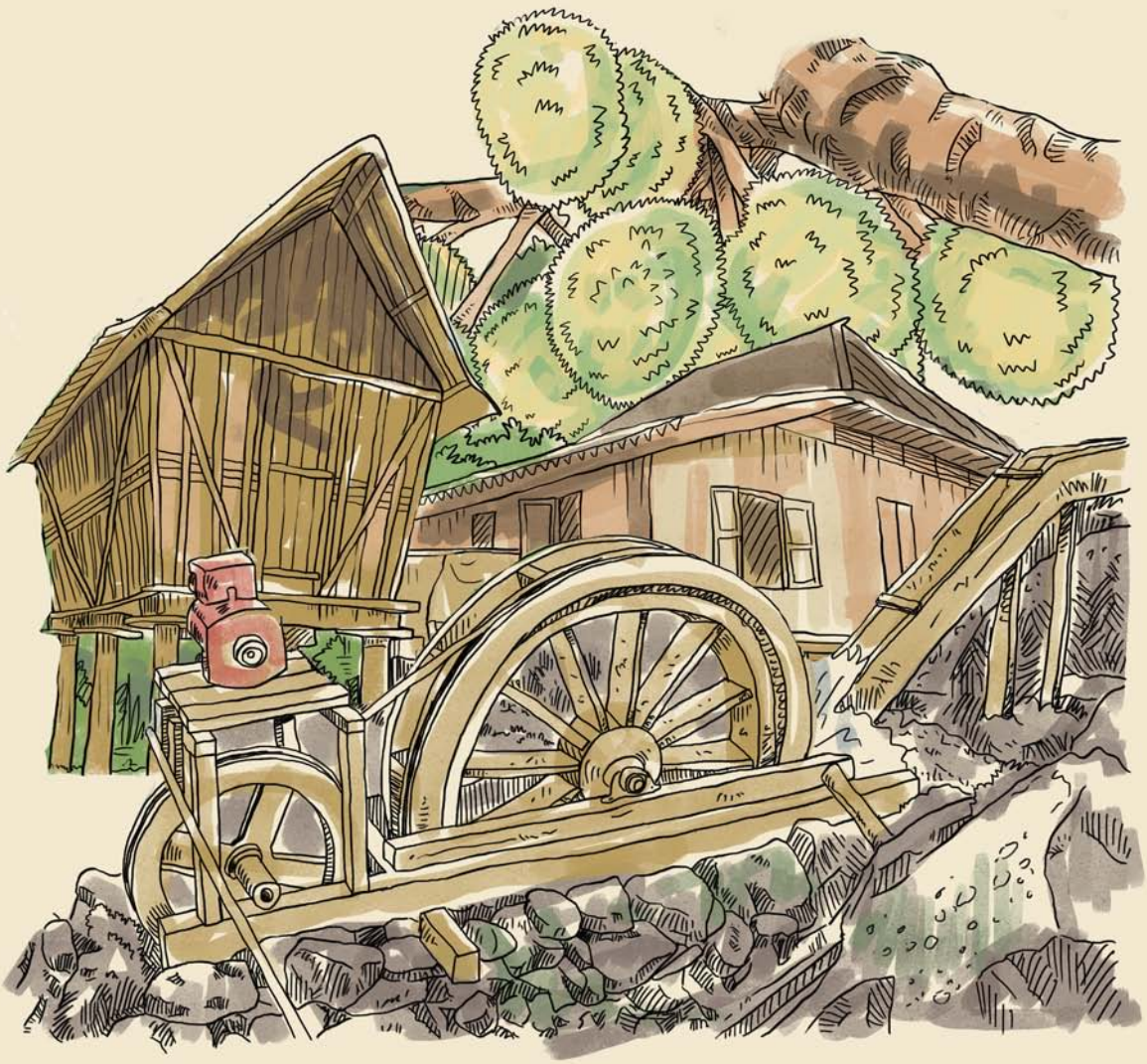
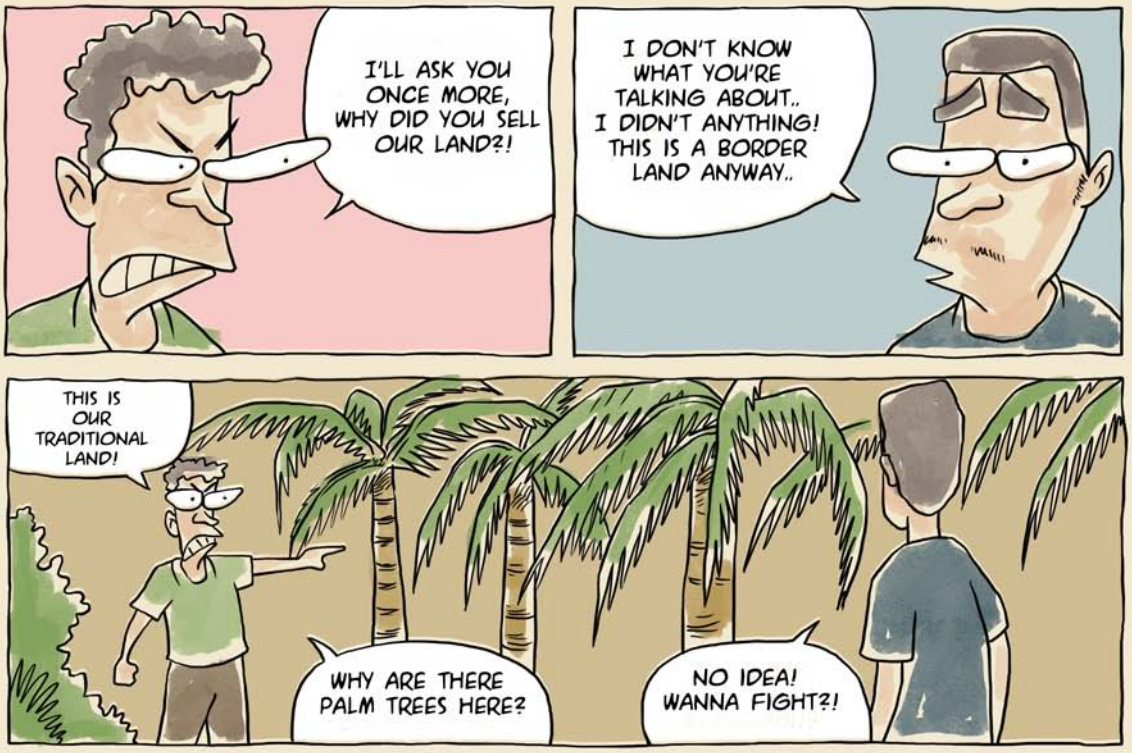
Life in the Tradition, Death in the Land

