



**Past and Present:
Momentous Events that Shape the Indigenous Moroneno of
Bombana District, Indonesia**

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Abstract

This research paper aims at providing a review of the literature and media coverage on the ethno-history of the Indigenous *Moronene* community. Thus far, there are less than a handful of sources on the ethno-linguistic identity and society that spread across the *Rumbia* Plain, *Polea* or *Poleang* coastal region and *Kabaena* Island in the District of *Bombana*, Indonesia.

The review consists of the major events, which introduced external shocks to different parts of the *Moronene* society. It begins with the history of the ethnic settlement on the mainland of Southeast Celebes, locus of its ethno-linguistic relations with other ethnic groups in Celebes and important ethnical structures and attributes. Furthermore, it continues with a description of the time line of major events that affect the society from the moment the country gained its independency in 1945 until the present time.

We argue that ethnic and linguistic characteristics as well as these major events shape not only people's collective actions and memory, but also their current identity, structure and patterns of social and environmental relationships. Linking this information into discussion of current social and development issues in the region is therefore a necessity.

Keywords: Ethno-Linguistics, Indigenous, Moronene, Southeast Celebes,

I. Background

1.1. Ethno-Linguistic Relation

The *Moronene* (de Jong, 2010; Elbert, 1920) or the *Maronene* (Lebar, 1972) is an ethno-linguistic community group, which spreads through the southeastern tip of the Sulawesi Island and the island of *Kabaena*. By its lexical similarity, Sneddon grouped the *Moronene* into the Bungku-Mori ethno-linguistic group (Mead, 1999). This suggests connection with other groups in the region such as the *Tolaki* in the northern of the mainland, the *Kulisusu* in the northern part of Buton, the *Menui* and the *Wawonii* islands east to the Sulawesi, as well as the *Bungku* in central east part of Sulawesi (Mead, 1999). According to this ethno-linguistic relation, local historians often propose that the *Moronene* could be the oldest group in the southeastern part of the Sulawesi.

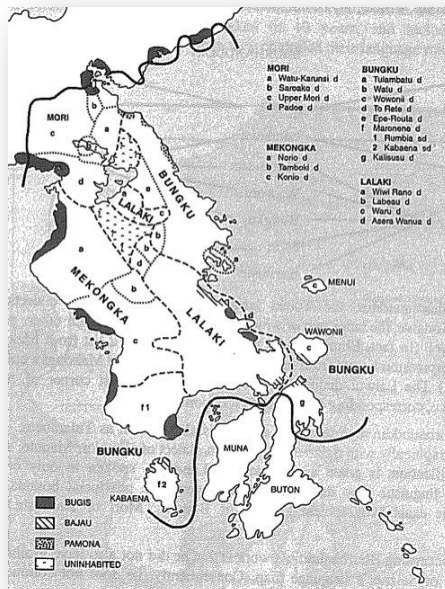


Figure 1. Sneddon's Bungku-Mori Language Group (Mead, 1999)

The *Moronene* language itself has two main dialects: *WitaEa* and *To'kotua*². *WitaEa* is the prestige dialect, spoken by group in *Rumbia* (east) and *Polea* (west), whereas *To'kotua* is common among those in *Kabaena* Island (Mead, 1999). These three dialect groups form the *Moronene* community today. The language is still vigorously spoken by group members in many villages especially in *Rumbia* and *Kabaena*, on both formal and informal events, such as traditional feasts, and gardening, a young

man's circumcision ritual (Mead, 1999), in churches' letter writing as well asin in traditional songs such as the *Kada* and the *Ohoho* or other epic songs are still popular and used to accompany traditional dance at the end of the marriage ceremony called *pinokompekai* (Andersen, 1999). In *Polea* or recently called *Poleang*(to adjust with to the *Buginese* pronunciation³ as the *Bugineseis* today the majority in the area), many *Moronene* people choose to speak *bahasa*(Indonesian lingua-franca), presumably to ease interaction with the *Buginese* (Limba, 2014).

