



The Fabrication of Local Identity: Marginalization of the Indigenous Dayak Beverage in Central Kalimantan

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Abstract

Since the decentralization era that started in 1999, the need to search for local identity in various regions in Indonesia gradually emerged. Local elites have been pursuing some specific characteristics to legitimize their indigeneity and authenticity which are useful to strengthen their local power grip. The production of local identity (e.g., *adat*; tradition) was transformed into a key factor for the success of a local government in the transition of political and economic power in Indonesia (Bourchier, 2007; Erb, 2007). In that cultural production, a particular ethnic tradition was often fabricated into a binary dichotomy; “good” and “bad” to come up with a “true local identity.” Within this scheme, a tradition considered “bad” is rejected. *Baram*, a traditional Dayak beverage containing alcohol, faces this kind of rejection. Even though it is inherently a part of the Dayak culture, evidence of its existence is systematically deleted in the public domain such as museums, books, and public documents and other local publications. *Baram* is perceived as a form of bad habit and also is thought to be irrelevant to the contemporary Dayak identity that is struggling to eliminate the stereotype of being uncivilized. This paper argues that the marginalization of *baram* not only is a matter of politics but also is related to current social and cultural contestation in Central Kalimantan, Palangkaraya in particular. The analysis in this paper focuses on the relation of the Dayak as indigenous people of Central Kalimantan and migrants from other Kalimantan regions and outside of Kalimantan. The data were collected during my short ethnographic research in Palangkaraya and Katingan Regency, Central Kalimantan in 2015. *Baram* is suspected of being a source of overconsumption of alcohol that triggers violence and criminal actions in both urban and rural communities. Such a formulation is common in the mass media to describe the negative effects of *baram*. The

marginalization of *baram* continues and has escalated into a more serious matter as the local regime now labels it as illegal good. It is, thus, alienated in its own home.

Keywords: *Baram*, Marginalization, Local Identity, Dayak, Indonesia

Local identity and how to approach it—an introduction

This paper is not aimed at discussing the already steady concepts of culture and identity. Rather, my purpose here is to challenge the concept of local identity that scholars have been used in a taken-for-granted manner in examining Indonesia's politics in the post-Soeharto era (Bourchier 2007, Erb 2007, Henley and Davidson 2007, Tirtosudarmo 2007, Tanasaldy 2012). Instead of elaborating how elites institutionalize their power using local features and traditions, I would like to argue that there is something more urgent and deeper than "local identity": its crafting process itself.

Local identity, in my opinion, is not something established as it is; rather, we should consider it as a series of events of fabrication. As fluid as identity concepts can be,² the local identity for a certain geographical area is also always contextual. The local identity puzzles are constructed from chosen fragments of tradition that can meet the concept of the nation. On the contrary, other traditions—though essential for the local people—are marginalized and often suppressed by the local regime due to improper impressions. Regrettably, the processes of construction are not always fully conscious. Often, the production of local identity for which traditions are selected is run under influence of hegemonic values.

These values consist of religious resilience and an Indonesian version of modernity; legacies from the New Order era that are deeply rooted in elites' minds even though Soeharto's regime fell 16 years ago. Values here, however, refer to a set of "worth" criteria related to of society—as Graeber (2001:3) says, values are ideas about what the people *ought* to want. The values are the criteria by which the people judge which desires are legitimate and worthwhile and which are not. Values, thus, are ideas, if not necessarily about the meaning of life, then at least about what one could justifiably want from it.

Through analysis of how the local regime deals with *baram* (local alcoholic beverage), I would like to share the way religious and modern values work hegemonically in pushing this traditional beverage to the edge of the Central Kalimantan cultural stage. These values somehow have been strengthened and reproduced by the presence of migrants in Central Kalimantan. What has happened then is a contestation between images embodied in the indigenous Dayak way of life and daily customs from the outside. The contestation initiated a particular cultural fabrication of a binary dichotomy—"good" and "bad"—to synthesize the Dayak "true local identity" in facing a new political environment. By this formula, traditions that could lead to bad cultural images should be rejected, avoided, or even buried. *Baram*—apparently—is perceived as part of these traditions. I found this interesting phenomenon during my short ethnographic research in two regions, Palangka Raya City and Katingan Regency.