By Mikael Edi Sairondi



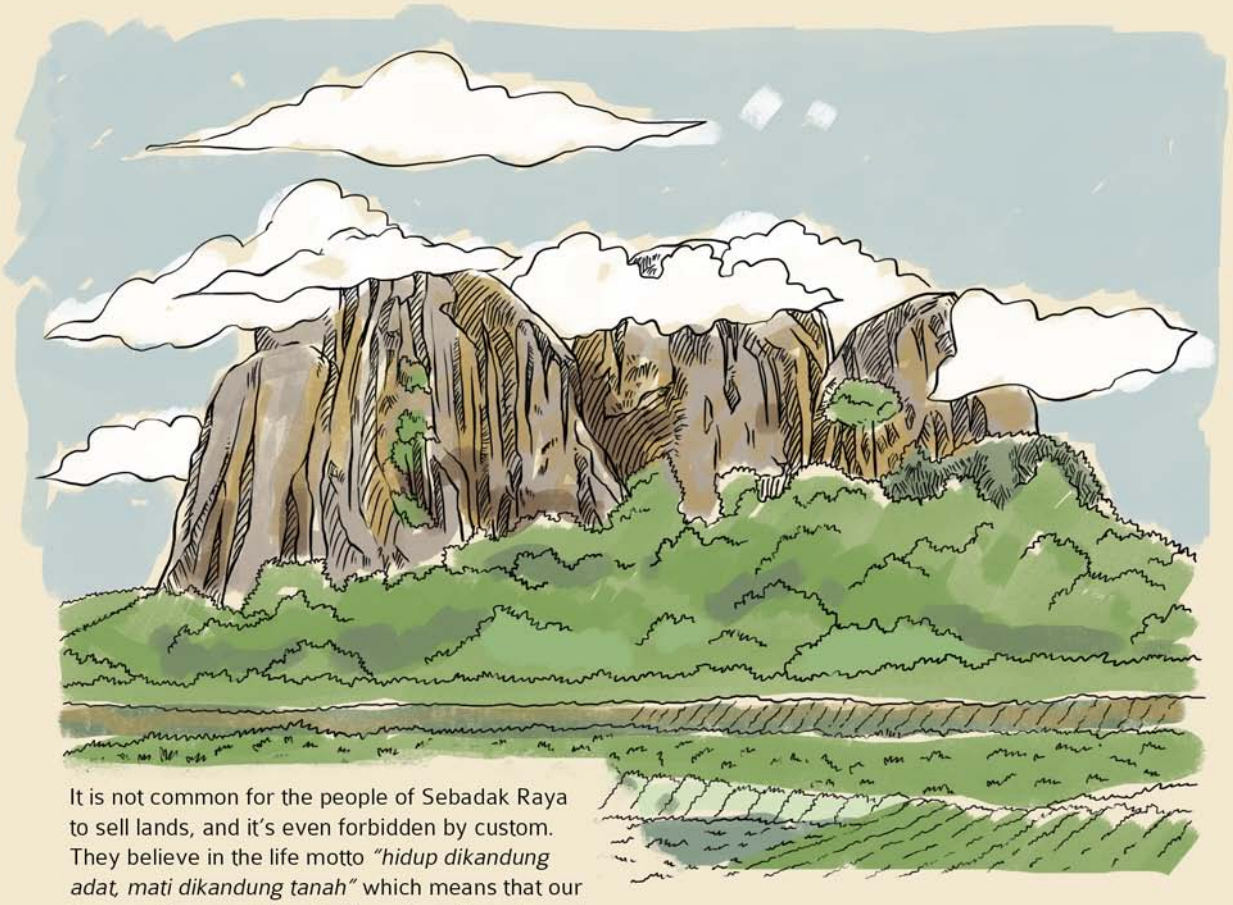


Throughout their history the people of Sebadak Raya have never clashed with the neighboring village, Pangkalan Suka. More over, the two villages were once united as one family. However since the entry of a palm oil company into the area two years ago, there has been a feud between the two villages up till now. In the past, the ancestors of the two villages lived together in Kebuai Hamlet. The traditional chief was then known as *Demung,* while the highest traditional leader was called *Mantir*. The struggle for Mantir position in 1943 was the reason for the division into two villages which are now having the feud. At that time, the two sons of the traditional chief, namely Rongas the eldest one and Songat the younger one, both wanted to succeed his father in leading the Kebuai Hamlet.

In the election, Rongas was elected as Mantir. His brother would not accept defeat and then led his family and all his followers to move to Tanjung Penjaluran which was located about 23 kilometers from Kebuai. In the new place, they multiplied and formed a new settlement called Sukamaju. In 1975 the settlement changed its name to Pangkalan Suka Village, while Kebuai Hamlet changed its name to Sebedak Raya Village.

Now there is feud between the two villages. The reason for that was the land that is located on the border between the two villages. The land dispute started when the people of Sebadak Raya Village caught in hand the Cultivation Rights Title boundary