1.2. The Ancestor' Movement and Ethno-Linguistic Group Distribution

There are different arguments regarding modes and pathways that the *Moronene* ancestors took to get to where the ethno-linguistic groups are found today. Local historians have different opinions regarding this matter. Some argue that they took a long walk through western coastline of the Sulawesi. This explains why the *Moronene* groups still exist along the west coast villages, such as in *Rate-rate* and *Kolaka*. Indeed, the current *Mokole*, maintains that these villages were evident of the expansion of the *Moronene* kingdom in the past. Others, however, believe that their ancestor traveled across the eastern sea line with *perahu* (wooden boat) all the way to the south. This explains why in islands east to the Sulawesi, the languages have lexical similarity. Abdurrauf Tarimana (1989), a prominent *Tolaki* historian and anthropologist, however, proposed that the *Moronene* used to dominate the central part of the Southeast Sulawesi mainland but pushed down south as it lost its long tribal war with the *Tolaki*.



Figure 2. The Current *Mokole* of Rumbia, Alfian Pimpie, explaining to me genealogy and history of the *Moronene's* past

De Jong (2010) also echoed the similar story and added in detail that the end of the war marked with the *BambuKuning* (Yellow Bamboo) agreement between the *Tolakinese* and the *Moronene*. Part of the agreement was that the *Moronene* maintained the area where the yellow bamboo plant distributes, and the rest belonged to the *Tolakinese* (ibid, 2010). The range of this *BambuKuning* distribution covers approximately what is now the *Roraya* Village (South Konawe District) all the way to the west towards *Mendoke* Mountain Range (ibid, 2010).

1.3. *The Social Structure and relation*

The *Moronene* groups have customary leaders called *Mokole* (Limba et al., 2014). A *Mokole* is considered representation of the God (*sangia*) in the world and thus has the authority to look after the land and its people. *Rumbia*, *Polea* and *Kabaena* region have and elected their respective *Mokole*. A *Mokole* is given title *o pau* means the honorable. For example, *Mokole* in *Rumbia* is given a title *o pau no Rumbia* (the honorable of *Rumbia*). Each *Mokole* coordinates a *kampo* or *tobu* (settlements/village) in their respective area. *Kampo* or *tobu* is led by a chief, called *kapalakampo* or *puutobu* (the head of the settlement/village).

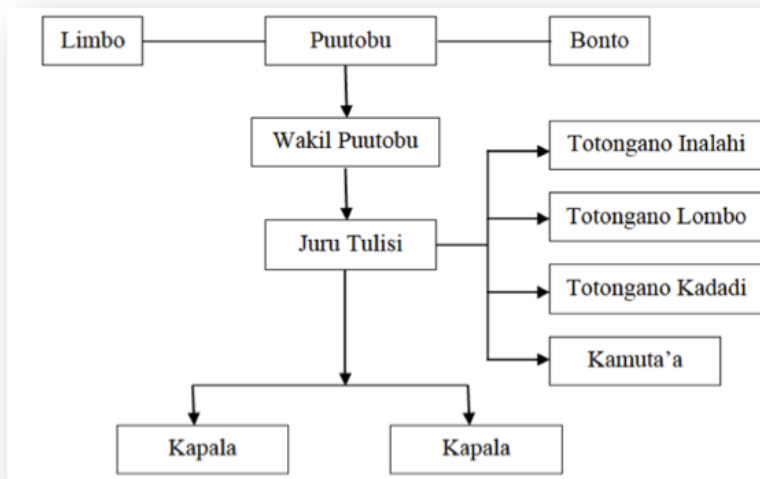


Figure 3. A Typical Social Organisation of The Moronene (YayasanSuluh)

Mokole is patriarchal arrangement, and only descendant of *Mokole* can hold the status. If a *Mokole* has more than one wife, the eldest son of the first wife who also marries the *Moronene* has the purest status and should thus be prioritised as the next crown. However, if he is considered incapable (for example, because of certain illness, or defects), his next blood

brother or closest male cousins who marry the *Moronene* are second in line. *Kapalakampocan* be from those who have close kinship relation with the *Mokole*. After-independence period, the rule in electing a *Mokole* stayed the same, but not with that of *Kapalakampo*. Those males who are from middle-rank in community (*Limbo*) and have leadership talent might be chosen as *Kapalakampo*. Under the first Indonesian village law introduced in 1967, women may hold the position as the village head, but thus far there is no woman's village head in the region. Although the current vice of regent, *MasyurallaLadamai*, is the first woman of *Kabaena* origin to assume leadership position. It is also important to mention that the descendant of slave (*o ata*) used to unable to hold the position as *Kapalakampo*, but this rule is increasingly weakening now as many of those from slave-descendant line have high education and leadership talent and thus elected as village head.

