

Cultural Resilience and Syncretism: The Towani Tolotang Community's Journey in Indonesia's Religious Landscape

Tasrifin Tahara¹, Andi Batara Al Isra, Surahmat Tiro
Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

Abstract: The Towani Tolotang community, nestled in the Sindenreng Rappang Regency of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of indigenous faith and culture. This research, spanning three months from March to June 2023, delves into the community's unique religious practices, challenges, and resilience, shedding light on Indonesia's complex landscape of religious diversity. The Towani Tolotang community's unwavering commitment to their ancestral beliefs, despite being classified under the umbrella of Hinduism by the Indonesian government, exemplifies the resilience of indigenous traditions. Their syncretic belief system, interweaving animism, Hindu rituals, and historical adaptations set them apart within a predominantly Muslim society. Traditional leaders safeguarding their rituals and traditions are critical to cultural preservation. The community's resilience lies in its adaptability, secrecy maintenance, and strategies for transmitting religious knowledge across generations. Challenges persist, with discriminatory policies and interactions with the majority Muslim society. However, the Towani Tolotang community's unwavering commitment to its unique identity serves as an inspiring example of cultural preservation. This research offers valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and advocates of religious diversity. It unravels the complexities of indigenous faith and its adaptation in a changing world, providing lessons in understanding, tolerance, and cultural heritage preservation. The Towani Tolotang community's story stands as a profound example of how traditions endure, evolve, and flourish amid the currents of history.

Keywords: Towani Tolotang, Indigenous faith, religious diversity, cultural preservation, traditional leaders, syncretism.

The Towani Tolotang community, nestled in the Sindenreng Rappang Regency of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, is a testament to the enduring legacy of ancient Bugis traditions (Elihami, 2022). This unique community remains committed to a local faith known as the Tolotang religion despite the Indonesian government's classification of this group under the umbrella of Hinduism (Jubba et al., 2019). As we delve into this intriguing community, we recognize the need for comprehensive research and analysis to better understand the historical roots of the Tolotang religion, their cultural practices, and the challenges they face in preserving their unique identity within a predominantly Muslim society. The primary objective of this research is to explore the Towani Tolotang community's religious beliefs, cultural practices, and the challenges they encounter as they strive to maintain their traditions. This exploration aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of indigenous communities, their religious practices, and their resilience in the face of cultural change.

¹ Corresponding Author: A Lecturer in the Field of Social-cultural Anthropology at Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia. E-Mail: tasrifin@unhas.ac.id.

We must first delve into the historical context to comprehend the Towani Tolotang community's enduring commitment to their local faith (Sitoto & Akkas, 2021). Historical records trace the roots of this community back to the 16th and 17th centuries when their ancestors hailed from Wajo. At that time, King Wajo mandated the conversion to Islam, and those who resisted faced expulsion (Mashuri et al., 2022). The Towani Tolotang community's steadfast refusal to convert led to their dispersion to various regions, including Amparita, Kanyuara, Otting, and Dongi.

The significance of this historical context lies in the stark contrast between the Towani Tolotang community's traditional religious practices and the broader conversion to Islam within the region (Heril et al., 2022). This contrast presents a substantial gap in our understanding, as it is relatively unknown why this community steadfastly held onto their ancient beliefs when others embraced Islam and what mechanisms enabled them to sustain these beliefs over centuries. This research aims to address this knowledge gap.

The Towani Tolotang people's adherence to their unique religious faith is at the heart of their identity. This adherence reflects a deep-seated commitment to their cultural heritage (Sari, 2021). However, in the face of the broader Indonesian society's predominantly Muslim identity, the Towani Tolotang community faces numerous contemporary challenges. Understanding these challenges requires exploring the complex relationship between indigenous faiths and the dominant religious landscape (Priyanto & Dharin, 2021).

