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THE INDIGENOUS NGATA TORO COMMUNITY CENTRAL SULAWESI

Reforming *Adat* to promote environmental,
economic and cultural sustainability

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Historical background

There are no accurate written records of when Ngata Toro² was founded, but there was a well-established community before colonial times. Village elders differentiate three historical periods - Mpone, Ntomatu and Menanca (also called Balawo) - based on the name of the village leader at the time. According to local oral history each of these periods was quite long,

The group of settlers who became Toro's first inhabitants was led by Mpone. Local legends say that these were the survivors who fled their ancestral village of Malino, some 40 kilometres away, because it was haunted by *bunian* – invisible malign forest spirits (see box on Toro origins).

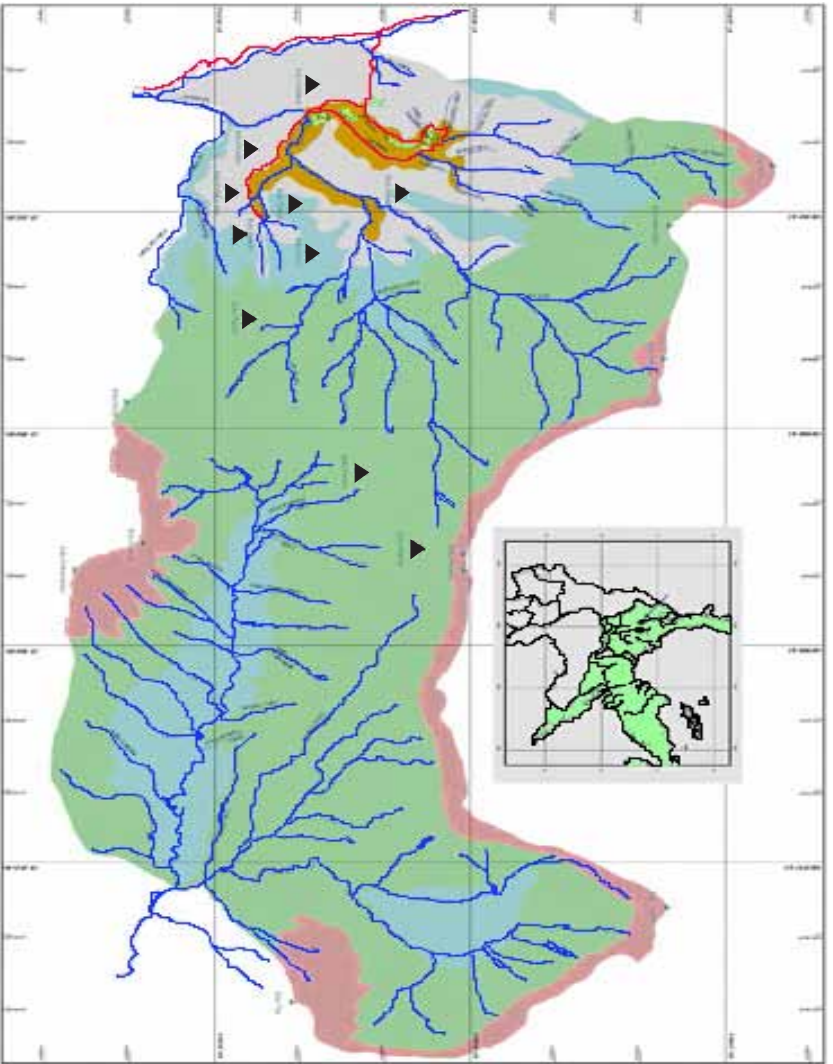
It was under the leadership of Balawo that the community started to clear the forest and organise their village more systematically. During this period, the Toro community grew significantly, mainly because several relatives of Balawo's wife decided to move there from Rampi - a place now in Luwu district in South Sulawesi. When they arrived in Toro, Balawo gave them land so they could make a living. Through marriage, the Rampi incomers eventually integrated with the Toro community.

During the pre-colonial era, Toro and the surrounding villages functioned as 'village republics' in that they had their own property and the authority to manage their own affairs. The Muslim kingdom on the coast paid them no attention, because the hilly hinterland was far away and the sultanate focused on trade by sea with other islands and regions.

Toro and its neighbours established a kind of loose federation within which each village retained its autonomy. Initially this was created for political reasons so villages could defend themselves in tribal conflicts. Over time the links grew stronger through the development of economic relationships, family ties, shared values and solidarity among the different communities.

² The local term for village is *ngata*.

