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Negotiating Identity, Ethnicity, and Place in Sumatra

Through Orang Rimba Origin Stories, Myths, and Legends

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Abstract. – This article examines how the Orang Rimba along the Makekal River negotiate their social identity, ethnic boundaries, and place in Jambi through an analysis of their origin stories, myths, and legends. While the Makekal Orang Rimba believe they have shared ancestry with the Malay, they are extremely adamant towards preserving their customs, beliefs, and religion (*adat*), and their traditional way of life in the forests. One theme in their origin stories is a strong desire to maintain cultural and political autonomy by maintaining separation with the village Malay and the outside world. However, like other Austronesian peoples these stories also represent a negotiation to emplace themselves in the region through the manipulation of common origins, ancestor figures, law, and notions of precedence. *[Sumatra, Orang Rimba, Kubu, Malay, origin stories, folklore, ethnic identity]*

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The Orang Rimba ("People of the Forest") are a Malay-speaking minority (population is about 3,000) who traditionally lived very mobile lives throughout the upstream, lowland rainforests of Jambi, Sumatra.[1] In contrast to other peoples in Sumatra, the Orang Rimba have a unique and extremely diverse traditional economy, which shifts back and forth between periods of swidden farming and a nomadic life based on foraging for wild yams (*benor*, mainly *Dioscorea* sp.). This is combined with hunting, trapping, and the collection of forest products for trade. The Orang Rimba have long been a part of larger village Malay (or Melayu) socioeconomic and political entities through the trade in forest products, and have developed a number of ways to maintain their unique way of life in the forests. The Orang Rimba have some of the strongest ethnic boundaries in the region, which serve to preserve their traditional customs and beliefs (*adat*) by restricting interactions with the outside world. One of the ways they do this is through a high concern for their traditional system of law, which is concerned with arranging marriages and protecting the safety, chaste, and rights of women (and children) from an exaggerated threat of a dangerous outside world. This results in extremely restrictive gender relations and little contact between outsiders and the core of their society. Spiritually, the Orang Rimba believe that if they diverge from their traditional customs and beliefs,

1 In the anthropological literature, the Orang Rimba have traditionally been referred to as the Kubu, a Malay exoynm ascribed to mobile, animist, (Malay-speaking) peoples who lived throughout the lowland forests of southeast Sumatra. This term actually encapsulates two similar but separate cultural groups: the Orang Batin Simbilan and the Orang Rimba. The Orang Batin Simbilan are a larger population of swidden farmers who reside in the central to eastern regions of Jambi (population is about 10,000) and South Sumatra (population is about 3,000–5,000). These are the peoples who appear in the writings of several early European authors (Dongen 1910, Hagan 1908, Schebesta 1926, Kamocki 1979). The Orang Rimba are a distinct and smaller cultural group who reside in the upstream or western portions of Jambi (population is about 3,000), and in South Sumatra (population is about 1,000–2,000) where they identify as Orang Hutan (Sandbukt 1984; Sager 2008, 2016, 2017).

their gods will abandon them, sickness and misfortune would occur, and life in the forests would be impossible. In reality, there appears to have been a long history of relationships, and an exchange of ideas, between Orang Rimba men and established Melayu patron in the Bukit Duabelas region, which occurred within the context of the trade in forest products, relations of debt-bondage, and their inclusion in a nested system of traditional law. More recently, the extent to which many Orang Rimba follow traditional prohibitions have also changed, as they actively negotiate access to remaining forests and alternative livelihoods in an era of logging and large-scale plantations.

This article is based upon a doctoral research carried out from 2002 to 2004 with Orang Rimba living in forests along the Makekal River in the Bukit Duabelas National Park. The majority of this time was spent within a camp then based along the Sako Jernang River, a subbranch of the upstream Makekal River. At the time, the camp consisted of an extended family (about 40 individuals), based around a grandmother, her six married daughters (and their families), and several bachelors. Just prior to my arrival, some of the members of this camp had begun to participate in an alternative mobile education program, which initially anyways, made the process of establishing rapport easier than it otherwise would have been. Interviews were also conducted in the Melayu villages surrounding Bukit Duableas, in particular Tanah Garo, where the traditional patron of the Makekal Orang Rimba reside.

Dongen are the stories of the ancestors, which are passed on to younger generations through storytelling. One of the main themes that run through their origin stories, myths, and legends is the fundamental importance of maintaining their customs, beliefs, and traditional way of life in the forests by maintaining separation with the Melayu. However, like other Austronesian-speaking peoples these stories also represent a dialogue and negotiation, which serve to explain their relations with the Melayu, and justify their place and rights in the region. Largely, this is done through localized "forest" versions of stories, concepts, and background characters that are not unique to the forests but are common throughout Jambi, and are often significant for changes introduced in the fields of religion and civil *adat* law. The names of common ancestors, prophets, and ancient kings from Jambi folklore and legends, not only contextualize and explain their place as Orang Rimba in a larger Malay world, but also legitimate and justify their rights to maintain the autonomy of their *adat* based on common origins, laws, and notions of precedence.

Camp elders tell these stories through lively oral performances, usually around a campfire. *Dongen* are never the creation of one person alone, participation and lively reactions from the audience are essential parts of the story-telling performance and an important way to remember and pass the stories onto the next generation. They are also an important avenue for teaching children moral values and the consequences of violating *adat*. The stories that follow were collected from men along the Makekal River and are a good representation of *dongen* told amongst the Makekal Orang Rimba.

The Early Creation Myths

In the beginning, the Orang Rimba along the Makekal River say that everything in the universe was created by two higher order gods: the senior "God or Creator of the universe and animals" (Orang Pomogong Ciak Mencipai), and the junior "God of trees and plants" (Orang Pomogong Kayu-Kayuon). Like the Melayu, these gods are often referred to together as "Tuhan Kuaso," the all-powerful God of the universe. Their separate identities are often pointed out in stories to explain their different acts, and to establish difference with the Melayu. Before creating land, the senior God created the sky, the sun, and the moon. As a man along the Makekal recounts,

> When the creator of the universe and animals created the firmament in the sky, it was small like an umbrella and only big enough to cover the small amount of land he created. This small earth was created atop the earth pole (*tiang bumi halom*), which takes the form of a tree trunk. He then placed the sun and the moon in the sky, and connected each to a gigantic piece of rattan, its movement around the earth powered by a machine. To watch over the movement of the sun and the moon, he sent the "God in the sky" (*orang de langit*) to live on the "cool" surface of the moon, where he lives in a giant Meranti tree. He sent a red hawk named *kilik dari* to fly around the surface of the sun to make it "hot" and give off light. After creating the sky, the moon, and the sun, he created land and the forests.

