

From Sacred Sites to Mining Sites: Revitalization of Myth and Local History of The Sawai People, Indonesia

Asma Luthfi^{1,3}, Azlina Abdullah¹✉, Mimi Hanida Abdul Mutalib¹,
Mansor Mohd Noor²

¹Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, ✉azlina_ab@ukm.edu.my

²Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), University Kebangsaan Malaysia

³Universitas Negeri Semarang

Article history

Received : 2025-09-02

Accepted : 2026-09-09

Published : 2026-10-24

Keywords

local history;
mining sites;
myth;
revitalization;
sacred sites;
transformation

Abstract: The presence of the mining industry in rural areas has significantly transformed local communities. In Central Halmahera, Indonesia, a nickel mining company has encroached upon sacred lands belonging to indigenous communities, altering not only the physical landscape but also the existence of myths and local histories. This study, conducted through participant observation and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious figures, and local communities, seeks to illustrate how the Sawai people, as an indigenous community, have reaffirmed the myth of their origin following the conversion of their sacred site into a mining operation. The research emphasizes the critical role of local initiatives in preserving cultural identity and history amid social, cultural, and environmental changes by revitalizing their myth of origin. This revitalization process involves maintaining the sacredness of Tanjung Ulie, incorporating sacred elements into everyday activities, and retransmitting the Myth of Tete Cekel within family, school, and social spheres. These efforts are essential for ensuring the survival of the community's social charter, collective memory, and local history, serving as a foundation for the sustainability of their lives and culture.

Abstrak: Kehadiran industri pertambangan di kawasan pedesaan menyebabkan terjadinya transformasi pada masyarakat lokal. Di Halmahera Tengah Indonesia, perusahaan tambang nikel telah menguasai lahan sakral masyarakat pribumi yang tidak hanya mengubah landscape fisik, tetapi juga mempengaruhi eksistensi mitos dan sejarah lokal. Melalui hasil observasi partisipasi dan wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh adat, tokoh agama, dan masyarakat lokal, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana orang Sawai, sebagai masyarakat pribumi, menguatkan kembali mitos asal usul mereka setelah situs sakral mereka dijadikan lahan operasi tambang oleh perusahaan. Kajian ini mengemukakan arti penting dari upaya masyarakat lokal dalam mempertahankan identitas budaya dan sejarah lokal mereka di tengah perubahan sosial, budaya, dan lingkungan dengan merevitalisasi fungsi mitos asal usul mereka. Proses revitalisasi ini dilakukan dengan cara mempertahankan sakralitas Tanjung Ulie, menghadirkan unsur sakral dalam aktivitas profan, dan men-transmisikan Mitos Tete Cekel pada ranah keluarga, sekolah, dan lingkungan sosial. Upaya ini dilakukan agar social charter, memori kolektif, dan sejarah lokal masyarakat dapat terjaga sebagai landasan atas keberlanjutan kehidupan dan kebudayaan mereka.

INTRODUCTION

As a global industry often located in coastal areas, nickel mining brings significant social changes and transformations across environmental, economic, social, and cultural spheres. Changes in spatial planning, land-use change, and land degradation are among the ecological changes that commonly occur (de Jong et al., 2015; Mensah et al., 2015; Thornton, 1996; Žibret et al., 2018). Economically, mining shifts subsistence economies toward formal economies and alters people's livelihoods and household incomes (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2016; Dikgwatlhe & Mulenga, 2023; Unceta, 2021). Meanwhile, changes in local institutions, migration, community interac-



Available online at
<https://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/paramita>

tion, social relations, cultural values, and religious behavior are sociocultural changes that follow the entry of the mining industry into villages (Petkova et al., 2009; Sincovich et al., 2018; Suopajarvi et al., 2017). These changes occur rapidly and on a large scale, in line with the fast pace of mining activities, and they force local communities to adapt quickly.

The presence of mining is intended to improve community welfare and foster resilient societies (Hosseinpour et al., 2022; Loayza & Rigolini, 2016). Applying sustainable development principles that emphasize environmental, economic, and social sustainability is a prerequisite for mining companies (Carvalho, 2017; Mobtaker & Osanloo, 2014; Monteiro et al., 2019). If mines are to follow a sustainable development path, adaptability, flexibility, responsiveness, and respect for people and the biophysical environment must be strengthened, and the diverse needs of society must be respected (Asr et al., 2019; Hutomo, 2000; Veiga et al., 2001), including religious and cultural needs.

In practice, however, the principles of sustainable development have not been fully implemented in mining areas, partly because of limited collaboration among sectors, government agencies, companies, and local communities (Cole & Broadhurst, 2022). Moreover, mining does not necessarily reduce poverty at the regional level, nor does it necessarily improve household welfare (Mwakesi et al., 2020). Environmental degradation and the social vulnerability of Indigenous peoples receive little serious attention from mining companies and other stakeholders (Fayiah, 2020; Mabey et al., 2020). The neglect of local values and the lack of Indigenous representation in mining policies are recurring problems in many mining areas (Ballard & Banks, 2003; Liu et al., 2024). In some places, mining activities have even encroached upon sacred sites that communities have long cared for and protected.

In Zimbabwe, for example, ancestral land has been dispossessed and people have been evicted from sacred lands that also serve as grazing fields, water sources, sources of traditional medicine, and ritual sites (Tarusarira, 2022). Similarly, Native Americans face new threats to their sacred sites because valuable natural resources lie above, beneath, and around their ancestral lands, while religious properties on these lands are not protected by applicable law (Reidy, 2024). The sacred forests of Odisha, India, have also come under increasing pressure from industrialization, forest resource exploitation, and agricultural expansion, even though these forests, which are closely tied to Indigenous

communities, help preserve biodiversity and provide ecosystem services (Rath & Ormsby, 2020).

A similar case has occurred in Central Halmaheira, Indonesia. The Sawai, an Indigenous people who have inhabited the area for generations, feel threatened by nickel mining. Although mining has brought changes such as economic gains from land sales and livelihood diversification, the community remains concerned about the sustainability of its livelihoods. The environmental impacts they experience include flooding, waste accumulation, dust and air pollution, landslides, clean water shortages, and the spread of various diseases. They are also concerned about social degradation and the erosion of local religious and cultural values, as their sacred land has been incorporated into a company's mining concession and the community has been marginalized from it.

Previous studies have offered various insights into the vulnerability of Indigenous peoples to the mining industry, including the loss of their main livelihoods and living spaces (Bainton, 2020; Blanco et al., 2023; Horowitz et al., 2018; Rorato et al., 2020; Segerstedt & Abrahamsson, 2019), the degradation of sacred land and myths (Patra et al., 2025; Skoda, 2021a), and local community responses to mining activities (Castillo & Alvarez-Castillo, 2009; Joseph et al., 2021; Raymundo, 2024; Ristić & Ćulafić, 2025; Sinthumule, 2022, 2025; Sinthumule et al., 2021; Widengård, 2025).

