

# The Ammatoa of South Sulawesi, Indonesia:

A Photo Essay

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Sapril Akhmady is a graduate student in Asian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. These photographs were taken by the author in South Sulawesi, in the summer of 2005.

Tana Toa is a village located in Kecamatan Kajang (sub district of Kajang) in Kabupaten Bulukumba (District Bulukumba), South Sulawesi Province of Indonesia. At the center of the village stands a gate that marks a cultural boundary between two areas: *Tana Lohea* (outside the gate) and *Tana Kekea* (inside the gate).

The Ammatoa people live inside the gate in an area surrounded by thick, dense forest.

The Ammatoa always dress in black clothing, a reflection of the local religion that they practice, *patuntung*, meaning "the direction."



*An Ammatoa man hunting wild pigs in the communal forest.*

The Ammatoa people's spirituality manifests itself in two core religious beliefs that illustrates the community's value systems. The first is known as *pakpasang* meaning "messages from God," which describes the relationship between human beings and the Creator.

The second is called *pasang* meaning "messages from the ancestors." These messages are transferred through oral tradition. This element of *patuntung* is a

reflection of the Ammatoa people's customary laws. They believe that all dimensions of life are related to both the material world, and also the immaterial world. All of these ideas are embedded in their religious values. They believe, for example, that God is watching their daily lives from the forest. For this reason forests must be preserved as sacred places.

*An Ammatoa boy wearing the traditional black clothing. As more Ammatoa children attend Indonesian government schools, the practice of always wearing black clothing is fading, due to government proscriptions to wear uniforms.*





*Top: Three Ammatoa men walking back to Tana Toa.*

*Middle Left: Ammatoa men performing a "scarf" dance. Prior to the arrival of Islam, the Ammatoa people practiced cockfighting. With the advent of Islam, the cock was substituted with a scarf.*



*Middle Right: A group of Ammatoa men exiting the village, while some women in black are bringing goods back from the forest.*



*Bottom: The Ammatoa people continue to use organic and traditional methods for growing rice, in spite of government pressure to adopt high-yield crops, as well as modern machinery.*