The sky-umbrella analogy is useful towards understanding their cosmological perceptions of the domelike shape of the firmament, which is believed to fall to the earth along the horizons.[2] From a stylistic perspective, the track-umbrella analogy is a com-

2 Similar beliefs have been collected from Malay-speaking peoples in Sumatra and Malaysia (Sjafiroeddin 1974: 34; Skeat 1900). Some Semang peoples in Malaysia believe the sun and moon to revolve along a piece of rattan in the sky (Endicott 1979).

mon method for Malay-speaking peoples throughout Sumatra to begin their origin stories in a very similar manner to "a long, long time ago." For minority communities, it is a politically charged way to begin their origin stories, and implicitly stresses the longevity of their *adat*, and their rights to live as their ancestors did before them.

The Makekal Orang Rimba believe that the creator originally created the first lands, forests, and animals in Minangkabau, and later their ancestors migrated to the forests of Jambi. The belief in Minangkabau origins is common among interior peoples in Jambi and Riau who base themselves along the Batang Hari and Indragiri rivers. These rivers flow from the Minangkabau highlands and traditionally connected the interior regions to the downstream Malay kingdoms in eastern Sumatra. For interior peoples, these rivers were a means of transportation, communication, and a conduit for ideas and influence from the Minangkabau through trade and migration.

Throughout Jambi, many interior peoples believe that, in the past, Minangkabau was the older, more powerful, and legitimate kingdom, and held precedence over the downstream kingdoms of Eastern Sumatra. From a historical standpoint, this was not always the case. Located along the downstream Musi River, the earlier kingdom of Sriwijaya was its predecessor, and in its heyday the most powerful kingdom in Southeast Asia. As its power declined, the balance of power shifted to the kingdom of Melayu, along the Batang Hari River, and gradually upstream, before eventually settling in Minangkabau. To many upstream peoples, Minangkabau would have been the legitimate successor to Sriwijaya and its powerful Hindu-Buddhist heritage. With this shift in power, there may have been a shift in precedence to this region, and possibly a gradual shift in the content of people's origin stories.

In order to strengthen their legitimacy with subjects and neighbouring kingdoms, in the 14th and 15th century Jambi royalty worked towards building relationships and kinship ties with Minangkabau royalty through the exchange of women and titles of nobility. In the realm of Jambi folklore, Queen Putri Seleras Pinang Masak is said to have returned to Jambi from Minangkabau sometime in the late 15th century to reestablish the legitimacy of the Melayu court. Whether this is historically true is not important. The subtle binding of symbols and power to origin stories, and the outrageous actions of ancient ancestor kings/queens, is all part of the aggrandised manipulation of legend and folklore in Jambi. They are key strategies for capturing and maintaining the loyalty of subjects, and for interior populations, claiming autonomy over lands, forests, self-governance, and *adat* customs and laws, based on notions of precedence. In the realm of legend and folklore, the Makekal Orang Rimba, and other minority peoples in the region, mimic coastal kings and queens by claiming to be the original migrants from Minangkabau. According to one elder along the *Makekal*,

> When God created the world, when our ancestors came in the beginning to stand on this earth, the earth was as big as a track and the sky was as big as an umbrella. The rest of the earth was covered with water. Before the senior Creator of the Universe and Animal Life made humans, he believed the sea would be an obstruction for the people, so he drained the seas, and tossed some of the water into the rivers. Then the junior Creator of Plant life made a flower of grass sprout, and the small piece of land began to blossom into forests. This all happened in Minangkabau, in the past there was no one living in Jambi. Our ancestor Bujang Perantau was the first person to come to Jambi from Minangkabau. After the earth and sky became wider and there were many people, then Bujang Perantau made the trip to Jambi in order to search for fortune and establish a new life.

A similar creation story along the Makekal concerns the "people of the flood" (Orang Kebanjiron). Most origin stories in the region emerge from a period when the world was submerged by water. For Malay-speaking peoples, deluge creation stories often include a mixture of local and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs, which always appear to be adapted to fit Old Testament themes. After hearing their version of the story, I asked if this was the story of Noah. "No," he replied. "We also know the story of Noh, but that is the story of the villagers (Orang Meru). In our story, there is no boat or mountain. That is the story of Islam and the Prophet Mohammad."

The traditional Melayu association between sacred mountains and origins is a significant difference he is pointing out. In Southeast Asian adaptations, some of the Hindu-Buddhist beliefs surrounding Mount Meru (the abode of Siva), were adapted to fit local beliefs in sacred mountains and regional origin stories.[3] Before the coming of Islam, these mountains were associated with godly kings, and only later adapted to fit Old Testament themes such as Noah and his ark. The Orang Rimba have supernatural associations with mounds of earth, local hills, and mountains, but in their stories pull Melayu origins

3 In Sumatra, the primary mountain associated that in the past associated with Mount Meru, and the kingdoms of Sriwijaya/Palembang and Melayu is Bukit Si Guntang Mahameru, located along the border of Palembang and Jambi. In Minangkabau it is Gunung Merapi, sometimes referred to as Gunung Sago.

into their own "rise of land," which existed somewhere in Minangkabau. As an elder man along the Makekal tells,

> When the earth was wide as a track and the sky as wide as an umbrella, during the time when the earth came into existence, God created a small rise of earth and "seven" honey trees. On this rise of land, God took handfuls of earth and moulded it into two siblings, one male and one female.[4] He then took handfuls of earth and created two creatures of every species, two gibbons, two tigers, two elephants, two deer, two pigs (and so on), one male and one female. The original people in the forests domesticated all of these animals. Through incest, they then went on to populate the world. During this period, the water gradually went down, the land became more extensive, and the sky grew larger. Eventually, the animals multiplied, became wild and spread throughout the forests. After the world became populated, there was no longer incest, and the people broke into different tribes. Half of these people decided to leave the forest and settle in villages, and half of them decided to stay in the forest and live a mobile life looking for wild yams. This is one of the splits between the Orang Rimba and the villagers.

In the Orang Rimba version of this story, God created "seven" (a magical number) honey trees on the first mound of earth, which are a primary means to mark their claims to particular tracks of customary forests. They say that their ancestors were the first domesticators, and then gave up the practice to live a mobile life in the forests. It includes an initial grounding for their notions of incest (*sumbang*), which has a broad meaning in their society, and provides justification for their separation. In origin stories, a summary of separation with the Melayu is often pointed out at the end in order to justify and rejustify their separate ways of life.

