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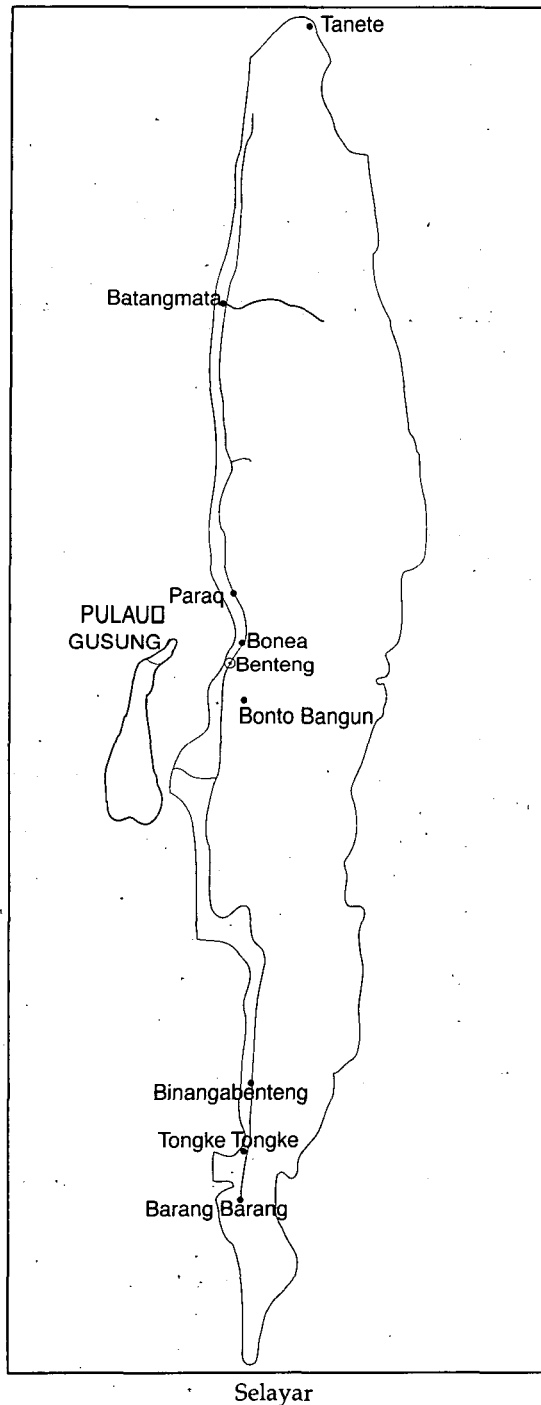
Introduction

In the 'Register of Religious Adherents' of *kabupaten* Selayar for 1986, Hinduism has 478 followers (0.5% of the total population) and Protestant Christianity 955 (1%).¹ Over half of the combined number of followers of both religions lives in the southern *kecamatan* (district) of Bonto Sikuyu, while the remainder inhabits the centre of the island around Benteng and Paraq/Bonea. The Hindu adherents and the majority of Christians listed as resident in Bonto Sikuyu district do not in fact practice Hinduism or Christianity. Rather, they are members of a movement which, although formally banned in 1966, has existed in Selayar for over 70 years since its founding by Haji Abdul Gani. During that time the movement has been variously called the Mukhdi Akbar movement, Isa Almukhdi Akbar, Igama Binanga Benteng (the 'Binanga Benteng Religion'), Domena Agamayya ('Religious Peace'), Bunting Berua ('New Wedding'),² Agama Maradekaya ('Religion of Freedom').

As a study of religious change, this article focuses on the origins and development of the Mukhdi Akbar movement in Selayar island, from its founding some time in the second decade of the twentieth century up to the present day. The ideology of the Mukhdi Akbar movement will be set in a broad historical framework, in order to understand how the movement came into conflict with the traditional Selayar élite. This article will also consider how Dutch Protestant missionaries used the movement to proselytize on the

¹ 'Daftar Pemeluk Agama Daerah Propinsi, Kwartal ke II 1986, Benteng, 20 October 1986'. There are 14 Catholics in Selayar, while the rest of the population (93,219) is Muslim.

² The name *Bunting Berua* derives from one of the later *guru* of the movement, Ince Abdul Rahim, and implies that joining the Mukhdi Akbar movement, generates the same feeling as marrying. According to the movement's last *guru* Haji Muhammad Jusuf, initiation in the mysticism of the Mukhdi Akbar evokes the same feelings as being joined in wedlock not only once, but for 77 times.



island during the 1930s, and what happened to the leadership during the Japanese occupation, the Dutch re-occupation of the island and the post-independence period. Finally, the paper looks at what happened to the Mukhdi Akbar movement after the South Sulawesi regional military commander banned the group in 1966. But first it is necessary to describe some significant features of the social and religious landscape in Selayar.

Adat-istiadat and religion in Selayar

To understand the nature of the religious protest Haji Abdul Gani and his followers were making, it is necessary to look at the organization of Islam in Selayar. The *onderafdeeling* of Selayar and its surrounding islands was divided into 17 administrative *adatgemeenschappen* (adat communities), each headed by a community chief known locally as *opu*. The Dutch, who had formalized these *adatgemeenschappen* as administrative units, recognized some to be more senior than others (and paid their chiefs more).³ Each district had a number of *gallarang*, also called *bali gauq* or sometimes *penggawa*, who were headmen of a number of *kampung*, each with its own *kepala* (head). Islam was administered by a group of officials known as the *pegawai syarat*, or 'administrators of the law'.⁴ The *pegawai syarat* were under the authority of the *opu*, but had their own leader, the *kadi*, who was usually a member of the local ruling family, and who was responsible for managing the religious affairs of the *adat* community. Under him were the *imam*, several *khatib* or *mubalig*, *bidal*, and *doja*, all of whom had particular functions relating to the performance of Muslim religious duties, of which the mosque for the *adat* community was the centre.⁵

The main function of the *pegawai syarat* was the administration of religious affairs. But since most if not all religious ceremonies were also concerned with *adat*, the function of the *kadi* was to ensure the maintenance of the *adat* as it concerned religious matters. Outside the religious bureaucracy there were Muslim teachers or *kyai* who taught the chanting of the Qur'an. Three of these *kyai* in Selayar were referred to as *gurunta*, or holy men

³ The *opu* of Bonea and Bonto Bangun were given the titles of *regent* with a salary of Rp. 125 per month. The other district chiefs were paid according to seniority and the size of the *adatgemeenschap*.

⁴ That is Islamic law, in Arabic *syari'ah*, locally called *syarat*.

⁵ In Selayar, religious officials were identified with the ruling families of each district. Thus the *kadi*, *imam*, and *khatib* were addressed as *opu kali*, *opu imam*, *opu katte*. The *imam* was responsible for the Friday prayers and presided over marriages; the *khatib* and *mubalig* read the Friday sermons in Arabic in the district mosque, the *bidal* was the mosque caretaker and the *doja* were assistants to the *imam* who read prayers in houses of *kampung* residents.

because of their large numbers of followers, who came to them to study the Qur'an and other spiritual knowledge (*ilmu*).

As it was common practice for district chiefs to appoint their relatives as *kadi*, sometimes they knew little about the religion they were supposed to be administering. For example, in 1936 the *opu* of Batangmata appointed as the new *kadi* his brother-in-law who, according to one critic, 'was not religious at all; he didn't carry out the five daily prayers, he didn't fast and he didn't know how to read the Qur'an in Arabic'. Nor did he know about the *adat* rules regarding inheritance. In short, he wanted the job 'only because he loved the money'. The Dutch publicly upheld the appointment of the *opu*, as they said it was 'the people's choice'.⁶ However, what was even more important to the colonial rulers was the upholding of the authority of the traditional élite.

In Selayar strict rules about all aspects of the marriage ceremony and the bridewealth (*sunrang*), determined not only in *royal* and *guldens*, but also paid with coconut trees, buffaloes, rice, and gold, were laid down by the *adat* and were supported, at least in part, by the colonial government (*Adatrechtbundels* 1929:428-30).

