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Pop Song As Custom: Weddings, Ethnicity, And Entrepreneurs In West Sumatra

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> *Sakali aia gadang, sakali tapian barubah.*
> After each flood, the bathing place changes.
> (Minangkabau aphorism)

At a wedding in a highland town of West Sumatra, Indonesia, the pop song "Malam Bainai" (Evening of Henna) is performed by the hired *orgen tunggal* group—vocalists backed by synthesizer, all pumped through massive speaker systems—as the bride, groom, and their entourage descend from the minibus and solemnly process the fifty feet to the gate of the yard. The processional participants halt there as the band pauses while a woman launches into stylized ritual speech welcoming the couple and wishing them success on their conjugal journey. Speech completed, the band resumes playing the same pop song as the processional party enters the house.

At some Minangkabau weddings today, in both the "homeland" province of West Sumatra and the Jakartan immigrant community, "Malam Bainai" is integrated into, and is itself constitutive of, significant ritual moments. The song, however, is only one musical option for these moments. What accounts for its presence? The Minangkabau—renowned for their Islamic piety, matrilineal kinship systems, extensive outmigration, and nationalist activism—are recognized as one of the hundreds of ethnic groups in Indonesia today. The inclusion or exclusion of this song in weddings speaks to multiple ways of being Minangkabau, responding to and articulating self-understandings based on this category, including different engagements with the concept of *adat* (glossed, momentarily, as custom).

Why do wedding hosts choose "Malam Bainai"? What is so special about this particular song that it gets incorporated as the primary music during ritual moments at some weddings? Popularized by vocalist Elly Kasim in the 1960s,

"Malam Bainai" is one of the classics of *pop Minang*, a broadly defined genre of popular music associated with the Minangkabau (Barendregt 2002). While most Minangkabau people would recognize the song, that recognition alone does not explain how it has been adopted as a part of contemporary wedding practices. To some extent, its relevance and validity stem from its direct association with weddings: the title references a specific wedding ritual, while the lyrics of the original and its covers celebrate Minangkabau weddings more broadly. "Malam Bainai," moreover, is not the only pop Minang song about weddings: others include "Alek Rang Mudo" (The Wedding Party of the Young People) and "Baralek Gadang" (The Grand Wedding Party). While it is difficult to establish a precise chronology, "Malam Bainai" is clearly the oldest, the most famous, and the most prevalent at weddings. Its adoption at weddings, therefore, appears to be about more than titular and textual references to weddings.

The process by which a pop song about wedding custom becomes custom at some weddings is, to follow the example of Gregory Booth tracking brass bands playing Hindi film hits at wedding processions in India, a "multi-layered and multi-directional process in which a wide range of cultural variables take part in the transformational play of meaning and value." It may not result in a "coherent story," but it is nevertheless worthwhile paying close attention to some of the agents of change located in "specific times and places" (2005:14–15). Some of the variables involved in this story include the multivalency and history of "Malam Bainai"; the history and positioning of pop Minang as a particularly sentimental, and often nostalgic, articulation of Minangkabau identity, especially within migrant communities; the song's incorporation by cultural entrepreneurs into commercialized and tourist spectacles iconic of Minangkabau wedding adat; the flexible nature of this adat system; and the involvement of entrepreneurs in managing weddings where the song is incorporated. In Peircian semiotic terms, the story of "Malam Bainai" also illustrates "semantic snowballing" where "[o]ld indexical connections may linger as new ones are added, potentially condensing a variety of meanings and emotions within a highly economical and yet unpredictable sign" (Turino 2008:9). The original meaning of the sign—a pop song about weddings—accrues additional implications as it is embraced in new contexts, like displays of wedding adat. When employed in weddings, "Malam Bainai" comes laden with a prior and co-existing series of meanings and emotional connections. As Donna Buchanan's analysis of an Ottoman Turkish song's travels has shown (2007), focusing on the same song in varying contexts can yield rich layers of cultural histories and meanings.

This story takes place at the juncture between music, cultural display, ethnicity, and weddings. Although different axes of this juncture have been explored in the ethnomusicological literature (e.g., music and weddings or music in cultural displays), the synergy resulting from the intersection of all four components has

not garnered much attention. As the examples discussed below will illustrate, the selection of musical genres, styles, ensembles, and, occasionally, repertoire to include at weddings—both actual ones and those involved in touristic displays—offers a rich site in which to investigate issues of cultural agency.

This article also responds to Timothy Rice's recent call that urges ethnomusicologists to not "take for granted identity as a category of social life and of social analysis," but rather to theorize what it is and how it works (2007:20, 2010). A recent review of theoretical approaches to identity provides an excellent overview of historically significant "theories that focus on internalization of social positions within a self-structure and those that focus on how consensual, cultural identity meanings are implemented within situations that evoke them" (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010). My thinking on identity and ethnicity, however, is deeply inspired by the work of Rogers Brubaker and colleagues who offer a provocative revisionist view not included in this overview (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Brubaker 2002, 2009; Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004). One implication of their work for ethnomusicology is to move "beyond 'identity'" as an analytical tool that means "too much," "too little," or "nothing at all" identifying it as a "category of practice" and a tool with more analytic teeth to differentiate the processes involved (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:1, 4; cf. Rice 2007, 2010). I join the school of thought that shifts the emphasis onto how and when an ethnic-based category such as "Minangkabau" is discursively created and conceptualized, cognitively maintained, and invoked. This cognitive view opens up space for a more nuanced analysis: rather than assume that all people with any given identity share the same habits of thought and practice, this allows me to get at when people's self-understandings as Minangkabau converge with or diverge from those of others, and how they create affective bonds to others through musical resources and processes at weddings.[1] I begin by unpacking the work of weddings and the role of music within them.

The Work of Weddings

A major rite of passage in Minangkabau communities, weddings usually incorporate two seemingly distinct ritual realms: those rituals dictated by Islam versus those governed by considerations of adat.[2] Typically performed in a mosque prior to the main wedding reception, and witnessed only by close family and officials, the religious ceremony accomplishes the "illocutionary task of marrying the bride and groom" (Schrauwers 2000:859). The adat rituals in the Minangkabau matrilineal system entail the delivery and attachment of the groom to the bride's maternal family, and also strengthen the bonds between the extended families of the bride and groom. Principally, however, the *baralek* (reception/ritual meal) is about the presentation of the bride and groom as married couple to the wider community.

Minangkabau weddings are important for the sociability they engender (Sugarman 1997; Nhlekisana 2007). Although births, male circumcisions, and deaths among the Minangkabau bring people together, the wedding is the largest and most wide-reaching event. Contemporary weddings mobilize relatives, communities, friends, and colleagues—of the couple and their families—from around the province of West Sumatra and often beyond; guest lists sometimes exceed a thousand people! Attending a wedding allows people to share in the joy of host families, while fulfilling social obligations and showing respect (Sugarman 1997; Blackwood 2000).[3] More importantly, weddings—celebrated regardless of socio-economic status—allow host families to negotiate and position themselves socially within the world. Anthropologist Evelyn Blackwood illustrates, for instance, how various elements in Minangkabau weddings—such as the presentation of food trays, ceremonial dress, guest seating and treatment, and speeches—"can be reworked in seemingly endless variation that provide host and participants with a number of ways to highlight or downplay their [social] relationships" (2000:117).

