Indigeneity, Locality and Recognition:
Young People’s Shifting Engagements with Modernity in an Indonesian Mining Town (Sorowako South Sulawesi)

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Abstract

After an inauspicious beginning in the 1970s, marked by the human rights abuses of the Suharto regime, the mining town of Sorowako, located in the remote interior of Indonesia’s Sulawesi (Celebes) is now a cosmopolitan urban enclave. A compelling aspect of the modernity of this town is dramatic changes in intergenerational relations and associated novel forms of expression of a locality-based identity by young indigenous people. Parents who had no or limited education saw educating their children as a critical way to prepare them to benefit from the industrial modernity they were now part of: they made great sacrifices to educate their children, which required students to sojourn in towns in Sulawesi and Java. Many of these young people return to Sorowako and seek employment, but even a university degree is no guarantee of success. This paper explores the different ways in which young adults now express their indigenous identity, compared to the mode of their parents, for whom the claim to indigeneity was focused on gaining recognition of land rights and material benefits from the mine. Armed with new forms of social and cultural capital, many of these young people are also exploring local history and cultural practices; indeed many of them are involved in a form of local cultural revival, which stakes a claim for recognition of a distinctive cultural identity. Moreover, this claim is associated with shifting power

relations that in turn reflect the changed economic and political circumstances in this early twenty-first century, compared with forty years ago.

Introduction:
Sorowakan Identity in Historical Perspective

In four decades, Sorowako in the mountainous interior of Sulawesi (Celebes) has undergone dramatic change: this previously remote agricultural community is now a mining town (established in the 1970s), a cosmopolitan urban agglomeration. This paper focuses on the contemporary expression of a cultural identity that invokes locality, by young people in Sorowako: I will argue that their ‘style’ (Ferguson 1999) of invoking locality differs significantly from that of their parents and grandparents whose response to the mine was framed as a resistance identity (Castells 1997). However, young people embrace this older style of expression of identity in specific (political) contexts, and it co-exists with their novel style. This change in expressive style is linked to significant political and economic changes – locally and nationally – that amount to more than intergenerational change: the changing forms of subjectification (in its dual sense of
processes of the development of interior subjectivity and political subordination [Day 2007]) illuminate shifts in the power relations within which everyday life is embedded. Of particular interest will be the interplay of roles that an international mining company and the state play in shaping the structural conditions of the cultural, religions and economic life in Sorowako.

Prior to the mine development Sorowako was a remote agricultural community of around 1,000 people, linked to the global economy at ‘arm’s length’ through export of jungle commodities (dammar resin and rattan), as well as iron ore smelted from local ore deposits and fashioned into weapons, agricultural and ceremonial implements (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000). In the pre-project economy, resources necessary for household livelihoods, such as land, buffalo and dammar trees were controlled by parents and grandparents, and this provided the basis for the exercise of parental power over youth. Cultural identity was linked to village membership (based around kin and affinal relations), language and also loose ties through the village elite to the Sultanate of Luwu (Robinson 1986). Sorowako people speak a dialect of Mori, a language of the Bungku-Laki group spoken in Southeast and parts of Central Sulawesi. Prior to the early twentieth century, when Dutch colonial rule extended to the interior, this was a region of turbulence and local identities were constantly reformed through internecine warfare and headhunting. At this time, the lives of children repeated those of their parents and the older generation passed on the skills needed for household survival: farming, animal husbandry and collecting jungle products. Parents controlled the resources necessary for marriage payments and hence the choice of their children’s spouses. Men and women worked together in their scattered slash and burn plots, and men took principal responsibility for the forays into the jungle to collect the trade goods dammar resin and rattan, or work at their traditional craft of smelting iron ore and forging metal weapons and implements. Prior to the expansion of Dutch authority and ‘pacification’ they remained committed to customary animistic rituals and beliefs, in spite of their connections to the Islamic sultanate of Luwu and to Muslim traders on the coast. In the early part of the twentieth century, when the Dutch extended their rule in the interior of
Sulawesi, headhunting and the carrying of weapons were banned and local smelting of iron ore gave way to imports of factory smelted scrap iron. Dutch colonial presence led to more intense links to global economic networks, including some early mining exploration. The extension of colonial authority into the interior of Sulawesi also (apparently paradoxically) led to conversion to Islam, through the influence of local colonial outreach workers (Bugis) deployed to extend knowledge of settled agriculture to these shifting cultivator populations (see Robinson 1986).

Indonesian independence in 1945 initially led to suffering as Sorowako fell within the territory controlled by the Darul Islam rebellion (1952-1965), which mobilised against the central government. The people were forced to abandon their village site and flee to the jungle. They experienced economic isolation, but intensification of their engagement with Islam. Customary practices in relation to life cycle rituals were overridden by Bugis cultural practices linked to Islam. The rebellion was crushed in the mid 1960s and the central government asserted control (Boland 1982). Local identities were gradually subsumed within the overarching identity of Indonesian citizenship.

