

## Chapter 6

### BECOMING A TRIBAL ELDER, AND OTHER GREEN DEVELOPMENT FANTASIES

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How does a globally circulating social category come to mean something to people in a particular political context? Categories are dream machines as well as practical tools for seeing; the fantastic view we are offered and the familiar job at hand are inextricably related. This essay is a backhanded defense of environmentally-inflected rural policy, including that sometimes called “green” or sustainable development. I argue that at least in one village in the Meratus Mountains of Kalimantan, collaboration between urban environmentalists and village leaders offers promising possibilities for environmental and social justice, that is, for building a world in which we might want to live. Yet my argument is a planner’s nightmare. The collaborations I describe are made possible only by clever engagements with green development fantasies of the rural, the backward, and the exotic. “Tribal elders” are made in the mobile spaces found within coercive international dreams of conservation and development, and these men and women — granted agency within the fantasies of their sponsors — are enabled to forge alliances that yet somehow present the hope of transforming top-down coercion into local empowerment. Categories often come to life in this round-about way. Yet we can only appreciate their creative intervention and their political charge if we move beyond a sociology of stable interest groups and hierarchies to investigate the social effects of shifting rhetorics and narratives and the reformulations of identity and community that they engender.

My argument is composed at a moment when many scholars have become critical of social movements committed to combining the protection of endangered environments and the empowerment of indigenous peoples (Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998). Fearing simplistic representations of wild nature and tribal culture, scholars dismiss what in my opinion are some of the most promising social movements of our times. In contrast, my approach offers an alternative to the choice between unselfconscious stereotypes of nature and culture on the one hand, and ironic dismissals of environmental and indigenous politics on the other. I argue that our discussions might better begin with the circulation and use of “green development fantasies.” My focus on collaboration — as

opposed to contestation or misunderstanding — offers a methodological framework for facilitating this discussion. In the late 1990s, both scholars and activists know a lot about how to talk about contests; we have less precedence for discussing the awkward but necessary collaborations central to both intellectual and political work.

Several layers of context are necessary for my argument to emerge. I begin by locating my essay within the concerns about upland transformations in Indonesia that form the subject of this volume. I then turn to the Meratus village of Mangkiling, which, already the subject of many green development representations, seems well suited for a meditation on the dynamics of representation. The fantastic aspects of international thinking about exotic and backward rural communities (for which I deploy the term “tribe” as a kind of shorthand) are my guide to the field of attraction in which Mangkiling representatives are able to become potential collaborators and political actors. Beginning conventionally enough in a rural sociology, I draw my argument into the unstable realm of pathos and love in which things that did not exist before can emerge. For it is in that realm that metropolitan fantasies *both* fulfil themselves *and* take the dreamers they construct by surprise.

#### UPLAND TRANSFORMATIONS

The residents of uplands Indonesia have come into a new visibility. For many decades, lowland peasants were the only rural peoples to figure in those great narratives of nationalism and development that plotted the country's past and future. In recent years, however, international concerns with the degradation of fragile environments have focused attention on rainforests and mountains — and their long-time residents. Policy makers have been pressed to rethink the uplands as key sites of environmental sustainability and to consider the role of uplands communities within environmental conservation as well as development programs. Non-governmental organizations focusing on issues of conservation and development have joined state officials in negotiating the role of uplands communities. Social scientists have been drawn into practical discussion of upland futures. Upland village farmers are aware of a new sense of focus and urgency in their dealings with state officials, NGOs, and social scientists alike.

The new attention to upland communities does not present itself in the form of a consensus. Discussion ignites fierce debates (Who owns the forest?) as well as unstated disagreements (What is a community?). Central to all this are much disputed issues of representation. On one end of

a continuum, upland communities are represented as closed and static repositories of custom and tradition; on the other end, uplanders are portrayed as hyper-rational, individualistic entrepreneurs with no commitments to local social life or culture. Either side of the continuum can be presented as politically promising or socially worthless: uplanders as cultural communities may be backward savages or guardians of the forest; as individualistic entrepreneurs they may be model citizens or undisciplined mobs. Both ends of this continuum of representation draw upon hoary historical roots as well as contemporary legitimacy. Terms are revitalized. International environmental and minority rights movements work to transform the assumption that “tribes” are backward remnants of archaic humanity to argue instead that the world needs tribal wisdom and tribal rights to preserve our endangered biological and cultural diversity. Other environmentalists celebrate the new hegemony of free trade by portraying a post-communal world of independent innovators and entrepreneurs. In Indonesia, both ends of the “individuals-or-communities” continuum, as well as many compromises and middle zones, engage some social scientists, some community leaders and advocates, some village farmers.

Given the variety of ways these dichotomous strategies of representation have been and are being used and abused, this does not seem a moment to decide once-and-for-all which one is really right. Instead, it seems an important time to analyze the dynamics of representation itself, and particularly to look at how representational categories come to mean something to farmers, community leaders, scholars, advocates, or development bureaucrats in a particular political moment. In this spirit, this essay discusses representational strategies, and the social categories on which they rely, as dreams and fantasies that grab people under certain circumstances. Preexisting complexities are of course important, but by thinking of them as gates to, rather than walls against the imagination, it is possible to trace the emergence of unexpected ingenuities. As we attend to both creativity and constraints in upland self-fashioning, a number of elements come into view.

First, a new role has become possible for rural minority leaders who convincingly “represent” the kind of community that environmentalists and green developers might choose for co-operation, learning, and alliance. These representatives take on the mediations that make collaborations between village people and advocates or policy makers possible. Their collaborations sustain and give life to concepts such as village development, tribal rights, sustainability, community-based conservation,

or local culture. At the same time, these same concepts make political agency possible on both sides: they are the medium in which village leaders and those who study, supervise, and change them can imagine each other as strategic actors and thus can mold their own actions strategically. We might call these representatives "tribal elders" because it is they who, to hold the attention of potential rural-minority advocates, take responsibility for the fantasy of the tribe.

For tribal elders to flourish, it is not enough to posit the existence of "tribes"; a field of attraction must be created to nurture and maintain the relationship between the rural community and its experts. Without this field of attraction, the community will be abandoned to its own fate; neither mediation nor collaboration is possible. Thus the single most important sign of a community representative's success is his or her ability to conjure, and be conjured by, that emotionally-fraught space that keeps the experts coming back. In this space creative action is possible, and collaborations are forged.

Collaborations are the hopeful edge of a political project. To condemn a project, it is not enough to say that it engages in simplifications; all social categories simplify even as they bring us to appreciate new complexities. Instead, it seems more useful to judge the political valence of a project by the promise for remaking the world of the collaborations it has engendered. Thus "tribal" fantasies in South Kalimantan, combined in an ambivalent and ambiguous manner with rural development dreams and hierarchies, lead to collaborations between urban activists and village leaders that offer possibilities for building environmental and social justice in the countryside as exciting as any I have heard of on the contemporary scene. At the end of this essay, I turn to two promising initiatives, collaborations between urban environmentalists and Mangkiling leaders that developed in the early 1990s. First, I show how "nature" is made into a utopian space of collaboration through the practice of naming trees. Second, I examine the mapping projects that, instead of clarifying land claims, amplify ambiguity in the system — and thus open the confusion in which village claims over forested land might hold their own.

It is not useful to be complacent about these collaborations. Tribal elders have no particularly striking powers; nor do they represent homogeneous or unified communities or grass-roots movements. Their "community" representations are vulnerable and contested; even close kin and neighbors are not necessarily supporters. A few minutes' hike away, no one may know a thing about their projects. Furthermore, environmentalist and tribal collaborations with outside patrons are hardly the most

powerful rural collaborations around. In Indonesia, development visions in which rapid environmental destruction is appreciated as progress or regulated as government-endorsed "sustainability" continue to be much more powerful than emergent "tribal" environmentalisms. Song-and-dance tourism predominates over ecotourism. The role of environmentally-friendly tribal elder deserves special attention because it is new and promising, but it does speak for either long-standing culture or newly-made hegemony, whether locally, regionally, or nationally.

Then, too, there is nothing here to suggest the kinds of progressive politics we most easily imagine: coalitions of "interest groups"; workers and peasants and intellectuals in league. Instead, here are moments of creative intervention and the making of new identities. Ordinary villagers may or may not get involved; it is unclear how many will see their interests as being advanced. Yet the space is cleared for the tribal elder and for the field of attraction that makes his or her agency possible. The enactment of the tribe is, to use a term from the International Situationists (writing about the very different context of metropolitan spectacle), the making of a tribal "situation"; it is the recharging of political possibility through staging the fantastical realities of everyday life (Debord 1983).<sup>1</sup>

#### THE TRIBAL SITUATION

Let me turn to a particular tribal "situation." Consider a fragment from a document written by Musa, a Meratus Dayak elder of the village of Pantai Mangkiling.

[W]e, as Indigenous Original Peoples of the Local Area, for the sake of guarding our Livelihood Rights and Environmental Conservation, as well as from our Culture, state as follows:

1. Our livelihood is to work the soil by DIBBLE-STICK PLANTING, and our care for our local natural world's plants from generation to generation has been as a productive garden, thus THERE IS NO WILD FOREST in our area.
2. We will not condone it if there is a destruction of our local natural environment, because this interferes with OUR BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS.
3. If someone destroys our local natural environment, this means they destroy our Basic Human Rights, and thus the destroyer will be confirmed as Violator of the Law of the Indigenous Original Local People.

In the Meratus Mountains of South Kalimantan, shifting cultivators have created socially-marked forest territories in which planted, encouraged, named, and closely watched trees signal the economic claims and social affiliations of particular individuals and groups. As Musa states, "There

is no wild forest" in this area. Yet since the late 1970s, timber companies, transmigration projects, plantations, and migrant pioneer farmers from the Banjar plains have made increasing claims on Meratus forests. None of these claimants recognize Meratus Dayak customary rights to the forests; instead, the forests are seen as uninhabited, wild territories to be assigned to various users by the state.

Meratus Dayak responses have been various. Stories circulate about violence and the burning of timber company bridges. At the same time, people retreat farther into the hills, discouragement spreads, and young men sell trees to illegal loggers before the "legitimate" companies can take them without compensation. This has been a challenging time for community leaders, who maneuver within the government regulations and rhetorics that both disenfranchise their communities and provide the only legitimate channels for protest. Creative responses have been necessary to hold on to any community land and resources; the threat of involuntary resettlement in government camps for "isolated tribes" looms. It is in this context that Musa has composed this document.

The document is a land-rights claim of sorts. It makes its claim by overlapping three divergent streams of political culture that, outside of this text, have rather separate spheres of existence. First, regional administration: the typed document is an official statement (*surat keterangan*) signed by Musa "on behalf of the Committee of the Traditional Hall of the People of Pantai Mangkiling," as "acknowledged" by the village head and district military officer and "verified" by the district head. The stamps of various district officers occupy the bottom third of the page; the formality is recognizable and appropriate within the regional bureaucracy.