However, studies on the transformation of sacred land into mining territory remain limited and often overlook its connection to myths of origin. Sacred land and myths of origin play a vital role in shaping the cultural identity, collective memory, and local history of Indigenous communities. This paper explores how the Sawai people revitalize their myth of origin to sustain their community amid rapid social and environmental change. The significance of this research lies in examining how the Sawai engage dialectically with their changing environmental, social, and cultural landscape by relating their contemporary experiences to their myth of origin and local history.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research method as the basis for tracing the social history of society. Qualitative research is used because this research produces descriptive data from people and observed behavior. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of an event and its relationship to a particular context, allowing the data to be explored and described in greater depth. The research

was conducted in two villages, Lelilef Waibulan and Lelilef Sawai, located in Weda Tengah District, Central Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province, Indonesia. These two villages were chosen as research locations because geographically, Tanjung Ulie is close to the settlements of the Lelilef Sawai and Lelilef Waibulan villages which causes people in these two villages to always visit it. Administratively, Tanjung Ulie is under the government of Lelilef Sawai Village.

The subjects of this study were residents of the villages of Lelilef Sawai and Lelilef Waibulan. A total of 16 informants participated, categorized into two groups: primary and supporting. The primary informants included ten individuals: traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth groups, and adult groups (both men and women). The supporting informants comprised six individuals, including village and sub-district officials, migrant workers, company employees, and local NGO activists. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on specific categories aligned with the research focus. Data collection methods included participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. To gather in-depth data, the author first established rapport with residents and informants by actively participating in their daily activities, such as communal worship, wedding and funeral rituals, and various social events. This engagement also served as a method of participant observation.

Before conducting the interviews, the author prepared an interview guide to ensure that the discussions remained focused on the key research issues. During the interviews, however, the guide was used flexibly rather than followed verbatim, serving primarily as a reference to ensure that all relevant topics were adequately explored. The interviews were conducted in a relaxed setting, resembling ordinary conversations, and often took place amid the informants' daily activities. The author recorded observations and interview outcomes, including the contextual atmosphere, in the form of field notes. Consistent with Atkinson's methodology, these field notes included both descriptions and transcriptions. The author documented not only the events and activities occurring in the social environment but also the dialogues with informants and their expressions (Atkinson et al., 2000). Data collection spanned from May 2023 to November 2024, with the analysis conducted concurrently with data reduction, narrative presentation, verification, and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Myth of Origin and Local History of Sawai People

Sawai is one of the ethnic groups that inhabit the area of Weda Bay, Halmahera Island. They are scattered in several villages in Central Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province. The majority inhabit the Central Weda District region, including the Lelilef Sawai and Lelilef Woebulen Villages. These two villages are located in coastal areas and have become the center of the nickel mining industry managed by PT. IWIP (Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park).

Before nickel exploitation, people in these two villages worked as dryland farmers and fishermen as a supporting livelihood. Coconut, nutmeg, and cloves are the primary commodities cultivated by the community to support their economy. Meanwhile, despite the abundance of seafood resources, they have primarily been used for household consumption rather than developed into processed or cultivated commodities by the local community. This limited commercialization was largely due to inadequate transportation infrastructure prior to the arrival of the nickel industry, which restricted market access and made it difficult for residents to sell their catches efficiently.

Sawai is taken from the Tidore language, "*wai-wai*," which means to sway. This word refers to *Tete Cekel's* attitude when he wiggled his legs when the Sultan of Tidore passed him. According to local belief, *Tete Cekel* is the ancestor of the Sawai people, who are of great stature and are still descendants of Sultan Tidore, a king who controlled part of Halmahera territory to West Papua. *Tete Cekel* was the son of the concubine wife of Sultan Tidore, who came from Halmahera. Since childhood, his existence in the palace was largely disregarded, so *Tete Cekel* left for Halmahera, his mother's place of origin. The public believes *Tete Cekel* to be a person who has a large stature and supernatural powers. He has artifacts considered sacred by the people of Sawai, such as graves, petrified food remains, former places to eat, footprints, fossils of pets that have become stone, and footrests used when fishing.

Before adopting a formal religion, the Sawai people maintained a strong connection to local beliefs rooted in animism and dynamism. They held a deep reverence for the supernatural powers believed to reside in trees, stones, and various objects. Additionally, they recognized the influence of spirits, particularly those linked to their ancestral figure, *Tete Cekel*. In the cosmology of the Sawai, anything

associated with *Tete Cekel* whether his body, artifacts, food, pets, footprints, or grave is considered sacred. The narrative surrounding *Tete Cekel* functions as an origin myth that informs local history and shapes the identity of the Sawai people. This myth has been preserved through generations via oral traditions and religious rituals, serving as a guiding framework for understanding kinship genealogy and for navigating interactions with the natural world and the spiritual realm.

Myth of origin is a genre of myth that narrate the creation of the universe and the early existence of humanity. Like myths in general, myth of origin offers narratives that outline sequences of events (Mills, 2020). This is achieved by constructing a series of dramatic events, tapping into subconscious symbolism so that the myth's message resonates on multiple levels. These myths serve various purposes: they can communicate or express ideas that may not have been originally intended (Cohen, 1969), transmit meaning, culture, and ideology (Martimianakis et al., 2020), and act as a tool to mediate the contradictions or conflicts experienced by humanity (Lévi-Strauss, 1955).

Myths are not merely imaginary stories; they encompass significant aspects of reality that are crucial for understanding societal norms and behaviours (Homburg et al., 2023), phenomena, reflections and symbolic expressions, (De Heusch, 1988; Des Bouvrie, 2002), important mediation for exploring the meaning of life, and cognitive mapping that influences social hierarchy and authority (De Heusch, 1988; Palmeirim, 2016). In traditional societies, the role of the myth of origin is essential, as it encompasses narratives that connect cosmogonic stories to the creation of the universe and to the establishment of norms and moral guidelines within an ethnic group. This myth reinforces a specific understanding of social order and contributes to both individual and group identity. This underscores the necessity for traditional societies to draw on myths to continually reference the past, thereby validating their established social practices (Engel, 1993).

The Sawai people maintain a profound belief in the *Tete Cekel* myth, even as they also engage with the practices of Islam and Christianity. The introduction of these religions coincided with the spice trade in Maluku, which attracted merchants from various nations. Islam was first brought to the Sawai territory in the late 14th century by traders from Arabia, Java, and Malacca, facilitated through trade relations, intermarriage, and everyday interactions (Lapian, 2011). The process of Islamization

gained momentum as the Sultanate of Tidore, having embraced Islam as its official state religion, extended its political influence into the Halmahera region (Amal, 2016; Andaya, 1993; Leirissa, 2022). This transformation occurred gradually and did not completely erase the Sawai people's traditional beliefs, including their veneration of *Tete Cekel* as an ancestral figure. They have managed to preserve this myth of, reinterpreting it to align with Islamic teachings.

The introduction of Christianity to the Sawai community was inextricably linked to sixteenth-century European mercantile expansion in North Maluku by the Portuguese and Dutch. Spearheaded by Catholic and Protestant missions, these proselytizing endeavors led to partial conversion among the Sawai (Andaya, 1993; Aritonang, J.S & Steenbrink, K(Ed.), 2008). However, this religious transition did not entail the erasure of ancestral heritage; instead, indigenous beliefs most notably the veneration of *Tete Cekel* were harmonized and reconciled with Christian orthodoxy.

While the adoption of Islam and Christianity created two distinct religious groups among the Sawai, this polarization remains strictly confessional rather than ethnocultural. Belief in the *Tete Cekel* myth endures as a vital element of their collective memory and cultural identity. Though relegated to secondary worship, *Tete Cekel* is still revered as a sacred ancestral figure, with associated sites maintained to honor its historical legacy rather than purely for religious observance.