Islamic Features in the Myth of Origin as Key Reference Points and Precedence Shifters

Islamic ideologies have made a significant impact on the content and characters of origin stories in the Malay region of the world. Traditional deluge stories, the creation of the world, splits between ancestor figures, and changing ideologies often serve as key reference points in which to merge, change, or adapt some of the more traditional beliefs to the significant events and prominent characters in Islam. For Muslims, these reference points often mark a shift in precedence from the older more traditional "beliefs" (*percayaon*) to the Islamic "religion" (*agama*).[5] Many minority peoples in the region also work a variety of Islamic elements into their belief systems and origin stories.[6] These features often serve as a bridge or a means to maintain a dialogue with majority peoples and the ideologies that surround them, and often serve to justify and shift precedence to their traditional beliefs and way of life (Atkinson 1987).

Throughout the Malay region of the world, the most significant and symbolic characters taken from the Koran and adapted to fit traditional origin stories are the "prophets" (*nabi*) Adam and Mohammad: Adam, the first human created by God, and Mohammad, the last of God's prophets and the founder of Islam. In these adaptations, Adam is often associated with the older traditional beliefs and Mohammad with the newer beliefs and traditions of Islam. For dominant Islamic peoples, Adam and the old ways are nostalgically respected, and in theory historically senior, however, precedence of belief is shifted to that which can be included or adapted to fit within the framework of Islam.

In a more politically charged manner, these characters also wind their way into the origin stories of minority peoples throughout the Malay region of the world.[7] The characters Adam and Mohammad may or may not have anything to do with their acceptance of Islam, however, usually implicitly serve to define their relationship with dominant Malay peoples, and these days, the larger nation-state. The manners in which these characters are manipulated often serve to justify or mark a shift of precedence to Adam and the old ways. In the Malay region of the world, the Koranic characters Adam and Mohammad are ideological figures who struggle for precedence of ideas, religions, and relationships between peoples within the mythical context of origin stories. In their own stories, the Makekal Orang Rimba manipulate the relationship of the ancestor figures Adam and Mohammad, and through them, relationships with the village Melayu, through kinship relations.

4 Throughout the region there are traditional stories that God moulded the first people out of earth or clay; for example, among the Peninsular Malay (see Skeat 1900, Wilkinson 1906); and in Southern Borneo (see Weinstock 1987: 82).

5 McKinley (1979), Osman (1989), Skeat (1900), Wilkinson (1906), Winstedt (1961).

6 Atkinson (1987), Edo (1998), Nowak (2004), Tsing (1993).

7 As examples of Nabi Adam and Nabi Mohammad stories in Malaysia see Edo (1998), Skeat and Blagden (1906), Skeat (1900), and in west Java see Adimihardja (1989).

The Separation of the Brothers and the Establishment of the Food Taboos

One common avenue that Austronesian peoples use to establish precedence and seniority among peoples, beliefs, and often to justify rights to land and resources, is the manipulation of siblingship among common ancestor figures.[8] As in everyday siblingship, "seniority bestows privilege and authority; just as children should defer to parents, so younger siblings should defer to elder ones" (Atkinson 1987: 183). These patterns can also apply to age and age-groups, regardless of age, ancestor figures, and the relationships between decedents of related ancestors.

In Orang Rimba folklore, Adam and Mohammad are described as brothers, Adam the elder brother and Mohammad the younger brother. They are considered the original ancestors of all humans, who lived in the forests of Minangkabau according to the first and oldest *adat*, which they believe they still follow today. According to the legend, their split from the Melayu, and the creation of both people's food taboos, were caused by an incident the Orang Rimba consider one of the biggest offences in their society, greed, hording, and not sharing game. As an elder man along the Makekal recalls,

> One day, after Adam caught a wild pig, Muhammad asked Adam if there was any pig to eat, and Adam replied that there was none, that it had already been eaten. Later, Muhammad caught Adam eating pork and found out that Adam had been hording the pig. Muhammad said to Adam, "Now we will separate, I will leave the forests and form a village. From this point on my decedents will be forbidden to eat pig. It will be *harom*." Upon leaving the forest, he extended what was forbidden to eat to other forest animals. In response to Mohammad, Adam equally made it forbidden for forest peoples to eat domesticated animals. Later, these two prophets were given two separate *adat* laws from the hands of two different angels, and Muhammad later developed Islam. This is our separation.

In identifying with the elder brother Adam, the caretaker of the original *adat* in the forests, the Orang Rimba establish precedence and seniority over the descendants of Mohammad, their customs, and the Islamic religion. For the Orang Rimba, the story also gives a reasonable explanation for their split and describes the origins of some of the religious and ethnic markers for both peoples based on dietary restrictions.

Pigs and Chickens: A Central Divide

Food prohibitions are one of the most effective avenues to reinforce, in a ritual everyday manner, a sense of community and a community ethic. On the borders of the community, they are an effective avenue to construct and maintain ethnic boundaries. In Jambi, village Muslims have prohibitions on eating most of the animals in the forests that the Orang Rimba hunt, but none is more important and symbolic than abstaining from eating pork. In concordance with Islamic values, the Melayu view pigs as vile, polluted animals, and to eat them, is considered a major sin. Abstaining from pork is a central feature of remaining within the Muslim and Melayu community. On the other hand, the villagers love their domestic animals, the women their chickens, and the men their cocks.

In the opposite manner, the Orang Rimba hunt and eat most of the animals found in the forests, particularly wild pig. Wild pig is one of the most consistent parts of their diet, and whenever captured word spreads quickly, eyes light up, and the camp comes alive with joy. Wild game cannot be stored for more than a day or two before spoiling, so as is often the case gluttonous eating ensues and it is not uncommon for someone to become satisfyingly sick. In contrast, the Orang Rimba have taboos on tending and eating all domestic animals, which they consider defile, polluting, and to eat them is considered a major sin. The most symbolic domestic or polluting animals are cattle and their milk, and chickens and their eggs. In Jambi, the food prohibitions surrounding pigs and chickens are a central and symbolic divide between these peoples.

Before the coming of Islam, most people throughout Jambi probably would have eaten pork and chicken, both domestic and wild. The villager's transition to Islam occurred for a variety of reasons, including a fit with social and gender values, religious empowerment, and was possibly a means to facilitate political economic and trade relations. It was eventually established as the kingdom's religion, and within its legal codes, Islamic values and rules were the overriding law of the land. It may have also been safer to be Muslim, as according to law it was illegal to enslave them. After the decline of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, the pre-Islamic kingdom of Jambi was a vassal state to Java, and only a shell of its former self. Local folklore suggests that regional power had shifted to the kingdom of Minangkabau, and the lesser kingdom of Jambi was in disarray. The upstream peoples were divided and disconnected from the downstream court and were increasingly coming under the influence

8 Atkinson (1987), Fox (1996), Tsing (1993).

of Minangkabau. The royalties' gradual warming to Islam may have been an effective avenue to distance themselves from their Javanese lords, and at the same time, warm relations with Indian and Arabic traders who were making their way through the straits. More importantly, the royalty may have seen Islam as an effective tool to reunite the upstream peoples with the downstream court.