The size of the bridewealth reflected the social status of the bride, whether she was from the aristocracy (*pattola*), common people (*tau samaraq*, or *tau sama*), or slaves (*ata*). Each social level was entitled to a different *sunrang*, which was paid to the family of the bride, by the family of the prospective bridegroom.⁷ Payments were also made to the *pegawai syarat* for services at weddings, circumcisions, funerals, settlement of inheritance, elopement (*silariang*), and administration of the tithe for the poor (*zakat*, *fitrah*).

After 1912 the Dutch government tried to regulate these payments, with little success. First in 1926, then again in 1937 and 1941, they attempted to find out how much the *pegawai syarat* were being paid for their services by sending out detailed questionnaires to all *kadi* in the Selayar *onderafdeeling*. In 1912 the sum to be paid to the officials had been fixed at 10% of the *sunrang*, while not allowed to exceed the amount of f 4. In 1926 the percentage appeared to vary amongst 12 *adatgemeenschappen* from 4% to 12.5%. 10% of the *sunrang* was paid for formalizing a *silariang*, of which there were six kinds, depending on how it was performed and which partner took the initiative.⁸

In pre-war Benteng, the administrative capital of *onderafdeeling* Selayar,

⁶ Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia Makassar (hereafter ANRI-M), Selayar Local Government Archive, Pemeriksaan Landraad, Register 600/Box 45.

⁷ In Selayar the *pattola* were divided further into direct descendants of the ruling *opu* (*pattola bambang*), his close family who had official positions (*pattola*), and other descendants of the local élite (*daeng*). The complex family system and social structure in Selayar as it relates to marriage is discussed in B. Pattiselanno (1986).

⁸ ANRI-M 81/91.

pegawai syarat were charging commission (*cuke*) between f 5 and f 25 to settle inheritances. The 1937 survey found that if a woman had her *sunrang* reduced below what the *adat* determined was the correct amount for her family status, the payment to the *pegawai syarat* was not reduced. For example, if a woman's *sunrang* was set at 80 *reyal* (f 160) because she was a member of the *patolla*, she had to pay 10% of that set amount to the *kadi* regardless of whether or not she actually received this *sunrang*. The *opu* was given *pangngadakang*, an obligatory gift, in this case of food 'not exceeding f 0,97 in value', and an invited district chief expected a gift of rice and a goat.⁹

In Selayar marriage ceremonies were as burdensome on lower level people as elsewhere in South Sulawesi. Apart from the *sunrang* there was also the *uang belanja* for the wedding. If one married a woman from another district in Selayar, there was an additional expense called *pemelombalang* ('crossing a river', that is the boundaries of a district), a payment also made to the *adat* leaders.¹⁰

Dying was also expensive in Selayar. Usually, the deceased's belongings were pawned, or relatives borrowed money to pay for food, drinks, and gifts which had to be given to the *pegawai syarat*. Beginning with the night of the death, food and drink were obligatory for visitors to the house of the deceased until the tenth night, and every ten days thereafter until 40 days after the death. Between the 40th and 50th days after death, relatives provided a feast every night. The *patolla* also received special food, while wardrobes with clothes and beds had to be presented to religious officials, one of whom would stay in the house of the deceased for 40 days after the death and had to be provided with special food each day. Further feasts were obligatory every 10 days until 100 days after the death occurred, then once every year for the next 3 years.¹¹

The obligatory tithe payable during the fast (*zakat*, *fitriah*) was also paid to the *pegawai syarat*, who distributed it to the poor after taking their share, again determined by *adat*. Up to one half of the *zakat* could be kept by officials, while the remainder went to the poor. In 1938 in response to a plea for 'freedom to observe our religious duties' by the Islamic reform movement Muhammadiyah, the *opu* of Bonto Bangun, who particularly disliked this organization, defended the *adat*. According to the *opu*, only unmarried people in his district gave *zakat* to whomever they liked; married people

⁹ ANRI-M 81/91.

¹⁰ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 15-11-1986.

¹¹ 'Samboengang Verslag yang telah dimadjoekan Pengoeroes Moehammadijah Tambolong-an kepada Padoeka Tuan Hoofd van het Plaatselijk Bestuur Seleier pada tanggal 15 Maart 1938', ANRI-M 80/437.

always paid the *zakat fitrah* to the *imam*.¹² Furthermore, he said, no one was discriminating against the Muhammadiyah, as the Ahlul Sunna Waljamaah, the adherents of traditional Islam, also paid their *zakat* to the *imam*.¹³

The *adat* not only regulated religious matters. In 1926 the Landraad (district court) in Selayar had to investigate complaints that people wanting to leave the northern district of Tanete had to pay their *opu* 3 or 4 *ringgit*; people had to pay a contribution to the weekly market fair even though they didn't attend. Boats taking shelter in the local harbour in the west monsoon had to pay f 6, and aspirants had to pay the *opu* before they could be appointed as *pegawai syarat*. The going rate to become a mosque official was between 20 and 40 *ringgit*, and to be appointed a headman (*gallarang*) a payment of 100 *ringgit*, or f 250, was needed.¹⁴

In addition to the payments to religious officials, people paid taxes to the colonial state. These taxes were assessed annually by the *opu* together with an official appointed by the Dutch. Because the *gallarang* and hamlet heads were not salaried, these members of the traditional élite were allowed to share a *collecteloon* of 8% of the taxes they collected among themselves.

In 1926, the same *opu* of Tanete was paying his *gallarang* only half the entitlement of the *collecteloon*. In his reply to the official of the Landraad who was investigating the matter, the *opu* maintained that because headmen were getting people to do labour service (*hof- en herendiensten*), they did not need all the *collecteloon*.¹⁵

Unpaid labour service was an important additional, though highly misused, source of labour for both the Dutch and the traditional élite. In Selayar the population was obliged to perform two kinds of service for their district chiefs, *kasuiang* and *baruga*. These forms of labour service included guard duty, serving at *adat* ceremonies, and maintenance or construction of the house of the district chief. The colonial government levied two kinds of labour service as well. Firstly, the *hof- en herendiensten*, which required people

¹² Letter to the *controleur* of Selayar from the *opu* of Bonto Bangun, 17-12-1938, ANRI-M 80/437.

¹³ Mainstream Islam in Indonesia is the Ahlul Sunna Waljamaah (Arabic: *Ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jama'a*, the people of the *sunna* and the community), the Islamic school which emphasizes the doctrine of the unity and oneness of Allah (*tauhid*) and the acknowledgement of the prophet Muhammad as the prophet of Allah. All the *pegawai syarat* were members of the Ahlul Sunna Waljamaah, which wanted to retain old traditions and opposed the independent religious opinions and interpretations of reformist Islam, such as the main sources of the teachings of Mukhdi Akbar's founder Haji Abdul Gani; see Atjeh (1969). For the Ahlul Sunna Waljamaah in the context of village South Sulawesi, see Mukhlis and Robinson (1985:349-51).

¹⁴ 'Pemeriksaan Landraad Saleier', 21 December 1925, ANRI-M 606/45. One *ringgit* = Rp. 2.50.

¹⁵ The *opu* was asked why he didn't pay the share of the *collecteloon* directly to the hamlet heads, bypassing the *gallarang*. The hamlet heads complained they had not been paid by the *gallarang*, who for his part said he had not received his share from the *opu* of Tanete. ANRI-M 606/45.

who paid taxes either to pay a corvée obligation of f 4 per year, or to contribute their own labour in building and maintaining roads and irrigation systems. Since few people could pay off their obligation, almost half the total labour force in Selayar was required to work on these projects, which were often located long distances from where people lived.¹⁶ Secondly, there was *gemeentedienst*, which required residents to work 3 days per year, though in practice more frequently, for the *opu*, but also for the *gallarang* or *bali gauq*. *Gemeentedienst* obligations included such tasks as collecting and delivering wood and other sources for the households of these officials (and often for the households of their relatives in addition), as well as performing unpaid work in their fields, such as planting and harvesting maize or coconuts.