establishment team which consisted of an oil palm company, PT Permata Sawit Mandiri (PSM), the Forest Service and the Nangatayap District Government. They were entering their traditional land without prior consent of the people. Finally the people sanctioned them with a traditional fine for "*langkah potsa curuk buhul*" which means they entered without permission and have to pay a traditional fine in the form of 6 pieces of *Tajau* or crocks.

After the incident, they finally realized that 300 hectares of people's land had been sold secretly by some people from Pangkalan Suka Village to an oil palm company, PT. PSM in 2010. The land was sold cheaply, only for Rp.300,000 per hectare, or Rp.30 per meter. Since then, the relations between the two villages became strained. The land owner almost clashed with the people who sold the land.



It is not common for the people of Sebadak Raya to sell lands, and it's even forbidden by custom. They believe in the life motto *"hidup dikandung adat, mati dikandung tanah"* which means that our lives are in separable with the soil and forests, and when we die we will go back to the soil. More over, the traditional people have been very dependent on the forest, which is also the source of water.

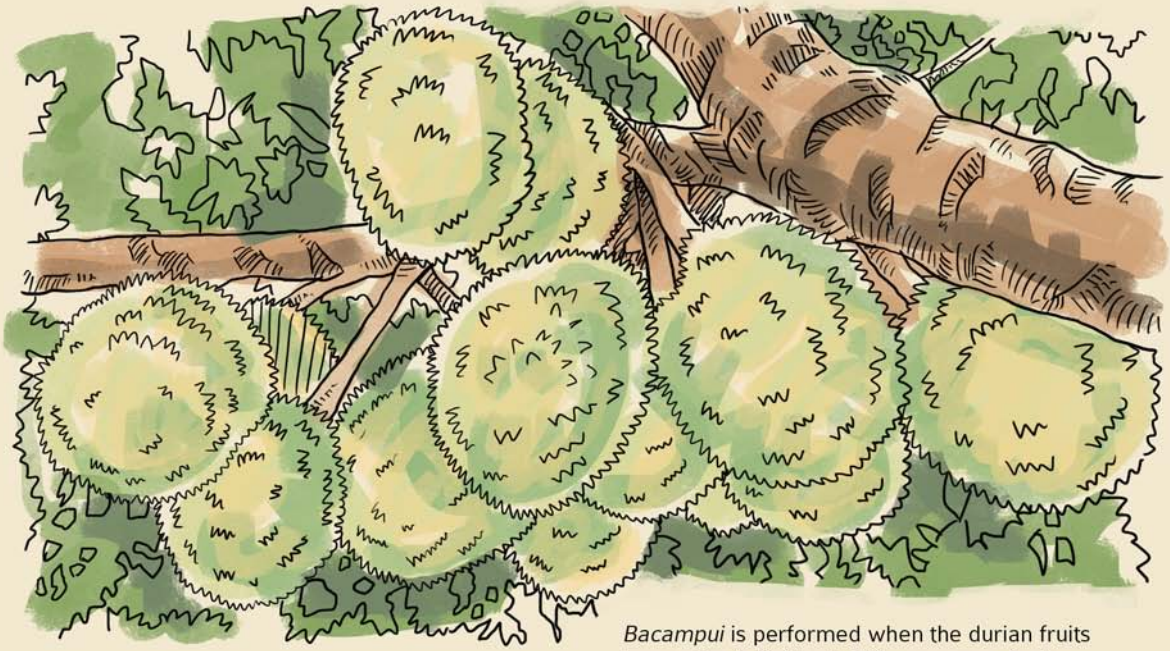
They have a proverb, *"buah kampong caba buah air caba ikan"* which means that when the forest is destroyed the hills will become bare and the waters will dry up and the people will no longer be able to taste durians and eat fish from the river.

