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Introduction

The traumatic decline of Malay kingdoms in the Indonesian province of Riau and, more recently, the area's rapid economic development, has prompted some Malay intellectuals to articulate a concern for cultural and ethnic specificity. In the search for local definition, some have suggested that it may be found among Riau's *suku asli* groups – small, indigenous forest-based and aquatic societies that retain strong economic and cultural links to the territories and natural environments that they have occupied for generations.

This paper is primarily concerned with issues relating to the identity and cultural survival of one such group – the Suku Petalangan – who number about 20,000 and occupy the once thickly forested Kampar river hinterlands on the Sumatran mainland where they engage in swidden farming, collecting forest products and fishing. Suku Petalangan leaders have described themselves to me as *Melayu asli darat* (authentic inland Malays) and *rakyat bekas kerajaan Pelalawan* (people of the former kingdom of Pelalawan). I have also observed that, depending upon the situation in which identity was an issue, individuals identified themselves or were identified according to their village of birth, clan origin and/or residency.

In this paper I argue that Petalangan arts and performing arts in particular have a vital role to play in the transmission, expression and celebration of Petalangan cultural identity, and that these functions exist in the context of, and perpetuate a set of, social, environmental and legal codes and attitudes known as *adat*. Drawing extensively upon the natural environment for primary analogies with social life, Petalangan *adat* reflects a world view in which territorial tenure is central to their concepts of self.

And yet in recent times the Petalangan and many other small-scale societies in Riau have found that their long-standing assumptions about territorial tenure are insufficient to protect them against land loss resulting from the intervention of outside powers that include government as well as private and international business interests. As many of the Petalangan territories do not show the designated signs of structured utilization such as tillage, fencing and built structures, they are deemed by the government to be vacant and therefore available for sale to the highest bidder.

Regarding the issue of continuing local cultural identity, the govern-

mental position does not acknowledge the linkages that exist between cultural identity and territorial tenure. As stated by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, the problem for Indonesia is simply 'how to manage the process of acculturation so that the sociocultural values of [*suku asli*] groups might add to the wealth of Indonesia's national culture.'¹

Thus in a recent seminar in Riau on the expressive cultures of so-called *suku pedalaman*, or societies of the interior, the Director General of Culture suggested that 'the stronghold of cultural identity is to be sought in language and art, and that characteristic style, structure and symbolism are the pillars of cultural identity' (Edi Sediawati 1993:6). However, the analysis and view presented in this paper suggests that if such small-scale societies are not to be uprooted from their respective cultures, strategies for their development must be sensitive to the specific historical, environmental, social, cultural and economic conditions that apply at the local level. Recognition of the economic and cultural importance of territorial tenure in the lifestyle and world view of the Suku Petalangan and other *suku asli* groups in Riau is vital if they are to continue to cohere as distinctive societies that are capable of contributing their sociocultural values to the national culture.

This paper also recognizes the 'Malay identity work'² of Tengku Nasyaruddin, or Tenas Effendy as he prefers to be known. Pak Tenas is a Pekanbaru-based Malay intellectual and cultural expert who has provided intellectual, moral and personal support for the Suku Petalangan through decades of involvement with them. As a son of Kampar's kingdom of Pelalawan he has been able to make a particularly significant contribution to the documentation and conservation of Malay identity in the middle and downstream reaches of the Kampar river. His extensive documentation and commentaries on the expressive culture of the region in general, and among the Suku Petalangan in particular, present a view of local Malay cultural identity emerging from the region's most ancient occupants.

This paper recognizes the disadvantaged position that Riau's *suku asli* societies find themselves in as they face rapid and unprecedented changes to their social and physical environments.³ Regarding the frequently encountered view among Indonesian decision makers that 'traditional culture' constitutes an impediment to development, this paper echoes the *a priori* position that 'traditional culture is dynamic, is always undergoing change, and as a result is not inimical to the process of development *per se*' (Dove 1988:1). In advocating programs of support for *suku asli* societies, including their attempts to conserve their cultural and environmental resources, the intent is empowerment, not the petrification or freezing of

¹ See *Republika*, 04-09-1993.

² See the contribution by Will Derks to this volume.

³ See the contributions by Cynthia Chou and Lioba Lenhart to this volume.

their cultures. Indeed the use by indigenous people of new methods, techniques and approaches to the preservation of their cultural resources demonstrates a highly creative, adaptive and rational response to and participation in a changing world.

The logic of decolonization requires an undertaking from those of us who have been privileged to work with such communities to listen and respond to their aspirations for equitable treatment and a participatory role in the decision making that affects their future lives. Like many indigenous groups throughout the world, the Suku Petalangan have identified the need to create a modern-day 'keeping place' for their cultural resources and references that might otherwise become extinct, and the need for cultural, economic and environmental strategies to ease the shock of collision with vastly more powerful, transnational cultural pressures. In this context the often-heard question of whether we are arguing for a 'living museum' misses the point of gravity in the debate, resting as it does on a colonial conceit. Instead we should ask: What are our obligations when confronted with the aspirations of underrepresented groups, and how we can best assist such groups to achieve their individual and collective aspirations?

National and Global Contexts

According to a report by members of Gajah Mada University's Pusat Penelitian Pembangunan Pedesaan dan Kawasan (Center for the Study of Village Development, hereafter P3PK), the people of Riau have received little benefit from the province's recent development despite the huge contribution that Riau makes to the Indonesian economy through its oil, mineral, forestry and plantation industries, and more recently through tourism (Mubyarto 1992:4-6).⁴ The report makes clear that the path charted by the central government for Riau's development requires a level of technological expertise that excludes local participation. Moreover the size of the gap between macroeconomic and microeconomic levels of development, and the lack of engagement between industrial and village levels of the economy, means that benefits do not 'trickle down' to the local level.

Since my first visit to Riau in 1984, changes have taken place in the physical and social environments that include the appearance of a network of roads and factories, deforestation, the appearance of large palm oil plantations and a large increase in the non-Malay population. For the Suku Petalangan and other forest-dwelling *suku asli* groups with whom I have worked, the economic development of Riau has also meant extensive land loss, environmental degradation of their remaining territories, population dispersal and government-sponsored resettlement programs. These factors have made their economic and cultural survival increasingly difficult.

⁴ See also *Kompas*, 25-04-1990 and *Republika*, 05-02-1993.

