Ivan Tacey

Animism and Interconnectivity

Batek and Manya' Life on the Periphery of the Malaysian Rainforest

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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For Lucien and Louis,
in memory of my grandfather Charles Tacey
and my friends Darren Miller and James Newton.

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NAMING THE PEOPLE

Choosing which ethnonyms to use for the different groups I describe within this thesis has been a difficult decision. All the groups I discuss in the thesis identify as Bateks, a term meaning 'person' or 'people' in local languages. Throughout the thesis, this is the term I use when there is no need to differentiate between different groups of Bateks.

Sometimes people identified in relation to the river valleys they lived in or originated from. For example, people from the Lebir River identify as Batek Lebir and those from the Aring identify as Batek Aring. Occasionally, people identified using micro ethno-linguistic categories such as Batek Dè', Batek Tè' or Batek 'Iga'. The socio-cultural differences between these micro-identities was minimal and former-speakers of the Batek Tè' and Batek 'Iga' dialects have almost entirely adopted the Batek Dè' dialect. For the most part, Bateks living across a contiguous territory stretching across Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu now speak the Batek Dè' language. In this thesis, I identify these peoples as Batek Dè' when it is necessary to differentiate them from other Batek groups. One of the Batek groups I worked with speak a separate language and have religious beliefs and practices that differ significantly from other Batek groups. This group, previously identified by anthropologists as either Mintil (Benjamin 1976) or Batek Tanum (Lye 2004), live in a territory to the west of the Batek Dè'. They never identify as Mintil, a term they find offensive, and although the Tanum river lies within their territory, I never heard any members of this group identifying as Batek Tanum. In the past this group had used the autonym Manya' [*Mãŋã'*] until a series of violent conflicts with local Malays in the early twentieth century. As mentioned previously, these people most commonly simply identify as Batek. In the end, I have opted to use the term Manya' to promote an ethnographic documentation of the group who are in some ways quite different to the Batek Dè'. It also helps avoid potential confusion between the two groups that could have arisen if I had used the term Batek Tanum. Adding to the plethora of confusing ethnonyms, autonyms and micro-linguistic categories already used for these groups was not an easy decision to make. After serious discussion with the people of Kg KiYing, the principle Manya' village in which I conducted research, we agreed that using this historical autonym provided an acceptable means to differentiate them from other Batek groups.

Language and Orthography

During my fieldwork, I tried my utmost to learn the languages of the different groups I worked with. Although I am fairly fluent in the Batek Dè' language I make no claims at linguistic expertise and remain in awe, although somewhat suspicious, of ethnographers who claim complete mastery of the languages of the groups they study. My linguistic abilities in the Manya' dialect is more limited, as I only encountered this group during the final year of my fieldwork. Most anthropologists working with the Orang Asli have been extremely fastidious in recording dialects phonetically and I am well aware some may be critical of my modest attempts at linguistics. For the large part, I have resisted the temptation to fill my ethnographic descriptions with phonetic transcriptions of local terms. For most readers, they serve very little purpose and while they have a strategic function of establishing ethnographic authority, I find them to be a distractive irritation to the reading of many ethnographies. My approach has been an attempt to find some kind of middle ground; when I consider a local term to be particularly salient, I have chosen to use it with an English translation. I use local kinship terms as they cannot be translated precisely into English and use local terms for flora and fauna and religious concepts as they are central to the Bateks' way of looking at the world.

I frequently use teknonyms for specific people rather than their 'true' names. This is due to the fact that there are prohibitions on using many people's true names and, furthermore, the use of teknonyms provides a certain degree of anonymity. These teknonyms take the prefix of a relationship term *'ey* (father), *na'* (mother), *ya'* (grandmother) and *ta'* (grandfather). For example, 'ey Kaniq (the father of Kaniq). There is no standardized way of writing Batek. However, people increasingly use their mobile phones and various social media applications to send text messages. When writing text messages people are completely unconcerned about glottal stops, nasalization, consonant-vowel-consonant orders and so on. Ways of writing are slowly being conventionalized but there are still many different ways of writing common expressions. For example, a simple greeting equivalent to the English 'how are you?' or the Malay *apa khabar*? may be written as *ailou kabar*?, *ailau kabar*?, *aloo kabar*, *alau kaba* or *ailau khabar*.

I have attempted to transcribe Batek and Manya' words in this thesis following the orthography used in Mon-Khmer studies and more locally by other anthropologists working with various Orang Asli groups (Benjamin 1976; Kruspe, Burenhult, and Wnuk 2014). This has not been an easy task. In Orang Asli languages, stand-alone words nearly always take the form of consonant-vowel-

consonant, a pattern which repeats and words always end in a consonant. However, sometimes the consonant is barely audible due to it being an aspiration /h/, a /y/ or a glottal stop /'/. In the Manya' language the consonant /r/ seems to be systematically replaced by /y/ in medial positions (Burenhult 2018 personal communication). I found some words extremely difficult to write phonetically. For example, the previously mentioned autonym Manya'. To me, it sounded like Maia /*maɪə*/, which is to say it rhymed with the English terms 'buyer' /*baɪə*/ or hire /*haɪə*/. However, after sending a recording of the term to linguist Niclas Burenhult, he assured me that there was an almost unheard medial consonant in the word, a palatal nasal /ɲ/ or nasalized glide /y/, and it was likely that the term ended in a glottal stop /'/. The two /a/ sounds in the autonym are both nasalized, resulting in the phonetic transcription [*mãɲã'*] and the phonemic transcription /*manya'*/.

Symbols	**Pronunciation**
i	As in Malay *tapis* or English *see*
e	As in Malay *leher* or English *bait*
ɛ	As in English *get*
ʉ	As the Scottish *hus* or English *moon*
ə	The schwa as used in Malay *betul* or English *ago*
a	As the Malay *belah* or English *sun*
u	As the first *u* in Malay *pucuk* or English *pull*
o	As the Malay *gol* ('goal' in football) or English *boat*
ɔ	As the *au* in English taut, but shorter
c	As the Malay *cicak* or English *church*
ɲ	As the Malay *banyak* or Spanish *señor*
ŋ	As the *ng* in English *singer* or Malay *nganga*
'	The glottal stop as in Malay pronunciations of *duduk*
k	Pronounced as a velar, like the *k* in Malay *makan*

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION: INTERCONNECTED

OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS

This thesis explores Batek Dè' and Manya' animism on the forest periphery. The Batek Dè' and Manya' are two politically marginalised groups of indigenous people who live in the central and northern interior of Peninsular Malaysia. Both groups are classified by anthropologists and the Malaysian government as 'Orang Asli' which means 'original people' in the Malay language. This is a broad ethnic category used to refer to at least 18 linguistically and culturally distinct indigenous peoples living in Peninsular Malaysia. The Batek Dè' number around 2,000 and their territory stretches across the states of Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu. The closely related Manya', also known as Batek Tanum, are a much smaller group, numbering around 300, who live in an area which abuts the Bateks' in the northwest of Pahang.

Through an examination of specific events occurring in particular places on the forest periphery, the thesis highlights changes and continuities in Batek shamanistic practices, myths, cosmologies and their relations with other-than-human beings in the transformed physical and social landscape. Batek animistic conceptions and practices are firmly embedded in the local environment and recent physical changes to this environment caused by logging and mining have been comprehended as angering the ancestral beings who created it and the various spirits that dwell within it. Bateks have never been isolated populations; they have long-standing historical connections with other places and people, and these are reflected within their animistic thought, practices and concepts of landscape and place. Today, the forest periphery is a nexus of complex interconnection between a variety of actors and agencies of the forest and the local and larger national and globalised human environment. It lies at the margins of both the forest and the State.

The thesis renounces persistent static representations of Bateks as an example of isolated hunter-gatherer animists. It critiques theoretical arguments about animism which ignore political economy, and analyses which simplistically portray people like them as contained within a fixed hunter-gatherer economic niche. By contrast, the thesis aims to highlight how the Bateks' contemporary predicament of socio-economic change, territorial displacement and environmental

transformation is part of a long history of interconnection with people and agencies from beyond the forest. Through an exploration of contemporary life on the forest periphery, I give an ethnographic account of contemporary shifts and modifications in animistic practices resulting from an increase in and complexification of interactions with the outside world.

The thesis is a study of religion in context. Each chapter presents ethnographic vignettes and case-studies as a means of providing concrete examples of how contemporary Batek animistic practices and conceptions are shaped by everyday experiences in a context of ongoing socio-economic, political and environmental change in twenty-first century Malaysia. Through this approach, I explore how religious thought and practice shape particular encounters in the interconnected places on the forest's edge, and conversely, how interconnections have shaped religious thought and practices in this setting. A constitutive element of Batek animism is that local landscapes are seen to host numerous other-than-human beings which dwell in various localities of the landscape. Alongside increased interactions and connections with people and places from beyond the rainforest, changing relationships with these beings, who have become increasingly angered by landscape degradation, form a central concern of the thesis. Another critical aspect of my research is how Bateks construct and construe narratives about their marginalized position in Malaysian society within the framework of their cosmology and cosmogony, and thus, contest their marginalised status. Changing ecological and social conditions are a key concern for both groups and are regularly discussed in everyday life. Such narratives often weave together religious and political language and imagery, and merge indigenous thought, values, and systems of meaning with national and global counterparts.

In his classic monograph, *Batek Negrito Religion* Kirk Endicott stresses how cosmology provides Bateks with a conceptual framework to understand the world and suggests that "mythical beings and their actions are cited as the causes of contemporary events" (1979a, 24). This insight was further developed by Lye Tuck Po in her monograph *Changing Pathways: Forest Degradation and the Batek of Pahang Malaysia* (2004) which framed an analysis of Batek ecological practices and environmental change within Batek cosmology. My research shares common ground with both these landmark Batek studies. However, the inductive approach I followed, focusses on Batek religious practices and narratives in everyday life, and differs considerably from theirs and others' earlier work (Schebesta 1928; Schebesta 1952; Evans 1937). While previous studies emphasized cultural continuity among isolated groups which continue to hunt and gather in the forest, I examine cultural innovation and negotiation among groups at the interconnected edges of the forest who have more diverse economies and livelihoods. Using detailed case-studies, I build upon Endicott's insight about how mythical beings are 'cited as the causes of contemporary events' but also reverse his formula to

examine how contemporary events—both local and global—have been understood by Bateks as galvanising mythical beings into action, often with cataclysmic results. Examining specific events in context allows me to demonstrate how animistic Batek views of the cosmos have been shaped by their dealings with outsiders and how they perceive the wider-world from their interconnected locations at the margins. This offers a framework for understanding the dynamics and variance of Batek animism, and the forest edge as a site of cultural production.

A Transnational Soul-Journey

I begin with an account of a Manya' shaman's soul journey to Japan, which he claimed to have undertaken in order to repair the damaged fabric of the underworld following the Japanese tsunami of 2011. This somewhat curious example forms an instructive case of how animistic practices are shaped through entanglements with faraway places, events and peoples. In a somewhat phantasmagorical way, it illustrates how local political and environmental concerns relate to wider contemporary and historical conditions and connections. In the thesis, I explore several such examples taken from both groups. Importantly, by portraying Bateks and Manya' as central agents in re-establishing cosmic order through shamanistic practices, rather than as marginalised bystanders victimized by events, such stories express longstanding desires for having political orders reversed.

One late afternoon in June 2013, 'eyWauh, the headman of Kampung Tom KiYing, a Manya' village situated in northwest Pahang, recounted the following story of the village's shaman's response to the Japanese 2011 tsunami.

> *Our shaman went to Japan today, he looked at the earth. The earth over there is damaged. If the earth is repaired, there won't be a problem. He went and looked at the earth below Japan today. There are many* 'ai djum *[spirits] over there, in the underworld and in the upper world. The shaman took threads he was given by the* 'ai djum *spirits. Like the [cosmic] threads I told you about. ['eyWauh illustrates by drawing a jumble of long web-like threads in my notebook]. This is Japan [points to notebook picture]. Before, there was a huge tsunami over there and the earth had been damaged. The shaman tied the threads to hold* Baji' *[the underground rainbow snake] in place and to close the earth. He attached took threads here, and there, everywhere threads, like a spider's web. He took all the threads and weaved them together. He saw the broken earth and he used the threads to pull the earth back together. That is what the shaman did over there, in Japan.*

> Baji' *cannot writhe anymore over there in Japan. I tell you* Baji' *is now held firmly in place, the threads he tied, all those threads, threads, threads … Threads here and threads there, everywhere he made threads. Now* Baji' *is held in place. She can't writhe anymore. Japan is now safe, it's good. Keep a lookout this year, it won't happen again, in the next few months, the shaman said it is safe now. The old man went to Japan. I heard he has come back now. You check the newspapers. The shaman helped the people of Japan. They are safe now. But they should help us as we helped them. If they can send us some money it will be good, they will be safe. But if they don't want to help us, maybe it is finished for them in the future.*

'EyWauh recounted the story just as if the shaman had really been to Japan. The shaman had probably entered an altered state, a trance (/*tiwɲiw*/, *teween*) or possibly had a dream. However, no special ritual had taken place at the village. He seems to have entered his altered state alone and then recounted his travels to 'eyWauh and others. Several other villagers frequently alluded to the story, particularly the shaman's grandson Um. People assumed the story was true and there is no reason to believe it was fabricated by 'eyWauh or anyone else. Certain details were added in subsequent conversations I had with 'eyWauh, Um and other residents of the village. For example, I was later told that *tɔm* (water) and *os* (fire) were human-like spirits (*'ay djum*) who the shaman had negotiated (*bincang*) with during his travels in Japan.

The references to threads (*menang* or *tali'*), snakes, tsunamis and Japan in the above story, may be read as a testimony to the importance of connections in Manya' cosmological thought and contemporary everyday life. The cosmological notion of how shamans weave cosmic threads which hold the cosmos in place is here taken to illuminate the present situation of complex interconnection in which the Manya' bring together images of faraway people, places and events to cogently structure their experiences of contemporary changes and marginalization. The fabrication and interweaving of local idioms, shamanic practices and non-human beings into political commentaries is common among both the Manya' and the Batek Dè'. Frequently, local landscape degradation is comprehended as threatening the cosmic order, while global events are apprehended through cosmological constructs. The story exemplifies how shamans have reassembled relations with other-than-human beings and built new discourses about environmental changes from their interstitial vantage point. Shamanic practices and the activities of other-than-human spirits do not only relate to the local environment; they are understood as central to a much wider cosmo-political realm that extends across the known world and invisible realms inhabited by spirits and gods into other places further afield. Bateks see the visible and invisible realms as forming one unified reality not two separated dimensions. Among humans, only shamans have

the ability to see the underlying invisible reality and its denizens through their special eyes (K. Endicott 1979a, 136). Batek myths, cosmologies and animistic practices are firmly entrenched in local territories but they are by no means confined to these areas. The story raises questions. How should this feat of transnational support for the Japanese people be interpreted? Why would a Manya' shaman go to the effort of aiding a people he has never met by fixing the damaged fabric of their underworld? 'EyWauh's words notably contain a hint of menace that the Japanese may need to reciprocate help for the Manya' to avoid future earth-shattering problems. Why would such a threat be suggested?

Bateks frequently vented their frustrations that their concerns and problems were not taken seriously by local and national authorities. 'EyWauh's group had held numerous meetings with local politicians and government representatives in efforts to obtain recognition of their ancestral territory, developmental aid and protection for their landscape which has been systematically deforested, converted to oil-palm plantations and opened up for mining and quarrying. Similar complaints are frequently made by their Batek neighbours about the same issues. The shaman's actions reflect an aching desire to establish alliances with international partners because these complaints have not been addressed by the relevant local and national authorities. 'EyWauh stated he wished the Japanese to reciprocally return the shamans work of cosmic reconstruction by economically aiding his village. If such a material exchange for shamanic labour was not forthcoming, the threads could be untied, plunging Japan back into calamity. As it later became evident, he also assumed I would somehow contact the Japanese and negotiate such a deal on their behalf. I quickly explained that I did not know many Japanese and would not be able to help with any such collaboration. The 'threat' of the shaman untying the cosmic threads if the Japanese did not help the villagers with their problems, might be interpreted as a psychological voicing of underlying frustrations. Or a self-assured assertion of the Manya' shaman's extraordinary powers; a domain of expertise in which they assume neither Japanese nor Malays hold competence.

Bateks frequently interpret earthquakes, tsunamis, storms and floods as punishments meted out by powerful ancestral beings when humans transgress prohibitions and ethical norms. Shamans among both groups consider themselves as specialists in preventing such catastrophes and repairing damage to the cosmos following such events. Like Urarina shamans in Peru, they may appropriately be seen to engage in what could be seen as a kind of climate politics (Walker 2013, 180–81, 212). The cosmic struggles of contemporary Batek and Urarina shamans are often described as methods of holding off the upcoming apocalypse which is signalled by a scarcity of game animals, a decline in powerful shamans and, for Bateks, the destruction of the local environment. As evidenced by the example above, Batek shamans position themselves as agents in a global struggle and in

doing so, sometimes establish relationships with foreign powers. The danger for the Japanese implicated by 'eyWauh, if they would not reciprocate the shaman's help, suggests perceiving the shaman's journey as motivated by a wish to enable exchange or even the sharing of power between potential Japanese allies and the Manya'. It is modelled upon an idiom of exchange which encompasses modes of relating to outsiders and some of the other-than-human beings that fill the Manya' social universe.

Most Bateks are well aware of Malaysian history in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras and are able to express in eloquent terms how historical events and encounters with different peoples have led to their gradual marginalization. Historical encounters with Japanese, Chinese and British have greatly affected their contemporary impressions of these peoples as potential allies. Bateks and Manya' often discuss the perceived economic and military might of Japanese, British, Chinese and Americans, based in part on global imagery of these geographically distant peoples which now regularly flows into communities through satellite televisions found in homes in many villages. However, they also frequently emphasize the weaknesses of these nations in the face of cataclysmic events caused by the supposed transgression of taboos by people in these countries. The Japanese invasion during WWII meant that both groups became aware of Japan as a major global power capable of defeating the British, who, as colonizers of Malaysia, were already considered as immensely powerful. Furthermore, and importantly, Manya' see the Japanese as being non- or anti-Muslim, and thus, in their eyes anti-Malay. It is in this hotbed of distorted magnification of perceived similarities and stereotyped mutual oppositions, that ideas of potential international partnerships are forged. Bateks and Manya' do not consider the Japanese as particularly more appropriate allies than the British, Chinese, Americans or others. All these nations are frequently seen as potential allies and people from Kampung Tom KiYing have in fact sent several letters to ambassadors of these countries asking for economic help in developing their village and political aid in supporting claims to land rights and cultural autonomy.

Alongside these letters, and throughout my research, many Manya' living at Kg KiYing articulated a fantastical desire for collaborative mining or timber projects with Americans who, like the Japanese were seen as potential allies. Many individuals told me of dream revelations in which they claimed to have met President Obama. When discussing these dreams, people told me that Obama communicated that he would soon be coming to Malaysia to help them. These dreams take a similar form to shamanic soul-journeys where alliances are forged with other-than-human persons. Dream revelations and premonitions also foretold of Americans imminently coming to the aid of the Manya', expelling the Malays and assuming governance of Malaysia. People supported the validity of these dreams by referring to news events they had seen on television offering "proof" of

Obama's imminent arrival. Naïve though they may seem at first encounter, the aspirational weaving together of desires, transnational media flows and potential international alliances within everyday discourses and dreams could be seen as a mode of resistance, a counter to their contemporary social, economic and political marginalization. They represent a means of imagining resistance, a way of figuring out lines of positive force from the everyday encounters and features of their lives. Like the shaman's journey to Japan they represent an alternative connection to centres of political power which circumvent the Malays.

Catastrophes and Cosmo-politics

The Manya' shaman's dealings with the Japanese on a cosmic level present an intriguing modality of the complex connectivity of globalization. Rather than presenting the shaman as a ritual expert of local affairs, he is re-imagined as a cosmo-political diplomat whose attempt to circumvent impending disaster in a faraway place involves restructuring cosmic relations and rebuilding the damaged structure of the world. Throughout my fieldwork, catastrophic disasters across the planet were consistently attributed to humans breaking prohibitions classified as *lawac* in the Batek Dè' language and *tailine* in Manya. The Japanese tsunami of 2011 was often interpreted as being caused by the subterranean rainbow snakes (*naga'* or *baji'*) who had been angered by Japanese dressing up animals as humans: a serious transgression. Rather than understanding such acts as provoking danger through a mixing of categories, as Mary Douglas' suggested in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), such acts are primarily dangerous because they involve transgressions of the boundary between human and nonhuman subjectivities (Cf. Bovensiepen 2014, 130; Valeri 2000). Most Bateks believe the 2004 tsunami that devastated Indonesia had been caused by Indonesians breaking prohibitions and causing the wrath of non-humans. Manya' say that below Japan and Indonesia lies an enormous fiery underworld which rises with the writhing of *naga'* every year. The movement of these monstrous rainbow snakes is generally considered fairly predictable; every year it causes the seasonal monsoons. But occasionally, when the thrashing of these gigantic serpents is particularly powerful, it results in earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or tsunamis.

There is nonetheless considerable internal diversity in the exact details of such interpretations of catastrophes. Many Batek Dè' said the Indonesian tsunami was provoked by Gobar (the thunder deity), while several Manya' claimed that it was caused by thousands of mischievous human-like frog spirits (*cangkai*) who transformed themselves into the devastating oceanic force. Despite these variations, among both groups, any transgressions of prohibitions or moral norms are said to be punished by powerful non-humans, most commonly the underground rainbow snake that causes upwelling floods and the ferocious thunder deity who

releases powerful storms. In everyday life, people are usually extremely careful not to break taboos or behave in ways that could anger these beings.

Increased interconnectivity has meant that many contemporary events and processes, in the local landscape as well as faraway places, are now understood to anger these beings, who may potentially react with apocalyptic wrath. Globalization theorist John Tomlinson has remarked that "as connectivity reaches into localities, it transforms local lived experience but it also confronts people with a world in which their fates undeniably are bound together in a single global frame" (1999, 12). Bateks increasingly understand themselves as key cosmological figures in a global setting, and as such, the narrative of the shaman's journey to Japan serves as a means of empowerment. Ensnaring the *naga'* within a cosmic web to prevent further damage to the underworld is a herculean task that Manya' say only their shamans can accomplish. Despite the ubiquity of *naga'* imagery (serpent-like beings associated with a watery underworld) in the cosmologies of peoples across Southeast Asia (Wessing 2006) and beyond (Knight 1991, 480–94), this is the only example I am aware of in which shamans actually subdue this powerful being. It is possible that such shamanic feats are recent emergences and relate to present circumstances. In an increasingly interconnected world in which globalised media imagery flows into their communities, Bateks experience what seems to them like a dramatic increase of ecological catastrophes. This imagery then combines with local experiences of massive landscape change and rapidly deteriorating environmental conditions. Locally, it was considered that shamans could prevent or at least calm the fury of the nonhumans causing catastrophes. Situating themselves as trans-national agents or negotiators serves as an empowering strategy to cope with both political and economic marginalization.

Weaving Worlds

'Ey Wauh's mantra-like repetition of 'threads, threads, threads' hints to the importance accorded to these cosmic twines within Manya' cosmology. The weaving of multi-coloured, cosmic threads (*menang*) is one of the most important tasks which Manya' shamans undertake. The magical threads needed to restrain and impede the rainbow snake's writhing are given to shamans by *'ai djum* spirits. I was never told how *'ai djum* fabricate or store these threads, just that they can only be obtained from such spirits.

After obtaining threads from *'ai djum*, Manya' shamans weave the threads together into gigantic webs which provide the structure of the architecture of the cosmos. One web holds the heavens in place to stop them crashing down to earth. Another supports the earth from collapsing into the underground sea below. One web holds the underground rainbow snake in place and another separates this entity from Capoi, an old woman, who lives directly below the snake. When Capoi

is angered she moves upwards causing the rainbow snake to writhe toward to earth's surface, although it is normally pulled back down by the threads. Long threads also stretch from the underworld realm of the rainbow snake up through the earth to the sky-world where the thunder lord known as Karei dwells and where numerous *cenil* ('immortal ancestors' or 'creator beings') and *'ai djum* spirits reside. During storms, shamans quickly weave threads down from the heavens and through large rainforest trees to hold them in place and prevent them from collapsing on forest camps. Manya' say that in the beginning there was just one thread which connected the upper-worlds, earth and lower worlds. Since then, their shamans have been continually weaving together more and more of these threads to create the invisible fabric of the cosmos.

The notion of threads, cords or ropes linking humans with spirits and the invisible world is fairly widespread among the Orang Asli although conceptions of how they function varies between groups. In Batek Dè' cosmologies, the thunder lord is sometimes seen as sending wind, rain, thunder and lightning down special cords or ropes (*tali'*) (K. Endicott 1979a, 69). For some groups, threads or cords are like paths which shamans and spirits use to move through the cosmos. Bateks living on the Aring River in Kelantan, reported to Endicott that the shadow souls (*bayang*) of shamans are carried along 'threads of wind' (*benang 'angin*) (K. Endicott 1979a, 145 footnote 10). Batek Nong and Batek Hapen groups in Pahang described their shamanic performances to Ivor Evans during which a sky-dwelling deity associated with fruit lets down long, sharp cords which shamans climb up to reach the sky-world (1937, 202). Evans' contemporary, Paul Schebesta (1938, 203), also recorded similar stories of shamans and spirits traveling along magical threads to and from the upper-world among the Kintaq Bong, a small group of former hunter gatherers living along the Perak-Kedah border. The Jahai, a group living to the north and northwest of the Batek, consider benevolent *cənɔy* spirits to "glide down along fluorescent threads, which they release from their hands, to dwell on earth and cause the flowers, especially those of fruit trees, to bloom" (van der Sluys 2000). Jahais also claim that if certain taboos are broken, the thunder lord Karei sends down "multi-coloured threads with hooks at the ends … where they attach to [the victim] and cause pain and sickness" (Burenhult and Majid 2011, 21). Spirit-mediums among the Temiar, a group who live to the west of the Batek, consider the lightning of Karei as "snake-like chords" (2014, 61). Semelais, living further south in the Peninsula, similarly claim that if certain taboos are broken dangerous spirits "attach threads between the victim and perpetrator of an impending accident" (Gianno 2016, 207). Semelais "believe that after a violent death a departing soul follows a red wind thread to the land of the dead." (Gianno 2016, 207) In the case of the Manya', they mainly serve to structure the cosmos and function as pathways between the different realms of the cosmos. In other cases,

they are the means by which punishment for breaking certain taboos are transmitted from powerful non-humans.

Although threads connect humans with the invisible world, their fragility suggests the cosmos is by no means considered stable or balanced. While they can be repaired, they can be easily broken. For Manya', the cosmos is only held together through the actions of shamans who must continually weave webs of threads to hold various other-than-human beings in their dwelling places and prevent collapse into cosmic calamity. Threads connect things, people and non-humans. They hold together landscapes and cosmos. Potential analogies include the pathways and rivers that humans and animals use to move through in the rainforest; the twisting rattan creepers that link the undergrowth of the rainforest with the canopy; snakes or *naga'* which hold central importance in Orang Asli cosmologies; the rising smoke of aromatic incenses commonly used in rituals which link humans, animals, plants and other non-humans; the stone pillars that connect earth with the firmament (K. Endicott 1979a, 42–48); and the shamanic songs received from spirits which function as 'paths' or 'ways' to navigate the cosmo-topography of the invisible world (Roseman 2007). Threads and these other connective media suggest that the animistic cosmos requires human and non-human action to retain its structure and stability. What is interesting about the usage of threads to maintain structure and establish connectivity is that threads are inherently fragile materials. Like a spider's delicate web (an image Manya' often evoke), the multiplying threads that shamans weave may connect people and places, prevent the *naga'* from writhing and hold the celestial realm in place. However, these threads are woven using a frangible material which can be torn if the social order established by the creator beings is not respected. Like the social bonds which are established in everyday life, they require constant effort to be maintained. As a defining meta-image of interconnectivity, the idea of threads is used in the thesis to provide an all-embracing theme and framework from which various interpretative pathways can be picked up and followed.

Batek and Manya' Animism

Bateks and Manya' hold a tripartite vision of the cosmos in which humans inhabit the middle realm of earth situated between a celestial world above the firmament and a watery subterranean world below earth. Descriptions of these worlds vary greatly between groups and among the different individuals who make up these groups (hence I will generally talk of cosmologies in plural). In the time of creation described in cosmogonic myths, creator beings, humans and animals were said to have lived together and were not sharply differentiated. Creator beings are often described in fuzzy terms and in myths it is often unclear whether they had human, animal or mixed human-animal forms. Different story-tellers often give varying

and vague descriptions of the characters within myths. Despite these variances, the time of creation is marked by a movement during which incompletely separated entities—land and water, humans and animals, humans and spirits—become increasingly separated and discrete, and in the process acquire their present identities. Such ideas of a 'great mythical separation' are common in animistic cosmologies (Viveiros De Castro 1998; Lévi-Strauss 1985; Walker 2013). For Viveiros De Castro, they reveal the underlying idea that "humans are those who continue as they have always been: animals are ex-humans, not humans ex-animal" (Viveiros De Castro 1998).

Bateks generally consider spirits, ancestors, meteorological phenomena and certain animals and plants as sentient, moral beings. Batek Dè' and Manya' do not describe their relations with other-than-human persons in figurative, metaphorical terms—they are described as having the same veracity as everyday human relations. Such relations with other-than-human beings are similar to that of the Chewongs, an Orang Asli group living in close proximity to both groups. As Signe Howell (2011, 41) writes, Chewongs "extend the boundary of human society to include humans as well as the nonhuman objects and beings within the environment that are perceived as conscious beings on a par with humanity". When Bateks discussed their relations with such persons to me, they highlighted their similarities to everyday human-human relations. My research shows that, in some cases, various non-forest agents, often from faraway places, are very present in Batek dreamscapes and emerging cosmological narratives. Similar findings have been reported among the Temiar, an Orang Asli group living West of the Batek by Marina Roseman (Roseman 2012; Roseman 2007) and by Anna Tsing (1993) for Dayaks in Kalimantan, Indonesia. In 2012, many Manya' reported to me that President Obama was visiting them in their dreams, and that they communicated with him in ways analogous to their *'ai djum* spirit allies. One group of dangerous predatory spirits are known among Manya' as *penyakit batak*, which I argue should be understood as cosmological transformations of Batak slave raiders from Sumatra who Manya' reported cannibalistically preyed upon them in the nineteenth century. It is certain that many Orang Asli groups, including Bateks, were victims of slave-raiding until early 19th century (K. Endicott 1983; Dentan 2008; Nowak 2004; Swettenham 1882). The Bataks of Sumatra have been described as cannibals for a considerable period by locals as well as Arab and European travellers (Masashi 2005). William Marsden (1783) summarizes the accounts of Nicoli Di Conti (1449), Odoardus Barbosa (1516), João De Barros (1563) and undoubtedly exaggeratedly embellished his own accounts of Batak cannibalism. As previously mentioned, both Batek groups accorded catastrophic floods, earthquakes and tsunamis occurring in distant places, which they heard about through the channels of global media, to the actions of non-indigenous peoples (Indonesians, Americans, Japanese and Arabs) which caused the wrath of powerful non-human beings. I am not arguing that these

non-humans should be understood in a purely Durkheimian sense of reflecting human relations. For the Manya' and other Bateks these kinds of beings are *experienced* and spoken about as if they were real. In these animistic worlds, to use Rane Willerslev's words, "there are not two realities—one of actuality and one of metaphor—but *one* reality, consisting of persons—both humans and nonhuman—and their relationships." (2007, 182).

Localized environmental degradation and the activities of outsiders are said to have affected various non-human persons dwelling within particular places in the local landscape and more powerful beings living in the celestial realm and the underworld. Boundaries between the visible and invisible worlds are permeable, particularly in regards to the sensorial qualities of peoples, objects and certain activities. Batek and Manya' claim that non-human beings are particularly sensitive to environmental and sensorial changes, especially to noises and odours. Thermic, auditory and olfactory codes are central to their cosmological constructs and ritual practices. The conversion of huge swathes of forests into oil palm plantations and the opening of mines and quarries to extract precious resources are considered as 'heating up' the landscape with potentially catastrophic consequences. Loud noises, such as dynamite used in quarrying, anger the thunder lord and various other non-humans. The dangerous 'heat' of oil palm estates is frequently contrasted to the 'coolness' of the forest which is associated with health and well-being. Similar thermic codes are widespread among other Orang Asli groups (Howell 1984; van der Sluys 2000, 431) and more widely among other peoples of Southeast Asia (Sillander 2016; Laderman 1991; Karim 1990; Barrett and Lucas 1994). Subtler sensorial shifts are said to affect non-humans (including animals and other-than-human persons); for example, perfumes and smells of the city, the chattering of tourists and so on. Bateks and Manya' are vigilant at keeping the world of the forest sensorially and symbolically separate from the outside world. While they can control which objects, odours and sounds they bring to the forest, they are anxious about those brought in by outsiders.

Kirk Endicott's and Signe Howell's pioneering works on Orang Asli (K. Endicott 1979a; Howell 1984) and Malay animism (K. Endicott 1970) preceded the resurgence of enquiries into animism that Graham Harvey has termed 'New Animism' (Harvey 2005). These latter studies have shown the ubiquity of concepts about non-human personhood in societies located in the Americas (Descola 2013; Viveiros De Castro 1998; Costa and Fausto 2010), South India (Bird-David 1999), Southeast Asia (Århem and Sprenger 2016) and Inner Asia (Pedersen 2001; Willerslev 2007). There is a widespread consensus among anthropologists that animism should be understood within an ontological framework that postulates an intersubjective cosmos filled with conscious agents. In these approaches, animism is frequently contrasted with naturalism, which Descola describes as "the cosmology of modernity" which supposes a dichotomy between objective nature

and subjective culture (Cf. Descola 2013). Subject-object and nature-culture dichotomies are markedly absent in animism where nature is not opposed to culture but rather, in Philippe Descola's words "everything is organized according to the criteria of human beings" (Descola 2013, 14).

The theoretical frameworks used in recent approaches to animism are more sophisticated than those of earlier Malaysian studies which presented animism as a religion without history (Cuisinier 1951; Cadière 1955). However, Signe Howell's descriptions and analysis of Chewong 'ways of seeing' largely anticipated 'perspectivism', a widespread element of animistic thought that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (Viveiros De Castro 1998) has described as "the conception … according to which the world is inhabited by different sorts of subjects or persons, human and non-human, which apprehend reality from distinct points of view." (Viveiros De Castro 1998). Among the Batek and Manya' perspectivism is not as clearly defined as that described by Amazonian ethnographers, or even that which anthropologists have outlined among certain other Orang Asli groups (Howell 1984, 172; Dentan 2008, 93). However, there are certain underlying similarities. In normal everyday reality, animals are perceived by humans as animals (as prey or predators), while in dreams and trances, people encounter animals in their 'true' human-like forms and relate to them accordingly. The perspectivist element of Manya' thought comes to the fore in their descriptions of dangerous disease-causing spirits, known as *penyakit*, which attack and devour human souls for their sustenance because they regard humans as prey. Shamans among both groups are said to perceive reality differently than normal humans due to their special eyes and can see various spirits that remain invisible to other humans.

Despite differences between structuralist (Descola 2013; Viveiros De Castro 1998) and phenomenological (Ingold 2000; Bird-David 1999) approaches to animism, both presume the common basis of animistic thought should be understood as resulting, not from peoples' beliefs, but from a particular 'way of being'. In Descola's structuralist approach, animism inverts the dichotomy between an objective nature and a subjective culture found in naturalism (Descola 2013). Descola draws up Mauss' notion of habitus and the psychological concept of cognitive schemas which, he argues, are internalized through experience in particular environments (Descola 2013, 101–7). The central tenet that distinguishes Descola's theory from other approaches, is his argument that ontology logically precedes sociology. This contentious argument, as Kaj Århem (2016b, 9) notes, "turns the Durkheimian sociological tradition – from Mauss to Mary Douglas – on its head". Descola seems to suggest that various groups of peoples live in ontologically distinct worlds; an even more radical version of the much criticized "global pool hall" model of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive bounded socio-cultural groups (Wolf 1982). Despite Descola's argument that cognitive schemas are internalized through particular experiences in particular

environments, the precedence he gives to ontology over sociology implies that history and wider socio-political relations have little, if any, role in determining, or shaping, ontologies. In my mind, this is a problematic position to take. Firstly, it is clear that particular ecological conditions have ontological effects, for example, the spirits that are described in animistic cosmologies and which are related to in specific ways are drawn from the local environment and meteorological conditions. Secondly, numerous accounts have shown that modalities of relating to non-humans are modelled upon particular types of human social relations. For example, relations between humans and nonhumans have been described as predatory in Amazonia (Viveiros De Castro 1998; Fausto and Rodgers 1999); nonviolent giving and sharing in the American subarctic and Southern India (Bird-David 1990; Bird-David 1999; Ingold 2000); and alliance based in Siberia (Willerslev 2007). Such accounts clearly show that relations between humans and non-humans are analogous to human-human relations. If ecology and social relations have impacts on the ways that different social groups configure their relationships with nonhuman persons, then we cannot ignore history and wider socio-political relations.

Rather differently, Tim Ingold's phenomenological approach stresses how animists are "united not in their beliefs but in a way of being that is alive and open to a world in continuous birth" (2011, 63) In Ingold's take on animism, "beings do not propel themselves across a ready-made world but rather issue forth through a world-in-formation, along the lines of their relationships." (2011, 63). The emergent and contextual aspects of non-human personhood have also been stressed by Nurit Bird-David who argues that "we do not first personify other entities and then socialize with them but personify them *as, when,* and *because* we socialize with them." (Bird-David 1999) Bird-David's approach allows for considerable internal diversity within social groups and prevents animistic practices from being reified as unchanging ontologies. However, in a similar vein to the structuralists mentioned above, neither Bird-David or Ingold pay much attention to either politics or intercultural influences, instead highlighting the importance of ecological conditions or internal social forms for shaping animistic forms.

The kinds of 'responsive relatedness' Bird-David describes among the Nayakas of Southern India apply equally to the Manya' and Bateks interactions with other-than-human persons. It is through specific relations and experiences with different entities that these beings become persons. For example, when an individual learns a song or spell from an animal spirit during a dream, it is through the particular interaction (or series of interactions) that the non-human-being is constituted as a person. Often this has lasting implications; the dreamer can no longer hunt or consume animals which they have encountered as persons; to do so would constitute a kind of cannibalism. Such animals become tabooed for the individual who dreamt them and as such are treated similarly to the personal totems described

among some Australian Aborigines (Radcliffe-Brown 1952). For Bateks, although virtually anything has potential for subjectivity and agency, in general, only those entities which are actually encountered and interacted with by particular individuals are treated as conscious agents on a par with humanity. As Morten Pedersen indicates, although "animism allows for a limitless, total socialization of the world in principle, in practice this is only a tendency, because the totality will invariably be ruptured by countless asocial entities, thus giving rise to a cosmology strangely reminiscent of a Swiss cheese" (Pedersen 2001).

One thing which unites the various approaches of 'New Animism' is their way of examining animism as a unifying principle for 'an anthropology beyond the human' (Ingold 2013a; Kohn 2013; Descola 2013; Harvey 2005). These approaches have frequently focused on constructions of distributed agency and personhood within local environments while downplaying, or even ignoring, complex historical and contemporary interactions between indigenous peoples and other social groups. Despite some notable exceptions (Bacigalupo 2016; Bovensiepen 2014; De La Cadena 2010; Escobar 2016; Kirksey 2012; Rutherford 2002; M. W. Scott 2011), many ontological approaches have relied upon examinations of cosmologies, cosmogonies and shamanisms while disregarding politics of exclusion, environmental degradation and marginalization (Bessire and Bond 2014). This thesis contributes to rebalancing this through an examination of contemporary Batek animistic forms, practices and cosmologies by contextualising them within a context of political exclusions, environmental degradation and marginalization.

Interconnectivity and Marginalization

Batek and Manya' animism has been significantly affected by their contemporary and historical interactions with others. Its fabric is an ontological web that weaves together threads of material from the local environment and increasingly faraway places. It is spun within a context of severe social, political and economic marginalization and environmental degradation. The forest, particularly its edges, is not fixed or stable, it is a porous and fluid environment, connected to, overlaid within, and across other places, landscapes and territories. It has what Robert Sack has described as 'loom-like' connections with other places and other phenomena (Sack 2001a). Sack's metaphor of the loom is particularly apt for the forest periphery because this zone is a nexus for a host of intersecting and mutually informing ecological, socio-cultural, economic and political conditions. In Batek and Manya' camps and settlements on the forest's edge, people meet numerous outsiders (principally Malay villagers and government officials, tourists and traders) who they are influenced by socially, economically, technologically and ideologically. Through these interactions new meanings and narratives are woven

together from the warp and weft of both forest and non-forest images, objects, ideas and stories.

The shaman's transnational soul journey from his home on the edges of a Malaysian rainforest to the underworld of Japan—a country associated with gleaming techno-cities—epitomizes the types of peripheral or marginal interconnectivity, which Sack argues, "weave together meaning, social relations and nature" (Sack 2001a, 108–11). Changes to networks, technologies, and socio-political forms have reverberated through Batek religious thought, leading to modifications of shamanistic practices, cosmologies and relations with non-humans in the transformed forest landscape. In their peripheral environment, Bateks' understandings of the present undergo perpetual redefinition in response to spatially and temporally distant places and people. Locations between the forest and the state are liminal, unstable spaces where people draw from a wide-range of discourses and phenomena that conjoin their own idioms and models with those of the wider society.

In recent years, numerous theorists have emphasized how global networks, assemblages and flows intersect and surge through places and landscapes bringing the local, national, regional and global together (Sack 2001b; Tsing 2005; Stalder 2006; Hannerz 1996). The conceptualization of places and peoples being shaped through connectivity contrasts radically with earlier ideas of autonomous, homogenous, discretely bounded cultures which dominated anthropology until intense criticisms from the late 1960s onwards (Wolf 1982; Wilmsen 1989; Wallerstein 1976; Gunder Frank 1967). The ways in which we think and talk about 'cultures' and 'societies' has profound implications for the ways that anthropologists understand social and cultural transformations. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson capture this idea succinctly in arguing that, "if one begins with the premise that spaces have *always* been hierarchically interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected, then cultural and social change becomes not a matter of cultural contact and articulation but one of rethinking difference *through* connection" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 8). Geographer Doreen Massey similarly suggests that we should "recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (2005, 9). Skewed spatial imaginings have powerful political implications. Gupta and Ferguson have forcibly argued that "the presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography to conceal successfully the topography of power" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 8).

This criticism is also valid for the New Animism approaches described above which have generally remained ahistorical and avoided discussion of the political dimensions of animism (Bird-David 1999; Descola 1996; Ingold 2000; Viveiros De Castro 1998). An associated problem, and a central contradiction in the New Animism studies, which ostensibly strive to understand the interconnections,

continuities and relationships between human and nonhuman realms, is that they frequently, especially in the structuralist camps of Amazonianists such as Descola and Viveiros De Castro, conceptually divide different social groups (the Achuar, the Runa and so forth) as bounded units with reified and bounded sets of ontological practices and concepts. On the one hand, this has engendered conceptions of undue homogeneity in collectives of both humans and non-humans. On the other, this has often resulted in ontological difference and alterity being stressed over the connectivity and relationality of lived worlds shared by humans and non-humans. Amazonianists following the structuralist school of thought (Descola 2013, 337–45; Fausto and Rodgers 1999; Viveiros De Castro 1998) have stressed the fundamental alterity of nonhumans and highlighted predatory idioms of human relations with nonhumans. This is despite significant evidence that Amazonian peoples relations with spirits also involve relations of intimacy and sharing (Overing 1989; Belaunde 2000; Walker 2013). Descola describes what he calls Amazonian 'species collectives' or 'tribe/species' as being isomorphic with the human societies of Amazonia; they are "fully complete societies with chiefs, shamans, rituals, houses, techniques, and artefacts [which] lead a communal life that, as described by humans, would appear to be covered by all the habitual rubrics of an ethnological monograph" (2013, 248). In Viveiros De Castro's perspectival variant, although the members of each of these collectives view themselves as humans, due to the habitus of their bodies and their distinctive eyes "the things that they see are different: what to us is blood, is maize beer to the jaguar; what to the souls of the dead is a rotting corpse, to us is soaking manioc; what we see as a muddy waterhole, the tapirs see as a great ceremonial house" (Viveiros De Castro 1998). However, some caution is necessary. In his discussion of this subject, Harry Walker writes that most of his Urarina "informants seemed hesitant, uncertain, or even downright uncomfortable speaking about animals at this level of abstraction" (Walker 2013, 166). Bird-David (2017) has criticized the homogenizing tendencies of these "species-society" approaches for their "scale-blindness" and raises the question of whether the "tiny communities of relatives" that make up hunter-gatherer-cultivator groups in Amazonia, and who live in one of the most bio-diverse environments on the planet, could really imagine such monolithic species-societies in such terms that equate individual biological taxa with the qualities of a nation (2017, 157-158). Even if many Amazonian groups do consider the various non-humans they interact with as living in species-specific societies, there may be specific historical and political reasons for them doing so. We should be careful not to assume they hold true for animists living in other contexts.

Examining how interconnections have shaped Batek religious practices and their animistic attachments to the landscapes they live in, allows me to reveal this topography of power. This approach is not an attempt to downplay the intense attachments indigenous peoples like Bateks have to the landscapes they live in.

Batek myth and history are very much embedded within the local environment; numerous locations mark the activities of ancestral beings and culture heroes, certain places are seen as the dwelling places of non-human persons, and many locations mark where ancestors broke ritual prohibitions. The ways in which Bateks embed places with meaning are very similar to those that Keith Basso (1996) has described for the Western Apache and others following his approach have described for many other indigenous populations (e.g., Thornton 2008). The idea that landscapes are filled with powerful non-human presence and potent locales is common also in Southeast Asia and has been received increasing attention in recent years (Allerton 2009; Aragon 2003; Bovensiepen 2014; Guillou 2017; Jonsson 2005; Telle 2009). However, as many of these Southeast Asia studies and my own material show, place-making and animistic practices have been shaped through historical and contemporary interconnections with other peoples and places. To downplay or avoid discussion of these exchanges would result in impoverished ethnographic descriptions that portray indigenous peoples like the Batek and Manya' as exotic others living in worlds separated from other groups by vast sociological and ontological divides.

Combining globalization studies with more traditional anthropological approaches allows, in the words of Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern (2003, 3), to "re-establish a sphere of studies for social anthropology that … integrate aspects of earlier community-based approaches with approaches that emphasize political change, citizenship, national identity, historical influences and similar broad factors." Concepts and frameworks from post-colonial and globalization studies are highly relevant for understanding the Manya' and Bateks' marginal situation where multiple perspectives and unequal power relations are significantly altering their religious concepts and practices. The forest-periphery is intersected by the kinds of ruptures, dissonances and structural divides, as well as interconnections, that globalization theorists describe (Appadurai 1996; Stalder 2006; Hannerz 1997; Castells 2000; Giddens 1990). Locations on the forest edge—villages, tourism hotspots, oil palm plantations, mines and quarries—are wrought with frictions and conflicts which, in Stewart and Strathern's language operate as "crucial transducers whereby the local, national and global are brought into mutual alignment; or as providing sites where conflicts between these influences are played out" (2003, 3). The distinctive religious forms of the Batek and Manya' should be understood as resulting from these kinds of connections and ruptures that alternately entangle and sever the ties between themselves and various beings and places in the local environment as well as peoples and places from the wider world (Cf. Kirksey 2012).

Visions from the Margins

During my fieldwork, people consistently discussed their marginalization within a framework that combined cosmological language with imagery from faraway places. In acts of bricolage, peoples, objects and ideas from the forest were combined with those from beyond the forest to create new cultural forms. Such acts of appropriating distant foreign imagery can be understood as what Danilyn Rutherford has conceptualized as the "fetishization of the foreign" (2002). The incorporation of foreign elements into local cosmologies is common in Southeast Asian societies, especially among maritime communities (Fox 2008; Sahlins 2017), however, it has only infrequently been reported by ethnographers working with the Orang Asli (Roseman 2012). Bateks often discussed their interactions with Malay government representatives and other outsiders and the topic of marginalization in reference to narratives of cosmology and cosmogony. Tourist activities in certain areas were seen as not only impacting on local economies but also affecting relations with other-than-human beings inhabiting particular locales. Through damaging and destroying locations associated with non-human beings, deforestation, mining and quarrying activities were frequently comprehended as angering other-than-human beings and threatening not just local environments but potentially causing catastrophic events that could plunge the world into primordial chaos.

In recent years, various anthropologists and post-colonial scholars have proposed a re-theorisation of margins as a powerful position from which to expose the cracks within national and academic discourses about minorities (Bhabha 1994; Taussig 1993; Tsing 1993; Tsing 2005). On the periphery of the forest, these cracks emerge in struggles contesting identities, lands and access to resources. As highly marginalized populations, Bateks and Manya' have needed to be competent in the socio-cultural worlds of their more powerful Malay neighbours. In daily life, people often use duplicity (Bhabha 1994), mimesis (Taussig 1993; Bhabha 1994) and bicultural oscillation (Gardner 1985) to manipulate the complexities of their social environment for their own purposes. For example, in resettlement villages, the strategical use of over-the-top mimesis of Malay behavioural norms confuse and blur the lines between colonizers and colonized in what Homi Bhabha (1994, 121-131) describes as colonial mimicry. In Bhabha's words, these performances, challenge the "totalizing boundaries — both actual and conceptual — [and] disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (Bhabha 1994, 213). Such mimesis involves a kind of double vision in which Bateks see the world from their own perspective and that of Malays. This is inherent to what Peter Gardner (Gardner 1985) has termed bicultural oscillation, a long-term adaptation that results from living in a frontier environment, whereby people shift back and forth between two different socio-

cultural worlds. Gardner argues that bicultural oscillation in frontier zones gives people "two images of a good life, they cycle back and forth between use of one culture and the other in partial response to variable frontier conditions" (Gardner 1985). Bicultural oscillation and duplicity provide a model of how two contrasting modes of identification (differentiation/separation and integration/relatedness) are simultaneously instantiated. This model is then reproduced within various cosmological frames. For example, shamans also use analogous strategies of mimesis and duplicity in interaction with non-human entities in the invisible world to transform and utilize the power of spirits. In some cases, this interaction draws upon sources of power from distant locales and serves as a means of reimagining and negotiating ethnic inequalities.

If we take seriously Ingold's assertion that other-than-human beings "issue forth through a world in formation", then we need to pay close attention to how changing environmental and socio-political conditions impact animism. The experience of being at the margins of the state can constrain political action but also, as Tsing suggests, offer perspectives which can help clarify "the constraining, oppressive quality of cultural exclusion and the creative potential of rearticulating, enlivening, and rearranging the very social categories that peripheralize a group's existence." (Tsing 1994) As such, marginal life on the forest periphery offers more than just a particular viewpoint; for Bateks it is a 'betwixt and between' space that allows people to articulate new identities, practices and representations.

Doing Fieldwork

The ethnographic research upon which this thesis is based was conducted during five periods of ethnographic fieldwork between 2006 and 2014 totalling twenty-three months. The fieldwork was conducted among Batek and Manya' communities living across a large geographical area spanning the states of Pahang and Kelantan. The greater part of the research was done with Bateks living at the Post Lebir resettlement village in Kelantan and along the Tembeling River in Pahang and with Manya' living at the village of Kampung KiYing in Pahang (all in all around 12 months in these two villages). I also spent considerable time with both groups living at various other locations situated on the periphery of the Taman Negara national park, which covers a large part of these groups' traditional territories (see map 1, for a comprehensive list of fieldwork locales). Alongside my fieldwork with the Batek Dè' and Manya', I also spent shorter periods with Jahais and Mendriqs living in northern Kelantan and Perak. To obtain a sense of the problems the Orang Asli are facing today, I visited numerous other Orang Asli groups (Temiars, Semai, Ma' Betisèk, Jah Huts) by accompanying Malaysian anthropologists and NGO workers for short visits (averaging one to two days per group).

My first two fieldwork visits to Malaysia were conducted between November 2006 and March 2007 and March and April 2008 in order to conduct fieldwork for my Master thesis in anthropology at the Université Lumiere Lyon 2 which I completed in June 2008. In May 2010, I returned to Malaysia for one month during which I visited Batek communities in Kelantan and upriver areas of Pahang. Through these three research periods, I was able to gain a fairly good grasp of the basics of the Batek Dè' language which greatly facilitated my doctoral research. This preliminary fieldwork also made me aware of significant socio-economic variations between Batek groups in different areas and how their experiences of marginalization and environmental changes were interpreted through their animistic lens.

From April 2012 June 2013, I carried out my doctoral fieldwork on the periphery of Taman Negara, focussing on groups I had previously worked with in Kelantan and along the Tembeling River in Pahang. My objectives at the start of my fieldwork were to research Batek conceptions of place and knowledge formation in areas undergoing rapid social and environmental change. The first phase of the research process included mapping the GPS coordinates of the main Batek camps and villages situated on the periphery of the Taman Negara national park, which covers an area of 4,343 square kilometers. I obtained high quality maps from the Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia (JUPEM) to examine how the Malaysian government has classified different geographical areas (into water catchment areas, forestry land, national parks etc.) and how these classifications have affected Batek rights, economic opportunities and attachments to places. Following this preliminary work, I carried out a series of case-studies to analyse how deforestation, mining, resettlement projects, increased contacts with outsiders, and proselytism have affected Batek place-making and links to landscape. Several research locations were chosen where I could carry out detailed case-studies; primarily the Kampung Post Lebir in Kelantan, Kampung Tom Ki Ying in Pahang and camps along the Tembeling River also in Pahang. However, I also spent shorter periods in camps, villages and settlements on the periphery of the forest throughout Pahang and Kelantan. The changes which Batek communities are currently experiencing differ according to geographical location, though certain issues such as deforestation, mining, and missionary activities affect the majority of the Batek living on the periphery of Taman Negara.

My choice to conduct multi-sited fieldwork in camps, forest-edge settlements and villages during this longest of my fieldwork periods was motivated by an interest to examine the ways people experienced and narrated their experiences of marginalization on the edges of the forest in different interconnected circumstances. My decision to focus on these three particular locales was motivated by several factors. The areas around Kampung Post Lebir and Kampung Tom Ki Ying have been heavily deforested and subjected to extensive mining operations,

both also contain a number of sites of religious significance. The former village is mainly home to Batek Dè' speakers and the latter Manya' (a preciously unstudied group) which allowed me to collect comparative data and examine different strategies for dealing with social and environmental change. In the third location, the Tembeling River, most Bateks continually oscillate between working with tourists to earn money and living as hunter-gatherer-collectors in upstream camps away from outsiders. From each of these three locations, I could also easily relocate with Bateks to camps within the forest thus allowing me to gather valuable data on how connectivity and separatedness are alternately established and maintained.

After this, I carried out a fifth and final fieldwork period with Bateks in July-August 2014. During this stay I revisited each of these research locales to verify my findings, collect missing data and see how things had changed.

Camps, settlements and villages within or on the edge of the protected Taman Negara national park are connected by numerous trails and rivers. In this environment, movement is either on foot or by river boat. However, people normally move between settlements on the periphery of the park and beyond using motorcycles and cars on a network of roads and tracks that criss-cross oil palm estates, Malay villages and larger towns. Although some Bateks would walk across the ancient passes between Pahang and Kelantan to visit friends and family, many preferred to save time getting a ride in a car or on a bus. I began my research by taking buses, hitchhiking and walking to access the different locations I worked in. However, it soon became clear that I needed a motor vehicle to access certain locations and I hired a car in November 2012. One effect of hiring the car was that I was often called upon by my hosts to take them on urgent trips to the hospital when someone became ill and people also frequently demanded me to take them on shopping trips to nearby Malay villages. These were the least I could do to help repay people for the time and effort they took in educating me about their lives. As I moved across these landscapes with my friends, I witnessed the extent of destruction caused by deforestation, mining and quarrying. Landscape degradation in the area occurred rapidly, through revisiting Malaysia over a number of years I was able to monitor how particular camps, villages and other locations changed over time and how Batek strategies to protect certain places succeeded or failed.

A considerable amount of my time with the Batek Dè' and Manya', was spent exploring what could be described as cosmo-geography. An important aspect of my research involved listening to and recording peoples' stories about the various non-human entities they encountered in dreams and trances and as they moved through the forest. I also spent a significant amount of time exploring various locales situated within the local area that held religious or historical importance. These included locations associated with non-humans and their activities, places where humans had been punished for breaking prohibitions and sites where historical and mythical encounters had taken place.

Forest was accessible in most villages where I did research. In the forest, I accompanied Bateks hunting, fishing, climbing, digging and collecting forest resources for sale or medicinal plants to use. My Batek friends did their very best to instruct me how to accomplish these activities but my foraging skills remain decidedly limited. Whenever I could, I helped my hosts to build their lean-tos and houses and joined in rituals when I was invited. In villages, I accompanied children to schools, took part in village meetings, and learnt about the complexities of changing village economies. Formal research techniques included: recording information about the economies and residence patterns of the different settlements I lived in, mapping kinship relations and recording myths and stories. However, most of my data was gathered informally through participating and observing the day-to-day lives of the people I lived with. Sometimes, it seemed as if nothing was happening in the places I lived and, like many ethnographers, I occasionally panicked that I was not getting enough 'data'. However, it is in the lulls and lows of everyday life that one realizes that people are never actually doing nothing. When people are not out collecting forest resources or clearing plots for fruit or rubber trees, they are sharing time and space together. As people sit around and chat, men make and repair blowpipes, play with children, cook food and talk. One of the most fruitful times of day was the evening. As the sun went down people would open up and tell stories about things that they did not feel comfortable discussing during the daytime, particularly their relationships with the spirits. In villages, this was perhaps due to fears of Malays overhearing their conversations and making fun of Batek 'superstitions'. My Batek and Manya' friends never left me alone, I was always surrounded by people. Fortunately, I am a very sociable type of person and found the Batek's gregarious sociality very enjoyable rather than a hindrance to my work. Even at night time, when I would roll out my camping mat on the floor of a hut or lean-to, I was always joined by at least one adult male living in the dwelling. In the forest, I usually shared lean-tos with groups of young men, sometimes five or six of us squished up in a lean-to built for three. At these times, before people fell to sleep, I was often told incredible stories about shamans, non-humans and mythical heroes. At times, I would attempt to scrabble for a notebook or recorder but most often I relied on headnotes that I recorded in my notebooks the following morning. But during these evening chats and in many informal settings throughout the daytime people also talked to me about all kinds of things; activities they had participated in, village gossip, plans, dreams and fears. People often laboriously explained specific details about the ways they did things and how things worked, trying their hardest to make sure I understood exactly what they meant.

Positionality and Reflexivity

As a thirty-something year old man, my gender and age undoubtedly affected the relationships I had with my informants. Although Batek society is gender egalitarian, many Batek women tended to be quite shy around me and most women probably did not talk to me as openly as they would with a female anthropologist. I was 'adopted', as anthropologists often are, by several different families in different villages and had strong relationships with my adoptive parents and siblings. On my arrival at the village of Post Lebir, I was simultaneously adopted by two families at either end of the village and my adoptive mothers — Berangus, the mother of my close friend Apat, and Halik, the wife of Batin Bolek, the headman at the village — both happened to be *bidan* (midwives). Although I found it very easy to talk to both of these women, especially Berangus, and discussed aspects of midwifery with them and other Bateks, I never witnessed the birth of a child and have little knowledge of any ethnographic value about the institution of midwifery. Unfortunately, this represents a gap in the ethnographic data that I collected during my fieldwork. Whilst many Batek women are shy, many are not, and I did manage to discuss all kinds of other matters with women living in most settlements. However, I am sure that had I been female, my relationships with these women, and the information they gave me, would have been quite different. My gender bias as a male anthropologist meant that most of my time was spent with men ranging in age from late adolescence to old age, many of whom I built up very close relationships with. Staying with Bateks in several different settlements, and with different families within the same communities, allowed me to develop relationships with a larger number of people than I would have had I stayed in one community with just one family. My informants ranged from Batek men and women living in resettlement villages to families who spent nearly all their time living in the forests of Taman Negara. Some of my informants were shamans and headmen but most were ordinary folk who did their best to teach me about their language, myths, rules of behaviour and socio-economic practices while accepting me into the intimacy of their everyday lives. Despite my continual questions, most people were happy to help me during my research and told me they wanted the world to know about their lives within and on the edges of the forest. Many people were particularly keen that I let people in Europe and America know about the changes they were experiencing and garner help for them to prevent the destruction of their forest.

Gender increasingly crosscuts social and political relations in Batek society. Although Bateks have been described by anthropologists as a gender egalitarian society (K. L. Endicott 1981; K. Endicott and Endicott 2008) my research suggests that changing social and ecological conditions are leading to gender inequalities within village settings. However, for the most part these inequalities are

situationally bounded. As soon as Batek men and women move into the forest and escape the scrutinizing gaze of Malays, they tend to relate to each other as equals in the manner described by Karen and Kirk Endicott. This is not to say that emerging inequalities in villages are not important. Living in villages has severely reduced women's mobility due to lack of resources in the surrounding areas meaning they now contribute far less to household economies than in the past. Women's mobility has been further diminished due to fears of encountering Malays and immigrant plantation workers who have been reported to sexually harass, abuse and assault Batek women (Tacey 2013; Tacey and Riboli 2014). Although Batek men and women both establish personal relations with spirits, at the time of my research all shamans among both the Batek Dè' and Manya' were men. However, besides this, gender did not appear to affect men's and women's notions about spirit and religion in any significant way as far as I can tell. For these reasons, I hereafter pay little consideration to gender differences in this thesis. Complementing this account with a gender analysis would also have necessitated access to more empirical material in the form of detailed discussions about identity with men and women, and pushed my analysis further from its focus.

Perceptions that I would have the ability to communicate with persons of political authority and power emerged in many discussions I had with different Batek and Manya' individuals. Reflexivity is clearly necessary in any analysis of such exchanges. As a white, male anthropologist hailing from Britain, I was associated with other white, British men that people had encountered (tourists, NGO workers and environmentalists) or heard about in stories (colonial administrators and military personal) but also individuals and groups which Bateks and Manya' learn about through global media flows. Like any other ethnographer—whether British, Malay-Malaysian, Chinese-Malaysian, European, Japanese or American (to name a few of the nationalities and ethnicities of previous Batek researchers)—I was the subject of a cluster of ideas and clichés stemming from their experience of colonialism, their interactions with 'others' of varying ethnic identities, and, contemporary media representations. Such associations may be unavoidable and make any Malinowskian ideals of the ethnographer obtaining 'total objectivity' in ethnographic descriptions impossible.

