

# COPYRIGHT AND AUTHORSHIP

## RITUAL SPEECH AND THE NEW MARKET OF WORDS IN TORAJA

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### **Introduction**

During the last one hundred years, the religious life of the Toraja highlanders of South Sulawesi (Indonesia) has undergone a considerable process of transformation.<sup>1</sup> Conversion to Christianity, which started at the beginning of the twentieth century with the arrival in the highlands of the Calvinist missionaries from the Dutch Reformed Alliance, engendered important changes in Toraja ritual practices and in their symbolic meanings. The process of religious and socio-cultural change relating to colonial penetration and missionization unfolded through a series of radical fractures and enduring continuities. As I have more thoroughly described elsewhere (Donzelli 2003, 2004a), the encounter between the Dutch missionaries and the highlanders resulted in multiple reciprocal processes of mimesis endowed with different degrees of reflexivity.<sup>2</sup> Hence, on the one hand, the Toraja transformed their ritual practices of buffalo slaughtering and meat distribution in order to make them fit into the Calvinist (and capitalistic) ethic endorsed by the Dutch missionaries; on the other hand, the Dutch moulded their attempts at proselytizing on the local system of practices and beliefs. Thus, in spite of the gradual – and yet inexorable – process of conversion to Christianity, the ‘traditional’ system of religious practices and rituals deeply pervades the contemporary Christian liturgy, resulting in locally differentiated and hybrid forms of orthopraxis.<sup>3</sup>

How did this process of ‘crossed mimesis’ (Pemberton 1994), triggered by the colonial encounter, intermingle with changes in the forms of religious learning? In the following pages, I will try to answer this question and to address the broader issue of the shifts in the transmission of religious knowledge, grounding my discussion on the ethnographic analysis of a narrower and more specific topic, namely, the locally shared ideas about how ritual speech is learnt. As we shall see, the focus of this chapter lies at the intersection between the multiple fractures and continuities that – during the last one hundred years – have been underlying the transmission of religious knowledge and practice among the inhabitants of the Toraja uplands. While the core of the local aesthetic notions concerning ritual speech has remained largely unchanged throughout the process of religious transformation, the way of representing the transmission of linguistic competence from older to younger generations of ritual spokesmen seems to be undergoing an interesting metamorphosis: competence in ritual speech is increasingly described not as a naturally acquired gift, but as the outcome of an intentional and self-conscious learning process.

As I will argue, these new ways of portraying the process through which speechmakers acquire their verbal expertise are deeply related to the process of monetization of the local ritual economy, which started at the beginning of the twentieth century with the introduction in both mortuary and fertility rituals of fund-raising auctions and microcredit associations connected to traditional animal slaughtering and meat distribution. The economic and symbolic changes produced by these new monetary institutions and grass-root capitalist organizations laid the groundwork for the introduction of monetary compensations for ritual speechmakers, which led to a gradual process of professionalization of the traditional ritual specialists. The following pages are devoted to analysing the relevance of these processes for the development a new form of reflexivity within the Toraja discourse on ritual speech apprenticeship.

### **Local Ideas on the Role of Intentions in Teaching and Learning Ritual Speech**

Notwithstanding the vast ethnographic literature devoted to ritual speech and to the study of its changes in the light of missionization and religious conversion within the Indonesian archipelago (Keane 1997b; Kuipers 1998; George 1990; Siregar 1979), little attention has so far been paid to a systematic analysis of how the process of learning ritual registers is represented and discussed by the local speakers. In fact, as I will try to demonstrate, the discourses on ritual

speech apprenticeship deserve deeper investigation. As will become apparent in the following pages, speakers' beliefs about the process of learning ritual language can enrich our understanding of the social and historical world they inhabit as well as shed light on the process of religious change and on the related shifts in cultural transmission.

Becoming a religious specialist in Toraja entails acquiring competence in a highly formulaic and densely metaphoric ritual register, which is locally referred to as *kada to dolo* ('words of the ancestors'), *basa tominaa* ('language of the tominaa') or *kada kada tominaa* ('words of the tominaa'), after the name of the ritual specialist and spokesman, the 'tominaa', which in the Toraja language literally means 'the one who is wise and knowledgeable'. Toraja ritual speech, like elsewhere in eastern Indonesia (see Fox 1988; Keane 1997a; Kuipers 1990, 1993), is constituted by predetermined sets of paired elements.<sup>4</sup> The ritual spokesmen's ability thus consists of drawing on fixed and pre-existing sets of couplets and combining them in verbal performances in which the respect of genre conventions intersects with their capacity of improvisation. Ritual couplets are believed to have been handed down by the ancestors and to be thus endowed with an unchanging nature.