There were other taxes as well, including a market tax (a 10% sales tax), a slaughter tax on all animals except goats, and a coconut palm tree tax (f 0,20 per tree).¹⁷ A prominent member of the Mukhdi Akbar movement today recalls: 'In the Dutch time everything was taxed [...]. People used to say jokingly, "If you scratch your bottom, they make you pay an arse tax (*pajak pantat*)"'¹⁸

The Mukhdi Akbar movement and its founder

All faiths have a founder or first teacher. Some time between 1912 and 1918 one Haji Abdul Gani Daeng Manrapi (circa 1846-1922) returned to his home *kampung* of Batangmata from the Middle East.¹⁹ According to family tradition, Haji Abdul Gani's grandfather, a former *opu* of Batangmata, was a kind of *wali*, a holy figure, who, although he had never been to Mecca, spoke often about the need to search for deeper religious insights than the local version of Islam on the island could provide. His son, Haji Balasa Daeng Rupai, took along to Mecca a number of wives and slaves, as well as the young Abdul Gani when the latter was in his early teens. In later life Abdul Gani repeated

¹⁶ Around 1928 *assistent-resident* W. Middendorp remarked about the *herendiensten*: 'Nevertheless this backward labour system causes proportionally so many abuses, jail sentences, murder and manslaughter and other disadvantages [sic] for the labourers involved [...]' As a result he pleaded for its abolition (Middendorp 1929:5,13). In Makassar the cost paying off the *herendiensten* obligation was f 5/year; outside the city the rate was f 10/year (Middendorp 1929:5,13).

¹⁷ Interview with a former tax official (*mantri belasting*) in pre-war Selayar, Ujungpandang, 24 November 1986; J. van Bodegom, *Memorie van Overgave der Onderafdeeling Selayar* (June 1947), ANRI-M 17/1.

¹⁸ Interview with Haji Basong Daeng Bicara, Benteng, Selayar, 14-11-86.

¹⁹ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, 'Sedjarah Ringkas Agama Muhdi Akbar Selajar' (typescript 9-2-1959), notes that Mukhdi Akbar was generally known by 1918; Muh. Nur Baso's informant says Abdul Gani returned home from Mecca about 1881 (Baso 1966:41).

the trip several times, and when he returned to Selayar for the last time, 'his hair was already two colours'.²⁰

The account we have today of Haji Abdul Gani's stay in the Middle East, for the greater part based on oral tradition, concentrates on his mystical experiences, which for his followers, successors, and his family legitimized his role as founder and *guru*. These stories, which came amongst others from his daughter and only surviving child, Salimah Opu Malluru, attest firstly to Abdul Gani's spiritual power, and secondly to his authority as founder of the movement. Abdul Gani was involved in one of the numerous Sufi orders, *tarikah*, which had abounded in Egypt for centuries. According to one of these stories, Abdul Gani, while on a journey on foot from Mecca to Egypt never felt hungry, despite not having eaten, until one day standing on top of a rock by the road he found his pockets were suddenly full of *kue* (cake), which he then ate. When he arrived in Egypt there was an abundance of fruit, so the *kue* disappeared. A second story relates to his time in Mecca. One day his *guru* came to ask why he no longer came to the mosque for the five daily prayers. His reply was that he was unclean, like a woman menstruating. But women are not unclean all the time, said the teacher. Abdul Gani's reply was to ask his *guru* to recite the Qur'an with him at his house. A third story relates how he discovered, then 'stole' a mystical text (*kitab*) belonging to his teacher, and received sudden revelations which enabled him to read the script of the text. On his return to Selayar he continued to have visions.²¹

Whether fact or fiction, the messages these traditions contain for an outsider about Haji Abdul Gani seem on one level quite negative. After all, is not inviting one's *guru* home to recite the Qur'an instead of attending the mosque like other believers an act of arrogance? Stealing a mystical text hardly seems a laudable endeavour either. Mukhdi Akbar adherents do not judge the founder in this way, however. For them these stories are important as symbols of the power and legitimacy of their first *guru* as well as his successors.

The historical account of events after his final return to Selayar is somewhat clearer. Haji Haiyung, a former pupil of Haji Abdul Gani, who learned to chant the Qur'an with him at this time but later became a prominent Muhammadiyah leader, recalled some thirty years later:

He was much loved by the people of Selayar. The *kadi* and other religious officials always came to ask his opinion (*fatwa*), especially concerning marriage, divorce, reconciliation (*nikah*, *talak*, *rujuk*), and inheritance matters. His opposition to the colonial government, which he regarded as a government of unbelievers, was

²⁰ Haji Abdul Gani inherited land in Bulukumba from his mother, who was related to Sultan Daeng Raja, the ruling family in Bantaeng (Bonthain). He later gave his land to those who cultivated it. Interview with Salimah Opu Malluru, Benteng, Selayar, 15-11-1986.

²¹ Interview with Salimah Opu Malluru, Benteng, Selayar, 15-11-1986.

very strong. He did not like the colonial government being involved in religious matters, including questions of inheritance.²²

While this opinion reflects more the anti-Dutch attitude of Muhammadiyah leaders in Selajar in 1953 rather than Haji Abdul Gani's attitudes in the 1910s and 1920s, relations with the island's religious officials soured after a court case concerning inheritance, in which Haji Abdul Gani's opinion was not upheld. Muhammadiyah leaders, such as Haji Haiyung, distrusted the Mukhdi Akbar movement's ideology, especially as Haji Abdul Gani had a low opinion of Islamic duties (*rukun*), except perhaps the pilgrimage to Mecca. At the same time Muhammadiyah regarded Mukhdi Akbar as a potential ally against traditional Islam and the *pegawai syarat* in Selajar.

At some point life in Batangmata must have become so difficult politically for Haji Abdul Gani and his followers because of hostility from the religious officials, that they moved south to the small fishing hamlet of Binanga Benteng, which has remained the spiritual centre of the Mukhdi Akbar movement until the present day. It is there that Haji Abdul Gani and other *guru* such as Sarepe Ali Tuang Muhammad, his son Murkurdini Tuang Nyaqlaq, and Haji Muhammad Jusuf are buried. These graves, which have simple stone borders but no headstones or other identification, are located by the beach in the centre of Binanga Benteng, next to Haji Abdul Gani's family home.

Mysticism, eschatology, ritual, and ethics

Several sources indicate that in Cairo Abdul Gani came into close contact with circles surrounding the Egyptian mystic and scholar Syeikh Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905).²³ This may well be, as Abdul Gani stayed in Cairo at the time when Muhammad Abduh was lecturing at the al-Azhar University (1894-1905). Muhammad Abduh is widely considered as the founding father of the Egyptian modernist school in Islam. Haji Abdul Gani's later teachings manifest the profound influence of Muhammad Abduh's approach to Islam. Abduh's low opinion of the eastern Islamic way of life, his

²² 'Laporan asal usul agama Muhdi Akbar di Selajar oleh kepala staf penerangan agama kabupaten Bantaeng, A. Wahid', 22-8-1953, ANRI-M 409/47. This report is based on an interview with Haji Haiyung, a leading reformist Muslim who founded the Muhammadiyah in Selajar in 1927.

²³ These sources are in the Missionary Archives, kept in the Institut Sejarah Gereja Indonesia Timur (ISGIT), Sekolah Tinggi Teologia Indonesia Timur (STT-INTIM), Ujungpandang. I BB 1.1., are documents relating to pre-war contacts between the Mukhdi Akbar movement and Dutch missionaries; Sahabu Daeng Maingak, 'Muhdi Akbar' (typescript; Ujungpandang, 1979), 28-29.

emphasis on reason and a relatively open attitude towards modern western movements, technology and science are typical for Haji Abdul Gani and his disciples as well. The same applies to the stance that acquired knowledge and revealed religious truths, if properly understood, are not incompatible with each other. Revelation was to Abduh (and Gani) intuitive knowledge of Allah and also an intuitive feeling where happiness can be found in this world and in the next. The most important task of religious leaders was, according to Abduh, the moral education of the faithful, whereas the initiated élite did not need dogmas or laws.

