Land rights and the forces of adat in democratizing Indonesia : continuous conflict between plantations, farmers, and forests in South Sulawesi

Muur, W.E. van der

5 ADAT IN TRANSITION: SPIRITUAL CULTS, DIVINE RULERS AND STATE FORMATION IN SOUTH SULAWESI

'Notions of divine kingship surely sit uneasily with the emancipatory ideals of a resistance movement' (Klinken, 2007: 164).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the rise of the indigenous movement in Indonesia and explained how adat has become a means of resistance of vulnerable rural communities vis-à-vis external forces. This chapter shifts back to South Sulawesi and focuses on the history of adat in this region. Such a historical overview is necessary to understand the context of local adat land claims that will be discussed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. I will show that there is a flipside to adat, which is significantly different from the image evoked by the indigenous movement. In contrast to the idea of adat as an emancipatory force to empower marginalized communities, adat in South Sulawesi has for centuries helped to legitimize the power of local noble rulers.

The first part of the chapter will look at the socio-political history of traditional belief systems and adat-based rule in South Sulawesi, focusing on the traditions of hereditary noble rule and the impact of Dutch colonial policies on this rule. Next, I will discuss the Darul Islam rebellion period (1950-1965), which was above all a resistance movement supported by the newly emerging middle class against the aristocracy. Subsequently I will cover the New Order period, particularly looking at the impact of the changes following Indonesia's unification of government administration, and the position of the nobility under the New Order. In the final section I will zoom in on the Ammatoa Kajang community from Bulukumba district, famous throughout Indonesia for its strict adat traditions. In contrast to most other rural communities in South Sulawesi, this community is known for its egalitarian culture and modest lifestyle. Often mentioned in NGO reports and advocacy speeches as a prime example of an authentic adat community, the Ammatoa Kajang community has become an icon of the indigenous movement. As a backdrop for the following two chapters, I will here discuss the community's socio-political organization.

5.2 ADAT, COLONIALISM AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY (1605 – 1948)

5.2.1 The Tomanurung cult of South Sulawesi

Invoking adat as a rights-claiming strategy for marginalized communities is actually far from self-evident if we consider the complex and turbulent history of adat and political authority in South Sulawesi. While the indigenous movement associates adat with egalitarian norms of rural society, adat in South Sulawesi has long been used by elites to legitimize a hierarchical system of social stratification. Crucially important in this regard is the ancient spiritual cult of divine ancestry practiced in the kingdoms of Gowa and Bone,

and the smaller kingdoms spread across the region. The spiritual cult formed the basis of a social organization characterized by a strict distinction between noble elites, commoners and slaves (Chabot, 1996; Gibson, 2000). For centuries, this system ensured the continuation of patronage and clientelist relations between the aristocracy and their subordinates. The spiritual cult of divine ancestry posed a serious obstruction to social mobility (Pelras, 2000). Chabot, who spent many years doing empirical research on adat law in South Sulawesi between the early 1930s and late 1960s, notes that 'according to the prince and his kinsmen, the little man has no adat (…) For a man of nobility, adat is just that which distinguishes him from the people; his adat is the real one' (Chabot, 1996: 70).

Even though Islam arrived in South Sulawesi in 1605, the pre-Islamic spiritual cult - of which some aspects are said to date back more than a thousand years - remained of outstanding importance in the realm of political authority in the centuries thereafter (Gibson, 1994: 64). Its main principle is the belief in the *Tomanurung*, the divine celestial beings who descended from the sky to the earth to bring law and order to society, before ascending back to heaven (Chabot, 1996; Andaya, 1984; Pelras, 1985; Gibson, 1994). The traditional noble rulers, called *Karaeng*, derived their special status from their ancestral ties to these celestial beings. They were considered the direct descendants from the *Tomanurung* and hence, their divine blood assigned them political authority (Röttger-Rössler, 2000). The rulers were the intermediators between the people and the divine realm, as well as the upholders of adat law (Andaya, 1984: 22).[126] The myth hence determined a 'finely graded hierarchy fixed largely by birth' (Gibson, 1994: 64).

Most regions in South Sulawesi have had their own version of *Tomanurung* but all versions showed strong similarities. Almost everywhere, the story goes that the *Tomanurung,* after descending from the upper world, was first found on a stone or rock (*gaukang*) located in an open area (Andaya, 1984: 24). The *Tomanurung* then became the divine ruler, bringing order and prosperity to regions formerly tormented by conflict and chaos. The *Tomanurung* introduced rules on land rights and inheritance, and appointed the *hadat*, the traditional council of community leaders. According to local beliefs, the *Tomanurung* left several objects behind that originated from the divine upper world, and these henceforth became sacred heirlooms. The object, known as *kalompoang*, conferred political authority on the persons who held them in their possession.[127] Traditional rulers usually kept them in their house and were viewed as 'the executive agent of the political power embodied in the sacred object' (Rössler, 2000: 163).

The *kalompoang* were usually weapons such as spears or knives and were the center of worshipping rituals. These rituals were attended by both noble elites and

[126] The *Tomanurung* myth stems both from written sources of the Buginese and Makassarese kingdoms called *Lontara*, as well as local oral traditions, see Abidin, 1971; Andaya, 1984. Cummings (2002: 152) argues that the *Tomanurung* myth originates from the Makassarese kingdom of Gowa. As the Kingdom became more influential throughout the region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, local versions of the *Tomanurung* myth were adopted across the region.