This informalleadership of *Mokole* is still maintained today, although it may not have as strong an influence as it did in the past. Today *Mokoleis* only positioned as an *adat* (customary law) stakeholder (*pemangkuadat*).



Figure 4. Left: The *Mokole* in *Kabaena* (Elbert, 1912); Right: The Current *Mokole* of *Kabaena*, *Rumbia* and *Polea* in a *Hukaea-LaeaKapalaKampo* Inauguration Ceremony in early 2015.

1.4. The Ancient's Livelihood and Landuse

The ancestor of the *Moronene* practiced rain-fed swidden farming with rice and sago as the main staples. They also hunted deer and buffalo, as well as

collected beeswax and dammar gum to sell (Elbert, 1912). Today, group members of the tribe are still foraging, hunting for deer and pigs and collecting rattan, timber and forest food, generally as a strategy to offset famine risks. In 2000, the *Suluh* Foundation, a local NGO providing legal mediation to the tribe during an eviction (see below), assisted those in *tobuHukaea-Laea* to summarize their social organization and traditional land use system (see Table 1 and figure 4) as well as to delineate and map each of these land use types (see figure below) (Muis, 2011).

Table 1. Land-use classification in Hukaea-Laea Village

Land use type	Vernacular	Size (hectares)
Primary forest	<i>Inalahipue</i>	4,623.44
Buffer forest	<i>Inalahipopalia</i>	2,599.50
Garden forest	<i>Inalahipeumaa/kotoria</i>	2,420.31
Forest patch	<i>Olobu</i>	1,077.56
Dryland farms	<i>Kura</i>	1,195.34
Savanna grassland	<i>Tana lapa/lueno</i>	11,471.35
Mangrove	<i>Bako</i>	2,593.75

Source: Yayasan Suluh (Muis, 2011)



Figure 6. Land use map of Tobu HukaeaLaea

Arranged marriages between kin are still common among the *Moronene*. The boy serves a one to three year probationary period with his future parents-in-law, during which sexual relations between the couple are forbidden (Elbert 1912: 1, 272-273). Inheritance is transmitted through

paternal kinship lines, including the land (NurArafah, 2001, p.54). In the past, the old religion was animism (ancestor spirits and nature spirits) (Elbert 1912: 271-272). The corpse is often preserved and unburied for up to one year. Graves are marked by mounds or decorated posts (Elbert 1912: 1, 270-71; Kennedy 1935; Noorduy et al., 1991). Today, Islam and Christianity are prevalent (Mead, 1999). Hinduism is observed among the Balinese trans-migrant communities (NurArafah, 2001).

1.5. Population

Andersen (1999) estimated that the population of the *Moronene* in 1999 was around 37,000 people. The national population census in 2010 randomly asked 10 percent of the population (roughly 130,000) to identify their cultural/socio linguistic identification (*sukubangsa*) and only around 20% of the respondents claimed to be from the *Moronene* group⁴. While data from the census has often been debated for its accuracy, we can see that the number of *Moronene* may indeed be in decline if we look at the naming of the villages across the coastlines, which indicates dominance of the *Buginese* people.

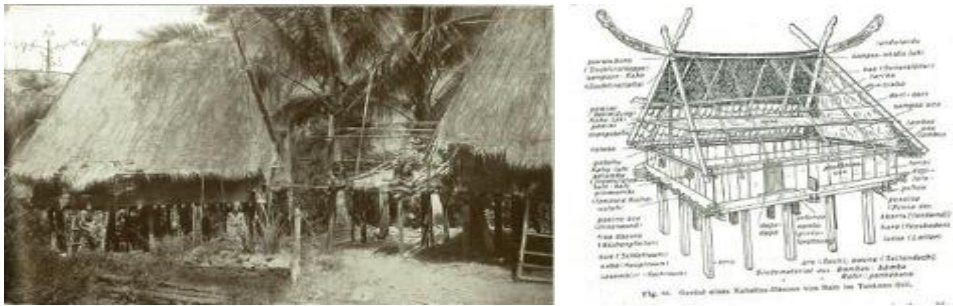


Figure 7. The Traditional House of the Moronene (left); the naming of house parts (Elbert, 1912).