From the 16th to the 17th centuries, Islam gradually spread throughout the interior of Jambi through the work of travelling religious teachers and the building of mosques. Islamic values and rules were being pegged to a kingdom-wide civil *adat* law, in the form of rhythmical couplets and aphorisms. According to Nasruddin (1989), one of the first and most important moral codes in this law concerned food prohibitions, which was initially one of the fundamental requirements of being Muslim.

The steps to heaven are made of steps of stone
Titian teras bertanga batu
the passageway is *adat*
titian teras adat
the steps are Islam and the Koran.
bertanga batu Islam dan Koran
That what is forbidden to eat,
Yang haram, tidak dapat
cannot be made pure,
dihalalkan
that which is able to be eaten,
yang halal tidak dapat
cannot be made forbidden to eat,
diharamkan,
that which is true is forgiven, that which
yang benar dibela, yang salah
wrong is fined.
dihukum.

As with the Melayu Islamic food prohibitions, the Orang Rimba versions are also a means to remain socially acceptable members of their community, and together with other rules and prohibitions maintain their cultural, religious, and political integrity. They also reinforce the mobile aspects of their economy, and effectively prevent them from becoming sedentary farmers. Along with the Islamic practice of circumcision, the Orang Rimba often point out their food prohibitions as one of the primary reasons why they would never enter Islam.

In the above story, the Makekal Orang Rimba credit their ancestor Adam as being the source of the Muslim taboo on pork, and for creating dietary restrictions on village domesticates. Dietary restrictions are some of the most important first or oldest laws, and those who diverge from them come under community pressure for endangering the balance of *adat*, and offending the ancestors and the gods. In the distant past, the Orang Rimba in Bukit Duabelas rejected Islam, but did not necessarily reject the kingdom's legal codes, one of the avenues in which these values were spread. The Makekal Orang Rimba have their own ideas, as to how these laws originated, and have uniquely adapted them to fit their own lives in the forests.

When the Brothers Received Separate *adat* Laws from the Angels

Along the Makekal, the Orang Rimba divide the chronology of their history according to the different eras in which their ancestors received and practiced different branches of *adat* law. These eras are divided according to the "old or first laws" (*adat lamo-lamo/hukom pertamo*), the "laws of the community" (*adat samo-samo*), and the current and just era of "religious law" (*adat ugamo-gamo*).[9] The "old or first laws" are the primary laws of their ancestors, those which they believe they have always followed. They include the laws surrounding uxorilocal residence, the household, brothers and sisters, bride service, marriage, divorce, and improper conduct with women. They also include prohibitions on interacting with the outside world, food prohibitions, the soap taboo, and the observance of boundaries to quarantine sickness whenever returning from travel outside the forests.[10] Breaking these rules are considered "heavy sins" (*duso berat*), which for adult males, accumulate, and will be judged in the afterlife. The "laws of consensus or the community" are based around the trunk laws, which were received by the prophet Adam in Minangkabau after his separation with Mohammad. In the past, the trunk laws were said to be strongly enforced by harsh community penalties, which included torturous punishment and the death penalty. They say that the current era of "religious law" be-

9 For an account of how village Malay in Malaysia divide the different eras of their history according to historical events and religious ages, see McKinley (1979). For an extended account of Orang Rimba social relations and system of law in the Bukit Duabelas region of Jambi, see Sager (2008, 2017).

10 The Orang Rimba believe that the smell of soap (and village domesticates) will repulse their gods, and can also attract malevolent earthbound spirits and the gods of sickness. The gods of sickness are believed to live in boats in the downstream rivers of heaven, but often make their way down to the downstream rivers on earth, and spend a great deal of time near Malay villages. Traditionally, whenever men return from trading trips outside the forests they must serve a quarantine period (*besesandingon*) to ensure they have not brought back sickness to forest camps.

gan after their ancestors received the "twelve legal appendages" of law after migrating to Jambi. These laws eased these punishments by establishing a system of fines paid in sheets of cloth.

After the split between the prophet brothers, the Makekal Orang Rimba say that Adam stayed in the forests in Minangkabau according to the original ways, while Mohammad left the forests and founded a village. From this time, they believe that their ways of life diverged, particularly after both brothers received separate *adat* laws from the hands of two different angels. While of little significance in the Melayu villages today, these laws are based on a variant of Jambi *adat*, a kingdom-wide legal code distributed to interior peoples in the 16th and 17th centuries by appendages of the downstream court. The Orang Rimba are aware that their laws are similar to those in the village, but stress that each encompass two separate ways of life, religions, and *adat* faiths. They are adapted to fit their unique way of life in the forests and relations with the outside world. For both, these laws are based around "the laws of Jambi" (*undang undang Jambi*), the "eight branches of law" (*pucuk undang undang nang delepan*), and the "twelve appendages" to these laws (*teliti duabelai*). The Orang Rimba in Bukit Duabelas consider these laws sacred and collectively refer to them as the *pangkol adat*, the "root" or "trunk" law.[11]

As with so many important aspects of their lives, the Orang Rimba conceptualise and express their system of law through botanic metaphor. Botanic metaphor is extremely effective for structuring, remembering, and manipulating *adat* legal codes, which exist in the form of rhythmical couplets and aphorisms called *seloko adat*. Linguistically, the basis of their law is conceptualised as the "base" or "trunk" (*pangkol*) of a tree or plant, from which other branches of law can "sprout" or "branch" into (*pucuk*). Where branches of law are coded in relation to the trunk laws is significant towards understanding their legal system.

In Bukit Duabelas, males begin learning the trunk laws at a young age and continue the memorisation, mastery, and manipulation of its sprouts and branches throughout their lives. Mastery of these laws can determine how well an adult male is able to defend the rights and interests of his family, and the family store of cloth. For adult men, it can

11 A reference to a very similar Melayu version of Jambi *adat* can be found in Syukur's, "Buku pedoman adat jambi" (1993).

Table: Different Eras and Subsections of *adat*.