[127] The Dutch referred to both *gaukang* and *kalompoang* as *ornamenten* (Chabot, 1996 and Vollenhoven, 1918).

commoners, and strengthened social cohesion (Chabot, 1996: 121). The *kalompoang* rituals also strengthened the solidarity between communities, given that outsiders often joined. A regional hierarchy was created as *kalompoang* of smaller village territories were subordinated to those held by the rulers of larger kingdoms. The *kalompoang* of Gowa for instance, was considered one of the most powerful and magical objects of the region (Friedericy, 1961). As such, the status of *kalompoang* reflected the power relations between different polities.

Given the importance of ancestry for the acquisition of political authority, genealogical ties ultimately became the most important factor of social organization in South Sulawesi (Chabot, 1996; Rössler and Röttger-Rössler, 1996) Descent is bilateral in South Sulawesi, meaning that noble blood is passed through the mother and father's family line (Röttger-Rössler, 2000). Members of shared ancestry were often spread throughout the region, but a sense of kinship connection nevertheless remained in place (Chabot, 1996). It was common that groups of various ancestries lived together in a single village.

Until the late nineteenth century, the dominant sufi version of Islam and the spiritual cult of *Tomanurung* were largely complementary to one another, in the sense that both helped to solidify the powerful position of noble elites.[128] For instance, that the Kingdom of Gowa came to possess a number of ancient sacred Islamic scripts in the seventeenth century helped to bolster its influence in the region. In a way, the sacred Islamic scripts became 'the newest form of *kalompoang* in Makassar' (Cummings, 2002: 154).

Noble elites were both agents of Islam and the spiritual cult. Pelras explains that well-to-do elites 'tried to combine the advantage of both systems, by monopolizing Islamic offices on the one hand, and on the other hand by maintaining those elements of the former system on which their political power had rested' (Pelras, 1985: 122-123). While the *Tomanurung* cult ascribed political authority 'to a class of hereditary nobles', religious authority was in the hands of those who descended from Islamic saints (Gibson, 1994: 64). Marriages between persons of noble descent, and persons with genealogical ties to Islamic saints were common and strengthened the mutual positions of families (Andaya, 1984: 40).

The strict hierarchy on the basis of family lineages was not absolute. In some situations, upward social mobility was possible. First, commoners could in theory become members of the nobility by marrying a noble person. Chabot writes in this context that a 'commoner can only be admitted into the nobility by way of kinship, that is to say, by marrying into the nobility' (Chabot, 1996: 132). However, for a commoner to marry a person of noble descent was not only very difficult, it would also take 'several generations' before admittance into the nobility was finally achieved. Second, 'personal qualities' such as 'learnedness, courage, and wealth' were also regarded important for leadership positions (Chabot, 1996: 143-144). Such personal qualities could consolidate one's

[128] Islam became the dominant religion throughout South Sulawesi, with the exception of the formerly isolated highlands in the far north of the region today kown as Toraja. In the course of the twentieth century, Christianity became the dominant religion in Toraja after various Dutch missions.

position, but yet, they would not be of much benefit without some royal blood. In sum, although becoming part of the nobility was under special circumstances possible, the traditional *Tomanurung* beliefs kept a clearly defined socio-political order based on descent intact for centuries.

5.2.2 The influence of colonialism on traditional rule

Like in the rest of the archipelago, the Dutch ruled South Sulawesi mostly in an indirect manner and the noble elites were mostly left in place (Gibson, 1994: 61). From 1667 until around 1860, the Dutch presence in South Sulawesi was 'but one state among others in the area' (Gibson, 1994: 64). Gibson speaks in this context of a 'para-colonial' government, given that the position of local rulers was virtually left untouched by the Dutch (Gibson, 1994: 61). This changed in the 1860s, after the Dutch defeated the Kingdom of Bone (Gibson, 1994: 70).[129] Inspired by liberal ideas of progress and development, as well as efficiency and profitability, the Dutch tried to make local government more modern and efficient by incorporating villages into larger regencies (Gibson, 2000: 51).

In 1905, the colonial government sent troops of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) to South Sulawesi, in order to force the independent kingdoms of Bone and Gowa to recognize Dutch sovereignty. The military campaign was successful. The colonial government thereafter abolished the two self-governing kingdoms and incorporated these regions into the structure of indirect rule. It implemented many changes to harmonize government administration following the Javanese model (Herben, 1987). At the lowest administrative level, the colonial government introduced the unit of *kampung*, which had previously not existed in South Sulawesi (Pelras, 2000: 406). The Dutch now divided administrative regions into four units: *afdeling*, *onderafdeling*, *district* and *kampung (*Goedhart, 1920).

The increased influence of the Dutch on local affairs in the early twentieth century changed the position of noble rulers. Village heads were now paid by the colonial government and were henceforth prohibited to gain income from land labor of commoners or slaves. Instead, they were now required to collect taxes (*landrente*) for the colonial state. Because of these developments, the traditional patronage relationships between the landowning nobility and their subordinates slowly began to be undermined (Pelras, 2000). Moreover, the Dutch had a final say in the appointment of rulers and officials and sometimes removed or replaced noble rulers if their loyalty to the colonial government was in doubt.

