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*Authority and Enterprise among the Peoples of South
Sulawesi*

Leiden, KITLV Presss, 2000, VIII + 285 p., gloss., bibl., index, ill., carte
(« Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en
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Huub de Jonge



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- 1 THIS READER about the Makassarese and Buginese in South Sulawesi and beyond contains ten interesting articles written by historians, philologists, and anthropologists. At first sight the subject matters do not seem to have much in common, but careful reading proves that there are important and unexpected connections. Above all they have to do with inequality, hierarchy, power, commerce, external influences, tradition, and progress. The opening article by Christian Pelras deals with the importance of patron-client relationships in the past and at the present time. It is a treasury of information on the societal order, in particular in the political and economic fields, and as such is a good introduction to the following contributions in which nobles and commoners, leaders and followers, traders and producers play a prominent role. It is, however, deficient because everything is seen from a patronage perspective. The concept of patronage is a useful means by which to understand social structures and developments, but here the societal order has been made subservient to the term to a certain degree. Not all unequal relationships can be reduced to patron-client relations, although they have characteristics of this type of vertical tie.
- 2 The contributions of Anthony Reid and Heather Sutherland relate to Makassar as erstwhile centre of international commerce. Reid wonders how the city, despite a rigid social hierarchy (including slaves) and a preoccupation with traditional values, norms, and institutions, could grow into a community in which openness, enterprise, security,

freedom, and progress flourished. It turns out that, he postulates, it was made possible by a combination of external and internal factors that coincided at the right time. In particular, the relative autonomy of local communities and the custom of establishing relationships between communities in contracts created a breeding-ground for new ideas and contacts after the international sea route to the spice islands via Bali and Lombok was shifted northwards. After the Dutch overthrew Makassar in 1669 and subsequently imposed restraints on overseas trade, this chemistry wore off to a large extent. However, in some fields it still made itself felt, as Sutherland shows with regard to the trade in *bêche-de-mer* (sea cucumbers) with China in the 18th and early 19th century. Her article gives a detailed picture of the development and organization of a trade network that extended from South China to Northern Australia and in which Chinese merchants, who arrived in Makassar with the yearly junk fleet, as well as local rulers, traders, and fishermen, all took part. The description of the relationships between the different parties involved is more than a case-study. It casts light on the nature and context of economic relationships in general in a period about which we do not know that much. It also makes clear that many characteristics of trading networks in present-day Indonesia have been in place for several hundred years, as comparison with the economic-anthropological article about kinship and debt by Greg Acciaioli in a later article demonstrates.

- 3 Following these historical articles are two philological essays. The late Koos Noorduyn analyses a Buginese manuscript that includes information on the Wajorese merchant community in Makassar in the 18th and 19th centuries. On the basis of these data, he describes the political relationship between the members and the elected head of this urban community, which was partly based on tradition and partly on agreements. Up to a point it reflects the usual form of interaction between a Buginese ruler and his subjects, but with discrepancies because of the mercantile and maritime orientation. The head of the community, for example, was endowed with a number of trade privileges and was entitled to tributes from ships that called at the port. Noorduyn's reconstruction of the relationship between a leader and his followers is a good illustration of the ideas put forward by Reid. Roger Tol examines the authoritative character of the *Toloq Rumpaana Boné*, a Buginese report on the Boné War in 1905, when the Dutch tried to subjugate this obstreperous realm by sending in a military expedition. By relating the text to Dutch data, Tol reveals the Buginese vision of the background to and the course of the fighting. At the same time he demonstrates which sorts of rhetorical, stylistic, and compositional means are used in *toloq* (a kind of poem) to achieve reliability and objectivity. One of the techniques by which this was done was to pass the narrator perspective constantly from one party to another. Although the objective of the author was very different, it would have been worthwhile to compare this Buginese text more systematically with Dutch reports and in that way confront the Western and Eastern visions and representations of the conflict more sharply.
- 4 The anthropologists Birgitt Röttger-Rössler and Martin Rössler each focus on sacred heirlooms as a source of status, authority, and power. In many villages in the hinterland of Makassar, traditional leaders were recruited from bilateral descent groups which descend from a divine female ancestor who was married to a local man. The heirlooms bequeathed by this mythical person – objects like swords, daggers, porcelain plates, or flags – are the most important symbols of unity and solidarity in villages. Both men and women of the traditional elite derive status from their genealogical proximity to these

sacrosanct relics. On the basis of research in one of the villages, Röttger-Rössler demonstrates that women who have access to the heirlooms still play a crucial role in the organization and execution of rituals in the social and religious fields. They are emphatically involved in both *rites de passage* and the redeeming of vows, and act as mediators between the secular and spiritual worlds. Despite the fact that they are not allowed to fulfil traditional offices, women from the traditional elite also exert political influence. They can transfer their inherited rights to their husbands, replace the latter on official occasions, and promote the interests of villagers with the local leaders. Martin Rössler concentrates on the altered significance of heirlooms in the political field. Because of far-reaching changes in the administrative structure in colonial and postcolonial times, the material symbols are no longer recognized as sources of power, which had led to conflicts between local communities and the state as well as to factionalism within villages. The community-wide rituals which confirmed traditional authority have also almost disappeared. The only ones which are still held now and then have assumed the character of cultural heritage spectacles. Both articles clarify the distribution and meaning of traditional means of power, although the time dimension could have been worked out with more attention to detail.

- 5 The last three contributions deal with Makassarese and Buginese outside their homeland. The earlier mentioned article by Acciaioli concerns migrants in the region of Lake Lindu in Central Sulawesi and R. Z. Leirissa writes about the prominent Makassare-Buginese presence in the port towns of Ambon and Ternate during the 19th century. Anton Lucas and Chris de Jong explain the development of Mukhdi Akbar, a mystical movement with an Islamic overtone, on the island of Selayar which since its genesis has opposed the high costs of life-cycle rituals and concomitant payments to religious officials. The aversion to material affairs is justified by a multitude of incongruent beliefs derived from various religions. It is fascinating to see how, because of all kinds of developments, the movement has distanced itself outwardly from Islam in the course of time. Eventually members began to register themselves as Christians and Hindus. Unfortunately, the authors do not pay much attention to the social characteristics of the followers of the sect.
- 6 Both from a thematic and a regional point of view this reader has much to offer. It deals with such matters as authority, power, and enterprise in a region that has become increasingly integrated into the wider, national society. As such it is very inspiring for those interested in comparable topics in other areas of the Indonesian archipelago. Besides, it is an excellent introduction to the southern part of Sulawesi.

AUTHOR

HUUB DE JONGE

University of Nijmegen, Department of Anthropology, Pays-Bas.