

Local society and the dynamics of ethnicity

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Elite competition in Central Sulawesi

Maps and dreams

The post-1999 reorganization of Indonesia's regional boundaries, literally termed 'blossoming' (*pemekaran*), is being done in the name of good governance, democratization, and regional autonomy.¹ The use of this botanical term suggests a natural and organic unfolding of new parts, as the nation matures like a healthy plant. Yet the creation and financing of political units in Indonesia is anything but biologically natural. At least in some provinces, decentralization has less to do with good governance than revised incentives for seeking political rents from natural resources, which encourage the re-drawing of administrative maps.² This essay explores how rent seeking at the district level and social discrimination interacted with competitive elections and decentralization in Central Sulawesi. In the Poso District, elite competition turned to religious and then to ethnic identity politics when district executives encountered both the enrichment possibilities of decentralizing governance and the risks of newly competitive, more democratic, elections.

Several new districts have been formed in Central Sulawesi since 1999, and lobbying efforts now aim to create a new East Sulawesi Province.³ There are many pedestrian issues for negotiation, such as which towns will become new capitals, which leaders from which groups will become district heads, and which people will receive new civil service jobs. Yet, the region's decentralization has been coterminous with post-Suharto collective violence. Ethnic

¹ I wish to thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, a Research and Writing Grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV) Modern Indonesia program for research support and collegiality. For helpful comments on an earlier draft, I am grateful to Arianto Sangaji and Jacqueline Vel.

² As used by economists, 'rent-seeking' describes how fees are garnered by state agents when governments stand in a monopoly position as contractual owners of public resources (Törnquist 1990; R. Williams 1999).

³ We can contrast Central Sulawesi with provinces like Bali, where a long history of districts based on prior kingdoms with little internal ethnic diversity seems to have made the idea of *pemekaran* uninteresting.

constellations mobilized for religiously polarized violence largely overlap with groups increasingly separated by most new district plans. Thus, the 1999 regional autonomy laws constructed under President Habibie revamped local politics and accentuated religious and ethnic competition through administrative fragmentation and the intensified extraction of natural resources made accessible by new roads.

Central Sulawesi's crony capitalism, violence between Muslim and Christian factions, and the push to redraw political boundaries are related. But their synergy is generated through multiple lines of local agency in conjunction with periodic state agent support, rather than top-down state control.⁴ Although continuous with practices from the Suharto era, corruption in Poso has in fact 'blossomed' under competitive elections, regional violence, and the potential for controlling local resources through *pemekaran*.⁵ These events stem from the ways transition economies in newly organized districts put public property 'up for grabs' to the marketplace, while elections evoke targeted patronage to insure the continued profits of public office.

Many observers became disillusioned as promises of Indonesia's pro-democracy movement fizzled in the wake of faltering national leadership, economic crisis, regional violence, and bureaucratic corruption. In 2002 I spoke with a seasoned program director for an international NGO in Jakarta. Although more optimistic than many, he commented that the equal opportunity dream of Indonesia's Reformasi movement was now mainly a reality of 'equal opportunity buying'. Power over public resources and legal processes merely had shifted from the Suharto regime into the hands of other wealthy people who could buy a piece of the decentralizing political economy system.

In some regions, though, the same sums of money could not always buy the same slice. In Central Sulawesi's capital of Palu, job seekers quoted different sums required for access to entry-level jobs. There was a low amount asked from those with relatives or ethnic cohorts already working in local government and a much higher amount requested from people with no strings to pull. In September 2003, non-insiders were asked to guarantee 20 million rupiah (almost US\$ 2,000) at civil service testing time when applying for a junior post. A 50% down payment was made to the department head (*kepala dinas*) before selections were announced. If lobbying for a paying client

⁴ This 'decentralized articulation' argument and background on the first years of the Poso conflict can be found in Aragon 2001. For ensuing events, see Human Rights Watch 2002; ICG 2004; George Junus Aditjondro 2003, 2004a; Aragon 2005; S. Sinansari Ecip, Darwis Waru, and Alip Yog Kunandar 2002; or Tahmidy Lasahido 2003.

⁵ To avoid misunderstanding, my thesis does not therefore recommend a return to centralized military control and rigged elections as seen under Suharto, but rather for legal checks, community institutions, and press monitoring that better safeguard public funds and resources. See Jenkins and Goetz 1999.

was overruled at the district secretary's office, the payment was not refunded. The loser only received assurances of lobbying the following year.

This was not equal opportunity buying, I concluded. It was un-equal opportunity buying. The bureaucracy was corrupt in both social and financial aspects.⁶ This matches many political patronage patterns worldwide, as well as Indonesia's local markets, where stores offering fixed prices are recent phenomena, which strangely displace personal negotiations over social difference and the local value of goods. Michele Ford (2003) describes a Batak man in Riau forced to pay higher prices for kerosene because of his non-Muslim, non-Malay identity. In that case, the Batak was considered an outsider to the majority population. Perhaps Muslim Malay migrants have similar problems near Lake Toba. Yet even people who consider themselves 'indigenous' encounter such problems in many Indonesian regions. The politics of discrimination is something that local politicians, both native sons and migrants, understand well and manipulate to organize patronage alliances, now linked to voting.

Given the history of shifting populations and privileges in Poso, corruption at the district level came to operate according to ethno-religious alliances as well as material incentives. This claim challenges economic approaches to corruption that assume the income-maximizing behaviour of individuals in all cases. Rather, the Central Sulawesi case entails non-market or parochial corruption based on personal ties (Scott 1972:88-9). Such corruption often involves material risk because it is 'socially conditioned and sustained by complex and enduring social networks', rather than following an omniscient and maximizing economic model with short-term goals (R. Williams 1999:508). For example, if a bureaucrat helps a member of his ethnic community to gain a job, he may or may not receive a direct economic benefit from that action. To give an example relevant for Poso, a bureaucrat may misuse his position to facilitate a militia killing for either material or non-material motives. These include monetary gain, revenge – if his family was harmed – or ideological reasons if he thinks in ethnic or religious conspiracy terms. This approach to corruption probes a wider cultural view of the 'private gain' aspect of the 'misuse of public office'.

One native Central Sulawesi family who had sacrificed heavily for their children's college degrees found that good performance on civil service exams could not outweigh the deficiencies of their minority status and

⁶ Corruption is defined briefly as 'the misuse of public office for private gain' (Robertson-Snape 1999:589). This Weberian type of definition has been critiqued for assuming too clean a line between public and private spheres, or too monolithic a public assessment of 'misuse of office'. Yet, a legal-focused definition serves here better than economic ones, which introduce positivist 'rational choice' biases I wish to avoid. See also R. Williams 1999 and Scott 1972.

shallow pockets. The educated children were unable to find government or private jobs in their fields. The one who graduated with a promising specialized agriculture degree eventually migrated to another island to assume unskilled work through the family's church organization. Some income was better than nothing, the family decided. The older child, with a law degree, stayed home to help her mother with housework. When I asked this bright young woman in 2003 whether there were any possibilities for her to use her university training and bring home a salary for her family, her answer was simple. If one of the newly proposed districts were authorized, a requisite set of civil servants would be needed. She was waiting for her chance to apply. Her dreams depended upon new maps.

The example of 'unequal opportunity buying' warrants expanded theories of 'non-market corruption', and illustrates how urban ethnic groups on the losing end of 'unequal buying' still hope for the benefits of a 'trickle-down' effect when bureaucratic jobs are created for new districts. They thus often support plans to split up districts conceived to benefit particular religious or ethnic groups. Both the elite plans and broader popular support are based in competitive rather than cooperative views of citizenship. The resulting 'transaction costs' (Bakker and Schulte Nordholt 1996) are rarely figured into analyses of decentralization or corruption at the policy level.