Tanjung Ulie: a Sacred Site under the Shadow of Nickel Mining

Sacred land is typically recognized as a location or physical space that holds spiritual significance (Sinthumule, 2022). The profound connection between humans, nature, and spirits in these sacred areas prompts individuals to treat them with special reverence, distinguishing them from other lands (Shiferaw et al., 2023). The term "spirit" encompasses the essences of ancestors, deities, or a divine entity, all of which are believed to possess supernatural powers (Keller, 2014; Rots, 2019). Sacred lands are often intertwined with myth of origin, wherein the narratives are accompanied by taboos, prohibitions, and directives that feature gods, goddesses, numina, and spirits, establishing a connection between nature and the supernatural (Colding & Folke, 2001; Tatay & Merino, 2023). The contextual relationship between indigenous peoples and these spiritual beings is often solidified in such sites (Keller, 2014). Various religious rituals are also per-

formed at sacred locations to commemorate past events and the individuals who lived through them, forming the foundation for contemporary moral guidelines (Roba, 2019; Uddin, 2019). These sacred sites provide a means for individuals to reconnect with their ancestors and reflect on the inception of rules and ethical standards (Borgstede, 2010).

Tanjung Ulie is one of the areas in Lelilef Sawai Village that the Sawai people believe is sacred because it is associated with *Tete Cekel*. Its sacredness is associated with the myth of the origin of the formation of Tanjung Ulie. According to the story in the community, Tanjung Ulie was not in the form of land protruding outwards but in the form of a coastal area whose distance to the sea was the same as the surrounding coastal area. At that time, *Tete Cekel* wanted to fish in that place with a “jorang” or fishing rod from a “hohati” tree, a type of palm tree. Such a giant fishing rod adjusts to his posture, which is also significant. While sitting fishing, suddenly, his fishing eye hit a big fish. His feet rested on the ground in front of him so firmly that the ground juttied out, separated from the mountains and land, and formed a cape. Seeing his vast fishing fish, *Tete Cekel* shouted, “Uuliii”. Based on the story, people refer to the place as Tanjung Ulie.

“Ada lagi kejadiannya di laut, di Tanjung Ulie, tempatnya perusahaan ini, itu dia punya Langkah. Dulu itu, dia mau mancing dia dapat ikan, lalu dia berteriak mengatakan “uuu liii”, lalu tempat itu dinamakan Tanjung Uli. Jadi dia punya Langkah itu yang jadi Tanjug, dan putus dari daratan. Jadi tanjung ini, sisa dari pijakan tanahnya, lalu dia tergeser keluar, berpisah dengan dataran (tempat duduknya). Pada saat dia kaget dapat pancingan, dia berteriak “uuu liii”. Pancingnya dia pake “hohati”, yakni sejenis pohon palem. Hohati ini jadi jorangnya (pegangan pancingnya)”

(Pak Anhar, Warga Lelilef Woebulen, 18 Juni 2023)

“There is a story set at sea, at Tanjung Ulie the very location where this company now operates. It involves a figure named Langkah. Long ago, while fishing and upon hooking a fish, he shouted ‘uuu liii,’ and the place subsequently became known as Tanjung Uli. The cape itself is formed from the ground where he once stood; it broke away from the mainland separating from the very spot where he had been seated. He shouted ‘uuu liii’ in surprise when he got a bite. He used a *hohati* a type of palm tree for his fishing gear; the *hohati* served as the *jorang*, or the handle of the fishing rod.”

(Mr. Anhar, resident of Lelilef Waibulan, June 18th 2023)

For the Sawai people, Tanjung Ulie is not just a sacred place related to the myth of *Tete Cekel*. It is also considered a haunted place and has stories about spooky and scary stories. There is a stone named “Loi Gosol.” In the language of the Sawai people, *loi* means stone, and *gosol* means rubbing, so *Loi Gosol* is interpreted as rubbing stone. This stone is shaped like a *wajik* cake with a rough surface because it is formed from blood mixed with sand and has become stone. The community considers this stone as a place where people kill each other. People who sail from East to West or vice versa must pass through Tanjung Ulie, and there are often killings between groups of travelers and pirates. The story of *Loi Gosol*, which developed in the village, made people even more afraid to visit Tanjung Ulie.

But with the changing times, when sea pirates no longer exist, many residents have begun to visit Tanjung Ulie. Some engage in economic activities such as farming and fishing; others aim to visit their sacred place. However, Tanjung Ulie's status remains communal land, which can only be used by residents and cannot be privately owned. This status as communal land was then included as state land by the government during the nickel exploration process by PT. WBN (Weda Bay Nickel). Tanjung Ulie is one of the state land areas acquired for mining purposes. Change in land status in Tanjung Ulie from state land to Contract of Work land owned by PT. WBN has kept community activities the same. Because it is still in the exploration process, PT. WBN still allows residents to take part in activities there.

In 2019, PT IWIP (Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park) commenced operations in Central Halmahera as a nickel mining company. Tanjung Ulie is one of the areas covered by the company's mining permit and forms part of the continued development of PT WBN's operations. In some official documents, this area is referred to as the Tanjung Ulie Site. Since taking over, PT IWIP has designated Tanjung Ulie as its office location, effectively transforming it into a restricted zone for residents. The Sawai people are no longer permitted to engage in activities there and can only observe their sacred land from a distance, without the ability to interact with it. To visit, they must seek permission from both the company and the Village Government. The imposing fence surrounding Tanjung Ulie further secludes the Sawai people from their

cultural sites and sacred areas. Nevertheless, the sacredness, spirituality, religious beliefs, and taboos associated with sacred land, sacred forests, and sacred landscapes play a crucial role in the preservation and management of biodiversity.

The penetration of globalization and regional development initiatives particularly extractive industries such as mining has profoundly transformed the socio-cultural paradigms of rural communities (Dudley et al., 2009; Imarhiagbe & Ogwu, 2022). Sacred sites that once embodied the myth of origin have largely diminished in the face of rapid development and extractive industrialization (Selmier II & Newenham-Kahindi, 2021). The development initiatives focused on generating large profits have pushed aside traditional myths and sacred lands, which are often viewed as irrational and obstacles to progress due to differing viewpoints and knowledge systems between Western approaches and indigenous communities in the decision-making processes (Lane et al., 2003). The spiritual aspects of sacred land are often overlooked (Cloud & Redvers, 2023), while its economic potential is highlighted. As industrialization accelerates, especially in mining, sacred landscapes undergo profound changes, forcing communities to make both material and immaterial sacrifices (Skoda, 2021b). Alternatively, they may engage in social movements to safeguard their sacred territories (Hobbs, 2024).

The significant transformation that occurred in Tanjung Ulie after its acquisition by a mining company gradually eroded its sacredness. This takeover not only stripped the land of its ecological and economic value but also disrupted the local community's spiritual ties to their ancestors. The loss of this sacred site diminished the role of local myths. For the Sawai people, Tanjung Ulie and the myth of *Tete Cekel* represent a profound unity that links the upper and lower realms, connecting earlier generations with the present. This relationship forms the foundation for establishing kinship, provides essential moral and social guidelines for community members, and serves as a basis for tracing local history.