Palangkaraya was chosen as a research site for an urban context in *baram* consumption. I include Katingan Regency for studying the rural context. In Katingan I visited two areas: 1) Kasongan, 90 minutes from Palangkaraya, as a representation of a rural area that affected by modern tradition as well as traditional values; 2) Tewang Kadamba and Tumbang Liting, two villages which were used to gain pure rural setting of Central Kalimantan.

The emerging local regime and production of locality

From the rubble of Soeharto's regime, a new kind of democracy emerged. People at that period celebrated the new wave of freedom in almost every aspect, particularly in politics (see also Tirtosudarmo 2007, Tanasaldy 2012, Li 2000, Sulistiyanto 2006, Davidson and Henley 2007). An era of so-called reformation was followed by a political phenomenon when 48 parties took part in the 1999 election. Another splendid milestone—and the most important—for Indonesia before the transition of the millennium was the beginning of decentralization according to Law No. 22/1999³ as a counter to a centralized system that had legally absorbed local resources for three decades.

In this new form of power sharing between Jakarta—the center of national power—and other regions, local governments are allowed to

manage their own resources independently and construct their own rules autonomously as long as their decisions align with national regulations. Elites' interest to grip more control in their territories has been met with high demand for decent public services, resulting in proliferation of new regencies and even new provinces. Kellas (1991 in Tanasaldy, 2012) emphasizes the proliferation as a serious implication of decentralization. By 2015, Indonesia is consisted of into 34 provinces and 514 regencies and cities, compared to 27 provinces and 305 regencies and cities in 1998.⁴

Politically, the reformation that was also the first time for every province, city, and regency to elect leaders by regional election; and it was also the first time the Indonesian public was familiarized with the propaganda of "native leader" (*putera daerah*) propaganda. Within this system, locality became a new mantra to obtain trust and support in elections. Locality then transformed by the elites into economic activities by deliberately advocating for local goods, services, merchants, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, alongside political and economic situations, primordial sentiments were produced and reproduced and traditions reinvented—even triggering communal violence or horizontal conflict (see Klinken 2002, Klinken (ed.) 2007). Thus, decentralization not only affected the political shape but also reformed economic, social, and even cultural matters all over Indonesia.⁵

These transformations resulted in massive movements for producing locality in various regions of Indonesia. The local elites use locality discourse for their political purposes, strengthening their power and sealing their resources. One of their typical methods is producing or reconstructing their locality from existing traditions to claim and reclaim their legacy in those areas. Eventually, it becomes normal to see local government promoting and even forcing one kind of tradition in their territory as part of impression management. Solely from my research experience, I can tell that West Sumatera province reactivated its old *Nagari* system as an act of social and cultural rejoicing, taking advantage of decentralization system. I can also refer to how the Aceh government forced *sharia* law—Islamic customs—as part of the claim to the region as a Muslim province. Recently, Purwakarta elites have believed that they are retrieving their old *Sundanese* customs as guidance for people as well as for tourism. The list of regions

applying a similar tactic is quite long, but the point here is that the elites surely need to reinvent and reinforce their local identity to preserve the throne.

Since it is important to endorse traditions that people favor in order to gain political sympathy, elites then value only those desired by public. In this scheme, each cultural manifestation—consciously or not—is scanned and selected to meet local people’s taste and the national outlook. In contrast to preferred cultural values or materials, those identified as disgraced traditions are intentionally rejected and even criminalized.

Baram as inherent part of Dayak culture

As what I’ve mentioned earlier, alongside the propaganda of “native leaders” (*putera daerah*), a notable tradition is often reinvented for such an illusive bonding with the local society, even though it generates only political sympathy and—more pragmatically—electoral votes. A serious consideration is that tradition should not be contrary to the common preferences or interests, either local and national. Rather, the chosen traditions should enable elites to transfer their ideal: to represent the local and to be politically valued in a larger context.⁶ That is why, even though some traditions continue as an inherent part of people’s lives, traditions that are contrary to the common cannot be promoted. This is what happened with people in Central Kalimantan and their *baram*.