Such small-scale societies face the additional problems of disempowerment and isolation (Edi Sediawati 1993:5). Moreover, many sectors of the government and society at large see such isolation as being contrary to the national interest as suggested by a gloss provided by the Department of Social Affairs (DepSos) which sums up the problem in the following words: '[these] societies are isolated and possess only limited abilities to communicate with other more modern societies, and because of that appear to be backward and left behind by the developmental processes of economic, political, sociocultural, religious and ideological life.'⁵

Another problem for *suku asli* groups is their almost complete economic and cultural dependency upon the territories and environments that they have occupied, managed and bequeathed for generations. Implied in this prior occupancy, dependency and ownership is the argument that such groups should continue to possess a right to own and manage their ancestral territories. However, such claims are regarded in official circles as being in opposition to the national interest, as indicated by the Minister of Forestry who at the Kongres Kehutanan Indonesia in 1990 stated that such claims constitute a hindrance to the development of Indonesia's forestry-based industries.⁶

The consensus view and reality is that *suku asli* societies must change or have change imposed upon them. The absence of a political voice among such groups means that *suku asli* groups are unable to mount any substantial resistance to imposed change. Moreover, they know from experience that to engage in overt resistance is to invite an overwhelming and catastrophic response from those who do possess power in Indonesia. Admittedly, some government and nongovernment organizations have made various efforts to assist *suku asli* societies to 'improve their fortune', however the P3PK report notes that these efforts usually fail because they are based on the imposition of external cultural values, a lack of effort to understand local values, and ethnocentric attitudes that see *suku asli* cultures as 'static' and 'backward'. The report singles out government-sponsored resettlement programs as one of the worst failures, noting that the forced removal of *suku asli* groups from their traditional territories places them in an economically impossible position (Edhie Djatmiko 1992: 20-1).

One recent effort to narrow the distance between *suku asli* and mainstream urban society in Indonesia was a four-day international festival of *suku pedalaman*⁷ arts (Festival Seni Budaya Suku Pedalaman Asia Pasifik)

⁵ 'Masyarakat yang terisolir dan memiliki kemampuan terbatas untuk berkomunikasi dengan masyarakat-masyarakat lain yang lebih maju, sehingga karena itu bersifat terbelakang serta tertinggal dengan proses mengembangkan kehidupan ekonomi, politik, sosial-budaya, keagamaan, dan ideologi.' Quoted in Koentjaraningrat and Simorangkir 1993:9.

⁶ *Kompas*, 28-10-1990.

⁷ According to the Pedoman Pelaksanaan Festival Seni Budaya Masyarakat Peda-

held in Pekanbaru (2-5 September 1993), which the Director General of Tourism described as 'a step toward understanding their [*suku pedalaman* societies'] social and cultural life.'⁸ However, it is illustrative of the status of *suku asli* cultures in Indonesia that the festival was held under the auspices of the Department of Tourism, Post and Telecommunications and not the Department of Culture and Education, thus confirming the impression presented through most of the Indonesian mass media that tourism constitutes the ultimate justification for the preservation of indigenous cultures.

Perhaps the most valuable side of the festival was an associated seminar in which several key issues were raised and widely reported. For example the Director General of Tourism suggested that tourism and heritage were not necessarily enemies, and that the development of suitably sensitive modes of tourism needed to become a priority for Indonesia (Andi Mappi Sammeng 1993). Wide coverage was also given to an acknowledgement by the Minister of Social Affairs that intensive forest clearing had in fact caused some indigenous societies to lose their ancestral territories, economic viability and cultural identity.⁹ Four recommendations forthcoming from the seminar were: the need to conserve the region (*kawasan*) in which indigenous people conduct their lives; the need for governments to facilitate immigration for those who are isolated from services; the need to develop programs that are sensitive to social and environmental concerns; and the need for continuing discussions at an international level.¹⁰ The opportunity for open discussion and advocacy that the seminar appeared to encourage was seized upon by various sectors of the media who sought to place the issue of indigenous peoples' culture in the broader context of human rights by drawing attention to the fact that 1993 had been declared by the United Nations as the Year of Indigenous Peoples, and that the Conference on Human Rights in Vienna had singled out land rights as a major problem facing indigenous peoples everywhere.¹¹

This background of international, national and local interests also forms the context for a project to assist the Suku Petalangan to conserve their arts and oral tradition. The promoters of the project have argued that its strength lies in its local genesis, high levels of consultation with the host community, and its integration with government-sponsored projects to

laman (Guidelines for the Implementation of the Arts Festival of Indigenous People), the term *suku pedalaman* is based on the Malay usage to refer to *suku asli* groups who performed 'special duties' in the kingdom.

⁸ The Festival Guidelines reproduces the authorizing legislation (Surat Keputusan DepParPosTel Prop. Riau, No: 04/FES/KWL.XXI/V/93) which states that the underlying issues of the Festival are the living environment, cultural preservation and tourism.

⁹ See *Kompas*, 04-09-1993; and *Kartini*, No. 492, September 1990.

¹⁰ See *Kompas*, 06-09-1993.

¹¹ See *Kompas*, 18-06-1993; also see *Republika*, 14-06-1993.

assist in developing small-scale aquaculture farms, more efficient agricultural practices and cottage industries at the village level. The site for this project is the village of Betung (Kecamatan Pengkalan Kurus, Kabupaten Kampar). According to a survey of the performing arts throughout the Suku Petalangan region, which Tenas Effendy and I performed in 1984, Betung possessed the greatest number of performing artists and ritual experts, as well as the largest repertoire of music, handicrafts and oral tradition. In 1995 Betung remained one of the very few Suku Petalangan villages where traditional arts are still a part of everyday life. It is also one of the few villages that has been able to retain a small but significant portion of its ancestral forest lands. These achievements are due mainly to the leadership of the village head Abdullah Munir who has worked hard to ensure that the community maintained a high level of social coherence despite the trauma that external developments over the last few years have brought.¹²

The arts conservation program in Betung is under the management of a Pekanbaru-based nongovernment educational and cultural organization, the Yayasan Setanggi (the Setanggi Foundation) whose members have had a long involvement with the Suku Petalangan. The project, which is based on a sociocultural approach to village development that stresses 'bottom-up planning' and 'development from within', was planned over many years, and involved extensive consultation with, and participation of, community leaders.¹³ The project proposal to the Ford Foundation states that its purpose is to assist the community in Betung to conserve their arts through an increasingly locally directed program of collection, documentation and dissemination, and to restimulate a sense of cultural pride and ownership through the involvement of the whole community (Yayasan Setanggi 1992).

The proposal also suggests that the project would be most effective if it were coupled to other programs targeted at the conservation of local natural resources and the improvement of the local economy and health. Fortunately the government has already funded projects in Betung to set up fish farms, to encourage the development of cottage industries and to construct a magnificent Cultural Center. The accompanying facilities serve as a center for cultural research and archives, as well as for mounting performances and displays of traditional crafts (such as wood carving, rattan and pandanus weaving, and musical instrument making). Community

¹² With assistance from Dr. Tabrani Rab, Tenas Effendy and other concerned outsiders, Abdullah Munir along with other Suku Petalangan leaders were able to raise their concerns about land loss with Riau's Consultative Assembly (see *Genta*, 2nd week, August 1988; also see *Mimbar Umum*, 16-08-1988).

¹³ The Indonesian government's Ministry for the Coordination of Public Welfare has expressed support for such 'grass-roots' projects through its *Kebijaksanaan Dasar-warsa Pengembangan Kebudayaan di Indonesia 1988-1998* (Policy for the Decade of Cultural Development in Indonesia 1988-1998).

leaders have also set aside grounds for a plant nursery to propagate and disseminate local species of forest flora that are presently under threat. The Yayasan Setanggi's project proposal expresses the hope that Betung may become a model of economic and cultural development that might be emulated by other *suku asli* groups, and that Betung and other *suku asli* villages might eventually be in a position to benefit from Indonesia's emerging eco-tourism industry.

