

Facts about Bambam (1936)

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DESCRIPTION

In this brief article the author describes the respective duties of the *topakada* and the *tomakaka*, two traditional functionaries in the Bambam area of western Sulawesi, Indonesia. The author also gives an historical account of the people who filled these positions, both prior to and following the establishment of Dutch colonial administration over Bambam in the early twentieth century.

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SOURCE

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Facts about Bambam (1936) ¹

From a report written by the *adspirant-controleur* of Mamasa Mr. P. C. Smit.

1. The situation in Bambang before the establishment of the government.

Until the rise of Salu Mokanan, led by Ambe Panalang, Bambang was virtually untouched by the various wars between them. In the confederacy Pitu Uluna Salu,² Bambang had a special function, namely as guardian of the adat.³ The highest head in Bambang, the *topakada di Bambang*, was the highest secular authority in Bambang, but also the highest priestly authority in the Pitu Uluna Salu. (The distinction between priestly and secular power has never been made rigorously in these Torajalands.) The highest intermediary between the gods and the whole of Pitu Uluna Salu was at the same time the *ada' di Bambang*.⁴

Being the chief priest carried many responsibilities. Among other things he was not allowed to have too many earthly goods, nor to obtain those, he was not allowed to mix freely among the people, but rather seclude himself somewhat, could not use his fist,

¹ [Translator's note: I wish to thank Ambe Sanggona and Phil Campbell for their explanations of certain Bambam terms. I pass on their comments in the notes.]

² [Translator's note: Properly spelled Pitu Ulunna Salu, literally 'seven heads of rivers.' The seven upland polities that composed this confederacy were (with modern spellings) Tabulahan, Aralle, Mambie, Bambam, Rantebulahan, Matängä, and Tabang, along with Tu'bi, located in a coastal region. The full expression explicitly including Tu'bi is Pitu Ulunna Salu, Kahua Ba'bana Minanga 'seven heads of rivers, one river mouth.']

³ [Translator's note: In the local language, *su'buam ada'* 'the place where *ada'* is stored/guarded.' See also footnote 6.]

⁴ [Translator's note: Here *ada'* refers to a functionary or official. The term *ada'* can also refer to the traditional system of native governance in general, and to polities within that system.]

could never quarrel or go to war, in short he was an *orang betapa*.⁵ Therefore in Bambang this ada' also had a right-hand man, the *tomakaka*, who had to follow the orders of the *topakada* and who carried out the will of the ada', who himself could not legally maintain the ada'. This was a rich man, who had to provide food to guests, organize the legal side of death burials, divided inheritances, carry out judgments, and be leader in war.

What may sound strange in European ears, but is perfectly normal for the Toraja is this: the tomakaka had the right to depose the topakada and [p. 389] appoint a new one, without any backing from others. This appointing of a new topakada he had to do very quickly, as he could not do anything without a topakada, but should base all his actions on the orders of the topakada. For the appointment of a new topakada the tomakaka had to consider three requirements: First that the person to be approached was from the right family, secondly that he had brains and was 'learned' in adat and old stories, and finally that he was just.

Around 1870 marauding raids from Ambe Panalang devastated the whole of Bambang. Most of the survivors fled, so that there were hardly any people left, or an ada' or some other authority. The tomakaka's of Masoso and Salodengen (little ada's in Bambang) fled to Arale and were given the area around Kayuberang. Even now this area is inhabited exclusively by people from Bambang (the kepala of Kayuberang is a descendant of the tomakaka of Masoso, the kepala of Taora from the tomakaka of Salodengen). But even here, under the protection of Arale, these people were pursued by Salu Mokanan. The Indo Kadanene himself was so powerless against these *anak banua* (underlings) of Rantebulahan that he had to buy off these newly taken-in people with eight buffalos,⁶ which was an enormous amount at that time; it made the Kayuberang people eternal debtors to the Indo Kadanene. Towards the end of the last century, when the atrocities of Salu Mokanan had moved in the direction of Malaboh Osango, and Rantebulahan itself, some people came to live again in Bambang. Then Indo Kadanene, who was on better terms now with Salu Mokanan, came to Lasodehata at the request of those people, where he reestablished the ada' di Bambang with the last descendent of the family of Ambe Sarrang alias Ambena Epa as topakada. Malle became his right hand as tomakaka.