Second, international environmentalism: the document uses every globally circulating jargon word in the social ecologist's 1980s agenda. The author writes for indigenous people, original people, people who for generations have guarded and protected their natural environment. Their traditional conservation strategies are being threatened, and with them their human rights. To destroy the forest — as the unmentioned timber companies and plantations want to do — is against traditional law. Instead, as he explains later in the text, the forests must be used by village cooperatives. Where did Musa get this rhetoric? These are not terms that Meratus Dayaks ordinarily use; furthermore, neither district nor regency bureaucrats in South Kalimantan know much about this kind of talk. The Indonesian language of the text is official and elegant — much more so than either my translation or Musa's ordinary speech. Presumably there

was collaboration here, and maybe collaboration with someone from outside South Kalimantan. However, this is not just a transplanted text, and there is a third stream evident: Meratus cultural ecology. For example, rather than engaging government problematics of shifting cultivation (*berladang berpindah-pindah*) or environmentalist endorsements of forest love and lore, the document goes straight to the cultural practice of dibble-stick planting (*menugal*), a much more locally relevant sign of social habitation.

Musa's tribal situation depends on his ability to evoke all three of these strands of political culture simultaneously. As a community representative, he can afford to show some agility with local knowledge. But he must articulate this knowledge within the discursive categories that make his community appear as an identifiable object to environmentalists, on the one hand, and government administrators and developers, on the other. His document is recognizable as a claim only to the extent that he evokes NGO and official ideas about rural minority communities. Thus my account detours momentarily from his text to introduce the community-like objects of environmentalism and development. I begin with the "tribe."

Until quite recently, tribes were supposed to represent our planet's past — the part of human evolution that city people were done with; tribal remnants were irrelevant to our times except as museum pieces. Suddenly, tribes have reentered stories of the future. The rainforests were shrinking; the ozone hole growing; the progress of *progress* looked terrifying. As the millennium drew to a close, the suggestion appeared that we had better pay attention to the wisdom of the tribes, since, after all, they are the ones who know how to maintain nature over the long haul. Attentive to the alternatives, a cosmopolitan audience looked up and listened. Tribes, it was argued, could be the guardians of the biological, pharmaceutical, cultural, and aesthetic-spiritual diversity that would make our future on earth possible. Even the most hard-headed of futurists, development planners, were forced to pay attention to this refigured planetary trajectory. The figure of the tribal elder became a small but insistent presence in the emergent rhetoric of sustainable — that is, environmentally sound — development.

Like any other political rhetoric, sustainable development plans can be idealistic and utopian or cynical and practical; they can be a tool in the hands of national military forces and transnational corporations or a rallying cry for community rights and social justice. Tribal rights is only one thin strand in an emerging "sustainability" rhetoric that more commonly takes for granted transnational capitalism and neocolonial manage-

ment as it counts board feet, parts per million, growth rates, and the bottom line. Sustainability means different things to different groups. In the Indonesian context, sustainability has been debated in Jakarta by government bureaus and non-governmental organizations: conservation areas, laws, and goals have been proposed and sometimes adopted; the question of tribal rights has even garnered some interest.<sup>2</sup> However, at least in rural areas, attempts to deepen national commitments to environmental conservation have been impeded by the presence of an enormously bureaucratized, subsidized, and militarized machinery of non-sustainable development. This is a machinery not easily converted to new purposes. It is not just that administration and planning occur through this machinery; the ruling concepts and institutions of government, economy, culture, and citizenship in rural areas have been tailored within its workings. Attempts to ignore or evade this machinery are quickly labeled subversive, a label made serious by the pervasive presence of arms. Any suggestions about forest conservation or tribal rights in South Kalimantan must somehow make their way around or through the national and regional development apparatus.

In South Kalimantan, the goal of rural development is understood to be the management of rural peoples and places for the advancement of national priorities. Development is a top-down project for expanding administration; development brings villages and forests into line with national standards.<sup>3</sup> As with all administrative projects, there is negotiation of just what will count as locally appropriate. Yet I heard little disagreement about the importance of externally imposed directives in the administration of regional minorities, who are completely missing within the ranks of provincial administrators — and who are sitting on the province's most valuable forest resources. Development for them involves independent plans for forests and for people; the goal of development is to make the people orderly while simultaneously redirecting their forest resources to national priorities such as patronage, profit, and export production. Villages are to be units of administration; forests are national resource domains; there is no legitimate connection between the two. Thus, most regional development administrators have never given consideration to concepts of tribal rights or community-based forest management, each of which — whatever their constituency in Jakarta — contradicts the hegemonic logics of provincial development.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, Musa's endorsement of indigenous peoples' conservation is not a mimicry of ruling ideas; within provincial political culture, it is an innovative challenge. Musa's text argues that the traditional values

of his village are not in need of development; they are the basis of the people's own equitable and sustainable development plans. Furthermore, even if Musa learned or copied the terms of his text from a Jakarta or Geneva visitor, to merely restate them in South Kalimantan could mean little, unless he could create a "situation" — that is, a dramatic enactment of phantasmic realities — in which these terms could come to mean something to the regional officials who control whether or not the village continues to exist.

How this situation was created is the subject of the rest of this essay. In the next sections, I examine a series of documents about the village of Mangkiling to look at how Mangkiling representatives became positioned as spokespersons for community conservation and development, or, in the shorthand I have been using here, as "tribal elders." On the one hand, Mangkiling can be said to be gifted with smart leaders who have been able to transform a regional development rhetoric of backward status and exotic culture into community entrepreneurship and self-representation. This requires that they engage the textual intricacies of the discourse of development administration to find what literary critic Ross Chambers (1991) might identify as its "room for maneuver." Their tricky transformations and revisions of regional development make local initiatives possible. But Mangkiling representatives cannot strategize as if they were generals on a battlefield in which opposing armies and objectives are clearly demarcated and unchanging. Instead, they are produced as representatives by outsiders' standards of representation. They enact a fantasy in which whether they play themselves or someone else's understanding of themselves is ambiguous; the community they can represent is produced in their development-directed performances of "community."<sup>5</sup>

To make sense of this double-sided agency, so much their own and so much not their own, I show the importance of what I have been calling "fields of attraction," for it is the longings, the broken promises, the erotic draw, and the magic of that Mangkiling enacted in the tribal situation that makes the tribal elder emerge as a politically active and creative figure. To the extent that conservation and development discourses can be engaged through these fields of attraction, local initiatives — whether for better or worse — become possible.

#### THE NATIVE IN THE DOCUMENT

If Musa's testament was an isolated object, it would be inspired but socially insignificant. However, Musa and his associates in Pantai Mangkiling have done more than write this text, and their ingenuity and

persistence and sheer luck have paid off in making the village of Mangkiling a place that cannot be rolled over and erased easily. Whether or not Musa is properly considered an elder of a "Committee of the Traditional Hall of Mangkiling," as he signs himself, he has effectively constituted the village as an object of attention and respect for those interested in the conjunction of forest protection, community resource management, and ethnic pride. Government officials, ecotourists, naturalists, social science researchers, environmental activists, and journalists have been attracted there. In the process, a small mound of documents about Mangkiling has been generated.<sup>6</sup> Pantai Mangkiling may be the best documented village in the Meratus Mountains. Most of these documents are about Musa and his fellow villagers, not *by* them. The portraits of the village and the villagers found in these documents serve the purposes of others. Yet reading them with my questions in mind, it is possible to find traces of the encounters in which Mangkiling representatives, empowered to be more than passive objects of study and command, have renegotiated the very purposes that gave them agency; they have turned regional dogma to unexpected ends. These traces guide us to appreciate the formation and deployment of tribal sensibilities in Mangkiling.<sup>7</sup>

Through the documents, I can ask how Musa and his fellow village leaders managed to get so much respect as "community spokespeople" while operating within the discursive and institutional constraints of expected village status — that is, as those with nothing to say. I can trace the transformations through which these leaders made the village a formidable ethnic-environmental object with forests under noticeable, if perhaps unenforceable, traditional claim. The documents can tell us something about how Mangkiling leaders positioned themselves to make more documents about them happen, that is, to keep the village a possible subject of tribal rights.

The documents generalize about the villagers, but, sometimes, too, they name individuals. Three leaders stand out: Musa, his sister Sumiati, who is the village head, and their brother Yuni, the village secretary. These three are consulted, profiled, and quoted extensively. My interviews confirm that they are major architects of the Mangkiling project. Let me begin with a document that features Yuni.

In April 1989 a one-day seminar was held in the provincial capital of South Kalimantan on the dilemmas of Mangkiling as an upland, forest village in an era of national development and change (Yayasan Kompas Borneo 1989). Organized by a provincial environmental group and sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the seminar was attended by regional

officials, scholars, and environmentalists. As the Assistant Governor who introduced the proceedings pointed out, the seminar's focus on one village could be generalized to propose concepts for the development of interior populations throughout the nation. The seminar featured a series of papers on the social, ecological, and economic features and challenges of Mangkiling. The papers, which were distributed afterwards in bound form, present a variety of research methodologies and perspectives. Some are based on field research; others contextualize the Mangkiling situation or offer theoretical viewpoints. Many authors are careful to point out the preliminary nature of their assertions.

Yet, to some, the results of the seminar were definitive. One of the province's two daily newspapers published a report on the seminar under the title, "The Economic System of the People of Mangkiling is Extremely Simple" (*Dinamika Berita* 1989a). The article focuses on a paper presented by the head of the regional office of the Department of Social Welfare. The paragraph from the original paper that inspired the headline reads as follows:

The isolated population group in South Kalimantan still holds to a simple economic system, that is, it still employs a barter system with other families but still within the group. The products that they are able to gain from their efforts are only enough to fulfill their own needs, such that the fulfillment of life needs in a proper manner, as with other peoples, is still far from the reach of their thought. (Mooduto 1989: 3, my translation)

The most amazing thing about this paragraph is that it is utterly and entirely untrue. It is not even a plausible interpretation of the Mangkiling economy or that of any other Meratus Dayaks for the last four centuries, at least. While subsistence and inter-family networking is an important concern within Meratus Dayak communities, they have long been involved in production for distant markets. The conditions of marketing have shifted over time, and the key products have changed. However, the idea that Mangkiling people are unfamiliar with cash and markets is absurd. (Other seminar papers describe the importance in Mangkiling of banana and chili production for regional markets; in the early 1990s, Mangkiling also produced a variety of cash crops besides these, including peanuts, mung beans, coffee, bamboo and light wood construction poles.) The fact that an important regional office with jurisdiction over Meratus Dayaks would promote the idea of a barter-and-subsistence economy in Mangkiling, and that the provincial newspaper would choose this item to report, suggests the blinding relevance of stereotypes about the backward and the primitive in regional development affairs. Because the persistent

conviction of Meratus Dayak traditionalism seems so necessary to the trajectory of regional development, planners and their publicity-makers let stereotypes about tradition overcome their other forms of knowledge about the area.

These stereotypes lead to discrimination and persecution. Yet they cannot completely close off Meratus Dayak agency. To the extent that they stimulate research and administrative contact between Meratus Dayaks and development planners, they can even present, ironically, new opportunities for creative community leadership. The seminar documents themselves demonstrate such an opening.