Major Eras of Orang Rimba *adat*	***Zaman adat***
The old or first laws	*adat lamo-lamo/pertamo*
The laws of the community (laws of Jambi and eight branch laws)	*adat samo-samo*
Religious laws (the twelve appendages)	*adat ugamo-gamo*
Some of the Old Laws That Can Branch into the Trunk Law	
The laws of the household	*adat rumah tango*
The laws of bride service	*adat besemindo-be'induk semang*
The laws for violating uxorilocal residence	*adat engkar*
The laws of the male protectors (brothers/sons)	*adat waris di atas batin*
The laws of the women (sisters/mothers)	*adat waris perebo*
The laws surrounding the negotiation of marriage	*adat pes'ko*
The "beating" for not completing bride service	*adat membunuhbunuhon*
Laws of polygamy	*adat besesambutan*
Divorce law	*adat bototorutowon*
The laws following death	*adat melangun*

also be an avenue to increase ones status, standing, and authority in the community. These laws begin with the "laws of Jambi" or the "first four traits of a king."

The Laws of Jambi (*undang undang Jambi*)

The Four Traits of a King
Empat pertamo rajo

1. The king who is ashamed
(to disturb an unmarried daughter)
   1. *Rajo nang dimaluko*
2. The king who is scared
(to disturb another's wife)
   2. *Rajo nang ditakutko*
3. The king who submits
(to the demands of a child)
   3. *Rajo nang diper'ajo*
4. The king who is given homage
(and in return gives autonomy)
   4. *Rajo nang disembah*

The laws of Jambi are primary laws or traits that a king and his subjects should possess and follow. The first three laws concern the rights of women and children, who are minors in the realm of law, and are perceived to be vulnerable in nature. Their safety and rights are to be protected from a dangerous outside world, and all men who are not immediate kin, by closely related male guardians. The forth law concerns the place of the Orang Rimba in the hierarchy of the Melayu political structure, which in the past was facilitated through relations of tribute, and in turn the autonomy they should receive.

Also included in the trunk law are the "eight branches of law," which are split into two parts, the "four above" (*empat de pucuk*) and the "four below" (*empat de bewo*). The "four above" are equivalent to the "first four traits of a king," and are equal in severity to committing murder. They deal with primary incest taboos and adultery, the two largest violations a man can commit, but more generally can include improper relations with women and by analogy their rights to forest resources. The upper branches of law can also include cases that involve the death of a honey tree, which are a primary means in which they establish claims to customary forests, removing a woman from uxorilocal residence, or passing through female sleeping space in the home. During the era of the "laws of the community," the penalty for breaking these laws was death, and after the ancestors received the "twelve amendments" to these laws, the penalty was five hundred sheets of cloth, the monetary equivalent of a person's life.

The Eight Branches of Law (*pucuk undang undang nan delepan*)

The Four Above
Empat di pucuk

1. Cracking the egg
(incest with child)
   1. *Mencarak telor*
2. Bathing on the tusk of an elephant
(incest with sibling)
   2. *Mandi de pancuran gading*
3. To dig inside
(adultery)
   3. *Gali* or *melubo delom*
4. Stabbing the earth
(incest with mother)
   4. *Nikom bumi halom*

The Four Below
Empat di bewoh

1. Poisoning a person
   1. *Upas racun*
2. Small cut or injury
   2. *Luka gores/rehat*
3. Threatening to kill another
   3. *Amaar gerom*
4. Argument over a woman
   4. *Menentan-nentang lawan*
5. The spark of a flame (arson)
   5. *Siur bekor*
6. Axing inside, slashing outside (slander)
   6. *Kapak sayup pecung leput*
7. Heavy injury
   7. *Lembam balu* or *luka bopampai*
8. Major cut, or broken bone
   8. *Empar patah* or *luka paroh*

The four below (which are actually eight laws), deal with criminal law, such as assault, slander, crime, and destruction of property. The lower laws are actually more extensive than above, and can include issues surrounding "private property" (*hak malik*) and "community property" (*hak besamo*); "theft" (*samun*), "minor theft" (*maling curi*), and "grand theft" (*maling bongkah*); "endangering the safety of the community" (*hukom siosio*) and "disrespecting" a community leader (*sidam*). When the infraction infringes upon the rights of females, and they usually do, it can be argued as incest (*sumbang*), or violating women's rights, and branched into the "four above."

In the past era of the "laws of the community," the Makekal Orang Rimba describe a time when there were extremely harsh and torturous penalties for breaking the "eight branches of law."[12] According to an elder man along the Makekal River,

Whoever wronged, was fined very harshly.
Siapo nang saloh dihuhum berat.
If you wronged with your feet, your feet were cut off.
Kalu saloh kaki, kaki ditotok.
If you wronged with your hand, your hand was cut off.
Kalu saloh tangon, tangon ditotok.
If you wronged with your eyes, your eyes were gauged out.
Kalu saloh mato mato dicukoi.
If you wronged with your mouth, your tongue was cut off.
Kalu saloh mulat, lidah digunting.

Because the gods felt sorrow for the severity of law, they sent an angel to their ancestors in Jambi with amendments to these laws, which in turn eased the punishments.

Now whoever wrongs does not die. If you received the death penalty, then you are not punished with death, but instead are fined in sheets of cloth. These are the laws that came down to us from the angel. Moreover, what arrived in the middle of this, a snake, a snake associated with our ancestors. And the snake said, allow the new branch laws, wherever there is a problem, it will no longer be a matter of life and death.

As with the "four below," the "twelve amendments" do not necessarily represent their numerical title. They are split into two groups, the "six above" (*enom de pucuk*), which is a recital of the old harsh law and the "six below" (*enom de bewoh*), which is a negation of these previous punishments. This is followed with suggestions, which advocate tolerance and learning from ones mistakes.

The Twelve Amendments (*teliti duabelai*)

The Six Laws above
Enom de pucuk
Buried deep in the ground
Ditanom delom delom
Thrown far away
Dibuang jauh juah
The death penalty
Dibunuh mati mati
Hung from high
Digantung tenggi tenggi

The Six Laws below
Enom de bewoh
If buried, not so deep
Kalu ditanom, jengon sampoi delom-delom
If thrown, not so far
Kalu dibuang, jengon sampoi jauh-jauh
If sold, not too far away
Kalu te'jual jengon ado sampoi jauh
If hung, not from high
Kalu digantung, jengon sampoi tenggi tenggi
If the punishment is heavy, it will not result in death
Kalu tebunuh, jengon sampoi mati.

The Six Laws below
Enom di bewoh
Pointing out a teaching
Tunjuk ajar
Remember tears
Ingat tangis
A hit and slap
Tepuk tampar

After receiving the amendments to the trunk law, penalties were no longer paid for with physical punishment or death, but in sheets of cloth.

Before we received the twelve amendments, if one walked down the path of sin, they died, because if they committed a sin, by law, it resulted in death. Now, if one wrongs, they are fined, and it is clear what they have to pay. However, sins stick with a person, and a person will have to account for them in the afterlife. The angel said to the prophet, "An example is incest (*sumbang*), this is the biggest sin."

