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THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM OF THE TOWANI TOLOTANG MINORITY IN SOUTH SULAWESI

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Abstract

This article provides a description of the ethnographical and political issues of the minority group located in South Sulawesi, i.e. the believers of Towani Tolotang that still exist there even in the national political scene as they have representatives in the legislature. The community seems to be playing the politics of Towani Tolotang accommodating and making use of the will of the political regime of Muslims and Hindus, where both of them are scrambling for mutual acknowledgment and entering into the tradition of the religion: Islam or Hinduism. As a minority group, the Towani Tolotang community has a variety of strategies to survive and fight in various kinds of interest. Economic and political gain, and commodification of ethnicity and religion are rampant in the area due to decentralization. This article is based on field library and research on the minority people who have been dealing with political suppression and discriminatory treatment.

Keywords: Towani, Tolotang and minority, political rights.

INTRODUCTION

Tracing the history and ethnography, Indonesia is clearly known as a country with many ethnic, tribal and religious groups (popularly known as *SARA* in the New Order era). Unfortunately, the multi-ethnic relations in Indonesia are contrary to the reality. A study conducted by Denis Lombart, a French historian who wrote about Indonesia and the history of Java gave an explanation that the land which experienced colonial rules the Europeans (referred to as *the others*) had so many tribal, the ethnic and religious groups. There were not less than 100 of indigenous religions and each had adherents in different parts of the archipelago. The Europeans, who were referred to as the others, wrote that ethnographically the islands now known as the archipelago really had diverse traditions, languages, peoples, religions and cultures.

Other ethnographic notes mention that Indonesia has long had a diversity of

300 thousand ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups. For the colonial Dutch, the diversity was used as a means of creating social segregation and implementing a centralized bureaucracy of government, so it was easy to control all power in the community. The Dutch understood how important the strength of the social power, so they needed to apply strict bureaucratic policies to easily dictate and reduce the authority of the groups scattered throughout the archipelago. The Dutch applied bureaucratic politics as capital for economic control of the archipelago so as to easily rule the territories from the islands of Sumatra, Sulawesi to Ambon and Timor.

Regarding such diversity, Sukarno --a figure referred to as 'an intelligent man' by Benedict Anderson and a messiah by some Indonesians-- used the term 'Bhinneka Tunggal that was used in the book of Sutasoma by Empu Tantular, rather than unity and the unification of Indonesia, as used the New Order. Sukarno gave a positive appreciation of the diversity that has long existed in the archipelago, while Suharto gave the imposition upon the diversity of the country. That is the main difference between the accommodating politics of Sukarno as compared to Suharto with the repressive politics toward his own people.

The diversity of this country, in fact has not changed since the colonial era as argued by J.S. Furnivall, an expert in political economy of Indonesia who wrote about the levels of the Indonesian people from the perspective of political economics and ethnicity. Furnivall wrote about the diversity of Indonesia as follows:

> "That it is the strict sense of medley for they mix but do not combine. Each group hold by its own religion, by its own culture, own ideas, and own ways. As individual they meet but only on the marketplace in buying and selling. There are pluralist societies with different sections of the community living side by side but in the same political unit."

With regard to what is said above by Furnivall, an economic anthropologist, we as a nation have long been diverse. It is unfortunate that the recognition and management of the pluralism by the political regime in power have "failed". Because of the failure to manage and acknowledge the factual pluralism in Indonesia, we have often witnessed conflicts, resistance, and even revolt by ethnic communities, both religious and cultural communities that live and thrive in the society of Indonesia. Pluralism has failed to function as a social basis of political regime to rule as desired by our Constitution. Pluralism was even forbidden.

The regime of power even tended to apply political harmonization by suppressing the minority groups except those seen to have an emotional attachment and used serve as a base of support in the exercise of political power. Thousands of minorities as Simon Philpot described above were not given freedom, and they actually became a real minority and were controlled in a peaceful coercive way politically by the new order regime.