This knowledge gap pertains to how the Towani Tolotang community navigates this intricate interplay, and the level to which they adapt to external values and changes while preserving their core beliefs and traditions is least explored. Likewise, their strategies to negotiate their place in the socio-cultural landscape need more exploration (Jubba et al., 2019; Sari, 2021). Therefore, the current study aims to present insights into the underlying phenomena behind the Towani Tolotang community's adaptation to external values and changes while preserving their core beliefs and traditions in the socio-cultural landscape.

Like many indigenous religions in Indonesia, the Towani Tolotang community faces the encroachment of external values, which have spread rapidly, even within relatively isolated communities. Yet, the Towani Tolotang community's capacity to adapt to change while preserving its core values, beliefs, and traditions is a testament to their resilience. They navigate a complex socio-cultural landscape, upholding their identity in the face of the prevailing religious majority's influence and striving to secure their place within this ever-evolving tapestry of cultural dynamics. The transition of the term "Tolotang" from an external label for the community to a traditional religious term is another intriguing aspect. This shift in perception highlights a gap in our understanding of how religious identities evolve. It also points to questions concerning the socio-cultural factors that contribute to such shifts and the implications for the community's self-identity and perceptions by outsiders.

In defining religion, scholars have proposed varied perspectives. While some view religion as a personal and individual realm of emotions and beliefs, others, like Bowen et al., (2015), suggest a broader framework. Bowen's approach encompasses two stages of religion: first, as a broad conceptualization of reality, and second, by exploring how communities construct their worldview. This framework introduces an important consideration: the interpretation of religion can differ significantly based on the specific community under study.

In this context, Cultural Resilience Theory offers a suitable lens through which we can analyze the resilience and sustainability of the Towani Tolotang community's unique religious identity within a predominantly Muslim society. Cultural Resilience Theory posits that communities, particularly those belonging to indigenous or minority groups, have the capacity to withstand external pressures and adapt to change while preserving their core cultural and religious values (Southwick et al., 2014). This theory asserts that cultural resilience is not

merely about resistance but also about adaptation and negotiation, all of which are essential for a community's survival in the face of dominant cultural forces (Bui et al., 2020).

The theory allows us to explore how the Towani Tolotang community's historical resistance to conversion to Islam and their subsequent dispersion was not just an act of defiance but a testament to their cultural resilience. Their steadfast commitment to their ancestral beliefs and practices in the face of external pressures forms the basis of their cultural resilience. Cultural Resilience Theory enables us to delve into the challenges the Towani Tolotang community faces in maintaining their religious identity within a predominantly Muslim society. It suggests that cultural resilience involves adaptation as well.

This framework can help examine how the Towani Tolotang community navigates the complexities of their surroundings and adapts to external values while retaining the essence of their beliefs. Hence, this research endeavors to delve deeper into the Towani Tolotang community, shedding light on their religious beliefs, cultural practices, and the challenges they encounter in their pursuit of preserving their unique identity within a predominantly Muslim society.

We explore the historical roots of the Tolotang religion, their community dynamics, and the mechanisms they employ to sustain their traditions. Furthermore, we analyze how their religious resilience intersects with the broader socio-cultural landscape, investigating the negotiations and adaptations that enable them to maintain their distinctive heritage. Through this study, we contribute to a better understanding of indigenous communities, their religious practices, and their enduring resilience in the face of cultural change.

Research Methodology

This historical research was conducted in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi. The study focused on unraveling the historical aspects of the Towani Tolotang community's religious dynamics. The primary objective was to comprehend the historical evolution of the Towani Tolotang community's religious beliefs within their social and cultural context. Ten informants, selected from Towani Tolotang families, provided narratives regarding the community's historical relationship with Islam, daily traditions, religious practices, and the evolutionary dynamics of their faith. Traditional leaders, acknowledged for their expertise in describing Towani Tolotang traditions, were also interviewed to provide a holistic historical perspective. The study delved into the historical context of daily life and the Towani Tolotang community's interactions with the broader community. This historical exploration was conducted through the analysis of historical documents and narratives to reconstruct the community's historical day-to-day experiences and exchanges.

