, these westerners want to see pagan rituals and funerals that the colonial Dutch government attempted to ban years ago. Still tourism is growing in this region despite some of the false marketing. Now Tana Toraja sees about 50,000 internal tourists a year. So, as the fully orthodox *Aluk* tradition was slowly dying down across history, all of a sudden, this aspect of themselves becomes their largest economic draw. This caused the Toraja elders to once again rethinking their religion, culture and the nature of their confusing relationship to the way of the elders.

The largest spectacle of them all, the funeral ceremonies specifically underwent huge change to accommodate the tourists and Toraja economic goals. Toby Volkmann observed that the “audience for ritual had begun to shift, from a social universe that began in and stretched as

⁵² Volkmann, 94.

⁵³ Volkmann, 95.

far as one could stretch in the Toraja world of kin and followers, ancestors and spirits, to a universe that included multilingual foreign audience who could admire exotic cultures on television” or elsewhere.⁵⁴ What he means by this is that the ceremonies used to be a very interpersonal and local event that held huge religious weight. But now the ceremonies are being prepackaged and made more assessable to outsiders. For instance, the ceremonies are organized with an itinerary where everything is supposed to happen at a certain time. To do this the ceremonies that would often stretch for weeks were now condensed into four days. In 1985 during one famous ceremony, the Minister of Social Affairs from Jakarta visited Toraja just to see a famous ceremony. This was the first instance of the Torajese attempting to directly translate their practice to the outside. During prayers in their local language, a loudspeaker was used to translate the language and meaning into Bahasa Indonesia so it could be intelligible for all of the outsiders.⁵⁵ What is clear here is the Torajan ability or cultural license to explicitly edit their ceremonies to their desire. A tactic no doubt picked up from the Dutch colonists who taught them the separation of *Aluk* and *Adat*. So, they took a sacred and personal ceremony such as the funeral and edited it to their liking. Interestingly, these new ceremonies often mirror other Christian ceremonies often preformed for an aesthetic purpose or ritual significant rather than theological. That is not to say that all current Torajan funeral rites are thus stripped of all orthodox religious meaning. But it’s not a stretch to think that these spectacles with government officials and hundreds of spectators are mere performances of something that was traditionally based in the community. But similar to Bali, that doesn’t mean that the new ceremonies lack the same ritual grandeur and authenticity. It is ass a famous anthropologist once said, “what is culture but a performance?”

⁵⁴ Volkmann, 102.

⁵⁵ Volkmann, 103.

This ability to culturally edit also worked to upend oppressive cultural norms that have been in place for centuries. Some of the most lavish and expensive ceremonies occurring today in Toraja are ceremonies from family of lower classes or former slaves. Volk describes this phenome as “attempts by nouveau-riche, fairly ordinary families (trying) to claim undue status, to enhance their name.”⁵⁶ Because as the class system was destroyed by the introduction of Christianity by the Dutch, commoners were able to travel and bring money back home to their families. Because these families never got an opportunity to have a lavish funeral or a funeral at all, they want to make these very special. This could also serve to make up for the generations of family members who feel that their ancestors did not receive a proper funeral. As discussed earlier, they could believe that their bloodline could be tainted by those who came before them. In this way the religious orthodox belief in *Aluk* is bending to meet the requirement of modern-day Torajans in a similar way as it did the past. The updating of the funeral ceremonies has led to continued space for *Aluk* to modernize and thus meld with Christian values.

Another event that defined the religious developments of this period was the training workshop of local Torajan guides. In 1985 the Sulawesi government department for tourism made a decree that only officially licensed guides were allowed to guided tourists in Toraja. This was a huge blow to many of the local guides who were unlicensed. To obtain a license, guides would have to travel to a major city and pay a lot. To combat this decree, the leading Toraja guides established a two week long workshop to develop uniform Torajan history and mythologies to thus eliminate any inconsistencies between local and nonlocal guides.⁵⁷ This would give the locals an advantage because they would know the full truth and extent of Torajan culture while the other guides would be playing catch up. This wasn't an easy task as Toraja

⁵⁶ Volkmann, 104.

⁵⁷ Adams, 317.

mythologies is quite varied throughout the particular villages. Finally, “several prominent aristocrats in the community who had celebrated reputations as cultural experts” compiled a uniform doctrine of Torajan history, cosmology, traditional dress, and architecture.⁵⁸ The other aspiring guides present were then quizzed on the material and if they passed then they were awarded certificates as official guides. But as many guides noted, this homogenization came at the cost of each of their unique beliefs from the spectrum of villages in the area. To this there is no positive answer but at least this instance of cultural editing was in the full control of the Torajans instead of an outside. It also made them more united and consolidated many of the differences seen between different sects of *Aluk*. Such is the theme with the Torajans throughout history: an outside influence forces them to change and they meet this change as an active force consistently looking out for their own interests at any cost.⁵⁹

Summary

The modern era of Torajan cultural and religious is interpreted as a continuation of their history with the colonial period. During the post-independence cultural reforms, the Torajan took matters into their own hands to further develop their relationship between *Aluk* and Christianity. With so many making the official switch to Christianity the Torajans put measures into place that prevented the destruction of *Aluk* and allowed the two religious relationships to continue. During the Muslim rebellions the Torajans faith was deeply tested. The result was an identity of Christian that was forced upon them by necessity. But they took advantage of this and used the Christian identifier to gain greater political power. Again, with the mass influx of tourism to Toraja they again had to redefine their customs based on the outside forces around them. As

⁵⁸ Adams, 317.