The conventional and formulaic structure of ritual couplets, together with the idea of their ancestral origins, constitutes the ideological and practical backbone for the reproduction of ritual speech authority. In other words, the shared belief that ritual couplets, conceived as the words of the ancestors, refer to a source of authority that transcends the context of performance is reproduced – in actual ritual events – through the deployment of formal linguistic features that 'detach discourse from the immediate constraints of utterance and attach it to a shared, coherent, and authoritative tradition' (Kuipers 1998: 71). As has been pointed out by cross-cultural and cross-linguistic analysis (Bloch 1975; Du Bois 1986, 1993), certain structural properties of ritual speech such as shifter avoidance and suppression of deictic elements are common to several ritual modes of speaking. In Toraja (and elsewhere), the actual use of these linguistic features intertwines with the speakers' ideas on the nature and origin of ritual speech and results in powerful technologies for the reproduction of linguistic (and social) authority. In simpler terms, the omission in ritual speech of linguistic elements (such as personal pronouns and words like 'here', 'there', 'now' and 'then') that refer to the immediate pragmatic context and presuppose knowledge of the time and place in which they are uttered, contribute to conferring to ritual speech a textual dimension.<sup>5</sup> The deployment of these 'decontextualizing features' reproduces the belief in the unchanging and ancestral nature of ritual speech and at the same time 'de-emphasize[s] the

particularity of the immediate occasion and the agency of the performer' (Keane 1997a: 117).

Besides its ancestral nature, another building block of the authority of Toraja ritual register is constituted by the socially shared belief in its semantic opacity, which makes it supposedly unintelligible to non-experts.<sup>6</sup> Access to the symbolic capital embodied by ritual language has traditionally been restricted to ritual specialists (tominaas) and to high-ranking individuals who share the tominaa's knowledge of ritual couplets and metaphors. However, in spite of the non-evenly distributed knowledge of basa tominaa, the general way of representing its apprenticeship tends to downplay learning efforts and difficulties. Apparently at odds with the emphasis on its semantic obscurity and social exclusivity, the acquisition of performative competence in basa tominaa is locally framed as a sort of *unintentional mimesis*. In Toraja, as Keane (1997a: 154) observed for Anakalang (on the neighbouring island of Sumba), ritual experts 'say they never actively learn their skills', and claim instead that 'it is knowledge that comes to them'. This tendency to downplay wilfulness on the part of the apprentice is probably linked to the structure of linguistic authority I sketched above. The deployment – at the level of performance – of linguistic features aimed at bracketing the speaker's authorship and disclaiming responsibility for what he is saying is therefore paralleled by an 'unintentionalist' ideology of learning.

According to several accounts provided by 'traditional' (or 'traditionalist') tominaas with whom I worked in Toraja, mastery of ritual speech is generally believed to be naturally transmitted from fathers to sons. When, for example, I asked Tato' Dena' (one of the most respected and famous tominaas in the whole Toraja regency) how and when he had learnt his verbal skills, he answered that he had never studied or willingly decided to learn how to use ritual speech. He had just become competent through listening to his father's or to other tominaas' performances and letting his natural talent develop spontaneously. As he once told me, he became tominaa in 1976, replacing his father who had died the previous year. But, in his view, it is hard to predict who, if any, of his sons will take his place after his own death. As he explained to me, he could not decide who would inherit his skills and become his successor, even though he confessed that he would be happy if it were one of his sons. He expressed his preference with the words: 'may my soul colour them [his sons]' ('semoga jiwa saya bisa mewarnai mereka').<sup>7</sup> Tellingly, he framed his hope through the use of the modal marker 'semoga' (roughly corresponding to the English 'hopefully' or 'may'), which allows him to disclaim his personal agency and removes any sense of direct and personal causation.

Tato' Dena', like many other ritual specialists I met, claims that his verbal skills, which entail memorizing long sequences of couplets to be declaimed in performances that at times may last a whole night, are not the outcome of some form of systematic and wilful training. In the local view, to be a ritual spokesman, one has to be gifted and to have a natural talent. At times I experienced a veiled contempt towards those whose performances are judged to betray the signs of a previous training. Once my landlord – a Toraja nobleman and talented orator – passing by while I was replaying a video recording of a wedding ritual speech, casually commented that the performer was not very skilful. When I asked him why, he sharply answered that it was clear that the man (a prominent representative of the new generation of ritual speech specialists I will describe below) 'had learnt every sentence he was uttering by heart' (*hafal setengah mati*).

In the last decades, however, the traditional denial of a voluntary apprenticeship of *basa tominaa* has started to intermingle with a new orientation to linguistic secrecy and a new understanding of the process of learning ritual speech. As a consequence of the growing commodification of the local ritual system and of the related introduction of monetary compensations for ritual performers, the traditional verbal dexterity, once the exclusive prerogative of the *tominaa*, has now become the expertise of a new type of speechmaker, as well as a remunerative occupation. Interestingly, the newly bred generation of ritual speech specialists, variously labelled *protokol* or *hansip*,<sup>8</sup> is marked by a novel attitude concerning the process of apprenticeship and transmission of ritual speech knowledge. Contrary to the traditional belief that knowledge of ritual speech is never the object of an intentional and wilful process of active learning, the *protokols* tend to emphasize the role of the apprentice's agency and volition in the learning process.<sup>9</sup>

As is apparent in the narrative by Tato' Dena' referred to above, being a *tominaa* is not only a matter of linguistic expertise but it also entails being in charge of an important religious role within the community. On the contrary, being a *protokol* requires good mastery of the ancestral language, but it does not imply having knowledge of ritual practices or being an adherent of the traditional religion. In this essay, I will not deal with the more general issue related to the process of secularization of ritual expertise; rather I will focus on the shifts in the patterns of linguistic authorship and on the transformations in the framework of authority related to the new representations of the process of ritual speech apprenticeship.