Partition of existing districts to create new, smaller ones requires lobbying in Jakarta, regional support, and sufficient local resources to make a new bureaucracy potentially self-supporting. Sponsors of *pemekaran* are motivated to control future capital from Jakarta, bureaucratic positions, and natural resource profits. Jakarta and regional politicians will share much of that income, along with business and military associates who protect them. What Jakarta or provincial officials seek in return for backing new districts and their would-be leaders are kickbacks (often termed 'tribute', *upeti*; or 'allotment', 'bribe', *jatah*), business cooperation, and political constituencies who can be counted on in the next election. Competitive elections and uncensored requests for greater public control over policies are the kernels of democracy nestled within patrimonial administrations now managed by the regions' so-called 'little kings' (*raja kecil*). These newly empowered district heads (*bupati*), shift more of the authoritarian structure anchored in cronyism from Jakarta to the districts (H. Schulte Nordholt 2003; Hadiz 2003a). This 'elite capture' process is perhaps less a matter of what Michael Mann (2005) terms 'the dark side of democracy' than Indonesia's lingering 'dark side of autocracy'.⁷

My discussion below targets four main issues. First, I discuss the rise and transformations of some ethno-religious groups seeking to control the Poso

⁷ I thank Gerry van Klinken for suggesting this comparison. This is also akin to what Charles Tilly (2003:43) calls the 'zone of fragmented tyranny'.

District.⁸ Ethnic identities, consolidated through Dutch influences and publicly fossilized during the New Order, moved in flux with political opportunities linked to the global market, regional bureaucracy, and informal economy. These ethno-religious constellations also developed historically in conjunction with colonial and post-colonial visions of 'indigenous' versus 'migrant' statuses. The situation in Poso thus emerged differently from what Rita Smith Kipp (1993) described for the Karo region of North Sumatra, where religious and ethnic identities became increasingly dissociated during the New Order.

Second, I describe how the Suharto family's precedent of *korupsi, kolusi, dan nepotisme* (KKN, corruption, collusion, and nepotism) was realized in Poso. Whereas most literature on crony capitalism in Southeast Asia focuses on macro-economic structures and national elites,⁹ the focus here is on district heads, their business links, and popular reactions to their activities. The Poso District illustrates how government institutions and illegal practices can construct each other to benefit incumbents who become inspired to maintain power at any social price. The Poso regimes echo the way Suharto's illicit practices were sheltered under the kinship metaphor of 'Daddy-ism' (Bapakism), where a good father provides well for his family (Saya Shiraiishi 1997). The most successful Poso political leaders of the late New Order were Sulawesi Muslims who claimed both 'native' ethnic and Muhammadiyah credentials as patronage shields for their profiteering activities.

Third, I document how Poso's violence became a catalyst for regime change at the district level from an ethnic Tojo network to a Bungku network. The two district heads' ethnic origins, Tojo and Bungku, can be traced back to pre-colonial entrepôt polities (Atkinson 1989; Velthoen 1997), setting an historic precedent for the emergence of 'little kingdoms' under decentralization. Historically, the political economy of such 'statelets' is characterized as inherently unstable, being based on competitive 'trading and raiding'. Indeed, the initial solidarity of the winning Bungku administration gives way to resentments about 'Bungkuism' from other Muslim ethnic groups. The district's corruption eventually moves beyond the routine siphoning of funds designated for government services into the less accepted misuse of humanitarian funds intended for Poso conflict survivors. Post-violence military deployments provide additional business opportunities for incumbents.

Fourth, I examine how successful district heads pursue *pemekaran* to counteract transfers of power at the end of their terms. Ethno-religious and

⁸ The term 'ethno-religious' indicates where ethnic and religious identities usually overlap and are not readily disentangled with respect to most local perceptions or inter-actional behaviour. Examples, which will be elaborated below, include Protestant Pamona and Muslim Bungku.

⁹ I. Brown 1997; Robertson-Snape 1999; N. Schulte Nordholt 1996; White 2004; Winters 1996; Yoshihara 1988.



Map 2. Central Sulawesi (1)

political debates surround the newly formed Morowali and Tojo Una-Una districts, as well as proposals for an East Sulawesi Province. It is through the realization of these 'models for' new districts and provinces that ambitious groups and leaders hope to prosper through natural resource extraction businesses. By contrast, Protestant minorities propose new districts in their homeland areas with little chance of authorization.

With increased migration during the Suharto regime, Central Sulawesi's population gradually became less rural and more linked to 'de-territorialized' religious and ethnic networks based in major population areas. When Jakarta placed an outsider Christian governor and district head in charge from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, coastal urban Muslims saw themselves as repressed 'native sons' (*putra daerah*). By the late 1990s, however, national politics had shifted in their favour. Politicians with Golkar and ICMI backing built family-based patronage constituencies along nationally supported lines of Muslim identity politics.¹⁰ Because national migration incentives led to a demographic Muslim majority in Poso, Muslim politicians strategically sought votes in 1998 by appealing to religious competition. Subsequent violence re-territorialized and separated different ethno-religious groups within the Poso District, as Protestants fled to the highlands centred in the mission town of Tentena while Muslims fled to the coasts, centred in Poso City. Seeing opportunity in the regional autonomy laws, Muslim politicians then lobbied for new districts to govern when their terms expired, offering to bring government jobs and development business to their ethnic constituencies. Thus far, newly created districts such as Morowali (centred on ethnic Bungku) and Tojo Una-Una (centred on ethnic Tojo), and plans for an East Sulawesi province have led to demonstrations and wrangling rather than eased regional tensions.¹¹

Emerging ethnic and religious constellations in Poso

Layers of individuals' multiple social identities – including sex, community, ethnicity, religion, or class – become more firmly envisioned when governmentally sanctioned or privileged by local economies. Indonesia's decentralization process introduced newly selective opportunities for some ethnic groups although their ascendance and 1998 mobilization is better under-

¹⁰ ICMI stands for Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia, or Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals. See Hefner 1993. Golkar was the professional organization to which all civil servants automatically belonged, but it functioned as a privileged corporatist political party under Suharto's rule.

¹¹ Violent conflict also occurred in September 2003, October 2004, and April 2005 during a process of *pemekaran* in the new province of West Sulawesi when some Muslims contested the inclusion of their villages within Protestant majority districts; see ICG 2005.

stood in the light of a longer history. At the turn of the twentieth century, most Central Sulawesi inhabitants followed local cosmological traditions and there was little demand for purity from the few migrants professing foreign religions. Most native groups' identities were based on known kinship ties and related claims to ancestral land (Aragon 2000). It was only the arrival of migrants, world religions, and state population controls that cultivated formal 'ethnic' categories, which colonial officers based partly on religious conversions. The results of these state and religious pressures were naturalized as the ethnic categories listed in government reports, and the religions listed on Indonesian identity cards.

Dutch colonial categories of indigenous 'native' and foreign 'settler' also became grafted onto religious and ethnic identities in post-colonial Indonesia, much as Belgian ones became grafted onto racial identities in central Africa.¹² Although the Dutch colonial regime created and favoured native Protestants in eastern Indonesia, both domestic migration and Muslims' political power increased during the late Suharto regime. Competing views about the relative legitimacy of migrants and natives often split along Muslim-Christian lines, increasingly supported through distant religious networks. As competition over land and business increased in Poso, the interpretive framing of economic problems shifted from local frustration to broader religious agendas. The native versus migrant overlap with Christian versus Muslim populations was accentuated before and during the collective violence in Poso, Ambon and North Maluku. Once violence was perpetrated along religious lines, police and army troops as well as under-employed young men were drawn to participate in violent acts framed as 'religious community defence'.

Dutch colonial officials introduced Protestantism as the true faith suitable for interior Sulawesi natives who had not been swayed by the foreign Muslim practices of early migrant Arabs or Malays. By contrast, the mixed coastal Sulawesi groups who adopted Islam argued that they were native Muslim 'sons of the soil', free to move anywhere along their trade networks in the archipelago, while Protestants were allied with foreign Western religion and imperial masters. Both rationales for religious nativism can be constructed by selecting among historical data concerning migration and religion in the Indonesian Archipelago. Therefore, rather than one set of 'victims' turning into 'killers', as in the Rwandan case, both Indonesian

¹² Mamdani 2001a, 2001b. I use the terms 'native' and 'indigenous' here recognizing that they are constructed, fluid, and contested political categories. Both connote such varied ideas as: 'original people' (*orang asli*), 'sons of the soil' (*pribumi*), current residents, newly contacted isolated groups, and descendants of local people described in the first European records who have no other known origin.