The reforms imposed by the colonial government impacted the relationship between the noble rulers and their subordinates. It began to occur more frequently that commoners were appointed village head. Slowly but surely it became easier for them to

[129] In 1667, the VOC first obtained a trading monopoly in South Sulawesi, after Dutch troops defeated the Makassarese kingdom of Gowa with the help of the rivaling Buginese kingdom of Bone. From then onwards, several principalities previously part of the Kingdom of Gowa were incorporated in the VOC's territory (such as Bulukumba), while the kingdoms remained self-governing territories (Huis, 2015: 177). Following the demise of the VOC, the region came under the jurisdiction of the Dutch East Indies in 1800.

climb the political and economic ladder (Gibson, 1984; Pelras, 2000). Meanwhile, the authority of the noble *Karaeng*, once characterized by impunity and unconditional loyalty among their subordinates, somewhat decreased (Chabot, 1996: 150-151). Despite these developments, becoming part of the nobility still remained very difficult for those of common descent. Chabot, covering the situation of the late 1940s, gives several examples of commoners becoming part of the aristocracy but classifies these as 'very rare cases' (Chabot, 1996: 144).[130] Hence, despite the emergence of a new class, the regional and local elite continued to be dominated by people of noble descent.

5.2.3 The revival of traditional rule against the rise of modernist Islam

The 1920s were a turning point for Dutch colonial policy in the archipelago. During this period, the colonial government abolished their modern reform policy and suddenly switched back to encouraging the authority of traditional, noble rulers. This 'conservative turn' was motivated by ethical concerns, but even more so, it was a response to the threats of the emerging nationalist, Marxist and religious movements in the Dutch East Indies, for which the political space was in part created by the Dutch liberal policy. The rise of modern political movements became an increasingly serious concern for the Dutch. To maintain political stability and secure their rule, the Dutch began to actively stimulate and promote the continuity of the traditional socio-political order.

In South Sulawesi, the Dutch restored the kingdoms they abolished several decades earlier. The *kalompoang* of Gowa and Bone –confiscated by the Dutch in 1906 to expose them in museums in Batavia and Leiden – were brought back to Sulawesi and returned to the kingdoms (Friedericy, 1961). The colonial government furthermore abolished the districts and replaced them with a new administrative unit, the adat community (*adatgemeenschap*). These were largely created along the lines of what the Dutch called *ornamentschappen* (ornament-worship communities) (Kooreman, 1883; Vollenhoven, 1918); groups 'living together in a certain territory worshipping a certain object' (Chabot, 1996: 120). The colonial government also created new adat communities, through which a number of separate villages merged into a new polity headed by an indigenous adat community head (*adatgemeenschapshoofd)* (Friedericy, 1961; Herben, 1987).

The noble *Karaeng,* who obtained the 'divine mandate' to be the leaders of the ornament-worship communities, were usually appointed as adat community head. The colonial government adopted a new electoral system (*verkiezingsreglement*) in 1927, which prescribed that only those of noble descent could become head of an adat community (De Jong, 2011: 69). Linguists and ethnographic researchers were furthermore assigned to study adat law and ritual traditions in South Sulawesi. Their studies were sometimes used to revive traditions that were beginning to disappear,

[130] One of these cases concerned a wealthy Muslim merchant who married with a follower of the queen of Gowa. The other case concerned a young and rich official of common descent who married the daughter of a noble adat community head (Chabot, 1996: 44).

especially when these related to the inauguration of the noble rulers (Gibson, 2000; Chabot, 1996).[131]

In South Sulawesi, the biggest threat to colonial rule and political stability was not nationalism or Marxism, but a 'new, egalitarian brand of Islam' that rapidly grew and became known as the Muhammadiyah movement (Pelras, 1985: 127). This form of Islam made no distinction 'between ranks, races or genders' (Pelras, 1985: 127.) First emerging in Java in the 1910s, the movement found most support from those 'on the periphery of the two worlds': the newly emerging middle-class people who were relatively wealthy, but could not access the ranks of the aristocracy (Palmier, 1954: 256).

In South Sulawesi too, the new form of Islam was promoted mostly by the rising class of businessmen and wealthy farmers of common descent (Pelras, 1985: 127, 2000: 417).[132] The Muhammadiyah movement first found its way into South Sulawesi through Haji Adbullah Bin Abdurrahman, a man from Maros who had spent ten years in Mecca. When he returned to Sulawesi, he established his own reformist Islamic organization in 1923, which was later incorporated into the national Muhammadiyah organization (Pelras, 1985: 27; Palmier, 1954: 256).

The Muhammadiyah in South Sulawesi strongly rejected the spiritual myths of *Tomanurung*, as well as the Sufi version of Islam widely practiced in South Sulawesi. As their influence grew they began to form a serious threat to the noble elite. The traditional nobility now needed the Dutch to stay in power, and the Dutch simultaneously needed the nobility to maintain control (Gibson, 2000: 44, 68). In 1942 Japan invaded the Dutch East Indies. In South Sulawesi, the Japanese tried to unite the Muhammadiyah and the traditional nobility under a single organization named *Jemaah Islam*, but largely failed, because the organization was strongly divided over issues of religion and feudalism (Huis, 2015: 185).

After the Japanese occupation came to an end in 1945, the Dutch tried to restore order in South Sulawesi. In 1948, they declared the federal state of East Indonesia (*Negara Indonesia Timur*), as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with Makassar as capital city. In November 1948, the Dutch established a council of noble rulers named *Hadat Tinggi* to rule the region. The princes of Gowa and Bone became president and vice-president of the *Hadat Tinggi* (Chabot, 1996: 122). Noble elites throughout South Sulawesi supported the idea of the East Indonesia State, knowing that this would be the best option to maintain their powerful position (Pelras, 2000: 129).

