CHAPTER SEVEN

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE PATTERNS IN A CHANGING ECONOMY

At the crack of dawn everything is already in full swing in the village of Kondo'. Today is market day in Rantepao, and the villagers are preparing themselves for the short ride to the commercial centre of Tana Toraja to sell their fresh products, to run some errands and to hear the latest news, including that about upcoming ceremonies. Pasar Bolu, as it is called, is located a few kilometres north of the town on the banks of the Sa’dan river, and it is the largest market in the highlands. The market space is a loose arrangement of various covered sections of vendor stalls which extend into the surrounding streets.

Small minibuses (bemos) loaded with pigs, vegetables, maize, sacks of coffee beans and rice arrive in the market streets. A couple of young Torajan men return by motorcycle from the harbour of Palopo where they have bought fish, now in two large bamboo baskets hanging on each side of the saddle, ready for sale. Hundreds of becak drivers (pedicabs), bemo chauffeurs and ojeks (motorcycle taxis) move haphazardly dropping off their passengers. In the midst of this chaotic traffic, women carrying large baskets of vegetables and fruit on their backs, plod forward in search of a spot to put down their merchandise. Men are loaded with bundles of colourful bags, hand carvings and hand-forged knives, or lug fresh palm wine in plastic jerrycans. While the stationary traders spread out their food, household items, hardware or clothes on a mat or in a basket, food vendors are pushing small stalls along, ready to serve those who did not have breakfast before leaving home. Some villagers are attempting to lead their buffalo through the crowd to the livestock section, the largest market of its kind in Tana Toraja. Hundreds of buffalo are offered to prospective buyers, but ordinary market visitors also try to get a glimpse of these prestigious animals. In March 2003, the most expensive bull ever sold for Rp 90 million. From the neighbouring section comes the penetrating sound of screaming pigs that lie on their sides, trussed up on bamboo stretchers in neatly arranged rows. The pig department is bustling with vendors, buyers and porters that carry the pigs to and from the bemos. The smaller pigs are carried in wheelbarrows and the larger pigs hang from stout bamboo poles. Before noon, many visitors are already returning home, and in a couple of hours the market space is quiet again.

This lively and picturesque scene, in which I was involved for several times, can be observed weekly on market days and does not seem to have suffered from Indonesia’s economic crisis. Although Pasar Bolu is at the
heart of a large network of markets spread all over the highlands, it is not very exceptional, and at most markets there is no obvious sign of diminishing economic activity. However, to interpret the Torajans’ economic situation solely in terms of trade and markets would produce a simplified portrayal of a predominantly agricultural economy and thereby reproduce popular dichotomies of a traditional versus modern dualism that ‘shares the problem of stereotyping, and underestimates the diversity, complexity and productivity of upland farming systems’ (Murray Li 1999:28). In order to show the breadth of the Torajan economy, we have to bring the various economic spheres—production, distribution and consumption—within a single field of vision. In so doing one has to take into account the historical processes that have informed both the differences and the similarities in the economic life of Torajan villagers. Consequently, the first section of this chapter provides a broad historical overview of the regional Torajan economy.

Against this background, I consider the various economic spheres of the research villages in the subsequent section. The discussion about production and distribution follows Murray Li’s analysis that pays equal attention: (1) to the ‘significant middle ground’ of rural economies, namely
income and expenditure patterns in a changing economy

On Indonesian upland societies, see for example the contributions of White and Hüskens on rural Java in Hart et al. 1989; Murray Li 1999:5.

‘tegal, dryland, tree grove/swidden combinations, commercial crops on smallholdings or in fallows, and farming strategies which include both upland and sawah components’; (2) to seasonal combinations that include fishing or waged labour and ‘many other livelihood options that upland people have identified and pursued’; (3) and to combinations of farm and non-farm components that can include migrants and their remittances. By taking into account the whole plethora of income activities that Torajan villagers have at their disposal, an attempt is made to show diversity, complexity and productivity. Even covering these income activities will not explain much without an understanding of the expenditure patterns of households; these will be outlined in the penultimate section.

I began this study with the assumption that an apparent paradox existed between the sizes and costs of ceremonial activities, that have increased while the value of money fell and living costs that have increased because of the national economic crisis. The question that then arose is, ‘What are the real effects of the economic crisis on people's living standard, and how do Torajans still find the money in ‘times of crisis' to contribute to the extravagant ceremonies?’ To overcome the problem of time limitations that prevent me from completing a pre- and post-crisis study of people's incomes and expenditures, which would help in analyzing the actual effects on people's livelihoods, I base the last section on case studies and oral histories that provide insights into the dynamics of people's economic activities.

Economic Development in Tana Toraja: Booms and Busts

Before turning to the village economies of Palipu’ and Kondo’, I begin with the historical conditions under which the economy developed in Tana Toraja as a whole. As in many other regions of Indonesia,¹ the penetration of the market into the Torajan village economy was neither an ‘abrupt development brought about by the modern agricultural technologies of the 1970s nor a linear progressive’ trend that took off following the early years of colonial interference (Hüsken 1989:303). Rather, agricultural commercialization, proletarianization and migration of the Torajan population, and cultural commodification, entered Tana Toraja cyclically; the course and pace were determined by nationally and internationally

¹ On Indonesian upland societies, see for example the contributions of White and Hüskens on rural Java in Hart et al. 1989; Murray Li 1999:5.
changing conditions and the way in which local agents responded to these changes. The manner in which the recent economic crisis is experienced locally and the way this works out in the context of everyday lives and practices, can only be understood if it is seen as a product of these complex historical economic cycles. As in Chapter 4, this section develops chronologically and is divided into the same four historical periods that have been prominent in Tana Toraja previously noted: pre-colonial; colonial; post-colonial; and post-1998 (or the economic crisis period). Since the history of migration has already been extensively discussed in Chapter 3, that topic will be largely omitted from this historical overview.

Early Economy of the Highlands

For generations, as with all spheres of life in the Sa’dan highlands, the economy was organized around the tongkonan. These ‘tongkonan economies’ were not only designed to assure the survival of its members but also production of a surplus needed for the performance of a complex cycle of rituals. In principle, the land and other resources that surround a tongkonan were communally owned. Members that wanted to establish their own tongkonan were pushed into uninhabited areas where they had to open up new agricultural land. Through this practice, Torajans moved out from the major fertile valleys to the smaller and drier knolls and steeper hillsides. In this early pre-colonial time, Torajans lived from the cultivation of rice, maize, cassava and other tubers. Rice played a major role in rituals and was mainly consumed during ceremonial activities and for daily consumption only by people from the highest social class. Rice was grown on irrigated fields laid out in the flat bottoms of the valleys and on some terraced mountain slopes. The diet of the less well-off mainly consisted of maize and cassava that were widely grown on upland dry lands (Kis-Jovak et al. 1988:14). The leaves of the cassava plant were ‘cooked and used for pig vegetables’ (Bigalke 1981:11). Animal husbandry of pigs, buffalo and chickens constituted another important livelihood activity. Buffalo and pigs were the most popular animal stocks as they were status symbols to be sacrificed in large numbers at ceremonies. For this reason, buffalo were rarely used to perform agricultural work.

Although there is some basis for suggesting that coffee had already been introduced into the Sa’dan highlands around the seventh or eighteenth century, it was not until the 1870s that substantial production
started. At this time, world market prices for coffee quadrupled, and the increasing demand from lowland traders encouraged various Torajans to cultivate coffee in the upland regions (Nooy-Palm 2003:87). It is not clear whether a market system existed as an economic institution before this trading stimulus. However, by the late nineteenth century, the Torajan market system was ‘in keeping with the new demands for collection and distribution of goods’ (Bigalke 1981:39). In this period, a large network of interlocking circles that each comprised six markets had developed in the highlands. In practice, this meant that markets returned to the same place every seventh day. In an account of his visit to the Sa’dan highlands in 1902, Van Rijn reported that markets were well attended by Torajans, many of whom walked for two hours or more to get there. Lowlanders came to these markets to trade coffee in return for cotton (cloth). According to Van Rijn, coffee brought some prosperity to the population of the Sa’dan highlands. He also argued that the slave trade went on freely, given the fact that children were offered for sale each market day. ‘They showed me a young boy for whom the owner, also Torajan, asked 10 Rijksdaalders [25 guilders or about 13 US dollars]; the child clearly had not been fed for many days and looked so miserable and weakened that death would have brought liberation within a few days’ (Van Rijn 1902:7). Children around the age of six were especially popular among Bugis traders because they did not try to run away as did their elders.

As noted in Chapters 3 and 4, slavery had existed in the highlands for centuries. However, the growing networks of trade that linked the highlands and lowlands in the nineteenth century ‘largely in response to the world rise in coffee prices and the proliferation of coffee bushes in the highlands’ made highland slaving easier (Bigalke 1981:64). In 1885, the highlands of Tana Toraja became the scene of a struggle between rival groups from neighbouring lowland regions who tried to control the valuable coffee exports. This struggle went on alongside plundering and slave raids by combative expansionist Torajan headmen (Van Lijf 1951:357). When the Dutch came on the scene in 1905, they found a region debilitated through intervening neighbouring rulers and civil wars that had afflicted Tana Toraja for two decades (Van Lijf 1948:534).

The Torajan Economy Under Colonial Rule

The Dutch occupied the region under the pretext of introducing a Pax Neerlandica. They ended the wars and slave trading and created

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3 For a plausible argument that coffee found its way into the highlands well before the nineteenth century, see Bigalke 1981:30–1.
conditions for the introduction of education, health care, Christianity, a centrally organized administration, and a structured import and export trade. Although cash entered the region in the first few years after the Dutch arrival in the highlands, the livelihoods of most Torajans remained largely unchanged. The latter half of the 1910s marked the beginning of a long period of economic booms and busts. A lingering drought was followed by a series of poor rice crops in 1916, 1917 and 1918, while the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918 and 1919 killed 10 per cent of the population in the divisions of Makale and Rantepao (Bigalke 1981:254). ‘Normal conditions’ returned in Tana Toraja at the end of the 1910s, and in 1920 and 1921 the Torajans were blessed with exceptional rice harvests (Alle den Volcke 1923a:89). However, in 1922 the economy took a turn for the worse for the second time within less than four years. Some villages lost their entire crop to the rice pest _pasian_, a rice mould that prevents the formation of the grain. Together with a plague of mice that devoured more of the crop, Tana Toraja faced a serious rice shortage that year. A cattle disease that was possibly even more disastrous devastated the most valued of the Torajan possessions, the buffalo, in the same year. Exporting the buffalo hides helped those who had lost their animals to minimize, to some extent, their financial losses (Alle den Volcke 1923b:31). In the following year, drought once again caused great damage to the rice crop (Alle den Volcke 1923c:102). These disasters made people look for causes, and they usually attributed them to individual and corporate violations of taboos.

