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## <Book Review>

Quynh Huong Nguyen

**Edwin de Jong. *Making a Living between Crises and Ceremonies in Tana Toraja: The Practice of Everyday Life of a South Sulawesi Highland Community in Indonesia*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.**

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formation or perpetuation of the national culture. It is likely, however, that social, political, and psychological chaos would result if there were conservative forces strong enough to resist change. In the case of the Philippines, the progressive forces have not gained substantial strength to transmute the country's political culture.

Kusaka could have tied political culture with his concept of moral politics to strengthen his argument on the deficiency of democracy and continuing inequality not only in the Philippines, but also in the world. Integrating the question of political culture into his framework would definitely show the bigger picture in the quest of comprehending moral politics. However, taken as a whole, *Moral Politics in the Philippines* is a worthy contribution to the wealth of knowledge in a range of disciplines—political science, psychology, and sociology. His work is highly relevant in rethinking the changing configurations in the developing world.

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### ***Making a Living between Crises and Ceremonies in Tana Toraja: The Practice of Everyday Life of a South Sulawesi Highland Community in Indonesia***

EDWIN DE JONG

Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Indonesia is well-known for its diversity of culture, languages, and 300 different ethnic groups (Geertz 1963). The Torajan are located in Tana Toraja, a mountainous region in the Indonesian province of South Sulawesi and known for beautiful scenery and spectacular funeral ceremonies (de Jong 2013). There are many books about Tana Toraja, but Edwin de Jong's *Making a Living between Crises and Ceremonies in Tana Toraja* has taken a specific socio-economic approach when describing in detail the living situation of Torajans, who continue to engage in costly ceremonies even in times of economic struggle.

The book starts with the scene of a loudly extravagant funeral ceremony in Tana Toraja, with tens of buffalo being slaughtered. In this chapter, the author questioned how the Torajans can maintain the expenses for such costly ritual ceremonies after the economic and political crisis in Indonesia during in the late 1990s. Subsequent chapters of the book then offer answers to this central question.

*Making a Living between Crises and Ceremonies in Tana Toraja* is structured in nine chronological ordered chapters, which include all kinds of cultural and historical events. Chapter 1 describes the paradoxes and complexities of the Torajan through socio-economic approaches. Chapter 2 introduces the author's analytical framework and methodology that aims to analyze the dynamic between culture, social structure, and economic activities in Torajan livelihoods. Chapter 3 explains how important the Torajan community and networks are outside the homeland. The income of Torajan migrants is a main financial contribution for the living and ritual ceremonies in Tana Toraja. Chapter 4 presents the historical background of Tana Toraja and the influence of elites and the noble class on the socio-political, economic, and cultural domain in Toraja society. Chapter 5 shows the power of the local government and tradition leaders in the concept of current democratic elections. Chapter 6 illustrates the importance of the *tongkonan* (ancestral house) as a symbol of social order and social stratification in Torajan life. Chapter 7 presents the economic activities, socio-political organization, and local culture of Torajans in Palipu and Kondo. Chapter 8 emphasizes the sense of *siri* (honor), which controls all the economic activities and social structure of Torajans. Chapter 9 can be regarded as the conclusion for the book—it emphasizes the relationship between economic activities and death ceremonies and rituals, encapsulated by the notion that “there is no life without the dead, and the meaning of life is a good death” (p. 295).

Using the methodology of ethnography with in-depth interviews with Torajans, and by offering readers true accounts of Torajans, de Jong paints a vivid picture of the struggle between their financial situation and the expenses of ritual ceremonies and funerals. The author collected many stories of Torajans living in the heartland and the migrants living abroad. Indeed, what connects both the domestic and international Torajan is their common goal of keeping a sense of community and honor—known as *siri*—by contributing their time and financial resources for the continued performance of rituals and ceremonies. As the book shows, rituals and ceremonies form the main expenditure of Torajans who *merantau* (emigrate), particularly to the regions of Makassar, Palu, Poso, Rongkong, Palopo, Pongrang, Buton, and Pare-pare. This volume's most significant contribution is in its explanation of *siri*, and how this a sense of community governs many of the economic activities and social organizations in Tana Toraja. Through *siri*, Torajans accumulate power and prestige, provided they have enough money to cover the extravagant ceremonies. However, because of *siri*, some Torajans must accept the financial burden of paying for these ceremonies and accumulate a lifetime's debt. This *siri* mindset is the main purpose of life for Torajans, not only the ones who are located in the homeland, but also Torajan who are *merantau* (emigrated or relocated). The population of Torajans living abroad is larger than in the homeland. Despite this, the sense of community remains very solid among the Torajan community and their networks. Torajan migrants are well-connected and support those living in Tana Toraja as well as help them maintain their ritual ceremonies.

The author makes mention of the cultural disconnect among the young migrant Torajans, who

cannot understand why their families continue to send money back to the homeland in financial support of these ceremonies. However, a deeper and more detailed study and explanation of this cross-generational phenomenon may have added another dimension to this volume—de Jong could have examined the future of crises and ceremonies for the Torajans. Instead of concluding the book with a set notion in that these ceremonies would simply continue to be maintained, the author could have also provided a possible future scenario regarding the next generation of migrant Torajans; for example, changes in financial contributions due to gradually changing cultural experiences based on his current findings of the Torajan living abroad. As more and more Torajans continue living outside the homeland, would the growing disconnect cause future generations of Torajans to slowly cease embracing and maintaining the culture, or would they merely adjust their methods of financial contribution in accordance with the modernizing world? These would have been interesting questions the author could have examined.

This book comes with a hard quality cover featuring a photograph of the Torajan conducting a ritual ceremony. The author, who has been researching Tana Toraja for many years, provided many professional photographs, maps, tables, and other graphics that well-illustrate Tana Toraja. In my opinion, *Making a Living between Crises and Ceremonies in Tana Toraja* is the best reference on the culture and economic development of Tana Toraja. It would be useful material for anyone interested in gaining an understanding of the historical and current economic situation for ritual ceremonies of ethnicity in Southeast Asia.

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