The emergent generation of ritual specialists displays a new way of conceiving the notion of authorship in ritual speech, which results in a tendency to emphasize personal oratorical styles. As we will see, their attitudes gesture towards a form of *stylistic copyright* in which the

emphasis on individual styles fades into a conception of personal ownership of ritual words and formulas. The spreading tendency among speechmakers of emphasizing personal stylistic markers is connected to their agentive and reflexive attitude towards the knowledge of ritual speech. As I argue, in order to make full sense of what at first sight can seem negligible details in the ways in which the new generation<sup>10</sup> of ritual spokesmen describe their verbal expertise, we need to analyse the historical process that led to the changes in the local ritual economy, which in turn are responsible for the important transformations in the local market of knowledge and for the related shifts in the local 'epistemologies of secrecy' (Berliner 2005). It is of this history that I shall now provide a brief account.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Mission, the State and the *Aluk To Dolo***

Like other eastern regions of the Indonesian archipelago, it was only relatively late that the inner territories of the island of Sulawesi were absorbed into the Dutch colonial system. The penetration of the Dutch army into the Toraja highlands and the establishment of the colonial administration in 1906 was shortly followed by the arrival of Dutch Calvinist missionaries from the *Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* ('Dutch Reformed Alliance'), who were sent to Toraja as early as 1913 to create a Christian 'buffer' to counter Islamic expansion from the Bugis lowlands (Bigalke 2005). Initially slow, conversion to Christianity has seen an incredible acceleration in the last four or five decades. Nowadays, most people inhabiting the regency of Tana Toraja are Christian (88.8 per cent), with only a minority (4.07 per cent) remaining faithful to the local ancestral religion (Badan Pusat Statistik 2001).<sup>12</sup>

Prior to the diffusion of world religions in the region, the local system of religious beliefs was based on a cult of the ancestors and on a ritual system marked by a dualistic structure: 'smoke descending rituals' (*aluk rambu solo*) (mortuary rites) and 'smoke ascending rituals' (*aluk rambu tuka*) (rituals promoting fertility and prosperity). Both types of rituals involve the slaughtering of cattle (mostly pigs and buffaloes) and the distribution of the animals' meat through a complex web of affinal and consanguine ties.<sup>13</sup> It was only in the 1950s that this autochthonous system of religious practices and beliefs started being identified with the term *aluk to dolo* ('the way of the ancestors'). The wider popularity of the expression '*aluk to dolo*' over other alternative terms suggests a local incorporation of the teleological bias inscribed in the modernizing project endorsed by the missionaries. The term reflects the temporal framework underlying the missionaries' accounts in which the Toraja system of practices and beliefs was

‘allochronically’ (Fabian 1983) labelled as *pikiran kekafirannya yang lama* (‘old pagan thoughts’) (Belksma quoted in van den End 1994: 144) or *agama lama* (‘old religion’) (Belksma quoted in van den End 1994: 261), as opposed to the ‘new religion’ (*agama baru*) (van der Veen, quoted in van den End 1994: 132).

In more recent times, this allochronic and marginalizing representation of Toraja indigenous religion has played an important role within the post-colonial policies of recognition. According to the *Pancasila*, the Indonesian state ideology established after independence from Dutch and Japanese colonial rule, what officially counts as religion (*agama*) is restricted to the four major world religions (Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism).<sup>14</sup> Whoever falls outside the officially recognized faiths is classified as animist (*animis*) and pagan (*kafir*), while all the local, non-monotheistic, minority confessions are denied the status of religion and result in being derogatorily labelled *kepercayaan* (‘beliefs’). Followers of the numerous indigenous religions within the nation-state borders are thus confronted with the alternative of having their systems of religious practices and beliefs recognized under one of these four major labels or being considered as ‘people who do not yet have a religion’ (*orang yang belum beragama*).<sup>15</sup>

While since the early post-colonial years (i.e. late 1940s), Indonesian state policy has presented monotheism ‘as a keystone of solid progress-oriented citizenship’ (George 1990: 6), the pressure to convert to one of the official religions became particularly strong in the mid-1960s, with the new political phase of the ‘New Order’ (1965–98), which coincided with the coming to power of Suharto. Among the several reasons that account for this, was the strong association between atheism and communism, which, after the 1965 *putsch* and the following massacres of communists or suspected communists, became the main target of Suharto’s political discourse.<sup>16</sup> It was precisely in the early years of the New Order that the Toraja local elites, drawing on the allochronic representation of their local religion as traditional crafted by the Dutch and on the exoticized image of their culture produced by the international tourist market, obtained the formal recognition of their local religion as a branch of Balinese Hinduism: in 1969, *aluk to dolo* was granted by the Indonesian Department of Religion the status of official religion.<sup>17</sup>

### **Evangelization and the Dutch Mimetic Subversion of the Toraja Ritual Economy**

Not surprisingly, the Calvinist form of Christianity endorsed by the Dutch Reformed Alliance stood at odds with Toraja rituals in which an



important role is played – especially at funeral ceremonies – by the exchange and slaughter of buffaloes and pigs, and the subsequent distribution of their meat according to distinctions of rank. As is apparent in the letters and reports written by the missionaries in the early decades of the twentieth century (van den End 1994), ritual animal sacrifices and mortuary meat division were considered as wasteful extravagances, exclusively motivated by a vain competition for prestige.<sup>18</sup>