Contemporary weddings also offer rich potential to generate prestige for the host families (Blackwood 2000; Booth 2005). This potential parallels that of Thai funerary practice, where Deborah Wong found that flexible elements "can be elaborated or simplified by a family to reflect their economic status—or their attempts at upward mobility. In Thai death ritual, more is more" (1998:111). While Minangkabau wedding practices are partially about the negotiation and display of economic capital, they are also about cultural capital and the kind of statement host families want to make. Substance, not just scale, is significant here: the choices hosts make are often related to how they view themselves as Minangkabau. I am suggesting that Minangkabau weddings function in much the same way as honky-tonk bars in Aaron Fox's study of "real country" music in that they provide "deeply valued sites for the highly ritualized production of cultural identity and community solidarity" (2004:24).

Music is an integral part of wedding celebrations today, except in dire economic circumstances. It conveys a festive atmosphere while publicizing the union with the surrounding community. Mardiani, a member of a women's *talempong* (kettle gong) ensemble, commented that if there was no music, people might think that a funeral was in progress (interview, 24 July 2010, Paninjauan). At one very modest wedding I attended, the hosts joked they had shared the costs of the loud music emanating from a celebration up the road, suggesting just how important its presence is today.

When host families make conscious musical decisions (circumscribed to some extent by exposure, access, and economic resources), this becomes a social process "through which persons understand and locate themselves" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:17). Hosts must decide which genres and ensembles to incorporate; whether to request the services of family and community members or

to hire professionals; whether to include multiple kinds of music; and, if so, the appropriate moment for their performance. Each choice is instructive: it makes the ways in which Minangkabau weddings are ritually celebrated through musical means patently distinct. Take, for instance, some of the options available for processional moments where music is not just an epiphenomenon serving to enhance "ritual and social efficacy" or "define and delineate ritual space and time" (McKinley 1999:51; 55), but is also something that comes to constitute and enact the ritual itself. "Malam Bainai" sung by a vocalist and accompanied by a synthesizer is different from the same song performed on a diatonically tuned talempong ensemble accompanied by *jembe* and bass guitar, although both ensembles involve hired professionals. Both these options contrast significantly with a five-person talempong and drum ensemble provided by community members. I will return to the import of these stylistic differences later in the article.

I am not arguing, as some scholars continue to do, that the presence of popular music is negative and detrimental to the continuity of older practices. Rosaleen Nhlekisana, for example, outlines how recorded popular music in weddings in Botswana takes precedence over community-based participatory performance, leading her to declare that "the bridal party dances to songs that have no relevance, do not add any value and are meaningless to the wedding celebration" (2007:157). Following the lead of scholars who argue for addressing human agency in consumption practices in popular music (Barendregt 2002; Fox 2004; Wallach 2008), I would argue, in contrast, that we should be attuned to the new values and meanings that accrue from changing practices. Booth, for example, asserts that Hindi film songs comprise the core repertoire of Indian brass bands because of their potential to generate emotional attachment (2005). My aim here is to understand how people relate to pop Minang and create meaning out of the use of "Malam Bainai" at weddings. Its meaning, in part, is derived from cultural displays reifying the Minangkabau.

Weddings, Cultural Display, and Tourism

There is a noticeable lacuna in the scholarly literature on the intersection of weddings, music, and cultural display, despite the attention given to music at weddings and the increase in tourism studies in ethnomusicology over the last decade or so. At best, the references to such junctures are fleeting. Ingrid Rüütel, writing of music and weddings on an Estonian island, alludes to the presence of folkloric performance of weddings for tourists, but provides no details of the musical style, content, or changes (2002:149). References to weddings linked with cultural display are more frequent in the Indonesianist literature, as wedding practices have provided colorful and rich material for what Greg Acciaioli calls "spectacles of adat" (1985). But these are often passing references

(e.g., Schrauwers 2000) that address neither the aesthetic dimensions, such as music, nor the structural and aesthetic changes and continuities prompted by the process of packaging adat for the stage. In the celebration of Minangkabau wedding practices, "Malam Bainai" is often part of the package; this highlights the need to pay attention to musical dimensions and transformational shifts, and also accounts for individual and institutional agents involved in engendering change.

Recent work in tourism studies has revealed the need to recognize the multiple, and sometimes contending, investments in and interpretations of cultural products, along with the discourses of authenticity and representation behind them (Lau 1998; Stokes 1999; Dunbar-Hall 2001). Cultural displays, as Margaret Sarkissian insists, are not "tasteless ephemera to be dismissed," but rather "contemporary texts to be interpreted" (1998:87). I draw on this work to consider the agency of individuals involved in selecting and packaging material for display: it provides insight into understanding how "Malam Bainai" transitioned from commercialized product to embedded cultural practice. The individuals who orchestrate displays of wedding ritual are caught up in the discursive articulation and deliberate invocation of Minangkabau ethnicity.

Ethnicity and Entrepreneurs

The cognitive view of ethnicity emphasizes that it is "not a thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on*" it (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004:33, emphases in the original; cf. Brubaker 2002). Arguing for the "demolition of ethnicity," as post-modernists have done, fails to account for the way our collaborators and interlocutors have become invested in their expressions of it (Levine 1999:166). The cognitive approach, in contrast, urges us to explore the "culturally specific ways in which persons, institutions, organizations, and discourses make sense of experience and interpret the social world" (Brubaker 2009:32). It finds, moreover, that "ethnicity works not only, or even especially, in and through bounded groups, but in and through categories, schemas, commonsense knowledge, symbols, elite and vernacular discourse, institutional forms, organizational routines, public ceremonies, and private interactions" (ibid.:20). I am suggesting that actors' use of music at weddings provides a productive space to investigate engagement with and understandings of Minangkabau ethnicity.

But why is ethnicity relevant to contemporary weddings? Greater geographic, social, and economic mobility has redefined the range of potential marriage partners. The past preference for endogamous marriage within the *nagari* (Minangkabau village confederacy) or in a neighboring nagari has been eclipsed by an increasing prevalence of marriages between couples from different areas of the Minangkabau region and even across lines of ethnic identification.

Coupled with celebrations that mobilize people from around the region, these marriage practices encourage people to search for cultural commonalities at a higher level. Minangkabau becomes a frame that unites yet also makes clear distinctions from other ethnically understood categories such as Javanese, Batak, or Melayu. Nonetheless, as Brubaker and Cooper point out, such "'self-understandings' may be tacit; even when they are formed, as they ordinarily are, in and through prevailing discourses, they may exist, and inform action, without themselves being discursively articulate" (2000:18). This is the case with regard to weddings; for some hosts, "Minangkabau" functions as a tacit category that shapes the way they celebrate (e.g., delimiting the musical options from which they can choose); for others, they feel compelled to make explicit statements that sometimes literally say, "We are Minangkabau. This is how we celebrate."