People living along the Katingan and Kahayan Rivers consider drinking alcoholic beverages part of their tradition. They have used alcoholic beverages since childhood, both modern products and the traditional ones. Often, it is the family that introduces this custom. In various *adat* ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, especially *baram*, are never missing. How *baram* became an inherent part of daily life is shown in the following table:

Ritual	<i>Baram</i> Function
<i>Tiwah</i> Completeness ceremony for the dead	Ensure the guests stay awake during the night since <i>adat</i> forbids people to sleep while celebrating <i>tiwah</i> ceremony
<i>Maja Misek</i>	Used as <i>Rapintuak</i> , part of the offering for

Rite to propose marriage to a woman	the woman's families. During traditional poetry contest between family groups (man and women side), the losing side drink the <i>rapintuak</i> , bonding the family
<i>Nahunan</i> Gratitude ceremony over child's health after delivery process. In some cases, also conducted when child is ready to walk on the land or go to the river.	Offering for ancestors; if the supply is plentiful, some can be consumed by family members as well
<i>Menyanggar</i> Required rite after a prayer is granted.	Offering for ancestors; put inside the <i>patahu</i> (a mini-temple made of wood located near the people's house)
<i>Memapas Lewu</i> A ceremony to clear a territory from bad spirits (usually held annually or for special occasions)	Offering for ancestors; poured to the ground
Agricultural Activities A set of ceremonies in the opening season (preparation of the land) and the harvest	Offering for ancestors to bless the crops; consumed by people who contribute in preparing/harvesting the land
Marriage Party	Sign of joy and enhancement of pleasure from entertainment; served to every guest, including women and children
Death Ritual	Ensure the family and other watching the corpse stay awake all night related to the common belief that if everyone is sleeping, the corpse will rise.
Curing Ritual	Medium used by curer to communicate with the ancestors in helping the patient as well as an offering for them.

Table 1. *Baram* functions in Dayak tradition⁷ (Author's field notes, 2015)

Beside its inclusion in every ritual, is also a noble present for guests of the house. Normally, whenever a guest visits a Dayak house, *baram* is served as a form of appreciation. When I first went to the house of my informant, he acknowledged "...to be honest, *baram* is supposed to be preserved in every single Dayak's house. Whenever a guest or an old friend comes to our house, we then could serve it well. Unfortunately, *baram* is getting scarce here. Me too, I wish I had it so I can serve it to you.". *Baram* as a tradition to honor a guest is also mentioned by Tjilik Riwut, founding father of Central Kalimantan, in his book *Kalimantan Membangun Alam dan Kebudayaan* (Kalimantan Constructs Nature and Culture):

It often is done, to appreciate an honored guest, they serve *baram*. I suggest one accept and drink the served *baram* even if only a sip; do not reject it because it is a form of joy and appreciation. If the guest rejects the *baram* and does not taste it even a bit, they would feel offended (2007:205).

Serving *baram* as a form of decency is an undoubted fact of Dayak custom. Nevertheless, there is one important detail is that they would not serve *baram* to just any guest. It is common that Dayak would serve *baram* to honorable guests or close allies, and I did experience the custom. In my early time visiting my informants, they served me only tea, but gradually, after we talked a lot with each other and the hosts felt safe and comfortable, and appreciated my presence, they offered me *baram*.

Baram is made from fermentation of yeast, rice, sugar, tobacco, and organic spices such as pepper, galingale, chili, cinnamon, and other materials depending on the taste of the maker.⁸ The rice and spices are threshed before being mixed with the yeast. The yeast mixture is then exposed to the sun for approximately two weeks. The dry yeast mixture is put into sugared water for roughly half a month. The container cannot be opened before the *baram* is ripe; otherwise, it will be ruined. Some makers even have rituals during the production processes, e.g. avoiding acid goods, restraining anger, talking about only good things, or praying.



Figure 1. The brief steps to produce *baram*. Normally, *baram* is produced by old women called *tambi'* (grandmother) (Illustration made by the author, 2015).

After being produced, *baram* is distributed in a simple manner. The makers sell it directly to the customers. Even intermediary parties buy the bulk quantities in cash as there is no such thing as a distributor here. *Baram* makers also take orders for rituals and ceremonies, both from inside and outside the village. The price of *baram* varies depending on the region but within the range of Rp 10,000-20,000 (1-1.5 USD) per liter. Despite some economic potential, *baram* makers normally do not sell their product to the young due to possibilities of alcohol misuse. If something bad happened, like criminal or violent acts, the blame would go to the *baram* makers. They do not want to take that risk.