This article provides political and ethnographic description of the minority group in South Sulawesi, i.e. the followers of the Towani Tolotang that still exist there even in the contemporary national political scene as they are "blessed" because they have elected representatives in the legislative body. The community seems to be playing the politics of Towani Tolotang accommodating and making use of the will of the political regime of Muslims and Hindus, where both of them are scrambling for mutual acknowledgment and entering into the tradition of the religion: Islam or Hinduism.

THE POSITION OF INDONESIAN ISLAM AMONG LOCAL RELIGIONS

Indonesia, despite not being an Islamic state, has no less than 88. 6% of Muslims, a population of 223 million (2005), see Aris Ananta on Indonesia's population and ethnicity. Currently, the population of Indonesia has reached 237.4 million which makes it appropriate to refer to it as an Islamic society. Though its Constitution does not allow a person to have no religion, according to a survey conducted in 2000 Indonesia had 2.9% of atheist population. Despite the fact that atheism is not recognized in the country as its Constitution does not regulate it, the reality is that there are communities who do not embrace any of the official religions, so they are similar to the nihilists.

Muslims often exercise a standard to judge whether a society is religious or not by the belief in God. Therefore people who have faith but do not believe in God will be grouped as the unbelievers. In fact, if there are communities who have different interpretation of the teachings of the Islamic pillars of faith, they will be categorized as those who have gone astray. Examples in this regard are numerous, such as the communities of Ashidiqiyah, Jamaah Islamiyah, Jamaah Salamullah and Ahmadiyah that have been grouped as the lost society by the mainstream Islamic community in Indonesia.

In Indonesia sociologically and anthropologically there are many variants of Islam. The Indonesian Islam is not the sole Islam but the dominant Islam as expressed by historians as the Islam of the school of *Syafiiyah, Ahlusunnah waljamaah* with its *fiqh* dimensions being stronger than Sufism. Even in certain dimensions, Sufism in Indonesia is often considered less acceptable

to the mainstream Muslims, for Sufism could be regarded as society opposing the Islamic *Shariah* which stresses on formalism, while Sufi Islam is closer to substantialism. The Shariah Islam is the exoteric Islamic style. Sufism is also considered syncretic Islam and less pure, and thus will destabilize the Shariah Islam or disrupt the pure *wahabi* Islam.

Under such dominant Islamic conditions, it has become clear that the position of local Islam developed by Muslim actors in the communities of Sunda, Java Dayak, Sulawesi and several other regions in Indonesia is apparently often considered heretical by Shariah Islam which emphasizes on formalism. Local Islam is regarded as syncretic and impure Islam that needs to be straightened out, while Shariah Islam is considered to be in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures and the Prophets. The Indonesian Muslims eventually can no longer critically position local Islam and metropolitan Islam as a variant of Islam that have sociologically and anthropologically developed in the archipelago centuries prior to Indonesia's independence and the coming of Islamic missionaries from Persia and other Middle Eastern regions in the seventh or the 13th century.

In this light, Islam is clearly very important and strategic in Indonesia. When Islam has emerged in the form of violence in the last five years, since the numerous acts of terrorism have allegedly been carried out by Muslim people, the religion has suffered a slap in the face as it is often associated with violence and terrorism. Islam and terrorism are obviously not the same as normative Islam does not teach people to be terrorists.

THEORETICAL AND LITERARY PERSPECTIVES

To explain the Towani Tolotang community, this paper adopts a perspective from "the belief community" rather than from an outsider. Therefore, there is a possibility of a defense or partisanship over the Towani Tolotang minority in study. The defense of the Towani Tolotang community is intended as a form of proof of the various issues faced by the community itself, in addition to the presence of elements of accommodation and strategies employed as this community has experienced various forms of political or legal discrimination in Indonesia, particularly by the majority of Islamic community of the Bugis (South Suawesi). From here it is expected that this paper will give description of the fate of the minority in the midst of the Muslim Bugis majority and MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council).