Sebadak Raya Village is located in the mountain sand is the up stream area of Tayap River. But the village is not the only people who benefit from its forests and rivers. Almost the entire population of Ketapang Regency in West Kalimantan also benefit from the forests and rivers there because the upstream area of Tayap River is an important water catchment area and the source of water for the lower regions, starting from Ingin River to the capital of Ketapang Regency.

The area is the headwaters of four major rivers in the regency namely Pawan River, Pesaguan River,Tayap River and Kebuai River.

"If the forest is lost there will no longer be a place to look for material for ceremonial purposes" said Martinus–the traditional *demung* of Kebuai. The loss of forest also means the loss of inherited customs and culture such as, the *bacocap bacampui, basailih batatobus* and *polas bio bantan tadah* ceremonies. All of those three cannot be performed any more if there is no forest.

The *bacocap bacampui* ceremony is a fruit-related ceremony. The focus of the ceremony is not the regular fruits, but just durian fruits. This ceremony begins when durian trees are flowering, which is also known as *mahalu kombang* ceremony. The objective of the ceremony is to pray for the durian flowers so that the flowers become fruits and fruits area bundant.



Durian has a special significance for the people there. It is regarded as the mother of fruits because durian fruits can be processed into a wide range of useful food sand drinks such as *tempoyak* (fermented durian), beverages, *dodol*, or other foods that are preserved. The varieties of durian are also diverse in this place such as duren, *kusi, trotungan, mawai, maloi, siawak and pekawai.* That is why the ceremony is regarded to represent the ceremony for all kinds of fruits harvest from the yard to the forest.

Durian trees are abundant in Sebadak Raya. When the durian season arrives from December to January, usually many fruits fell of the trees uneaten because they are plentiful. "In the three hills in our village including Lincah Hill, a durian tree with its trunk reaching 2 meters can produce over 1000 fruits," said Martin. The fruit harvest ceremony is conducted in Lincah Hill.

Bacocap in the local language means the start of the harvest, while *bacampui* means the completion of harvest. *Bacocap* is done after *mahalu kombang,* right after durian fruits start to fall from the trees. In the ceremony people pray so that the durian fruits are good and won't harm the people

Bacampui is performed when the durian fruits harvesting is finished. This ceremony is also conducted on Lincah Hill in August, when the durian trees start flowering. Usually durian trees produce fruits from December to January.

Bacocap bacampui ceremony is done 3 times a year, precisely when the durian flowers begin to grow in August, when the fruits are ripe and start falling usually from December to January and finally when the harvest is completed.

The ceremony also marks the beginning of harvest for other fruits such as *mentawai, duku langsat,* longan and others.

They do not only pray for fruit trees, but human health too. This ceremony is called *basasilih bataobus,* which aims to ask the Creator to protect the health of people of the village, in order to avoid disaster and attacks from dangerous animals, such as snake bites, bears, scorpions and others in the forest.

The ceremony is also done so that people survive the journey, and be successful in business. The time of the ceremony can be conducted at any time depending on the demand of people. The ceremonies are led by a local wiseman who is called *Bolin sasidih.*

Actually Sebedak Raya is a village that has incomparable natural wealth. The area of the village is approximately 48,000 hectares, 3,000 hectares of which are the traditional forest and village forest with an area of 2,425 hectares. Most of the people live as farmers. The population of this village is roughly 2,129 people, mostly rubber and coffee farmers. Each family owns a minimum land area of about 4 hectares.