The Dutch justified the rule of the nobility by arguing that for the people of South Sulawesi, the appointment of rulers of divine descent would be the only acceptable form of political authority.[133] However, strong opposition kept coming from the

[131] An interesting example in this regard is provided by Chabot (1996: 122), who observed in 1948 that as a result of the formal positions granted to the princes of Gowa and Bone as members of the *Hadat Tinggi*, it could be expected that the importance of rituals of the ornaments of these kingdoms would increase in the future.

[132] Buehler notes that some nobles also supported the Muhammadiyah to 'oppose rival aristocratic groups' (Buehler, 2016: 59).

[133] Colonial official Schwartz for instance, states in a 1947 report on the government administration of *onderafdeling* Bulukumba that if a leader would not come from one of the families of divine descent, the

Muhammadiyah movement, which had grown increasingly anti-feudal and anti-colonial. The Dutch responded with harsh violence. Between 1946-1947, Dutch troops under the command of Captain Westerling killed many thousands of suspected independence fighters in the countryside of South Sulawesi.

5.3 After Indonesian independence: Darul Islam, administrative harmonization and the nobility

5.3.1The Darul Islam rebellion against the nobility

The idea of an Eastern Indonesian State was short lived. In 1949, the Dutch recognized Indonesian independence on the condition that it would come to consist of a federation of states. A year later however, Sukarno proclaimed the unitary Republic of Indonesia. In the fifteen years that followed, South Sulawesi continued to be torn by violent conflict, which would drastically shake up the traditional socio-political order. During this period, known as the Darul Islam rebellion period (1950-1965), the guerilla armies of Kahar Muzakar took over large parts of the South Sulawesi countryside. Kahar Muzakar was a soldier of common descent from Luwu, who returned to South Sulawesi in 1949, after having fought against the Dutch in Java. He was deeply disappointed that he and his comrades were not offered a position in the Indonesian army. In 1953, Muzakar declared his support to the independent Islamic State of Indonesia (Darul Islam). In 1947, a Darul Islam rebellion army had emerged in rural areas of West Java. It resisted both Dutch rule and the authority of the Indonesian republic. Muzakar began to form a similar army in South Sulawesi in order to wage a full-fledged war against the traditional elites and the spiritual cult that had legitimized their power for centuries.

The insurgency of the Darul Islam movement was above all an attempt to 'reconstruct the social order in more egalitarian terms' (Gibson, 1994: 71). Gibson explains that the use of Islam as a way of challenging the traditional social order was not surprising, given that Islam played a prominent role in the life of South Sulawesians, while an ideology like socialism did not (Gibson, 1994: 72). The Darul Islam movement was extremely anti-feudalist. The movement introduced Shari'a law in regions under Muzakar's control, while the *Tomanurung* beliefs became strictly forbidden and 'all symbols of social ranking were excised from life-cycle rituals' (Gibson, 1994: 72). Muzakar's guerillas quickly took over large parts of the South Sulawesi countryside. Both Bulukumba and Sinjai districts fell almost entirely in the hands of the guerillas (Gibson, 2000: 67). The rebellion attempted to wipe out all forms of traditional practices and rituals. Houses in which the *kalompoang* were kept were burned and many noble leaders were killed.

The Darul Islam found most support from the emerging Muslim middle class who liked to see the power of the nobility diminish. Many of its supporters were of non-

people would not accept his political authority in the community. Hence, Schwartz argued that tensions between the Western principles of democracy and adat were inevitably going to occur. Therefore, a smooth process towards democracy would first require the recognition of adat leadership (Schwartz: 1947: 3).

aristocratic descent and followers of the Muhammadiyah. Although often classified as a rebellion movement against the central government, Buehler instead characterizes the rebellion as 'an expression of tensions along horizontal lines between a local aristocracy in control of the state and a class of non-aristocrats outside it' (Buehler, 2016: 61). Buehler explains that local support for Darul Islam was particularly large in districts like Pare-Pare and Luwu, where the position of the nobility was relatively weak and competition from the emerging middle class of common descent was strong (Buehler, 2016: 61).

In areas where the nobility was traditionally powerful, resistance against the invasion of the Darul Islam guerillas was fierce and took on extremely violent proportions. The rebels faced the strongest resistance in the highlands of Kajang, stronghold of the traditional Ammatoa Kajang community in the northeastern part of Bulukumba district (see map of research locations on page 6). Followers of the traditional Amma Toa adat leader organized their own army (called *Dompe*) in order to defend their *Tomanurung*-inspired cult. For a while, the Darul Islam rebellion was seriously weakened by the attacks from this civilian army as the guerillas suffered several blows in combat. Despite the fact that this army did not dispose of firearms, it temporarily managed to expel the Darul Islam troops from eastern Bulukumba, until it was beaten by the machinegun-carrying troops of Muzakkar in 1955 (Gibson, 1994; 2000) In a bloody confrontation in May 1955, around 500 adherents of the Amma Toa were killed by Darul Islam rebels and 200 houses were burned.[134] Eventually, it was the Indonesian army that defeated the Darul Islam movement in the 1960s. Kahar Muzakar was killed by troops in 1965 and government authority was gradually restored thereafter (Gibson, 1994; 2000).

Under Suharto, Islamic movements were suppressed and marginalized. In South Sulawesi, overt support for Darul Islam was risky and could lead to persecution (Buehler, 2016: 62). Buehler however notes that the 'Darul Islam networks and their shari'a ambitions stayed intact throughout the Suharto years' (Buehler, 2016: 62). Through these networks, new Islamic organizations were established, including boarding schools. They continued to be driven by 'a class of economically successful but politically marginalized traders and landowners that sees itself in opposition to aristocratic elites dominating the local state and political institutions' (Buehler, 2016: 64). Hence, Islamist networks still existed but operated outside of the New Order state, which was to become dominated by the nobility and military men loyal to the regime.