In Muhammad Abduh's view, the Qur'an although divinely inspired was wrought by man. Gani maintained the same view. If Abduh limited mystic experience to a small élite, Gani did likewise, for he selected his *murid* carefully and he gave them a rigorous education. Without lowering the standards of such a period of preparation and initiation, succeeding generations of devotees of Haji Abdul Gani, nevertheless, put a stronger emphasis on the attainment of mystical experiences on the part of everyone than their master had done. With their continuing emphasis on a rigorous preparation for the attainment of mystical experience by an educated élite, Abdul Gani's successors lessened the populist appeal of traditional Islam in a way that Muhammad Abduh's teachings had never done.²⁴

Centuries before Muhammad Abduh there were already mystics within Islam, called *sufis*, for whom the observance of the law, ritual asceticism, and penance were scarcely important, and whose total emphasis was on the moral and spiritual intentions of persons. They strove to suppress evil inclinations within themselves to make possible a life in communion with Allah. They were concerned with the internalization of the religious life.

²⁴ Muhammad Abduh was born in 1849 to a peasant family in lower Egypt. He stayed in Cairo from 1866 onwards at the al-Azhar mosque, where he steeped himself in mysticism. In 1872 he became a disciple of the revolutionary Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, who initiated him in the newer theology and acquainted him with the works of modern European authors. In 1876 Abduh became a journalist and gave private tuition to students. After a short exile (1879-1880), he became chief editor of the liberal Egyptian newspaper of the government *Al-Waḡā'i' al-Misriyah*. Abduh envisioned, like al-Afghānī, a renewal of Islam, but not through violent revolution but by gradual reform of society through schooling and education. He was exiled again in 1882 and settled in Beirut. In 1884 he went to Paris and Tunis. From 1885 he lectured at the theological department in Beirut and returned to Egypt in 1889. There he was employed in various eminent positions, State Mufti being one of them, and he lectured from 1894 at the al-Azhar University in Cairo. He stood for reform of traditional Islam and simplification of the administration of the *syariah*, renewal of Arabic, and recognition of the fundamental rights of the people, even if this went against the prevailing interpretation of the Qur'an. He denounced Islamic domination of the political life in Egypt (as anywhere else) and insisted on the separation of state and mosque, and on simplification of the administration. In Muhammad Abduh's numerous publications, the influence of al-Ghazālī's ethical and pedagogical interpretation of religion is important. (Gibb and Kramers 1961:405-7).

They juxtaposed this internalization to formal observance of the law and code of duties, which they found to be utterly inappropriate for their purpose. *Sufi* elements in the doctrine of Abdul Gani are easily detected, although sometimes in his mysticism he goes further than did the *sufi* mystics. His doctrine, which at the beginning did not have a name, was not exactly a secret, but he initiated only a few of his most trusted disciples. The ones he judged to be advanced sufficiently enough were those who had prepared themselves thoroughly by studying Arabic, a manual for the pilgrimage to Mecca, and a few works of Arabic mystics (among others al-Ghazali, 1058-1111). The first Arabic *sufis* had not been excluded from the Islamic community, and it was not Gani's intention that his movement in Selayar should suffer this fate, but in the course of time Gani was indeed ostracized from the local Muslim community.

Haji Abdul Gani did not provide a systematic exposition of his doctrine; he only wrote down a number of ideas. He did sign and give a kind of synopsis to a few of his disciples as a 'declaration of the truth', granting them the right to be a *guru*. Of these declarations only six had still been preserved in 1938.²⁵ The disciples were mainly orally initiated by Gani. These disciples in turn gave their own interpretation of the material, which also was rarely written down.

The disciples of Abdul Gani and *guru* of the first generation were people resident in Selayar like Longgi, Sarepe Ali Tuang Muhammad, his son Murkurdini Tuang Nyaqlaq (Binanga Benteng), Sehe Tuang Maulana (Binanga Benteng), Saie (Pariangan), Mustafa Tuang Keboq Menyengkoro, Haji Muhammad Jusuf, and Ince Abdul Rahim, a Sumatran from Jambi (from 1950 until his death the headman of Padang). Together with Muhammad Daming, Jusuf and Rahim were leaders of the Mukhdi Akbar group in Makassar and Maros since before the war. After the death of Haji Muhammad Jusuf in 1949, the movement did not acknowledge new *guru*, but only leaders (*pemimpin*), as the end of time is thought to be near and *guru* are no longer necessary.

As the Mukhdi Akbar movement expanded rapidly towards the end of the colonial period, a difference between a northern and a southern group emerged. After Gani and most of his followers moved south to Binanga Benteng, the smaller group remaining in Batangmata was subjected to greater pressure from traditional Islam and was less receptive to contacts with the outside world than the southern group. As this northern group did not sustain itself as well, more of its members reverted to Islam than in the south. Because in the view of many people the most important motive for

²⁵ Letter of J.C. Brokken to Th. Müller-Krüger, 1-5-1938, Archief van de Raad voor de Zending, Oegstgeest, 101-3-16.

joining was the opportunity of avoiding the *syarat* and the obligations of *adat*, many members of Ghani's movement from before the war when it attained a membership of between 1,500 and 1,700, were not fully initiated followers at all. Although sometimes vehemently opposed by the much larger Muhammadiyah, both movements nevertheless concurred in the attempts to divest daily life of numerous obligations that had been imposed by the local version of traditional Islam and whose performance was demanded by *adat*. Both movements participated in the reformist spirit that around the century prevailed in Mecca and Cairo. However, their bases and goals were very much apart. While Muhammadiyah conformed completely to the Qur'an and the Sunna of the prophet Muhammad and attempted accordingly to purify Islam from all foreign elements, Mukhdi Akbar taught that all formal religion, including the *syarat*, has been abrogated. Three central themes of the Mukhdi Akbar movement – mysticism, the expectation of a rapidly approaching end of time, and a concentration upon the ethical implications of mystical knowledge and ritual – reveal its distinctiveness.

I. Mysticism

As in other mystical traditions, the mystic of the Mukhdi Akbar movement seeks a certain knowing (*pappijappu*), which consists of the perceiving (*ma'rifat*) of the Eternal. This knowing is based – apart from any sensuous perception – on revelation and can be obtained by means of concentration on the Divine element in man himself. The Eternal is indicated not only by the term Allah, the One and the Only (*Seqrea*), but as well by Isa or Rohulah Kudus (the Holy Spirit of Allah). The mystic strives to unify himself with this. The central thought is that the God of Creation (Allah, Allah Tuhan, Ilah) is not separated from his creation and that whoever worships will be unified with Him. All things do not exist by themselves, but derive their existence from Allah (*ittihad, tauhid*).

In this context the term *sembahyang* is relevant. Although indicating a regular succession of ritual formulas and activities in Islam, preceded by symbolic purification, in the Mukhdi Akbar movement it has lost both ritual and compulsory connotations. The opposition between pure and impure as laid down by the *syariah* and orthodox rites (in the legalistic-ritualistic sense) has been sublimated by a new polarization between the illuminated soul and the world covered in darkness. This does not imply that the material, or secular world is in itself impure, evil or sinful to the mystic. The world is good and without fault. The pursuit of material interests is sinful, however, for it is noxious to the soul and suppresses the goodness in humanity. It impedes man (human beings, both female and male) in becoming one with Tuhan

Sanggami bateku tuntut
 appijappu ri kalengku.
 Kuasseng tommi
 pakeang tena rusaqna.

(What is *sembahyang* and what is *syarat*? the singer asks.)

Allah is prayer
 Muhammad is the law.
 All will be destroyed
 in the future.

Ritual prayer is like a sarung
 the fasting month is like a shirt.
 They are like knowledge
 which will be destroyed.

But I seek knowledge
 within my self.
 I know that such knowledge
 will not be destroyed.

(We must purify what we see. When we purify ourselves, and forget the material world only then we can see the reality of the divine essence.)²⁶

In another interesting piece of writing, attributed to the movement's founder, the religious path is described as being both a journey through four worlds (*alam*) and an experience of four states (*zaman*). In each world and each state there is an emotion which has to be overcome. The four worlds (or existences) are as follows: power/rulers (when fear is conquered), the middle world (when enthusiasm is conquered), the supernatural world (when changeability is conquered), and the world where belief is strengthened, where a person must be humble. The four states include the appointed day of judgement, a terrible time of crisis, followed by gnosis (*ma'rifa*), then a state of *yakin*. Similarly, there are states of outer life, transition, and the inner truth, when one reaches the glory of God. In realizing the absolute truth, all forces will be destroyed except the One who is Truth. After one experiences the absolute truth (which can be neither heard, seen, nor felt), all previous knowledge will be superseded. All holy texts, including the present Qur'an, will disappear at the end of the world, when the real holy book, the real Qur'an, will be revealed.

