The term *adat* (custom) is used frequently in Central Sulawesi. It has multiple meanings, and is picked up and instrumentalized for a variety of purposes. Although various authorities believe they know what adat is or should be, the polyvalence of the term makes it difficult to control. To invoke adat is to claim purity and authenticity for one's cause. Adat is deemed to be naturally present in, indeed the essence of, Indonesian society. It also, paradoxically, defines an arena of intervention: adat is represented as fragile, deficient or in decline, in need of protection, strengthening and restoration. It shares these characteristics with the concept of community, imagined as a natural state that nevertheless requires intervention and correction in order to make it complete. These features of the term adat render it deployable for a wide range of political projects. On one end of the spectrum are attempts to institute orderly rule through adat. The adat invoked in the service of rule is conceptualized as hierarchical but still democratic, because it emerges from the people; it is disciplinarian but promotes harmony. On the other end of the spectrum are attempts to challenge state authority in the name of popular rights and capacities for self-government and social justice. Central to the oppositional agenda is the reclaiming of customary rights to land appropriated by the colonial regime and its successors. As I will show, one agenda for adat promotion and restoration can slide into or indeed be reversed by another, using key terms such as sovereignty, autonomy, and responsibility to different effect.

My goal in this chapter is to provide an inventory or map of some contemporary deployments of the term adat that I have observed in Central Sulawesi over the past five years. I outline the contexts in which they have arisen and the projects they serve, and explore the stakes implied by the idiom of adat for different parties. Three features of Central Sulawesi render it especially interesting for an investigation of this kind. First, as Sangaji explains in this volume (Chapter 14), social and cultural formations in Central Sulawesi have been shaped by histories of migration, long-standing links to markets and state or chiefly regimes, and the influence of world religions. As a result, the issue of which social groups qualify as customary communities, and the nature and extent of their customary rights, is a
matter of contention and debate. The vicissitudes of the adat concept in this province serve to highlight dilemmas in the adat rights movement that are not unique to Central Sulawesi, but arise there in especially concentrated forms. Second, Central Sulawesi is a province in which the discourse of adat serves as an effective means of rallying and organizing political action. For this reason, it cannot be ignored or dismissed as esoteric, antiquarian, or reactionary, or critiqued with a view to replacing it with an alternative such as the idiom of class. For better or worse, the discourse of adat is a political force. Finally, Central Sulawesi has been the site of violent conflict since 1998, focused in the city of Poso and its environs, but extending to the city of Palu and to rural areas such as Morowali. Although often presented in media accounts as a struggle between Muslims and Christians, the relationship between identity and territory, or the right of one group to rule by virtue of its historic attachments to a place, is a right understood as customary or adat-based is centrally at issue. By tracking diverse deployments of adat I hope to shed some light on why the concept has become relevant or compelling for different groups in Central Sulawesi at the current time.

Adat in formal national law

The term adat appears in an impressive number of national laws and regulations from the 1960s onwards. Although the New Order regime was accused of trampling customary rights through its Forest Law of 1967, clauses of that law and numerous other legal instruments of the New Order period continued to refer to adat communities and adat rights (Sirait et al. 2000). As Sangaji notes in this volume, adat rights were recently confirmed in a constitutional amendment, and in a parliamentary declaration (TAP MPR IX, 2001) on Agrarian Reform and Natural Resource Management. Yet reference to adat in formal national law does not circumscribe or even clarify the question of who and where and what are adat communities. Rather, national law supplies a problematic to which people in Central Sulawesi concerned to assert adat rights have to respond. If laws state that adat communities are to be recognized so long as they exist, the critical question is how and by whom that existence is determined. For Ronny Toningki (2003: 1), elected head of Central Sulawesi’s adat rights organization AMASUTA, the questions of who and what and where exactly need to be answered concretely, by criteria and definitions that can be made operational. Otherwise, he argues, adat rights will continue to exist only on paper. There is a great deal at stake in definitions and in the processes through which criteria are established.

In Central Sulawesi, the governor of the province announced in 1993 that there was no adat land in Central Sulawesi, because all the land in the province is classified as bekas swapraja, royal domain passing to the national government at independence. He was supporting a 1992 ruling by the National Land Agency (BPN) that procedures for formalizing individual

land rights would take the form of grants of state land, rather than recognition of pre-existing customary rights. However the governor has not provided any supporting evidence or arguments for the claim that there is no adat land, and AMASUTA has been calling for the ruling to be revoked. As Sangaji points out, there is lots of documentation about the existence of local, customary tenure regimes all over the province but little or none about the purported sovereignty of the rajas over territory and natural resources (Sangaji 2003: 18). AMASUTA is arguing for a provincial regulation (Perda) on the existence of customary communities, and hopes to take the initiative in defining criteria for recognition. But AMASUTA, as Toningki (2003) laments, is equally unclear about who should be recognized as adat communities.

One solution to the problem of legal recognition is to proceed on a spatialized basis by mapping customary territories. AMASUTA has made such mapping part of its work plan (AMASUTA 2003). At a seminar sponsored by AMASUTA in 2000 in connection with its first congress, representatives of the National Land Agency urged AMASUTA to proceed with mapping customary lands as soon as possible, so that BPN would know the extent of customary claims and could avoid allocating the same land to plantations or other ventures (AMASUTA 2000: 103). BPN officials were quite prepared to accept the existence of customary communities—they just wanted to know who and where they are. The same request was echoed by representatives from other government departments at the seminar. Mapping, however, is unlikely to solve the problem.

Following its first congress, in 2001 AMASUTA held an executive meeting to prepare a detailed work plan. I attended this meeting as an observer. During discussions of mapping, most participants argued that they already had maps—their desa (village) maps. They saw little point in trying to devise a separate map covering their wilayah adat or customary domain. The few who advocated the mapping of wilayah adat had made maps in cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the context of particular struggles, notably the struggle to recover access to ancestral land enclosed by the Lore Lindu National Park, a process described by Sangaji (this volume, Chapter 14). These maps document the presence of human agency in the creation of the ‘nature’ protected by the park, and advance the customary claim that investments of labour confer enduring rights. Mapping of this kind is particularly relevant on land claimed by the state to be state forest, especially where there are relatively isolated hamlets located far from the centre of the desa. In many cases, however, desa maps or counter-maps could serve equally well to reassert the claims of local forest users against the state. In a study of forest villages in Java, Hery Santoso (2004) found that forest department maps showed extensive areas of state forest land marked by small, scattered dots representing human settlement. Very little land was attached to these dots. The maps create the impression that villages are merely clusters of dwellings accommodated precariously
and awkwardly on state forest land. The administrative system, by contrast, constructs the entire territory of Indonesia as a grid of provinces, districts, sub-districts and desa. If one adds up the total land area of all the desas described in the official annual release of statistics, they total the land area of the sub-district, the sub-districts together total the land area of the districts and so on. There is no land that is not within a desa, so state-claimed forests must fall within desa boundaries. From this perspective, desa are blocks of land, not fragile dots. Santos found that desa headmen felt disempowered in their dealings with the forest industry because they did not have desa maps showing their boundaries. But even if desa boundaries in forested areas remained unmarked, and desa control over state-claimed forests effectively suspended, the territorial jurisdiction of the desa continued to exist as a counter-claim during the New Order. It has been significantly strengthened by the regulations for desa autonomy discussed below.

The complex overlapping of adat claims, desa boundaries, and state-claimed forests was revealed in one very contentious land case in the province. In 2001 a group of farmers occupied the Dongi-Dongi Valley in a corner of the province's principal national park, the Lore Lindu National Park. Leaders from the adjacent village of Seda opposed the land occupation, claiming that they held customary rights to the land. Dongi-Dongi settlers regarded Seda's adat claim as weak, however, because they had failed to defend their customary rights vis-à-vis the Park, which had effectively appropriated their land. When I asked Seda leaders about their relationship to this land in 2003, their principal argument did not refer to adat. They argued, rather, that the Dongi-Dongi Valley, although 20 kilometres away from the Seda village centre, falls within the desa boundary which had been established by government administrators in 1973. Their other boundaries had been established by the Dutch, albeit indirectly. The Dutch had instituted a system for licensing the trees that produce the resin dammar by attaching a tin plate that bore the name of the owner and the village. Seda villagers envisage their boundary with the neighbouring desa, Alitupu, as the line where the licence markers change. It is mountainous, forested terrain, also claimed by the forest department. Thus they find themselves with a clear sense of their territorial boundaries, but unable to exercise jurisdiction over their land.