Relative prosperity returned in 1925 and persisted until the Great Depression affected Tana Toraja in the mid-1930s. Food such as rice, maize, cassava, leaf vegetables, bananas, coconuts and peanuts were amply available, and a large proportion of the rice harvest was even exchanged for money on the local market. A considerable volume of potatoes was grown for export to neighbouring regions but not for home consumption (Lafeber 1925:7). In 1928, coffee prices were high and centres of coffee production were booming. ‘Hundreds of persons owned horses…and expenditures on gambling, cock-fights, and death feasts were reportedly lavish’ (Bigalke 1981:254). However, sacrificial feasts, which devoured large quantities of buffalo, pigs, chicken and rice, the custom of maintaining a large number of followers, and the passion for gambling prevented the formation of

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4 The coffee trade was mostly based on an exchange of Torajan coffee for weapons, necessities, or gadgets; cash was rarely used in this pre-colonial exchange network.

sizeable capital holdings (Nobele 1926:96). As most land was controlled by large landowners from the highest class, common people and slaves had no opportunity to share in the benefits of the boom years in the late-1920s and early 30s, and many Torajans left the relatively densely populated highlands to places all over Sulawesi to find employment (Van den End 1985:288). The Dutch encouraged the extension and intensification of the growing of rice and cash crops in Tana Toraja, but sizable plantations like those in Java or Sumatra never developed. The Dutch administration introduced head taxes and laid claim to labour service for large public works. Ne’Bado, an elderly woman from Palipu’ recalled:

> When the Dutch were in Toraja, every person had to pay a tax called ‘Sima Ulu’...each year, even the ones married had to pay an individual sum. During this time, little money was circulating, only coins. To pay the tax sometimes we had to sell chickens or we even gave chickens as barter. The tax collector was from Palipu’ and if we couldn’t pay the tax one year we had to pay the double amount next year.

The increased need for cash made many Torajans, who had formerly worked unpaid or as slaves, leave their homeland. As the Great Depression settled over Tana Toraja, the bottom dropped out of the coffee market, and the cash crunch became even more severe in the late 1930s (Bigalke 1981:254). With coffee prices low, Torajans struggled to come up with cash to pay taxes. The reliance on an economy increasingly dependent on exports had made Torajans more vulnerable to fluctuations in world demand. Further, in most villages, rice harvests failed for several years in a row, and people started to migrate on a large scale (see Chapter 3).

Even though coffee plantations were largely abandoned during the Depression, 5.2 million coffee trees were back in production in the years leading up to the Japanese intrusion into the highlands in 1942. During the years of Japanese occupation, coffee bushes were once again neglected and, by 1946, approximately half of the trees had died, and only one-third of the remaining trees were in production. The Japanese did not drink coffee, and exports were frozen completely. In the period between 1942 and 1945, Torajans had to cope with many difficulties: the Japanese took cattle to feed their troops and prevented the import of buffalo from other areas into Sulawesi; rice became scarce and the stock of pigs shrank quickly; many Torajans were forced to work in the lowlands and died of

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malnutrition and bad treatment. Thousands of others returned to their highland villages infected with malaria (Van Lijf 1951:259). ‘The most difficult thing I remember’, a villager from Palipu’ remarked, ‘was to find clothes. In that time we started to weave with threads made of pineapple leaves.’ Ne’Payung, now in her nineties and living in Kondo’, recalled the Japanese occupation:

During that time, there was a food shortage and it was very difficult to buy food. Nothing was like in the Dutch period. Many villagers only ate cassava and were hungry all the time. We didn’t have any clothes, and everything was too expensive to buy. Compulsory work for the Japanese was much harder than under the Dutch regime. Some villagers had to build houses for the Japanese, work on roads, and so on. Because life was so difficult, the Torajan word for difficulty or hardship, mapari’, became synonymous with food and clothes.

In the early years of Indonesian independence, the Torajan economy needed time to recover from the problems created during the Japanese occupation. The local market was suffering from shortages of rice, salt and textiles, which pushed prices up (Bigalke 1981:356). Meat and palm oil were also too expensive for most Torajans, and they had to live on only cassava and maize, leaving many of them malnourished. The ‘[e]conomic problems were accentuated by the collapse of coffee production’ (Bigalke 1981:357) and Tana Toraja found itself again in a crisis situation.

By the middle of the twentieth century, little had really changed in the way that Torajans supported themselves (except for a small number of civil servants, church officials and school teachers). The rotating weekly markets continued in much the same way. The two Torajan villages of Rantepao and Makale had developed into typical Indonesian towns. Rantepao had even become a significant marketplace but most of the trade was controlled by outsiders, such as the Chinese and Bugis (Van Lijf 1953:254). Only a minority of the Torajans managed to set up little shops or make use of a truck, bus or taxi.

Economic Transition: Steady Growth and Commercialization

Given the political turmoil in South Sulawesi, the Torajan economy became fairly isolated until 1965 when Suharto’s ‘New Order’ army defeated both Kahar Muhzakkar’s troops and the Torajan Communists. The onset

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7 A typical Indonesian town includes some government offices, schools, mosques and churches, shops and a central market place.
of the ‘New Order’ period (1966–1998) marked a rapid transition in the highlands. ‘The coming of the Dutch, the Japanese occupation, the call for Indonesian independence and the subsequent political unrest all had their effect, and the population has had to live through all these within three-quarters of a century’ (Kis-Jovak et al. 1988). It was, however, the enormous increase in out-migration and the consequent remittances from the migrants, the proletarianization of the population, the introduction of tourism into the highlands, and the introduction of several high-yielding cash crops that really touched upon all aspects of Torajan life. Since the 1970s, village economies have started to open up. Many economic activities that still largely revolved around subsistence and barter now became cash-based activities.

Nooy-Palm (1979a:12) had already observed in 1970 that tourism in Tana Toraja was burgeoning. Thus, only a few years after the Indonesian government had issued its second Five-Year Plan in 1974, which stimulated the development of tourism in ‘Outer Island’ destinations, the tourist industry in the Torajan highlands was already booming. ‘Whether it was the tourism promotion by the Indonesian government or a BBC television documentary in 1972, showing a Torajan funeral ritual, that led to the tourist boom is uncertain but the documentary certainly helped to lure foreign visitors to the Torajan highlands’ (Adams 1998:81). The unique character and beauty of the landscape, the colourful and dramatic ceremonies of the Torajans, together with a pleasant temperature all year round, hold much appeal for tourists. Since then, the number of tourists in Tana Toraja has been growing steadily. Hotel registration figures show that in 1996 over 58,000 international and 218,000 domestic tourists visited Tana Toraja.8 Next to migration, tourism offered Torajan people another non-agricultural alternative to the narrow range of available government and commercial positions (Morrell 2001). It has provided opportunities for some Torajans to invest in hotels or restaurants. Others found employment as drivers, guides, servants or cooks. Moreover, some farmers benefited from the sale of vegetables, eggs, poultry, handicrafts and even entrance tickets for tourist attractions located in their village.

Regardless of the benefits that tourism has brought to some people of Tana Toraja, most Torajans believe that the bulk of profits derived from

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8 BPS Kabupaten Tana Toraja 1996. This official number is probably a bit on the high side because it also includes Indonesian guests, such as traders, politicians and NGO members attending conferences and workshops, as well as occasional Torajan migrants with their families who may prefer to stay in hotels while taking part in ritual activities.
tourism goes to non-Torajan tour companies based in Jakarta, Bali and Makassar who have their agents and facilities in the capital of South Sulawesi (Crystal 1989:159). Despite the non-Torajan domination of the tourist market, some people, especially in and around the town of Rantepao, have a sizeable stake in this industry. Although reliable studies on the influence of tourism on the Torajan livelihood are lacking, it is argued that tourism has had little impact on most of the 75 per cent of the Torajan population who subsist as village farmers. According to Crystal, only those villagers involved in the production of handicrafts for sale in Rantepao and Makale have profited from the explosion of tourist arrivals. Further, these handicrafts are largely produced in one village, La’bo.

While little had changed in the Torajan agriculture since the nineteenth century, in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the agricultural world was shaken up. Rice was still the preferred Torajan staple but, except for a few large landholders, most people did not own enough land to provide themselves with rice all year round, and they had to buy some rice and supplement their diet with other crops grown in their garden. Contrary to what the lush green landscape and rice-field-covered mountains might suggest, most of the soil in the region was infertile or poorly suited to cultivation (Nooy-Palm 1979a:13). In the 1970s, national policymakers introduced agricultural programmes and economic policies aimed at making Indonesia self-sufficient in rice. The introduction of ‘high yield variety’ seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, technical assistance and improvements to irrigation systems by the Indonesian government in the 1970s increased the yearly production of rice. Many Torajan farmers reaped the benefits of these policies, and by the late 1970s some even started to harvest a second rice crop each year. Although it was formerly forbidden to plant rice on dry fields, this ‘ban’ had gradually been relaxed. With some exceptions, the development of irrigation works lagged behind, so that the success or failure of the harvest (or double cropping) for the majority of the rice farmers still depended on the amount of annual rainfall (Nooy-Palm 1979a:19).

In the late 1970s, the government introduced the cultivation of cloves to the highlands of Tana Toraja as a second cash crop alongside coffee. At that time, Torajan farmers also started to pay greater attention to the cultivation of fruit and vegetables because of an increased demand from the growing number of tourists and people working at the mining centres in

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9 In the 1970s, 90 per cent of the population in Tana Toraja was still involved in agriculture (Nooy-Palm 1979b:12). The remainder were civil servants, teachers or church officials.
the neighbouring district of Luwu (Nooy-Palm 1979b:22). In the 1980s, pepper was launched by government officials as a third cash crop, but it was never grown on a large scale. By the end of that decade, cocoa appeared much more promising in the Torajan highlands and even partly displaced coffee and traditional rice farming (Potter 2000:249). Although government extension or support was lacking, the rumours of large profits induced people to plant cocoa. While cocoa trees did not yield as high an output as coffee, and prices per kilogram were lower, cocoa cultivation was much easier. In the mid-1990s, vanilla was privately brought into the highlands and became another popular cash crop, but it is grown on a much smaller scale than cocoa. Based on the information from local vanilla planters, the vanilla plant yields pods after two or three years, but it usually dies after three harvesting years. Further, the plants are quite vulnerable to pests and disease and need constant care. As of 1996, coffee was still, by far, the most widely cultivated crop.

