

Tomohon — Minahasa's City of Flowers

By Wahyuni Komah

fresh air welcomed us as we entered this town. The first impression I had of this city was full of flowers. On either side of the road, in flower kiosks and in the gardens of wooden Minahasan houses, I saw flowers galore. They included hibiscus, gladiolus, lilies, irises, asters, carnations and bougainvillea. It is no wonder that this town is popularly known as the "City of Flowers". It seems the townspeople do their share to perpetuate this reputation by planting neat rows of colorful flowers in their gardens and along the streets of Tomohon.

Kakaskasen village is a wonderful place to stay. Most homes are typical wooden Minahasan houses with flower gardens. They enjoy the atmosphere of a Minahasan village, stay in the Volcano Resort located in the middle of Kakaskasen II village. Like other Minahasans, the people in Kakaskasen village

are quite friendly. Children especially enjoy greeting foreign tourists with a warm "Hallo Mister". Dogs are also welcomed in Minahasa. Each house in the village usually has more than one dog, and these dogs are free to wander about.

Our taxi driver was right about the climate. The clouds began to gather in the afternoon and rain fell almost every afternoon. At night the air was chilly and it made the stay in this famous Christian education center perfect. The weather, however, will not keep you from enjoying the surroundings of Tomohon. In the morning the weather is normally perfect.

As a small city, it is possible to reach every corner of Tomohon in one day. A stroll down to the center of Tomohon for a look around is worth doing. The center of Tomohon is a bit crowded in the afternoon. The facilities are quite comprehensive — including a bank with an ATM, shops selling sundries, a tourist (telecommunications kiosk), an Internet kiosk, restaurants, and even a pub.

You won't starve in Tomohon

because there are a lot of *toko* (*pastry shops*) and restaurants. But beware — the local cuisine is known for its dog flesh and pork. Walking around a traditional local market in Tomohon, it is common to see heads of dogs or pigs on the table for sale. Moslems, who eat neither pork nor dog flesh, must be careful. However, most restaurants' menus are posted on boards at the door and Moslems can find suitable food at Restaurant Padang, where only chicken, beef, or fish are served. And it is best not to miss the typical local Minahasan dishes such as *agam rice-ries* (hot sautéed chicken), *ikan mas bakar* (grilled carp fish) or *cah kangkung*.

Vihara

The Vihara Buddhayana complex and Buddhist temple in Kakaskasen III village are interesting phenomena. Local people call this *minibus* (Rp 600 one way). Directions can be obtained from the hillside in the Volcano Resort's reception area. Although some of them are written in Chinese, English, and attendants will help you with information. Interesting neighboring areas include Tondano Lake, Kampung Jawa in Tondano, the waterfall near Rurukan, *torung* (sarcophagus) near Sawangan village, the Japanese caves near Sander and other villages. If you plan to take a day trip, do it early because in the afternoon the buses run early.

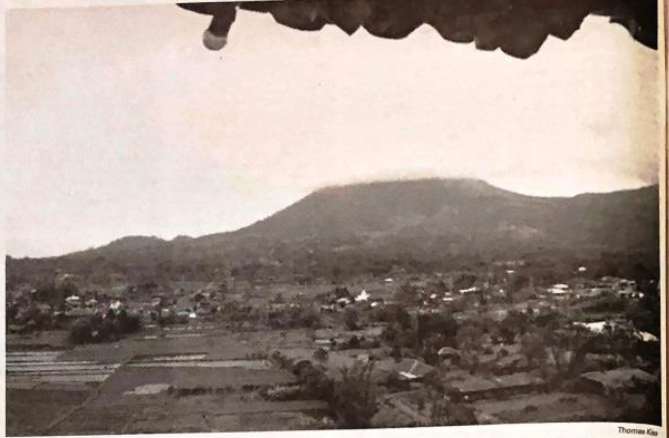
The Minahasans speak *bahasa Manado* dialect, but they also speak Indonesian well. As an Indonesian whose mother tongue is *bahasa Manado*, I had no problems in asking the directions on my travels. If you are not an Indonesian, knowledge of some Indonesian is necessary for you to ask the directions.

Some real adventures can also be found in Tomohon, if you want to try trek on Mt. Lokon. The dominant red buildings of viharas attract visitors from the main street. A friendly guard from the vihara complex will accompany visitors through each building. Climbing to the top of the seven-floor pagoda is worth your time. From there you have a wonderful view of Kakaskasen village and Mt. Lokon from a distance. It is a breathtaking panorama.