5.3.2 Administrative harmonization and abolishing adat authority

After the defeat of Darul Islam, the central government could finally integrate the region into the republic. The traditional socio-political order had to make way for modern and equal citizenship. In accordance with Indonesia's new administrative system, South Sulawesi province was divided into districts (*kabupaten*) and sub-districts (*kecamatan*). The boundaries of these units largely followed those of the former administrative units

[134] From Dutch-language newspaper *De locomotief: Semarangsch handel-en advertentie-blad*, 05 May 1955.

under colonial rule.[135] The adat communities were nevertheless abolished and noble descent was no longer a formal requirement to hold government positions. Through the administrative changes, a separation between the political and spiritual sphere was enforced (Pelras, 2000: 31). Even if noble rulers were appointed as village head, the provincial government no longer allowed them to keep *kalompoang* in their house, as they were believed to contravene principles of modern public administration (Rössler, 2000:171).

5.3.3 The South Sulawesian nobility and the New Order

Both the Darul Islam rebellion and the reforms of modern government had a significant impact on the traditional socio-political order of rural South Sulawesi (Pelras, 1985, 2000; Rössler, 2000). The *kalompoang* rituals no longer played a formal role in the political domain. Although they had survived the Darul Islam rebellion period in many regions (or were reintroduced), they had often turned into somewhat of an underground practice (Gibson, 1994).[136] Commoners could now challenge the position of long-time traditional rulers and compete for political authority, given that the socio-political hierarchy was no longer fixed by birth (Rössler, 2000: 174). In some cases, the authority of traditional elites became confined to the sphere of rituals. Families that long held authority based on their divine descent sometimes lost their position as village head to other competitors. Such situations easily resulted into social conflict, 'not only between the adherents of the pre-Islamic religion and the representatives of modern administration and Islam, but also among the group of adat representatives' (Rösslerr, 2000: 172).

Under Suharto's rule it became easier for people of a non-noble background to obtain influential positions previously inaccessible to them (Huis, 2015: 190). During the New Order period, an important condition to obtain a prominent position was a person's loyalty to the regime. Village heads refusing to join Suharto's political party GOLKAR, were often removed from office and replaced by candidates considered more trustworthy (Kato, 1989: 109; Gibson, 2000: 69). New groups of elites could emerge, consisting of landowning farmers, military chiefs and high-level bureaucrats of 'common' descent.

In most places however, the dominant role of the traditional noble families persisted. Many people continued to view noble descent as a requirement for the obtention of positions of authority. Often, traditional elites were still given local and regional government positions such as village head or sub-district head, although they were often assigned to areas other than their own, in order to minimize the influence of adat (Pelras 2000; 41; Rössler, 2000; 170).

The old nobility thus largely retained its privileged status. As under colonial rule, positions in the higher echelons of the state apparatus during the New Order period remained predominantly reserved to the nobility. The bulk of military figures that rose to

[135] Law no. 29/1959 on the Establishment of the Level II Regions in Sulawesi.

[136] Pelras conducted fieldwork in the region in the late 1960ss and notes that despite the turbulent past, he 'cannot help being struck by the long-lived survival of pre-Islamic elements' in society (Pelras, 1985: 107).

prominence in South Sulawesi under Suharto were members of the nobility (Buehler, 2016: 81). Moreover, commoners with high positions in regional governments, such as district heads, began to merge with the old nobility. Many of them soon began to behave similar to the old aristocracy they once positioned themselves against, basing their rule too 'on personal links of loyalty between a supreme leader and subordinates/followers' (Pelras, 2000: 408). Furthermore, many of the new elites married with members of the old nobility in order to obtain the prestigious status of the aristocracy (Huis, 2015: 190).

On paper, the New Order regime further marginalized the role of adat authority, under the guise of uniform government administration. The Village Law (Law no. 5/1979) imposed a unified system of village government in Indonesia, following the model of the Javanese *desa*. Like other laws enacted during the New Order period, adat was only given symbolic recognition (Galizia, 1996; Kato, 1989). The old noble elites were nevertheless important regional agents of the New Order. On a basis of patron-client relations, they handed out personal benefits to subordinates in exchange for loyal support (Pelras, 2000: 399). Suharto's regime supported such structures and purposely clinged on to existing clientelist power relations, as it needed the support of loyal local elites to exert political influence and maintain political stability in the regions (Huis, 2015; Klinken, 2003). In the Bulukumba plantation conflict discussed in Chapter 3 for example, local noblemen were agents of the New Order and worked closely with the plantation company and the regional military.

Since the *Reformasi* era, noble descent has continued to be an important asset, especially for those who run as candidates in local and regional elections. Sometimes this translates into political campaigns that strongly emphasize the noble blood of a candidate or the 'royal connections' that he or she has (Buehler and Pan, 2007: 59) Buehler and Pan write in this context that 'royal and aristocratic lineage is still perceived to be of great importance in the politics of South Sulawesi', although they also note that funds and personal networks might be of even greater importance today (Buehler and Pan, 2007: 52).

5.3.4 Transitions of authority and impact on landownership

For centuries, the nobility in South Sulawesi enjoyed a privileged status on the basis of their 'divine mandate' from the *Tomanurung* myths. This is what kept the hierarchical order of society in place and determined one's social status. Another factor that played a crucial role in the stratification of society was the nobility's disposal of economic capital. Noble families often owned large tracts of land and 'the main source of aristocratic political power was an appanage system of land-ownership' (Buehler, 2016: 95).