According to Gani, the Eternal is the source of all great religions like Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. This view has enhanced an

²⁶ 'Rambang-rambang Mukhdi Akbar' was sung (and recorded) in Benteng, Selayar, 19-11-1986. The text was copied by A. Lucas from the original held by Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq.

openness and interest in these different religions, preferably with the more educated adherents his followers wished (and wish) to commune with as brethren. But the time of established religions, with their obligations and ritual activities, based on the word of a prophet and on books deemed holy, as well as *adat*, has definitely gone now. All these obligations and rituals rather obscure the one true religion according to the Mukhdi Akbar movement and impede union with Allah. For the mystic can and must seek this union and know it, without the mediation of others. This point of view was the cause for bitter conflict with the *pegawai syarat* and for the disappointing experiences of the Dutch missionaries in their contact with the movement. As expressed by Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, another current leader of the movement in Benteng, adhering to Islam or Christianity, or even the worship of ancestors, is like sleeping when the rooster is crowing.²⁷

Unlike the writings of Gani himself, the notion of Tuhan Allah or Ilah is unclear for younger members of the Mukhdi Akbar movement. The nature of the mystic union is not clearly described either, as everyone experiences this union differently. But spiritual interests are considered higher than material interests. Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq described the term Allah as *gelar*, 'grade' or 'title', namely the highest imaginable perfect state of humanity. Allah as both perfect man and the attaining of that state is therefore possible for everyone. Thus, the traditional notion of Tuhan Allah as revealing Himself at the end of time when He will reign as king and lord over all the nations of the world becomes the final victory of the mystic of the Mukhdi Akbar movement over all oppressors.²⁸

II. The end of time

The existing expectation of the end of time within Islam had already been fulfilled, according to Gani. That end of time, as far as the first phase is concerned, had already begun in the Islamic year 1300 H (1881). Ever since Allah had ruled over the world through Isa, without mediation of prophets or holy books, which belong definitely to the past. This does not imply, however, that within the Mukhdi Akbar movement the belief in the coming of the Mahdi (or Mukhdi) – derived from Islam – has disappeared completely or that the end of time already has become reality. For the moment humankind finds itself in a period of transition. The coming of the Mahdi, the emissary from

²⁷ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 15-11-1986.

²⁸ This notion of Tuhan Allah is somewhat difficult to reconcile not only with some of Gani's other views, but also with Mapattaq's view of Tuhan Allah as a separate lord ruling over all nations at the end of time.

Allah who in fact is Allah, is seen to be closely related to the complete and definitive breaking through of the end of time, when all forces that still resist the complete establishment of the Kingdom of Peace, will be destroyed. One lives in the assurance that this final establishment is to be expected in the near future, and that the great peace, sometimes referred to with the term *Isa*, will reign on earth (*esso riajjanciangnge*). The fact that the end of time has begun already and that the final establishment of the Kingdom of Peace is imminent may presently be seen in the signs of the time, such as the increasingly violent wars, the development of technology and science, and, in particular, in the prohibition of Mukhdi Akbar movement itself by the authorities in 1966. Technology and science are positively evaluated as mighty instruments by which Allah shapes the end of time, so that one need not fear, for instance, a nuclear war:

It is the secret of Allah that this world will not perish by a nuclear war. Allah wants humanity to progress, for humankind is His ultimate creature which He will not simply allow to be destroyed. I believe that. That's why we speak about Mukhdi Akbar as the great peace. All atomic weapons and other means of destructions are instruments of peace.²⁹

The *rambang-rambang* referred to earlier also contains strong eschatological expectations. It is difficult to see the *raja* whom adherents worship, because He is protected by two very high mountains. He will become visible when both mountains (one of which is Bawakaraeng) are destroyed. There is only one religion, the religion of freedom (*agama maradekaya*). According to these beliefs, an announcement about the free religion will eventually be made in the centre of the Karebosi field in the middle of Makassar.³⁰ Minister and *ulama* must be aware because 'the wind of the new world' (*anginna lino berua*) has arrived.

Others, like Haji Muhammad Jusuf, held that unbelievers and wicked people are reincarnated as animals, to perish for eternity. Only members of the Mukhdi Akbar and all who serve the same cause as them, peace and friendship, will be saved to live in this new world, guided by their *guru*. This new world actually appears to be the triumph of the Mukhdi Akbar over all enemies, as the coming of the Mahdi is for Islam. It is not about a new creation, for people will remain mortal, but as everyone shares the ideals of the Mukhdi Akbar, on dying all will go straight to heaven (Gibb 1969:88; Gibb and Kramers 1961:310-3). Belief in the resurrection of the dead is not consensual. According to some followers it will happen, according to others it will not.

²⁹ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 15-11-1986.

³⁰ The Karebosi field in Makassar is also where the messianic King of Goa will appear (Mukhlis 1985:296-7).

According to Mukhdi Akbar, this new world will be ruled by a council (*sidang*), presided over by the Mahdi and which will consist of representatives of all nations. Some Mukhdi Akbar members identify Haji Abdul Gani with the Mahdi. Tradition has it that Gani has predicted his own return, after which he will function as chairman of that council. In the opinion of Muhammad Jusuf, the last *guru* and successor of Gani, a Dutchman will play a prominent role in that Council. According to Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, this is an expression of the close union between the Netherlands and Selayar, despite the colonial past.

III. Ritual and ethics

Regularly on special occasions, such as funerals, marriages, the day of Haji Abdul Gani's death, and also new year's eve, the members of the Mukhdi Akbar have religious meetings (*songka bala*) of a very simple form. Adherents meet at someone's house or in Gani's former house in Binanga Benteng, where a master of ceremonies – male or female – explains briefly the principles of the movement, and leads the *sembahyang*. There is a strong feeling of unity at these meetings. This is reflected in all present sitting on the ground, so that no one is higher than another. Afterwards all shake hands to wish one another *selamat*, health and peace, and to ask forgiveness for past wrongs done. Sometimes the 'congregation' shares a communal meal at the end of the proceeding. On this occasion the master of ceremonies not infrequently gives advice, not only about spiritual questions, but especially about practical matters as well. One should hold in high esteem humanity, honesty, and the conduct of a sober, virtuous life. One should avoid conflict. One does not punish a thief, but tries to persuade the thief to realize the folly of her or his actions.

Within the mysticism of the Mukhdi Akbar movement there was an earlier ascetic element, represented by a leader of the movement after Gani's death. Sarepe Ali Tuang Muhammad was related to the local ruling élite of Barang-Barang. A teacher of asceticism, he could read Arabic and Bugis but was unable to speak Indonesian. Abdul Gani insisted that his daughter Salimah Opu Malluru marry Sarepe Ali Tuang Muhammad's son Murkurdini Tuang Nyaqlaq, thus ensuring the leadership stayed within one family. According to tradition within the movement, Sarepe Ali Tuang Muhammad's ascetic knowledge (*ilmu tapa*) was passed on to his two sons, and to Haji Muhammad Jusuf (a second cousin of Abdul Gani), the leader of the movement in Paraq. However, this *ilmu tapa* died with Sarepe Ali Tuang Muhammad because 'it was too difficult to pass on to any of his followers'.³¹

³¹ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 19-11-1986.

The Mukhdi Akbar movement and the Protestant Church in Makassar

In 1932 a minister of the Protestant Church of Makassar, the Reverend P.A. Binsbergen, started evangelizing on Selayar, convinced that the central notion of Isa in the doctrine of Haji Abdul Gani was closely related to the figure of Christ in Christianity. He appointed a number of *guru injil* (lay preachers) on the island and established three *volkscholen* (primary schools) in Tongke-Tongke, Binanga Benteng, and on the island of Gusung. A fourth *volkschool* was established at Padang, the place of residence of Ince Abdul Rahim, followed in 1938 by a *Hollandsch-Inlandsche School* (Dutch language 'native' primary school) in Benteng. Mainly, though not exclusively, children from Mukhdi Akbar went to these schools in the beginning. Initially the colonial authorities supported the intentions and the plans of the mission. Controleur Dr C. Nooteboom acknowledged in 1937 the affinity between the Mukhdi Akbar movement and Christianity,³² but two years later his successor appeared to think differently.³³ This was mainly caused by the fact that the agitation of the Mukhdi Akbar movement against established *adat* indirectly threatened to corrode colonial authority in Selayar. There was apprehension that the situation would be aggravated if large numbers of Mukhdi Akbar followers converted to Christianity. On the urging of Binsbergen's successor, Reverend J.C. Brokken,³⁴ the colonial government agreed to appoint a special local official, who would conduct marriages according to the Mukhdi Akbar rite.