From Kakaskasen, you can reach other interesting places inexpensively by *angkut* (taxi), for instance for a special festival. And it is best not to miss the typical local Minahasan dishes such as *agam rice-ries* (hot sautéed chicken), *ikan mas bakar* (grilled carp fish) or *cah kangkung*.



The seven-floor pagoda in the Vihara Buddhayana complex and the Buddhist temple in Kakaskasen village, Tomohon, North Sulawesi. The buildings are interesting phenomena, considering that the main houses of worship are churches.



The wonderful view of Kakaskasen village and Mt. Lokon (above). Tourists pose among *wuraga* (sarcophaguses) near Sawangan village. The body was laid out in a stone tomb either standing or a sitting position (right).

Compared to the three other North Sulawesi provinces, Minahasa is the most densely populated and highly developed district. Minahasa is naturally a peaceful place. It is no wonder why it was rumored that many *Kakaskasen* wanted to move to Minahasa for fear of unrest in Jakarta prior to the May election. As a people, Minahasans are naturally friendly, extroverted and lively and they warmly welcome their guests. Unlike in Jakarta where newcomers are targeted by *deviant* taxi drivers, in Minahasa, the taxi drivers, despite the fact that you are not a native Minahasan.

The climate there is normally temperate, but in the middle of the year when it is usually hot, it also rains. "It has been raining quite frequently in Tomohon lately," said the taxi driver, who took us from the Sam Ratulangi Airport in Manado to Tomohon. Tomohon, twenty-five kilometers to the south of the capital of the North Sulawesi province, is the best place to enjoy the beauty of hilly Minahasa and life in a Minahasan village. Situated on a hilltop between two volcanoes — Mt. Mahawu and Mt. Lokon — it is a good place to escape the heat.

Besides the attraction of its mountains, Minahasa also boasts a historical site on the way to Tomohon. In Prinsburg we passed the gate leading to the grave of Imam Bonjol, a Dutch colonial fighter in West Sumatra, who was exiled to Ambon and later to North Sulawesi and died there in 1864. Along the main road connecting the cities of this predominantly Christian district stand various dominations. The rain stopped as we were about to enter Tomohon and wet

A breathtaking journey through the land of coconut trees



The beach view at Maelang shows the best point for sightseeing. You will find fine white sand, a glossy marine blue sea, coconut trees and a small island.

MANADO (JPA) If you happen to be in Manado, North Sulawesi, and plan to go on to Gorontalo, don't miss the Manado-Gorontalo road trip. The journey takes more time than traveling by airplane, however, fantastic vistas await you along the way.

Allowing for time to view the panorama and to take photographs, it is much better to travel by Manado early in the morning. The Manado-Gorontalo road trip itself takes eight hours or more. The length of the trip also depends on how long and how often you pause during the journey. Despite some bad road segments, this long journey will not exhaust you. The amazing scenes along this 460 km path will make you forget about time.

The best way to enjoy the wonderful scenery along this Trans-Sulawesi highway is by renting a good air-conditioned car plus a skillful driver. The price of renting a Kijang car for the Manado-Gorontalo trip is normally Rp 350,000 (the driver's lunch and water risk are not included in this price). You can also rent a Kijang car together with other passengers leaving for Manado for approximately Rp 35,000 per person. In Manado two firms operate share taxis, you take one unfortunately, you must wait until all the seats are fully occupied. Therefore, the trip is dependent

on other passengers. Furthermore, you cannot stop the car whenever you want to without dealing with other passengers. By renting a private car you can conveniently ask the driver to stop at any spot you like.

My German friend, Thomas, and I were lucky to have a helpful and friendly driver. He is a native Gorontalo and often drove the Manado-Gorontalo highway. He told us briefly about the villages or towns that we were heading to and guided us to the best places for photography.

Coconut trees

The Trans-Sulawesi highway connects the north and south of the island of Sulawesi. Buses and trucks commute the length of it. We started our first stage from the southwest of Manado, actually not on the Trans-Sulawesi road. This road was under construction as we passed by. However, taking this route meant we could clearly see Manado Bay on our right hand side.