Revitalization of the Myth of Origin and Local History of the Sawai People

Durkheim explains that every society requires continuity between the past and the present. Through collective memory acting as a bridge, the past can be linked to the present, thereby providing identity for individuals and groups (Durkheim, 2016). This social memory preserved through religious ceremo-

nies serves to ensure shared morality and social cohesion. At the same time, the myth of origin is one of the most powerful ways to forge community unity (Misztal, 2003) and to shape the relationship between the past, the future, and the broader global order (Moretti, 2012).

Collective memory is formed, maintained, and reconstructed through social interaction, rendering it highly resilient and difficult to shake or distort. Certain past events hold profound significance for individuals, prompting them to share these stories with other group members (Hirst et al., 2008; Schudson, 1997; Woźny, 2020). Collective memory cannot be separated from the social context, language, and various symbolic systems constructed by society, as the process of remembering always unfolds within social frameworks and inter-group communication (Jacobs & Hanrahan, 2016; Khan, 2021; Wang, 2021). Fundamentally, the interconnection between collective memory, collective consciousness, and solidarity in early societies is rooted in the myth of origin or shared narratives regarding the group's origins; these serve to establish identity and continuity across the past, present, and future (Bachleitner, 2022; Woźny, 2020). In this context, Halbwachs posits that the primary function of collective memory is to forge identity and social solidarity through shared narratives of origin, which manifest in symbolic forms such as oral traditions, rituals, commemorations, museums, monuments, and religious practices (Halbwachs, 1992).

The social history of the Sawai people begins with mythical stories that chronicle past events from before they knew how to write. The story of *Tete Cekel* is a myth of the origin of the Sawai people, serving as a connecting medium between past, present, and future generations. Through the recounting of the *Tete Cekel* myth, the Sawai people possess a collective memory that defines their identity. Although the Sawai people have now embraced Islam and Christianity, they still maintain their past beliefs and myth of origin. As Malinowski argued, myths are manifestations of pre-existing attitudes, morals, rituals, and beliefs. Myths validate and confirm the customs, rituals, and beliefs that have been taught to people in society. These stories do not originate from rituals but exist to reinforce pre-established rituals, customs, and cultural beliefs.

In response to the presence of nickel mines, the Sawai people strive to maintain their sacred sites and myths of origin. For them, the myth of *Tete Cekel* has an important meaning in providing a sense of security for the community, both in spiritual and socio-cultural aspects. According to Mali-

nowski, myths have social functions in a community such as social cohesion, moral guidance, and psychological support that help people overcome uncertainty and challenges (Malinowski, 2016), while connecting collective memory, cultural practices, and individual and group identities (Bascom, 1983). Because traditional societies face the limitations of reason and fact, to legitimize their institutions, they need a kind of charter that is beyond fact, beyond reason, and refers to events outside of memory and ordinary time, which he calls a social charter. Through his theory of myth as a social charter, Malinowski argues that myths reinforce established ideas about morality, beliefs, and social norms. Within a cultural system, myths also help shape behavior, influence social norms, and provide meaning to the lives of both individuals and communities (Malinowski, 2016). The actions of the Sawai people to revive the function of the origin myth are to strengthen the spiritual function of the myth, to present the sacredness of the myth in profane activities, and to strengthen local history through the retransmission of the origin myth.

Preserving The Sacredness of Tanjung Ulie

The nickel company's control over several sacred sites has raised significant concerns among the Sawai people regarding the sustainability of their way of life. These sites, which are considered relics of *Tete Cekel*, hold supernatural powers that are deeply intertwined with the existence of the Sawai community. For instance, at *Tete Cekel's* tomb, situated on a mountain, the Sawai believe that if their descendants pass by without stopping to seek permission from *Tete Cekel's* spirit, a loud thunderclap will sound a warning of impending danger. Likewise, at Tanjung Ulie, the Sawai people approach the area with caution, adhering to the cultural etiquette and taboos specific to their traditions. Their profound respect and protection for Tanjung Ulie intensify their fears, as the nickel company's takeover and plans for reclamation of the site threaten to bring disaster upon them.

"Ada juga Lagaelol, dia punya tempat tinggal di situ. Lagaelol artinya Paitua besar atau bapak besar, karena Tete Cekel Besar, dan langkahnya juga besar. Lagaelol itu dia punya bekal. Istrinya buat bekal yaitu seperti wajik. Jadi pada saat sampai disitu, dia punya Langkah kaki, dan bekalnya itu jatuh, sehingga bekalnya itu menjadi batu. Itu tempatnya di hutan. Kalau ada masyarakat yang mengatakan ini kepercayaan purba, dan ingin melakukan sesuatu negatif, maka orang itu tiba-tiba dia mati."

(Pak Julius Burnama, Warga Lelielf Sawai, 19 November 2023).

"There is Lagaelol; he had a dwelling there. The name 'Lagaelol' signifies a 'Great Elder' or 'Great Father' referring to Tete Cekel Besar reflecting his stature and his long strides. He carried provisions prepared by his wife a type of sticky rice cake known as wajik. Upon arriving at that spot, his stride caused the provisions to fall, and they turned into stone. That site lies within the forest. It is said that if anyone dismisses this as merely an ancient superstition and attempts to commit a negative act there, they will suddenly drop dead." (Mr. Julius Burnama, resident of Lelielf Sawai, November 19th, 2023).

The Sawai people, deeply rooted in their religious beliefs, hold that human life is ultimately governed by God. They believe that God is aware of all human actions, and therefore, people should refrain from activities that may provoke God's anger. Such anger is perceived to arise when humans violate God's commands.

The Christian Sawai community believes that as God's children, they are commanded to protect nature. However, they acknowledge that humans possess free will, and as a result, their actions can sometimes lead to environmental harm. Similarly, the Muslim Sawai community understands their role as Allah's caliphs (representatives of God) and believes they are tasked with safeguarding the environment from the damage caused by human activity. Despite their distinct religious affiliations and expressions, both the Christian and Muslim Sawai communities share a common doctrine centered on the importance of environmental protection.

In the context of Tanjung Ulie, the relationship between religious doctrine and environmental protection is reinforced by the community's ethnic identity, particularly their reverence for *Tete Cekel*, whom they regard as their ancestor. There is a strong belief that damaging traces and remnants of *Tete Cekel* could jeopardize their well-being. As a result, they engage in personal rituals of worship and prayer rooted in their religious beliefs, seeking divine protection and a sense of security. While there are no specific communal rituals, these individual practices embody their spiritual commitment. Additionally, their pursuit of salvation is complemented by secular actions, particularly through political advocacy. Leaders from both religious communities in the two villages have appealed to the village head and the company to halt any mining or reclamation activities that could cause environmental harm in Tanjung Ulie. They

have urged the company to honor their cultural sites and beliefs by preserving the legacy of *Tete Cekel*

"Kalau saya dengar cerita, paitua Cekel itu, dia punya jejak kaki masih ada, jadi batu, di dalam hutan, dia punya jari-jari besar. Tanjung uli itu, tempat dia mancing, dapat ikan, dan berteriak, uulli, makanya disebut Tanjung Uli. Tapi tanah itu tidak bisa digusur. Kepala desa bilang itu tidak bisa digusur, karena dia punya sejarah. Jadi perusahaan hanya ambil saja, tetapi tidak boleh digusur. Itu tanah besar. Kalau digusur, maka kita akan dapat musibah. Kalau perasaan saya juga, jangan digusur karena itu warisan dari dulu-dulu. Begitu juga dengan makamnya Tete Cekel. Kalau jejak kaki sudah tidak ada"

(Pak AMI (Abdul Majid Idris, warga Sawai Woebulen, 24 Juni 2023).