In recent years, the validity of participant observation as a research methodology has been questioned abundantly, particularly in regards to the cultural baggage associated with class, race and gender that ethnographers carry with them (Clifford 1988; Asad 2003; Faubion and Marcus 2009). However, cultural baggage should not necessarily be considered as a hindrance to research. John Borneman and Abdella Hammoudi (2009, 19) pertinently describe fieldwork as a "process of mutual subject-discovery and critique, an engagement with persons, groups, and scenes that takes into account the dynamics of our interactions as well as the differences between our locations and those of our interlocutors". During

such encounters, the authors argue, "experiential insights are arrived at not only through visualization and observation but also through linguistic exchanges, (mis)translations, feeling of attraction and repulsion, discussion and arguments, and fights and power tactics" (2009, 19). As I and Italian anthropologist Diana Riboli, who I occasionally conducted fieldwork with, have previously argued (Riboli and Tacey 2013), the dynamic process of mutual discovery to which Borneman and Hammudi refer, necessitates continually renegotiating "complex webs of power within and across the communities we work with, between minority ethnic groups and their more powerful neighbours, and between these communities and State actors". The webs of power in which researchers are entangled, are central to understanding the stories we are told during fieldwork.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis presents the various dialectically related modalities of connectivity and separation which characterize Batek life and animistic forms on the periphery of the Malaysian rainforest. Theoretically, the thesis questions assumptions about ontologies as thing-like entities hermetically sealed off from the wider-world and as arising primarily from local ecological conditions (Cf. Feuchtwang 2014). By focusing on relatedness and connectivity that extend throughout the forest environment into the wider world, I explore how Batek cosmologies, prohibitions and modes of relating to other-than-human beings continually emerge through, and are shaped by, relations with other people and things in a politically charged environment. I argue that the Batek's interstitial and marginalized conditions on the periphery of the rainforest have shaped their porous, unstable and shifting animistic forms and ways of making sense of the world.

Chapter 2 focuses on the various layers of Batek identity and the diversity of the Batek's residence patterns and socio-economic forms. Particular attention is paid to how these forms have developed historically and been influenced through interactions with other groups and the State. A central goal of the chapter is to challenge the idea that Bateks represent examples of isolated hunter-gatherers by arguing that their long-term strategy of "bicultural oscillation" between the forest and outside world presents both spectrums of possibilities and constraints for action.

Chapter 3 explores connections between people, landscapes and non-human persons. I analyse how rules, practices and prohibitions which relate to the thunder deity, rainbow snake and other powerful non-humans who inhabit and move through the landscape, express a moral code or 'law of the land' which Bateks say they must abide by in order to avoid cosmic retributions and catastrophes.

Chapter 4 focuses on an examination of Batek relations with benevolent non-human beings. Theoretically, the chapter develops and challenges recent

approaches to animism by analysing the nuanced and varied ways Bateks relate to these beings that they share their environment with. The chapter also analyses how encounters with the world beyond the forest and historical experiences are reflected within the cosmotopographies of shamans' journeys.

Chapter 5 builds upon the previous two chapters' argument that the Batek's encounters with the world beyond the forest and historical experiences are reflected within and transformed through animistic consciousness. The chapter focuses on the analysis of various monstrous beings within Batek cosmologies which I argue embody their historical relations with predatory outsiders.

Chapter 6 presents a case study within a Batek resettlement village to examine how socio-economic marginalization, degraded environmental conditions and increased interconnectivity with external agents has led to the emergence of a sharp symbolic and sensorial boundary between forest and village. I discuss the centrality of the principle of separation within the Batek's taboo system and describe how sensory schemes of classification have been applied to new objects, medicines and foodstuffs and the degraded environment.

Chapter 7 looks at how the retelling of myths and historical narratives is used by Bateks to contest their economic marginalization and political exclusion. In the chapter, I highlight how storytellers create new potentialities for imagination and open up spaces where marginality is contested the weaving of multiple elements into delicate webs of connectivity that fuse politics with myth and past with present.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis and draws together the various strands of connectivity which characterize contemporary Batek animism alongside the corresponding ruptures which have emerged as a consequence of recent environmental and socio-political changes. The chapter highlights the necessity for anthropological studies of animism to take seriously the historical experiences and precarious social and ecological conditions that indigenous peoples like the Batek face at the dawn of the twenty first century.

Chapter Two

LIFE ON THE FOREST PERIPHERY

In the ethnographic literature, Bateks are commonly described as a forest-dwelling animistic egalitarian population of hunter-gatherers. In this chapter, I offer a careful reading of the ethno-historic literature alongside an overview of the contemporary situation to show a more nuanced picture. The chapter describes the layers of Batek identity and the diversity of the Batek's residence and socio-economic forms and gives an overview of how they have been influenced by other groups and states through history. Describing the complexities of contemporary and historic socio-economic forms and regional connections, I show how these relate to wider contemporary and historical socio-political processes and conditions. The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first section, I describe the various socio-cultural, racial and linguistic categories the Manya' and Batek have been classed within by government officials, anthropologists and linguists. The second section involves a discussion of how the socio-economic forms and languages of Bateks and other similar groups in Peninsular Malaysia have emerged through long-term interactions with other groups and states through history. The third section of the chapter provides ethnographic data about Batek and Manya' social forms, values, kinship systems, residence patterns and economic forms. Through describing the complexities of contemporary and historic socio-economic forms and regional connections, I show that Bateks and Manya' are highly adaptable peoples, whose socio-economic practices have been fundamentally interwoven with the wider word since ancient times.

THE BATEK AND MANYA'

The word Batek means 'human', 'person' or 'people' in Batek languages and is used as an autonym by several linguistically related groups who live within, and on the peripheries of, the rapidly diminishing forests of the Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu states in Peninsular Malaysia (see map 1). The largest Batek group now predominantly speak the Batek Dè' language and number around 2,000 individuals. This is the most well-known Batek group, previously studied by Endicott (1979) and Lye (2004). The term Manya' is the historical autonym of a much smaller group living at the western edges of Batek territory who now also consider themselves

Batek and have been regarded as a Batek subgroup by researchers. The term is probably related to the Jahai and Mendriq term *mnra'* meaning 'person' or 'people' (Burenhult 2018, personal communication). The Manya' have previously been referred to in ethnographic literature as either Mintil (Benjamin 1976) or Batek Tanums (Lye 2004). Both Bateks and Manya' occasionally use the term Mintil to jokingly refer to each other. However, neither group identify as Mintil, a term which they both consider a mild derogatory insult (Cf. Lye 2004, xx). According to my informants, they began identifying as Bateks, rather than Manya' following a series of violent slave raids by Malays in the early twentieth century in an effort to hide their ethnicity. The term is rarely used as an autonym today although people say this is their 'real' name. As previously mentioned, I have chosen to identify this group using their historical autonym to differentiate them from other Bateks. A third group of Bateks, the Batek Nong, who live settled lives as agriculturalists in the area of the Cheka River in Pahang, do not form part of this study. I visited the group once in 2007 and they number around 300 individuals (JAKOA 2012). Batek Dè', Manya' (Batek Tanum) and Batek Nong each have their own languages, histories and traditions and identify as separate localized groups (K. Endicott 1997, 36; Lye 2004, xx).

Bateks numbered 1,447 individuals in 2010 according to the Department of Orang Asli Development in (JAKOA 2010). These figures, which include both the Batek Nong and Manya', are probably underestimates (see fig. 1). The Batek Dè' probably numbered at least 2,000 individuals at the time of my research. Around 500 Bateks follow fairly nomadic lifestyles within Taman Negara, while the rest of the population lead lifestyles in a continuum from semi-nomadism on the park's edges to fairly settled lifestyles at resettlement villages. The current Manya' population numbers around 300 individuals most of whom were living fairly settled lives in three villages (Kg Tom KiYing, Marem and Paya Keladi) on the western edge of Taman Negara (see map 2)[1].

Some anthropologists and linguists have differentiated the Batek into a number of further dialect groups. Endicott describes four Batek micro-dialects: Batek Dè', Batek Tè', Batek 'Iga' and Batek Teh (the term Bateks use for Mendriq) but notes the socio-cultural differences between these groups are minimal (1997; 1979a). More recently, Burenhult, Kruspe and Dunn (2011, 261) have divided both the Batek Teh and Batek Dè' into further micro-categories associated with geographic locale and micro-linguistic differences. Apart from Mendriq, the other

[1] In my own demographic surveys of Kampung KiYing, I counted 145 individuals in 2012. However, in the same year, JAKOA estimated there to be 179 Manya' living at Kampung KiYing (Becah Kelubi), 61 at Telok Gunung and 180 individuals living in the mixed Batek-Manya village Marem. In 1995, the predecessor of JAKOA, the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JHEOA) estimated the total Manya' population to be 175 (Lye 2013).

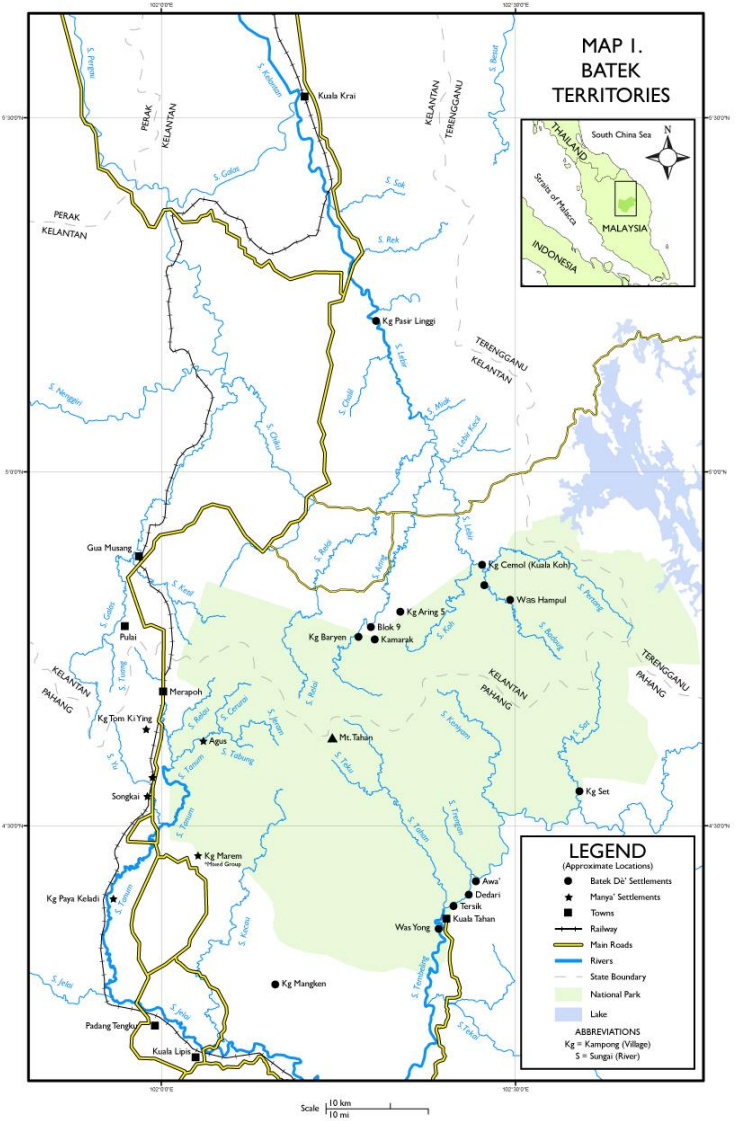
Batek micro-dialects are very similar in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Linguists have recently remarked that several Batek dialects are disappearing quickly as former-speakers are adopting Batek Dè' (see Benjamin 2012, 21). During my own fieldwork, some Bateks occasionally identified themselves as Batek 'Iga', Batek Tè' or Batek Dè' and I was told of a further group called the Batek Taŋkol living within Taman Negara. However, identifying within such categories related more to ancestry than language. Most people simply identified as Bateks or as Bateks from such and such river valley. For this reason, I identify speakers of all these micro-dialects simply as Batek Dè'.

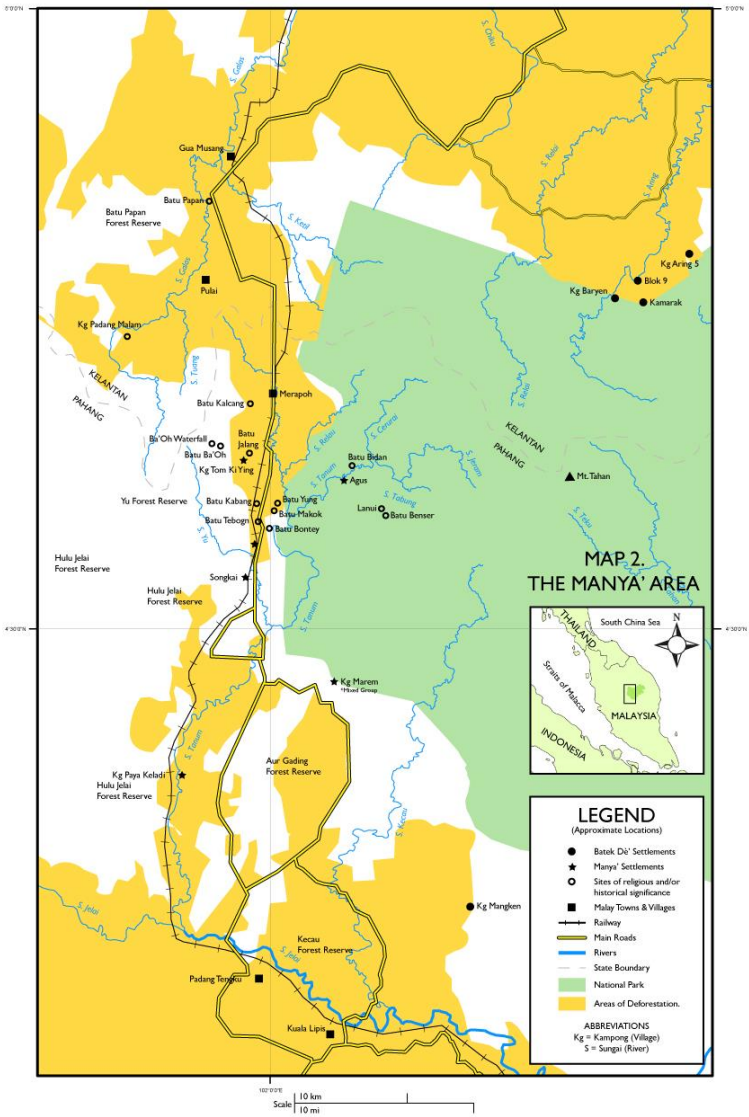
Nearly all Bateks are fluent in standard Malay and local variants, many are also fluent in Mendriq, Temiar, Semai and other Aslian languages. Among the Manya', although all men I spoke to were fluent in Malay, many women were not. However, most Manya' speakers were fluent in the Batek Dè' language which I used to communicate whilst learning the Manya' language. The village of Kampung KiYing, where I conducted most of my fieldwork with the Manya', was much more linguistically homogenous than Batek settlements of similar sizes such as Post Lebir and Aring 5. The village Kampung Marem, is composed of both Manya' and Batek speakers and many residents there are fluent in both languages.

Category	Ethnic subgroup	2000	2008	2010
Negrito	Kensiu	254	224	237
	Kintak	150	112	194
	Jahai	1,244	1,663	2,387
	Lanoh	173	244	382
	Mendriq	167	268	362
	Batek	1,519	1,160	1,447
	Total Negrito Population	**3,507**	**3,671**	**5,009**
Senoi	Semai	34,248	42,383	51,437
	Temiar	17,706	24,908	31,038
	Jah Hut	2,594	3,762	5,618
	Ceq Wong	234	456	651
	Mah Meri	3,503	3,675	3,799
	Semoq Beri	2,348	3,972	5,313
	Total Senoi Population	**60,633**	**79,156**	**97,856**
Aboriginal Malay	Temuan	18,560	22,736	27,590
	Semelai	5,026	6,272	7,727
	Jakun	21,484	24,977	34,722
	Orang Kanaq	73	157	148
	Orang Kuala	3,221	3,010	3,625
	Orang Seletar	1,037	1,251	1,620
	Total Aboriginal Malay Population	**49,401**	**58,403**	**75,332**
Total Population		**113,541**	**141,230**	**178,197**

Figure 1. Orang Asli population by Malaysian governmental categories [2]

[2] The figures for the year 2000 have been adapted from the Centre for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC) website. The 2008 figures are from the JHEOA as displayed at the Orang Asli museum in Gombok in 2012. The figures for 2010 are adapted from the JAKOA report 'Pecahan Penduduk Orang Asli Mengikut Kumpulan Kaum Dan Etnik Bagi Tahun 2010' (Aboriginal Population Breakdown by Race and Ethnic Group for the Year 2010) published in 2012. In the table, the Manya' are subsumed within the Batek group.


MAP 1.
BATEK
TERRITORIES
THAILAND
South China Sea
Straits of Malacca
MALAYSIA
INDONESIA
N
PERAK
KELANTAN
TERENGGANU
PAHANG
Kuala Krai
Kg Pasir Linggi
Gua Musang
Kg Cemol (Kuala Koh)
Was Hampul
Kg Aring 5
Blok 9
Kg Baryen
Kamarak
Pulai
Merapoh
Kg Tom Ki Ying
Agus
Songkai
Mt. Tahan
Kg Set
Kg Marem
Kg Paya Keladi
Awa'
Dedari
Tersik
Kuala Tahan
Was Yong
Kg Mangken
Padang Tengku
Kuala Lipis
LEGEND
(Approximate Locations)
Batek Dé' Settlements
Manya' Settlements
Towns
Railway
Main Roads
Rivers
State Boundary
National Park
Lake
ABBREVIATIONS
Kg = Kampong (Village)
S = Sungai (River)
Scale
10 km
10 mi


MAP 2.
THE MANYA' AREA
LEGEND
(Approximate Locations)
Batek Dè' Settlements
Manya' Settlements
Sites of religious and/or historical significance
Malay Towns & Villages
Railway
Main Roads
Rivers
State Boundary
National Park
Areas of Deforestation.
ABBREVIATIONS
Kg = Kampong (Village)
S = Sungai (River)
Scale 10 km 10 mi
Gua Musang
Batu Papan
Batu Papan Forest Reserve
Pulai
Kg Padang Malam
KELANTAN
PAHANG
Batu Kalcang
Merapoh
Ba'Oh Waterfall
Batu Ba'Oh
Kg Tom Ki Ying
Yu Forest Reserve
Batu Kabang
Batu Yung
Batu Makok
Batu Tebogn
Batu Bontey
Hulu Jelai Forest Reserve
Songlai
Batu Bidan
Agus
Lanut
Batu Benser
Mt. Tahan
Kg Aring 5
Blok 9
Kg Baryen
Kamarak
Kg Marem
*Mixed Group
Aur Gading Forest Reserve
Kg Paya Keladi
Kg Mangken
Kecau Forest Reserve
Padang Tengku
Kuala Lipis
THAILAND
South China Sea
Straits of Malacca
MALAYSIA
INDONESIA
N

Racial and Socio-Cultural Classifications

Orang Asli

Along with seventeen other officially recognized minority indigenous peoples of the Malay Peninsula, Bateks are classified by the Malaysian government as Orang Asli ('Original Peoples'). This term emerged in the late 1950s during the Malaysian Communist Insurrection (1948-1960) through use by the British colonial government. It is modelled on the term 'Orang Asal' which was used by Communist insurgents based in the interior forests of Peninsular Malaysia as a means to befriend local 'tribal' peoples with the aim of securing logistical support and supplies in their fight against the government.

Until about 1960, the various Orang Asli groups did not see themselves as a homogenous group in any way. In the contemporary period there is much exchange, movement and intermarriage between different Orang Asli groups and it is likely that group membership was also fluid in the past. In recent years, many groups have increasingly embraced the Orang Asli category as a political tool to use in negotiations, land rights claims, and other forms of activism. However, as Colin Nicholas has argued, "Orang Asli homogeneity is more a creation of non-Orang Asli perceptions and ideological impositions than it is self-imposed." (Nicholas 2002, 119) Bateks rarely identify as Orang Aslis, although they often refer to other Orang Aslis as Bateks (in this sense meaning 'indigenous peoples'). For Bateks, location and language play a much more important role than descent or racial characteristics when deciding upon how people identify.

Right up to this day, anthropologists and government administrators divide the Orang Asli into three major sub-divisions: Negrito-Semang; Senoi; and Aboriginal Malay, or Proto-Malay (see fig. 1 below). This simplistic racial schema, first appeared in Skeat and Blagden's two-volume classic *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (1906) but was further refined by Paul Schebesta in the book *The Jungle tribes of the Malay Peninsula* (Schebesta and Blagden 1926). In this tripartite classificatory system, the Negrito-Semang are physically described as having dark skin, a short stature, tightly curled hair and associated with a mobile foraging way of life in the forest. Senois are described as being slightly taller than Negritos, having a lighter skin colour, wavy hair and practicing swidden agriculture. Aboriginal Malays are described as physically resembling Malays and having economies based upon either farming or fishing combined with the trade of produce collected from the forest or sea. Each of these categories subsume a number of groups who are usually referred to in local contexts by their subgroup names. Eighteen subgroups of the Orang Asli have been recognized by the Malaysian government and are neatly classified into these three racial groupings.

From early on, ethnographers began associating these three racial groups (Negrito-Semang, Senoi and Aboriginal Malay) with specific socio-cultural forms,

a practice which has continued to the present day. However, in recent years, the terms Semang, Senoi and Aboriginal Malay have been increasingly used to refer to socio-cultural criteria rather than racial types. The change in usage of the terms is largely due to the influence of Geoffrey Benjamin, who has long argued that the terms Semang, Senoi and 'Malayic' relate to distinct institutionalised kinship-based societal patterns or 'regimes' rather than discrete populations of ethnic groups (Benjamin 1976; 1980; 1985; 2002). It is somewhat unfortunate that Benjamin opted to use terms that had been long associated with racial categories rather than providing a new conceptual vocabulary. Central to Benjamin's classification are divisions based on specific kinship avoidance rules and marital patterns which serve to 'block off' the option of becoming Malay peasants and maintain alternative, tribal, ways of life.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that there is considerable correlation not only between physical features and socio-economic forms but also with languages. Most Semang groups speak Northern Aslian languages, most Senoi groups speak Central Aslian languages and most Malayic groups speak either Southern Aslian or Malay languages. The fact that the match between physical appearance, socio-cultural forms and languages is imprecise is important and has significantly complicated various models of the prehistory of Peninsular Malaysia.

Negrito and Semang

Bateks are classified as Negritos along with the following groups: the Jahai of Northeast Perak and Northwest Kelantan; the Kensiw of Northeast Kedah; the Kintaq along the Kedah-Perak border; the Lanoh of North-central Perak; and the Mendriq of Southeast Kelantan. The Manya' are subsumed within the Batek category along with the Batek Nong. Another Negrito population, the Mani', live in the Trang and Pattalung provinces in Southern Thailand. Historically, Negrito peoples were distributed over a much wider area and just 100-200 years ago some groups were still living on the coasts in Perak, Penang and Kedah (Burenhult 2014; Hamilton 2006; Nagata 2006). In Malaysia, the entire Negrito population only numbers around 5,000 individuals accounting for just over 3% of the entire Orang Asli population in Malaysia. All these groups live in the northern areas of Peninsular Malaysia and historically practiced a foraging lifestyle. Today, many of the groups categorized as Negritos have been coerced to settling down in government resettlement villages composed of individuals originating from different ethno-linguistic groups and ancestral territories.

Although the terms Negrito and Semang are frequently used by anthropologists interchangeably, their contemporary meanings differ significantly. It is worth stating from the outset that Bateks and Manya' never identify as either Negrito or Semang and consider both terms derogatory. The term Negrito derives

from the Spanish term meaning 'little black person' and refers to the purportedly distinctive physical features of several small groups in the rainforests of northern Peninsula Malaysia. The term has also been used to refer to populations with similar physical appearances and socio-economic forms living in Andaman Islands and the Philippines who were long-thought to have held common ancestry with the Malay Negritos. In this perspective, the three populations were considered as living relics of pre-agricultural Southeast Asia (L. Reid 2013; Blust 2013; Bellwood 1993). A recent genetic study by Catherine Hill et al. has categorically dispelled this idea (Hill et al. 2006).

The term 'Semang' was originally used by early anthropologists and explorers as a synonym for Negrito (Skeat and Blagden 1906a; Low 1850; Maxwell 1878; Mikluho-Maclay 1876; Schmidt 1901; Stevens 1893). Historically, Malays used the term to refer to debt-slaves, bond servants and other dependents (Dentan 1997, 113) and when used by some Senoi groups it still carries these negative connotations (Nagata 2006, 46). It is probably derived from *'sma*, the term for 'person' in the Lanoh, Semaq Beri, Semelai and Temoq languages (Dentan 1997; Benjamin 1976; Skeat and Blagden 1906a).

Languages

Bateks and Manya' speak languages classified by linguists as Aslian, a unique group of approximately twenty Austroasiatic languages spoken by indigenous peoples in Peninsular Malaysia and parts of southern Thailand. Aslian, derived from the term 'Orang Asli', is a division of the Southeast Asian branch of the Austroasiatic language group which includes some 150 languages, the largest of which are Khmer, Mon and Vietnamese (Benjamin 2012; Bellwood 2007). A separate branch of Austroasiatic includes the Munda languages of South Asia. The Aslian languages are now "recognized as the oldest recoverable language family in the Malay Peninsula" (Dunn, Kruspe, and Burenhult 2013). Not all Orang Asli speak Aslian languages, many of the groups living in the south of the Peninsula—Orang Kualas, Temuans, Jakuns, Orang Kanaqs and Orang Seletars—speak Austronesian languages.

Aslian languages are thought to have been introduced by Mon speakers from the north from around 3700 BCE, a date which coincides with the arrival of Ban Kao agricultural and ceramic assemblages from south central Thailand (Benjamin 2012; Dunn, Kruspe, and Burenhult 2013). It is unknown which languages the ancestors of the Orang Asli spoke before that period. Benjamin (2013, 208) postulates the Mon language, which belongs to the larger Austroasiatic category, was probably the lingua franca in the northern Peninsula lowlands until sometime between 1200-1300 CE when Malay began to replace it as the dominant language. This suggests that ancestors of the Orang Asli probably began speaking Aslian

languages to facilitate trade with their neighbouring Mon speakers and Mon polities situated to the north. The three main clades of Aslian—Northern, Central and Southern—broadly correlate with three ethnographically defined socio-economic patterns—Semang, Senoi and Aboriginal Malay—described above. Most nomadic forager-collector groups (Bateks, Manya', Jahais, Mendriqs, Kensiws and Kintaqs) speak Northern Aslian languages; semi-sedentary swidden horticulturalists (Temiars and Semais) speak Central Aslian languages; and, farmer-fishers collector-traders (Semaq Beri, Semelai and Mah Betisek) speak Southern Aslian or Malay languages. Recently, it has been argued that Jah Hut be classified within a separate clade (Benjamin 2012; Burenhult 2014). There are several exceptions: the Lanoh, who were historically nomadic forager-collectors, speak a Central Aslian language; the Ceq Wong speak a Northern Aslian language but have economies based upon semi-sedentary swidden horticulture; and the Semaq Beri speak a Southern Aslian language but were historically nomadic forager-collectors (see Burenhult, Kruspe, and Dunn 2011 for a detailed discussion).

Aslian languages have incorporated many loan words from Malay demonstrating a long history of interaction with Malays notably through trade (Benjamin 2012, 14; Benjamin 1976, 73). Of all the Aslian languages, the Batek Dè' and Manya' languages (alongside Semelai) have the highest borrowing rates of Malay. As Benjamin (1976, 73; 2012, 14) has suggested this probably results from ancient trade routes crossing directly through their territories. Alongside Malay borrowings, Aslian languages also contain many words which come from other Austronesian languages, demonstrating contacts with pre-Malay Austronesian speakers (Benjamin 2012, 156). Computational analysis of the phylogenetic relations between Aslian languages have also shown that there have been "a distinct pattern of long-term lexical diffusion/exchange" between the Jahai, Menriq and Batek languages (Burenhult, Kruspe, and Dunn 2011, 267–367). Batek and Manya' are very similar languages and it is highly likely similar exchanges also took place between Manya', Batek and Mendriq speakers, although they were not included in recent studies. Such linguistic exchanges are unsurprising considering that these groups show preferences for long-distance marriages and the four languages fall within a contiguous geographic area. Such evidently long-term historical connections clearly demonstrate that Bateks and Manya' should not be considered as isolated groups.

Previous Studies of the Batek

Russian explorer-naturalist Nikolas Mikluho-Maclay provides the earliest European account of the Batek who he met living along the Lebir River in Kelantan in 1878 (Mikluho-Maclay 1878a). British administrator-ethnographer Walter William Skeat briefly visited Batek living in upstream areas of the Aring and Lebir

Rivers of Kelantan in 1901 and visited several other Semang groups during his time in Malaya (Skeat and Blagden 1906b). Skeat published several wordlists he collected among Batek communities living along the Lebir and Aring rivers in Kelantan in the appendix of his second volume of Pagan races of the Malay Peninsula (Skeat and Blagden 1906b). Following closely on the heels of Skeat, British ethnographer Ivor Evans began his long-term studies of the Negritos in British Malaya and southern Thailand from 1913 to 1932 (Evans 1923; 1937). Evans' eclectic descriptions of Negrito life ranged from studies on physical appearance, tool use and material culture, to music, art and religion. In 1924, Paul Schebesta began his detailed ethnological, linguistic and physical anthropological studies of the Negrito populations of Peninsular Malaysia which culminated in the publication of several books and papers in German and English (1926; 1940; 1929; 1927; 1928). Schebesta's work is highly detailed and should be considered as a major anthropological contribution to the studies of the indigenous peoples of Malaysia.

Kirk Endicott began conducting long-term fieldwork with Bateks living in Kelantan in the early 1970s. His ethnographic fieldwork, covering periods from 1971-73, 1975-76, 1981, 1990 and 2004, documents forty years of change and covers a variety of subjects including religion, economy, property relations, ethnicity, gender egalitarianism and non-violence. Between 1975-1976 and 1990 his wife Karen Endicott joined him to live with the Bateks of Kelantan and has authored and co-authored several pioneering articles on gender, child-rearing and territoriality (K. L. Endicott 1981; K. L. Endicott and Endicott 1986; K. L. Endicott 1992; K. Endicott and Endicott 2008). Kirk Endicott's authoritative study of Batek religious forms "*Batek Negrito Religion: The World-View and Rituals of a Hunting and Gathering people of Peninsular Malaysia*" (1979) is unparalleled in its detail and has provided an unexhaustive resource to verify and compare with my own findings.

The second long-term study of the Batek was undertaken by Lye Tuck Po in Pahang, from 1994 to 1997. Lye's research has been published in the form of various articles and book chapters and her doctoral research was published in book form in 2004 under the title of *Changing Pathways: Forest Degradation and the Batek of Malaysia.* In this detailed ethnography Lye examined the ways that the Batek construct place within the rainforest and how they have coped with the recent degradation of their environment. Her studies, which have focussed heavily on Batek sentiments and representations of the experience of forest loss and landscape degradation, parallel some of the interests of this study and have provided a good starting point from which to examine other landscape-related practices (Lye 2000; Lye 2004; Lye 2011).

During the period that I carried out my doctoral fieldwork, several other anthropologists were also conducting fieldwork with different Batek groups. Italian anthropologist Diana Riboli path crossed with my own several times and we had

the opportunity to work alongside each other for brief periods among the Jahai of northern Kelantan and with different Batek groups. Our collaborations do not form part of this thesis and were published as independent articles; the first concerned methodological issues associated with collaborative research, emplacement and positionality (Riboli and Tacey 2013), the second non-violent Batek practices (Tacey and Riboli 2014). Japanese anthropologist Aya Kawei also carried out research for her own doctoral thesis at roughly the same time as myself at the Batek Dè' village Kuala Koh in Kelantan. Although we never conducted any fieldwork together, we did compare notes about Batek economies after leaving the field. Finally, biological anthropologists Tom Kraft and Vivek Venkataraman began research into Batek climbing practices, residential mobility and the evolutionary advantages of short stature in a rainforest environment towards the end of my own fieldwork period.

Prior to my own research, the Manya' had never been subject to any long-term ethnographic studies. The colonial explorer Carveth Wells traversed Batek and Manya' territories between 1912 to 1918 whilst surveying the country for the Tumpat railway line. Although, he had virtually no contact with the Batek or Manya'—they always seemed to be one step ahead of him and keen to keep their distance. Several decades later, Benjamin collected a Manya' word list from one man at the Gomak hospital in the 1960s who purportedly identified as Mintil (1976: 102-123). During her fieldwork with Bateks in the Kecau and Tembeling areas, Lye occasionally stayed with the Manya' for short periods and collected a 600-word vocabulary from people living at the village of Marem (a mixed Batek-Maia settlement) which she has yet to publish (Lye 2004, xx). The scant reports provided by Wells, Benjamin and Lye were the only documentation of the Manya' before I began my own fieldwork.

Landscape and Territory

The geographical area which is home to the Bateks and Manya' predominantly consists of undulating foothills, broken up by river valleys and streams, which, until recent times, were covered in tropical rainforest. Batek Dè' ancestral territories stretch about 100 kilometres southwards from just below the Malay village Lalok on the Lebir River in Kelantan, to just south of the confluence of the Tahan and Tembeling River in Pahang, and roughly 60 km east-west from close to the Pahang-Terengganu border to the Tanum River (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008; Lye 1997). The Tembeling River marks the south eastern borders between Batek and Semaq Beri territories and the Tanum River marks the western boundary between Batek and Manya' territories (see map 1). Manya' live along the Tanum, Yu and Relau Rivers and their tributaries in Pahang. Their territory runs up to Semai territory in the foothills of the Titiwangsa range in the west, northwards to

the edge of Gua Musang in Kelantan, and southwards to just north of Kuala Lipis (see map 2).

Since the 1970s, much of the forest in Peninsular Malaysia has been clear-cut for vast palm-oil plantations as part of the government's plans to develop the country. A recent report states that 4.98 million hectares of land in Malaysia was covered by palm-oil plantations in 2011, equivalent to 15 % of the total land area (Hansen, Olsen, and Ujang 2014). Palm oil estates, logging, road construction, and other related development schemes have greatly fragmented the Batek's environments and pushed the Batek and Manya' into an ever-smaller geographic area. The largest remaining forested area within Batek Dè' and Manya' territories is the Taman Negara National park which covers an area of 4,343 square kilometres. It is the largest remaining area of unbroken forest in Peninsular Malaysia and straddles the three Malay states of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. The park is managed by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP). The DWNP officially allow Bateks and Manya' to move through and live within the park as they wish. Although they are allowed to gather forest products, to hunt and fish, they are not allowed to sell these products on to traders. This means people can no longer continue to trade forest products from Taman Negara with outsiders; or can only do so illegally with the danger of being arrested. The park has provided a refuge for those groups who have refused to relocate to government resettlement villages in logged-over areas but it is also visited by many people living in resettlement villages. Outside the protected Taman Negara Park, Batek and Manya' territories are now dotted with villages, towns and hamlets populated by Malays, and to a lesser extent Chinese, and criss-crossed by roads, railway lines and logging tracks.

Today, Bateks have virtually no real legal title to any land and none of their traditional territories have been recognized as such by the government. This is a situation they share with most other Orang Asli groups. Colonial and post-colonial governments have made almost no efforts to recognize the Orang Asli as the traditional owners of their lands. Colin Nicholas (2000, 33) summarizes the situation as follows: "(u)nder present Malaysian laws, the greatest title that the Orang Asli can have to their land is one of tenant-at-will — an undisguised allusion to the government's perception that all Orang Asli lands unconditionally belong to the state." The Orang Asli's lack of land rights is by far the most pressing issue they face today and the root of their socio-economic marginalization (Subramaniam 2011; Subramaniam 2016; Nicholas 2000).

The Orang Asli's connections with different areas of land relate strongly to mythical episodes where the landscape was forged through the activities of creator beings and also to peoples' knowledge of particular spirits said to reside in the landscapes (cf. Subramaniam and Edo 2016). Bateks claim that many landscape features, particularly the limestone karsts which dot the landscape, are said to be

transformations of peoples, spirits and animals that occurred in distant times. Shamans are responsible for maintaining relations with the particular beings which inhabit their own ancestral territories, which are known as *pesaka'*, while neighbouring indigenous groups are responsible for the beings in their respective *pesaka'*. The shamans of different Orang Asli groups are seen as having special knowledge and practices which connect people to places and beings that inhabit their particular *pesaka'*. As one Batek Tanum man explained to me: "We know the spirits of our territory; we do not know those of the Semai or other Orang Asli. Our shamans have their own specialities and Temiar, Semai and others have their own specialities". All Batek and Manya' I worked with considered themselves obligated to protect the entire area which their ancestors had long lived in; a responsibility handed down to them by the creator beings.

Kirk Endicott has argued that the term *pesaka* is context dependent and "can refer to the person's actual place of birth, a whole river valley, or a vaguely-defined region, depending on the context of discussion" (K. Endicott 1988, 113). Other Orang Asli groups refer to similar territorial units as *saka'* or *lengri* (Gomes 2007, 36; Edo 1998, 25; Subramaniam and Edo 2016, 76–80). An individual may live in several different *pesaka'* throughout his or her lifetime but people most strongly identify with the *pesaka'* they were born in or where they lived during their childhood (K. Endicott 1988, 113). For example, some Bateks I worked with on the Tembeling River in Pahang identified most closely with the *pesaka'* where they were born in Kelantan, even though they had spent most of their adult lives in Pahang. At the time of my research, people often justified staying within or relocating to particular river valleys they identified with in order to protect these areas from possible Malay incursions. Movements and inter-marriages between people belonging to different *pesaka'* mean that most people have a number of intimate connections with different areas of land; those where their parents were born, the places they were born and grew up, the places they have lived during their lifetimes and the places their children were born.

Endicott has previously argued that Bateks the rights to live in one's own *pesaka'* do not differ from the right to live anywhere else in the forest and "there is no sense in which the persons who share a *pesaka'* claim collective rights of ownership or custodianship over it" (K. Endicott 1988, 113). My findings differ significantly, Bateks living in different areas told me they always had to obtain permission to forage within other groups *pesaka'*. This was the case whether the custodians of these lands identified as Bateks or as members of Orang Asli groups (Mendriqs, Jahais, Semaq Beris). In most case, such permission was granted straight forwardly.

A History of Regional Connections

The ancestors of the Bateks and Manya' probably began interacting with early state societies at least two thousand years ago. The emergence of complex civilisations and the external trade of forest products and minerals most likely began in the Malay Peninsula and Indonesian archipelago during the first millennium BCE (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 22–27; Benjamin 2015, 98). Early references to kingdoms in Southeast Asia are found in early Indian works such as the *Ramayana*, ancient Greek texts from the first century CE and Chinese sources dated to the early centuries of the first millennium CE (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 25–26). By the sixth century CE, trade between the Malay Peninsula, other areas of Southeast Asia, India and China was well established. However, there is mounting evidence "that social complexification had been under way in the Peninsula and its immediate region before the period of contacts with India and China" and the rise of 'Indianized' kingdoms (Benjamin 1997). Archaeological finds of "indigenous iron and bronze socketed tools, beads and pottery from India, and cast bronze drums from Dong Son in northern Vietnam" in the Upper Pahang-Tembeling River valley dating to between 500-300 BCE suggest evidence of the historical depth of trade networks linking the Batek's area with Mainland Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 50). However, substantial trading between India and Southeast Asia probably only began in the first few centuries CE (Bellwood 2007; L. Y. Andaya 2010).

The first polities in the Malay Peninsula emerged along major rivers and coastal areas. These locations were strategically important for the control of the trade in various goods obtained from 'tribal' populations living in upriver forested areas. The largest and most powerful of the early 'Malay' kingdoms, Srivijaya, located on the southeast coast of Sumatra, emerged in the seventh century CE. By 1300 CE every coastal plain in Southeast Asia had its own "miniature kingdom based on Indian conceptions of royalty" (J. C. Scott 2009, 113). These kingdoms competed with each other across Southeast Asia and according to their wealth and power they pulsated outwards or inwards intersecting and overlapping with each other and the lives of the non-state people who lived between them. Stanley Tambiah famously described them as "galactic polities" (1973) while W.O Wolters termed them "Mandala" kingdoms, drawing from the geometric figure representing the universe in Hindu and Buddhist symbolism which formed the template for the cosmological, political and administrative ordering of Southeast Asian kingdoms (1982).

Benjamin argues that the presence of a state led to the development of three types of sociocultural formation in the Malay World: rulers, peasants and tribal peoples. In his usage, the word 'tribal' refers to those peoples "who stand apart from the state and its rulers, holding themselves culturally aloof in a 'sub-nuclear

fashion'" (Benjamin 2002, 9). As previously mentioned, he argues that the Orang Asli have maintained one of three mutually distinctive social formations (Semang, Senoi, and Malayic) or a mixture of elements from these three ideal types (Benjamin 2002, 10; Benjamin 1985). Mutually assimilatory and dissimilatory adjustments to tribal people's economic, political and socio-cultural patterns were made as responses to state influence and led to the implementation of the specific kinship patterns described above and the continuation or adaptation of particular economic practices among tribal groups (Benjamin 2002, 9–12).

Across Southeast Asia, it is clear that 'tribal' groups and downstream polities have been connected through economic exchanges for very long periods. Although downstream states in the Malay Peninsula might have been contemptuous of their uphill and upstream neighbours in the pre-colonial period, they depended upon them significantly for the collection of valuable forest products which were much sought after by Malay lowland agriculturalists and their trading partners (Junker 2002; J. C. Scott 2009; L. Y. Andaya 2010; B. W. Andaya and Andaya 1982). For hundreds of years ancestors of the Orang Asli and Malays had lived in interdependence and "the complementarity of their economies encouraged the maintenance of their differing lifeways" (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 202). Discussing wider Southeast Asia, James Scott argues that "the symbiosis of hill and valley people was so durable and mutually recognized that the two "peoples" could be thought of as an inseparable pair (J. C. Scott 2009, 108).

The plasticity of the social forms of forest peoples allowed groups to form and dissolve at a moment's notice. During peaceful times, the ancestors of the Batek and Manya' would have maintained considerable contact with trading partners, but during periods marked by violence they would have split into smaller groups and moved into the upper watersheds of the rivers within their territories where they could avoid persecution. The extreme flexibility in foraging groups' social forms conferred particular economic advantages in trade relations with downstream groups. This has been remarked upon by James Scott who argues that "particularly at the upper reaches of the watershed [foragers] were frequently close enough to another watershed so that they could, if they chose to, shift their trade to a different entrepôt on an adjacent river system" (J. C. Scott 2009, 105). For Bateks, moving from the upper reaches of the tributaries of the Tembeling in Pahang to similar tributaries of the Lebir in Kelantan could take anything between six hours to a day or two walking. However, such speed in movement entails intimate knowledge of forest passes and paths that only the local inhabitants would have had.

The ancestors of the Batek and Manya' would have had detailed knowledge of their forest environments which were the source of many valuable resources that were traded for metal tools, pottery, basketry, textiles, salt, rice and other manufactured goods and dietary supplements (B. W. Andaya and Andaya 1982, 10). The long and easily navigable Lebir, Tembeling and Tanum Rivers made Batek and

Manya' territories considerably easier to access than that of certain other Orang Asli groups like the Temiar and upland Semais who lived in mountainous zones. The Tembeling-Lebir rivers formed a major trade route to access the gold fields of Pahang and formed a key section of a vast network of rivers and short portage routes which criss-crossed the Malaysian Peninsula (K. Endicott 1997; Benjamin 1997; L. Y. Andaya 2010). Known in Malay as *Laluan Penarikan* (Wheatley 1961), this vast network stretching from the Isthmus of Kra to the southern end of the Malay Peninsula remained important during the reigns of several 'Indianized' kingdoms: Srivijaya (8th to 12th centuries), Majapahit (1293 to 1500) and the Malaccan Sultanate (1400 to 1511). During my fieldwork Manya' told me that a network of forest paths they used stretched southwards to Singapore and northwards to Kota Bharu. For Bateks and Manya', the Mon Kingdom of Tambralingga situated in Ligor in southern Thailand was probably the most important kingdom they traded with from the 6th to 13th centuries (K. Endicott 1997, 37). The ancestors of both groups likely acted as guides, porters and supplied forest products to traders crossing their territories. Living in such a key location along an important historical trade route provides compelling evidence that Bateks and Manya' have been integrated in wider regional trading and political systems for a significant period.

Across Southeast Asia, the economic independence of tribal forest peoples and their downstream trading partners was often cemented through political alliances (J. C. Scott 2009, 108; L. Y. Andaya 2010, 202–4). Several studies have highlighted the political importance of different Orang Asli and Orang Laut (sea peoples) groups during the pre-colonial period (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 202–34; Nicholas 2000, 73–78; Edo 1998, 1; Nagata 1997, 84). Alliances between Malays and Orang Asli were often forged through kinship as Melayu princes were married to the daughters of Orang Asli leaders (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 185; Nicholas 2000, 74). Another way that Malay rulers attempted to gain the allegiance of Orang Asli groups, was through the granting of titles and recognition of their lands (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 216; Edo 1998, 1; Nagata 1997, 84). During my own fieldwork, Bateks in Kelantan often proudly recount their genealogies citing ancestors who were 'ministers' (*menteri*) and 'kings' (*raja*). Such titles were probably awarded by Malay sultans or their subordinates in the 19th century (Cf. K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 63).

From the seventeenth century onwards relations between Malays and Orang Aslis started to change as international demands for forest products began to be replaced by cash crops such as pepper (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 207). By the nineteenth century when British colonialists had restructured Malay political life and introduced plantation and extractive economies, the collection of forest products had become far less important than in preceding centuries. At the end of the century, European and Chinese capital had begun to intensely reconfigure the economies and territorial arrangements of preceding centuries. Land, previously

considered as worthless forest began to be sought after for the development of rubber, timber, palm-oil and tin industries. As the economic interdependence between populations faded, the collectors of forest products became less and less important for Malays. This led to a shifting of semantic categories as forest peoples began to be seen by Malay as everything the Malays were not. While Malays practiced Islam, forest-peoples had no *agama* (religion), ate 'unclean' *haram* forest foods, spoke 'unintelligible' languages, left their bodies uncovered except for loincloths and roamed the forests like 'wild' animals. Malays saw them as *Orang Liar* ('savage' or 'wild' peoples) or *Sakai* ('niggers') only good for enslaving (see above) (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 217) When European explorers, anthropologists and administrators began to venture into Batek lands in the late nineteenth century, they had arrived at a time where Orang Asli – Malay relations were at their lowest point.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterized by heightened Malay slave raids on Orang Asli communities. From the Malay's perspective, attacks on the Orang Asli were justified as the latter were considered primitive pagans without the same legal rights as Muslims. Bateks and Manya' have vivid memories of the horrors of these events and their local landscapes are filled with places where they claim Malay slavers captured and massacred entire groups in the past. Although Bateks and Manya' usually chose to flee from violence when outnumbered, there is some evidence that they sometimes fought back. Lye has noted, "it seems that slave-raiding did not create a paralysis of fear, groups in the past were capable of aggression" (Lye, 2005, p. 106). The last of these attacks probably occurred at some time in the 1920s and 1930s when, according to Batek and Manya' reports, the British army intervened.

Many Malays began moving into Batek and Manya' areas in Pahang and Kelantan from the end of the 19th century to the early 20th century. These population movements were caused by the Pahang Civil War 1857 to 1863 and later by the extension of the north-south railway line from Kuala Lumpur to Tumput on the Kelantan coast in the 1920s which led to the emergence of a number of towns along the railway route (K. Endicott 1997, 38). Although most Chinese and Indians are descendants of migrants who began to arrive from the mid-nineteenth century to work in the colonial economy, significant numbers of Chinese had settled in the peninsula prior to British rule, and some have lived in settlements in the Batek and Manya' areas for as long as four hundred years (Middlebrook 1933; Tan 2012).

While the British colonial government helped end Malay on Orang Asli violence they treated the Orang Asli's claims to their traditional territories very differently to those of Malay groups. By the early 20th century (during the British colonial period) large tracts of Orang Asli lands were handed over to ethnic Malays and were designated Malay reservations. In these reservations, Malays were granted land titles that "were legally recognised in perpetuity" (Nicholas 2000: 85

citing Means 1985: 639-70). No such titles were awarded to the Orang Asli whose lands were "deemed to be crown lands of the Malay rulers and were treated as if they were unoccupied." (ibid).

From 1948 to 1960 and again from 1967 to 1980 the interior of Peninsular Malaysia was wracked by the violence of a conflict, known as "the Emergency," a war waged between Chinese communist insurgents and government forces. Bateks were less affected by the Emergency than some other Orang Asli groups and were not forced into British-run "jungle forts" with concentration camp-like conditions. However, several Batek groups remember terrifying assaults by government forces (Lye, 2005, p. 49). Despite the violence of this period, the Batek frequently recount their nostalgic memories of British doctors, administrators and army personnel visiting their communities in helicopters to deliver medicines and other supplies. Batek's stories about this period frequently rework the past through underemphasizing British and Communist violence while highlighting that of the Malays.

Following the end of the Emergency in 1960, the new post-colonial Malay-dominated Malaysian government began trying to encourage Bateks from Kelantan to settle in villages on the Lebir and Aring Rivers through establishing medical posts in these areas in the mid-1960s (Endicott 2008, 15). Although early resettlement projects were largely unsuccessful, as large areas of Batek and Manya' territories were systematically deforested and converted to palm-oil plantations from the 1970s onwards, both groups were forced to either relocate to resettlement villages on the edges of the forest or move to areas of protected forest within the Taman Negara national park. Alongside rampant environmental degradation, these projects have led to the resettlement of large numbers of Malays and immigrant plantation workers in federal government development agency (FELDA) villages throughout the Manya' and Bateks' ancestral territories.

Heterogeneity of Batek Social Forms

In the following section, I outline Batek social forms through a discussion of values, kinship, marriage patterns and other internal conditions of social life. Central to their forms of sociality are open-aggregation, immediacy, high levels of mobility, extensive social networks and generalized access to resources. Both groups share a common set of values and ethical principles of behaviour, in which mutual-aid, individual autonomy, egalitarianism, gregariousness and peaceability—an 'anarchic' sensibility—hold considerable importance. Values of sharing, individual autonomy and peaceability, termed 'ethical principals' or 'moral obligations' by Endicott (K. Endicott 2011), are shared by most Bateks whether they live in forest camps, forest-edge settlements or resettlement villages. These values are sometimes explicitly articulated, especially those concerned with non-violence. In

everyday life, accepted behavioural norms are enforced through social pressure and the fear of powerful non-human persons punishing any disrespectful or forbidden acts. Most importantly, values and ethical principles are embedded in everyday practices which are gradually learned as children are socialized.

Sharing, Personal Autonomy and Non-Violence

The three most important social values intrinsic to all Batek groups are sharing, personal autonomy and non-violence. Kirk and Karen Endicott's concept of "cooperative autonomy" (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 42) nicely captures the dialectical relationship between sharing and individual autonomy which lies at the heart of social life. People share and help others in a variety of ways as and when needed, but the principal obligation to share, among nomadic forest groups, concerns food. Game is first shared with a hunter's children and spouse, then with parents-in-law and finally with other camp members. Fish, fruits and tubers are not shared as much as game but are always given to anyone who asks (Cf. Lye 2005, 252). Bateks see the receiving of shared food as a right, and central to their way of life in the forest. Similar practices have been reported among numerous other hunter-gatherer groups which exhibit what James Woodburn (1982) terms immediate-return systems (Cf. Lee 1988; Morris 1982; Bird-David 1992b). Sharing rules equally apply to the Manya'.

Social values are communicated through myths and stories but are most effective when performatively expressed and communicated. Values are maintained through social pressure, primarily gossip, social criticism and the implicit threat of withdrawal of social support. Respect for the personal autonomy of others is an important value; if an individual does not want to do something asked of them, they simply refuse or ignore any requests they do not want to fulfil. Values of sharing, personal autonomy and the respect of the autonomy of other individuals are instilled in children from a very young age (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 115–26).

Social pressure should be understood as a serious means of enforcing and communicating values and can be quite extreme in some cases. Bateks say they would permanently ostracize anyone who was "habitually aggressive" (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 150). Many other small-scale foraging societies have similar methods in dealing with individuals who exhibit unacceptable behaviour, particularly violence (Woodburn 1982; Fry 2013; Gardner 2013b; Marlowe 2010). Among Bateks and Manya' the term *sakel*, holds the meaning of 'to hit' and 'to murder' and all types of violence are strictly prohibited by both groups. Many people told me that even feelings or thoughts of violence were dangerous and caused one's soul to become dangerously 'hot' and cause illness or accidents. As

such, people tend to supress all such feelings and individuals are expected to always maintain a calm and 'cool' demeanour.

Kinship, Naming and Social Plasticity

Bateks have no descent groups, clans, moieties or other structurally ascribed corporations and egocentric kinship is the principal means by which people relate to each other. Kinship is reckoned bilaterally or cognatically (which is to say ancestry is traced through both males and females). Bateks sharply distinguish between *kaben* (kin, real and fictional) and non-Bateks are who classified as *gɔb* (outsiders). The idiom of relatedness extends beyond biological kinship, exemplifying Alan Barnard's concept of 'universal kinship' typifying many hunter-gatherer groups wherein "all members of society may be classed as kin and no members of society may be classed as non-kin" (Barnard 1978, 70). People often use classificatory kinship terms of address which merge "genealogical specifications" with more fictive ties to evoke metaphors of relatedness. For example, to denote respect, an individual may refer to males of his or her parents' generation as *bah* ('uncle') or a male individual of their grandparent's generation as *ta'* ('grandfather'). Similarly, people refer to females of their parents' generation as *bə'* ('aunt'). To denote relations typified by equal social standing, individuals refer to members of their own generation who are younger than themselves as *bɛr* (younger sibling) or older then themselves as *to'* (older sibling).

Alongside kin terms, Bateks use personal names for children, nicknames (*pənəwa'*) for childless adults, and teknonyms for adults. People also commonly have Malay names they use when dealing with outsiders. 'True' names of children (*kənmɔh bətɔl*) are frequently taken from rivers, streams or other landmarks near the child's place of birth or plants and animals encountered or eaten following the birth. Recently, some Bateks have begun naming children after characters from films and television shows (I knew one boy named Cowboy and another called Superman). After a certain age, it is considered disrespectful and dangerous to use people's true names so older children and young adults are usually given nicknames. Following the birth of a couple's first child, prohibitions expressly forbid using the 'true name' of the child's parents who are then addressed through teknonyms. The most commonly used terms to refer to adults with children are as follows: *na'X* (the mother of X), *'eyX* (the father of X), *ya'X* (the grandmother of X) and *ta'X* (the grandfather of X). Names of younger children are also used, particularly if someone has had children with different husbands or wives. Usually, teknonyms are derived from the name of the eldest unmarried son or daughter. Once someone's child is married and has children another teknonym is taken either from another unmarried child or from the grandchild. The 'paradigmatic' practice of using multiple names to refer to an individual throughout their lives is fairly

common among egalitarian groups and is very different from the syntagmatic practice of stringing along names and titles to denote social status and ranking (McDonald 2009).

Using the true names of elders and in-laws is prohibited. Manya' classify such prohibitions as *tailine* offences which are punishable by the rainbow snake or thunder lord while Batek Dè' refer to these prohibitions as *tolah*, an offence punishable by the creator being Tohan. In both groups, people can use nicknames, Malay names, kinship terms or teknonyms to avoid breaking these prohibitions (cf. K. Endicott 2011, 69). Batek rules pertaining to parents-in-laws (*kən'ac*) and sibling-in-laws (*habaŋ*) are marked by "respect" and "restraint" and are not as strict as their closest northern neighbours, the Jahai and Mendriq who adhere to stricter "avoidance" rules. While Bateks consider using the true names of in-laws as only being mildly offensive to Tohan, Jahais and Temiars consider using the true name of in-laws as a very serious offence punishable by the thunder deity. Linguists Nicole Kruspe and Niclas Burenhult have argued that among these groups dedicated in-law pronouns "serve as a vocative and referential smokescreen with the purpose of inhibiting Karɛy's sensory access and avoiding his attention altogether" (Kruspe and Burenhult, forthcoming). This interpretation is convincing and applies equally to the Manya'. As the authors argue, such linguistic trickery should be seen in relation to other ritualized behaviours in which sensorial phenomena are central to communication or miscommunication between the visible and invisible worlds.

Batek society is inclusive and individuals are free to join or leave camps or villages at will, resulting in the membership of groups being in a continual state of flux. In forest camps and village groups brothers and sisters often live together (in neighbouring houses or lean-tos) and sibling sets form the heart of many groups (Kraft 2017, 58–75). Batek terms for siblings (*to'* for individuals older than ego and *bɛr* for individuals younger than ego) also include cousins *and* all individuals of ego's generation. As such the idiom of siblingship serves to promote solidarity, equality and cooperation. (cf. Bird-David 2017, 97–103). Work groups in camps and villages are composed of friends and relatives who choose to work together for practical reasons, intimacy, or due to friendship or kinship relations. Such groups can be single-sex or mixed depending on the nature of the work and membership shifts according to practicality and personal choices. In the forest, most hunting is done by men and most gathering of wild tubers by women but men and women often collect rattan together. Sometimes a man and his wife, often accompanied by some friends and young children, work within earshot of each other in the forest. When more people are needed for difficult tasks other friends and family lend a hand when they can, if they want to. Village economies differ from those in forest camps, and now it is more common for men to work together in flexible associations when going on trips to the forest to collect rattan or other resources.

When clearing areas for rubber or fruit trees, men usually work either alone or with brothers, parents or parents-in-law. In villages, women, elder children and men who are not working often care for infants in informal groups of friends and relatives.

In daily life, people can associate with most other people freely. Batek kinship forms do not only allow for high degrees of autonomy and social plasticity, they also encourage solidarity between people. Indeed, kinship categories prescribe various forms of inter-personal behaviour such as respect, restraint, intimacy, and mutual help. The plasticity of Batek and Manya' social units is largely dependent on what Charles Macdonald, following Mark Granovetter, has termed "weak ties" that can easily be broken and restored (Macdonald 2010). Weak ties depend on immanent relationships between individuals in direct contact at the present moment rather than structurally imposed kinship or corporate organisation. To paraphrase Macdonald, weak ties allow for a "flexible kind of organization [and] extended networking capabilities better adapted to a [nomadic] way of life" as opposed to that of strong ties which depend on relations marked by "perpetuity, asymmetry, and reciprocity, entailing transcendence, mechanistic complexity, and a linear order" (Macdonald 2010, 3). The concept of "open aggregation," developed in Gibson and Sillander's book *Anarchic Solidarity*, offers a similar picture of the importance of personal autonomy in the social organisation of groups like the Batek "in which all groups beyond the domestic family are loosely defined, ephemeral, and weakly corporate, and in which membership is fluid, elective, and overlapping" (Gibson and Sillander 2011, 1). It involves a situation of relatively flexible disassociation but also of association. Weak ties allow Bateks and Manya' to build and untangle relationships with kin and friends at a moment's notice thus allowing for extensive and flexible networks connecting people across large geographical areas. Practices of flexible relatedness and connectivity that alternate with disassociation and separatedness are also central to the Batek's relationships with non-human persons and sources of power in distant locales.

Bateks are free to marry who they wish except for siblings, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, children, nephews and nieces (including in-laws and half-relatives). Their allowance of marriage between first cousins is unusual among Semang groups. Neither group shows preferences for exogamy; sometimes Bateks marry people from distant communities and sometimes from their own camp or village. Marriage with members of different Orang Asli groups (Temiar, Semai, Jah Hut and Mendriq) is common in Batek resettlement villages but less frequent among the Manya'. The most important criteria for choosing a marriage partner is mutual attraction (Cf. K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 55–61). Traditionally marriages consisted solely of a couple moving into a home together and this practice is still followed by many Batek living in forest camps. Marriages between

groups of siblings from one family with siblings from another family are not uncommon.

In Batek resettlement villages where people have nominally converted to Islam, marriages sometimes follow Malay norms and simple ceremonies are occasionally conducted by visiting Malay dignitaries. As notions of development and progress are internalized by young people in villages, some people have started to practice Malay style weddings. Most importantly, state sanctioned unions provide a useful means of obtaining identity cards and passports for children of such marriages. Divorce is also a simple affair and if couples no longer wish to stay together one of them will simply move out. During my fieldwork, I knew of only one instance where a Batek man had followed the Malay practice of having more than one wife. This man, from Post Lebir in Kelantan, was a self-proclaimed 'real' Muslim and received a salary to promote Islam within the village. However, after he married his second wife (a young Malay woman), his first (Batek) wife soon left him and joined her family who were living in a forest camp in Pahang. Endicott and Endicott reported nearly identical findings during their fieldwork (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 60).

Emerging Inequalities and Social Change

In resettlement villages, the Malaysian government has tried to assimilate Orang Asli into the Malay section of society. This has primarily involved the coercion of Orang Asli to become Muslims and the encouragement of Orang Asli children to be educated within the national school system. However, only some Batek Dè children living in larger settlements in Pahang and Kelantan attend local schools, and for the time being, no Manya' children do. Many Bateks and Manya' nominally converted to Islam in the 1980s and 1990s after intense pressure. Although some Bateks may superficially seem to have adopted Islam, it has by no means replaced animist concepts and practices. Modern healthcare and medicines coexist with indigenous healing practices, midwifery and shamanism. Other consequences of resettlement include: increased dependence on the market economy, a reduction of mobility, reduced freedom of movement, the bullying of children in schools, a loss of forest knowledge, increased social differentiation and gender inequalities, heightened poverty and loss of independence (Cf. Gomes 2007, ch. 6).

Although social hierarchies were markedly absent in Batek and Manya' society prior to the British colonial period, in many resettlement villages there are government-appointed headmen (*penghulu* in Kelantan, *batin* in Pahang). These are men (never women), who have been chosen by the Department for Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) to convey the wishes of the government to their communities. Headmen have almost no authority over other Batek and often find themselves in the difficult position of needing to be seen by JAKOA as

accomplishing various things in villages but without actually being able to coerce anyone to do anything. JAKOA appointed headmen are paid salaries by the government and often given various gifts in the form of consumer durables (televisions and the like). Some other men are employed in Village Development and Security Committees (JKKK). Like headmen, JKKK employees are paid salaries by the government and their official role is "to administer and develop public institutions and infrastructure in their areas" (Bernama 2015). They function as intermediaries between government authorities and villagers. Finally, a few Batek men have been trained by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and are paid salaries to work as *ustaz* (religious teachers) to spread Islam within their communities as part of the government's 'civilising mission'.

The appointments of headmen, Village Development and Security Committees (JKKK) and Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) employees represent a significant augmentation of Malay political power within Orang Asli communities and are part of the government's attempt to assimilate the Orang Asli into the Malay section of Malaysian society, a stated goal of the Malaysian government since at least 1961 (K. Endicott and Dentan 2004). While headmen cannot coerce other Bateks or Manya' into doing much, they sometimes try to encourage their fellow villagers to put efforts into maintaining or planting rubber small-holdings, attend meetings in villages and keep the village tidy (part of the government's efforts to sedentarize and 'civilise' the Batek and Manya'). However, when collective decisions are made, for example in the rare cases where outsiders pay Bateks or Manya' compensation for loss of land or resources, the JKKK and headmen, often play key roles in negotiating terms for compensation. Furthermore, the fact that headmen, JKK and JAKIM employees receive a regular salary and other benefits is one way that structural economic inequalities have begun to emerge in villages. Each of these institutions has played a role in restructuring Batek and Manya' egalitarian sociality into a more rigid system with hierarchies and new possibilities for individuals to gain power. Similar situations have been described by anthropologists working among the Lanoh, Menraq and Temuan (Toshihiro 2008, 98–99; Dallos 2011; Gomes 2007).