There are no detailed accounts of the distribution of landholdings in South Sulawesi before the 1920s. The Dutch paid most attention to the communal land tenure systems and had little interest in how land was distributed within rural communities. However, one account by Van Vollenhoven (1918) provides several relevant insights. He notes that all land in South Sulawesi belonged to a certain community on the basis of the right of avail (Vollenhoven, 1918: 378). This right did not exist at the village level, but at

the larger level of the ornament-worship community. This meant that the *Karaeng*, usually the heads of an ornament-worship community, had far reaching authorities to decide on matters of land. The *Karaeng* moreover possessed land on the basis of their privileged status, the so-called ornament lands (*ornamentsvelden*), on which commoners were forced to work. According to Van Vollenhoven, it happened often that the *Karaeng* abused their position and arbitrarily allocated land as ornament land, even if this land previously belonged to other community members (1918: 378). In the same study, Van Vollenhoven stressed that the right of avail began to weaken, given that land transactions and land tenancy outside of the adat-worship community were on the rise (1918: 378).

For much of the colonial period, Dutch colonial rule did not pose a threat to the large share of landholdings of the traditional nobility in South Sulawesi. However, from the late nineteenth century onwards a number of developments began to impact the distribution of landholdings. First, as a result of the earlier mentioned modern reforms imposed by the colonial government, the absolute power of the nobility began to be undermined. The Dutch abolished slave labor on fields owned by the nobility and taxes from agrarian profits were now to be sent directly to the treasury of the colonial state. This resulted in a strong decrease in economic gains of the nobility, a decrease in their landholdings, and a decrease of 'the direct dependence of ordinary people' (Buehler, 2016: 96).

A new class of middle-class entrepreneurs and farmers emerged who became landowners too and 'replaced aristocrats as agricultural patrons' (Buehler, 2016: 97). Many of these people became supporters of the Muhammadiyah movement and later Darul Islam.

Chabot, in his study conducted in rural areas of Gowa district in the late 1940s notes that although noble families were often large landowners, descent was not the only factor that determined one's landholdings, since 'rational economic grounds' were also important (Chabot, 1996: 157). Pelras, basing himself on data from the 1920s and 1930s, contends that in South Sulawesi 'only a minority of the nobility seems to have owned much more than the average, and landless commoners seem to have been more or less a minority too' (2000, 414). However, Chabot notes that noblemen tend to have a comparative advantage to acquire land laborers, given that commoners rather work on the land of noblemen than on the land of wealthy strangers. Chabot in this regard writes: 'An ordinary kampong individual prefers to work the land of a prominent man from the *Karaeng* group. In that he has confidence; it strengthens his positions. A tie with a nobleman can always turn out to be advantageous' (Chabot, 1996: 157).

A second development that further decreased the landholdings of the nobility was the Darul Islam rebellion. During this period, many noble elites fled from the countryside into the cities, virtually the only areas where the government had retained its control. The move to the cities 'isolated them from their landholdings' (Buehler, 2016: 97). In the 1960s, the position of the nobility was reportedly further affected due to the implementation of agrarian reform, which in South Sulawesi only began in 1965 when peace had returned to the region. In the years that followed, local newspapers reported that thousands of hectares of absentee land formerly in the hands of noble families were

redistributed to landless or nearly landless farmers (Buehler, 2016: 98). Many of these lands belonged to noble families that had fled to the cities during the Darul Islam rebellion. Buehler argues that in the decades that followed, the distribution of landholdings did not change significantly. This would imply that in general, the nobility at present does not own much more land than commoners. According to Buehler, the nobility's strong position in society today is more tied to their dominant position in the state apparatus than to their landholdings.

5.4 THE LAST OF THE PATUNTUNG: THE AMMATOA KAJANG COMMUNITY

5.4.1 The patuntung communities

So far, I have explained how modernist Islamic movements and the structural changes imposed by the colonial and Indonesian government administration altered the role of adat and adat-based rule in South Sulawesi in the decades following independence. Although the nobility remained influential and traditional patronage structures remained prominent in the countryside, the *Tomanurung* myths lost the political significance they once had in most areas. In certain places they virtually disappeared, while in other places they lived on, albeit cut off from politics. However, there are some groups in South Sulawesi that continue to hold on strongly to the old traditions. Among them is one of the 'patuntung communities', which are known for their cultural emphasis on modesty and simplicity.

According to the literature, the importance on egalitarianism and a lifestyle of 'striving for modesty' set patuntung communities apart from others in South Sulawesi, (Rössler, 1990). The public perception of these communities has therefore come to resonate well with the notions of purity and authenticity promoted by the indigenous movement, as well as with the legal definition of adat law community. In recent years, this has substantiated various claims to adat land rights. In order to understand how indigeneity has been locally claimed in these cases, which will be the topic of Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, I will first further elaborate on the special character of the patuntung communities.

Patuntung communities are ornament-worship communities that were only superficially influenced by Islam. Their pre-Islamic oral traditions have remained of crucial cultural importance (Usop, 1978; Rössler, 1990). The patuntung communities are small in numbers and live in the Konjo speaking highlands and coastal areas surrounding Mount Bawakaraeng in what today is the border area of the districts Bulukumba, Gowa, Sinjai and Bantaeng. Rössler describes the difference between the patuntung and other ornament-worship communities as following: 'The basic values of simplicity and modesty are reflected in a general emphasis on social egalitarianism among patuntung. This contrasts particularly with the rigid distinctions of social rank (and economic wealth) found in the lowland/West Gowarese communities, which are commonly cited as representing the principal characteristics of 'Makassar society'' (Rössler, 1990: 315).