Past historical literature was incorporated to enrich the study. An extensive literature review explored historical narratives of the Towani Tolotang community, offering a historical backdrop and facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the community's religious identity. Historical documents and other historical sources were meticulously reviewed and analyzed to identify recurring historical themes and patterns. By adopting an iterative approach, the researchers aimed to triangulate historical data, ensuring its validity and reliability. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the historical research process. The researchers adhered to ethical standards in respecting the cultural sensitivities and historical traditions of the Towani Tolotang community.

Literature Review

This paper explores the historical processes and dynamics of religiosity in South Sulawesi, shedding light on their coexistence and conflicts. The arrival of Islam and Christianity in South Sulawesi profoundly impacted the region, with both religions influencing the local culture and society (Mashuri et al., 2022).

Islamization in South Sulawesi

The historical context of Islamization in South Sulawesi is crucial for understanding the region's transformation. Before the arrival of Islam, the various ethnic groups inhabiting the area had their own indigenous beliefs and practices (Sitoto & Akkas, 2021). The process of Islamization represents a significant shift in the religious landscape. These indigenous beliefs and practices were diverse, and they often had animistic elements, which included the worship of ancestors, spirits, and the forces of nature (Suarni et al., 2019). These local beliefs were deeply ingrained in the communities of South Sulawesi, shaping their customs, rituals, and way of life. A desire for religious unity within the region partly drove Islamization. As trade routes expanded and South Sulawesi became more interconnected with other parts of the Indonesian archipelago, there was a growing awareness of the broader Islamic world (Karim et al., 2022). This awareness led to increased interest in adopting Islam as a common religious framework, which could help unify the diverse societies in the region.

The process of Islamization in South Sulawesi was multifaceted and dynamic. While the Sultan of Ternate Baabullah and the King of Gowa, Tunijallo, played pivotal roles in the formal introduction of Islam, understanding the broader context of this agreement is essential (Melindasari, 2023). This was a religious transformation and a political and social shift. The agreement signaled a significant change in the power dynamics of the region. One key aspect of the Islamization process was the role of local rulers and elites. These leaders were instrumental in facilitating the spread of Islam within their territories. They converted to Islam and encouraged their subjects to do the same (Supitayanti et al., 2023). Their leadership provided a top-down impetus to the process, as their subjects often followed their lead in adopting the new religion. At the same time, the process of Islamization was not purely a matter of coercion or imposition. It also involved dialogue, cultural exchange, and the integration of Islamic ideas into the existing belief systems. As a world religion, Islam offered new perspectives on life, ethics, and social organization. It brought new concepts of justice, morality, and governance that had an appeal to the people of South Sulawesi.

The role of key figures in the Islamization process cannot be understated. They facilitated the spread of Islam and contributed to its theological development in the region. Let us take a closer look at some of these figures:

- **Tunijallo:** Tunijallo (1545-1590) was a key figure in the process of Islamization in South Sulawesi. As the ruler of the Gowa kingdom (1300 CE), converted to Islam himself and adopted Islamic laws and practices within his domain. His conversion set an important precedent for other local rulers in the region.
- **Datuk Patimang:** Datuk Patimang (1570-1583), a revered figure in South Sulawesi, played a significant role in promoting Islam. His teachings and influence were critical in shaping the local interpretation of Islam, and he became a respected religious authority.
- **Three Datuk from West Sumatra:** These three Datuk (1567-1882) were crucial in introducing Islamic jurisprudence and legal systems in South Sulawesi. They helped

establish a framework for applying Islamic law, further solidifying the presence of Islam in the region.

The influence of these figures was not limited to religious conversion; it extended to political and social realms. Tunijallo, for example, used his conversion to Islam to forge alliances and consolidate his power. Datuk Patimang's teachings and influence extended to governance, ethics, and law (Rasyid & Nurdin, 2021). The collaboration between local leaders and these key figures profoundly impacted the region's transformation.