Economic Heterogeneity

Batek economic forms demonstrate the relative lack of utility of the classificatory term 'hunter-gatherer'. I argue it obscures the diversity of economies, a diversity which has been well documented in the past and present. At the time of my own fieldwork, Batek and Manya' socio-economic organization showed remarkable variation and plasticity. Some Bateks lived in forest camps similar to those described by Kirk and Karen Endicott (1979a; 2008) and Lye Tuck Po (2004), some in forest periphery base-camps, and others in large settled communities which

were situated some distance from the periphery of the forest. Most Manya' spent the majority of their time in villages although men often set up small forest camps when collecting forest products for trade and on occasion large numbers of people relocated to forest camps for short periods when they perceived physical threats from neighbouring Malay villagers.

The economies of all groups I stayed with were decidedly mixed and featured various combinations of the collection of flora and fauna for trade with: the cultivation of fruit and rubber trees; hunting and gathering; occasional wage work as tourist guides; the sale of handicrafts and cultural performances for tourists; employment in various government agencies; occasional wage labour; reliance on government handouts; and limited entrepreneurial activities. I had been on hunting and gathering expeditions with Bateks living in forest camps, forest-edge settlements, and villages but these were never the most important economic activities that people were involved in. Bateks and Manya' living on the edges of the national park do practice hunting and gathering, however, it is arguably more importantly their ability to mix and match economic activities which has provided socio-cultural continuity. Similarly mixed economies have been described in a number of other 'hunter-gatherer' groups in Peninsular Malaysia (Benjamin 2002; Dallos 2011). Bateks and Manya' are highly opportunistic; as Benjamin has remarked for Semang populations more generally, they "forage off *anything* that comes their way including, the Malay state" (2002, 34).

Such heterogeneity of economic forms should not be seen as a recent development. Over the last one hundred and forty years, ethnographers have described Bateks and other northern Peninsula Negritos hunting, gathering, collecting and trading forest flora and fauna, cultivating fruit trees, planting fast-growing crops, working as porters and guides, farming, labouring for neighbouring agricultural groups, selling handicrafts (Mikluho-Maclay 1878b; Skeat and Blagden 1906a; Evans 1937; Schebesta 1928; K. Endicott 1979a; Lye 2004; Benjamin 1973). As Endicott first stated in his doctoral thesis, Bateks have "a complex mixed-economy, geared to the exploitation of many different kinds of resources, in which hunting and gathering happens to be an important part" (K. Endicott 1974, 35). It is clear from these reports that contemporary heterogenous economic forms of Bateks and Manya' have long histories and form part of a complex strategy that enables extreme flexibility within a particular niche located between the forest and the outside world. Such economic diversity raises the question of whether Bateks and Manya' should be described as hunter-gatherers. And, more generally, is the epithet 'hunter-gatherer' still useful for groups exhibiting such mixed-economies?

Ethnographers working with 'hunter-gatherers' in other geographical areas have witnessed similar situations. Bird-David summarized findings about the heterogeneity of hunter-gatherer economies over twenty five years ago, arguing that such economies should be seen as having four interrelated features:

autonomous pursuit of resource getting, diachronic variation, synchronic diversity and the continuous presence of hunting and gathering (1992a, 41). As long as a core-group among populations still hunt and gather, others trust that it is a viable economic strategy to pursue, and the core-group's knowledge and skills can be passed on to other members of the group (Bird-David 1992a, 41). She suggests that an attitude of procurement is what most fundamentally characterizes their economic orientation over and beyond their particular subsistence strategies. Somewhat similarly, Alan Barnard has argued that rather than being classified as hunter-gatherers, such groups might be better seen as having a "foraging mode of thought" which "represents a charter for action or inaction" shared between pure foragers, part-time foragers and some other groups (Barnard 2002). This mode of thought, is not purely coterminous with particular economic conditions—described as 'immediate–return' by James Woodburn (1982)—it also relates to the cultural field and can be characterized by an extreme flexibility, gregariousness, open-aggregation, egalitarianism, sharing, individual autonomy and immediacy (Macdonald 2011). Barnard's (2002, 19) argument that foragers' values can be and are retained in spite of the loss of a strictly immediate-return economy based upon hunting and gathering seems to hold true for the Batek Dè' and Manya'.

The spectrum of economic possibilities and constraints looks quite different for different Bateks depending on where they live. To obtain an understanding of this variability, it is useful to look at three principal types of locality that they inhabit— forest camps, forest-edge settlements, and more permanent villages. The extent to which this socio-economic division is determinant is tempered by the considerable movement of individuals and families across the different localities, thereby disrupting the confines of opportunity presented by any given location. Economies vary significantly between localities, but the collection and sale of forest flora and fauna is the principal economic strategy which Bateks rely upon regardless of location. Interestingly, nearly 150 years ago, Mikluho-Maclay (1878b, 212) also described "numerous gradations" between highly mobile Batek foragers that Malays called *Orang Liar* (tame people) and Bateks living in villages similar to their Malay neighbours which Malays termed *Orang Jinak* (wild peoples). His graded series classified Bateks into three broad categories in a similar framework to the one I have proposed above. This suggests historical roots dating back to at least the late 19th century for this three-tiered socio-economic pattern. Before outlining the economies of these three locales, I describe the three types of economic activity which hold the highest salience for Manya' and Batek identity and which have historically formed the basis of mixed-economies; namely the collection and trade of forest products, hunting and gathering.

Collection and Trade of Forest Flora and Fauna

At the time of my fieldwork, the collection and sale of forest products was the most reliable economic activity for Bateks and Manya' in nearly all areas I worked in. The two most commonly collected species were rattan vines from the Calamus genus (B. *'awey*, L. *Calamus caesius*) and the aromatic wood eaglewood (B. *baŋkol*; L. *Aquilaria* spp.; M. *gahuru*). Alongside these plants, Bateks and Manya' also collected palms sold as thatch (B. *cəmcom*; L. *Calamus castaneus*), pandanus (L. *Pandanus* spp.), various plants used as aphrodisiacs in Chinese and Malay medicine; tree resins; frogs; and numerous forest flowers and vegetables (Cf. Lye 2004, 128; K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 91–95). These plants and animals were then sold to Chinese and Malay middlemen who were met at pre-arranged sites at the edge of the forest. In forest camps and forest-periphery settlements people usually collect forest products in mixed groups, and temporary forest camps are usually located in places where there is an abundance of a particular resource. Money earned from the sale of these forest products is used to buy shop-bought foodstuffs (rice, canned sardines, vegetables, tea, coffee, cooking oil and sugar) and consumer items (clothes, mobile phones, top-up cards for phones, motorbikes, petrol and so forth). Three factors are behind the decrease in hunting and gathering as subsistence modes. Firstly, many Batek complain that there are now fewer animals than in the past due to environmental degradation and overall forest loss. Secondly, as people have been increasingly enticed into the market economy, they spend more time collecting flora and fauna for trade than hunting. Thirdly, it is now much easier for the Batek to get to Malay villages to stock up on shop-bought foods with motorboats and motorbikes than it was in the past.

Gathering

Traditionally, Bateks and Manya' gathered a wide variety of flora including: yams, seasonal fruits, nuts, palms, mushrooms, ferns, berries, bamboo shoots and palm cabbages. While some of the mobile Batek groups still gather wild foods, they are no longer reliant on these food-stuffs for subsistence needs. Tubers are dug out of the ground by women using wooden digging sticks tipped with a metal blade and yam gathering is primarily a female activity[3]. At the time of Kirk and Karen Endicott's research, wild yams (~ 10 species from the genus *Dioscorea*) provided an important source of carbohydrate for Bateks' diet (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 82–87).

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[3] See (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 82–87; Lye 2004, 124–31) for detailed descriptions of yam digging activities and their importance for meeting subsistence needs during the 1970s and 1990s.

During my research, the principal staple for most people in forest camps, villages and forest-edge settlements was rice. Sometimes, I saw piles of yams in lean-tos in forest camps when someone had come across some but it seems that people only rely on them for subsistence as 'emergency' foods when rice or other staples are not available. However, wild foods are still gathered by Bateks and Manya' whenever the opportunity arises and provide important food for snacking on while other economic activities are carried out. The opportunistic gathering of wild foods is also an activity that is very much enjoyed and holds central importance for peoples' identity as a forest people (Cf. Lye 2004, 128–29). During my own fieldwork, individuals would proudly reel off lists of various yams, fruits and other species they gathered, regardless of whether they lived in forest camps or villages.

Figure 2. Manya' women preparing fruit after a bountiful harvest.

The honey season usually begins in April and continues until June. At this time of year, courageous Batek men collect honey by scaling tall trees at night using vine ladders to access the nests. Honey that is collected is either consumed in the following days or sold to neighbouring Malays. The honey season overlaps with the ripening of wild fruits in succession between July to September. Fruits are enthusiastically gathered at this time of year and nomadic groups often congregate in areas of the forest where wild fruit trees are known to grow. Some people living in villages and forest-edge settlement may join these camps to partake in the fruit festivities at this time of year which sometimes include singing and trancing ceremonies to thank the creator beings for ample harvests. In Kelantan, abandoned Malay orchards on the Lebir River valley provide people living in that area with ample supplies of seasonal fruit.

Hunting and Fishing

When men hunt, they use blowpipes with poison darts to target small-to-medium-sized arboreal game including leaf monkeys, gibbons, siamangs, squirrels and civets. Bateks do not eat large iconic forest animals such as tigers, leopards, panthers, elephants, rhinoceros or bearcats which are often considered as other-than-human persons with human-like characteristics. Most commonly men go hunting individually or in groups of two or three in order to make as little noise as possible. Behavioural norms and values embedded in the Batek's religion, govern which animals can be hunted and consumed, how meat should be prepared and how food should be shared among camp residents (K. Endicott 2011; K. Endicott 1988; Lye 2004). At the time of Kirk and Karen Endicott's research in the 1970s, men were successful in around half of their hunting forays (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 72–78)[4]. By the time of my own fieldwork, things had radically changed. I often saw men preparing darts and blowpipes and I accompanied men blowpipe hunting whenever I was given the opportunity, however, these trips were rare and frequently unsuccessful. I only witnessed the Batek eating game animals on a few occasions (mainly squirrels, turtles and bamboo rats). A similar situation has been reported by other anthropologists working with Bateks in recent years (Riboli 2016, Kraft 2016, Kawei 2017 personal communications).

Despite the decrease in the importance of blowpipe hunting, men spend considerable time constructing and maintaining their blowpipes and darts in camps and forest-edge settlements. Bateks and Manya' construct blowpipes from two long

[4] Tom Kraft (2017) and Vivek Venkataraman (2016) have recently re-analysed the Endicott's highly detailed data-sets on co-residence, diet, food sharing, foraging performance and residential mobility using computational analyses. For a detailed analysis of Batek subsistence economies and residence patterns see their recently published doctoral theses (Kraft 2017; Venkataraman 2016).

pieces of thin bamboo measuring around 1.5metres to 1.8metres in length to form a double-walled blowpipe with a diameter of around 2-2.5centimetres (Cf. K. Endicott 1979b, 9). Bateks construct mouthpieces from a bulb of resin which are fixed to the end of the bamboo tube while Manya' normally craft wooden mouthpieces into a conical shape which is slotted over the bamboo tube and wrap rattan around the opposite end of the tube. The variances in blowpipe designs between the groups are interesting and may reflect historical connections with other Orang Asli groups living in the south of the Malay Peninsula. Manya' blowpipe designs are identical to those described by Evans for Negrito groups living on the Jelei River in Pahang which he states resemble blowpipes made by Jakun groups in Selangor and Negri Sembilan (Evans 1937, 99).

Figure 3. Batek Dè' children outside a lean-to at Was Keniyam in May 2010

In the forest, men and women catch burrowing animals such as bamboo rats, porcupines and pangolins by smoking animals out of holes and then digging them up. Turtles and tortoises are just picked up when opportunities arise. Children and young adults often hunt birds with catapults. In Pahang, young men occasionally hunt deer at night with spears, an activity which does not seem to have taken place when the Endicotts or Lye conducted fieldwork. Endicott (1979b, 13) describes Bateks' "lack of interest" in hunting deer and pigs but notes that some men have shop-bought spears that are "kept for defence against tigers". It is possible that some Bateks may have copied the practice from other Orang Asli groups and it is likely to have arisen in recent years. In general, large animals are almost never hunted.

Fishing is also an important subsistence strategy. Bateks use a variety of methods to catch fish including: rod and line, net, spear-guns, and poison. Fishing with rods made from palm fronds with shop-bought lines and hooks was commonly practiced by women. Men sometimes go net-fishing in larger rivers and streams. Spear-fishing is primarily practiced by young men and adolescents. The use of bark poisons to stun fish has been reported by Kirk Endicott but is no longer regularly practiced (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 82). Fishing is still practiced by Bateks in all types of settlements I visited and is one of the primary means by which women still contribute to local economies.

Forest Camps

The principal areas where the Batek Dè' continue to lead nomadic lives as hunter-gatherer-collectors are the upper reaches of the Aring and Lebir rivers in Kelantan and the watersheds of the Tembeling and Kecau rivers in Pahang (see map 1). At the time of my research no Manya' groups lived as full-time mobile foragers in forest camps. Since I left the field at least half the Manya' residents from Kampung Ki Ying have relocated to a forest camp after becoming increasingly disillusioned with the lack of development at the village.

In forest camps, known as *hayã*', people live in clusters of small lean-tos, also called *hayã'*. These simple structures are constructed using three to five sticks driven into the ground onto which a thatched palm roof is attached and under which split bamboo is used as a floor. Many Batek now use plastic tarpaulins alongside or instead of the thatched palm roofs. The Manya' construct similar shelters and occasionally use long lengths of split bamboo for roofing which serve as excellent protection from the rain. In forest camps, the majority of households consist of either a nuclear family of parents and children (B. *kəmam*), or childless couples (B. *kəlamin*). Aged, often widowed, individuals may live in lean-tos alone, while single-sex groups of unmarried men sometimes share lean-tos as do groups of unmarried women (Endicott 1979, 10-11; Lye 2004, 11). Each shelter often has several cooking fires due to prohibitions on cooking certain classes of animals over the same hearth. Normally, Bateks only keep a few possessions in their lean-tos—clothes, cooking pots, machetes, lamps, digging sticks, blowpipes, dart quivers and pandanus sleeping mats. In recent years, people have bought more consumer items and some forest camps even have televisions and large speakers which are run on petrol generators.

The economies of most forest camps are now based upon the collection of forest flora and fauna for trade supplemented by hunting, gathering and fishing. Forest camps last anything from a few days up to several weeks depending on communal perceptions of resources available in a particular area (Venkataraman et al. 2017). Successive forest camps are usually situated between five to ten

kilometres from each other, a walk of anything from 1-2 to 6-7 hours (Lye 2004; Lye 2013; Venkataraman 2016). Camp membership fluctuates daily with families and individuals moving and changing camps according to environmental pressures, available foraging opportunities, seasonal changes and personal choices. In camps, group members remain bound by some degree of kinship, friendship, or relatedness. Camps vary in size from one or two up to twenty nuclear families, but Bateks prefer to camp in groups of more than three families due to dangers from tigers and wild elephants. On average, camps generally consist of five to ten families composed of about 35 individuals with fairly equal ratios of men and women (Lye 2004; K. Endicott and Endicott 2008; Venkataraman et al. 2017). Most camp groups stay together for around three to four months after which they may disband leading to the formation of new groups (Lye 2004, 11).

The spatial organisation of forest camps has important implications for Batek sociality. Areas between lean-tos are not usually cleared of trees and other plants but a network of trails gradually emerges within camps as undergrowth gets trampled with people moving back and forth between the homes of family and friends sharing food, gossip and knowledge. The open structure of shelters and camps' spatial organisation mean the hoarding or accumulation of material wealth by individuals or families is virtually impossible. Proximity means people are normally fully aware of exactly what other members of the camp are up to and who is sharing what with whom. Lean-tos generally face each other rather than the forest and seem to be somewhat randomly arranged (K. Endicott 1979a, 10). However, outwardly random camps organisation may reflect subtleties of in-camp sharing networks, shifting social alliances and conflict resolution, as noted upon by Alberto Gomes among the Menraq (2007, 155). In camps, shelters are easily constructed, moved and rearranged around camp if people wish to live closer to certain people or further away from others. A similar situation has been described by Yasmine Musharbash among Walpiri aborigines in Australia, where people change sleeping positions almost nightly. Musharbash interprets this as reflective of the subtle dynamics of interpersonal relationships (Musharbash 2008, 82). If tensions rise in Batek camps, people can simply uproot and move to join another camp. The spatiality and temporary nature of Batek camps allow for extreme individual autonomy and flexibility.

Villages

Since the large-scale deforestation of Batek areas that began in Kelantan in the 1970s and quickly spread to Pahang, increasing numbers of Batek and Manya' have chosen to relocate to villages where they have been encouraged by the government to take up agriculture (mainly in the form of growing rubber trees) as a means to integrate with the mainstream economy.

In all villages, economic needs are primarily satisfied by men collecting eaglewood, rattan and other forest products which they then sell on to Chinese or Malay middlemen. Collecting groups of settled Bateks are nowadays almost exclusively composed of between one to four men who target resources in areas often situated a long distance from villages on motorbikes. Most households usually have a small plot of land where they cultivate rubber and fruit trees. Income derived from rubber-tapping varies according to ecological context, economic choices and opportunities, rubber prices and the maturity of rubber trees. Rubber prices fluctuate wildly and people usually only practice this economic activity when they are assured of good prices. Furthermore, most people find rubber-tapping as highly monotonous work and only rely upon it as a fall-back in the absence of other economic activities. Although Bateks and Manya' consider the plots of land cleared by different individuals or households as belonging to them, people often allow others to tap rubber in their plots if they were not tapping these places themselves. In this way, sharing practices are extended from the subsistence economy of hunting and gathering to agriculture.

There are limited possibilities of employment in some of the larger Batek villages. At Post Lebir, the largest Batek settlement, a few men work as gardeners and security guards at the local school and a few others were paid salaries by the Department for Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) or the Village Security and Development Committee (JKKK) for various duties. Other opportunities for work include sporadic employment for government agencies and institutions such as the Orang Asli hospital at Gombak (collecting medicinal plants) and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (building paths and walkways in the national park). Some Batek men, disillusioned by the economic opportunities in villages, have migrated to the Klang Valley to work as manual labourers or lorry drivers. A few other Batek men have joined the army or police force. Alongside income derived from trade, agriculture and employment, people also receive government hand-outs from time to time. In Manya' villages, there are almost no opportunities for employment and many people rely heavily on government handouts.

The entrepreneurial spirit of some villagers, the growth in employment from government agencies, and the rise of the market economy have all contributed to rising economic inequalities between villagers. As mentioned previously, political opportunities associated with village life have meant that certain men have attained limited political power through employment as agents of the state, altering previously acephalous and egalitarian forms of sociality. Most significantly, economic and political changes associated with resettlement have impacted Batek gender relations. Because most cash that flows into villages comes from men's trade in collected forest products, women are increasingly economically marginalized.

The spatial organisation of villages is markedly different to that described above for forest camps. Resettlement villages have been organised by the government like Malay villages. Lean-tos have been replaced by cheaply-built concrete houses with corrugated iron roofs which are built in rows along roads or in small clusters. Close kin often live in certain areas of villages in adjacent houses. However, the permanent nature of housing has greatly affected Batek and Manya' modes of sociality described above. The flexible modes of association that characterize forest life are not easily reproduced in villages. If tensions arise in villages, people can no longer simply uproot and move away. Another effect of living in permanent houses is that social life has become more private and people can hide possessions and conceal wealth from others. Alberto Gomes has described similar changes among the Menraq living near Jeli in Kelantan (Gomes 2007, 153–57). The sharing of food is much reduced in villages and families tend to eat together within their own homes. However, in villages, as in camps, much social life takes place outside houses. In the daytime, women and those men who are not off collecting forest products often congregate together in areas of the village and look after young children. During evenings, although some families spend time indoors watching films on televisions, others often use the spaces outside their homes to 'hang out' chatting, singing or just sharing time together. Village life, may have changed certain aspects of sociality but has not led to the kinds of markedly high levels of individualism and privacy.

It must also be emphasized that the differences between village and camp life that I have described are context-dependent. During school holidays, many Batek Dè' families from Post Lebir join camps and forest edge settlements like Bar Yen and Kamarak where they live in traditional lean-tos and spend time collecting forest products following more traditional social forms. When people move from villages to forest camps, they quickly adjust to the new situation. Behavioural changes are most marked among women. As soon as women are beyond the gaze of Malays, they discard *hijabs* (head coverings) worn in villages, join in any foraging or collecting activities and become markedly more confident and expressive.

Forest-Periphery Settlements

A number of Batek and Manya' forest-settlements are located on the edges of the forest throughout Pahang and Kelantan. These settlements all differ; some are rather like more permanent versions of forest-camps and some are more village-like. Despite variation between different forest-edge settlements, what they hold in common is their position between the forest and the outside world. They are located in such locations so that people living in them can draw upon resources from the forest and the wider-world. From these base-camps, people can simply

walk into the forest on day trips or quickly relocate to temporary forest camps to collect wild resources for trade or hunt animals and gather plants for subsistence. But they can also quickly relocate back to the edges of the forest, where they have their more permanent homes. At these settlements people can also clear land for fruit and rubber trees, receive government aid and access Malay shops and local amenities (health clinics and hospitals). The forest-edge is the preferred location to meet with Chinese or Malay middlemen to trade forest products people have collected. In a few locations, children also have access to local schools.

At many of these settlements, Bateks have also cleared areas of forest for the cultivation of fast-growing crops like cassava as well as rubber and fruit trees. In these places, some people build Malay style wooden homes and others more temporary lean-tos. The cultivation of land and permanent style of architecture makes these settlements more recognizable to state authorities and form part of a larger strategy for Bateks to secure some rights to their lands. There was significantly less interference from government agencies at forest-edge settlements compared with official government resettlement villages. Depending on the time of year, these settlements alternate from being virtually empty to being filled with families. People based in permanent forest-edge settlements continually moved back and forth from these settlements to small temporary forest camps. Some forest-edge settlements have become recognized by the authorities. For example, when I visited Marɛm and Kuala Koh in 2007, both settlements were composed of numerous traditional lean-tos, but during my fieldwork, JAKOA built permanent pre-fabricated housing for the people living there. Both these settlements are located right on the edge of Taman Negara. Despite the fact these places now have permanent housing they still largely operate as base-camps in the ways I describe above.

Living in Two worlds

In dealing with traders and other outsiders, Bateks and Manya' have needed to be competent in the socio-cultural worlds of their more powerful neighbours. Operating between two culturally different worlds has been common for indigenous groups in Southeast and South Asia for a very long time and has been variously termed "code switching" (Kratz 1980), "bicultural oscillation" (Gardner 1985), a "dualistic lifestyle" (Morris 1982) and "paying lip-service to the convention of others" (Bird-David 1988). The ability to move between two cultural worlds allows foragers and other small-scale groups to manipulate the complexities of their social environment for their own purposes. Despite the usefulness of terms like "bicultural oscillation"—and the agency they imply for minorities—they simplify the complexity behind contemporary and historical interactions between foragers and more powerful neighbouring ethnic groups.

In the past, Batek and Manya' dealings with Malays and other outsiders were episodic. When relations with Malays became marred by violence some of the Batek were able to retreat to the forest. Others were not so lucky and were killed or enslaved. The forest is much smaller now than it was even forty years ago and the tentacles of the state now stretch within the forest. For groups living in resettlement villages, retreat is no longer an option as there is simply not enough forest left. "Code switching", "paying lip-service to the convention of others" and other similar concepts imply that strategic choices can be put into action by foragers when necessary. However, when the state is constantly on your back, it can be difficult to escape the "double life" you are being forced to live. For children who spend long periods in schools learning Malay values, this is especially challenging. Where tactical duplicity ends and assimilation begins is unclear. Batek adaptations to the violence behind Islamisation, resettlement and 'development' in general are complex and need to be treated as such. Different Bateks have reacted to the violence of resettlement and modernity in different ways. The dualism of "bicultural oscillation" needs to be rethought in terms of spectrums of possibilities and constraints for action.

An important aspect of living in the complex social environment of Southeast Asia, where neighbouring groups often have quite different socio-political forms, is highlighted by Thomas Gibson in his book chapter *Egalitarian Islands in a Predatory Sea* (2011). As the title indicates, the small-scale groups of non-violent, egalitarian foragers and shifting cultivators of the region are surrounded by much larger predatory and hierarchically stratified groups. Expanding upon Marilyn Strathern's (1988) idea that Melanesians have very different ideas of agency, subjectivity and social relations to Westerners, Gibson argues that the complex social environment of Southeast Asia has made these egalitarian groups adept at shifting between multiple political regimes and modes of subjectivity (Gibson 2011, 287–88). Gibson suggests that they are "well aware of the existence of competing sets of political values" and "develop several different kinds of subjectivity" as they move between institutional settings associated with different social groups (ibid). Alongside inter-cultural experiences that shape them through daily interactions with outsiders, collective memories of historical relations with outsiders shifting from peaceful trade to violent predation have crucially contributed to this orientation. In the chapters that follow, I argue that these multiple modes of subjectivity and of relating to others have had impact, not only on Batek daily lives, but on their modalities of relating to various nonhuman others.

Chapter Three

Landscape, Thunder and Serpents

Two conspicuous features of Batek everyday life and environmental relations are the salience of taboos and a fascination with topographic features of the landscape which are associated with unseen agencies. Bateks frequently make references to the thunder deity, known as Karei or Gobar, and an underworld rainbow snake (*naga'*) in creation stories and whenever taboos are invoked. What is the significance of these beings, the complex taboos they enforce and the landscape features they are related to? This chapter explores these questions through a series of case-studies carried out among Manya' living at the village of Kampung Tom Ki Ying in which I analyse a number of creation myths and ritual prohibitions associated with particular landscape features within the local environment. Central to the places and stories I examine in this chapter, is a particular type of connectivity; that between humans, non-human persons and landscape. The landscapes Bateks live in not only provide them with food, shelter and materials, they are filled with memory, history and religious significance. A central goal of the chapter is to analyse how conceptions and practices, related to the thunder deity, rainbow snake and other non-humans who inhabit and move through the landscape, shape a moral code or 'law of the land' which Bateks say they must abide by in order to avoid cosmic retributions or catastrophes.

In common parlance and in legal terminology the expression 'law of the land' refers to binding customs, practices, or rules of conduct which are enforced by a controlling authority. In my usage, 'law of the land' refers to the loosely defined socially proscribed behaviour and ritual prohibitions of a particular ethnic group—in this case the Manya'—which are found in myths and stories that are emplaced within particular topographic features of the local landscape. Conceptually, I approach landscape as the shaping of socialized areas of the earth which results from the continual interactions between people—humans and nonhumans—and their environments. In this understanding, landscape is closely related to praxis, experience, religion, politics and materiality. In the Batek's acephalous and egalitarian society there are no chiefs, no courts and no 'tribal councils' who can enforce behaviours or punish perceived wrong doers. Deviations from established social and behavioural norms are enforced through peer-pressure backed-up

through fear of punishments inflicted by powerful non-human persons who act as a 'controlling authority'. Numerous places across the Manya' landscape mark places where individuals or communities transgressed prohibitions and were punished by the thunder deity and rainbow snake. These places serve as powerful reminders for people to follow the way of life established by ancestors and creator beings. The myths and prohibitions associated with these places, at first glance, seem to be a strange collection of exotic beliefs and include taboos about ridiculing animals, mixing categories of foodstuffs and blood, odours and kin. In the chapter, I analyse their centrality for Batek ideas about keeping categories of things apart and preserving an original order established by creator beings.

Kampung Tom Ki Ying and the Local Environment

It quickly became apparent to me that the landscape around Kampung Tom Ki Ying—an area stretching at least 50km north-south from Gua Musang to just north of Padang Tengku—was especially complex. The area is a patchwork of forested land, oil-palm and rubber plantations, interspersed by rivers and dramatic limestone karst formations. Within days of arriving at the village, people began taking me on trips to the surrounding area to visit a number of locations holding a wealth of mythopoetic and historic significance. I visited waterfalls where beautiful *ai djum* spirits were said to reside and people told me stories about dangerous soul-devouring spirits inhabiting caves and sections of rivers. We explored numerous places where humans had broken prohibitions or where *cenil* (creator beings) had performed specific activities that had been etched into the features of the physical landscape. Manya' pointed out places where the activities of the powerful non-humans had marked the landscape—huge rocks cleaved in half by spirits digging passageways through earth to connect the underworld with the upperworld and sites where the petrified remains of humans had been transformed into magnificent limestone karsts. Within this interanimated environment the numerous places which conjoin the invisible and visible worlds, connect past with present and humans with nonhumans serve as continual reminders for people to abide by ethical codes; they constitute an emplaced 'moral geography' that structures everyday life and brings some aspects of cosmologies to life as people move through and dwell in their local environment.

Kampung Tom Ki Ying is the largest of three Manya' villages situated between Kuala Lipis and Gua Musang. It is a typical Orang Asli resettlement village of around 145 people who live in twenty rundown government-built concrete houses and a few traditional lean-tos scattered around the village. Houses in the village are often shared by more than one family and contain a minimal amount of possessions usually limited to a few plates and dishes, some cooking pots, clothes, a mattress or two, and a few tools. In many homes, NGO posters outlining Orang

Asli rights are displayed, most of which have not been implemented. A small number of families own televisions, and in the evening friends and families often gather to watch shows, documentaries and films broadcast via the Malaysian satellite television company Astro. The globalized-media imagery that flows into the community via satellite televisions, DVDs, and newspapers has a powerful effect on how the Manya' see the outside world. News coverage and documentaries mean the villagers are well aware of international catastrophes, wars, and political events in foreign countries.

There are few economic opportunities at Kampung Tom Ki Ying. The government has done very little to develop the village asides from constructing a few houses and building a hall which is already falling into disrepair. The nearest area of primary rainforest is the Taman Negara national park which lies about twenty miles to the east, too far away for people to access on foot, and in any case the Manya' are frequently told by representatives of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (PERHILITAN) they can no longer forage in the park. This is despite the fact a major part of their ancestral territory falls within park boundaries. The village is surrounded by Malay communities and a Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) palm-oil estate. FELDA gives each household RM600 (US$188) per month as compensation for the use of this land, but the Manya' consider this amount far too low for their needs. Northwest of the FELDA estate, villagers can still access an island of logged-over secondary forest on foot where they sometimes fish, hunt and collect forest products. Like most land in the area, this parcel of forest is demarcated as a forest reserve. Although the label 'forest reserve' may conjure an image of land that is protected from industrial logging, the reality is very different; the current trend is to clear-cut huge areas of natural forest and then replace it with fast growing agricultural crops, usually even-aged monocultures of rubber-trees specially bred to produce timber as well as latex ("latex timber clones"), which are considered to be "forest plantations". Furthermore, despite their official designation as "permanent reserved forests", these areas can, at the whim of the state government, be given out for private development and turned into oil palm plantations. Around the nearby Malay village of Merapoh land has been classified as a Malay reservation, an administrative category which restricts land ownership to people officially recognized as ethnic Malays. However, no lands have been recognized as belonging to the Manya' or even gazetted for Orang Asli usage. Manya' territory is located on a rich mineral belt containing gold, iron-ore, limestone and various rare-earth metals and the area has been increasingly targeted by mining and quarrying companies in recent years. The residents of Kampung Tom Ki Ying understood these ecological and social changes as a severe threat to this agential landscape and an endangerment to the cosmic order established by ancestral creator beings.

Landscapes of Spirits

During my time with the Manya' I was told a corpus of myths and stories about extraordinary topography of this area. Until the 1980s, most of the local landscape was typified by luxuriant rainforest interspersed with rivers, streams, hills, mountains and huge limestone karsts that towered above the forest canopy. Alongside *'ai djum* spirits which are associated with various plants and animals, hills and mountains are seen to host powerful non-human entities known as *langoi*. These non-human persons often become the spirit guides of shamans and the particular ways that Manya' relate to them is examined in following chapters. For the time being, my focus is on creation stories, ritual lore and memory and their associations with particular landscape forms. I begin with a short vignette describing one of my first trips to the area of land surrounding Kampung Tom Ki Ying.

A few weeks after my arrival, 'eyWauh, the outspoken headman from the village, and Mayam, a young bachelor—highly respected for his knowledge of the forest—accompany me through the oil-palm estate that adjoins the village to explore the local environment. After leaving the palm-oil plantation, we follow a trail westward through the forest. This area is intimately known by 'eyWauh's group and has been a favourite foraging ground for generations. It is filled with flora, fauna, knowledge, memories, meaning and history. Mayam and 'eyWauh name each stream we cross and point out places they have formerly camped. My companions regularly stop to examine and collect leaves, barks, and roots, which are used for their medicinal properties. As we walk, Mayam stops and signals towards a clump of *nyop* (*Mimosa pudica*): a plant whose delicate leaves fold inward when shaken, touched, or blown. The Manya' term for the plant, *nyop*, means 'shy' or 'bashful' and conjures similar images to common English terms for the plant which include 'sensitive plant', 'humble plant, 'shame-plant' and 'touch-me-not'. He recounts how long ago there was a Manya' girl who was so shy she could not even look at boys, hiding away whenever they approached her. Eventually, she transformed into the gentle, sensitive plant that now brushes against our trudging legs. The way that Bateks relate to and think about different plants, animals and places within their environment often involve similar such 'eco-semiotic' relations, to use Eduardo Kohn's terminology (Kohn 2013). Walking westwards we come to a large granite rock which sits aside the Ba'Oh River. As we stop to catch our breath 'ey Wauh tells me the following story:

> *A long time ago, my grandparents, my ancestors, were moving through this area. At this time, my mother didn't have a husband she was only little. I don't know everything, I'm just telling you the story I heard. When my grandfather's group was here this was just one big rock, it was not*

> *broken like it is today. People were camped here looking for food and hunting* kaldʉs *(common banded leaf monkeys, L. Presbytis femoralis). At this time this rock was not broken [he points towards a large granite rock about 20 metres in height that has broken into two sections]. When the people were packing up camp to move to the Peset river, my grandfather looked up there ['ey Wauh points to the top of the rock]. He saw one of* Karei's *helpers who was working up there. No-one else could see anything but my grandfather was a shaman, he could see. When my grandfather looked, he saw* Karei's *helper, who was making a path for a thread* (menang). *My grandfather saw one of Karei's hala' (spirit helpers) digging here. He looked and could see the spirit making a path (halbəw). He was using a digging stick* (caŋkol), *to break the rock. My grandfather saw him. He saw the spirit* (*hala'*) *digging through the rock. All of Karei' helpers have digging sticks and machetes* (wɛɲ) *which they use to dig down. No-one else could see the spirit. My grandfather saw all this while he was walking past here. The people moved further upstream Tɔm Peset to forage. They set up camp, collected food and stayed there for a week or two. But when the people came back, down this path, they could see the rock had been broken, it had been broken in half.* Karei's *helper had broken the rock into two here. He was making a path from the celestial world straight down to the underworld. This is a path so that Karei can follow down to where the* naga' *(underword rainbow snakes) live. He was making a path with a thread* (menang) *to connect the upperworld with the underworld. When he finished work, he went back to the sky world. He was making the threads so the* naga' *cannot writhe. The 'ai djum who live in the mountains and rocks around here hold the* naga' *in place so they cannot writhe. When the people came back here the rock was broken. My grandfather was a shaman. He saw that* Karei's *helper was making a path before the rock was broken. This is what the people said happened.*

The events that 'ey Wauh described blur myth and history and highlight the highly transformational aspects of landscape. The story did not occur during the mythical time of creation, it took place during his own mother's lifetime. Karei is the name the Manya' give to the god of thunder, an important figure in Orang Asli cosmologies. 'ey Wauh could not describe to me the appearance that Karei's helper took as he was watched by his grandfather. His use of a digging stick or machete to break through the rock formation points towards his human-like form. The spirit is described as digging down through the earth and weaving a thread towards the abode of the *naga'* to hold her in place. The spirit could only be seen through the special eyes of the shaman; other members of his band, only saw the outcome of his action when they returned a week or two later and found the rock broken in

two. As we saw in chapter one, connecting the three layers of the cosmos through the weaving of magical threads is an activity that shamans and spirits conduct together to hold the structure of the cosmos together. At Batu Ba'Oh, these actions result in a transformation of the physical form of the land which is seen as proof that something really happened and assumedly increases the shaman's aura of mystical power. Most importantly, the event testifies that the creator beings are ever-present and act in the world in ways that can be perceived by humans.

Climbing a small hill, we decide to set up camp near a waterfall on the Ba'oh river. This beautiful place is a much-loved camping spot for Manya' when they forage along the Peset and Ba'oh rivers. Although the area is a known hotspot for Malay poachers, flora and fauna remain abundant here. Mayam tells me that increasingly rare species such as Malayan sun bears, elephants and tigers are still occasionally encountered here. He adds that the rich ecosystem of the area and its aesthetic qualities make it a favoured locale of benevolent *'ai djum* spirits. Mayam and 'ey Wauh assure me that if a shaman were with us, he would be able to see these spirits through his 'cool', 'clear' eyes. In Manya' thought, shamans' special eyes allow for a kind of double vision which conjoins the invisible world of spirits with the physical reality visible to normal humans. When people camp at places like this, in dreams they may encounter and befriend resident *'ai djum* spirits who appear as beautiful human-like beings.

Re-Conceptualising Place and Landscape through Animism

In common usage, landscape is frequently understood as a physical backdrop, often in terms of a 'natural' environment of mountains, rivers, hills and valleys. Academically the term has often been used to describe a particular "way of seeing", a representational form as in the tradition of Italian or Northern European landscape painting. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels' definition of landscape as "a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing or symbolising surroundings" (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, 1) is typical of such visually centred representational approaches which have been used in cultural studies (Williams 1985), historical analysis of landscape representations (Schama 1995) and in classic anthropological studies which mapped societal divisions onto the spaces of houses, villages and landscapes (Durkheim and Mauss 1963; Bourdieu 1979). Such approaches have relied upon a long-held assumption within the Western philosophical tradition of a universal nature-culture dichotomy. The universality of the nature-culture dyad and other related Cartesian dualisms (mind-body, subject-object, spirit-matter and so forth) have been intensely scrutinized by a number of scholars in recent years (Latour 1993; Strathern 1980; Ingold 2000; Cronon 1996; Olwig 2002; Descola 1996; Descola 2013; Haraway 1991). Such nature-culture distinctions are largely absent in the Batek's modes of relating to a plethora of 'natural' phenomena—animals,

plants, meteorological phenomena, landscape features and certain objects—which are considered, in certain conditions, to have agency, cognition and perceptual capacities analogous to humans.

Many recent approaches within landscape theory have attempted to overcome the nature-culture dichotomy by describing the various ways that humans embed meaning into particular locales through dwelling, knowledge, perception, story-telling, memory, movement and practice (Basso 1996; Tuan 1977; Olwig 2002; Hirsch 1995; Strang 1997; Munn 1996; Sack 1993; Cronon 1996; Schama 1995; Lefebvre 1991). These approaches share the idea that landscapes must be understood as the result of complex entanglements of social histories with natural histories rather than merely representing aesthetic or ecological phenomena. Bateks, like many other animists, consider their worlds to be populated by an array of non-human persons, many of whom existed long before humans. In this manner of extending social relations beyond the human sphere, landscapes do not constitute physical backdrops which are then overlaid with meaning through human actions; they are already-socialized, transformational environments which are still in the process of being shaped by the activities of humans and non-humans (cf. Descola 2016). Furthermore, just as human and animal bodies are considered as 'cloaks' or 'shells' which are animated by human-like souls, the Manya' consider many landscape features—mountains, hills, river sections and so forth—as the 'bodies' or 'homes' of different non-human persons (*langoi*) or the remains of ancestral creator beings. Bateks think about their landscapes as being already inhabited by nonhumans and continually in the process of being refashioned through the interactions of humans and nonhumans. This idea of a dynamic, already-existing, always-becoming, interanimated or agential landscape is markedly anthropogenic if mythological creator beings and other non-human persons are included within the category of the human. Similar ideas are held by indigenous peoples across Southeast Asia and Melanesia and have been described by numerous anthropologists (Allerton 2009; Aragon 2003; Bovensiepen 2011; Bovensiepen 2014; Guillou 2017; Janowski 2003; Jonsson 2005; Kirksey 2012; M. W. Scott 2007; M. W. Scott 2011). Catherine Allerton has proposed the term 'spiritual landscapes' to highlight "both to the ways in which people imagine spirit forces and energies to emerge from or be connected to places, and to the attitudes that people may have to the 'hidden' or mysterious realms lying beyond, behind or immanent within the visible earth" (2009, 237). Some of the most nuanced of these rich ethnographic accounts have highlighted how indigenous populations have mobilised their ideas of potent landscapes and the chthonic powers that dwell within them as a means to counter their contemporary marginalisation (Bovensiepen 2011; Kirksey 2012; M. W. Scott 2011).

Batu Ba'Oh and the Ba'Oh waterfall emplace cosmological knowledge within the landscape and operate as potent 'conductors' of the power of spirits, focussing

non-human agency into particular locales. As we shall see in this chapter, many other locations across the Manya' landscape function in similar ways through drawing upon the aesthetics of place—natural beauty, aquatic features, special markings or particularities or rich ecologies—to create complex relations between people, landscape and nonhumans. Through linking times, places, people, spirits and myths, this agential landscape constitutes a remarkable cosmotopography. History and myth merge in the landscape, stories associated with some places detail how shamans used their magical powers to protect communities from violent outsiders, other stories and places mark the locations of daring escapes from slave-raiders or violent attacks which took place during the Communist Emergency. These places which conjoin historical and mythical time with place are characteristic of what Keith Basso (1996), drawing from Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), termed chronotopes in his ethnography of Western Apache place-making. Across Batek landscapes, many such chronotopic locales mark events from the mythological time of creation as well as more recent events. Basso's approach to place-making was pioneering, particularly his analyses of the powerful perceptual, and experiential qualities of places which he argues shape thoughts about the self and "lead commonly to thoughts of other things—other places, other people, other times, whole networks of associations that ramify unaccountably within the expanding spheres of awareness that they themselves engender" (1996, 107). As stories, places and peoples are connected through such expansive rhizomatic networks, to use a more Deleuzian vocabulary, a moral geography emerges connecting people, places, ritual prohibitions and various human and non-human others. Certain places I describe in this chapter undoubtedly function as "mnemonic pegs" which Basso argues people use to "hang the moral teachings of their history" (1996, 62). The qualities of other places, like the Ba'Oh waterfall have more agential qualities which are activated through particular activities such as visiting and dwelling. These are eminently 'spiritual landscapes' (Allerton 2009; Guillou 2017) in which humans' lives are closely entangled with those of non-human beings associated with particular places as well as the wider environment. The conversion of the landscape to oil-palm and rubber plantations, quarries and mines, significantly threatens the ways which Bateks relate to these places. Many Bateks claim that the destruction of forests and landscape by outsiders angers the ancestral creator beings who respond by causing earthquakes, storms, floods and tsunamis. Furthermore, as forest cover is removed, people have fewer reasons to move through certain landscapes and the ways particular locations are activated through dwelling near them or moving past them is diminished.

Rethinking landscape through animism allows for a reconfiguration of landscape theory within a new ontologicized lens. Drawing upon an older European sense of the term landscape as an environment shaped by politics and practice, cultural geographer Kenneth Olwig argues that landscapes constitute

specific areas of land shaped by its people, their institutions and customs which form a complex set of use rights and obligations (Olwig 2002, 17)[5]. A central tenet of his argument is that landscapes constitute "the expression of the practices of habitation through which the habitus of place is generated and laid down as custom and law upon the physical fabric of the land. A landscape is thus a historical document containing evidence of a long process of interaction between society and its material environs" (Olwig 2002, 226 citing Bourdieu 1977, De Certeau 1984, Olwig 1996). If we adjust Olwig's idea of 'society' to refer to a heterogeneous collective of humans and non-humans we arrive at a closer idea of how Bateks think about landscapes.

The Creation of the Landscape and the Emergence of Forms

Waterways constitute the principal means by which Bateks navigate their landscapes and as people walk through the forest, they continually name even the smallest streams they cross or walk along. As long as someone knows which stream they are near, they can follow this waterway downstream to a larger river and then back to more familiar terrain. The term for water in the Manya' and Batek Dè' languages is *tɔm* which is contrasted to other general categories such as *te'* (earth or ground), *həp* (forest) and *keto'* (sky). The category *tɔm* designates the substance of water as well as different kinds of waterways: large rivers, streams, rivulets and brooks. Like their Jahai neighbours to the north, Bateks generally classify rivers into nested hierarchies using kinship metaphors (Burenhult 2008, 188; Lye 2004, 57). Smaller *tɔm wɔŋ* (child rivers) flow into *tɔm na'* (mother rivers) which are the *tɔm wɔŋ* (child rivers) of even larger rivers downstream. The Manya' claim the world's rivers and waterways originally came about through the activities of a creator being (*cenil*) known as Cangkai (frog). This was during the time when humans, animals and spirits had not yet been differentiated. Generally, this cosmogonic myth is told alongside another myth describing the origin of fire, which is the form I have preserved in the following account based on a version of the story told to me by Mayam in a forest camp not far from Kampung Tom Ki Ying.

> *Long ago, the* cenil *lived on earth. At this time, everyone lived together and had human-like forms. One day, everyone was fed up with eating raw food and wanted to eat cooked food. But Kasat [the sambar deer], held all*

[5] Olwig traces the etymology of the North European term landscape to the German *landschaft* which has cognates in: modern Danish - *landskaber*, Dutch - *Landschap*, and Swedish - *landskap*. The English suffix scape derives from the German schaft meaning to shape (Olwig 2002, 19; Spirn 1998, 16–17; Schama 1995, 12).

the fire between his antlers and refused to share it with the other people. Despite protestations from everyone he stubbornly refused to share the fire. One-day, crafty Pelanuk [the mouse-deer], came up with a cunning plan to relieve Kasat of this precious substance. He told Kasat that he had head-lice and offered to pick them out of the large deer's hair. Kasat lay down and Pelanuk began delousing him. As soon as Kasat fell asleep, Pelanuk began knocking the embers off Kasat's head and everyone else started picking them up and using the fire to cook yams. But Kasat soon awoke and realized what was happening. He gathered up all the embers and put them back between his antlers and ran off. But clever Pelanuk chased him and grabbed on to Kasat's mane. As Kasat ran across the world, Pelanuk knocked the fire off his head and the pair left a trail of fire which the other cenil gathered up and could use to cook their foods. This is how people got fire.

After cooking their food with fire, the people soon got thirsty after eating. But when they went down to the river to fill their bamboo sections with water, their drinking vessels remained empty. This was because greedy Cangkai [the frog] *had hidden all the water. All the animals went to Cangkai and asked him to share the water but he refused to part with it and wouldn't tell anyone where he had hidden it. Shrewd Pelanuk guessed that Cangkai was hiding the water within his fat belly and devised a cunning plan. He crept up behind Cangkai and thrust a sharpened bamboo straight into his back. Cangkai croaked in agony as the water pissed out of his back. As he hopped off across the land, the streams, rivers, lakes and seas were created from the water gushing out of him. Pelanuk followed after him naming the waterways as they were formed.*

The origin of fire myth involves a transformation of raw foods to cooked foods, and thus, from a structuralist perspective, could be seen as a socialization of 'natural' elements into the cultural world. Alongside explaining the origin of different phenomena, which is associated with the act of naming, these types of creation myths serve as important cautionary tales (cf. Lye 2004, 81–83; K. Endicott 1979a, 62–63). In the above stories, greedy Cangkai and Kasat embody the antithesis of Batek norms of sharing. The frog's swollen belly and semi-aquatic lifestyle make him the perfect creature to have hidden the world's water. The attitudes and qualities of the creator beings are often embodied in the physical features and the behaviours and those of the animals the *cenil* would later become. Manya' frequently associate frogs with water. For example, choruses of croaking frogs are seen to herald rain and frog spirits are seen as being able to metamorphose into water. Associations between frogs and water are by no means restricted to the

Manya'. Throughout Southeast Asia and even as far away as Australia, batrachians are closely associated with rain-making and thunder due to their alleged habit of croaking loudly before heavy rains (Dang 1993, 307; Thomas 1923). For example, the famous Tiddalik myth of Australian aborigines concerns a greedy frog who causes a terrible drought after consuming all the world's water which he only releases after being forced to laugh by the contortions of an eel (Thomas 1923). The similarities to the Manya' myth we saw above are clear. Several fundamental values central to the Manya's particular forms of sociality emerge in the mousedeer stories.

The form and behaviour of Kasat (the Sambar Deer) in the fire myth also encodes information in similar ways. Male Sambar deer, large cervids measuring up to 160cm in height, are relatively anti-social compared to other deer and generally live alone. Their solitary behaviour is the antithesis of Batek norms of solidarity and gregariousness. Other unusual behaviour of these deer includes bipedalism when marking territory and, when threatened, the deer spray urine on their own faces with their unusually mobile prehensile penises; factors which exaggerate Kasat's anti-social characteristics. Finally, the Sambar deer's large antlers are the means he used to carry the primordial fire but also function as metonyms for the kindling wood used to start fires. Batek Dè' and Mendriq have similar stories about the origin of fires which they also claim was originally taken from the Sambar deer, although in their versions it was the woodpecker rather than the mousedeer who stole it (K. Endicott 1979a, 126; Schebesta 1928, 274–75). As previously mentioned, the *cenil* who Kancil tricks embody the antithesis of socially accepted behaviour; they are greedy, self-centred and selfish. Acting autonomously—a highly valued form of behaviour—Kancil tricks Cangkai and Kasat into parting with fire and water which is then distributed across the landscape where it can be shared by the different members of society.

Creator Beings

Manya' refer to all creator beings as *cenil*. This class of powerful entities occupy a similar ontological position to the *hala' 'asal* (original creator beings) of the Batek Dè' (K. Endicott 1979a; Lye 2004). In the time of origins, humans and creator beings are described as living together, communicating, intermarrying and exchanging. Sometimes creator beings are described as having human forms and at other times are described as animals or humans with animal characteristics. Similar ideas about an undifferentiated transformational period during the original creation of the world are found in myths of indigenous peoples worldwide. The Manya' consider the *cenil* as a primordial class of entity which existed before humans and who taught humans the norms and rules of correct social behaviour. Like the *hala' 'asal* of the Batek Dè' it is generally assumed that they have always existed (cf. K.

Endicott 1979a, 124). Both Manya and Batek Dè' claim that when humans die, they join these beings, are given new immortal souls and essentially become absorbed into the mass of existent entities. In this way, *cenil and hala' 'asal* are not only creator beings but also what Cornelia Van der Sluys (2000) has termed 'immortal ancestors' to describe the Jahai's versions of these entities. The creator beings are not considered as entirely separate from humans, relatedness between humans and creator beings is apparent in cosmogonic myths and in descriptions of the after world when humans join the *cenil* or *hala' 'asal*. Manya' claim the *cenil* gave the shamans of different Orang Asli groups their particular forms of ritual knowledge which is dependent on dwelling within the particular territories each group was entrusted with. Like the spirit masters found among many South American indigenous groups (Viveiros De Castro 1998; Fausto 2007; Descola 2013), each species of animals has a *cenil* counterpart who is described as originally living on earth in a human-like form: Pelanuk (mouse-deer), Gagoh (elephant), Telebas (sunbear) and Kasat (sambar deer). But not all *cenil* are associated with animals, some like Karei the thunder lord, are described as humans, albeit with incredible powers of metamorphosis. The metamorphosis of a number of *cenil* into their current forms is described in the following myth.

> *One day, Kancil (the mouse-deer) asked all the animals to partake in a competition to see who was the strongest. He persuaded everyone to take turns in kicking a huge tree in the forest. Whoever, managed to kick the tree down would be the winner. Gagoh (the elephant) went first, he kicked the tree again and again but he could not succeed. As he kicked the tree, his feet and legs swelled up and he transformed into his current form. Next, Telebas (the sun-bear), took his turn, and began kicking the tree. But like Gagoh, he was unsuccessful and as his feet swelled up he transformed into his bear form. Each cenil animal took its turn but no-one managed to knock down the gigantic tree. As each cenil repeatedly kicked the tree, their feet and lower legs, and eventually their entire bodies, transformed into the forms of the animals we know today. As the Cenil transformed into the different animals Pelanuk named them one by one: "Now you are Gagoh (elephant), now you are Telebas (honey-bear) and so forth". As their physical bodies transformed into the forms of animals, their cenil souls became invisible and took up residence in the beautiful subterranean world.*

Certain aspects of this story are fairly commonplace across Southeast Asia. The mouse-deer (L. *Tragulus kanchil*), known in Malay as *Sang Kancil*, is the protagonist of many Malay and Orang Asli stories (Skeat 1900; B. L. Lim and Ong 2010). As Skeat first noted (1900, 179), he is very much "the 'Brer Rabbit' of the Malays", an

archetypal trickster figure who "is credited with extraordinary sagacity, and is honoured by the title of 'Mentri B'lukar,' the 'Vizier of the (secondary) Forest-Growth.'" Like Malays, the Manya' also claim *pelanuk* is now an important Menteri (leader) of the *cenil* which suggests a somewhat hierarchical ordering of *cenil* which is akin to Malay forms of social organisation. The theme of the metamorphosis of *cenil* into animals or various other phenomena through an act of naming is also common across the region (K. Endicott 1979a, 63; Lye 2004, 83). Such stories are undoubtedly transformations of myths that have circulated the region for a significant period. The Bateks' marked openness to outside ideas and influences has been noted by Kirk Endicott who writes "there is a constant flow of new ideas into the religion, both from the dreams and aspirations of group members and from outside sources" (1979a, 220–21). The adoption of religious ideas and myths from outside sources is by no means unique to Bateks. Anthropologists have long described how myths have a separate life of their own (Boas 1916; Lévi-Strauss 1963) and the religions of hunter-gatherers show especially high levels of internal diversity and a propensity for borrowing from outside sources (Morris 1982, 39, 161; Turnbull 1966, 246; Gardner 1966, 390–98). Several recent ethnographies have evocatively captured the complex connections between local cosmologies and foreign sources in other areas of Southeast Asia, particular among Austronesian speakers (Bovensiepen 2014; Kirksey 2012; Rutherford 2002; M. W. Scott 2011).

Working with such tiny communities who have no entirely coherent authoritative accounts of their own cosmologies is a difficult task and the collection of data on myths, cosmologies and other-than human persons involves patching together bits and pieces of information gathered piecemeal over a long period (K. Endicott 1979a, 26–28; Howell 1984, 59; Bird-David 2017, 155). The fact that many myths, stories and cosmological constructs are undoubtedly borrowed, and in the process, indigenized in particular ways, highlights what Roy Brunton (1989) has described as the 'cultural instability' of egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies. Although Brunton's argument that "such cultures can be little more than heaps of randomly associated elements, whose persistence is always fortuitous" (1989, 678) and his dismissive statement that egalitarian societies are simply not viable (1989, 679) are unhelpful, his stress on what could be termed the cultural open-aggregation of these groups is valuable. As stories and myths are indigenized, they take on new meanings pertaining to the particular groups that have adopted and transformed them.

Inclusiveness and Relatedness

It should be noted that Mayam began recounting the origin of fire myth by stating that at the time of origin "everyone lived together". In their versions of creation myths, Batek Dè' also describe the *hala' 'asal* (original creator beings) as living

together with humans at the time of creation. The heterogeneous and inclusive aspects of non-human societies described by the Manya' and Batek Dè differ significantly from the 'species societies' or 'tribe-societies' described by Descola (2013) and Viveiros De Castro (2012) among Amazonian groups. Descola (2013, 248) claims that "where animism prevails, the members of each tribe/species thus share the same appearance, the same habitat, the same feeding and sexual behaviour and are, in principal endogamous." Each species-society purportedly has its own institutions, customs, rituals, houses and so forth which are analogous to those of human societies. The idea of a fundamental separatedness of Amazonian species-societies is also emphasized by Viveiros De Castro (1998) who argues that the particular eyes and bodies of each species are understood as giving them a unique perspective of the world. This species-specific perspectivism means that while "individuals of the same species see each other (and each other only) as humans see themselves", different collectives of species see the world through their own eyes, "what jaguars see as 'manioc beer' (the proper drink of people, jaguar-type or otherwise), humans see as 'blood'. Where we see a muddy salt-lick on a river bank, tapirs see their big ceremonial house, and so on." (Viveiros De Castro 2004). In Amazonia, biological similarity forms the basis for different collectives living together whilst biological differences lie behind the separatedness of species-tribes into distinct communities and the ways different collectives perceive the world.

Batek cosmogonic myths are filled with a plethora of creator-beings (*cenil* or *hala' 'asal*) who live in small communities *together* not as *separate* tribe-species. The two exceptions to this rule are the thunder deity and rainbow snake who are generally described as living alone, albeit sometimes with various helpers. As we have seen, certain physical locations in the forest, such as the Ba'Oh waterfall are also associated with multi-species collectives of *'ai djum*. The Batek Dè claim just two communities of especially powerful non-human persons, the *hala*'-tiger shamans and *sakai pangan* were-tigers live together in species-specific collectives within caves associated with specific karsts in the forest. As we saw in chapter two, Batek sociality is marked by egalitarianism, open-aggregation and individual autonomy. No matter how distant relations are, or even if kin relations are determined fictitiously, it is the notion of kinship (*kaben*) that ties people together. The inclusiveness of Batek Dè' and Manya' spirit collectives mirrors the Bateks open-aggregation and inclusive forms of kinship. In a comparative discussion of the Nayaka of Southern India and the Chewong (an Orang Asli Group living to the south of the Bateks), Bird-David has similarly argued that the cosmologies of these groups are characterized by "a universe of tiny-scale multispecies communities of relatives whose plural mode is supported by a 'diverse-and-together' rather than a 'same-and-separate' logic" (Bird-David 2017, 176). The relationships between humans and spirits and the heterogeneous composition of spirit collectives are characterized by kinship and relatedness which, as Bird-David has argued for the

Nayaka of India and Chewong of Malaysia, "override[s] bodily dissimilarities … species is simply one of an individual's attributes alongside gender, age and personality" (Bird-David 2017, 172). Kinship and affinity are also central to the relations Manya' and Batek Dè' shamans establish with spirits in dreams and trances which commonly take the form of friendships or marriages.

The Manya' say that after the *cenil's* bodies were transformed into animal forms, their souls left earth to live in the beautiful subterranean or celestial realms. Other *cenil*, such as *Mawong* (the moon), *Met Ketop* (the sun), *Karei* (thunder) and *Leway* (the honey bee), relocated to the heavens in other stories. A few *cenil* remained on earth and some are said to be trapped in various limestone karsts in the Tanum area. The departure of the *cenil* marked the establishment of physical discontinuities between spirits, animals and humans. From this time onwards, the *cenil* communicated very little with humans although humans are said to join them in the after world. Similar stories of a primordial separation between humans, spirits and animals are widespread in animistic cosmologies (Viveiros De Castro 1998). Viveiros De Castro has argued that this "great mythical separation" involves "nature distancing itself from culture". This is a very different idea to that of the Western philosophical tradition which, although being far from homogenous, is largely based upon the idea that humans became separated from other species when they became culture-bearing animals equipped with language, art, religion, kinship institutions and so forth. Within many animistic cosmologies, at the time of origins, everyone (humans, animals and spirits) is endowed with personhood and the qualities normally associated with humans. As Viveiros De Castro writes "humans are those who continue as they have always been: animals are ex-humans, not humans ex-animals" (Viveiros De Castro 1998).

The Rainbow Serpent

In Batek cosmology the earth is usually depicted as being supported on the back of an enormous *naga'* (rainbow snake) who rose to the surface of the primordial waters in the distant past when the world was created (cf. Endicott 1979, 33-34). Similar myths are fairly ubiquitous across Southeast Asia (Wessing 2006) and date back to at least the period of Hindi-Buddhist hegemony across the wider area but probably much earlier. Similar myths of subterranean serpents are also common in Australian aboriginal cosmologies suggesting that this concept could date back to the Palaeolithic (Knight 1991, 455–61; Radcliffe-Brown 1926). During my fieldwork, most Bateks described the original world-creating *naga'* as resembling a gigantic snake. However, in descriptions collected by Endicott (1979, 33-36) and Lye (2004, 81) it was sometimes said to resemble an enormous turtle, sometimes even "a fabulous cross between the two: it is like a snake but with a broad back like a turtle, huge horns like those of a water buffalo, and it speaks like a Batek" (K. Endicott

1979a, 33 footnote 2). Manya' usually refer to the underground serpent as *Baji'*, although they also use the Sanskrit term *naga'*, which is favoured by most other Batek groups. Although the original *naga'* is generally spoken of as a singular entity, people often describe a multitude of ancient gigantic serpents living in the subterranean depths. In all accounts I collected, these giant underground serpents were also closely associated with an old woman or 'grandmother' and the rainbow. Manya' say this old woman, who they call *Capoi*, is the mother of the thunder lord (Karei) while other Bateks call her *Ya'* or *'Aroc* and say she is his aunt (Endicott 1979, 168). Sometimes the serpent and the old woman are described as separate figures and sometimes as different images of the same entity. The rainbow is understood as the earth deity's *bayang* (an Austronesian term which translates as both shadow soul and reflection). For this reason, rainbows are considered as being particularly dangerous and taboos strictly prohibit pointing at the rainbow or even uttering the rainbows name. Bateks claim that whenever prohibitions are broken the *naga'* becomes angry and begins to writhe. This writhing and rocking cause tremendous upwelling floods, tsunamis or earthquakes which threaten to dissolve earth (*te'*) into the subterranean sea below. Simultaneously her celestial counterpart, the thunder lord—known as Karei by the Manya' and Gobar by other Bateks—sends forth devastating storms and winds. Occasionally, people say that floods are caused by the old woman digging upwards or prodding the *naga'* to release the waters of the underworld.

The idea that the world is supported upon the back of these primordial serpents is central to Batek cosmologies and testifies to a rather fragile and precarious vision of cosmic order that can be undone at any time. Below the *naga'* is said to be an enormous subterranean sea and Bateks claim that any movement ('writhing' or 'rocking') of this primordial snake can result in catastrophic foods, earthquakes and tsunamis as the waters of the underworld are released. In the local area, mining and quarrying activities as well as generalized deforestation are considered particularly dangerous because they anger the *naga'* and her celestial counterpart the thunder lord. When Bateks hear news stories about distant places being affected by extreme weather or earthquakes they consistently interpret these events as being caused by the wrath of these entities. Explanations that Bateks give for the rainbow snake and thunder lord's anger range from people breaking prohibitions, to warfare and generalized ecological degradation. For example, many Bateks claim that wars between Americans and Arabs in the Middle-East led to earthquakes and floods in that area as well as the catastrophic floods that hit America in 2012. In this way, local cosmologies and landscapes become interconnected with global events through ever-expansive rhizomatic relations connecting people, non-humans, landscape, meteorology and environmental change.