Developments in the New Order period thus dramatically altered the foundations of the regional economy. A new rice variety was introduced in the 1970s that enabled double cropping. Mechanization made it possible to prepare larger plots of land in a shorter time, while the use of pesticides with the improved varieties greatly reduced losses and fluctuations in harvests. On the other hand, these new techniques required larger investments, which acted as constraints on the lower-income earners (if they possessed rice fields at all). Together with the increasing popularity of wage labour, this turned the traditional farming system upside down. Former farmer groups, based on reciprocity, largely dissolved, and patron-client relations loosened or strengthened. The introduction of cloves, pepper, cocoa and vanilla made some farmers less vulnerable to fluctuations in coffee prices on the world market. The introduction of new cash crops also provided poor farmers and former slaves who owned no sawah the possibility of obtaining some cash from farming, thereby making them less dependent on patrons. However, most of these lacked the land or capital to farm on a large scale. For this group, livestock raising, petty trade, or migration (or remittances from other family members) seemed to be a better option.

10 In 1996 13,033 hectares were planted with coffee yielding 5,078 tons of coffee; 3,037 ha with cloves (110 tons); 904 ha with cocoa (733 tons); 277 ha with vanilla (57 ton); and 33 ha with pepper (8 tons) (BPS Kabupaten Tana Toraja 1996).

11 In 1970 the rice harvest yielded 40,000 tons (Nooy-Palm 1979a:12), while the rice harvested by 1996 amounted 133,559 tons (BPS 1996), which is more than a threefold increase.
In addition to agriculture, animal husbandry and tourism, by 1996 some 10 per cent of the population found jobs as civil servants, school teachers, church officials and businessmen. Similar to the tourist industry, local shops and the supply industry were still largely dominated by the Chinese and lowlanders (primarily Bugis). Local industry and manufacturing had remained fairly small-scale and only contributed in limited ways to the wealth of the area. Some small home industries (for instance the production of handicrafts in mountain villages) existed in Tana Toraja, but in general the only medium-scale industry in the region was to be found in Rantepao and Makale. The narrow range of jobs outside agriculture, a shortage of agricultural land, limited opportunities for higher education, a constraining social class system, and expensive funeral and house-building ceremonies encouraged the mass migration of Torajans to other regions in Indonesia and beyond (see Chapter 3). As a consequence, the flow of remittances into Tana Toraja became the largest source of income for the region.


After more than three decades of steady growth under the Suharto regime, Tana Toraja entered a rapid transitional period in the late 1990s. Regional economic conditions had been affected by the national economic crisis and, in 1998, the growth rate of the Gross Regional Product (GRP) had dropped dramatically from 9.12 per cent in 1996 to minus 3.38 per cent (BPS Kabupaten Tana Toraja 2000b:12). By 1999, Tana Toraja was recovering from the economic downturn, and the growth rate of the regency rose slightly again, reaching 4 per cent in 2001 (BPS Kabupaten Tana Toraja 2004a). However, in 2003 it slipped back once more to 2.29 per cent and to date the high growth rates of the early and mid-1990s have not been repeated.

Tana Toraja’s large involvement in cash crop cultivation meant that its economy was not hit as hard as were other areas of Indonesia.12 Owing to higher world market prices and a lower rupiah, resulting from the Indonesian economic and financial crisis, the rupiah prices of coffee (Robusta and Arabica), cocoa and cloves had skyrocketed by July 1997. By mid-1998 the prices of these crops in Tana Toraja had more than tripled

12 Indonesia’s Gross Domestic Product shrank in 1998 by 14 per cent (Gérard and Ruf 2001:3).
income and expenditure patterns in a changing economy

The contribution of cash crops to the General Regional Product (GRP) of Tana Toraja more than doubled from 9.95 per cent in 1996 to 19.73 per cent in 1998 (BPS Tana Toraja 2000b). The increase in the contribution of agriculture to the RBP of Tana Toraja (52.46 per cent in 1996 to 62.23 per cent in 1998) seemed to be entirely due to the increasing production of cash crops and the rising market prices for these crops. As of 2002, the price of one kilogram of Arabica was still worth twice what it was before the impressive price increases of 1997. The price of cocoa also remained fairly stable until the beginning of 2003, when it collapsed completely. After the hefty price fluctuations of coffee, cocoa and cloves came more or less to a standstill, vanilla prices started to rise dramatically in 2002. In 2003, one kilogram of wet vanilla yielded as much as Rp 250 thousand at the local market in Tana Toraja.

Alongside the price increases for cash crops in the initial phase of the Indonesian crisis, inflation of the rupiah pushed up the costs of daily necessities such as food, toiletries, electricity, fuel, medicines and education. Imported products such as pesticides, fertilizers, machines and luxury goods became even more expensive. Following the national trend, the inflation rate in South Sulawesi province reached 8.0 per cent in 1998, compared to just 4.56 per cent in 1996 (BPS Propinsi Sulawesi Selatan 2000). The inflation ceased in 1999 and has more or less stabilized in the years thereafter.

In addition to fluctuating profits for cash crops and costs of daily necessities, the once-thriving tourist industry in Tana Toraja collapsed completely. When violent conflicts spread throughout Indonesia in 1998 and 1999, tourists began to stay away, and the number of people visiting the area dropped from a peak of 280,000 a year to about 25,000 in 2001. In 2002 it seemed that tourists were regaining confidence in Indonesia and starting to return to Tana Toraja. However, the bomb blast in Bali in October 2002 was a deathblow for Tana Toraja's already crumbling tourist industry.

Meanwhile, thousands of Torajans were returning from conflict areas such as Poso, East-Timor, the Moluccas, Aceh and Kalimantan (Sambas) to the relatively safe haven of Tana Toraja. In 2002, many migrants also returned from Malaysia after the Malaysian government introduced stiff

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14 By 2002, as many as 7,588 Torajans had registered themselves as return migrants (Dinas Kependudukan dan Tenaga Kerja Kabupaten Tana Toraja 2001/2002).
measures to stem the flow of illegal immigrants. According to local records, only 391 migrants returned as a result of the Malaysian crackdown, but in reality the numbers are much higher.\textsuperscript{15} As one Torajan official explained, ‘It is difficult to get accurate data on the number of migrants who returned to Tana Toraja. Torajan people always feel embarrassed if they return to Tana Toraja after failing to succeed where they had migrated to. They do not want to register because they do not want other people to know about their failure.’

\textit{Village Economies in the Early Twenty-First Century}

After this outline of the regional historical processes, I will now sharpen the focus somewhat and look at the way in which these processes have constituted both differences and similarities in the economic lives of Torajans in the villages. Identifying and interpreting the plethora of income activities, costs of living, consumption patterns, resource allocation and distribution, and the way in which all these aspects are managed within the household, creates a basis for determining the way in which the recent economic crisis is experienced locally. These experiences, and the way these developed in the context of everyday lives and practices, are discussed in the next section.

\textit{Gross Village Cash Incomes}

The data from Palipu’ and Kondo’ show that almost all households (99 per cent) were involved in the agricultural cycle in some way or another (see Table 7.1). Likewise, livestock breeding was also found to be prevalent. Crop and livestock production feature alongside several non-agricultural contributions to a household’s wellbeing. Whereas diversification of local activities and income sources has become the norm, about half of the households have even spread their activities over two or more locations through migration. In this section, specific attention is paid to local productive livelihood practices; in other words, all that household members undertake to earn an income or create outputs that can be used directly by the household (Ashley et al. 2003), as opposed to reproductive (domestic)
practices. Although certain income activities are typically gender related, in most households both sexes generate incomes in cash or in kind.

Apart from market days, church services, feasts and ceremonies, everyday life in Palipu’ and Kondo’ is generally governed by the seasons. Because of the seasonal and fluctuating character of most income activities, it is difficult to obtain exact data on incomes. Nevertheless, most villagers were able to give a broad indication of their household’s income over the past year, sufficient to provide a picture of income divisions and differences.16 The data in Figure 7.1 show the contribution (in percentages) of each local income activity toward the total cash earned in Palipu’ and Kondo’. Noteworthy is the fact that the figures for the two villages differ on almost every activity, with the exception of general farm activities (proceeds from growing vegetables, fruit, sweet potatoes or corn, or paid labour on neighbouring farms).

Considering these figures, we can conclude that cash crop cultivation and government employment make up the largest income share in Palipu’, whereas Kondo’ can be characterized as a livestock-breeding village where rice growing and non-farm activities, such as carpentry and small-scale

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16 The data from the survey have been cross-checked with information derived from general observations and in-depth interviews.
trading, are equally important. The total annual income earned from local activities in Palipu’ is about Rp 290 million and in Kondo’ about Rp 385 million. When we take into account the fact that the number of households in Palipu’ (181) is much higher than in Kondo’ (148), we see that households in the northern village earn far more than households in Palipu’. The average yearly income per household (Rp 1.6 million) in Palipu’ is only two-thirds of that in Kondo’ (Rp 2.6 million). When we exclude the large amount of money earned by the very few civil officers (10 in Palipu’ and 2 in Kondo’), the picture becomes even more disadvantageous for the households in Palipu’. With that calculation, households in Palipu’ earn only a little more than a third (Rp 800,000) of households in Kondo’ (Rp 2.2 million).

Local Household Income Activities

The rice cultivation process runs through the life of most villagers like a continuous thread and, as a consequence, most livelihood activities are adjusted to it (see Figure 7.2 for the number of households involved in this activity). As rice is currently the main staple in both villages in the case study and important during ceremonial activities, it is generally planted for subsistence purposes. Only when households have a surplus will rice be sold on the markets of Rantepao or Makale. Notwithstanding this important role of rice (culturally and economically), the rocky soil in Palipu’ and in Kondo’ hinders large-scale rice cultivation and, especially in Palipu’, it contributes little to overall income.