Muslims and Christians had grounds to see themselves as victims, and they took revenge upon each other during various phases of the Poso and Maluku conflicts. When these conflicts escalated, moreover, they did so because the attacked were able to attract financing, weapons, military agent support, or militia personnel from migrant and trans-national religious networks who saw these local conflicts in grander national or universal religious terms (see Aragon 2005).

As Central Sulawesi's narrow coastline rises sharply to interior mountains, Muslim traders initially remained within a few kilometres from shore (Adriani and Kruyt 1950, II). Other than Chinese traders, pre-colonial migrants to Central Sulawesi were mostly Muslims, and many intermarried with native women. Indigenous coastal groups in the Poso area who became Muslim include Tojo, Bungku, and Togian. Muslim migrants include Gorontalo, Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, Kaili, and Javanese people. Earlier migrants formed an elite business class in Poso City, while later migrants more often assumed roles as labourers. After New Order bureaucratic reforms of the 1970s, outsider Muslims, usually Javanese, Gorontalo, or Bugis, were installed as civil servants. During the past decades, especially as the Trans-Sulawesi 'highway' was cut through Poso during the 1980s, large numbers of South Sulawesi migrant farmers entered the interior in search of land for cash cropping.

Sulawesi highlanders, viewed by earlier Europeans as 'pagans' eligible for Protestant conversion, were sorted by language and then lumped together by colonial authors as various kinds of 'Toradja'.¹³ Ethnic identities that emerged during the colonial period in the Poso region include the mostly Protestant Pamona, Mori, Napu, Besoa, and Bada. Other Protestant converts, including Minahasa from North Sulawesi and Sa'dan Toraja from South Sulawesi, were sent to the area as preachers and teachers. Until the end of the New Order when migration shifted the demographic balance in Muslims' favour, Protestant Pamona communities maintained significant political representation in the Poso District.

Most Poso District residents either are Muslim, the unmarked national majority category, or Protestant, the unmarked highland category. But a small percentage of migrants are Catholic, Hindu, or Buddhist. Either a common religion or length of residence in a particular area can be invoked to minimize interpersonal differences based on the other criterion. Protestant Pamona and Muslim Tojo speak virtually the same language and may consider themselves more alike than do Muslim Tojo and Bugis (or Javanese) migrants. By contrast, self-consciously Muslim Tojo may consider any of their fellow Muslims as more like them than any non-Muslims.

Indigenous versus migrant statuses in Sulawesi are relative categories that

¹³ Adriani and Kruyt 1950; Aragon 2000; Kaudern 1925; Kruyt 1938.

can elide both time and space, meaning the duration of present residence and its distance from an original homeland. In reality, the families of some Arab or Malay Muslim migrants became earlier Poso City residents than some migrant families from Protestant highland areas. Moreover, descendants of 'original' groups living near the coast became Muslim through conversion or marriage to early Muslim traders, especially Bugis who elevated this integration strategy to a fine art. Struggles for control over resources among these earlier and later populations, whose ethnic identities were entangled with religious affiliations, animated the Poso conflict yet their ideological divisions initially were more messy than Messianic.

During the past ten years, most anthropologists have focused on the constructed, political, or contextual aspects of ethnicity.¹⁴ Indonesianist scholars rejected 'primordialist' or essentialist notions of ethnicity, the monolithic stereotypical views that were drawn from colonial ethnography and later reified by the New Order government in its cultural programs. What appeared in their place, especially following John Pemberton's book (1994) on 'Java', was a view of ethnicity as artificially constructed by the discourse of state power apparatuses. For Central Sulawesi, Albert Schrauwers (2000) makes this argument about the Pamona, who are a post-colonial amalgam of scattered pre-colonial highland communities around Lake Poso.

Yet new 'opportunity structures' have contoured more ethnic changes from the late New Order to the present. For example, the Javanese generally do not pursue migration, but the Suharto regime brought them to Central Sulawesi in significant numbers, first in the capacity of trans-migrants to open wet rice fields, and second as Jakarta-appointed civil servants.¹⁵ In the first case with insufficient resources to stay at home, they had little choice but to become 'Sulawesi people'. In the second case, Central Sulawesi was considered a hardship post. Some department heads in the 1980s routinely asked for bribes in the form of round-trip airline tickets to Java. These bureaucrats remained firmly 'Javanese', scorning Central Sulawesi and its natives. But their children are different. The grown daughter of an army officer stationed in Poso could not speak Javanese and had rarely been to Java. She called herself a Poso person (To Poso), speaking only Indonesian with friends who included Muhammadiyah Muslims from Tojo, Gorontalo, and South Sulawesi, as well as some Protestant Pamona.¹⁶ These varied migrants are not the kind of Javanese that either Geertz (1979) or Pemberton (1994) described.

¹⁴ An excellent dissertation discussing 'messy' and changing identities in Luwu, Sulawesi is Roth (2003).

¹⁵ Some Central Sulawesi people, both Muslims and Christians, have interpreted transmigration (*transmigrasi*) as 'Javanization' (*Javanisasi*). Roth (2003) observes this also in South Sulawesi.

¹⁶ K. Robinson (2000) also notes that many poor Javanese women have emigrated to become domestic servants in the Middle East, Malaysia, and Hong Kong.

The national and global economies have had novel effects on their class-stratified cultural patterns and ethnic consciousness.

Bugis migration patterns had an even greater effect upon Poso. Bugis are renown for their cultural inclination to *rantau*: to seek their fortune through migration in order to return with capital, buy land, and raise their status at home. But in Central Sulawesi, as in other regions, many Bugis migrants have little interest in returning 'home'. Political disturbances in South Sulawesi, land shortages, ascribed status restrictions, and under-employment inspired many to emigrate. Ample opportunities awaiting Bugis in Central Sulawesi have included development projects desiring migrant labour, unplanted forests (often long-term fallow swiddens), and some government officials willing to sell customary village land (*tanah adat*) or conservation lands.¹⁷

Another pathway opened for South Sulawesi migrants from conjunctures in the global economy, ecology of cacao, and the unevenness of Sulawesi's regional development. When the price of cacao (*coklat*) rose dramatically in the 1990s, South Sulawesi farmers already were familiar with its cultivation from government outreach programs, or earlier technology transfers from Sabah. Most Central Sulawesi farmers, by contrast, were not yet familiar with cacao horticulture. The Indonesian monetary crisis (Krismon) made cacao cropping for export more profitable than wage work or subsistence farming. Suddenly, local people who quietly had sold or otherwise lost access to their ancestral land through various development processes wanted that land back, and resented the many new migrants who had profited in their stead.

Yet, what looks to some like Bugis or general migrant aggression and greed for land appears to others as admirably industrious, government-supported entrepreneurship in the nation's booming agricultural export sector. Javanese became less uniformly 'home bodies' under New Order politics, transmigration, and global economy shifts. Bugis too, following new roads and economic frontiers, often migrated voluntarily on a permanent basis. Both these Diaspora populations retained strong ethnic constituencies 'at home' willing to lobby for, and defend them during post-Suharto violent conflicts (K. Robinson 2002).

By contrast, Pamona ('Bare'e speakers') were subsistence rice farmers when the Netherlands Indies government began tinkering with their societies after 1905. The Dutch mission provided some of them education and opportunities for ministry or local civil service, but not for entrepreneurship, which remained in the hands of Chinese and Arab-Malay populations. 'Bare'e speakers' living in the coastal area of Tojo, east of Poso City, formerly

¹⁷ Aragon 2002. As Acciaioli 2004 notes, Bugis cultural motivations to migrate are not strictly economic, but are contextualized within a broader set of behavioural and cosmological values. Those important nuances, however, are beyond the range of the arguments made here.

also were labelled Pamona, but they intermarried with incoming Bugis and Gorontalo settlers and generally converted to Islam. By the 1990s, most eschewed the ethnic label 'Pamona' for its Protestant connotation and began to consciously identify themselves as Tojo.¹⁸ Tojo, Bungku, Gorontalo, and Bugis ethnic associations in many major towns suggest a new, multi-sited ethnic consciousness born from local expansions of political opportunity.