⁵⁹ Adams, 318.

should be evident, the main theme of Torajan religion and culture during the modern era is the power of editing and self-reflection. Thus, demonstrating that while many of the outsider factors are out of their control, they always have shown an ability to bend their traditions to meet the outsiders requirements. I think Kathleen Adams puts it best when she writes: “self-conscious cultural reformulation does not necessarily imply a collapse in meaning or emotive power... (this shows) that it is time to rethink the discourse of “authenticity and “stage authenticity.”⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Adams, 318,

Final Considerations

Tana Toraja's story is one of status, power, authority, and adaptation. All of these elements combine to create a dynamic and mythical melding of Christian and indigenous tradition. The two traditions did not just produce something new from being in close proximity. Rather, we can observe direct causes resulting in specific changes. Such is the case as Toraja hierarchical culture encountered the liberal Christian values brought by the missionaries. Then the Torajans took those values and applied them to their current modernized position to meet unexpected outside forces. All of these changes resulted in the dominate identity of Christian in the villages. However, the Toraja specifically preserved their ancient *Aluk* tradition so that it could coexist with Christianity.

By following the Toraja people throughout their colored history, there are many conclusions to make about the ethnic group and the nature of religion in general. The Torajans were certainly more flexible and held a more active role in their transformation that is typically thought. At each turn they always looked out for their best interests in the face of ultimate resistance. In the same way, religious as a concept is often more flexible and malleable than is typically shown. It is the nature of religion to adapt and change over time to not only include outside beliefs but also to adapt older practices to meet a different world. As you can see the past century has brought with it the most rapid change the world has ever seen. So, it is not such a stretch to believe that religious would change with it. Therefore, the Torajan religious identity is that of editing and adapting in order to make the indigenous as orthodox.

Further Research

In order to best explore this theme further I think there is a number of things to do. Firstly, traveling to the region itself to conduct interviews with spiritual leads of Christianity and *Aluk* is imperative. There I could ask them personally how the relationship between the two religions has changed over the years. Hopefully they would remember times before and after the colonial influence as well as traumatic events such the Muslim militant occupation that changed the course of their history forever. Being in Tana Toraja would also allow me to gain a greater cultural competence as I am able witness the creation of *tau-tau* or a funeral ceremony.

Secondly, I would reach out to some of the authors of these academic authors to get additional information from their topics. Most of the sources I read were not pertinent to my specific topic, but I assume that they authors would have the auxiliary knowledge to answer my questions. I could also research the topic even further and compare that research to another ethnic group's interaction with an "orthodox" religion. Such as the Japanese Shinto movement interacting with Mahayana Buddhism. I think that project could isolate some of the consistencies in the ways that religious changes as they interact with one another.

Thirdly, I think it could be illuminating to further explore how Christianity's journey throughout Indonesia changed the lives of those who converted or resisted. I know that there are many parts of East Java that resisted Christianity for years and year so that could be an effective contrast to the Torajan embrace of it. Regardless, I will still follow the Toraja stories in regard to tourism and the continuing evolution of their traditions which is inevitable.

Glossary

Tana Toraja (Toraja) – The Southeaster section of Sulawesi that contains the tribes of the Toraja

Torajan (Torajanese) – Ethnic signifier of someone from Toraja

Sa'dan – The river in Southern Sulawesi that often defines the region of Tana Toraja

Aluk To Dolo (Aluk) – Umbrella term for the traditional religion of the Torajan area → literally “way of the ancients”

Ma'Nene – Most common type of funeral ceremony preformed in Torajan culture

Tongkonan – Tradition Torajan ancestral house

Puya – Mythological “afterlife” of the Torajans

Bombo – The idea of an eternal spirit for Toraja people

Kinallo – Offerings that follow bombo into the afterlife

Ma'badong – a funeral dance performed in a group of ten to a hundred people → the group holds hands in a circle solemnly dancing and praying for the souls' release

Tomebalun - ritual practitioner specializing in rituals of death

Adat – Word that defines Toraja culture apart from Aluk or religion

Darul Islam – Islamic military/ political organization that fought for the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia

Parkindo- Christian political party

Pancasila – Chief political ideology of Indonesia

Sawah – name for Torajan irrigated rice fields

Barizan Tani Indonesia – the Indonesian ‘Peasant Front’, associated with the Indonesian Communist Party

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