During the time of creation, the Manya' claim many of these primordial serpents (*naga'*) smashed through the surface of the earth from their abode in the underworld. The magnificent limestone karsts which dot the landscape throughout Manya' territory are said to be the bones (*tolaŋ*) of these ancient *naga'*. This idea vividly brings cosmology to life; landscape forms constitute material 'proof' of stories passed down from ancestors and are a constant reminder of the power of these dangerous subterranean serpents. Alongside the belief that many karsts in the local area are the bones of ancient *naga'*, many Manya' claim that some karsts were formed by the activities of another powerful *cenil* (creator being) called Senti. People say that long ago, Senti lived with the Manya' and married a woman with whom he fathered children. This strange figure looked just like a human except that he had two faces, one on the front and another on the back of his head. One day, because everyone was so terrified of his monstrous appearance, even his own family, they all ganged up against him, murdered him and fled to the forest. However, Senti was not completely destroyed by this violent act and lived on as a spirit.

Acts of violence are completely prohibited by the Manya' and all other Batek groups and the people who killed Senti were suitably punished. In revenge, he used his magical powers to petrify the perpetrators of this terrible crime into rocks and mountains and metamorphized others into animals and birds. Even people's lean-tos were transformed into various limestone karsts in the area. Senti's spirit is still said to roam around the forest and is considered extremely dangerous. People claim that strange wailing and screaming in the forest can signal his presence and immediately flee when they hear sounds of this kind. Senti is a typically liminal being; he lives in the deepest parts of the forest, is morphologically anomalous and is both human and non-human. Unlike most other *cenil* who now live in either the upper or lower worlds, he remains on earth. His two-faces mean his gaze extends in all directions giving a synoptic and inescapable vision. He is neither dead nor alive. He is what Mary Douglas (1966) would describe as a "source of disorder". His liminal status means he cannot be neatly fitted into the classificatory order of things and he holds the typical monstrous characteristics that Yasmine Musharbash describes as a "taxonomic disturbance" (2014, 8). When faced with the anomalous two-faced figure of Senti, the Manya' were repulsed and decided to kill him. In doing so, they transgressed the established social order and were punished accordingly. The myth of Senti and his continual presence in the forest serves as a continual reminder for people to refrain from violence.

Landscape Features Relating to Prohibitions

Numerous locations across the Manya' landscape mark places where Karei (the thunder lord) and Baji' (the rainbow snake) are said to have punished humans for

breaking prohibitions. Several such sites are located within three kilometres of the Malay village Kampung Kubang Rusa, an area which is densely filled with cosmological and historical significance for the Manya'. In April and May 2013, several men from Kampung Tom Ki Ying took me around the area to visit four karsts—Batu Makok, Batu Bontey, Batu Tebogn and Batu Kabang—each of which are associated with specific myths and one further karst (Batu Yun) where many Manya' hid before fleeing from government troops during the Communist Emergency. All these karsts fall within an area classified by the government as a Malay Reserve (land which may only be owned and used by Malays) which is surrounded by the much larger Yu Forest Reserve (see map 2).

The first site we visited was Batu Kabang (fig.4) a relatively small circular karst topped by a forested crown. To access the karst, we cut through a Malay durian orchard and then through thick undergrowth until we reached a cave located at the bottom of the karst. None of the men who accompanied me would enter the cave due to fear about resident ghosts and spirits. Respecting their beliefs about the karst, I made no attempts to map the cave myself. The following story was told to me by Baya' a quiet bespectacled man in his late fifties, who struggled to make himself heard over the roaring of cars that zoomed along the highway within several hundred yards from where we stood.

> *Long ago, our ancestors were staying at the cave here. One evening during their stay some people had broken a serious prohibition by laughing at a millipede. This infuriated Baji the rainbow snake, Capoi the underworld grandmother and Karei the thunderlord. Quickly, Capoi began tunnelling upwards causing Baji' to writhe. Early the next morning, the sky darkened with Karei's thunder clouds and torrential rains began pouring down. As thunder claps boomed through the sky and cracks of lightning ripped apart the heavens, the earth opened up and groundwaters surged forth through the earth flooding the entire area and drowning everyone. Two men, who had been off hunting kaldus (common banded langur; L. Presbytis femoralis) nearby, also drowned after being frozen in one spot by Karei. Since this time, we are forbidden to hunt in this area and it is strictly prohibited for anyone to climb this limestone hill. If anyone does attempt to climb the rock it will grow higher and higher into the sky. The rock descends deep underground. A Batek shaman tried to escape by flying up a magical thread to the top of the karst. From there, he tried to fly up towards the heavens but Karei cut his magical thread killing the man and fixing his soul within the karst. The cave at the bottom of the hill is filled with the ghosts (sei' sei') of the people who died here. We are afraid of entering the cave because the ghosts can be heard wailing and grunting inside. Only one man escaped from here to tell the story.*

Batu Kabang is a manifestly topophobic locale, a place imbued with fears about past events which is augmented by the dread of dangerous non-humans lurking within the cave. The story about the place describes a series of terrifying events which resulted in the deaths of an entire community and clearly serves as a warning for others not to commit similar offences. Importantly, the punishments wrought by the rainbow snake and the thunder lord at Batu Kabang were not directed at specific individuals, the entire community was punished as the skies and earth simultaneously opened up flooding the land with water. Escape was not possible. The two men who had been absent hunting when the millipede was laughed at are frozen in one spot and are killed by the ensuing floods. The shaman who tried to escape by climbing up cosmic threads to the celestial realm was also punished by *Karei* who cut his threads and then confined his soul within the karst itself. The fact that communities, rather than individuals are punished by such acts, means that people continually need to monitor each other's behaviours and call each other out for transgressing these behavioural norms. This does indeed occur, cries of *tailine* or *lawac* (prohibited or tabooed) occur on a near daily basis in Batek communities. This is not to say that people live in constant fear of cosmic punishments, people do occasionally laugh at animals and break other taboos, however, when called out, people tend to immediately stop any acts considered as offensive.

Figure 4. Batu Kabang

Batu Kabang is also significantly invested with non-human agency. Specific prohibitions forbid hunting in the area and climbing the karst; if anyone does

attempt to do so the towering rock is believed to magically 'grow' upwards toward the sky. Agency is also apparent in the various non-humans who now inhabit the karst itself, namely the soul of the shaman who became trapped within the rock when he tried to escape, and the ghosts of the people who died within the cave at the bottom of the karst whose wailing and groaning keeps people well away from the location. Although the site is usually avoided, it can be seen from a considerable distance away. As Basso (1996) has argued, places and their names, function as signifiers for the myths, prohibitions and non-human persons associated with them. By emplacing myths within particular locales, these places function as permanent reminders from people to adhere to established cosmological rules and proscriptions. One glance at a place, the mentioning of a place name, or even a memory of a place can bring forth cascades of meanings and associations. Likewise, being called out for laughing at a butterfly, millipede or other prohibited species immediately brings such stories and places to mind.

Keeping Things Apart

Laughing at or mocking certain animals is completely prohibited by the Manya', Batek Dè, many other Orang Asli groups as well as indigenous groups across the wider Southeast Asian region (Needham 1964; Blust 1981; Forth 1989; K. Endicott 1979a, 70–73; Howell 1984, 178–83). Manya' classify such offensive behaviour as *tailine*, while Batek Dè' specifically refer to it as *lawac pilngal* (laughing prohibitions). Certain species are considered especially dangerous to laugh at (pigtailed macaques, long-tailed macaques, leeches, dogs, cats, snakes, lizards, millipedes, butterflies and moths) but some Bateks told me it was dangerous to laugh at any animals. Although the specific animals deemed especially dangerous to ridicule varies between groups and often among individuals belonging to the same group, most people agree that it is dangerous to laugh at any animals which cannot be eaten as well as the two species of macaque (Endicott 1979, 71). Endicott has argued that prohibitions about ridiculing animals stems from a fear of mocking the original order established by the creator beings and the belief that the qualities and identities of things must be kept separate.

Most Bateks did not give me any satisfactory explanations as to why taboos are applied to particular species and not others. They simply said it was *lawac* or *tailine* (prohibited) to do so because they were the creations of Tuhan (God). Many tabooed species occupy what could be described as betwixt and between positions. Lye, following Mary Douglas' logic, has stated the "most troublesome—most salient—creatures are those that can't be boxed in one category" (Lye 2004, 61). Lye does not discuss the taboo on mocking animals but does name flying lemurs, land-monitors, snakes, mud-turtles as animals which cause *malaŋ* (ill-luck) when encountered during hunting expeditions (2004, 61). The animals which Bateks most

commonly list as species which cannot be laughed at have these kinds of qualities. Macaques are the most human-like primate species that Bateks hunt (K. Endicott 1979a, 73). As typical domesticates, dogs and cats, are also closely connected with humans. Leeches' behaviour of sucking human blood could be seen as another aspect of liminality, they are composed of both human and animal substances. Butterflies and moths are transformational creatures. The prohibition of laughing at snakes, lizards and millipedes is probably due to them being considered as friends of the rainbow snake. An illuminating way of understanding the logic behind taboos has been explored by Valerio Valeri (2000). Valeri argues that certain acts are taboo because they result from mismatches between what subject and objects stand for that "contradicts their identity as determined by categorical affiliation" (Valeri 2000, 136). Although Bateks maintain that all animals have the potentiality for personhood and subjectivity, during day-to-day life, especially hunting activities, the underlying subjectivities of animals is downplayed and they are related to in a fairly naturalistic manner. Indeed, the personhood of animals may be deliberately downplayed to avoid the problem of cannibalism. In the examples above, the identities of each of the categories of animals are already in some way confused; macaques are human-like, dogs and cats are species which live alongside humans as kin, flying lemurs, land-monitors, snakes, mud-turtles are strange animals which do not easily fit into categories and so forth.

Prohibitions and Blood Throwing

Most Batek prohibitions are concerned with keeping categories of things distinct, particularly edible species, blood, odours and certain categories of kin. The idea of separateness or separatedness is of fundamental importance for Bateks but can only be understood alongside its conceptual counterpart interconnectivity. As we have seen for Bateks, humans, animals and plants, landscape features and meteorological phenomena have an essential unity which is seen as the potentiality for personhood. It is the totality of all these subjects or persons whose relationships constitute society. The various prohibitions and proscriptions that shape the behaviour of the Batek are governed by non-human persons, who punish humans for any transgressions by causing floods, storms, illnesses and accidents. The fundamental importance of maintaining separatedness within such an interanimated view of the cosmos has been highlighted in Signe Howell's work with the Chewong of Malaysia (Howell 1984; Howell 2011; Howell 2012). Howell describes how humans and non-humans "interact according to principles that form the basis for correct behaviour and maintenance of order and that are expressed as named prescriptions and proscriptions" which the author terms "cosmo-rules" (2012, 4).

The Batek Dè' have five main categories of prohibitions or cosmo-rules: *lawac* the prohibition on laughing at animals, mixing incompatible types of food over the same fire, letting different types of blood flow into streams and imitating sounds and images associated with the thunder lord; *tolah* which concerns improper social behaviour ranging from disrespect to violence; *cemam* which prohibits incest and improper sexual behaviour; *dos* a prohibition on crushing lice and the irreverent rhyming of food stuffs which is said to cause a dangerous disease *reway*; and, *punén* which relates to rules governing the sharing of foods. The Manya' classify all prohibited behaviour as *tailain* which includes the same acts covered by the Batek Dè' *lawac, cemam* and *tolah* prohibitions[6]. An important difference between Batek and Chewong ideas about prohibitions is that the Chewongs believe, their "cosmo-rules do not operate beyond the forest; they have no effect" (Howell 2012, 10). This is very different to the Batek Dè' and Manya' idea that earthquakes, tsunamis, storms and floods which occur in Malaysia and foreign countries are caused because people (often unwittingly) have broken prohibitions. Howell (2012, 11) also notes that there has been "a noticeable decline in the active reference to cosmo-rules among the people who live in new villages on the outskirts of the forest". Things are quite different among Bateks living on the edge of the forest, where prohibitions are still strictly adhered to and often encompass the new objects, foods and peoples that Batek encounter in these places. The reason for more strict observance of taboos by groups on the periphery of the forest is clearly related to encapsulation. In forest-edge settlement, due to the presence of Malays there is a greater need to emphasize alterity and maintain a clear boundary between different identities (Cf. Elkholy 2016, 98–100).

Of course, ideas of keeping things apart to preserve symbolic order and prevent pollution is found in all human societies. As Mary Douglas (1966) has argued, in both small-scale and complex societies, purity stands for, and involves a recognition of clear boundaries. If categories of people or things are polluted, they become ambiguous, confused and disordered, dirty and dangerous. In small-scale societies, "the machinery for retribution is never likely to be very strong or very certain in its action. We find that pollution beliefs reinforce it in two distinct ways. Either the transgressor is himself held to the victim of his own act, or some innocent victim takes the brunt of the danger." (Douglas 1966, 165). Bateks have

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[6] The Manya' term *tailain* /*tlaɲ*/, has cognates in several other Orang Asli languages. Among the Batek Nong, the Kenta-Bogn and Kensiu, *telaidn* takes the same meaning as the Manya' term and refers to ritual prohibitions in general (Evans 1937, 146, 176; Schebesta 1957, 231–32). As already noted, Chewongs use a similar term *telaiden* to refer to ritual prohibitions and their version of the rainbow snake is known as *telòden naga* (Howell 1984, 62–64, 83–88, 178–82). In the Batek Dè' language, *talañ* is used to describe upwelling floods caused by the rainbow snake (K. Endicott 1979a, 69).

countless stories about entire communities being punished by the thunder lord and *naga'* (rainbow snake) for transgressing *tailain* and *lawac* taboos. Whatever the underlying reasons for prohibitions on these species, which, as mentioned, varies significantly among and between different groups and individuals, the fact remains that the Batek themselves cannot clearly articulate why these particular species are tabooed.

Fear of retributions caused by the rainbow snake and thunder lord for any transgressions of prohibitions are firmly etched into peoples' psyches from a young age as we can see in the following extract from my fieldnotes recorded at Kampung Tom KiYing in June 2013.

> *Karei and Baji' are furious. Thunder claps explode above the village like explosions of dynamite. The pounding of heavy rain against the corrugated iron roof of the house we are in is deafening. Flashes of lightning illuminate the faces of people huddled in the entrances of their huts. Powerful winds rush through the village. Streams race past the houses and water seems to be flooding up from the ground itself. I quickly pull out my camera, hoping to catch some of the chaos of the scene. Batek friends yell at me to put it away. The flashing of the camera would further anger Karei causing the storm to worsen. Din, a young man aged about 17, is rocking backwards and forwards, holding his head in his hands. He looks very stressed and anxious. Earlier in the day he committed* tailine *by laughing at a butterfly and he is worried that this has caused the storm. He grabs his machete, cuts his shin, and lets blood drip into a plastic cup. He mixes the blood with water and circles the cup over a fire while making an incantation directed to the thunder lord and naga'. He then walks into the rain, throws the blood over his left shoulder and right shoulder and carries on the incantation. Finally, he recites the same words while throwing the blood upwards to the left and the right. Everyone hopes the odour of blood will appease Karei and Baji' and the storm will calm.*

Storms often terrified people, however, someone generally acccepted responsibility and then quietly performed the blood-throwing ritual to open up a line of communication between humans and the *naga'* (underground rainbow snake) and thunderlord so that these deities could be appeased for any perceived transgressions. Storms represent a very real threat to people's lives; huge rainforest trees have shallow root systems and can be easily toppled by powerful storm winds. If even a medium-sized tree collapsed on a Batek camp it could quite easily crush many people to death. Alongside the blood ritual, Manya' shamans claim they also quickly weave magical threads vertically down through trees to hold them in place during storms, and, as we saw in chapter one, journey down to the subterranean

depths to keep the rainbow snake in place with magical threads obtained from the '*ai djum*. Order is thus re-established by coalitions of humans and nonhumans weaving threads that *connect* areas of the cosmos and through the weaving webs that keep things and entities *separate* in their proper places.

The belief in a flood causing underground serpent and a sky-dwelling thunder deity, alongside the practice of throwing blood to pacify the fury of these beings, can be found among Orang Asli communities across Peninsular Malaysia (K. Endicott 1979a; Dentan 2008; Howell 1984; Schebesta 1928; Burenhult and Majid 2011; Evans 1937; Skeat and Blagden 1906b), among indigenous communities in parts of the Philippines, Borneo and Eastern Indonesia (Forth 1989; Blust 1981; Blust 1991) and even as far away as China (Hammond 1992, 26–29). In the 1960s, Rodney Needham introduced the term 'thunder complex' to refer to this assemblage of ideas and the term has remained in use since then (Needham 1964; Blust 1991; Robarchek 1987). Needham (1964, 147) evoked Jungian archetypes in arguing that "certain things in nature seem to exert an effect on the human mind, conducing to symbolic forms of the most general, and even universal, kind." In a response to Needham, Derek Freeman (1968) offered his own psychoanalytical interpretation of the complex by drawing upon Freud and an extremely wide range of comparative examples to argue that the thunder deity should be considered as a kind of Oedipus complex. Neither explanations are at all satisfactory and avoid any analysis of the sociological implications of the complex.

Endicott has highlighted the equivocal qualities of blood and how this reflects their ambiguous relations with the thunder deity and underworld rainbow snake (*naga'*) (1979, 159). As he has previously argued, there is no agreement among Bateks on why throwing blood is said to calm these deities and many individuals cannot explain why the ritual is performed. Some Bateks say the thunder lord and *naga'* like to drink the blood which is sent to them. Others say only the *bayang* (shadow soul or reflection) of blood or its odour reaches the deities. In the first case, the *bayang* of blood is said to be used by the thunder god to cause the seasonal fruits to ripen. In the latter case, the *pel-eng* odour (like raw meat) of blood is said to cause the *naga'* and thunder deity to cease their punishments through revulsion and fear (cf. Endicott 1979, 159). For Bateks, blood and soul-stuff (*ɲawa'*) are very closely related. Their blood throwing performances can be considered a means by which people are sending part of their life-forces to the thunder-deity and rainbow snake. The associations between blood/*ɲawa'* as a source of life and vitality are echoed in the idea that blood is used by Gobar to cause fruits to ripen. Some Batek Dè conceptualize fruits as a class of *hala'* (creator beings) known as *hala' tahan* (*fruit spirits*) and the idea that the blood which is thrown to Gobar is shared by the thunder deity among these entities further establishes relatedness between humans and non-humans. By and large, Bateks claim they throw blood to stop storms and floods because this is what their ancestors did. There is considerable doubt and

ambivalence in why things are done the way they are. Most people do not clearly know why the blood-throwing ritual works, but they are quite sure it does.

All Bateks, aside from very young children, are well aware of these prohibitions and they very much shape everyday life which is ritualized in very subtle ways. For example, outside peoples' shelters, there are always several hearths due to prohibitions on cooking different categories of food over the same fire. People do not make a big song and dance each time they cook foods, they simply know that foods must be cooked over different fires to stop their odours mixing which would anger the rainbow snake and thunder lord. Similarly, everyone knows that the blood of macaques, certain turtles and tortoises must not be allowed to flow into streams for similar reasons. Rules proscribing improper social and sexual behaviour such as violence, spitting, disrespect towards older people are also obvious for all Bateks, having been taught to children from a very young age. The fates of people who broke these rules and were punished by non-humans is frequently described in myths which are told and retold countless times, often on quite informal occasions. Certain rules are more difficult to abide by. For example, the prohibition about laughing incontrollably is difficult to abide by if someone does something very funny. However, even on occasions like this someone will shout *lawac* or *tailine* ("prohibited") to calm everyone down. Prohibitions are adhered to seriously in order to reduce any potential risk of the thunder lord and underworld *naga'* causing floods and storms or of someone being put into a state of ritual danger which could lead to them having an accident or falling ill. The idea that prohibitions serve to reduce risks has also been emphasized by Signe Howell in her work on the Chewong who argues that prohibitions shape everyday life behaviour and put "humans and non-human conscious beings into a continuous, but prescribed, relationship of mutuality, rendering the rules 'techniques for life saving'" (Howell 2012, 4 citing Hocart 1970, 33-34).

Bateks continually told me that the current degradation of the local environment, through deforestation, mining and quarrying would end in disaster as the *naga'* would begin to rock and writhe causing massive floods and earthquakes (see also Lye 2004). Here we really get to the crux of the question of separatedness. Bateks are well aware of the fundamental relatedness of humans and non-humans, and which categories of things must be kept apart. They know how to behave correctly, they know which categories of things and persons must be kept apart and they are fully aware of the correct norms of relating to the nonhumans with whom they co-constitute the forest community. Non-Bateks are classified as *gob* (outsiders), they do not belong in the forest, they do not form part of this society and they do not know the correct norms of social behaviour. Bateks are first and foremost forest peoples (*Batek həp*), the archetypcal *gob* (Malays) are not forest people, their world is associated with towns and villages downstream, outside the forest. As Endicott (1979) and Lye (2004) have previously stated, if the

Bateks were to leave the forest, the result would be cosmic collapse. The huge increase of outsiders who have moved into their territories, chopped down forests, clogged up rivers and ripped apart landscapes through mining and quarrying represent a catastrophic threat to cosmic order. Influxes of outsiders within the forest (Malays, tourists, poachers and government workers) can be seen as constituting what Mary Douglas (1966) terms "matter out of place", they represent, and bring with them, disorder. Cosmological and everyday practices are mutually informing. There are clear similarities in the ways that Bateks need to maintain ethnic distinctivness from Malays and their concerns for maintaining categories of things apart. A useful way of think about this relationship between connectivity and separation in everyday and cosmological practices is through Valerio Valeri's (2000, 136) concept of the "danger of identification by association". Building on Mary Douglas' work, Valeri argues that due to the similarities between human and nonhuman subjectivities, separation must be maintained through the enactment of taboos or prohibitions. His argument can also be applied to human-human relations. For Bateks who continually shift between two different modes of subjectivity alternately associated with Batek or Malay political systems, they must simultaneously maintain separateness to inhibit the "danger of losing [themselves] of undermining [their] embodied identit[ies]." (Valeri 2000, 136). Judith Bovensiepen and Fredrico Rosa have previously discussed the usefulness of Valeri's approach but emphasized that "as relations with outsiders change so can relations with the sacred" (2016, 672–73). This is important, the most terrifying violence meted out by the rainbow snake and thunder lord in the forms of tsunamis, floods and earthquakes are often caused by outsiders destroying Batek ancestral landscapes.

The Thunder Lord

About two and a half kilometres south of Batu Kabang lies another important karst known as Batu Tebogn that is associated with another type of prohibition. Standing in a grassy area surrounded by fruit and rubber trees a few hundred metres in front of the karst, ʻey Wauh recounted the following story about this place in May 2013.

> *Batu Tebogn has a very old story but I am frightened to tell you. I'm frightened [laughs nervously] but I will tell you. Long ago, people were camped here. One day, when most of the people had gone to the forest a man stayed here in his lean-to. He was making his blowpipe (bəlaw) and his poisoned darts (təŋlac). His niece (bɛr) also stayed here at her lean-to. After some time, the man got itchy. He wanted her. He wanted to have sex with her straight away. He was itching for sex! [ʻey Wauh scratches his body excitedly and laughs]. But Karei was watching them from above. He*

could see the two of them. He could see they were having sex. He flew down and took the couple. He took them up to the top of the rock. [ʻey Wauh points to the top of the rock]. He took them up there, that is where they died. Their blood (yap) now stains the rock. You can see it there today [points at red marks on the karst]. Their souls now live within the rock. We cannot climb this rock otherwise we will die too.

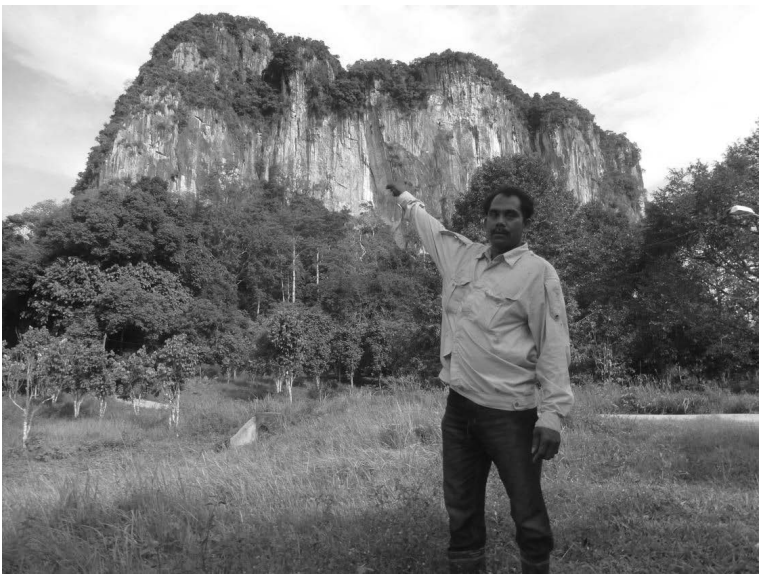

Figure 5 Batu Tebogn. The darker area of rock that ʻey Wauh is pointing at and the dark area on the top left corner of the karst are of a reddish-orange ochre colour which is said to be the blood of the incestuous couple.

Certain details of this story need contextualisation. The man being described as making a blowpipe at camp possibly hints at his sexual desires. Blowpipes are often joked about and used as metaphors for penises and the mouthpiece (*tamam*) at the end of a blowpipe is sometimes referred to as *lō'* (penis). ʻey Wauh expressed his fears about the locale before recounting the myth and the rules about avoidance of the site (specifically climbing) make it another topophobic locale. The reddish-orange marks on Batu Tebogn which are seen to be the blood of the incestuous couple also function as a signifier of danger. The Manya' (and other Bateks) have very strict rules pertaining to sexual relations between closely related members of the opposite sex (albeit less strict than other Semang groups) and the relationship between the man and his niece at Batu Tebogn transgressed accepted limits. The events recounted in the above story can be illuminated through some further background information about the thunder deity. A good starting point concerns

how he initially became associated with this role. The following story told to me at Kampung Tom Ki Ying details this event.

> *Long ago, Karei (thunder) lived with his brother Leway (the honey bee) and their mother Capoi (the earth deity) here on earth. When he lived on earth, Karei cultivated various crops such as bananas, cassava, yams and rice. He lived just like a Malay. His brother, Leway was different, he lived like a Batek. One day when Leway was out hunting, Karei became sexually aroused and raped his mother Capoi. When Leway returned and discovered what had happened he became furious. As they began fighting, Karei took a torch and tried to burn his brother. Leway fled but then returned and repeatedly flew about stinging Karei [metamorphosing into his bee form]. Karei fled and took his current abode in the sky-world. Leway also ascended to the celestial realm but to a separate place than his brother. Their mother Capoi descended into the subterranean depths and became the earth deity.*

Although he is the principal deity associated with the punishment of incest, this myth shows that Karei himself incestuously raped his own mother while living on earth. Indeed, it is a consequence of this act which led to him becoming the thunder lord and the events that are recorded at Batu Tebogn clearly mirror this act. Alongside explaining the origins of these powerful nonhumans, this myth connects Karei with Malays who are the emblematic groups which Bateks construct their identity against. In the past, Malay political power was frequently exercised through direct violence against the Manya' and Batek Dè' in slave raids and massacres which only ended in the early twentieth century. Even today, Malays hold considerable political power over Batek communities. Manya' living at Kampung Tom Ki Ying are still extremely wary of Malays who live in neighbouring villages and often complain that they are threatened with violence by Malays, both direct physical violence and supernatural violence in the form of curses and spells to cause sickness. The power of the thunder lord mirrors that of the Malays and to a certain degree he can be seen as an embodiment of the uncontrollable and inescapable violence of the past and present. The myth of Karei, Leway and Capoi's origin is intriguing in that relatedness and separation are instantiated simultaneously. While the three form a close kin unit formed of two brothers and their mother, Karei and Leway are associated with two different ethnicities and modes of sociality, Karei with Malays and Leway with Bateks. Furthermore, each character ends up in a separate realm; Capoi in the underworld, and the two brothers in separate domains of the celestial world. The simultaneous relatedness and separatedness of Leway and Karei mirrors Batek relations with Malays;

although both live side-by-side and interact regularly, they identify with quite different environments and embody quintessential alterity for each other.

Bateks generally describe the thunder deity as an incredibly powerful, vengeful but somewhat ridiculous entity living somewhere in the sky. The Manya' refer to him as Karei, a term which has cognates across the Malay Peninsula, Borneo and the Philippines (Carey 1976, 100; Blust 2013, 409–10) suggesting an ancient pre-Austro-Asiatic origin for the term (Blust 2013). The Batek Dè' refer to him as god Gobar, a term which is derived from the Malay term *gobar* meaning 'gloomy' or 'overcast' (Wilkinson R. J 1901, 580).

There is no real agreement about the thunder deity's current appearance; his identity is highly fluid. When I asked Manya' to describe him to me they claimed he normally resembles a human when calm but transforms into a terrifying theriocephalic being when angered—a human with the head of a siamang, gibbon, bear, elephant or tiger. As we saw in the origin story above, the Manya' also associate him with Malays. Similarly, Mendriqs claim that when Karei makes thunder he has the form of a gibbon but when sending disease he looks like a Malay (Evans 1937, 184). Some Batek Dè' say Gobar resembles a giant monkey-like creature while others say he is impossible to see due to blinding flashes of lightning which continually shoot out of his eyes. Semai describe him as "a mammoth black animal, a ghastly sunbear, a giant pig-tailed macaque, leaf monkey or siamang" (Dentan 2008, 70). As noted by Endicott (1979, 165), one of his names, Mawas, evokes images of giant apes in the Malay language. Batek Nongs call him Jawac and say he looks like a pig-tailed macaque (B. *bawac*; L. *Macacus nemestrinus*). Menriq, Jahai and Lanoh descriptions of him alternate between a giant ape and a Malay or a Malay prince (Evans 1937, 184–88; Schebesta 1957, 13–14, 24; K. Endicott 1979a, 174; Schebesta 1928, 185). Versions of his name used by Temiars ('Ɛŋkãây) and Semai (Ngku) are cognate with the Malay word *tengku* meaning 'Prince' or 'Lord' (Dentan 2002b, 163). During my own research, the Manya' and Batek Dè' described him as a singular entity but in stories collected by Kirk Endicott (1979a, 163) he was sometimes described as two brothers (called Mawas and Nawas), a brother and sister, or a husband and wife. His ambiguity is also reflected in his character; he is both greatly feared as the destructive embodiment of thunder but he is also a trickster and a hilarious figure who can be mocked (Lye 2004, 155; K. Endicott 1979a, 167–68). Again, this ambiguity is reflective of the Bateks relations with Malays. Like the thunder lord, they are greatly feared but behind their backs they are also frequently mocked and derided. While the Manya' say the thunder lord lives somewhere alone in the celestial world, the Batek Dè say he now lives atop a mountain or within a cave high up on a limestone karst at the centre of the world where he guards flower blossoms and bees (cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 42–45). At the bottom of this huge karst, which Endicott names as Batu Balok, is said to be a large cave which is the home of powerful *hala'*-tigers (original creator beings) who

some people claim that Batek shamans' join after death (K. Endicott 1979a, 137–38). Cosmological imagery is also drawn from foreign sources in some descriptions of "large quantities of seasonal fruit blossoms and bees which rest in small caves 'like goods on a shop shelf'" above the tiger caves (K. Endicott 1979a, 44).

The thunder lord's associations with giant apes, tigers and Malays equate him with Otherness, that of formidable and highly salient forest animals and the potency of Malay polities. This characteristic is common to similar such monstrous entities in many cultures described by Jerome Cohen as "an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond" (Cohen 1996, 7). The alternating appearance of the thunder lord as a normal human of Malay appearance when calm and terrifying animals when angered mirrors the episodic violence that punctuated Batek-Malay relations. Historically, during times of peace, Bateks traded forest products with Malays and relationships were, for the most part amicable, but when violence erupted, Bateks fled to the forest, or were massacred in incidents of devastating violence (K. Endicott 1983; K. Endicott 1988; Dentan 2008; Tacey and Riboli 2014). Even today, the Manya' and other Bateks will flee to the forest at the drop of a hat if they perceive they are threatened by Malays. Robert Dentan has argued that the long period during which Orang Aslis were subjected to extreme violence by slave raiders, made an indelible mark on their cosmologies and hence the destructive power of the thunder lord should be seen as an embodiment of the violent slave-raiding state (Dentan 2002b; Dentan 2002a). However, the thunderlord's behaviour and characteristics is not only an *incorporation* or *embodiment* of external power and violence, it is also a *transformation* of power and violence into reproductive potentiality. Alongside his role as a punisher for transgressive behaviour, the thunder lord is also intimately connected with the seasonal fruit and honey cycles. His thunderous rumblings in February and March are said to signal the creator beings to send down fruit blossoms and bees to earth at the correct time of year (Endicott 1979, 56). Bateks do not see the thunder god as embodying evil, the punishments he metes out to humans for transgressions are only aimed at those who transgress established modes of behaviour. Furthermore, his wrath is increasingly aimed at non-Bateks who destroy the environment and act violently. In this guise, he also acts as a protector of the Bateks' cherished way of life as a forest people.

Making Claims to Place

Three men from Kampung Tom Ki Ying who were particularly keen to take me around the local landscape to explore these places were Mayam, 'ey Wauh and Baya'. Mayam an unmarried bachelor in his thirties, is well respected by other Manya' for his knowledge of myths and stories and his foraging abilities. 'ey Wauh, the village headman, was particular outspoken about the degradation of the local

environment and the marginalization of the people at Kampung Tom Ki. Baya', a village elder, was a much quieter man in general, but was well aware of myths and stories. Each held various degrees of authority at the village. Although the Manya' will never directly name anyone as a shaman, two of these men were often alluded to by other villagers as having shamanic abilities.

The willingness of these men to take me to so many places associated with non-human persons, myths, ritual prohibitions and historical episodes should not just be understood as a readiness to help me with my research, it was undoubtedly a strategic decision to add authority to their claims to place and forms part of a concerted effort to regain control of their landscape. Similar techniques of establishing presence have been described by anthropologists working with indigenous peoples in a variety of places (Tsing 1993; Bacigalupo 2016; Thornton 2008). The stories the Manya' told me about these places, recontextualized myth and history within their contemporary context of marginalization and can be understood as a means to reassert their authority over landscape. This authority has been wrested from them during Malay and British colonization of the area which attempted to efface any traces of the Manya's presence in the area, both literally through violence, and figuratively through map-making and administrative land classifications, and politically through denying the Manya' land right and cultural autonomy.

Immediately upon my arrival in the village of Kampung Tom Ki Ying in November 2012, 'ey Wauh and other villagers began articulating their grievances against the Malaysian government and their desire to create alliances of equality with national and international actors. I was handed piles of letters 'ey Wauh had addressed to different nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), human rights groups and foreign governments in the hope that someone would be able to help them. The aims of the requests were far-reaching: autonomy from the Malaysian government, legal rights, the immediate halting of mining activities in the area, recognition of their ancestral lands, and collaboration on equal terms with international partners to develop local resources.

These letters had been written in haste and anger; their contents describe the absolute desperation that the people of Kampung Ki experience. No-one at the village has been given any formal schooling and the letters jumped from grievance to grievance without thought for formalities and polite forms. Some letters asked that local Malays be expelled from the area and sent back to their place of origin (which was assumed to be Kalimantan in Indonesia). Land rights, marginalization and cultural autonomy were central themes. Complaints were made that the Malaysian government preferred helping Palestinian refugees instead of improving the lives of the Orang Asli. Some letters written to the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) asked for help in leaving Islam, a religion the villagers complained they had been forced to convert to. People complained that on their

identity cards they were given Malay names that they did not choose. They demanded that their 'true' personal names and the 'true' name of their village be restored. Government officials refer to the settlement as Kampung Telok Gunung on all official documents, rather than the local Manya' name Kampung Tom KiYing which refers to the KiYing stream that passes close by the village. They also demanded that no *surau* (Islamic assembly buildings) be built in the village. Another key theme was local resources. Several letters focussed on 'illegal' gold and tin mining in the area and the destruction of forests. People outlined their anxieties about mining activities in the area and the pollution of rivers resulting from such activities. Mines and quarries were described as 'illegal', people complained that resource extraction posed grave ecological threats to the area. In letters, people clearly articulated their need for the rivers for drinking, bathing, fishing and other daily activities. People also highlighted the fact that they had not economically profited from any mining and logging activities. While 'outsiders' got rich, they remained poor.

Figure 6. Letters written at Kampung Tom Ki Ying

When I arrived at the village, I outlined my research focus on religion, place and environmental change to 'ey Wauh and other villagers. My project clearly overlapped with the grievances that the villagers made in these letters and my arrival at the village just when these letters were being drawn was seized as an opportunity to add authority to the claims that the villagers had outlined in their letters. The Manya' and other Batek groups I worked with, were adamant that they

had inhabited the landscapes they currently live in long before Malays and others had moved into them. The stories and myths I was told about particular places clearly serve to establish the Manya's ancestral presence in this part of Peninsular Malaysia.

The Emplacement of Myth in Landscape

Answering the question that I posed at the start of this chapter, concerning the significance of the Bateks relations with the various non-humans that inhabit their environment, the complex taboos they enforce and the landscape features they are related to, involves several levels of analysis. The relations between Bateks and the various non-human persons they share their environment with are fundamentally interpersonal relations and are thus ontologically defined. Non-humans, particularly the thunder lord and underworld *naga'* (rainbow snake), are powerful agents who enforce socially proscribed behaviour. The underlying relatedness and similarities between humans and non-humans largely determine various ritual prohibitions which are aimed at keeping things separate. For Bateks, if categories of things (kin, animals, names and blood) are not kept within their cosmologically defined categories or places, they disrupt order and cause the wrath of nonhumans. Analogous to this idea is that people also belong in particular places. The place of the Manya' and Batek Dè' is within the forest, alongside the other non-human persons who co-constitute their society. Bateks know how to relate to the heterogeneous spirits of the forest in the correct way by following specific, ritually defined modes of behaviour. Outsiders, particularly Malays, do not belong in the forest, they do not know how to behave correctly within this environment and thus disrupt and upset the order of the creator beings, disturbing the local environment and causing the wrath of creator beings.

The stories, myths and prohibitions of Bateks and other peoples with 'oral cultures,' do not float anchorless through time and space. As we have seen in this chapter, many relate to specific places in the local environment. Landscapes and particular locations within them are frequently, in the words of Keith Basso (1996, 62), "charged with personal and social significance [and] work in important ways to shape the images that [people] have—or should have—of themselves". Batek myths, which are associated with particular topographic features, emplace cosmologies within the landscape and serve as reminders of cosmologically prescribed ways of behaving. For Bateks, it is the interactions of ordinary humans with non-human persons in socially and ontologically prescribed ways which produces landscape and constitutes the larger cosmic community. Landscape and the stories associated with particular places across the landscape constitute a moral code or 'law of the land' which Bateks say they must abide by in order to avoid cosmic retributions or catastrophes. The fact that the places Bateks associate with

myths, prohibitions and non-human others are highly salient locations with striking aesthetic features is important. The Manya' and Batek Dè' most commonly associate mythic episodes, the movement of ancestral culture-heroes and non-human persons with limestone karsts. These places literally 'stand out' from the rest of the environment, they often tower over surrounding forest, or increasingly, oil-palm plantations. Such features serve as important landmarks which, as Lye (2004, 55) has written "can be used to orientate movement and give directions." Other prominent topographic features which Bateks associate with myths and non-humans include large riverine boulders, waterfalls and mountains whose forms are clearly distinguishable from the surrounding landscape. Such striking places are easy to remember and their aesthetic qualities are often alluded to in the stories associated with them. While most people know the names of these places, only a few people had enough confidence in their knowledge to tell me the stories associated with them. Many people claimed they did not know much about them and directed me towards others, often older men, who did. Whilst important for all Bateks, these places are of particular importance for shamans for whom knowledge of mythological lore and cosmo-topographies forms an essential part of their training with elders and non-human others in dreams and trances.

Landscapes, Non-Humans and Marginalization

It would be a mistake to only understand Batek relations with their local environment as purely relating to internal modes of social relations. Bateks, like most other indigenous peoples, have extremely intimate relations with the places they live in. However, these places are not separated from the wider world. As we saw in chapter two, Bateks have been connected to other people and places in Malaysia for at least two thousand years. Many of the Batek's myths and cosmological constructs are shared by numerous other groups across Southeast Asia testifying to high levels of cultural and cosmological borrowing. However, interconnections with other peoples have rapidly increased in recent years and resulted in radical environmental and social changes. Places, landscapes and territories are constructed relationally, historically and materially on multiple scales by different social groups with different linguistic, socio-cultural, economic and political configurations, creating overlapping, contradictory, and often, conflicting senses of place, landscape, and territoriality (Massey 2005; Tsing 2005; Stalder 2006; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). It is within their current context of marginalization and political exclusions that the Bateks place-based stories must be understood. Alongside serving as reminders for correct behaviours and mythological episodes, these places serve as important territorial markers. By telling me stories associated with particular locales and topographic features, Bateks were making territorial claims.

The destructive power and uncontrollable wrath of the thunder deity is clearly associated with Malayness, while those of benevolent non-human persons like the *'ai djum* and *hala' 'asal* (creator beings) are closer to in-group forms of sociality. Similar correlations between the characteristics and behaviours of non-humans are widespread in many other indigenous societies. This is hardly surprising, as Descola has argued human social relations "are easier to handle, to memorize, and to mobilize for wide use than the relations that are detectable in the nonhuman environment" (2013, 254). However, anthropologists, such as Tim Ingold (Ingold 2000) and Rane Willerslev (2007), who have taken more phenomenological approaches to animism, have been fiercely critical of the idea that "the human social domain is the fundamental reality from which all representations of the natural environment are derived" (Willerslev 2007, 18) arguing that such approaches end up reproducing Cartesian dualisms by suggesting that the relations between humans and non-humans are metaphorical. From the phenomenological angle, our engagements with things, animals and the environment take priority over abstract contemplation; self and the world are indissolubly entangled and ontologically inseparable.

Although I agree with Willerslev's argument that "personhood, rather than being an inherent property of people and things, is constituted in and through the relationships into which they enter" (2007, 21), the fact remains that the non-human persons that animists claim populate their worlds are fundamentally very human-like. Karei and Baji' incarnate natural power in its rawest and most powerful forms: thunder, earthquakes, torrential rains and floods, but they are categorically related to as persons with human-like attributes. Their behaviours and characteristics condense, embody and emplace an array of historical experiences and relations covering precolonial, colonial and postcolonial experiences of interaction with neighbouring ethnic groups and the State in its various forms. All of these aspects of the thunder lord and *naga'* (rainbow snake) are important.

The "ontological liminality" of these entities and their "refusal to participate in the classificatory order of things", to coin a phrase used by Jeffrey Cohen (1996, 6), is typical of the rhizomatic non-binary connections that typify animistic Batek cosmologies and their varying modes of relating to non-human persons. In the contemporary interconnected world Bateks often interpret devastating tsunamis, floods, earthquakes and storms in Malaysia and foreign countries as being caused by these deities as punishment for humans (rather than just Bateks) for breaching taboos, causing widespread environmental destruction, and increased violence. Similar ideas of catastrophes being caused by powerful non-humans due to the activities of foreigners of outsiders have been reported by Michael Scott in the Solomon Islands (2011) and Judith Bovensiepen in Timor-Leste (Bovensiepen 2011). The thunder lord and the *naga'* can be understood as what Viveiros De Castro

(2009, 110) describes as examples of "rhizomatic multiplicity … not truly a *being* but an assemblage of becomings, a *"between"*: a "*difference engine*". Or in Cohen's terms "polysemy is granted so that a greater threat can be encoded" (1996, 11). The polysemic multiplicity of such monstrous entities is, as Cohen (1996, 11) argues, "like a hydra" allowing "possibilities of escape, resistance, disruption [to] arise with more force". The thunder lord is simultaneously perceived as Malay and Batek, human and animal, as one and many, as the destructiveness of the Malay state, and the power which punishes this destructiveness. The *naga'* has similar qualities, she is at once human and animal, one and many, Batek and Other, a subterranean serpent and a rainbow arching through the heavens, a world creator and world destroyer. The rhizomatic qualities of various entities and persons within Batek cosmologies means that they cannot be reified like their state-backed counterparts, they defy simplification and transcend dualistic thinking. It would be a grave mistake to attempt to understand how Bateks and other animists constitute and experience their inter-agential landscapes and relations with non-humans as entirely separate from historical experience and wider social relations. It is to this topic that I turn in the following two chapters.

Chapter Four

BENEVOLENT SPIRITS: SHARING AND ALTERITY

This chapter presents some of the major categories of benevolent non-human beings in Batek cosmologies and describes the various modes of relations maintained with them. Besides non-humans, it also considers Batek shamans who mediate the relations with them, and who themselves are perceived as having more-than-human capabilities. I examine Batek relations with and the characteristics, identities and behaviours of non-human beings (including animals) by paying close attention to narratives, myths and stories that people tell about non-humans encountered within the forest and the cosmotopographies revealed in shamans' journeys. The goal of the chapter is to move beyond ideas and concepts developed by proponents of the 'new animism' (Århem 2016b; Bird-David 1990; Descola 2013; Viveiros De Castro 1998; Ingold 2000a) to explore how encounters with the world beyond the forest and historical experiences are reflected within, and transformed through, animistic consciousness. Thereby, I aim to contribute to a more nuanced theorisation of animism. Batek forms of animism and shamanism are thoroughly inclusive and outward looking and should not be considered as examples of radical alterity. By integrating other places and peoples into their visions, shamans reconstruct contemporary and historical relations with various outsiders through the lens of animistic consciousness.

In numerous recent studies of animism, non-human others — animals, spirits, deities and the dead — have been described as human-like persons. Batek animism is significantly person-oriented, although personhood is largely context dependent and only emerges through specific intersubjective encounters. If animists do indeed consider spirits as human-like persons, then it would seem to follow that the ways they relate to them should resemble the ways that humans relate to other humans. In this chapter, I make three challenges to recent studies of animism.

First, I argue that animistic ways of relating to nonhumans cannot be narrowly reduced to one particular mode of interaction characterized, for example, by 'sharing', 'exchange' or 'predation'. Humans, whether post-industrial urbanites or forest dwelling non-state peoples, lead complex social lives, involving multifaceted forms of interaction. To avoid simplistic characterisations of non-state peoples and to properly understand the complexities of their relations with nonhumans we

must also consider the different factors that may shape these relations: in-group social relations, relations with ethnic others, historical changes, wider socio-political circumstances and shifting ecological conditions. I argue that this social complexity is refracted within Batek animistic ontologies. The ways Bateks relate to benevolent collectives of non-human others usually evokes in-group forms of sociality characterized by sharing and solidarity. Relations with predatory spirits conjure more antagonistic, and frequently violent, interactions with downstream Malay traders, slavers and state polities.

Second, I question the assumption that animists live in ontological worlds separated from other groups by incommensurable difference. In Southeast Asia, animistic peoples have exchanged goods, ideas, and cosmological constructs with other social groups, including pre-colonial states, for millennia. Cosmologies, animistic practices and modes of relating to other-than-human persons, are not fixed, unchanging and impermeable, they change through time, and are shifting and porous. Such cosmologies, practices and modes of relating should not be considered as unitary or thing-like 'ontologies'; they consist of practices of interpretation which vary significantly between individuals and develop and change through particular individual's lifetimes. Empirical observations and experiences shape how people relate to spirits, animals and other non-humans, how they interpret and tell myths and their understanding of ritual prohibitions. Although this leads to significant internal diversity, this is somewhat curbed through the sharing of ideas and interpretations of specific events through discourse. People draw on each other's ideas and their interpretations of experiences, including ecological and socio-political changes, which are refracted animistic conceptions and circulate around and between communities in stories. Over time, varied experiences and ideas shape rather amorphous and indeterminate 'ontologies' which are only conceived as entities by anthropologists, who often struggle to make sense of them. Although the ideas of some people considered as especially knowledgeable, particularly shamans and elders, carry authority, Bateks generally tend to trust their own experiences far more than those of others. An illustrative example of this concerns Batek concepts of the afterlife. When trying to corroborate different descriptions of the afterlife with a Batek elder at the village of Post Lebir in Kelantan, he simply replied "I don't know, I have never died". Such expressions of immediacy, which prioritise lived personal experiences and the observation particular events are common among small-scale hunter-gatherers and horticulturalists. This is captured in Sillander's concept of "the authority of experience," which he argued was "a common tendency of [his Bentian] informants to dismiss theoretical knowledge as not true knowledge or a valid grounds for action or belief, and to advance personal observation as the only reliable source of knowledge" (Sillander 2004, 153).

Third, I argue that portraying animism in diametrical opposition to Western naturalism conceals the nuanced and varied ways that indigenous peoples relate to animals, plants and other phenomena. While Bateks (and other animists) sometimes relate to non-human others, especially animals, as persons, in many contexts they relate to animals and the wider environment in more naturalistic ways; animals are often just considered as 'meat' to be hunted.

Modes of Relating to Nonhumans

For Bateks, the cosmos is filled with a myriad of potential subjective agents. Under certain conditions, animals, bees, flowers, plants, wind, thunder, the dead, spirits, and landscape features have the potential for qualities of personhood such as agency, cognition, intentionality, reflexivity and consciousness. Bateks often describe the bodies of humans and animals to be like shirts (*baju*) or 'wraps' (*sarong*) which shamans and spirits can put on (*pakai*) and change; and certain 'substances'—blood, life force (*nawa*) and odours—are considered as transferable between humans and nonhumans. Their varying modes of relating to nonhuman others might best be understood as ontogeny (Ingold 2013b; Ingold 2016a) or onto-praxis (M. W. Scott 2007; Jon Henrik Ziegler Remme 2016). These terms merit some unpacking. Ingold's Deleuzian usage of the biological concept of ontogeny—which normally refers to the biological development of individual organisms or behavioural features—connotes the mutual development of cultural forms through relations, exchanges and connections between beings. Somewhat similarly, Jon Henrik Remme and Michael Scott's concept of onto-praxis underscores how the enactment of intersubjective practices, performances and discourses between shamans, spirits, deities and other nonhumans are interpreted as realizations of the potentiality of shared sociality that transcends the human realm.

Bateks frequently talk about more mysterious nonhuman beings and persons which they encounter in the forest: heavenly spirits visiting earth, tigers that can transform into men, giant apes that can transform into elephants and various monstrous beings. The presence or sounds of certain animals, birds and insects often signify the activities of other nonhuman beings. For example, calls of the Great Argus Pheasant (B. *kwang;* L. *Argusianus argus*) on the edge of the forest, can indicate imminent earthquakes caused by the movements of the giant underground serpent, while the presence of owls (B. *hong hong kuwach*) can signal the arrival of tigers, were-tigers or giant ape-like beings. However, communications and interactions with nonhuman entities most frequently take place in altered states of consciousness (dreams and trances).

The connections Bateks cultivate with nonhumans cannot be reduced to one relational mode in the manner that some anthropologists have classified the animistic relations with nonhumans of indigenous peoples in other parts of the

world: predatory in Amazonia (Viveiros De Castro 1998); nonviolent giving and sharing in the American subarctic and Southern India (Bird-David 1990; Bird-David 1999; Ingold 2000); and alliance in Siberia (Willerslev 2007)[7]. Furthermore, their relations with non-human others, their narratives about the cartography of the cosmos, and the identities and behaviours they ascribe to non-humans are not purely dependent upon an "animistic way of thinking" limited to an egalitarian, hunter-gather lifestyle within a rainforest environment. Certain relations that Bateks have with different socio-cosmological collectives are homologous to types of internal social relations characterized by sharing, particularly those between humans and the benevolent spirit beings which Batek Dè' call *hala' 'asal* and Batek Tanum call *ai djum*. These spirits are said to be frequently encountered in human-like forms in dreams and trances during which they teach shamans songs, spells and other forms of knowledge. The relations that the Batek Dè' have with *hala' 'asal* and the Manya' cultivate with *ai' djum* usually take the form of alliances: friendships, marriages and teacher-student relations.

Specific modes in which Bateks and non-humans relate to each other are emphasized in italics below: the *punishment* of humans by the thunder deity and rainbow snake through the unleashing of floods, storms, rains and earthquakes if taboos and moral norms are not abided by and the appeasement of these entities through ritual *exchange*; the *sustenance and giving* of fruits by creator beings for humans; the *transmission* and *sharing* of ritual and medicinal knowledge from spirits and ancestors to humans in altered states; the *curing* of humans in ceremonies involving human and nonhuman interactions; and the *predation* and *consumption* of nonhuman animals by humans and of human bodies and souls by cannibalistic monsters. The modes of some of these relationships can be reversed through specific actions. For example, creator beings will withhold fruit production if humans behave in ways which offend nonhuman persons and knowledge will only be transmitted to individuals who act in ways that please non-humans. Rather than being ontologically predetermined, the qualities of relations with nonhumans emerge through interaction with humans. Each of these modes of relating to nonhumans is important and different modes of relating continually inform each other (Sillander 2016).

Concepts developed by the New Animists offer a powerful framework to understand animism. However, they have certain shortcomings. The structuralist leanings of many Amazonian anthropologists associated with New Animism and the wider ontological turn in the social sciences means that their schemas and models are overly rigid. As Joanna Overing suggests (1999, 1), there are many

[7] See Joanna Overing (1999), Laura Rival (2012), Kapfhammer (2012), for opposing accounts that highlight 'giving' rather than 'predatory' aspects of Amazonian ontologies.

reasons to avoid "any generalising schema that works toward the end of categorising … peoples into this or that animic mental template". Furthermore, the mythological and cosmological focus of Amazonian studies means that the more dynamic and performative aspects of Amerindian ontologies is often downplayed. The relations that animists have with non-human others are varied and nuanced, personhood emerges through specific practices and relationships that may be conceptualized as ontopraxis or ontogeny. Generalising schemas tend to turn dynamic, fluid and shifting practices into reified ontologies grounded within anthropological "assumptions about their 'social structures' (based on such principals as exchange, reciprocity and hierarchy)" (Overing 1999, 3). Bateks do not live in ontological worlds separated by incommensurable difference from their Malay neighbours, Euro-Americans or other social groups. Ontopraxis and modes of relating to non-human others is shaped through what Strathern (1991) terms 'partial connections' with other peoples and places. The Batek's historical modes of alternately establishing relations with outsiders and then temporarily breaking off these relations, has allowed for disjunctive flows of cosmological imagery and concepts to enter the forest and shaped the modes in which Bateks relate to certain non-human others.

Personhood in Context: Animals as Persons and Food

As forest peoples, Bateks are acutely aware of the behaviours and habitats of a large number of species which they regularly encounter in their daily lives. While most animals are considered as capable of intentionality, consciousness, and reflexivity, the majority of animals are not thought of as persons under normal conditions. Bateks regularly hunt and consume forest animals and so to consider game animals as persons *all of the time* would constitute a form of cannibalism. As Endicott notes, "most animals that can be eaten are regarded dispassionately as meat 'on the hoof'" (1979a, 64). In many contexts, Bateks think about and relate to animals in a fairly naturalistic manner. From a young age, Batek children begin accumulating an encyclopaedic knowledge of flora and fauna and are able to recognize the habitats, life-cycles, anatomies, morphologies, behaviours, tracks, calls and odours of a vast number of animal and plant species (Cf. Lye 2004, pp 123-145). Much of this knowledge is of a clearly scientific nature and would put most ecologists, ethologists and botanists to shame. This type of learning takes place alongside the learning of other types of knowledge—myths, shamanic lore, techniques of entering into altered states, songs, prohibitions and so on—which constitute a different way of thinking about and relating to animals and the environment than more naturalistic modes. These different types of knowledge are not separated into distinctive domains, they mutually inform each other. For example, ecological knowledge is contained within myths, myths are often emplaced within particular

locations in the landscape with distinctive ecologies, and animals' behaviours may signify ecological changes or cosmic activities.

Conceiving animism as a structural reversal of naturalism is both simplistic and counter-productive by serving to reinforce negative stereotypes of indigenous peoples as exotic 'primitives' in opposition to sophisticated and scientifically minded 'moderns'. It is more helpful to conceive of human thought and practices as encompassing an ontological spectrum within which humans are remarkably adept at shifting. The quality of personhood is not generally fixed but varies according to context. In myths, altered states and rituals, the human-like forms and characteristics of animals, plants, thunder and so on are clear. In other contexts, for example when hunted animals are consumed as food, their personhood is deliberately concealed or downplayed. There are, of course, circumstances in which the personhood of animals lies just below the surface, such as when Bateks encounter elephants or tigers (the two most human-like species) in the forest. The personhood of animals is activated and interpreted through specific intersubjective practices, predominantly dreams and trances, through which different species are encountered in human-like forms and are related in homologous ways to humans. Bateks do not always talk about animals *as if* they were persons; cosmology is only invoked on certain occasions.

Other Orang Asli groups have been described as relating to animals in similar ways. For example, Wazir-Jahan Karim (Karim 1981, 32–66) has argued that Ma' Betiséks living in coastal areas of Selangor have "two fundamentally opposing views" of plants and animals. Ma' Betiséks consider animals and plants as ancestors (*moyang*) who were transformed into their present forms so that people could eat. Because plants and animals are ancestrally related to humans any acts (*kemalik*) that results in their killing and destruction, can bring humans "misfortune and death". However, because animals and plants are considered as having been cursed (*tulah*) by their ancestors and transformed into their present forms, their eating is normally justified. Karim argues that when people engage in hunting and gathering activities *tulah* views are reinforced while *kemalik* views are activated when people become sick or injured and shamans must interact with the spirits of animals and plants as persons. The importance of context for determining relations with non-humans has also been emphasized by Signe Howell who writes in relation to the Chewong that, "while the forest is a world of numerous conscious animate beings with whom they maintain proper relationships, this does not prevent them from otherwise acting in a manner perfectly recognizable to a European visitor … It is only within certain contexts that the "people status of some non-humans becomes relevant" (2014, 107). As with Bateks, animals, plants and other beings and things that have the potential for personhood are only referred to as persons in particular situations.

The Personhood of Animals

One way that the underlying aspect of animals' personhood can be seen in everyday practices is through the Batek's employment of avoidance terms (*kənmoh pənəwak*, 'trick names' or 'disguise names') for many species of animals who are seen as being able to hear their 'true' names. Because hunters do not want to give their intentions away, they employ linguistic duplicity to trick many commonly hunted species including: pig-tailed macaques, long-tailed macaques, banded leaf monkeys and dusky leaf monkeys. Unsurprisingly, the most dangerous and human-like animals have the most numerous avoidance names as using their 'true' names is seen as inviting attack (Lye 2004, 114). Bateks also claim that using the true names of animals can cause the anger of the thunder deity and the *naga'*. For this reason, people also avoid using the true names of snakes, turtles and even tadpoles which are all considered as friends of the original *naga'* (world creating rainbow snake). The fractal-like association of the original *naga'* with these common species reflects the ambiguity of this entity who is frequently described in both the singular and plural; a potent image for peoples who are currently experiencing dramatic upheavals and change. Lye (2004, 114) has even reported Bateks using trick names when talking about certain yams, which, she argues are considered as having certain features in common with humans. For example, Bateks say that yams *cip* (walk or move) and *cam* (look for) places to live rather than simply *suroŋ* (grow) and when people are unsuccessful in digging "the yam is deemed to have *talak*, the general-purpose verb to denote any kind of flight or escape" (Lye 2004, 114). This perhaps stretches the idea of yams being considered as persons a little far, Bateks do not generally talk about yams as persons. The use of avoidance terms for animals confers human-like capabilities upon them and as Lye has argued, "acknowledges that the species are sentient: can hear, can understand, can respond" (ibid). Similar usage of names for animals have been reported among other Orang Asli groups (Benjamin 2014, 77; Dentan 2008, 89), hunter-gatherers in Africa (Marshall 1999, 150) Paliyan foragers of Southern India (Gardner 2000, 45, 102; Gardner 2013a, 80).

Although Bateks appreciate that monkeys and gibbons are more human-like than other species, they are two species men commonly hunt with blowpipes. Some Batek Dè' claim that *hala' 'asal* (creator beings) occasionally take the forms of these animals when visiting earth. This seems to only occur when Bateks overhunt these species. In this case, the *hala'* shed their gibbon or monkey 'cloaks' and transform into humans or leopards to frighten any hunters away (K. Endicott 1979a, 66). Batek Dè' and Manya' also have specific taboos which prohibit dressing monkeys and apes as humans. If these taboos are broken the thunder deity and *naga'* release devastating punishment in the form of floods and storms which, according to

Bateks, have destroyed entire communities in the past (K. Endicott 1979a, 64–65; Lye 2004, 61).

Certain large animals, particularly tigers and elephants, are often attributed with human-like characteristics and are never hunted or consumed. Most Manya' told me that they simply would not hunt or consume any large animals including: elephants, rhinoceros, tapirs or gaur. Similar beliefs have been reported among the Nayaka of Southern India (Naveh 2014, 353–56). According to Endicott (1979, 64), Batek Dè' collectively refer to these animals as *pangan*, however, during my research among them this term was only used to refer to cannibalistic tigers who can transform into humans. Both elephants and tigers have the potential to reveal themselves as persons; most commonly as shamans or benevolent spirits who have temporarily put on animal bodies but occasionally as more dangerous shapeshifting nonhumans.

Bateks have many names for tigers but they are most commonly referred to as *beg*, *yah* or *'anyok*. These terms are used not only to refer to the large Malayan striped tiger (L. *Panthera tigris jacksoni*) but also for clouded leopards (L. *Neofelis nebulosi*) and smaller jungle cats. Although people greatly fear tigers and attacks have been reported among Batek communities (Riboli 2014), the Batek's relationships with these fearsome animals is complex. Alongside elephants, tigers are one of the few species Bateks consider to be capable of human language. In Lye's words they are "the archetypal symbol of predation" but "have human-like qualities" and frequently live in the same ecological niches of the forest as Bateks (2004, 113-114). Endicott (1979, 141) describes the Bateks' relationship to these magnificent animals as being "highly ambivalent". Some tigers are conceived as animals (albeit with certain human characteristics), others may be shamans or *hala' 'asal* (creator beings) in tiger form, and others yet may be dangerous were-tigers known as *sakai pangan* (discussed in the following chapter). In each of these guises, the tigers' power is manifested in different ways. As 'normal' animals their physical forms are breath-takingly beautiful but terrifyingly powerful. Through magical metamorphosis Batek shamans are able to embody this power by transfiguring it from a predatory to protecting role.

Tiger Transformation

Batek shamans are well-renowned among Malays and Orang Asli for their abilities of tiger-transformation. Living shamans (*hala' tè'*), ancestors (*hala' mana*) and creator beings (*hala' 'asal*) are all seen as being able to transform into tigers (Endicott 1979, 134-141). All *hala'* are said to have both human and animal 'cloaks' which they can 'wear' (*pakai*) over their shadow souls (*bayang*). Powerful shamans are given these cloaks during their training with the *hala' asal* while normal humans receive them when they die. Similar ideas have been reported among the

Orang Rimba of Sumatra (Elkholy 2016, 174). Unlike normal tigers, *hala'* tigers protect Batek communities from dangers "even against other tigers" (Endicott 1979, 141) and they are considered as one of the most important sources of shamanic knowledge.