The project possesses one other great advantage, namely that Tenas Effendy, who founded the Yayasan Setanggi in 1989, has known and worked with the Suku Petalangan for several decades. During that time he has produced thousands of pages of (mainly unpublished) essays on their rituals, games, arts, and performances, and complete transcriptions (and sometimes, translations into *bahasa Indonesia*) of their epic songs, stories, traditional sayings, statements of law, mantras and lullabies.

A Place and History in the Malay World

In an unpublished essay (1982) entitled 'Selayang Pandang Latar Belakang Sejarah Pesukuan Batin-Batin di Kecamatan Pengkalan Kuras', (An Overview of the Historical Background of the Batin-Led Clans in the Subdistrict of Pengkalan Kuras), Tenas Effendy and H.T.S. Jaafar present an overview of Suku Petalangan history and culture in the context of the life and history of the kingdoms of Pekantua and Pelalawan on the Kampar river.¹⁴ As stated in a foreword by the then *camat* (district administrator) of Pengkalan Kuras, Tengku Zalik Umar, the writers were eager to preserve the *adat*, traditional cultural values and language of Kampar's forest-based *suku asli* people, whom they refer to as *masyarakat di petalangan* or *orang talang* (hinterland people).¹⁵

Eight years later Tenas Effendy produced two essays in which he suggests that *suku asli* cultures in Riau contributed a significant part of the local detail and history that once defined local Malay cultural identity (Tenas Effendy 1990a; 1990b). Citing various examples and sources including epic songs (*nyanyi panjang*), origin stories (*tombo*) and other forms of oral tradition, he notes that *suku asli* groups in Riau were neither regarded nor referred to as 'isolated societies' (*masyarakat terasing*), as they are today. Rather, they formed an integral part of the Malay kingdoms to which they were attached.

He describes the Suku Petalangan clans as the *tulang punggung* (backbone) of a fighting force which waged battles to defend the kingdom of Pekantua against the Portuguese and, later, the kingdom of Pelalawan against Dutch invaders. They also participated in the trade, infrastructure

¹⁴ H.T.S. Jaafar is Tenas Effendy's paternal uncle, and both are descendants of Tengku Said Hasyim who ruled as sultan of Pelalawan from 1894 to 1930.

¹⁵ In his later writings Tenas Effendy regularly used the terms 'Suku Petalangan' and 'Orang Petalangan'.

and cultural life of the kingdom by gathering forest products, patrolling the waterways, transporting envoys and merchants through the hazardous mouth of the Kampar river¹⁶ and by providing the kingdom and court town with bards, dancers and instrumentalists for weddings and Idul Fitri celebrations.¹⁷ They even provided shamanic healers (*kemantan*) whenever the ruler fell ill or if the kingdom faced an epidemic.

One Suku Petalangan clan known as Singo Bono provided two particularly important services. It provided pilots at the mouth of the Kampar river, and musicians for the royal orchestra (*nobat*), which played at royal installation ceremonies, to receive foreign dignitaries and on other state occasions. Their control of access to the kingdom was thus more than merely physical; it also extended to one of the most important symbols of royal legitimacy.¹⁸ In charging the Singo Bono with responsibility for providing musicians for the royal orchestra, the rulers of Kampar thus signalled a symbolic dependency on the region's *suku asli* groups.¹⁹ I suggest that the reasons for this have to do not only with strategic and economic necessity, but also with the need to achieve the legitimacy of local identity – something that in fact only the 'indigenous' inhabitants could provide. For, unlike the outward-looking, trade-oriented coastal Malay settlers whose cultural identity drew heavily upon influences from outside their immediate region, the indigenous clans' sense of self grows from ancient local roots.

In return for their service and loyalty Suku Petalangan clans and individuals obtained positions of rank and honor in the kingdom. The origin story *Bujang Tan Domang* records that in return for giving land to the ruler of Pelalawan, the *batin* (leader) of Sialang Kawan (a Suku Petalangan territory) was appointed as *monti ajo* (king's minister). In this capacity he represented the monarch on certain occasions. Since his inauguration in 1984, the present-day village head of Betung, Abdullah Munir, continues to bear the title of *monti ajo* and is acknowledged to be the leader of all the Suku Petalangan clans. His status is also recognized by other *suku asli* groups such as the Talang Mamak who receive him as a kinsman and as

¹⁶ Until the recent development of a network of weatherproofed roads, aquatic transport was the natural and most reliable means of access to and within the Kampar river region. However, passage through the mouth of the Kampar is restricted by shifting sand bars, large equatorial tides and a large tidal bore (*bono*).

¹⁷ Leonard Andaya 1975b notes a similar role for the Orang Laut in the kingdom of Johor. Also see Matheson 1986:30.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the history and significance of the *nobat*, see Kartomi 1987: 374-5.

¹⁹ The role of *suku asli* groups as *nobat* musicians seems to have been a reasonably common feature in the kingdoms of Riau. According to Matheson (1986:30), referring to information from Vivienne Wee, only the Suku Bintan could play the *nobat* drums of the royal orchestra. During my fieldwork among the Talang Mamak of Indragiri in 1984, I learned that only the Talang Mamak were allowed to play the *nobat* orchestra and that this was a measure of their high status in the court of Rengat.

the entitled leader of a neighboring group of *suku asli* clan.

Most importantly the fourteen Suku Petalangan clans received formal recognition from the ruler acknowledging their prior occupancy and continuing rights to possess and use their twenty-nine ancestral territories (Batin Kurang Oso Tiga Puluh).²⁰ Furthermore, the traditional Suku Petalangan method of using 'the sound of a wet drum' (*sepenggual gondang basah*) to determine the whereabouts of territorial boundaries was adopted by the rulers of Pelalawan as the means for establishing the boundaries of land for newly arrived settlers.

During several hundred years of kingdom Suku Petalangan culture underwent a gradual process of change. Following the establishment in the late fifteenth century of Islam as the official state religion, the *adat* system of the Suku Petalangan was modified and expanded to reflect Islamic laws and values. According to Tenas Effendy the introduction of Islam was through a slow and peaceful process that 'colored' but did not seek to eliminate those elements of Suku Petalangan culture that did not conflict with Islamic values, an assertion that seems to be borne out by the continuing presence of many pre-Islamic elements in Suku Petalangan culture such as shamanic healing and other magico-ritual forms in which ritual specialists invoke familiar spirits and spirits of nature, but always in the name of Allah and his Prophet (Tenas Effendy 1990b:2). Instead, the stories and performing arts became vehicles for promoting Islam. Through a process of 'stimulation' and 'correction', folk tales that were based upon belief in the existence of spirits were 'brought into accordance' with Islamic concepts (Tenas Effendy 1990:2-3).²¹ My research into musical

²⁰ Referring to developments in the kingdom of Pelalawan under Sultan Ismail (r. 1828-1844), H.T.S. Umar Muhammad, Tenas Effendy and T. Razak Jaafar (1988:39-40) write: 'Penggunaan tanah juga mulai diterbitkan, yang dasarnya diambil dari Hukum Adat tempatan yang dianut pesukuan-pesukuan di kerajaan tersebut. Sultan menetapkan, bahwa semua "tanah baru" dan "tanah tumbuh" menjadi milik kerajaan [...] Sedangkan Tanah Wilayah milik masing-masing pesukuan tetaplah menjadi milik mereka, bahkan Sultan mengukuhkan kepemilikan itu dengan memberi "Surat Pengukuhan" atau "Pengukuhan Hutan Tanah"' (Patterns of land usage were also published based on local Customary Law of the clans within the kingdom. The sultan determined that all 'new land' and 'emerging land' belonged to the kingdom [...] Meanwhile the traditional territories would remain the possession of the various clans, the sultan even formalizing this ownership through the issue of 'Letters of Authority' or 'Authorizations to Forest Lands').