How does music play a role in this engagement with ethnicity at weddings? While aesthetic preferences are crosscut with status concerns, many people expressed a deliberate preference for Minangkabau genres, identified by language and/or instrumentation, over and above cosmopolitan or other Indonesian genres. Following two arguments made in the ethnomusicological literature, sharing and (ideally) appreciating the same music within the frame of weddings helps people imagine a sense of belonging and create an affective bond with others (Rice 2007:34–5).

A phenomenon I highlight in this article is the role of certain individuals in actively eliciting ethnic representations. I draw on the Bourdieuian-based concept of "ethnopolitical entrepreneurs" as formulated by Brubaker. As he elucidates, these people are:

> specialists in ethnicity . . . who, unlike nonspecialists, may live "off" as well as "for" ethnicity . . . By *invoking* groups, they seek to *evoke* them, summon them, call them into being. Their categories are *for doing*—designed to stir, summon, justify, mobilize, kindle and energize. (2002:166; emphases in the original)

I believe that this concept can be productively applied to explain the role of those managing cultural displays and wedding businesses, along with those making their living (or supplementing their income) as musicians and *sanggar* (performance troupe) directors who are involved in the ways that Minangkabau weddings are celebrated today. John and Jean Comaroff's new book, *Ethnicity Inc.* (2009), likewise turns to the strategies and personal investments behind the commercialization of ethnicity. Moreover, just as historian Jeffrey Hadler examines the agency of colonial scholars and local elites in producing standardized, romantic images of Minangkabau houses and families (2008), I think it is productive to examine the role of entrepreneurs in producing contemporary understandings of the Minangkabau.

Locating the Minangkabau

People identifying themselves as Minangkabau populate the contemporary province of West Sumatra, an area containing both the *darek* (cultural heartland) and parts of the *rantau* (outlying areas). They are also found in immigrant communities scattered throughout the Indonesian archipelago, including Jakarta, and beyond Indonesia. In contemporary understandings, these areas have also come to be identified as the rantau, while West Sumatra constitutes the *ranah Minang* (homeland). With nearly three percent of Indonesia's population of 240 million people, the Minangkabau formed the sixth largest ethnic category—out of hundreds—in the 2000 census. The increase in permanent migration combined with retention of strong attachments to the homeland has, as Bart Barendregt notes, raised "the question as to who may still be regarded as Minang and how Minang-ness should be defined" (2002:416–17).

For most of the people I work with, the category of Minangkabau—whether tacitly or explicitly claimed—is an important part of their self-understandings. For many people it engenders an "emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:19). The connectedness is relational, based on an Andersonian sense of belonging, and crystallizes in the frequently invoked phrase in the Minangkabau language: "*urang awak* (our people)." For cosmopolitans and migrants, the category is particularly marked: they consciously invoke Minangkabau in discursive and symbolic displays to provisionally differentiate themselves from others.

What the category implies, however, is "variable across time and across persons" (ibid.:18). Divergent economic, political, and religious histories of Minangkabau regions, along with state and modernist discourses, have engendered discernible differences in ways of experiencing Minangkabau identity. As Blackwood points out, even within one village people "have different levels of exposure to media, state ideology, Western-oriented education, and religions fundamentalism" (2000:26). One's self-understanding as Minangkabau is shaped over the course of a lifetime in dialectical interplay with projected images (including those of the state and media) and specific encounters (such as migrant networks when individuals or families move for college, marriage, work, or education).

In spite of these differences, "Minangkabau people claim a commonality of beliefs and practices—in their form of kinship, mythology, religion, and *adat*—that allows them to speak of a shared Minangkabau world" (ibid.:25). But how, in the words of Brubaker, has the category "become institutionalized and en-

trenched in administrative routines . . . and embedded in culturally powerful and symbolically resonant myths, memories and narratives" (2002:169)? A number of scholars have studied various meanings that have coalesced to construct the category over the years, looking at processes ranging from origin myths, other legendary tales, and colonial and postcolonial policies to popular music (Kahn 1993; Kahin 1999; Barendregt 2002; Hadler 2008). Some processes have been particularly influential in positing conceptualizations of the Minangkabau as unitary, conflating the internal differences that endure.

One of the most influential ways of delimiting the Minangkabau is through the concept of adat, although it is a difficult concept to define because it, too, is embedded within multiple histories and discourses. At its broadest, adat is a system for managing social relationships. Anthropologist Lucy Whalley outlines adat's domain as covering the

> matrilineal system of reckoning kinship relations, inheritance, rights to and use of property, marriage arrangements, household composition, the procedures for all life-crisis rituals, the system of titles inherited by males, village political procedure, a value system that defines the reciprocal rights and obligations between relatives, living or deceased, all proper behavior in society, and even provisions for the treatments of guests and strangers. (1993:7)

An important life-crisis ritual, weddings come under its domain.

As the *pepatah-petitih* (aphorism) opening this paper suggests,[4] Minangkabau adat is also malleable and adaptable to the times. It involves four categories on a continuum from the most immutable to the most mutable (Hakimy 1997). Seventy-year-old adat leader Taufik Datuak Mangkuto Rajo explained to me that the first two—the laws of nature and Islam—provide the fundamental basis for the adat system and are therefore universal throughout the Minangkabau region; the second two are variable from one nagari to the next. Things can be "modified, expanded, diminished, or erased if they are not needed any longer. Minangkabau adat is elastic. It likes to receive the new, but there are filters" in place. Maintaining the foundation means that changes, including aesthetic choices like music at weddings, will be beneficial and useful rather than threatening (interview, 18 June 2010, Padang Panjang).

The flexibility of the adat system helps explain how it is possible for a pop song to become ritual music. Focusing on this "negotiated quality of ritual," as Blackwood asserts, allows analysts "to avoid representing people as simply reproducing 'custom'" (2000:130). She further argues that we should examine how "new meanings are introduced, weighed, incorporated, or rejected" (ibid.:154), including the agency of weddings' hosts. As part of the pop Minang corpus, a genre recognized for its ability to generate sentimental attachment, the presence of "Malam Bainai" suggests an engagement with what it means to be Minangkabau.

Pop Minang: Sentimental Representations of the Minangkabau

Pop Minang is a "genre" that encompasses a broad range of musical styles and thereby encourages different kinds of attachments to it. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was a way for some people identifying as Minangkabau to proclaim their modernity; now, the same people view it through the lens of nostalgia. Common understandings suggest the genre began to materialize in the 1950s, epitomized by the Jakartan-based band Orkes Gumarang. With the emergence of the cassette industry in the 1970s, the genre crystallized, taking on particular stylistic characteristics that have since become more diffuse with diversification into sub-genres in the 1990s (see Barendregt 2002 for an overview of the genre's history).