Christianization in South Sulawesi

The historical background of Christianization in South Sulawesi predates the region's significant Islamization. European missionaries and traders primarily initiated early Christianization efforts in the region (Nurkidam et al., 2020). The presence of Christianity as a global religion added another layer of diversity to the region's religious landscape. Portuguese and Spanish traders and missionaries were among the first to bring Christianity to South Sulawesi. In the early 16th century, these Europeans established contact with local rulers and communities, which eventually led to the introduction of Christianity in the region (Niemeijer, 2021). However, this introduction was not without challenges, given the predominantly Muslim character of the region.

Antonio de Payva (1806-1879), a Portuguese merchant and missionary, played a pivotal role in the early Christianization of South Sulawesi. His mission was both commercial and religious, as many European traders saw the spread of Christianity as integral to their trading ventures (Xin, 2022). De Payva's interactions with local rulers and nobles, particularly in the Gowa kingdom, provide insights into the complexities of introducing Christianity in a predominantly Muslim society. De Payva's mission was met with mixed reactions. While some local rulers were receptive to his message, others were wary of the potential implications of adopting a new religion. Christian missionaries' challenges in this context ranged from religious resistance to political tensions (Imanuella & Yoesoef, 2021).

Muslim Malay Traders and Christianization

The presence of Muslim Malay traders in South Sulawesi created a complex interplay between Islam and Christianity. These traders had longstanding connections with the region, and their presence influenced the spread of both religions. While some Malay traders converted to Christianity, others remained faithful to Islam. This interreligious encounter led to a certain degree of religious syncretism in the region. Some communities incorporated elements of both faiths into their religious practices, creating a unique fusion of beliefs. It is essential to recognize the role of trade networks and the interactions between different religious communities in shaping the religious dynamics of South Sulawesi (Suarni et al., 2019).

Gowa's political ambitions were a driving force behind the use of Islamization as a tool. Gowa sought to dominate the Bugis kingdoms, particularly Bone, and used Islamization as a means to assert its authority (Anis et al., 2020). It is crucial to delve into the broader political context of the time to understand this conflict. Gowa's expansionist ambitions were not solely driven by religion but also by territorial control and the desire to consolidate power (Ismoyo et al., 2023). The Bugis kingdoms, with their diverse ethnic and religious makeup, were a battleground for Gowa's political aspirations.

The resistance from Bone, Soppeng, and Wajo against Gowa's push for Islamization is critical to the narrative. The formation of the coalition was a response to Gowa's attempts to impose Islam on these kingdoms. Bone, in particular, played a central role in resisting Gowa's

expansion. The reasons behind this resistance were multifaceted. They included a desire to preserve local traditions and beliefs, resistance to external imposition, and a commitment to maintaining autonomy. These kingdoms' resilience and ability to form a united front against Gowa's ambitions reflect the complexity of power struggles in the region.

At the same time, the war of Islamization, known as Musu' Selleng (1490-1607), became a defining conflict in South Sulawesi's history. Key events, military operations, and political maneuvering marked this war. It ultimately led to the Bugis kingdoms' eventual embrace of Islam as the official religion (Abbas & Na'im, 2022). The conflict was not merely a religious war but a culmination of longstanding political and cultural tensions. The use of force to impose religious conversion was one of the tools employed in this struggle. The war's resolution had far-reaching consequences for the Bugis kingdoms and their religious identity.

Furthermore, government policies, especially during the New Order era in Indonesia, played a significant role in shaping the religious landscape of South Sulawesi. During this period, the Indonesian government officially recognized only a limited number of religions (Gusman, 2023). This recognition had significant implications for religious communities, often requiring them to conform to officially recognized faiths. The Tolotang community, faced with the government's limited recognition of religions, chose Hinduism as their state religion. This choice was not purely a matter of faith but a strategic response to government policies. By identifying as Hindus, the Tolotang community sought recognition and protection for their religious practices.

The Tolotang community's journey was marked by a series of challenges, including military operations during the Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII) (1948-1962) and Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) (1914-1966) rebellions. These challenges had profound implications for the community's religious practices and identity. The DI/TII rebellion, which had an Islamic foundation, posed a significant challenge to the Tolotang community. It represented an attempt to impose a more orthodox form of Islam, which clashed with the community's syncretic beliefs (Suriadin & Hadara, 2022). The conflict during this period revealed the complexities of interreligious dynamics and tensions.