Furthermore, in the context of alcoholic beverages, elites of Hindu *Kaharingan*⁹ stated clearly during our interview that their society has never understood the norms of alcohol consumption. Drinking *baram*, specifically, until one is drunk, is basically forbidden. Principally, *baram* is used only by *pisur* or *basir* (priests)¹⁰ to help them communicate with the ancestors' spirits. In their analogy, the sensation from drinking *baram* should never exceed the sensation from chewing areca nut or tobacco; thus, no more than a small glass can be consumed. When *baram* is consumed excessively, it becomes "a devilish potion" that could turn a human being into an evil.

Meanwhile, in the *adat* law of Dayak daily life, there is no particular regulation that forbids them to drink alcohol—i.e., *baram*. Any regulations are only for cautionary purposes so that their actions would not lead them to get *singer* (a fine). Regardless, *baram* in the eye of *adat* elites is an inherent part of the life cycle of Dayak. Birth, wedding, and death ceremonies always involve *baram* for both sacred and profane purposes. In the past, when Dayak lived deep in the forest, drinking *baram* before leaving their houses or bringing *baram* as a travel supply was common and even recommended to warm the body during activities. When describing *baram*'s functions in daily file, those *adat* leaders are frankly against the Hindu *Kaharingan* elites' idea. The information from Hindu *Kaharingan*'s elites, they argue, does not have a solid ground since Hindu *Kaharingan* and its views are considered to contaminate the true *Kaharingan*'s precepts since this region has been influenced too much by outsiders.

Dayak locality and outsider hegemony

Outside influences that those elites referred to involve two related matters: first, the migration of other ethnic groups to Central Kalimantan; and second, hegemonic moral values from the concept of Islam and modernity. Two larger groups, the Javanese and Banjarnese, made major migrations into Central Kalimantan.¹¹ The waves of Javanese into the area occurred through transmigration programs during colonization and the New Order era although other moves made by individuals to pursue better opportunities also occurred (see Tirtosudarmo, 2007: 176). Meanwhile, historically, the Banjarnese shared geographical space with the Dayak before the separation of Central Kalimantan and South Kalimantan in 1957.¹² After Central Kalimantan became an independent province, some of the Banjarnese have continued to live in the new province and have been followed by other groups.

Dayak in Central Kalimantan consists of several groups, such as *Ngaju*, *Ma'anyan*, *Katingan*, and several others. The Dayak population in Central Kalimantan is still unclear, but *Ngaju* is considered the largest Dayak ethnic group in Central Kalimantan due to its mobility in their past and that its language is being used as *lingua franca* among the other groups. At a glance, it is easy to imagine that Palangkaraya and Katingan are

dominated by Dayak. It is true that in Central Kalimantan Dayak attributes can be seen everywhere as part of their identity production, but in fact, it is not the Dayak who really run the cities. Based on my observations and information gathered, even though the Dayak formally hold the grip on the power, economic activities are geared up neither by them nor the Javanese, but by their old brothers: migrants from South Kalimantan, the Banjarnese.

The story of Central Kalimantan cannot be separated from Dayak rivalry with the Banjarnese. The foundation of this province was triggered by Dayak cultural aspiration to be a more independent. At the time, Central Kalimantan was part of South Kalimantan, ruled by the dominant ethnic, Banjarnese. The Banjarnese supremacy occupied the economic, political, and even socio-cultural aspects of daily life. Dayaknese felt they had suffered enough and had a historical claim over their own resources and territories (see Tirtosuwarto 2007). Thus, it was only natural for them to separate from their old siblings. It was Soekarno himself, the founding father of Indonesia, who in 1957 laid the first stone for the new road as part of Palangkaraya's development as the capital of Central Kalimantan.¹³