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is a religious institution that is a representation or claims to represent Indonesian Islam, but often marginalizes

local religious groups. In fact, the attitudes and actions of MUI toward local religious groups are at times inhumane. Local religious groups are often banned, in other words, forbidden to live in Indonesia even though they claim to be local religions that profess to Islam or believe in God. Therefore, local religions in Indonesia are forbidden and heresy that need "to be reconstructed" to get back on the right path, of course in accordance with the MUI version. The main purpose of the MUI is to accommodate the aspirations of Indonesian Muslims in terms of taking care of the issues of the Ummah rather than questioning other people's belief or accusing someone of heresy. The Towani Tolotang is positioned as a minority that should get the "attention" in this case to become Muslims or a Hindus, though they are actually refuse to be both.

The MUI's issuance of a fatwa that pluralism, secularism and liberalism are forbidden is the perfect example of the attitude and actions of the MUI which tend to be defensive and coercive toward local religions regarded as unfit to the culture of the six officially recognized religions in Indonesia. There are many small ethnic groups with their local religions (indigenous religions) in the archipelago. However, their existence is often unknown in detail to religious organizations including the MUI as they are scattered on remote islands in the country. Local religions are part of the wealth of Indonesia, each with its diversity. The MUI and other Islamic organizations often treat these local religions as targets of "anger" as they often become victims of vigilante actions such as destruction of the facilities belonging to them, dispersion and even expulsion by force. However such things are not taught by normative Islam, because Islam does not allow expulsion and violence let alone the destruction of property of another person unless the person accused of "heresy" is doing the expulsion, violence and murder of the Muslims.

The Towani Tolotang community being the focus of this paper is not popular among the community of Indonesia except for some people who have a strong interest in local religions such as anthropologists or social researchers. If no one cares about the Towani Tolotang, they will have similar fate to the Sedulur Sikep in Blora, the Sunda Wiwitan in Cigugur, the Kaharingan in the interior of Kalimantan, the Parmalim in North Sumatera, the An-Nadhir that perform pilgrimage on the Mount Bawakaraeng in South Sulawesi whose existence is 'unknown' in the Indonesian literature, let alone in the literature of religious institution of the MUI. There are still so many local communities in Indonesia and they already practiced their own religion before the official state-recognized religions came to them. The MUI should be concerned with the issue as local religions had been embraced by the community particularly in the rural areas long before Islamic organizations were founded in the country.

When discussing the "alienated" communities, what often appears is various kinds of "punishment" over them. They are considered heretical, regarded as harming the public order and violating religious norms shared by the majority. Unfortunately the majority of communities show little empathy to them and do not give a positive appreciation, and even worse the existence of this so-called 'alienated' community is often seen as an enemy of the majority. This happens to the Sedulur Sikep in Blora, Kaharingan, and of course the Towani Tolotang. The majority of people and the State have become coercive over the Towani Tolotang because they are considered as going astray from Islam. What should be done is to guide and provide insight into the diversity of religions. Religion in Indonesia is not single depending on the perspective where we see it from. If we insist on exposing Islam in perspective of right and wrong, then local Islam and metropolitan Islam will always be regarded as heretical and there will always be syncretic Islam against Shariah Islam or pure Islam.

A study by Atho Mudzar, former Rector of IAIN Yogyakarta, among the research that provides a picture of the Towani Tolotang and gives an explorative idea of what the Islamic community of Bugis Towani Tolotang is like. The Bugis Muslims perceive that the Towani Tolotang are not part of Islam as they practice Hindu traditions. Atho Mudhar described how the community of Towani Tolotang interacted, adapted to social change, and accommodated as well as resisted the state and the Islamic community of Bugis. He did not elaborate on the cultural and structural issues when the Towani Tolotang were about to be included into one of the official state religions.

Mudzar also specifically did research on the Towani Tolotang in relation to the position of the state that put various kinds of social conflicts between the Towani Tolotang and the community around them. Mudzar stated that the Towani Tolotang in Sidenreng Rappang and Amparita often had conflict with the Muslim Bugis community. The Towani Tolotang also had to encounter the state as they intented to include the Towani Tolotang belief into one of the official state religions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism) with the various regulatory and repressive actions as well as discrimination against them. However Mudzar failed to give attention to the sustainability of the Towani Tolotang and the impact of various forms of regulation imposed by the State.