The last section of the volume distributed after the seminar is a photographic essay documenting the proceedings. The heads of speakers rise over the podium out of official uniform shirts; the microphone arches toward each serious face. The audience sits in straight parallel lines along long tables draped neatly with cloth; the exact line of tea glasses before them marks out the orderliness of the row. Some audience members lean forward, taking notes; others lean back, listening or bored. No one leans to the side. But one page of photographs is different; it offers the "profile of a Mangkiling village member who attended the one-day seminar, Mr. Yuni, the Secretary of Mangkiling village" (Yayasan Kompas Borneo 1989: Appendix I). Yuni is shown in three photographs. He is serious and neatly dressed but awkward, innocently out of place, standing as if on display between the audience rows. In one picture, the seated audience appears to be teasing him, laughing at him. He leans precariously, off balance or in a gesture of undisciplined motion.

Through his profile, Yuni "represents" the village in a number of senses. His photographs legitimate the seminar proceedings, and their images of primitive Mangkiling, both through the truth value of his attendance and his inability to pass as just another seminar member. At the same time, his pose reveals traces of the kind of leadership he is able to forge from this position. That artless, off balance stance presents him as the open, desiring subject of an imagined modernity yet with the untutored simplicity of tradition in his background and breeding. He is a tribesman longing for change. Nor need he have been "plotting" to devise this pose; what alternatives are there for the bureaucratically-undisciplined body in the midst of lines of authority and order? Yet, ironically, his lack of bureaucratic experience opens the possibilities of a community leadership role that even development planners can begin to imagine. If the "tribal situation" is to be enacted on the regional development scene, it is the cosmopolitan tribesman, the representative of unfulfilled desire, who can

enact it. This representative is created within the opportunity spaces of the development apparatus itself, as villagers are brought in to join its activities. It is negotiated within encounters such as that recorded in Yuni's photographic profile; it finds its subtle traces in the documents that propose and debate the categories of development. My next sections offer more of the context in which I interpret Yuni's pose.

#### VILLAGES AS FANTASIES AND FRAMEWORKS

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the resettlement and resocialization of "isolated populations" (*masyarakat terasing*), including Meratus Dayaks, became an important component of the regional development plan in South Kalimantan. By working to assimilate these peoples into normative Indonesian standards and grouping them into discipline-oriented villages, the program provided a striking and inexpensive model of how development was expected to operate at a national scale. The process of development could be imagined within the diorama of village resettlement, in which tribes — that is those who did not have the know-how to live in proper villages — were to become modern citizens. Development was the elimination of tribes and the creation of villages. Furthermore, because official definitions of "isolated populations" stressed an imagined landless nomadism (i.e., as an interpretation of shifting cultivation), tribal groups targeted by the "isolated populations" program were defined out of any land rights recognized by the state.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a new regional administrative initiative overcame and indeed reversed some of the consequences of the "isolated populations" program by disciplining existing settlements rather than creating new model sites. The regional government redoubled its administrative efforts in all rural areas — "isolated" and otherwise — by dividing its administrative units into smaller and more closely regulated districts and villages. Where once there was one "village" unit, three or four were created. Villages were to be further naturalized and normalized in the process; while still development models, they were also somehow to correspond to on-the-ground communities. At the same time, district and regency officials refocused their attempts to find and train appropriate village leaders. Instead of allowing older men with existing community status to assume official village positions, they appointed younger men with formal education and the ability to articulate commitments to the goals of development and orderly state administration. These new leaders were offered travel opportunities, gifts, and ceremonies; village subsidies controlled by these new leaders increased rapidly. Furthermore, subsidies

were offered differentially, depending on leadership performance. Village leaders were pressed into a competitive relation with each other, in which pleasing regional officials, rather than cooperating with each other, paid off in personal and village benefits.

In contrast to the "isolated populations" program (which continues to operate simultaneously, with reduced resources, but remaining a significant threat), this administrative initiative has promised a new stability for Meratus Dayak groups, in relation to their lands and resources. However, the terms of this stability have been community leadership that articulates and demonstrates compliance with the goals of regional development. There is a contradiction here. "Communities" in the Meratus Mountains are contentious, unstable social groupings, forged through day-to-day local initiatives. Yet to the extent that communities reaffirm themselves as communities, with independent initiatives and resources to manage, they refuse the demands of development, which require that they give up their autonomy and their resources to national planning. However, to the extent that leaders merely confirm national planning by forming villages without locally autonomous communal concerns, their communities slip away and they find themselves treated as pompous ideologues.

This contradiction is rendered more intense by the competition among factions and leaders. Since most contemporary Meratus "villages" only gained their current status sometime in the last fifteen years, the possibility of rearranging administrative affiliations — and thus capturing regional development resource flows — is obvious. As in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the struggle to create new polities before the polity-making time is over is zealous. Furthermore, current village leaders create the impression that they are in competition with all others for the survival of their communities; one group's advancement could mean the dissolution of another group. By the early 1990s, it was clear that the most successful village leaders were becoming rich and powerful from development subsidies in ways never before possible in the Meratus Mountains; the closest constituents of these successful leaders were also gaining disproportional benefits. Village offices had never been so important. Family ties were rearticulated, as young men cajoled their elders, hoping to coalesce some community to lead, while old men flattered the young, desperately needing a channel to regional power. Around these rearticulated family ties, factions fight and reform, each trying to channel the differential flow of resources from regional centers. Village leaders sense that if they are not sufficiently creative and aggressive in holding on to their positions, they can be quickly displaced.

It is important to understand that the unit of the "village" has not always been the most relevant to Meratus Dayak sociality. Most all Meratus Dayaks are shifting cultivators who clear new fields every one to three years, while turning old fields into more or less managed garden and forest areas. Small family-like groups (*umbun*) make their own farms; these groups affiliate in clusters of some five to twenty-five *umbun* to form work groups, share meat, fruit, and fish, and hold festivals and healing rites together. Living arrangements vary across the mountains. In the area that includes Mangkiling, clusters construct a large multi-roomed *balai* hall as their central settlement; every *umbun* makes its own room around the central floor. Single-*umbun* houses are also built near the *umbun*'s fields. Until recent development subsidies offered the possibility of making *balai* with long-lasting construction materials, the halls were repaired or rebuilt every few years. On these occasions, the hall might be relocated, and new *umbun* might join or split off to join other clusters. Decisions to affiliate into another *balai* hall generally took into account the location of an *umbun*'s familiar forests, gardens, and fields; it was rare to relocate far from one's most well-managed livelihood resources. However, because in any *balai*, the territories with which each *umbun* was most associated radiated out in different directions, toward different *balai*, each *umbun* had a number of options of groups with which to live, without ever straying from its familiar territories.

The village (*desa*) is a government administrative unit that operates over, within, and around these shifting clusters. Until the 1980s, villages were huge, unwieldy units, and it was mainly their constituent neighborhoods (*RT*) that had much meaning for local clusters. Some neighborhood and village leaders were more successful than others in gathering and holding communities (Tsing 1993). Since the administrative reapportioning and the subsequent increase in development subsidies for successful village leaders, villages have become more significant. Village leaders have more tools with which to convince their constituents to stay; at the same time, factions attempting to displace those leaders abound. In this context, village leaders and would-be leaders need to find aggressive ways to articulate regional development goals without losing all local support.

Pantai Mangkiling has been one of the most successful models of this new kind of village. Pantai Mangkiling is the name of a place — a flat spot (*pantai*) along the Kapiiau River. There has not always been a *balai* there, although fields, houses, and planted, productive trees have marked the spot continuously; between the late 1960s and early 1980s, the central



balai in the area was at a place called Apurung. Yet Musa, Sumiati, and Yuni — all of whom lived in Apurung — had their familiar territories around Pantai Mangkiling. Musa was already a political mover and shaker by the early 1980s when the reapportioning happened there (he had once been village head of the much larger territory), and so it is not completely surprising that, in the competition for new political focal places, his home grounds became a village center. Mangkiling became a village in 1982. Musa's family gained control of village politics when the district officer accepted his sister Sumiati as village head, and his youngest brother Yuni as secretary. By the mid 1980s, the location boasted a balai, a village office, and a cluster of houses. Several other current balai were included in the village territory; and while each grumbled about Mangkiling's new dominance, none was strong enough to change the situation.

In consolidating a central position in the village reapportionments, Musa, Sumiati, and Yuni acted similarly to many successful Meratus leadership factions. However, over the next few years, their leadership became exceptional in making Mangkiling a strong village, one that attracted the attention of environmentalists, scholars, officials, and tourists. Between 1985 and 1990, Mangkiling's leaders consolidated a set of national and regional connections and ties that brought them out of mainstream Meratus invisibility to become a focus of regional attention. It was in this period that their leadership creatively engaged with metropolitan fantasies and created what I am calling a "tribal situation." The events that led to these regional connections are complicated, and I analyze them in detail elsewhere (Tsing n.d.a.). Suffice it to say here that they involved a set of disputes with a timber company over rights to forest land and trees. By chance, a provincial environmental group got involved with Mangkiling's cause and took it as a training exercise to a national environmental forum that was scheduled in the provincial capital. After that publicity, the regent refused to renew the timber company's concession; Mangkiling had won a very major (if, perhaps, tentative) victory for village land rights.

In the process, Mangkiling leaders met a variety of advocates and adversaries including environmentalists, forestry officials, foreign visitors, and timber company workers, as well as regional administrators. The provincial environmental group, *Kompas Borneo*, decided to pursue their relationship with Mangkiling and wrote a successful grant proposal to the Ford Foundation for a research project there that would last several years and involve a large, shifting group of researchers. The 1989 one-day

seminar was the first major event in this research relationship; field research, mapping, and various kinds of reports followed. The relationship also attracted funding and support from regional government. In 1992, *Kompas Borneo* applied to US AID for further support, although their grant was not successful. Meanwhile, Mangkiling became the subject of several series of articles in the provincial newspapers. Ecotourists from Indonesian cities as well as from foreign countries began to make their way there. South Kalimantan was already organizing for ecotourism by the mid 1980s, although the focus of organized tours was the most "developed" and therefore presentable Meratus village of Loksado. Adventurous tours and individuals, however, found Mangkiling. In the early 1990s, a Chinese Indonesian entrepreneur married a Mangkiling woman and set up a hostel for ecotourists. He electrified the balai, using generator power, and built a huge, rickety guest house out of bamboo. Meanwhile development agencies and groups began various small model projects, digging fish ponds and planting cacao, coffee, and other "development-positive" trees. District officials assigned special funds to allow the villagers to repair the balai, build a generator-operated rice mill, and improve their trails and bridges. Islamic groups and health agencies visited. Journalists from a national women's magazine made a trip. A conservation education tour, sponsored by environmentalists from several Kalimantan provinces, made a long stop there. Mangkiling became a bright spot on the regional map.