In 1931, according to missionary sources, an association was established within the Mukhdi Akbar circles, the Association for the Investigation of the Truth of Religions (*Persekoetoean* [from 1937 *Pergerakan*] *Menoentoet Kebenaran Agama*, PMKI).³⁵ It was an attempt to give more publicity to the ideals of the Mukhdi Akbar movement and to rid it of the stigma of being only a separatist movement of Islam, especially as Muslim leaders were waging war on the movement. When the PMKI started to deal with the Protestant Church of Makassar in 1932 through Binsbergen, it received a strong boost. The association acquired in the following years a broad basis, under the leadership of prominent members like Ince Abdul Rahim, Muhammad Daming (chairman), Muhammad Daeng Situju (secretary), Abdul Hadji, and Halik Alle. In collaboration with the noted linguist Dr A.A. Cense, J.C. Brokken, formal

³² Dr C. Nooteboom, Controleur van Selayar, *Memorie van Overgave der Onderafdeeling Saleier* (October, 1937), ANRI-M 15/1.

³³ G.J. Wollhoff, Controleur van Selayar, *Onderwerp: Sluiting en ontbinding van huwelijken onder de aanhangers der Binanga-Benteng beweging* (24 July 1939), ANRI-M 409/47.

³⁴ The Indies minister (*Indisché predikant*) J.C. Brokken was specially trained by the mission to work with the Mukhdi Akbar movement in Selayar between 1936 and 1942.

³⁵ 'Laporan pertemuan dengan puncak pemimpin agama Mukhdi Akbar di Selayar, 14 Agustus 1953, oleh kepala staf penerangan kabupaten Bantaeng', ANRI-M 409/47, places the founding of the PMKI about 1928.

adviser to the PMKI, G.A. Nicolaas, an elder of the Protestant Church, and the Torajan evangelist Sem. B. Bombong, a pragmatic attempt was made to study Islam, Christianity, and other religions, in order to search for valuable comparative religious and philosophic insights. For this purpose regular meetings were organized in Makassar, Maros, and Selayar, in which representatives of various local churches participated, as well as the Salvation Army, Chinese theosophical movements, Muhammadiyah, and traditional Islam as locally practised. Apart from this, the PMKI maintained a youth organization, and organized sewing courses, sports competitions, and music performances, while maintaining relations with churches, schools, and other associations. In 1938 a bilingual monthly was published, the *Soeara PMKI*, edited by Muhammad Daming and J.C. Brokken.³⁶

Religious change

The granting of the Mukhdi Akbar movement the right to hold their own marriage ceremonies may have been a result of Dutch missionary influence, or the Dutch may simply have wanted to defuse religious conflict on the island, which had grown rapidly in the 1930s because of Muhammadiyah. In 1927 a petition was sent to the *controleur* of Selayar complaining about the *opu* of Barang-Barang, who had held a conference with the *kadi* and the orthodox *guru* regarding 'the following of Sarepe Ali [Tuang Muhammad]'. They had decided that those who did not perform their religious duties would not be allowed into the district mosque for the Friday prayers. Nor would religious officials be available for funerals or marriages.³⁷ Another incident, occurring in the late 1930s, which reflected worsening relations between the Mukhdi Akbar movement and the traditional élite, is remembered by the present day leader, Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq:

The traditional élite hated Mukhdi Akbar. Once on a market day in Paraq the *opu* of Bonea was greeted by Haji Jusuf. The *opu* held up his foot to Haji Jusuf instead of holding out his hand to greet him. Everyone saw it. It was a public place. In fact Haji Jusuf was offering his *salaman* (greeting).³⁸

It was the influence of Haji Muhammad Jusuf, the best known of the Mukhdi Akbar *guru* in this period, that won over the local headman (*bali gauq*) of Paraq to the movement:

My father Suhu Daeng Pataleh was the *bali gauq* of Paraq. He was a student of Haji Muhammad Jusuf. He used to waive the *adat* rules, for example (those) about marriage. If people wanted to get married and they didn't have enough money he

³⁶ *Soeara PMKI*, Vol.I, no. 4, March 1938, 2. ISGIT, STT-INTIM.

³⁷ Report of the Controleur of Seleier to Assistant Resident of Bantaeng, ANRI-M 121/69.

³⁸ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 18-11-1986.

would say 'there's no need to pay.' This was because he was strongly Mukhdi Akbar. Mukhdi Akbar says 'we are not concerned with material things.' Also in the way he received *upeti* (service) my father was different. People were obliged to fetch our water and guard our house. My father would insist they ate with us. He always gave them food. This wasn't prescribed by the *adat*. They would come and crouch down before my father and say *sumbangkapu* ('I give you my obedience').³⁹

The Mukhdi Akbar marriage ceremony has simplified the traditional Selayar *adat* weddings, which follow closely the Makassarese ceremonies. After an investigation of the prospective bride and her prospects by the interested man's family, a formal proposal is conveyed, after which the *sunrang* and *uang belanja* (expenses) are decided. Then follows the formal engagement, and later the Islamic ceremony and a wedding party. Mukhdi Akbar simplified this long process into one short ceremony before their own marriage celebrant. There is a modest *sunrang* or none at all. Both partners, not just the bride, are represented by a *wali*. The bride's *wali* may be her mother; the *wali* need not be a male relative. If both *wali* agree, the bride is simply asked if she is willing to give her 'heart, mind, body, and soul' to the groom. There are no payments to religious officials. However, although husband and wife are considered equal in rights and duties, polygamy still exists and many Mukhdi Akbar adherents have more than one wife.

The Japanese occupation

The Japanese occupation was a period of great economic and social disruption for Selayar. Food gardens were planted with castor oil plants, and a new fast-growing variety of cotton. The Japanese successfully revived the once famous local cloth industry, and Selayar again began exporting the traditional blue *kain Selayar*, which because of severe cloth shortages elsewhere in South Sulawesi became very valuable on the black market. The maize crop was requisitioned at very low prices, common people had to 'steal to eat,' and people had to plant cotton in their maize field to make yarn which the Japanese then requisitioned to make cloth. Japanese officials supervised cotton and castor oil planting through the local élite, who determined whose land was to be used. People with distended stomachs due to the swelling of the spleen caused by chronic malaria could be seen everywhere. Smuggling was very lucrative as people took whatever cloth they could keep or hide as far as Boné to barter for food.⁴⁰

³⁹ Basong Daeng Bicara, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 14-11-1986.

⁴⁰ Hussein, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 24-12-1986; Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 15-12-1986. One Selayar copra dealer who had pawned 2000 coconut trees during the depression got them back for 400 *kain Selayar*, such was the value of cloth during the occupation. Haji Chaeruddin, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 20-11-1986.

With the Dutch no longer imposing the status quo in religious affairs in Selayar, Islam, especially reformist Islam, began to reassert itself. The *opu* (renamed *guncho* by the Japanese), of Layolo in the south informed the Japanese *guncho shodai* (head of administration) that Muslims in Binanga Benteng would no longer take orders from their *gallarang* or headman because he was a member of the Igama Binanga Benteng. The people wanted a Muslim *gallarang* as in former times.⁴¹ The Dutch-backed authority of the traditional élite, the *adat* and *syarat*, was beginning to weaken, a process which culminated, as recounted below in a peaceful revolution in 1951. The indirect Christian missionary protection of the Mukhdi Akbar movement was also gone, leaving its adherents more vulnerable to pressure from either traditional or reformist Islam (especially Muhammadiyah) to return to that fold.