Endicott describes the ways in which shamans can seek knowledge from these beings (ibid, 135-137). This involves an adept waiting alone at the burial site in the first week following a person's death (normally a parent or grandparent) and singing to call the dead person in their *hala'*-tiger form. When the tiger shaman arrives, the adept causes the tigers to transform into human form by blowing incense smoke and is then taught various shamanic songs and spells and how to send his shadow soul on a journey around the cosmos. Training of this kind usually takes about a week and often continues through discipleship in dreams. *Hala*-tigers are recognized through their especially beautiful markings and faces which are said to show traces of their humanity. When encountered by individuals travelling alone through the forest, adepts can blow fragrant smoke onto the animal to cause it to transform into its human form in order to learn songs, spells, medicinal qualities of plants and so forth. Although my informants stated such knowledge cannot be deliberately obtained, they said that individuals who journey through the forest alone may receive shamanic knowledge from *hala'*-tigers or other *hala*' in their dreams.

Although the spirits of the dead are generally considered to join the *hala' 'asal* in the celestial world, some Batek say that *hala'*-tigers, including the souls of dead shamans, reside within a cave of a huge limestone karst situated within Batek territory. Endicott's informants named Batu Balok situated along the Relai river as this place (1979, 43) while my own informants named Batu Badok, a karst situated near the Keniam River as their principal abode. The latter is probably another name for a place Endicott refers to as Batu Keñam (1979,42). Both these karsts hold considerable cosmological significance. When inside their cave home at the bottom of this huge karst the *hala'*-tigers have human forms but when they leave the cave they put on their tiger bodies (Endicott 1979, 44). Some Bateks say that Gobar dwells in a cave high up one of the karsts and *hala'*-bees and fruit blossoms are considered as being stored in other caves in these places (K. Endicott 1979a, 132). Although *hala*' tigers are associated with superhuman powers, they can be killed. The threats that poachers pose to *hala'*-tigers was first described by Kirk Endicott who reported the following:

> The shaman-tiger is like an ordinary tiger in that it is vulnerable to death, though it will not die of disease because it knows all the necessary cures. It tries to keep out of sight of men, fearing that it may not be recognized and will be killed. It is afraid of people's spears, but is still more afraid of snares. It can pull out the spears and heal the wounds, but, if it is caught in a snare, it will surely die. When the tiger body is

> killed, the human body dies as well. My informants remember two cases in which this was thought to be the causes of a shaman's death. (K. Endicott 1979a, 133)

Endicott notes the killing of shamans in tiger form is usually believed to result in the death of the shaman's human body. The author describes how *hala'*-tigers are perceived as being capable of pulling out spears and healing the wounds but nowadays poachers use guns not spears when hunting and it is not clear how they can survive being killed like this. In recent years, tiger populations have decreased massively in Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries. In the 1950s, there were an estimated 3,000 tigers in Malaysia but now there are thought to be less than 500 (Kawanishi and Sunquist 2004; Clements et al. 2010, 1120-1121). Habitat loss has contributed to dwindling numbers but illegal trade in tiger parts is the most urgent threat[8]. There is considerable uncertainty about the effects of poaching on these superhuman tigers and most people could give no definite answers on what exactly happened when *hala'*-tigers were poached. What is clear is that tiger and elephant poaching has contributed to heightened anxiety among most Bateks. It is difficult to comprehend how ancestors and creator beings could be killed by poachers, as they are only visiting earth in the guise of tigers. In accounts of episodes of historical violence between Malays and Bateks, shamans are described as teleporting around, causing aggressors' guns to explode, and creating magical shields to protect communities from aerial bombardments. To admit that shamans can be killed by poachers would be an acceptation that shamans are not all powerful.

Are Elephants Persons?

Even when highly salient species like tiger or elephants are not considered as shamans, spirits or shapeshifters, they are often treated in ways suggesting an underlying personhood. Two extracts from my fieldnotes about elephants will help clarify this point.

> *At Mangkin, a small forest-edge settlement on the south-eastern border of Taman Negara, a group of elephants have just emerged from the forest on the hill opposite the village. The elephants soon begin eating bananas and trampling through cassava gardens that the villagers have planted. Two men, who have been watching the elephants with me, begin calling to the*

[8] Tiger parts are extremely valuable due to their importance in Chinese and other traditional medicines. Bones, blood, sexual organs, meat, teeth, whiskers and eyes are much sought after by traditional practitioners in China, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, while skulls, teeth and skins fetch high prices among collectors of trophies and talismans. Tiger flesh is consumed in restaurants specialising in exotic meats.

elephants. "Hey that is our food you have eaten! Why don't you go back to the forest and eat your own food? We need those bananas, leave some for us." The men do not seem angry despite the fact that in recent months elephants have destroyed hundreds of rubber trees around the village and demolished several huts. The men's tone is friendly and humorous, intended to cajole the elephants to move on rather than scare them away. After about ten minutes, the elephants disappear back in to the forest.

Apin, 'ey Dengwong and Wol, three friends from Post Lebir, are camped deep within Taman Negara along a tributary of the Lebir River collecting rattan. It is early morning and the three friends have just woken up. Wol is lying face down and moaning in pain. He slipped over several days ago and cut his backside. The wound is now infected and he finds it difficult to move about. Apin hears a noise and signals to the others. Listening intently, Apin and 'ey Dengwong both hear something large approaching. Despite Wol's protestations, the friends grab their belongings and quickly leave the camp. A group of several elephants are rapidly approaching. The men speed up pace but the elephants are now moving faster and are definitely following them. Increasingly worried, Wol tries to forget his injury and the men begin to run. The elephants are definitely angry and are charging through the forest. The men rush up a small river, climbing over rapids until they reach a waterfall. They climb the slippery rock face and hide behind the cascade. A group of four female elephants emerge from the forest trumpeting angrily. The elephants definitely want to harm the men but fortunately there is no way they can get close enough. It is a standoff and the men wait freezing under the waterfall for several hours until the elephants eventually leave. In recent months, numbers of Vietnamese and Cambodian poachers have been targeting elephants within the park for their valuable ivory. The men are sure that the angry elephants want revenge for a male member of their herd who they guess has been killed by a poacher.

In both of these examples, elephants are treated as having human-like attributes but the two encounters show rather different aspects of these pachyderms' underlying personhood. It is unsurprising that elephants visit forest-edge settlements; their preferred ecotones are secondary forests, logged over areas and forest-fringes. At Mangken, the men retain a calm and friendly manner despite the fact the elephants are causing significant economic damage to their crops. There are superficial similarities in how the men speak to the elephants and how pet owners speak to domesticated animals. However, while relationships between pets and their respective 'masters' or 'owners' is often characterized by human

domination of 'domesticated' animals, Bateks make no attempt to dominate elephants, or any other animal species, although they sometimes raise leaf monkeys, gibbons, porcupines, civets and squirrels. These animals are often adopted as babies if they are found clinging to an adult animal that has been blowpiped or found alone in the forest. Sometimes, they are even breastfed, and due to their intimate relations with humans they are considered as kin (*kaben*). On reaching adulthood, however, they are usually released back into the forest. Endicott also mentions that if tame gibbons die before reaching adulthood they are given tree burials like humans (1979a, 64). This is to say they are treated as human-like 'persons'. Bateks generally consider the idea of eating raised animals as repulsive, because they are conceived as kin. An exception is the bamboo rat, kept as a toy-like plaything and later consumed, which suggests that certain categories of animal are never considered as 'persons'.

In the Mangken encounter, the elephants are respectfully treated as equals and spoken to as such. Perhaps understanding the intentions of their human interlocutors, the elephants eventually depart and "leave some bananas" for the Bateks as requested. This way of dealing with elephants strikingly differs from that of Malay farmers who have been reported scaring elephants away from their crops and plantations by burning bonfires, throwing firecrackers, and shooting (Baha 2016; Patrick 2017; Clements et al. 2010). Although Bateks usually consider elephants as benevolent beings, they are well aware that these forest giants can be dangerous. Many Bateks described similar encounters. Bateks in Pahang and Kelantan often told me about elephants entering villages, causing serious destruction and economic hardship. Jahais similarly frequently complain of elephants tearing up cassava crops and destroying their homes (Yee et al. 2017) Both groups blame increased conflicts between them and elephants on government-sponsored programs that have relocated elephants to their areas. Where such encounters were common, fears of elephants often contributed to a reduction of women's mobility. Women were more worried about coming across elephants than men for two reasons. First, they often take young children on foraging excursions with them, meaning that they could not escape from these animals by running away as easily as men. Secondly, Bateks claim that elephants become angered if they smell the *pel-èng* (raw) odours of menstrual blood or the odours that women are believed to emit when pregnant.

The danger-fraught encounter between Apin and his friends deserves further comment. The men believed that the group of elephants had become alerted to their presence and deliberately chased them. Bateks are well aware of elephants' exceptionally keen sense of smell and it is possible the elephants were attracted to the men through olfaction. Their ideas about elephants have both practical and cosmological significance. Ecologists and biochemists have described elephants' "extraordinary olfactory receptive equipment" (Rasmussen and Wittemyer 2002;

also see Byrne, Lee, and Njiraini 2008). Quite possibly the men's interpretation of the elephants' desire to seek revenge upon humans for killing a member of their family group is accurate. There is no other obvious reason for the elephants' behaviour. The small camp where the men had slept for the night contained no crops or other elephant food sources.

Scientific studies have demonstrated the advanced cognitive abilities and social complexity of elephants: they live in multi-level complex societies; have a human-like capacity for memory; can communicate over long distances through vocalizations which are detected aurally and seismically; have been observed using at least ten different tool types, and show strong emotional attachments to their dead (Bates, Poole, and Byrne 2008; Byrne, Lee, and Njiraini 2008). If we take the Batek men's description of this confrontation seriously, their interpretation of the elephants' behaviour demonstrates another aspect of elephants' intelligence; their capacity for revenge. While elephants' capacities for empathy have been described in detail in the scientific literature, the subject of whether they can consciously seek revenge has received little attention. Animal spirits seeking revenge abound in studies of animism, but what is interesting in the account described above, is that the elephants seek revenge as animals, not as spirits in the invisible world of dreams and trances. Such interactions upset the casual opposition frequently made between animistic and naturalistic knowledge. While Batek understanding of animal behaviour is clearly coloured by animistic conceptions, we need to be careful not to ascribe all intersubjective encounters to ontological differences. There is a clear overlap in how Bateks perceive elephants as human-like persons and how scientists describe elephants' advanced cognitive abilities. Their interpretations of the elephants' violent and *jebec* ('strange' or 'bad') behaviour also makes special sense in the contemporary context of animal habitat loss, landscape fragmentation and poaching. Ongoing threats to these highly salient animals are part of a wider shift in which the Bateks' relations to animals and other nonhumans are being reconfigured as landscapes are transformed by the activities of outsiders. In order to understand the changing relations between Bateks and nonhumans, whether animals or spirits, it is imperative that we do so within the web of wider social relations. The elephants' violent behaviour was specifically understood as resulting from the killing of elephants by non-Bateks. It is arguably the result of a specific trio of social relations between elephants, Bateks and non-Bateks within a particular context. Increasingly, changes to non-human behaviours are understood as resulting from outsiders breaking the prohibitions and behavioural norms which govern life in the forest.

Although these encounters show that Bateks treat elephants as capable of consciousness, intentionality and agency, they do not indicate that they are treated as humans. The lines between the personhood and non-personhood of elephants, tigers and other species are frequently somewhat fuzzy in Batek cosmologies and

everyday life. Describing her work among the Chewong, Signe Howell describes her difficulty to "comprehend the implications of a semantic collapse between the different species of "true persons" (*bi loy*), also referred to as "people" (*beri*), which include human Chewong and a large number of conscious non-humans" (Howell 2014, 106). Howell has argued that the "acid-test for people status is the possession of consciousness" which for the Chewong means the possession of a soul (2014, 107). For Bateks, true personhood cannot be cast in such terms, it only emerges in specific situations. Whilst Manya' told me that all animals, most other living things, landscape features and even some objects such as certain pebbles had human-like souls, they did not categorically ascribe all animals, living things, landscape features and pebbles with personhood. It only emerged in specific intersubjective encounters, principally dreams and trances. Batek Dè' do not claim that all animals and plants have human-like souls. When people meet spirits of animals or plants in dreams or trances, or when these species assume human forms in the forest, they are thought to be creator beings rather than individual members of a particular species. Despite differences between the two groups, personhood is always context dependent.

Shamans and Spirit Guides

Shamanism remains an important institution for all Bateks and shamans known as *hala'* are the key intermediaries between the human realm and the realm of spirits. Like other Semang groups, Bateks tend to conceal the identities of shamans from outsiders and such individuals can usually only be identified indirectly or when someone becomes very familiar with a group (K. Endicott 1979a, 131; Skeat and Blagden 1906b, 227; Schebesta 1928, 227; Evans 1937, 191). Most groups say that there are now fewer shamans than in the past and that contemporary shamans are less powerful than those of former years (cf. Riboli 2008; Riboli 2010). Despite this, most groups always claimed that powerful shamans were still living among groups deep within the forest. These individuals, like the shamans of the past, are referred to as *hala' bəw* ('great' or 'big' shamans) who are associated with exceptional powers such as the ability to transform into animals, soul-journeying throughout the cosmos, the curing of individuals from diseases and protecting their communities from the activities of dangerous humans and non-humans.

Batek forms of shamanism are markedly less objectified than those of many other peoples. Batek shamans do not use any particular paraphernalia when conducting rituals which tend to be very low-key affairs. Most Batek Dè' do not sharply differentiate between ordinary people and shamans, so anyone who so wishes can learn magico-religious knowledge from other-than-human persons or established shamans (cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 131). However, there is considerable internal diversity; most Manya' and many Batek living along the Aring river in

Kelantan say that only certain individuals can become shamans (Cf. K. Endicott 1979a 129). The most important role of the shaman is that of a protector of his community and this role extends to dangers that come from within the forest and those that come from beyond it. In a context marked by rapid change, shamans increasingly act as commentators not just of the moral conditions of their own communities but of the wider world which is also a source of much knowledge (Lye 2004; Tacey 2016). Although Bateks do not mark off shamans as especially different from ordinary humans in everyday life (cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 131), their observations on the moral conditions of their communities and the wider world are taken seriously and their various abilities are admired.

The polyvalent term *hala'* is central to understanding Batek notions of the cosmos, non-human personhood and shamanic practices. Essentially *hala'*, which is also used by Jahais, Semais, Temiars and Lanoh to refer to their shamans or spirit-mediums (van der Sluys 2000; Benjamin 2014; Dentan 2008; Dallos 2011; Evans 1937; Schebesta 1928), connotes the ability to act as an intermediary between this world and the otherworld. Certain contemporary Malay usages of the term *hala* also denote various forms of connection including: guidance, direction, route, course, flow and way. Etymologically, the term *hala'* is likely derived from the Malay noun *berhala* which Benjamin (2014, 160) following Wilkinson (1932, 127) translates as "idol or graven image". For Bateks someone who is *hala'* is seen as having the knowledge necessary for curing illnesses and protecting communities from storms or other threats by drawing upon the power spirits through songs, spells and trancing. This knowledge is gained through direct encounters with spirits in dreams or through training with an established shaman.

While the Batek Dè' use the term *hala'* to refer to their shamans as well as the *hala' 'asal* creator beings who also act as spirit guides, Manya' usually restrict the usage of *hala'* for shamans and refer to creator beings as *cenil* and spirit-guides as *ai djum* or *langoi*. Endicott usually translates *hala' 'asal* as "original superhuman beings" while Lye (2004, 80-81) more specifically describes *hala' 'asal* (or *batek hala'* [shaman person) as "a mysterious force, endowed with no gender, no name, no personality, no practical function, save to channel powers towards its subordinates". The multivalent concept *hala'* highlights the permeability of boundaries between humans and non-humans. It implies interconnectivity between spirits and non-humans, between the forest and the sources of knowledge and power within and beyond it, and the ability of shamans to focus and redirect this power to resolve problems that their communities are facing. *Hala'* implies agency, power and potentiation and gives humans the capacity and efficacity to alter the world by drawing upon the power of spirits. As we saw in the preceding chapter, for Bateks, landscapes have always-already been pre-constituted by the agency of non-human persons. Through drawing upon the power of the spirits,

hala' work alongside their non-human counterparts to protect their communities and continually maintain a fragile cosmic order.

Batek Concepts of Souls

Batek Dè' say that each human has a *lih* (body) which is animated by a wind life-force (*ɲawa' angin*) and a shadow soul (*bayang*). Alongside humans, all animals also have *ɲawa'* (an Austronesian term for 'soul', 'breath' or life force) which is considered to be a homogenous, limited and recyclable substance (K. Endicott 1979a 92). Although Endicott translates the term *ɲawa'* as 'life-soul', it seems that Bateks generally understand it more as an animating principal rather than a soul, hence my translation of it as 'life-force'. Batek Dè' say that *ɲawa'* is given to them by Tohan and when someone dies their *ɲawa'* is returned to him and can then be given to another human or animal. *Ɲawa'* is said to be particularly concentrated in the vital organs, especially the heart (*kelangès*), lungs (*sop*), liver (*ros*) and kidneys (*berkòl*) and is also distributed through the body by blood where it is also concentrated (K. Endicott 1979a, 89-90). Human's mortal wind life-force (*ɲawa' angin*) is often described as being warm and dry and is contrasted to the immortal life-force of the creator beings which is referred to as either water life-force (*ɲawa' tom*) or moon life-force (*ɲawa' bulan*). Generally, the Batek Dè' conceive the *hala 'asal* as being very similar to, albeit more powerful than, human beings. Both humans and *hala' 'asal* also have shadow souls (*bayang*), which are associated with each individual's personality and idiosyncrasies. But whilst humans are conceived as having mortal wind-life force (*ɲawa' 'angin*) and warm red blood (*nyap*) the *hala' 'asal* have cool immortal water-life force (*ɲawa' tom*) and cool, clear dew-like blood (*mun*) (K. Endicott 1979a, 125–26).

Originally, the creator being Tohan is said to have invested humans with immortal life-force (*ɲawa' tom*) like that of the creator beings but the world quickly became over-populated and so he replaced it with mortal wind-life force (*ɲawa' angin*) which he took from a banana plant (see K. Endicott 1979a, 83–84 for another variant of this myth). In accordance with this myth, Batek Dè' sometimes call the wind life-force a banana life-force (*ɲawa' pisang*). Replacing humans' immortal water souls with the banana-soul meant that humans became mortal and the problem of overpopulation was solved by a logic of replacement (cf. Lye 2004, 82).

Alongside the concept of life-force (*ɲawa'*) the Batek De' also say they have a shadow-soul (*bayang*). The term *bayang* translates into English as 'shadow' or 'reflection' which Bateks conceive as visible manifestation of the shadow-soul. This soul is said to have exactly the same form as an individual's body which is conceived as the 'cloths' (*sarong*) or 'shirts' (*baju*) in which the shadow soul resides or 'wears' (*pakai*). Each individual is born with his or her own shadow soul which develops alongside the body. In dreams, human's shadow-souls are said to wander

the local environment where they can meet the *hala' 'asal* as hypostasis of various plants and animals. When a Batek meets, for example, a turtle in a dream-state, the turtle will appear in the form of a beautiful human, albeit with a distinguishing trait of the particular animal, in our example, perhaps something resembling a turtle's shell. Unlike ordinary humans, shamans are seen as having the capacity to use their shadow souls to travel anywhere in the cosmos they choose. The idea that bodies are conceived as cloths (*sarong*) or shirts (*baju*) that can be removed and changed is widespread among the Orang Asli (Howell 1984; Howell 2011; Dentan 2002b; Dentan 2008; Roseman 2007) and has also been widely reported by anthropologists working with indigenous people in the Americas (Descola 2013; Viveiros De Castro 1998) and Eastern Asia (Willerslev 2007).

Unlike *ɲawa* which is returned to Tohan when humans die, the shadow-soul is said to leave the empty shell of a human's body and then travel to the after world situated above the firmament where it joins the *hala' 'asal*. When an individual's shadow-soul arrives in the celestial realm the Batek Dè' claim the *hala' 'asal* give each individual various new bodies; at least a youthful version of their human body and a tiger body and perhaps the bodies of other species which can be worn when visiting earth. The dead are then further incorporated into the community of creator beings by being "taught all the songs and skills of the superhumans" (K. Endicott 1979a, 112). Creator beings, shamans and dead thus occupy a similar ontological position which is explicitly realized in their capacity to shift between human and animal forms by changing bodies. The world of the creator beings and the dead is thus ontologically similar as the world in the time of origins when humans, animals and spirits were not sharply differentiated.

Overall, Batek Dè' and Manya' concepts of the souls are fairly similar. However, the Manya' have a singular concept of the soul which combines features of the Batek Dè' life-force (*ɲawa'*) and shadow-soul (*bayang*) into *semangat* (an ancient Malay-Indonesian term for 'soul' or 'vitality'). Although the Manya' claim that all living things and many landscape forms have *semangat,* they say that only certain entities can be encountered in dreams and trances as human-like persons, namely the *'ai djum* (a category which includes the souls of animals and plants and various spirits that live in the upper and lower worlds), the *langoi* (the souls of mountains and sections of rivers) and a class of dangerous beings known as *penyakit* (which can attack humans and cause disease or death).

Relations with Spirits

The most common modes of communication with benevolent spirits are through songs, olfaction and altered states. Both Batek Dè' and Manya' say that benevolent spirits are attracted by beautiful singing. Singing sessions are often held at informal occasions but also during more formal rituals held during the fruit seasons or for

the curing of sick individuals (Cf. Endicott 1979, 143–44). During these rituals, spirits are enticed and seduced by music and singing (*piñlòñ*), the sweet-smelling leaves (*hali' ayam*) and flower headdresses participants wear and the aromatic woods (B. *gahuru*; eaglewood) and incenses (B. *kemoyen*; L. *Styrax benzoin*) which are burnt (Cf. Endicott 1979, 143). Ceremonies are not just performed *for* the spirits but *with* the spirits. Both formal and informal singing and trancing sessions are communal ways of maintaining harmonious social solidarity with non-humans. Such rituals show spirits that Bateks respect, admire and love them and in return spirits express their approval by protecting humans, sending them bountiful fruit harvests and providing esoteric knowledge in the form of songs and spells. The songs which are sung during fruit rituals and other ceremonies are learnt from the spirits during dreams and often function as paths to guide shamans in trance states on their journeys to the world of the creator beings (Endicott 1979, 144-155). During fruit ceremonies, shamans may negotiate with the spirits to send as many fruit blossoms as possible. This form of negotiation mirrors the exchange relations that Bateks have with their Malay trading partners. Interestingly, Endicott notes that shamans may attempt to obtain extra blossoms directly from Gobar and "must use deception to do this, for Gobar does not willingly give up his fruit blossoms" (1979, 150). It is worth noting that Gobar is often associated with Malays and utilizing deception to 'steal' fruit blossoms from the thunder deity also evokes the fraught relations that Bateks hold with their downstream neighbours.

Most shamanic knowledge (songs, spells and the medicinal qualities of plants) is obtained from the spirits of animals, although ancestors are also important sources of knowledge. It is within dreams and trances that the personhood of animals and other phenomena emerges most clearly as individuals move through the environment and encounter various non-humans who appear in human forms. Animal spirit-guides are usually described as beautiful humans but with a mark or sign of their true nature. Despite tell-tale characteristics that give away the animal form of spirits, they are always conceived of as extremely beautiful.

Alongside animals and ancestors, the Manya' say that various landscape features (mountains, hills, waterfalls, river branches and confluences) contain spirits called *langoi* which are considered as particularly powerful non-humans. Like *'ai djum* the *langoi* are also described as persons (*batek*) and appear in dreams in the guise of beautiful humans. Some of the most powerful spirits that Manya' shamans befriend as guides and allies include the *langoi* spirits of mountains and hills in their area and the following *'ai djum*: *'Ai Djum Te'* (the earth spirit), *'Ai Djum Jekob Baji'* (the rainbow spirit), *'Ai Djum Naga'* (the dragon spirit), *'Ai Djum Os* (the fire spirit) and *'Ai Djum Tom* (the water spirit).

One key difference between Batek Dè' and Manya' forms of shamanism concerns spirit-mediumship. For the most part Batek Dè' shamanism concerns soul-journeying rather than spirit-mediumship, although as Endicott states, the

idea that "any person may be visited by *hala'* in dreams [demonstrates] a trace of the generalized spirit-mediumship of the Malays and the Orang Asli to the north and West of the Batek" (1979, 149). Spirit-mediumship is a very important aspect of Manya' shamanism. During trances, a shaman's *'ai djum* and *langoi* spirit guides are called into *hayã* (houses) located in the shaman's heart and head. When a shaman has called a sufficient number of spirit guides into his body (the more the better), he causes his soul to leave his body where it can travel around the cosmos to carry out specific activities. During his trance state the various spirits, located in the *hayã* within his body, then sing through him. The shamanic embodiment of spirits is often described by Manya' in the idiom of clothing and people often say shamans *pakai* ('wear') spirits. Although ordinary humans can communicate with *'ai djum* in dreams and call them down through singing, only shamans have the ability to see *'ai djum* spirits in the visible world and invite these spirits into their bodies during trances (*teween*) to perform specific tasks.

The alliances between Batek shamans and their spirit guides often take the form of discipleships, friendships or love affairs. The latter are often said to develop into long-lasting relations in which spirit lovers are described as an adept's husbands or wives (cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 150). Erotic relations and marriages between shamans and spirit wives or spirit husbands are common among the Orang Asli (Dentan 2008, 88–93; Howell 1984, 95; Karim 1981, 162–64) as in other animistic societies across Asia (Eliade 1972; Lewis 1999; Sarbacker 2011). Bateks do not consider the spirits of animals met in altered states as specific animals, they are more like representatives of the species as a whole. In this way, they are somewhat similar to the spirit masters described among Amazonian groups in that they "function as hypostases of the animal species with which they are associated, thereby creating an intersubjective field for human-animal relations even where empirical animals are not spiritualized" (Viveiros De Castro 1998). Once someone has dreamt of a particular animal the species as a whole becomes prohibited to eat for the individual who dreamt it but not for the wider community. If someone was to eat an animal they had dreamt of, they would become very ill and most probably die. As one Batek Dè' shaman in Kelantan told me:

> *When you dream and you meet a gibbon and you get knowledge from him you can no longer eat gibbon. If you dream of a turtle you cannot eat turtle again. If you dream of a monkey you cannot eat monkey again.*

Thus, shamans are often subject to many more food taboos alongside those already proscribed by *lawac* or *tailine* prohibitions. Similar prohibitions have been described among the Chewong (Howell 1984, 136) who assert that "they do not eat the flesh of those animals that are spirit-guides because they are people (*beri*) and the Temiar (Benjamin 2014, 159) who also sometimes instigate "dietary restrictions

or prohibitions … aimed at the flesh of the spirit-guide's own species". The prohibition on eating animals who act as spirit-guides is clearly due to the fact that for the dreamer the animal is categorically a person and eating the animal would constitute a form of cannibalism.

People rarely talk openly about their spirit-guides as to do so would breach rules concerned with humility and boastfulness and could disturb the relationship established with spirits by angering them (Sillander 2016). Some Batek Dè' told me the songs performed in fruit and honey rituals are learnt from *hala'* ancestors while incantations and curative knowledge are learnt from *hala'* animals but the boundaries between these two categories are vague and most people usually just describe spirits collectively as *hala'*. Parents normally teach their own children the techniques necessary for entering trances and lucid dreaming. Songs or spells learnt in dreams are considered secret and cannot be shared with others until a shaman reaches old age and feels that he is nearing death. To share this personal knowledge with another before nearing the end of one's life is considered a mark of disrespect toward the spirit, meaning the song or spell would lose its efficacy and the teacher of this knowledge could be punished.

Illness and Curing

Batek Dè' consider both *ilmu* (knowledge) and *penyakit* (disease) as aspects of the *hala'* hypostasis of a species as a whole which are somehow condensed within the physicality of a particular animal's body. As one man told me "when you eat a gibbon, you get the *penyakit* of the gibbon, when you eat a tortoise you get the *penyakit* of the tortoise." Although all animals are said to possess *penyakit*, if someone has not previously dreamt of that animal (it is not a spirit guide) it is not normally considered as harmful to eat[9]. In this form, *penyakit* is thus seen as a latent potential that is usually only activated through pre-existing relations between the *hala'* spirit and the person who consumes the animal. If the *penyakit* of an animal is particularly powerful it can cause someone to become sick after they have consumed it even if they have not previously dreamt of this particular species. Because this type of *penyakit* is caused by the *hala'* of the animal, it can only be cured by a shaman who has previously dreamt that animal. To cure the sick individual, the shaman uses *jampi* spells he has learnt from the *hala'*-animal.

Batek Dè' do not see all illnesses as being caused through the consumption of animals' *penyakit*. Certain illnesses are blamed upon the breaking of ritual

[9] Some people told me that certain animals such as gibbons, box-turtles, wild boar and frogs have particularly powerful *ilmu* and they considered these species as being more dangerous than other animals to consume but there is great variation between and within groups in regards to which animals should be avoided because of their *penyakit*.

prohibitions and are punished by the spirits. For example, *cemam* prohibitions concerning relations between members of the opposite sex are punished by Gobar. In the case of incest, the most serious violation of *cemam*, Gobar is said to send a spark of lightning into the offender's foot which causes a serious disease. For lesser offences, such as the mixing of shadow souls or odours of close relatives he causes offenders to suffer from fevers also called *cemam* (Endicott 1979a, 77). The breaking of *tolah* prohibitions which relate to proper social etiquette are punished by the creator being Tohan who may cause the guilty individual to have an accident or succumb to a disease that causes the body to waste away while the heart and eyes live on (Endicott 1979, 81). Another disease which is blamed upon the anger of spirits is *reway* which causes a victim's body to waste away and head to grow larger. People suffering from *reway* are also said to go 'crazy' and start doing very dangerous acts. *Reway* can be caused by: pointing at the rainbow, which is considered the reflection or shadow soul of the rainbow snake; by pointing at or naming the moon; eating *petai* or irreverent rhyming (*ye' yò'*) about particular food stuffs, "the *hala'* or anything closely associated with them, such as the sun, moon, stars, sky, seasonal fruit, and bees" (Endicott 1979a, 80). Menstruating women and young children can also get *reway* if they eat honey.

In many cases, sickness and illnesses are given naturalistic explanations. People say some foods and liquids may contain harmful parasites or germs (*komam*) which can cause illness. Bathing in polluted water is understood as causing fevers and nausea, coughs and eye irritations are often blamed upon the inhalation of smoke and ashes, and fevers and headaches are frequently thought to arise from sunstroke (Cf. Endicott 1979, 103-104). Increasingly, Bateks avoid bathing in polluted rivers due to fears about contracting illnesses. Some Batek Dè', but especially Manya', blame some illnesses on deliberate poisoning or curses from neighbouring Malays. Most diseases that come from the forest or result from particular behaviours in the forest can be cured through forest remedies and spells learnt from the spirits. The curing of non-life-threatening illnesses is a fairly informal affair. Usually, this takes place within a hut or lean-to where the healer will recite a particular spell (*jampi*) over the sick individual's body whilst laying on hands. In the case of headaches and toothaches or other illnesses affecting particular areas of the body massage or acupressure will often be used alongside the spell. Most Bateks also have highly detailed knowledge of the medicinal properties of a wide-range of barks, leaves, roots and flowers which can be either rubbed on the body or boiled up in infusions to be drunk. In cases of serious illnesses shamans may enter trances to take a sick individual's shadow soul (*bayang*) to the celestial world to be treated by the creator beings who may sing over the afflicted person's soul or bathe them in cooling *mun* (celestial dew).

Othering the Spirits

Interestingly, most of the spells that Bateks learn from spirits are in the Malay language often with various Arabic-Malay phrases (Cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 108). Shamans were adamant that songs received from spirits could be in English, Chinese, or any other language. What was important was that the words must be intonated in exactly the same way that they were taught by the spirits. Although trancing-songs tend to contain more Batek words than spells, Endicott notes that they "are very difficult to translate [and] … contain many words that have no equivalent in the vernacular language." (1979, 145). The author suggests that some of the words Bateks use in trancing songs may be linguistic borrowings from the Semaq Beri while others "are standard Batek or Malay but have entirely different meanings in songs than in normal speech. In addition, many words are distorted for harmonious effect, either consistently or only in certain contexts." (Endicott 1979, 145-146). This is a common feature of spirit communication in many indigenous cultures (May 1953; Townsley 1993; Kan 1990; Sillander 2016)[10]. For example, Kenneth Sillander notes for the Bentian of Indonesian Borneo that spirits "may be talked to with strange intonation or strange pronunciation of some words, and the language of chants is archaic, replete with loan words from other languages, and special ritual words and expressions" (Sillander 2016). Some foreign words used in Batek songs and spells are clearly cultural borrowings. Batek adepts from the Tembeling and Lebir areas sometimes study with neighbouring Semaq Beri shamans and I know one man from the Aring who has studied with numerous Orang Asli shamans including Jakuns living in the very south of the Peninsula. However, people were adamant that the majority of spells and songs are learnt directly from the *hala' 'asal*.

With the spread of Islam in Peninsular Malaysia from the fifteenth century onwards, Islamic concepts were overlaid onto pre-existing animist and Hindi-Buddhist beliefs and practices, creating what Clifford Geertz aptly described as a "syncretism of myth and ritual in which Hindu gods and goddesses, Moslem prophets and saints, and local place spirits and demons all found a proper place" (1957, 35). Although there are striking religious and ontological differences between Bateks and Malays today—the former are generally animists, the latter Muslims—there are undercurrents of animism in Malay folk religion, especially in rural areas. In the very recent past, animism would have been even more important

[10] Graham Townsley writes that Yaminahua shamans songs are "made up of metaphoric circumlocutions or unusual words for common things which are either archaic or borrowed from neighbouring languages" (1993, 458), while Sergei Kan notes that "the language of [Tlingit Potlatch] songs seems in some cases to be a human foreign language, such as Haida or Tsimshian, and in other cases an unknown language revealed by the shaman's spirit" (Kan 1990, 358).

in shaping how Malays thought about their world (K. Endicott 1970; Winstedt 1925; Winzeler 1983; Skeat 1900). Although Malay animism is founded upon a hierarchical ordering of physical beings, spirits and things, these ontological differences do not imply incommensurability with the more egalitarian and immanent animism of Bateks and other Orang Aslis (Cf. Århem 2016b, 17–19). Many Malay loan words in Aslian languages relate to the spheres of cosmology and magic which Benjamin interprets as "indicating that in former times the animistic practices of [Orang Asli and Malays] were often performed jointly" (Benjamin 2012, 14). Rather than indicating that Malays and Orang Aslis jointly performed ceremonies together in the past as Benjamin suggests, the Orang Asli's usage of foreign languages in shamanic songs and spells should be considered alongside the use of archaic terms, unusual intonations and vocal distortions. Rather than representing that Malays and Orang Aslis performed their rituals together as Benjamin suggests, it is more likely that foreign words and strange vocal distortions are used to express the alterity of the spirits (Sillander 2016; Kaartinen 2016; Sprenger 2016; Gibson 1986). The use of foreign words within songs and spells highlights the profound historical interconnections Bateks have had with other groups and exemplifies the kinds of 'cultural instability' that were discussed in the previous chapter.

Ontological Relations and Everyday Practices

The types of relationships I have described between humans and benevolent spirits are marked by sharing, exchange and protection. Benevolent spirits are not categorically classified or represented as persons *a priori*, they become persons when humans engage with them or they engage with humans in a sharing mode. Such encounters mainly take place in the highly personal contexts of individual's dreams and trances. Bateks often describe spirits as 'looking after' (*jaga'*) humans (cf. Lye 2004, 117). These kinds of relationships are typical of those described by Nurit Bird-David (1990) as a "cosmic economy of sharing". However, the protection that these spirits afford Bateks is reciprocal, people say the spirits would stop looking after them if they did not take care of the forest (Lye 2004, 27–42, 50–54). Cornelia van der Sluys (2000) has described similar idioms of sharing between humans and spirits among the Jahai. Using a culturalist argument, the author argues that the altruistic, prosocial sharing practices of Jahais are extensions of the sharing practices between humans and 'primordial immortal ancestors' (*cənɔy*). Arguing that the "Jahai way of sharing is to be understood from the prevalence in their world-view, of a specific configuration of cultural core premises and embedded values" (2000, 448) that depend upon the "presumed affective relatedness between primordial immortal ancestors and the present-day Jahai" (2000, 436), Van der Sluys argues that 'worldview', determines everyday practices and values. In my

opinion, this argument places too much emphasis on cosmology and ends up being overly deterministic. It seems more plausible that prohibitions, myths, everyday practices, ecological circumstances and forms of sociality all contribute to maintaining sharing systems. Rather than worldviews or ontologies determining socio-cultural practices or socio-cultural practices determining ontological principles and ethics, they should be seen as co-constitutive (cf. Howell 2012, 5). The high levels of sharing and peacefulness found among 'immediate-return' hunter-gatherer groups work so well, precisely because they are embedded on so many levels.

Shamanic Journeys and Cosmopolitical Consciousness

Despite the fact that Batek relations with spirits often take the form of long-lasting friendships or marriages, the dreams and trances of shamans can be terrifying experiences. Alongside benevolent spirits, shamans also encounter more dangerous beings in dreams and trances. Many people told me that if someone is attacked by a nonhuman in an altered state, they could suffer from a heart attack, nervous breakdown or even death. Only people who can face such dangers can follow these routes to knowledge. Shamanic dreams are normally only received by individuals when they journey through the forest alone without fear (Cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 143–44). What differentiates great shamans from normal humans are their extraordinary powers to transform into animals and to embark upon soul-journeys to various areas of the cosmos to seek knowledge and resolve any problems humans are facing. Batek shamans are cosmopolitical agents; their activities include: curing sickness, preventing cosmic collapse—in the form of floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, winds and storms—and the gaining of knowledge about the wider world to ensure the safety and security of Bateks and non-Bateks. In February 2013, 'ey Lalang, a Batek shaman in his sixties from Kuala Koh in Kelantan recounted his first journey into the upper and lower worlds to me. The following vignette summarizes what he told me and serves to introduce some of the ideas discussed in this chapter.

In the early 1960s when he was about eighteen years old, 'ey Lalang began entering altered states during which he visited fantastic areas of the cosmos. On one of his first journeys, he embarked upon a strenuous underwater journey to the realm of the naga' (original rainbow snake). *To reach the depths of the underworld, he swam for twenty-four hours passing many things of beauty, snake-like beings and huge fish. "I saw many* naga'. *It was really difficult, the fish and* naga' (serpent-like beings) *could eat us!" When he arrived in the subterranean realm, 'ey Lalang walked along a narrow path between lines of enormous* naga' (original rainbow snakes) *who had "bodies the*

sizes of mountains", "eyes of fire" and "huge teeth". "They were huge and could easily have eaten me!"

After his voyage to the underworld, he flew upwards to the celestial realm. He passed through various sky worlds, travelling great distances with the aid of small whirring wings attached to his ankles. He eventually reached the realm of Gobar, the thunder deity. Due to the powerful flashes of lightning which were emitted from Gobar's eyes it was impossible for 'ey Lalang to see his true form.

From the heavens, 'ey Lalang looked down on the entire world and its peoples: Malaysia, England, America, Africa, China and India. "Up in the sky, I saw Kota Baru and England, from above they looked tiny! They were so near and so small. Even if they are big, from up there they looked tiny! I could see America. It was so close. I could see it! I could see it all. Woah!" He contrasted the sky-world to his forest home, "There were no trees in the upper-world it was like a beach. There were no animals either." He described the celestial realm as populated by collectives of strange human-animal hybrids and other human-like beings: "Some had monkey's tails, they were just like Batek but with tails. Others were like birds but human, they were good. They had their own languages." He also described seeing bipedal beings with hairy bodies but no hair on their heads. These frightening beings "had sharp claws and were dressed in rags". 'ey Lalang described how they got excited when they caught the scent of a human and how he was worried they would hunt him down with the intent of devouring him. "They wanted to eat people like tigers do". He also saw "strange negros" [using the English term] living in territories close by, noting "We can't be friends with them. Negros here on earth are fine, no problem, but the negros there we can't befriend. They could eat us!" He described how he could somehow access all these places on earth from his celestial position: "I could go wherever I liked, but if I went to the place of the negros I would die. I could see the Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis and White people down below. It was a long time ago, long ago. I forgot my own language. I forgot how to speak Batek. I went to twelve countries. I was up there for about a week. When he returned to earth, he found his Batek camp so noisy he had to run away to the forest and suffered from sporadic convulsions caused by the powerful spirits he had encountered (Kuala Koh, Kelantan, February 2013)

'Ey Lalang's account of his journey through the cosmos fuses traditional animistic imagery with imagery of places and peoples that have held key importance in the history of the Malay Peninsula. During his initiatory journey to the invisible world, he visited and drew shamanic power from places and beings imbued with potency; first down the vertical axis of the cosmos to the subterranean realm, a place associated with the raw chthonic power of the *naga'*, next upwards to Gobar the lord of storms, thunders and lightning; finally, from his synoptic position in the upper world, he looked down on and then travelled along the horizontal axis to

visit centres of power on earth: Malay cities; China, India, England and America—places associated with peoples who have exerted power upon the indigenous peoples of Malaysia. I suggest these sequences of the shaman's journey testify to historical influences of encounters with outsiders including Malays and British colonialists alongside contemporary images and news of faraway places which are increasingly flowing into Batek communities.

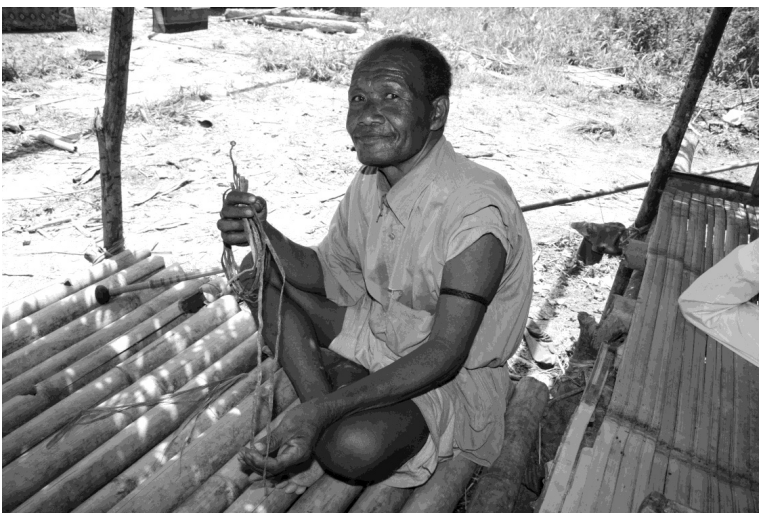

Figure 7. 'Ey Lalang at Kuala Koh

'Ey Lalang began his story by describing his journey through the underground sea. Streams and mountain pools are frequently mentioned in Batek shamans' songs and are considered as gateways into the invisible world (K. Endicott 1979a, 155, 188)[11]. Despite the original *naga'* holding the earth on its back, Bateks see the vast subterranean sea as being situated directly below the earth. 'Ey Lalang evoked the immeasurable depth of this sea by stressing swimming downwards for twenty-four hours. He passed "things of beauty" and "snake-like beings and huge fish" emphasising the danger of being consumed by these beings. Rivers and pools are often seen as the homes of snakes and *naga'* who are considered as friends of the

[11] In the first verses of one such song collected by Kirk Endicott, the shaman asks the *hala'* to carry his shadow soul "all around the land, all around the sea at the horizon, all around the firmament, all around the underground sea … [to] the passage through Tingring, the land of Redam" (1979a, 147–48). Tingring is a pool of water on top of Mount Tahan which Bateks say is one such entrance to the underworld and Redam is a tall mountain which nearly reaches the firmament (ibid).

original subterranean *naga'* (Endicott 1979, 39 n5)[12]. After passing through the subterranean sea, he arrived in the realm of the ancient chthonic creator being(s), the *naga'*. During his journey, he was required to walk along a narrow path between lines of enormous *naga'* who had "bodies the sizes of mountains", "eyes of fire" and "huge teeth". The dangers he faced travelling down through the underground sea and confronting the *naga'* should be seen as part of his initiatory ordeal. Manya' also described shamans' visits to the subterranean rainbow snake' (which they call *Baji'*) in similar terms and implied that their shamans drew upon the being's chthonic powers, sometimes by even riding it.

The first entity 'ey Lalang encountered when he travelled up to the firmament is Gobar, the god of thunder. Although Gobar is only briefly alluded to in the shaman's narrative, his mention can be understood as part of the shaman's journey to places and entities holding immeasurable power. Alongside Gobar, the different nonhumans he encounters in the upperworld are representative of some of the most typical nonhuman beings Bateks discuss, and allegedly encounter. They feature heavily in origin stories, shamanic discourses and tales of unexpected encounters in the forest. These beings can broadly be divided into two categories. The first includes benevolent human-animal hybrids that 'ey Lalang describes as having "monkeys' tails" or bird-like characteristics similar to *hala' asal* spirits met in dreams and trances. The second category includes the dangerous blood-thirsty entities that he describes including the hairy, tiger-like beings "dressed in rags" and the cannibalistic Negros which evoke *sakai pangan* weretigers and other cannibalistic beings who feature heavily in Batek horror stories and which are allegedly sometimes encountered in the forest.

'Ey Lalang's synoptic viewpoint upon the firmament allowed him to gain a sense of scale and gain a feel of the earth's immensity. His journey throughout the cosmos condenses the various interconnections that exist between the forest world and other places and times. His superhuman abilities of flight empowered to visit the places he saw. *"I could go wherever I liked"*. The depiction of the cosmos as an interconnected space where he encounters mythical entities and visits places of cosmological and political potency echoes the Manya' shaman's journey to repair the damaged underworld of Japan described in chapter one. Both journeys can be seen as efforts of obtaining agency and power over forces that would otherwise be beyond control.

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[12] This section of his journey holds similarities to Mendriq concepts about an upside-down world below rivers that is home to serpent-like *naga'*-people. This world is like a mirror double of our own; in the daytime *naga'*-people live like humans but at night they become snakes, while humans eat cooked meat, *naga'*-people eat raw meat and our rivers form their sky (K. Endicott 1979a, 76).

One thing that differentiates shamans from ordinary humans is their ability to see various spirits through their 'cool' and 'clear' eyes (K. Endicott 1979a, 132, 136). Like the creator beings, shamans are said to have cool eyes, blood and bodies which is the principal means by which their bodies are differentiated from those of normal humans. The associations of shamans with coolness are common among the Orang Asli and have also been noted by Signe Howell among the Chewong (1984) and Juli Edo among the Semai (1998). Endicott reports that during a Batek Dè' shaman's training, the *hala' 'asal* place cool *mun* into the heart, eyes and ears of the adept, which "enables the person to see and hear the *hala'* even from hundreds of miles away" (K. Endicott 1979a, 136). Howell remarks (1984, 166) that Chewong shamans (*putao*) are "the only beings within their extended social universe able to travel to all the different worlds within it, as well as being able to see in the same way as the inhabitants of these different worlds." Batek shaman's abilities to see vast distances not only pertains to the cosmological realm, as Lye has previously remarked, it also extends to "the world beyond the forest, the world of the Chinese, the white people, the Japanese." (Lye 2004, 16). Manya' often describe the eyes of shamans as lighting up like bright lamps allowing for superhuman vision at night and across great distances. Shamans' movements through the cosmos give them new perspectives, from which the world can be seen in a new light. Their visions must not only be all-encompassing, their real power comes through the ability to incorporate the perspectives of Others, whether those others are animals, non-human spirit people or that afforded by other humans living in faraway places.

Drawing on Sources of External Power

Kota Baru, a place which 'ey Lalang specifically singles out, is the capital of Kelantan and the seat of the Kelantanese Sultanate. The current Sultan, Muhammed V (the 29th Sultan of Kelantan) is the head of Islam in the state and the source of all titles, dignitaries and honours of the state's peoples. The city gleams with power, it contains seven palaces and numerous government offices. In 'ey Lalang's account, Kota Baru should be seen as a metonym for Malay power more generally. For the last millennium, the power of Malay polities situated on coastal plains throughout Southeast Asia, have pulsated into the lives of the non-state peoples who lived in the zones on the edges of their influence (Stanley Jeraraja Tambiah 1973; Wolters 1999; L. Y. Andaya 2010). Their power has been both tantalizing and devastating for people like the Batek. Historically, Batek relationships with Malay polities (and their Malay neighbours) have been marked by ambiguity. Despite the direct violence of the past and contemporary structural violence, Bateks have drawn, and continue to draw, upon their relations with the state as a means of gaining power, and most Bateks remain open to foreign ideas and exchanges with outsiders. The riches and excitement that towns promise also entice young Batek

men to move to cities for employment. These men often return to tell tales of violent encounters they braved in cities. Kota Baru, is sometimes visited by Bateks trading forest produce who hope to get better deals than those afforded by local middle-men. But traders in Kota Baru are described as far more dangerous than local Malays and Chinese. Such perceptions are not without basis in reality, Kota Baru lies on the Thai border and is a major hub for the wildlife trade, human traffickers and drug-smugglers.

The mention of America by ‘ey Lalang may have been motivated by some interesting particular historical circumstances besides the country's general global importance. Some Bateks in Kelantan claim that Menteri Lai, a former Batek headman, was taken to America in the early 20th century to negotiate the value of mineral wealth in the form of iron-ore found in Batek territory. Such claims reflect disappointment and anger about the way that mineral resources found in their territories have been extracted by Malays and Chinese who have not shared profits with Bateks. Images of America have been brought into communities through television programmes and films and Bateks are well aware of America’s significance as a global power. During my fieldwork, American interventions in the Middle-East were often discussed. Recent conflicts in the Middle-East have fuelled Batek conceptions of Americans as anti-Muslim and therefore as potential allies against Malay Muslim hegemony (Cf. Riboli 2013, 138; Tacey 2013). Bringing America into his cosmopolitical vision, ‘ey Lalang adds yet another historical layer of interconnection into his journey.

Besides general historical and contemporary Batek experiences, ‘ey Lalang’s biography also reveals personal links to state power which may help to illuminate his journey. Born in the mid-1940s, he grew up during the twilight of colonial-era British Malaya; a period marked by political rupture, social change and violence. World War II was coming to an end and the Communist Emergency (1948-1960) was about to begin; the last of a series of violent conflicts that had wrought havoc throughout Batek territories for over a century. As a child, ‘ey Lalang’s parents and grandparents would have recounted story after story of brutal outsiders who had moved across, and sometimes settled in, Batek territories over the previous hundred years (see chapter two). At roughly the same time as he received his shamanic initiation, sometime in the mid-1960s, the emergency had ended and he was recruited as a medic in the British army by Doctor Malcolm Bolton. Bolton was the first flying doctor in Malaysia and had brought medical services to many Orang Asli communities from the outset of the Emergency until its end. He is fondly remembered by many Bateks and people often recounted their memories of him to

me during my fieldwork[13]. ‘ey Lalang’s experiences with Bolton undoubtedly contributed to the cosmopolitan tone and imagery of his shamanic experiences.

The places, entities and peoples ‘ey Lalang visits should be seen as polyvocal, chronotopic and mythopolitical capacitors; they condense times, histories, myths and ethnic Others into singular places or entities whose power the shaman can draw upon. Similar kinds of logic have been described by Kohn among the Runa of Amazonia in which the realms of Runa spirit masters “superimpose ethnic, pre-Hispanic, colonial and post-colonial hierarchies onto the landscape” (Kohn 2013, 169). In shamanic altered states, strands of history, myth and personal biography are condensed into a unified embodied experience. ‘Ey Lalang’s synoptic vision, and his powers of cosmic travel, suggest a reconfiguration of relations with "Otherness" through which he emerges as a master. Like the Macpuche shamans that Ana Mariella Bacigalupo describes in her vivid ethnography (Bacigalupo 2016), Batek shamans are masters of “multiple realities” and “multiple temporalities”. Shamanic narratives often connect and contextualise different times and places within a cosmological framework, and in doing so challenge and remake the world.

The seeking of transnational sources of knowledge by Batek shamans is consistent with a pattern reported by other Batek ethnographers. Kirk Endicott concluded his monograph by stating that Bateks “are always open to knowledge from outside, and they eagerly incorporate any new ideas that have practical or metaphysical value … [They] are foragers of ideas as well as foragers of food” (K. Endicott 1979a, 221). Similarly, Lye argues that “in his dreams and trances, [the shaman] looks for the right way to do things, looking everywhere, in the world beyond the forest, the world of the Chinese, white people, the Japanese” (2004, 16). In a Batek shaman’s song collected by Diana Riboli, a shaman recounted flying to Mount Tahan from where he could reach “more than 100 countries all over the world” (2011, 101).

Shamanic experiences and present-day narrations of mythical events fuse collective and personal experiences. In doing so they “challenge long-standing conceptual dichotomies between individual and collective memory” (Bacigalupo 2016, 228). Although frequently exoticized by anthropologists and more generally in popular Western culture, shamans and their narratives, as Bacigalupo has argued (2016, 229), “are historically and politically grounded mediators between different cultures, worlds, and forms of being”. This is a common pattern in Southeast Asia

[13] Bolton instigated a recruitment policy of preferment for Orang Asli and implemented courses during which groups of Orang Asli *bomoh* (healers) were brought to be trained in basic first aid and hygiene at a training centre. It is likely that ‘ey Lalang was one of these recruits. By 1968 Bolton had recruited 143 Orang Asli men and women who served as medical orderlies, nurses and midwives. Once a month Bolton flew to Orang Asli posts throughout the Peninsula personally delivering medical services to the Orang Asli and soldiers stationed nearby (Cranbrook 2006).

(Tsing 1993; Elkholy 2016; Roseman 2012). Marina Roseman describes Temiar shamans learning songs from "spirits of modernity" such as harbour ships, airplanes, parachutes and canned sardines. She argues shamans' acts of "dreaming the spirits of the world into his song repertoire constitutes a subtle instance of cultural… resistance and appropriation, an instance that confirms the cultural integrity and confidence that is the basis for contemporary and future political organization and resistance" (Roseman 2012). Similarly, Tsing describes how the charismatic female Meratus leader Uma Udang drew power from the ancient Indonesian Kingdom and "made offerings intended to regulate the transnational economy" (Tsing 1993, 26). Elkholy argues the Orang Rimba *dukon* (shaman) "releases collective trauma through confronting those malevolent forces of the forest, particularly those that take on familiar morphological characteristics derived from the outside world; and in doing so, he is able to maintain a delicate balance between the purity of the forest and those dangers emanating from the village world" (Elkholy 2016, 191). These strategies and practices confound the idea that animists live within ontological worlds separated from other groups by incommensurable difference, and show that interconnections with the outside world, which hold important political and everyday significance, is intrinsically linked to their cosmological and religious practices and pursuits.

Personhood, Interconnectivity and History

Batek and Manya' relations with the benevolent non-human beings they share their environment with are largely coterminous to the ways that they relate to other human beings. The spirits which fill the cosmos are persons (*batek*) who can be communicated with and related to in similar ways to humans. Relationships with these beings is not speculative or abstract, in dreams and trances Bateks establish 'real' ties with spirits which are described as friendships, marriages and teacher-student relations. Like the forms of sociality that characterize in-group relationships, these are typified by sharing and solidarity.

Bateks do not consider all the entities that inhabit their environment to be persons all of the time. The ways that Bateks relate to animals, demonstrates the fluidity of Batek ways of relating to nonhumans which oscillates between a naturalistic tendency in which prey animals are treated as game to be consumed—albeit during which the potential personhood is either downplayed or camouflaged through the use of avoidance names—and an animistic propensity in which animals are treated as persons in altered states and mythology. Certain salient animals—primarily elephants and tigers—occupy shifting and context dependent positions in which their personhood sometimes emerges in the visible world during specific encounters.

Shamans function as intermediaries between the visible and invisible realms and seek knowledge and power from a host of sources. The forms of knowledge (foreign language used in songs and spells) gathered from entities in the invisible world and the cosmotopographies of shamans' soul-journeys reflect long-term historical relations with a variety of outsiders and the influence of Malay, Arabic and European ideas and imagery on Batek cosmologies and magico-religious practices. By incorporating the perspectives of Others and drawing upon the perceived power of specific locales (human and non-human) in the cosmos, shamans reconfigure their contemporary and historical relations within a realm where they hold considerable power. The creative potential of mythopoetic story-telling and embodied shamanic experiences does not refute modernity or obliterate history. Shamans draw upon the power of modernity and history to remake socio-spatial and temporal relations with an array of human and non-human others. The increasingly complex world we live in has been described by Bessire and Bond (2014, 450) as one "of unstable and rotational temporalities, of epistemic and material ruptures, of categories and things unravelling and being reassembled. It is a world composed of potentialities but also contingencies, of becoming but also violence, wherein immanence is never innocent of itself." The visions of 'ey Lalang and other Batek shamans demonstrate a highly developed cosmopolitical awareness attuned to these complexities. Agency is evident in their determination to draw power from all potential sources, to combat embodiments of violence and reassemble categories and things from disparate places, times and dimensions.

Chapter Five

Predators and Monsters: Incorporating Outsiders

This chapter describes the array of cannibalistic and monstrous non-human entities which Bateks claim that prey upon human bodies and souls. While the Batek's modes of relating to benevolent non-humans that were described in the previous chapter tend to be homologous to in-group forms of sociality, their relations with predatory beings and monsters are more akin to relations with powerful, and often violent, outsiders. The chapter continues my argument that the Batek's encounters with the world beyond the forest and historical experiences are reflected within and transformed through animistic concepts and practices.

The importance of predatory relations between Bateks and the various non-humans that they share the forest with has been alluded to by Lye (2004, 112–14) who interprets such relations as having a symbolic nature. Lye argues that tigers and Malays "*stand for* the boundaries of Batek society and are yet integral to social order, with Malays *representing* everything "not-like-us" and the tiger *representing* both the worldly and other-worldly sides of the forest" (Lye 2004, 112 emphasis mine). To argue that Malays or tigers stand for or represent predation and otherness is somewhat misleading, for Bateks both are also very *real* predators. The shifting positions of predator and prey in Batek modes of relating to nonhumans evoke the "venatic ideologies" that reportedly form the basis of Amazonian perspectivism. Viveiros De Castro (1993, 184) has argued that 'generalized predation' is "the prototypical modality of Relationship in Amerindian cosmologies". Following this line of argument, Luiz Costa and Carlos Fausto have argued that "predator-prey relationship is constitutive of the play of perspectives that frames Amazonian ontologies, and it is therefore anterior to any point of view" (Costa and Fausto 2010). For these anthropologists the predatory elements of Amazonian animism stem principally from hunting practices. Batek perspectivism is much less discernible than its South American counterparts and only *some* rather than "all perspectives are immersed in a socio-cosmic matrix in which the positions of predator and prey are presupposed" (ibid). Although the perspectivist approaches of Amazonian specialists offer new ways of understanding the modalities of animism they have generally lacked historical and political

contextualisation and do not take wider socio-political interactions between groups into account. Any study of monstrosity must involve, as Yasmine Musharbash has argued, "taking seriously how the monstrous manifests locally and documenting the socio-culturally specific ways in which people relate to monsters reveals how people understand themselves, their world, and their position within it" (2014, 2). In this chapter, my main argument is that the historical relations between Bateks and violent outsiders have informed their concepts of and relations with predatory non-humans just as much, if not more so, than their hunting practices.

Clearing the Ground

Before getting into the specific details of the Bateks' relations with predatory beings and monstrous entities that fill their world, it is necessary to briefly overview some of the principal claims made by Amazonian specialists which I mention above. Among many Amazonian groups, diseases are commonly thought to arise as the spirits of animals (who live in human-like worlds) either devour or incorporate human souls they have captured into their own communities (Viveiros De Castro 1998; Fausto 2007; Vilaça 2002; Rivière 1994; Whitehead and Wright 2004). Amazonian shamans cure sick individuals by combatting, or negotiating with, spirits to recover the souls of their patients who are either being consumed or integrated into the respective animal community (Kohn 2013, 154). In discussing the predatory idiom among the Wari', Aparecida Vilaça describes how this group considers animals as humans, "especially since they themselves can act as predators and eaters — the core meaning of the term *wari'*. Acting as humans and predators, they treat the Wari' as game" (2005, 450). The most well-known proponent of this theory, Viveiros De Castro, contends the "hunting ideology is also and above all an ideology of shamans, in so far as it is shamans who administer the relations between humans and the spiritual component of the extra-humans, since they alone are capable of assuming the point of view of such beings and, in particular, are capable of returning to tell the tale" (Viveiros De Castro 1998). One problem with structuralist arguments about animistic forms and practices concerns their lack of political and historical contextualisation and their underlying assumptions that predatory idioms are based purely upon hunting practices.

Many recent examinations of Amazonian forms of animism have avoided any analysis of the role that historical experience and wider politics—particularly experiences of colonialism and neo-colonialism—have had on indigenous ontologies. Descola meticulously describes the historical development of naturalism in two chapters of his oeuvre *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2013, 57–88, 172–200) while making almost no mention of the role of European conquest and colonialism. His chapters exploring totemism and animism eliminate more than 200 years of Australian colonial history and a massive half a millennium of

American colonial history. Similar criticisms can be applied to Viveiros De Castro, the other structuralist heavyweight of Amazonian studies of animism. Viveiros De Castro's much-cited article *Cosmological deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism* (Viveiros De Castro 1998) contains no references to history or colonialism, neither does his book *Metaphysiques Cannibales* (2009). These authors give the impression that the indigenous people of Amazonia live in mythical pre-historical and timeless worlds. While their approaches offer powerful conceptual frameworks to rethink animism, a major weakness is their reproduction of the reductionist and ahistorical cognitive-representational models of earlier forms of structuralism.

Not all anthropologists working with indigenous groups in Amazonia have followed Descola and Viveiros De Castro's structuralist frameworks; many have offered decidedly more historicized accounts of Amazonian shamanism and animism (Bessire and Bond 2014; Whitehead 1993; Taussig 1987; Gow 1996). Neil Whitehead describes "a scholarly myopia as regards the use of the archaeological and historiographical data" (1993, 285), and argues for the need to understand Amazonian cultures as an articulation of colonial and modern state structures as well as Amerindian ethnohistories (1993; 2003). Michael Taussig (1987) and Peter Gow (Gow 1996), have both argued that idioms of Amazonian animism and shamanism have been drawn from historical experiences and are modelled upon political relations between upriver indigenes and downriver polities. Gow has suggested that *Ayahuasca* shamanism "evolved as a response to the specific colonial history of western Amazonia." (1996, 91) He emphasises that western Amazonian shamanism is "deeply embedded in the contemporary structure of social and economic relations in the region" and how the *ayahuasca* curing ritual "engages a set of images of time and space that are coherently related to the spatio-temporal symbolism of other domains, such as the extractive industry, subsistence economy and class relations" (1996, 92). More recently, Eduardo Kohn has described how "masters of the beings of the forest are often thought of as European priests or powerful white estate owners" (2013, 153–88). These historicized and politicized studies of Amazonian animism challenge the structuralist claims that predatory relations can be reduced to a venatic ideology arising solely from ecological relations.