A study conducted by Nasir Baki on the Towani Tolotang explained that Islamic organizations, such as the Whabi-influenced Muhammadiyah, are unable to accept the existence of the Towani Tolotang because many things practiced by the community are considered straying from the modernist creed of Islam. The Towani Tolotang, if they keep practicing their current belief, should

become Hindus not Muslims as they have gone astray from Islam in terms of worship and belief. Meanwhile, the NU (Nahdhatul Ulama) in Bugis are not so vicious against the Towani Tolotang who live around the mountains near Lake Sidenreng Rapang. The NU seems to be more accommodative than the Muhammadiyah in South Sulawesi. In short, the Towani Tolotang in eyes of the modernist Islamic organizations are not an Islamic community, and should they wish to be one, they have to leave the things considered by modernist Islamic organizations as heresy, *khirafat* and *shirik* such as the worship of stones, trees, planting and throwing the corpses through the window instead of the door during a funeral. Nasir Tray explained that Towani Tolotang are not considered an Islamic community by the Bugis (Makassar).

Ibnu Qayim's research (2004) on local religions, religiosity of the communities such as the Tolotang and Patuntung, Parmalim, Saminism and Sunda Wiwitan explained that the country actually is in a position of setting up a formal regulation of local religions in various regions in Indonesia. Local religions in view of Ibnu Qayim have been placed in the shadows of the dominance of the state policies and formal religions. The state policies that require religious formalization have indirectly marginalized local religions, and failed to acknowledge their existence. Local religions have lost freedom to practice their beliefs and rituals. In his research, Qayim said that local religions have suffered a wide range of discriminatory actions by the State and other official religions by requiring them to follow the State policy of religious formalozation. The position of local religions such as the Towani and the like is actually being suppressed by two major institutions: the State and the religious institution called the official/state-recognized religions.

Muslimin (1996) reviewed leadership of the Towani Tolotang in detail. Muslimin explained that the position of Uwa (a figure that is considered to have the leadership qualities) is so high that every member of the Towani Tolotang society who intends to planting rice always asks for tips from the Uwa. The role of the Uwa is very dominant in the society, although the Towani Tolotang according to Muslimin were not economically well-off. Uwata is a figure that is asked for advice regarding various terms related to "fate". Although in some cases, the advice of Uwata is not accurate, his position remains dominant, since the Towani Tolotang are uneducated and there is a tendency education is often overlooked. They even consider those attending schools to be no longer a member of the Towani Tolotang.

Syamsul Maarif (2001) compared the Towani Tolotang with the Ammatoa community in South Sulawesi. In his research Maarif expleined that the position of the Towani Tolotang was in fact similar to the Ammatoa community

in that they were both discriminated in the form of discriminatory rules set by the State. Some regulations were issued to make local religious followers unable to freely to observe their beliefs, rituals and activities as part of their conviction. The local religious communities have been marginalized through the regulations issued by the state. Maarif described that local religious issues such as those of the Ammatoa and the Towani were developed by the state as a method to marginalize the local communities' social and political roles and to hamper the inclusion of local religions to become one of the state-recognized religions.

With a theoretical representation of the minority in the perspective of the state, and an inside look at the position of the Towani Tolotang by researchers, it is clear that the local community has received a positive response from researchers not from Islamic organizations such as MUI, Muhammadiyah, and of course the Wahabi Islamic Islamic Groups that are more concerned with the purification of Islamic teachings. Meanwhile, the NU has shown a more tolerant attitude toward this community. Moreover, the Hindu Dharma Indonesia recognizes the Towani Tolotang as part of the Hindu religion. It can be seen here that there is actually a fight between Islamic organizations and those outside the Islamic community for recognition of the Towani Tolotang in Bugis Sidenreng Rapang. However as the Towani Tolotang is deemed incompatible with Islamic teachings by the *wahabis,* they feel obliged to reconstruct the Tolotang in South Sulawesi to conform with Islamic doctrine believed by the majority Islamic sects. On the other hand, the NU does not question the existence of Towani Tolotang for some of their activities are considered common; it is just with a different method. The Towani Tolotang are not considered heretic or infidels.