Decades have passed but still the Dayak cannot get rid of their old rival and, contrary to their expectation, Central Kalimantan has been filled with Banjarnese due to continuous migration. The dominance of the Banjarnese is inevitable, in my opinion, since Palangkaraya's supply of goods is mostly received and distributed from Banjarmasin, the capital of South Kalimantan. Thus, Palangkaraya is highly dependent on its neighbor. The Banjarnese are synonymous with trading and are mostly Muslims. Unfortunately, there are no reliable sources for the ethnic distribution in Central Kalimantan, Palangkaraya, or Katingan. To support my observation, I can only present with religious and occupational data. The population census in 2010 from the Central Agency on Statistics of Indonesia shows that the people in Central Kalimantan are dominantly Islam (74%) in religion and traders (35%) in occupation. These data meet with the stereotype of Banjarnese in Central Kalimantan, that their culture is different from the Dayak.¹⁴ The Banjarnese slowly but surely have been filling this region and have some way defined a new "style" of living for people here. Thus, in the center of activity of Palangkaraya and Katingan,

where I conducted my research, Islamic nuance and ambiance are really strong.

Undeniably, Islamic resilience has gotten stronger in every aspect of Indonesian life, especially in politics, all over the country. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, with more than 200 million people, nearly 88 % of its citizens.¹⁵ Therefore, it is only natural for the country to be influenced by Islamic values and perspectives. Islamic values became a national matter after the Reformation era, when morality movements, alongside technological development, and newfound freedom could heavily affect the people. Mass Islamic organizations have also been playing a significant role in spreading the message of Islamic morality through all available media. The dissemination of Islamic messages is a part of the contemporary salience of religious movements around the globe. In Indonesia, these Islamic morality movements range from the softest, such as prayer groups, to the most extreme approaches, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia. Peculiarly, these movements have also resulted in more conflict-prone society in which people are more easily annoyed by the presence of people with other beliefs, and promoting acts of intolerance. Asad (2003) captures this pattern around the globe: “[T]he resurgence of religion has been welcomed by many as a means of supplying what they see as a needed moral dimension to secular politics and environmental concerns. It has been regarded by others with alarm as a symptom of growing irrationality and intolerance in everyday life.”

Besides religious movements, modernization has been at the very heart of development in Indonesia since the New Order era, and it has played a pivotal part in shaping locality. Modernization, alongside liberal economics, has become valued as normal, preferred, and regarded as the core that guides regional development in Indonesia, including in Central Kalimantan. In discussing development, putting attention on the migrants is crucial because they are at once the catalyst and the assurance of modernization. Gradually, they have transformed into the backbone of modernization in its economic, social, and political aspects. The existence of migrants has effectively triggered modernity among the Dayak.

At a certain point, being modern in Dayak context means that people should behave modernly and put away their traditional customs. Being

educated in formal institutions, living in a permanent house, using electronics, and having a bathroom are among the attributes of modernity. Another aspect is avoiding violent actions such as those that occurred in Sampit in bloody ethnic conflict with the Madurans. Although violence and other “tribal” actions are avoided, some still occur. Today’s Dayak still collectively intoxicated with *baram* and other alcoholic beverages, especially while participating in various *adat* ceremonies. The activity presents an “uncivilized” image since fighting and other criminal actions are often committed by the drunken mass, in both urban and rural areas. Furthermore, being modern is also equal to obeying formal regulation. *Baram* as a substance cannot comply with formal regulations in terms of its presence and alcohol composition. Modernity combined with religious values and the outsiders’ influences has been progressively internalized into every aspect of today’s Dayak’s livelihood and affects their ideas about what they ought to want.

Repression over *baram*: fabrication of local identity

Question: “Do you have *baram*?”

Answer: “Yes I do”

Question: “Who’s the maker?”

Answer: “I have no idea. Maybe in that area [referring to rural places]; there is no *baram* maker nearby.”

During my ethnographic research, conversations like this one were typical. People could easily answer where they could find *baram* if they needed it, but they really have no idea who the maker is since the *baram* is supplied from other regions. Palangkaraya’s citizens usually articulated, “...maybe in Katingan, Gunung Mas, or Lamandau” (other regencies, far from the city). Ironically, when I asked the same question in Katingan Regency, people there stated that they did not have particular information about the *baram* maker’s presence. Apparently, *baram* makers have been gradually marginalized to peripheral areas. One causal explanation for why the number of *baram* maker has slowly decreased is the local regime’s oppression.