The genre was cosmopolitan—following Thomas Turino's definition (2000)—in style since its inception. In the 1950s, the genre played into and capitalized on the Latin dance craze circulating through cosmopolitan loops: songs in Minangkabau language were set to Cuban rhythms, such as the rumba and the mambo, played on Latin percussion (Barendregt 2002:424). By transcending local linguistic and musical markers, the artists of this time attempted to forge an inclusive, pan-Minangkabau genre that "was at once modern and definitely Minang" (ibid.:245). By the 1960s, pop Minang had become the definitive Minangkabau music for many cosmopolitan Minangkabau, both in the homeland and in the rantau (interviews, Edy Utama, 25 August 2004, Padang; Irsjad Adam, 21 July 2004, Padang Panjang). It offered a more accurate reflection of how these individuals conceptualized their self-understandings as Minangkabau people than genres conceptually attached to village life. Its solidification at this time is also significant when aligned with the political position of the Minangkabau following the failure of a regional rebellion, but that topic is best left for another time.

Elly Kasim, the vocalist credited with popularizing "Malam Bainai," rose to fame in the 1960s. A number of her songs, including "Malam Bainai," have canonic status, and are often obligatory at pop Minang contests (Barendregt 2002:249). Today, she is an icon of the genre and the Minangkabau in general, marked by her inclusion in books and museum exhibits dedicated to famous Minangkabau people. This status is undoubtedly aided by the highly self-conscious references to "her Minang identity" through costume and other iconographic choices on album covers, along with song topics (ibid.:429–30).

The classic hits of pop Minang, like those of Elly Kasim, maintain cultural currency today because they engender nostalgic attachment. As the work of Christine Yano (2002), Aaron Fox (2004), and Martin Stokes (2007) shows,

sentimentality can be a motivating force for understanding oneself and bonding with others. With its capacity to evoke deep emotion and provoke nostalgic recollections of times past, Yano reveals how *enka* provides one means "through which Japanese define themselves to themselves and signify who they are" (2002:4); while enka "is not a face with which all Japanese would agree or even one all would accept . . . it persists as . . . ambient public culture" (ibid.:24).

Drawing on sentimental interpretations of what it means to be Minangkabau, pop Minang works in similar ways. Prominent lyricist and composer Syahrul Tarun Yusuf, who has been involved in the genre since the early 1960s, commented that he deliberately writes lyrics to "arouse the feelings" of people in the rantau so they "will feel homesick and return to the homeland" (interview, 25 June 2010, Balingka). Record storekeeper Erman told me he does the most trade in *lagu kenangan* (nostalgic songs, also identified as *lagu nostalgia*) with migrants visiting the homeland. When listened to from afar, these songs help migrants "feel like they are in their *kampung halaman* (native village)" (interview, 22 July 2010, Padang Panjang).[5] The songs, however, also appeal to some people living in the homeland. On one of my trips, the driver of the car, a man in his mid-thirties, was playing an album of sentimental songs. When I asked him what the appeal was, he responded that it was the lyrics, the poetry, and the quality of allusions that reach deep inside oneself and find emotional resonance (personal communication, 13 July 2010). Some older people find the style, quality, and ethics of older songs and their performance more appealing and appropriate (especially from an Islamic perspective).

Pop Minang, therefore, provides one of the avenues through which identification as Minangkabau is experienced, defined, and consumed internally. It constructs a Minangkabau sensibility "by depicting a recognizable landscape through the use of metaphors" related to migration and the homeland (Barendregt 2002:416). Yet the affection for the *alam Minangkabau* (Minangkabau world), like the attachment to the homeland in enka, is not simply geographical in nature but also conceptual. As Barendregt points out, the attachment goes beyond this landscape to "a community sharing the same moral values" (ibid.:417). "People identify with sentimental culture," Stokes astutely notes, drawing on Michael Herzfeld, "as a means of . . . 'rueful self-recognition' in the nation-state" (2007:216). Like Egyptian sentimental dramas and music, pop Minang is a form of cultural intimacy, one that allows the Minangkabau to recognize themselves within the nation as distinct from its other constituents. Songs like "Malam Bainai" that express a specific Minangkabau sensibility contribute to this feeling of intimacy.

"Malam Bainai": The Pop Song about Weddings

The history of the song is imprecise. Unlike some pop Minang songs, listings on album covers show no data relating to either the composer or the lyricist, suggesting that it predates the recognition of such attributions. Interviewees in their sixties and seventies, including Syahrul Tarun Yusuf, all suggested that the song existed prior to their earliest memories. Some personal accounts also suggest that there was an earlier version with a different melody: the version with this tune initially went by a different title, "Anak Daro" (The Bride), and it was only with Elly Kasim's popularization of the tune in the 1960s that the title "Malam Bainai" was assigned. It is the circulation of her version and lyrics that form the basis for this article.

Many covers of this version exist. In most, the song contains several verses; the melody is set to harmonic progressions using just I, IV, and V, with some versions modulating up a half step in later verses; and there are intermittent instrumental breaks. The style of the accompaniment and instrumentation differs according to the vogue of an era; some renditions use only cosmopolitan instruments, while others incorporate Minangkabau instruments, or at least samples of them. As is typical of many Minangkabau songs,[6] the lyrics change from one version to another while the melody remains set. In spite of this variation, the song's importance and connection to wedding adat—beyond the title itself—derives largely from its lyrical content.

The song title makes specific reference to the adat ritual of *malam bainai*, literally translated as "evening of henna," for the decoration of the bride's fingernails with henna. Historically witnessed only by the bride's closest family and friends, this ritual marked the end of the bride's youth as she transitioned into adulthood. But as Arzul Jamaan Datuak Endah Kayo nan Kuniang—respected adat leader, academic, musician, and my host father—emphasized, the song actually has little to do with the ritual after which it was named (interview, 6 July 2010, Padang Panjang). The lyrics of Elly's classic version detail several days of wedding rituals:

"Malam Bainai" Lyrics from *Elly Kasim: Top Hits 1960–1970 Vol. 2*

Malam malam baiko yo mamak	This evening, *yo mamak*[7]
Malam malam bainai yo sayang	Evening of henna, *yo sayang*
Anak daro yo mamak	The bride, *yo mamak*
Jo marapulai.	With the groom.
Pasumandannyo banyak yo mamak	The attendants are many
Manatiang-natiang piriang yo sayang	Carrying plates
Sambanyo lamak yo mamak	The dishes are tasty
Si gulai kambiang.	Goat curry.

Malam malam bacoki yo mamak	The evening of playing a game
Di bawah, bawah tirai yo sayang	Underneath the curtains
Bujang jo gadih yo mamak	Young men with young women
Banyak maintai.	Lots spy on each other.
Cincin yo lah dicabuik yo mamak	The ring is brought out
Di jari-jari manih yo sayang	Placed on the sweet finger
Marapulai galak yo mamak	The groom laughs
Anak daro manangih.	The bride cries.
Malam malam katigo yo mamak	The third evening
Malam malam bajapuik yo sayang	The evening of collection
Marapulai tibo yo mamak	The groom arrives
Anak daro takuik.	The bride is afraid.

The distinctions between different rituals part of wedding adat,[8] including malam bainai, are conflated in the lyrics, making the song iconic of Minangkabau weddings in general. This iconicity is reinforced through its recurring adoption in idealistic representations of Minangkabau weddings.