Muslim leaders were at the vanguard of anti-colonial movements, and they see their entrepreneurship as responsible for Central Sulawesi's recent development. As part of Indonesia's Muslim majority and, by the 1990s, a demographic majority in the Poso District itself, they argue that they are entitled to dwell anywhere in the district and control its political and business fortunes.¹⁹ This last scenario in fact existed when violence in the Poso District began and the political families described below took power. During the 1980s and 1990s there was an addition of roughly 90,000 trans-migrants from Java, Bali and Nusa Tenggara, and a perhaps equal number of voluntary migrants, mostly Muslim Bugis, Makassar, and Mandar people from South Sulawesi. By 1998, over 60% of the Poso District's roughly 350,000 residents were registered as Muslim while less than 36% were recorded as Protestant (Arianto Sangaji 2003:13).

Thus, many factors besides bureaucratic corruption, including ethnic inequities, migration patterns, land alienation, changes in global markets for cash crops, religious proselytizing, and partisan media narratives played significant roles in fostering communal distrust in eastern Indonesian regions such as Poso (Aragon 2001, 2005). Resentments about past inequities were cultivated during the competitive 1999 election campaigns. With Golkar's success no longer automatic, candidates needed to attract both wealthy sponsors and the electoral action of the masses. Playing the cards of religious identity politics among sensitive ethnic constituencies brought predictable votes, but also uncontrollable violence.

¹⁸ In 2004 I tracked archival documentation of this identity shift in the Central Sulawesi Museum. A wall map of 'Ethnic groups of Central Sulawesi', which was installed in the mid-1980s, includes only Pamona, Lore, Mori, and Bungku groups in the Poso region. The ethnic area now called Tojo is still identified under the Pamona label. The Bugis, Gorontalo, Javanese, Minahasa, and other migrants – now powerful residents of the region – do not appear on the map, which thereby erases the political and cultural realities of the province.

¹⁹ Mindanao is a useful comparative case because it offers a mirror image to Poso's ethnic, nativity, and national political religious dynamics. In the Christian-majority Philippines, minority Muslims identified as native to Mindanao described to me how they resent being demographically overrun by Christian migrants seeking fertile land. By contrast, Christians told me that migrants should not be blamed because the land formerly was 'wasted' by Muslim groups who live by trade rather than 'more productive' farming.

Family affairs: Tojo ascendance

George Junus Aditjondro (2003, 2004a) and his Central Sulawesi NGO activist collaborators, including Harley (2004) and Arianto Sangaji (2003), suggest that violence was intentionally provoked by incumbent Poso District leaders to mask and facilitate their corrupt governmental practices. These pro-reform investigators have done significant research into the less savoury aspects of Sulawesi politicians' financial activities. Yet, district corruption in Indonesia was not confined to those areas succumbing to collective violence. If patrimonial politics and 'rent capitalism' had been a sufficient condition to precipitate post-Suharto conflicts, most Indonesian districts would have followed the known cases.²⁰ They did not. Rather, additional circumstances affecting group relations were required to promote violence. Such caveats aside, the politics of institutional corruption was integral to the Poso conflict's emergence as well as its perpetuation.

Poso district heads' bribery and nepotism practices, from the Suharto to the post-Suharto era, evince more continuity than radical change. The district head (*bupati*) for ten years before the Poso conflict governed for the maximum two terms (1989-1994, 1994-1999). Born in Poso City during the Japanese occupation, he identifies as ethnically Tojo. Tojo names the site of a colonial era Muslim kingdom (Atkinson 1989; Kruyt 1930), and now a coastal area east of Poso City influenced by Bugis and Gorontalo migrants. Tojo and Pamona dialects are nearly identical (Noorduyn 1991) although, in the past twenty years, the categories have diverged as ethnic identities, distinguished by coastal versus interior locations and respective conversions to Islam and Protestantism.

The Tojo district head affiliated with the second largest Indonesian Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah, known for its relatively strict, modernist stance. He developed his career as an enthusiastic Golkar activist beginning in the early 1970s, part of the 'native sons' Muslim response to Christian bureaucratic dominance in the province. By the late 1980s he had consolidated authority among his fellow Tojo and also among Poso's Muslim migrant communities by becoming head (*ketua*) of the Poso District branch of the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI). He thereby became a leader of both Poso City's 'old' migrant labourer community from Gorontalo, as well as 'newer' Muslim migrants from Java and South Sulawesi.

The former district head's triple affiliation with ICMI, Muhammadiyah,

²⁰ In an eye-catching comparative example of judicial exposé, virtually the entire West Sumatran Legislative Council (DPRD) was convicted in court in Padang, a relatively conflict-free area, of embezzling Rp 6.4 billion (US\$ 711,111) from the 2002 provincial budget (*Jakarta Post* 18-5-2004).

and Golkar, all favoured by Suharto's last vice-president and successor B.J. Habibie, was a winning political package for the late 1980s and 1990s.²¹ This trend among ambitious civil servants embodied a modernist Muslim political ascension, despite the fact that, historically, party politics in Indonesia have been linked more to the favoured deliverance of resources than to strong commitments on debatable ideological issues (H. Schulte Nordholt 2003). But perhaps it is exactly this added declaration of pious 'purity' to what had been the more oecumenical attraction of pay-offs through affiliation with the previously nationalist Golkar party that is a novel element in the religiously polarized conflicts of post-Suharto Indonesia. Golkar itself became factionalized with the Habibie wing of Golkar becoming allied to the Muslim United Development Party (PPP, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan; Malley 1999; O'Rourke 2002:344). This national factionalization of Golkar affected Sulawesi's district politics in 1998 as well.

Prior to the Poso violence, or even the success of the 'triple affiliation package', corruption was firmly entrenched in Central Sulawesi's bureaucracy among both Protestant and Muslim civil servants. In the 1980s, Suharto and his family presented a model of personal enrichment followed through the governorship to the district level (George Junus Aditjondro 2003:xxviii). To win his first district headship in 1989, the Tojo candidate reportedly paid the Central Sulawesi governor 250 million rupiah to secure the appointment (Harley 2004). To win a second term, he reportedly paid 350 million rupiah to the same governor, plus bribes to the staff of the Minister of the Interior, who would finalize the selection, and to members of the district parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah I, DPRD I), who needed to support his nomination to the governor. Why was winning the district head position worth so much?

Upon assuming his post, the district head assigned his wife to represent all other district civil servants (*wakil sekretaris* Korpri Kabupaten Poso). Then she was promoted to be head of all the district's civil servants (*kepala bagian pegawaiian*), and put in charge of hiring, promotion, and firing decisions. In that capacity, she could receive bribes from those who sought profitable bureaucratic positions.

Another member of the wife's family was given the contract to produce Poso District residency or identity cards (KTP, Kartu Tanda Penduduk).

²¹ In the 1990s, Arabs of Hadramaut origin claiming descent from the Prophet became increasingly influential in high government circles (Mona Abasa 2004). Residing in Yemeni quarters of Jakarta, they made business connections with President Suharto, Vice President Habibie, and the 'Green' or pro-Muslim army generals. Habibie's preference for Harmoko to lead Golkar reflected the increasingly pro-Muslim activism of Golkar (see Hefner 2000). Although the idea behind ICMI was to create a 'think tank' to rival earlier Christian-led ones, ICMI branches in provinces such as Sulawesi were more pro-Muslim political organizations.

Beyond the routine monitoring of new migrants to the district, citizens' identity cards, which mark name, village, and religion (but not ethnicity) played two important roles in the Poso violence. First, they were inspected by vigilante groups 'sweeping' vehicles and neighbourhood roads for religious enemies. Second, many new identity cards became needed after the 2001 Malino ceasefire accord. Members of militias, displaced persons, or undocumented migrants then sought legitimate residency in certain villages, either for safety, or in pursuit of land or humanitarian aid allotments.

The district head's younger brother was hired as director of district public construction (*kepala bagian pembangunan*), and assigned to build modernist Muslim junior high schools (*madrasah tsanawiyah*).²² Other family members were invited to take lucrative contracts for district projects such as building roads. Civil servants or police who did not cooperate with this nepotism program were transferred or demoted. Most simply took the perquisites offered.