"From the stories I've heard, the footprints of the elder *Cekel* who had huge toes are still there in the forest, turned to stone. Tanjung Uli was the spot where he used to fish; whenever he caught something, he would shout 'Uli!' which is how the place got its name. But that land cannot be cleared. The village head said it's off-limits for clearing because of its history. Companies might take the surrounding area, but that specific site cannot be touched. It is a significant piece of land; if it were cleared, we would face calamity. My own feeling is that it shouldn't be disturbed, as it is an ancient heritage. The same applies to Grandfather *Cekel's* grave. As for the footprints, they are no longer there"

(Mr. Abdul Majid Idris, resident of Lelief Waibulan, Juni 24th, 2023).

Bringing Sacred Aspects into Secular Practices

The introduction of a nickel mine in Central Halmahera was an event the Sawai people had long anticipated. However, they could not foresee the profound impact and social changes it would bring about. In their vision, the mine represented a pathway to progress and prosperity for the villagers. Prior to the mining company's operations, Lelilef Village was largely isolated; electricity had yet to reach the area, and there were no roads connecting one village to another. Consequently, the community relied solely on boats to travel to Weda, the district capital, or to Ternate, the largest city and port in North Maluku, to sell their agricultural product or pursue education. Without seafood processing technology, the abundant catch was used exclusively for daily consumption, and any potential marketable seafood would simply spoil during the lengthy journey.

The dire living conditions they faced fuelled their hope that the nickel mine's operation would improve their standard of living. Their optimistic vision for the nickel mine aligned with government policy under President Joko Widodo, which designated Central Halmahera as a National Strategic Project. The government pledged to develop public facilities in the village and generate employment opportunities. At that time, the villagers envisioned their community becoming a vibrant city filled with bright lights and all amenities. Moreover, they frequently heard optimistic accounts from the government about the nickel mine as a pathway out of their poverty. This optimism led them to offer little resistance during the land acquisition process, even though the company had purchased their land at a significantly low price.

When Tanjung Ulie was acquired by the company, concerns arose regarding the erosion of cultural identity among the local community. The sacred site, which they had long protected and revered, was now under corporate control. However, opposing the company's presence and resisting its claim over Tanjung Ulie would mean stifling their aspirations for a more prosperous future. In this context, the sacred nature of Tanjung Ulie, a place deemed religious-magical by the community, was faced with the harsh reality of commodification, as perceived by both the state and the corporation.

The conflict between the two distinct and opposing binary sides of Tanjung Ulie has prompted the Sawai people to seek reconciliation through economic activities. Rooted in their religious beliefs, they view environmental preservation as a divine command, while simultaneously recognizing the importance of enhancing quality of life as a human obligation whether as servants of God (for the Islamic Sawai) or as children of God (for the Christian Sawai). They believe that nature can be cultivated but not destroyed; it can be exploited for human benefit, but not excessively.

When companies engage in economic activities in Tanjung Ulie, the Sawai people consider these efforts acceptable, provided the companies honour Tete Cekel's legacy. In this context, the economic activities in question involve using the land for office and commercial buildings without damaging the Tanjung Ulie landscape or compromising the "*Loi Gosol*," which is regarded as a sacred cultural site. Additionally, before the initiation of nickel extraction operations, the land was also utilized for economic purposes such as fishing and short-term farming. This indicates that the sacred and the

profane need not be rigidly opposed; rather, they can exist in a dynamic dialectical relationship under certain conditions.

Retransmitting the myth of origin

In the myth of origin of the Sawai people, *Tete Cekel* is depicted as their ancestor, endowed with extraordinary supernatural abilities beyond those of ordinary humans. He possessed the remarkable power to traverse the oceans swiftly, enabling him to leap from one island to another almost instantaneously. This narrative has been passed down through generations among the Sawai people through oral tradition. Additionally, various sites and objects associated with *Tete Cekel* are regarded as sacred and taboo by the Sawai people, reinforcing their reverence for him and belief in him as their esteemed ancestor.

"Kita punya moyang itu aslinya Sawai sudah. Tete Cekel adalah nenek moyang orang Sawai, dia hidup di sini. Dia ada punya jejak saat dia mau cari makan, hidupnya ini, dia pergi berburu binatang rusa, sampai di Kao (Halmahera Timur). Dia punya anjing dan babi lari ke pantai, dia di atas batu karang, dan anjingnya jadi batu sampai sekarang. Manusianya jadi batu, dan babinya juga jadi batu. Kita juga tidak tahu lokasinya, tetapi awal ceritanya begitu. Tetapi masyarakat percaya karena kita punya leluhur. Jejak-jejaknya juga banyak."
(Pak Anhar, Warga Sawai Waibulan, 18 Juni 2023).

"Our ancestor was originally Sawai. Tete Cekel was the ancestor of the Sawai people; he lived here. There are traces of his life specifically, his deer-hunting expeditions that took him as far as Kao (East Halmahera). His dog and pig ran toward the shore while he was on a rocky outcrop; the dog turned to stone and remains so to this day as did the human and the pig. We do not know the exact location, but that is how the story begins. Yet, the community believes it because he is our ancestor, and there are many traces of his presence."
(Mr. Anhar, resident of Lelilef Waibulan, June 18th, 2023)

The myth of *Tete Cekel* is significant not only for its popularity but also for its role in reinforcing the identity of the Sawai people. It narrates the early history of the Sawai tribe, tracing their lineage back to *Tete Cekel*, regarded as the ancestor of the Sawai. Today, the Sawai are distributed across various regions in Central and East Halmahera and comprise eight sub-ethnic groups, referred to as "sowa."

These groups include *Muwe*, *Mon Poto*, *Ngofa*, *Manyira*, *Ipe mdi*, *Foya*, *Mafa*, and *Mefen*, all of which have their roots in Lelilef.

When the Sawai people face challenges, representatives from these *sowa* convene to address the issues at hand. The classification into *sowa* is influenced by the unique skills possessed by each group. For instance, the *Ipe Mdi*, which translates to 'rowing,' is responsible for navigating boats during conflicts between the Sawai and other ethnic groups. Moreover, the Sawai community adheres to a guiding philosophy known as "Fagogoru." This philosophy encompasses values of love, respect, and a sense of shame principles that foster unity and mutual protection among the Sawai people.

The Sawai ethnic group's bonds of brotherhood run deep, as they support each other due to a shared ancestral lineage. During the inter-religious unrest that erupted in Ambon and extended to Halmahera, many regions experienced turmoil. Despite this, Lelilef remained unaffected by the conflict, even with its mixed population of Muslims and Christians. This harmony is rooted in their strong kinship ties and a shared commitment to the *Fagogoru* philosophy, which prioritizes caring for one another.