The Celebration of Weddings

Cultural policies of the independent state, especially since Suharto's New Order regime (1965–1998), have encouraged elaborate displays of adat: weddings provide prime material for adaptation as glossy spectacles designed to engage cosmopolitan and tourist audiences. Like enka, these displays provide a certain kind of cultural memory that "selects which details to obscure in order to naturalize memory, history, and identity and then build its own phantasmic utopia" (Yano 2002:17). Cosmopolitans and migrants alike relate to them because they offer a nostalgized view of the ways things used to be. I am interested in them here because "Malam Bainai" is often utilized in this selective "remembering" of wedding tradition. Just as Hadler demonstrates how colonialists' intervention and the role of the elite they put in place over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries contributed significantly to the codification of adat (2008), I suggest that cultural displays provide a mechanism through which we can evaluate its contemporary codification.

One event exemplifying adat as spectacle was the 2004 Special Packet at the West Sumatra pavilion of Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (the Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Theme Park) in Jakarta. The event—designed to increase tourism in the province—was billed in program notes and through speeches as an evening of "Minangkabau cultural enchantment" in order to display adat from the Bukittinggi region of West Sumatra. The centerpiece of the evening was a fusion of dance, drama, music, and ritual. The music for this event, like most cultural displays, involves *talempong kreasi baru* (new creation talempong), a

diatonically tuned set of thirty to sixty talempong augmented with a variety of indigenous wind instruments and drums, synthesizer, bass guitar, tambourine, and/or jembe. These ensembles, often accompanying choreographed dances, play orchestrated, harmonized arrangements of well-known Minangkabau tunes, including pop Minang and *dendang* ("song," but also a broadly defined local genre). The roots of the style date back to 1968 and an experimental form called *orkes talempong* (talempong orchestra) that was developed by the Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia (Academy for Traditional Music) in Padang Panjang (see Fraser forthcoming). Talempong kreasi (as it is commonly called) still remains central to curricula at state institutions for the arts (Figure 1).

The first half of the drama, punctuated by music and dance, led into a scene that depicted the wedding of a couple, complete with the *palaminan* (bridal dais) provided by a wedding business that seized the opportunity to distribute promotional materials (Figure 2).

The mock wedding included a procession, dances to entertain the guests, and a segment where the VIP audience members, constituted of ambassadors and other high-ranking officials, were invited to go up on stage to greet the "couple." This participatory activity, however, momentarily conflated the distinction between the display of ritual and its enactment; the recognition of the

Figure 1. *Talempong kreasi* at the High School for Performing Arts in Padang, February 16, 2004.

Figure 2. The front of Gadih Ranti's glossy brochure.

distinguished guests and the element of sociability were real, with this act thereby operating as a ritual greeting embedded within the display of ritual. In spite of the multiple meanings entailed in the event, the emcees of the evening declared in Minangkabau, Indonesian, and English that the "wedding" was staged according to "authentic" adat, as did Nasrul M. Phietra, the head of the sponsoring tourism office, in an interview some weeks later (19 August 2004, Bukittinggi). Following Brubaker's definition (2002), the cultural officials, troupe directors, and wedding business involved in managing and staging this event operated as ethnopolitical entrepreneurs.

Wedding Celebrities: Elly Kasim and Nazif Basir

Two exemplary entrepreneurs involved in the business of weddings are the married couple Elly Kasim, the pop Minang icon, and Nazif Basir, an equally prominent Minangkabau luminary. Nazif is a *seniman* (professional artist) who has worked variously as a lyricist, scriptwriter, composer, and choreographer. Based in Jakarta, Elly and Nazif are full-time entrepreneurs producing Minangkabau cultural goods of all kinds: they provide costumes, tailored sanggar packages, and *tari massal* (dances on a massive scale) for a range of ceremonial and state occasions. Their influence on cultural practice is particularly noticeable

within the realm of weddings. Together, they have a produced a performance, a book (Basir and Kasim 1997), and a cassette (*Baralek Gadang, Baru*) related to Minangkabau wedding adat.

Elly and Nazif were among the first people to package Minangkabau wedding practices for staged performance. In 1975, just as the "adat as spectacle" development was gaining momentum, they created an operetta titled "Baralek Gadang" (Grand Wedding Celebration). Journalist and cultural commentator Hamid Djabbar describes the operetta as presenting

> a wedding celebration according to Minangkabau adat . . . abbreviating in a popular manner all matters about the celebration, it was filled in with narration according to adat aphorisms, [and] continuously with songs and dance. (*Singgalang*, June 13, 2004)

Fusing ritual practice with music, dance, and narration, this show—performed for both domestic and international audiences—set a precedent for the performative reification of Minangkabau wedding practices. As Djabbar asserts, it was "more than just an arts performance . . . it became a type of model for wedding celebrations of Minangkabau people that was successful in the rantau" (ibid.). In other words, this display of Minangkabau wedding adat informed the way adat was realized at actual weddings. This was possible in part because Elly and Nazif are also in the business of organizing weddings, and have been doing so—mostly in Jakarta and other large Indonesian cities—since the late 1970s (Basir and Kasim 1997:ix).

Their influence and success within the wedding business has led to the publication of a book on Minangkabau wedding adat (ibid.) that was formulated in response to continual requests from Minangkabau in the rantau who wanted to know how to conduct wedding rituals and celebrations in accordance with "correct" adat (ibid.:ix). As Nazif states, the book is not based on empirical research, but rather on his experience in the wedding business (ibid.:xi). Its significance is reinforced through the endorsement of prominent officials involved in state projects invested in the celebration of cultural diversity. In her preface, Edi Sedyawati, then Director-General of Culture in Indonesia, suggests that

> for those who come from Minang families this book can be used as guideline to holding an adat wedding ceremony, whereas for those who are not Minang but involved in the ceremony, either as part of the "committee" or as a guest, this book can be used to understand the meanings behind the ceremonial actions . . . (ibid.:v)

Thus, she views the book both as an interpretive guide for cultural outsiders and as a kind of "do-it-yourself" manual for "authentic" Minangkabau weddings.

The release of a cassette that celebrates Minangkabau wedding practices

through speech and music is even more significant for my purposes. Like their operetta, this recording is titled *Baralek Gadang* (The Grand Wedding Celebration). The first edition was originally timed to coincide with the 1992 "Visit ASEAN Year," part of the incentive to increase tourism to Southeast Asia. The cassette, re-released with updates and additional items in 2004, features famous pop singers, including Elly Kasim herself; well-known composers and lyricists; and Sangrina Bunda, Nazif and Elly's sanggar.

The insert is designed to make explicit reference to images of the Minangkabau, including use of the iconic colors of red, yellow, and black. Several women, including Elly, are attired in different styles of adat costumes provided by Elly Kasim Collections, her costume rental business. The cassette therefore functions as a direct publicity ploy for Elly and Nazif's wedding business, while promoting and disseminating their aesthetic sensibilities.