The valley floor of Palipu’ is covered with 59 hectares of rice fields, which is about 11.4 percent of the total land area (517 ha). Considering that one hectare of wetland in Tana Toraja produces an average of 4,000 kilograms of rice per year (BPS Kabupaten Tana Toraja 2001), each individual would have 260 kilograms of rice at his or her disposal if the harvest were shared equally. Ellis (1990:46) noted that in the late 1980s average rice consumption in Indonesia was 145 kilograms per person. Thus, theoretically, each person in Palipu’ would have a surplus of 115 kilograms. In practice, however, the situation appears to be very different. All the major rice fields are owned by a small number of families that make up the highest social stratum of Palipu’ society. Further, the rice fields in Palipu’ are dependent on rainfall, which makes production unpredictable and

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17 Theoretically, 59 hectares of wetland yields 236,000 kilograms of rice. Dividing by a population of 905 gives an average of 260 kilograms per person in the village.
prevents the cultivation of a third or often even a second rice crop in a year. In practice, only 16 per cent of households produce a surplus of rice for sale; the majority have just enough or need to borrow rice from other villagers or buy it at the market.

There is a considerable variation between the quality and size of rice fields. The lowest ones in the valley are the most fertile, often fairly large in size, and all owned by families of the highest social strata. The upland rice plots are much smaller in size, strewn with large rocks and less fertile. These fields are accessible to some families from the lower social echelons of Palipu’. Irrigation of the rice fields comes about through an ingenious and complex system of small canals that runs between the rice fields. Many rice field owners depend upon the responsible water management of other landowners. There is no formal regulation of the irrigation system, yet quarrels appear to be infrequent. One farmer interviewed noted that ‘formal regulation for irrigating the fields is lacking, but each landowner, or caretaker, of rice fields understands how to regulate the water in the irrigation canals’.

In spite of the unequal distribution of rice fields, both in quantity and in quality, 44 percent of the households in Palipu’ have direct access to these fields through shared tenancy arrangements. In general, three kinds
of shared tenancy arrangements exist in Palipu': (1) the lenders take care of the rice fields and pay for all investments, and 30 to 50 percent of the harvest is transferred to the landowner; (2) both the investments and the harvest is shared equally by the landowner and land user; or (3) the rice field is worked by several people who receive 30 to 50 percent of the harvest, and the landowner is responsible for the necessary investments. Additionally, the pawning of rice fields, in return for their value in buffalo, is a common manoeuvre often undertaken in the event of an upcoming ceremony, or to meet the expenses of their children's education or to secure a position at a government office.

For instance, Pong Fitri pawned a piece of his rice fields to some rich villagers. The land is worth a certain number of buffalo and the market price for buffalo is what he received. If he wants the rice field back, he needs to return the same number of buffalo (or their future market value) to the mortgagers. He pawned the land because he needed the money to pay the school fees for his son in Makassar. Pong Fitri believes that he will be able to repay his mortgage soon after his son graduates from the police academy and starts to work.

Further, most households in Palipu' have at least access to a share in the rice harvest through different forms of labour arrangements. The rice cultivation process takes about 100 days and involves a series of practices that are quite labour-intensive. The cycle starts with the sowing of the rice seed in small nursery beds. A few days later, the rice fields are cleared of weeds, the dykes and irrigation system are reconditioned, and the fields are filled with water. After a month, the water will be drained out and the fields ploughed. Dykes are cleared of weeds, and the bottom of the field is flattened. The fields are re-flooded and are then ready for planting. It takes a couple of weeks more before the small lush green rice seedlings from the nursery beds are transplanted to the rice fields. This is the first activity in which women are heavily involved, or more precisely is only carried out by women. After another two months, the rice (padi) is fully grown and harvested by both men and women.

The planting and harvesting periods require a large number of labourers, although the ploughing of the fields also requires considerable labour. A quarter-hectare rice field requires about 30 to 40 people for two days in both the planting and harvesting seasons. Throughout Tana Toraja, rice field labour is still largely paid for by a share in the harvest. What does differ by region, or even by village, is the percentage of this payment.

Papi Legi owns a couple of rice fields that are considerably larger than the average in the village of Palipu'. In a good year, he has a rice harvest of six to
Ill. 7.2. Torajans planting rice (photo by Wim Jakobs).

Ill. 7.3. Taking a break from rice planting (photo by Wim Jakobs).
eight sacks (karung), which equals about 600 to 800 litres of rice. His family uses about two litres of rice per day; therefore the harvest is hardly enough to meet household consumption needs. Papa Legi calls in the help of some neighbours and friends for ploughing, planting, and harvesting. The fields are ploughed by hand, because the terraces are too small for a mechanical tractor. He pays the labourers at harvest time according to the general regulations in Palipu’. For ploughing, labourers obtain 7 to 8 litres of rice per day, for planting 4 to 5 litres, and for harvesting 2 litres out of every 10 litres harvested. He further has to provide one meal, cigarettes, coffee and palm wine to the labourers each working day. Papa Legi himself works on other people’s rice fields, where he receives the same kind of payment. He generally works for around ten days per rice cycle on the fields of others, and, if they have a good year, there might even be two rice harvests.

Given that this household, which owns a fair amount of land by Palipu’ standards, has problems meeting its consumption needs, it is not hard to understand that it must be difficult for landless villagers to make ends meet, even if they receive rice as wages-in-kind. Therefore, many households in Palipu’ grow cassava (48 per cent), maize (12 per cent), and/or sweet potatoes (45 per cent) to supplement their rice diet. Most also grow vegetables, fruits and chillies for home consumption. Some vegetables, such as tomatoes and onions, are sold on the market (by 12 per cent of households). In contrast to rice fields, which are symbolically important and inextricably linked to tongkonan, dry land (tegal) is less valuable and every household in Palipu’ has access to some tegal through direct ownership or on loan from their patron.

Some pieces of dry land are very small and located near to the house or carved out on steep slopes, while others are rather large and often used for cash crops such as coffee, cocoa, vanilla or cloves. Robusta coffee is the most popular crop grown on tegal. Whereas in the 1960s only a few coffee trees could be found in the village, now 71 per cent of households in Palipu’ cultivate coffee. However, the crop is generally used for subsistence purposes, and only 6 per cent of households earn money from the sale of it.¹⁸ More lucrative is the cultivation of vanilla and cocoa. When vanilla prices rocketed (following world market prices) in 2001, vanilla soon became a desirable crop in Palipu’. Some households in Palipu’ earned as much as Rp 5 million at the market for their vanilla harvest in 2002. Triggered by these promising profits, 59 per cent of Palipu’s households started to grow vanilla. However, vanilla vines need special care, and not everyone has the

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¹⁸ The average income from coffee is Rp 114,000, ranging from Rp 5,000 to 500,000.
knowledge or skills to grow them successfully. Only 22 per cent of the vanilla growers actually netted a profit out of this activity in 2002. Cocoa is a different story. Cocoa has been grown in Palipu’ since the early 1990s, and currently 67 per cent of households are growing it. Unfortunately, since 2001 Palipu’ has been hit by an epidemic that has affected most of the cocoa trees in the village. Although the fruits look healthy from the outside, the cocoa beans inside are rotten, and because of this only 19 per cent of the households in Palipu’ managed to earn any income from this activity. Along with dry land and rice fields, several households also possess some groves with various kinds of trees and bamboo. Some of these groves are close to the houses and consist of just a few trees, while others are much further away and much larger. About eight households in Palipu’ possess some Palmyra palm trees from which they extract palm wine.

Although agriculture is by far the most important source of income in Palipu’, livestock breeding and poultry add significantly to household income and constitute a fallback position in times of distress (see Table 7.1 for the number of livestock owned in the villages). Every household in Palipu’ raises at least some livestock, such as pigs (92 per cent of households), chickens (85 per cent) and buffalo (9 per cent).

In addition to providing income and security, livestock constitutes a future investment for gifts for funerals, tongkonan and wedding ceremonies. Some people rear cocks for fighting contests (gambling). Since many farmers lack the resources to cover the large initial investments in buffalo and pigs, a sharing arrangement with a livestock owner or trader is not uncommon. Apart from some large landowners who breed fish between the rice cycles in the rice fields, fish breeding is quite rare in Palipu’.

Table 7.1. Number of livestock.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livestock</th>
<th>Number of animals</th>
<th>Average number of specific animals owned in households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palipu’ Kondo’</td>
<td>Palipu’ Kondo’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>14 49</td>
<td>1.1 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>429 286</td>
<td>3.2 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>981 1153</td>
<td>7.8 11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>22 1</td>
<td>3.7 1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey conducted in Palipu’ and Kondo’ in 2003.
Along with agriculture and livestock breeding, Palipu's inhabitants employ several other activities to diversify the household's income. About 17 per cent of the households have at least one member who, on a part-time basis, works as a carpenter, bricklayer, or handicraft producer; depending on the labour demand in or near Palipu'. Four per cent of the households are involved in small-scale trading of livestock and cash crops. A few households (5 per cent) are more fortunate and have a stable monthly income through government employment, and others through government pensions. Surprisingly, these few households bring in about half of the village's total income. On average, these households receive more than Rp 10 million annually from the government.

In retrospect, one can confidently state that most households in Palipu' obtain a living through raising pigs or chickens in combination with the cultivation of one or more cash crops, such as coffee (Robusta), cocoa, vanilla and cloves. Less than half of them are involved in rice growing and/or in the cultivation of cassava. Some households have a regular income through government employment, or an irregular income through business, carpentry, craftwork, and so on, which is often on a part-time basis.
In contrast to Palipu', Kondo' is predominantly focussed on rice-growing. While the total area of rice fields (36 ha) is less than that in Palipu', and rice fields only cover 12.4 per cent of the total land area (290 ha), the quality of the soil is much better. The best rice fields, owned by households from the highest social strata, are even irrigated by the Rangri river. These rice fields nowadays generally yield two, and sometimes even three, harvests a year. However, the majority of Kondo's population have to rely on rain fed rice fields, and they are consequently more dependent on the amount of rainfall each year. As in Palipu', the distribution of rice fields, both in quality and quantity, is highly skewed. However, 73 per cent of the village's households are involved in the rice-growing process through share-cropping arrangements; which is far more than in Palipu' (44 per cent). These arrangements are usually based on an equal division of the harvest. Most people in Kondo' do not think about the size of their land and instead think in terms of the number of plots they own or work on. Most villagers retain their land even if they migrate. In return for a share of the harvest or cash, others are usually allowed to work such plots. Rice fields are rarely individually owned but remain the possession of the tongkonan. Land division in Kondo' (as in most of Tana Toraja) is highly complicated. Most plots, especially rice fields, are divided at funeral ceremonies among consanguineous relatives of the deceased person. The size of the land they inherit (usage rights) usually depends on the number and value of the buffalo they sacrifice at the ceremony. Because of the many divisions and re-divisions of land, many households possess several small rice plots of different quality at various locations. Each rice plot has a name that usually corresponds to an ancestor's name from an important tongkonan. The rice fields usually remain the property or common wealth of the tongkonan and are therefore seldom sold. In the past, all rice fields belonged to people from the highest class. A comprehensive land division has never taken place, thus denying most lower status households (usually from the poorer strata) access to rice fields.