**New Order Development and Identity**

Following the alleged coup in 1965, which enabled General Suharto to take power from the founding president Sukarno, the newly re-established village became the central location for a nickel mining and processing project, established by the Canadian company, International Nickel (Inco) (Robinson 1986). Suharto’s New Order rejected the ultranationalism of founding President Sukarno and embraced the developed world’s teleological vision of the capitalist path to modernity, seeking out foreign investment as one of the principle engines of development – referred to by the neologism *pembangunan* (development). The infamous Freeport mine in West Papua was the first contract the government negotiated with a foreign company and the Sorowako nickel project was a ‘second generation’ contract. The regime embraced the
Western Rostowian\(^2\) theory of ‘development’ – infusions of foreign capital would lead to ‘take off’ in the national economy. The ideology of pembangunan contained the coda that there was no particular need to engineer the process whereby local people would benefit from the mining project because these benefits would ‘trickle down’. This justified the denial of rights – in the case of Sorowako most notably land rights. Their prime agricultural land was taken for the company townsite and golf course and access to the village commons, for opening new fields and pasturage was delimited. Sorowako was remote from the district capital Palopo, reached by a difficult day’s journey over poor roads, or road and sea. The mining company had to develop its own infrastructure—roads, port, airport, hydroelectricity, health facilities and schools, and a town. The cash-strapped district government, which received only a trickle of the taxes and royalties generated by the mine, took the attitude ‘Inco is in Sorowako’ and deployed its scarce assets for the benefit of populations closer to the capital. While this gave Inco a lot of freedom to order its environment, the freedom had costs, as access to the facilities they developed became the focus of demands for compensation by the local people.

The Sorowako people shared a truncated vision of the regime’s myth of modernisation: they welcomed the mining exploration teams and shared their local knowledge, in the expectation that they would be partners and beneficiaries in the mega project. While older people articulated hopes and expectations from the mine, their children grew up enjoying the benefits of facilities such as better health care and education, especially for children of workers, but also the opportunities for social encounters and experience in the expanded and complex social environment of the multicultural, multiracial mining town. The mine dominates economic activity in Sorowako; the loss of the village estate meant that employment by Inco and its contractors quickly became the main form of local employment and the most significant source of social esteem. While the company's

\(^2\) The rationale for foreign investment adopted by the New Order government of Suharto (1966–1998) embraced the logic of the theorist WW Rostow, whose evolutionary model of economic development has been the dominant paradigm in framing relations between ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ nations (Robinson 1986).
fortunes go up and down with the world price of nickel, it has been a fixture for four decades. Its concomitant domination of the landscape stamps the economy and society in terms of its industrial modernity.

**Emergence of a Resistance Identity**

The local indigenous people have had a complex and constantly negotiated relationship with the mine and its form of industrial modernity. Many local men found employment in the boom years of construction, which softened the economic blow of their loss of agricultural land. When high levels of employment for locals failed to emerge in the post-construction phase, people became very bitter, all the more so because of the inadequate compensation package that the government negotiated with the company, for that agricultural land. Nonetheless, the dominant idiom in Sorowako was an idealising of the industrial modernity that quite literally encompassed them.

In the 1970s, over ten thousand migrants sought work and other economic opportunities in this village that previously had a population of around a thousand. The local people saw the mining company and migrant workers and businesspeople scoop up opportunities while they were relegated to abject conditions on the fringes of the local economy. They responded with a strong assertion of their rights as *asli* or indigenous, as the proprietors of the land, an identity set up in opposition to *pendatang* (migrant). The *asli* identification in contradistinction to *pendatang* can be regarded as a resistance identity (Castells 1997) based on a claim for ownership of resources that had been denied in the process of capitalist development. While adherence to the *asli* identity has always been strong, this region has long been characterised by dynamic population movements and intermarriage with neighbouring groups. After some initial suspicion of migrants within a few years of the project's beginnings, intermarriage with (especially Muslim) migrants has become common (Robinson 1998). Bilateral kinship means that these marriages have boosted the number of people who can claim 'asli' status.
While indigenous identity as Orang Asli Sorowako (Indigenous people of Soroawako-OAS) invoked ‘tradition’, in this instance tradition was mobilised to make modern claims, namely to have their property rights recognised in response to a form of class domination in which they were transformed into a dispossessed industrial reserve, as low paid and usually temporary workers for the company or its construction contractors – or unemployed. In Sorowako, the assertion of asli (OAS) identity was not a refusal of modernity but a claim for a stake in it – privileged access to jobs, health and educational services, as well as recognition of land rights, and compensation for loss of land. The indigenous identity was organised around a local elite with links to the old Luwu Sultanate (Errington 1989) who are the descendants of the indirect rulers from Dutch colonial times. This resulted in the reproduction of power and authority of local elites who have assumed positions of authority in the modern state – but this group also provided the leadership for the local challenges to the mining company and the government (see below)³.

I entitled my book that analysed the first decade of the project *Stepchildren of Progress* (Robinson 1986) as this was the common idiom they used to describe their relation to the dramatic changes happening around them. They did not reject the dream of the benefits of *pembangunan* that took grip in Suharto’s Indonesia, of achieving the lifestyle associated with the urban middle class, which they saw played out in the suburbs of the company town that encompassed their village and by the 1980s, on their TV screens. The appeal of this lifestyle was rooted in its material comforts (running water, electricity 24 hours a day) but the middle class life provided the form for the concrete expression of their desire to be treated with dignity, rather than the indignity of their lowly status within the hierarchical mining town – the indigenous people were either locked out of industrial employment, or incorporated in the lowest rungs of the company job ladder⁴.

The articulation of their resistance identity was somewhat successful in gaining

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³ The complex form of subjectification associated with this identity also encompassed/was also formed by identification with Islam. ‘Traditional’ or customary practices, for example in relation to life cycle rituals, were overridden by Bugis cultural practices linked to Islam.