This cassette presents an idealized picture of Minangkabau wedding adat by featuring more component rituals than are found at many weddings today. Most tracks involve a brief segment of *pasambahan* (ritual speech), followed by, or sometimes included within, a musical arrangement that draws on pop Minang and/or talempong kreasi. The lyrics describe wedding practices, for example, "Nan Dinanti Lah Tibo" (The One who is Waited for has Arrived) or "Manyonsong Marapulai Tibo" (To Receive the Arrival of the Groom). At other times the speech or song involves the enactment of the ritual itself, such as "Sia Gala Marapulai" (Broadcasting the Groom's Title). When I asked adat leader Arzul Jamaan what he thought the cassette was trying to achieve, he answered that it has been packaged for *infotainment* (information given within the frame of entertainment), especially for the people in the rantau (interview, 28 July 2010, Padang Panjang). Erman, the record storekeeper, confirmed that he primarily sells it to migrants who come looking for advice on what music to play at their weddings (interview, 22 July 2010, Padang Panjang). In addition to this album, he sells them other pop Minang wedding songs, including "Malam Bainai," "Alek Rang Mudo," and "Baralek Gadang," and advises them on what to play when.

It is not surprising to find "Malam Bainai" included on *Baralek Gadang*. The song, however, is not identified by this title, but rather by its function as the "Lagu Basandiang Duo" (Song for Sitting Side by Side). At this moment in weddings, the couple is enthroned on a bridal dais (a habit adopted only in the last half century), presiding over the reception and receiving the congratulations of guests as they depart. The application of the song to this specific context has necessitated a change of lyrics from the original, though they still contribute to the idealized depiction of wedding practices.

"Lagu Basandiang Duo," Lyrics from *Baralek Gadang*

Malam malam baiko yo mamak	This evening, *yo mamak*
Malam malam basandiang yo sayang	The evening sitting in state
Anak daro yo mamak	The bride, *yo mamak*
Mamakai suntiang.	Wearing the crowned headdress.
Diiriangkan basamo yo mamak	To be accompanied together
Jalan jo langkah gontai yo sayang	Walk with relaxed steps
Anak daro yo mamak	The bride
Jo marapulai.	With the groom.
Disonsong jo galombang yo mamak	To be welcomed with *galombang*
Ditabua bareh kuniang yo sayang	Yellow rice scattered about
Anak daro rancak	The bride is good
Marapulai santiang.	The groom is dedicated.
Duduak basandiang duo yo mamak	The two sitting in state
Dibawa palaminan yo sayang	Underneath the bridal dais
Nan mudo-mudo yo banyak	The youth
Nan kacin inai.	Have a little henna.

While the lyrics clearly index weddings, the semiotic potential of the song is expanded with its adoption in cultural displays of weddings, which continues the process of semantic snowballing in which new meanings accrue to the original sign.

"Malam Bainai" in Cultural Displays

In cultural displays, "Malam Bainai" is frequently used to index weddings. It is often used as background music for fashion parades featuring regional varieties of Minangkabau wedding costumes. In other instances, it is utilized for an explicit enactment of wedding processions. For example, it was used for the procession in the mock wedding where the couple, along with their attendants and entourage, promenaded in ceremonial dress in circuitous routes on the stage. As the program for the evening had included a fashion show earlier, it was the second time the song was performed that evening by the talempong kreasi ensemble. Its repetition indicates its significance and iconic status. The sentimental capacity of pop Minang is enhanced when played on ensembles such as talempong kreasi that are designed to index music of the past within a contemporary frame; the man sitting next to me at the event, for example, happily hummed along with the performance.

Another telling moment involving the song comes from its adoption during a wedding procession on a video compact disc recording by sanggar Puti Limo Jurai titled *Minangkabau Traditional Arts* (English in the original).

Marketed toward international tourists visiting West Sumatra, the track called "Bararak" (To Process) is translated as "Wedding Costum [sic] Show." The description of the item suggests that the main function of the procession is to show off the ceremonial clothes. In this depiction of wedding ritual, the bridal couple and their entourage of attendants and musicians, all attired in colorful costumes, process around the paved grounds of a cultural park with a reconstructed *rumah gadang* (Minangkabau longhouse) in the background. While the visual aesthetics of the video provide considerable material to deconstruct, I am most interested in the musical accompaniment that is designed to index *talempong pacik*, the indigenous talempong style used in processions, while simultaneously referencing "Malam Bainai." Talempong pacik is referenced through the instrumentation—three pairs of talempong and a *sarunai* (single-reed pipe)—and instrumental function where the talempong are divided into interlocking parts while the sarunai provides a melody. The adoption of "Malam Bainai" as the melody played on the sarunai, and the diatonic tuning it necessitates, however, entail significant departures from the indigenous style.[9] In fact, the combination of talempong pacik with "Malam Bainai" makes the presentation doubly—or perhaps redundantly—indexical of wedding procession music, referencing as it does different modalities and approaches to the traditional.

The constant incorporation of "Malam Bainai" into celebrations of wedding adat by entrepreneurs has helped to legitimize its use in actual weddings. The dialectical interplay between cultural display and lived practice suggests that cultural display cannot merely be explained by the transformation of cultural, or in this case musical, artifacts into commodities, and that the projection of ethnicity in such cases is not spurious, as is often suggested of tourism contexts, but part of lived reality. Entrepreneurs provide the critical links between the two.

Custom for Hire: Entrepreneurs and Wedding Celebrations

Minangkabau weddings have become increasingly commercialized over the years. Wedding hosts in urban contexts and others with sufficient economic resources often hire wedding planners and other professionals to manage their events. At the high-end of the scale, wedding businesses like Gadih Ranti offer "traditional Minang weddings" in their promotional materials (see Figure 2 above). These businesses provide packages that include everything from the ceremony marking the arrival of the bride and groom to costumes, decorations, catering, and entertainment. One can even hire ritual attendants to enhance the size and prestige of the event.

In positioning themselves as adat specialists, some entrepreneurs have contributed to changing interpretations of what constitutes adat. Sulastri Andras provides weddings services in combination with her sanggar, Satampang Baniah.

A graduate of the Academy of Traditional Music, she is a teacher in the dance department at the High School for Performing Arts in Padang. Her academic training and credentials help legitimize her sanggar work. Packages for her clients are based on abbreviations of what she calls "*adat yang sebenarnya*" (adat which is correct), although it is consciously selected and shaped for marketability. She remarked that the *kemasan* (packages) she presents "achieve great reception by the community, even though they don't know [adat]." She is successful in the marketplace, she reminded me, because her clients know so little themselves (interview, 27 August 2004, Padang).

When entrepreneurs define "correct" adat, they make decisions about what elements to include or exclude from their packages. The flexibility of adat allows contemporary tastes to influence choices and standards. As Nazif declares, "what is defined as *rancak* (beautiful/ pleasing) twenty years ago is different from people's understandings of what is rancak today . . . " (Basir and Kasim 1997:x). The following anecdote from their book also suggests that entrepreneurs have the power to set standards that are emulated by others: while their efforts to modify "clothing styles for the couple and for the Minangkabau bridal dais in Jakarta so [they were] nice in form, motif, and color" initially met some resistance, "the reality is that now almost everyone in the business, not only in Jakarta but also in Padang, has followed suit" (ibid.). Interestingly, the flow has been from the rantau back to the homeland.