To tell Mangkiling's recent history in this fashion highlights the contributions of outsiders, which, indeed, have piggy-backed upon each other to make Mangkiling a place of note. However, from the perspective of Mangkiling villagers, these outside contributions have been sporadic, short-lived, and often more ceremonial than substantive. Even the infrastructural improvements cannot be counted on. Thus, for example, in 1994 when I visited, the ecotourism entrepreneur and his wife had moved down to town, taking their generator; their guest hostel had deteriorated beyond use. Mangkiling's status as a "good" village, that is, a village that has the privilege to hold on to current leadership and resources, cannot rest on its past achievements; it depends on keeping a stream of these visitors and benefits coming. This, in turn, depends on the village representatives' continued ability to present the village as needy, that is, backward and primitive enough to require special development attention. At the same time, they must present themselves as open to change, such that development attention will not be lost on them. Mangkiling has continued to be successful because its leaders have figured

out how to present it as a community caught between tradition and modernity — needing help, and ready to change, at the same time as entangled in primordial cultural values.

This leadership stance is recognized in documents about Mangkiling that label it a “transitional” village. In the 1989 one-day seminar, for example, the head of the provincial directorate of village development concluded the presentations with an evaluation of the village as already on the move: due to the guidance of outsiders, the villagers were already more able to solve their problems and to escape the “influences of traditional custom that have a negative quality” (Soemarsono 1989: 1). Most importantly, he found “a change in attitudes and an open perspective along with the desire for progress” (1989: 2). Similarly, the 1990 research report of the provincial environmental organization found the village in a “transitional phase.” “On the one hand, they want to carry out innovations; however, on the other hand, they are still tied to a traditional culture that does not support innovative efforts. This situation represents at the very least a potential for efforts at guidance and development” (Kompas Borneo 1990: ii). These evaluations assume that development, for villagers, is mainly a psychological process. They must rid themselves of adherence to static tradition and open themselves to change, that is, national directives; then outsiders will be freer to come in and tell them what to do. The challenge to maintain this transitional status — this openness in the midst of tradition — while courting a long string of advice and “guidance” from many visitors is formidable. Yet it must be maintained to keep the village’s privileged status. This returns my analysis to the awkwardly off-balance pose of the village secretary, Yuni, surrounded by so many orderly-development experts. The always-unrealized yearning for change of this stance is perhaps even easier to see in the ways his older sister Sumiati, Mangkiling village head, negotiates her presentation in a series of newspaper articles about the village.

#### BROKEN PROMISES AND UNFULFILLED DESIRES

In October 1989, a series of six articles about the village of Mangkiling appeared in the provincial daily newspaper *Dinamika Berita* (“News Dynamics”). The articles, by woman reporter Irma Suryani, focus particularly on Sumiati and pay considerable attention to issues of concern to village women. Suryani is open-minded and sympathetic; her writing is warm, straight-forward, and sometimes poetic. She has clearly worked to build rapport with Mangkiling people. These are rare traits for any non-Dayak writer to bring to reports of Dayak communities. As a result, the

self-presentations of village leaders come through with startling distinctiveness. It is not that villagers presented themselves to her with more authenticity or cultural autonomy than to other interlocutors; rather, because she listened to them, their distortions of regionally self-evident truths seem unusually clear in her portrayals.

Suryani’s first two articles (1989a and b) revolve directly around her discussions with village head Sumiati. The reporter is sympathetic, and respectful of Sumiati’s double burden as a woman village leader; she must carry responsibility for her family and overcome assumptions of women’s political irrelevance at the same time as keeping up her leadership training and doing her job. (Indeed, Sumiati is one of two women village heads that anyone I spoke to could remember ever taking office in that entire regency.) Perhaps, the reporter seems to imply, Sumiati’s unusual status as a woman village head makes her leadership dilemmas that much more striking: as a woman, no one would distinguish her from any ordinary traditional villager, but, as a leader, she has a dream of progress beyond tradition.

From the outset, Sumiati tells the reporter of her “hopes,” “dreams,” and “longings”: she dreams that the village might have the conveniences of the cities; she longs for a road to be built to the village; she yearns for proper educational facilities. She hopes to be a “light” within her village. (The term the reporter uses for “light,” *pelita*, is especially laden because it is the acronym for national five-year development plans.) Sumiati is especially clear about roads: “I wish so much that Mangkiling would have a road so that it would be easy for motor vehicles to come to the village,” she tells the reporter “in her plain words.” Her longing looks less plain-spoken if we look back a few years to 1986, when a road constructed by a timber company did come through the village territory. (By 1989, the road had eroded away, taking large pieces of hillside with it.) At that time, another newspaper article recorded the experiences of Mangkiling villagers, the reporter again taking his cue from village head Sumiati. “Other problems have been faced precisely because of the presence of a company that has made roads in the area of managed orchards. The fruit orchards of Mangkiling have been destroyed because they were hit by the road-building project of a company working there. Efforts to ask for help [compensation] have been made but have not received a response” (Ihsan 1986). As this quotation suggests, the issues that arise around road-building are complex. However, longing for roads is key to the “openness” that development thinkers demand. Mangkiling is “isolated,” that is, primitive, as long as it is not on a motor road. Almost every report on

the village begins with the difficult experience of the outside experts getting there; as long as they cannot travel easily to the village, there is no way that it can qualify as up to national standards. Sumiati is not faking her opinions: to speak within the lines of intelligibility, she glosses over her knowledge of the village's history with roads to show plain, innocent longing.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Sumiati describes her longing for roads as just another example of an unfulfilled promise.

She has often taken up this matter by approaching the qualified officials, but evidently of Sumiati's wish, only hope remains. "Several times already we have submitted proposals to the district to improve our settlement; our requests have even been approved. But in reality, it's not our village that receives the help, but another village, and we feel that we have been patient enough, even weary from waiting for the reality from these promises," she says, half moving me to pity.

"The People of Mangkiling Wait on a Promise," proclaims the headline of the second article (Suryani 1989b). By the time Sumiati has finished her explanation of the village's problems, it appears that the village has been offered nothing but empty promises. Even when they are offered "help," it comes in pointless, ritualistic forms that may satisfy regional administrators but is of little use for the village. The village has school buildings but no regular teachers to staff them. They have been given a television but no electric generator to run it. They have been formally converted to Islam but offered no religious instruction to learn it. If it wasn't so sad, one might say, it would be funny.

Empty promises have some local uses. The conversion story can illustrate: in 1985, the Mangkiling villagers decided to convert en masse to Islam. Regionally, Islam is equated with civilization, and thus this was a major step toward their acceptance of development. Hundreds of people hiked up to a wide spot in the timber road to meet the Ulama who (arriving by motor vehicle) staged an official ceremony and duly noted and photographed the event. Then everyone went home. Afterwards, Mangkiling people continued to practice shamanic ceremonies and raise pigs and dogs. With a few exceptions, such as village leaders during their sojourns in town, no one practiced any Islamic religious rites. But they were then able to benefit from their ambivalence. On the one hand, one of the major attractions of Meratus Dayak villages for outside visitors is their colorful festival life. (One of Suryani's articles, entitled "Dancing Until Dawn" (1989e), describes a festival she attended.) On the other hand, no one can accuse them of being closed to the more cosmopolitan religion, Islam.

They are not stuck in tradition, but they do not lose their enticements for visitors — or their well-loved local events.

Sumiati builds her leadership stance on this ambivalence by placing the blame for failed development on the regional authorities. In another newspaper article, she explains the lack of Islamic practices in Mangkiling after their conversions as due to the sporadic attention of the provincial religious apparatus. She begins with her own conversion in 1982 when she was chosen as village head. "At that time, the proselytizers came to our place, but after that they have only come a few times, and as a result we don't know how to do the devotional activities," she explains. The prayer house built for them is falling down, she adds, because it is inconveniently located and no one came to care for it (*Dinamika Berita* 1989c). Surprisingly to me, this placement of the blame was readily endorsed by the authorities. Instead of blaming the villagers for their indolence or greed, provincial religious leaders, challenged by the newspaper articles, agreed that they had not properly instructed Mangkiling villagers, and that they must work harder in extending their missionary efforts (*Dinamika Berita* 1989d). Similarly, the Education and Culture Department took full responsibility for not sending teachers in a regular enough manner, when they, too, were challenged by the newspaper's reporting of Mangkiling complaints about the schools (*Dinamika Berita* 1989b and e). This occurred in a context in which regional authorities routinely blame villagers for their ignorance, bad habits, and lack of initiative. However, these latter traits are rooted in the "static thinking" of traditional culture, the bane of development. In contrast, no one can fault longing for change; this is what development is meant to instill. The trick for Sumiati, then, is to make visible a trail of broken promises that can be seen to generate ever more intense forms of longing.

The danger looms: because most development inputs are, indeed, gaudy handouts and cheerful rites with little long-term value, most will not have the kinds of transformative effects development planners fantasize. To the extent that regional administrators can interpret failed development in the village as a resurgence of tradition, that is, static thinking, Mangkiling will lose its privileged status as a "transitional" village, worthy of special development inputs. To renew these inputs, and with them village identity and leadership, Sumiati must continually produce an insatiable development longing. The traditional village woman must always have hope in her eyes for the lights of the city.

Tradition is that which developers most despise; yet it is also that to which they are most attracted. Ordinary poverty is uninteresting to those

who imagine themselves civilizing the tribes. (Besides, tribal peoples are often well-endowed with land and resources until these are stolen from them; they don't necessarily need a better livelihood situation until after they are "developed.") Even as she honestly longs for change, Sumiati must know that no one would come to the village if it wasn't "backward." Backwardness is her commodity for negotiation. My next section explores the ways Mangkiling leaders are caught up in a discourse on tradition and exotic culture as they create, and are created by, the tribal situation.

#### LOVE MAGIC

Every village leader who wants access to development funds in South Kalimantan must cultivate a longing for development. Only Dayak minorities, however, must learn to work with the stigma of being considered not just technologically and economically backward but also primitive and exotic. The stigma is terrible, and it is created together with economic, political, and cultural discrimination. However, particularly in the last decade, there have been some ways to use it. The alliances Mangkiling leaders have built with environmental activists and their appeal to ecotourists are two clear examples of opportunities that would not have been available to South Kalimantan villagers not marked by the classification "primitive." With this support, based largely on their ability to identify as "indigenous people," Mangkiling villagers can at least *try* to create legitimate claims over their forests. Here lies the difference between those who can only work to create a "village situation" — a demand for rural citizenship — and those who can aim for a "tribal situation" — a staging of community identity and resource rights. To transform exotic stereotypes into community designs, however, is a work of magic — and a work of seduction.

One beginning move for outside advocates of the tribal situation has been to take the most positive stereotypes they know of the primitive to try to build an alliance with those whom they imagine as tribes. In this spirit, journalist Irma Suryani portrays Mangkiling villagers as experts in traditional herbal medicine, especially that used for contraception (1989c). International interest in indigenous knowledge of rainforest pharmaceuticals has come together with Indonesian population control priorities to make contraceptive herbal knowledge one of the few most positive "traditions" a minority ethnic group can have in Indonesia. Thus, Suryani portrays village head Sumiati expertly explaining the names and uses of herbs to regulate women's fertility. "Mangkiling people don't have to hassle with birth control pills because our natural world has already

prepared birth control for us," Sumiati says "with pride." The journalist even permits a little criticism of development expertise: "We are afraid of the side effects," says Sumiati of birth control pills. With traditional contraception in hand, the ground is relatively safe.