⁴ This summarises arguments developed in Robinson (1986) and other publications.
compensation for their alienated land through the courts, and in gaining some special benefits in terms of access to health, education and even, on occasion, employment (Robinson 1986). But these matters have never been settled and conflict is ongoing on claims framed in terms of indigenous rights.

In the initial legal challenge to the compensation package by the OAS they were represented by the Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum – LBH) so the denial of their rights was linked to the pattern of human rights abuse of the New Order. Since the 1980s the discourse of Indigenous rights has become more prominent as oppressed groups in Indonesia have linked up to global Indigenous rights discourse, which feeds into their own construction of identity.

**The Significance of Education.**

An apparent paradox of Suharto’s crony capitalist regime was that while skimming off billions of dollars generated by the exploitation of Indonesia’s vast natural wealth, the regime deployed super profits resultant on the 1975 oil price hike to expand education and health services for Indonesia’s population, that is, to support forms of social reproduction concomitant with *pembangunan*. The government gave substance to the middle class dream by educating the nation’s youth, and the national curriculum made them work-ready for urban industrial occupations (see Warouw 2004). But even before the government expansion of education, parents in Sorowako recognised that the critical difference between themselves and the people they saw enjoying the benefits of the mine, in better paying jobs and company housing in the neat middle class suburbs of the company town, was that the immigrants were educated and they were not. The idea that parents dispossessed of the wherewithal for agricultural livelihoods that they once gifted to their children were now obliged to provide their children with education as the ‘*bekal*’ (provisions) for the future took root very quickly (Robinson 1991, 1995). Until the 2001 decentralisation of government functions, Sorowako was a long way from local government and government services (notably health and education) were extremely poor. Education for indigenous children at the company-funded school was a significant
demand in the political campaign for recognition of indigenous rights. They have had success in this regard, and hundreds of indigenous children have now received high quality education, which has enabled them to go on to tertiary education. Like government schools, it is an important site for the development of ‘human resources’ (*sumber daya manusia*) for the modern capitalist economy. That is, the company-sponsored school is a critical site for the development of new forms of subjectification and has been instrumental in founding novel locality-based forms of social identity.

As a result of the strong commitment of their parents to fund their education, and as a consequence of successful claims to access the company-sponsored school as an indigenous right, many young Sorowakans now are university graduates who work in middle class occupations in the mining company, and a small number have moved out of the original village and occupy managers’ houses in the company town. Other local people have benefited from expanded economic opportunities in the mining town and are successful traders, the most successful sending his three sons to an International school in Malaysia in the belief that this will open up global networks, global possibilities. The original village now has many large multi-storied houses squeezed into the housing blocks established in a village reorganisation in the 1970s to accommodate Sulawesi-style wooden houses (*see* Robinson 1986). Others who are ‘doing well’ have built large houses in the new lakeside suburb of Sumasang where housing land was released in settlement of a further compensation claim by the indigenous people after Reformasi (the period of democratic reform instituted after the fall of Suharto).

Nearly forty years on, Sorowako stands as a monument to the New Order vision of modernity. The mine and processing plant dominate the landscape around Lake Matano, alongside the still-growing company town with white painted wooden bungalows set in large house gardens. The most recent construction is a company-built apartment building (inspired by urban development in Malaysia) in which the local government is planning to rehouse squatters who have built houses over the water on the lake shore. The company town has charming lake side recreational beaches where residents moor
water craft and romp on inflated truck inner tubes. But Sorowako also expresses the contradictions that remain as the New Order legacy, most especially the social and economic inequalities and associated envy and resentment, which sit alongside the expanded opportunities for personal economic betterment that resulted from its economic policies.

Local Identity in Decentralised Indonesia

Suharto’s New Order had ambivalent regard for the localised identities of the population of the archipelago, which crystallise around language communities and spatially delimited groups, and whose specificity had to be subsumed by the generality of national belonging. The Indonesian nationalists used the term ‘suku’ to describe local cultural-linguistic groups: suku had connotations of parts of a whole (like the segments of an orange) and suku in this context was shorthand for suku bangsa, or segments of the nation, a state ideological formulation that acknowledged cultural difference under the umbrella of the equality conferred by national citizenship. However, New Order policies were directed at control of local difference in the service of national unity under the control of the centralised state. The regime allowed folkloric expressions of identity (Acciaioli 1985), especially in the context of state ceremonies (on national independence day for example) and public institutions (such as schools and museums), but denied the right for local groups to express, for example, rights in land as a fundamental aspect of local identities. Pembangunan justified internal migration from areas of scarce resources to places where land and sea resources were more abundant, and this free population movement demanded the assertion of national rights of citizens to utilise resources, over local rights (Robinson 2002).

Locality is critical to expressions of identity in South Sulawesi: everyone is from somewhere. But in South Sulawesi cultural differences have been inventarised into four official suku: Bugis, Makassar, Toraja and Mandar (Robinson 1997), which are distinctive language groups. Sorowako people’s language and with it, their local identity are not
encompassed in the official South Sulawesi classification of the ‘empat etnis’ or ‘four ethnic groups’\(^5\). This lack of recognition made their marginalisation through the development of the Nickel project even more complete. That is, they not only experienced the extinguishment of their way of life through loss of the village estate, but also struggled against erasure of their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness.