VARIANTS OF INDONESIAN ISLAM

Indonesian Islam is interesting to note from one political regime period to another. From there, we can grab multiple variants of the "faces of Indonesian Islam". John L Esposito, an observer of Islam based in Georgetown, United States, gave appreciation to Islam Indonesia in the form of "colorful Islam" which all leads to one God. Many variants of Indonesian Islam should be seen within the framework of diversity (plurality) that complements each other and serves as part of the country's riches. Islam in Indonesia is clearly different from that in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa or in other Southeast Asian countries though they also observe the *Ahlus Sunnah Waljamaah* which is part of the schools of Shafii and Hambali, in addition to Maliki and Hanafi.

In Indonesia Sufic Islam such as the schools of Al Junaid and Al Ghazali which

are very popular in Java. Meanwhile other Sufic sects i.e. Al Maturidiyah and local Sufism are also developing, such as the Rifaiyah in Pemalang, Indonesia, and even Sadzaliyah in Jepara and Rembang. Other Sufic sects found in the country are the Naqsyabandiyah and the Qadariyah in addition to the Jabariyah that have become the majority of Sufism in Indonesia. Sufic Islam is believed to be the exponent of Islam that gives color to the moderate Islam by developing Islamic *dakwah* among the public which has triggered the emergence of "Wali Songo" tradition in Java and the Sufis in Sumatra, Sulawesi and Kalimantan such as Hamzah Fansuri, Sheikh Yusuf and Sheikh Al Banjari of Banjar South Kalimantan.

In the recent development, we also find more variants of Islam, as reported by Kuntowijoyo that Indonesian Islam contains Islamic patterns as diverse as Islam Without mosques, Peasant Islam (messiah of Islam), political Islam and substantial Islam. Kuntowijoyo's description provides diverse maps of Indonesian Islam in historical perspective and social movements.

In addition to Kuntowijoyo, Bahtiar Efendi and Fahri Ali also divided Indonesian Islam into several categories, the modernist Islam, formalist Islam, neo-modernist Islam and traditional Islam. Bahtiar and Fachri's explanation revolves around the social and political Muslim intelligentsia in responding to modernity and contemporary issues.(see *Bahtiar Efendi and Fahri Ali, Merambah Jalan Baru Islam Indonesia, 1986*). M. Syafii Anwar also categorized Indonesian Islam into variants of Substantial Islam, Ideal Islam, Historical and Political Islam.

Meanwhile, the recent development Zuly Qadir also conduvted a study on the format of Indonesian Islam which was different from its earlier form. The author gave an overview of the various kinds of variants of Islam in Indonesia which are struggling to exist in the public sphere. Indonesian Islam has appeared in the format of the revivalist Islam (political Islam), neo-modernist Islam, Neo-Traditionalist Islam, Progressive Islam, Sufic Islam or Popular Islam. All the forms of Islam mentioned are competing to gain public recognition in the country. Their activities include offering certain programs, conducting recruitment, promoting ideology from villages to campuses.

The diversity of Indonesian Islam was also reviewed by Abdullah Ahmed An-Naim, an Islamic Law expert from Sudan who provided a very interesting explanation though not at length about the state of Indonesian Islam which he reported as showing respect toward pluralism and being liberal. Therefore, Prof An-Naim stated that the development of Islam in the world will actually depend on the maps and development of Islam in Indonesia. If Indonesian Islam shifted from the pendulum of pluralist, inclusive, and liberal Islam to

conservative, radical and revivalist, the state of Islam in the world would look like that in Indonesia. This is due to the fact that Indonesia has the largest number Muslims in the world and it is growing fantastically. Indonesian Islam varies and is embraced by no less than 88% of the country's population. The number of such large Islamic population of Indonesia would have influence on the development of Islam in the world, and at the same time the positive or negative image of the Islamic world would be reflected from Indonesia.