Entrepreneurs have been critical in widening contemporary interpretations of adat. Understanding their influence and impact, along with recognizing the explicit connections between the work of cultural displays and wedding businesses, allows us to imagine how the use of "Malam Bainai" to mark ritual moments in the celebration of weddings has gradually morphed into practice at real weddings where it has accrued value as part of contemporary renderings of adat. The final section of the article moves on to explore the reasons why, ways in which, and moments when "Malam Bainai" has been incorporated into contemporary weddings.

"Malam Bainai" at Weddings

What motivates families to incorporate "Malam Bainai," a song with clear cosmopolitan connections, in place of, or in conjunction with, indigenous genres into their weddings? One explanation is the "trickle down" theory where habits and preferences of the elite eventually trickle down through the social classes as those of a lower ranking aspire to improve their position through emulation of the elite. Another fruitful avenue to consider is the affective appeal of pop Minang, in addition to the evocative resonance of the song's subject matter, the moment in which it is played, and the kind of ensemble on which it is performed.

In referring to the "trickle down" theory of fashion styles, Booth suggests

that the widespread adoption of brass bands can be traced back to their presence as an icon of prestige at colonial and indigenous courts. The desire to imitate cultural practices of social and political elite led to the dissemination of the practice. An important aspect of this theory is the recognition that the practices of elites are constantly changing in an effort to keep ahead of the middle and lower classes imitating them (2005:159–60; cf. Wong 1998). This theory offers a plausible explanation for the adoption of "Malam Bainai" in contemporary Minangkabau weddings. While it is impossible to trace the precise history of the song's adoption, it is easy to imagine how people like Elly and Nazif could have once posited "Malam Bainai" as an expression of adat that is both beautiful and fitting with the times. From there, the habit was adopted by social and political elites who could afford to hire them or other entrepreneurs to manage their weddings, finding their musical offerings a convenient way to express their simultaneous self-understandings as Minangkabau and modern. While the high-end entrepreneurs have now moved on to more elaborate adaptations involving the recovery of "tradition," the use of "Malam Bainai" has trickled down to the middle-class and aspiring cosmopolitans. In search of social and cultural capital, they engage lower-level entrepreneurs and wedding businesses that often provide the song as a default part of their wedding packages to signal the arrival of the bride.

The occurrence and tenacity of "Malam Bainai" in contemporary weddings is linked with the subject matter of the song, just as Booth found that the most enduring and ubiquitous film songs at South Asian wedding processions were those iconic of weddings, and especially processions. The use of these songs in live processions therefore mimicked their filmic contexts. Booth found, moreover, that these songs were particularly meaningful and resonant: for the older processional participants, the songs have the capacity to generate nostalgic recollections of the film; for the younger attendees, they may have no such prior association with the original film contexts for these songs, but their constant reiteration at wedding processions during their lifetime makes the songs iconic of "*barat* [processions] and weddings in a newly traditional way" (2005:262). While illustrating semantic snowballing, Booth's example suggests that different participants may interpret the same sign—a particular song—in strikingly different ways.

The semiosis of "Malam Bainai" functions in a similar way. Most people who identify as Minangkabau understand it as iconic of weddings, having heard it in contexts ranging from primary school to karaoke, cultural shows, and weddings. Hearing "Malam Bainai" at a wedding can potentially index each prior exposure, along with the personalized emotional states of the time. For some participants, it might conjure the sentimentality of pop Minang, functioning as nostalgic recollection of times past; sixty-eight-year-old Yufida, hostess of the

2004 wedding opening the article, likes these songs because they "make me feel young again" (interview, 20 July 2010, Padang Panjang). For others, its recurrence has made it, like Hindi film songs, indicative of weddings in a "newly traditional way." While the song had become "adat, already a custom," when I played a range of samples I had recorded at weddings to Siti Aisyah, a talempong performer from the village of Unggan, she was quick to identify the song as "*adat kota* (the custom in cities)" (interview, 13 July 2010, Unggan). For cosmopolitans, however, their emotional attachment to pop Minang runs considerably deeper than it does to genres associated with indigenous contexts to which they have had little personal exposure. As Sarkissian found of cultural shows aimed at tourists, they are "equally (if not more) powerful for urban residents who have little practical experience of life outside the modern metropolis" (1998:95–96).

The kind of ensemble on which "Malam Bainai" is played also contributes to the song's affective appeal. Relatively economical in comparison to hiring a full band, orgen tunggal was the most popular live music at Minangkabau weddings during 2003–2004, especially in urban areas. In 2010, no hosts said they chose orgen because they liked the style; indeed, some found it "noisy." Its selection was primarily motivated by economic limitations and convenience (it is often part of the packet offered by lower-end wedding businesses). Like *campur sari*, which substitutes for gamelan at life-cycle rituals in Java, orgen is more economical in terms of space and cost (Supanggah 2003:3). Hired primarily as entertainment, orgen groups, featuring one to several vocalists backed by a synthesizer complete with rhythm machine and programmed for karaoke, crank out the classic and latest pop Minang hits throughout the day. Although the performers also cover songs from Indonesian genres like *pop Indonesia* and *dangdut*, many hosts and guests expressed a definite preference for Minangkabau repertoire.

When families have the economic resources to do so, they typically hire an ensemble that is more explicitly Minangkabau in character than orgen and which consequently serves to garner more prestige. Sometimes affiliated with higher-end wedding businesses, these ensembles include talempong kreasi and *talempong goyang* ("talempong that shakes"). According to Alfalah, one of its major proponents, the label suggests talempong "performed in a passionate, rather than stiff manner, which is absorbing for the viewers to watch" (interview, 26 June 2010, Padang Panjang). As talempong goyang is a derivative of talempong kreasi that dates back to the 1990s, the distinction between the two ensembles is subtle. During fieldwork in 2003–4, there was considerable overlap in terms of instrumentation: both ensembles incorporated electric bass/guitar, synthesizer, jembe and vocalists. In 2010, the distinction was clearer; Alfalah's group incorporated a drum set (see Figure 3).

By 2010, talempong goyang looked and sounded more like a rock band with talempong than a talempong ensemble augmented with electric instru-

Figure 3. Alfalah's *talempong goyang* ensemble playing at a wedding in Padang Panjang, June 17, 2010.

ments. Covering repertoire that extends beyond pop Minang and dendang to incorporate other local, regional, and Indonesian genres, the repertoire of talempong goyang ensembles is considerably broader than that of talempong kreasi ensembles. In many ways, talempong goyang is the Minangkabau counterpart of Javanese campur sari, a form that mixes *keroncong*, gamelan, dangdut, and pop repertoire played on an ensemble of mixed instruments where keyboard is valued for its imitative qualities and contributions to a "modern image" (Supanggah 2003:11).