As I argued elsewhere (Donzelli 2003, 2004a), the evangelizing efforts of the Dutch missionaries concentrated not so much on converting the souls of the Toraja but rather on ‘re-semanticizing’ their rituals. In order to contrast the Toraja ‘wasteful pagan feasts’, the missionaries, in the early decades of the twentieth century, introduced the custom of holding fund-raising auctions (*lelang*) at the ceremonies (van den End 1994: 124). Their goal was a sort of capitalistic re-functionalization of ritual expenditure through which ‘irrational’ and ‘wasteful’ animal slaughter could be converted into occasions to collect funds to promote social development and religious conversion. The Calvinist propaganda against Toraja ‘wasteful’ ritual slaughtering underwent a process of appropriation by several groups of the local elite. Archival sources (Tana Toraja Archive, bundles no. 636, 106, 1128, 274, 1454, 1450, 383, 248) testify that missionaries’ emphasis on the need to promote development resulted, between the 1930s and 1950s, in the founding of local saving and loan organizations aimed at promoting social progress. Funds for the constitution of these microcredit associations were mostly achieved through donations of animals, which instead of being ritually slaughtered, were sold. The meat auction and the microcredit associations introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century mediated between local practices of meat distribution and the missionaries’ concern for optimizing ritual expenditure and finalizing it to promote the development and diffusion of Christianity. Furthermore, they constituted important practical and symbolic structures for the ideological and material penetration of a cash economy within ritual and initiated the practice of setting aside some pigs and buffaloes from the funerals that, instead of being sacrificed, started being sold to collect donations for building schools and other infrastructure.

### **The Monetary-Driven Professionalization of Ritual Performers**

Nowadays it has become customary throughout Tana Toraja not to *mantunu* (‘kill’ – literally ‘to smoke’) all the animals: some of the cattle



are *dipatorro* ('spared'), set aside and either given to the church or the village council or converted into cash and used to pay the several kinds of ritual specialists and performers who are hired for the event. A vivid account of the way in which a significant share of animals contributed by affinal and consanguine relatives for the ritual is converted into cash is given by a conversation I had in Nanggala with several members of a family who had recently held the funeral of one of their nene' (elder family member), a woman of semi-noble rank who had been buried with a ceremony of medium grandeur. When I last visited this family (August 2004) almost one year had passed since they had celebrated the funeral. Now that the hectic days of the ceremony were past, I thought it was the right moment to make some straightforward inquiries on how they had managed the ritual expenditure, a topic, which – in my experience – can be indelicate to touch upon at the time of the actual negotiations. As I sat with them on the rice-barn platform in front of their house, I drew the conversation to the number of buffaloes that were actually slaughtered compared to those that were set aside and given to the church or the village council<sup>19</sup> or that were used to compensate the several kinds of ritual specialists and performers who had been hired for the occasion:

Nephew (of the deceased): Eh for the funeral of the woman that we celebrated last year, [we slaughtered] more than 30, 36 [buffaloes]... more or less ... no? ... more than 40 ... Together with those that were given to the *lembang* ('village'), the church, the to *ma'badong* ('those who performed the *ma'badong*' – funerary chant), to the *to massuling* ('those who played the flute'), to the *to ma'marakka* ('those who performed the *marakka*' – another kind of funerary chant) ...

Son (of the deceased): Yes and also the to *ma'dolanni* ('those in charge of escorting the groups of guests to the reception shelter') [were paid].

Nephew: not all [the buffaloes] were slaughtered (*tae' nasang na ditunu*) ... because if that had been the case ...

Nephew's wife: ... They would have all gone [i.e. all the buffaloes would have been slaughtered and none would have been spared for paying the bills].

Nephew: Those that actually exited ... [those] that were slaughtered (*dit-inggorona*) were only 36.

Son: ... Yes and there was one buffalo [that had been used] to pay the *tau-tau* (mortuary effigy) maker.

Nephew: But that [the one given to the person who carved the mortuary effigy] was not even included in the calculation, those that we calculated are only: one for the village council, one for the church, one for the *ma'madong*, one for the village savings organization (*kas tondok*), one for the flute players, one for those who performed the war-dance ... All [these buffaloes] were converted into money (*diuangkan*) corresponding to the value of a *sangpala* (a male buffalo whose horn-size measures roughly 15 cm).