Figure 8. The traditional house of the Moronene in Hukaeta and Laeta enclave of the RawaAopaWatumohai National Park

Today forty-one ethnic groups inhabit the Bombana district; the largest include the *Bugis* and *Javanese* (Mead and Lee, 2007, p.29-30; BPS, 2010). It is not clear when the *Bugis* first arrived in the district. Velthoen (2002) mentioned that the *Bugis* had settled in *Kendari Bay* from 1850 (p.76), while de Jong (2011) noted that Dutch expeditions had encountered *Bugis* traders in the area since the late nineteenth century (de Jong, 2011). The large *Bugis* migration is believed to occur in the 1980s along with the booming cocoa plantations. *Javanese* migrated into the area mainly through national transmigration from 1979 to 1980 (this will be further discussed in next section). They spread into nine transmigration settlements (*satuan pemukiman* or SP), many of which no longer exist, due in large part to the unsuitability of soils and climate. Some still exist including *Lombakasih* settlement (SP2), *Lantari* settlement (SP1) and *Aneka Marga* settlement (SP3) (Rekson Limba, Pers.Comm).⁵

1.7. The Moronene's on Map Significance

During the colonization period, the Dutch only recognized the *Buton* Sultanate. The *Moronene* kingdom was considered the *Buton's* sub ordinance. The diverse and separated political groups of *Moronene* were never being properly identified and recognized. On map, the Dutch recognized that the *Moronene* kingdom was centered in *Rumbia*, even though *Polea* and *Kabaena* groups have always been different political entities.

Post-Indonesian independency, the *Moronene's* significance was still shadowed by the *Buton* sultanate. Likewise the Dutch, the *Buton* sultanate also recognized that *Polea* and *Kabaena* were integrated with *Rumbia* and ruled by the same *Mokole*. During this period, *Mokole* was inaugurated with ceremonies by the sultans in *Buton* (Alfian Pimpie, Pers.Comm).⁶

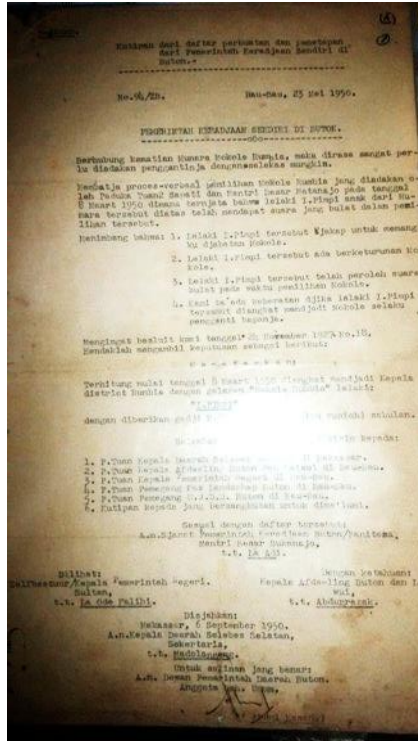


Figure 9. The document of the Inauguration of the Mokole by the Buton Sultan

When the Southeast Sulawesi Province was established in 1950s, the Buton became a single district. All Moronene ethnic groups' locales (*Rumbia*, *Polea* and *Kabaena*) were put together into one *kecamatan* (sub-district) called as *Rumbia*. Sub-district *Rumbia*, despite its size that is larger than the Buton Island and its location on the mainland, was made part of the *Buton* district. When Protestant Christian missionary came to the area in 1960s, mainly around Taubonto, the *Moronene* was re-introduced to the western world. Yet, this also had not properly regarded the *Moronene* as consisting of groups that is larger than that in *Rumbia*.

The existence of the *Moronene* as an ethno-linguistic group and as a social identity had never become more centered than when the district of *Bombana* became a district separated from the *Buton* in 2003; thanks to the decentralization system put in place since 1999 in Indonesia (Limba et al., 2014). The *Moronene* as a social identity and indigeneity became bolder. Many young *Moronene* actors and politicians brought themselves up on the stage, insisting the notion that *putradaerah* (local youngster) of the *Moronene* should role in their society. This spirit of recognition of the *Moronene* had

successfully brought *Subhan Tambera* as the first vice regent of the *Bombana* District of *Moronene* descendant. Indeed, he is the first *Moronene* to hold formal political position in the history of the region.