²¹ 'Cerita-cerita rakyat yang awalnya berpunca kepada kehidupan dewa, mambang, peri dan makhluk-makhluk gaib, distimulir dan disesuaikan dengan makhluk gaib yang diakui Islam. Kalaupun perwujudannya masih bersifat dewa, mambang dan sebagainya, namun nafas Islam sudah ditiupkan ke dalamnya, baik melalui dialog-dialog maupun melalui tema cerita. Berbagai bentuk, jenis dan unsur kebudayaan yang ada di dalam masyarakat, dijadikan ajang dan alat untuk menyebar Islam [...] Bentuk-bentuk kebudayaan yang pra Islam, sepanjang dapat "diluruskan" tetap dipertahankan, dan dimasukkan pula unsur kebudayaan baru bersumber dari ajaran Islam. Perpaduan ini, lambat laun menyebabkan persebatan kebudayaan itu semakin kokoh, sehingga tidak lagi terpisahkan antara Melayu dengan Islam.' (Folk stories

rituals among the Suku Petalangan suggests that this approach achieved subtle but significant changes at the symbolic and interpretative levels while producing little change to performance structures (Turner 1990).

Another important change was the introduction of a body of ceremonial customs, norms of behavior and governmental structures that were inherited from Melaka. Suku Petalangan people refer to this body of laws and customs as *adat yang diadatkan*.

After Siak subjugated Pelalawan in 1811, trade and education in the region flourished, Islamic teachings spread among the people, court protocols were 'perfected', and the court became a sponsor for local musicians, martial arts teachers and storytellers (Umar Muhammad et al. 1988:33-55). Under Sultan Tengku Sentol (1890-1892) – a 'golden age' for the arts according to my informants in Betung – the finest artisans, musicians, dancers, storytellers and ritual specialists from Suku Petalangan villages were invited to take up residence in the court town Pelalawan and were even granted a regular salary (Mughtar Lutfi et al. 1977:350).

Disjunction

Suku Petalangan leaders with whom I have spoken identify the period of the Japanese occupation of Sumatra as the beginning of their isolation from mainstream society.²² They claim that the lines of social and economic contact that existed under the Malay kingdom were all but severed following Indonesia's Independence. Social revolution, changes in the political order, population movements, economic poverty associated with collapsing markets, shifting cultural values and the fear of appearing to support the feudal structures of the past resulted in what Tenas Effendy described as 'cultural confusion' among Malays generally in which cultural performances became a rarity, and in which the oral and performative transmission of cultural forms and values virtually ceased, particularly those that expressed traditional *adat* values (Tenas Effendy 1990b:5). Furthermore the development of television, radio and recording industries meant

about spirit beings were stimulated and brought into accordance with Islamic concepts about the spirit world. Although these spirit beings still resembled *dewa*, *mambang* and so on, the essence of Islam had already been breathed into them, via dialogues or narrative themes. Various cultural forms, types and elements that already existed within society became vehicles for the dissemination of Islam [...] As long as they could be 'straightened', pre-Islamic cultural forms were preserved, and instilled with new elements based on Islamic teachings. This union gradually brought about an increasingly complete integration of cultural elements, so that we no longer see a separation between Malay identity and Islam.)

²² During discussions arising from this paper at the IIAS Conference, Barbara Watson Andaya suggested that in general, the relationship between court and village in the Malay world was less benign than this paper suggests. The interpretation presented in this paper is limited to the kingdom of Pelalawan, and is based on the writings of Tenas Effendy and the collective and individual oral representations of Suku Petalangan informants.

that the 'cultural vacuum' that Malays found themselves in was gradually filled by non-Malay cultural expression. By the time Indonesia's New Order government put its programs in place for cultural, social and economic development, entire oral and performance repertoires had been lost because their retainers had died or were too old to take a vigorous role in the reconstruction of Malay culture practices.

During this same period of 'cultural confusion' the Suku Petalangan and other *suku asli* societies found themselves without the means to participate in the new world and economic order. Instead they turned inward to their traditional roots – the only social and economic security available to them. While coastal Malays 'adapted' to the new structures and challenges that followed Indonesia's Independence, *suku asli* societies continued to engage in the traditional subsistence patterns of their forebears. In their economic, social and geographic isolation many *suku asli* societies maintained a substantially intact body of performance arts, oral tradition, traditional crafts and graphic design. And it is to these groups that some Malays are now looking as they seek to recover elements of their own local Malay identity.

The grievances expressed by most Malays with whom I have spoken revolved around the loss of land and destruction of the natural environment. Some believed that these losses will lead to the final erasure of the *alam Melayu* (Malay world). Others like Tenas Effendy take the view that as long as Malay moral, social and cultural values continue to exist then so does the *alam Melayu*. His explorations of Petalangan oral tradition and performing arts reveal a world view and framework for identity in which traditional stewardship of place and nature is mandated through the adherence of the society to its codes of social and religious morality. Following Tenas Effendy's lead, the following section looks at three Suku Petalangan performance genres – epic songs (*nyanyi panjang*), honey-collecting rituals (*menumbai sialang*) and shamanic rituals (*belian*) – with the aim of drawing out the social, cultural and moral themes of territorial tenure. At the heart of this philosophical system, transmitted through performances, we find a core concept of self-identity which the Suku Petalangan refer to as *alam dalam diri* (nature within oneself).

Concepts of 'Place' and 'Nature' in Suku Petalangan Performing Arts

Concepts about place and nature are fundamental and inseparable in the world view of the Suku Petalangan. Probably the most important cultural expressions of this primacy are through several night-long performances of epic songs (*nyanyi panjang*) which tell of the heroic efforts of the ancestors as they settled the land, established laws and practices to ensure that the forest lands would remain a viable resource for their descendants, the battles they fought on behalf of the kingdom and in defense of their homelands, the relationships that gave rise to present-day social inter-

dependencies between individuals, clans and villages, and the events that led to certain places becoming sacred or forbidden.

In the past each original clan (*suku asal*) in the Kampar region possessed areas of forest land. Each territory was established by a named ancestor, and each was associated with a *tombo* or origin story that 'proved' the clan's status and its rights to territorial tenure. A clan that did not possess a *tombo* was regarded as a group that lacked a clear origin (*kaum tidak berasal-usul*), which almost certainly did not possess ancestral territories of its own, and whose members therefore relied upon the goodwill of landowning clans for permission to participate (*menumpang*) as intercroppers.