As this account testifies, the introduction of monetary forms of compensation for ritual specialists and performers plays a significant role in the way in which people deal with ritual expenditure in contemporary Toraja. The increasing professionalization of the performers of the most typical funeral choral chant (*ma'badong*) offers a good example of the more general process of ritual commodification triggered by the ongoing introduction of cash into the ritual economy. Funeral ceremonies in Toraja generally entail the performance of mortuary chants in which the deceased is praised and mourned. The *ma'badong* chant is performed in groups of forty to sixty people who, holding their hands in a circle, sing and move their feet and hands according to different combinations of patterns. The *ma'badong* is generally performed spontaneously at night during the period that precedes the funeral by groups of villagers who gather in the evenings at the house where the funeral will take place. However, in the last decades, along with these more casual and informal forms of *ma'badong* chanting performed by the neighbours, it has become increasingly common to hire professional groups who perform the *ma'badong* during the one or two days scheduled for the *penerimaan tamu* ('reception of guests').<sup>20</sup> Unlike the spontaneous performances, *ma'badong* professional choirs are composed only of men and are staged during the day. As Daniel Sakka, the leader (*ambe'*) of one of the most well-known professional choirs in the district of Nanggala (who performed also at the funeral spoken about in the excerpt above), explained to me in August 2004, the honorarium (*ongkos*) for the *ma'badong* group in the Nanggala area is set on the value of a *sangpala*, that is, a male buffalo with horn-size of 15 cm, whose price at the time of the interview was around four million rupiahs (four hundred euros). Besides this, the family who hires the group is expected to provide its sixty members with food and matching clothes (generally a dark t-shirt bearing the name of the deceased and a white sarong). The family who organizes the funeral has the option of paying directly in cash or with a buffalo, in the latter case the animal is sold and the money is divided between all the group members.

### **The Protokol and the New Market of Ritual Knowledge**

While *ma'badong* performances are generally limited to no more than a couple of hours, the protokol's job is more demanding both in terms of time and responsibility. He has to perform different orations throughout the funeral (that generally lasts several days) and, during the guest-reception days, he is in charge of welcoming the procession of guests (who can easily number several thousand) with appropriate honorific couplets. The role of the protokol within a funeral is much

more relevant than that of the *ma'badong* performers and so is his individual salary. If you hire a professional speechmaker, you will be charged between one and three million (one hundred to three hundred euros) for a funeral, while the fee for a brief performance at a wedding party ranges between five hundred thousand (fifty euros) and one million rupiahs (one hundred euros), which is a remarkable amount of money given that a monthly salary of one million is considered comfortable for a family living in a village.<sup>21</sup>

The monetary compensation to which *protokols* are entitled differentiates them from the more traditional spokesmen and becomes a critical element of their social identity. The salary they are given also constitutes a basis for judging their expertise against that of other *protokols*. Different *protokols* have different prices: higher fees imply acknowledgement of their greater skills and thus higher prestige. This is apparent in the way one *protokol* once described to me his own value:

I already have a price list (*tarip*) ... obviously there are many others who are cheaper. But people still prefer to pay a higher price to hire me ... because when they hear my voice from afar ... they already know: 'oh this is Sam's voice!' ... I have already met many people who do not know my face but know my voice!

Furthermore, being given a salary makes the *protokol* eligible to be hired easily and quickly and makes them more mobile. On the contrary, asking a *tominaa* to officiate at a ritual requires pre-existing relations. The *tominaa* will not need to be paid an honorarium (although he will be given meat and probably even cash gifts), but his availability is much more unpredictable and subject to his other ritual engagements and to his bonds of clientele towards the notables he is connected to. *Protokols*, on the other hand, can be thought of in terms of freelance professionals. They are the ones who are generally hired by the communities of Toraja migrants who live outside Toraja and who lack the necessary social network to mobilize a *tominaa*. *Protokols* can be hired from far away places, and sometimes travel even to Jakarta or to Kendari (in the distant southeast peninsula of Sulawesi) to perform at wedding parties or funerals.

But most strikingly, unlike *tominaas*, *protokols* emphasize their commitment to the study of ritual speech. Samuel Barumbung, for example, a young *protokol* in his early 30s, described the time he devotes to cultivating his knowledge of ritual speech with the Indonesian term *pengkajian*, which generally refers to academic and intellectual research. As he explained to me,<sup>22</sup> his decision of 'doing research' (*mengkaji*) on ritual speech grew out of his linguistic studies at Hasanuddin University in the city of Makassar. More than ten years

ago, while he was an undergraduate student in the linguistics department, he happened to go back to Toraja to attend a wedding ceremony. It was on this occasion that he noted that many speechmakers were committing serious mistakes in the usage of the ritual couplets. It was the awareness of the others' mistakes that prompted him to choose basa tominaa as the topic of his BA dissertation. However, shortly before graduating, he decided to replace his dissertation on Toraja ritual speech with another dissertation based on the analysis of the lyrics of the songs of Iwan Fals, a popular Indonesian folk singer.

As he explained to me, his decision to keep secret his research on what he terms 'the Toraja literature' (*sastera Toraja*), was due to a copyright concern: he feared that if he had submitted his 'real' dissertation in which he had provided a thorough documentation of the 'real' basa tominaa, somebody else could have used it 'without recognizing his copyright' (*hak cipta saya tidak diakui*). In order to prevent this risk, he wrote a second dissertation on a much more trivial topic (the lyrics of an Indonesian pop-star) as a sort of camouflage of his real research.