Although the most important reasons for growing rice are to meet household consumption needs and supply funeral and house-building ceremonies, 51 per cent of the households in Kondo' make some money out of it. On average, they earn a little over one million rupiah (ranging from Rp 50 to Rp 10 million). As in Palipu', the majority of the villagers have access to the rice fields by contributing their labour during the ploughing, planting or harvesting seasons in return for a share of the harvest. However, it is no longer uncommon to pay labourers in cash, especially the ones ploughing the field. These labourers cost around Rp 25,000 a day, plus the
food, palm wine and cigarettes that have to be provided by the landowner each working day. The planters (women) earn 3 to 4 litres of rice per day, and those who harvest the rice receive one-third of the total harvest, which has to be shared among them.

While the soil in Kondo’ is suited to rice growing, it is less suitable for dry-land farming. Most households grow some cassava (35 per cent), maize (19 per cent), vegetables (46 per cent), fruits (25 per cent) and/or sweet potatoes (95 per cent), but only on a small scale and usually not for the market. The majority grow sweet potatoes to feed to their pigs. With regard to cash crops, the story is not much different; 27 per cent of households own a few coffee, cocoa or clove trees or vanilla vines that produce small quantities of marketable crops. The cultivation of bamboo trees is quite popular (52 per cent of households). One of the major reasons for the large bamboo groves that can be found in Palipu’ is its usefulness for constructing the ceremonial fields. There are six households involved in the extraction of palm wine from local trees.

As in Palipu’, livestock breeding is a popular enterprise undertaken to raise additional income and savings for times of distress in Kondo’, and it is also important for providing gifts for ritual activities. Virtually all the
households in Kondo’ raise chickens (98 per cent) and pigs (91 per cent), and a relatively large number also buffalo (24 per cent). Most young men breed cocks, which they train to fight at ceremonies, in gambling dens or at semi-formal gatherings with friends or fellow villagers. The number of households earning an income through livestock raising is similar to that in Palipu’. What differs significantly is the amount of money earned from raising livestock. Whereas households in Palipu’ make on average Rp 445,000 through selling livestock, Kondo’s households earn on average Rp 2,400,000 per year through breeding livestock. As in Palipu’, fish breeding is an uncommon activity and very small-scale.

Fifteen per cent of Kondo’s households have a member who contributes to their income through part-time work as a carpenter, bricklayer or handicraft worker, usually in the slack season. One man, for example, earns an additional Rp 100,000 per year by making mortar, another earns a little less through weaving bamboo baskets. Seven per cent of the households are involved in the small-scale trading of livestock. Following the reorganization of the village administration, the village headman and his assistant no longer receive a salary from the government and now rely upon a percentage of the taxes levied at ceremonial activities for the...
slaughtering of buffalo and pigs. Only two households receive some income from government pensions, which is again a rather large proportion of the total village income.

In conclusion, most households in Kondo’ are involved in raising chickens or pigs in combination with cultivating rice. Only one-quarter of the
households grow cash crops (mostly cocoa and coffee) and then only on a small scale. Unlike in Palipu’, vanilla has hardly entered the farming agenda. A small number of households earn some income through part-time work such as in construction and small-scale business activities.

**Spreading Activities beyond the Village Borders**

As local employment outside of agriculture is rare in Tana Toraja, and higher education facilities are limited, those in need of a supplementary income or wanting a higher education have little choice than to leave the highlands. Consequently, 30 per cent of the population of Palipu’ and 33 per cent of the people of Kondo’ have migrated at least semi-permanently to other places in Indonesia or abroad.

Migration in Palipu’ started in the 1950s, when some villagers (mostly men) moved to Berau’, in the northern part of South Sulawesi, and later to Napu’, in Central Sulawesi, to work in the forests for logging companies. Some years later, more and more people (men and women) started to leave for the larger cities of Indonesia, especially to Makassar where they found employment at one of the government offices, as teachers or nurses, in the military or police, at a shop, or to continue their education. Pa’Wanti, who left for Makassar in 1958 following his uncle, mentioned that at that time—

> It took one week to get to Makassar and we drove in a convoy of 40 cars under the guidance of the army against any guerrilla attacks. Especially the first part of the trip from Tana Toraja to Pare Pare was difficult because the road was very bad. It took until the mid-1990s before this road was asphalted. The latter part of the journey, from Pare Pare to Makassar, was already an all-weather road at that time.

In line with the regional trend, in the 1960s and 1970s many villagers followed and spread out all over Indonesia. Today, 35 per cent of migrants have left the island of Sulawesi and are living elsewhere in Indonesia or abroad (2 per cent). The others remain in South Sulawesi, usually in the cities of Makassar and Palopo, or in some transmigrant villages in Luwu. The migrant population left Palipu’ for several reasons: 32 per cent left in search of work, 10 per cent to follow higher education, to join their family (29 per cent), to get married (21 per cent), to live independently (5 per cent), or for other reasons (3 per cent). While 14 per cent of the migrants are attending school and 18 per cent are unemployed but looking for work, the vast majority are working as farmers (24 per cent), as housekeepers (10 per cent), as civil officers (8 per cent), or involved in various other jobs, ranging from priest to driver.
The migrant population from Palipu’ come from 67 per cent of the households in the village. Of these households, 55 per cent claim to receive remittances at least annually (in the form of goods, cash or both). Money and goods are sent home by post or bank transfer, through family, friends or acquaintances visiting the village, or carried personally by the migrants on a visit home.\(^{19}\) In particular, those migrants who are living and working outside of Tana Toraja (such as in Luwu, Makassar, Kalimantan and Irian Jaya) send money home to support their household members: for day-to-day existence (71 per cent), for funeral and other ceremonies (16 per cent), or house-building activities (10 per cent). Migrants living in Tana Toraja support their home-households by returning and supplying labour for agricultural and ceremonial activities, or by bringing some food or small amounts of money with them when they return, although these transactions are usually not seen as remittances. Apart from a few extremes, the amounts of the remittances generally range from Rp 500,000 to several millions a year. With an average value of Rp 1.6 million, these contributions are considerable.

In Kondo’, the picture is somewhat different from that in Palipu’. People in this northern village are strong supporters of funeral and tongkonan-building ceremonies, and their livelihoods are essentially centred on these extraordinary happenings. Given the huge costs of funeral ceremonies, and the few job opportunities in or near the village, 81 per cent of the households in Kondo’ have one or more members who have migrated to places beyond Tana Toraja. Of the total migrant population, 47 per cent left the highlands in search of employment. The remainder migrated to pursue higher education (12 per cent), to get married (15 per cent), to follow other family members (13 per cent), to become independent (2 per cent), or for other reasons.

The largest group (34 per cent) have moved to Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) and some to other countries such as Singapore and Japan. The Tondon area (including Kondo’) is regarded by other Torajans as the source of many of the women working as prostitutes in the larger industrial areas of Malaysia. According to sources both within and beyond the village, Tondon men are often involved in illegal activities (illegal gambling, running brothels, and the like) in the same areas. In other words, the image of Tondon is that of a closed community in which people are willing to forgo

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\(^{19}\) Migrants regularly visit their homes during holidays (particularly Christmas) and to attend funeral, house-building and wedding ceremonies.
their *siri*’ once they leave Tana Toraja in order to earn money and increase their socio-cultural status and *siri*’ back home. While the figures from the questionnaires do not really say much about the migrant’s ‘real’ jobs, they do show that many girls left at the age of 12 or 13 to go to Malaysia,20 and the in-depth interviews with parents and other villagers partly confirm the image of Tondon, or at least the village of Kondo’, as an area where girls leave to work in the sex industry of Malaysia.21

Some of the girls working in the sex industry left for Malaysia because they are impressed by the wealth obtained by other villagers or family members working in that sector, which they see displayed during funeral ceremonies. When these workers return to Malaysia, other village girls will join them voluntarily, or coerced by their parents who hope their daughter will be able to earn a lot of cash for future necessities, such as a funeral or rebuilding a house. In other cases, girls are recruited by Torajan middle-men under false pretences. These girls are promised a factory job and sometimes even sign a contract, but, upon arrival in Malaysia, they end up in one of the many brothels. According to an informant who explained how this works, ‘their documents appear to be incomplete or useless and they have a culture shock because they have come straight from the *kampung* (village). Most of them have rarely left Tana Toraja before, and are used to speaking the Torajan language and having familiar people around them. At least in the initial stage, all these factors give them little other option than to cooperate’. Some of these girls are sent to Kuala Lumpur or Penang in West Malaysia to learn English. Afterwards, they continue on to Singapore, Hongkong or Taiwan. In general, these Torajan girls are from the poorer families and have had little education.

Other villagers have migrated to Kalimantan and Irian Jaya (28 per cent), or stayed closer to home by moving to Luwu or Makassar (6 per cent) or to locations within Tana Toraja itself (28 per cent). As in Palipu’, migration became more popular in the 1960s when people migrated to the city of Makassar to continue their education or to the area of Palopo to open up new farmland. Since the 1980s, villagers have started to move to other areas in Indonesia and Malaysia due to the TKI (Tenaga Kerja Indonesia) programme of the Indonesian government, which promoted

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20 In Palipu’, all migrants were over 18 when they left the village.

21 Although this reputation might have some truth in it, one should be careful about generalizations as I came across many young migrants from Tondon who migrate to continue their education at high schools or university, or who are working in legal and highly respectable businesses.
international migration. Today, most migrants to Malaysia leave in the same way as do the girls that end up in the sex industry. They either join a family member or are recruited by middlemen to work in a factory or mining company, but they will never go without any ‘guarantee’ of work or knowing someone at the place of migration. Due to the stricter immigration regulations imposed by the Malaysian government, nowadays most villagers migrate illegally to Malaysia.

Seventy-nine per cent of all households with migrant members in Kondo' reported receiving remittances on a more or less regular basis. Most migrants who send money home do this to support their family in buying the daily necessities (77 per cent), for funeral and other ceremonies (65 per cent) and for house building and repairs (16 per cent). The vast majority of the remittance money is for specific ceremonial activities. Accordingly, the amounts of money sent home are generally much higher than in Palipu' but also less frequent. It is not uncommon for households in Kondo' with Malaysian migrants to receive Rp 10 to 15 million at a time. Migrants working in Indonesia usually send less, but they still send considerable sums of money, ranging from Rp 500,000 to several million a year. The importance of migration in raising the economic standards of many households in Kondo' is made clear by a man who told me ‘there are people in the village who are so poor that they can hardly pay the school fees and have to take their children out of school. However, after these uneducated children migrated, they send lots of money home that benefits their families and helps them to survive.’ Just as in Palipu', family migrants still living in Tana Toraja support their home household by contributing labour, food or small sums of money.