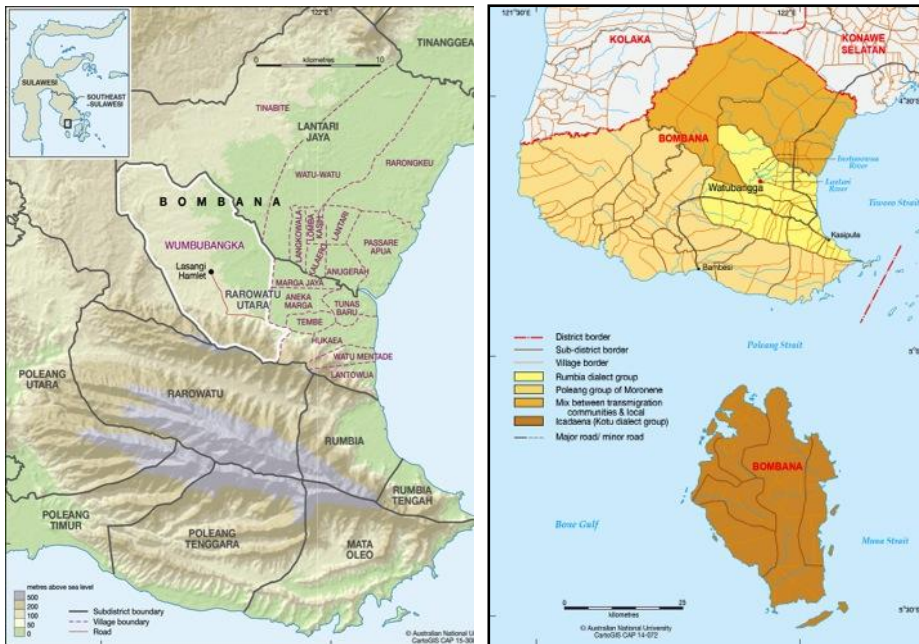


Figure 10. The Bombana District of Southeast Sulawesi Province, Indonesia

II. Events that Led to Eviction and Land Disputes

Lynch and Harwell (2002) outlined a series of conflicts that the *Moronene* groups have had in the past with outside parties. This section summarizes some of the major events, as literatures narrated and people remember, which had caused social shocks such as eviction of people from their land and disputes over traditional land ownership.

In 1952, the armed rebel guerrilla of the Islamic nationalist movement, *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia* (DI-TII), led by a rebel military officer, *Kahar Muzakar*, penetrated into the sub-district of *Rumbia*. The guerrilla movement looked for local volunteers and logistic support, but often accompanied their appeals with land seizures and intimidation. The Indonesian National Army (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*) eventually swept into the area and declared it as a military operation zone (*Daerah Operasi Militer*). This pushed DI-TII into nearby areas, such as *Kasipute* and *Tinanggea*. DI-TII brought many local residents with them saying that it was for their own

safety. Fearing for their lives members of the native *Moronene* fled too, but returned when the situation calmed down (Nur Hasanah, 2001).

In 1976, the Ministry of Agriculture issued Decree No. 648/Kpts/um/10/1976 regarding the designation (*penetapan kawasan*) of 50,000 hectares of lowland forest around the *Watumohai* Mountain as *Suaka Margasatwa* or wildlife reserve (Sugiarto, 2012). The intention was to create an ex-situ area or area for preservation of vulnerable-wildlife species outside of their original habitat.⁷ The issuance of the decree raised concerns among the *Moronene* as seven of their villages (*tobu*), where nearly 300 members resided, were included in the park's area (Maha Adi and Kurniawan, 2002). The Central Government did not take much notice of these concerns.

From the period of 1979 to 1980, the national transmigration program reached Southeast Sulawesi Region (Benoit and Pain, 1989). The demarcation of transmigration zone in the area was a Central Government design and performed without proper consultation with the *Moronene* (Lynch and Harwell, 2002). The area overlapped forestlands, which the *Moronene* claimed as their customary land and resources. The issue has not yet been fully resolved and sparked land disputes between the local customary communities and the trans-migrant people. In 1990, the Ministry of Forestry issued Decree No. 756/Kpts-II/1990 which grouped the *Watumohai* Mountain, the *Rumbia* Plain Hunting Park and *Rawa Aopa* Peatswamp wildlife sanctuary as a national park called *Rawa Aopa Watumohai* (Sugiarto, 2012). The park covered an area of 105,194 ha. Residents of villages in the park in the settlements of *Hukaesa*, *Laea*, and *Lanowulu*, resisted moving out (Maha Adi and Kurniawan, 2012). They remain in the park today. The park authority made an informal arrangement by allocating an enclave zone of 366 hectares. An informal arrangement means that village members have no ownership over the land but have limited usage of it. They were often blamed for extraction of timber and other resources from the park, and this led to a series of eviction operations (Lynch and Harwell, 2002). On 16 December 1997, the Provincial Government of Southeast Sulawesi conducted a relocation operation called *Sapu Jagat* (*Clean Swipe*) which was aimed at moving the *Moronene* villages out of the *Rawa Aopa National Park* area (Lynch and Harwell, 2002, p.97-98; McRae and Tomsa, 2012). The ground for the operation was an accusation delivered by the provincial Governor at the time, *La Ode Kaimuddin*, that villagers had caused destruction of 3,000 hectares of forests within the park. *Kaimuddin* reiterated that of 234 residents of *Hukaesa-Laea* village, only two have historical ties to the native