Sorowako, for centuries, was in the orbit of the Islamic polities of Ternate and Luwu, who were rivals to control trade in the interior, but the region around Lake Matano was only really Islamised in the early 20th century as a consequence of Dutch indirect rule through Luwu (Robinson 1986). Islam became a key pillar of indigenous Sorowakan identity through the influence of village imam from Sinjai and then later as a consequence of the forcefulness with which the Darul Islam rebels required adherence to a modernist form of Islam. Bugis cultural practices gradually replaced local customs around life crisis rituals and, to an extent, agriculture. For example, the tandem influence of Islam and Bugis culture have resulted in indigenous Sorowakans wearing Bugis costume at weddings, that is, the style of Bugis costume which stands for national representation of Bugis identity. Weddings are the most significant public rituals in Bugis (and now Sorowakan) culture, and this public display of mimicry helped cement a view among migrants (including mine managers) that they ‘had no culture’\(^6\).

During the New Order, the nationalist terminology of ‘suku’ gave way to a concept of etnis or etnik, based on the English word ‘ethnicity’, with connotations of a bounded group that shared a self-conscious identity expressed in opposition to other groups (rather than difference as part of an encompassing whole) (Robinson 2002). Inter-ethnic violence broke out in many parts of Indonesia in the late New Order, frequently between ‘locals’ and migrants triggered by competition for resources in the difficult economic conditions of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis (AFC). Conflicts reflected the tensions that

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\(^5\) Mandar people have successfully lobbied to be the core group of a new province, West Sulawesi.

\(^6\) In Sorowako, elaborate mortuary rites were once significant public rituals, as is the case with neighboring Toraja (see Grubauer 1913) but being ‘un-Islamic’ no longer occur.
had built up with the movements of people seeking economic opportunity, legitimised by *pembangunan*.

Conflicts of this type were one of the factors that led to the demise of the Suharto regime, weakened by the failure of its *pembangunan* policy made manifest when the AFC hit Indonesia. A political solution was buckled together, with Vice-president Habibie taking the reins. The package of reforms was dubbed Reformasi, and characterised as a democratic movement. Fears that the nation might crack apart through ‘ethnic’ conflict eventuated in a political compromise in which Indonesia followed contemporary global trends in moving to decentralisation of political authority, from the centre to over 300 districts, in the ‘package’ of reforms post-Suharto. The architects of the decentralisation stated the change was intended to promote democratisation, by making decision makers more directly responsible to the people. It was also intended to assuage sentiments associated with sub-national identities, which had flared up in the chaos of the late New Order. It was feared such conflict could lead to a break-up of the unitary state (Aspinall and Fealy 2003).

Regional autonomy in the districts has unleashed claims to and expressions of local cultural distinctiveness, which had been largely suppressed under the New Order. The political recalibration that took place with the establishment of regional autonomy has been accompanied all over Indonesia by cultural revival. It is expressed in folkloristic displays and also a fashion for installing local customary rulers, namely in revived court ceremonials (Robinson 2011). Some of the impetus is political; it includes making claims to local autonomy or, in the case of customary rulers, utilising the idiom of custom (*adat*) to seek power in the newly empowered district government. In Sorowako there has been an attempt to revive a traditional political office, the Makole Matano (Ruler of the realm of Matano). The movement also reflects the global trend in which culture is

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7 The regime had also had an ambivalent relationship to Islam, at times courting organised Islam as a political ally (against leftist movements) and at other times suppressing it as a political force – the lessons of the Iranian revolution were apparently very clear and posters and writings of the Ayatollah were banned. The new political freedoms of Reformasi allowed an efflorescence of political Islam and a proliferation of faith groups, form the conservative to militant radicals.
objectified as a commodity for exchange in the global tourist market, not infrequently as a way for people otherwise ‘locked out’ of the global economy to realise the ‘value’ of their culture in global markets (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Sorowako has been caught up in this trend. Traditional dances that were banned under the Darul Islam rebellion that gripped the island in the 1950s are being re-established – perhaps even reinvented – and performed in local festivals. The principal audience is the multiethnic population of the mining town, but on their website the festival committee express their hope of capturing a broader tourist gaze (see below). These contemporary expressions of locality are a lens through which to explore the intergenerational differences in expressions of a local cultural identity, and what this might tell us about the dramatic changes that have occurred in Sorowako.

Changing Cultural Styles in the Expression of a Local Indigenous Identity

The Sorowako people struggled for recognition of their indigenous status, expressed as a resistance identity critically related to power – to land rights and the right to benefit from the mine in terms of jobs and access to services. Their expression of identity also became caught up (at least for the local leaders) with global discourses of Indigenous rights, which resonated with their positioning. They protested the original land compensation that was negotiated between the mining company and the district government, and also pressed claims for special privileges such as access to company health and education services designed for employees, or privileged access to company employment. They asserted their identity as Orang Asli Sorowako in articulating these claims and in seeking recognition as the original owners. The company gave limited symbolic recognition in the use of local place names in the company town (for suburbs etc.) and in naming streets and markets after local people.