In the case of Seda and other highland villages I have visited, concepts of customary territory were shaped by the Dutch and have become interlaced with the territorial system of the desa to the extent that they are difficult to separate. This is why making adat maps made little sense to some of the participants at AMASUTA's work plan meeting: they felt their desa maps would suffice. Further, while any group can make a map of the land and natural resources used by its members past and present, this operation does not help government agencies or AMASUTA to identify which communities qualify as adat communities with special rights protected by national law. Finally, the National Land Agency's hope that maps of adat lands would help to identify blocks of land free from adat claims that can be allocated to other users will not be realized in cases where adat claims become co-extensive with the desa.

As Sangaji shows in his chapter (Table 14.1), the total area of land controlled by various government agencies (forestry, mining, estate crops) already exceeds the provincial total, leaving no space in which customary rights could be exercised, no space, indeed, for any villagers to pursue their farming activities undisturbed. In practice, there are on-the-ground compromises which enable villagers to continue to use at least some of their land, but the majority of Central Sulawesi's farmers lack tenure security and are vulnerable to displacement by more powerful claimants backed by official licences. The problem of insecurity is not confined to culturally unique or minority communities.

Arguably the search for identifiable adat communities, imagined as culturally distinct from the surrounding population, spatially concentrated, and sharing common resources — communities that might fit the slot of masyarakat adat named in law — has distracted attention from the fact that the majority of Indonesians outside Java access land and resources on an adat or customary basis. As Daniel Fitzpatrick points out in this volume (Chapter 6), 20 per cent at most of all Indonesian landholders have formal certificates of title. The rest access land through some version of customary tenure, or on the basis of semi-official or hybrid official-customary practices and understandings that are deeply insecure.

According to legal scholars the key feature of customary or community-based tenure is not that it is communal. It is that the tenure system is generated and recognized by the community in question (Lynch and Harwell 2002). In a customary tenure system the principal guarantee of an individual's rights to use individual or collective resources is that those rights are understood and supported by the surrounding community, and can thus be defended. Villagers know the extent of their individual and collective rights, and can be brought before the village head and/or the village adat council if they transgress customary rules. Customary tenure is dynamic, because villagers' understandings of what is normal or acceptable or fair change with the times. It is still, however, the community rather than national law that is the principal entity defining and guaranteeing rights on an everyday basis.

Although NGO promoters of the masyarakat adat concept assert that resource ownership tends to be communal (Nababan 2003), customary tenure in Central Sulawesi can be called communal only in a specific and limited sense. Members of a village or hamlet generally have common access to adjacent forests as the source of products for use and sale, while outsiders must seek permission. The customary principle for recognizing individual tenure is the investment of labour in the current or previous generations. The marking and protecting of trees that produce resin and sago confers individual ownership, as does the clearing of forest for swidden by the
original pioneer. These rights are passed on to future generations, often in
undivided form, the descendants of the original owner using the resource
in rotation. Inherited wet-rice fields (sawam) are usually divided among
the descendants, opening the way for commoditization and sale. The selling
of the previously undivided, inherited swidden pool is a new practice that
has arisen with the arrival of tree crops such as cocoa and new migrant
populations seeking to purchase land. It is a deeply contested practice, new
"customs" for which have yet to emerge (Li 2002c).

The registration of land for taxation serves as a formalization of customary
tenure, but many people have additional land they are reluctant to
register if it is not in production. Insecurity for villagers holding customary
rights exists not only at the collective level, when large blocks of land
villagers have been using are appropriated by the government and assigned
to other users (timber concessions, plantations, mining, and so on). Insecurity
also exists at the individual level, particularly among relatively poor
and powerless villagers. In many places village elites have monopolized fellowed
swidden land for their own use or sale. Napu villagers dismayed at the way
the elite have been selling off land to migrants see this as a land grab thinly
disguised by idioms of custom: 'Whoever has

On basis, legal uncertainty gives village headmen significant
scope to recognize and defend the customary rights of villagers to land
invested with labour or to appropriate this land to sell it or reassign it
according to their own assessment of rights and interests. It permits them
in short, to act as sovereigns who can dispossess a land holder when they want
to access the land themselves, or favour one party in a dispute, or plan to
sell the land to a third party. To justify their actions, headmen in the Sulawesi
hills apply various 'rules' which purportedly limit the validity of customary
rights to swidden land. They tell villagers that their customary rights lapse
when the land has not been used for five years, or if the area exceeds 2 hectares, or
if no permanent improvements (tree crops, terracing, irrigation) have been
made, or if the land has not been registered with the headman, or taxed, or
issued with a certificate. The legal standing of any of these 'rules' would
certainly be disputed by legal experts on customary land rights. But in
the absence of such countervailing knowledge and support, a headman's
bullying along these lines is sufficient to unsettle villagers who are isolated
and unsure of their ground. Legitimations for appropriations by village
headmen tend to stress 'development' and, more specifically, the need to
improve the land to make it productive, as an example for backward
villagers (Li 1996).

Ironically, land which has been bought and sold has a stronger legal
status than land that is still in the possession of the customary owner or
owners. Land sales are documented by the issue of an official letter, an akte
jual-beli, witnessed and stamped by the sub-district chief (Burkard 2002b: 11). By officializing these transactions, the sub-district official effectively
acknowledges the customary ownership rights of the land-seller: if not, why
would the seller be required to sign the sale document? An official who did
not recognize the prevailing customary land tenure system would be unable
to facilitate these routine transactions, resolve local disputes, or collect the
attendant fees. Yet the recognition is partial and easily ignored or circum-
vented when there are more powerful claimants.

Masyarakat adat in national and provincial advocacy

The term masyarakat adat was devised by NGOs at a meeting in 1993 as a
translation for the category Indigenous People recognized in international
law. It entered the arena of public debate in 1999 through the high-
profile national congress that established AMAN, Aliansi Masyarakat Adat
Nusantara (see Chapters 12 and 13 in this volume). In a paper presented at
a seminar in Central Sulawesi in 2003, the executive secretary of AMAN,
Abdon Nababan, gave a concise review of the hopes and fears embedded in
the term masyarakat adat from the perspective of the sponsoring NGOs
(Nababan 2003). He explored the moment in the late Suharto period
when NGO activists had discovered, through field exposure and by reading
anthropological studies, that there still exist communities in Indonesia living
in harmony with their environment, possessed of indigenous ecological know-
ledge, holding land under communal tenure, and maintaining autonomous,
democratic forms of self-government based in tradition. He called these
discoveries 'an oasis in the middle of the desert' (Nababan 2003: 9).
Masyarakat adat represented, for these activists, the direct inverse of
everything that was problematic about New Order development: individualism,
greed, ecological destruction, an emphasis on modernity understood as
Westernization, control by international financial institutions, burdensome
debt, and the loss of national economic, political, and cultural autonomy
glossed as globalization. Masyarakat adat supplied the model for an
Indonesian future that was unique and authentic. If masyarakat adat were
restored to wholeness and encouraged to be true to themselves, they would
refuse society from below (Nababan 2003: 7-12).

For the masyarakat adat movement, finding these ideal communities has
turned out to be more difficult than anticipated. The possibility now arises
that they were not so much an oasis in the desert as a mirage, a projection
of the activists' own fervent hopes and desires in an otherwise bleak situ-
ation. One response to the difficulty of locating the perfect adat subject has
been to highlight exemplary people and places where nature-loving natives have organized themselves to defend their right to maintain customary rights to territory and self-government. Central Sulawesi has supplied a number of these exemplary cases. The protest of the Lindu people against forced resettlement related to a hydro dam at the Lindu Lake, the success of the Katu people in resisting forced resettlement out of the national park, and subsequent cases of recognition (Doda, Toro) were well covered in the national media and are often referred to by activists looking for examples of indigenous communities and practices, and the successful defence of indigenous rights. But even these cases, if one scratches below the surface, are complex articulations between local histories and NGO imaginaries drawn together under conditions of duress, rather than self-evident or natural forms (Li 2000).

Another approach taken by AMAN is to formulate criteria of authenticity. Thus, according to Nababan’s presentation at the AMASUTA seminar in 2003, AMAN maintains that masyarakat adat do not sell land, because land is their essence or soul (*inti*, *roh*). People who do sell land are not masyarakat adat. I doubt that anyone has been expelled from AMAN or its affiliates for land selling, but the purpose of these statements is to induce the desired behaviour. It is an example of the double move in which adat denotes something that naturally exists, an essence, but one that is often in need of restoration and repair. AMAN asserts that adat needs to be adjusted and improved in keeping with the times, its gender and status hierarchies modified by democratic values. Nababan stated at the seminar that adat leaders ‘infected’ with greed and opportunism, untrue to the essence of adat, should be identified and avoided, presumably so that the pure essence can flourish.