In ancient times, the myth of *Tete Cekel* was passed down by the Sawai people through the art of storytelling. The transmission process did not follow a specific pattern. Whenever possible, parents would share the tale of *Tete Cekel* with their children during family gatherings at home, using the Sawai language. Mothers often recounted stories about *Tete Cekel* and its rich mythology to their young ones. This storytelling tradition also encompassed taboos, prohibitions, and recommendations that served as moral guidelines for children, reflecting their cultural values and teaching them to recognize and respect *Tete Cekel*. This method proved highly effective at embedding the myth in children's memories.

The arrival of nickel mines has introduced significant challenges to the transmission of myths within the Sawai community. The influx of thousands of migrants from various ethnic backgrounds in Indonesia, as well as foreign workers from China to Lelilef, has compelled the Sawai people to adapt their everyday communication. Indonesian has emerged as a *lingua franca* for intercultural exchanges, resulting in a noticeable decline in the use of the Sawai language. Nowadays, communication among the Sawai community, whether between children at play or the elderly, predominantly occurs in Indonesian, often accompanied by a unique

North Maluku dialect. The use of the Sawai language has become increasingly infrequent, leading to a concerning decline in the indigenous language that traditionally serves as the medium for transmitting oral histories, including the important *Tete Cekel* myth.

The technological factors influencing the transmission of the *Tete Cekel* myth include land conversion and the changes in occupation undertaken by the Sawai people. Following the sale of their land to a company, many Sawai individuals transitioned from being dryland farmers to becoming rental owners, traders, drivers, and mine workers. Previously, their land was the cornerstone of their existence, with dryland farming culture deeply rooted in their lives. Their emotional and spiritual connections to the land are profound, as it not only serves as a source of livelihood but also links them to their ancestors, particularly *Tete Cekel*. As they lost ownership of their agricultural land, their knowledge systems and technologies also underwent significant changes. The ancient teachings related to agriculture and the tools once used for cultivation could no longer be passed down to their children and grandchildren. Nevertheless, these knowledge systems and technologies are vital for transmitting myths and other cultural values.

The transformation of land use and ownership has significantly affected cultural sites, especially Tanjung Ulie. As an important cultural landmark, Tanjung Ulie serves as an effective medium for imparting mythical stories to younger generations. By exploring the locations where these myths originated, children can develop a deeper appreciation for their cultural significance. Additionally, preserving these sacred sites enhances cultural identity and increases awareness of the heritage embedded in mythological narratives.

Concerns about the erosion and neglect of the *Tete Cekel* myth among the younger generation due to socio-cultural changes have prompted the Sawai people of Lelilef to undertake various initiatives to reinforce its transmission. This process of transmission occurs in three key settings: home, school, and community.

In the home environment, the traditional approach of storytelling is still utilized to share the *Tete Cekel* myth with children. At school, the myth is taught as part of local content subjects, where not only the narrative is conveyed but also the language and local wisdom of the Sawai people are integrated into the curriculum. By employing learning methods grounded in local wisdom values, and through contextual learning, students primarily from the

Sawai community can gain a profound understanding of their local history and cultural identity. This exploration of local history through the myth fosters a stronger sense of ownership among students regarding their environment, as they recognize the deep interconnection between their historical and geographical contexts. Additionally, they develop an appreciation for the knowledge and experiences of their local community (da Silva Rocha, 2025). However, according to previous research, significant challenges persist, including limitations within the curriculum, insufficient learning resources, and a lack of teachers' understanding of local wisdom values (Wijayanti et al., 2025).

In the community, efforts to convey the *Tete Cekel* myth are present at every gathering, consistently emphasising Sawai's cultural identity and the importance of upholding Sawai cultural values in interactions with multi-ethnic and multi-religious migrants. This ongoing transmission of the myth plays a crucial role in preserving a social order rooted in local values. Myths possess the power to guide, prohibit, reward, and impose sanctions. By steadfastly upholding local values, traditions, myths, and rituals, the community can maintain shared hopes, goals, and communal ideals (Witasari, 2022).

Through the transmission process across these three realms, it is hoped that the myth of *Tete Cekel* will once again serve as a social charter for contemporary Sawai society. This myth has the potential to preserve collective memory, enhance socio-political relationships, reinforce ethno-religious identity, and facilitate a re-examination of their local history.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the revitalization of the *Tete Cekel* myth as a myth of origin for the Sawai people, highlighting the sacred significance of the Tanjung Ulie site. The transformation of this area from a sacred site to a mining location has raised concerns among the Sawai people regarding the sustainability of their livelihoods and the well-being of future generations. In response, the Sawai community is actively working to restore the myth's significance by preserving the sacredness of Tanjung Ulie, integrating sacred elements into everyday activities, and reintroducing the *Tete Cekel* myth within family, educational, and social contexts.

The findings of this study offer valuable scientific contributions and enhance our understanding of the resilience exhibited by indigenous communities in preserving their cultural existence. The

encroachment of globalization, particularly through nickel mining in rural areas, introduces new experiences for these communities, fostering dialogue about various aspects of their lives. The shifts in lifestyle, alongside the emergence of new societal regulations, present significant experiences that aid in their adaptation and enable them to navigate change while remaining rooted in their identity and cultural heritage. The myth of origin, as a vital component of their culture, serves as a social charter that underpins the formation of cultural identity, social norms, societal order, collective memory, and the local history of the Sawai people. It acts as a bridge connecting human existence across the past, present, and future.

This research focuses on the efforts of the Sawai people to revitalize the significance of their myth of origin by retransmitting it, thereby preserving their collective memory and local history. This endeavour is essential for maintaining their cultural identity amid changing times. To enhance this study, a deeper exploration of three key domains in the transmission of the origin myth is warranted, including the extent of this retransmission and the challenges it presents to society, particularly for communities in mining areas undergoing rapid and extensive transformations. This exploration is crucial for upholding the principles of sustainable development while respecting the community's local cultural values.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the Indonesian Education Scholarship (BPI) under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia for providing financial support for this research. We also extend our sincere appreciation to Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) for providing financial assistance toward the publication of this article.

