



Michaela Budiman

# Contemporary Funeral Rituals of Sa'dan Toraja

From Aluk Todolo to “New” Religions

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**Michaela Budiman**

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*To my parents*



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*Tidak ada agama yang saya benci, semua agama baik,  
sepanjang mereka itu mengejar kebenaran.*

*There is no religion that I do not respect; all religions  
are good if their quest is the pursuit of truth.*

*Tato' Dena'*



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*Kurre sumanga'!*

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Themes and Objective of the Present Work

The present work discusses the Toraja ethnic group, who inhabit the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, and who, until the arrival of the first Dutch missionaries at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had essentially been cut off from the rest of the world. It can thus be said that until that point, the Toraja represented an isolated socio-cultural system. The present work draws on the field research of the author, which focused on the study of the most important contemporary Toraja ritual – the funeral – and furthermore on identifying and documenting the changes that have affected Toraja society as a result of their embrace of Christianity during the past century. The Toraja region, which is at present populated by the adherents of various Christian denominations, Islam, and the autochthonous religion *Aluk Todolo* (lit. the religion of the ancestors), offered an exceptionally rich and varied source material for study. The result of this field research is the present work, which aims to analyse the material gathered and to present a description of the formal and principal shifts expressed in the traditional rituals, which reflect seminal changes in terms of the role of religion. The book points out how Christianity, which has been adopted relatively recently, is incorporated into the indigenous religion and the customary law *adat*, which is derived from it. The present work ventures to explain why in less than a hundred years, almost 90 % of the population converted from *Aluk Todolo*, mainly to Christianity, also describing the process of conversion, and the extent to which (and in which localities) the new religion most visibly affected the form