In recent decades, many of the patuntung communities have been subject to vast changes. Rössler, who conducted fieldwork among the patuntung of eastern Gowa in the 1980s, notes that old norms and traditions are quickly vanishing as a result of the increased criticism from religious officials who regard these as pagan traditions. However, he mentions one community as an exception: The earlier mentioned Ammatoa Kajang community from Kajang sub-district, Bulukumba. The traditions of this community seem to have withstood the test of time and as such, it is 'commonly believed to represent the last genuine patuntung' (Rössler, 1990: 294).

At several points in recent history this community has drawn the attention of outsiders. When the colonial government sent their official linguist, Abraham A. Cense, to South Sulawesi to study adat law in the early 1930s, he first spent a period in Kajang to study one of the region's most 'purest' traditional cultures.[137] It was not by coincidence that Cense was sent to this area. For the colonial government, proving the existence of such a traditional community helped to legitimize late colonial policies favoring traditional rule. It proved that at least for some South Sulawesians, Islam was only of very limited importance. This idea strengthened the argument that the most legitimate way to 'govern' communities was through their traditional leaders.

As mentioned above, the Ammatoa Kajang community became an important ally of the government army in the 1950s. It received much praise from pro-government parties for its prominent role in the fight against Darul Islam. Newspapers released sensational headlines such as 'Amma Toa is cleansing in South Sulawesi' and 'Marching with chopped off heads through the village', reporting furthermore that the government armed forces were very thankful to the Ammatoa Kajang community for its brave efforts to help the army and police with fighting the guerrillas.[138]

Many of the traditional customs and rituals that Cense described in his 1931 report are still being practiced in Kajang today, even though the community formally identifies itself as Muslim. Rössler notes that 'its members have managed to preserve many features of an almost archaic type of religious and social organization' (Rössler, 1990: 290, see also Usop, 1978; Katu, 1980; Lureng, 1980; Akib, 1990; and more recently Maarif, 2012). Thus, while other communities increasingly adapted to modern influences, the traditional patuntung culture of the Ammatoa Kajang community seems to have survived. In the next section I shall discuss several distinct aspects of this community, particularly in relation to their socio-political organization.

5.4.1 The adat of the Ammatoa Kajang community: egalitarian norms or feudalist culture?

The Ammatoa Kajang community consists of people in Kajang (a sub-district in north-eastern Bulukumba) who follow the spiritual cult of a living moral leader whose office is known as Amma Toa. A strict and dedicated compliance to a local version of *Tomanurung*

[137] The findings of this research were compiled in an unpublished report from 1931 called '*De Patoentoengs in de Berglanden van Kadjang*'.
[138] From Dutch-language newspapers *Het Nieuwsblad van Sumatra* of 01 February 1955 and *Java-Bode* of 31 January 1955.

distinguishes the community from others in the region. The Ammatoa Kajang comprises around 5000 people who live in a number of villages in sub-district Kajang. These villages are considered the inner adat territory of the community. Here, strict customary norms apply. The greater Kajang sub-district area, which today has a population of around 50,000 people, is known as the outer adat territory as customary norms apply less strictly here but are still of great influence. Bonto Biraeng village, earlier discussed in relation to the Bulukumba plantation conflict, is located in this outer adat territory.

There are three characteristics that separate the Ammaota Kajang community from other communities that traditionally lived in accordance to *Tomanurung*-inspired cults. The first thing is the great importance of the community's spiritual and moral leader, the Amma Toa (old father) or simply Amma. In contrast to more common regional titles such as *Karaeng*, the title of Amma Toa is unique to Kajang. While the various *Karaeng* traditionally held the highest political authority in much of South Sulawesi, including in Kajang, the Amma Toa is a moral leader who refrains from politics. He is the 'protector and controller of the community' and exercises 'outstanding authority' over his followers in matters of adat and beliefs (Rössler, 1990: 310-311). He is considered the personification of the normative system based on adat law.

The second characteristic is the importance and continuing abidance by a normative system of oral traditions called *pasang ri Kajang*. The *pasang* are formulated in the Konjo language and refer to 'a complex integrated whole of social morality' (Rössler, 1990: 314). They clearly prescribe social behavior within the community, as well as the relation between humans and the natural environment. If a community member violates a customary rule, a trial will take place in the Amma Toa's house, where he will decide on the appropriate sanction. One of the main principles of the *pasang* is the obligation of each individual to live a modest and egalitarian life. Rössler writes that the Ammatoa Kajang community is known for 'an extraordinary austerity of the material culture, which corresponds with the general attitude on egalitarianism and conservatism' (Rössler, 1990: 315). Examples are the tradition to wear black attire - symbolizing modesty - and a prohibition to bring modern goods inside the traditional adat territory.

A third characteristic of the community's traditional culture is the utmost importance of land in the social, political and spiritual domain. For other communities in the region, the greatest symbols of communal solidarity were the sacred objects, the *kalompoang* discussed earlier. In Kajang, sacred objects were of much less significance (Rössler, 1990). Instead, Ammatoa Kajang community members do not consider objects, but the land that they inhabit as sacred.