Recognition is important in the contemporary expressions of local identity by young people in Sorowako, but the ‘style’ of representation of locality is different from the dominant style of the past. Many of them have attended the company-sponsored schools,
even gone on to become university graduates (some with assistance from the company), and many are now company employees. There are over 3,000 people currently who identify as OAS, and the local NGO representing graduates now lists over 300 names. The indigenous youth are seeking recognition in ways that differ from the claims posed by their parents, although in some respects they overlap. Ferguson (1999) introduces the concept of ‘cultural style’ in order to address changes in personal identities in the African Copperbelt. Cultural styles are ‘signifying practices that mark socially significant positions and allegiances’ and help produce difference (Ferguson 1999: 220; they are cultivated modes of action through which people place themselves or are placed in social categories, and are cross-cut by other social categories such as gender and class). In speaking of style Ferguson aims to address the effects of change on everyday social practices and interactions, but at the same time to “break... with the old dualistic concern with traditional and modern by making it possible to talk about cultural difference without smuggling in assumptions about social typologies and evolutionary teleology” (Ferguson 1999: 102). The identity claims of youth still invoke indigeneity as having entailments, in particular rights to jobs in the mining company, but their identity claims are not forged in so strong a binary opposition to migrants, as in the older resistance identity. Instead, their claims cross-cut social categories: they take form in the cosmopolitan terrain of the mining town, the nation, indeed the world, demanding acknowledgment of their cultural distinctiveness and recognition of their dignity and honour. Sorowakan subjectivities are formed in the context of complex power relations – the nation, global Islam, and of course the identity as employees. These claims converge in the younger generation’s strong aspiration to employment since work roles provide the main sense of identity and dignity in the mining town as the dominant cultural style, over and above the status of indigenous. Their embrace of indigeneity, of a locality-based identity, does not signal a clinging to ‘traditional’ mores, but rather an expression of a style of belonging in the cosmopolitan domain of the mining town, and the global world of the internet.
Three Examples of Young People’s Expressions of Cultural Identity

Here I present three case studies of contemporary expressions of locality-based identity. All involve young indigenous people who have tertiary education, and whose educational foundations were in the company-sponsored school system (Yayasan Pendidikan Soroawkao, Sorowako Education Foundation, henceforth YPS). The YPS school plays a critical role in forging new subjectivities, stressing educational achievement, middle class aspirations (lifestyle and employment) and new collective identities. However, these three young people are all from families who are heavily involved in claims for indigenous rights (of OAS), that is, in the expression of ‘resistance’ identities. Like the rest of Indonesia, Sorowako has witnessed the growth of an aspirational middle class, who desire consumption patterns linked to housing developments, shopping malls, private cars and travel. Prolonged education promoted by the national government (the policy of nine years compulsory education introduced in 1994) has resulted in an extended period of youth as young people chase the middle class dream through education.

Mardiani

Mardiani is a young woman in her twenties who grew up in Sorowako and who identifies as an indigenous Sorowakan. Her family is one of the family lines that claims originary status as village founders. Her mother has been a leader of the NGO formed in the 1990s to defend indigenous rights (KAWAS-Kerukunan Warga Asli Sorowako). She has a Graduate Diploma (D2) in English from a university in Jogjakarta, and her case is unusual in that she received support for her education from an expatriate family in the company town, with whom she lived as a high school student. Since returning to Sorowako she has found employment as a kindergarten teacher in the company-funded school system. She proclaims her Islamic identity in the manner of young middle class educated Indonesian women in that she always wears a jilbab (tight veil) but in a ‘student style’ often with jeans, sandals and backpack.
She contacted me several years ago to ask for sources when she was preparing her final research paper, which she chose to write about the cultural history of Sorowako. In 2008 she produced a book of stories which she and a team of local researchers collected from old people in Sorowako – *Putri Loeha dan Payung Saktinya (The girl from Loeha and her Sacred Umbrella)*. The mining company funded the printing by major national publisher Gramedia, and folklorist James Danajaya (from the University of Indonesia) has written a forward. She is rightfully proud of her book, which has also been translated into English. The mining company distributes it to local schools and gives it to visitors. If she could do further study, she would like to be an anthropologist.

Her choice of stories is very ecumenical – it records three different origin stories for Sorowako, each of which represents claims to an originary line from a different founder. Claims to precedence in South Sulawesi are commonly framed in terms of descent from founding ancestors, who are identified with origin places. In Sorowako, legitimacy for powerful local families is indexed by public acceptance of their lineal ancestor as

founder. When I first went to Sorowako, the version giving precedence to the family of the then village headman had most currency, and many people claimed a connection to this kindred, but the claims to precedence were being challenged in a non-public manner.

She also includes stories from the Padoe and Karungsi’e cultural-linguistic groups who are regarded by indigenous Sorowakans as socially inferior, and whose oral histories represent them as subject peoples of the dominant groups (Sorowako and Matano). This perhaps reflects the concern of the community relations section of the mining company that they cannot acknowledge the claims of the Orang Asli Sorowako to the exclusion of the interests and rights of other people (for example, in implementing clauses of agreements relating to indigenous rights to employment and services).

What frames her interest in folklore? Her book uses a contemporary medium to place on record the distinctive cultural traditions of her birthplace. It has been sponsored by, and is distributed by the international mining company which frames it in a cosmopolitan setting; a local identity that stands for the geospatial distinctiveness of the cosmopolitan mining town. The book demonstrates Mardiani’s prowess in managing modern institutions and relationships. Mardiani also expresses her identity as an author, in obtaining the endorsement from national scholar James Danajaya and in her awareness of her rights to royalties.