On the basis of the *tombo*'s authority, the rulers of Pelalawan reaffirmed the Suku Petalangan clans' rights to own, use and bequeath their territories. This recognition was formalized through the issue of a 'Letter of Authority' (Surat Pengukuhan Hutan Tanah) to every clan head (*kepala pesukuan*) who could demonstrate such proof of ownership. In the essay that accompanies a 1500-page transcription and translation of the *tombo* belonging to Betung's *monti ajo*, Tenas Effendy provides a copy of the text of a Surat Pengukuhan Hutan Tanah belonging to Batin Poetih. The text indicates that the original document was signed by the king of Pelalawan, Tengko Said Hasyim bin Aboebakar, on 23 August 1930 (Tenas Effendy 1993:60).

In Suku Petalangan culture there are two kinds of *harta* (inheritance): *harta pusaka* which belongs to individuals, and *harta soko*, meaning everything that a clan owns. Thus a clan 'owns' its *tombo* as it does its titles (*gelar*), offices (*jabatan*), laws (*hukum adat*), ancestral territories (*hutan tanah wilayah* or *tanah soko*), and its guardian spirits (*akuan*). Only by being able to recite its *tombo* could a clan demonstrate its rights of inheritance. It is therefore the primary referent to a clan's identity. Accordingly, each landowning clan had its own, officially appointed *tombo* narrator or *pebilang tombo*.²³

In fact *tombo* exist in two forms. The common, unsung, truncated form is restricted to the statement of names, places and territorial boundaries. The fully expanded version, known as *tombo induk*, was delivered as a *nyanyi panjang* or epic song. It is different from the truncated form, not only because of its musical elements and performance contexts,²⁴ but also because of the great body of detail that the narrative must disclose, including: information about the founding ancestors, their families and

²³ It was conventional to appoint three people (two males and a female, or two females and a male) per generation to the office of *pebilang tombo*. After being trained by an expert (*datuk pebilang tombo*), the novices would perform before the whole community. If their performances were regarded as satisfactory they could then be installed to the office of *pebilang tombo* as official reciters of their clan's history.

²⁴ *Tombo induk* were performed to celebrate occasions of special significance to the clan, such as ceremonies to install a clan leader.

origins, the travels and adventures that led to the forebears' discovery of suitable forest lands for their descendants, and pacts between humans and spirits associated with first settlement.²⁵ They also include familiar, formulaic descriptions of the land, the geographic, ecological and social characteristics that inspired the original naming of place (*nama asal tempat*), and instructions and advice (*tunjuk ajar*) regarding the social, legal, environmental and moral codes, obligations and practices that continue to bind the territories' inheritors.²⁶

All *nyanyi panjang* stories are elaborated through such descriptions and *tunjuk ajar*. In fact the most important requirement of a singer or narrator (*tukang nyanyi*, or *pebilang tombo* in the case of a *tombo induk*) is his or her ability to insert the appropriate phrases and verses into the narrative.²⁷ An epic story that is presented without the appropriate formulaic descriptions and *tunjuk ajar* is said to be 'lacking evidence' (*kurang dalil*).

Many of the descriptions and *tunjuk ajar* that appear in *nyanyi panjang* refer directly to the ancestral territories. Thus listeners are reminded that the ancestral territories are divided into four sections: village land (*tanah kampung*), land for gardening and village expansion (*tanah dusun*), land for swidden farming (*tanah peladangan*) and restricted forest lands (*imbo laangan*). Moreover they learn of the territories' fundamental importance in social, cultural and economic life, and of the need to guard them as a shared resource that may neither be sold nor gambled away:

²⁵ The Suku Petalangan practice three types of formal social pacts: *bergito* through which social alliances are created that bond the oath takers to death and beyond; *beranak iyang* which links shamans to their patients; and *berakuan* through which shamans, musicians and others acquire the assistance of guardian spirits (Turner 1993:176-7).

²⁶ Tenas Effendy defines *tunjuk ajar* as: 'all types of advice, orders, instructions, responsibilities, teachings, and examples, that are beneficial in human life' (Tenas Effendy 1994:5). His compendium of several thousand samples of *tunjuk ajar* is organized into twenty-nine categories, as follows: Fear of Allah, obedience to parents, respect for leaders, social unity and calm, justice and truth, the importance of knowledge, selflessness, hard work, self-sufficiency, morality and good character (*budi*), responsibility, shame, affection, ownership and rights, meetings and consensus, bravery, honesty, thriftiness and frugality, humbleness, thinking well of one's fellows, self-absorption, self-knowledge, openness, forgiveness, trusteeship, responsible use of time, forward thinking, praise of Allah, and simple living. In addition he provides ten categories that refer to the responsibilities of trusteeship in the following fields: teaching, parenting, family life, raising and protecting children, social life generally, friendship, facing the future, social welfare, leadership, and protection of the natural environment (Tenas Effendy 1994:vii-viii).

²⁷ The other requirements are: mastery over the loose, strophic form which characterizes sung narratives, clarity of nasal voice which makes the text easily apprehended, beauty of sound, and precise control over musical pitch required by the melismatic vocal style.

Apo tando tana wilayah	What are the signs of the ancestral territories?
Tana adat tana pusako	Land of <i>adat</i> , land of inheritance
Tana soko tuun temuun	Land of <i>soko</i> come down through generations
Tana beasal dengan beusul	Land of source and origin
Tana milik dan betuan	Land that is owned and has a host
Tana tesobut dalam tombo	Land that is spoken of in the <i>tombo</i>
Tana tedonge dalam ceito	Land that is heard of through the stories
Tana betontu lotak batenyo	Land whose boundaries are certain
Tana toang pancang galangnyo	Land whose length and breadth are known
Tana bekampung bedusun	Land of village and gardens
Tana beladang dan beimbo dalam	Land of swidden fields and deep forest
Tana belubuk dan besungai	Land of pools and rivers
Tana belomba dan pematang	Land of valleys and embankments
Tompat idup uang banyak	Place where many people live
Tompat daah ditumpuhkan	Place where blood has been spilled
Tompat badan dikuboukan	Place where bodies have been buried
Tompat adat ditogakkan	Place where <i>adat</i> is upheld
Tompat lembago ditinggikan	Place where institutions are respected
Tompat ico pakaian dimuliakan	Place where good content and form are exulted
Tompat beanak beketuunan	Place of children, generation after generation
Tompat gale besandean	Place where one's burden is shared
Tompat dagang betopatan	Place where merchants are fair
Tompat suku bekesukuan	Place where clan receives clan
Tompat tombo dibendangkan	Place where the <i>tombo</i> is proclaimed
Tanah tak bolei dijual digadai	Land that may not be sold nor gambled
Tanah tak bolei disio-siokan	Land that may not be wantonly wasted
Itulah tanda tanah wilayah	Those are the signs of the ancestral territories ²⁸

As indicated in the following statement of law, even though the forest is managed under a duty-of-care, usage is permitted as long as it does not result in the depletion of resources and as long as it is with the permission of the leaders:

Apo tando imbo laangan	What is the sign of the restricted forest?
Imbo dikungkung dengan adat	The forest is subject to laws and conventions
Imbo dipeliaio dengan lembago	The forest is managed through institutions
Tompat tumbou kayu kayan	A place where trees grow aplenty
Tompat idup binatang utan	A place where forest animals live
Tompat duduk sudao akuan	A place where the guardian spirits reside

²⁸ Tenas Effendy 1993:47; my translation.