REFERENCES

- Al Rawashdeh, R., Campbell, G., & Titi, A. (2016). The socio-economic impacts of mining on local communities: The case of Jordan. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 3(2), 494–507.
- Amal, M. A. (2016). *Kepulauan Rempah-rempah: Perjalanan Sejarah Maluku Utara 1250–1950*. Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Andaya, L. Y. (1993). *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Aritonang, J.S & Steenbrink, K(Ed.). (2008). *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*. Brill.
- Asr, E. T., Kakaie, R., Ataei, M., & Mohammadi, M. R. T. (2019). A review of studies on sustainable development in mining life cycle. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 229, 213–231.
- Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (2000). *Handbook of ethnography*. Sage.
- Bachleitner, K. (2022). Collective memory and the social creation of identities: Linking the past with the present and future. *Progress in Brain Research*, 274(1), 167–176. <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.pbr.2022.07.002>
- Bainton, N. (2020). *Mining and Indigenous Peoples*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.013.121>
- Ballard, C., & Banks, G. (2003). Resource wars: the anthropology of mining. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 32(1), 287–313.
- Bascom, W. (1983). Malinowski's Contributions to the Study of Folklore. *Folklore*, 94(2), 163–172.
- Blanco, G. D., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Blanco, G. D., Baker, J., Tagliari, M. S. M., Hayata, M. A., Campos, M. L., & Hanazaki, N. (2023). The impacts of mining on the food sovereignty and security of Indigenous Peoples and local communities: A global review. *Science of The Total Environment*, 855, 158803. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.158803>
- Borgstede, G. (2010). Social memory and sacred sites in the Western Maya Highlands: examples from Jacaltenango, Guatemala. *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 21(2), 385–392.
- Carvalho, F. P. (2017). Mining industry and sustainable development: time for change. *Food and Energy Security*, 6(2), 61–77.
- Castillo, R. C. A., & Alvarez-Castillo, F. (2009). *The Law is not Enough: Protecting Indigenous Peoples' Rights Against Mining Interests in the Philippines BT - Indigenous Peoples, Consent and Benefit Sharing: Lessons from the San-Hoodia Case* (R. Wynberg, D. Schroeder, & R. Chennells, Eds.; pp. 271–284). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-3123-5_14
- Cloud, Q. Y., & Redvers, N. (2023). Honoring indigenous sacred places and spirit in environmental health. *Environmental Health Insights*, 17, 11786302231157508.
- Cohen, P. S. (1969). Theories of myth. *Man*, 4(3), 337–353.
- Colding, J., & Folke, C. (2001). Social taboos: "invisible" systems of local resource management and biological conservation. *Ecological Applications*, 11(2), 584–600.
- Cole, M. J., & Broadhurst, J. L. (2022). Sustainable development in mining communities: the case of South Africa's West Wits Goldfield. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 4, 895760.
- da Silva Rocha, J. A. (2025). Ensino de história com mitos e lendas: uma experiência docente na Comunidade Quilombola de Pau D'arco, Arapiraca-Al (2020–2021). *Revista História Hoje*, 14(31).
- De Heusch, L. (1988). Myth as reality. *Journal of Religion in Africa/Religion En Afrique*, 18(3), 200.
- de Jong, E. B. P., Ragas, A. M. J., Nooteboom, G., & Mur-

- sidi, M. (2015). Changing Water Quality in the Middle Mahakam Lakes: Water Quality Trends in a Context of Rapid Deforestation, Mining and Palm Oil Plantation Development in Indonesia's Middle Mahakam Wetlands. *Wetlands*, 35(4), 733–744. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13157-015-0665-z>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. sage.
- Des Bouvrie, S. (2002). *The definition of myth. Symbolical phenomena in ancient culture*.
- Dikgwatlhe, P., & Mulenga, F. (2023). Perceptions of local communities regarding the impacts of mining on employment and economic activities in South Africa. *Resources Policy*, 80, 103138.
- Dudley, N., Higgins, Zogib, L., & Mansourian, S. (2009). The links between protected areas, faiths, and sacred natural sites. *Conservation Biology*, 23(3), 568–577.
- Durkheim, E. (2016). The elementary forms of religious life. In *Social theory re-wired* (pp. 52–67). Routledge.
- Engel, D. M. (1993). Origin myths: Narratives of authority, resistance, disability, and law. *Law & Society Review*, 27(4), 785–826.
- Fayiah, M. (2020). Mining and environmental degradation: A gift brings grief scenario for mining communities in Sierra Leone. *Journal of Mining and Environment*, 11(2), 347–361.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *ONCOLLECTIVE MEMORY* (L. A. COSER, Ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Hirst, W., A. W., S. mail to H., ; Coman, A., & B. (2008). Building a collective memory: the case for collective forgetting. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 23, 88–92.
- Hobbs, H. (2024). Protecting Sacred Sites: Land Is Kin: Sovereignty, Religious Freedom, and Indigenous Sacred Sites by Dana Lloyd. *Sydney Law Review*.
- Homburg, J., Grunwald, S., & Brevik, E. C. (2023). *From Native American Tradition to Modern-Day America: Native Origin Legends That Involve Soil and Earth BT - Cultural Understanding of Soils: The importance of cultural diversity and of the inner world* (N. Patzel, S. Grunwald, E. C. Brevik, & C. Feller, Eds.; pp. 181–207). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13169-1_9
- Horowitz, L. S., Keeling, A., Lévesque, F., Rodon, T., Schott, S., & Thériault, S. (2018). Indigenous peoples' relationships to large-scale mining in post/colonial contexts: Toward multidisciplinary comparative perspectives. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 5(3), 404–414. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2018.05.004>
- Hosseinpour, M., Osanloo, M., & Azimi, Y. (2022). Evaluation of positive and negative impacts of mining on sustainable development by a semi-quantitative method. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 366, 132955.
- Hutomo, M. Y. (2000). Konsep Ekonomi Kerakyatan. *Sumbar: Www. Bappenas. Go. Id/.../&view*, 401.
- Imarhiagbe, O., & Ogwu, M. C. (2022). Sacred groves in the global south: a panacea for sustainable biodiversity conservation. In *Biodiversity in Africa: potentials, threats and conservation* (pp. 525–546). Springer.
- Jacobs, M. D., & Hanrahan, N. W. (2016). *The Blackwell companion to the sociology of culture*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Joseph, L., Cuerrier, A., & Mathews, D. (2021). Shifting narratives, recognizing resilience: new anti-oppressive and decolonial approaches to ethnobotanical research with Indigenous communities in Canada. *Botany*, 100(2), 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.1139/cjb-2021-0111>
- Keller, M. L. (2014). Indigenous studies and “the sacred.” *American Indian Quarterly*, 38(1), 82–109.
- Khan, J. H. L. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9520-5727> J. h. liu@massey. ac. nz and S. S. (2021). Implications of a Psychological Approach to Collective Remembering: Social Representations as Cultural Ground for Interpreting Survey and Experimental Results. *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, (April 26). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/18344909211007938>
- Lane, M. B., Ross, H., Dale, A. P., & Rickson, R. E. (2003). Sacred land, mineral wealth, and biodiversity at Coronation Hill, Northern Australia: indigenous knowledge and SIA. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 21(2), 89–98.
- Lapian, A. B. (2011). *Orang laut, bajak laut, raja laut : sejarah kawasan Laut Sulawesi abad XIX* (2nd ed.). Komunitas Bambu.
- Leirissa, R. Z. (2022). *Sengketa Rempah: Halmahera Timur dan Raja Jailolo Abad ke-19*. Komunitas Bambu.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1955). The structural study of myth. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 68(270), 428–444.
- Liu, Y., Alnafrah, I., & Zhou, Y. (2024). A systemic efficiency measurement of resource management and sustainable practices: A network bias-corrected DEA assessment of OECD countries. *Resources Policy*, 90, 104771.
- Loayza, N., & Rigolini, J. (2016). The local impact of mining on poverty and inequality: evidence from the commodity boom in Peru. *World Development*, 84, 219–234.
- Mabey, P. T., Li, W., Sundufu, A. J., & Lashari, A. H. (2020). Environmental impacts: Local perspectives of selected mining edge communities in Sierra Leone. *Sustainability*, 12(14), 5525.
- Malinowski, B. (2016). Myth in primitive psychology. In *Myths and Mythologies* (pp. 146–157). Routledge.
- Martimianakis, M. A., Tilburt, J., Michalec, B., & Hafferty, F. W. (2020). Myths and social structure: the unbearable necessity of mythology in medical education. *Medical Education*, 54(1), 15–21.
- Mensah, A. K., Mahiri, I. O., Owusu, O., Mireku, O. D., Wireko, I., & Kissi, E. A. (2015). Environmental impacts of mining: a study of mining communities in Ghana. *Applied Ecology and Environmental Sciences*, 3(3), 81–94.
- Mills, J. (2020). The essence of myth. *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 37(2), 191–205.
- Misztal, B. A. (2003). Durkheim on collective memory. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 3(2), 123–143.
- Mobtaker, M. M., & Osanloo, M. (2014). Positive impacts of mining activities on environment. *Legislation, Tech-*