The difficulties of locating and expanding the oasis, or transforming a hopeful mirage into reality in Central Sulawesi are formidable. As the Java-based legal scholar and activist Rikardo Simarmata stated in his presentation at the AMASUTA seminar, NGOs that supported the birth of the adat movement are recognizing the difficulty presented by bold statements such as ‘we will not recognize the nation if the nation does not recognize us’. Who is to be recognized? How? What kind of sovereignty is sought by different groups? Will this statement open up an arena of creative, political action, or yield only confusion and cynicism? These are the questions activists pose themselves as they contemplate the dilemmas of the adat movement.

The worries flagged by Nababan and other supporters of the masyarakat adat movement are a return to feudalism, and the risk of provoking ethnic cleansing - possibilities Nababan notes in his paper but does not further address. At the AMASUTA congress Arianto Sangaji of the Central Sulawesi-based NGO Yayasan Tanah Merdeka (YTM) argued for the adoption of a different definition of indigenous people, one that is also derived from the transnational movement but has a different political bite from the one adopted by AMAN that emphasizes ancestral ways and attachment to a fixed territory since time immemorial. Drawing from the work of Ben Kingsbury and others (Barnes et al. 1995), Sangaji argued that the critical feature of the subjects of concern to the adat movement is their positioning as people oppressed by majorities and/or state regimes whose resource rights, cultural rights, and rights to livelihood and security are under threat. Cultural uniqueness or dwelling on ancestral land are not necessary or sufficient criteria. For Sangaji the key criterion by which masyarakat adat can be recognized is their oppression. He argued that this definition is well suited to the situation of Central Sulawesi where a high degree of population mobility in pre-colonial times caused by famines, disease, and inter-group warfare, followed by New Order resettlement programmes, have left many people ‘out of place’ but oppressed none the less, in ways that the adat movement needs to recognize if it is to be a progressive force. A further implication is the need to combine the forces of various oppressed groups, a front on which YTM has been active.

YTM together with WALHI and other NGOs supported the formation of the Forum Rakyat Miskin Sulawesi Tengah (FRMST, Poor Peoples’ Forum), an alliance of farmers, fishers’ and workers’ unions, urban and rural poor, women and students, as well as groups organized under the adat banner and a political party with a history of activism on land and labour issues (Partai Rakyat Demokrasi, PRD). The political significance of this kind of alliance is signalled by the violent opposition to it by the then ruling political party (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, PDI-P, led by Megawati Sukarnoputri). In 2003, PDI-P sent thugs and enforcers to threaten the FRMST headquarters (housed in the office of national environmental NGO WALHI). Thugs also attacked participants in a rally against Megawati and her deputy Hamzah (FRMST 2003).

Most Central Sulawesi villagers are not aware of definitional debates among activists and scholars taking place in the provincial capital Palu and in other urban centres. Many have never heard the term masyarakat adat, and would not know whether or how it applied to them. Among people who find themselves pitted against the government or corporations for control over land, however, the term masyarakat adat devised by activists has taken hold because it helps them to make sense of their situation and to identify allies in the struggle to assert their rights.

Adat as a banner for mobilizing against land appropriation and forced resettlement

Individuals and communities that have been attracted to the masyarakat adat movement have found there a language, a sense of solidarity, and a set of allies that have helped them to articulate and advance their claims, especially claims against the state for control over ancestral land. Sangaji (this volume, Chapter 14) describes the process through which villagers in
it had not been mentioned in their initial narrative. These are the
questions raised by participants at seminars and workshops organized by
NGOs such as W ALHI and YTM that were talking the language of customary rights, and that had
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projects that challenge the authority of the state apparatus to appropriate resources and dictate how and where people should live and work. This is a remarkable achievement. It also carries significant responsibilities. If AMASUTA is to be consulted on the fate of masyarakat adat in the province, the issue of whom and what it represents becomes very important. The same issues have arisen for the national adat organization AMAN, consulted by donors who have clauses in their statutes requiring consultation with indigenous people. It is very convenient to treat AMAN as the pan-national voice of Indonesia’s indigenous people, but does AMAN understand, and can it adequately represent, the interests of its far flung and highly diverse constituency?

There are many weaknesses in AMASUTA. It has adopted the practices and language of government and donors who try to 'socialize' their initiatives from the top down. There are misunderstandings. When I visited one village leader after he returned home from the 2003 AMASUTA congress, a co-villager asked him what the meeting was about: 'Was this an adat ceremony?' (acara adat ini?). He replied, disjunctively, that it was 'voluntary' (sukarela). The congress was not, of course, a venue for performing rituals or for discussing customary laws and practices, the kinds of practices that spring to mind when villagers hear the word adat. The congress was interrupted by a conflict among the organizers which led some participants to conclude that AMASUTA’s leaders know nothing about adat (meaning, in this context, proper conduct). Part of the fight was over money, and some of the participants suspected that the money involved was rightfully theirs. They believed they should have received the ‘pocket money’ customarily given for attendance at government or NGO organized events. The idea that one would spend unpaid, ‘voluntary’ time listening to speeches and contributing to a discussion for the advance of a common cause – one’s own, chosen, political cause – is still unfamiliar in Central Sulawesi. One AMASUTA activist recounted an experience he had when he was sent for an exchange visit to Java, and spent time at the headquarters of a Farmer’s Union (Syariatik Petani Pasundan, SPP). 'The office was full of farmers', he said, 'ordinary people. And when they made their demands at the rally, they just wrote them out on paper. They didn’t need an NGO with a computer.' He was impressed with the union’s mass base, its large membership, its capacity to mobilize tens of thousands of people for rallies, each paying their own way, and the populist spirit of their struggle.

Adat and conservation

Advocates for the right of masyarakat adat to retain access to ancestral lands have argued that adat communities live in harmony with nature. This argument, backed by the preparation of maps and the description of traditional land use and tenure systems, has been effective in restoring use rights to a few communities in Central Sulawesi located in and around the Lore Lindu National Park (see Chapter 14). It has also been used, however, to limit and control the practices of adat communities according to criteria that conservation experts and park management officials have devised. If adat communities make claims based on cultural difference, so the argument goes, they should demonstrate that they really are different.

The conservation law forbids settlement and agriculture inside parks, but has provisions for a traditional use zone which allows ‘limited resource extraction of locally occurring species’ (TNC 2002b: 100). The use zone has as its imagined subject traditional villagers collecting indigenous forest species of nuts and berries, ferns, fruit and medicinal plants for use in traditional, non-commercial ways – the model Michael Dove (1996) dubs ‘rainforest crunch’. This concept fits uneasily with the reality of resource use inside the park, where thousands of hectares have long been under-planted with coffee, and there is currently a very strong desire on the part of park border villagers to remove the forest canopy in order to replace worn-out coffee groves with the new boom crop, cocoa. Besides the core problem that agricultural land use is expressly forbidden by the conservation law, there is the problem that many of the resources present in and around the park and valued by villagers are not actually indigenous, they are exotic – coffee and cocoa, dogs, cats, chilies, carp, rusa deer, tilapia, and water buffalo are among the introduced species that biodiversity-protectors would like to see removed from the park and its environs (TNC 2002b: 20, 65, 178). Further, the rules for the use zone forbid the commercial extraction of resources (TNC 2002b: 69). Traditional systems of resource extraction are assumed to prioritize subsistence use. But since around 1870, commerce has driven the ebbs and flows of resource extraction from the forests of Indonesia, including Central Sulawesi (Boomgaard 1997; Henley 2005; Schrattwers 1997). Resin, for example, was collected and exported from trees now inside the park for at least a century (1870–1970). Rattan, which is collected for household use as a binding for tools, baskets and farm huts, has been extracted for sale on a commercial scale to meet the demands of the furniture industry since the mid-1980s.

The text of the draft Management Plan for the park, prepared with assistance from the transnational NGO The Nature Conservancy (TNC), notes the disjuncture between concepts of traditional use in the conservation law and the existing practices of villagers in and around the park, and makes this an argument for intensified regulation. Thus rattan collection, which is ‘claimed as a traditional activity but in the last twenty years has become a major local business’, should be subject to ‘tight control measures, including codes of practice’ – if, indeed, it is to be allowed at all (TNC 2002b: 69). The practices of Katu and Toro, two villages that successfully argued for the recognition of their adat right to use land and resources within the park, are subject to special scrutiny in the park management plan. These villages succeeded in gaining recognition from the park manager on the basis of two arguments: that they have customary rights to land and resources sequestered
by the park, and they have traditional wisdom in resource management and conservation. In response to a threat to resettle their village outside the park, the Katu people with the help of NGO supporters prepared maps and documents presented to the park manager as evidence of adat claims and conservation competence. The park manager accepted the arguments, declaring the Katu villagers 'an integral part of the park management system' and accepting their definition of an adat domain (wilayah adat) covering 1178 hectares of park land. He subsequently promoted Katu as an exemplary place, and achieved national fame for his 'eco-populist' model of conservation that recognized indigenous rights and traditional wisdom (Suara Pembaruan, 24 August 1999; Sangaji 2002). He argued that other communities that had lost their traditional ways and become obsessed with possession of land, or were pressing in on the park with monocropped cocoa, should learn from Katu's example (Laban 2000).