Watching over the shoulders of the Kompas Borneo researchers, the journalist learns the names of a variety of traditional medicinal herbs explained by Mangkiling villagers: earth axis tree; King Kahayan vine; white medicine root; King Hanoman vine. Reading through the article, these names did not catch my eye; while none of them were herbs I remembered from the villages I know better in the Meratus Mountains, I expect variation in terminology, knowledge, and flora across the mountains. Then I encountered the list again in Kompas Borneo's report (Yayasan Kompas Borneo 1990: 24). After the list, the report continues, casually, "These medicines are also known to city people." Suddenly I remembered these herbs from urban and rural markets. They are not particularly Meratus herbs but rather commodified, cosmopolitan medicinal herbs used throughout the region. The self-positioning of Mangkiling informants became blindingly clear: to forge the best relationship, given the circumstances, tell the researchers the traditional medicines they already know.<sup>9</sup>

There is something here of flattery and of submission, but it is also an enormously complex skill to reproduce the dominant group's stereotypes so beautifully that they only see their imagined Other. Perhaps it is helpful to think of it in relation to the skill that women in so many places have used to make themselves attractive to men, that is, to make themselves "feminine" as men see it. This is one way to understand the erotic charge that this strategy of sympathetic acquiescence appears to have for outsiders and experts. Suryani is an honest enough reporter to let the reader see the male research group's compulsion to draw the village girls into a web of flirtation: "Wah. . . even without being dressed up you are so beautiful, let alone if you were dressed up, the city girls would lose," the men tease; "This one's name is Lili Marlen but she is lost in the Mangkiling forest" (1989d). But she also sexualizes the girls, describing their imagined ethnic innocence as seductive. The girls are natural objects of enticement, with their lively smiles and "golden skins" (the description often used regionally for Dayak women). Their naive efforts to adorn themselves are "cute" or "amusing" (*lucu*): they wear lipstick and curl their hair without knowing how. They wear their shirts open, revealing black brassieres, which sparks jokes with the researchers about the popular song, "Under the Dark Glasses."

In the hands of village head Sumiati, the seductiveness of asymmetrical

ethnic acquiescence is both useful and hard to control. The primitive summons outside expertise into the community, but it also hints at illicitness and disorder. In this context, Sumiati appears in the newspaper as an ordinary Dayak woman: like other Meratus Dayaks, we learn, she has been married too many times (Suryani 1989b). The woman journalist tells us that this is unfortunate; even naturally seductive women, she seems to imply, can be victims. But she cannot completely suppress the sense that this is uncivilized sexuality. Indeed, those town people who had heard of Sumiati, who after all is a Meratus Dayak leader of some repute, warned me with rolled eyes that she was married to four men, not sequentially, but simultaneously. Whatever Sumiati says about her life, they do not believe her. For them, the seductiveness of Dayak exoticism turns quickly into savagery. Mangkiling leaders must handle this with care — for the closer they get to claiming the autonomy of tribal distinctiveness, the more erotically dangerous their claims.

Thus, according to reporter Suryani, when the Kompas Borneo researchers pin down the site where eroticism is thickest, they find it precisely in the formative place of exoticism and ethnic difference: magic. Magic is key to regional images of Meratus Dayaks. According to the regional majority, Meratus are sorcerers and concoctors of magic oils, and it is this power that makes Dayaks both primitive and frightening. In my research in the region, I found that sorcery and magic oils were most important to Meratus Dayaks precisely as part of a regional trade with those who named Dayaks as sorcerers (Tsing 1993). In villages such as Mangkiling, outsiders make demands for mystical expertise, and, indeed, this expertise is produced. The importance of magic in regional images of Dayak “difference” is so great that I was not surprised that Suryani chose to devote half of her final Mangkiling article to magic oils (1989f). The oils she describes are used for seduction and for healing the wounds of fighting. In learning about them, the journalist and the researchers she accompanied place themselves in the middle of an ethnic exchange in which the seductions and healed-over hostilities of both exoticization and self-representation become difficult to disentangle. To follow this process, the article is worth quoting at some length:

The issue that the writer will discuss here is the strength of belief of the Bukit [Meratus Dayak] people toward what one would call magic. They tie everything to the power of “dewa” spirits in which, until now, they believe.

This is also the case with sorcery, which they always connect to mystical power. For example, this writer and the research group had the opportunity to meet with a resident of Pantai Mangkiling village whose condition was rather

alarming because other than suffering from deafness, he also had a deformed body. However, from him we obtained information as well as research materials that could be used for our analysis. Although to communicate with him, we had to use “Tarzan” language (signs).

From him this writer and colleagues from the Institute “Kompas Borneo” obtained an account of several kinds of oils with special qualities. For example, there is the oil that they call “Unchaste Adam” that they use to entice someone. Usually it is used by a woman to entice a man or, in reverse, for a man to entice a woman.

There are also oils that cause a person to be able to stand blows or gashes, and according to Pak Sani (a pseudonym), he has already proved it himself. Indeed, we could see his misshapen bones that looked like the result of a break but evidently had connected again (There is also an oil for this). Concerning the truth of these special characteristics, as presented by Pak Sani, this writer does not know but can only say that this is what they use up until now if they encounter the difficulties I have explained.

It is hard to fathom why the research group decided to use an interview with a deaf man as their decisive entrée into traditional knowledge. It is quite a scene to imagine: the deaf man and the researchers each pointing and gesturing and mimicking each other enough to develop some communication. The reference to Tarzan calls up the colonial situation, in which Europeans and “natives” faced each other across such gaps of communication, and in which at least the Europeans thought they were communicating with animals. Ganneth Obeyesekere has argued that European ideas of cannibalism in the Pacific were in part conjured up by scenes in which Europeans and Pacific Islanders, unable to speak with each other, each mimed a fantasy of cannibalistic consumption, biting arms and legs while the other party copied the mime (1992). In the Mangkiling exchange, too, language was omitted, and the researchers, through mime, learned exactly what they hoped and feared: Dayaks have the power to entice and to heal injury; their magic entraps expert attention and reconnects the shards of modern alienation. A fantasy of seduction and erased violence was woven around the deaf man’s signs; the indeterminability of who exactly wove this fantasy is the underlying “magic” of the situation.

Through this love magic, Mangkiling villagers attract a stream of visitors, experts, and tourists. The motivations of visitors range from development assistance to nature appreciation to personal adventure; but all are drawn by the magic of exotic nature and culture. One record of these seductions is the visitors’ log that is kept in the village office, where Yuni, the secretary, sometimes resides. Besides their names and the dates of their visits, visitors are asked to enter their trip’s purpose and their impressions. Many of those who wrote in the log that I copied in 1994

explained themselves in the language of development; they came, they said, to examine, criticize, and help the villagers. But others wrote love notes — to nature, to the people of Mangkiling, and even in reference to their private affairs. Nature hikers expressed a platonic attraction: “Beautiful nature, friendly people”; “*Refreshing* while enjoying the ambiance of nature in the mountains of Pantai Mangkiling”; or, fully in English, “We are remember to Mangkiling. We can’t stop loving you to Mangkiling.” More ambivalent, perhaps, were the lovers who came to the village after it became a weekend destination for town toughs to bring their girlfriends; they drew on the hint of promiscuity that always accompanies love magic. Yet when one of these casual guests wrote that s/he had come to Mangkiling “carrying a heart wounded by my angry, jealous lover,” s/he hinted at the dialogue in which Mangkiling had become an appropriate site for erotic recharging. Another guest drew an outline of a heart in the log.

## THE UTOPIAN PROJECT: NATURE

In the ways I have been describing, Mangkiling leaders make themselves available to work with agencies interested in community development, ecotourism, rainforest conservation, and tribal rights. It is not enough to live in the forest. One must have a stable village that can be identified and funded. One must have a distinctive culture worth studying and saving. And one must have a strong, visible leadership to articulate community concerns in ways that these agencies can understand. To craft each of these is a work of imagination and artistry. Only with these prerequisites can Mangkiling be part of the global “sustainability” question: how can we meet the needs of the present without jeopardizing the resources of future generations? In that question, “tribal” forest communities have a special niche. Everyone wants to know: do these communities protect and manage the forest or destroy it? When agencies and experts flock to Mangkiling, it is in part because they are thinking about this question.

Yet, amazingly enough, this question is investigated directly nowhere in the documents I found about Mangkiling. Occasionally, an author makes a wild stab from his prejudices. Thus, although no research of which I am aware has examined Mangkiling forest use, an economist interrupts his otherwise modest survey of Mangkiling incomes to rant about the huge amount of money lost every time a Mangkiling farmer clears a swidden.

2400 cubic meters – 2800 cubic meters [of timber wood] x Rp. 50,000 = Rp. 120,000,000 – Rp. 144,000,000. If the problem of shifting cultivation is allowed to continue in the next ten years, one could estimate that forest

products, especially wood logs, worth 12 to 14.4 billion rupiah will be thrown away, not to count the environmental destruction that this causes. (Siddik 1989: 3)

This kind of thinking would be very easy to refute (e.g., by questioning the truth of the assumption here that Mangkiling farmers regularly cut down mature dipterocarps, by studying patterns of post-swidden forest regrowth and tree management, by examining forest destruction in commercial timbering, or by questioning who benefits from timber versus swidden incomes). Yet, for some reason, none of the many advocates who have conducted research in the village — and who clearly don’t believe this economist — have bothered to address this question in their studies. Instead, they offer traditional beliefs in support of the spirit of forest conservation:

The view of the people of the village of Pantai Mangkiling toward the world around them, such as the forest, mountains, rivers, and animals, is that it is a materialization from themselves (as human beings), and because of this they treat it carefully. (Yayasan Kompas Borneo 1990:35–6)

In explaining advocates’ turn to traditional beliefs rather than local resource management practices, one might posit that advocates can’t imagine officials taking local practices seriously; perhaps the idea that tribal people conserve forests is just too far from regional development dogma to imbue its technical features with any legitimacy. Alternately, perhaps conventions of separating social science and natural science research have made it difficult for researchers to ask questions about the human management of the environment. Yet a third possibility presents itself along with these: advocates’ focus on abstract beliefs rather than a history of forest management practices creates a connection between environmentalists and villagers. Many environmentalists base their own hopes for forest conservation on the ability of their abstract beliefs in conservation to prevail, rather than on particular management practices. If village conservation is also based on an ecological vision, then villagers and environmentalists are ideal working partners.