The illustrations in Puteri Loeha were made by Mujiyo (Nurkholis), an author and illustrator of children’s religious books from Java. They invoke the standardised imagery of what Taylor (1994: 79) calls the Nusantara concept of culture, the standardised style of cultural representation under the New Order where the iconography of differences among groups in the archipelago is smoothed into a series of representative set images. The characters in the illustrations are dressed in a pan-Malay fashion: the female

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9 Nusantara means archipelago, and is a poetic synonym for the nation. Every museum has a Nusantara room that followed a standard format and which compared artefacts from different parts of the archipelago – for example, swords or wedding costumes from each province, and bride and bridegroom dolls, which are the most popular (Taylor 1994: 79). The museum in South Sulawesi province uses Bugis costumes ‘to represent the entire province’ (Taylor 1994: 81).
characters wear *sarong* (wrapped cloth skirt) and a *baju kurung* (ling-sleeved Malay blouse); the men wear Malay style calf-length pants and triangular headscarves, a costume held to represent as Makassarese or Bugis in ‘Nusantara-style’ performances and presentations.

The umbrella on the cover is a reference to a symbol of royal status in the Islamic sultanate of Luwu. The clothing styles of old Sorowako have faded from memory, as clothing has been a manifest feature of cultural styles that have been taken up by the people of Sorowako in waves of self-fashioning in response to new influences.
Bugis dress was adopted as wedding dress by brides and grooms under the influence of the Sinjai imam, and when the urban Indonesian migrants began to flow in to Sorowako in the 1970s, the women self consciously began wearing skirts and blouses and little triangular headscarves, specially at functions associated with modernity, like women's association meetings; while men would always don trousers to go to the company townsit (Robinson 1988).

Mardiani is proud of her own family story and the precedence it makes claim to, as well as her social identity as a member of the indigenous identity group (OAS). She at times expresses the indigenous resistance identity in regard to local rights. But this occupies a
different relation to her own identity and subjectivity (Werbner 2002) than the expression of the resistance identity of her parents. In 2009, she helped me organise interviews with young graduates who had returned to Sorowako, inviting people from her strong cohort of friends, who come from all sections of the mining town, and who have parents who originate from diverse parts of the archipelago. They are united through friendships forged in high school and now through the workplace.

When I asked about their identity group/origin, the young people replied they were ‘penduduk Sorowako’, that is, population/people of Sorowako (they did not claim a cultural/linguistic identity following the identity of their parents, for example as Javanese, Sundanese or Bugis). Mardiani explained to me in English: ‘They were born here and went to school here so they are Sorowako’s people’. That is, while in certain contexts Mardiani expresses her identity as indigenous, and claims rights for indigenous people, she also embraces a local identity which encompasses her cohort of school friends who come from immigrant families. By contrast, my elderly friend Agasa, who is a direct descendant of the most publically acclaimed founder at the time I first went to Sorowako (and daughter of a former village headman), still pointedly tells people that she meets that she is ‘asli’ (indigenous) Sorowako and that the market is named after her former headman father – claiming her status honor as a member of the local elite and her ties to place.

Mardiani has an active Facebook site that connects her to people in Sorowako, but also to university friends and to former expat employees now returned home.
The photographs published on her Facebook site reflect her identity as a modern young woman in a mining town: she shows photographs of herself and her friends in the mining town site, near heavy equipment, and also on trips to other parts of Indonesia. One photograph shows her proudly holding her book.

**Festival Danau Matano**

In 2009, a group of young Sorowakan people organised the Festival Danau Matano (Lake Matano Festival), for which they received assistance from local government and the mining company. Over two days, it featured performances of local dance and song; competitions of customary recreational activities, like diving, boat racing and fishing; and stalls selling handicrafts and food. They also had a display of photos of Old Sorowako from Grubauer’s 1913 book, which I had provided. The festival invoked local
indigenous culture: performances, activities on the lake such as *ketinting* (motorised outrigger) races, traditional dances like Monsado and local food and handicrafts. The acknowledgment of local cultural distinctiveness was emphasised by (limited) use of the local language (Mepau/Bahasa Sorowako) in defining the events and expressing the broad aims (*see* the festival website [http://www.festivaldanaumatano.com/](http://www.festivaldanaumatano.com/) accessed 10 December 2011).

I first heard of plans for the Lake Matano Festival at a local culture festival in Masamba, the capital of the neighbouring district of North Luwu, in 2006 (Robinson 2011). These kinds of festivals promoting local culture have become a common aspect of the cultural revival under way in post Suharto Indonesia (Robinson 2011; *see* Comaroff and
Comaroff 2009 and Otto 2011 for discussion of this kind of cultural presentation as a contemporary global phenomenon).

On a subsequent visit to Sorowako in 2008, I was informed that the local government plans for a Festival Danau Matano were abandoned because of conflicts among elites of the older generation, especially a conflict between two men over which of them had the hereditary right to be installed as the Makole Matano. The young people then decided to take matters into their own hands—they were not caught up in the dispute, about who was entitled to prestige and power based on their purported hereditary rights to assume office. For the young people, the aspiration was to seek recognition and dignity for their culture and cultural identity, but also to promote tourism. They went ahead and planned the festival, with company and local government support, and the older generation then got behind them. They described themselves as generasi muda (young generation) on the festival website, which makes clear who is sponsoring the event. In 2009, I received an email from a young indigenous man asking me for assistance in providing historical materials and images for the festival, and I arrived in Sorowako to find plans well under way. The young committee members told me that they had become frustrated by the squabbles over who was the local customary ruler, which had disrupted their own plans for a festival with a different intent.