The legal basis of the recognition of Katu bestowed by the 'eco-populist' park manager is still disputed - the management plan reasserts the claim that national parks are state land, the law forbids settlement, and Katu village should be relocated outside the boundaries. Afraid of a tidal wave of claims on the park but unable, for the moment, to implement park exclusion, park-oriented conservationists are attempting to define stringent criteria for what will count as permissible 'traditional' or indigenous practice. When he recognized the rights and wisdom of the people of Katu, the park manager argued that they did not need to be directed or monitored because they were an adat community that naturally did the right thing. He was very happy when they showed interest in restoring some rice terraces they had built a few decades previously and planting them with biodiverse strains of local rice. He was doubtless disappointed when Katu leaders announced a plan for every Katu household to plant at least 100 cocoa trees by 2002 (TNC 2002b: 167). The exemplary indigenous subjects fell from ecological grace, joining the rush to cocoa, a cultivar he opposed on the grounds of decreased biodiversity and market risk (TNC 2002a: 22).

The authors of the management plan, less trusting than the park manager, proposed stringent standards to which Katu and Toro must adhere, while suggesting that these standards derive, conveniently, from their own customs. The plan states that the 'application of adat or customary practice would, presumably, restrict hunting to indigenous communities who have traditional hunting grounds. Techniques would, presumably, have to be traditional, thus ruling out the use of guns and wire snares' (TNC 2002b: 67). The management plan argues that activities in Katu and other park border villages that claim adat rights need to be vetted for their sustainability. They also need to be vetted according to new criteria of health and well-being. There is, the plan argues, 'no guarantee that traditional hunting practices were ever sustainable, or are now appropriate to meet modern-day nutritional needs'. At odds with the argument that adat communities should conform to adat, the plan also makes the argument that traditional communities should not be 'fossilized'. They 'must be financially viable and, in the long-term, must integrate with the wider cash economy' through 'the planting of coffee ... or better still a commercial local natural resource such as rattan' (TNC 2002a: 84). The statement occludes the fact that villages such as Katu have been selling coffee for about a century, and rattan for decades, so the plan offers them nothing new. Moreover the park manager has expressly forbidden them from pursuing their most 'financially viable' option: cocoa.

In sum, although the argument for customary rights hinges upon intact traditional communities and customary legal regimes, communities such as Katu are still assumed to need expert advice, regulation, and improvement. Their rights are recognized only so long as practices conform to prescriptions of eco-friendly conduct deemed to be appropriate to adat communities. As a villager stated during a dialogue session with park officials facilitated by the NGO YTM:

We move our farms in order to retain soil fertility; we return to the land later; we don't exhaust the soil; we do clear [membongkar] the forest but we don't destroy [merusak] it. Our question is, will the Park authorities ever agree to that? ... We doubt it. We want our customary land back and we will use it our way. We can't be accused of invading the park when we are just taking back what belongs to us.

YTM (2003: 10)

From the perspective of park border villagers cutting trees, 'ordinary trees' (pohon biasa), is not destruction. It is the normal and necessary practice of people making gardens.

Lack of concern with the conservation of forests led the experts of TNC and a large, interdisciplinary German-led research programme around the park (Stability of Rainforest Margins, STORMA) to conclude that the park border villagers do not have, and probably never had, a customary forest management system. 'Traditional rules on forest resource use are almost absent', writes Burkard of the STORMA team, 'little restrictions on forest use were developed and no well defined traditional mechanisms to regulate resource use among community members have been created' (Burkard 2002a: 6). Villagers in the park border area, he argues, lack a concept of collective benefit or responsibility. He finds that they have no local cohesion and little sense of community or mutual assistance in livelihood matters, where each family takes care of itself and theft of perennials, plants, and harvests is common (Burkard 2002b: 33). They do not fit, that is, with the expert's model of indigenous people living in harmonious communities deeply in tune with nature. When the Harvard scientist and TNC consultant Campbell Webb was interviewed by a STORMA team, he reported argued that the park border villagers have little forest knowledge compared to indigenous peoples whose ways he had studied in the past, namely the Dayak of...
Kalimantan. Sulawesi villagers, he concluded, are not 'forest people', rather they are 'basically agriculturalists' who use forests for limited practical purposes, for instance as sources of timber, rattan and firewood (STORMA 1999: 40). I believe that Sulawesi highlanders would concur with this assessment of their pragmatic relationship to the forest. What I find odd is the characterization of the Dayak, since they too cut trees to make gardens, and are 'basically agriculturalists'.

Nature-loving is an urban predilection, and biodiversity protection an imported concern: they are not 'customary' for people who farm in forests and value and protect useful species, but view most trees as 'ordinary'. Resources are rationed or protected only when they are especially valuable or scarce (Ellen 1986). The key scarcity that has now arisen in the Central Sulawesi highlands is not a scarcity of forests, but rather a scarcity of agricultural land caused by the increased population, the closure of the forest frontier by state regulations, and the privatization of significant areas of swidden land which have been planted with cocoon (Li 2002c). It is access to agricultural land, not forest conservation, that is on the minds of villagers on the forest frontier.

Besides the issue of agriculture, illegal logging is identified as a threat to the park, and border villages have been invited by the park management to help protect the park by conducting patrols under the authority of their adat councils, arresting the culprits and imposing adat fines. These are heavy responsibilities which the villagers observe have not so far been compensated in the form they request - the return of access to ancestral land. 'Empowering' villagers to protect their forests from illegal loggers amounts to expecting or requiring villagers to confront powerful outsiders, including government officials, and to confront their co-villagers who are directly involved in logging on the front line. Where the eco-populist park manager envisaged consensual, homogenous adat villages with a unified interest in preventing damage to the forests adjacent to their settlements, the source of their drinking and irrigation water, the reality is that village elites, including members of village adat councils, are often complicit in the logging, acting as brokers for logging syndicates, organizing village labour and providing local 'security' for the logging operation. They are often in competition with one another, factionalizing their own villages, and they compete with outsiders who try to log village lands (inside or outside the park) without making the proper financial arrangements. Thus these elites may have an interest in controlling logging, as in instituting monopolies and watertight collection systems, but not necessarily an interest in preventing it.

The deployment of adat in the context of conservation amply illustrates its polyvalent qualities. Used initially by Katu and others as a language of protest in the attempt to reclaim rights, adat was taken up by park authorities as a language of management, a mechanism through which to regulate the conduct of park border communities. The autonomy and responsibility claimed as adat rights were reimposed as adat obligations, as villagers were required to control themselves and others, meeting standards and objectives experts prescribed. But the containment of adat claims remains incomplete. Park border villagers encouraged by frequent reference to adat by the park managers continue to argue for their own definitions of adat rights, customary practice, conservation, and appropriate conduct.

Following the Katu example, there are moves afoot in many park border villages to recover ancestral land from inside the park. This is the scenario most feared by the park authorities, TNC, STORMA, and others concerned to protect the park. So long as Katu could be treated as an exceptional case, a unique masyakat adat with a unique system and way of life, the threat to the park was limited. But park border villages do not accept the difference of Katu. They argue they too have tanah adat (adat land) inside the park. They too are indigenous to the area. As evidence they point to signs left by their unnamed ancestors from previous generations who lived and worked in the area enclosed by the park, marking the landscape with signs of habitation and labour investment. Such signs are found in former hill-top village sites marked by graves, bamboo, and fruit trees that date from the period before the Dutch forced scattered highlanders to build permanent villages on the valley floor. In some cases the signs of habitation are more ancient still, comprising stone mortars and megaliths. As Henley (2005) has demonstrated, the pre-colonial population in the highlands was vulnerable to famine, disease, and disruptive warfare. Some of that population lived in the upland valleys, the extensive abandoned sawah in areas such as the Napu depression evidence of a much larger population prior to Dutch conquest. Many lived in the hills, for reasons of security and to reap the benefits of swidden production, which is highly productive in relation to labour investment (Dove 1985).