⁵ [Translator's note: Indonesian *orang bertapa* 'an ascetic.']

⁶ [Translator's note: To be precise, the person referred to here as the Indo Kadanene (properly spelled: Indo' Kadanene') bought off Ambe Panalang so that he would no longer harass the people who had fled to Kayuberang. Indo' Kadanene', literally 'the leader of the words of the grandparents,' is the title given the ada' of Aralle. Other ada' titles from the past include Petaba Mana' Pebita' Parandangam (for Tabulahan), Lantang Kadanene' (for Mambie), Su'buam Ada' (for Bambam), Ma'dua Takim Ma'tallu Sulekka (for Rantebulahan), and Andihi Tantemponna Pitu Ulunna Salu (for Matängä). There is also a title for the ada' of Tabang, but Ambe Sanggona could not recall what it was.]

2. The situation after the establishment of the government.

The establishment of the government made the sun of Bambang set again. The district became part of Arale. Malle, the tomakaka, became village chief. Ambe Sarrang, the topakada, who had gotten into conflict with Indo Kadanene (who had converted to Islam) was not appointed to any function. When later the district of Bambang was reestablished, a meeting was held of Bambang people among themselves. Ambe Sarrang, then called Ambena Epa, stood up and said, “Sebetulnya saya harus berdiri pegang pangkat ini, tetapi saya sudah tua dan saya takut pegang ‘ada’ compania.’ Anakku Sarrang sudah meninggal dan anakku Epa tidak bisa, sebab bodoh. Jadi sekarang saya serahkan pangkat compania ini pada Malle.”⁷ This transfer was partly motivated out of fear of Indo Kadanene, who when the government was first established, was the oracle and *the* adviser and therefore, as far as Toraja matters [p. 390] were concerned, the ruler in the subdistrict. This is how Malle became district head in Bambang. It should be noted that the headship over Bambang was not transferred in perpetuity. No buffalo was slaughtered, nor were the dewata’s called upon as witnesses in any other way.

3. The present situation.

On December 4, 1935, Malle was discharged as district head because of old age. It was only in the letter of discharge that for the first time I encountered the title *topakada* to designate who was always called tomakaka. At this an investigation was held, with the result as outlined above. This matter was also discussed with the village chiefs, with the old district head Malle, his son Bahu, and the son of Epa, the grandson of Ambe Sarrang, the real topakada who converted to Christianity and is presently a guru of Ds. Geleynse in Lasodehata.⁸ It was possible to discuss this calmly, because the relationships in Bambang are very good and the latter two young people are friends.

The result was that all the village chiefs, with the exception of Saludengen, acknowledged that indeed Malle, and with him Bahu, did not have the right to the headship over Bambang, but that he should be second-in-command. They also acknowledged that the transfer at the appointment of Malle had only been a loan. However, they also considered that Malle had been a good district head of Bambang for almost twenty years, that he was very influential, and that the appointment of Kamba, the grandson of Ambe Sarrang, would inevitably lead to difficulties as long as Malle was alive. They urgently requested Bahu the son of Malle to be appointed district head, however, without the title of topakada, which he was not allowed to carry, but with the

⁷ [Translator’s note: Roughly translated, “In actuality I should take on this position, but I am old and I am afraid to hold a ‘company (colonial administration) office.’ My child Sarrang is dead, and my child Epa is unable, since he is foolish. Therefore I now surrender this company title to Malle.”]

⁸ [Translator’s note: Ds. Geleynse was the second Dutch missionary to Mamasa.]

title tomakaka di Bambang. Kamba, they reasoned, would not be a good topakada, because he converted to Christianity. (Bahu is also a Christian.)

The village head of Saludengen, however, insisted that the pangkat⁹ be returned to the rightful owner, that is Kamba, with the title of topakada, because Kamba had become a Christian and could therefore perform all the secular duties. The old district head Malle urgently requested the appointment of his son as his descendant. He acknowledged right away that the title of topakada does not belong in his family. The two young men, the candidates, dropped all their desires, saying that whatever the case they would always cooperate.

⁹ [Translator's note: *pangkat* is Indonesian for 'rank, title, position.']