The district head's administration worked with some non-kin business cronies who were awarded construction projects known by the percentage of their kickbacks as 10 percent or 20 percent projects (George Junus Aditjondro 2003:xxxiii; Harley 2004). Some of these partners were from the older Chinese or Arab elite of Poso. Others were members of the provincial or district parliaments. These politicians often sold the building contracts onward to subcontractors. Equipment from the district's Public Works Department was provided or sold to preferred contractors. As a result, many district roads, bridges, and clean water projects were not built, or else were built poorly with diluted cement or inferior materials.

I had observed such badly built, corruption-related infrastructure in Central Sulawesi since the mid-1980s. Most urban residents were aware of these 'transaction costs' for local projects although they might not know the exact details or extent of mismanagement. Such activities were characterized as 'not good' (*tidak baik*), but they also were accepted as 'business as usual' (*bisnis biasa saja*). The national model for this kind of contract shorting was early set and symbolized by Suharto's wife, Ibu Tien, widely known as 'Ibu Tien Persen' (Mrs Ten Percent), or sometimes even Ibu Lima Puluh Persen (Mrs Fifty Percent).²³

The most unseemly money diversion exposed during the early Poso con-

²² That brother later was convicted of creating leaflets that slandered his father's Protestant rivals in 1998.

²³ President Megawati's corruption was mocked with the name 'Ibu Mega Persen' (Mrs Gigantic Percent), while Suharto's grown children and business partners only multiplied the excesses.

flict was the district head's mismanagement of the Kredit Usaha Tani (KUT, Farmer's Credit Program). Although the ostensible aim of the loan program was to help farmers cope with seasonally high planting costs, the district head used the funds from Jakarta to pay his political supporters. Many supporters were lobbied through the Partai Daulat Rakyat (PDR, Islamic People's Sovereignty Party) to support the 1999 presidential bid of Adi Sasono, one of President Habibie's ministers. Organized into regional Muslim NGO groups that were supposed to administer the farmers' loan funds, these supporters were supervised by district head partners who also took cuts of the money (George Junus Aditjondro 2003:xxx-xxx). Moreover, the lists of needy farmers reportedly were padded by names of fictitious farmers.

An ethnic Minahasan PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) member of the district parliament was murdered in 2000 as he began to expose the KUT fund improprieties. When the Javanese police chief in Poso investigated the case, his transfer from the area was demanded by a group of the district head's partners (Aragon 2001:65). By that point, the ethnic Tojo district head had stepped down, his brother was implicated in the 1998 Poso violence, and the ethnic balance of power shifted from Tojo to Bungku rule.²⁴

Bungku ascendance and limits to corruption

As the 1999 elections approached, the ethnic Tojo head of Poso District was reaching the end of his two-term limit. The first phase of Poso violence occurred during the campaign, where his second in command, a Protestant Tojo Golkar candidate, competed with his preferred successor, a Muslim party (PPP) Una-Una candidate. The Protestant had been selected as district secretary (*sekwilda*) by the prior governor in order to train him to become the next district head. A slanderous leaflet that accused the district secretary and one of his Protestant Pamona sponsors of planning to kill the incumbent district head was circulating when the first Poso street fight began on 24 December, 1998. The Pamona associate was an ebony business competitor and political rival of several of the district head's supporters. The handwriting on the leaflet, which led to demands that both Protestants be hanged, was traced to the district head's brother. Reportedly, the leaflet was planned at a meeting convened by the incumbent, which included his business associates

²⁴ When the Farmer's Credit Program was investigated thoroughly, it was discovered the loans were in arrears by 5.7 billion rupiah (George Junus Aditjondro 2003:xxxv). One of the prosecuted killers of the parliament member was freed while another received four years in prison (S. Sinansari Ecip, Darwis Waru and Alip Yog Kunandar 2002).

and a Poso District Ministry of Religion official.²⁵

The leaflet's accusations, the fighting between Muslim and Protestant factions associated with the candidates, and investigation of the brother's leaflet tarnished the reputations of the ethnic Tojo incumbent and the top two candidates. After the 1999 elections, when Habibie's Golkar machine fared better in Sulawesi than in Java, the governor eliminated both top contenders from the nomination list.²⁶ As George Junus Aditjondro (2004a) has calculated, the retiring district head and his family moved quickly and comfortably to Yogyakarta with luxury automobiles and trillions of rupiah in visible holdings, while Poso was abandoned to a state of escalating violence.

The remaining candidates then made payments to parliamentarians who would select the new Poso district head. By late October 1999, well-compensated members of the Golkar party chose, and the governor installed, a new district head. Reports claim he paid 5 million rupiah in advance, and promised 35 million rupiah to each parliamentary supporter (Rinaldy Damanik 2003:13; *Surya* 10-11-1999). Another long time Golkar activist, the new district head had been Assistant Rector at Tadulako University in Palu. Despite his outsider status in Poso, his candidacy was heavily supported in Palu through the Islamic Students Union (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam), whose members sought positions as Poso department heads. He also received support from business contractors who had worked with the prior district head, based on his willingness to continue mutually profitable relationships. In fact, many members of the district parliament (DPRD) who chose the new district head owned businesses that received contracts from the district head office (Harley 2004).

The winning district head was from the coastal Bungku region, over 200 kilometres southeast of Poso City. Muslim Bungku politicians, who were ICMI members and Golkar activists during the prior regime, then gained control of several key Poso District posts including deputy district head (*wakil bupati*), head of transmigration, and speaker of the DPRD. They also had lobbied successfully for a new Morowali District to be split off from the southeast of the Poso District. In fact, Morowali was one of the first new districts announced in September 1999 under Habibie's Regional Autonomy Laws, suggesting the closeness of Muslim Bungku ties to the power centres of Jakarta.

The Poso district head shift, along with Bungku success in governing

²⁵ George Junus Aditjondro 2004a. At a later stage the same official from the Department of Religion was instrumental in supporting the entrance of outside Muslim militias into Poso (ICG 2004).

²⁶ The Una-Una Muslim supported by the incumbent continued to mobilize supporters, however, and made a 2004 comeback as head of the new Tojo Una-Una District (see below).

the new Morowali District, perturbed non-Bungku Muslims as well as Christians. Although several Bugis held important posts in the new government, a Bugis sociologist based at Tadulako University in Palu described the new political trend in Poso as 'Bungkuism' (Sulaiman Mamar 2001:121). A Central Sulawesi joke claims that PBB (Persatuan Bangsa-Bangsa, United Nations) no longer stands for the United Nations, but instead for the United Bungku People (Persatuan Bungku-Bungku).

This regional ascendancy of Bungku people is not historically unprecedented, although Bungku's glory dates back about 200 years. J. Vosmaer (1839) described the area as a fortified settlement and trading centre that operated independently from the Bugis and Makassar traders who sought sea slugs (*tripang*) collected by Bajo seafarers (Velthoen 1997; Velthoen and Acciaioli 1993). By the 1850s, however, Bugis involvement in the area led to a Bungku conflict with the Sultan of Ternate who destroyed the Bungku settlement. Bugis merchants then gained political influence over eastern Sulawesi, including Bungku. In the early 1900s, the Netherlands Indies Government classified Bungku as a vassal of Ternate, then claimed it as a Dutch holding under administration from Makassar in 1908, and then from Manado in 1924. Bungku was of little prominence during the twentieth century, until its untapped timber and other natural resources could be extracted via new roads built in the 1980s. Then Bungku leaders including the future district head became successful provincial politicians by networking through Golkar and the Islamic Students Union.

Although some observers of the Poso violence have spoken about pre-conflict religious 'power-sharing' in district politics, most of the post-colonial district heads have been Muslims from coastal Sulawesi or from Java.²⁷ The ethnic Bungku district head was championed by the new governor who was grateful for his help in mobilizing Golkar supporters during the 1999 campaign. The governor also responded to pressure from Muslim Al-Chaira'at organization leaders in Palu to install an ethnic Arab in Poso's district secretary post.²⁸ The Arab was a close associate of the prior district head of Poso, and one of his in-laws is a Saudi weapons parts manufacturer with business ties to Pindad, the government munitions factory whose products appeared

²⁷ What is noted accurately is that when past Poso district heads were Muslim, regional secretary or other executive offices often were given to Protestants to make for a more balanced district government than those beginning in 1989. See Suriadi Mappangara 2001 and Rinaldy Damanik 2003.