Whatever the cause, there has been a noticeable silence on questions of the construction of the Mangkiling forest. Although researchers are clearly interested in the trees, no one has examined tree management; although they are interested in wild animals, no research has asked about hunting or the making of food-rich forest niches. The cycle of shifting cultivation is discussed, but researchers do not continue their studies after the harvesting of rice to ask about long-term vegetables, shrubs, and tree crops. And while one might assume that I bring up this silence as a criticism,

in fact I want to point first to its positive effects. By ignoring the specificity of Mangkiling nature-making practices, and thus the differences in how nature is appreciated that divide urban environmentalists and rural shifting cultivators, environmentalists are able to imagine a utopian space of overlap and collaboration in which they join Mangkiling villagers in cherishing the forest. In this imagined space, loving the forest — the business of urban nature appreciation — is conflated with living in the forest — the business of Mangkiling village existence. The project of protecting this space of “nature” is utopian in both the best and worst senses. It is idealistic, offering the hope for making a liveable world. It is single-minded, glossing over its own improbabilities.

Furthermore, it has developed around its own distinctive and collaborative practice of naming the elements of nature. Most Meratus Dayaks know a great deal about their natural environment, including many plant and animal names, and, in my experience, people enjoy explaining these names to curious outsiders. Similarly, environmentalists love to learn the names of the flora and fauna. From these mutual pleasures, a characteristic event of environmentalist visits to Mangkiling has developed: the shared experience of hiking around identifying natural organisms. Of course, there are great differences in the significance of these names as a component of forest-management practices. Indonesian environmentalists draw on the European natural history tradition in which to name nature is to know it in all its universal abstraction; they also practice a more recent kind of nature loving in which to identify a plant is to identify with it, that is, to feel a sense of communion and mutual belonging on earth. In contrast, Meratus Dayaks tend to be most interested in the specificity of plants and animals as they occur in particular landscape locations. To know a tree it is not enough to know its species name; one must be able to understand the complex of other plants as well as human claims and histories that put that tree into a socially meaningful landscape. Despite the need to ignore these differences, however, plant and animal identification is a truly collaborative practice. Both environmentalists and Mangkiling villagers with whom I spoke felt a sense of having shared important information with the other.

My interpretation of naming nature in Mangkiling as collaborative diverges from recent scholarship that identifies “botanizing” as among the most insidious of imperialist practices. Both Mary Pratt (1992) and Paul Carter (1989) argue that European colonization was brought to a new standard of control through natural history, which, they argue, taught Europeans to imagine Third World lands as entirely without inhabitants.

By describing landscapes full of plants and animals, but without humans, eighteenth century natural historians created narratives that facilitated colonial control. Recent events in Mangkiling do not tell us anything about the eighteenth century texts these authors analyze; however, they do suggest that natural history investigations can be more politically open-ended and flexible than these scholars imply. Mangkiling “botanizing” texts also do not contain any writing about Mangkiling people. They tend to focus on lists of plants and animals with perhaps short descriptions or discussions of the landscape. However, a closer reading of these texts suggests the way utopian collaboration peers out even from a list of trees.

NO.	AREA NAME	LATIN NAME	PLOTS					TOTAL
			1	2	3	4	5	
01	LANDUR	<i>LOPHOPETALUM JAVVANICUM</i> (ZOLL) TURZ	3	—	—	2	4	9
02	HAMAK		1	—	—	1	1	3
03	MAHANG	<i>MACARANGA HYPOLEUCA</i> MUELL. ARG	4	—	—	—	—	4
04	HUMBUT	<i>XYLOPIA</i> SP.	1	—	—	—	—	1
05	MINJURUNG		3	1	—	—	—	4
06	TIWADAK	<i>ARTOCARPUS RIGIDUS</i> BL	1	—	—	—	—	1
07	LURUS	<i>PERONEMA CANESCENS</i> JACK	2	—	—	—	—	2
08	RAMBUTAN	<i>NEPHELIUM</i> SP.	1	—	—	—	—	1

EXCERPT FROM “INVENTORY LIST OF FLORA,” YAYASAN KOMPAS BORNEO 1990.

I believe this excerpt can stand in not only for the rest of that tree list, which goes on for pages, but also for other tree lists I have encountered, published and unpublished. It follows the convention of supplying two items: “area name” and “Latin name.” The latter is the scientific, Linnean term that unites genus and species; presumably the botanist supplies this information after s/he sees the tree. But the former term, the local term, suggests that the botanist does not find and identify the tree alone; s/he is brought to the tree by a villager who serves not only as guide but also as first botanical identifier.

The priority of the Mangkiling identification is suggested by the fact that in two cases (#02, #05), an “area name” is not followed by any scientific identification. The villager appears to have shown the botanist a tree s/he did not know. (This is consistent with the rest of the list, in which there are many blank spaces in the “Latin names” column, but no blank spaces under “area name.”) Sometimes, perhaps, the botanist asks for a name for a tree about which the villager is unsure. (I have my doubts about #04, *Humbut*, “palm heart,” as the best possible Mangkiling name for this plant, which I assume to be a palm; Meratus palm classifications

can be very detailed.) But the local name is never omitted; it forms the first line of knowledge about the tree.

Other minor collaborations are suggested. For example, slightly later in the list, there are fourteen trees identified as *Damar* (area name)/*Shorea* sp. (Latin name), suggesting a joint decision not to be too picky about identifications. Dipterocarpaceae, the big emergents of the forest, are notoriously divergent as well as hard to sort out — from the perspective of botanists as well as Meratus Dayaks. Yet both do sort them out for appropriate occasions. These fourteen trees may not have sparked that sense of occasion for either party to the identification. For other dipterocarp entries on the list, smaller divisions are made.

The inventory offers the chance for another collaboration, however, that is not pursued. If read with the right questions, the list is a striking testament to the managed nature of the Mangkiling forest. *Landur* (#01), *Tiwadak* (#06), *Rambutan* (#08), and *Siwau* (#25) are highly valued fruit trees; they were probably planted, or, at the least, claimed and managed carefully. *Kahingai* (#20), *Kembayau* (#21), and *Tarap* (#22) are less valuable fruit trees; while they may not have been planted, Mangkiling residents would certainly have their eye out for them. *Damar* (#16, #17, #18) and *Bangkiray* (#09) can become sites for honey bee nests, in which case, they become expensive and carefully guarded claimed trees. Even without bees' nests, the *damar* trees may have been saved in swidden-making, encouraged, or claimed for their bark, resin, or other uses. *Lurus* (#07) has become highly commercialized in this region, since its price for construction poles rose sharply in the 1980s; it is a quick-growing and easy-to-foster secondary forest species, claimed by those on whose old swiddens it is encouraged. One could continue. However, this is not the framework to which this inventory has so far been deployed. Off the track of the utopian project, forest management raises difficult questions about nature's purity and purposes. While one must praise the inventory project for allowing this unbidden text to be recorded, one could also criticize it for not, or not yet, making it possible to discuss these issues. As Musa stated in the document with which I began this essay, "there is no wild forest here." Yet environmentalists still need the image of the wild with which to build their most promising alliances.

#### MAPS AND DREAMS

Instead of listening to Mangkiling villagers' histories of forest management and use, environmentalists build their practical project of advocacy on a different front: the mapping of village territory. Perhaps this is their most important work for Mangkiling villagers; at least potentially, it offers

the possibility of making a case for village control of land and forest resources. It draws together all the imaginative frameworks for collaboration that I have been discussing to create what appears to be a singular joint project: the map. The lines of the map offer a "common sense" obviousness. Either this is your territory, or it is ours; any administrator should appreciate that. However, mapping a politically charged landscape is never so simple. Environmentalists and Mangkiling leaders work together, I will argue, to use the technology of precision to increase fertile ambiguity, multiplicity, and confusion. From ambiguity, the possibility of tribal rights might emerge.

The potential of Mangkiling maps to build tribal rights is based on the viability of attempts around the world to reclaim resources through what Nancy Peluso has called "counter-mapping," that is, the use of maps to argue against state claims by spatially depicting the explicitness and historical priority of local resource control (1995). (Peluso's term acknowledges that mapping has generally been the tool of colonial or state expropriation of local lands; as she explains, however, mapping can also become a strategy of local resistance and struggle.) In places across the Americas, Australia, and Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, the issue of tribal rights has been argued through mapping. Thus, for example, the title I have given this section, "maps and dreams," invokes one of these projects: the customary-use mapping project of Northwest Canadian Native Americans, as described by Hugh Brody (1981). In this project, a key challenge was the forgetfulness of the white-settler majority that living communities of Native Americans continued to exist; thus, when Native Americans mapped the spots they had gone hunting, fishing, or berry picking, they reminded the white majority of their presence. The maps Brody records show entangled lines of personal and community use of land and forest resources. In contrast, the mapping challenges or "dreams" in Indonesia are different. Since colonial times, the geography of local Indonesian peoples has been imagined in generally non-overlapping, bounded territories; local groups have been identified in relation to such imagined territories, and "indigenous" advocacy has often begun with the notion of territory. These are the territories recognized as *adat* lands, that is, the lands acknowledged under customary law. Counter-mapping projects make these *adat* territories explicit; they generally do not, however, break with historically legitimate conventions for imagining space — for example, to show overlapping patches and entangled lines marking histories of individual and collective use, as in Brody's maps. To be effective, mapping for tribal rights must be convincing within regional and national histories of policy and politics.



This need to convince opens opportunities even as it imposes constraints. In their maps, environmentalists and Mangkiling leaders have adapted the colonial and national advocacy-through-adat tradition to make a joint statement about village lands and forests. Since adat is nationally understood as an indigenous conceptual system, to map adat lands is to articulate the inner logic of indigenous minds. Maps are not seen as analyses or even descriptions of tribal life; like folklore or cosmologies, they are supposed to be direct expressions of the native point of view. Collaboration between environmentalists and village leaders does not, then, produce "the native in the document" for which my earlier questions searched; instead, it aims for "the document in the native." Unlike lists of trees in which collaboration is made evident, the goal in making maps of adat lands is to create a single, seamless product in which the technological expertise of the map-maker seems only to enhance the traditional knowledge of village elders. To make this joint product, both environmentalists and village elders must imagine they are mapping the same thing: here the common space created by the utopian project of nature becomes crucial. The maps then superimpose and join the tactics of village leaders and environmentalists, as each aims to convince the authorities of the legitimacy of adat lands.

Making adat claims legitimate is no easy task, despite the long history of administrative discussion of adat lands in Indonesia. It is never enough merely to establish the status of a given plot as adat land in order to hold it; one must then argue against all the other classifications to which that same plot is assigned. First, adat land is an insecure classification. Since the colonial era, arguments for the recognition of adat lands have always been "counter-arguments" in a debate in which state domain over land and resources has been the opposing opinion.<sup>10</sup> In Indonesian national law, adat lands are sometimes recognized and sometimes not. In the Basic Agrarian Law, for example, adat is said to be the underlying law of the land. In the Basic Forestry Law, in contrast, all forests are said to be the domain of the state. The partial recognition of adat creates the possibilities for local arguments over the status of particular territories.