Within their conceptions of law and religion, the concept of sin (*duso*) is crucial. The Orang Rimba believe that sin accumulates and can affect their position in this world and in the next. Some sins, such as those that enter the "four above" are believed to be heavier than others (particularly disturbing women), and in this world can lead to accidents and misfortune through notions of "karmic law" (*hukom kerama*). Upon death, they believe that a person's sin will be weighed on a scale by God's assistant, and will determine their position in the afterlife. They believe that as long as they pay for their sins (in sheets of cloth) within a community legal hearing, they are cleared, and will not add any weight to the person's record at judgement. As minors in the eye of *adat* law, both women and children are not prone to negative karma,

12 In the 13th century, a Chinese traveler in Palembang comments that adultery was the only crime that merited death, and that customary law in Jambi called for burial alive as a test of innocence, and banishment or death for the guilty (Andaya 1993).

the accumulation of sin, or judgement in the afterlife.

By building their *adat* around this code of law, the Orang Rimba take a legitimate legal structure used throughout the region and claim a similar version as their own, legitimately placing themselves in the larger Melayu region. This law is cleverly reshaped, pulling out Islamic undertones, and wrapping it with the old laws, which come with their own cultural usages, beliefs, and stories of their ancestors. Through these codes of law, the Orang Rimba structure their identities, notions of law, and set boundaries based on interactions, food taboos, clothing, materials, and technologies. Below is an example of one of the "sprouts" of law that is commonly associated with the trunk law,

Our chicken, it is a jungle chicken
Kalu ayom awok, ayom hutan
our goat, it is a deer
kalu gambing, kijang
our roof, a roof of *cikai* leave
kalu hatop, hatop cikai
walls, walls of bark
dinding, dinding benyer
a floor, a floor of bark
lantoi, lantoi gembut
water that I drink, is not yet poisoned
aik bisoa kitok, belum ado racun
it is water that stores in the hole of a tree.
aik der'i lumbang kayu.

Furthermore, they sanctify this law, claiming that it was given to their ancestors by the hand of an angel, thus liberating them from a time when the fines for violating *adat* law meant extreme punishment or death. These laws, which reinforce their traditional beliefs, are believed to be enforced by the gods and the curse of the ancestors. Along the Makekal, men commonly end the story of how they received their laws with the following phrase,

Then after the separation, from the time of my parents to the time of the prophets this is how our *adat* came to us. Since the earth was as big as a track and the sky as big as an umbrella, we have always had our *adat*. The trunk laws have been enforced, the appendages have been enforced.

Shared Ancestors that Sprung from a Fruit: The Kelumpang Fruit Story

In the origin stories of people's throughout the archipelago, very important items such as the first grains of rice and ancestor figures, originate or spring from a variety of hard-shelled fruits. This is a classic format in which Austronesian-speaking peoples frame their origins (personal communication with James Fox). Along the Makekal River, the Orang Rimba identify on a secondary level as Orang Kelumpang or "Kelumpang people," the descendants of Seti'au, the goddess who sprang from the Kelumpang fruit. In the Kelumpang fruit story, the Makekal Orang Rimba describe their migration from Minangkabau to Jambi, and another split with the Melayu. While the Orang Rimba stayed in the forest according to the old ways, some of their junior ancestor figures are said to have left the forests to settle in the nearby Melayu village of Tanah Garo, while others went east and formed the village of Serangam, and later settled throughout the rest of Jambi. This separation occurs due to four siblings' unwillingness to commit incest to populate the forests of Jambi. Before leaving the forest, they make an oath to define their future relations with one another, and strictly lay out one another's cultural boundary markers based on diet, clothing, religion, and the use of certain outside technologies. A very similar version of this story is told in the Melayu village of Tanah Garo, where the traditional patron of the Makekal Orang Rimba reside. This joint origin story establishes rules that clearly define each of their social identities as Orang Rimba and Islamic Melayu villagers, define their socioeconomic relationship, and strongly point out that the cultural boundaries created between the two groups are not allowed to be confused, mixed up, or crossed.

According to the Orang Rimba version of the story told along the Makekal River,

The origins of the Makekal Orang Rimba come from a man named Bujang Perantau, who left Minangkabau to begin a new life in the forests of Jambi. This was before anyone lived in Jambi and before Islam. One day he was walking along and came upon a Kelumpang fruit, picked it up, and took it to his home. Later, the Kelumpang fruit broke into pieces and out came a beautiful young woman with very dark skin. "My name is Seti'au. Why have you travelled this river?" she said. "I have moved to this area in order to search for a new life, open a field, and find a wife, however, I have found no one," replied Bujang. "Regardless, who is there to marry around here, I have looked for people, but there isn't anyone here." While Seti'au wanted to marry, Bujang Perantau was uncertain. When Seti'au persisted, one day Bujang made a deal with her. He cut down a tree, peeled off its bark, and placed it across the Tuha River. "I will stand at one side of the tree and you stand at the other. If we both make it across the slippery tree and our heads meet in the middle, then we are right for one another and we will be married. If one of us falls off the log, then we will go our separate ways." They both stepped on top of the log and walked across until their heads met in the middle, and were married.

Eventually, they had four children who they named Puteri Geding, Bujang Melapangi, Puteri Seler'as Masak, and Dewo Tunggal. As they came of age, their parents were worried how they would propagate. "If our children marry one another, this will be incest," Bujang expressed. Therefore, the parents came up with a plan to deal with the incestuous situation. The eldest child was to marry the youngest, the third child would marry the second, and the incest would be broken. The children did not want to follow their parent's suggestion, and the eldest child, Dewo Tunggal and the youngest, Puteri Geding, decided to stay in the forest, while the two middle children, Bujang Melapangi and Puteri Seler'as *Pinang* Masak decided to leave the forests to create a village.

Before parting, they stood at the base of Sekembang Mountain, and made an oath with one another that was sanctioned with a curse. Dewo Tunggal pointed to Bujang Melapangi and Puteri Seler'as Masak and said, "If you want to enter the village, grow betel nut, coconuts and build a village. If you want to form a settled village, grow coconuts and raise domesticate animals, then we will cast you to the downstream. We who stay in the forest will make our roofs with *cikai* leaves and walls of bark, and where water falls in the holes of wood, this is where we will drink. We are forbidden to eat buffalo, goat, and chicken." Bujang Melapangi was shocked. He then pointed to Dewo Tunggal and said, "if we come to the forest, we will be polluted by food in the forest such as pig, tapir, and snake. Do not accept orders from us, however, all forest products will return to us. If this oath is broken then in the water, you will find nothing to drink, and on land you will not find food. In the water, you will be eaten by a black crocodile and on land a black tiger. You could be hit by a falling tree or cursed by a magical dagger." Dewo Tunggal was shocked. The two parties brought to the location signs to signify their identities. Those who left the forest held a piece of cassava and a buffalo, and those who stayed in the forest held a wild yam and a monitor lizard.