Ecological studies conducted by TNC tend to confirm villagers' conviction that a significant portion of the park has a long history of agrarian land use. Twenty-six per cent of the park's total land area of 229,000 hectares is described by TNC experts as to a greater or lesser extent 'anthropogenic forest', mainly former swidden land (TNC 2002c: 76). Interestingly, TNC notes the difficulty in distinguishing natural from anthropogenic forest:

The moist lower montane forests on the north slopes of Mt. Nokilalaki have been strongly influenced by human activity but they are almost indistinguishable from the same conditions due east of the Beson enclave, near the Park boundary, which have experienced little or no human disturbance.

TNC (2002c: 67)

Of more immediate relevance, TNCs vegetation and land use studies of the park show that thousands of hectares of park land extending 9-10 kilometres inside the borders have been under-planted with coffee and,
increasingly, cocoa (TNC 2002b: 20). Dutch promotion of coffee as a means to pay taxes, and the recognition in Dutch and national law that the planting of productive perennials confers individualized rights, have inadvertently consolidated the conviction of park border villagers that they have been illegitimately excluded from adat land.

**Everyday meanings of adat for Central Sulawesi highland villagers**

The term masyarakat adat, introduced by NGOs as a translation of the term indigenous people and associated with a distinct political agenda focused mainly on access to land, has entered popular discourse for some highlanders, but not others. The adat movement has no monopoly over use of the term adat, or masyarakat adat, terms also subject to other interpretations. For many highlanders, the ready translation of the term masyarakat adat is people who have or follow customary ways (orang yang punya adat), people who adhere to practices inherited from the ancestors (ada budaya sendiri, dari leluhurnya). When I asked villagers for examples of customary ways they described the holding of rituals to mark important events (birth, death, marriage, village founding, clearing primary forests, new buildings), and referring interpersonal disputes to elders with the charisma and authority to adjudicate and impose customary sanctions, whether or not the elders are formally organized as an adat council.

Many highlanders have considerable pride in cultural uniqueness, in having retained an adat they deem to be authentic (mash utuh). They resist attempts to amalgamate distinct bodies of adat for the purpose of administrative convenience. In Napu, for example, there exists a tiny remnant population of Baria people (also known as Topayapi or Tawaelia) in the isolated Sedoa valley, speaking a language unrelated to those of its neighbours, the Pekurehua people of Napu and the Kaili of Palolo. Recent efforts to establish an adat council for Napu have stumbled on what to do about the Baria, who do not want to give up their uniqueness or their autonomy in adat affairs. Even in Sedoa, however, there is a recognition that the purity of adat should have its limits. They were strongly hierarchical in the past, assigning slaves the task of waiting under the platforms of dead aristocrats to collect the rotting body parts, a practice they recognize as inappropriate in independent Indonesia. They also recognize that their contemporary adat is in part a product of government control and regulation. Before the Dutch missionaries came in 1912, we had the law of the jungle [hukum riniba], said the current head of the adat council:

People were wild [liar], there were no fines then, there was just killing... People lived scattered in the hills, and met in a place called the penteng for matters of war... Since the Dutch times adat has been controlled by the government, it is recognized and we continue to carry it out [diakui dan dilaksanakan]... Now since the Perda [regulation] in 2001, adat is being conserved and restored [dilestarikan dan diangkat kembali].

A positioning as masyarakat adat in this sense of people who adhere to customary ways is constant and portable – it endures even when people find themselves outside their ancestral domain as a result of migration and resettlement. This concept of masyarakat adat does not share, that is, in the 'sedentarist metaphysic' (Malkki 1992) embedded in the transnational indigenous rights movement that views indigenous identities as whole only when attached to fixed territories 'since time immemorial'. The concept of masyarakat adat as used in the Central Sulawesi highlands is distinct from masyarakat asli, a term used to signal hierarchies of belonging on a nested scale. Thus highlanders can be asli (native, indigenous) in their village, but pendatang (newcomers, migrants) if they move to an adjacent village, then asli there in relation to people from distinct highland ethno-linguistic groups, and all of them asli in relation to Bugis or Torajans from South Sulawesi, or Javanese transmigrants. Another term used to signal the latter distinction is anak daerah – people who belong to the province versus others clearly defined as outsiders. Time is also a relevant factor: as noted, many people in the highlands of Central Sulawesi have moved around and in every village there are clusters of households that arrived in different migrant waves. People who were there first have some precedence over those who came later. Being asli or pendatang are thus relative positionings, both spatially and temporally. Again, the relativity of the concept asli accords poorly with the concept of 'indigenous people' as members of an identifiable and fixed group that can be the subject of international legal instruments such as the International Labour Organization Convention on Indigenous People (Convention 169).

Another sense of adat domain current among Central Sulawesi highlanders refers to the sphere of influence of their ethnolinguistic group, an influence that radiates out from the person of a raja (king) or from a historical spot, such as the site of the battle in which the Napu people made their last stand against the Dutch. Clearly marked at the centre, this sense of domain has no clear outer boundaries. As others have noted, pre-colonial sovereignty in Southeast Asia was less concerned with control over territory than with control over people, or minimally their loyalty. Today, understandings of domain are influenced by the practices of colonial indirect rule, as the Dutch took pre-existing spheres of influence and consolidated them spatially, or invented new ones and appointed raja. The spatialization of sovereignty was accomplished through new practices of mapping and boundary marking (compare Winichakul 1994). Dutch institutionalization of adat as customary law through the vehicle of indirect rule embodied in the person of the appointed raja intensified the association between adat and territorial sovereignty, especially at the level of the district.
Everyday manifestations of the sense of tanah adat as an ethnoterritorial domain are found, as usual, in contexts where people are out of place. Building on a long history of forced resettlement initiated by the Dutch, the Department of Social Affairs classified thousands of Da’a highlanders from the hills around Palu, and Kulawi people from the steep hills west of the Kulawi valley, as ‘isolated and estranged tribes’ (suku terasing). Thousands of highland families were subject to more or less forced resettlement in the Palolo valley in the 1970s. In the resettlement sites, the Kaili Ila people who were indigenous to Palolo claimed precedence over the people resettled in Palolo from Kulawi not because they or their ancestors ever lived, farmed, or otherwise imprinted their labour on the resettlement land (one sense of tanah adat) but because the sites fall within the customary (adat) domain of the pre-colonial kingdom of Sigi (Aragon 2000). A resettled Da’a told me that he is often challenged: 'people say, why did the Da’a and Kulawi people come here [to Palolo], this is not their wilayah [domain], they should go back to the mountains, but I reply why did you bring us here? We are not suku terasing, we are suku asli.'

**Asserting territorial sovereignty through adat**

Communities that have an ancestral association with their current territory sometimes deploy the concept of adat when attempting to assert territorial sovereignty vis-à-vis migrants they classify as outsiders. As I noted earlier, insider and outsider are relative terms, but divides can become sharply marked where migrant status coincides with a difference in religious affiliation and origins outside the province. The majority of indigenous highlanders are Christian. The migrants who are most often defined as other are Muslim Bugis from the province of South Sulawesi.

Critics of the adat rights movement often highlight the risk that adat discourse will heighten ethnic sentiment and induce ethnic cleansing and ethnic violence. But just as concepts of adat predate the adat movement and exceed its purview, so too do ethnic sentiment and concepts of ethnoterritorial sovereignty. In this section I examine two cases in which concepts of adat have been deployed in struggles between insiders and outsiders, one case (Lake Lindu) influenced by the adat movement, and another, Tentena, in which the route to adat has been quite different.

On the shores of Lake Lindu, the adat council (lembagqa adat) was revitalized in the mid-1990s in the context of the struggle against the hydroelectric dam described by Sangaji in Chapter 14. Opposition to the dam united many (though not all) of the Lindu residents, including the migrant Bugis and Kulawi who share the lakeside settlements, and who also stood to lose their land and livelihoods if the dam was built. 'People versus state' was a platform NGOs could easily endorse. Subsequent struggles have been politically and ethically more complex. The Lindu adat council turned its attention to the problem that large areas of land by the lake had been sold to, or appropriated by, Bugis migrants, usually with the approval of the village headmen. Adat elders disputed the legitimacy of these sales, transfers, and appropriations, and started looking for ways to recover the land or at least to limit further Bugis expansion, and to bring the conduct of Bugis settlers under their control: our rule in our house.

Regulations passed by the Lindu adat council make clear reference to the existence of two types of people at the Lake, 'locals' and 'migrants'. The latter are subject to different rules. They can, for example, be expelled from the Lindu lakeside for infractions of the council’s rules (Lindu 2001). Rather than rejecting the presence of Bugis settlers outright, and seeking ethnic cleansing of their homeland, Lindu people focus on the practices of Bugis settlers that violate the Lindu peoples’ sense of adat or proper behaviour - itself a hybrid of customary concerns and concepts derived from state regulations. They accuse the Bugis of failing to respect the authority of the adat council, clearing forest land without permission, and expanding their landholdings beyond 2 hectares per household, the limit the Lindu people deem to be an appropriate allocation for new settlers because it coincides with the standard allotment of land per household in government resettlement schemes.