²⁸ Al-Chaira'at (also transcribed Al-Khaira'at or Al-Khaerat), which runs a large and popular network of *madrasah* and other Muslim schools in eastern Indonesia, was begun by a mixed Bugis-Hadrami migrant, Al-Habib Sayyid Idrus ibn Salim al-Juffrie, who settled in Palu in 1930. Photographs of the founder are displayed in many Muslims' homes, and the founder's son directs the headquarters, which remains in Palu.

in later phases of the Poso conflict.²⁹

The new Poso district head kept past corruption unchallenged, while he installed his own relatives into profitable posts. His oldest child owns a building contract firm while a younger one uses leadership of the local Bungku ethnic association (Kerukunan Keluarga Bungku) to facilitate contracting operations in Poso (George Junus Aditjondro 2004a; Harley 2004). One of his children's contracts was to renovate and expand the Poso district head's office building, possibly in anticipation of it becoming their father's governor's office for the proposed new province of East Sulawesi. The district head also placed a first cousin to head the Welfare and Development office (Kesbang) of the Social Services Department (Dinas Sosial), one of the main channels for Poso conflict aid funds. A nephew headed the Transmigration Department. Contractor partners were appointed as directors of government divisions, such as education or transportation, where they awarded their own firms contracts to build new schools or roads. Some of these were chosen from non-Bungku groups, their allegiance to the administration insured by their comfortable placements.³⁰ The ethnic Arab district secretary's relatives also were put into key positions, making more funds available to lobby for a new Tojo Una-Una District where he hoped to become future district head.

The nepotism described above was business as usual in Central Sulawesi. What began to draw scorn to the new district head's corruption was his willingness to allow embezzlement of humanitarian aid intended for victims of violence, even re-routing some to militias. For example, an in-law of the district secretary assigned to rebuild Poso's ruined infrastructure was investigated in 2002 for selling aid supplies to finance his luxury house, and for giving two tons of 'rice for the poor' (*beras miskin*) to Laskar Jihad troops (George Junus Aditjondro 2004a; Harley 2004).

In late July 2001, soon after the grisly and well-publicized killings of thirteen Muslim civilians at Buyung Katedo Village, Laskar Jihad sent a delegation from Java to visit Palu and Poso. The delegation was publicly received by the governor, the Poso district head, Tadulako University professors, and by Muslim groups such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Council of Indonesian Muslim Leaders) and the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII, Indonesian Council for Islamic Appeals). According to an August 2001

²⁹ Sulawesi military officers said the use of Pindad weapons in Poso attacks entail no necessary connection to strategic military involvement, implying that such weapons are sold routinely on the black market; not a comforting claim. Some Muslim web site messages also claim their proud use of smuggled army weapons in Poso.

³⁰ As suggested by Syarif Hidayat (personal communication), certain types of corrupt clientelism such as contracting awards are driven strictly by mutual business interests (instead of ethnic or religious identity) in contrast to many bureaucratic positions, which have more significant political effects.

report in the Palu newspaper *Mercusuar*, the Laskar Jihad leaders asked to bring humanitarian aid to Poso Muslims harmed by the conflict, and to protect them from further attacks. They claimed reconciliation efforts were only weakening law officials' attempts to control and prosecute Christian attackers (S. Sinansari Ecip, Darwis Waru and Alip Yog Kunandar 2002:35-6).

Indeed, during May-July 2000, Poso Christian militias took revenge for previous episodes of violence by killing hundreds of Muslim migrants. Both the new district head and Poso's head of the Department of Religion supported the plans of Laskar Jihad and other militias to supplement government forces. Even then Minister for Security, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, voiced this perspective on television although, when the violence worsened with jihad groups' participation in November 2001, he and Jusuf Kalla spearheaded the Malino Accord mediation.

Few besides Protestant leaders publicly objected to politicians' support for Muslim militias. Yet, the widespread aid corruption while sporadic violence continued sparked criticism from both Muslims and Christians. As much as two-thirds of the over 160 billion rupiah designated for post-Malino Accord humanitarian and recovery aid disappeared in the hands of government officials, never reaching the programs or disappointed persons for whom it was intended (Aragon 2004; *Suara Pembaruan* 24-2-2005).

Although the Indonesian verb *proyekkan*, referring to 'the making of a government service program into a personally profitable business', is not yet in the Echols and Shadily or *Kamus Besar* dictionaries, it is used frequently by both Muslims and Christians in Poso. They employ the term (usually in the passive form *diprojekkan*) to describe how rebuilt buildings are destroyed anew, false village census figures are used, and there is no transparency for aid funds. In fact, Poso businessmen well-entrenched in past corruption schemes often changed hats to become Malino Accord signatories, and so were placed into post-Malino fund distribution posts.

A powerful Bugis merchant involved in the Farmer's Credit Program (KUT) scam, who also was a Muslim militia supporter in the district heads' inner circle, was selected as a Malino Accord signatory, and then placed on the Malino Accord Task Force (Pokja Deklama), which administers government aid. Through that position, he received reconstruction contracts, including one for a new Mobil Police Brigade (Brimob) outpost west of Poso City. It was not the conflict of interest that angered Poso citizens, but the shamelessness of the extremely rich stealing from impoverished victims of violence even as they were aiding militias who caused more destruction. Many Poso Muslims and Christians say they no longer trust either their political or religious leaders because too many have joined the manipulation (*ikut manipulasi*) of Poso recovery funds.

One cynical joke about the misuse of Poso aid funds goes, 'while refu-

gees get Super Mie (instant noodles), bureaucrats get Super Kijang (cars) (*Sementara pengungsi dapat Super Mie, pejabat dapat Super Kijang*). Even Jusuf Kalla, formerly Megawati's Minister for People's Welfare, Malino Accord mediator, and Toyota tycoon was embarrassed to hear reports about the mis-handling of aid. He visited Central Sulawesi in December 2003 and lectured officials about how they should not make the plight of Poso refugees into a field of personal profiteering. Kalla himself was involved in a dispute with President Wahid over who had profited from the Bulog scandal in early 2000 (*Tajuk 7* (25-5-2000); Van Dijk 2001:495, 518-20).

But generally, Kalla's immense wealth as a businessman left most ordinary Sulawesi people thinking that he had no need to steal welfare funds or take sides in any conflict that would interfere with his road-building projects or automobile sales.³¹

Another business arena linked to the ethnic Bungku district head's regime and the prolongation of violence in Poso is the expansion of Indonesia's army territorial command. The dangers of spreading regional violence in areas such as Ambon and Poso gave top army generals a national security rationale to increase deployments and provincial bases (George Junus Aditjondro 2004a; Arianto Sangaji, this volume). Military officers made business arrangements with district leaders to build the bases and assist with troop funding. Given the territorial command structure, the army profits from the transfer of authority from Jakarta to the regions (Mietzner 2003). If only 30-40% of Indonesian army soldiers' deployment costs is covered by the national budget, the remainder must be raised on site, leading to soldiers' coercive involvement in both legal and illegal businesses. These include security checkpoint fees, protection services, aid donation re-sale, munitions diversion, gambling, prostitution, natural resources appropriation, and smuggling.³²

The temptation for military personnel to 'share' in funds for war-torn Poso is overwhelming. People displaced by violence complain how soldiers, rather than needy local people, were paid to build refugee barracks (Aragon 2004). Even some key Poso District executives, Bungku relatives accustomed to enjoying the spoils of political victory, found newly delivered office equip-

³¹ Kalla's personification of the ultra-successful Bugis entrepreneur has succeeded the image of B.J. Habibie, raised in South Sulawesi, as representing Bugis national triumphs. During Kalla's 2004 vice-presidential campaign, his Palu Golkar supporters engaged in ethnic identity politics by proclaiming on market banners that 'Honouring Jusuf Kalla (with a vote for his ticket) equals honouring Bugis people'.

³² For example, passing a Poso checkpoint in 2003 cost most drivers Rp 5,000-20,000, even if their licenses were in order. On long trips from Palu via Poso to Luwuk or South Sulawesi, drivers would pass dozens of TNI and Brimob posts, some open and collecting while others might be closed with troops 'on break'.

ment appropriated by army officers they were afraid to challenge. After the Malino Accord in December 2001, a new battalion, Yon 714 Sintuwu Maroso, was created to protect Poso City, plus three companies were added for areas east of Poso. George Junus Aditjondro (2004a) alleges that these deployments were made less to protect Sulawesi people than to suppress uncooperative villagers who resist new investments such as Tomy Winata's planned Morowali District marble mine, or the new 270-kilometer road from Kolonedale to Kendari.