Similarly, the PKI rebellion had repercussions for the Tolotang community. The communist ideology was at odds with religious beliefs, and the community was caught in a turbulent political and ideological struggle (Syarif, 2020). The experiences during this rebellion highlighted the vulnerability of religious minorities in times of political upheaval.

The split between the Towani Tolotang and Tolotang Benteng, each with its distinct religious identity, is an important outcome of the community's journey. This division reflects the broader challenges faced by religious communities in South Sulawesi. The reasons behind this division were multifaceted. They included differences in religious interpretation, social and political factors, and external pressures (Heril et al., 2022). The split also underscored how government policies and historical events can lead to the fragmentation of religious communities as they navigate their identities in a complex environment. This further reflects that the historical processes of Islamization and Christianization in South Sulawesi, as well as the experiences of the Tolotang community, reflect the broader dynamics of religious diversity and discrimination in Indonesia (Elihami, 2022). These narratives serve as a testament to the enduring influence of religion on the region's cultural, social, and political landscapes. Hence, understanding these historical processes is crucial for a comprehensive appreciation of South Sulawesi's religious history and its impact on contemporary religious dynamics in the region.

Results And Discussion

Having established the historical backdrop in the literature review, this section shifts the focus to research conducted in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The study seeks to unravel the contemporary dynamics of religious practices and discrimination faced by the Towani Tolotang community. This section provides an in-depth exploration of their religious beliefs, practices, the influence of government policies, and their interactions with the majority Muslim community in the area. Moreover, it offers insights into the broader landscape of religious diversity in Indonesia and the challenges faced by religious minorities like the Towani Tolotang community.

Religious Practices and Beliefs of the Towani Tolotang Community

It is crucial to delve deeper into the historical and cultural context that has shaped their unique religious identity to understand the religious practices and beliefs of the Towani Tolotang community (Lawelai et al., 2022). This section presents their migration history, the significance of their name, and the profound impact of Indonesia's political history on their religious practices. The Towani Tolotang community's story begins with the migration of their ancestors from Ternate, an island marked by its significant Muslim population (Alfian, 2022). Over generations, this migration resulted in a distinctive religious identity characterized by a syncretic blend of indigenous beliefs and elements of Islam. This migration entailed a physical journey and represented a profound cultural and religious transformation (Rahmawati et al., 2018).

The name "Towani Tolotang" holds great importance in understanding their religious identity. The term "Towani" finds its roots in the Bugis word "Tona'i," which translates to "not praying in the Islamic way." "Tolotang," on the other hand, references their ancestral rituals (Mania & Gunawan, 2018). This name encapsulates their unique religious position, distinguishing them from mainstream Islamic practices and deeply rooted in their cultural heritage (Xin, 2022). Indonesia's political history, particularly during the New Order era under President Suharto, played a pivotal role in shaping the religious identity and practices of the Towani Tolotang community. During this period, the Indonesian government officially recognized only a limited number of religions, leaving those with syncretic or indigenous beliefs, such as the Towani Tolotang, in a challenging position (Agustin et al., 2022).

The preservation of the Towani Tolotang community's ancestral beliefs and practices is intrinsically linked to the role of traditional leaders, particularly the Uwa and uwa-uwa. These leaders are not merely religious figures but also the custodians of their cultural heritage. The Uwa and uwa-uwa play multifaceted roles within the community (Parker et al., 2018). Their responsibilities encompass leading religious rituals, interpreting omens, and maintaining social harmony. They are the conduits between the community and their ancestral spirits, ensuring a continuous connection to their cultural roots (Afala, 2018). The traditional leaders are pivotal in the community's ongoing commitment to their religious practices. The Towani Tolotang community's religious life revolves around a rich tapestry of traditional ceremonies and rituals. These ceremonies are conducted to seek blessings and protection from their ancestral spirits and nature. These rituals are a beautiful blend of indigenous practices, weaving elements of their cultural heritage into the fabric of their faith.