Lindu leaders have devised new practices to assert their sovereignty. They have identified migrants with more than 2 hectares of land, and are attempting to retrieve it from them for reallocation to land-poor Lindu people. 'We tell them: we don’t want your coffee and cocoa, you can keep that, but the land is ours. We never gave it or sold it to you. You took it and now we’re taking it back', said one Lindu elder I interviewed in 2003. His plan includes the prevention of new migration by setting up a checkpoint on the trail to Lindu at which identity cards will be inspected. Lindu people have conducted a census and plan to repeat it every three months to check that there has been no new migration. 'We have become the managers' (kami jadi manager) he said, using the English term manager to signal, perhaps, the hybrid form in which reasserting sovereignty requires the Lindu adat council to assume functions associated with modern government - listing, surveying, classifying, regulating, and thinking ahead to the needs of future generations. Bugis people counter that citizens of Indonesia have the right to migrate at will, and to prosper through their own labour and initiative. They argue that it was their labour and initiative that improved land previously abandoned or misused by the Lindu people. They are the ones who have helped to meet state goals for development. From their perspective, late counter-claims by Lindu people signal only jealousy and opportunism.

In Tentena, a mid-size, predominantly Christian town on the shores of Lake Poso founded by Dutch missionaries, mobilization around the sense of territorial sovereignty mediated through adat has no connection to the adat rights movement. It is a response to the violent conflict in the Poso district that has pitched Christians (mostly indigenous) against Muslims (mostly Bugis) during the past years. The reassertion of adat in this context
is an elite venture. It is led by senior government officials, some of them living in Tentena as refugees from Poso city, a place that has become identified as Muslim territory and effectively cleansed of Christians. They are still government officials, receiving their basic pay, but they cannot safely report to work in Poso. Thus they find themselves oddly inside and outside government, with time to reflect on how to reorganize sovereignty.

One factor in their minds is the Malino Declaration devised to end the fighting in December 2001, which contains the statement: 'The land of Poso is an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia. For this reason, each citizen of the State has the right to live, enter, and remain there in a peaceful manner, respecting local customs.'

This statement licenses the territorial expansion into the Poso district of migrants from other provinces on the grounds of their common Indonesian citizenship. It also subjects migrants to adat istiadat setempat, the customs of the land. This clause potentially enables the leaders in Tentena to reassert the sovereignty of the indigenous ethnolinguistic groups, whose customary rules should govern the conduct of themselves and others residing in their territory. But to implement this clause they must first clarify what the local adat is, and how it will be enforced. It was in this context that they became curious to know what AMASUTA was about, having read about it in the media and heard about it through NGO networks. They wanted to explore whether the adat movement had any relevance to their particular concerns. They invited Sangaji, myself and others to stop in Tentena en route back to Palu from the AMASUTA congress for a discussion with them.

The proper conduct of adat has been a long-running concern of the Christian elite of Tentena as it was, indeed, a concern of the Dutch missionaries, and of the Dutch officials who attempted to rule indirectly through the raja they appointed in Poso (Schrauwers 2000). In keeping with this elite tradition, one leader present at our meeting thought the best approach to defining the adat of the Poso district would be to hold a large, high-profile adat conference. He was seeking funds for this purpose from the governor. His goal was to produce a unified Pamona adat incorporating the subgroups Lage, Ondae, and Tojo, a vision that coincided with his aspiration for a new district, Pamona Raya. 

Citing regal genealogies and the dispersal of Pamona adat from its original highland source, he argued that the pure Pamona adat currently resided with the Raja Datu Luwu in Palopo, and needed to be retrieved from him. For three days, when he was a young man, he had borrowed a book in Dutch about Pamona adat that he would dearly like to photocopy, as if the answers to re-establishing Pamona strength and integrity lay in that solid, documentary source.

Other leaders contributing to our discussion in Tentena had more mundane but practical concerns. 'We found twelve bombs in Muslim houses in Tentena', said one, 'we have to exercise more control over who comes to live here and what they are doing'. Another argued that the adat practised in Tentena, and in the Pamona area more generally, deals only with weddings and other ceremonies, and does not address what have now become key questions: control over who lives where, and control over rights to land. 'If we have land problems', he commented, 'we go to the police and the courts, not to adat'. The leaders were generally optimistic, however, that adat could play a bigger role: 'if the ancestors could organize themselves through adat, why can't we?'

Tentena leaders are becoming interested in reclaiming land around Lake Poso appropriated by government officials, and implementing some kind of environmental regulation to maintain water quality and stem the drop in water level. They recognize that Bugis migrants are buying up more and more land in Poso district, negotiating with impoverished highland villagers and making deals with desa headmen and more senior officials who smooth their way, a dynamic they must somehow reverse. They do not propose to undertake ethno-religious cleansing of the highlands, but they see an urgent need to stem the current wave of Bugis migration so that the indigenous, Christian highlanders can hold on to some land. Muslims have been removed from Tentena town, which serves as the headquarters of the Christian leadership and point of retreat for Christian refugees. Before the conflict, there was a significant number of Muslims living in Tentena. Now there are very few, possibly none, Muslims left, and pigs wander freely about the marketplace where Bugis stalls were once located. 'Our rule in our house' seems feasible in Tentena town, under current conditions, but in the rural hinterlands of Poso district and Central Sulawesi more generally, the influx of Bugis migrants is ongoing.

**Adat as a tool of ethno-politics**

In Central Sulawesi as elsewhere, the spatial reorganization of power occasioned by the legislation on regional autonomy has provoked a series of moves by bureaucratic and political elites to create new districts and to mobilize political support along ethnic lines. These elites often descend from aristocrats who occupied prominent roles in the Dutch-sponsored adat systems used for indirect rule. For them, adat is the confirmation of their fitness to rule. Their language is often populist, however, with references to empowerment and rights, making it difficult for some to distinguish between their platforms and those of organizations such as AMASUTA. This confusion may be deliberate, designed to disorient the adat movement, or it may be coincidental: ethno-politics might have invoked adat even without the challenge posed by AMASUTA and related organizations.

Aminundin Ponulele, governor of Central Sulawesi from 2001 to 2006, devised an adat organization called the Pitu N'gota Ngata Kaili. It is staffed by prominent Golkar members. It claims jurisdiction over the Kaili domain and also over Napu, Besoa, and Bada. This geographical span is historically problematic: Napu at one time acknowledged the suzerainty of the Kaili kingdom of Sigi, but Besoa and Bada did not. Their inclusion has been
justified by the governor in terms of his own genealogy: he claims to have an ancestor buried in Besoa, making him a Besoa native, and he also claims to have ancestors at Lake Lindu. One interpretation of the Pitu N’gota is that it is the governor’s vehicle for re-election. But there are other interpretations.

A schoolteacher from Palu, originally from Napu, explained the Pitu N’gota to me in terms of struggle between the indigenous people of the province (anak daerah) and the migrant Bugis, and placed it in the broader context of violence in Poso and Palu over the past five years. ‘The Pitu N’gota is to fortify [menperkohok] the Kaili people, so they are strong and adat-based [beradat], so others can’t just take over their land [rampas tanah orang]. We control the districts of Donggala and Poso – this is Kaili territory, not Bugis territory.’ The problem of Bugis who like to steal people’s land [menperbotok tanah orang] has, he said, been openly discussed in Pitu N’gota meetings. It has been linked, through various narratives, to regional autonomy and the need to restore the adat of each region. One link is through elections: the Pitu N’gota, he lie, said, would propose and support candidates who meet with the approval of adat leaders, namely, people of aristocratic descent who also have appropriate education. Another link is through decisions about district and subdistrict boundaries, hot political currency, with the Pitu N’gota advising on historical dimensions. As in Lindu and Tentena, an important function envisaged for a strengthened adat is to control Bugis conduct: ‘they [the Bugis] don’t know what adat is’, he said, ‘they just take up their knives, they take peoples’ land, they just do what they like – as in the incident at the market [in Palu]: the Da’a were just trying to make a living, but they [Bugis] tried to collect taxes, and then took up their knives’. In this incident, which is recounted in various versions, the entire market was burned down, and five Da’a were killed. Significantly, lowland Kaili who are Muslim joined together with highland Da’a, a Christian Kaili sub-group, forming an ethnic front across the religious divide. ‘We are a nation that respects law, the Kaili people respect the law, so we will educate them [the Bugis].’ This statement is an interesting reversal of a common Bugis view of Central Sulawesi natives as backward, lazy, feckless and primitive, lacking in refinement, in need of education and direction by their more advanced neighbours from the south.