One point in the local regulation 13/2013 touches on the type of alcoholic beverages that are allowed to be circulated in the city. There are

three categories based on ethanol content: A for less than 5%; B for 5%-20%; and C for 20%-45%. Unfortunately, there is no standard for alcohol content for *baram* and it cannot be put into any of these categories; hence its circulation is considered illegal. In 2015 alone, police officers have made several raids on *baram* makers in Palangkaraya, including the new case in Tangkiling.¹⁶ *Baram* is perceived as a dangerous potion due to the lack of alcohol standard and it is labeled as one of the causes of juvenile crimes. Making *baram* for any purpose is prohibited by law.

An informant, a traditional curer, was one of the raid victims. She had been making *baram* since 1980 for medicinal purposes. *Baram*, in her perspective, is used as a medium to invite the spirit of ancestors essential in the curing process. When the local regulation was applied, she stated, she got raided twice. The first time, around three years ago, she was only warned not to make *baram* any longer but was not arrested. In the second raid, there were more police officers that combed her house for tools and equipment. She was then brought to the police's office. Recalling the experience, she said, "*I don't know what's wrong, they only said that 'You should not make baram!' 'You do not have a permit!' After the raid, I never made baram anymore.*" She added in a cynical tone "*it's alright.*" At her trial, the judge punished her with a fine of around IDR 1,000,000 (USD 75) and a prohibition against making *baram*. She told me that she once asked for a permit several years ago so that she could make and distribute *baram* legally. She was rejected because her *baram* did not have a standard for alcohol content. After the rejection, she continued to produce *baram* to answer the demand from the people who need it for medicinal purposes.

This kind of legal ambush is not unique to Palangkaraya. The terror was also experienced by people in Kasongan, Katingan. Both the makers and the distributors of *baram* were caught and warned. One of my informants expressed that even if he had *baram* in stock, he could not sell it to anyone and would give it only to familiar persons. Police officers often camouflage themselves as a strategy to capture the "criminals." Even in the stores where we gathered for group interview, the seller looked very cautious and served *baram* only to people he already knew.

I found a similar situation in Tewang Kadamba, a *baram* maker village in Katingan regency. During my first visit, the wife of the village head

looked terrified whenever we approached the topics of *baram*. She persistently stated that no one produced *baram* in the village at that time and she really did not have any idea of who was still making it on a daily basis. Although I met with the village head the next day, the producers were afraid of getting caught by the police as if I were one of them. When the village head finally came with *baram* he articulated, “...the grandma [baram maker] was afraid, if it was not me [a village head], she would never give her *baram*.” Thirty minutes from Kasongan, Katingan, a *baram* maker in Kerengpangi was more worried than frightened. She even asked me to guarantee her business so that the police could not touch her. I obviously could not produce that kind of statement for her. The form of government repression through the police institution is aligned with their effort to wipe out the alcohol tradition in Central Kalimantan. In public documents about culture, especially the government version, *baram* is something that never existed; its appearance is purposely obscured.

My suspicion about the regime’s effort to hide *baram*’s existence began when I visited Museum Balanga—a place dedicated to being an information center for Dayak culture in Central Kalimantan. Among the numerous displayed posters, portraits, sculptures, miniatures, and other items, not a single one of them talked specifically about *baram*. Nonetheless, *baram* could easily be identified in photographs of the Dayak life cycle. In one poster describing a ceremony (see figure 2), *baram* was clearly presented but not even once was there an explanation.



Figure 2. A poster in Museum Balanga, Palangkaraya, shows an offering in a Dayak’s ceremony. *Baram* is clearly identifiable (two glasses in yellow circles), but there is no explanation about its presence (photographed by the author, 2015).

I reviewed several books and museum items, looking for information about traditional alcoholic beverages. I found almost nothing, which was interesting. I got the impression that the local regime was “too ashamed” to provide a portrait of an alcohol-consumption tradition among Dayak people. In the book *Tiwah dan Perlengkapannya* (*Tiwah and its Instruments*; 2003) the *Tiwah* ceremony and items used in it are pictured and described, including a buffalo horn which is used ultimately to drink the *baram*. Ironically, there is no mention of *baram*. This presentation is certainly very different from what I learned from people and local figures: that *baram* is always a part of ceremonies, especially *Tiwah*.