After two hours of driving, the first village that we encountered was Senuki. It was small with wooden *rumah panggung* (stages) and churches. Coconut, clove and banana trees lined both sides of the road in this village. The road twists and turns but our driver, who had driven from Manado to Makassar with foreign tourists, did not have many problems. It is not surprising that



The hut of a copra farmer among the coconut trees. Copra is a major North Sulawesi product, which is not surprising as coconut trees dominate the long stretches of the Manado-Gorontalo road.

North Sulawesi province yields copra. For long stretches of the Manado-Gorontalo road, the dominant tree is the coconut tree, tall and slim, reaching heights of up to 30 meters. The sights changed as we drove on up the road. Besides plain, wooden, zinc-roofed houses, there were also

traditional Minahasa houses, and more coconut trees. Only two on three cars passed us during our trip. As we did not want to miss this amazing view, we stopped at several points to take some photographs. "Hold your camera at the next spot there are more wondrous vistas," shouted Telle, who knew each corner of this Trans-Sulawesi road well. He referred to a spot called Maelang. This small town is situated about at the halfway point on the Trans-Sulawesi road. A stop not miss the most spectacular view along the coastline of North Sulawesi. The beach in Maelang is the best point for sight-seeing. You will see fine white sand, a glossy marine blue sea, coconut trees and a small island. It is really a fantastic sight. Unfortunately, you can only witness this virgin beach from the other side of Maelang. The one-hour drive from Maelang was not smooth since some parts of the dangerously curving road were under

construction. We saw only coconut trees, and there was seemingly no civilization in the area. As we had already accomplished half of our journey on the hot, cloudless afternoon, we started to think about food. "We will stop for lunch in Buntara," answered Telle after I had asked him whether there was a good *rumah makan* (restaurant) in the vicinity. The *Rumah Makan Gusnar* in Buntara is well-known restaurant among Manado-Gorontalo drivers, where they frequently stop for lunch. It is a simple restaurant, serving various local and Indonesian dishes. The food, in the restaurant that proclaims itself *halal*, is delicious and reasonably priced. "It is the last food stop. There are no more houses are zinc-roofed." In Amurang, a larger town we passed further along, coconut was again the dominant tree. As in other towns that we had passed, the concrete buildings in this town were churches. After driving approximately 160 kilometers, we reached the road that branched to Gorontalo and Kotabombu — the capital of Bolaang Mongondow district. We quickly reached a deserted road. On both sides of the road were huge grass fields where cows were grazing. Arriving in Lolak, Bolaang Mongondow district, coconut trees filled the area as far as the eye could see. As we did not want to miss this amazing view, we stopped at several points to take some photographs. "Hold your camera at the next spot there are more wondrous vistas," shouted Telle, who knew each corner of this Trans-Sulawesi road well. He referred to a spot called Maelang. This small town is situated about at the halfway point on the Trans-Sulawesi road. A stop not miss the most spectacular view along the coastline of North Sulawesi. The beach in Maelang is the best point for sight-seeing. You will see fine white sand, a glossy marine blue sea, coconut trees and a small island. It is really a fantastic sight. Unfortunately, you can only witness this virgin beach from the other side of Maelang. The one-hour drive from Maelang was not smooth since some parts of the dangerously curving road were under

Children play on a beach in Coloane, Macao's largest island, overlooking buildings on the other side of a strait in mainland China.

After almost 450 years, Macao returns to China

By Gregor Garbassen

MACAO (DPA) In the night of Dec. 19-20 the last hour of Europe's colonial history in Asia will strike.

After almost 450 years of Portuguese rule, Macao returns to the boom of the Chinese mainland. The Middle Kingdom will then be richer by 23.5 square kilometers, 500,000 citizens, and a special administrative region — the second after Hong Kong.

Unlike Hong Kong, which was returned to China on July 1, 1997 with considerable pomp and circumstance, Macao is not making a big fuss. By this Macao hopes to avoid what had happened in Hong Kong, i.e. a short-term increase in visitors, followed by a dramatic post-handover decline.

Not much is going to change, anyway. Following the "one country, two systems" formula that China has guaranteed Macao for the next 50 years, it will have its own local administration, a free-market economic system and a separate currency, the pataca. Also after the handover to China, a passport will suffice to enter Macao.