Participatory map of Toro Village



TARI MUNTU PELOUTAA
 DODOHA TOI TOLO
 PETA TEMA PEMANFAATAN
 TANAH ADAT ORANG TORO

- **Dada Ngata** (Village Road)
- **Ue** (River)
- ▲ **Bulu** (Mountain)
- **Pongata** (Settlement)
- **Polidaa** (Paddy Fields)
- **Oma** – scrubby forest that has regrown after cultivated land was intentionally left fallow for a certain period. Individual property rights (*dodoha*) apply here.
- **Pangale** – mature forest which has regrown over several decades on land formerly used for farming and agroforestry (*kebun*).
- **Wana** - primary forest located immediately below the *wana ngkiki* zone.
- **Wana ngkiki** – primary montane forest, dominated at high altitude by grasses, mosses and low-growing plants. This zone, close to the mountaintops, is of great importance as a source of fresh air (*wiharu*) and must not be used for any purpose.

The integration of Toro into this local political structure presented a stimulus for significant and wide-ranging changes during the colonial period and after independence. More recently, policies imposed during the Suharto era have resulted in an even more fundamental transformation of the Toro community, redefining its identity, religion, territorial boundaries, governance system and the local landscape and bringing other general social changes³.

2. Location

Administratively, the village of Toro is part of the Kulawi sub-district of Donggala, in Central Sulawesi. The whole area is predominately mountainous, with intervening hills and valleys. Some of the larger rivers in the area are the Sopa, Biro, Pangemoa, Alumiu, Pono, Bola, Mewe and Kadundu.

The Toro's customary lands are bounded by:

- Mount Taweki to the north – this coincides administratively with the villages of Mataue and Lindu;
- Mount Podoroa to the east – administratively, the villages of Kaduwa (Ue Biro) and Katu Ue (Ue Hawuraga);
- Mount Mahue and Potovoa Noa to the south (O'o Parase and Lawua);
- Mount Tobengi and Ue Halua to the west (Sungku and Winatu).

The development of the village has followed the topography of the landscape and resembles a letter W when seen from the higher slopes of the land now claimed by Lore Lindu National Park. The settlement is concentrated almost symmetrically in the centre of the valley while the main ricefields stretch along the arms of the W-shape between two mountain ridges.

³ Over three quarters of the Toro's customary lands are now part of Lore Lindu National Park. The village governance law and the forest zonation system which designated part of Ngata Toro as a Protected Area were introduced in the 1970s. The traditional belief systems of indigenous peoples were not recognised under Suharto's interpretation of the national philosophy of Pancasila. Only one of the five approved major religions could be recorded on official documents including individuals' identity cards. People had to conform as to register no religion was interpreted as being a member of the (banned) Communist Party.

3. Demography and settlement structure

In 2004 Toro had a population of 2006 inhabitants (543 households). The population density, averaged over the total extent of the community's customary lands, is 87 people per km². More data is given in the table below.

Demographic data Toro village

Feature	Total
Village area	22,950 ha ¹
Population	2006
Number of households	534
Religion	
• Protestant	1,777
• Islam	229
Age (years)	
• 0 – 6	364
• 7 – 12	192
• 13 – 18	389
• 19 – 45	772
• 46 – 60	196
• above 60	93

The authorities officially recognised the existence of Ngata Toro in the 1950s. Around that time, Toro experienced a substantial influx of people from Rampi who had been displaced by the *DI/TII*⁴ uprising. Other communities have also contributed to the diversity of the Toro population. The late 1960s saw the arrival of Uma people from the western part of Kulawi due to a forced resettlement programme targeting indigenous societies deemed by the government to be 'isolated and underdeveloped'.

Due to its demographic history, the population of Toro village mainly consists of three groups: the Moma, considered to be the original settlers and still the largest component, plus significant numbers of Rampi and

⁴ The *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia* movement aimed to set up a separate Islamic state under the leadership of Kahar Muzakar. The conflict between the *DI/TII* and Indonesian armed forces caused great loss of life and lands for many indigenous peoples throughout the southern and central parts of Sulawesi in the 1950s and 60s.

Uma immigrants. An interesting feature of the settlement structure is that each group tends to cluster in separate hamlets (*boya*). The majority of the Moma live in Boya 1, 2, 3 and part of Boya 4; Rampi people mainly live in Boya 5 and 7; and the Uma are concentrated in Boya 6⁵.

Despite the ethnic homogeneity of each hamlet, descendents of the first settlers and incomers are linked through family ties and a sense of tolerance and mutual respect. They all consider themselves to be Toro people.



Yuyun Indradi [DTE]

Ngata Toro hamlet

4. Origins

Origin myths are very important to the Toro people. They are central to the development of the community's collective identity and to strengthening awareness of people's unity and diversity. These processes have been crucial in building an inclusive society which encompasses groups from different backgrounds.

Although myths are stories of phenomena not normally experienced in the real world, they are not simply meaningless fantasies. Toro mythology relates past events as a reflection of our present lives. It is

⁵ Each hamlet (*boya*) within Ngata Toro has its own local name: these are labelled Boya 1-6 here for simplicity.

an expression of the community's history and identity, reflecting social norms that have evolved from different elements such as actual events, peoples' everyday lives and the physical environment.