Livelihood Sources of Various Wealth Groups in Palipu' and Kondo'

From the above description of the livelihood activities open to households in the case study villages, and the extent to which households employ them, it remains unclear whether certain activities are related to a household’s wealth or not. However, to determine whether the effects of and responses to the economic crisis are typical of the village as a whole, or relate only to households within a particular wealth group, we need to obtain insights into the livelihood activities that are predominant within each wealth group. Below, therefore, we compare households belonging to different wealth groups, and the way in which they make a living.

Palipu's inhabitants identify four wealth classes among themselves (very rich, rich, moderate and poor) which closely correspond to the
prevailing social categorization. The first two categories, the very rich (3 per cent) and the rich (8 per cent), make up less than one-eighth of Palipu’s population. The group identified as moderate households includes 33 per cent of the total population. The families in the remaining and largest group of households (56 per cent) are considered poor. Large landowners were usually identified as very rich as these are the only villagers who own considerable areas of rice fields. The very rich households produce 20 to 40 karung of rice per harvest, while the rich produce 5 to 8 karung per harvest. Moderate and poor households depend on access to the fields of the richer people and obtain less than 5 karung. Other determinative criteria for wealth class are: the size and state of the house in which the household lives; the tongkonan of one’s ancestor; the educational level of one’s children; the current employment of family members and the size of the related remittances they send home; and the physical assets of a household such as motorcycles, hand tractors and rice-milling machines.

The pattern of activities that make up the livelihood composites of the various wealth groups is shown in Figure 7.3. As a result of their dominant role in rice farming, very rich households never need to buy rice. Wealthy households sometimes buy rice to supplement their own harvest, and all the households in the moderate and poor categories have to buy rice to feed the family. As a result, the latter two groups of households are most vulnerable to fluctuations in the market price of rice.

In terms of the cultivation of cash crops and the breeding of livestock, the only significant difference among the various wealth groups is that whereas nearly all the upper-class households are involved in all the possible activities, poorer people are only involved in one or two activities. Although involvement in these activities might therefore not seem to be a significant marker, the extent of participation in these activities does have significance. The scale of the production of cash crops by the rich is much larger than by the poor because they have more arable land and the resources needed to plant and look after the trees (fertilizer, pesticides, labour, and other inputs). The same holds true for the number of livestock kept. The poorer households can be characterized by the smaller scope of the activities they undertake. The poor households rely for the most part on the breeding of pigs and chickens, while they try to find some additional income through growing small quantities of sweet potatoes or vegetables that are sold at the market.22
Linked to the qualitative information on wealth rankings, it seems that salaried jobs are equated with wealth. People in the village see government jobs (or rather the regular salary they bring in) as a means of obtaining wealth, or at least of securing an acceptable living standard. The salary makes it possible to invest in agricultural activities, and it can also serve as collateral for obtaining bank loans for larger investments or to buy desirable consumer goods.

Finally, in the comparison, relatively rich households receive greater financial and material support from migrant family members than their poorer neighbours. Nevertheless, despite the smaller amounts involved, for most of the middle- and lower-class households, remittances are a vital source of income in making a living or in coping with crisis or distress. The families from the highest social strata, on the other hand, generally use their remittances for ceremonies that maintain or increase their status rather than for satisfying daily needs.

As in Palipu’, Kondo’s dwellers distinguish four wealth classes using the same descriptions: very rich (paling kaya), rich (kaya), moderate (sedang) and poor (miskin). However, in Kondo’ wealth is even more closely associated with social stratification. The names of certain social positions in the society directly refer to the economic status of a person. Pa’buntuan sugi’, for example, means ‘rich man’, and anyone having this status (and the tongkonan he represents) is automatically ranked in the highest level of society. As a consequence of these closely interwoven social and economic
dimensions, wealth is measured through the number and value of pigs that a household has slaughtered at previous funeral or tongkonan-building ceremonies, as well as through the state of the tongkonan of the forebears from whom the household acknowledges descent. The number of migrants and the amount of remittances they send home for ceremonial activities is another important criterion used by Kondo’s dwellers to distinguish the poor from the richer households. Finally, as in Palipu’, physical assets such as rice fields, houses, motorcycles, hand tractors and rice millers are an important component in wealth mapping. In Kondo’, the distribution of households over the four wealth classes is a little more equal than in Palipu’. The very rich (11 per cent) and rich (12 per cent) layers make up 23 per cent of all households in the village. Twenty-nine per cent of households were placed in the moderate category, leaving almost half of Kondo’s households (48 per cent) categorized as poor.

The activities that make up the livelihood composites of the various wealth groups are shown in Figure 7.4. As noted earlier, virtually all households in the top two categories own rice fields, with most of the very rich having fields reliably irrigated by the Rangri River. A lot of households in the moderate category grow rice in the fields of large landowners in return for a share of the yield. People from poor households generally work on the land of those who own or have hired land and are paid in rice or money. It should be noted that there are some exceptions—situations in which poor people own rice fields and rich people lack rice fields.

Figure 7.4. Percentage of Kondo’ households involved in the various livelihood activities by wealth group.
Source: Surveys and wealth-ranking sessions conducted in Palipu’ and Kondo’ in 2003.
Across all wealth groups, cash crops are grown only on a small scale. Since they are by far the largest group, most households (in absolute terms) in the poor category are involved in the cultivation of cash crops, especially coffee and cocoa. At first glance, there seems to be no significant difference between the four wealth groups with regard to breeding livestock. However, the number of buffalo, pigs and chickens that a household owns mirrors the wealth of the categories.

A fairly high number of labour migrants are to be found in all wealth groups, although the very rich and rich households have proportionally more migrant members than the poorer sections of society. Also the destinations of the migrants differ significantly across wealth categories. Most migrants from the poor households leave South Sulawesi and travel to Malaysia or other parts of Indonesia, such as Irian Jaya and Kalimantan, where they are able to make more money with their limited education.

Migrants who stay within Tana Toraja usually live in the Tondon region or in the nearby town of Rantepao, the location of the main market (pasar Bolu). A few of the very rich and rich households have second houses in Rantepao from which family members run a small shop or food stall. Virtually all households in the very rich category receive some remittances, as do over half of those placed in the moderate and poor categories. Thus, the majority of households receive remittances, and the amount of money received is considerable, especially in the event of a funeral ceremony.

**Expenditure Patterns**

The differential income opportunities and income levels are reflected in expenditure patterns. However, because expenditures within households fluctuate tremendously, depending on seasonality and unexpected events or contingencies, it is difficult to give some general figures on average expenditures in the villages. Nevertheless, I will try to give some indication of expenses of poor and rich households by dividing expenditures into four categories: monthly expenses, annual expenses, one-time purchases, and emergencies.

The monthly costs in both research villages are quite similar. The most important expenditures are on food, toiletries, fodder, electricity or kerosene, transport and church attendance. Typically, the expenditure on

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23 Migrants from the poor and moderate wealth groups generally have a lower education level than their richer fellow villagers and, accordingly, find different types of employment.
food varies from about Rp 30,000-Rp 300,000 per month. The poor only buy some rice, salt and cooking oil; they obtain most products such as cassava, vegetables, fruits and chillies from their own gardens. The rich, in contrast, add sugar, coffee, tea, sweets, cookies and so on to their diet. With toiletries it is much the same story. The poor usually spend about Rp 5,000–10,000 a month on toothpaste and bathing and washing soap, while the richer households spend Rp 40,000–50,000 a month on these products. Because most households own pigs, they need fodder to feed them. In general they feed pigs the leaves of sweet potatoes grown in the garden around the house. However, this is not sufficient to really fatten them, and the people who can afford to mix the leaves with rice bran bought in the village or at the market for about Rp 60,000–70,000 per month. Electricity costs vary between Rp 5,000 and 30,000 a month. The poor only use electricity to light a lamp in the evening, but richer households usually have a television, sewing machine and radio. In Kondo’, only a third of the households, those living closest to Rantepao, are connected to the electrical grid. The other two-thirds of the household use kerosene or gas for cooking and lighting which costs Rp 5,000–10,000 per month. Because the market is popular in Tana Toraja as a social event as well as the place where one buys daily necessities, most villagers go to the markets in Makale or Rantepao on a weekly basis, or at least once a month. For these market visits, people use public transport or motor taxis which costs them about Rp 5,000–15,000 a month. Together with the weekly church collections, which cost villagers several hundreds to a thousand rupiah a time, poor households therefore need about Rp 45,000 per month to pay for these daily necessities. To cover expenditures of around Rp 500,000 a month, the richer households need ten times as much income as the poorer ones.

In addition to these monthly costs, most households have additional expenses that recur annually: agricultural inputs, educational costs, clothes and land tax. Labourers who help the household with the preparation of rice fields, rice planting and harvesting are usually paid in rice and not in money. However, most landowners who cultivate rice usually spend some money on fertilizer, some on renting a hand tractor for ploughing, and some on buying seeds and/or pesticides. Naturally, all these costs depend on the size of the rice fields but, in general, landowners apply at least one sack of fertilizer that costs about Rp 80,000 each. For the cultivation of cash crops not much money is needed because most plants are acquired through family and neighbours, while the farmers use natural fertilizer.
Educational costs are burdensome for most households in the research villages. The school fees for the primary school (SD) are Rp 60,000 a year in addition to the cost of the school uniforms and writing materials that schoolchildren need. When children continue to the lower secondary school (SMP) or even further to the higher secondary school (SMA), enrolment fees run from Rp 120,000 to Rp 300,000 a year. Higher education in Makassar costs from one to several million rupiah a year, which is beyond what most households can afford. Considering that typical households have at least three children, education costs them a minimum of several hundred thousand rupiah a year. Clothes are generally purchased only once a year during special events or before Christmas. Wealthier households often spend more on clothes (Rp 500,000 to Rp 1 million) and buy them more frequently, while the very poor rarely purchase clothes but receive the cast-offs from their richer neighbours.