The people also have traditional ceremonies related to their farm. One of them is *Polas bio bantan tadah*. The ceremony is performed to pray for the land so that it provides an abundant rice harvests through out the year, and give blessings for the next year. The ceremony also aims to ask the safety for people who work in the fields from clearing the land until the harvest is over. *Polas bio bantan tadah* is held every May 25. Before performing the ceremony, people are not allowed to cut down or clear the farm land. The ceremony is led by *Belindu ato* , or a shaman.

The people of Sebadak Raya still apply swidden farming method by 5-year cycle slash and burn technique. They will clear up new fields, and will return to the first field five years later. This way they believe it gives time for fields to become fertile again.

They grow rice for their daily food, using varieties that are planted on dry fields.There varieties of rice there are diverse. There are at least 20 varieties of rice that are still cultivated. The names of some of the varieties are for example *kediu* which smells like *Pandan Wangi*, and there are *kelatang Bayung, duku, tukul, sayap,* and *pandan bintik* (red rice).

After the harvest, the people again perform a ceremony called *Menjangan Pantuk Tugak* which means praying when storing rice in *Jurung*. Granaries are called *Jurung* there. The location of *Jurung* is usually not far from the people's homes, just 10 to 30 meters away.

Jurung is a building madeof bamboo similar to a small house with an area of 6 square meters but with no doors and windows on the side. The door is located at the top, top event rats from entering. The ceremony is also known as *Naik dangau*.

"No wood and forest, no more *adat kamuh banyak sapata tahun,*" said Limin, a traditional leader of Kebuai confirming the view point of Martinus, his friend. It means that when the forests are gone there are no more places to open farmlands, plant rice and gardening. He said even if the tradition is performed it is useless if the forest is gone.





"We are the jungle people who are used to hunt and gather vegetables in the forests," he added. Although they hunt for animals, the people still realize that the forest is the home fordeer, pigs, muntjacs, mouse-deer, bears, orang utans and other. If the forest is cut down, there will no longer be a place for shelter and the animals will lose food. Humans also lose their source of meals and livelihood in the forest.

The people also believe in the saying "No forest, no life." When the forests are destroyed life will disappear. Therefore the forests need to be preserved and maintained, as well as the wildlife that exists in the forests. They believe that the loss of just one species of an animal or a plant will result in an imbalance of other living beings.

The traditional people have long been proven to manage their forests wisely. Keeping the forests means maintaining tradition, said Martin. This means that people should keep the forest and animals to preserve the traditions and culture. The traditions can be performed if the ritual needs can be taken from the forests, including the ritual to save the forest it self, such as the *Bapolas* ceremony.

"Traditional law was made to ensure that forests are not destroyed and the people can live in peace," he added.

Not only the forests, they also apply the wisdom in managing farm lands, including fields and rubber. Rubber farmland there is very big that often they are not able to manage their own field. Fortunately they have a mutual aid tradition called *Juruk Barai* which in the local language means mutual aid, working together on the land, taking turns from one family to another. Usually *Juruk Barai* is done to build houses, and clean the sacred forests.

Siswanto and his friends who live in Sebedak Raya actually apply *Juruk Barai* on their rubber farmlands since 2007. "*Juruk Barai* can turn any heavy work into an easy task, the impossible becomes possible. "That is the reason why the thirteen men who mostly have rubber and cacao plantations in the area of Cundai Hills are becoming close to each other.

In the beginning Siswanto and his friends were unable to clean up and plant rubber in their large fields. Each family has at least a 4-hectare rubber field. "If you clean the field yourself, one hectare can be completed in half month, however using *juruk barai* thirteen of us can complete the work in one day," said Siswanto. *Juruk barai* is done every Sunday around 10 am, after the church service.



Their lands in Cundai Hills are side by side, so the distances between them are not too far away. In the field rubber, coffee, cacao and *bengkirai* are planted. The total area of their fields is 250 hectares.

Rubber plantation produces latex. Every day, on average they are able to harvest at least 20 to 30 kilos of latex. "Now the price of latex is still high at about Rp10,000 per kilo" said Siswanto. Rubber prices actually go up and down, depending on international market demand. But the problem is Sebadak Raya is located in the remote place so it is not easy to sell rubber especially when the price of rubber is uncertain. But people have a unique way of storing rubber latex. They store it along the Tayap river.

The river there is like a natural storage area that is vast and long. Once the latex is harvested and processed into white sheets, they are then rolled up, lined up and stored along the banks Tayap River.

They roll them using a log and tie them with rattan ropes, before immersing them in the river. Typically, each family has its own storage are along the river with a length of 7 to10 meters. Usually latex sheet is stored for a maximum of 3 months submerged in the water. Sometimes they store as much as 800 kilograms latex there.