The Towani Tolotang community's religious identity is characterized by religious hybridity, resulting from their interactions with Hinduism and the Indonesian government's recognition of this faith as their official religion. In response to the Indonesian government's limited recognition of religions, the Towani Tolotang community adopted Hinduism as a strategic response to secure legal status and protection for their religious practices (Alimuddin

et al., 2020). While this recognition was, in part, a practical solution to navigate government policies, it has led to the development of a unique form of religious hybridity. This hybrid identity is marked by incorporating Hindu rituals and practices into their existing belief system. This adaptation is not solely a pragmatic response to government policies; it has, over time, evolved into a distinctive religious identity that sets them apart from mainstream Islam and traditional Hinduism.

Local Religious Discrimination and Its Effects on the Towani Tolotang Community

The role of local government policies, especially during the New Order era, significantly impacted the religious landscape in which the Towani Tolotang community operated. The Indonesian government's policy of recognizing only a limited number of religions had direct consequences on the community's decision to adopt Hinduism as their state religion. Despite this recognition, the Towani Tolotang community continued to face discrimination. Government policies sometimes favored the majority Muslim population, resulting in the marginalization of religious minorities like the Towani Tolotang (Suarni et al., 2019). The government's stance on religion and its reluctance to fully protect the rights of religious minorities had significant implications for the community's experience.

The coexistence of the Towani Tolotang community with the predominantly Muslim majority community is a complex dynamic. The region's population is overwhelmingly Muslim, and the Towani Tolotang's syncretic religious practices set them apart as a distinct religious minority. Interactions between the two communities are often fraught with tensions and discrimination. The majority Muslim community may view the Towani Tolotang as outsiders or heretics due to their unique religious identity (Syarif, 2020). These perceptions lead to social exclusion, discrimination, and sometimes hostility. Religious differences and a lack of mutual understanding challenge coexistence.

The Towani Tolotang community has experienced varying degrees of discrimination over the years, ranging from verbal insults to physical violence. Specific incidents and conflicts have arisen due to their religious identity, shedding light on their challenges. These conflicts include disputes over property, disputes related to religious rituals and ceremonies, and even restrictions on their ability to practice their faith freely. Discrimination extends to social and economic aspects of life, limiting their opportunities and access to resources.

Despite the discrimination and challenges they have faced, the Towani Tolotang community has demonstrated remarkable resilience (Voak & Fairman, 2023). Their commitment to preserving their ancestral beliefs and traditions remains unwavering. One of the strategies employed by the community is the maintenance of secrecy regarding their religious practices. Keeping their rituals discreet is protective, allowing them to avoid unnecessary attention and potential discrimination. It also serves to maintain the sanctity of their rituals and traditions. The passing down of religious knowledge from one generation to the next is another crucial aspect of their resilience. This intergenerational transmission ensures the continuity of their religious practices and traditions. Through these strategies, the Towani Tolotang community continues to thrive despite the challenges they face.

Comparative Analysis of Hinduism within Indonesia

Hinduism in Indonesia is not a monolithic entity but takes on various forms in different regions, reflecting the archipelago's diverse cultural and religious landscape. Understanding the variations in the practice of Hinduism across Indonesia provides valuable insights into the adaptability and flexibility of the religion. The Towani Tolotang community's adaptation of Hinduism is just one example of this diversity. A comparative analysis is crucial for

understanding how different indigenous communities have incorporated Hinduism into their belief systems. For instance, the Alukta Hindus in Kalimantan and the Dayak tribe in Borneo have unique Hinduism interpretations. By comparing these variations, we can better understand how Hinduism has adapted to Indonesia's diverse cultural and religious contexts.

The role of the government in recognizing and regulating religious identities is a pivotal factor in understanding religious diversity in Indonesia. Government policies, especially during the New Order era, have significantly shaped the religious landscape. The recognition of Hinduism by the Towani Tolotang community is a prime example of the government's influence on religious identities. This recognition was a response to government policies, and it highlights how government decisions have shaped the religious choices and practices of religious minorities seeking legal recognition and protection. Government policies have also influenced how various religious communities coexist and interact in Indonesia. The government's approach to recognizing and managing religious diversity has far-reaching consequences for the nation's social fabric and religious tolerance (Haryanto, 2019).