Each household in Tana Toraja is obliged to pay land tax to the government annually. The amount of the tax depends upon the quality and size of their land. People with small plots that hold only their house and a small garden pay around Rp 5,000, while large landowners with a lot of good quality rice fields have to pay more than Rp 100,000 a year. However, because of the complexity and opaqueness of landownership, which often involves several owners who are no longer living in the village, the system is not really fixed, and large landowners often manage to reduce their annual contributions to Rp 20,000 or Rp 30,000. Overall, these yearly expenses are thus very variable, and while some people spend almost nothing on agriculture, education, clothes or land tax, others spend millions of rupiah.

In addition to these monthly and annually recurring expenditures, some people also spend money on luxury goods such as radios, televisions and motorcycles, or on their houses. However, these expenditures are only made once or a few times in a lifetime. The poor usually spend very little on their houses and use materials that are available in the surrounding area such as wood and bamboo, while the richer people build houses that cost Rp 10–30 million. While these expenditures may take a large part of the household budget, emergency costs are, in most cases, a larger burden on the household because they are generally unexpected. Besides the death of livestock, most sudden costs are linked to human health problems. Officially, poor households should have a health card that provides basic healthcare free of charge at the government hospitals and local first-aid posts (Puskesmas). However, in Palipu’, most of the poor households have yet to obtain a healthcard, while in Kondo’, the card distribution...
system seems to be influenced by family networks, which do not always benefit the poor. When households do not have the money to pay for healthcare, they usually turn to traditional doctors, who are much cheaper than the modern doctors and hospitals. The richer households, on the other hand, opt for private healthcare, which is expensive but more reliable and better trained than that provided by the government.

The last category, and for some households the greatest burden, are the expenditures on funeral and/or tongkonan ceremonies. Though death is usually sudden, funeral ceremonies are well-planned, sometimes years in advance, and therefore not as unexpected as health problems. Tongkonan building—and the ceremonies that go with it—could be put into a different category but are sudden in a sense that the tongkonan leader usually determines at what moment it will be rebuilt and at what cost. While most household expenditure is broadly similar in both villages, the expenditure on ceremonies is very different (see Figures 7.5 and 7.6). Typically, in Palipu 38 per cent of the households spend less than Rp 100,000 a year on ceremonies, whereas in Kondo, there are hardly any households that spend less than Rp 100,000 on these events. While in Palipu more than half of the households (57 per cent) spend less than Rp 500,000 on ceremonies, in Kondo only a quarter do so (24 per cent). In Palipu, only 21 per cent of the households spend more than Rp 1 million annually on ceremonies, compared to 64 per cent in Kondo. Finally, while there are hardly any households in Palipu that spend more than Rp 5 million a year on ceremonies, in Kondo 34 per cent of households do so.

**Kondo’**

![Figure 7.5. Yearly ceremonial expenditures in Kondo.](source: Surveys and wealth-ranking sessions conducted in Palipu and Kondo in 2003.)
In conclusion, the amount of money spent on funeral and tongkonan ceremonies is out of all proportion to other household expenditures as well as in terms of household incomes. When we consider that the average annual incomes from local activities in Palipu’ and Kondo’ are Rp 1.6 and Rp 2.6 million respectively, there is a significant gap between income and expenditure for a large number of households, especially in Kondo’. This gap is bridged by migrant remittances, as we saw in the previous section, and highlights the importance of such supplements to household income. In the following section, I turn to the effects of the economic crisis on the income and expenditure patterns just described.

The Economic Crisis as Experienced in the Two Villages

Palipu’ during the Economic Crisis: Crisis or Godsend?

Across all the wealth categories, only a few households saw an increase in their income over the five-year period starting in 1998. The major reason for the income growth for the lucky few was the huge increase in the prices they obtained for vanilla, and to a lesser extent for cocoa, on the local and national markets. Others mentioned that remittances in local currency from family members in Malaysia, South Korea or Japan had increased substantially due to favourable exchange rate changes. Given that the wealthier classes grow larger quantities of vanilla than the poorer ones, it is not surprising that the wealthiest category of households gained most
from the increased returns. As a villager from the rich class commented ‘thanks to the price rises for vanilla in 2001, our income has increased enormously and we were able to build a new house.’ However, overall, very few households were profiting from the high vanilla prices.

The exorbitant prices being obtained for vanilla brought about a new problem. Since vanilla prices were so high, it quickly became a desirable crop in Tana Toraja. In Palipu’, around 40 per cent of the moderate and poor households and 25 per cent of the very rich and rich categories, started to grow this crop. Throughout Tana Toraja, vanilla seeds have become scarce and the theft of plants has become a new phenomenon in the Torajan highlands. Even within village boundaries, suspicions and accusations of vanilla theft have become more frequent, leading to social distrust and sometimes to conflict. Moreover, the high vanilla yields have led to jealousy among people who are still growing cocoa or coffee, or whose vanilla crop has failed. Vanilla vines need special care and not everyone has the knowledge or skills needed to grow them successfully. Not coincidentally the richest households in Palipu’ are especially plagued by theft because most of them grow vanilla in considerable quantities and had started to cultivate the crop before its price rose rapidly on the market. Two-thirds of the vanilla farmers from poor and moderate households have only recently planted the crop and are still awaiting their first significant harvest.

Notwithstanding the rising prices for some cash crops, the vast majority of households faced a drop in income, especially in the three lowest wealth categories. In the moderate and poor groups, around 75 per cent of all households were affected by the long droughts of 1999 and 2002. Because of these droughts, the villagers had to delay rice planting for several months, which made it impossible to grow a second crop, and the eventual harvest was also lower than normal. The coffee, cocoa and often also the vanilla harvests of these households were also disappointing, or even failed, as a consequence of the droughts. In addition to the problems caused by the lengthy dry season, the incomes of households within these three wealth groups appeared to be negatively affected by plant and animal diseases. Because of local beliefs, ignorance, or simply a lack of money, most villagers do not vaccinate their livestock and, every year, a fair number of buffalo, pigs and chickens become ill or die.24 Crop diseases are also

24 A few years ago, one farmer in Palipu’ did decide to vaccinate his pigs. Shortly after, they all died. Since then, it is difficult to convince people of the benefits of expensive injections.
quite common in Palipu’, and again it is especially the poorer households, who lack the money to invest in pesticides or the knowledge to use them properly, who suffer from crop problems. Since 2001, Palipu’ has suffered from a problem that has affected most of the cocoa trees in the village, and although the fruits look healthy from the outside, the cocoa beans inside are rotten.

Thus it is not only the economic crisis that has created hardships for some of the farmers, and sometimes it is difficult to differentiate the effects of the crisis from other influences. This is well illustrated by the case of Yannis Buku’s household, from the poorest category.

Yannis and his wife had been cultivating coffee and cocoa for many years. In 1997, this appeared very lucrative as local prices for these crops had increased six-fold due to higher world market prices and the falling rupiah. However, this windfall lasted less than two years before the prices of coffee and cocoa fell back. In 2002, the household cut down most of their coffee and cocoa trees to create additional space for vanilla plants. This decision did not yield the expected results as most of the newly planted vanilla died. Although they had been growing a little vanilla for more than ten years they had paid it little attention until 2001 when they saw that prices were on the rise. They planted some more vanilla, which they bought from some Torajans in a neighbouring village. ‘Two years earlier I had obtained vanilla plants for free from some neighbours but now it has become hard to find free vanilla plants’, Yannis complained. ‘Also the costs of maintenance have increased’. Fertilizer and pesticides had become expensive, and since they could not afford these, they could not benefit from the high vanilla prices at the time.

The household had also been unlucky with other food crops they grew. After the long drought in 1999, they brought home hardly any rice from the two fields they hired from a rich family in Palipu’ in exchange for half the harvest. In the good years before the drought, the household had purchased some pigs with the money they had made from the sale of coffee and cocoa. They raised the pigs for funeral and house-construction ceremonies, and also as a form of insurance for difficult times. Unfortunately, most of their pigs died of disease in 1999 when they most needed the money: to pay off the costs of agricultural inputs to the rice field owner; to buy additional rice for household consumption; and to buy daily necessities such as toiletries, soap and electricity, all of which had increased in price. As a consequence, Yannis’s wife had to ask the children in Makassar for money. The household had another disappointing harvest in 2002. They had hardly anything left to sell and again called upon their children in Makassar who are themselves struggling to make ends meet. Now all their hopes for a better life rest on the newly planted vanilla.

Yannis’s close neighbours, who are a slightly better off, experienced similar contingencies but faced an even more serious crisis: they had been
obliged to adopt three nieces whose parents had died in the clash between Christians and Muslims in the Buginese city of Palopo in 1999. The head of household told me:

We adopted the three children who are now going to school in Palipu’. We face huge problems in feeding the children and paying their school fees. We would like to grow some vanilla but do not have enough land. Most of the land in Palipu’ belongs to the rich, and the poor can only work on the land in exchange for a share of the harvest, making it hard to earn much money. Another family we know who fled from Palopo had a lot of land over there but their house was burnt down and they had to abandon their land. Nowadays they live in Palipu’ without any land and are having to start rebuilding their life all over again.

The return of family members from the conflict areas of Poso, East Timor and Ambon in 1998 and 1999 has been another cause of declining household incomes in the moderate and poor classes. These households face a double burden because, first, the remittances abruptly stopped, and second, they also have to care for the returning migrants.

Furthermore, some of the poorest households complained about the loss of the additional income that used to come from construction work, because many of the rich people had been refraining from building or renovating their houses in the last couple of years. As one respondent explained in the spring of 2003:

Because of the rising prices of daily necessities such as salt, cooking oil, fertilizer and school fees, we all need more money, and so more and more people are looking for some construction work. However, the number of people building a house has decreased since everything became more expensive in Tana Toraja, and some people get less money from their migrant relatives.

While one rich household did mention the shrinking remittances from Kalimantan as a reason for its declining income, there is no indication that this is a general trend among the rich in Palipu’. Rather, most people pointed to remittances as a resource that steadily enables new investments, or that improves the fallback position of the household. A final reason given for falling incomes was the sickness or death of a family member and thus a reduction in the potential labour force, and this was mentioned by households in all but the ‘very rich’ category. These stochastic risks obviously do not have any connection with the crisis.