In terms of district sub-divisions, there are two sides courting Napu: Pitu N’gota is viewed by some as part of a bid for a district incorporating the Palu Valley, Palolo, Napu, Besoa, and Bada (to be named Sigi-Lore district). An alternative plan includes Napu with Poso, in a district that would be Muslim-dominated, as Poso town and the adjacent coastal zone (Poso Pesisir) have been largely ‘cleansed’ of Christians. Napu is Christian, but historically opposed to the Pamona, the principal Christian protagonists in the Poso conflict. Elders in Tentena commented on Napu’s failure to assist Christian refugees or send reinforcements when the Java-based Muslim militia Laskar Jihad launched a vicious attack on Christian villages and was advancing on Tentena in December 2001. They see Napu’s star rising, in the form of government contracts and official positions, as the Pamona are shut out. It is relevant that Napu is currently a frontier for Bugis expansion into the interior. One Napu village, Watumeta, had in 2001 a population that was 58 per cent Bugis, and neighboring villages Seda and Alitupu also have a significant Bugis presence (Li 2002c; Yayasan Kayu Riva 2001).

Operationally, the Pitu N’gota has not done much so far. It was invoked by the provincial governor in the context of the squatter settlement at Dongi-Dongi inside the national park boundaries mentioned earlier. The governor said that the Pitu N’gota should ‘go and give some understanding’ (memberi pengertian) to the people, that is, exert pressure on them to leave the land they have occupied and agree to be resettled outside the park. Pitu N’gota intervention was also requested by some of the protagonists in the conflict, speaking in the name of masyarakat adat Pekurehua (of Napu) (Laban et al. 2002: 48, 65). In response, the Pitu N’gota proposed that the name of the park be changed to Baloni Lore Lindu National Park to confirm its status as adat land, whereupon the adat council would impose a fine comprising buffalo, copper trays, and ceremonial sarongs on the forest destroyers (perambahan hutan).

Nothing came of these pronouncements. It is not clear that the people of Central Sulawesi recognize the authority of the Pitu N’gota Ngata Kaili as an adat body. One group sceptical of claims made by or about the Pitu N’gota are the Da’a highlanders who have formed their own ethno-political organization, the Rumpun Da’a. Like the Pitu N’gota, in some renditions the Rumpun Da’a is motivated by opposition to the Bugis, and was formed in response to the conflict at the Palu market in 2000. The Rumpun’s problem with the Pitu N’gota is that the latter is dominated by Kaili lowlanders who do not recognize the historical precedence of the Da’a as elder siblings, the first to spring from the magical ancestors whose descendents comprise the Kaili groups and all other races, including the Bugis and the Dutch, through Queen Wilhemina. ‘We tried talking to the Pitu N’gota’, said a prominent member of the Rumpun, ‘but the histories just didn’t match. They did not want to recognize that their ancestors came from the mountains.’

As a result of forced resettlement by the Department of Social Affairs under the programme for isolated and estranged communities (masyarakat terasing), the Da’a are diasporic. They are scattered throughout Donggala district, and are reputedly the largest group in Palolo, outnumbering the original Kaili lja. One objective of the Rumpun is to draw their dispersed community together. Following the conflict at the market, the Rumpun reportedly took an oath stating that ‘five [deaths] was enough, if more than that, we’ll settle this ourselves’. By this, I was told, they meant settle their problems with the Bugis by violence, not by national or customary law.

The squatter settlement at Dongi-Dongi inside the Park boundaries is dominated by Da’a who moved in from their inadequate resettlement site.
in Palolo, or direct from the hills west of Palu where they have waited in vain for facilities such as roads. Members of the Rumpun at Dong-Dongi reportedly made an oath that outsiders - orang sebelah, meaning Bugis - would not be accepted because they would try to take over and cause trouble. The Da’a claim that their own strength comes from their unity and their numbers: ‘If there is a problem, thousands will come down from the hills.’ This indeed happened during the incident at the market in Palu, and has been threatened should the Da’a settlers at Dong-Dongi be violently expelled from the park by the army and police. It may partly account for why the settlers are still at Dong-Dongi two years after they occupied park land.

The city of Palu, in the Rumpun’s eyes, is Da’a territory, ‘It was hill people who cleared the forests in Palu, before there was a Bay, before [the culture hero] Sawerigading pushed back the sea, they planted corn there.’ Although the Da’a have their differences with the lowland Kaiil who have not helped the Da’a to obtain government jobs, they claim they would support the Kaiil in the event of conflict with the Bugis. They are wary of being used politically. A former governor, Paludju, is Da’a, but they feel he did nothing for them when in office, and they were unimpressed by his subsequent activities in Jakarta where he attempted to deliver a block Da’a vote (reputedly tens of thousands) to his chosen party in the 2004 elections.

The Rumpun Da’a, like other ethno-political movements, is led by aristocrats who have grievances different from those of the rural poor in whose name they often speak. In particular, the Da’a elite has felt excluded from provincial government office, despite adequate educational levels. The desires they express through the Rumpun are for inclusion in the state machinery and for the provision of proper services (schools, roads) in their mountain homelands, so that more Da’a can occupy positions of respect in government and society. They look to the past, that is, in order to assert their rights in the present, including the right of access to modernity. They also promote Da’a culture, understood as song, dance, and mytho-history.

The Rumpun Da’a operates in the same territory, and with potentially the same Da’a constituency, as AMAK (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Kawalise), an adat rights organization affiliated with AMASUTA. Both operate in the name of adat, but their political agendas and their modes of organization are distinct. The Rumpun is explicitly advocating an ethno-politics: ideally, Da’a control over the machinery of government in the Da’a homeland; minimally, fair Da’a representation. It is organized through the government’s own territorial system. It is headed by the headman of Desa Dombu, who claims royal descent. It includes scores of desa in the hills and has representatives in subdistricts where Da’a are numerous. AMAK, by contrast, is supported by members who have had ‘cases’ (kasus) bitter encounters with government authorities appropriating their land and resources. Its spatial coverage is patchy, and the enthusiasm of members waxes and wanes with the urgency of their struggles. Its leaders are not among the aristocratic elite.

Adat as a tool of village government and orderly rule

Both the Pitu N’gota and the Rumpun Da’a have been invoked by the governor, bupati, and other senior officials to help resolve conflicts or, more commonly, to help guide and educate recalcitrant subjects assumed to recognize and respect adat authority. As already noted, the Pitu N’gota was asked to ‘give understanding’ to the settlers who have occupied land inside the national park at Dong-Dongi, but it had no practical solution to propose other than the resettlement option already offered by government officials – and rejected by the settlers. In the context of the ethno-religious violence in the province, adat and religious authorities have frequently been invoked by government officials and asked to educate and guide the combatants and others who might otherwise be ‘provoked’.

Officials emphasize the psychological deficiencies of the masses who run amok, and need ‘mental guidance’ (penibinaan mental), especially the youth, who are easily led (Kompas, 27 June and 18 September 2001). Adat ceremonies were staged for the brokering of (shallow) peace agreements between warring groups in and around Poso. These interventions were not effective in ending the conflict, and only fed cynicism about adat and its elite constituency. As several critics have observed, it is one thing to bring together an elite group to agree that fighting is bad, quite another to examine the underlying causes of violence and build a consensus for peace that addresses the hopes and fears of the protagonists on the front lines (HRW 2002; Sangaji 2003).

The idea that adat can be deployed in the service of peace and order is often emphasized in discussions of regional autonomy. Adat councils being formed or strengthened at the level of the sub-district, district, and province are expected to operate as tools or even as branches of government. Their mandate, and the basic question of whose adat they will recognize or promote, is unclear. Nevertheless the government intends to ‘strengthen the role of adat and adat values, customary practices, and adat institutions in order to facilitate smooth government, sustainable development, and national resilience as well as to stimulate participation for local wellbeing’ (Djanggola 2003: 1). This statement was made by the head of one of the new districts in the province, Parimo, who was invited to give a presentation at a seminar organized by AMASUTA in 2003. One can almost see the bureaucratic mind at work in this statement, imagining how easy it would be to rule over people who are already governed by their adat, and whose leaders take responsibility for conducting their conduct in peaceful and improving ways. The bupati’s image of adat is every bit as idealized as that espoused by the activists supporting the adat movement. Like the activists, he proposes to recover the essence of adat and make it real. He writes about an adat that already embodies various ideal qualities, while also noting the need to strengthen, improve, and restore adat in order to achieve that ideal state.
Adat embodies the life of the community that stems from pure and generous sentiments for the well-being of humankind without distinction of race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality... Adat guides and directs the community to respect one another, to value differences and is full of love and peace... Adat is the vehicle and the means for the moral education of the nation...