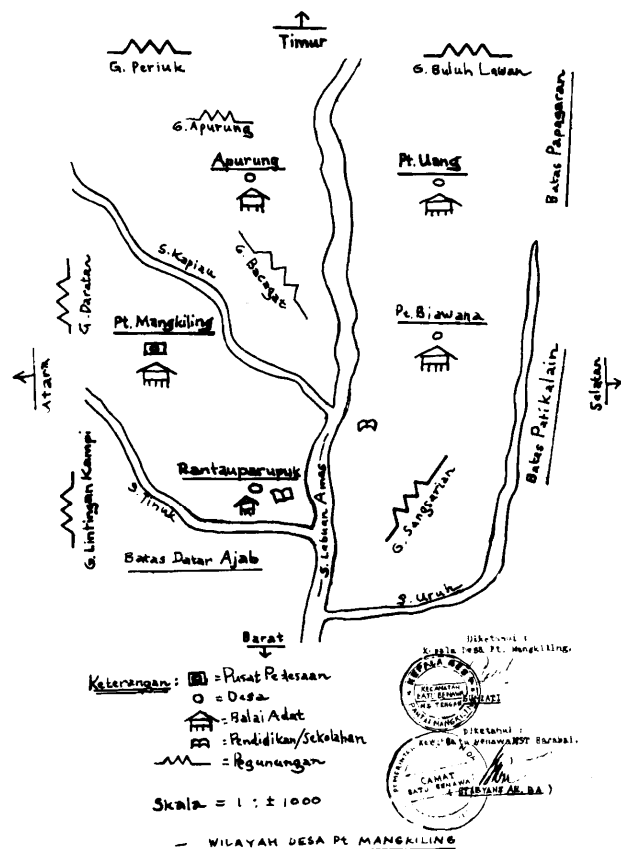
Second, official mapping offers contradictory views about the status of any given plot — whether or not adat status is at issue. Territories officially classified as "forests," i.e., government-controlled land, may include entire districts and multiple towns and villages with their agricultural terrains. Government departments often map areas differently, such that potential transmigration sites, production forests, and nature reserves may be found, in different maps, on precisely the same site. The forest in

Mangkiling is simultaneously classified as protection forest, production forest, a proposed nature reserve, and village territory.

How can village rights be established in this mess? The counter-mapping projects in Mangkiling do not clarify the situation; instead, advocates and village leaders add to the layers of ambiguity. Rather than making a single, clear-cut map, environmentalists and village leaders in Mangkiling have confused and layered conventions and land claims. First, they have conflated varied map-making standards to create complex products in which different kinds of land claims appear to garner the same legitimacy. Second, they have stacked overlapping, contradictory, and redundant maps. All the possible claims on the forest are shown, sometimes on top of each other, sometimes on separate pages.<sup>11</sup> In the context of village powerlessness, clear and simple village claims would probably be officially dismissed, while adding layers to already recognized claims creates the potential for tentative local successes. By adding to the pool of overlaid possibilities, they make openings for local claims that cannot hold their own as singular logics.

The chain of village maps I have seen begins with two maps attributed to Musa and drawn sometime in the 1980s. I am unsure who else besides Musa worked on these maps; I assume they are the collaborative product of Musa and village advocates. I reproduce the first, the easier to read, as Map 1. At first glance, this is a nicely drawn but ordinary enough sketch map of village territory, as marked by the locations of the various constituent balai halls, as well as the village center and school buildings. Yet closer attention to the stylization of the map suggests that it offers more than the location of village settlement clusters; it creates the implication that these settlement clusters control territorial segments, which together constitute village land. In this sense, the map, like the written document to which it is attached, is a land rights claim. In order to achieve this effect, the map brings official mapping conventions to portray local conventions of land use and occupancy. However, neither mapping conventions nor local land-rights conventions go untransformed in the process. In order to make a hopeful village land claim, Map 1 overlaps, combines, and deforms both local and official understandings of landscape.

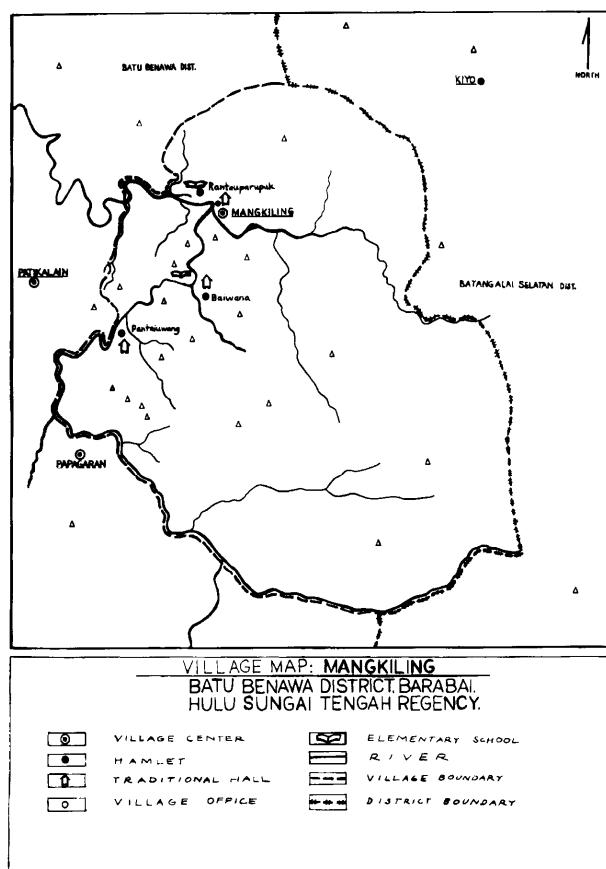
The map presents the local river system as if it were a set of boundary lines both drawing together and dividing up the land; tree-like, there is a straight, upright trunk stream — which defines the unity of village settlement — with branching arms that mark off village subsections. (The stylization becomes evident when Map 1 is compared to the more-standard geographic representation made by environmentalists in Map 2.) The



MAP 1 TERRITORY OF PT. MANGKILING VILLAGE.  
ORIGINAL MAP BY MUSA. MAP REDRAWN BY BRIAN ROUNDS.

LEGEND: VILLAGE ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER VILLAGE SETTLEMENT TRADITIONAL HALL  
 EDUCATION/SCHOOL MOUNTAIN RANGE

UTARA "NORTH"; SELATAN "SOUTH"; TIMUR "EAST"; BARAT "WEST"; PT. [PANTAI] "FLAT"; BATAS "BOUNDARY"; S. [SUNGAI] "RIVER"; G. [GUNUNG] "MOUNTAIN"



MAP 2 VILLAGE MAP: MANGKILING.  
ORIGINAL MAP BY KOMPAS BORNEO INSTITUTE. MAP REDRAWN BY BRIAN ROUNDS.  
ORIGINAL OFFERS ADDITIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DETAIL AND LEGEND IN INDONESIAN AT A SCALE OF 1:25,000.

river system appears to divide village land into discrete and somewhat equivalent chunks. Each chunk has a traditional hall, the heart of a community, at its center. Mountains bound the territories where they are not marked by streams. In this representation, then, community centers appear to preside over segmented territories, whose unity makes up the village.

The map's success in drawing the village in this way draws on two key features of the Meratus Dayak social landscape: the association of particular kin and neighborhood groups with particular areas of the forest, on the one hand, and the focus of social ties around particular leaders, groups, and central sites, on the other. Areas of the forest are associated with groups of people who once created swiddens there, and who continue to plant, encourage, harvest, and manage the forest there. Old living sites as well as farm sites become orchards and foraging grounds for those who know them best. The managed and well-used forest territories of different individuals overlap. However, group clustering around focal individuals, families, or sites creates the effect of center-controlled territories. When people live together in a balai hall, their familiar forest and swidden territories spread and radiate in each direction around the balai. It is these center-focused territories that are given the authority and permanence of graphic representation in this map. The mapped territories are not illusory; however, they stabilize and specify shifting aggregations.<sup>11</sup>

The map uses and confuses Mangkiling landscape conventions, but it does the same with official mapping conventions. Territorial domains claimed by settlements are never drawn in official maps in this region. Official maps offer a strict separation of settlement, on the one hand, and territorial divisions, on the other. They show settlement as a dot rather than a territory. Even huge villages with dozens of small, scattered settlements are depicted as a single dot. This dot represents the stability, and thus the administrative appropriateness, of settlement; no village can claim legitimacy without its dot. But a dot takes up no space. In contrast, territorial divisions are marked in official maps of land use, forest classification, concession areas, and the like. Settlements may be sketched in on these maps, but they are for place identification not territorial claims; these are maps of state and private domain. They offer villagers no rights. The Mangkiling map Musa sponsored conflates and combines these two bureaucratic conventions, to create an intelligibility that draws on and exceeds each. His map offers administerable centers yet implies territorial jurisdiction. It is a usefully confusing hybrid.

This kind of creative confusion was not the choice of the environmen-

talist mappers who followed Musa's lead to draw more maps of the village in the 1990s. These mappers show much more allegiance to official conventions; after all, they want their maps taken seriously in official circles. Thus, they re-separate out administrative and territorial maps. Their administrative map (Map 2) shows the familiar dots, as these guarantee that Mangkiling will be administratively recognized. Like Map 1, however, Map 2 shows all the constituent balai and settlement groupings of Mangkiling rather than just a single village center. It is a joint project of representation that employs local categories. It also includes village boundaries, but because of the irrelevance of their spatial relation to the settlements, it is hard to use this map to imagine that village people control all this territory.

The territorial maps produced in this project neatly depict village adat lands, including current and past swiddens and protected adat forest. Territorial maps insert Mangkiling claims into the realm of forestry department and land use planning representations; they argue for equal billing for village territories. The messiness and shifting status of forest territories thus must be eliminated; secondary forest and protected forest must be separated by neat lines. Here, too, village leaders and environmentalists must have worked together to form a joint product of hopelessly-legitimate simplification.