Based on the literature survey on the variants of Indonesian Islam we can draw a conclusion that Indonesian Islam is not single. Indonesian Islam has many faces, not only the Shariah Islam which is now part of the discourse of Indonesian Islam, but also Substantialist Islam that has become a reference for most middle-class Indonesian Muslims and Urban Sufic Islam which is a trend among the urban Islamic culture. All three are scrambling to get public space for existence. However Shariah Islam seems to be the one that is making every effort in the Islamic community that it appears to rule Indonesia. In reality as the surveys conducted by survey institutions such as the Center for the Study of Islam and the Community stated that those who agreed with the idea of the Islamic State of Indonesia only reached 34%, while those agreeing with the *pancasila* reached 88%. It means that Shariah Islam that often claims to get support from the majority of Muslim population in Indonesia cannot be justified. That Muslims agreeing with enforcing Shariah reached 87% is not fabricated, but that it does not mean the Indonesian Muslims agree with the establishment of the Islamic State of Indonesia which is said to be the alternative to the secular State.

In later developments in contemporary Indonesia it seems that the school of native Islam which is deep rooted in the Islamic culture of Indonesia, as desired by Abdurrahman Wahid, often referred to as Indigenous Islam or Archipelago Islam, did not really develop. In the world of Indonesian Islam, pure Islam or Wahabi Islam seems to have so strong an influence that Shariah Islam of formalist Islamic in addition to revivalist Islam in the form of the establishment of Islamic political parties. *Nusantara* Islam or Indigenous Islam lacks the publicity and recognition from the MUI. The MUI, as the institution that seems to have the right to "define the Islamic religion," has placed Islam in its own construction. Thus, what is the position of the Towani Tolotang in Indonesia? Are they one of the Islamic groups in Indonesia, or shall they remain in their culture? This is what will be the next focus of this paper.

TOWANI TOLOTANG MUSLIM MINORITY

The ethnography of the Towani Tolotang is, to a certain extent, important to

this community in South Sulawesi and Indonesia in general. One can take note on the social and demographic data of the Towani Tolotang in Sidenreng Rapang, Amparita, South Sulawesi which is a province with a strong Bugis Islamic characteristics, even lately regarded by some as radical. Here, Muslims insisted on enforcing Shariah-related Regional Regulations voiced by the Committee of the Preparations for the Enforcement of Islamic Sharia Law in South Sulawesi (KPPSI) that have issued legislation concerning mandatory reading and writing of the Quran to civil servants who wish to be promoted to a higher rank at the Government of Bulukumba, regional regulations on *Zakat* in Bulukumba and liquor and Prostitution in the city of Makassar.

The ethnography of the Towani Tolotang can be described as follows. They inhabit most of the Sidenreng Rappang District in South Sulawesi; they live with other communities in Amparita. The distance is 231 km from Makassar city. When using land transport (private cars or taxis) it will take 4.5 hours with a fee of thirty thousand rupiah. When renting a car, it costs three hundred and fifty to four hundred thousand rupiah to arrive at Sidenreng Rappang. To get to Amparita, we can use *pete-pete* or take a motor cab that costs fifteen to twenty-five thousand rupiah depending on that bargain we make with the driver. It takes about fifteen minutes to Amparita where we can find settlement houses lined along the streets.

As an urban area, Amparita has sufficient infrastructure such as highways, roads, electricity, telephone lines, and even the cellular phone service, clean water and public transportation. However, during the dry season, Amparita is very hot and dry and dusty. Dust is always found around the area due to a lack of vegetation. The existing road facilities at Amparita are severely damaged at some spots because of the heavy traffic of vehicles and the poor asphalt quality.

People of Amparita have diverse livelihoods. Most of them engage in fishing at the lake. Freshwater fish are a blessing for the people. However, the majority of them choose agriculture as the main source of earning due to its topography. The lowland stretching with hills serves as fertile farmland and is therefore very promising to the community. The agricultural area covers 478. 10 hectares and for the settlement area is more or less 37.10 hectares. The community has been familiar with modern tools such as the tractor instead of plowing with cows or buffaloes. So the people of Amparita are flexible to adapt to modernity.

The Towani Tolotang are ethnic Bugis. In general, they wear clothing like that of the Bugis. The difference between them can be seen when the Towani Tolotang come to a place of worship to perform rituals before the *uwata* (community leader that leads the ritual). The Towani Tolotang jointly perform the ritual with the *uwata* only once a year in January. Another difference is

when a member of the community dies. The dead body is planted in trees instead of being buried, and before planting it in a tree, the corpse is thrown out through a window or an opening that is not the exit door.