Moronene group, and of 200 residents of *Lanowulu* village, only seven have such ties (MahaAdi and Kurniawan, 2002). In other words, most people there are deemed to have no hereditary resource use rights of the park, let alone ownership to the land. Villagers refuted this claims and refused to be reallocated. The *SapuJagat* team moved in knocking down and burning their houses and threatening to shoot tribal leaders. They arrested ten *Moronene* tribal figures. Fearing for their lives, members of the native *Moronene* ran and hid in the forests. The team, witnessed by many park rangers, continued burning down the remaining houses. There were approximately 175 houses destroyed and 300 families evicted (Lynch and Harwell, 2002., p.97-98). When the situation calmed down, members of the native *Moronene* returned to their villages. These operations continued until 2002. There have been a few attempts to file a lawsuit for violations of human rights in the operations, but there have been no lasting solutions (Palisuri, 2014).



Figure 11. *SapuJagat* Tim demolishes a *Moronene* house in *Hukaea* Village (left); a *Moronene* man looks at ruins of his house (courtesy: *Suluh* Foundation)

III. Gold Rush and Mining Exploration Bonanza

3.1. Gold Rush

In late September 2008, at the beginning of the Islamic fasting month of *Ramadan*, the news of the gold discovery in a little stream in *Rarowatu* sub-district went viral⁸ (Pudjiastuti, 2010). The news was sourced to a local resident by the name of *Budi* who had been panning for flecks of gold from the river and selling it to a gold shop in town. The selling was so frequent that the shop became suspicious. Concerned that they might be buying illegally sourced gold, they reported their suspicion to the police who arrested and interrogated *Budi* who later admitted that the gold came out of his artisanal gold production⁹ (Hamdan, 2008; Muttaqin, 2009). The media caught on to this affair and made it a headline for several months in some local newspapers. The news sparked curiosity among local

people of *Rarowatu* and *Bombana*. Because of the news, many people from nearby coastal and transmigration villages came to the creek to inspect the site (Pudjiastuti, 2010). Local governments illustrated the discovery as a parable of '*LailatulQadar*'¹⁰ or night of rejoicing (ANTARA News, 2008). This excited people even more, and the influx of aspirant miners grew quickly. The media reported that around 20,000 had descended on the stream to initiate gold panning by the end of month (Taufiequrrohman, 2008; Zulkarnain 2010). These activities signaled the beginning of the gold rush in the district.

Bombana District government's lack of control over the influx of artisanal miners and the isolation of the panning site had resulted in the gold search area becoming dense with miners and the mining activity turning destructive. Miners dredged and dug up the stream banks and beds in such rapid fashion that it caused erosion and sediment. High miner mobility also caused an extension of the gold prospecting zone. People then moved downstream and also to the adjoining river *Wumbubangka*, in the neighboring sub-district of North-*Rarowatu*. The search also moved to the old village or settlement (*perkampungan tua*) of *Wumbubangka*, which for many years was the site of land conflicts between the central government and indigenous landowners¹¹.



Figure 12. Gold rush in Rivers and Creeks in *Rau-rau*, *Bombana*.

The influx of tens of thousands of people into the area brought by the gold rush was also a major cause of negative social impacts. Migration on such a scale often results in structural changes to society through variation in the demographic, organizational, and institutional factors, as well as variation in micro-scale aspects, such as access to labor, land and other capital. In the upland of *Bombana*¹², Pudjiastuti (2010) observed that the gold rush had caused disruptions in social structures and organizations of what had been rural agrarian communities. The arrival of artisanal gold

mining subsequently further divided communities into different jurisdictions and non-agricultural groups. Mining groups congregated in village-like camps located in state forestland (some may be under dispute with local indigenous groups or others are under exploration and exploitation concessions) outside village administrative area. Miner groups break down further into various production and processing groups. Informal economy groups add to the mix of groups that form mining camps. Some of the miners in mining camps are village residents who travel back and forth daily between locations. Pudjiastuti (2010) asserts that this can stimulate dynamic relations between jurisdictions and possibly changes social constructs and relations in both jurisdictions.