This year 7 million visitors are expected, approximately as many as in 1998. The majority come from Hong Kong across the brackish waters of the Pearl River delta for a one-day visit. Hydrofoils and high-speed catamarans manage the 80-

kilometer voyage in one hour. Most visitors are Hong Kong Chinese wishing to enjoy Macao's casinos, since most gambling — apart from horse racing — is illegal in Hong Kong. The casinos give Macao about 40 percent of its income, but have caused a number of serious problems lately associated with a big increase in crime.

Trade, Chinese organized crime groups have fought a bloody battle in the Portuguese enclave to dominate private gambling, the drug trade, prostitution and the like. The gangster's obvious intent: to get the territories settled before the new British Chinese rulers can interfere.

More than 50 years have been blown up over the last two years — and more than two dozen people killed, although tourists have not been attacked. To be extra safe, it is probably better — if you don't mind — to avoid the casinos and nightlife.

It might not be that difficult, since the city on the South China Sea is a unique mixture of Portuguese baroque and Chinese savoir-vivre. The people, the roads, even the fountains bear Portuguese names, but the lan-

guage is hardly spoken, the official language is Cantonese, and 95 percent of Macao's citizens are ethnic Chinese.

Unlike Hong Kong, Macao can look back on several centuries of colonialism. In the delta of the Pearl River, where the old part of town stands today, Portuguese merchants had already founded a trading post in the middle of the 16th century. So Macao had almost 450 years to become the only southern European city in the Far East.

The colony owes its name to the very worthwhile A-Ma temple, located in the south of the peninsula, where since the 14th century A-Ma, the goddess of seafarers and fishermen, has been worshipped. Ma Ngu, or "bay of A-Ma," was the name the local Chinese gave this place, which the Portuguese turned into Macao — sometimes written as "Macau."

Today, care and attention is lavished on Macao's colonial heritage. The best example is the Largo do Senado, the central square in the old part of town. Here the city government has its residence, in a picturesque building from the 18th century. Across the square is the main post office, and beside it a maze of winding old lanes leads decked out with colonial-era buildings.

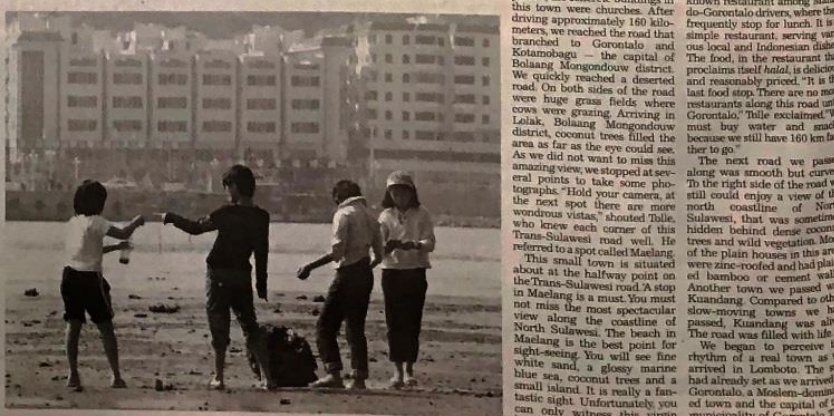
In the streets with their market stalls and many little shops it is as

busy as an ant-hill. Wildly ringing rickshaw drivers carry tourists about, housewives take cocking chickens home to the cooking pot, and scooters roar everywhere. And there is a strong smell — of incense sticks, dried fish and durian, a tropical fruit which, due to its often powerful odor, is sometimes called "stink fruit."

The eight most photographed in Macao is the ruin of Sao Paulo, a cathedral built in 1602 but which went up in flames 243 years later. Ever since its baroque facade, with its empty windows, has stood alone reaching into the sky, the remaining stands on the foot of a hill on which colony's fort sits in state.

From the fort there is a beautiful view of the old part of town, of Sao Paulo, and of Macao's new mother country. On the Chinese side of the Pearl River delta there was nothing but countryside until a few years ago, but today the shadows of the giant skyscrapers reach Macao.

Apart from the peninsula, two smaller islands belong to Macao. All three parts of the colony are connected by giant, high bridges. The island of Taipa has lost a lot of its charm due to the concrete apartment blocks, but the outer island Coloane has less buildings and is an oasis of silence.



Children play on a beach in Coloane, Macao's largest island, overlooking buildings on the other side of a strait in mainland China.