Usually the rubber is stored until it is enough to make a lot of money when it is sold or they wait until rubber price in the market becomes stable, before they sell it to the traders who come and sell it in Pontianak.

The experience of working on rubber fields using mutual cooperation or *Juruk Barai* have made Siswanto and his friends realized that when they work together they will become stronger and the task becomes easier. In 2008 they finally agreed to set up a farmers group called Cundai oh Cundai. The name was taken from the name of Cundai Hill where their fields are located."The hill is high. If we go up there we have take a breath, and usually sigh,"Cundai oh cundai," said Siswanto.



The Cundai oh cundai farmers group not only grow plants but they also grow freshwater fish by making fish ponds, and growing pond fish such as carps, *parau*, *gabis* and catfish. They also started making nurseries and planting endemic plants such as agarwood and ironwood, *keladan*, *meranti* , *Omang* and others. Now there are 20 species of endemic plants that they grow, about 10 thousand trees in total.

Apparently the group efforts were observed by the people of Sebedak Raya. The cooperation that they do is considered successful. That is why, when there is a threat to the forest and a land dispute occurred with an oil palm plantation company in 2010, Cundai oh cundai was asked to intervene.

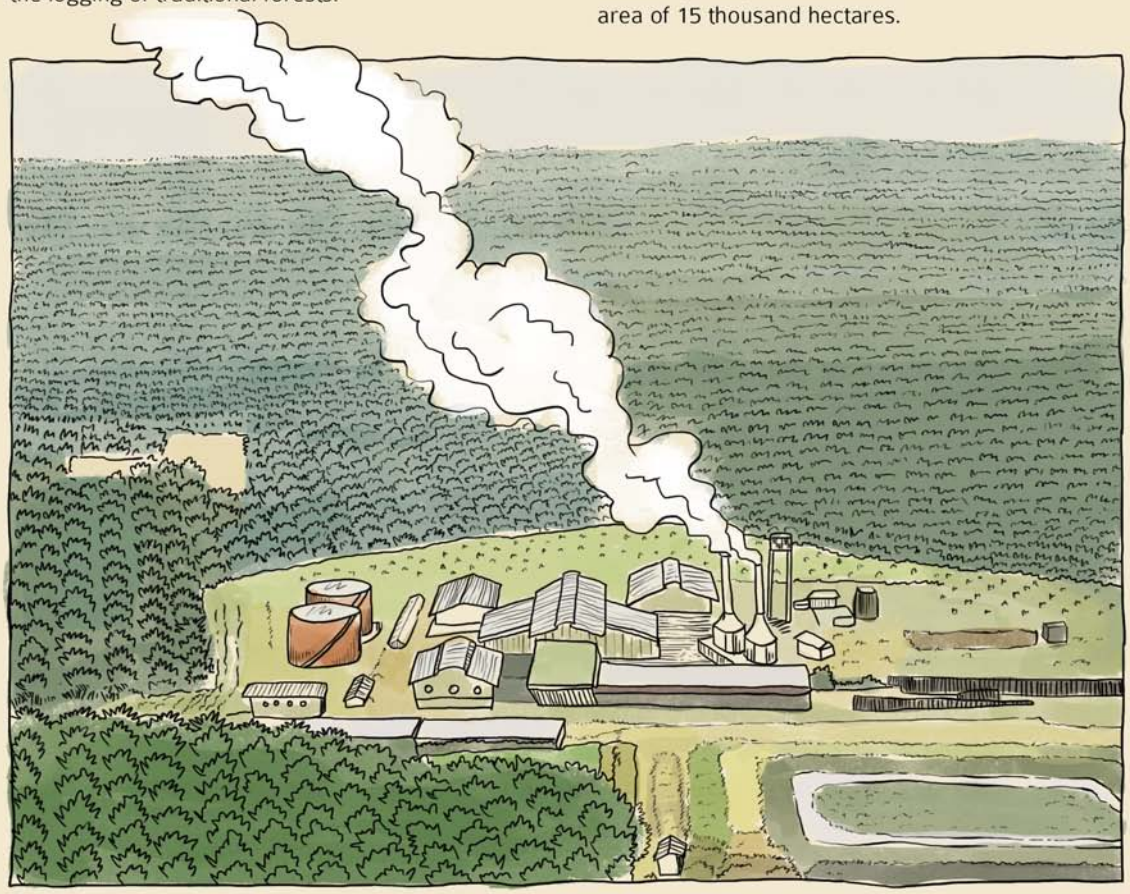
Actually it was not the first time that the forests there were threatened. The forests there have been targeted by investors since 2001. At that time there were some businessmen who funded the logging of traditional forests.