In April 2009, due to various social and environmental problems and political pressures from the provincial and central government, the district government decided to shut down the artisanal mining area and evict all individual miners from the area (BeritaLingkungan, 2009). A team consisting of civil servant police (*Polisi Pamong Praja*) and paramilitary police (*Brigade Mobil*) forcibly removed miners; beating and shooting two miners who resisted leaving and then burning all the mining equipment and tents they found in the area. (BeritaLingkungan, 2009).

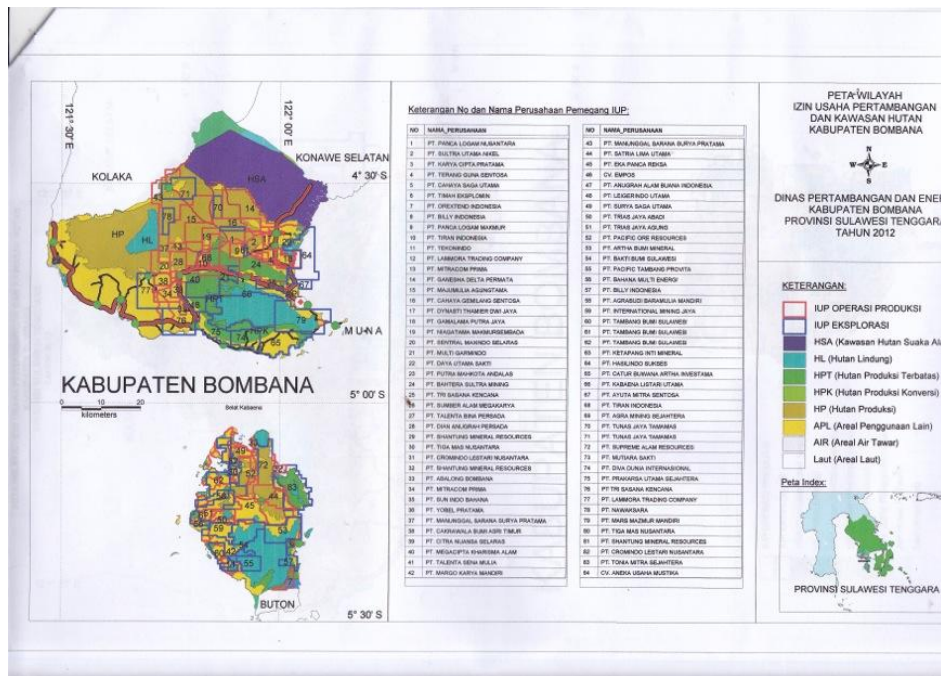
The shutting down of the WPR ended an 8-month period of quasi-formal artisanal and small-scale gold mining activity in the area and returned the sector into an informal and unregulated one. Since then, the district government has been issuing mining exploration and production operation licenses to medium-scale mining companies.

3.3. Mining Permit Expansion

With the authority that the mining law no.4/2009 gives, the district government, since 2009 has been expanding mining exploration and production zone. The number of mining exploration and production permits which were given to private companies continued to increase. As of 2012, there were the total of 84 permits issued by the district government. The size of concessions ranged from 185 hectares to 7,850 hectares but together made a total of 122,216 hectares (The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, 2013). Half of the district, from the east and south coast to the middle of the peninsula to the *Rawa Aopa Watumohai* National Park, now consists of mining concessions and settlements, whereas the other half, to the west and southwest of the peninsula, is still covered with forests and coastline settlements (see figure below).

The expansion of mining permits in the region has created further

dynamics in how the *Moronene* interact with the landscape as the space to live and search for livelihood is shrinking. One concern that they frequently raise with regards to this expansion is what will happen after. Mining is technically destructive. Since gold rush occurred, landscape has been dramatically damaged and changed. “Can we still call it our home and land if they no longer look the same” said one village elder. This statement clearly expresses how the people feel about their attachment to the landscape that they really rely on in providing them with livelihood alternatives but increasingly being taken over by others.