Samuel's narrative epitomizes a new attitude towards linguistic secrecy. As I mentioned in the introduction, communicative exclusivity has always been a quintessential ingredient of basa tominaa authority. As with the case of many other types of ritual registers elsewhere, the use of a highly specialized and esoteric code, mostly incomprehensible to common people, serves to reproduce the authority of the political and religious elite. From this perspective, ritual speech works as a sort of ciphered language whose esoteric meanings are perfectly transparent to those who own the interpretative key, but totally obscure to all the others. Thus, while – within the local linguistic order – basa tominaa is canonically understood as a code whose interpretation is hierarchically restricted to a limited social group, Samuel's account alludes to a new configuration of the 'traditional' notion of secrecy embedded in ritual speech expertise. Samuel's concern for his own copyright and his efforts in preserving it allude to more individualized notions of communicative exclusivity, remarkably different from those encoded in the traditional form of linguistic oligarchy grounded in a shared (although elitist) regime of secrecy.

In addition to this novel and individualized way of framing linguistic secrecy, other distinctive features of the protokol's attitudes towards the transmission of ritual speech expertise are constituted by their self-perception as professionals and their display of a prominent reflexive awareness of their verbal skills, as well as of traditional matters in general. This self-conscious attitude towards 'tradition' is effectively conveyed by the way in which another young and famous protokol with whom I worked during my last period of fieldwork described his professional commitment to the study of ritual speech:

I try to convey the messages from the ancestors regarding the original Toraja customs and traditions (*kebiasaan dan adat istiadat asli toraja*) ... My attempt is to provide an understanding through the language of the chiefs and the wise ones in order to make the people appreciate the real Toraja language (*bahasa toraja yang benar-benar bahasa toraja*) ... [And to provide] an understanding concerning the Toraja cultural philosophy (*philosophi kebudayaan toraja*) ... the true Toraja life-style ... and to provide an understanding of the difference between the authentic Toraja culture and the Toraja culture [that derives] from acculturation ... besides being an emcee, I am an activist! (*saya adalah seorang aktivis!*) ... I am an active researcher of the Toraja tradition (*saya seorang pengkaji adat toraja*).

### Notions and Practices of Stylistic Copyright

As these narratives clearly suggest, the recent development of a new market of words has important consequences for the shaping of new local notions of linguistic authority and personal creativity among speechmakers. Once, as I was engaged in transcribing the speech of an authoritative tominaa from the southern part of Toraja, I was struck by some comments made by a protokol who had stopped by at my house. The text on which I was working consisted in ritual formulas that were traditionally used to strengthen the *sumanga'* (life energy) of small children. Peeping at my computer screen the protokol could not help but making some remarks. The text offered a beautiful example of parallelistic structure:

1. *kurarako rarana bai ma'kuli' pindan*  
I sign you with the blood of a white haired pig
2. *kutera'ko lomba'na bonde ma' ka'pun inaa*  
I mark you with the blood of a pig full of wisdom

I noted that the third line had somehow caught the protokol's attention:

3. *nenne' panoto' ba'tang tumimbu*  
May the strength always pervade (enter in) (your) body

Pointing out to me the last word, he said: 'well actually, as far as I am concerned (*kalau saya*), I use *tidukun* instead of *tumimbu*'.<sup>23</sup> Both words mean 'to enter', but replacing one with another is enough to turn the text into a slightly different version. He then moved to the closing couplet:

5. *Nenne' panoto' tontong papatuinaa undaka' eanan sanda makamban*  
 May the strength always enable (you) to search for richness of every kind
6. *Sola barang apa sanda' ammu susi todiba' gi tento dikataanni*  
 and goods of any kind like the one who has been granted inheritance

and explained to me that he would rather replace the last word 'dikataanni' with 'ditage'tageranni' (although both words mean 'to give').

These remarks are quite representative of a general attitude of commenting on other speechmakers' performances that I encountered while revising my transcriptions with protocols who had not originally performed the text I had transcribed. All the protocols with whom I worked displayed a consistent tendency to suggest possible alternatives to ritual couplets appearing in the texts and openly voiced their personal stylistic preferences, an attitude that I never observed among the 'old school' of the tominaa. Despite the fact that these comments concern apparently negligible stylistic details, they embody a new tendency towards a personalistic re-articulation of ritual speech formulaic structure. The protocols' explicit emphasis on their individual styles produces interesting shifts in local patterns of linguistic authority. Although they do not go as far as claiming to be the 'authors' of the words of the ancestors, their claim of originality in the use of the ritual repertoire endows them with a higher degree of agency than that of mere 'animators' of the ancestors' words.<sup>24</sup>

The notion of copyright – in Indonesian *hak-cipta* (literally, 'right of invention') – often evoked by my interlocutors, stands as a sharp paradox to traditional ideas concerning Toraja ritual register. As I mentioned earlier, the authority of basa tominaa is traditionally grounded in an ideology of invariance. Like many other instances of ritual and esoteric registers, the belief in the ancestral origin and unchanging nature of tominaa language is reproduced, in the context of performance, through verbal behaviours aimed at downplaying personal authorship of ritual words. This idea is reinforced, at the level of learning ideologies, through a way of representing ritual speech apprenticeship as a process of unintentional mimesis.

The protocols' emphasis on the originality of their own repertoire of ritual speech formulas and on their individual choices in selecting specific genres in certain performances conveys the idea of stylistic copyright and embodies a remarkable change in the local notions of linguistic authorship.