The influx of aid money to Poso creates incentives for power brokers to insure that the conflict never completely ceases. As one displaced person explained bureaucrats' insouciance about continuing violence: 'in a conflict area, there is money to be had' (*di daerah rusuh ada uangnya*). Aside from the theft of aid money, the speaker meant that many are willing to pay for protection or weapons once there is ongoing violence. As in Aceh, Poso people say that soldiers arrive in their area with M16s (assault rifles) and leave with 16M (16 billion rupiah). Christians sometimes view the violence and corruption of government officials as ideologically motivated, basically an extreme form of Muslim clientelism, while Muslims tend to see it as purely economic, simply a matter of personal aggrandizement combined with callous neglect of the population. It may well be some of both. But even if corruption is purely a matter of greedily harvesting political windfalls, its grounding in ethno-religious violence has aggravated regional disharmony.

Motives for new districts

Central Sulawesi politicians' lobbying for new districts reveals ethnic leaders looking for new political units they can rule when their terms expire, or they lose campaigns in their current district. The creation of Morowali and Tojo Una-Una Districts are the direct result of ethnic block politics promoted by allies of the last two Poso district heads. In the Morowali District, further schisms have occurred over the capital of the district. The two main competing groups, Bungku and Bugis, are both Muslim, illustrating an emerging ethnic rather than overarching religious dimension to the competition. The proposal to create a new East Sulawesi Province following the 2004 presidential elections emanated from the combined demographic and political gains of Bungku, Tojo, and Bugis blocks.³³

Although Central Sulawesi politicians run newspaper advertisements that support proposed districts, most citizens have only a vague sense of why

³³ A freeze on the creation of new political units was set in place in November 2003 prior to the 2004 parliamentary and presidential elections.

new districts are being made, and what impact this will have on daily life. Protestants in both the new Morowali District and the smaller Poso District were disappointed with the initial results of *pemekaran*. Many Protestant Mori had favoured *pemekaran*, thinking a closer regional government in Kolonedale would be more responsive than the distant one in Poso City. But, when only one relatively weak political office (*wakil bupati*, deputy district head) went to a Protestant Mori while most went to Muslim Bungku politicians, Mori felt a continued lack of political representation for Protestant-majority sub-districts (*kecamatan*). The plan to shift the Morowali District capital southeast from the more cosmopolitan city of Kolonedale to Bungku City in 2004 left non-Bungku residents, both Protestant and Muslim, feeling further disenfranchised.

The 2000 splitting of Morowali District from Poso put ethnic Bungku men in charge of both areas, which are rich in ebony, *meranti* and *palapi* (woods used in ship building), oil, marble, and nickel mined by PT Inco Mining Corporation. Illegal logging in Morowali Conservation Park reportedly has increased exponentially in recent years (*Tajuk 7* (25-5-2000); *Jakarta Post* 13-5-2004).

Bungku leaders' temporary control of both districts gave the Poso district head and his business partners more capital to lobby for a new East Sulawesi Province, while they advanced development projects that may provide few benefits to local populations. This follows both New Order and general decentralization trends, leading to an increasing pace of resource removal for the global market (Ida Ayu Pradnja Resosudarmo 2003).

Law no. 51 authorizing the Morowali District in 1999 contained an ambiguity about what town would become the district capital. The law stated that Bungku would become the eventual capital, but that first Kolonedale would be capital because it already had the necessary governmental infrastructure. By 2003, however, the new Morowali district head, an ethnic Bugis, was so profitably entrenched in Kolonedale that he petitioned the Minister of the Interior to keep the capital in Kolonedale. He recommended splitting the Morowali District again, to make a separate Bungku District with Bungku City as its capital. These plans angered ethnic Bungku and various youth associations, which lobbied for the immediate transfer of Morowali's district capital to Bungku City. Demonstrations by Bungku groups in Kolonedale, and Kolonedale groups in Bungku, led to the burning of government vehicles and ethnic sparring between Bungku and Bugis around Kolonedale. Although the central government has supported the original plan to move the capital to Bungku City and maintain the Morowali District borders as specified, the transfer of the capital is not yet realized.

In addition to ebony in the upland forests, the reported discovery of oil offshore from the Tojo coast made that area attractive for the creation of a sepa-

rate district. The splitting of mostly Muslim Tojo Una-Una District from the Poso District in 2003, re-elevated ethnic Tojo to control of their own district. The Muslim Una-Una candidate favoured by the Poso district head in 1998 but denied both district headship and district secretary positions in Poso, was installed as the new head of Tojo Una-Una District in January 2004. From one perspective, this was a delayed victory for one of the Muslim leaders championed by fighters in the early phases of the Poso conflict (December 1998 and April 2000). Yet, the creation of Tojo Una-Una District also coincidentally eliminated the Muslim majority in the residual Poso District. For this reason, many non-Tojo Muslims in Poso and Palu resisted the creation of Tojo Una-Una. By contrast, its formation has given Protestant Pamona and Lore residents hope for more future control over the now smaller Poso District. If Poso City becomes its own district (*kotamadya*), then the interior Poso highlands would become a more autonomous, but tiny and weak, Protestant district.

By 2003, a key issue in Central Sulawesi was a proposed new province of East Sulawesi (Sulawesi Timor), to extend from Poso City to the Banggai Islands. Economic analyses of the Regional Autonomy laws explain that provinces are to have a more minor role than during the Suharto era, basically only coordination and 'backstopping' for any district unable to perform its own governance functions. So, what are the incentives to create new provinces such as East Sulawesi? If an area has certain natural resources potential, then by becoming a new province it will no longer need to share that income with the adjacent districts or original province (Hofman and Kaiser 2002). Thus the motivation to create provinces, as with districts, emanates from a competitive rather than a cooperative view of citizenship. Political leaders of eastern Central Sulawesi wish to benefit from timber, mining, gas and offshore oil deposits without sharing revenue with people in western Central Sulawesi. The push to create provinces also hints that provinces are not expected to become as politically weak as the 1999 laws and the revised autonomy laws of 2004 suggest.

Although both Protestant and Muslim politicians first proposed creating East Sulawesi in early 2000, district boundaries and executives have changed in the intervening years. The districts now usually planned to enter the new province are Poso, Morowali, Tojo Una-Una, Banggai, and Banggai Islands. Throughout 2003, supporters noted that Central Sulawesi was the largest of the island's provinces (14,434 square km), far too huge and rugged to govern effectively. They added that the eastern section needed the economic boost that new province status would bestow. Skeptics, however, suggested that the politicians' true aims concerned greater access to, and military protection for, the region's timber, cacao, oil, nickel, marble, and shrimp.

A rancorous debate concerns whether East Sulawesi should have its capital in Poso or Luwuk. Poso residents argue for their city, saying it is older,

centrally located, and – because of the recent violence – already has an army battalion, a prerequisite for all provinces. They note that Poso was the capital of a much larger district before the recent partitions. Only by becoming the capital of East Sulawesi Province, which would reincorporate exactly the same partitioned areas (and Banggai) can Poso City regain or surpass its former administrative stature. But then, one might wonder, what was the point of the whole contentious *pemekaran* exercise of the past five years?

In 2003, some Poso Muslims claimed there would be anger and more violence in Poso if their city was not chosen to become the new provincial capital. By contrast, advocates for Luwuk noted that their city is peaceful and its infrastructure intact, unlike Poso. This debate over the future capital of the proposed province pits the leadership of two western districts – Poso, and Tojo Una-Una – against those of the two eastern districts – Banggai and Banggai Islands.³⁴ This is a clear case where a ‘reunifying’ *pemekaran* plan intended to benefit some segments of a population only radiates further inter-regional competition and hostility. The dispute ultimately will be settled by central government authorities, who likely will evaluate future payments or investment deals.