Regarding marriage, there is a little difference from the Bugis community. The community of Islamic Bugis does not perform ritual outside the Islamic tradition, while the community of the Towani Tolotang still practices the tradition of Hinduism that they are often regarded as practicing syncretic Islam. The debate about the practice of Syncretic Islam as opposed to pure Islam has drawn a lot of attention from many writers on Islam such as Azyumardi Azra, Bambang Pranowo, Taufik Abdullah, Moeslim Abdurrahman and Kuntowijoyo when observing Indonesian Islam in general. The practice of marital rituals not only rests on the Islamic tradition but also on that of the pre-Islamic Bugis which is held by the majority community of the Towani Tolotang in Amparita Sidenreng Rapang, South Sulawesi.

MINORITY POLITICS OF THE TOWANI TOLOTANG

Until 2007, the population of the Towani Tolotang at Amparita was 6,620 (60%) of the total population of Sindenreng Rappang. Muslim population was 4,711 (37, 36%) out of a total of 12,279 inhabitants. (BPS, Subdistrict of Tello Limpoe, 2007). The community Towani Tolotang is generally divided into two large categories: the Towani Tolotang, later called the Towani by Atho Mudzar as they have been reluctant to convert from the Towani who were not Muslim, and the Towani Benteng who were willing to convert from their original Hindu religion but also not willing to be referred to as Muslims. They are better known as the Towani Benteng (*Fortress Towani*); since they did not remain in their fortress, then they were referred to as the Towani Tolotang. (Mudzar, 2002). Meanwhile Hase Juba called them 'Islam Tolotang' because they converted to Islam.

The Towani Tolotang community comes from Wajo and Luwu an area near Sidenreng Rappan. Following a clash between the Kings of Wajo and Luwu, they fled to Sidenreng Rappang in the South and thus they are called the Southerners and referred to as *Tolotang*. They refer to themselves and their teachings as the Towani Tolotang according to Matulada (1982). They came to Sidenreng Rappang around 1666, as Islam was spread there in 1606.

The religious pillars of the Towani Tolotang are as follows. *First*, believing that there is no God worthy of being worshipped except the *Dewata Seuwae*; saying prayer through the ancestors; saying prayer in the mornings and afternoons and when the harvest comes. *Second*, performing the obligation

to the ancestors (*attomatoangeng*) namely doing all that is inherited from the ancestors such as the ritual of funeral in which the dead body is prepared with a mattress, pillow, bed and dishes, and this is still performed to date. *Third*, promoting *malilu sipakainge,* a pillar of promotion of virtue and prevention of vice. For example, if one makes a mistake other will remind and forgive them. *Fourth*, *marrelau* (praying), which is done by gathering at the *Perriyameng* near the ancestral graves through the medium of *uluwwatu*.

Viewed from their pillars of the faith there are several differences and similarities between the Towani Tolotang and other religions. The similarities lie in the teaching about God, charity, and prayer. The differences are among others: prayer being said through the *uluwwatu*, death rituals, and offerings to the ancestors.

We can see that in Indonesia religion and the state are pretty important, especially the majority religion (in this case Islam), so in the political strife, Islam has always occupied a significant position. Religion and the state may take advantage of each other as argued by Milton Yinger, that religion in Indonesia is often used in the interests of the political power of the ruling regime and at the same time may be used by the opposition over the regime in order to gain influence and position.

I use this term 'official religions' also to refer to religions which are not recognized by the sate such as the local religions of Towani Tolotang, Parmalim and the like whose position is not strong. On the other hand, the official religions are very strong in the two sides, gaining recognition and being controlled by the regime in power. The official religions are locked up tight by various regulations and guidelines as required when dealing with 'unofficial religions' as reported by Karel Steenbrink.

The Towani Tolotang were 'safe' when the King of Wajo implemented Islamization. When they showed disobedience, they were expelled from Wajo and ultimately ended up in Sidenreng Rappang today. The Towani Tolotang chose Hinduism as their religion with various consequences. In 1966, the Regent of Sidenreng Rapang issued a decree that ruled out that the Towani Tolotang were not a Hindus, not even a religion, so that any form of religious practice should be eliminated and should not be performed by the community. They were required to choose either Hinduism or Islam as a religion.