In a similar way to what happens in other forms of formulaic oral performance (Finnegan 1988; Keane 1997a; Lord 1960; Zurbuchen 1987), ritual speaking in Toraja is based on a dynamic tension

between conventionality and improvisation. As suggested by the negative evaluation of those performers 'who learn their speeches by heart', in spite of the emphasis – placed by local metalinguistic discourse – on the fixed, unchanging and ancestral nature of the ritual couplets, the speakers' ability to improvise and to use couplets innovatively is highly appreciated by the audience.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, notwithstanding the general claim that ritual speech is unintelligible, people are generally able to identify the personal features that mark the oratorical styles of individual performers. Hence, within the highly formulaic character of the compositional techniques employed by Toraja speechmakers, personal styles have always played an important role. However, what is really distinctive in the language ideologies that developed around this new type of speechmakers is the explicit and reflexive emphasis on their individual styles and the related rearticulation of linguistic secrecy through a new form of verbal economy grounded on a notion of copyright.

As linguistic anthropologists long ago suggested, within processes of language learning much more is at stake than the acquisition of communicative competence. Apprenticeship of verbal skills related to special registers also entails socialization to a specific cultural and professional ethos. The notion of copyright explicitly evoked or tacitly implied in my interlocutors' accounts and their departure from the traditional attitude towards learning as an indeliberate and unpredictable process are full of implications.

The shift in the local ideology of learning and the heightened awareness of personal stylistic markers could suggest a transformation in the local notions of personhood and action, as well as in the forms of historical imagination underlying socially shared frames of linguistic authority. While the traditional representation of *basa tominaa* as an authoritative and esoteric language handed down by the ancestors is still widely shared by both speechmakers and their audiences, the way of construing the 'speaking subjects' (Keane 1997c) of these ancestral words, is undergoing a remarkable historical shift. The wilful and intentional way of framing the learning process and the reflexive commitment to the study of ritual speech at the same time derive and constitute a particular form of historical consciousness grounded in the voluntarism that pervades the local idea of modernity.

Toraja vernacular theories of modernity have been strongly influenced by the rhetoric of development (*pembangunan*), which substantiated the missionaries' ways of framing religious conversion, as well as the public discourse during the post-colonial New Order regime. Notions and practices of temporality in contemporary Toraja are marked by the coexistence of a teleological narrative of development – understood as a process of building, of 'creating something which was



formerly non-existent' (Heryanto 1988: 16), with a retrospectively oriented form of historical consciousness based on the cult of the ancestors (or, at least, on their authority). The proactive and agentive style of the new speechmakers is clearly to be ascribed to the former of these coexisting structures of historical consciousness, in which the notion of development based on 'reliance on a conscious human will' (Heryanto 1988: 16) is pivotal. The cultural and economic dynamics I have sketched in this chapter open up views on a novel notion of the speaking subject and shed light on the historical construction of the concept of agency in the Toraja highlands.<sup>26</sup> In these processes a great role is played by different conceptions and practices of ritual speech knowledge. My aim here has been to show how learning postures contribute to shaping the way in which people inhabit the world.

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### Notes

1. The Toraja administrative region (*Kabupaten Tana Toraja*) nowadays comprises an area of roughly 3,200 square kilometres, inhabited – according to local statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik 1999) – by 381,260 people. Toraja society is primarily agrarian: aside from wet-rice farming, the local population also cultivates small

- gardens of sweet potato, cassava and other cash crops such as vanilla, clove and coffee. The social structure is marked by an interesting combination of a remarkably inclusive kinship system (in which descent is traced bilaterally) and a notably rigid stratification in ranked descent groups.
2. A key aspect common to all cross-cultural encounters consists of their potential to induce reflexivity (Keane 1997c). Shortly after their arrival in 1913, the Dutch missionaries set up an official commission aimed at establishing a theological distinction between *adat* ('traditional culture') and *aluk* ('pagan beliefs'). The commission became an important arena for debating the role and the semiotic meaning of the different material objects used during rituals. It may be argued that the asymmetrical relationship between different forms of tacit and explicit reflexivity engendered by the cross-cultural encounter between the Dutch Calvinist missionaries and the people dwelling in the Toraja uplands has greatly contributed to the reproduction of the discursive hegemony of the colonizers. While the Toraja cultural and ritual system became matters of explicit and thorough discussion, Dutch cultural and religious assumptions were not talked about.
  3. The importance of the analysis of the ideologies of learning for the study of the transmission of religious knowledge has also been foregrounded by Michael Lambek (this volume).
  4. Sandarupa's (1989, 2004) work provides exceptionally fine-grained accounts of how Toraja ritual speech parallelism unfolds within verbal performance.
  5. Students of ritual and formal speech refer to this semiotic process by the term 'entextualization' (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996).
  6. Elsewhere (Donzelli 2004b), I provide a more detailed analysis of the implications of the linguistic ideologies of ritual speech unintelligibility for the Toraja historical consciousness and the reproduction of social hierarchy. On the socially shared belief concerning ritual speech unintelligibility, see also Coville (1988, 2004); Sandarupa (1989, 2004); and Volkman and Zerner (1988: 284).
  7. Conversation with 'Tato' Dena', 19 September 2004.
  8. A borrowing from the English 'emcee' (MC).
  9. Protocols do not represent the only new group of ritual speech experts. Acquiring mastery of *basa tominaa* is considered an important requirement for anyone willing to become a Christian priest. Since 1913 when the Calvinist Mission first arrived in Toraja, there has been a pervasive appropriation of ritual speech from the side of the Church. *Basa tominaa*, after being properly purged of its pagan elements, is no longer considered as an esoteric language to be used in animistic rituals but is nowadays employed in Christian ceremonies. Here I focus only on the differences in the learning postures I observed among the *tominaas* (adherents of the ancestral religion) and the protocols (who for the great majority are Christian). However, it is worth mentioning that I often noted among Christian priests who engage in the study of ritual speech an attitude similar (though slightly less narcissistic) to that of the protocols described here.
  10. My use of the term 'generation' could be misleading in that protocols are not necessarily younger than more traditional types of speechmakers.
  11. The historical sources I have used comprise, along with first-hand interviews conducted in the Toraja area, the late colonial and early post-colonial archival material from the Tana Toraja Archive in Makassar, which I was able to examine directly in 2002–03 and 2004. Access to earlier sources was made possible thanks to Thom van den End's (1994) edited collection of letters and reports written by missionaries and colonial administrators during the first half of the twentieth century.
  12. There is, however, a small percentage of Muslim adherents (7.11 per cent), mostly located in the southern districts. While the advent of Christianity is dated to the