These forest encroachers come from outside their village. They cut iron wood and *bengkirai* illegally because the two types of wood are expensive.They sold it to capitalists in Sandai and Kelik River.

Before illegal logging was rampant, the government also gave logging permission to PT. Wana-Mukti Lestari which operated in the traditional forests around Layang Hill. Meanwhile, another company, PT. Alas Kusuma Grup was also granted a license to cut down the forests of Pancong and BatuPutih Hills.

As a result, the forests become degraded. The river waters become polluted due to open forests and erosion, thus polluting the waters of Tayap and Uangan rivers. Slowly but surely their traditional rights are beginning to be undermined.

Most recently, the government issued a permit for an oil palm company, which is PT. Permata Sawit Mandiri (PSM) in 2008 to work on a land with an area of 15 thousand hectares.



Another permit was also granted to PT. CitraSawit Cermerlang (CSC) for 800 hectares of Sebadak Raya Village territory. Oil palm is a type of plantation with uniform plants. If the forest is turned into oil palm plantations, the plants and animals will no longer be able to live there.

The people of Kebuai were united in rejecting the presence of those two oil palm companies. Their reason was PT. CSC and PSM will clear the forests and eliminate their traditional rights on the forests. But the company backed by the local government actually intimidated the people so that the people were becoming afraid to demand justice on their traditional rights.

According to Siswanto, although the situation was difficult, the people continued to try and find a way out. They compared the prosperity of their village to other villages that have received oil palm plantations. In their view, Sebadak Raya is more prosperous without the presence of oil palm plantations. They were determined to manage their forests on their own as opposed to releasing them to other people because forests are inseparable from their lives.

Especially in the last fifty years they have proved that the rubber fields have been able to sustain their economies. The people really understand the method of planting rubber and its maintenance is easy. The rubber plants do not require special care. Not only rubber, they also plant coffee and fruit trees. The coffee and fruit trees are grown in between the rubber trees. Each family can have 400 to 500 coffee trees and the yield is mostly for personal consumption.About 80 percent of the people there drink coffee.

The people's efforts in coffee cultivation finally got the support from Ketapang Regency Forest Service. In August 2010, the people received training to improve the quality of the coffee fruit, coffee and to choose the appropriate coffee varieties that are suitable to thes oil condition there. Hopefully, the training will help the farmers improve their coffee quality. The high quality coffee will improve their economy so that they do not need to sell their land to companies, but manage the land on their own.



"We have also started to think about how our forests and rivers can generate electricity," said Siswanto. They want to make use of water resources an driver for village's lighting which will become the reason for them to keep the forests there. The initial idea was to build a micro-hydro, a small-sized power plant that uses the power of river water to turn turbines. The church was actively involved in the discussion the plans with them.

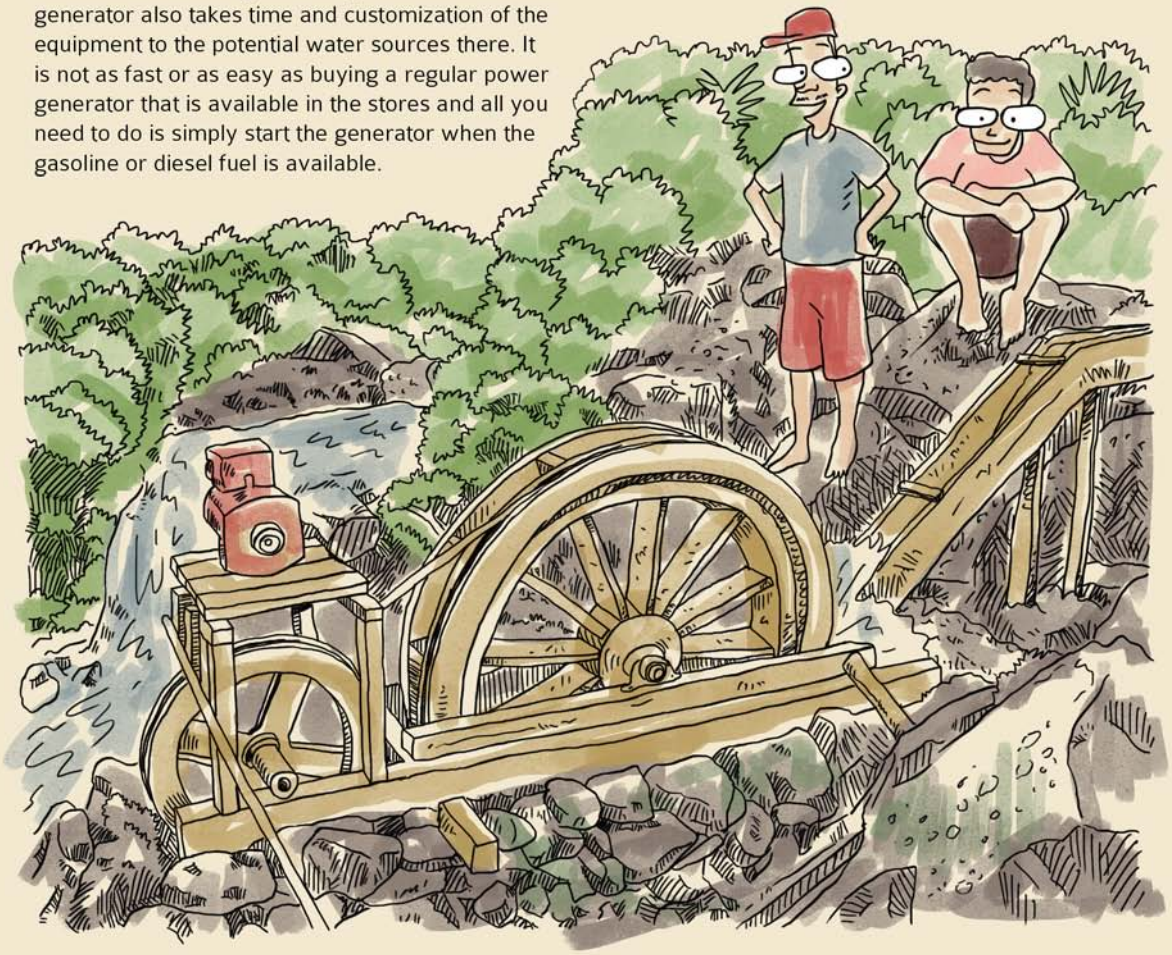
The plan to build a micro hydro electric generator was the starting point for Cundai oh cundai to become acquainted with the GEF SGP, around the end of 2010.They asked for support on the procurement and management of micro hydro.