The environmentalist maps, however, do not stop here; they proliferate in piles of overlapping territorial classifications. In showing all kinds of claims and classifications, these maps extend the concerns of village leaders into the agendas of environmentalists; they make it possible to imagine a democratic space of debate, that is, to make forest territories into a "public sphere" of pluralistic and open discussion. Kompas Borneo's Mangkiling project has produced not just maps of adat-protected forest and maps of village swidden areas, but also maps of production forest timber concessions and maps of nature reserve areas. And, most pointedly, there are maps in which many of these things are shown on top of each other. I reproduce one of the most intricate as Map 3. Map 3 shows the timber concession of the company that was logging Mangkiling trees in the 1980s. The concession neatly overlaps the zone of village territory, including both mature (*butan*) and secondary (*belukar*) forest. The map, to me, is a *tour de force*. Village claims are given the same status as timber company claims — thus offering a sensitive official the chance to pick the villagers rather than the company as the appropriate local claimants, and all without having to uphold a general principle of adat rights. By showing overlap and contest in forest classifications, environ-

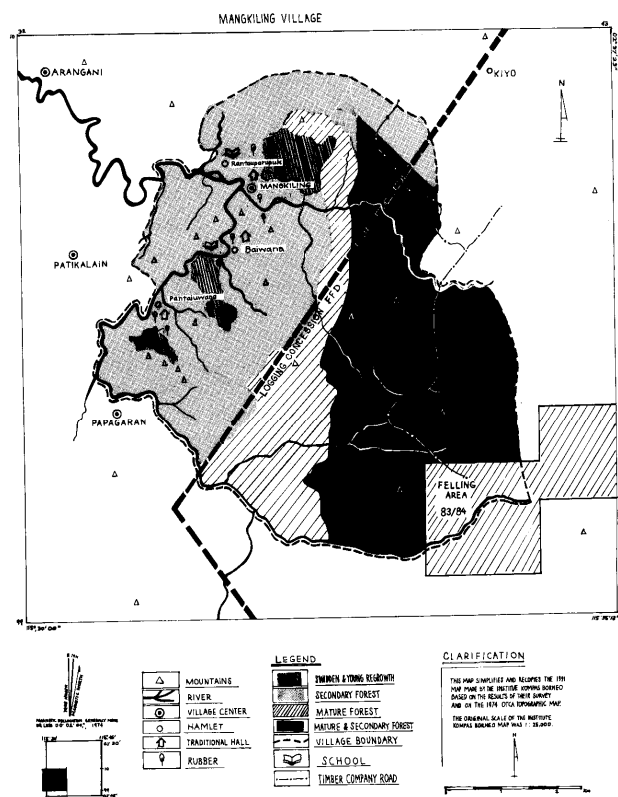
mentalists add — rather than subtract — layers of possibility in policy discussions. The precise technologies of mapping do not narrow down the truth but instead open territorial classifications as a matter of democratic public debate. Indeed, this proliferation of options makes the alternative conventions of the map attributed to Musa also come alive as the map that could be made by the tribal elder, the indigenous map. Its collaborative layers disappear as it too becomes one perspective in this debate, the village text in the technical dossier.

#### REPRISE

What does it mean to speak of or for a “tribe” in the late twentieth century? The term has emerged in international movements for environmental conservation and minority rights to draw attention to the political and ecological importance of marginalized rural communities. At the same time, scholars have criticized the traditions of representation in which these communities have been understood to have backward customs and exotic cultures, that is, to be identified as tribes. The concept of the “tribe,” recent scholars argue, calls up a history of metropolitan fantasies about the bizarre, the natural, or the originary lines of human evolution (e.g., Clifford 1988; Torgovnick 1990; Kuper 1988). It is never a simple descriptive term.

The political rehabilitation of the tribe and its scholarly rejection too often speak past each other. Instead, I have argued that we must begin both our political rapprochments and scholarly investigations with the question of how the concept of the tribe, with all its simplifications and codifications of metropolitan fantasy, comes to mean something to people caught in particular political dilemmas. The fantastic aspect of tribal identity does not make it irrelevant to marginalized people who pass as tribals; to the contrary, it is the fantasy of the tribe that becomes the source of engagement for both tribals and their metropolitan others. Both scholarship and advocacy deserve a closer look at such histories of engagement.

Recent cultural theorists have shown how cosmopolitan dreams and fantasies forge the categories and narratives through which central and peripheral social settings are segregated and aligned with each other. Emergent notions of polity and history — such as modernity (Foucault 1970), nationalism (Anderson 1983), colonial rule (Stoler 1991), or archaic folk traditions (Ivy 1995) — have rebuilt the framing architecture through which we organize and recognize the local, in city and countryside, lowlands and uplands. “Local” self-conceptions and notions of place, personhood, desire, marginalization, and resistance have changed



MAP 3 MANGKILING VILLAGE. ORIGINAL MAP BY KOMPAS BORNEO INSTITUTE. MAP REDRAWN BY BRIAN ROUNDS. ORIGINAL OFFERS ADDITIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DETAIL AND LEGEND IN INDONESIAN AT A SCALE OF 1:25,000.

to live within these emergent architectures. We assert ourselves as "rational men" as "citizens," as "natives," as "women," or as "community representatives" within the cosmopolitan dreams and schemes that make these self-imaginings possible. Yet these dreams and schemes never work out in the ways they are supposed to. Their formulations of difference get away from them, slipping into unexpected transformations and collaborations. No theory of resistance along the lines of already assumed, immutable material interests (workers on strike; peasants in community) can capture the nuances with which metropolitan desires fulfill themselves. What is needed is a theory of localization, in which attention can be focused on the ways categories become stretched beyond themselves in particular events and confrontations. Such a framework points us toward the situational deformation of globally circulating categories. In my examination of Mangkiling documents, I have focused on the staging of "situations" in which the categories of green development are creatively transformed to make Mangkiling a village, a tribal location, and a place on the map that cannot be erased.

The "tribal elder" is a position empowered by international concerns for environmental sustainability and community-based environmental justice. This is an agenda with powerful backers but also substantial enemies. Its local deployments, however, do not depend entirely on the international play of this agenda; instead, they involve attempts by would-be tribal leaders and their advocates to pick up on important local concerns, that is, to contextualize international agendas and shape them in new ways. Notions of community, territory, and culture are reconstructed around the new tribal discourse as it is interpolated with tribal deployments in government administration, commercial enterprise, regional religious doctrine, research, and tourism.

Local articulations of tribal autonomy and rights make use of "room for maneuver" within administrative categories for local people and activities. Even so, some creative transformations are needed to make the difference between resource loss and bureaucratic encompassment, on the one hand, and community initiative, on the other. In development programs that require local communities to function as docile administrative units, room for maneuver is particularly prominent in the community research components that readjust and align development initiatives at the regional level. Environmentalist concerns, which entered Indonesian regional development in the 1980s, increased this community research load and shifted some of it to non-governmental organizations, some of which thought of themselves as community and environmental advocates. Through

this trajectory, tribalism entered within the program of development.

In Mangkiling, then, tribal elders long for development at the same time as they hold on to markers of tradition. The appearance of tradition draws the guests who hope to change them and offers them legitimacy among these guests as authentic community spokespersons. With the right leadership stance, it becomes possible to enter into collaborative projects in which Mangkiling concerns assume the aura of urban professional environmentalism, and vice versa. The more layers of alternative interpretations collaborators are able to add, the better the chances, one might argue, of successful Mangkiling advocacy. These collaborative layers then form the space of local articulation for so-called global environmentalism. They also transform it, as it becomes a tool within local negotiations of related, but not synonymous, makings of Mangkiling.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Nancy Peluso (personal communication) offers an important political contextualization: "These are clearly not inter-village movements because this would be politically impossible. Organizing across villages could raise various spectres; if not communist or 'tribal' insurgency, any anti-government organization would be suspect. So the focussing of 'development' on making documents happen, creating situations, etc., is of necessity focussed on the village and best served in the person of the village leaders."
- <sup>2</sup> Preliminary histories and analyses of the Indonesian environmental movement can be found in Belcher and Gennino 1993 and throughout the journal *Environesia*. For an account of environmentalists' attempts to use the concept of *adat* to build a national appreciation of tribal land and resource rights, see Tsing n.d.c.
- <sup>3</sup> Much of Escobar's (1995) analysis of development expertise is relevant to Indonesia.
- <sup>4</sup> There is a social forestry program with pilot projects in South Kalimantan, but the focus of this and other "participatory" efforts is to design model communities rather than to empower already existing community-based forest management.
- <sup>5</sup> If this seems odd, it may be useful to think of a woman's enactment of womanhood or an

Asian country's enactment of the Orient; where are the lines between player and role? Self-making here brings to life the powerful desires that define one's Otherness; and only by inciting those powerful desires can one act "as a woman" or "as the Orient." Other kinds of agency are, of course, possible for these actors, but these do not lead to collaborations on these lines of difference, here manhood and womanhood, East and West.

- 6 To analyze documents written by and about relatively uninfluential people raises important questions about confidentiality and exposure. Once the analysis refers to a public document, it becomes impossible to change the names and places referred to; yet, it seems proper to protect the strategies and reputations of both writers and their objects from undue prying. In this essay, I have tried to keep my analysis to documents that have been distributed, registered, or published in public places. Furthermore, I have tried to avoid attention to idiosyncratic foibles and mistakes to focus instead on systematic meanings and asymmetries as well as acts of courage and imagination.
- 7 Mangkiling was never the center of my ethnographic research. I have stayed in the village and talked with Musa and other key figures, and my understandings of our conversations are guided by research in other Meratus areas (see Tsing 1993). Even without extensive participant-observation, the documents are revealing; they offer the kinds of historical materials so often unavailable to an ethnographer of rural areas.
- 8 Tsing n.d.b. offers a complementary but rather different analysis of Meratus road-longing.
- 9 It is unclear from the texts whether the researchers asked about medicinal herbs by name or solicited these names from Mangkiling informants. In either case, it appears that the villagers did not challenge the researchers' ideas of what might constitute "traditional medicine." I imagine that the researchers were already so sure of the forms exoticism should take that a heroic effort to introduce new pharmaceutical models probably would still have been unsuccessful. Rather than intentional deceit, going along with researchers' preconceptions involved only villagers' willingness to avoid being annoying.
- 10 Potter (1988: 138–41) describes the debate among colonial officials over forest control in Borneo earlier this century; aspects of this debate are replicated in current controversies over Kalimantan forests.
- 11 Stabilization and specification began long before this map, and the map cites and rewrites other efforts. In particular, Musa's imaginative framework for the map appears to invoke an earlier document he helped design in 1967, when he was village head. This was a written text which put land rights on paper by assigning sectors of the village to particular neighborhood groups.

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## Chapter 7

### REPRESENTATIONS OF THE "OTHER" BY OTHERS: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE POSED BY PLANTERS' VIEWS OF PEASANTS IN INDONESIA

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#### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian plantations were thrust into the global limelight in 1997 by dramatic episodes of social and environmental violence in Kalimantan. The former involved an outbreak of tribal warfare in the vicinity of huge oil and rubber plantations in West Kalimantan in January and February, and the latter involved the engulfment of plantation lands throughout Kalimantan by wildfires so great as to imperil human health in several neighboring countries. These developments, unique in both scope and character, can be interpreted as signs that something is fundamentally wrong with the social and environmental relations in the state plantation sector (Dove 1997). Yet public representation of these relations, which has been dominated by the official views of plantation managers, gave no prior hint of this. The social and environmental conflagrations of 1997 suggest that these official views have been distorted and self-serving. The purpose of this study is to examine how and why this distortion occurs.

#### *Plantations and Peasant-Planter Rhetoric*

State and para-statal agricultural enterprises constituted an important part of Indonesia's upland (and to a lesser extent, lowland) landscape in historical times and this is ever-more true in the contemporary era. The lives of significant numbers of the peasants and tribesmen who live in these uplands have been affected by these enterprises, either because they work for them or because they compete with them for local lands and other resources. Peasant-planter conflict stemming from these labor relations and resource competitions has become a salient component of the upland "ethnoscape." The national bureaucratic elite that manages the plantations attributes these conflicts to the cultural, economic, and political backwardness of the peasantry. Indeed, the rhetoric of the managerial elite characterizes this local population in "polar" terms: in industry, intelli-