The Japanese received a report that the members of the Mukhdi Akbar movement were enemy spies because of their Dutch missionary connections. In Paraq, as elsewhere in occupied Indonesia, the Japanese broke open wardrobes and cupboards in their houses to search for illegal radio transmitters. A large sign outside the house of Haji Muhammad Jusuf, expressing the meaning of Mukhdi Akbar as *Damena langasenna Agamaya*, or Harmony of All Religions, a notice which many Mukhdi Akbar members also had outside their homes, was taken down at that time. About thirty Mukhdi Akbar members from nine villages were detained in the stables of the Japanese commander, interrogated, beaten, and left without food for thirteen days, according to popular memory. The Japanese also wanted to know why Mukhdi Akbar members did not pray five times a day, suggesting to them, as they were under pressure at the time, that perhaps the Muhammadiyah or the *pegawai syarat* (or both) were behind the enemy spy accusations.

The prison period is remembered as a time of great suffering, but also great solidarity. It was a time of visions, visitations, and dreams. The movement's deceased founder Haji Abdul Gani appeared to Haji Muhammad Jusuf and told him that the Japanese would be forced to eat tobacco because 'they did not know truth from evil'. The story is told that several times during *sembahyang* the soul of Jusuf left his body, so he was able to observe with detachment how a Japanese soldier illtreated his body. Murkurdini Tuang Nyaqraq, the son of Sarepe Ali Tuang Muhammad and Haji Abdul Gani's son-in-law, urged Haji Muhammad Jusuf to use his powers to escape, but he refused, saying that his *ilmu*⁴² was not to be used for this purpose. Tuang

⁴¹ Letter from Layolo Guncho to Selayar Guncho Shodai, 12-2-2603 [1943], ANRI-M 65/60.

⁴² *Ilm* or *ilmu* covers systematic, theological knowledge of the other world.

Nyaqlaq also dreamt that women brought him food. After the meal he woke up, burped, and felt no hunger for the next seven days and nights.⁴³ These experiences, which in principle could be had by all members, profoundly affected all those who were involved. Today members are proud of themselves and their group solidarity, the fact that nobody betrayed anyone under pressure or gave information to the Japanese. With no proof that they were Dutch spies the Japanese released the Mukhdi Akbar people and approached them with the offer of becoming informers, but they refused. However, the Japanese told them to start attending Friday prayers at the local mosques. The occupation experience thus provided some spiritual capital, which helped the movement to survive in the post-independence climate.

Independence

Between the Japanese surrender and the reoccupation of Selayar by the Dutch after a short resistance by a handful of poorly armed *pemuda* led by Muhammadiyah nationalists on the beach at Benteng on 13 February 1946, the traditional élite began to reassert its authority:

The *opu* were even more reactionary in the Nica period.⁴⁴ You had to get off your bicycle when they passed. When I came out of jail in 1948 I was sent to do *corvée* on the roads. The *opu* laughed, '*Apa itu merdeka?*' ('Is that independence?').⁴⁵

NICA removed the pro-Republican leadership in Selayar, most of whom were members of Sukarno's PNI (Indonesian National Party) of Muhammadiyah background who refused to cooperate. To the relief of the Dutch the Mukhdi Akbar movement kept a low profile. The new Dutch administrator in Selayar noted that the Mukhdi Akbar movement with its mystical teaching of 'how to become holy by the suppression of the individual' is a movement whose members are 'even more orderly and quiet than other Selayar people.'⁴⁶ The Protestant Church resumed missionary work on the island in 1948 and appointed a local man, Nonce Daeng Massikki, as evangelist. The Mukhdi Akbar movement, in order to strengthen its position against Islam, engaged in a short-term collaboration scheme with the Protestant Church.

⁴³ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, interview, Benteng, Selayar 18-11-1986; Basong Daeng Bicara, interview, Benteng, Selayar 15-11-1986.

⁴⁴ NICA, or Netherlands Indies Civil Administration, headed the administration of Selayar until July 1946, when the Allies returned the responsibility of administration to the Netherlands Indies Government under Van Mook.

⁴⁵ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, interview 18-11-1986.

⁴⁶ J. van Bodegom, 'Politiek overzicht Onderafdeeling Selajar. Behoort bij de Memorie van Overgave der Onderafdeeling Saleier' (June 1947) ANRI-M 17/2.

There were no mass conversions, but rather the forming of a federation, called Agama Isa, between the church and the movement. Both parties retained their identity, while certain interests of the Mukhdi Akbar movement were taken care of by the Protestant Church, which acted as a representative for the movement to the government. Christianity made only few converts among the Mukhdi Akbar before 1966. In 1952 the number of autochthonous Christians on the island was only 32 people.

Religious change after independence

In Selayar the revolution meant simply reoccupation by the Dutch. Following the removal of foreign rule with the The Hague Round Table Agreement of December 1949, far-reaching forces for change were released. The KGSS (Kesatuan Gerilja Sulawesi Selatan), a federation of resistance groups which helped establish Republican authority elsewhere in South Sulawesi throughout 1950, effectively controlled the island by August 1950 through APRIS (Angkatan Pemuda Republik Indonesia di Selajar), the Youth of the Republic of Indonesia in Selayar. At a mass meeting in Benteng under the auspices of KGSS Battalion X02, Muhammadiyah led the demands for change. *Opu* and *kadi* appointed by NICA were called upon to resign, 'because they only filled their own pockets or their own stomachs, and always oppress the people. Starting now we have to overthrow them.'⁴⁷ All the *opu* had to resign and were replaced by either Muhammadiyah men or their sympathizers. The new republican administrator (Kepala Pemerintah Negeri, KPN) of Selayar was Arupala, who was appointed by Lonto Daeng Pasewang, the first republican governor of South Sulawesi.⁴⁸ Until his departure in October 1951 Arupala confirmed appointments of religious officials (*imam*, *khatib*, and *bidal*) chosen by local elections to replace the old *pegawai syarat*. *Kadi* also became government officials of the Ministry of Religion.⁴⁹

Developments within the Mukhdi Akbar movement can be seen in the context of the social changes experienced by Selayar during and after the revolution. On 5 May 1948, the Partai Mukhdi Akbar was established, having as its basis the principle of *ketuhanan*, the belief in the One God. The goal of this party, a kind of peasant organization, was the advancement of mutu-

⁴⁷ 'Verslag dari rapat Masjumi pada hari Kamis tg. 14 September 1950, djam 3.30 sore bertempat dibangsal pasar di kampung Tanga-Tanga, Kajuadi dan dihadiri anggota kira-kira 300 orang', ANRI-M 135/134.

⁴⁸ Arupala, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 2-12-1985.

⁴⁹ 'Kutipan dari surat penetapan kepala pemerintahan negeri Salajar', 8 August 1951, ANRI-M 413/137A.

al help and assistance (*gotong royong*), especially in building roads, agriculture, fisheries and livestock husbandry. The party was willing to cooperate with anyone who strove for the same ideals. In fact, this organization was a continuation and extension of what had been begun by Haji Abdul Gani a long time before the war, when he had tried to establish small scale cooperatives (*lumbung desa*).⁵⁰ These were intended to give assistance, especially to poor peasants, who frequently fell victim to the despotism of large land-owners.

During the next decade the Mukhdi Akbar movement earned a reputation for cooperation with the local government. Villages where Mukhdi Akbar adherents were influential also organized common gardens, the produce from which was distributed equally amongst all members.⁵¹ The government in general was favorable to the movement because of its members' enthusiasm for work, and gave permission for the lands formerly owned by the *opu* of Batangmata to be cultivated by the Mukhdi Akbar members, with 10% of the income going to Selayar regency.⁵² On Gusung Island, Mukhdi Akbar members built and managed fish traps on a cooperative basis, and the proceeds went to pay for funeral expenses or for boats lost in storms.⁵³

Using the opportunities the new political climate seemed to offer, the movement on 11 July 1953 formally announced it was going to be called the Agama Mukhdi Akbar. In the statement issued on that date, the movement announced that from that moment marriage and funeral services would be the responsibility of the movement, free from any supervision from the *pegawai syarat* but in cooperation with the Department of Religion. This declaration was prompted by the still unresolved religious differences between the *pegawai syarat* and the Mukhdi Akbar movement and by the lack of uniformity in religious administration among districts. Moreover, there were no marriage laws for non-Muslims and non-Christians, and articles 18 and 43, paragraph 2, of the Constitution of the Independent Republic of Indonesia guaranteed freedom of religion, including the so-called *kepercayaan*, and freedom to observe one's own religious practices. This declaration was accompanied by a document entitled 'The basis of belief of the Mukhdi Akbar Religion', which also emphasized freedom to conduct one's own religious rites and ceremonies. Religious duties and obligations were not laid down as in Islam, because Allah is invisible (*gaib*), and cannot be known through the

⁵⁰ Also called *lumbung padi*, or *lumbung miskin*.