Djanggola (2003: 4)

Recall that these words were penned by the official for a presentation at the AMASUTA seminar. Yet his understanding of adat as a tool of pacification and national unity, a vehicle of what Laura Nader (1991) dubs 'harmony ideology', is rather different from AMASUTA's understanding of adat as a banner for popular mobilization against state-sponsored injustice. Educating people to hold mass rallies, occupy land, and demand their rights is hardly what advocates of adat-as-orderly-rule have in mind. Nor does the vision of ethnic harmony and tolerance accord with the current reality in Central Sulawesi in which adat discourse is implicated in ethno-religious violence, ethno-politics, and ethno-territorial ambitions to restore one's own rule in one's own house and reverse Bugis dominance. The fact that the AMASUTA seminar was held in the meeting hall of the governor's office might indicate that the governor also associates the term adat with orderly hierarchies and the promotion of good behaviour. Or it might signal his recognition that popular mobilizations around adat are a force he needs to contain and direct if he is to maintain the status quo in the province.

The local regulation (Perda) on 'Empowerment, Preservation and Promotion of Customs and Customary Councils' (Pemberdayaan, Pelestarian dan Pengembangan Adat Istiadat dan Lembaga Adat) as passed by the districts of Poso and Donggala is copied directly from the national regulations on village and regional autonomy. That is, it has not been drafted in the region with a view to addressing regional realities and concerns, as the autonomy legislation permits. The focus of the regulation is on adat at the level of the desa or its equivalent, an entity assumed to be a natural adat unit, an 'integral, jural community that has the authority to organize and administer the needs of local groups based on their local origins and customs' (article 1F). Adat is defined as the values, norms and habits (art. 1G) that are recognized as law (hukum adat) by the community concerned and its neighbours (art. 1H). Adat councils (lembaga adat) are presented as emerging naturally from within the community milieu. They have rights 'over the wealth and resources that exist within that adat domain', as well as the right to resolve problems and conflicts that arise within their domain (art. 1I). Adat and the lembaga adat are subject to pemberdayaan, educative direction towards improving ends, and are to receive empowerment (pemberdayaan) so that adat is conserved, strengthened, and equipped to play a positive role, especially in ethical and moral guidance (art. 1J-M).

This regulation on the role of adat in village government captures, I would argue, the contradictory conundrum of adat in contemporary Indonesia. Natural rights and authentic habits and values, as well as autonomous capacities for self-government, are presumed to spring naturally from harmonious village communities, intact and unchanged despite a century of Dutch and New Order intervention. Yet adat also needs to be protected, upgraded, and brought into line with new standards. It is to be made democratic, fair and objective, open to positive influences from elsewhere, and supportive of national unity (art. 3A-B). There is no clarification of the status of villages that are multiethnic, or that were formed through the resettlement schemes that have moved hundreds of thousands of rural people away from their ancestral land. Will their ancestral customs, and new customs developed and adapted to their new situations, also be recognized and conferred with legal status? There is no mention of mechanisms for recourse against discrimination or unfair treatment. Villages are assumed to have a common and consensual adat, one set of values, and one set of interests. Indonesia's villages are presumed to be natural and democratic communities that need only a gentle 'tweak' to make them complete.

Most controversially, the regulation recognizes a right of adat councils to manage adat wealth and resources (including, implicitly, adat land) in order to improve the wellbeing of the people (art. 5/1A). It was this article that I found underlined in a copy of the regulation in the home of the headman of a Napu village where I stayed for a few days in 2003. He pointed out to me the contradiction between the rights recognized in this article and the series of letters he had received from the bupati ordering him to stop his villagers from clearing land inside the borders of the Lore Lindu National Park, land they regard as tanah adat and which they deem essential for their economic improvement. Many more questions are opened up by the regulation than are answered by it, and its possibilities are both conservative and progressive, depending upon which elements in the law are taken up, and by whom, and for what purposes.

Conclusion

Having surveyed an array of interpretations and deployments of adat, I conclude with a brief statement of my own perspective. As I have argued in previous publications I am nervous about the implications of adat as a tool of ethno-territorialization, and the risk of elite manipulations of adat for political purposes. I am also nervous about the reading of adat through a green, conservationist lens, which seems to me out of step with popular demands for access to land for market-oriented production and for access to modern facilities such as roads, schools, and government jobs. Conservation should be a shared burden, not one borne disproportionately by marginalized populations. I do not believe that communities are natural units, and I am convinced that 'harmony ideologies' tend to privilege elit...
especially senior men, who are empowered to speak on behalf of a presumed whole.

For me the most significant problem that the discourse of adat could potentially address is this: tens of millions of rural Indonesians access the land and natural resources upon which they depend through customary rights. I mean by this rights which are undocumented, but locally recognized especially senior men, who are empowered to speak on behalf of a presumed whole.

This, I believe, is what needs to be changed.

Notes

1 Research for this chapter was supported by a grant from the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), by the MacArthur Foundation Program on Global Security and Sustainability (Research and Writing Grant), and by Dalhousie University. Some of the field research and analysis was carried out in collaboration with staff of Yayasan Tanah Merdeka, especially Arianto Sangaji. Warm thanks to the many villagers and activists who gave generously of their time in talking to me. My primary sources are interviews and discussions with villagers in the highland valleys of Kulewi, Napu and Palolo in 1996, 2001, 2003; observations and interviews with participants at two formal meetings of AMASUTA in 2001 and 2003; and a meeting in Tentena with a group of elders reconsidering the role of adat post-conflict.

2 I have discussed these dilemmas in other publications that are not focused on Sulawesi. See Li (2001a) for a discussion of the origins of the adat movement and the problem of limiting adat communities to a niche in nature, Li (2002b) for a discussion of ethno-territorialism and violence, and Li (2002a) on assumptions about communities in resource management. Li (2000) uses Sulawesi examples to examine why some highlanders have come to identify themselves as indigenous, while others do not.

3 In 1999, following discussions during the national congress that established AMAN, the National Land Board (BPN) passed a decree (SK5/1999) setting out procedures for recognizing customary territories and registering them as communal, non-transferable rights. This registration cannot proceed until criteria for the identification of adat communities are established at the district level. Note too that it pertains only to land under BPN jurisdiction, and excludes land under the jurisdiction of the forest department and land already allocated to other users—that is, all of the land in Central Sulawesi, according to Sangaji’s table (14.1) in this volume.


5 These cases are described by Sangaji in this volume (Chapter 14) and elsewhere (Sangaji 1996, 2001; 2002).

6 My summaries of Simarmata’s and Sangaji’s positions are based on my notes from the seminar.

7 The selection of the Farmers Union (SPP) as the venue for the exchange visit surprised one Java-based adat activist, who argued to me that the appropriate destination for the Sulawesi visitors was other adat organizations. This activist believes that the Sulawesi NGOs supporting the adat movement are creating confusion by blending the cause of farmers and masyarakat adat. 'The adat movement needs to know its genealogy’, the activist stated: 'members should know who founded the adat movement, its history, not the history and workings of the farmers’ movement, which are quite different'. As I understand it, the adat movement in the province has sought alliance with farmers and other groups sharing a common position of oppression not because they are confused but as a deliberate political strategy. Experience in Central Sulawesi is that a mass, united front such as the FRMST gets results. In an era where the popular vote matters, such a front forces politicians and administrators to listen. Further, members of adat communities are also farmers, while farmers may see themselves as belonging to masyarakat adat — this is the on-the-ground reality of Central Sulawesi. Alliances and a blending of categories make more sense than sharp distinctions. The main purpose of the visit to SPP was to see how a (relatively) autonomous, mass-based social movement can function without NGOs and donor support, thereby addressing the problem of dependence that currently besets adat organizations.

8 The general argument I have made about the limit imposed by adat when this is presented in terms of a niche in nature (Li 2001a) is amply borne out by events in Central Sulawesi.

9 See Tsing (1999) for a fascinating account of the ascription of nature-loving to Kalimantan villagers.

10 See discussions of the complicity of village elites and adat councils in illegal logging in Kalimantan (Anau et al. 2002; Barr et al. 2001; Obidzinski 2002) and Sumatra (McCarthy 2000).


12 On the missionary origins of the ethnic category Pamona and the complexities of ethnic identification in the highlands see Schrauwers (2000).

13 On the mountain origins of Sulawesi populations see Henley (2002, 2005), Li (2001b), and, for a more general argument, Reid (1997).

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