Incorporating either a talempong kreasi or goyang ensemble into a wedding validates and bolsters one's sense of self as Minangkabau. As Suryanti, my host mother, responded when asked about the presence of the latter at her daughter's wedding: "Although it is modern, there are still traditions. It is more Minang. Orgen is just *barat* (Western)" (personal communication, 14 July 2010). For many of the families and guests listening to these ensembles, especially for the younger generation socialized into these styles through the media and education system, this music functioned as their version of tradition; often, they were not familiar with the styles that survive and continue to be performed in communities with a more indigenous worldview. In those contexts, found in rural

and, occasionally, urban areas, ritual and entertainment music usually involved ensembles drawn from the local community; in the villages of Unggan and Paninjauan, for instance, talempong pacik is used for processional moments while *talempong duduak* (seated talempong) is used for the reception.

The final factor to consider in this analysis is the moment when "Malam Bainai" is deployed. Is it primarily for entertainment or does it constitute ritual action? If so, how does this correlate with its use in cultural displays? At some weddings, like the one in the highland town of Padang Panjang that opened this article, "Malam Bainai" was played to mark the most significant ritual moment involving the wedding party and their entourage: their arrival through procession. At this wedding, the significance of this moment was enhanced by the delivery of ritual speech in the middle of the song as the procession paused before entering the house for the bride and groom to sit in state. Its function thereby parallels that of cultural displays.

At a wedding in Padang Alai on the rural outskirts of Payakumbuh, one of the largest towns in the highlands, "Malam Bainai" was also used as the wedding party entered the house, but in this case it was not the only ritual music. The local talempong pacik ensemble involving five women accompanied the *bararak babako* (procession from the bride's father's maternal home to her mother's maternal one), colliding with the sounds of orgen tunggal blaring through massive speakers at the reception. While the orgen group ceased playing as the procession approached, thereby suggesting ritual precedent lay with talempong pacik, the group resumed playing as the bridal party entered the house; "Malam Bainai," arranged in a medley with "Alek Rang Mudo" (a link also typical of Alfalah's talempong goyang group), provided the soundtrack. The orgen group then proceeded to entertain guests who enjoyed a buffet-style meal under the satin canopies before passing on their congratulations to the couple. Although diachronically displayed, in this case the presence of both talempong pacik and "Malam Bainai" served to mark, and indeed constituted, the ritual action: the reception and recognition of the bride and groom as couple. I argue that rather than suggesting redundancy of ritual action, these moments reveal multiple ways of musically enacting adat and marking oneself as Minangkabau.

Finally, at a wedding in Hotel Nikko, a five-star hotel in central Jakarta, a talempong kreasi ensemble (Figure 4) attached to the Gadih Ranti wedding business—the same business that provided the bridal dais for the staged wedding at the theme park—involved four instrumentalists plus a vocalist and an emcee who delivered ritual speech and interpreted the action for the guests. As the couple entered the hall, the musicians played an arrangement of talempong pacik on the kreasi ensemble. The reception of the couple was marked by a dance typically used by sanggar to pay tribute to honored guests. It was only as the guests queued up to congratulate the couple that the ensemble performed

Figure 4. The talempong kreasi ensemble part of the Gadih Ranti wedding business at the wedding in Hotel Nikko, Jakarta, May 2, 2004.

"Malam Bainai." While the song did not mark the primary ritual moment at this wedding, it imitated the function of the song on Elly and Nazif's *Baralek Gadang* cassette, used to mark the segment of the ceremony where the couple sit in state and greet their guests.

Conclusion

Taking place at the juncture between music, ethnicity, weddings and tourism, this story about a pop song about wedding custom that becomes custom at some weddings shows how some songs function as particularly rich cultural texts. The story has illustrated three major points. Firstly, it demonstrates how popular music is not only embedded in social life, but is also imbued with profound value and meaning. Pop Minang, for instance, engenders a kind of "cultural intimacy" where its listeners imagine themselves belonging to a bounded community through shared sentimentality. For those people, its emotional potency provides an important way of understanding oneself as Minangkabau. However, the semiotic potential, and thus affective appeal, of "Malam Bainai"

extends beyond the sentimentality of the genre to the song's position as a powerful icon of Minangkabau weddings. The use of "Malam Bainai" in displays of wedding adat both capitalizes on and extends this iconicity, making it a particularly efficient and potent sign to use at weddings.

Secondly, I have highlighted the agency of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs in affecting transformational shifts in meaning. Shaping Minangkabau cultural practices for display, they have done much to not only invoke a sense of ethnicity, but also evoke it. Just as Sarkissian found the process of designing cultural shows to have a cumulative effect that conferred "authority and legitimacy on [particular] pieces" (1998:98), so I argue that the involvement of cultural entrepreneurs, including record storekeepers, confers authority and legitimacy on "Malam Bainai" as an expression of Minangkabau identity. The synergy between cultural displays and actual weddings is activated and mediated by them.

Finally, witnessed by friends and family, weddings offer host families a chance to show who they are and how they fit into the world, including their tacit or explicit engagement with Minangkabau as ethnic category. I have suggested that the explicit articulation of Minangkabau ethnicity at weddings is an artifact of increasing geographic, social, and economic mobility, while a more tacit invocation is primarily expressed through aesthetic choices. Underscoring the fluidity and flexibility of the adat system that governs these choices, this story has revealed how individuals and communities have agency over which practices to follow, affirm, or adopt. As Yano asserts, these choices become "strategic assertions and practices of identity." Just as the existence of multiple options "suggests multilinear paths to coexisting, often competing, modernities" and ways of being Japanese (2002:14), so the choice of music at weddings suggests multiple ways of understanding and being Minangkabau in today's world. As ethnographers we should be attuned not just to the moments of sameness that a particular category evokes, but also to the differences within it.

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Notes

1. I address how people have engaged with the category of Minangkabau more fully in relation to musical genres, activities, and institutions in a current book project.

2. Islam, however, has been incorporated as an essential part of the Minangkabau adat system, so that technically the distinction is one between categories of adat, a topic I will return to later.

3. In the height of wedding season (the months preceding and following Ramadan), people may be invited to several weddings a week.

4. Pepatah-petitih is an important Minangkabau oral literary style; aphorisms like this are both a part of and a self-reflexive commentary on Minangkabau adat.

5. Many migrants, however, were not born and have never actually lived in their "native village" (identified according to the mother's line of descent), but still identify by and assert an attachment to this ancestral place of origin.

6. In West Sumatra, the identification of a particular song is defined more by melodic contour than by lyrical content. Unlike Japanese enka, it does not extend to instrumentation or the particular arrangement (Yano 2002:49–50).

7. The phrases "yo mamak" and "yo sayang" are vocables with no direct lexical interpretation.

8. The "evening of collection" in the lyrics, for example, makes reference to the historical practice of ritually collecting the groom from his family home and delivering him to his new residence at the bride's family home.

9. It is important to note, however, that talempong in indigenous contexts is also morphing, including with regard to diatonic tuning and the adoption of pop songs.

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