A recent archaeological study led by Jonas Gregorio de Souza, has shown that in pre-Columbian Amazonia large numbers of people (~500,000 and 1 million) were living in fortified villages along "the interfluves and minor tributaries of southern Amazonia" (de Souza et al. 2018, 1). These fortified settlements suggest widespread violence in the region even long before European colonialism, and it is reasonable to assume that pre-colonial states would have impacted upon animistic forms in comparable ways to how Whitehead, Gow, Taussig and Kohn argue for modern states. This puts into a new light Carlos Fausto's observation that in Amazonia, "warfare and disease represent different perspectives on a single event: what

appears as disease to humans may be seen as warfare by animals" (Fausto 2007, 501). Both forms of interaction are clearly important to Amazonian animism and apparently closely interlinked.

Structural violence clearly seems to have played an important role in shaping animistic concepts and practices in the Malay Peninsula, where 'tribal' peoples have had significant interactions with the Malay state and its predecessors for at least two thousand years (L. Y. Andaya 2010, 25–26). Violent relations between Orang Asli and Malays and Thais have been documented at least from the eighteenth century (K. Endicott 1983; K. Endicott 1997; Dentan 2008; Swettenham 1882; Dodge 1981). But Dentan has argued that pre-colonial violence may have even begun a thousand years ago when "petty despots" from early Hinduized coastal states "showed off their power by killing and slaving" the tribal peoples within their reach (Dentan 2002b, 173 citing Coedès 1968:58; Maxwell 1996). Many authors suggest that violent long-term interactions with neighbouring populations and state polities affected the emergence of present-day Orang Asli socio-cultural forms (K. Endicott 1983; K. Endicott 1997; Leary 1995; Dentan 2008; Tacey and Riboli 2014). To understand Batek modes of relating to predatory non-humans, it is clearly essential to consider their largely violent wider historical and political relations with outsiders.

Monstrosity and Change

During my fieldwork, Bateks expressed fears of a diverse array of monstrous entities. These dangerous predatory beings stand in stark opposition to the benevolent creators and spirit-guides described in the previous chapter. Merely discussing them was seen by many Bateks as inviting danger. People would shudder when questioned about them, muttering "*oh ji-hat*" (they are dangerous) or "*yek entung*" (I'm frightened). For Bateks, monstrous non-humans are not confined to stories and myths, many are perceived to dwell in caves, mountaintops and other dark places in the forest. They often have hybrid forms melding anthropomorphic and zoomorphic characteristics. Many live as spirits in the invisible world; their predatory behaviour manifests as disease or illness and their 'true' forms can only be seen by shamans. What unites these frightful beings is their desire to consume human substances—blood, flesh and 'life force' (*nawa* or *semangat*).

Monstrous beings are commonly reported by Orang Asli groups. Anthropologists working with other groups have provided detailed accounts of dangerous, soul devouring beings among the Jah Hut (Holaday, Ping, and Seong 2003), Chewong (Howell 1984), and Semai (Dentan 2008). However, similar beliefs among the Batek have received scant attention. Whilst Lye (2004) describes the thunder lord and *naga'* as being angered by forest loss and illustrates how Bateks

conceptualize degradation through cosmological idioms, she gives little mention of other nonhumans acting in what could be described as a sustained predatory mode. Kirk Endicott writes "those things that are dangerous, such as thunderstorms and flash floods, are represented by appropriately fear-inspiring beings, such as the thunder-god and the earth-snake. But the great majority of *hala'* are portrayed as benevolent to man and as freely bestowing their bounties on him" (K. Endicott 1979a, 219). Endicott argues that Bateks "see their forest as basically a hospitable place to live, one in which they feel relatively safe and secure." (K. Endicott 1979a, 219). Variances between my own findings and those of Endicott and Lye may reflect differences in our research focuses, and the geographic locales where research was conducted. Predatory beings are indeed particularly feared by many Manya', a group that neither Lye nor Endicott conducted research with. But it is possible that monsters and predators may have a greater general relevance than at the time when Lye and Endicott conducted research. Social and environmental changes in recent years have caused a heightened sense of insecurity and anxiety among *all* Batek groups. It is likely that the increasing presence of dangerous entities is directly related to the anxiety that people experience as a result of changing social, environmental and political circumstances. These changes have been the most dramatic among communities situated on the periphery of the forest where I conducted my fieldwork and stories about monsters tend to abound in these locations.

Following Endicott's logic that creator beings and spirit-guides, "are the collective *alter egos* of the Batek" (1979, 124), I argue *certain* predatory beings should be seen as embodiments of the most violent aspects of non-Batek outsiders. To be clear, my argument is not that *all* monstrous beings that Bateks interact with and describe in their myths should be seen as embodiments of violent outsiders. Monsters, like other nonhumans, relate to complex socio-cultural realities and have complex polysemic characteristics. For example, ghosts of people who have not been accepted by the creator beings into the after world includes a few people (Bateks) who have violated serious prohibitions as well as many other people (non-Bateks) who have buried their dead in the ground (thus trapping their shadow souls) rather than giving them tree-burials (Cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 113–14). A similar situation has been described by Ramsey Elkholy among the Orang Rimba of Sumatra (2016, 204–6). Bateks consider that ghosts can cause disease and death to anyone coming too close to a grave site and at locations where people who broke prohibitions were punished through the wrath of the creator beings. Batek Dè' call these ghosts *jereng saro'* and associate them with people who have broken *tolah* offences which are punishable to Tohan (Endicott 1979, 114) while Manya' refer to them as *sei sei* which is a general term for ghosts, often those of people who have broken prohibitions that are punished by the rainbow snake and thunder deity. Notions about these beings relate to and affect different things. Alongside various

other roles, they amplify fears of breaking taboos, mediate ethnic differences between Bateks and non-Bateks and differentiate particular locations within the forest as topophobic locales.

Cannibals and Seduction

Some entities are said to be able to take human forms as a means to trick, seduce and entice people to follow them to their forest homes, before revealing their true grotesque forms and consuming their prey. For example, many Batek Dè' in Kelantan talk about a strange ape-like creature called Keboi who is said to lurk in the forest and attack humans. Although his true form is that of a gibbon, his dopplegänger-like powers allow him to take on the guise of a human. Masquerading as a particular individual, usually a family member or friend, he tries to trick people by getting them to follow him further into the forest where he kills the individual and drinks their blood. Reportedly, the only sign that differentiates Keboi from the people he mimics is the fact he does not have a philtrum. Across Southeast Asia several similar shape shifting cannibals are also associated with missing philtrums including the Cindaku were-tigers of Jambi, Indonesia (Wessing 1986, 97) and the Engkantos of the Philippines (Demetrio 1969). Like other cannibalistic creatures that populate Bateks stories and myths, Keboi serves as powerful reminder of the, often, illusory nature of everyday reality. Although some cannibals in Batek stories are much more human-like than Keboi they often exhibit bizarre behaviours. The following two myths, about two cannibalistic entities which were told to me in 2007 by 'ey Asso in Post Lebir, are fairly typical of this genre. Such stories about cannibals serve as vivid illustrations of ways not to behave and serve to amplify fears about non-Bateks. The Bateks relations with these cannibalistic persons are characterized by predation and avoidance. These are important modes of relating to non-Bateks, whether humans or non-humans, and exemplify the interconnections between socio-political and cosmological domains.

Bulok Makok

Long ago, there was a strange man who lived in the forest named Bulok Malok. He met a group of Bateks and stayed with them for about three or four years. He married two Batek women and one of his wives soon became pregnant. One day, when the three of them were in the forest, the man suddenly became crazy and began to eat his own flesh. His companions were obviously very frightened. His wife that wasn't pregnant quickly climbed up a tree to hide. His pregnant wife couldn't climb the tree so she fled. Little by little the man ate up all the flesh on his body and then sat down and rested in a big pool of his own blood. He then took a small piece of wood and used it as a toothpick to remove pieces of his flesh that had become stuck between his teeth. After

discarding the toothpick an ant picked it up and climbed the tree where his wife was hiding. As he watched the ant climb the tree the man saw where his wife was hiding. His hunger returned and he wanted to eat her too. However, because he had eaten all his flesh and muscles, he was just a skeleton and couldn't stand up. He could only scream. When his wife saw him, she was terrified. She quickly climbed down the tree and the man tried to attack her. She hit him with a big stick and smashed him to pieces. Then she took his bones and burnt them.

Cakawet

One day, a man went to the forest looking for food. He soon found a rambutan tree and climbed it to pick the tasty fruit. After a short time, a strange old woman walked up to the place the man was. The woman said she was hungry and wanted to eat kaldus (dusky leaf monkey). *The man who was halfway up a rambutan tree harvesting the fruit immediately realised the old woman was really a dangerous cannibal who wanted to eat him. He threw some fruit down to her, suggesting it was monkey meat. Smelling the fruit, the old woman kept up the pretence that it was monkey but could smell the odour of the man on the fruit. As she became excited, she started to play with herself, fondling her breasts and vagina which created a strange music. The man was frightened by the music and knew the woman wanted to eat him. When she left to get an axe to chop the tree down, the man hurriedly climbed down from the tree and fled back to his camp.*

The central theme of these short tales is the equation of strangers with cannibalism. Although there is no specific mention of the stranger's ethnicity in the story about Bulok Makok, the man's polygamous marriage to two Batek women suggests he was Malay. However, he also holds non-human characteristics. His desire to eat human flesh is uncontrollable to the extent that he consumes his own body to satisfy his hunger. Even after eating his own flesh, he remains sentient and longs to devour his wife that he sees hiding in the tree. The Batek woman's act of burning his bones after she has smashed him to pieces seems to hint that he must be completely destroyed to prevent any further attack.

In the second story, the fact that the cannibal Cakawet seems unable to visually identify the piece of rambutan fruit that the male hero of the story has thrown to her is peculiar. It suggests that what she visually perceives may be different from what humans perceive and that she is actually not human. It is as if Cakawet's capacities for perception may be somewhat imperfect or at least not fully known to the Batek man. This ontologically ambiguous being's interiority is not transparent to him. Importantly, the story involves a series of interactions during which the two characters attempt to deceive each other through shifting the signification of the object which they infer the other desires them to perceive. Cakawet desires human flesh but demands monkey meat. The Batek man is aware

of Cakawet's true intentions and tries to distract her by a double replacement; he substitutes rambutan fruit for 'monkey meat' which is already a replacement for human flesh that he knows Cakawet desires. Cakawet appears potentially deluded by his pretence but becomes alerted to his human identity by identifying the human odour which lingers on the fruit.

Visual perception does not seem to be Cakawet's primary mode of perceiving reality; her identification of the man through smelling his odour suggests a non-human identity. It is worth remembering that olfaction is a key mode of communication between Bateks and nonhumans, as in many societies olfactory sensations are considered as having the capacity to cross the divide between the seen and the unseen world (Classen, Howes, and Synnott 1994). Touch may also have played a role here. The leathery skins of Rambutans (whose name derive from the Malay word for hair, *rambut*) are covered in hair-like fleshy spines which can make them *feel* rather animal-like (and their whitish flesh inside may be seen as an apt substitute for human flesh). The man's act of throwing down rambutan fruit to the woman is also a possible cause of her sexual excitement and a potential indication she views him as human. For Bateks, the act of throwing boughs of rambutan that have been cleared of fruit over tree branches and snagging them is known as *saŋsaŋ*, which designates one's intentions to marry. Cakawet's desire to consume flesh is directly associated with sexual arousal and music. As mentioned in the previous chapter, intersubjective relations between Bateks and *hala'* spirits are often of an erotic nature. Once relations with benevolent animal-spirits are established there is an immediate prohibition on the hunting and eating of members of the spirit species. Cakawet, however, transgresses these norms of human-spirit interaction by making love to herself rather than the other and lusts for the consumption of human flesh. Her masturbation creates a strange music — another mode of communication between humans and nonhumans — but serves to further frighten the Batek protagonist rather than seduce him. Rather than seeing the man in the tree as a person, she perceives him as meat to devour. Although Batek perspectivism is less salient than its Amerindian counterparts, the behaviours of predatory beings like Cakawet suggest underlying perspectivist elements.

In both these myths the strangers that are encountered live alone in the forest, although this is not exceptional for many peoples, it is something no sane Batek would ever do (cf. Lye 2008a, 30–32). The cannibals' anti-social behaviour and madness is exaggerated through acts they perform on their own bodies; Cakawet's masturbation mirrors the man's act of auto-cannibalism. In these myths, the protagonists escape but other stories often end with Bateks being cannibalistically consumed (Lye 2004, 28). On one level, I suggest, the characteristics and behaviours of cannibalistic nonhumans in myths and stories like this serve as wildly exaggerated dramatizations of social and ethnic differences between Bateks and

Malays (cf. Lye 2004, 68). Such stories are clearly intended to install a fear of strangers in children, an understandable strategy for people who were regular victims of slave-raids until recent times. On another level, they are dramatic illustrations of improper human behaviour. It is possible that they not only serve to frighten people of dangerous outsiders but also to warn people of being seduced into joining their downstream Malay neighbours. In this way, they function as one of the myriad ways in which Bateks "block off" any desires to join Malays (Benjamin 2002, 10).

Cornelia van der Sluys (2000, 442–43) recorded an interesting variant of the Bulok Makok myth among the Jahai living in the Belum-Temengor region which illustrates how the destructive power of cannibalistic beings can be transformed into a reproductive force. In the Jahai version, a man lured three of his sons one by one into the forest before killing and consuming them. After eating his sons, he wrapped their bones up in bundles under a tree. His wife managed to escape by hiding in a tree and the man, whose hunger for human flesh had not been quelled, ends up consuming the flesh of his own arms and legs. When the woman finally descended from the tree, she called her relatives who beat the man to death causing him to transform into a common species of edible yam. When the bones of the three sons were scattered around the forest, they became all the other species of edible yams. In another Jahai myth that van der Sluys recorded (2000, 440–41), the origin of many animals, especially hunted species, are described as originating from the body of a giant cannibalistic ogre. In this story this ogre, the "Giant Spectacled Leaf Monkey Man" desired meat so much he hungrily consumed whole camps of Jahais. Finally, two *hala'* killed and butchered the monster before scattering the parts of his body around the forest. These pieces then become various animals, including the present-day spectacled leaf-monkey (ibid).

Batek Dè' have a very similar version of this myth in which a gigantic bearcat (B. *cepuk*. L. *Arctictis biturong*) or palm-civet (B. *tɔŋ*. L. *Paguma larvata*) is blow-piped by two *hala'* brothers who then butcher the animal and scatter the pieces of meat in the forest. As the *hala'* brothers throw the pieces of the bearcat in different directions, they name various species of animals which the parts of the bearcat become as they are dispersed: blood becomes wheat, bones iron; veins become leeches, snakes and millipedes; the skin becomes the elephant; and the heart becomes the tiger (K. Endicott 1979a, 62–63; Lye 2004, 83). Although Bateks do not describe this primordial bearcat or civet as predating upon Batek bodies, his monstrousness is apparent from his enormous size. What is interesting in all these myths is that the monstrous body of the ancestral beings is transformed into generative potential. Conceiving the landscape as being the metamorphized remains of monstrous predatory ancestral beings imbues the environment and the beings that inhabit it with traces of these beings. The act of naming plants and

animals following the distribution of the butchered remains of the bearcat further anthropomorphizes the environment and evokes the relatedness of species.

KING KONG

Between 2008 and 2012, in Kelantan, Batek Dè' often told me about colossal blood-thirsty ape-like creatures known as *bawac gerai* who they said dwelled high up on mountain peaks. Due to fears that these beings will be angered if their 'true names' are used, people usually use the avoidance term *King Kong* when discussing them. The use of this term illustrates how interconnections and popular culture contribute to cosmological imagery. Whenever I went through picture books of animals with Batek friends they immediately identified gorillas and orangutans as *bawac gerai* (or King Kong). People always described *bawac gerai* as being just as real as any other animals (*'ay*) of the forest and were adamant that these beings were not spirits of the invisible world.

Most people associated these colossal apes with Gunung Tahan, the highest peak in Malaysia, but others told me they dwelled on several mountain peaks between Kelantan and Pahang. Kirk Endicott briefly describes these entities as "pig-tailed macaques as big as cows" but does not comment further (1979a, 65). Although *bawac* is the Batek term for pig-tailed macaque, people categorically told me this creature was not a macaque. Like descriptions of many non-human beings, those of the *bawac gerai* varied between individuals. Some people said they have the ability to create clouds and make it very cold. Others say that although *bawac gerai* usually spend their time high up in the mountains, they could transform into elephants if they wished to roam further afield in the forest. Everyone agreed that when humans come too close to the *bawac gerai* they roar in anger and hurl down huge boulders. When angered, they are said to thirst for humans' blood, hearts and eyes; the parts of the human body in which life-force (*ɲawa'*) is said to be particularly condensed. The monstrous qualities of the *bawac gerai* is apparent in their enormous size, blood-thirstiness and violent behaviour.

While many people living in settlements on the forests-edge like Post Lebir and Aring 5 highlighted the more frightening facets of the *bawac gerai*, people living deeper in the forest told me that although he could be dangerous, he was in fact good (*betet*). One man living at Was Rangsil, a small forest camp situated on the upper Lebir River, said he had once encountered the creature while collecting forest plants to sell to Malays. He described it as large as an elephant, covered in bodily hair (*sok*), with human-like hands (*cas*) and eyes (*met*) but with a rhinoceros-like horn in place of his nose. The man reiterated many times that *bawac gerai* was good (*betet*) and was only dangerous (*ji'hat*) if people intruded into his home at the peak of Mount Tahan. In these accounts, his role is more of a guardian than a typical predator.

Images of gigantic apes acting as guardians to the heavens are found among several Semang groups (Skeat and Blagden 1906b; K. Endicott 1979a). Walter William Skeat collected several descriptions of similar ape-like beings "the size of mountains" protecting fruit paradises in the celestial world. In these descriptions, rather than hurling rocks at intruders, the apes prevent shamans from stealing fruit from heavenly fruit islands by pelting would-be thieves with large prickly fruit (Skeat and Blagden 1906b, 211). The similarities between these ape-guardians and *bawac gerai* above are clear, particularly the role of these gigantic entities in protecting a location situated in the upperworld (mountains or heavens).

Mount Tahan, the home *bawac gerai*, is considered an exceptionally potent locale by many Batek Dè'. It is also commonly associated with the thunder deity and rainbow snake and is seen as an entry point to the invisible world. The mountain is frequently named in shamanic songs and functions as a port of call during their soul journeys to the upper and lower worlds (Riboli 2011, 101; K. Endicott 1979a, 45 nn. 22, 146–148). Some Bateks say atop the mountain there is a pool called Tingring which acts as a gateway to the underworld (Endicott 1979, 147). Batek Teh call this pool *Manko'* and consider it to be a gold filled bathing place of the *hala' 'asal* (K. Endicott 1979a, 187). This pool is said to be extremely deep and the rainbow snake is said to lie somewhere in its depths. The mountain links the lower world of the *naga'*, the world of humans and the upper world of gobar and the *hala' 'asal*. An abundance of cosmological significata are condensed within its dizzying peaks. Associations of mountain peaks as centres of the cosmos or *axis mundi* with shamanic power are fairly widespread across Southeast Asia (Wessing 1988; Roseman 2007; Sillander 2004) and point toward wider historical connections.

The archetypal *axis mundi* in Southeast Asia, is Mount Meru, the sacred five peaked mountain of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain cosmologies (Mabbett 1983; Wessing 1988). Wessing argues that places like Mount Tahan function as "Meru replicas [and] may be seen as the place where the sky and the underworld, fire and water, male and female or Siva/Visnu and Sri intersect and, through their intersection, create the universe, the world or, on the local level, the state." (Wessing 1988, 43–44) Although such an interpretation is appealing, it could also be argued that Mount Meru emerged as an amalgamation of pre-existing cosmological constructs across South and Southeast Asia as Hinduism emerged in the first millennia BCE. As Hindu-Buddhism spread through Southeast Asia, these pre-existing cosmological ideas would have been absorbed into the larger Hindu-Buddhism system (Cf. Dentan 2002b).

Although their territory is divided by the Tahan mountain range, Bateks rarely climb any peaks. For the most part, people prefer instead the low undulating foothills where food resources are more easily found (Lye 2008b, 39). When travelling between Kelantan and Pahang people tend to follow ancient routes

through mountain passes rather than ascending the peaks of the Tahan mountain range. The associations of Mount Tahan with *bawac gerai* and other powerful entities also serve as powerful deterrents to Bateks climbing the peak. This is not to say that Bateks never scale the mountain, a number of men from the Tembeling area work as guides and sometimes take tourists in search of adventure to the peak of Mount Tahan (Lye 2002). Interestingly, stories about *bawac gerai* were less common in the Tembeling area than in Kelantan. Many Bateks in Kelantan told me that they were worried about tourists visiting Mount Tahan as their activities could anger the *bawac gerai* causing them to move down from the mountains or act in unforeseen ways. Although Bateks in the Tembeling area seemed generally less worried about the effects of tourists on the *bawac gerai*, they were very worried about the activities of another variety of nonhumans; *sakai pangan* (were tigers). Bateks consistently described *bawac gerai* as 'real' animals which were sharply distinguished from the *hala' 'asal*. I was never told of them being encountered in dreams or trances and they never function as spirit guides.

Sakai Pangan Were-Tigers

During the same period that I recorded stories about *bawac gerai* in Kelantan, I began collecting stories about blood thirsty tiger-men called *sakai-pangan* on the opposite side of Taman Negara along the Tembeling River. Similar stories about these beings were also collected by Diana Riboli (2013, 144) who conducted fieldwork at approximately the same time as myself. Bateks described *sakai pangan* as highly dangerous blood-thirsty tigers who can transform into men by swallowing a stone called a *batu penangis* (M. 'weeping stone'). After having defecated the stone, they transform again and keep the stone hidden somewhere in their bodies. In tiger form, the only sign of their true nature is said to be their eyes which are larger and more slanted than that of normal animals. The only sustenance they need is blood and they eschew any other foods in both human and animal form. Like many other monstrous beings, they are said to dwell in caves and are only rarely encountered (usually by people travelling alone).

The name Bateks use to refer to these strange tiger-men combines two Malay terms: *sakai* and *pangan*. Both terms were commonly used in colonial literature to refer to the Orang Asli (Rentse 1937; Skeat and Blagden 1906a). The first term, *sakai*, was often used to refer to many Orang Asli groups and has the connotations of 'slave', 'serf' or 'nigger' (Porath 2002, 98–99; Nicholas 2002, 120; Nagata 2006, 1). *Pangan* was more specifically used to refer to Bateks and other 'East coast Negritos' by Malays and colonial administrators during colonial times (Rentse 1937). Following Richard James Wilkinson's suggestion, Ivor Evans translated *pangan* as an extensive 'tract of forest'. Alternately, Skeat and Blagden (1906a, 21) argue the term may relate to a North Bornean term *pangan* meaning 'friendly'. More recently,

Shuichi Nagata (2006, 4) has argued that *pangan* should be translated as 'people of the forest' or 'people of the scrubland'. Bateks say that *sakai-pangan* usually resemble Malays in human form and they are then often described as speaking the Malay language. Riboli has argued their association with Malays and their blood-thirsty nature makes them, "powerful representations of violent Otherness" (Riboli 2013, 144). The Batek's choice of these particular terms to refer to these nonhumans subverts colonial thinking by appropriating these derogatory terms and attaching them to violent nonhumans.

The *sakai pangan* stand in stark opposition to the shamanic *hala'* tigers described in the previous chapter. While *hala'* tigers protect Batek communities and act as important sources of ritual knowledge, the *sakai pangan* embody uncontrollable violence. Until recently, many Bateks living along the Tembeling River in Pahang said the *sakai pangan* dwelled within a cave called Gua Telinga located near the park's headquarters at Kuala Tahan. The association of these predatory tigers with this cave parallels the *hala'* tigers associations with Batu Badok described in the previous chapter. These locations are separated by about 25 kilometres; the former lies deep in the heart of Batek Dè' territory, while the latter is situated near the southern border of Batek lands close to Kuala Tahan. Like Mount Tahan, Gua Telinga is a favoured locale of tourists who visit the national park.

Kuala Tahan is the primary entry point for the 80,000-100,000 tourists who visit the park each year during the dry season between March and November (Daud and Rahman 2011; K. Endicott et al. 2016). Several Batek camps along the Tembeling (Was Dedari, Was Yong and Tersik) allow paying tourists to visit and almost 40% of all tourists visiting the park choose to do so each year. This means that during the peak season up to three hundred tourists can visit these settlements each day. Daud and Rahman (2011) report that 33% of tourists to Taman Negara choose to visit caves in the vicinity of Kuala Tahan and around 12.1% of visitors climb mountains. Although Endicott et al. (2016, 99) have argued "'playing native' for tourists" allows Bateks to take "advantage of opportunities emanating from the outside world while steadfastly maintaining their autonomy, core values, and preferred way of life", the impacts of tourism should not only be understood in positive terms. The high numbers of tourists visiting Batek camps during the dry season is highly stressful for many Bateks and many choose to retreat to the forest or camps situated further upstream for respite (Cf. Riboli 2013, 142). Alongside economic changes and an increased sense of general anxiety among Batek communities, the changing social and sensorial fabric of particular places caused by the activities of tourists (and other outsiders) has also contributed to the heightened sense of fear that Bateks have of beings like the *sakai pangan* and *bawac gerai*.

Tourists visiting Batek camps and the forest area around Kuala Tahan significantly change the sensorial landscape. The contemporary forest soundscape near Kuala Tahan is characterized by a hybrid amalgam or cacophony of animal and insect calls blended with non-forest sounds of motor engines, tourists chatter and music blaring from riverside cafes. It is not only soundscapes that have been modified by tourists and other outsiders, many Bateks claim that tourists and other outsiders carry the smells of the town and city—pungent deodorants, fragrant soaps and perfumes—on their bodies. Sounds and smells can cause the fury not only of the thunder lord and rainbow snake, but also of the dangerous non-humans living on earth. During Diana Riboli's fieldwork in the Tembeling area in 2010, Bateks reported to her their concerns about tourists visiting Gua Telinga. Bateks living in the Tahan area interpreted the large numbers of tourists visiting the cave as polluting the site through their noise and activities (Riboli 2013, 143–45). Bateks claimed the sensorial shifts caused by the activities of tourists within the cave eventually caused the *sakai pangan* to flee the site and triggered the partial collapse of the cave (ibid).

Another factor which may have led to increased fear of the *sakai pangan* relates to poaching. In Batek settlements I stayed in all across Taman Negara, people told me stories of poachers from Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia. Poachers were described as being heavily armed and dangerous. The Batek's fears of poachers revolved around anxieties of being killed by poachers or of poachers kidnapping and raping Batek women. This has contributed to a generalized anxiety that the forest is a more dangerous place than in the past. In every conversation I held on the topic of poaching phrases like "*yek ʻəntɯŋ*" (I'm afraid) and "*oh sakel yek*" ("they will kill me") were repeated over and over again. Fears of violence were probably exaggerated above the threat poachers realistically posed. Most important is arguably the actual violence that poachers use against tigers and elephants. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Batek have reported cases of elephants becoming more violent as a result of poaching. In their incarnations as *sakai pangan* and *bawac gerai*, tigers and elephants reverse the violence of poaching, but are indiscriminate in their vengeance; their human targets may include the perpetrators of this violence (poachers) or any humans living in the forest (Bateks).

The *sakai pangan* and *bawac gerai* stand apart from other predatory non-humans in that they are categorically described as physical entities akin to animals, rather than as spiritual beings and are encountered in the real world rather than dreams and trances. They are never described as stealing or consuming human souls, they thirst for 'real' blood and flesh. The violent dispositions of the *sakai pangan* and the fact that they are often described as Malay-like when in their human guises suggests that they should be considered as monstrous embodiments of Malays. The particular places these entities are associated with is very important.

The *sakai pangan's* former associations with Gua Telinga, a place situated on the edge of Taman Negara, locates them within a separated space (a cave) that lies betwixt and between the forest world of the Batek and the outside world of Malays. The fact that they fled this abode and now live in an unspecified place within the forest emphasizes fears that the outside world is now uncontrollably entering the forest world. Former separatedness has been ruptured by non-Bateks (tourists) disrespecting proper behavioural norms or cosmo-rules. The noises and non-forest odours of tourists incurred the anger of the *sakai pangan* who then left the cave and moved into the forest. This is typical of the kinds of rupture which are fracturing and reconfiguring the Batek's already diverse and fluid forms of animism which is based upon an underlying logic that things and beings belong in their proper places and that rules and prohibitions should be followed in order to prevent the anger of non-human persons.

The particular characteristics of Mount Tahan, the home of the *bawac gerai* are also important. The *bawac gerai* are rarely encountered because they live in a place that is physically separated (at a height of 2,187 metres) from the rest of the forest. Mount Tahan functions as one of a number of *axis mundi* connecting earth with the celestial abode of the thunder lord (whose image alternates between that of a giant ape or Malay) and the subterranean realm of the *naga'*. While these two entities can only be encountered in dreams and trances, the *bawac gerai* are resolutely described as physical entities. As such they can be seen as agents of these two *hala' 'asal* who act to protect Mount Tahan from any potentially unwelcome visitors. Through their shamanic powers of transformation, the *bawac gerai* are able to leave this place in the highly potent guise of elephants which reflects their mighty power. Their associations with Malays and other outsiders are significantly less obvious than those of the *sakai pangan*, however, as embodiments of uncontrollable power they act as potent guardians of a place seen as a boundary between the visible and invisible worlds.

Soul Devourers: Violence and Predation Among the Manya'

The largest group of predatory nonhumans in Manya' thought are known as *penyakit* (a Malay term meaning disease). These monstrous disease-causing entities are classified into two subgroups: the *penyakit batak* which are human-like beings said to dwell in caves and trees within the forest; and, the *penyakit djinn* who are described as gigantic entities which lurk in rivers (*tom*), swamps and marshes (*paya*). *Penyakit* spirits are considered one of the principal causes of disease by the Manya' and the illnesses they cause can only be cured through the activities of shamans. They are sharply distinguished from the other principal categories of non-human persons — the *ai djum* and *langoi* spirit guides and the *cenil* ancestors. *Penyakit* never function as spirit guides for shamans in the way that *ai djum* and

langoi do. In the descriptions I was given of them, *penyakit* were only ever described as agents of disease who prey upon the souls of humans for sustenance. The historical relations between the Manya' and outsiders are central for understanding their relationships with *penyakit*. Several Manya' recounted stories to me about how they were repeatedly subjected to violent attacks from Malay and Batak slave raiders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Attacks by local Malays resulted in the massacres of several communities while those perpetrated by Bataks purportedly involved cannibalism. I contend that *penyakit* should be seen as cosmological transformations of these agents of extreme violence into monstrous other-than-human entities.

The Manya's employment of the Malay-Arabic terms *penyakit batak* and *penyakit djinn* for soul devouring beings suggests profound historical connectivity. Batak is a collective ethnonym used for several groups from the lake Toba area in Sumatra, Indonesia who were infamous for practising ritual cannibalism and slave raiding on other ethnic groups across the Indo-Malaysian world (Marsden 1783). Manya' living at Kampung Tom Ki Ying claim that historic attacks by cannibalistic Bataks were recorded by their ancestors in a series of cave paintings in limestone karsts in the local area. Alongside attacks from Indonesian Bataks, people living at the village claim three entire communities in their area were wiped out during massacres by local Malays that took place in the early twentieth century. It is possible that claims of Batak cannibalism might have been later added to embellish the experiences of slave raiding attacks and other local experiences of violence. Indeed, in a detailed historical study, Hirosue Masashi has argued that images of Batak cannibalism were deliberately cultivated by inland Northern Sumatran chiefs so they could control trade routes between Batak areas and coastal polities when Arabs and Europeans began trading with the area (Masashi 2005). However, the Manya's claims of slave raids and violence should be taken seriously, regardless of whether or not they were victims of cannibalism. The colonial literature is rife with descriptions of Malays, Thais, Rawas and other dominant ethnic groups hunting down Orang Aslis—labelled as *sakais* (slaves) or *kafirs* (infidels)—like animals (see K. Endicott 1983 for an overview). Endicott has documented how the influx of Malays into Kelantan from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries corresponded with violent slave raiding attacks upon Bateks and Mendriqs and a series of outbreaks of infectious diseases that decimated populations living there (K. Endicott 1997, 38, 43–44). The violent outsiders who attacked Bateks and Manya' would have been described in monstrous, predatory terms by any survivors. As lived experiences informed the altered states of dreams and trances, violent outsiders were transformed into disease causing *penyakit*.

While Malays now largely understand diseases as rising from biomedical conditions, historically they conceived of illnesses as being caused by disease-causing spirits termed (*penyakit*), ghosts (*hantu*) or genii (*djinn*) (Sandbukt 1984,

90; Gimlette 1913, 30; Skeat 1900, 64–65, 94; K. Endicott 1970, 53–56). Manya' conceptions of disease being caused by spirits is clearly related to this idea. *Djinn* is a Malay term which originates from Arabic and literally means 'hidden from sight'. In Islamic thought, *djinn* are seen as a class of nonhuman beings attributed with superhuman powers who were created by Allah from fire (Surat Al-Hijr, 27; Surat Al-Rahmaan 55:15). In the Koran, *djinn* have shapeshifting powers and can take the appearance of humans, animals or dragons but are often described as living in societies like humans where they marry, have children and so on. In Manya' usage, the term *djinn* is only used in conjunction with *penyakit* and *penyakit djinn* are always considered as dangerous entities.

The semiotic shifting of Malay and Arabic terms for forest peoples onto monstrous entities and the association of Malays, Bataks or other violent outsiders with these entities has been described by numerous ethnographers working in Southeast Asia. Several Orang Asli groups use local versions of the Malay-Arabic term *iblis* meaning 'devil' or 'Satan' to refer to disease-causing entities which have similar characteristics to *penyakit* (Jah Huts *bes*; Chewongs *bas*; Batek Nongs *bès*). Variations of *iblis* are also common in Borneo, for example the Luangan of Kalimantan use the term *blis* for spirits when acting malevolently (Herrmans 2015, 54; Sillander 2004, 192–93). Among the marginalized Orang Rimba (Kubu) of Sumatra, Øyvind Sandbukt (1984, 87–88) and Ramsey Elkholy (2016, 177) describe a class of similar disease-causing entities called the *orang me-layu* who "are said to dress like Malays and live in Malay-like villages particularly associated with swampy and palm-rich indentations in the terrain" (Sandbukt 1984, 88). Generally, *blis* and *orang me-layu* spirits are seen to be extremely dangerous and inclined towards harming human beings. Sandbukt also describes another not-quite-human class of being, which the Kubu call *Orang kapir* as "almost unimaginably depraved and polluted beings, quite clearly a reflection of common Malay attitudes toward the Kubu" (Sandbukt 1984, 88). As Elkholy has argues (2016, 177), "the term *skapir* or *kapir* finds its etymology in the Arabic term *kafir* which translates literally as "infidel" or more generally as "heathen" or "pagan."" Like Bateks, the Orang Kubu take the derogatory and dehumanizing terms Malays use for them and apply them to classes of monstrous non-human entities. Similar to Batek Dè' conceptions of the *Sakai Pangan* and Manya' ideas of *penyakit*, Orang Rimba notions of the *orang me-layu* and *Orang kapir* exemplify how "subaltern" cosmo-political strategies may emerge from within positions of subordination through eclectic blending of different cosmological frameworks coexisting at the political margins

Penyakit spirits attack and carry out violence upon human souls in much the same way Malays and Bataks historically attacked the Manya's physical bodies. In a mirroring of the Bataks historical hunting and consumption of humans, the *penyakit batak* carry out their predatory cannibalistic acts on souls (*semangat*) rather than bodies. The Manya' claim that in the past they would sometimes fight

off would be attackers through employing magical means. For example, some stories detail how entire groups of Manya' would transform into tigers to frighten away Malays. In the present, the ability to transform into tigers is restricted to shamans. Other stories detail people making daring escapes from slave raiders. Today, Manya' shamans enlist the help of their *ai djum* allies to combat disease-causing *penyakit batak*. This strategy not only functions as a means of alleviating illness but serves as a means for shamans to use violence through the proxy of their '*ai djum* spirit guides. Fleeing the violence of spirits — a common strategy for Orang Aslis during the period of slave raiding (K. Endicott 1983; Dentan 2008) — is not possible. However, rather than directly combatting *penyakit* through the use of magical weapons, Manya' shamans enlist the help of their *'ai djum* and *langoi* spirit guides to carry out violence on their behalf.

Manya' say that *penyakit* inhabit the invisible world (*linung*) and, like other spirits, can only be seen by shamans. *Penyakit* are said to have grotesque and abnormal features; long bodily hair, claws and fangs. However, like the *ai djum* and *hala' 'asal* described in the previous chapter, they are considered as persons (*batek*). They are typical incarnations of monstrosity in both their forms and behaviours. During my fieldwork, people often compared them to the monsters depicted in popular Thai and Indonesian horror films. Mayam, a middle-aged bachelor from Batu Jalang. described these beings as follows:

> *There are two types of* penyakit: penyakit batak *and* penyakit djinn. Penyakit djinn *are very big and usually dwell in rivers.* Penyakit batak *are like humans and they live in different places in the forest. When we sleep, our souls (*semangat*) travel, and go to other places in the area. If a batak meets my soul he will attack me. He'll take me to back to his house, in a cave or a tree. He will then chop me up and cook me with vegetables and eat me. It is like when we go hunting animals.* Batak *and* djinn *hunt our souls in the same way that we hunt animals. Sometimes when we move through the forest we visit places but we don't know they are the homes of a batak or djinn. These beings take our souls and when we return home we start to feel ill. This is because the* penyakit *are cutting up our souls with their knives. If they chop us up completely and eat our souls we die, it is finished. But if a* hala' *helps quickly and kills the* penyakit *we live. Batek eat the animals of the forest, monkeys, siamangs and others.* penyakit *eat our souls, it is the same.*

Penyakit are predators *par excellence*; they consume human souls because they perceive human souls as game and people often explicitly compared *penyakit* predation upon human souls to their own hunting and consumption of animals. As Mayam explained to me, anyone can be attacked by these monsters during the

daylight hours as they move through the forest, or during dreams when their souls (*semangat*) wander the local environment. However, because *penyakit* are invisible to all humans except shamans, individuals only know if they have been attacked if they begin suffering from an illness and a shaman determines that a *penyakit* is responsible. The only way to save someone who has been attacked by a *penyakit* is through the intervention of a shaman.

Soul Journeys to Combat Penyakit

To cure illnesses that are suspected to result from the actions of *penyakit* spirits, a Manya' shaman must retrieve the lost soul of the inflicted person and combat the *penyakit* responsible for the attack. Although such styles of curing are fairly typical in Southeast Asia (Skeat 1900; Sillander 2015; Herrmans 2015), they are markedly absent among the Batek Dè'. To recover the soul of an individual which has been taken by a *penyakit*, a shaman calls down his spirit guides (*'ai djum*) through burning fragrant woods and incense and singing (*penloin*). As the ceremony progresses, he enters a trance state by rhythmically rocking backwards and forwards (*teween*). Trancing is usually accompanied by a shaman's wife strumming a *cungud* (a two-stringed bamboo tube) to create a droning sound. Once in a trance state, the shaman's spirit-guides travel down multi-coloured threads and enter houses (*hayã*) located within the shaman's head and heart. Once sufficient numbers of *'ai djum* spirits have entered his body, the shaman causes his soul (*semangat*) to leave his body. During the trance state, the different *ai djum* spirits incorporated into the shaman's body sing through him. The shaman's soul then journeys through the local environment with his *'ai djum allies* and searches for the *penyakit* responsible for the person's illness. Once he has discovered its location, he then battles the being to recover the lost soul. Rather than combatting the *penyakit* directly, the shaman sends his *ai djum* to fight on his behalf who attack and kill the *penyakit* by blowing magical darts at them. The shaman then recuperates the human soul that the *penyakit* had taken to devour and returns it to the sick individual and finally leaves his trance state as he re-enters his own body. I have never witnessed a curing ritual of this kind myself but was told by many Manya' that they are common. I was told that if a shaman did not intervene in this way, the *penyakit* would completely devour the soul of a sick individual causing his or her death.

Predatory Relations Among Other Orang Asli Groups

Similar predatory relations between humans and spirits are common among many Orang Asli and Malay populations. Wazir-Jahan Karim (Karim 1981, 136–87) gives a detailed account of predatory relations among the Ma' Betisék as does Robert Dentan for the Semai (2008, 87–112). Among both the Semai and Ma' Betisék,

certain illnesses are perceived as arising from attacks carried out by spiritual manifestations of animals in demonic form. The following citation from Dentan describes Semai relations with predatory animal spirits as forming a closed circuit of predation:

> As spirits, demons attack and devour human souls … causing disease and death. Humans appear to demons [the souls of animals] only as souls but attack them in the flesh, as hunters. Together the two peoples constitute the whirling totality of eater and eaten, the wheel of predation, forever changing places as humans kill and devour the flesh of the animals, which are the materializations of demons, and demons kill and devour the souls, which are the spiritualizations of humans. This is the grinding wheel on which both people are crucified, endlessly returning cruelty for cruelty, terror for terror, death for death. (Dentan 2008: 93)

In Semai and Ma' Betisék thought the spirits of animals occupy shifting and contextual positions; animals act as both benevolent spirit guides and as malevolent agents of disease. Marina Roseman has described a similar situation among the Temiar for whom "both illness agents and spirit guides come from stones, mountains and flowers; they are both "of the same type"" (Roseman 1993, 131). Similarly, Ma' Betisék talk about the spirits of animals contextually appearing as both predators and helpers (Karim 1981, 32–66). This alternating way of thinking about spirits is very different to that of the Manya', for whom spirits occupy much more fixed positions. In Manya' thought, *ai djum* and *langoi* are always considered as benevolent (although sometimes terrifyingly powerful) while *penyakit djinn* and *penyakit batak* are consistently considered predatory. The spirits of animals are normally considered as *ai djum* and are not generally perceived as acting in harmful ways towards human beings. However, there are some variations. For example, I was told by one Manya' man at Kampung Tom Ki Ying that an animal could seek revenge on a human by attacking his soul if one of the animal's friends or kin (*kabin*) was killed. This same man also told me that he thought Islamic *haram* methods of killing animals were dangerous because individual animals could witness their *kabin* being killed and could carry out counter-predatory attacks.

The relations between Chewongs and disease-causing *bas* spirits that Signe Howell describes in her ethnography *Society and Cosmos: Chewong of Peninsula Malaysia* (1984) are perhaps most similar to those between Manya' and *penyakit*. Howell describes predatory *bas* spirits as causing "disease to humans by either taking their *ruwai* (souls), or by attacking their bodies" (1984, 104). Despite their monstrous appearances, *bas* are considered by Chewongs as being extremely similar to humans; they live in societies like people, they marry, have children, hunt animals, make traps and so on (1984, 104–6). Like *penyakit, bas* hunt and consume human souls (*ruwai*), which they perceive as game (*ai*). Like Manya',

Chewongs claim that human souls (*ruwai*) can be attacked by *bas* when they travel around the local environment during dreams or during the day when humans move through the forest (1984, 105). Howell argues that Chewongs do not conceive of *bas* as being evil; *bas* perceive reality differently than humans and consume our souls because we appear to them as looking like pigs (their preferred food). This perspectival conceptualization extends to the ways Chewongs believe animals perceive reality, as Howell explains. "*Bas* is not an absolute term … humans are also *bas* as far as animals are concerned" (Howell 1984, 113). Manya' ideas are markedly less perspectivist than that of the Chewong and Semai; Manya' never described animals as perceiving their human hunters as *penyakit*. However, their relations with animals and *penyakits* clearly involve an asymmetrical exchange forming a closed-circuit similar to that described by Dentan among the Semai and Howell for the Chewong.

The ways that different Orang Asli groups deal with illnesses caused by spirits differs significantly. Ma' Betiséks attempt to placate angry spirits by giving them ritual food offerings (Karim 1981, 182–87). Semai ceremonies culminate with adepts entering ecstatic states of surrender in which angry demonic spirits are transformed into spiritual lovers (Dentan 2008, 94–112). Temiar versions involve shamans and spirit-guides recovering lost souls or ritually sucking illness-agents out of the victim. Similar strategies of pleading with, cajoling, exchanging with or making sacrifices to spirits to alleviate the illnesses they have caused have been reported by numerous other ethnographers working with animist peoples in Southeast Asia (Cf. Herrmans 2015, 53; Århem 2016a, 98; K. Endicott 1970, 131). Unlike these groups, Manya' do not claim that shamans can retrieve the souls of individuals whose souls have been taken by *penyakit* through ritual exchanges, barter, presenting offerings, casting spells, transformation or trickery. The only method that is used is the employment of counter-violence through the medium of *ai djum* spirit allies.

Even among Orang Asli groups, like the Semai and Ma' Betisék, who characterize the predatory behaviours of certain spirits as a form of counter-predation due to humans killing conspecifics, such concepts and associated shamanic practices should not only be understood as relating to a venatic ideology. Like the Manya', both these groups were victims of long term violence perpetrated by Malay slavers (Dentan 2008, 22; Karim 1995). Dentan argues Semai modes of relating to spirits and shamanic practices must be understood within a particular historical context. Semais were the victims of terrorizing historical slave-raiding attacks perpetrated by Rawas, a group of Malays from the Rawas River in Sumatra, who would enter Semai villages, kill all adult males and kidnap children to be sold as slaves. In Semai thought, the Rawas occupy a similar position to the Bataks for the Manya'; it is possible these two groups are the same people. In the nineteenth century, the Rawas, according to Dentan, "exterminated one group of Malaysian

indigenes, the Mantra, and drove three others—Temuan Belandas, Semelai, and Btisisi ("Mah Meri")—far from their native lands with great loss of life" (Dentan 2008, 22). Dentan suggests the powerlessness that Semais experienced as a result of slave-raiding violence led to two responses; "identification with the oppressor" and "learned helplessness". He argues that while the demons that cause diseases through preying upon human souls are explicitly described as the souls of animals, they are the subconscious transformations of Malay oppressors. The author describes how Semai healing ceremonies involve surrendering to and embracing the terror of demons; the transformations of their historic persecutors. I have chosen to cite Dentan extensively here so as to preserve the nuance of his argument:

> The identification with *hnalaa'* power shows up in Semai ideology in metaphors: Nkuu's [the thunderlord] gift of shamanic power to humans (perhaps by trickery), the repeated brutal humiliation of Nkuu', the great humiliator. With this power, Semai adepts become the fearsome patriarchs who actually have to seduce subservient childlike timorous demons. The people adopt the pose of sexual abusers, the seductive *gunik* of the abused, in a form of transcendence that, briefly, makes the humans into lovers instead of brutalizers. In that moment, the ethos of helplessness that always echoes faintly through traditional Semai society dissolves into love. The oppressed becomes the oppressor but nobody gets hurt. Indeed, in a further transformation, they do good, healing the sick." (Dentan 2008, 111)

As previously mentioned, in Semai thought, the relations between humans, animals and spirits, are seen as constituting a closed circuit. Humans predate upon animals' bodies, demons are transformations of animals' souls who predate upon human souls in revenge, and in trance-dances shamans transform into powerful entities to seduce these demons and transform them into lovers. Rather than considering the relations between humans, animals and spirits as resulting from a venatic ideology, Dentan considers the predatory cycle as a cosmological transformation of historical relations between violent slave raiders (Malays) and their victims (Semais). Manya' relations with *penyakit* holds obvious similarities to this way of relating to predatory spirits. However, while Semais have responded to the historical violence they have experienced through what Dentan describes as "identification with the oppressor" and "learned helplessness", Manya' shamans have actively countered violence through combating *penyakit* indirectly by using their '*ai djum* allies as agency endowed proxies. This cunning tactic ensures that shamans do not transcend their non-violent ethics and break any associated prohibitions. Rather than being passive victims of violence Manya' respond indirectly and assert their agency. If, as I have suggested, the *penyakit* spirits are considered as spiritual personifications of Batak cannibals and Malay slave-raiders, these tactics allow the

Manya' to shift their historical, and perhaps contemporary, experiences of violence into the invisible world where their shamans are masters.

Manya' descriptions of their shamans' modes of relating to *penyakit* through violence is markedly different to the Semai's transformations of violence into erotic surrender. Although the Manya' adhere to non-violence in normal everyday life, they have numerous stories of violence erupting under specific conditions. Rather differently to the Batek Dè', the Manya' shamans can reputedly use their powers of tiger transformation to frighten or even kill other humans if they so wish, even other Manya'. In the past, tiger transformation was an ability that all Manya' were accredited with and there are stories of entire groups of Manya' metamorphosing into tigers to chase away slave raiders. Although direct physical violence is rare today, Manya' often complain about Malay threats of violence and are extremely wary of their neighbours. Fear and anger are considered as powerful emotions which put people into ritually dangerous states and subject to attack by nonhumans (*penyakit*). These emotions often brew just under the surface at places like Kampung Tom Ki Ying where people feel persecuted and marginalized by their Malay neighbours. I suggest the violence that is acted out within trances and dreams cathartically purges such emotions, leading to a resolution of underlying socio-political tensions between the Manya' and their Malay neighbours.

Monstrosity as the Embodiment of Violence and Otherness

The predatory and monstrous beings that occupy Batek cosmologies should be understood as otherworldly embodiments of powerful ethnic others and collectives of historical personages. The blood-thirsty desires of certain predatory beings like Keboi and mythical cannibals like Cakawet and Bulok, who seek to trick Bateks by luring them into the forest before devouring their bodies, can be seen as frightful ethnic doubles who represent the antithesis of normal behavioural codes. On a practical level these serve as useful devices to make children (and adults) wary of dealing with outsiders; a rational product of centuries of slave-raiding and ethnic violence perpetrated by Malays. They also serve to quell Batek desires to join their Malay neighbours and give up their identity as a forest people.

The names that Bateks have used for several classes of predatory beings—*sakai pangan*, *penyakit djinn* and *penyakit batak*—speak of long-term connections with outsiders and are adopted from the Malay language. The term *sakai pangan* subverts derogatory language used to refer to the Bateks in the pre-colonial and colonial epochs and fixes it to a class of entities with 'primitive' and animal-like desires to consume raw human flesh. An important aspect of many predatory non-humans in Batek conceptions is that they stand in stark opposition to more benevolent beings. The *sakai pangan* have similar powers to Batek shamans in that both can metamorphize from human to tiger form, but while the latter do so to

protect Batek communities the former use this power to attack humans with their devastating power. In Manya' thought, the principal non-humans that people encounter are the benevolent '*ai djum* spirits and the predatory *penyakit*. The former are potent sources of knowledge and power whilst the latter feed upon peoples' souls causing their bodies to wither and die. One class of entity, the *bawac gerai* (King Kong) stand apart from other monsters in that they function more as guardians of Batu Badok (an extremely potent locale) rather than preying upon humans' blood or soul-stuff out of desire or necessity. What unites the different monsters and predators that I have described is their desire to consume human blood, flesh or souls, expressing a fundamentally violent aspect of the Bateks relations with Malays and other outsiders.

The central question that I have attempted to answer in this chapter concerns whether the predator-prey relationship that characterize relations between Bateks and predatory spirits is modelled upon hunting practices as suggested by certain anthropologists working with Amazonian groups (Viveiros De Castro 1998; Costa and Fausto 2010). The ways that Manya' describe their relations with *penyakit* spirits are clearly very similar to those that anthropologists working in Amazonia have described for many groups living in that area. The Manya' do describe *penyakit* hunting of human souls as being akin to how humans hunt animals. However, they do not conceptualize *penyakit* spirits preying upon human souls as a form of revenge for humans' predation of animal bodies. Their modes of relating to animals do not involve what Fausto (2007, 501) describes as an "enchainment of predatory cycles [which] tends to oppose humans and animals directly." In Manya' thought, the spirits of animals are always considered as benevolent *ai djum* who act as spirit guides, never as malevolent spirits. *Penyakit* spirits are considered as a separate class of entities and they are never described as spiritualizations of any physical entities (animal or other). The predatory actions of *penyakit* are not, as allegedly in Amazonia, conceived "as a cannibal counter-predation undertaken by the spirit of the prey turned predator, in a lethal inversion of perspectives which transforms the human into animal" (Viveiros De Castro 1998). They are considered as a separate mode of predation entirely and informed by experiences of extreme violence. *Penyakit* should be understood as transformations of predatory human slave raiders and cannibals who decimated Manya' communities until the early twentieth century, not merely as a form of counter predation for human hunting of animals. This difference is important. As suggested, Descola's, Viveiros De Castro's and Fausto's argument that hunting forms the central metaphoric template for predatory animistic relations and shamanic practices implies that the historical and political relationships that Amazonian peoples have with other human groups (whether 'tribal', 'peasant' or state-based) have played no role in shaping their animistic practices and cosmologies. My research suggests quite the opposite, and that it is vital to consider history and wider political interconnections.

The Batek's relations with and narratives about predatory spirits and other monstrous nonhumans are means whereby history is [re]constructed and the larger social world comprehended. This is one way that unequal power relations and experiences of violence reverberate through time and are reconfigured within the present.

Chapter Six

KEEPING THINGS APART: PROHIBITIONS AND SENSORIAL BOUNDARIES

This chapter presents a case study from the resettlement village of Post Lebir to examine the effects of a range of contemporary influences—forced relocation, Islamization, changing diets, environmental degradation and increased media flows—on animistic forms and practices among sedentary groups. I describe how these shifting socio-economic and environmental conditions which reflect interconnection with external agents have led to the emergence of a sharp symbolic and sensorial boundary between forest (associated with coolness, health and well-being) and village (associated with heat, illness and danger). This boundary determines normative rules governing behaviour and action within particular locations and regulates sensual flows between the village and forest and the visible and invisible worlds. As shown earlier, Batek and Manya' concepts of extended sociality mean they are interrelated with nonhumans with whom they communicate and interact in a variety of modes. Parallel to the notions of interrelatedness, there exists a complementary system which emphasizes the importance of keeping categories of things separate. Bateks believe the mixing of certain categories of people, foodstuffs or odours can lead to punishment from powerful non-human beings. The various ways Bateks keep things separate through their system of ritual prohibitions has previously been described in detail by Kirk Endicott for groups living within a forest environment (1979, 67-82). This chapter describes how this logic has been adapted and expanded upon by groups living in resettlement villages who have been obliged to live, at least superficially, according to Malay norms, and has led to a marked symbolic and sensorial division between forest and village. The Bateks figurative incorporation of their experiences of social and environmental change into their taboo system empowers their understanding and experience of the wider forces at work within their lives and landscapes. I argue this figurative incorporation is a mechanism which allows the Batek to structure and field their responses to the wider forces at play within their world.

The chapter opens with a vignette about life in the resettlement village of Post Lebir serving to contextualize present-day life at Post Lebir. I then describe how forced relocation, Islamization, environmental degradation and changing diets have affected the Batek's lives and animistic practices there and more generally. Following this, I discuss how respectively objects, food, and landscapes are classified according to the principle of separation and then describe the sensory (particularly olfactory and thermic) schemes of classification whereby the keeping apart of things is cosmologically grounded among Batek. The chapter ends with a discussion of the influence of globalized media flows on Bateks cosmologies.

Life at Post Lebir

In early July 2012, after being awoken by the crows of cockerels, I find the large resettlement village Post Lebir quieter than I remember. The village looks much the same as it did a few years ago, but things have changed substantially. Many areas where rubber trees used to grow are now overgrown, and there are many more cars, scooters, and cell phones. My friend Apat, whose family I am staying with, has just awoken and is tinkering with his moped. Apat's room is filled with various tools and equipment he uses to fix cell-phones—a skill he learnt during an internship in Kuala Lumpur a few years previously. Hung, Apat's elder brother, is visiting with his Semai wife for the weekend. Hung works for the army as a border patrol guard—his job involves moving through the dense forest along parts of the Thai-Malay border trying to prevent smuggling. We pop into 'ey Boroi's (another of Apat's brothers) house a couple of doors down to grab a quick breakfast of coffee and biscuits. A few children are playing with plastic toys in the front room. Boxes and bags of rice, biscuits, tea, sugar, coffee, and cooking oil line the walls. 'ey Boroi and his wife na' Boroi opened a small shop in their home a few months ago to sell basic food-stuffs to other Bateks. People mill in and out of the shop picking up things they need. Alongside income from the shop, 'ey Boroi also earns up to 800RM ($250) per month from the JKKK (the Village Development and Security Committee) which he has been working for since 2007. His responsibilities include: writing letters, taking rainfall measurements and completing forms so villagers can get birth certificates and national identity cards. Fourteen other men in the village work for the JKKK but they only earn around 50RM each ($16) as they have less responsibilities. On Sunday, he is meeting Malay officials in Kuala Krai to discuss Batek land issues. His plan is to encourage officials from Kelantan's government to create a special land reserve for Bateks to ensure that future generations will have some kind of economic security. At the moment, neither the national government, nor the state governments of Kelantan, Pahang or Terengganu recognize any Batek claims to land. Ey Boroi is one of the few Bateks I know who work through official channels to try to get Bateks land rights.

Apat's family are keen to tell me about changes in the village. As kids rush by on their way to the village school, Apat tells me that all the rubber trees in the village, which were previously the main source of revenue for villagers, have been cut down and are yet to be replaced. This has completely transformed the village economy and pushed most people further into poverty. Agus, one of Apat's younger brothers, has moved to the Klang valley where he works as a lorry driver. Their mother, Berangus, has split up with her husband Tikus who is currently in Pahang visiting friends but lives with his new wife at Aring 5.

Last time I visited, Berangus and Tikus were using Tikus' car as a mobile shop and would drive to various Batek settlements selling basic food-stuffs and goods. This is a family of entrepreneurs. Berangus tells me that she and many other women in the village are now attending adult learning classes held at the school in the village to learn basic numeracy, and literacy. Berangus is a sought-after mid-wife and worked in hospitals in her youth and also trained in Batek traditional midwifery. Despite only being a nominal convert to Islam, like most Batek women in the village she wears a loose head-scarf as a sign of Islam to please Malays and to keep them off her back. People tell me that JAKOA (the Department of Orang Asli Development) and JAKIM (the Department of Islamic Development) have joined forces in the village. Officials from both departments consider everyone at Post Lebir to be Muslim.

Hung tells us about a Batek woman living in Taman Negara who is worried she may have contracted AIDS, a disease which cannot be cured through traditional means. Supposedly, some Bangladeshis and Indonesians who work on the palm-oil plantations around the national park have the virus and she is panicked she may have caught it. The subject of conversation switches and Hung proudly tells me about his adventures on the Thai-Malay border and shows me his blowpipe and darts that he takes with him. He says his job can be dangerous due to heavily-armed gangs of Vietnamese, Thai and Cambodian poachers who roam Taman Negara and other forests hunting tigers and elephants and searching for highly valued gahuru (eaglewood). Hung compares the blowpipe to a gun but says blowpipes are superior to guns as they are silent. After breakfast, Apat and I head to a small side stream to wash as there is currently no running water in his house.

Not long after we return, Apat, Hung and 'ey Boroi leave for Kota Bharu, the state capital of Kelantan, to sell some forest produce to a Chinese middle-man. I sit inside Apat's home with his mother and his sister Bangie. Soon, another brother, Pox, pops over from his house just opposite. Pox helps me label a few photos on my computer until a huge thunder squall shatters the calm. We are forced to stop using my computer due to taboos which prohibit using any technologies during storms as they could anger the thunder lord. Pox tells me of his plans to leave Post Lebir with his wife and young child and move to Taman Negara to follow a more forest-based way of life. Another of his brothers, 'ey Baryen, now spends a lot of time at the forest-edge settlement of Baryen where his daughter was born (and named after the small stream there). Later

in the day, I hear that Pox has become more interested with shamanism and is recognized for his knowledge about certain spirits and the medicinal qualities of forest plants.

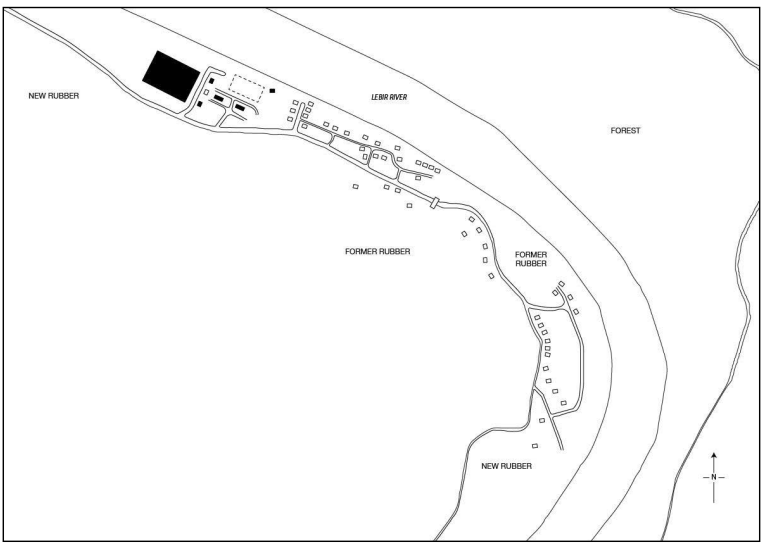
After the storm resides, I hike a couple of kilometres to the upper end of the village, known as Macang, bumping into various friends and acquaintances in cars or on scooters on the way. When I ask what people are up to, virtually all the men reply "yek cip ba-həp" (I'm going to the forest) or "yek cip cam gahuru" (I'm going to look for gahuru). Most household economies here are now almost completely reliant on men collecting and selling eaglewood or other forest-products. A few families have temporarily relocated to forest-periphery settlements such as Baryen for a few weeks or months but most families have opted to stay in the village. Men regularly leave in small groups of two to four people, leaving their families for anything from a few days to a few weeks to collect flora and fauna for trade.

Village Life and Relocation

Around 180 Bateks and around 80 people identifying with the Mendriq Orang Asli subgroup lived at Post Lebir during the time of my fieldwork (cf. Odani 2017, 159). Population numbers fluctuated significantly at the village as people moved between Post Lebir and other Batek settlements in Kelantan according to economic opportunities and personal choices, a pattern which has been noted since at least the early 1980s (cf. K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 130–32). Small numbers of both groups first moved to Post Lebir when the village was established by Department of Aboriginal Affairs in the mid-1960s, but most people were persuaded to relocate to the settlement when their ancestral territories in the Chiku, Lebir and Aring River valleys were systematically logged over in the 1970s and 1980s (K. Endicott 1997, 39–47; K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 127–33). The relocation of nomadic Bateks into villages is part of a widespread pattern of the Malaysian government resettling Orang Asli groups across Peninsular Malaysia (Gomes 2007; Nicholas 2000; Winzeler 1997; Dentan et al. 1997). After forested lands were cleared by logging companies, the Federal Land Development Agency (FELDA) and the South Kelantan Development Authority (KESEDAR) terraced landscapes and bulldozed networks of roads and tracks before planting oil palm and rubber seedlings. By 1990, much of the Bateks ancestral territories in Kelantan had been logged over and converted into vast plantations of these two species (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 127–36). In recent years, mining and quarrying has caused extensive environmental degradation in the area.

Pasir Linggi and Macang are separated by a small stream. The former is the downriver section of the settlement closest to the school, football field and other amenities (see Map 3) while the latter is situated about two kilometres upriver. The village is the largest Batek settlement in Malaysia and is the only one to have its

own primary school. It is located on the border between Batek and Mendriq territories, the latter lying to the north. Most inhabitants speak the Batek Dè' language, but there are also a number of Mendriq speakers. Post Lebir can be accessed on a recently tarmacked road which stretches about nine kilometres to a Malay village called Sungai Sam. Villagers at Post Lebir frequently visit Sungai Sam to stock up on supplies—principally canned sardines, rice, vegetables and tobacco—and Batek men often hang out in a small cafe there where they meet Malay or Chinese middlemen to sell forest flora they have collected. Villagers sometimes visit the larger towns of Gua Musang and Kuala Krai in medical emergencies, for banking, or to buy consumer goods such as mobile phones. During the rainy season from November to February rising flood waters make access to the settlement nearly impossible.