Then at that spot in the forest, they split. Those who moved to the village followed the ways of their father Bujang Perantau, and those who stayed in the forest followed the ways of their mother Seti'au from the hills of Bukit Duabelas. The two who entered the village took their loincloths off and sewed pants. Bujang Melapangi first formed a settlement at Muar'o Kembang Bungo along the Makekal River, and over time, the village shifted downstream before finally settling in its present location at Tanah Garo. His descendents in the north are referred to as "trunk" *waris*, who are the caretakers of the forests and the intermediaries of the Orang Rimba. Puteri Seler'as Masak moved southeast and formed a village at Hajran, and was referred to as "branch" *waris*. After some time, she moved west and founded the city of Jambi, and later promoted the spread of Islam.

This story is significant for one particular ancestor they work into the story. In Jambi Melayu folklore, Puteri Seler'as Masak is one of Jambi's most significant ancestor figures. Tracing her lineage to Sriwijayan kings and queens, she is said to have returned from Minangkabau sometime in the late 15th century to reestablish the legitimacy of the kingdom. She is also said to believed to be responsible for promoting and spreading the religion of Islam. In this story, the Orang Rimba work Jambi's most sacred ancestor queen into their origin myth, make her a younger sibling to their ancestors who stayed in the forests according to the original *adat*, and again establish precedence over the Melayu. Later, they cast her downstream where she is said to found the Kingdom of Jambi, and lay the foundation for Islam throughout the region.

This story is also significant in that it defines an active set of debt bondage relations between the Makekal Orang Rimba and Melayu patron in the village of Tanah Garo. As with many primary aspects of their social and religious lives, the Makekal Orang Rimba express their external power relations with the Melayu through the botanic analogy of "trunk" and "branch." The lead patron in the village of Tanah Garo is referred to as "trunk" *waris* (*pangkol waris*), while the lead patron in the eastern village of Hajran/Pak Juaji, was referred to as "branch" *waris* (*ujung waris*), marking the priority in their relations with the Melayu.[13] For the Makekal Orang Rimba, trunk *waris* is the final authority in matters concerning *adat* law, and through his ability to bestow or affirm titles on headmen adds legitimacy to their system of law.

These relations are reinforced by the belief that they share common ancestors, and perceive themselves to be distant kin. While the patron in Tanah Garo believe that the Orang Rimba have the right to live in shared customary forests along the Makekal River, they also believe that everything found in these forests, including the labour power of the Orang Rimba, are their lineal heritage to manage. In the relationship, their patrons are obliged to assist them in any legal case that may arise. However, only certain families (*waris*) whose families received titles from Sultan Taha in the late 19th century are allowed to trade with particular Orang Rimba families along the Makekal River. In the village, these titles and the rights to trade with particular Orang Rimba families are passed on through women as inheritance, and are managed by closely related men who remain in the village as well as in-marrying husbands. The Makekal Orang Rimba believe that if they were to trade outside of these relationships, they would break the oath made between their ancestors, be struck by a curse, and misfortune would fall upon the community.

13 The Arabic derived *waris* can be defined as lineal heritage.

To an outsider this relationship may appear to contrast with the precedence that the stories establish, and is acknowledged in principal by both parties. Their patron have a very paternal way of dealing with them, and commonly refer to their "little brothers," as primitive, dirty, stupid, and pagan. However, they also say that they respect the oath made between their ancestors, which helps to insure their cultural autonomy. There are certainly status and economic-oriented motives for allowing them this autonomous respect. These issues are intertwined with a traditional form of status in the village (inheriting the rights to manage Orang Rimba families), and traditionally was intertwined with their economic livelihoods, the trade in forest products. During my research, this relationship was more concerned with village efforts in logging. These stories establish, in fact bind them by the curse of their ancestors into a complex web of social, political, and economic relationship that is based on, but not restricted to trade. The Orang Rimba are the subordinate party in this relationship, however, also secure several advantages, which in the past included a stable market for their forest products, access to outside goods, protection from slavery, and representation in their relations with the outside world. It also provides a means for the Makekal Orang Rimba to obtain a nested hierarchy of village titles, which provides structure and legitimacy to their traditional system of leadership and law.

After the separation with the Melayu, some say that Bujang Perantau received the title Temanggung, and was from that point referred to as Temanggung Mero Mato, reference to the colour of his blazing red eyes.[14] According to an elder along the Makekal River,

> Bujang Perantau held the title Temanggung and after was referred to as Temanggung Mero Mato. His son Dewo Tunggal held the title Mayang meaning "palm blossom." Among the descendents of Dewo Tunggal and Puteri Geding are the ancestor Mayang Balur Dado and his child Mayang Segayur. This was one of our greatest ancestors. After he died, he was referred to as S'pite Lidah or "Sir Bitter Tongue."

The Legends Surrounding Segayur or S'pite Lidah

Some Orang Rimba legends aggrandise the mistakes of ancestors in order to teach people what not to do. Moreover, this seems to be the point of the stories related to the ancestor Segayur, also known as S'pite Lidah or "Sir Bitter Tongue." Throughout Sumatra, Sir Bitter Tongue (Si Pahit Lidah) is often portrayed in local folklore as a prominent community ancestor, who had great strength and magic, yet was arrogant and quick tempered, and easily let out his rage on anyone who crossed him the wrong way.[15] His trademark magical ability was the power to turn objects into stone by touching them with his tongue. Numerous stones throughout Sumatra are associated with his actions, and the names of villages throughout the region bear witness to these story filled stones.

The Orang Rimba have a localised tradition of these stories, told within the context of their own lives in the forests. According to their stories, S'pite Lidah, also known as Segayur, lived during the age of the Hindu kings in the hilly area between the Air Hitam and Makekal rivers. They describe Segayur as gigantic in size, with extraordinary strength and magical powers. Like Bujang Perantau, he is said to have married a woman who derived from a spirit. These stories recall a time when the Orang Rimba had a powerful leader who did not subordinate himself to the surrounding Melayu. According to one of the Segayur stories commonly told along the Makekal,

> During the time of Segayur, there were many problems between the Orang Rimba and the villagers. At the time, the Orang Rimba lived around the Bukit Duabelas hills, between the Makekal and Air Hitam rivers, and the villagers sometimes attacked us in the forests.[16] During the first war with the villagers, the King of Jambi sent his soldiers to attack Segayur at his home on the hills of Bukit Duabelas. The villagers began at the base and started to march up the hill with weapons. However, Segayur was intelligent and easily outwitted the villagers. With his superhuman strength, he chopped down several trees, each tree with one swipe of his axe, and rolled them down the hill killing those who tried to climb up. Ever since this event, we call the river at the bottom of this hill Lanceron

14 This character also provides a link to one of the most commonly told Melayu folktales in the downstream region of Jambi concerning the origins of the Kubu (see Sager 2008). In the Orang Rimba version, it was not a Melayu king (Orang Kayo Hitam) who drove the Orang Rimba to the forests but rather their ancestors who cast the king's mother (Pinang Masak) outside the forests.