Tompat beamu dan bebuu	A place to collect wood and to hunt
Tompat buah bemusim-musim	A place of seasonal fruit
Imbo tak boleh diusak binaso	The forest may not be destroyed
Bilo meambik dengan memintak	When taking, request permission first
Mintak kepada pucuk adat	Permission from the peak of law and convention
Mintak kepada Uang tuo-tuo	Permission from the Elders
Kepado Batin pemogang adat	From the <i>Batin</i> , custodian of law and convention
Kepado Ketiapan pemogang undang	From the Council of advisers, custodian of the rules
Ambik tidak mengabi-an	Take, but do not deplete
Mintak jangan bekelobei-an	Ask, but for no more than is needed
Ambik seukou patut dan layak	Take a measure, fair and proper
Mintak seukou diboleikan adat.	Ask, for a measure is permitted by law and convention ²⁹

According to Suku Petalangan law, there are two categories of owned forest: *imbo simpanan* (the forest of resources, also called *imbo dalam*, the deep forest), and *imbo kopungan sialang* (forest surrounding the bee trees). They are ecologically distinguished by the presence or not of the towering trees where wild bees make their nests. Although Petalangan law protects both against resource depletion, there are certain important differences in their function and status, as the following statements of law indicate:

Apo tando imbo simpanan	What is the sign of the forest of resources?
Tompat kayu amuan umah	A place to find house timber
Tompat kayu lobat bebuah	A place to find trees heavy with fruit
Tompat kayu banyak gotah	A place to find trees in which gum is plentiful
Tompat gau dengan dame	A place to find eaglewood and aromatic resins
Tompat otan beampaian	A place to find all kinds of rattan
Tompat ake bejelolan	A place where roots spread far
Tompat binatang beanak pinak	A place where animals multiply
Tompat sosak dilopean	A place where [social] pressure is released
Tompat sompit dilapangkan	A place where one's confines are expanded
Tompat nasib ditumpangkan	A place where fortune is shared
Tompat akuan dibosekan	A place where the guardian spirits were raised
Tompat menjadi sui teladan	A place that is the source of examples [for living] ³⁰

²⁹ Tenas Effendy 1993:46; my translation.

³⁰ The forest as a 'mother of examples' is further explained through the saying: 'Alam tekombang menjadi guu' (Nature unfolded becomes the teacher). During shamanic healing rituals (*belian*) sung mantras reveal a world view that regards the

Apo tando kopungan sialang	What is the sign of the sialang forest?
Tompat sialang ampak daan	It is the place where the sialang spreads its branches
Tompat lobah melotakan saang	The place where bees make their nests
Imbo dijago dan dipeliao	The forest is guarded and managed
Imbo tak bolei ditobe tobang	The forest may not be cleared and felled
Bilo ditobe dimakan adat	Those who clear it will be consumed by the law
Bilo ditobang dimakan undang	Those who fell it will be consumed by regula- tions ³¹

Why is the usage of the *imbo kopungan sialang* so restricted? First, the Suku Petalangan say that the forest surrounding a *sialang* tree presents greater diversity in its flora than the rest of the forest, and that the forest may regrow from the *kopungan sialang*. Second, it is the source of a variety of valuable resources that may in fact be extracted in small quantities according to provisions made in traditional law. The most important forest products from the *kepungan sialang* are honey and wax; honey for food (as are bee grubs) and medicine, and wax for making candles and a variety of other domestic uses. Third, *sialang* trees are by far the largest trees in the forest, some reaching to a height of sixty meters or more. As one honey collector or *juagan* from the village of Betung said to me, '*Sialang* are the largest beings that share the land with us.' Its status as a 'being' (*makhluk*) worthy of care and respect is reflected in the practice of addressing it in special songs known as *tumbai*, and in traditional law that states that the fine for felling a *sialang* is a white shroud to cover the entire tree.

The special status of the *sialang* tree is revealed through its ownership and management. *Sialang* trees form a part of a clan's *harta soko*. Each clan territory contains several if not tens of *kopungan sialang* within its boundaries, and it is the responsibility of the clan and in particular the *juagan* to care for them appropriately. This means keeping the base of the tree clear of other smaller trees which may inhibit its growth, and which could inhibit the work of the honey collectors. The absence of scrub at the foot of the *sialang* means that tigers, bears, snakes, scorpions, giant centipedes, ants, and leeches are less likely to be a problem for the ground crew as they handle and strain tens of liters of freshly collected honey.

It is also said that a well-kept *sialang* indicates the presence of humans and their law in the midst of the forest. In contrast an unkempt but still viable *sialang* is regarded as a waste of resources and a sign that its owners do not properly understand their responsibility to 'manage' (*memeliao*) the forest. In 1984, before the Suku Petalangan had experienced

land and forest as female and the sky as male.

³¹ Tenas Effendy 1993:42; my translation.

the large-scale dispossession of their lands, I did not encounter a *sialang* that did not appear to be well tended.

As is the case with all aspects of a clan's *harta soko*, the life-history of a *sialang* is known to its owners. When honey collectors travel in the forest (for example when fishing, hunting deer or collecting forest products), they keep a keen eye out for young *sulur batang*, *rumah keluang* and *cempadak air* trees that may one day tower over the forest. They examine the sapling carefully for signs that it will one day attract bees to its heights, signs such as a straight, smooth, slippery trunk, and high primary branching. They also look for signs that it will be acceptable as a repository for an *akuan* (guardian spirit), for it is believed that without the benevolent presence and assistance of an *akuan* the removal of honey would be too dangerous.

Knowing how to read the signs of such acceptability falls within the domain of ritual knowledge referred to as *kaji*. The *kaji* of a *sialang* tree concerns beliefs about the 'essence' (*hakikat*) of its origins as a living being, its constituent elements and their origins, and its relationship to other beings, the most important being humans, bees, and the *akuan* whose presence the *sialang* manifests. One of the most important considerations for the *juagan* as he examines a tree's potential to become a *sialang* is that it has the correct proportions and features needed to map it onto the human body (head, feet, limbs, orifices, etc.). According to U.U. Hamidy, parts of the tree are also named following membership of the *juagan*'s family, thus the base of the *sialang* is thought of as the place of the *juagan* himself; the primary branching is where the *juagan*'s wife awaits; and at the top is Tuan Putri Nilam Cahaya, the *juagan*'s female child. U.U. Hamidy suggests that this metaphoric mapping is to complete the identification between the *juagan* and the *sialang* (Hamidy 1987:102). This identification is referred to with the gloss *alam dalam dii* (nature within oneself).