The rubric for the festival, posted on a website and Facebook page, emphasises their desire for recognition of the culture of the people of Lake Matano and for the beauty of the area to be appreciated by a wider audience. Indeed, their agenda coalesced with a recent initiative by the district government: they have applied for what they term ‘the Malili Lake System’ to be listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site.

The festival was held on the shores of Lake Matano, at Pantai Ide (Ide Beach), the recreation area of one of the mining town suburbs, which has a grassed area flanked by parking lots and a wooden pier jutting out into the lake, looking across to the high

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10 A young leader had been elected as the local member of the district parliament (DPR). He was from another elite family but his political goal was to force a discussion about alternative economic futures, looking to the days when the mining company would leave, and he saw tourism as a likely way forward.
mountains on the opposite shore, rather than at the mine in the mountains behind. The organisers of the festival received support from the mining company and the local government. The company's community relations department provided a stage and high quality public address system, and portable stalls where food and handicrafts were sold. The natural beauty of the lake and the region figured heavily in the imagery of the festival. The photos on the festival website and Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=82573401596&v=photos) include popular local tourist destinations and recreation sites, including Pantai Ide. There are no photos of the mine, which in fact hovers over the lake and the company town, but there are images of the suburban streets of the mining town, its wooden bungalows and lush house gardens.

Since decentralisation the idea of kearifin lokal (commonly glossed in English as ‘local genius’) is frequently deployed to assert local distinctiveness. It is an assertion of local specificity and accomplishment but also the expression of a belief in the possibility of local values underpinning development (by promoting harmony and co-operation). I asked a senior scholar and retired official of the Department of Culture and Tourism what had prompted the emergence of this term and he replied that it was seen as a way to replace the old state ideology of Panca sila,11 which was also an expression of autochthonous values but which had been discredited by its association with the New Order.

The young festival organisers drew on forms of popular culture from national media. The performances were ‘mc’d by a boy and girl wearing event T-shirts that had been printed for all the organisers and ‘crew’. They stood confidently on stage, each holding a microphone and engaged in banter while introducing acts, brightly mimicking TV hosts on shows like Indonesian Idol where people compete for recognition and honour. Their style and demeanour were at great variance to that of older local people, for example the

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11 The Panca Sila or Five Principles was ‘discovered’ by founding president Sukarno as the autochthonous expression of Indonesian political values: they are one deity, nationality, humanity, democracy and social justice (Feith and Castles 1970: 495).
village women who stood awkwardly on stage while they sang or played the traditional music, Nohu Bangka (beating out a rhythmic tune on rice pounders). While the website emphasises the national motto ‘unite (sic) in Diversity’, the highlighted performances drew on local cultural practices, even when performed by migrants. A dance group named in Sorowako language Ame Mea Asoroa (‘We are One Heart’) performed the Sorowakan Monsado dance. The Ame Mea Asoroa centre, principally for young people, was started by a Torajan teacher who had grown up in Sorowako. It is very significant that the use of a name in the local language would never have happened pre-Reformasi – the immigrants, especially high status migrants in the company town on the whole were ignorant and disrespectful of local culture, and such a festival could not be organised without the support and participation of migrants.

The festival was notable for its emphasis on locality based practices, local history and use of the local language (Bahasa Sorowako); and also for the ecumenical nature of the group of young people who organised the festival, united by bonds formed at High School that endured the years they were away studying in other parts of the archipelago, and new links forged in the company workforce. The website describes the festival as ‘ekspresi dari jati diri akan cinta terhadap tanah air (expression of [self]-identity and love for the nation).

I asked one of the young organisers if he thought the way of expressing local identity was shifting for the younger generation. His eyes lit up as he enthusiastically expressed his recognition of my suggestion: that for the young people the assertion of indigenous Sorowakan identity is not about differentiating themselves from immigrants and claiming superior right on this basis, but rather it is about ‘jati diri’ (self-identity or subjectivity).12 By contrast, older style politicised local identities emerged ‘backstage’ in a conflict between several older men as to who should be speaking as the ‘Ketua Adat’, the source of traditional knowledge and authority. This represented an expression of

12 Indeed, one of his uncles who had left Sorowako for education as a young man become cut off in the city because of the Darul Islam rebellion, but had graduated from university and become a government official in Jakarta, told me about ten years ago that he had been collecting stories from his mother and other old people in an attempt to reconstruct history as he wanted to know ‘who am I?’
what Castells (1997) has termed a project identity, organised around achieving a distinct objective in the political context created by decentralisation, and invoked indigeneity as the legitimating factor. The overall claim by the young indigenous members of the committee is for recognition as people in possession of a distinctive and noteworthy local cultural identity – one which has been erased from official inventories of ‘ethnic groups’ – in the context of the Indonesian nation and the world (Lake Matano as a tourist destination). While one purpose of the festival was promoting tourism, the expression of local identity was not immediately linked directly to claims for material resources or benefits. Tourism was especially linked to the promotion of the natural environment, and the expression of love for that environment. In fact, some of the young people were looking to mine closure, which is not yet on the mining company agenda – thereby staking a claim in the ‘identity economy’, a term coined by Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) for the increasingly common practices of commodification of local cultures for economic gain in a global capitalist economy where many have no possibility to sell their labour power. These educated young people invoke the local in expressing a cosmopolitan identity (cf. Ferguson 1999); cosmopolitan in the sense identified by Clifford (1998, p.362) as “worldly productive sites of crossing; complex unfinished paths between local and global attachments” (see also Robinson 2007). The intended audience is not just local, and not just the local sources of power (local government and mining company) but ‘the world at large’, from whom they seek acknowledgment of their distinctiveness.
Atma Gamara: a Modern Man with a Passion for Tradition