Indonesia's rich tapestry of religious diversity has led to interreligious dynamics and challenges. The coexistence of different religious communities, each with unique beliefs and practices, presents opportunities for enrichment and challenges related to understanding and tolerance. Religious minorities like the Towani Tolotang navigate these challenges by seeking legal recognition and protection. The complexities of interreligious interactions are evident in the tensions and discrimination these communities face (Khanif, 2022). Understanding these dynamics is essential for promoting religious tolerance and harmony in a diverse nation like Indonesia. Thus, the contemporary religious practices, discrimination, and resilience of the Towani Tolotang community are deeply intertwined with Indonesia's complex religious landscape. The historical processes of Islamization and Christianization continue to shape their experiences and those of other religious minorities in the country. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering religious tolerance and harmony in Indonesia, a nation characterized by rich religious diversity.

Study Implications

The extensive exploration of the Towani Tolotang community's contemporary religious practices, discrimination, and resilience in the face of complex historical processes carries significant implications for various stakeholders, including scholars, policymakers, and advocates of religious diversity. This section outlines the broader implications of the research findings.

1. This research provides a wealth of data and insights into the intricacies of religious practices, identity, and resilience among religious minorities in Indonesia. Scholars and researchers in anthropology, religious studies, and cultural studies can find valuable material for further investigation and analysis. The Towani Tolotang community's syncretic religious practices and their adaptive strategy of adopting Hinduism offer a unique case study for understanding how indigenous communities navigate the challenges of religious recognition and discrimination in a predominantly Muslim nation. This research underscores the importance of preserving indigenous religious practices and the complex interplay between state policies, cultural heritage, and religious identity.
2. For policymakers in Indonesia and countries with diverse religious landscapes, the findings of this research have significant policy implications. The Indonesian government's approach to recognizing and regulating religious identities, particularly the policies implemented during the New Order era, continues to impact the lives of

religious minorities. The government must consider communities' unique challenges, like the Towani Tolotang, and work towards a more inclusive and equitable approach to religious recognition and protection. This research highlights the need for a nuanced approach to religious diversity and the recognition of indigenous beliefs and practices. Policymakers should consider the complexities of religious hybridity and the preservation of cultural heritage when crafting legislation related to religious rights and recognition.

3. Understanding the experiences of religious minorities like the Towani Tolotang is essential for fostering interreligious harmony and tolerance in Indonesia. The nation's rich tapestry of religious diversity offers mutual respect, cooperation, and enrichment opportunities. Advocates for religious tolerance and dialogue can draw from the experiences of the Towani Tolotang community to promote a more inclusive and accepting society. Initiatives focusing on education, awareness, and dialogue can help bridge the gap between different religious communities and foster a culture of understanding and acceptance.
4. The Towani Tolotang community's commitment to preserving their ancestral beliefs and traditions serves as a testament to the importance of cultural heritage. Efforts to document, protect, and promote indigenous cultures are vital to maintaining the unique identities of such communities. Cultural preservation initiatives should not only focus on religious practices but also encompass language, folklore, and traditional knowledge. These elements are crucial to a community's cultural heritage and should be safeguarded for future generations.
5. The research on the Towani Tolotang community's adaptation of Hinduism and their unique syncretic religious identity also has implications beyond Indonesia's borders. Scholars and policymakers in countries with diverse religious populations can draw comparisons and learn from the strategies employed by the Towani Tolotang to preserve their religious and cultural identity.

Limitations And Future Research Directions

This research, while extensive, primarily focuses on the Towani Tolotang community in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The experiences and practices of other religious minority communities in different regions of Indonesia may vary significantly. A more comprehensive understanding of religious diversity in Indonesia would require studies across a broader geographic and cultural spectrum. The linguistic diversity in Indonesia presents a significant challenge for research. While efforts were made to overcome language barriers, translation and interpretation may introduce inaccuracies in capturing the nuances of the Towani Tolotang community's beliefs and practices.