Interestingly, in response to a question concerning whether the household had faced serious problems or ‘crises’ during the period 1998–2003, the sickness or death of a family member ranked only third behind
droughts and crop and animal diseases. In general, the serious problems or crises that households pointed out coincided with the wider reasons for declining incomes and were not necessarily related to the income of their own household. In addition, another problem that often cropped up during the interviews was the high unemployment rate and the bleak prospects for youngsters with a decent education. With the establishment of a ‘decentralised Torajan government’ the entry fee for government jobs has increased enormously (up to Rp 20 million), and there are few other jobs for educated people in Tana Toraja. A similar trend toward increasing admission fees for civil service positions can be observed elsewhere in Indonesia. This has made it much harder for Torajan people to obtain government jobs than in the past. Moreover, some private companies have also started to demand entrance fees for new employees, limiting job opportunities for young graduates from poor families even further. This problem seems to be of particular concern to households in the lowest two classes. The rich and the very rich households who have land to use as collateral are still able to raise the necessary ‘entrance fee’.

The number of households registering positive events in recent times is considerably lower than the number of households confronted with the negative aspects of the crisis. Across all wealth classes, households reported receiving increasing amounts of money for their vanilla, cocoa or coffee crops as positive experiences.

The question remains as to what extent these positive and negative events affected the situation of these households. Compared to the households in the very rich and rich categories, very few poor and moderate households had seen any improvement in their situation. In general, any improvement or deterioration in the household situation resulted from a combination of the reasons outlined above. Households from the moderate and poor classes also emphasized their ever-growing expenditures on daily essentials such as food, kerosene, toiletries, local transport, their children’s education and medicines. A dozen children in Palipu’ dropped out of primary school between 1999 and 2003 due to the increase in school fees. In the same period, it also became increasingly difficult to find cheap medicines, stocks at the local health centre (Puskesmas) were running out, and what was still available was past its expiry date. Medicines at the

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25 Sickness here means serious illness for which hospitalisation is needed or which has resulted in permanent disability. When an able-bodied person dies, it not only implies a reduction in available labour but also brings huge costs for a funeral ceremony, even if the rituals are relatively modest.
private pharmacies are fresher, but their quality also declined while prices have more than tripled. For some, the rising costs of agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, have had a dramatic impact on the household budget. Despite all these sometimes large fluctuations in many aspects that affect households in Tana Toraja in the period between 1998 and 2003, the bulk of the households in Palipu' did not experience any significant change in their situation at all.

**Kondo’ during the Economic Crisis: Flourishing Ceremonies**

In contrast to Palipu', the increase in income experienced by Kondo' households between 1998 and 2003 had nothing to do with increasing returns on cash crops. Rather, the rises in income were a result of larger remittances being received from household members working in Malaysia (and due largely to improved exchange rates of the Malaysian ringgit), or because of higher rice yields through increasing use of fertilizer.

Households in which incomes fell in this period tended to mention the prolonged dry seasons of 1999 and 2002 as a major cause. Households from the upper classes complained about disappointing rice harvests, and households from the lower categories pointed to the shrinking labour market. Several households from across all wealth groups commented that their rice crops had been affected by infestations of mice and caterpillars in 2002.

As in Palipu', the majority of the households in Kondo' had not experienced any sizeable change in income level. Although relatively less dependent on cash crop prices, incomes in Kondo' are never completely stable and vary from year to year. Incomes are dependent on the amount of rainfall, the health of plants and animals, available family labour, market prices and the continuity of the remittances they receive from migrant family members.

Droughts, animal and plant diseases, and sickness or death of household members are as much crises for households across all wealth groups in Kondo’ as they are in Palipu'. Animal diseases had spread through Kondo’ in late 2002 killing many chickens and pigs although, surprisingly, few households gave this as a reason for their decreasing incomes. On a more individual basis, one very rich household saw their vanilla garden destroyed by a plant disease, and the land of one household in the moderate wealth group was flooded in 2001. Besides these rather individual crises, there was another factor that negatively affected some families: an increase in gambling. Since the central government in Jakarta loosened its
control over Tana Toraja in the late 1990s, the frequency and scale of gambling activities has been growing rapidly. Although cockfights are allowed at funeral ceremonies as part of the ritual activities, gambling remains illegal. However, according to Morell, ‘the immediate post-Suharto period saw a resurgence of cockfighting and gambling in Tana Toraja, as advantage was taken of bureaucratic disarray and inattention’ (Morell 2001:12). One villager from the very rich class remarked:

Since the crisis there are not so many problems here in the village because cockfights are being organized and this brings in lots of money from outside through the gambling. Many Chinese, Buginese and Makassarese, as well as Torajan migrants, come here to gamble and, of course, for the ceremonies. They bring in money from outside Tana Toraja to try their luck in the highlands.

However, in contrast to this somewhat recreational gambling, quite a few of the less well-off Torajans gamble heavily in the hope of boosting their income or paying off debts, but they usually return home worse off, causing trouble and conflicts within the household. Thus, while gambling might provide a new source of income for the few winners and those involved in organizing such events, it also leads to financial and social problems. One respondent from the poorest wealth class mentioned that, from the day that her husband had given up gambling, she had seen a positive effect on the household’s income.

Just as in Palipu’, quite a few people pointed to the high unemployment rate among pemuda (youngsters) as a real problem. Given the large number of unemployed, local wages for agricultural activities and construction work have fallen, further tempting youngsters to try their luck at gambling. Further, the male youth from Kondo’ had been involved in gang fights in the town of Rantepao. In the clashes, which carried on for several months toward the end of 2002, a few Kondo’ youngsters suffered knife or gunshot wounds. Some people believe that the clashes were a local struggle for power among the assorted gangs. Others, however, assert that—as occurred elsewhere in Indonesia—the conflict in Rantepao was purposely instigated by Golkar politicians to distract attention from regional political scandals. Once initiated, these fights become difficult to stop. Whatever the cause, the local police, despite the extra power they had obtained during the decentralization politics of the late 1990s, appeared unable to put an end to the fights. Eventually, the central authorities had to intervene, and the national army based in Pare Pare brought the conflict under control.
In Kondo’, about half a dozen youngsters have become *tukang ojek* (motorcycle taxi drivers) in the town of Rantepao and in their own village. Within a couple of years, most villages have seen the arrival of five to ten motorcycle taxis, all of them driven by young men between 18 and 30 years old. Several of them are former tourist guides who used to accompany tourists to funeral ceremonies, places of interest, or on walking treks through the mountains of Tana Toraja but who, since the Bali bombing, can no longer make a living in tourism. Other guides have returned to their villages to work in the rice fields or find temporary employment during the coffee, cocoa, vanilla and clove harvesting seasons. Some, however, have taken the opportunity to sell goods (chips, sweets, cigarettes, beer, and the like) at the increasing number of ceremonies and illegal gambling sites throughout Tana Toraja.

The positive experiences and events that have taken place between 1998 and 2003, and that were reported by respondents, once again indicate the importance of migration and remittances for livelihoods in Kondo’. The majority of households see the graduation of their children from high school, leading to employment and the sending home of remittances, as positive events. During the recent turbulent years, their children have been successful (*berhasil*), which has given them the opportunity to invest in funeral ceremonies to show off their enhanced wealth and increase their social status. The success of children in obtaining well-paid jobs is a major cause of improvements in household wellbeing.

In 2003, only a small minority of households claimed to feel worse off than five years earlier. Those who had experienced a worsening situation in their household blamed the increases in prices for cooking oil, petrol, food, transport and fertilizer. Although most households in Kondo’ acknowledged the increased prices for food and goods as important, most of them commented ‘there is no crisis in Tana Toraja because the funeral ceremonies are still flourishing.’

**Concluding Remarks**

According to Bourdieu (1989:18), the ‘social reality’ that objectivists speak about is an matter of perception and so can be a crisis: ‘Social science must take as its object both this reality and the perception of this reality, the perspectives, the points of view that, by virtue of their position in objective social space, agents have on this reality’. The reality of crisis and the interrelated livelihood changes, and people’s perception of this reality,
have been documented in this chapter. A detailed picture of people’s incomes and expenditures, and their perceptions of the series of events that have affected Tana Toraja since the late 1990s, reveal some interesting insights.

In Palipu’, the southern research village, households from the poor and moderate categories were the worst affected by the events that took place during the period 1997–2003. In general, because they were unable to profit from the higher prices for cash crops such as coffee, cocoa and vanilla, they experienced relatively large problems in coping with the higher prices for daily necessities and agricultural inputs. The level of dependency on cash played an important role; the more dependent on cash, the greater the hardship. Exceptions to this ‘rule’ were the rich and those who, by luck, had grown vanilla. Quite a few households in the rich and very rich categories saw their situations improve, mainly due to increasing incomes as a result of the rising prices for their cash crops and the growing amount of money they received as remittances. Socioeconomic class, and the associated land and other income opportunities that come with it, appeared to be an important factor in how people experienced events. Overall, the level of remittances received by the households in Palipu’ determined their resilience to shocks and, with this, their perception of events (a more passive stance was adopted by those with higher remittances).

In Kondo’, where the social structure is more flexible, and the opportunities for social climbing across all wealth classes are much greater through organizing extraordinary ceremonies, a different picture emerges from that of Palipu’. The large flow of remittances into the village, especially from Malaysia, completely neutralized the negative effects of the crisis. In fact, a number of households, even moderate and poor ones, experienced an improvement in their household situation because of increased remittances from family members in Malaysia. Although there are some differences between perceptions of the crisis among households in the various wealth classes, most people in Kondo’ did not admit to experiencing any negative effects of the economic crisis. This has a lot to do with the specific constitution of the major objectives in their lives. Alongside social position in society and past experiences, someone’s present reality (and thus their experiences and responses to changing conditions) is shaped by future objectives. In Kondo’, people’s objectives in life are generally not oriented toward their daily wellbeing but rather toward their participation in the funeral ceremonies of family, friends and acquaintances, and the organization of an honourable ceremony for deceased parents. This is
demonstrated by the enormous expenditures on these ceremonies. Thus, as long as these ceremonies continue to flourish, they do not experience any real problem or crisis.

Interestingly, in general, people had less money available to invest in ceremonies in the aftermath of the economic crisis. The costs of ceremonies were however then covered at the expense of other items such as clothes, food and luxury goods. This does not mean that there is a different economic rationality in Tana Toraja, but rather that people have priorities in their expenditure patterns that are not purely aimed at satisfying basic needs, as they are usually defined in Western literature. Nevertheless, as we saw in Chapter 6, social mobility is not possible for everyone, and some people do refrain from participating in ceremonies. Because the use of averages masks a lot of detail in this chapter, it is still not clear which people or households invest vast amounts of money in ceremonies and which do not. Not everyone in the same wealth class acts in the same way. Given this we need to include the less tangible variables than money or income, and this will be the purpose of the next chapter.