- nology and Practice of Mine Land Reclamation. *Proceedings of The Beijing International Symposium Land Reclamation and Ecological Restoration*, LRER, 7–14.
- Monteiro, N. B. R., da Silva, E. A., & Neto, J. M. M. (2019). Sustainable development goals in mining. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 228, 509–520.
- Mwakesi, I., Wahome, R., & Ichang'i, D. (2020). Mining impact on communities' livelihoods: A case study of Taita Taveta County, Kenya. *AIMS Environmental Science*, 7(3), 286–302.
- Palmeirim, M. (2016). Do "Culture Heroes" Exist? A Dialogue with Luc de Heusch on the Limits of the Structuralist Approach to Myth. *SAGE Open*, 6(2), 2158244016649013.
- Patra, J., Barman, P., Gupta, T., Naskar, M., Ghosh, A., & Talukdar, S. (2025). Cultural Landscape and Sacred Geography: A Sociological Study of Uranium Mining Sites in India. *Eksplorium*, 46(1), 17–29.
- Petkova, V., Lockie, S., Rolfe, J., & Ivanova, G. (2009). Mining developments and social impacts on communities: Bowen Basin case studies. *Rural Society*, 19(3), 211–228.
- Rath, S., & Ormsby, A. A. (2020). Conservation through traditional knowledge: a review of research on the sacred groves of Odisha, India. *Human Ecology*, 48(4), 455–463.
- Raymundo, Sarah. (2024). Modalities of the Sacred in the Lumad Struggle for Sustainabilities and Futures. *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy*, 13(2), 238–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22779760241252304>
- Reidy, P. E. (2024). New Threats to Sacred Sites and Religious Property. *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, rwa019.
- Ristić, N. D., & Ćulafić, I. K. (2025). Sacred Networks and Spiritual Resilience: Sustainable Management of Studenica Monastery's Cultural Landscape. In *Land* (Vol. 14, Number 5). <https://doi.org/10.3390/land14051011>
- Roba, G. O. (2019). Indigenous mechanisms of preserving sacred natural sites in Guji Oromo, Adoola Reedde and Anna Sorra districts, southern Ethiopia. *Cogent Food & Agriculture*, 5(1), 1609765.
- Rorato, A. C., Camara, G., Escada, M. I. S., Picoli, M. C. A., Moreira, T., & Verstegen, J. A. (2020). Brazilian amazon indigenous peoples threatened by mining bill. *Environmental Research Letters*, 15(10), 1040a3. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abb428>
- Rots, A. P. (2019). This is not a powerspot. *Asian Ethnology*, 78(1), 155–180.
- Schudson, M. (1997). Lives, laws, and language: Commemorative versus noncommemorative forms of effective public memory. *Communication Review (The)*, 2(1), 3–17.
- Segerstedt, E., & Abrahamsson, L. (2019). Diversity of livelihoods and social sustainability in established mining communities. In *Extractive Industries and Society* (Vol. 6, Number 2, pp. 610–619). Elsevier Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2019.03.008>
- Selmier II, W. T., & Newenham-Kahindi, A. (2021). Communities of place, mining multinationals and sustainable development in Africa. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 292, 125709.
- Shiferaw, A., Hebo, M., & Senishaw, G. (2023). The spiritual ecology of sacred landscapes: Evidence from sacred forests of the Sebat Bête Gurage, Central-South Ethiopia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1), 2210900.
- Sincovich, A., Gregory, T., Wilson, A., & Brinkman, S. (2018). The social impacts of mining on local communities in Australia. *Rural Society*, 27(1), 18–34.
- Sinthumule, N. I. (2022). Conservation effects of governance and management of sacred natural sites: Lessons from vhutanda in the vhembe region, Limpopo Province of south Africa. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(3), 1067.
- Sinthumule, N. I. (2025). Sacred natural sites as other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMS) for biodiversity conservation in South Africa: Key opportunities and challenges for policy and practice. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 86, 126935. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2025.126935>
- Sinthumule, N. I., Mugwena, T., & Rabumbulu, M. (2021). The Conflict between Preserving a 'Sacred Natural Site' and Exploiting Nature for Commercial Gain: Evidence from Phiphidi Waterfall in South Africa. In *Sustainability* (Vol. 13, Number 18). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131810476>
- Skoda, U. (2021a). Mining in a Sacred Landscape: Adivasis, Deities and Alliances in a Former Princely State in Odisha/India. *Lagoonscapes*, 1(2), 219–244.
- Skoda, U. (2021b). Mining in a sacred landscape: Adivasis, deities and alliances in a former princely state in Odisha/India. *Lagoonscapes*, 1(2), 219–244.
- Suopajarvi, L., Ejdemo, T., Klyuchnikova, E., Korchak, E., Nygaard, V., & Poelzer, G. A. (2017). Social impacts of the "glocal" mining business: case studies from Northern Europe. *Mineral Economics*, 30, 31–39.
- Tarusarira, J. (2022). The grass versus the people: sacred roots of environmental conflict in the Chilonga communal lands in Zimbabwe. *Zeitschrift Für Religion, Gesellschaft Und Politik*, 6(1), 65–82.
- Tatay, J., & Merino, A. (2023). What is sacred in sacred natural sites? A literature review from a conservation lens. *Ecology and Society*, 28(1).
- Thornton, I. (1996). Impacts of mining on the environment: some local, regional and global issues. *Applied Geochemistry*, 11(1–2), 355–361.
- Uddin, S. M. (2019). Religion, nature, and life in the Sundarbans. *Asian Ethnology*, 78(2), 289–310.
- Unceta, R. A. (2021). The economic and social impact of mining-resources exploitation in Zambia. *Resources Policy*, 74, 102242.
- Veiga, M. M., Scoble, M., & McAllister, M. L. (2001). Mining with communities. *Natural Resources Forum*, 25(3), 191–202. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-8947.2001.tb00761.x>
- Wang, Q. (2021). The Cultural Foundation of Human

- Memory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 27(January 2021), 151–179. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-070920-023638>
- Widengård, M. (2025). From displacement to statehood: The ecological and political metamorphosis of Accompong marronage. *World Development*, 190, 106948. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2025.106948>
- Wijayanti, Y., Warto, Wasino, W., Djono, & Esa, M.S. (2025). History Learning Based on Local Wisdom Sanghyang Sikskandang Karesian. *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, 35(1), 167-179. <https://doi.org/10.15294/paramita.v35i1.9033>
- Witasari, N. (2022). Whispers from The Forest, Local wisdom in forest conservation and utilization. *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, 32(1), 23–32.
- Woźny, G. Z. and A. (2020). The Comparative Politics of Collective Memory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46 (July), 175–194.
- Žibret, G., Gosar, M., Miler, M., & Alijagić, J. (2018). Impacts of mining and smelting activities on environment and landscape degradation Slovenian case studies. *Land Degradation & Development*, 29(12), 4457–4470.