The Toro people have three myths relating to their origins and collective identity. All three are inter-connected and describe how the village, its inhabitants and the surrounding landscape came into being.

The first relates to the location of Toro village. It tells how the original settlers - the Moma people - left when a huge flood and mudslides devastated the area. A lake formed where the village had once been. The second relates how spirits drove the inhabitants of Malino from their village. The survivors resettled in what is now known as Toro. The third explains how a Kulawi nobleman discovered a fertile valley which had been a lake and encouraged the Malino people to settle there.

In the Moma language, the word *toro* means 'left behind'. So Ngata Toro's name may refer to somewhere reclaimed by the forest after the earliest inhabitants abandoned the site. It may also refer to the escapees from Malino who eventually made their new home in a place deserted by another group.



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Women of Toro

The Origins of Toro

1. How a village turned into a lake

Two brothers were fighting over a golden drum¹. One of them cut off a cat's leg and used it to play the drum as loud as he could, even though cats are considered sacred and must not be harmed. To break this rule risks a major disaster.

Later that afternoon, there was a sudden tremendous downpour with strong winds and a violent thunderstorm. For three days and nights darkness engulfed the whole village; trees were uprooted by the storm and the waters washed away the soil. The village was completely destroyed and disappeared into the lake formed by the flood.

2. How the people of Malino left their village

Some Malino children were playing tops with the children of forest spirits (*bunian*). The young *bunian* used golden tops and won the game. Later, the Malino children told their parents that they had played with some new children. They also described the shiny yellow tops and how the strangers glowed with the same golden light. The next day the Malino parents killed a spirit child who was playing and took away its golden top.

That evening, a noise like soldiers fighting in battle thundered through the village. No warriors could be seen, but swords and spears flew through the air and attacked people. The Malino then realised that the spirits were taking revenge for their child's murder. They scattered, trying to flee from their invisible aggressors. Most were killed but seven families managed to escape.

The survivors eventually found a new home where they cleared the forest to work the land and build their houses.

3. How the Malino people found their new land

Balu was a Kulawi ruler famous for his love of hunting. Not satisfied with familiar localities, he liked to explore the mountains and valleys

¹ *Karatu bulawa*

looking for new hunting grounds. During one of his expeditions he discovered a valley with very fertile soil because it had once been a lakebed. This was the site of an earlier village deserted due to a natural disaster.

Balu showed the place to the refugees from Malino. They decided it was suitable for their new settlement, so their leader (Mpone) bargained with Balu. They agreed to pay seven gold nuggets, each the size of a sparrow. The spot where the transaction was agreed later became known as *Kaputua*, meaning ‘the place where a decision was made’.

5. Socio-cultural structure of the Toro

The Toro people’s long history of interacting with their environment has produced both a mature cultural landscape and ecological stability. This is reflected in the structure of their society and culture as well as in their natural resource management system.

Toro society centres around two pivotal values. *Hintuvu* governs relationships between people and is based on the principles of mutual respect, solidarity and consensus. *Katuvua* determines relationships between human beings and the natural environment and is based on an understanding of and harmony with nature.

The Toro believe that there are three kinds of interrelated organisms which nourish and give life to each other: humans (*Tauna*), animals (*Pinatuvua*) and plants (*Tinuda*). *Hintuvu* and *Katuvua* govern the interactions between them. The two principles constitute the framework for all social interactions and provide the norms to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour - both towards other human beings and towards nature.

A series of *adat* laws and a judicial system have been developed to ensure that these important values are respected by all community members. Violations are punished according to predetermined sanctions. Enforcement is the responsibility of the Council of *Adat* Elders (*Totua Ngata*), a local governance institution which has retained its authority over time and still functions today.



Harvesting grass from old paddy fields to weave mats

II. NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The Toro community has two kinds of land ownership. Basically all land within the boundaries of their customary area is common land and is an expression of the community's shared control over their customary domain (*huaka*). Individual ownership (*dodoha*) of a particular piece of land is only possible for the person who first clears the primary forest for agriculture (*pampa*). While members of all three groups in the community practise the same land use, only Moma people have the rights under customary law to own land – either collectively or individually. The Rampi and Uma only have land use rights, unless they purchase land from the Moma who were Toro's first inhabitants. More information on land ownership can be found in section V.2.

The Toro differentiate six kinds of traditional land use, according to when the forest was cleared and the stage in the rotational cultivation system⁶.

⁶ In the rotational cultivation system traditionally practised, the Toro clear certain areas of forest to grow rice and vegetables. At the same time they plant tree crops such as cloves, coffee, cocoa and various fruit trees plus species useful for timber. Around thirty years after these agroforestry plots are abandoned, they form mature forest.



1. ***Wana ngkiki*** – primary montane forest, dominated at high altitude by grasses, mosses and low-growing plants. This zone, close to the mountaintops, is of great importance as a source of fresh air (*winara*) and must not be used for any purpose.



Primary forest on mountain ridges (*wana ngkiki*)