In mid-2004, the East Sulawesi issue was still provoking demonstrations, counter-demonstrations, and angry debate (Arianto Sangaji 2004). A national parliamentary leader (*wakil ketua* Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR) noted the planned borders of East Sulawesi would make it a larger province than the province from which it would split – a formula technically prohibited in the *pemekaran* rules. He argued that Poso District should remain in Central Sulawesi, disqualifying Poso City from capital status, while the new districts removed from the Poso District would become East Sulawesi. This suggestion aroused further rage, with Muslim-oriented youth groups such as the Forum Komunikasi Generasi Muda Sulawesi Timur (FKGM Sultim, Youth Communication Forum East Sulawesi) lobbying fiercely against politicians unwilling to defend a Poso City-centred East Sulawesi Province (Arianto Sangaji 2004).

Protestant minorities in Poso developed their own Protestant majority district plans, but they never got far in the lobbying process. Some argue that Pamona and Lore people will regain more control within the Poso District now that the Tojo Una-Una region has exited. One Protestant plan for a Pamona-Lore District follows 2001 ‘wishful thinking’ to create a province called Sintuwu Maroso. This plan aimed to reunite the current Poso and Morowali Districts back into what was the Suharto era Poso District, except the capital of the new province would be the Protestant mission centre of

³⁴ Morowali District leaders split on the issue with the Bugis Morowali district head supporting Luwuk and the deputy district head, a Mori Protestant, supporting Poso City.

Tentena instead of Muslim majority Poso City. The nativist character of the proposed province was stressed by naming it with the Pamona language motto 'Sintuwu Maroso', meaning 'Strongly United'. Given the prolonged violence in Poso, that phrase has become the source of many jokes. Many Poso residents say that *Sintuwu maroso*, 'United we are strong', has become *Sintuwu malonco*, 'United we flee'. As the word play suggests, the Sintuwu Maroso Province plan disappeared along with violence and the loss of Protestant Pamona in any significant bureaucratic positions.

Decentralization and democracy

Decentralization in post-Suharto Indonesia cannot be equated simply with democratization, but must be investigated in terms of power struggles linked with the revised regional finances specified by the 1999 regional autonomy laws (H. Schulte Nordholt 2003). States like Indonesia routinely operate in part through illegal practices that are rarely prosecuted (Heyman and Smart 1999). Post-Suharto patterns of corruption in Central Sulawesi, and their entrenchment within family networks and ethnic constituencies, are continuous with Suharto regime models. What has changed is the greater political and financial autonomy of the district from Jakarta, creating increasingly empowered district heads with a need to attract local voting blocks and develop untapped natural resources. In Poso, this situation became combined with the revised public performance of religious and ethnic identities for the purpose of extending claims to both political power and land rights. In terms of national strategies for resource development, we should consider *pemekaran* as another form of economic 'outsourcing', but one with specific Indonesian socio-political antecedents and local ecological consequences.

District leaders in Poso turned to religious identity politics in 1998, motivated by a combination of ideology and efforts to protect political power and payments. The transition to regional autonomy was coterminous with Poso's collective violence, as district leaders sought to heighten religious tensions to mobilize voters. Only by focusing on district governance are we likely to answer the puzzling question of why escalating waves of violence generally followed the major roads outwards from Poso City, but then, with some recent exceptions, stopped at the pre-conflict district (*kabupaten*) boundaries.³⁵

³⁵ The exceptions include 2000 and 2001 Christmas season church bombings in Palu, the killing of a Palu prosecutor on May 26, 2004, a woman minister during a Palu church service on 18 July 2004, and nearly simultaneous shooting attacks on two Palu churches during services on 12 December 2004. All three of the recently attacked churches are branches of the Poso Protestant denomination (GKST, Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah).

Because district and provincial executive posts in the New Order were regulated by choices made in Jakarta, Muslim religious credentials were necessary for 1990s success at the regional level, although native ethnic credentials also were promoted to insure broad local support. The Golkar-Muhammadiyah-ICMI activism by district leaders, who sought support from Muslim migrants and natives, accentuated the region's religious polarization in 1998. An ethnic conflict strictly between Muslim Tojo and Bungku, or between Protestant Pamona and Mori, would never have escalated beyond local interest, or been prolonged for six years by attracting outsider fighting specialists. It was rather the invocation of a bipolar religious divide that turned a petty youth fight and a contentious district campaign into a chronic state of siege and suspicion between deterritorialized religious groups.

When the Poso conflict was nationally mediated in December 2001 after attacked Muslims and Christians fled into different territories, Muslim leaders could lobby the divided ethnic blocks to create new districts for administration and development. Muslim Bungku politicians conceived the Morowali District just before they took control of the Poso District from an ethnic Tojo leader. Bungku politicians then could administer two regions, one in their home ethnic territory and one beyond it. Tojo politicians, in turn, conceived the Tojo Una-Una District as a means to regain a regional centre of power in their ethnic territory. By splitting Tojo Muslims off from the remaining Poso District, however, Protestants returned to a demographic majority in the now smaller district. Pamona leaders hope to regain control in Poso even though Protestants are still too intimidated by violence to return to Poso City, where their old neighbourhoods are occupied by displaced Muslims. The fissiparous process of *pemekaran* not only draws on prior ethno-religious identities, but also cultivates them in new ways to define groups who should dwell in separate political territories.

Poso District administrations crossed the line of 'routine corruption' when they began to use conflict aid funds to buy personal luxuries and support militias instead of helping the displaced. Regional NGOs in Central Sulawesi have worked hard to expose government malfeasance and cultivate local unity. Yet, populist activism like that in Jakarta makes slower headway in provincial outposts where intimidation and state suppression exist beside new media and imported products as 'the natural features of a landscape of power' (Tsing 2003:215). In this landscape the terms and conditions for receiving 'democracy' often look much like the New Order terms and conditions for receiving 'development', that is, they involve the attrition of local group autonomy and environmental control. Any upgrade in the political status of one's locality may entail a trade-off of little understood resource rights. Poso District's non-elite groups are unsure about the impact of *pemekaran* although many Muslim and Christian urban dwellers hope that new dis-

tricts will deliver bureaucratic jobs that they might win despite the patterns of 'unequal buying'. *Pemekaran* in Central Sulawesi unquestionably is aimed towards the elite pursuit of forest and shoreline resources. Whether profits from those development projects will be shared more widely and equitably to fulfil needs of the diverse populace is still unclear.

The Suharto government created a symbolic map of the Indonesian nation in its famed Jakarta theme park Taman Mini, where every province had its own ethnic groups and all groups were theoretically equal as portrayed by their material culture displays. Religion was relegated to the background. In the actual provinces, however, ethnicity was more complex, often nascent, mobile, or entangled with religious identities. The dominance of Java could hardly be hidden, although inequities among other groups largely were. Political economy inequities emerged from a combination of demographic, geographic, and state policy differences dating from the colonial period forward.

Suharto's regime then fostered new movements of these diverse peoples across the provinces, through transmigration, road construction, and development projects attracting labour migrants. The Suharto regime's increasing regulation and prioritizing of religion over ethnicity and custom had additional consequences for district leadership success, as well as the development of local identities and inter-religious tensions. The post-Suharto regional violence, religious territorialization in places like Poso, and initiatives for the ethnic partitioning of districts after 1998 can be seen as a culmination of these policies, where unequal opportunity buying still exists largely unexplored and unchecked by either national or local social institutions. Future leaders, both national and local, may want to consider this history and the potential for greater harmony among a diverse citizenry.

The true bright blooms in Central Sulawesi's 'blossoming' process, which need to be emphasized in closing, are the impressive efforts made by several Central Sulawesi NGOs and international investigators to bring Poso conflict aid embezzlement and continued violence to national attention. With President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's initial public push against bureaucratic corruption, Central Sulawesi NGOs seized the moment to speak out about Poso's continued troubles. In both local and national newspapers, NGO directors have demanded that local bureaucrats, their hired hands, and even military personnel, be investigated and prosecuted for their misdeeds (*Kompas* 31-5-2005; *Suara Pembaruan* 29-4-2005). Some police authorities also are rising to the challenge, despite continued killings and bombings such as those in Tentena on 28 May 2005. These nationwide efforts, and the direct elections in June 2005 for new district heads in Poso and elsewhere, remind us of the possibilities for democratization and accountability that, at least ostensibly, set the decentralization wheel in motion.