Unfortunately, they have to face many obstacles in providing sustainable energy for the whole village. In addition to technical knowledge and coordination, building a microhydro electric generator also takes time and customization of the equipment to the potential water sources there. It is not as fast or as easy as buying a regular power generator that is available in the stores and all you need to do is simply start the generator when the gasoline or diesel fuel is available.

"The first stage did not meet our expectations, but it was a struggle, not only in getting lights, but also a weapon to save the forests. Forests produce water and we need water to produce electricity" said Siswanto.

That's why they are determined to build a micro-hydro. Currently, GEF SGP is hooking them up with another one of their grantees, Cibuluh community from West Java, which has managed to build and run a microhydro. Cibuluh community will help them immediately in designing a village scale microhydro.

Cundai oh Cundai believes if they are successful in realizing this electricity which is generated by nature, everybody will become aware that the forests have the power to give life. Their spirit in saving the forests gained a lot of support. "Aids flow just like water," he said.



Later several conservation organizations also made programs in Sebadak Raya, including CIFOR and Fauna & Flora International. "They did a research and made village forests," said Siswanto. In August 2011, the villagers got permission from the Ministry of Forestry to manage village forests, although in reality the forests are their traditional land, which are established as State Forests.

Ever since large organizations made their programs there, the people become more aware of the wealth of their forests. "We were also taught how to calculate forest carbon. We were offered to sell forest carbon credits so they can get an extra income," said Martin.

The traditional forests in Sebadak Raya village are now widely known.

The governments and companies are becoming increasingly cautious in imposing their intention to forcibly clear the forests.

At least everything that has been done by the people has made them more confident about their efforts in preserving the forests. Although their relationship with neighboring village has not improved and their forests are still threatened, they have managed to stop the wider destruction of their forests.

They also proved that the traditional people are capable of maintaining and managing their forests not only for their economic value, but also social and cultural values. The threats of rainforest destruction were successfully answered with the actions planting and maintaining forests, planting rubber, coffee, bengkirai, rattan and building a sustainable power source.



Mikael Edi Sairondi

The man's nickname is Eddie. He is 39 years old, with a wife and two children. He comes from the village Cundai oh Cundai, West Kalimantan.

Edi devotes himself to a community organization that specifically addresses the case of deprivation of the rights of indigenous peoples by both company and or the government. The organization is "Commission of Justice and Peace of Papua Borneo". His motto of live is "Environmental Conservation". Besides working on his IP rights organization, he also allocates his time to facilitate people to express the issue of "Environment".

The most interesting thing of Edi is that he is directing the people to conserve the forests that have been destroyed by the investors for the purpose of protecting and preserving the forest for the community. For example, forests can provide water for the life of the local community. For Eddie, water is the source of life and if people want to be secured, then people should protect the forest, and water is also a unifying symbol.