The sacredness of land manifests in a number of ways. First, until this day the Ammatoa Kajang community has a core adat territory known as *rembang seppang*. It is inside this territory, located across a number of villages, where the *pasang* rules apply most strictly. The Amma Toa lives inside the *rembang seppang* and is not allowed to ever go outside of it. In this area, there are no paved roads, no electric connections, no modern houses such as mosques or schools, and no one is allowed to use footwear in the area. The *rembang seppang* consists of several traditional housing complexes, rice fields and farming gardens, traditional burial sites and a dense forest. This forest, which has a size

of 314 hectares, is considered the most sacred place of all, as community members believe that the first of mankind, *Tomanurung*, landed here and introduced the *pasang* to the earth. The *pasang* prescribe strict rules with regard to the use of forest resources. Some areas in the forest are reserved for rituals, while other parts may only be used for the collection of wood when the Amma Toa gives special permission to those in need of construction materials.

However, that the Ammatoa Kajang community prioritizes a modest way of life does not mean that they are not socially stratified. In fact, the institutional structure of traditional authority in Kajang bears many similarities with the highly stratified, rural societies common to South Sulawesi. Like elsewhere, social inequality was institutionalized in Kajang by a strict distinction between commoners and nobles. Usop (1978) and Rössler (1990) relate this social hierarchy to the political influence of the Kingdom of Gowa, which dates back to the seventeenth century. Besides the position of Amma Toa as highest moral leader, the influential, through-blood-line inherited position of *Karaeng* also still exists in Kajang. Rossler notes that: 'People of very 'pure descent' — which is an important qualification for Karaengship — occupy prominent positions in the community' (Rössler, 1990: 316).

Thus, the modest lifestyle and rejection of modern goods do not imply that the community also has an egalitarian socio-political organization. The *pasang* provide a clearly defined power structure. The Kajang 'government' consists of 26 leader positions, headed by the Amma Toa. Most positions are hereditary and can only be obtained by members of noble families. Since the imposition of modern government administration in South Sulawesi, the hereditary positions have been kept alive by connecting them to modern government offices. In Kajang, important local government positions such as the village heads and sub-district head 'are expected to be members of the local nobility' (Rössler, 1990: 317). Moreover, although the *pasang* dictate that leaders should always adopt a modest lifestyle, Usop notes that generally, the hereditary adat/government leaders own much more land that the average Ammatoa Kajang community members (Usop, 1978: 38).

In sum, the Ammatoa Kajang community represents one of the last patuntung strongholds in South Sulawesi.[139] We will see in Chapter 7 that the continuous importance of the traditional *pasang*, the adherence to adat institutions and the existence of a sacred communal forest makes the community a logical candidate for legal recognition as adat law community. Since the emergence of the indigenous movement in Indonesia, the community has become somewhat of an icon of the movement. It is often mentioned as an authentic example of a forest protecting adat community with an egalitarian culture and traditional normative system. However, in this section I have argued that in fact, a strict socio-political hierarchy of noble adat leadership characterizes the community. In the next chapter, we will see that this traditional hierarchy remains present today, as noble descent continues to be of great importance for one's position in the community.

[139] It is worth noting that the word *patuntung* seems hardly used in South Sulawesi these days. Instead, people now refer to such communities as *masyarakat (hukum) adat*.

Traditional Kajang house in the inner adat territory 'rembang seppang', Tana Toa village, April 2014.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a historical account of adat in South Sulawesi. I have shown that contrary to the discourse of the indigenous movement for whom adat has become synonymous to the land rights struggles of marginalized communities, adat in South Sulawesi has long been associated with the feudalist order that privileged a landed aristocracy. For the poor farmer of common heritage, adat leaders were important patrons that could offer protection. However, for the middle class of non-aristocratic descent that began to emerge in the early twentieth century, adat legitimized the un-egalitarian socio-political order and formed an obstruction to social mobility.

Resistance movements under the banner of Islam emerged from the 1920s onwards and aimed to challenge this social order. After independence, the republican government tried to create a system based on modern citizenship. Since then, the nobility and their adat have been subject to pressure from external forces promoting political and economic equality.

Today, the old socio-political hierarchy between the nobility and commoners continues to be of social and political importance in rural areas of South Sulawesi. The nobility does not own much more land than families of non-aristocratic descent, but the prominence of the nobility currently exists predominantly in relation to their influential position as officials in the local and regional governments. Noble descent is also considered an asset for candidates in regional elections. When one looks for adat in South Sulawesi therefore, one shall inevitably stumble upon the noblemen that occupy

influential state positions. Today, land rights activists deploy adat in their imagery of dispossessed tribes. But considering the history of adat in South Sulawesi provided in this chapter, we see how this imagery stands in an odd relation to the ideas of those who see adat not as a form of emancipatory resistance, but as means to keep the traditional social order in place.

It can therefore be concluded that there is a certain discrepancy between the current popular notion of adat as an emancipatory force, and the history of adat as an oppressive tool to maintain the traditional social order. Earlier in this book I have explained the new meaning that adat has taken up in recent decades as an intrinsic element of the indigenous movement. Under the influence of this movement, activists and local land users now invoke adat as a means of defending local culture and strengthening land claims of marginalized people. Paradoxically however, it is adat that has long legitimized social inequality in South Sulawesi. For generations, adat has functioned to consolidate the power of noble rulers.

Some communities do appear to match the image that the indigenous movement evokes. Yet, I have shown that one of indigenous movement's icons, the Ammatoa Kajang community, has a living tradition of distinguishing noble people from commoners. Some of those who invoke adat as a rights-claiming strategy have recently come into conflict with traditional leaders for whom adat legitimizes traditional authority. How this has worked out in practice will be addressed in the next chapter.