In 1966, with the issuance of the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the District Attorney, the Towani Tolotang religion was dissolved. Under such condition, the Tiwani Tolotang temporarily chose to remain under Islam while waiting for the political conditions and the decisions of the Central

Government. Several Islamic figures recognized the Towani Tolotang as Islam while several Hindu leaders said that the thay were part of the Hindu religion. Rivalry of control over the Towani Tolotang was inevitable between Islamic and Hindu institutions as both were the official state institutions that deal with the religions in the country.

The rivalry between the Islamic and Hindu institutions can be seen in three forms: first, the Islamic elites' desire to include the Towani Tolotang into Islam because of the regulations issued by of the District authorities of Sidenreng that there can be no other than Muslim communities in Sidenreng Rapang; second, the Muslim elites' desire to get rid Sidenreng Rappang of communities other than Muslims; and third, the long-term political interests given the number of followers of the Towani Tolotang. The Golkar is the political party that has giving attention to the community for their political support in elections.

Responding to the debate about the Towani Tolotang, the elites have chosen to side with the powerful party. The Towani Tolotang have joined the Golkar party. By being part of the Golkar, the Towani Tolotang have become part of the country and integrate themselves with Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia including South Sulawesi and Sidenreng Rappang that tried to exclude any community other than the Muslims. In this light, the Towani Tolotang display an inclusive and accommodating attitude on developments and realities in Sidenreng Rappang. The accommodating attitude of the Towani Tolotang includes receiving the influx of foreign cultural elements in everyday life, such as the use of modern tools and means of communication. They also showed an inclusive attitude of mingling with other communities especially Muslims and Hindus. However, their exclusive attitude has remained unchanged, i.e. not allowing outsiders to be involved in their annual ceremony at Sipulung rituals. To respect other communities, they host the *massempe* ceremony for outsiders.

CONCLUSION

Looking at what happened in Indonesia over its history (so to say), the treatment of political regime to a religious community that is not the mainstream, such as the community discussed here the Towani Tolotang, we have some important notes to take. Indonesia is a country that since the beginning of time has been plural. In the last few decades due to economic and political interests, the differences have been dwarfed. Political coercion over minority groups has been very common. Three are at least three important agenda that should be considered by the regime in power. First, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed by the founding fathers without applying the

principle of a specific religion. Although Islam is the majority, but it has never served as the basis of the State, and it is a political commitment of the country to remain this way. That the country is in the process toward a prosperous, fair, and independent state should maintain the pluralist characteristics. The State should provide control over space and simultaneously the aspirations of the citizens to communicate their will, such as local culture and religions. On the contrary, the state should also warn any group of citizens who wish to change the basic principles of the Unitary State with a particular religion. This must be done to prevent a breach of human rights as there will be a greater human rights violations committed by certain groups over others.

Second, the State should be willing to enforce the law firmly and consistently so that the State is seen to have a resolute attitude of defending the human rights and enforcing the law in Indonesia. It is true that in Indonesia there are customary law, religious law and positive law, but the state is based on the national constitution (positive law) that is progressive. So when there is a group with an attitude of wishing to dissolve a religious community, the State must immediately act in the corridors a productive and positive law to stop such unlawful acts. Third, the State must intervene over human rights violations that have occurred over the minorities in the country. If the state is reluctant or even afraid of intervening over human rights violations, then the State has no true political attitude and good will to uphold the law and various regulations made in this country. The state should not run away from the responsibility to eradicate the groups that often claim to represent the majority. The state must really take a decisive action to crack down on the offenders of the human rights including the cases of dissolution of the existing minority communities in Indonesia. The State should not be subject to the strength of small groups that often threaten and manipulate their activities under false religion claims for their own political and economic interests. Minority groups should not be removed and merged with a larger group because they have their own guidelines and conviction clearly stipulated in article 28 of the Constitution. In this context, the minority communities should continue to live and survive in their own conviction as expressed by Benedict Anderson in his works on the minority communities in Indonesia.

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