IV. Summary

This ethno-historical review has briefly summarized post-independent events up until today, which are covered in the literature and put forward by local historians as those that define and shape the *Moronene* as an identity or as an imagined society. There is obviously a more detailed historical account of this ethno-linguistic group, but most of them are in *Bahasa* and rarely are in English. Indeed there are linguistic-related materials written in English, such as those of David Mead and David Andersen. However these covered only a little on ethno-historic account.

As has been described in this review, throughout the times, the *Moronene* people in different parts of the region have had to deal with series of momentous external shocks, from the penetration of Darul Islam and the implementation of *Daerah Operasi Militer* (Military Operation Zone) in 1950s, the influx of Javanese-Balinese-Lombok transmigrant people in 1980s, the incoming of a variety of conservation and development projects as well as forest industrial investment in 1990s, the proliferation of the district in 2003, and more recently the gold rush and expansion of mining business permits. All of these occasions have brought with them different types of social pressures: oppression, tortures, land grabs, eviction, relocation, massive population influx, landscape damages, hyper-inflating commodity prices. These pressures have to certain extent influenced the way the *Moronene* remember their past and present, as well as their identity, structure and fields of relationships.

Yet, what is amazing is that the *Moronene*, both as an identity and imagined society, still exists until today. However, the extent to which the *Moronene* community is the same or has changed, and what do these changes, if anything, means. Does it lead to a more resilient community or perhaps a more vulnerable community? These are the aspects that need to be researched in the future and this review serves as an enticement to those who are interested in doing so.

Endnotes:

¹ Lecturer of Haluoleo University

² WitaEa dialect is 80% similar with To'kotua dialect, but is also 68% similar with *Menui* dialect spoken on *Wawonii* Island, 66% similar with *Kulisusu* language spoken on the northern part of *Buton* Island, 65% similar with *Taloki* and *Koroni* languages spoken on the northern part of the *Buton* Island, 65% similar with *Tulambatu* dialect spoken on *Bungku* Island (Central Sulawesi), 64% similar with *Bungku* language (Central Sulawesi) and 57% similar with *Tolaki* language (Mead, 1999).

³ The *Buginese* dominates the western *Polea* region.

⁴ I obtained this number from the assistance of an ANU Phd Colleague who run the 2010 Indonesian Population Census Data.

⁵ *Rekson Limba* is an anthropologist, native *Moronene* and local historian. He is currently working with the Haluoleo University in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi. Correspondance made in June 2014.

⁶ *Latiff Haba* is a local historian and close kin to the current *Mokole of Rumbia*.

⁷ This was followed by the introduction of exotic species such as *Rusa Bawean* or *Bawean deers* (*Cervus* sp.) into the area which became over-populated and turned out posing the risk of extinction of the flagship species lowland anoa (*Bubalus depressicornis*) as

both competed for almost similar range of diets. Later on to tackle the problem of overpopulated deers, the area was changed to become game park.

⁸ Sub District *Rarowatu* is part of *Bombana* District in Southeast Sulawesi Province of Indonesia. It is located 180 kilometers southwest of the capital city of *Kendari*, whereas the *Tahilte* Stream is about 50 kilometers from *Kasipute*, the capital town of *Bombana* District

⁹ I quoted this from field notes of a local journalist friend of mine, Mr. *Akbar Hamdan*, which he wrote during his trip to the area from 4-6 October 2008. According to information he obtained, there are three stories of how gold panning in the stream began, but this version was most frequently mentioned by people.

¹⁰ In Islamic belief, this is a night of rejoicing and blessing in the fasting month of *Ramadan*. The blessing is believed to be more than a thousand of other months (Ali, nd., p.4)

¹¹ In 1980s, this settlement had in the past been allocated by the central government for national transmigration settlements (*Satuan Pemukiman* or SP), namely SP8 and SP9, but left unoccupied due primarily to the poor soil. In the 1990s, the area had subsequently been allocated for PT. Barito Pacific, a national timber company, to establish a plantation, but then again left abandoned due to poor levels of production (Zulkarnain, 2010). The land has been deemed forest area by the central government but also claimed as *ulayat* land by indigenous communities (Lynch and Harwell, 2002).

¹² Population Census in 2010 asked people in the district the ethnic groups that they belong to, and out of roughly 13,000 interviewed, 4 major groups were identified: the *Buginese*, the *Javanese*, the *Moronene* and the *Butonese*. Up land of *Bombana* consists mainly of the native *Moronene* groups, transmigrant *Javanese* communities and the *Bugis* communities.

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