If the sapling fulfills these requirements, a regime of care is put in place to assist the tree to achieve its potential. As a sign to the community at large, to passers-by, and to the bees, the *akuan*, and the forest spirits, it is conventional for the *juagan* and a work team from the responsible clan to clear around the base of the tree and to sprinkle it with *air intan* - water that has been poured over a diamond - thus metaphorically imparting qualities of brilliance to the tree so that it might sparkle with light. For the *juagan* know that bees are attracted to light. (When addressing bees directly, honey collectors use the title Putoi Lalat Putei Soi Manun - Princess White Fly who is Maddened by Light.)

The status of the *imbo kepungan sialang* is also revealed during the honey-collecting ritual *menumbai sialang* (charming the *sialang* with song). On a moonless night the *juagan* and his apprentices ascend a specially prepared ladder or scaffolding (*semangkat*) which reaches into

the tree's canopy where the bees make their nests.³² After reaching the canopy they make their way out along the limbs to the bees' nests where they drive the bees away with smoking firebrands. When the bees have departed, the waxy hive is broken away and lowered to the ground using a rope and bucket to the awaiting ground crew (*tukang sambut*). After the work has been completed, the honey and wax are divided according to prior agreement between the *juagan* and his assistants, the ground crew, the landowning clan, the *batin*, and honored guests. The honey may then be sold, or stored for future consumption.

Before the ascent can begin however, the *juagan* must determine whether the *sialang* and its inhabitants are ready to receive the climbers. He does this by reciting a mantra called *menuo sialang* (ripening the *sialang*) after which he slaps the trunk three times. If he does not hear the deep humming reply from thousands of bees that indicates their readiness to take flight, the ascent is postponed. As the *menuo sialang* mantra reveals (see below), the *sialang* is the property of a forest spirit whose permission must be sought before it can be harvested for its honey:

Kayu pulak kayu pulung	Tree that is also the tree of divine light
Kayu putei pandang gelobu	White tree overlooking the turbulence
Kayu beduo tana ombang	Both trees are of the land at the center
Tana ombang tana Duato	Land at the center of the land of the sacred
	One
Tana ombang tana tempat ku jadi	Land at the central place where I came into
	being
Tana ombang tana Duato	Land at the center of the land of the sacred
	One
Tana ombang tana tempat kau jadi	Land at the central place where you came
	into being
Ooooooii	Ooooooii
Nek Ayo si Antu Ayo	Great Grandmother, Great Spirit
Nan diam di imbo ayo	You who reside in the great forest
Loba jangan boi menyongat	Do not allow the bees to sting
Loba jangan boi meamuk	Do not allow the bees to become furious
Lai-an malam lainnyo	Let them flee another night
Kami muun kayu nan sebatang ko	We request only one tree
Sialang ko	This Sialang
Bokat lailahailallah	With the blessings of Allah (there is no other
	God) ³³

³² I have counted as many as forty bees' nests in a *sialang* tree. However, I have heard from honey collectors that in a good season a tree might support one hundred or more nests, and that collection may take several nights.

³³ Tenas Effendy 1982:50; my translation.

At each stage of their work the *juagan*, his assistants and the ground crew sing *tumbai* songs, songs to cajole the bees and the spirits of the forest (named *mambang kayu*, *jembalang tanah*, *orang bunyian*, and others) into cooperating with them. They sing in a very loud voice so all the spirits of the forest can hear, and to drive away dangerous animals. Before beginning his ascent the *juagan* sings a *tumbai* suggesting that the bees should sleep soundly, knowing that their *juagan* is guarding them and their home:

Popat-popat tana ibu	True and clear is mother earth (at the base of the <i>sialang</i>)
Mai popat di tana tombang	Let us lay down in the land of song
Nonap-nonap Cik Dayangku tidou	Sleep soundly my <i>Cik Dayang</i>
Cik Dayang Juagan mudo di pangkal sialang	The honey collector is at the base of the <i>sialang</i> ³⁴

It is believed that direct and spoken reference to the physical activities of honey collecting will alert the bees to the fact that they are being robbed of their precious treasure. By singing *tumbai* the *juagan* and his assistants are able to coordinate their activities through metaphoric references to their work. Thus the *juagan* sings the following *tumbai* to suggest to the bees that they should descend, but also to signal to his colleagues that he is starting to brush the bee nest with a smoldering firebrand (*tunam*), and that the ground crew should take care as thousands of bees descend upon them:

Anak buayo mudik menudu	The young crocodile goes upstream without looking back
Mai singga ke pelabou-an	Let us stop over at the port
Putei la kuning bukanlah baju	Yellow and white one, open your blouse
Kami menengok petubou-an	We [want to] see your body ³⁵

According to numerous ritual specialists whom I have consulted, the safety of the *juagan* and his assistants is based upon their ability to attain a state of 'oneness' (*persebatian*) with the *sialang*. They say that this is achieved through knowing and internalizing the symbols that point to the 'higher reality' of the *sialang*. This 'oneness' is referred to in the first stanza of the *menuo sialang* mantra when the *juagan* asserts that both he and the *sialang* spring from the same sacred soil. Note that the *juagan* begins by addressing the *sialang* as *kayu pandang gelobu* (tree that overlooks the turbulence). According to ritual specialists, this name refers to a particular manifestation of *kayu alam* – the 'world-tree' and *axis mundi* – which

³⁴ Tenas Effendy 1982:53; my translation.

³⁵ Tenas Effendy 1982:54; my translation.

connects 'mother-earth' to 'father-sky'. They also say that *kayu alam* is related to the human body through the 'nature within oneself' (*alam dalam diri*), and that the *juagan* can ascend the *sialang* tree in safety only after these metaphoric mappings are complete. The *juagan* and his assistants believe that in such a condition the limitations that define mundane reality no longer bind them. For the climbers, mundane reality gives way to cosmological reality when they reach the half-way point between the ground and the canopy, where they sing the following *tumbai*:

Di ilei awang di ulu awang	The outflow is far off, the source is far off
Samo tonga padang menkuang	As though [seen from] the middle of a field of tubers
Di ilei sayang di ulu sayang	Love at the outflow, love at the source
Di tonga-tonga badan tebuang	Right at the center the body is shed ³⁶

From there on the work of the *juagan* and his assistants is likened to a journey in the realm of spirits upon whose kindness they must rely, as indicated in the following *tumbai* which is sung upon arrival at the primary branching of the *sialang*:

Ambung lo ambung kemenaluan	Coming up, a visitor coming up
Samo tonga puting beliung	As though from the eye of a whirlwind
Assalamualaikum Daan Jambang	Peace be unto you Bearded Branch
Numpang ku lalu ke Balai Tonga	First I wish to rest in the Central Hall ³⁷

The context and function of *menumbai sialang* demonstrate that the natural environment and ancestral territories are at the center of a complex system of symbols and metaphors that give meaning to musical expressions. The final case examined in this paper concerns the shamanic healing ritual *belian*, in which musical sound itself becomes a metaphor for nature, human occupancy of the land, and the journey that the shaman takes as he searches for the blessings that bring comfort and healing to the community.