turn of the twentieth century, for the diffusion of Islam it is not possible to identify an equally precise beginning. Islamic penetration was more gradual and less remarkable since it occurred as a consequence of long-term contacts with the neighbouring Bugis lowlanders who have been Muslim since the seventeenth century. This chapter is mostly focused on the changes connected to Christianization. The Toraja Muslims and the role of Islam in the peasants' revolts and religious uprisings of the 1950s and 1960s constitute interesting topics of inquiry on which little has yet been written (see Donzelli 2004a).

13. For thorough accounts of the web of affinal and consanguineal ties at play in funeral and house ceremonies, see Waterson (1993).
14. According to this official repartition, Catholicism and Protestantism are considered as two different religions.
15. The temporal adverb *belum* ('not yet') alludes to the construction of a development scale based on a dichotomy between backward people who do not yet have a religion and developed people who follow an official and 'true' religion.
16. '(L)ack of affiliation with a world religion' was thus equated with a potential indicator of communist political sympathies, in addition to being stigmatized as a 'sign of primitiveness' (Sillander 2004: 74).
17. Not all the minority religious communities received the same recognition at the same time. For example the Bentians, a Dayak people of east Kalimantan, had their religion officially recognized under the umbrella of Hinduism only in 1980 (Sillander 2004: 74). While the ancestral religion (*ada' mappuro*) practised in Pitu Ulunna Salu, a region not far from Toraja in the 'hinterlands of Sulawesi's southwest coast' (George 1990: 6) has not yet been recognized by the Indonesian government. The success obtained by the Toraja in the political recognition of their cultural and religious specificities is partly due to the capabilities of the local elites to exert political pressure and to use symbolic resources to achieve the status of privileged minorities. But it also needs to be related to the late 1960s resurgence of the old Toraja ruling class. As Crystal (1974) effectively argued, in the late 1960s, the old guard of the Toraja aristocracy took advantage of the raising hegemony of the Golkar Party (which became the state party during Suharto's regime) at the expense of its long-standing political rival, that is, the local middle class (and its political expression in the Christian Party – Parkindo), which had played a leading role during the 1940s and 1950s.
18. The Dutch missionaries' view of Toraja ritual practices as wasteful and irrational was greatly motivated by their failure to understand that Toraja ritual slaughtering is embedded in a complex system of investments and circulation of wealth connected to funerals.
19. It should be added that aside from these donations, livestock meant to be used at rituals (be it sacrificed or spared) is also subjected to taxation. Those who bring the animal to the ritual field are required to pay to the District administration fifty thousand rupiahs (five euros) for pigs (roughly a tenth of the market price of an average male pig) and one hundred thousand rupiahs (ten euros) for each buffalo. Prices of buffaloes vary remarkably according to the size, horn shape and colour of the eyes, fur and spots. In 2004, prices at the Rantepao buffalo market ranged from four to five million rupiahs (four to five hundred euros) for a standard black male up to eighty million (eight thousand euros) for the most expensive spotted buffalo.
20. Several elder *ma'badong* performers I interviewed in 2004 agreed that the introduction of monetary compensations dates back at least as early as the 1960s. Several of these accounts emphasized that in the 'old days' people performed without requiring any payment.

21. Figures dating to 2002–04.
22. Interview with Sam Barumbung, January 2006.
23. ‘Tumimbu’ comes from the root ‘timbu’, while ‘tidukun’ comes from the root ‘dukung’.
24. I am referring here to Goffman’s (1981) notion of speech roles. Goffman (1981) identified three main speech roles: animator, author, principal, and showed how individuals can take different alignments with respect to their utterances.
25. The positive value of personal creativity in the usage of ritual couplets is also noted by Webb Keane (1997a: 111) in Sumba.
26. Keane (1997c) shows how the concept of agency is an historical and cultural product and provides an illuminating analysis of the role of religious conversion in the historical construction of the idea of agency in Anakalang (Sumba), although he does not address the issue of ritual speech apprenticeship.