⁵¹ Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq, 'Mukhdi Akbar didalam ke-Agamaan' (Selayar, 3-1-1953), ANRI-M 513/171.

⁵² 'Surat dari kepala pemerintah negeri Selayar tentang permohonan berkebunan Koko Lohe (Katangka) jang terletak dalam distrik Batangmata', Selajar 12 October 1959. (Private collection of documents of Rukuq Daeng Mapattaq.)

⁵³ Umarang, interview, Benteng, Selayar, 18-11-1986.

five senses. The religion believed in prophets because prophets created peace and order in the world. There was no need for prayers for the dead.⁵⁴ The last of the four *guru*, Haji Muhammad Jusuf had died on 12 August 1949. The present leaders were not *guru* in spiritual matters; their authority was concerned with social issues (*soal kemasyarakatan*) which affected members, such as marriages and funerals. Mukhdi Akbar members should be ready to work together with the adherents of other religions in programs to improve the community (*memperbaiki masyarakat*). From the movement's various registers of adherents kept in each region of Selayar, it was estimated that, at the beginning of 1953, there were 2,337 members, of which 793 were children.⁵⁵

Not surprisingly the declaration by the Mukhdi Akbar movement labelling itself a formal religion caused concern in the Office of Religious Affairs in the *kabupaten* or regency capital of Bantaeng (from where Selayar was administrated until 1961). Soeleman Abbas, the head of the local Office of Religious Affairs in Selayar (who had helped the Japanese arrest Mukhdi Akbar members), wrote at length on the 'unhealthy' local religion. The Mukhdi Akbar movement had been under observation and had been required to answer questions about its history and activities as early as November 1950.⁵⁶ In April 1953 the Department of Religion in Makassar took a rather liberal view, saying that the movement was the responsibility of the state and should not be obstructed. However, Muslim preachers should be more active in informing people about Islam.⁵⁷ When the Selayar Religious Affairs Office complained that the Mukhdi Akbar movement was 'creating chaos for organized religion' (*hanya mengacau agama*), they admitted that it was obtaining converts because their marriages did not have to be registered.

For the next eight years the Mukhdi Akbar movement was left alone by the government, although in 1959 Mukhdi Akbar leaders were again reminded that their position as a 'mystical movement' was still difficult.

The banning of the Mukhdi Akbar movement

One can see the formal banning of the Mukhdi Akbar movement in 1966 in terms of the changed political climate after the attempted coup of 1965 and the opportunity this altered ambience provided for Islam on the offensive

⁵⁴ 'Muqaddimah', 11 July 1953, and 'Dasar paham agama Muchdi Akbar', 10 July 1953, ANRI-M 409/47.

⁵⁵ 'Daftar djumlah anggota agama B. Benteng di kawedanaan Salajar', 25 January 1953, ANRI-M 513/171.

⁵⁶ ANRI-M 958/177.

⁵⁷ Letter from H. Moh. Sjukri, head of the Department of Religious Affairs in Makassar, to the Office of Religious Affairs in Bantaeng, 30 April 1953, ANRI-M 409/47.

throughout Indonesia, not just towards the left, but also other religious groups. Three years before the coup, the Department of Religious Affairs in Makassar went on the offensive, urging the Department of Home Affairs to ban the movement. The main thrust of their argument for the banning was that because Mukhdi Akbar was in fact a Muslim sect, its marriage ceremony was 'unregulated' (*perkawinan liar*). Originally, Mukhdi Akbar had been a genuine spiritual tradition, but after the founders had died and younger leaders had taken over following the Second World War, the movement had lost its spiritual direction and had become an organization for private profit.⁵⁸

The provincial government in Makassar remained unimpressed with these arguments, despite yet another long submission from Soeleman Abbas. The provincial government's response showed a reluctance to interfere. Can the marriage problem not be solved locally? If the movement is banned, what will be the people's reaction?

The political situation after the attempted coup of 1965 left local religious minorities, particularly those liable to accusations of being socialist, in a vulnerable position to pressure from Islam and the military. While the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in Selayar had never amounted to much, the Mukhdi Akbar movement could be labelled a movement with socialist and in the political climate of the time, subversive tendencies. In Selayar Muhammadiyah, which had formed a local branch of the Jakarta-based KAPPI (Indonesian Student and Youth Action Front), used the situation in early 1966 to launch its campaign.⁵⁹ The report sent to the military authorities in Makassar said it was Mukhdi Akbar that was the base of the unrest in Selayar, and gave the commander of the Hasanuddin Division a security reason for the order on 26 October, 1966, to ban Mukhdi Akbar and all its activities. While under the state ideology of Pancasila, the Indonesian government officially recognizes six 'religions' (*agama*),⁶⁰ in Selayar Mukhdi Akbar adherents were given only two choices, Islam or Protestant Christianity. Between 1966 and 1971 Muhammadiyah in Selayar, and the Department of Religion made little headway, just as 30 years earlier Dutch missionaries had little success in gaining Mukhdi Akbar converts. Tuang Nyaqlaq, one of

⁵⁸ ANRI-M 958/177.

⁵⁹ At the same time members of Muhammadiyah were cutting down palm trees as a protest against the production of palm wine, while KAPPI forced local Chinese to sign a declaration that all foreigners would leave Selayar by the end of 1966. Letter from F.K. Pondaag, chairman of the Benteng Church Council, to Nonce Daeng Massikki, chairman of the Christian Church of South Sulawesi (GKSS), 16-6-1966, Arsip Massikki, ISGIT, STT-INTIM, Ujungpandang. Pondaag, a public prosecutor, was worried that his church would suffer the same fate as the Chinese and to be told to leave the island. This, however, did not happen.

⁶⁰ Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam. See Howell 1982:500.

Mukhdi Akbar's spiritual leaders, under pressure from authorities to choose between Islam and Christianity, after long hesitation said that his religion was Agama Isa (the religion of Isa). In 1971 he had himself, his wife Salimah Opu Malluru, and several followers baptized at the beach near Benteng. Local authorities were relieved, as they took this to mean Tuang Nyaqlaq was now a Christian.

Epilogue

In the mid-1970s Hinduism was officially recognized as a religion in Selayar. Many former Mukhdi Akbar adherents left the local Protestant Church (Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Selatan, GKSS) and were registered as Hindu. These followers felt that Hinduism rather than Islam or Christianity allowed them the freedom to practice their own sufistic beliefs. The few marriages that take place among Mukhdi Akbar adherents today are registered, ironically enough, as Hindu rather than Muslim marriages.

The process of adjustment and adaptation between different religious traditions in South Sulawesi has continued for over four centuries. After independence, in particular since the rise to power of the New Order, the status of religious beliefs and practices of minority groups and belief systems has continued to be an issue. The Marriage Law of 1974 recognized the rights of minority religious and cultural groups to conduct their own marriage ceremonies. Groups previously outside the officially recognized religions could now be accepted by the state as members of *aliran kepercayaan*, (literally 'currents of belief'). After 1978 supervision of these *aliran kepercayaan* was transferred from the Ministry of Religion to a new Directorate for the Guidance of Believers in the Almighty (Pembinaan Penghayat Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa) within the Ministry of Education and Culture (Permadi 1986/87). A national register of *aliran kepercayaan* was drawn up, which includes two groups from mainland South Sulawesi: the Amma Toa in the east coast village of Kajang, who are adherents of the original Patuntung beliefs of highland Goa, and the Toani Tolotang of Amparita, in Sidénréng-Rappang. Partly because the Mukhdi Akbar movement was banned in 1966, partly because it is still considered a deviant mystical sect of Islam, the Mukhdi Akbar has not yet been able to gain official registration as an *aliran kepercayaan*.