Even in the book *Adat Istiadat Dayak Ngaju* (*The Customs of Dayak Ngaju*; 2003) information about *baram* is lacking. Nevertheless, whenever I talked with Dayak Ngaju people, *baram* is described as something common and significantly integrated with their daily activities. From my investigation of books in the local public library, I could not stop myself from constructing the hypothesis that information about traditional alcoholic beverages among the people had been intentionally concealed. The local regime seemed to be avoiding a public image that Dayak is identical with alcohol or drinking activities. Moreover, in government published books and documents, *baram* and other alcoholic beverages are alleged to be “negative elements” that people need to abandon. Yet, *baram*’s existence in cultural ceremonies is inevitable and people tend to consume it excessively and become intoxicated. Perhaps this tendency of excessive consumption is the reason that the government does not acknowledge the presence of alcoholic beverages, especially *baram*, in cultural descriptions about Dayak in Central Kalimantan.

I believe this kind of treatment over *baram* is related to how modernization is articulated by the local elite to become the moral standard. As mentioned by Maunati (2004:310), being a modern people—or at least perceived as modern—is politically necessary, especially when linked to the well-known “tribal” and “distant” Dayak. Modernity is then an achieved label in order to overcome the stereotype of them as being uncivilized. In doing so, they need acknowledgment that they deserve to be equal to the rest of the republic. Thus they show their local traditions publicly, traditions that have been processed for political purposes.

Utilizing locality is not particularly new in politics. Internationally, the use of local identity as a means on the political stage has been widely applied, especially in power transition from one regime to the another (see Goodman 2002; Sulistiyanto 2006). I believe the locality production in Central Kalimantan has been influenced by Islamic and modern values that have spread both nationally and locally. These values affect local elites' actions in decision-making process related to their political maneuvers using indigenous attributes—although this viewpoint needs further investigation. In a hegemonic way, these values have shaped binary categories regarding cultural heritage. *Baram*, which contains alcohol, apparently has been labeled as a bad tradition that triggers a lot of social problems.

It must be acknowledged that the need to construct local identity derives from a combination of an indigeneity movement and a political campaign. That is why a produced identity should be folkloric enough to serve a role in locality's promotional material and at the same time strong enough to grab mass attention. The case of Central Kalimantan reflects a set of rediscovered tangible traditions perceived as exotic that represent the indigeneity on the one side and to accommodate dominant migrant interest on the other. Thus, local identity is indeed fabricated.

Conclusion

Baram is not the only tradition experiencing marginalization. Other examples include repression of Mentawai's tattoo, Banyumas' *calung* and *lengger*, Chinese traditions, and many other traditions considered dangerous for social harmony and stability of the state. The repression against undesired customs itself has been happening in Indonesia, just like occurred to In this matter, Jones (2013) explains that the "development" discourse during the New Order's peak time between 1970 and 1980 indeed presented "underdeveloped" people and their traditions—including communist related entities—as burdensome and needing to be governed.¹⁷ Although aimed at local tradition, this institutional repression was part of the political supremacy of the regime to the local politics. From his observation in West Kalimantan, Tanasaldy (2012: 25) draws a solid description of how local politics suffered during the Soeharto era:

Politic of Dayaks... has always been constrained by the nature of the regime. Under such a regime, ethnic politics, which are often linked with regional politics or even separatist movements, is repressed because it is perceived as a threat to national unity. Under repressive systems, most ethnic groups and their elites have no other options except pledging loyalty to the regime.

What is so different in *baram*'s case is that other customs had the chance to be publicly presented as local wisdom and even a matter of local pride. *Baram*, ironically, has been continuously suppressed even though the regime has changed since the early 2000s. This marginalized *baram* story is the beginning way to understand the construction of a local identity. By presenting this case, I would like to contribute to the local identity debate by stressing the question of "what" rather than "how" and "why." The "what" about local identity is essential, in general, to add to earlier studies that tend to use local identity without proper elaboration of the concept itself (see Maunati 2004, Bouchier 2007, Erb 2007, Henley and Davidson 2007, Tirtosudarmo 2007, Tanasaldy 2012). Although the relation among Islamic movement, modernity, and migrants' presence, needs to be elucidated further, it is clear that a set of values has had significant role in shaping elites' decision in the process of local identity fabrication.