Map 3. Post Lebir

At Post Lebir, the Department of Orang Asli Affairs has encouraged Bateks to shift from their hunting-gathering-collecting economy to one based on small-scale rubber production agriculture (K. Endicott 1997, 33). Until recently, the economy of the village was primarily based upon rubber-tapping supplemented by the trade in flora and fauna collected from the wider area. However, in 2010 the collection and trade of flora and fauna had become by far the most important economic activity. Many men in the village own motorcycles which enable them to access areas of forest well beyond the local area and trade collected forest produce with

middlemen in larger towns. Subsistence strategies based upon hunting and gathering now have almost no economic importance in the village. Incentives for Bateks to stay in Post Lebir include the government-built primary school and basic amenities such as electricity and running water. The village also has a hall that is used as a medical clinic on a monthly basis, a sports field and a mosque, all constructed by the Malaysian authorities. Just next to the school is a Malay-run shop that sells basic consumer products. Life at Post Lebir is rather different from that which ethnographers have described among forest-based groups (K. Endicott 1979a; Lye 2004). Televisions, DVDs and travel to towns bring in images, ideas and news of other peoples and places from across the planet. Media flows, transport technologies and integration into the market economy mean Bateks at Post Lebir are now very much connected with the outside world.

Islamization and Sly Civility

Many Bateks at Post Lebir converted to Islam during the 1980s after a coercive campaign of proselytism (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 132–34). At the village, a mosque has been constructed by JAKIM and they also run regular events at the settlement to promote Islam, as do other Islamic organizations such as the International Islamic University of Malaysia (UAIM). Conversion to Islam means Batek villagers are obliged to behave according to Malay Muslim norms when in the presence of Malays. Although adherence to Islam remains nominal for most, the impacts of Islamization have been powerful. Besides women wearing the Malay *hijab*, modes of conformation at Post Lebir include the concealment of the consumption of *haram* forest animals; children attending the village school praying daily; and villagers adopting a Malay name when dealing with outsiders. Occasionally, when Malay dignitaries or Malays working for JAKIM visit the village, Bateks join in cultural performances in acts of collective praying and processions. Within their homes framed Islamic prayers written in Arabic script are often hung on the wall of front rooms as a display of religious affiliation.

This means life at Post Lebir superficially resembles that of a Malay village. However, the reality is far more complex and this has important ramifications for animistic Batek practices. Batek acts and performances of conformity should be seen as conscious, calculated, attempts at conflict avoidance which may be used to win material or financial gains from visiting Malays. In Homi Bhabha's terms, they form acts of 'sly civility' or 'mimicry' (Bhabha 1994). Such strategies are the result of the imbalanced power relations between Bateks and Malays and are used as a means of operating between two different social worlds and sets of rules and norms (Cf. Gomes 2008). When people from Post Lebir move into forest camps beyond the gaze of Malays they quickly revert back to more traditional behaviour. Likewise, in the absence of Malays, most people show absolutely no interest in Islam. What is

important for the present discussion is how these different context dependent behavioural codes have contributed to the hardening of a sharp boundary between forest and village.

Islamization, along with shifting ecological and economic circumstances have also affected changes to other everyday practices, particularly the preparation and eating of foods. Most food at Post Lebir is shop-bought. In the morning, people drink tea or coffee and snack on biscuits. At midday and in the evening, people generally eat a heaped bowl of rice accompanied with tinned sardines which are fried up with a few vegetables and chilies. On the rare occasions that someone manages to blowpipe a forest animal they are usually either eaten (by men) within the forest during collecting trips or after dark with families in the village behind closed doors. This is because, in the eyes of Muslim Malays in Kelantan, any animals hunted in the forest are considered *haram* (forbidden). Any animals brought back to the village are concealed within bags and the bones, skin and fur of animals are immediately buried.

Congruous with 'sly civility' but not simply stemming from it, is the way that Bateks are unwilling to perform their own rituals in the presence of Malays. Due to the importance of the blood ritual—needed to appease the thunder deity and rainbow snake following storms—Bateks will perform this ritual in villages but quietly and only when they believe there are no Malays present, I saw it performed on many occasions. However, people will not perform their bi-annual singing and trancing ceremonies at the village. Rather than just relating to fears of Malay reactions, this reflects a stated belief that these rituals must be carried out deep within the forest well away from any outsiders. This also testifies to the importance of maintaining symbolic boundaries between village and forest which reflect interconnected influences that predate recent changes at Post Lebir. Normally fruit ceremonies should be carried out several times a year to please the *hala' asal* but most Bateks at Post Lebir have not participated in these ceremonies for many years due to the constraints of sedentary life. These changes mean many villagers at Post Lebir never participate in these important aspects of ritual life, leading to feelings that they are not living in accordance with practices established by their *hala' 'asal* ancestors. Alongside various other factors described below, this sense of disempowerment has contributed to fears that the *hala' 'asal* will be angered and may retaliate by causing devastating punishments.

While Malay influence has led to Bateks not performing their traditional rituals in villages, there are, on the other hand, new developments. Just before I left the field, some Bateks from Post Lebir and Aring Lima began performing *sewangs* (singing and dancing performances) for visiting Malays. However, these cultural performances are quite different from 'real' fruit ceremonies and Bateks performing them dress in standardized Orang Asli ritual attire (that generally copy Ma' Betsisék costumes which are well known in Malaysia) combined with symbols

of Islam (women wearing *hijabs* and full-length clothes to protect their 'modesty'). Malays have encouraged Bateks and other Orang Asli groups to perform these rituals as a means to preserve those cultural practices they deem as 'traditional' whilst transforming them into an exotic means of entertainment.

Boundaries and Separatedness

Maintaining separation is a central feature of the Batek's everyday life and is most evident in the preparation and cooking of foods and the observation of kinship rules. Although Bateks have been described as having very few rituals or ceremonies (Skeat and Blagden 1906b, 174–75; K. Endicott 1979a, 22), they are extremely careful of keeping different categories of things apart. Although Bateks do not perform the types of elaborate rituals commonly described by anthropologists elsewhere, the minutiae of everyday practices are highly ritualized. Prohibitions structure rules of sociality through kinship patterns, naming practices and most importantly for this chapter, the mixing of different categories of foodstuffs and odours. Bateks claim these rules originate from an order established by the creator beings which must be maintained to avoid cosmic catastrophe (Cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 78–79). For Bateks living at villages like Post Lebir who have been obliged to live in two socio-cultural worlds, new rules—encompassing foods, objects, medicines and odours—have emerged to keep these two domains separate.

Similar concerns about keeping categories of things apart have been remarked upon by numerous anthropologists working among indigenous groups in Southeast Asia (Howell 1984; Howell 2014; Karim 1981; Dentan 1968; Benjamin 2014). For indigenous peoples who consider most beings and things as being capable of agency, intentionality and consciousness, "different beings, domains and objects of significance must be kept separate" (Howell 2015, 59). The relationship between connection and separation is essential to social life including relations with non-humans. As Howell has argued for the Chewong they "constitute the semantics of sociality" (2015, 59). A delicate balance must be maintained between respecting the fundamental relatedness and similarity between humans and nonhumans and in keeping them separate to avoid a collapse between human and non-human persons. In this dialectical manner of thinking to "become and remain human" as Jon Henrik Remme (2017, 56) has noted, "necessitates both separating from nonhuman others and occasionally dissolving that separation." For example, while Bateks relate to the spirits of animals as persons in dreams and trances, this is only temporary. In the waking world animals should preserve their distinctiveness as non-humans and never be treated as humans. Indeed, there are strict prohibitions in dressing monkeys, cats and dogs in human clothes and mocking their true nature (cf. Endicott 1979, 65). If Bateks related to nonhumans all the time as persons they would cease to maintain their very humanness, the

things that marks them as distinct from the spirits. Furthermore, everyday practices like hunting would be impossible as to hunt and kill animals would constitute cannibalism. Similar dialectical interplays involving alternations between relatedness and separateness of humans and nonhumans have been noted by many anthropologists working with indigenous people in other contexts. Willerslev (2007, 188) writes for the Yukaghir of Siberia, "the lack of any guaranteed, a priori difference [between humans and nonhumans] means that difference has to be created constantly through various everyday practices that demonstrate it." Sillander has also described a similar situation of opposing but complementary modes of relations between humans and spirits among the Bentians of Borneo. Bateks relations with non-human agencies are characterized by what Sillander (2015, 157) describes as an "oscillation between a mode of relation based on integration and similarity, and another based on separation and alterity". Batek prohibitions about keeping things within prescribed categories and their proper places are also reflective of their beliefs about human relations. Bateks see themselves as a forest people, and part of the wider forest community which includes humans and non-humans, whilst the proper place of Malays, Chinese and other outsiders (and the foods and objects associated with them) is outside the forest.

As we saw in chapter two, historical Batek relations with ethnic others (primarily Malays) oscillated between friendly trade relations to self-imposed separation when fleeing episodic outbreaks of violence. Such long-term adaptations are characteristic for groups living on a frontier zones and have been described in a variety of contexts (Gardner 1985; Morris 1982; Gibson 2011). Gardner's comments (1985, 421) that Paliyan biculturality affects all groups "not just those near the edge of the forest" and his suggestion that "each person, at least by adulthood, is likely to possess two separate sets of understandings and expectations which allow relatively effective behaviour in the two cultural contexts" applies equally to Bateks. To understand the nuanced effects of bicultural oscillation in an area as ethnically heterogenous as Southeast Asia, it is necessary to regard the entire region as a interconnected system. Gibson's remarks on this subject are highly illuminating.

> If the societies of Southeast Asia are understood as parts of a larger system, it is one in which everyone is well aware of the existence of competing sets of political values and everyone develops several different kinds of subjectivity as they participate in the ritual and disciplinary practices associated with different institutional settings such as house, mosques and schools. (Gibson 2011, 287–88)

What is important for the present discussion, is that living in such complex social worlds, which are characterized by alternation between different political systems,

subjectivities and disciplinary norms, further amplifies the ontological need for separatedness and boundaries between different categories of objects, people and places. Maintaining categories of things, people and places separate is, in many contexts, obsessively adhered to by Batek groups living in frontier zones on the edge of the forest.

Health and Illness

Bateks associate their forest homes with coolness, health and vitality and villages and towns with heat, illness and danger. Such beliefs about sedentary life in villages being unhealthier than nomadic life in the forest are not unfounded. Although villages are closer to modern healthcare facilities, diets based on shop-bought foods containing high levels of fat, protein and sugar have been detrimental to the health of resettled groups (H. M. Lim and Chee 1998; Baer 1999a; Gomes 2007; Khor and Zalilah 2008; Zulkifli, Khairul Anuar, and Atiya 1999). There is considerable evidence for childhood malnutrition indicated through high numbers of underweight and stunted children in many Orang Asli villages (Khor and Zalilah 2008; H. M. Lim and Chee 1998; Zulkifli, Khairul Anuar, and Atiya 1999). Incidences of cholera and dysentery due to unsanitary conditions related to inadequate rubbish disposal and toilet facilities are also more frequent in villages (Baer 1999b; Baer 1999a; Gomes 2007) and the spatiality of villages has led to a proliferation of Malaria and other contagious diseases as large numbers of people are squeezed into ever smaller spaces (Baer 1999b). Lived experiences have undoubtedly contributed to beliefs about the forest as a source of vitality and the village as a place of illness. Historical experiences of infectious diseases wiping out large numbers of Bateks and Mendriqs from the end of the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century as large numbers of Malays moved into Batek territories (K. Endicott 1997, 38), undoubtedly contributed to the idea that the worlds of Malays are more disease-ridden than the Batek's forest home.

At Post Lebir, most villagers continue to use a large variety of plant-based medicines from the forest. Shamans (*hala'*) and midwives (*bidan*) are especially proficient in curing a variety of diseases and illnesses through traditional means but most 'ordinary' Bateks also have a wealth of knowledge about the medicinal uses of plants and how they can be used to treat a variety of ailments. However, most people also take bio-medicines such as paracetamol and see doctors, nurses and other medical practitioners trained in Western bio-medicine when necessary. As mentioned in the opening vignette to this chapter, some Batek healers, like the mid-wife Berangus, are trained in both traditional methods and Western versions. Bateks are by no means averse to gaining knowledge from beyond the forest and anything deemed useful will be appropriated and used. Most common ailments are treated through herbal remedies, massage, magical incantations or the laying on of

hands (often in combination). Some shamans even claim they can cure diseases like Malaria through such means. More serious illnesses are dealt with through trancing and soul-journeying where shamans seek help from the *hala' 'asal*. However, certain diseases—tuberculosis and AIDS for example—are categorized by Bateks as *penyakit bandar* (town diseases) which are considered as being beyond the repertoire of traditional healers. As such, they can only be treated in hospitals or health clinics.

Prohibitions on Food

The divide between forest and village emerges most clearly in prohibitions about the mixing of forest foods and Western biomedicines which are rationalised through the perceived qualities of different types of foods and medicines. Most Bateks say 'modern' pharmaceuticals such as paracetamol or antibiotics should not be consumed after eating forest game animals which are considered particularly powerful. People often describe such prohibitions through thermic codes. For example, game meat and certain fruits are considered as 'hot' foods. To mix them with paracetamol could result in an individual becoming dangerously hot and causing illness or accidents. For pregnant women, such dangerous combinations are said to result in death[14]. Most Bateks do not believe that pharmaceutical medicines such as paracetamol are ineffective or dangerous. In fact, they are often sought after and sometimes even given extra potency through the practice of *jampi* (spell incantation and laying on hands). However, consuming pharmaceutical medicines at the same time as, or following, the ingestion of forest foods is widely believed to cause people to suffer from disease or misfortune. Every time I was offered any meat from the forest, I was always questioned on whether I had taken any biomedicines. Sometimes people said this was because mixing *dog* (the poison used on blowpipe darts which is taken from the sap of the *ipoh* tree; L. *Antiaris toxicaria*) with medicines could result in death. Another way, this was explained to me was that the power (*tenaga*) of game meats and other forest fruits should not be combined with the *tenaga* of modern medicines. Interestingly, even at the time of Endicott's research in the 1970s there is some evidence that forest and non-forest foods were considered slightly differently by Bateks living in Kelantan. The disease

[14] Pregnancy, like menstruation, is considered as a ritually dangerous state during which other food taboos must be adhered to (Cf. Endicott 1979, 100-101). Alongside, traditional food prohibitions, many Bateks now say canned sardines are dangerous for pregnant women because the sardines are tightly packed in the cans. They maintain that this means an unborn baby could become stuck inside the womb, like the sardines in the can, and the mother-to-be might experience difficulty in delivering the baby. This is similar to a traditional taboo on women eating pangolins during pregnancy, the prohibition this time connected to the animal's defensive tendency of rolling up into a tight ball when threatened, which again is seen as raising the analogous possibility of constriction impeding an easy birth.

cika' is understood as being caused by the disrespectful rhyming (*ye' yò'*) of particular foodstuffs whilst the more serious illness *reway* is caused by the disrespectful rhyming of the names of the *hala' 'asal* or anything associated with them such as the rainbow, sun, moon, stars, sky, bees or seasonal fruit (Endicott 1979, 80). For fun, Bateks often make rhymes by taking one word and then making a rhyme with a following nonsense word formed from the prefix *bal* followed by the final vowel and consonant of the first word. For example, one could *ye' yò'* a lean-to by saying "*hayā' balayā'*" for amusement. Endicott (1979, 80) lists "milk, tinned sardines, and noodles (*mee*)" as types of food which, if rhymed irreverently would cause death. Rhyming the names of most forest foods, except the seasonal fruits, is somewhat dangerous although less so than non-forest foods and anything associated with the *hala 'asal*. Normally, *cika* caused by this kind of *ye' yò'* can "be cured by various magical medicines and spells" (Endicott 1979, 80). This suggests the beginnings of an emerging conceptual divide involving a similar logic intended to prevent the confusion of distinct categories of food stuffs. It is worth noting that the two most dangerous categories of things and persons to *ye' yò'* are foreign foods and the *hala' 'asal* or anything associated with them, suggesting a certain equivalence between these domains; the mocking of either can result in death.

Although Bateks living in most locales I worked in described their fears about the dangers of mixing 'town' medicines with foods and medicines from the forest, they were most prevalent in villages like Post Lebir where people have the most interactions with Malays. It is in these places that Bateks are most wary of becoming too similar to Malays. Becoming Malay (*masuk Melayu*) is seen by Bateks and Malays as a process involving the adoption of the Malay language and norms, becoming Muslim and living sedentary lifestyles (Dentan et al. 1997, 79–81; Benjamin 2002, 50–54). Superficially, Bateks living at resettlement villages resemble Malays, however, they do not identify as Malays, they have not internalized Malay practices and beliefs and their everyday practices are very different to those of the Malays. Fears and prohibitions on mixing forest foods and medicines with their non-forest counterparts are closely linked to fears about losing identity and ceasing to be forest peoples. The assimilatory pressures and social changes experienced at Post Lebir have not led to Bateks living there being simplistically integrated into the Malay world. However, some Bateks have definitely internalized a more Malay-like mode of subjectivity than others. Furthermore, numbers of Bateks became assimilated with their Malay neighbours in the past and will continue to do so in the future. But in general, it is clear that most Bateks can shift between two distinctive modes of subjectivity and sets of politico-economic values. Although this is accentuated at resettlement villages like Post Lebir, oscillating between two systems has in all likelihood deep historical roots. Reinforcing the forest-village divide through sensorial, ritual and symbolic practices is one means Bateks are able to preserve an identity separate from Malays

whilst concurrently maintaining relations with them. It is also consistent with the deep-seated logic wherein different categories of things must be kept conceptually and sensorially separate.

It is now widely accepted among Batek communities that the *hala' asal* (original creator beings) do not like the odours from towns like those of deodorants, perfumes, foods and other products because they have *meni' jebèc* ('bad' or 'strange' odours) which can cause the wrath of various non-human persons. Indeed, anything with a non-forest odour has the potential of offending Gobar (the thunder lord) and other beings from the invisible world. At Post Lebir, I was told that when hunters enter the forest, they should avoid wearing clothes, perfumes and other objects carrying non-forest odours. Some prohibitions on odours have a practical basis. Hunters often rub forest leaves on their bodies to conceal their *meni'* from game they hunt and from dangerous animals including tigers and elephants. Once while hunting with Jahais from the Jeli area, I was actually encouraged to roll around in a wild boars' 'nest' (which was fortunately vacant at the time) to get rid of my particular "odour" (*meni'*). The odours of pregnant and menstruating women are considered particularly powerful and described as *pel-èng* (the smell of raw meat or blood). Many Bateks warned me about entering the forest when my wife was pregnant due to the fact I would be carrying my wife's *pel-èng* odour which could attract the attention of tigers, elephants and large snakes or other dangerous other-than-human beings.

Ideas, beliefs and rules associated with the separation of the forest and non-forest worlds differ between Batek communities, and there are variances between ideal models for behaviour and what is actually practiced. At Post Lebir, I was often told to avoid bringing certain foodstuffs into the forest. These generally included rice, coffee, tea, sugar and tinned foods. However, all of these are shop-bought staples bought and consumed on a daily basis by Batek living in villages. Of course, the Batek do bring these foods into the forest as hunting success can never be guaranteed; what people say is remarkably different to what people actually do. Indeed, groups living in forest camps often regularly stock-up on exactly these kinds of shop-bought produce. At Post Lebir, people also expressed the division between the forest and village as being between tradition and modernity. Many objects from outside the forest are seen as 'modern' and many Bateks living in villages see themselves as being modern. The latter is due to the fact that they live relatively settled lives, wear similar clothes to other Malaysian groups, and own consumer items such as cell phones, televisions and motorbikes.

The forest-village dichotomy emerges most significantly in the ways people classify foods, objects, people and places according to sensorial criteria. There are several reasons for the importance of the olfactory dimensions to the forest-village divide. Odours are emotionally and phenomenologically appropriate ways to indicate strong boundaries and denote ideas related to aversion, avoidance and

separation. Among the Batek, olfactory boundaries concern several different domains of relatedness and separatedness. First, odours are seen as easily crossing the divide between the seen and unseen world and play a central role in communications between humans and non-human persons. Second, odour is closely associated with personal identity and, like shadows, are thought to carry the essence of a person or species. For example, the Batek's *cemam* taboos that govern improper sexual behaviour between closely related members of the opposite-sex (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings, children, nieces and nephews) also relate to spatial proximity. One must not stand, sit or sleep next to the above-mentioned members of the opposite sex as doing so could result in one's odours (or shadows) mixing and causing disease. Third, each particular species of animal is also said to have its particular odour which should not be mixed with the odours of other incompatible species. For example, Bateks say that *kəbɔɲ* (gibbons) have *meni' kəbɔɲ* ('gibbon odour') and must be cooked over a separate fire than *ikan* (fish) which have *meni' ikan* (fish odours). The olfactory classification of foodstuffs also relates to vegetables and starchy foods which also have particular odours which must be kept separate. Fourth, odours play a place in fundamental cosmic classifications for the Batek. The celestial domain of the *hala' 'asal* is associated with the fragrant odours of flowers. While the sun is said to carry the *pel'èng* stench of raw meat, the moon, like the celestial abode of the *hala'* is said to be fragrant and cool (Endicott 1979, 38-39). Finally, olfaction is a common means by which humans differentiate ethnic others. Many different societies claim that the different ethnic groups they interact with and differentiate themselves from carry strong or pungent odours (see Classen, Howes, and Synnott 1994, 161–69). The Batek's forest-village divide associates the forest with fragrant odours whilst towns are associated with Malays and odours which can anger the spirits of the forest.

Environmental Degradation: Fear and Heat

In this section, I describe how the rampant environmental degradation in the area of Post Lebir is conceptualized by Bateks living in the area through a set of oppositions between hot and cold which relate closely to the olfactory codes described above. Around Post Lebir there is very little remaining forest except for a small area located on the opposite side of the Lebir river from the village. The rest of the surrounding area has been radically transformed through deforestation and the opening of oil-palm estates. Historically, the forest has been the primary source of identity for the Bateks. They consider themselves first and foremost as a forest people. Villages, and the various modes of behaviour that go along with sedentary living (Islam, farming, living in houses and so on)—are typically associated with Malays (Cf. Lye 2004, 67-68). While the forest is considered to be

healthy, safe and a source of vitality—except when it is intruded upon by dangerous 'outsiders'—villages and towns are associated with heat, illness, danger and violence. Bateks believe the forest keeps the earth at a suitably cool temperature by protecting it from the heat of the sun. Some examples from my fieldwork should help illustrate this more clearly. Whilst visiting a series of important sites in the Chiku and Aring River valleys marking the activities of culture heroes in the distant past with my friend 'ey Asso from Post Lebir, we stopped at the location of a former Batek village Perai (known as Blok 9 by Malays) which was now being mined for iron-ore. As 'ey Asso pointed towards the mines and the ravaged landscape he said:

> *Look at our land. The earth is a body. Imagine it was your body. [He scratches at his arms and chest mimicking the action of a digger clawing at his body] We would become sick if we were treated this way, wouldn't we? The earth is sick now because the forest, its skin, has been stripped away. Without the forest it is getting too hot, and now it's being hurt by the mining too.* ('ey Asso, November 2012, Block 9)

'Ey Asso's emotionally-laden description links landscape transformation linguistically and performatively through the tropes of bodily sickness and pain. In Batek conceptions, heat is an important referent associated with sickness and disease whilst coolness signifies health and well-being. Without the protective forest ('skin') the earth is described as being vulnerable to sickness and at the same time it is being torn apart by mining. Various such 'plays of tropes' concerning sickness, the body and heat are frequently used by Bateks to describe landscape degradation (Cf. Lye 2004, 30). In turn, these tropes are contextually linked to the gamut of referents associated with the master symbols of Gobar (the thunder lord) and the *naga'* (the rainbow snake). During my research, people regularly commented on the unpredictability of the rain, fruit and honey seasons in recent years, which they blamed on the overheating of the world due to deforestation. Bateks say the destruction of forests has angered Gobar and the *naga'* and many Bateks see current climatic changes as a sign of the onset of the world's end brought on by devastating human activities (Cf. Lye 2004). Bateks told me that if landscapes continue to be destroyed the *naga'* will respond by causing devastating earth quakes and floods and the thunder lord will send terrible storms. There are clear millenarian overtones in such perceptions of landscape degradation which relate to the Batek's ideas about interconnectivity between themselves and the creator beings as well as between themselves and other humans. While Bateks can avoid angering the *naga'* and thunder deity by following the ritual prohibitions established by the creator beings, landscape degradation caused by other groups (Chinese and Malays) is beyond their control, has led to a sense of powerlessness

and extreme anxiety that such changes cannot be stopped and will end in apocalypse as the rainbow snake and thunder lord vent their catastrophic fury.

In the current context of landscape transformation, the Batek at Post Lebir and in many other places have witnessed the ripping apart of their forests, the bulldozing through of networks of logging roads, the carving up and reshaping of landscapes into terraces suitable for plantation species, and the planting of oil palm and rubber mono-crops in endless uniform grids. It is hardly surprising they consider the world to be sick. Their experiences of these rapid and often violent anthropogenic transformations have been particularly traumatic. Their fears are by no means irrational; they make sense and are well-placed. The destruction of the forested environment has led to a marked increase in the frequency and magnitude of catastrophic floods in Kelantan. Like Bateks, climatologists have blamed these floods on the conversion of forest to agricultural land (Adnan and Atkinson 2011). Unfortunately, neither the Kelantan nor Federal government listened to either Bateks or climatologists and Kelantan suffered from its worst ever flooding in December 2014 and January 2015, causing the evacuation of over 90,000 people on the east coast of Malaysia and causing over 560 million Malaysian/US dollars in damages to property and infrastructure (Tjaardstra 2018).

The degradation of landscapes is also associated with a loss of cultural identity as we can see in the following conversation which took place at Post Lebir with the father of ʻey Asso, Bolek, the headman of the settlement and his brother Pasir during a later stay in the village in December 2012.

> *There are no original trees* [kayu asal] *around here anymore. The gob [Malays and Chinese] have cut everything down [he points across the Lebir River]. We love* [sayɛŋ] *the forest and the original trees but now it has all gone. I long for* [ha'ip] *them. This is our land, the land of our parents and our ancestors, we love this land. How can we live without the forest? (Bolek, December 2012, Post Lebir)*

Pasir was particularly upset and made no effort to conceal his anger. He told me story after story about his family's history and their ties to the landscape in the Aring, Chiku and Lebir river valleys. Both men were distraught about the deforestation that has taken place since the late 1970s. After Pasir left, Bolek signalled for me to close my notebook and said:

> *Close the book. That is enough for now. I can't tell you more today, just a little at a time. I'm frightened of the gob [Malays]. They will get angry if they hear us. Just a little at a time.*

I agree and ask Bolek if he thinks Pasir, his brother, is okay.

He is hot, hot with anger, he is not frightened anymore. (Bolek, December 2012, Macang)

This dialogue highlights some of the collective anxieties of unrelenting and uncontrollable environmental and social processes that underlie what I have termed 'tropes of fear' (Tacey 2013). The latter manifest, firstly in experiences of loss expressed through *ha'ip*, a word used when expressing feelings of longing for friends, relatives, game animals, fruit, and places which have not been seen or visited for a long period (cf. Lye 2004, 33). Bateks say even certain birds and animals are able to express *ha'ip* through their songs and calls. In the above-conversation, *ha'ip* expresses more than just longing, it is nostalgia of a past time when the landscape was covered in trees. In this context *ha'ip* expresses hopelessness, the loss of something which cannot be regained. Both brothers were born before the outbreak of the Second World War and remember when the Lebir, Aring, Ciku, Kecau and Relai River valleys were covered with forest. They also remember when their territories were first being opened through the construction of railways and roads. They told me how their relatives worked for the British and later Malay authorities to clear the land for the railways and main roads, something they say they would never have done if they had known how this would lead to the near-total destruction of the forests.

A second trope of fear is the fear of *gob* (outsiders, most commonly Malays). Batek relations with individual Malays and other outsiders can be cordial, even friendly on occasions. However, historic experience has meant that commonly Malays and other outsiders are collectively feared and mistrusted. At Post Lebir, Bateks are often reluctant to talk about a wide-range of issues, including local problems because of the proximity of Malays and the fear they will be punished by them if they hear them complaining about their situation. This fear and mistrust is firmly etched into the social memory of the Batek and other Orang Asli and stems from their history as victims of sporadic but repeated slave raids by the Malays and their ancestors which continued until the 1920s when they were finally ended by the British colonial authorities (K. Endicott 1997; K. Endicott 1983; Dentan 2008).

Thirdly, fear and experiences of danger are askewly expressed in ways such as that in which Pasir is being described as 'hot' (*bʉd*) with anger. His anger is characteristic of the ways that tropes of fear connect peoples' internal emotional states with the creator beings. Normally, Bateks consider that heat puts an individual in a ritually dangerous state and should be avoided. Heat equals danger and can bring about sickness, even death caused by the spirits as one's *ɲawa'* (life-force) is weakened. Interestingly, Pasir's heated anger is described as a reflection of him not being frightened of Malays anymore. In most contexts, Batek behavioural norms, backed-up through *lawac* and *tolah* prohibitions, require that violence, anger, jealousy, bossiness, greed, selfishness and other possibly harmful

emotions that can cause the soul to become dangerously hot are suppressed. One consequence of this is that although Bateks often complain about their marginalized situation to each other (or visiting anthropologists) they rarely if ever make angry complaints to the Malaysian authorities or loggers and miners. It is worth noting that Pasir's anger was not expressed to the authorities directly but via myself as an intermediary. After leaving, presumably Pasir calmed himself down to prevent himself remaining in this ritually dangerous state.

This is not to say Bateks never inform the authorities of problems in their villages, they do, but complaints are nearly always made in a calm and 'cool' manner. The belief that anger should be avoided at all costs is firmly entrenched in socio-religious rules. Even showing one's anger can provoke punishment by Gobar. The practice of interacting with Malays in a peaceful manner also relates to experiences of past conflicts that characterized Orang Asli-Malay relations prior to the 1920s. It is closely connected to the economic, social and political marginalization the Batek have experienced throughout the post-colonial period. The entrenched fear and distrust of Malays coupled with a lack of land rights severely affects the types of political action Bateks take when faced with problems and grievances.

Olfactory and Thermic Codes

To understand the logic behind the ways Bateks think about landscape changes and the emerging prohibitions on mixing forest foods with biomedicines it is necessary to look at a series of aligned binary oppositions involving thermic, olfactory and gustatory codes which structure Batek concepts and practices. A general semantic 'good' versus 'bad' distinction is based upon the master opposition of 'coolness' versus 'heat', which subsumes the following oppositions: forest-village, Batek-Malay, healthy-unhealthy, safe-dangerous, fragrant-foul and sweet-sour. Thermic and olfactory codes, which closely related and mutually informing, are central to Bateks cosmologies and the ways health, emotional states and the general environment are conceived. Many anthropologists and linguists working with Orang Asli groups in Malaysia and Southern Thailand have described the importance of olfaction and thermic codes in everyday life and religious practices (K. Endicott 1979a; Lye 2004; Dentan 2008; Roseman 1990; Burenhult and Majid 2011; Wnuk and Majid 2012; Majid and Burenhult 2014). However, less attention has been paid to the relationship between the olfactory and thermic code.

For Bateks, heat is seen as being both causative and symptomatic of illness while coolness is associated with health and well-being. Coolness perhaps most basically stands for "good" and "heat" for bad, although the concepts also designate an aligned thermic opposition. As we have seen, at the level of the individual, the idea of being hot (*bʉd*) is closely associated with anger, danger and illness, while

being cool (*bəlahit*) is associated with calmness, well-being and vitality. The body/mind distinction is markedly absent. Indeed, body, soul and mind are seen as being mutually constitutive. If an individual's heart (*kelangis*), the seat of emotions, is hot (*bʉd*) then that person is put in a state of ritual danger which could result in accident, illness or even death. The importance of coolness for health and well-being is directly related to Batek concepts of the soul, their ideas about disease and illness and the ways in which the cosmos is organised. While humans have wind life-force (*ɲawa' angin*) and warm blood, the *hala' 'asal* and shamans are seen to have immortal water life-force (*ɲawa' tom*) and cool, clear, watery dew blood (*mun*) (K. Endicott 1979a, 124–25). It is the cool qualities of their bodies and souls that make shamans and superhumans immortal and invulnerable to disease. Because humans are not immortal they still need to eat various hot foods such as meat while the *hala' 'asal* only eat cool fruits which is seen to be out of pleasure rather than for sustenance. Many Bateks also say that when humans die they join the *hala' 'asal* and their hot blood is replaced with cool *mun* (K. Endicott 1979a, 128). Differences in the blood, souls and diets of humans and *hala' 'asal* separate and distinguish them. However, shamans who have similar bodies and powers as the *hala' 'asal* function as intermediaries between these two societies and relatedness is re-established when humans die and join the *hala'*.

Several other Orang Asli groups have been reported as having similar conceptions (Howell 1984, 75, 157, 170; Roseman 1993, 30) and it is likely they are central to the cosmologies of most groups. Coolness of the body, mind and soul are idealized states to be strived for. As mentioned above, heat and coolness relate directly to landscape categories; the healthy coolness of the forest is often contrasted to the dangerous heat of villages, towns and plantations. Even the sun and moon are classified within this logic. Unsurprisingly the sun is described as hot and the moon as cold. But the sun and moon also have olfactory qualities. While the sun is said to have the foul *pel'èng* stench of raw meat, the moon is said to have a good or beautiful (*betet*) odour similar to flowers. Perhaps, as Endicott argues the sun's foul odour is due to the fact that when the sun sets, it descends close to the place where rotting carcasses of humans and animals of former times are said to lie (K. Endicott 1979a, 38–39). Bateks do not say that they can actually smell the sun or the moon, rather their particular odours are described in cosmological myths and in shamans' accounts of their journeys through the cosmos. Finally, the sky-world of the *hala' 'asal* and after world is also associated with coolness which is contrasted to the heat of the earth.

The dichotomy between hot and cold are central to Batek beliefs about health, illness and curing. In cases of illness, the body is seen as becoming 'hot' (*bʉd*) and remedies usually involve cooling the body in some way. This often involves the use of flowers, gingers, and burnt resins in rituals and healing ceremonies due to the beautiful (*betet*) fragrances of these things. Frequently, medicinal plant leaves are

rubbed between the palms of the hand to release a fragrant odour (*meni'*) which is said to cool the body and cause the disease (*penyakit*) to leave (K. Endicott 1979a, 106–8). A similar means of cooling patients' bodies involves covering them with fragrant leaves and blowing *kemeyèn* (a plant resin) over the patient's body while reciting incantations (*jampi*). The efficacy of most medicines and treatments is associated with their perceived qualities to cool the body and soul which are thought to have become hot through disease (cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 106-108).

Figure 8. Batek Dè' women adorned with fruit blossoms (photo credit Vivek Venkataraman)

Olfaction plays a key role in most of the Batek's interactions between the human and non-human worlds and is of central importance to everyday life. Olfaction is both a means by which relations with others (humans and non-humans) are established and a means to maintain boundaries between different domains and places. Plants and flowers with pleasing fragrances are often used in bodily adornments and the decoration of lean-tos. During the flower and fruit seasons, women adorn their heads with flowers, fruit skins, and fragrant leaves which they also tuck into their sarongs to sensorially align themselves with the spirits. The olfactory and visual qualities of these signifiers empower women, not only by increasing their beauty to husbands or potential lovers, but also through pleasing the *hala' 'asal* by establishing connections with them. Odours easily permeate the fragile boundaries between the visible world and the invisible world of the spirits. Flowers, fruits and fragrant leaves are all seen as having *betet* (beautiful odours) and cooling qualities and are contrasted to the foreign odours of non-forest objects

including perfumed soaps, deodorants and non Batek food stuffs. Objects, things and people from outside the forest are seen as carrying an unpleasant rather than a foul *pel'èng* stench (normally associated with raw meat). They are disliked by the creator beings because they come from beyond the forest, a place associated with heat, danger and Malays and because they are not considered as *'asal* (original). The cool/fragrant versus hot/unpleasant dichotomy is particularly important during fruit ceremonies in which fragrant flowers, incenses and resins are used to entice benevolent spirits and delight the original creator beings. During these rituals, participants bodies and the large lean-tos in which the ceremonies are performed are decorated with cool aromatic leaves, flowers and fruit skins which serve to temporarily collapse the boundaries between humans and spirits thus facilitating communications.

Within this eminently sensorial logic, Bateks classify most foods according to thermic and olfactory criteria. Foods associated with qualities of coolness are seen as having properties which cool the body and soul while those considered hot are said to heat the body and soul. All game meats are seen as being 'hot' (*bʉd*) and as carrying strong odours of raw blood (*pel'èng*). Most fruits, for example *cawas* (L. *Artocarpus lancefolia*), *nanas* (pineapple), *bangkong* (jackfruit), *tampuy* (L. *Baccaurea griffithii*), and many wild Nephelium species (relatives of rambutans) such as *ramey*, *təkɔy*, *pərajok* and *klas* are considered as cool (*bəlahit*). It is perhaps due to their associations with coolness that fruits are by far the most preferred foods of the Batek. However, durians (L. *Durio*), *tawɛs* (L. *Artocarpus* sp.), common *rambutan* (L. *Nephelium lappaceum*), *tembikai* (watermelon), *duku* (Langsat, L. *Lansium parasiticum*) and *rambai* (L. *Baccaurea motleyana*) are considered by some Bateks as hot (*bʉd*). Durians are widely considered as 'hot' food across Southeast Asia perhaps due to the fact they can cause heartburn, they are also well known for their powerful odours. However, the logic behind why various other fruits are considered as hot is less clear. Most fruits which are classified as cool tend to be sour tasting (*masam*) while those which are sweet (*gehet*) are said to heat the body. Interestingly, and in line with the logic of the forest-village division, most fruits classified as 'hot' and 'sweet' are cultivated by Malay farmers while their cool and sour counterparts, for the most part, grow wild in the forest. It is likely that more sensorial principals are also at play here and there is a significant gap in the ethnographic and linguistic literature on Orang Asli gustative categories. There may also be an underlying cosmological pattern here, Bateks tend to prefer wild fruits (*kəbʉ' tahun*), which are generally thought of as being sent down, created and sustained through the intervention of the *hala' 'asal*, over their domesticated counterparts that rely upon human labour (Cf. Endicott 1979, 55; Lye 2004, 141). In the celestial world of the *hala' 'asal*, there is no longer any need to eat 'hot' foods such as the meat of wild animals and these beings, and humans who have joined them in the afterlife, only eat cool fruits for pleasure.

Olfaction is also central to the set of ritual prohibitions known as *lawac* among Batek Dè' (K. Endicott 1979a, 68–82). However, rather than relating to the general binary logic described above, the *lawac* taboo system is more concerned with the mixing of particular odours associated with different categories of food stuff, species and people. For example, the cooking of different groups of foods over the same hearth, either at the same time or at different times, is strictly prohibited under a sub-set of *lawac* rules known as *lawac òs* (fire taboos). The Batek Dè' claim that if *lawac òs* rules (fire or cooking prohibitions) are transgressed and incompatible categories of animals or other foodstuffs are cooked together over the same hearth, their odours will mix together and be carried to the thunder deity (Gobar) and rainbow snake (*naga'*) who will respond by causing terrible storms and floods due to their finding the resulting odour offensive. Within this system different categories of foodstuffs can only be cooked together if they share a certain olfactory similarity. Bateks associate each species of animal with a particular odour (*meni'*), for example *meni' talo'* (leaf-monkey odour), or *meni' tɔŋ* (masked palm civet odour), while particular species of fish and birds are just seen as having *meni' ikan* (fish odour) or *meni' kawaw* (bird odour).

Although each species of animal is associated with their own odours, different species of animals can be cooked together if they share certain likenesses. Such likenesses usually involve having similar habitats, anatomies, body coverings or skin colour[15]. Starchy foods (tubers and rice) are grouped together as *bab* and vegetables as *sayor*. According to the fire and cooking prohibitions, most vegetables and starchy foods can be cooked on the same hearth but while animals can be cooked with starchy foods, they cannot be cooked with vegetables (Endicott 1979a, 73-74). Generally, any types of fish can be cooked together over the same fire and fish can be cooked with birds but not with other meats while birds can be cooked with any other meats. There is significant variation between Bateks about exactly which things can and cannot be cooked together over the same fire and it is extremely difficult to find an underlying logic of why Bateks think that certain things should not be cooked together. People usually explain these rules by saying that mixing the odours of different species or groups of food stuffs angers the thunder lord and rainbow snake who would respond by causing terrible floods and thunder storms. The *hala' 'asal* become angered by the cooking of things with different odours because this confuses the identities of the things that they have

[15] Endicott has previously written about this topic extensively and names the following criteria as being the most used to classify animals which can be cooked together: "(1) anatomical similarity (especially the number and nature of the appendages), (2) similarity of habitat (the usual divisions being tree-dwelling, ground dwelling, underground dwelling, and water dwelling), (3) similarity of body covering (the main types being fur, feathers, and scales), and (4), similarity in colour of skin or body covering" (1979,74).

created. Endicott argues that this "special concern with odours is not because they are the most basic defining features of the food-species, but because they are the features most prone to intermixing, even when the substances of the food-species are kept apart" (K. Endicott 1979a, 75–76). Because the olfactory divide between the visible and invisible world is particularly permeable any person who confuses different categories of things that should be kept apart risks the punishment of the creator beings. Similar systems of classifying and prohibiting the cooking of different categories of foods over the same fires have been described among the Ma' Betisék (Karim 1981, 44–45), Semai (Dentan 1968, 36–37), Chewong (Howell 1984, 26–230) and are probably found among most Orang Asli groups.

Another way that olfaction shapes everyday life is through the mixing of human odours. Many Bateks claim that when people share the same dwelling, the mixing of their odours helps cement social ties and friendships. However, as mentioned previously, the mixing of odours (or shadows) with close relatives of the opposite sex is considered by Bateks as *lawac lih*, a relatively mild category of incest (K. Endicott 1979a, 77).

A third category of prohibitions, *lawac yãp* (blood taboos) also has a distinctive olfactory basis. Certain categories of blood—menstrual blood, blood resulting from childbirth and the blood of *bawac* (pig-tailed macaques), *jəlɛ̆w* (long-tailed macaques), *koh* (a species of turtle) and *hawaŋ* (a species of tortoise)—are seen as having odours which are particular repulsive for the thunder lord and the rainbow snake. The carcasses of any of the above-named animals cannot be washed in streams and likewise menstruating women must avoid letting their blood enter any flowing water. If these types of blood flow into streams, the *meni'* (odour) of the blood is said to drift upwards to the home of the thunder lord and flow downwards to the watery underworld where the rainbow snake dwells. It is the stench of blood that attracts the fury of the rainbow snake and the thunder lord, not the blood itself and it is the odour of the blood which appeases or drives away Gobar and the *naga'* during the blood throwing ritual which is performed during storms by people who have broken *lawac* prohibitions (K. Endicott 1979a, 76–77). Another means of placating or driving Gobar and the *naga'* away during storms involves burning plants, hair, crayfish or resins to release their pleasing or repulsing olfactory qualities (K. Endicott 1979a; Burenhult and Majid 2011; Blust 2013).

At Post Lebir, the emergence of prohibitions governing the mixing of forest and non-forest foods has clearly developed from, and is an extension of, the *lawac* taboo system and an underlying logic where beings, places and objects are classified according to thermic and olfactory codes. This logic structures the ways that Bateks think about health, well-being and the local landscape..

Media Flows, Cosmology and Fear

Globalised media flows are an important form of contemporary influence affecting animistic concepts and practices in Post Lebir. At the time of my fieldwork, many Bateks living at the village had televisions in their homes. The villagers are well aware of global events and frequently discuss natural disasters and wars they hear about through the media. In this context again, people have reacted to the influx of global imagery depicting a violent, dangerous and unstable world by increasingly expressing their anxieties through what I call 'tropes of fear': through dynamic, figurative manifestations of collective anxieties about unrelenting and uncontrollable processes and change. Although Bateks sometimes clearly articulate their fear of these processes in transparent language without recourse to metaphor or other tropes, they most commonly express anxiety and terror through 'polysemic' or 'multivocal' symbols (Turner 1967) frequently in reference to the wrath of their thunder deity and the flood-causing rainbow snake.

James Fernandez describes tropes as "figurative devices that lie at the very heart of discourse, defining situations and grounding our sense of what is to be taken as real and objective and, therefore, entitled (by means of the figurative entitlements we employ) to have real consequences" (Fernandez 1991, 1). Experience of the world can be confusing and chaotic particularly during periods of rapid change. Tropes allow transferal of meanings from areas we understand well to those we do not (Fernandez 1991). Perception, knowledge, memory and identity are built into and negotiated through these figurations, in which for the Batek sensory experiences are particularly relevant. Often tropes are drawn from multi-sensorial signifiers—auditory, olfactory and visual. As increased interconnections with the outside world bring new elements into the Batek's lives, signifiers from the forest combine with those from beyond to create new tropes and more complex multivocal symbols. As seen in this chapter, these fears relate to Batek ideas about keeping domains of things separate so as to maintain the order established by ancestral creator beings.

In 2008, Batek living at Post Lebir often talked about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. They believed these wars could lead to even more terrible consequences due to the huge quantities of blood being spilt on the earth. They said the *pel'èng* odour of this blood would reach the thunder lord and the underworld rainbow snake, angering them and leading them to cause catastrophic storms and flooding as a punishment. Several Batek expressed their belief that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were a kind of divine punishment for Muslims because of past offences (such as the historical enslaving of the Orang Asli). Yet they also believed the flooding and destruction in New Orleans in 2005 was a punishment against the Americans due to the bloodshed they caused in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 was also interpreted by many Bateks living at Post Lebir as

the consequence of the thunder lord's and rainbow snake's anger due to Indonesians breaking *lawac* taboos.

Batek religious beliefs and cosmologies are fluid and dynamic; stories transform in interesting ways as they circulate throughout the Batek area. In regard to the tsunami story, which taboo was broken depends on who is telling the story. One Batek mid-wife living at Post Lebir explained to me that the Tsunami was caused by the thunder lord *Gobar* because people were laughing at animals and breaking other *lawac* and *tolah* taboos in Aceh and other places. An interesting variation of this story was recounted to anthropologist Diana Riboli by a young Batek man living in the Tembeling area of Pahang. currently training to become a shaman. In this version, trans-national flows are emphasized even more vividly.

> [He] explained that the tsunami was a terrible punishment sent by Gobar, whose rage had been incurred by the worst offence: the purposeful pouring of menstrual blood into the water of a river or the sea. Together with his friends and relatives, the *halak* [*hala'*] explained that some poor Indonesian girl must have been hired as a housemaid in Dubai or Saudi Arabia and had probably decided to take a revenge on her cruel employer for the many abuses and injuries she had suffered by using black magic. They believed she had probably gone to the sea and thrown in a concoction of her menstrual blood mixed with other things, and the consequences of her act had grown out of proportion. Her pain, suffering and rage along with her menstrual blood, transported by strong sea currents, tried to go back to her country of origin: Indonesia. When the menstrual blood crossed the sea close to Malaysia, Gobar smelled it and, offended, but also struck by the attempt and the girl's suffering, transformed it into a devastating force which, combined with the powerful black magic, exploded as soon as it came close to Sumatra. (Riboli 2013, 145–46)

All versions of the story interpret the catastrophe as being caused by the breaking of taboos with consequent supernatural punishment in the form of the devastating tsunami. This interpretation is fairly straightforward as Bateks consider that any transgression of the moral order must result in such a punishment from Gobar or *naga*'. However, as Riboli (2013) notes, the global themes within the story are particularly interesting and need unpacking: the suffering of the Indonesian maid working in the Middle East (a common tragic story repeated regularly in the Malaysian media); Indonesian black-magic (which is widely feared in Malaysia); and the transnational nature of the tsunami's destruction. These transnational elements give us insights into the Batek's problematic confrontation with global interconnectivity. The interpretation of the Tsunami being Gobar's punishment for an act that involved throwing menstrual blood (which should never come into contact with flowing water), directly into the ocean (a place which transcends all national boundaries) combines multiple global elements (Malaysia, Indonesia, the

Middle East, immigrant labour, a transnational catastrophe) and translates them into a powerful trope of fear through local cosmology. Riboli comments the "Batek could not explain who was supposed to be the real target of Gobar's punishment. It had certainly not been directed at the Batek, or the rest of Malaysian population. It had perhaps been directed at the girl, her family and social group, as well as her vicious employer somewhere in Dubai or Saudi Arabia" (Riboli 2013, 17). This uncertainty reflects the uncontrollable aspects of Gobar's rage but also the unfathomable and destructive aspects of the Batek's contemporary experiences.

The multi-vocal symbols of Gobar and the *naga'* now increasingly correlate with the devastating trans-national forces, a transformed potential of meaning which the tsunami story dramatically illustrates. In Riboli's analysis of the story of the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, she states that "the abuse and violence were so extreme that the consequences enacted by other-than-human-persons somehow mirrored the violent acts perpetrated by humans" (2013, 17). There is certainly a 'mirroring' or symbolic 'doubling' occurring in the Batek's magico-realist interpretations of catastrophes like the tsunami. However, it seems that rather than these interpretations being a mirror of human violence, they could best be understood as horrific kaleidoscopic refractions where multiple forms of violence—human, environmental and supernatural—collide, reflect and magnify each other in grotesque ways. Rather than pinning down the signification of their symbolism to one particular meaning, perhaps they should be seen as texts-in-motion, a 'play of tropes' working at multiple levels, but which must be understood from the Batek's perspective as front-line witnesses to the environmental destruction that has unfolded concomitantly with a dramatic increase in the, often frightening, flows of globalization. The ways in which Bateks describe their experiences of the changes wrought by the influx of flows of non-forest objects, foods and medicines alongside contemporary landscape degradation demonstrate the Batek's acute awareness and fears of transnational flows. In this way, they offer compelling insights into both phenomenological and socio-political aspects of globalization, particularly into how disenfranchised marginalized groups like the Batek experience global power.

Marginal Experiences and Cosmological Blending

How and why has recent environmental and socio-political change and resettlement affected Batek animism? When Kirk Endicott carried out his work on Batek religion in the 1970s, the objects and symbols of the Batek's *lawac* prohibitions were drawn uniquely from the forest environment. In recent years, the new objects, foodstuffs and odours which have entered Batek's lives at places like Post Lebir have been subjected to a similar classificatory logic which is aimed at keeping things apart. The ways that Bateks conceptualise their bodies, souls,

emotions, the environment and the wider cosmos involve a series of binary oppositions which oppose forest/village, coolness/heat, health/disease, anger/well-being, humans/superhumans, fragrant odours/unpleasant or foul stenches and sun/moon. This logic of separation, which involves thermic and olfactory codes, can be seen as a distinct type of avoidance relation which regulates the types of behaviour that are considered acceptable in particular locales. It has significantly shaped how Bateks have conceptualised the social and environmental changes they are experiencing. Within resettlement villages like Post Lebir, this has allowed for Bateks to experience cultural continuity while people are pressured to assimilate Malay norms and behaviours.

On a cosmological level, if things or odours that are deemed incompatible are accidentally mixed, they are seen to enrage the thunder lord *Gobar* and the *naga'* rainbow snake, and provoke them to cause extreme weather conditions. Logging and mining activities in their area are seen as cataclysmic because they are understood as heating the earth in ways analogous to how diseases heat the body. Ecological degradation is understood as angering the *hala' 'asal* who respond by increasing the frequency of thunder storms and flooding. Although Bateks describe these changes through their particular animistic logic, their fears are rational; deforestation has undoubtedly contributed to changing weather patterns and the increased frequency and magnitude of flooding. Similarly, fears of villages being significantly less healthy places to live than the forest are not unfounded. Alongside localized changes to living conditions and the general environment, sedentary living has increased the Batek's access to globalized media meaning they are now highly aware of extreme weather events across the planet. Within their cosmologies, they frequently interpret such events as being caused by humans breaking prohibitions. As such, the wrath of the thunder lord and rainbow snake is not merely a comment on moral conditions within forest camps but an increasingly manifest commentary on both global events and local landscape transformation.

Life in resettlement villages like Post Lebir is marked by economic uncertainty, extreme vulnerability and marginalization. The Bateks' logic of connectivity and separatedness clearly relates to these socio-political circumstances on the edges of the rainforest. Although resettlement projects and Islamic conversion are aimed at turning Bateks into Malays, they have resulted in the augmentation of various socio-cultural strategies —bicultural-oscillation, sly civility, non-violence, timidity and avoidance — that enable Bateks to shift between the world of the forest and the outside world and maintain cordial relations with their Malay neighbours. The figurative incorporation of a variety of new elements into existing cosmological constructs has also led to the development of magico-realist apocalyptic visions that strongly mark the particular modality of their contemporary animistic forms. Socio-political and ecological circumstances also clearly contribute to shaping the

ways in which Bateks construct and maintain the symbolic and sensorial divides between the forest and outside world. Underlying anxieties about forced relocation, marginalization and ecological degradation, augmented by increased media flows that bring in images of a highly unstable outside world into the Batek's life, have all impacted the shaping of what I have termed tropes of fear. As different experiences, ideas and images merge in everyday life, they affect how Bateks relate to non-human persons and agencies from the forest as well as how they relate to and conceptualize outsiders and the world beyond the forest. Their animistic conceptions and practices are continually shaped through a process whereby different modalities of interconnection and separatedness mutually inform and co-constitute each other.

Chapter Seven

MYTH MAKING, MARGINALIZATION AND AUTOCHTHONY

Myths form a central element of Batek animism alongside people's interactions with spirits and the various prohibitions which govern behaviour. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse how the retelling of myths and historical narratives is used by Bateks to contest their economic marginalization and political exclusion. Ethnographically, the chapter draws upon excerpts from a discussion with two individuals in Post Lebir who were introduced in the previous chapter, Bolek the headman, and his elder brother Pasir. In the discussion, cosmogonic myths about autochthony, the creation of the world and the division of human groups into different 'races' (*bangsa*) were invoked to critique and comment upon colonial-era encounters, contemporary experiences of landscape degradation and political exclusion. Present during the discussion were also two American anthropologists and several other Bateks, and the subjects and nature of the discussion were undoubtedly influenced by this particular audience. Bolek and Pasir are among the oldest residents at Post Lebir and have witnessed tremendous changes in the area throughout their lifetimes. Both have some authority in the village and often act as intermediaries between the villagers and government representatives. They are also well-respected for their knowledge relating to mythology, the performance of ceremonies and political matters. In Batek discourse myths are often used to comment upon experiences in which people, landscapes, spiritual entities, politics, and imagery from and beyond the forest, continually merge, clash and collide. It is within a context of blurred boundaries and complex entanglements that the Bateks' understanding of their place in the world and their strategies of resilience against marginalization and domination emerge. Whilst the previous chapter focussed on concepts of separation, my focus here is on connection and relatedness.

Within the multiplicity of events, myths and political claims that Bolek and Pasir discussed, lies a more abstract kind of relatedness; that of the underlying similarity of all humans. For Bateks, all humans and many non-humans are seen as persons, which all share the same underlying souls. Bolek and Pasir allude to various myths which describe this underlying similarity of all groups, whilst

simultaneously emphasizing their special position as autochthones. Batek ideas about the relatedness and similarity of human groups are quite different to corresponding Malay ideas in which humans are classified into different races (*bangsa*) and accorded different rights, although Malay ideas have clearly permeated Batek thinking to a certain extent. Historically, Bateks were treated by Malays as a kind of subhuman or as not-quite-human others (K. Endicott 1970, 81). Regarding Bateks and other Orang Asli as not-quite-human others enabled Malays to justify their mistreatment and enslaving of these people until the early twentieth century. Although Bateks and other Orang Asli are now of course recognized as humans by the Malaysian government they still lack the same political rights which are granted to other ethnic groups in the country. Bateks are well aware of how Malays saw them as not-quite-humans in the past and their marginal political position in the contemporary period. The claims that Bolek and Pasir make about the similarity and relatedness between humans must be seen within this context.

Rather than being seen as a dialogue, the conversation between Pasir, Bolek, myself and other individuals present should be seen as a *plurilogue* involving multiple people. The plurality of voices typifies what Bird-David has termed *pluripresence*; "the salient experience of being-with vivid and proximate others rather than the experience of being one" (2017, 18). Such ways of being and speaking are typical of the Batek's anarchic sociality whereby people share daily life intimately. The brothers Bolek and Pasir, who have lived together for over sixty years, continually interrupted each other, finishing each other's phrases while other people present chimed in, adding details and opinions when necessary. The two men articulated multiple cosmopolitical connections between local issues, Malaysian national politics and the irrevocable similarity of all humans by assembling myth, history and politics in ways that challenge colonial and neo-colonial discourse. Throughout the conversation there were frequent shifts in geographic scale—from the local to the national and global—and in temporality—from the mythical and colonial era to the present. Such story-telling involves chronotopic thinking in which the past, present and future mutually inform each other. In the chapter, I highlight how through weaving time, place, politics and myth into fragile and fluctuating webs of connectivity, new potentialities for imagination are created which open up spaces in which the Batek's marginal status is contested.

Imbroglios and Assemblages

It is early evening on a sweltering evening in mid-July 2013, around a year after the events described in the previous chapter. I am seated with friends on the concrete floor of a small government-built house. This is the home of na' Kunc,' and 'ey Kunc, the parents of Kunc (pronounced coin) a twenty-year-old Batek bachelor who has worked

with me over the last year as a research assistant. Kunc normally lives with his aunt in the village of Hariŋ (Aring 5), but his five youngest siblings live here with their parents. The small room is crowded with people: Kunc; his parents; their neighbours Batin Bolek (my adopted father and the JAKOA appointed headman at Post Lebir) and his wife Halik, a well-respected bidan (mid-wife); Bolek and Halik's middle-aged son 'ey Ajas; Tom Kraft and Vivek Venkakaraman (two American anthropologists I have been working with over the last month); Kunc's parents; and myself.

The simple house was built by JAKOA (the Department of Orang Asli Development) as part of their programme to resettle, 'develop' and assimilate the Batek into wider Malaysian society (2004, 112). *Like other houses that JAKOA has constructed in Orang Asli resettlement villages across the Malay Peninsula, the building is a small and simple structure consisting of four concrete walls covered by a corrugated iron roof. The main room is separated from two small bedrooms and the kitchen by flimsy plasterboard walls. A rolled up pandanus mat and a blow pipe are propped up in the corner behind a small television balanced on two boxes of clothes. In the evenings, families often congregate here to watch films together, anything from Bollywood classics to Hollywood blockbusters. Favourites during my fieldwork were burlesque comedies such as the British show 'Mr Bean' and 'The Gods must be Crazy', a film about Kung Bushmen who people often described as 'Bateks just like us!'*

The walls of the front room are decorated with photos of Malay models cut from magazines and school pamphlets, and an impressive number of medals that Kunc and his siblings have won at school for athletic and scholarly activities. Several pictures that children have drawn adorn the walls. One depicts a beautiful Malay woman wearing a hijab *(the Malay headscarf). The image of the Malay woman evokes a certain ambivalence, especially due to its positioning, just above a painted image of a Batek man dressed in a* penjok *(bark skin loincloth), his arms outstretched proudly holding a gibbon he has just blow-piped. Batek men no longer wear loincloths and hunting is rare in this area, although it remains a highly valued activity. The child's image of the Batek hunter is almost identical to the frontispiece in Kirk Endicott's 1979 book* Batek Negrito Religion. *In an act of mimetic reproduction, the alterity of 'modern' village life is excessively mirrored while simultaneously emphasizing Batek pride as batek* həp *(forest people). A third picture shows Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 flying over the rainforest, the plane which mysteriously disappeared on its way from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Satellite televisions mean that Bateks are well aware of life beyond the forest; news stories quickly pass from group to group as people move back and forth from villages to forest camps carrying information of local resources, gossip and national and international events.*

This short vignette serves to create a feel of the place in which the discussion around which this chapter revolves takes place, with the assemblage of images, sounds, objects, and people in the room which connect the Batek to the wider

world. Ethnographic representations and those of popular culture frequently depict indigenous peoples as being isolated from wider society or as being assimilated and corrupted by it. Neither hold true for Bateks. The cluttered scene in which "modernity and tradition", the "global and local" and "town and forest" are entangled, exemplifies Batek life in the early 21st century. Binary opposites such as 'modernity' and tradition', the 'local' and the 'global'—have been frequently criticised by social scientists for their cumbersome political awkwardness and lack of nuance (Latour 1993; Appadurai 1996; Taussig 1993; Thrift 2008). While geographer Nigel Thrift (2008, 2) argues that "no satisfactory alternative to the connected separation they imply seems to exist", certain 'non-representational' or 'more-than-representational' approaches, to coin Hayden Lorimer's term (2005), do offer a possible solution. Networks connecting ostensibly incongruent assemblages of people, objects, imagery, discourses and so on, typify contemporary life, whether that of urbanite Europeans or Bateks living on the edges of the forest in Malaysia. As Latour has argued, these networks are "*simultaneously real, like nature, narrated like discourse, and collective, like society*" (Latour 1993, 6 emphasis in original). Within these complex imbroglios, material cultures and political discourses connect to, overlap with, and bounce off cosmologies, everyday practices and sensorial stimuli. To understand how such cultural production occurs in these mixed-up places, let us return to our scene.

Violence, Land and Resources

After a few minutes Bolek's elder brother, Pasir arrives and carefully squeezes in between myself and Bolek, paying attention not to step over anyone and accidentally committing *lawac lih*, the prohibition on mixing shadow souls. The conversation soon shifts to issues of land, origins and identity in a complex plurilogue which jumps between national policies, cosmogonic myths, land rights claims, and ethical statements concerned with non-violence and morality. Pasir begins by telling me about the creation of the world and the origins of humanity. Bolek and 'ey Ajas frequently interject to illustrate points while Kunc nonchalantly listens in, sporadically adding details and translating difficult terms while sending text messages to his new Semai girlfriend. Pasir's style of narrating is characteristically rambling and disjunctive but he manages to masterfully weave a narrative linking past with present and Batek ethics, cosmogony and etiological myths with Malaysian national politics.