Atma Gamara is a Mechanical Designer in the mining company and an enthusiast for local history and tradition. Atma is from a village at the end of Lake Matano, which is where oral traditions locate the origin place of the pre-colonial ruler, the Makole Matano. He has taken the patronym Gamara which was the name of a Matano official who dictated the oral tradition to a family member, Ranggo (Atma’s grandfather), in 1933. Gamara has collected genealogical data and other oral historical information from his relatives, including the abovementioned Gamara memoir. He uses web-based technology to publicise his family and also to source historical materials, for example, photographs from the Troppenmuseum in the Netherlands, which he publishes on a Facebook site that he has developed, for the Keluarga Besar Mokole Wawa Inia Rahampu’u Matano (extended family of the Ruler of Matano).

Figure 8. Facebook page for the Keluarga Besar Mokole Wawa Inia Rahampu’u Matano (descendants of Ruler of Matano).
The site supports the desire by his uncle to be ‘crowned’ as the current Makole Matano. Atma’s family are linked to the Kerajaan Luwu (Luwu sultanate): the desire to achieve this status is not just nostalgia for tradition but can be used to legitimate political power in the modern state: since regional autonomy members of this extended family occupy local leadership positions in the newly empowered districts located within the territory claimed by the old kingdom. However, these Facebook sites do not have many friends signed up and now due to be archived. The themes of the royal history and the legitimization of claims are apparently not attractive to the young Indonesian users of Facebook (noting that Indonesia has the second largest number of Facebook users in the world).
Atma has used web searches to locate antiquarian books with images of the region in the past, which his uncle, a wealthy businessman, is happy to pay for. He posts photos of his extended family at events and significant sites, such as visiting the royal graves in Matano, or attending functions at the Luwu palace in Palopo. On this site Atma Gamara appears in customary dress of the Kerajaan Luwu.

Interestingly, his uncle’s rival for the position of Mokole now also has a Facebook site and he also appears in some of the group photos on that site. Atma has excavated some historical sites in Matano and found objects, which he identified with the help of photographs of similar items retrieved from the internet. He is also involved in cultural revival, describing at length on a blog the Harvest Festival (Mobua) and cultural festival held in Matano village in July and August 2010. On this blog he describes himself as a son of Rahampu’u Matano, Rahampu’u being part of the Mokole title (http://matanoatma.blogspot.com/2010/08/mobua-dan-pentas-seni-budaya-mokole.html#links).

Atma also has a Linkedin site, on which he represents himself as a young professional, mentioning his degrees, his competencies and his work experiences. He straddles
different styles of expression of identity, with his historical and archaeological research fuelling the self-narrative which awards his family precedence. However his is also a modern sensibility in which he wants to know his past in order to understand who he is (in the manner expressed by the festival organisers, ‘jati diri’). Atma encompasses the local in a cosmopolitan identity, using his modern technical competence in a global search for his ‘roots’ and posting his findings online in order to represent himself as a descendant of the Mokole. But any mention of locality-based identity is absent from an alternative self-representation as a highly qualified technically competent professional, with skills that could be used anywhere in the world.

**Conclusion: Locality in Modern Identities**

The changing ‘styles’ of invocations of locality in the expression of identity provide a window onto the reshaping of the social world of Sorowako. Locality is encompassed for the *generasi muda* (young generation) in the expression of a cosmopolitan identity, a kind of ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ where expressions of indigenous identity are claims for recognition in a socially complex environment. By contrast, the parental generation, who first encountered the mine, expressed a locality-based identity through the binary of *asli/pendatang* (indigenous/migrant), which can be understood as a response to new forms of class oppression, as a ‘resistance identity’ in Castells’s (1997) terms. For the current generation of young adults, while the expression of locality is related to seeking ‘recognition and dignity’ their identity claims may still also encompass claims to special rights to materially benefit from the mine, in particular employment. Further, facets of the cosmopolitan ‘style’ of young Sorowakans impact on the older generation. Whereas in the pre-project economy, parents controlled resources, possessed knowledge required for living and controlled significant choices in offsprings’ lives, today young people make autonomous decisions about higher education (which are paid for by their parents); once educated and in employment they control resources for further life choices; and they bring back from the cities new styles of expression of piety and lifestyle choices which their parents in turn adopt. In many parts of Indonesia, regional
autonomy has been associated with a renewed expression of locality-based cultural identities, which in some cases can be linked to an anti-immigrant discourse. This is evocative of the ‘asli–pendatang’ discourse that was prevalent in Sorowako in the 1970s and 1980s, but this hostility to migrants is not reflected in the locality-based identities of young educated people in Sorowako.

Drawing insight from Ferguson’s (1999) discussion of changing responses to urbanisation and change in the Zambian Copperbelt, these co-eval expressions of identity are a facet of the contemporary social setting in a modern urban industrial enclave that has developed over the last four decades. Counterposing the way youth signify locality in expressing their modern identity cannot be read simply as an evolutionary change, from ‘tradition’ to ‘modernity. For young adults, the expression of locality is seeking ‘recognition and dignity’ – but their identity claims may still also encompass claims to special rights to materially benefit from the mine. Their activities in promoting a local identity, through cultural performances can also be linked to their imagined futures in a post-mine landscape.

**References**