15 For examples of S'pite Lidah stories throughout Sumatra see Andaya (1993), Boers (1839), Collins (1979), Forbes (1885), Hasjim (1999), Westenenk (1962).

16 The Orang Rimba believe that the Bukit Duabelas hills (about 500 meters high) are the abode of evil earthbound spirits and ghosts. In their origin stories, some of their ancestors wind up living on these hills, but no one presently lives on them. One practical reason often given is the difficulty in accessing rivers and opening a swidden garden.

Dero, the "path of flowing blood." After, there was a time of peace. Segayur opened many fields throughout the forests, planting them with fruit trees, and domesticated many of the wild animals in the forests. His wealth and inheritance, in the form of Durian fruits is found throughout the forests. Eventually, as he moved north, closer to Tanah Garo, tensions rose and he fought a brutal war with them and was victorious.

While Segayur legends are nostalgically recounted with community pride, at times, his actions violated customs, and disturbed the harmony of *adat*. This ultimately leads to his death, by the claws of the tiger spirit, the guardian and enforcer of *adat*.

After the war with the villagers, Segayur moved to forests along the Tabir River to a place called Kelaka Pinang. This is close to a village we now call Batuh Sawar. One day he was damming a river to poison and stun the fish. As the fish became dazed, he picked them off the water and threw them to his wife so that she could place them in her basket. "See if you catch it in your bag," he yelled, throwing her a fish. She was not able to catch it, and it fell back into the river. "You need not be so arrogant Segayur," she said to her husband. Segayur replied, "There is no one who can challenge me in this forest! If a tiger came, I would swat him away like a mosquito." As he said this, Sekilat Lalu,[17] the King of the tiger spirits appeared along the side of the river, together with sixty tigers. The tigers began to attack him, one by one, and as they attacked, he swatted each of them away like mosquitos. After dealing with the tigers, he laughed and turned his back to the King of tigers, and continued to look for fish. Sekilat Lalu then struck Segayur from behind, pulling the content of his stomach out through his rear end. After killing Segayur, Sekilat Lalu cut off his tongue and brought it to a powerful ruler named Squat Larai to see if the myth of his power was true, if his tongue was truly bitter. Upon putting the tongue in his mouth, he instantly turned to stone.

Similar to other Si Pahit Lidah legends throughout Sumatra, following his death his bones were distributed to different groups of people, which together with other stones throughout the forests mark the deeds of his actions in life and death. Through this ancestor, the Orang Rimba establish claims to tracks of forests, explain the presence of wild animals as well as another split with the villagers.

Our ancestors received his enormous jawbone. After his death, some tried to carry it back to his home at Lanceron Deroh. It was so heavy that it took one hundred and twenty men to carry it on top of a plank. Eventually they gave up and left it somewhere between the Kajasung and Makekal rivers. It is still sitting along a trail, preserved in stone, and charged with magical powers. Most are afraid to sleep at the location, as we believe that it is the abode of evil spirits. At his former camp near Lanceron Dero, the home of *S'pite Lidah* is also still present, petrified in stone. Near this location, there is a stone in the form of an elephant. Some say that it was a shaman that S'pite Lidah subdued by turning him to stone with tongue. He had gone insane while invoking the Elephant God. These days, his wealth, in the form of Durion trees is spread throughout the forests. After his death, his domesticated animals spread throughout the forests, and became jungle chickens, deer, and other wild animals we see today. Some of his subjects decided to stay in the forests, while others moved to the village.

Discussion

The telling of origin stories, folklore, and legends are a medium in which community elders begin to teach and explain to the youth the sacred, aggrandized, and seemingly unbelievable tales of their ancestors. Through these stories, youth in the community learn about the structure and creation of the universe, the stories of ancestors, common origins with the Melayu, and their splits. They learn of the sacred nature of *adat*, and the rules for maintaining its balance based on following traditional customs, prohibitions, and separation with the Melayu. They begin to develop their unique social identity as Orang Rimba, which develops in direct contrast to life in the village.

An analysis of the structure of Orang Rimba origin stories demonstrates that the content, themes, and characters that wind their way through them are similar to other peoples in the region, and are manipulated in ways that are common among Austronesian peoples. Through the belief that the world was created in Minangkabau, a land charged with ideological-laden undertones of power, and by claiming to be the original migrants to Jambi, they claim precedence over the Melayu, and begin to establish the right to live in their customary forests according to the customs and laws of their ancestors. The politics of precedence begins in their initial creation stories when God initially creates "seven" honey trees, the most significant form of inheritance, which is used to establish rights to tracks of customary forests. In these stories, their ancestors were the first domesticators, but chose to continue with an older and precedent lifestyle in the forests. Many of their ancestors leave behind vast tracts of fruit and honey trees, which again establish the longevity of their rights to the forests they utilise. The supernatural manner in which their ancestors received the "trunk" laws gives their *adat* legitimacy and precedence over similar laws, which in the

17 The name Sekilat Lalu (bolt of lightning) is reference to the speed of the tiger's *silet* attacking style.

past were common laws in the kingdom. From its "trunk" spring "branches" or "sprouts" of law imbued with complementary categories, which can denote precedence, seniority, and values. Where and how they place these branches of law is important towards understanding how the Orang Rimba structure and manipulate their system of law.

A theme of precedence continues through the names and relationships of ancestors that work their way into these stories. By choosing the names of important characters found in Jambi folklore and religion, claiming them as common ancestor figures and making them junior to their own, the Orang Rimba manipulate origins to their advantage. Some origin stories place, in fact binds, the Orang Rimba into subordinate bondage relations with the villagers. In the past, these stable political-economic relationships provided a reliable and safe means to interact with the outside world. It gives their traditional customary law legitimacy and can be a means for leaders to obtain titles, status, and authority and solve disputes within their communities and with outsiders. Through the telling of origin stories, the Orang Rimba participate in a common language of folklore, which does not necessarily translate into receiving precedence in everyday social relationships, but can be manipulated to ensure certain advantages.

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