Belian takes place in the village. It may be held to treat ordinary sickness (*belian obat biaso*), to obtain a talisman to protect the village against a marauding tiger or to treat an epidemic (*belian gegawe*), to protect a mother and her unborn child against future misfortune (*belian bainang*), to repay a debt to spirits (*belian membaye utang*), or to initiate and heal a *kemantan* (*belian pole*). In all cases the ritual requires participation and support from the entire community.

For the purposes of expediting the ritual, the community is divided into four groups: The first group, called *kelompok kemantan* (shaman's group) consists of the shaman or *kemantan* and his immediate assistants (*pebayu*).

³⁶ Tenas Effendy 1982:53; my translation.

³⁷ Tenas Effendy 1982:53; my translation.

The second group, called *bujang belian* (servants of *belian*), consists of two male drummers (*bujang nobat*) to play the double-headed *ketobung* drum, one man to guard a burning torch (*penjaga dame*), and several other men to look after the ritual houses and other paraphernalia. The third group is called *kelompok induk longkap*. This group, consisting of women and men under the direction of the *induk longkap* (the complete mother), is responsible for preparing the ritual paraphernalia. The fourth group, the *kelompok umum* (general group), is responsible for collecting forest products needed to make the ritual houses and icons, and platforms that the ritual may require.

The performance takes place at night. It takes the form of a danced drama in which the main actor is the entranced *kemantan* whose dancing, singing, gesturing and ritual actions are understood by the assembled community to be the visible manifestation of his inner journey and encounters in the spirit realm. It is also understood by participants and onlookers that his journey is a dangerous one which may require him to enter the inner forest (*ke imbo dalam*) where madness awaits the unwary.

For the duration of the performance, which usually lasts about four or five hours, the players of the *ketobung* drum provide an almost unceasing flow and pulse to accompany the *kemantan*'s dancing. This flow and pulse is also the main source of continuity for the *kemantan*'s trance and set program of ritual activities. Each episode in the ritual has a corresponding named rhythm or suite of rhythms, and each name refers to a place, spirit or activity. For example, the *kemantan*'s entry into trance is achieved through a suite of rhythms referred to as *kenaikan tujuh* (sevenfold ascension), beginning with *mulo togak* (beginning to stand), and ending with *ke seboang lautan* (to the opposite shore); the rhythm *kobunyan* is associated with the passage of the *kemantan* 'to the village of the invisible folk'; and the exceedingly complex rhythm *kemantan layang angin* (*kemantan* soars the wind) is played as the *kemantan* attempts the difficult journey to his mentor who lives above the clouds.

The two drummers must not stop playing in the middle of such critical episodes, for to do so would cause the *kemantan* to lose his way. *Ketobung* players must therefore be highly accomplished musicians. *Ketobung* players must also be well matched, for they must play with great accuracy in order to integrate their separate rhythmic parts, referred to as *penyelalu* (the continuous one) and *peningka* (the respondent). This integration is said to give rise to a higher-order sound called *suao duato* (sound of *duato*), which the *kemantan* relies upon for his orientation in the spirit realm.

The *ketobung* drum is regarded as a receptacle for the *kemantan*'s familiar spirits. Like the *sialang*, the *ketobung* is a symbol of the world-tree. Another correspondence with the *sialang* tree was provided by a *ketobung* player, called Nantan Itam, who suggested to me that the sound of *duato* that emanates from a properly played *ketobung* was like the

humming of bees as they responded to the call of the *juagan*. They both signify occupancy and cooperation. Nantan Itam also likened the sound of a the *ketobung* to the sound of all humanity as it proclaims its presence while crying out its needs.

In the symbolic domain of shamanic ritual the *kemantan* ascends the world-tree in order to enter the spirit realm. And like the *juagan*, the *kemantan* also envisages the world-tree as being within himself.

Thus performances of shamanic healing and honey-collecting rituals both present a system of symbolic linkages between the human domain and the natural environment. Moreover these linkages are mediated and validated through the perceived cooperation of local spirits who, according to Suku Petalangan beliefs, are the most ancient occupants and owners of territories. Thus the *sialang* tree and the *ketobung* are both potent symbols whose focus is territorial stewardship and community.

Future Prospects and Conclusion

The cultural identity of the Suku Petalangan is closely linked to concepts and practices surrounding a history of communal ownership and utilization of specific tracts of forest lands. These ancestral territories are at the center of a nexus linking economy, social structure, local history and expressive culture. However, changes in political hegemony, loss of land, acculturation, and changing social values make the cultural survival of such societies uncertain.

Even now the art of singing a clan's *tombo* – the height of the art of narrative singing in Suku Petalangan culture – is dead. This extinction is due to the fact that the *tombo* no longer serves as 'proof' of a clan's land-ownership in post-Independence Indonesia. As one leader explained, the manifest loss of rights to continue to own and care for their ancestral territories, the impersonal and legalistic manner in which those rights have been expunged, and the sight of outsiders possessing the former ancestral territories to grow oil palms, makes the *tombo* a painful inheritance. Thus *tombo* are no longer transmitted in their fully expanded musical forms even though this loss is warned against in the saying: 'Hilang pebilang tombo berarti hilanglah nyanyi panjang, tombo, dan hilang pulalah harta soko' (To lose the *tombo* singer means losing the epic song, the origin story, and the clan's inheritance).

For the Suku Petalangan land loss and environmental degradation means culture loss, a relationship that is eloquently summed up in the following verse:

Batang sialang cabangnyo tinggi
Di situ tempat loba besaang
Kalaula ilang si tukang nyanyi
Sunyi sonyap banje nan panjang

Sialang tree with high branches
That is the place where bees nest
If [we] lose the singer
The swidden will be quiet and empty

Since 1972 legislation has existed that forbids the felling of sialang trees and their surrounding forest. Although the people of Betung have lost a large part of their ancestral territories, none of their sialang trees have been lost. However, many other villages have not been so fortunate.

If it is true that the stronghold of cultural identity is to be sought in language and art, then the fact that there are still singers, artisans and ritual specialists to celebrate the community's entitlement to their ongoing occupancy of the ancestral territories gives reason to hope that Suku Petalangan cultural identity will not be lost. However this cautious optimism is contingent upon the retention of that entitlement, for it is through the bequeathing, possession and management of ancestral territories that Suku Petalangan arts acquire their meaning and it is this 'meaning' that underpins the function of their arts. If this entitlement is lost, as has happened among other *suku asli* communities, the Suku Petalangan will have little reason to value their participation in the national identity. And although their expressive forms might be preserved through recordings and documentation, the sociocultural values that transmit only through living culture would be lost to all.

²⁸ *Sialang* trees and their immediate surrounds are protected by three instruments of legislation: Surat Keputusan Menteri Pertanian, No. 54/Kpts./Men/2/1972; Surat Keputusan Gubernur Kepala Daerah Tingkat I Riau: Kpts.118/IX/1972; Surat Keputusan Badan Koordinasi Penanaman Modal Daerah Propinsi Riau, Kpts. 17/I.L-X/1988.

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