Additionally, future research should consider conducting comparative studies with other religious minority communities in Indonesia. Exploring the experiences, practices, and adaptations of diverse religious minority groups could yield a richer understanding of religious diversity in the country. Collaborative research involving linguistic and cultural anthropologists could help address language barriers and deepen the understanding of the cultural and linguistic aspects of the community's rituals. Future research and initiatives can focus on preserving the cultural heritage of indigenous communities like the Towani Tolotang. Documenting their language, folklore, and traditional knowledge can help safeguard their unique identity.

Conclusion

In the heart of Sindenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, the Towani Tolotang community stands as a living testament to the endurance of indigenous faith and culture (Mashuri et al., 2022). This research has delved into their unique religious practices, challenges, and resilience, offering profound insights into Indonesia's dynamic tapestry of religious diversity (Syakur & Khoiroh, 2021). The Towani Tolotang's steadfast commitment to their ancestral beliefs, despite being categorized under the umbrella of Hinduism by the Indonesian government, underscores the resilience of indigenous traditions (Achmad et al., 2021). Their syncretic belief system, woven from the threads of animism, Hindu rituals, and historical transformations, sets them apart in a predominantly Muslim society. Traditional leaders, the Uwa and uwa-uwa, are pivotal in preserving the community's cultural heritage, ensuring their rituals and traditions remain vibrant (Nahuway & Tanamal, 2023). The community's resilience lies in its adaptability, preservation of secrecy, and strategies for passing down religious knowledge from generation to generation. Additionally, challenges persist as the community navigates discriminatory policies and interactions with the majority Muslim society (Afala, 2018). However, their unwavering commitment to their unique identity serves as an inspiring example of cultural preservation. This research holds significance for scholars, policymakers, and advocates of religious diversity. It illuminates the complexities of indigenous faith and its adaptation in a changing world, offering lessons in understanding, tolerance, and cultural heritage preservation. As we conclude this exploration, the Towani Tolotang community's story resonates as a profound example of how traditions endure, evolve, and thrive amidst the ebb and flow of history.

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Notes on Contributors

Tasrifin Tahara is a lecturer in the field of social-cultural anthropology at Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia. E-mail: tasrifin@unhas.ac.id. His field of interest is in culture and power, politics and ethnicity, conflicts, maritime studies, and other social issues. He graduated from Anthropology Department, Hasanuddin University (1998) before continuing his master program in the Anthropology Hasanuddin University (2002) and pursuing his Doctoral Program in Anthropology, the University of Indonesia (2011).

Andi Batara Al Isra completed his bachelor degree in Anthropology, Hasanuddin University and master degree at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, with the same major. His interest is in the field of anthropology of religion, migration, community development, and ethnic-group relationship. While his undergraduate thesis is about Islamic organisations in Indonesia, his master thesis deals with the issues of Christianity and migration in Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Apart from writing journal articles and research reports, Batara also writes short stories and poetry. His short story was translated into English by Dalang Publishing, a California-based publisher. His published solo book is a collection of ethnographic poems “Di Seberang Gelombang” (2019). Currently, he is actively involved in the Anthropology department of Hasanuddin University as a lecturer and the Antropos Indonesia Foundation as a researcher.

With his colleagues and friends, he is now working on the research about 12 years of Rumata’ ArtSpace in Makassar, the Ethnography of Massenrempulu People, the dynamics of culture in North Kalimantan, and cultural development in several regions in eastern part of Indonesia, including Sulawesi and Papua.

Surahmat Tiro is a graduate student of Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University. In 2018, he completed his undergraduate studies at Alauddin Makassar State Islamic University, Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics and Islamic Business. He works as a Socio-Cultural researcher at Cita Tanah Mahardika in 2023.

ORCID

Tasrifin Tahara, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2026-5474>

Andi Batara Al Isra, <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3591-204X>

Surahmat Tiro, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9614-0953>