Endnotes:

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² My argument here supports Hall's (1990) opinion "...identities are *always* about becoming, as well as being, but are never simply invented... cultural identities [*then*]... come from somewhere, have histories. But far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (in Li, 2000: 4).

³ Effective January 1, 2001; the law itself was revised into Law no. 32/2004.

⁴ Visit www.bps.go.id for further information and recent numbers.

⁵ There are many examples of how decentralization reshaped political, economic, and social stature in Indonesia. See Tanasaldy 2012 for West Kalimantan; Erb 2007 for Western Flores; Sangaji 2007 for Central Sulawesi; for other changes in Indonesia see Davidson and Henley (eds.) 2007 *The Revival of Tradition in Indonesian Politics*.

⁶ Goodman (2002) captures how local elites in Shanxi Province, People's Republic of China, activated local traditions to grab political power as well as to promote the region's economy. In practice, the elites used the traditions differentially according to the level of administration: national, provincial, and smaller.

⁷ These limited lists of my findings during a short period of ethnographic research. Nonetheless, they show the significant position of *baram* in Dayak's daily life. I believe there are more sacred rituals and various profane occasions in which *baram* is served.

⁸ Basically, there are two different kinds of *baram*. In the upstream region the main material is rice and the result called *baram bari* (rice baram), while in the downstream region, the main substance is sugared water. This paper, however, refers to the later. The ingredients to produce *baram* could vary further, depending on the makers' creativity.

⁹ The religious system of indigenous Dayak is called "*Kaharingan*," meaning life. The name of *Kaharingan* was crafted by Dayak elite figures when they dealt with other religious identities such as Islam, Catholic, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist. Dayak people have no name for their belief—they often refer their way of life as "religion of the past" or "religion of ancestor." In the Soeharto era, this way of life was not considered formal religion. Rather, the government perceived Dayak indigenous belief as a sectarian thus allowed other religious institutions to preach on them. The Dayak religious elites then lobbied the government and agreed to be merged with Hindu. The need to construct the formal religious institution was intended to protect the indigenous people from other religions' penetration. Hindu-*Kaharingan*, the official name for them, became a win-win solution for the Dayak to be acknowledged by the government (officially in 1980). After that moment, the religious elites started to build Hindu-*Kaharingan* institutions such as the prayer, holy book, and holy building. These sacred attributes, including the well-known symbol of "*Batang Haring*," have never been existed before. I collected this story from a senior leader of Hindu-*Kaharingan* in June 2015. For detailed description and analysis of Hindu-*Kaharingan*, see Mahin, 2009.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The migrants in Central Kalimantan are not exclusive to Java and Banjar. Actually, there are also other ethnics from various regions such as Melayu, Bugis, and Madura. However, compared to Java and Banjar, their number is not significant (Tirtosudarmo, 2007: 173)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Klinken (2006) illustrates that remarkable moment: "President Sukarno traveled up the mighty Kahayan River of Central Borneo with a convoy of boats to lay the first stone for Palangkaraya, capital of the new province of Central Kalimantan... for thirty-six hours, all along the river, according to a serialized report in a major Jakarta daily, villagers came out in their canoes to greet the president and shout 'Merdeka!' 'Freedom!' They had only seen the president before in pictures sold on the riverboat."

¹⁴ Tirtosuwarto 2007 describes that Central Kalimantan indeed dominated by Banjarnese—roughly 24% of the total population based on 2000 census.

¹⁵ See Pew Research Center, Mapping the Global Muslim Population, October 2009.

¹⁶ This news was presented in a local newspaper, Palangka Post, with title "Polsek Bukit Batu Bongkar Pabrik Pembuatan Baram" <http://www.palangka-post.com/?p=3392>

¹⁷ This idea was strongly influenced by Indonesian technocrats at that time to create pro-development discourse. Moertopo—the author of *Strategi Kebudayaan* (1978) for

instance—suggests that Indonesian people should be modernized to achieve development goals. For detail explanation, please visit Jones (2013) chapter 4.

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