> *Our place of origins is Wɔs Terengganu (the mouth of the Terengganu River). In the beginning Terengganu was Batek land. Terengganu was the first place that we came to. We won't go far from the borders of Terengganu or the headwaters of the Pahang River because we follow the*

> *ways of our ancestors.* Gobs *(Malays) say that* Wɔs Terengganu *is Melayu but really it is Batek. In the beginning, rice, tea and sugar were all Batek foods. The original sugar is* ləwey *(honey). We followed the original way of life. In the beginning there were no trees, no countries, nothing. Tohan (the creator) then made the first man and woman from the earth. He gave us life. We can't take life away, we can't* sakɛl *(kill or hit). I am Pasir Bin Liling, I can't kill people, it is* lawac *(prohibited) to kill. All the Orang Asal know this. We should love each other not kill each other. This is what Tuhan [the creator] said. Menteri Lai (Bolek and Pasir's grandfather) said that we cannot kill any humans. We follow this. We love each other, we cannot kill. All the Orang Asal know this.*

In Malaysian national history, Terengganu, like neighbouring Kelantan, is commonly imagined and represented as the heartland of Malay culture, but *Pasir* claims it was originally the home of the Batek in a time before the political division of land into territories associated with particular ethnic groups and rulers. Many other Bateks also claim that they originally came from a place near the sea in Terengganu (Cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 86). Pasir associates Tohan's creation of humans from the earth and his gift of life with the moral value that humans can never take human life away. He also associates Batek ethics and identity to the larger Orang Asli group which he consciously identifies with. The theme of non-violence was reiterated over the next forty-five minutes as Pasir, Bolek and others constantly reiterated that humans should *sayɛŋ* (love) each other and never *sakɛl* (kill or hurt other humans).

Before continuing it is worth pausing to briefly overview some of the Batek's ideas about violence. Both direct physical violence and environmental degradation (logging, quarrying and mining) are considered *lawac* (prohibited). Non-violence is central to Batek ethics, philosophy, politics, and identity. As we saw in the precedent chapter, the term *lawac* refers to any prohibited acts which are punished by the thunder deity (*gobar*) and the underground rainbow snake (*naga'*). However, the term is often used as a coverall category that subsumes various other prohibited categories including *tolah* (improper social behaviour and violence) and *cemam* (improper sexual behaviour). Concerns about violence are powerful; hitting anyone, let alone killing someone, is unthinkable for most Bateks. Violence is an emotion that Bateks are at continual pains to supress and many people told me that even to think jealous or angry thoughts was forbidden and dangerous. Individual acts of violence are punishable by Tohan, who causes any individual who breaks these taboos to suffer from accidents, disease or death. The name Tohan is derived from the Malay word for god or master (Tuhan) who Bateks consider as a creator being alongside other *hala' 'asal*. Endicott has argued, that apart from his role as a creator and as the custodian of *ɲawa' angin* (life-force), Tohan holds little

importance for the Batek and remains "rather distant and unapproachable" (1979a, 81). However, as the enforcer of the punishments for *tolah* prohibitions, he remains an ever-present reminder of the dangers of violence. While breaking *lawac* prohibitions are collectively punished by the rainbow snake and thunder deity, Tohan punishes individuals for the transgression of *tolah* prohibitions. These prohibitions are taught to children from a very young age and extend to any signs of violence, anger and jealousy. In this way, rules about violence become normative and it is extremely rare to see any forms of violence in Batek communities (Cf. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 50).

Next, Pasir shifts to the topic of resource wealth in Batek territory and Malaysia's colonial past, describing how his grandfather, Menteri Lai, showed the British administrator Tuan Bay the locations of iron-ore (*batu bersih*) in Batek territory.

> *Tuan Bay used to give us rice and tobacco. He knew we were poor. Tuan Bay asked Menteri Lai and our ancestors about* batu bersih *(iron ore) a long time ago. There is a lot here in the hills. Menteri Lai told him there was iron ore at the Aring River. Tuan Bay said "you are the original people (*Orang Asli*) and these original stones are yours, this land is yours". He saw the iron-ore and visited the places but no mining was started [due to the Japanese invasion in 1941-1942]. Tuan Bay promised the profits from mining would be shared with the Batek. We have always lived in this area, it is our land. We can't kill, we are friends (the whites and the Batek). We eat together. You come and live in our village with us, we are friends. Why do people kill (*sakɛl*)?*

Pasir's movement from stories of Batek origins from the earth, to a discussion of the earth's mineral wealth in the local area is judicious in the way he associates autochthony—in a similar sense to its literal Greek meaning: "springing from the land" (αὐτόχθων)—with the Batek's rights to their ancestral territories. Batek cosmogonic myths detailing how humans were created from earth share clear parallels with Athenian or Theban myths of *gêgensis*, the idea that people were born (*gen*) of the earth (*gê*) as described by Plato, Isocrates and Socrates. The relationship between autochthony and the historical emergence of the concept of territory in Europe have been discussed in detail by Stuart Elden (2013, 23–24) who argues that "the people of Athens and Thebes [had] a deeply rooted attachment to the soil, to the particular place. They were not just born there, but born from there". Myths about autochthonous humans being created from the earth of their ancestral territories are common throughout Southeast Asia (Bovensiepen 2014, 218; M. W. Scott 2011, 202; Oppenheimer 1998, 365–81). It is worth noting that Malays are classified by the government as Bumiputera (meaning "sons of the soil"), a term

which evokes a similar idiom of *gêgensis*. However, Batek claims of autochthony through *gêgensis* differ sharply from Malay mythical claims to indigenousness which are frequently justified through ancient marriages between Malays arriving from beyond the Peninsula with Orang Asli indigenes (Nicholas 2000, 73–76). Similar 'stranger-king' myths, in which a foreigner establishes the right to rule through a marriage to an autochthone, are widespread among Austronesian speaking populations from Southeast Asia to Hawaii' as well as groups on the Southeast Asian mainland in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Burma (Firth 1970; Malinowski 1948; Rutherford 2002; Sahlins 2017; Siikala 1996; Fox 2008).

Drawing upon colonial power, Pasir supports his claim by stating that Batek lands were recognized by a representative of the former British colonial government. He establishes his political authority in his references to his ancestor Menteri Lai ('Minister' Lai) who negotiated rights to mineral resources within the Batek's territory with the British administrator Tuan Bay. Pasir and Bolek were born along the Ciku River in Kelantan and claim a lineage of recognized political authority dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. As mentioned earlier, Bolek is the current government recognized headman at Post Lebir. Pasir and Bolek's father was Pengulu Liling the former headman of the village. Their grandfather, Raja Kelah, was purportedly recognized by Malays and the British as a Batek chief, and their great-grandfather was the afore-mentioned Menteri Lai. Although Endicott (1997, 41) has argued that the existence of such political titles were bestowed by Malays upon Bateks in an attempt to impose a "political hierarchy through which they could control them", the existence of these political titles has other important implications. Firstly, they imply that Malays recognized Bateks as the traditional owners of their ancestral territories. Secondly, they show that Bateks clearly understand the political significance that such conferred titles established. Thirdly, they demonstrate that hereditary political office (albeit somewhat limited) has been passed down through paternal lines in Kelantan for well over one hundred years.

Some contextualisation is necessary to understand why Pasir specifically refers to the iron-ore deposits in the Aring area. When I began research in Kelantan in 2006, several companies had begun to establish open-cast iron-ore mines in the area. Bateks from the Aring had attempted to protect their lands by maintaining a presence in the area. In 2008, a Batek settlement — known in the Batek Dè' language as either Kampung Calgak or Perai and Blok 9 in Malay — proudly stood on a hill a few hundred metres from forests edge. All the areas north of the village had been systematically deforested and converted to vast oil-palm plantations. The small settlement, composed of around ten Malay-style wooden huts, covered an area where iron-ore deposits were clearly visible in the top soil. However, by 2010, the villagers had been pushed off their land and had received no economic compensation. Following a lengthy dispute, on April 10 2013, the Chinese-owned

mining company finally agreed to provide Bateks with a minimal amount of financial compensation for the destruction of fruit trees in the area. After demanding all claimants signed or fingerprinted paperwork, the company paid out a small sum that was divided up between men from the Kampung Aring 5 area and Post Lebir during a meeting organised by the JKKK. People were extremely disillusioned by the loss of this land and the small funds they were compensated with.

Te' (land or earth) is a key concept in Batek cosmologies and is integral to their ways of relating to and living in their forest world. Earth is considered even older than forest and lies on the back of the primordial *naga'* above the underground sea. In this fragile position any movement of the *naga'* can cause the earth to dissolve into the underground sea. The earth is held together by the forest which covers it and so deforestation is quite correctly seen to soften and weaken earth (cf Lye 2004, 53–54). Furthermore, as we saw above, Bateks consider that they were created from the earth itself, expressing a primordial connection with the land. Without forest covered land, Bateks could no longer continue to exist as hunter-gather-collectors and any loss of land through deforestation and mining represents a very real threat to the Batek's way of life. It also represents a threat to the various non-humans (animals and spirits) which Bateks consider as part of their community. As we saw in earlier chapters, many landscape features across Batek and Manya' territories, especially limestone karsts, are considered as potent sites; many are seen as either homes of other-than-human beings or locations marking their activities. A few days earlier, Pasir had expressed his worries about the destruction of the landscape through quarrying and mining activities to me. He was particularly concerned about the destruction of one large karst which he was certain would enrage the thunder lord who would respond by causing devastating floods and tsunamis. Another intriguing aspect of Batek earth-centricism concerns Manya' practices of geophagy. Several Manya' men told me they regularly ate balls of earth either cooked or uncooked as a means of improving their health. Although such embodied and emplaced practices may provide some physiological benefits (Young et al. 2011), they also (re)produce relatedness between individuals bodies, the body politic and bodies of landscape.

Most Bateks see, the earth as resting on the back of the huge *naga*, who is described as a giant snake, turtle or a composite turtle-snake who resides above the enormous underground sea (Endicott 1979, 33-36). The fragility of the earth in this cosmology is evident and has been explored in detail by Lye (2004), especially in regards to how it has shaped the Bateks' experiences of environmental degradation. But the Batek's earth-centrism goes beyond ideas about the structure of the cosmos and claims to autochthony through *gêgensis*. Batek, Manya' and Mendriq forms of shamanism and ritual practices are also very focussed on the earth and the underworld. Bateks had previously invited me to visit certain underground caves

where they and Mendriqs perform very secretive rituals. Unfortunately, unforeseen circumstances (a serious leg infection) prevented me visiting these caves when planned. Bateks told me that in one cave, a group of stalagmites could be played like musical instruments. In another, shamans are said to descend on a rope to a cave where they perform singing rituals directed at a powerful earth spirit. Similar stories had been told to Benjamin by Mendriqs living at Kuala Lah (Benjamin 2014, 181 footnote 32). Through a cosmological lens, Pasir and Bolek's fears of mining and quarrying activities can be understood as provoking ontological uncertainty. From this perspective, the destruction of these, and other similar locations, would provoke cosmic calamity by angering the spirits.

The way in which Pasir connects violence with resource degradation is intriguing. The way that he uses the term *sakɛl*—which normally means 'hit' or 'kill'—just after discussing the environmental degradation caused by mining, refers to both environmental violence as well as direct physical violence. His comments echo those of Tebu, a Batek shaman from Pahang who eloquently described landscape degradation to Lye using similar language about twenty years earlier. In Lye's account, Tebu used the Malay term *bunoh* which normally means 'kill', 'murder' or 'slay' when he described environmental destruction, in his words: 'the killing of the world' (Lye 2004, 189–93). Pasir's use of *sakɛl* holds a similarly broad sense; it evokes experiences of physical, environmental and structural violence. Mining and deforestation are understood mythopoetically; they are considered as serious ontological disturbances. In the Batek's interanimated view of the cosmos, 'killing the world' does not just mean a vague sense of environmental destruction, but rather a killing of the various beings—humans, animals, plants and other-than-human beings—which inhabit the world.

However, the Batek's fears, frustrations and anxieties about resource extraction are not only ontological. On the political and economic level, what is also implied in Pasir's comments above is that the current Malaysian federal government and the Kelantan state government have failed to recognize the Batek's ownership of their ancestral territories and the resources within them. Many Bateks complain how mining and quarrying activities have devastated areas of their lands, while profits from these extractive industries have not been shared. They have lost their homes, livelihoods and economic resources. Like Pasir, people claim that during the colonial era promises were made to share profits between Bateks and outsiders but this has never happened. Bateks often highlight the fact that it was their ancestors who showed outsiders the areas where these resources could be found. In previous conversations, Pasir had told that the British had promised to pay RM1 million (US$250,000) in compensation for mining iron-ore in the Aring area. Such claims are impossible to validate but were mentioned again and again to me during my fieldwork.

Origins and Shared Humanity

Bolek then returns to the subject of origins by elaborating on the cosmogonic myth previously alluded to by Pasir.

> *In the beginning, there was just sea. Tuhan (the creator) made the earth by whisking the water of the sea into a froth that solidified into earth on top of the back of the great* naga' *who had risen to the level of the sea's surface. The whisking of froth formed an island at Terengganu which became the earth we live on ['ey Ajas demonstrates by frothing up a glass of tea]. This is how he made the earth. There were no trees, and there was just one river. At this time, the sun and the moon were in the sky together [night and day had not yet been differentiated]. After nine dry seasons the heat of the sun baked the earth hard. Following this, the hala' 'asal sent the first trees to earth. Tuhan made the first people; a man and a woman out of earth. When the sun rose, Tuhan sneezed* ɲawa' bulan *(moon life-force) into the first couple. With the moon life-force, we would die and come back to life, die and come back to life with each new moon (bulan). Soon there were too many people and there wasn't enough food for everyone so Tuhan removed the moon life-force from the people and gave everyone the banana life-force (*ɲawa' pisang*) which we all have now. With the banana life-force, when you die your life-force continues in your child. The first island at Terengganu is the place of origins for the Batek and for all humans. There are not lots of different races; we are all Batek (human). The people were only differentiated later: the Malays, your people the whites, the Chinese, the Indians. It wasn't that the Batek were made before other people, we are all* batek *(humans). Our ancestors are the same.*

Bolek's interjection continues Pasir's theme of life and death by articulating the discussion with cosmogony, furthering the cosmopolitical bent to the discussion. There are many variations of this myth. In some versions two *hala'* brothers are credited with moulding the first humans from earth, occasionally a Batek *hala'* and a Malay *hala'* perform this primordial act (Lye 2004, 81). In other versions, Allah, Nabi Adam or a sandpiper bird are described as creating earth and the first humans (K. Endicott 1979a, 83–84). Bateks often use Allah and Nabi Adam as synonyms of the *hala' 'asal*. Both Skeat (1900, 16–23) and Endicott (1979a, 86) have remarked upon the influences of Muslim-Malay traditions on variants of the myth which are also found in creation stories found in a number of groups across Southeast Asia. Images of the earth emerging from the primordial sea, often on the back of an enormous *naga'* or turtle, are common in the myths groups in Sumatra and Java (Wessing 2006, 211). The idea of earth being formed through the whisking of sea

foam is also shared by Malays (Skeat 1900, 1). And images of the first men being fashioned from earth are common among Malay and indigenous groups in Malaysia and the Indonesian archipelago (Skeat and Blagden 1906b, 184, 336). The incorporation of other groups' religious concepts and terminology within Batek mythology clearly demonstrates the Batek's cultural instability and openness to outside ideas and influences. Through 'raiding the lands of the foreigners", to coin Danilyn Rutherford's (Rutherford 2002) pertinent phrase, external ideas are incorporated within local idioms. For the present discussion, what is of importance, is how Bolek and Pasir utilize the myth as part of their discourse about larger issues; namely claims to resources, environmental degradation and claims to autochthony.

Having the moon life-force meant that humans died during dark moon (*bulan bakès*) only to be reborn again with the new moon (*bulan kèn*). Bateks use the term *ɲawa' bulan* (moon life-force) interchangeably with *ɲawa' tom* (water life-force). They sometimes refer to this original, immortal animating force as *ɲawa' betet* (the beautiful life-force) or *ɲawa' satu* (the first life-force) (K. Endicott 1979a, 83–85). In some versions, the tides and the wet and dry seasons are associated with the continual death (heating and drying up) and rebirth of the first humans (wetness or life). If Tohan had not replaced the first humans' moon life-force (*ɲawa' bulan*) with the banana life-force (*ɲawa' pisang*) the world would quickly have become overpopulated, and resources would have been quickly depleted as Bolek explicitly states when recounting the story. Bateks often call the secondary life-force *ɲawa' angin* ('wind life force' or 'life breath') or *ɲawa' cinhat* ('short life-force'). Similar concepts of early immortal humans who lived like the moon and a secondary race of mortals have been described by Skeat among other Semang and Jakun groups (Skeat and Blagden 1906b, 184, 336). Bateks often complain that there are now too many people in the forest and not enough resources. Another myth which deals with the topic of overpopulation that Lye (2004, 30, 82) collected, details how half the original Batek population sacrificed themselves by transforming into trees. In the tree myth and the myth of *gêgensis* described above, Batek bodies become synonymous with an original landscape; the earth or the forest. To devastate the forest or the land involves the destruction of ancestral bodies.

Bolek's way of recounting the myth about overpopulation just after discussing resource loss and environmental degradation is a typical style of Batek speech. Rather than directly stating something, people usually prefer to periphrastically skirt around subjects building their arguments slowly without directly stating something. Speaking in such an indirect manner is one means by which people avoid becoming 'hot' with anger and putting themselves or others in a ritually dangerous state as we saw in the previous chapter. People go to great pains to never criticize someone directly for their actions. Furthermore, Bateks fully understand Malay norms about politeness and the expectation of people lower in the political

hierarchy not to directly criticize those in positions of authority. By jumping between cosmological myths, resource loss, national politics and violence, Bolek acts in accordance with both Batek and Malay norms.

Five Fingers: We are all Batek

Before returning to the subject of land ownership, Pasir jumps back and forth between the subjects of: non-violence; Batek local knowledge; friendships between the Batek and British colonialists and foreign anthropologists; and, autochthony. In doing so, he articulates how these seemingly disparate topics are articulated at the nexus between land and identity. Before *Pasir* can continue, his brother *Bolek* interjects:

> *I have five fingers, you have fingers, we are the same, we can't kill. We are friends. Your ancestors thanked us for showing them the iron ore. We don't want to mine these resources. They (the British) cut down the trees to make the train line through Batek territory. All of this land is Batek land, our original land. We were made of this earth. We cannot kill. We remember our origins. The* gob *government, the Malay kings they always want more.*

Emphasising the universality of humanity, *Bolek* simultaneously stresses the Batek's territorial rights as autochthones, reiterates his brother's claims and criticizes colonial and post-colonial land-grabbing projects. In his cosmopolitical discourse, Bolek emphasises the shared physicality of humans through his 'five fingers' metaphor and links the destruction of the environment with destruction of ourselves: "we were made of this earth". The 'five fingers' metaphor is also a comment on the Batek's marginalization and lack of a political voice. Bateks are well aware that their contemporary marginalization is partially a product of historical Malay imaginings of them as sub-humans savages situated on the cusp between animality and humanity—wild men that could be enslaved (Couillard 1984, 102). In the 'graded series of hierarchical Malay animism, Bateks and other 'Negritos' were grouped with spirits and animals and were seen as lacking the aspect of the soul which marks the divide between humans and animals (K. Endicott 1970, 80; Lye 2011, 51–52). At the same time, Malays had to regularly deal with Bateks during trade. As such, they "were ipso facto symbols of anomaly, 'matter out of place'" (Lye 2011, 52 citing Mary Douglas 1966: 3). Bateks are of course recognized as humans in present day Malaysia, however they are still denied basic rights that other peoples of Malaysia are afforded; namely land rights, cultural autonomy and the recognition of their animistic concepts and practices as constituting a religion rather than mere beliefs or superstitions. Though his

repetition of the 'five-finger' metaphor, Bolek highlights the inherent contradictions in the Malaysian government's denial of Orang Asli rights to their ancestral territories and cultural autonomy.

Food, Bodies and Origins

Returning to the subject of origins, Bolek, adds more detail and expands his arguments.

> *We dig for* takop *(yams), we eat forest foods, not the town food. We know all about the origins of rice. There is one origin of people not many. People are all the same, we all have the same origins. We all come from Terengganu. Before, the Batek knew how to grow rice and how to write. That is another story which you already know.*

The subject of food is also a central thread in Bolek and Pasir's discourse. Bateks origin stories are filled with references to food stuffs. The collection and sharing of food is central to sociality and the forging of relationships and food is frequently used as an identity marker. People love reeling off lists of the various yams they dig for, palms they gather and fruits they collect. Most individuals have a wealth of knowledge of plants in the rainforest, especially staples like yams and fruit (Cf. Lye 2004, 124–31). Food is a key means that humans use to establish, solidify and maintain collective identities and set themselves apart from other social groups (Mintz and Du Bois 2002). In Southeast Asia, the sharing and consumption of food is commonly seen as transmitting a substance necessary for creating kinship and a means of constructing boundaries between ethnic groups (Janowski 2007). For Bateks, the eating of forest foods is central to becoming kin (*kabɛn*) and being accepted by the group (Lye 2004, 110). Although the consumption of forest foods has dramatically decreased in resettlement villages like Post Lebir, people still eat hunted meat when they get the chance (most often when they temporarily move into forest camps) and are acutely aware that Malays never eat with them due to Islamic prohibitions on game which is considered as *haram* (prohibited) by Malay Muslims. It is partially for this reason that Malays "will remain the archetypal *gob* [strangers]" (Lye 2004, 110). As Lye notes, Bateks frequently "probe their guests about their food preferences" and are eager to know "if the guests have any dietary restrictions like the Malay's Islamic prohibitions" (2004, 110). Alongside their love of game foods which are hunted in the forest, people are extremely proud of their knowledge of forest plants and the benefits such knowledge brings. As Bolek's son-in-law Koh had told me a few years earlier:

> *Before, the Batek would eat these [forest] foods all the time but now because of rice we eat less. However, Batek həp (forest Batek) still eat these*

> *plants every day. When there is no rice the Malays go hungry but the Batek don't because they know about these foods. All Batek aged about 10 or more know about these foods. In the forest we have everything, food to eat, palms and bamboos to build shelters, and medicines for headaches, stomach aches and pregnancy. These medicines come from bark, roots, leaves. Some that we burn, some that we mix with water, some we mix with others, some we rub on the skin." (Koh, Macang 17/04/08)*

The forest is closely associated with plentiful supplies of food, medicines and materials for shelter. Although settled groups accept that they consume less forest foods than in the past, people maintain they will never go hungry as long as they still have the knowledge to find forest plants and animals.

Yams are considered as the original food *par excellence* for Bateks. A story collected by Kirk Endicott in Kelantan details how, after Tohan had created the first humans, numbers of *hala' 'asal* (who were living on earth at that time) transformed themselves into yams and fruits by releasing their shadow-souls and forming tuber and fruit bodies so that humans would not go hungry (K. Endicott 1979a, 54–55). Through eating yams, fruits and earth, Bateks can be said to partake in a kind of theophagy which links humans to the *hala' 'asal* and the mythical time of origins. At the time of creation, humans, animals, plants and *hala' 'asal* were not sharply defined, their bodies are often described as human-like and they were able to communicate with each other with ease before they were differentiated. But fruits and yams, like animals, are also considered as having human-like qualities in some contexts in the present day. Lye (2004, 114) has argued that the ways Bateks talk about yams ascribe them with intentionality and other qualities of persons; yam roots *cip* (walk) and *cam* (look for) places to *cip*, when Bateks unsuccessfully dig for tubers, the roots are said to have *talak* (fled or escaped). The decrease in the consuming forest foods at resettlement villages has corresponded with an increase of the symbolic importance of these foods as ethnic markers and as sources of health and power. This has involved a reversal of the stigma that Malays attach to *haram* foods that have instead become a source of pride for Bateks in the current context of marginalization.

Bateks prize fruits for their delicious flavours and refreshing qualities. They are associated with 'coolness', the key property of health and well-being. Because they can be eaten raw, they are believed to be particularly nourishing and disease-free. Fruits are literally seen as the 'food of the gods'; they are the only foodstuff which the *hala 'asal* are said to eat. In some myths, fruits are explicitly described as persons. Some Bateks say that outside the fruit season, the seasonal fruits take on their human bodies in the celestial world where they become *hala' tahun* (seasonal fruit superhumans). But there is considerable variation in these concepts and other Bateks claim that fruit is stored as blossoms in the heavens, or in the

caves high up in Batu Keniam just below Gobar's dwelling place. In one vivid version that melds together elements from both these versions, the "*hala' tahun* are pictured as storing the fruit blossoms, or the shadow-souls that produce them, in their chests. When they hear the distant thunder [Gobar's signal of the impending fruit season], they burst open, scattering the flowers or souls far and wide, to all the earthly fruit-trees" (K. Endicott 1979a, 56). The fruit songs, sung by Bateks during *kensing* rituals at the end of the raining season to entice the *hala' tahun* and Gobar to send fruit blossoms down to earth, also point toward the agency and personhood of these entities. Sometimes shamans enter trances during these ceremonies and send their shadow-souls to beg the *hala' 'asal* or Gobar to send more blossoms. Failing this, duplicity can be used and shamans sometimes secretly steal the blossoms from Gobar (K. Endicott 1979a, 57–58, 150–55). In all these myths the forest is portrayed as a source of sustenance of life itself. Myths and rituals, in which human-like yams and fruits are seen as ancestors, establish a fundamental connection between Bateks and the forest in a similar fashion to the myths of *gêgensis* we saw above. The eating of forest foods means this ancestral connection is continually maintained as bodies are formed from the landscape itself.

Although villagers at Post Lebir still consume large amounts of fruits during the fruit season, *kensing* rituals directed towards the *hala' 'asal* have not been performed at the village for many years due to the presence of Malays. However, people living in villages still consider themselves as *batek həp* (forest peoples) and think about the forest as a source of vitality and as an environment intimately associated with their identities. The visual perspective offered from villages is remarkably different from that of people living in the forest itself. Outside of the forest people can clearly see the degradation of the environment as they look across landscapes devastated by oil-palm plantations and mining. Living in villages means that people oscillate between two worlds and two ways of life. During visits to the forest, people do receive songs and other knowledge from the *hala' 'asal* who visit them in dreams meaning that relatedness with non-humans is maintained. This back and forth movement mean that separatedness and relatedness (between humans and nonhumans) are alternatively established or ruptured according to context-specific situations. Furthermore, this mode of alternating between village and forest undoubtedly contributes to the novel ways that myths are retold as commentaries of contemporary conditions.

Sameness and Differentiation

Returning to Bolek and Pasir's discussion.

Pasir's allusion to the mythical story about the Batek's loss of knowledge of rice agriculture and writing also links food to identity, origins and place. Similar stories are widespread among the Orang Asli and numerous versions have been collected

by anthropologists (Skeat and Blagden 1906b, 219; Schebesta 1928, 89; K. Endicott 1979a, 87; Lye 2004, 16; Evans 1923, 146). In fact, stories about a loss of agricultural foodstuffs and sacred books which is explicitly associated with the division of ethnic groups, abound among indigenous groups across Southeast Asia, a fact already noted by Walter William Skeat (Skeat and Blagden 1906b) and more recently by James Scott (J. C. Scott 2009, 220–37) among others. This story had been told to me on numerous occasions and I present here an abridged version told to me by Bolek in December 2012.

> *Long ago, the first people lived near where the earth had been first formed from the sea at Wɔs Trengannu. After this he created the first humans. At this time, there were no races, no Malays, no Bateks, no white people, there were just humans. At this time, there was no war. Everyone lived together at Wɔs Trengannu. This is what the old people say. There were no different countries (negara) then. People lived together on crops grown in a big clearing (ladang). But when Tak Kelemai (a shaman) burnt the crops, to escape the fire, we ran to the forest, the Malays ran to the river and the white people ran to the sea and went to your countries. We have curly hair because it was burnt in the heat of the fire. We lost our books in the fire, the Malays and the white people managed to keep their books. We were all the same, we all have five fingers. After the fire Tuhan named the different races (bangsa)—Bateks, Malays, Chinese, White People. It was Kelemai, the shaman who burnt the ladang. It was Kelemai who petrified many of the first people and animals who became the landscape features* (batu) *in our area. He wasn't a Batek shaman or a Malay shaman, he was a shaman of the first people. The Malays call him Nūh (Noah) but he is Tak Kelembai.*

This myth not only highlights the single origin of all mankind it simultaneously explains physical and cultural differences between Bateks and Malays which serve as key identity markers for both groups (cf Lye 2004, 84). In claiming that they originally practiced agriculture, had domesticated animals and sacred texts, Bateks show they are well aware of what Malays consider to be marks of civilisation and contest established political order. Versions of this story are found among all Semang groups and vary in details. In some versions, Chinese, Indians, Whites, Siamese and Japanese are included (K. Endicott 1979a, 86–87; Lye 2004, 84; Skeat and Blagden 1906b, 219) and in others even monkeys and apes (Evans 1923, 146; Schebesta 1928, 89). The fact that very similar versions of the myth are found among indigenous groups across large areas of Southeast Asia suggests an omni-present emergence of ethnopolitical concerns as people were confronted with ethnic others who followed very different ways of life. In many Batek versions of this myth, the

current position of Bateks and Malays is often reversed at the time before the fire; Batek cultivated rice and crops in clearings while Malays lived on yams and other wild foods collected in the forest (K. Endicott 1979a, 87; Lye 2004, 16–17, 83–84). In the version of the myth told to me by Bolek, the fire is started by Tak Kelembai (an original shaman) who Bolek equates with Nūh (Noah) but in other versions the fire is often described as being started by Malays. In one version collected by Lye (2004, 84) it is Adam. The incorporation of characters like Adam and Noah into these origin myths positions the Batek against their Malay neighbours and demonstrates a certain measure of subversive internalization of outside religious concepts and sources of knowledge from outside the forest. But such cultural borrowings involve reversals of political power; in Abrahamic religions Adam and Noah are mythical culture heroes, in Batek myths these characters become the instigators of primordial violence; the reversal of dominant ideas is a reoccurring tactic in contesting wider political power. The story should be seen as a means of comprehending marked socio-cultural differences, establishing a story of the shared origins of mankind and questioning established socio-political order.

It is worth recollecting Bolek's earlier words here, "*It wasn't that the Batek were made before other people, we are all batek (humans). Our ancestors are the same*". The essential unity of mankind is highlighted whilst the Batek's autochthony is simultaneously stressed. Unlike other groups, Batek have not strayed from the place of original creation and have not destroyed the world created by the *hala' 'asal*.

'1Malaysia': The Unity of Humankind

After the brief interlude of this origin story, *Bolek* intervenes and expands upon the theme of the essential unity of humankind briefly and the differences between the Batek and Malays while placing these ideas within a political framework:

> *Najib (the prime minister of Malaysia) knows, Satu Malaysia (One Malaysia). He knows! Some people say everyone is different, the Batek, the Malays, the whites. But look. I have five fingers, you have five fingers. We are all the same! We are all batek (human). He [Najib] is making '1Malaysia'. I have five fingers, you have five fingers, we all have five fingers. We are all the same we are all* batek *(human). We cannot kill each other. You are good, you stay here with us. Malays never stay here. Semelai are* batek*, Jah Hut are* batek*, the Malays are* batek*, the white people are* batek*. Everyone is* batek *(human). Count your fingers, you have five fingers. We all have five fingers. One country, 1Malaysia! I can't hurt you, you can't hurt me. It is* lawac [*prohibited*]*. The white people are* batek *(human). We are all the same. The Malays are angry, they get angry. We can't get angry, you can't get angry. The Malays are angry.*

> *They log our forests and they know we don't want them to, so they are angry with us. The government doesn't help either. Why aren't we represented in the government? I don't have a government, why not? The state government at Khota Bharu doesn't like me but they have five fingers like me. They are my government too. Look we all have five fingers. Everyone all humans have five fingers. We all have the same ancestor and we all have five fingers.*

Bolek repeats his favoured "five-finger" metaphor to illustrate the unity of mankind and stresses this unity through shifting the meaning of the term *Batek* as an ethnonym to *batek* as a term for 'human' or 'person'. Like many tribal names which now stand for particular ethnic groups, the sense of the term *batek* as 'person' or 'human' is probably the primary meaning of this designation (Bird-David 2017, 8–10). Although the term Batek is the preferred autonym of similar groups living in Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu, these people also frequently use it, depending on context, to refer to: all humankind, indigenous people in general, the Orang Asli of Malaysia, and local communities of Batek speakers. Bolek emphasizes the shared humanity of all peoples in three ways: firstly, through the previously mentioned 'earth man' origin story; secondly through highlighting the undeniable biological unity of mankind through his "five-finger" metaphor; and, thirdly through using the term *batek* to mean 'human' rather than as a member of a particular ethnic group. In doing so, he highlights economic and political disparities between Bateks and Malays. He also makes the astute and ironic connection between the essential unity of humankind and wider Malaysian projects of nation making through evoking '1Malaysia', a slogan of Barisan National used by the Malaysian government to promote ethnic harmony, national unity, and efficient governance.

It should be mentioned that Bolek was dressed in smart grey trousers and a short-sleeved shirt adorned with the '1Malaysia' logo of the ruling Barisan Nasional Party (BN). Like many other Bateks in Kelantan, Bolek is a supporter of Barisan National, the ruling coalition in Malaysia. The BN have remained in power in Malaysia since independence. It might sound strange for highly marginalized populations like Bateks to support the national government, but Kelantan, the Malay heartland of conservatism, is ruled by the opposition party PAS (the Islamic Party of Malaysia) who have done little to alleviate poverty among the Orang Asli and have not recognized any Batek claims to ownership of their traditional territories. Because PAS have made little efforts to help the Orang Asli many Batek feel they would have more luck with the BN. Although never properly defined, the slogan of '1Malaysia' appealed to large sections of Malaysia's non-Malay population who were fed up with the idea of *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy). According to the '1Malaysia' website, the concept embodies "the importance of national unity regardless of race, background or religious belief for a better

tomorrow" (www.1Malaysia.com.my). In short, '1Malaysia' holds the air of inclusiveness and political equality. For many it signals a possible end to the institutionalised racism which became endemic during Malaysia's colonial and post-colonial history. It promises to reduce Bumiputera (a term which means "sons of the soil" which is frequently used to recognize the special position of the Malays provided in the Constitution of Malaysia and grant them special rights over other ethnic groups[16]) advantages and is seen by some to herald the beginnings of a society based upon meritocracy and mutual respect between Malaysia's much divided 'races'.

Although many Batek, as a marginalized and disadvantaged population, often discuss the concept in mocking tones, the rhetoric of '1Malaysia' holds obvious attractions. Perhaps more importantly, it brings much needed cash into communities. Everyone looks forward to receiving their "duit 1Malaysia", the vernacular term for the cash handouts which form part of the governments "Malaysia People's Aid" (BR1M) program. In 2012, this included: a one-off payment of RM250 to single unmarried individuals aged 21 and above earning not more than RM2,000 a month; a payment of RM500 to households earning less than RM3,000 per month; and, a one-off RM100 payment for schoolchildren. Not long before the scene I describe in this chapter, a large contingent of forest-dwelling Batek from the upper Aring River had made the trip to Post Lebir to collect their cash handouts.

Bolek, somewhat cynically, evokes the idiom of '1Malaysia' alongside his own use of the 'five-finger' metaphor, just after retelling a myth about the underlying similarity of humankind. He begins by praising Najib in stating "He knows! [we are all the same]", "He [Najib] is making '1Malaysia'." Importantly, Bolek underlines three interrelated phenomena: the Malaysia Batek's lack of land rights, the rampant environmental degradation across Batek territory, and the Batek's lack of political representation. His cynicism reflects his critique of the empty rhetoric of Malaysian politicians who speak of "equality" and government slogans which promise "national unity" but of the lack of political will to upset Malay supremacy. Malaysian democracy holds none of the advantages of the substantive democracy of Batek egalitarianism which is embodied, emplaced and enshrined within the practices of everyday life rather than being situated in a utopian future of 'national unity'.

As our conversation came to an end, Bolek reiterated his arguments once again and highlighted how breaking prohibitions threatens cosmic calamity.

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[16] Officially the Orang Asli are categorised as *bumiputera* alongside the dominant Malay population and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak. However, their land rights are not recognised under the Aboriginal Peoples Act (1954) and the Orang Asli do not benefit from the political and economic advantages that are accorded to Malays, the group most associated with the Bumiputera status (Subramaniam 2012).

> *Najib says '1Malaysia'; we can all do what we want. We are all equal. But we can't lawan [break prohibitions]. We can't hurt or kill other people. It is* lawac (prohibited). *In Japan people committed* lawac*, in Indonesia people committed* lawac. *We should love each other not kill each other. This is what God (tuhan) says. All of our ancestors said this. Everyone has five fingers on their hand.*

The Batek's interpretations of the 2001 Japanese tsunami and other global calamities as well as catastrophic localised flooding are a constant reminder of the dangers of breaking taboos. As we saw in the previous chapter, such interpretations involve temporary assemblages which coalesce in instances and events creating new potentialities for imagination. Evoking these catastrophes and the non-violence and peaceability which are central to Batek ethics, Bolek warns of the dangers of breaking *lawac* prohibitions. To "kill the world" through deforestation and mining, or to use violence, in the eyes of Bateks is to incite cosmic catastrophe. For the large part, studies of Orang Asli non-violence have examined physical violence separately from environmental or structural violence (Dentan 1968; Dentan 2008; K. Endicott 1983; K. Endicott 1988; K. Endicott 2013; K. Endicott 2017). Pasir and Bolek's words forcefully associate human violence with environmental violence and the Batek's lack of political representation, arguably a central factor of structural violence.

The Re-Telling of Myths Within Wider Webs of Connectivity

It would have been possible to invoke separate topics of the conversation I held with Bolek and Pasir into discrete analytic sections of this thesis concerned with origins, land rights, violence and so on. However, to do so would decontextualize the stories and the claims the Batek make through them. These issues and conditions are all connected, the Batek myths, historical and ecological discourses discussed in this chapter are political and moral-epistemic vehicles which are deeply embedded in ongoing contemporary everyday reality. This is not to say that Batek myths are always recounted in such convoluted ways; on other occasions, similar stories were recounted to me in more easily digestible chunks. Indeed, as Kirk Endicott has argued "there is no special ritual telling of myths or legends, and they are not preserved in a set form. The stories may be told on any occasion, as a whole or in fragments, and the episodes and incidents may occur in different orders and be described in different ways." (K. Endicott 1979a, 24). But they are most often recounted in the fragmented form presented here, which shows their relevance in, and the pressing nature of, obtaining agency in their contemporary predicament of landscape degradation, and social and political marginalization. They are often quoted and used when Bateks discuss the changes they are experiencing, especially

those that concern the destruction of their environment and in contexts where Bateks have been economically and politically side-lined by development projects. Lye has described the fragmentary style of Batek storytelling practices as characteristically "performative, dynamic and un-textlike" (Lye 2004, 79). I suggest this is because story-telling is closely interlinked with the critical imperative of obtaining agency and making sense of self, history and multi-scalar political contexts in a world, from the Batek's perspective, which is being wrought by destruction. Will Karkavelas' remarks on the narratives of First Nations peoples in the Americas are here pertinent.

> Tellers and listeners are co-participant in the performance. Listeners are able to recognize and reconstruct such details from stories they have already heard and from an environment they have grown up in and a part of. These are stories that make the past a viable part of the present by reaffirming links in the contemporary story to the tribal way. The stories make the experience of self, intelligible. (Karkavelas 2001, 106)

Karkavelas' remarks shed light on the way Batek re-tellings of myth relate to present day concerns. The stories which Pasir and Bolek recounted to me are well known by all Bateks and relate to an environment which people are intimately connected to through everyday practices and personal relations with various non-human spirits who they share the forest with. Through interspersing their retelling of myths, with political commentary and images of environmental degradation, Bateks assert their claims to autochthony, reaffirm their connections with landscape and concomitantly address issues of their marginalization. The narratives and performances of story-telling are key means by which the Batek emphasize their agency rather than being mere 'victims' of development or government policy. It is for these reasons that I chose to present this conversation in the form that it was told to me; a form in which origin myths are entangled with land claims, colonial era encounters connect to contemporary resource claims, and Batek ethics and morality are associated with political programmes put into place by the Malaysian government.

Batek story-telling entwines together threads from myths and discourses on humans, non-humans, the material environment and political conditions into new assemblages. The ways Bateks "weave dreams round things", to coin a term used by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty 1962, xi), brings us back to ideas I discussed in the introduction of this thesis. For Bateks, the 'imaginary' and the 'real' constitute what Merleau-Ponty describes as a "closely woven fabric" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, xi). The Batek's retelling of cosmogonic myths, which assemble people, places and politics in new and startling ways, point toward the ways in which worlds are constituted through both humans and nonhumans. Alongside the new animism approaches examined in previous chapters, many

theorists in the social sciences have moved towards what have been described as non-representational (Anderson and Harrison 2010; Bennett 2010; Thrift 2008) or more-than-representational theories (Lorimer 2005) and actor-network theory (Latour 1990). What these very varied approaches have in common is the way they allow us to rethink how the world is mutually constituted through humans and nonhumans, through imaginaries and more-than-human material conditions. Bricolages which align humans with non-humans have radical implications for the concept of agency. Rather than being restricted to human bodies, agency becomes "distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field" (Bennett 2010, 23). This chapter showed how Bateks fashion new possibilities for contesting their marginalization and wider structures of power within the fragile and fluctuating webs of connectivity. Pasir and Bolek's arguments are emphatically cosmopolitical, in a sense that political issues are persistently understood within a cosmological framework. Their cosmopolitics are simultaneously construed at the level of national politics—through calling into question the universalism of Malaysian national policy—and at a cosmic level which connects human activities with sanctions imposed by powerful other-than-human beings. This way of thinking also speaks to Isabelle Stengers's (2005) use of the term cosmopolitics, in that "cosmos refers to the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable" (Stengers 2005, 995). Bateks do not live in an ontological world separated from other 'worlds', they constantly draw upon and refashion many kinds of ideas, objects and imagery imposed through interconnectivity. Bolek's final assertion that "we are all equal" is not merely a statement; it is a demand that the Bateks should be recognized as equals and a demand for a new kind of cosmopolitics.

Chapter Eight

MARGINALITY AND INTERCONNECTIVITY

All margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins.
— Mary Douglas (1966, 150)

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences.
— Homi Bhabha (1994, 2)

In this concluding chapter I present a final case study recounting the death of a young woman and summarize the main ideas of the thesis to argue that animism must be understood in the context of shifting political conditions deriving from wider connections with the outside world including historical and contemporary experiences of marginality. The thesis has demonstrated that the Batek's peripheral position on the boundary between the forest and the outside world has shaped their cosmologies and modalities of relating to non-human persons and shamanic practices. Contesting a view of animism as an ahistorical and objectified, 'thing-like', ontology, I have pursued a historicized and politicized reinterpretation of ontological approaches to animism, following the lead of theorists like Bhabha (1994), Tsing (1994, 2005) and Gupta and Ferguson (1992). On the forest periphery, like any borderland or frontier zone, "[t]he fiction of cultures as discrete, object-like phenomena occupying discrete spaces becomes implausible" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 4).

The thesis has shown that intangible phenomena such as myths, other-than-human persons and cosmological forms are firmly embedded in empirical reality: landscapes, animals, in-group forms of sociality and unfolding relationships with outsiders. Philippe Descola summarizes the central tenet of animism as the idea that "[m]ost of the entities that people the world are *interconnected* in a vast continuum inspired by unitary principals and governed by an identical regime of sociability" (2013, 9 emphasis mine). This idea is basic to most recent approaches to animism (Bird-David 1999; Bird-David 2017; Costa and Fausto 2010; Elkholy

2016; Jokic 2015; Viveiros De Castro 1998; Willerslev 2007). Whilst stressing the interconnectedness between human and nonhuman which arise from sharing identical interiorities and 'regimes of sociality', Descola and Viveiros De Castro have simultaneously stressed the alterity of spirits, especially animals, which Viveiros De Castro argues are "the extra-human prototype of the Other" (1998, 472). Quite differently, many phenomenological approaches (Bird-David 1999; Ingold 2000), have generally neglected the importance of separation and the significance of keeping different entities and things apart. Intertwined with the notion of fundamental similarity and relatedness between human and non-human subjects, many animists almost obsessively adhere to strict ritual prohibitions and taboos concerned with separatedness (Howell 1984; K. Endicott 1979a; S.J. Tambiah 1969; Bovensiepen 2014; Karim 1981). Another significant problem with many New Animism studies, which have strived to apprehend the continuities between human and nonhuman realms, concerns their proclivity of dividing peoples into bounded units with reified sets of beliefs and practices (the Achuar, the Runa, the Chewong. etc.). In claiming that different social groups live in radically different bounded ontological worlds, and in stressing the fundamental differences between animism and naturalism, such approaches have contradictorily ended up focussing on ontological difference.

One objective of the thesis has been to combine approaches from both New Animism approaches and globalization studies in order to use the concept of connectivity to describe Batek ideas of shared personhood among humans and nonhumans and to argue that animistic forms and practices must be understood in relation to, and as a consequence of, the interconnected and interstitial conditions that constitute life on the periphery of the forest. From even a cursory glance at Southeast Asian history, it is clear that the entire region and its people have been historically interconnected with other places and people for millennia (B. W. Andaya and Andaya 1982; L. Y. Andaya 2010; Benjamin 1985; Benjamin 2002; Gibson 2011; Morrison 2007). Socio-economic and political relationships between different social groups within Southeast Asia, that stretched onwards to South Asia, Arabia, China and Europe, and which have deep historical roots, brought about various types of connectivity, integration and relationality whilst simultaneously instigating ruptures, fragmentation, separation. One result of this has been that Bateks, like many other small-scale animistic peoples living on and beyond the margins of the state, have developed deft skills in shifting between two contrasting socio-cultural systems that rely upon fundamentally different political regimes and modes of subjectivity (Gardner 1985; Morris 1982; Gibson 2011; Sillander 2006). Another effect has been the sharing of an array of cosmological forms which originated and developed from widespread geographical and cultural sources.

A Death in the Forest

I will now present a vignette recounting an event involving a traditional Batek tree-burial following the death of a young Batek woman from tuberculosis. The vignette illustrates how the fleeting and temporary relatedness of humans and nonhumans is permanently re-established following death. Secondly, it exemplifies how interconnectivity with the outside world on the forest edge is increasingly experienced as rupture; not all agencies which originate from beyond the forest can easily be integrated into the Batek's world and related to according to established principles. The cultural forms that connectivity engenders have multiple socio-cultural and ontological effects, with both positive and negative consequences; rupture, separatedness, integration and relatedness are often co-produced through connectivity necessitating a reappraisal of existing theoretical models.

Early morning in March 2013, two men leave the village of Hariŋ (Aring 5) carrying the frail shrouded body of Juhi, a twenty-year old Batek Dè' girl, on a small stretcher made from freshly cut branches. Climbing over the hill that lies behind Hariŋ, I follow the men with Na' Klisom, Kunc and several of Juhi's family members and friends as they make their way up a hill and cross the nearby oil-palm estate that stretches to the edge of Taman Negara about one kilometre away. We quietly follow a winding forest path for about ten minutes until we reach a clearing. Juhi's father chooses a place near three small-to-medium sized trees where we will bury his daughter. A light rain glistens in the sunshine as it gently falls through the forest canopy. Although everyone is subdued, men quickly begin gathering and cutting branches and rattan which will be used to construct a platform and lean-to for Juhi's body while women prepare a thatched roof. As people work, they quietly chat and even make the occasional joke. Everyone knows what must be done and people simply get on with their work without instruction. Juhi's brother, 'ey Klisom lightly admonishes me for not bringing my camera, he says that he wants people to know about the Batek's customs, especially important traditions like tree-burials. Slowly, a small platform is constructed and attached to twelve upright poles about six-feet from the ground. Juhi's father, 'ey Jagung, tells me that normally he would have raised the platform much higher but as it is raining this could be dangerous. After finishing the platform, the men make a small lean-to shelter which is then attached to the platform. Juhi's friends and family members whisper a few words over Juhi's corpse (saro') and say their goodbyes. Her body is then placed within the lean-to, with a few of her possessions: a hair comb, ring, and a few pieces of clothing. Some fragrant incense is blown over Juhi's body and a small section of bamboo filled with water from a rattan vine is placed alongside her. Finally, the front of the shelter is closed over with some palm fronds. Slowly everyone leaves the clearing and walks back to the village.

The Batek Dè' and Manya' are among the last of the Orang Asli groups to practice tree-burials in Peninsular Malaysia. Juhi's friends and family believe her shadow soul will follow the fragile trails of fragrant *kemoyen* incense to the celestial world where she will join the creator beings and be reconstructed in their form. Bateks consider the water obtained from rattan that was placed by her body as *mun* (a dew-like liquid drunk by the *hala' 'asal*) and believe this should help quench her thirst on her journey. According to Batek beliefs, the *hala' 'asal* will replace the mortal components of Juhi's body and soul with their immortal equivalents, her mortal wind life-force (*ɲawa' 'angin*) will be exchanged with immortal water-life force (*ɲawa' tom*) and her hot blood will be substituted for cool, clear dew-like blood (*mun*) (cf. K. Endicott 1979a, 111–14). But her shadow soul (*bayang*), the seat of her consciousness and personality will remain the same, providing continuity between the world of the living and the world of the dead. As Juhi is incorporated into the celestial world of the *hala' 'asal*, she will be taught their songs and dances and will be given several new bodies including a reinvigorated and healthy version of her human body, a tiger body and perhaps the bodies of other animals that she can put on and wear (*pakai*) like a shirt (*baju*) if she chooses to visit earth (K. Endicott 1979a, 111–14). In short, she will be remade as an immortal, as an 'original' shaman, a *hala' 'asal* joining her ancestors in a time-space where the ontological fluidity of the time of origins is re-established.

I had only met Juhi a few days prior to her death when visiting Camp Kamara', a medium-sized forest periphery camp located in the vicinity of Hariŋ. Not long after arriving at the settlement I had spotted her father, 'ey Jagung, near a shady lean-to beneath some large trees where he was bent over his daughter's feeble body. Although Juhi was twenty years old, she only looked about thirteen. Her father told me she was seriously sick with tuberculosis and had problems breathing. He had tried to cool her fevered body by covering her with aromatic forest leaves and painting white lime paste on her face but did not believe these traditional medicines would stop the disease. He was deeply worried about his daughter's health and asked me to take her to the hospital in Gua Musang, which, of course, I agreed to do. Juhi had already spent several extended periods in hospitals in Gua Musang and Kuala Krai but each time had been released before making a full recovery. Despite his anxiety for his daughter's condition, 'ey Jagung did not want to come with us to the hospital. In fact, no-one did and Juhi tragically died alone at the hospital a few days later. Juhi's brother, my friend 'ey Klisom, was contacted by the hospital just hours before her death and although we rushed to the hospital as quickly as possible, we arrived about ten minutes after she had died. Bateks generally avoid hospitals because they consider them as places filled with agents of disease. But people also avoid hospitals for the simple reason that they are frequently mistreated in these places due to the racism which is deeply entrenched in Malaysian society. Juhi's family were upset that she had not been allowed to stay

in hospital longer and felt that her death could have been avoided if she had received better care.

Among Bateks, places where individuals have died are actively avoided. Harry Walker describes a similar situation among the Urarina of Peruvian Amazonia (2013, 206). For Bateks, one exception is the burial sites of shamans which are sometimes visited by adepts in the week following a shaman's burial during which the adept will be taught knowledge from the deceased who appears as a tiger-person (K. Endicott 1979a, 138). If someone dies in a Batek forest camp, all members of the group will immediately pack up and leave the camp following the individual's tree-burial. In villages, there is no possibility of the entire group relocating and so villages often contain several derelict, decaying houses where different individuals have died. Walker's astute remarks upon differences between the sociological processes of birth and death among the Urarina ring equally true for Bateks, "if birth unifies and consolidates residential groups, death is an occasion for their partial dissolution" (2013, 206). Furthermore, both processes create powerful attachments between people and landscapes. Bateks are frequently named after the places of their birth, and despite the fact tree-burial sites are avoided, places where people are born and died constitute important toponymic markers. When a woman enter labour, Bateks build special birthing lean-to a short distance away from camp. Locating this special lean-to away from the camp is usually described as a means to prevent everyday dwellings being contaminated from the 'polluting' or 'dirty' blood associated with childbirth (K. Endicott 1979a, 98–99). Following the delivery of a child, a mid-wife (*bidan*) cuts the umbilical cord "with a sharp sliver of bamboo" which is then wrapped in a small piece of cloth that is worn "as a bracelet by the baby until the infant can walk or until the bracelet … [is] lost" (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 113). The placenta is covered by a pandanus mat and left in the birth house. It is unclear whether Bateks consider the placenta to be a younger sibling of the new born in the way that many other Southeast Asian societies do (Bovensiepen 2014; Winstedt 1924; Sillander 2016). But infants are thought to be intimately connected to their placentas and umbilical cords and Batek parents attentively care for these things. Bateks attribute considerable agency to the placenta and some people say that placentas must not be buried in the ground, in accordance with the logic used to justify why humans must be given tree-burials rather than earth burials, as the latter would impede the deceased's shadow soul's journey to the celestial realm. An infant's mother keeps a small fire burning in a birth house for around three to four days to ensure that the placenta is kept warm, revisiting the site regularly until the placenta dries and shrivels up (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 113). Birthing lean-tos are always constructed at a distance from streams to prevent the lean-to and its contents from being washed away during floods which would cause the separation of the child /placenta / birth-place triad. Any such separation is thought cause dangerous soul-

loss for the infant which can cause *sabɛn* (the infant uncontrollably crying) or *məryɛn* (fever for the mother of child) (K. Endicott and Endicott 2008, 112). Any disturbance of either burial sites or birth places is considered very dangerous and constitutes one reason why contemporary deforestation is so deeply traumatic for Bateks.

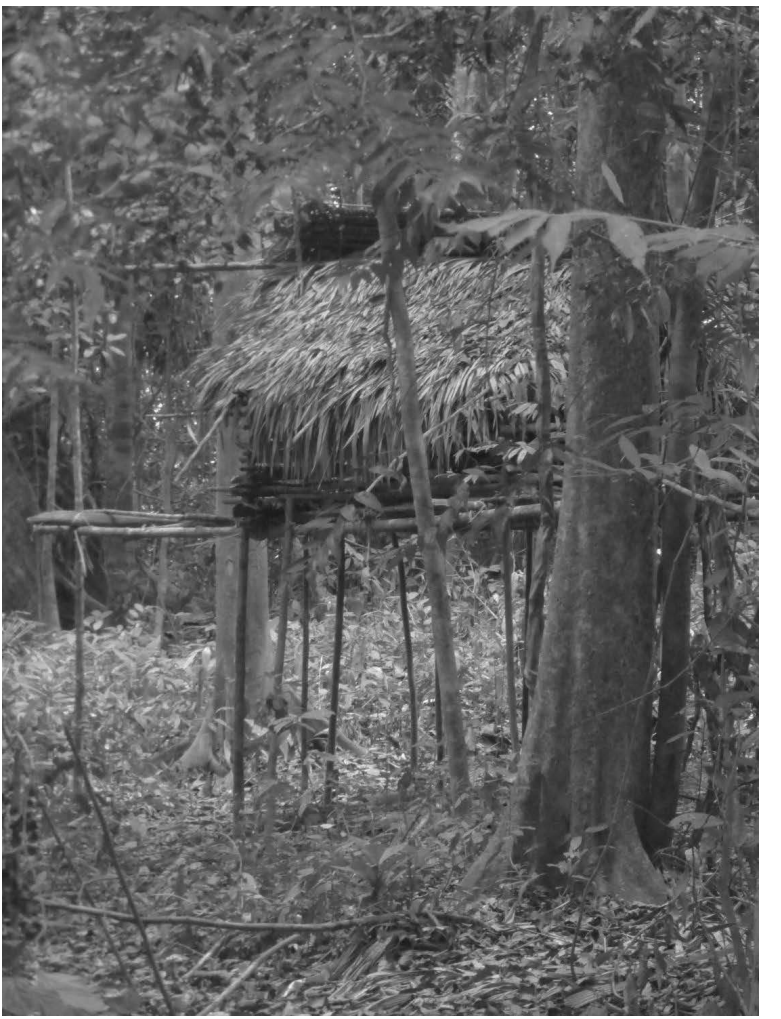

Figure 9. Juhi's tree burial. Photo taken April 13, 2013 approximately one month after the burial

Juhi's family did not consider that her death was caused by her breaking prohibitions or being attacked by a non-human agency. She died from tuberculosis, which Bateks categorize as a *penyakit bandar* (a town disease) considered beyond the repertoire of shamans and traditional medicines. Bateks have a wealth of medicinal knowledge and can treat numerous illnesses and ailments. However, they acknowledge the limits of their knowledge and make no claims to be able to magically cure people of all sicknesses. In the early to mid-twentieth century highly contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, brought in by influxes of Malays, wiped out entire groups of Batek (K. Endicott 1997). Such diseases are still widely feared today. While the spirits of the forest are generally known and can be related to or avoided according to established prescriptions and proscriptions, the same does not apply to the agencies who originate from the outside world. Indeed, as we saw in chapter 6, Bateks draw a sharp line between the world of the forest, which they see themselves as part of, and the outside world of *gob* (a term used to refer to outsiders, but especially Malays) which is frequently associated with danger and illness.

Ruptures, Marginalization and Borrowing

The conditions surrounding Juhi's death mark an epistemological and ontological rupture between the Batek's forest home and the outside world that separates different kinds of humans and non-human agencies and the kinds of knowledge that can be obtained in these places. This is not to say that forest and outside world generally form two discrete worlds separated by a radical ontological divide. Boundaries at the margins, whether ontological or geographical, are in many cases porous and leaky, even as they may at other times be more impervious. Many things, people and objects move between the forest and the wider world, including, of course, Bateks themselves. While some of the people, things and agents which move across the boundaries between the forest and the outside world are considered benign, others are seen and experienced as being far more dangerous. Imagery, people and places from the world beyond the forest are extensively integrated into Batek cosmologies. For example, in sharp contrast to the forest, the afterworld is generally conceived as a cool dry sandy place with little vegetation and no rivers. Intriguingly, in the celestial domain, the *hala' 'asal* (including creator beings and reconstituted dead) are said to live in huge stone houses said to resemble warehouses (M. *gudang*). The outside walls of these dwellings are said to be decorated with beautiful intricate patterns and several thousand *hala'* live within each warehouse (K. Endicott 1979a, 112). These descriptions conflate imagery of nonhuman otherness with foreign imagery, specifically that associated with urban dwelling Malays.

Shamans often draw upon knowledge and sources of power emanating from places beyond the forest during soul-journeys that take them to the worlds of

Malays, whites, Japanese and others. However, they are not always successful in their endeavours and they cannot control or regulate the flows of all agencies across and between different domains. The epistemological rupture I speak of concerns the kinds of knowledge that Bateks can obtain from the different non-human persons that they relate to. Most of the knowledge that Bateks use to cure people from illnesses is obtained from spirits that people establish and maintain relations with during dreams and trances. Because the *hala' 'asal* were not perceived as being responsible for causing Juhi's illness they could not provide any knowledge about how to cure the illness. This disconnect thus results from an epistemological, and ontological, rupture — tuberculosis is not known and its agents cannot be related to. However, this rupture also stems from Batek fears of hospitals and the wider Malay world in which the hospital is located, and amplified by the racist attitudes of *gob* (outsiders) towards Orang Asli. Dying alone at the hospital from an illness which could have been effectively treated by modern medicine, Juhi was separated from her kin and beyond remedy from forest and shamanic sources of power. Originating beyond the forest, tuberculosis penetrated into her life-world and quite literally destroyed her. Beyond "friction" as a metaphor for fraught "heterogeneous and unequal encounters [which] can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (Tsing 2005, 5), "rupture" as used here testifies to more unassailable forms of disconnection, caused by relations with agencies and forces which originate from the outside world and yet pervade the forest.

At the time of Juhi's funeral, a stark line, about one kilometre west of Hariŋ divided the monotonous oil-palm plantations from the forest. Each year I returned to the village during my fieldwork, the forest had visibly receded to make way for the expansion of oil-palm estates. This movement reflects larger processes during which the perceived wilderness of the forest is transformed according to the logic of the state; heterogenous biodiverse environments are reimagined as resources to be extracted, forests are transformed into simplified monocrop plantations and state-avoiding peoples are cajoled into living like their downstream neighbours (J. C. Scott 1998). Tsing (2005, 32) has described frontiers as "an imaginative project capable of moulding both places and processes". For Bateks, projects modelled upon simplified state-thinking is a nightmarish experience as the lands of their ancestors are remodelled according to the logic of capitalist extraction projects and they are coerced into joining the market economy by settling down and taking up agriculture. In the twenty-first century, Batek lives take place on this interconnected frontier between forest and the outside world, a shifting zone where different ideas, peoples and objects collide creating new cultural forms. Economic and socio-political marginalization, particularly a lack of rights to land and political and cultural autonomy, is an especially influential aspect of Batek connectivity. Neither the state nor federal governments recognizes the Batek's land rights.

Profits from logging, mining and quarrying within their territories have enriched outsiders whilst Bateks have been pushed off their lands and into poverty within resettlement villages.

In forest periphery settlements, Bateks have been targeted by government-sponsored missionaries who have pushed them to convert to Islam and leave behind their animistic practices. However, the Malaysian government's objective of transforming Orang Asli into Malays through resettlement and Islamization have had only limited success among the Batek who have adapted to the new situations they find themselves in, as best they can, by drawing upon strategies of bicultural oscillation, sly civility and mimicry to avoid completely committing to resettlement, agriculture or Islam.

Life on the forest periphery is marked by an ambiguous and fluid alternation between the life-world of the forest and that associated with Malays and other outsiders, even for groups that spend much of their time in forest camps. Living in this interconnected space, where exchanges and interactions with outsiders are commonplace, has clearly shaped the Batek's economic practices, kinship forms and modes of sociality (Benjamin 1985). In chapter two, I questioned the usefulness of the hunter-gatherer epithet through highlighting the importance of the trade in forest products for Batek economies. Trade has been, and remains, a long-term economic strategy which is actively pursued and highly valued by the Batek. It should not be considered as a 'secondary' economic choice behind the subsistence strategies of hunting, fishing and gathering (cf. Dallos 2016, 404). Long before Europeans began colonizing the Malay Peninsula, the ancestors of the Batek Dè and Manya' lived along river valleys which formed part of network of ancient trading routes that traversed the Malay Peninsula (Benjamin 1987; Benjamin 1997; Noone 1939). In order to maintain trade relations with neighbouring Malays and Chinese, Bateks chose to live on the interconnected spaces of the forest's edge where they could retreat to the forest if their relations with outsiders deteriorated. Over the last forty years, land development projects have meant that, for most groups, this choice has become an obligation; retreating to the forest is no longer a viable option.

Living on the periphery of the forest and the outside world has also led to high levels of cultural borrowing and characteristics of 'cultural instability' which Roy Brunton (1989) has argued is typical of egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies. Cultural borrowing occurs in numerous domains. Many Batek myths and cosmological forms hold common features with those of other Orang Aslis and other groups across Southeast Asia attesting to long-term historical exchanges. In chapter 3, we examined the centrality of the chthonic *naga'* (rainbow snake) and thunder deity within Batek cosmologies and the roles that these entities play in regulating the prohibitions, proscriptions and prescriptions that govern everyday life. Similar entities, which are associated with similar phenomena (floods,

rainbows and thunder), prohibitions and myths, are ubiquitous across Southeast Asia and further afield. However, Bateks have reconfigured and indigenized these beings into forms which incorporate elements drawn from both their forest home and the outside world and both entities are closely associated with landscape features within Batek territories. For Bateks, the fragility of existence is reflected by the idea that any movement of the *naga'* could result in the flooding of the world into the underground sea if humans do not abide by rules established by ancestral beings. This apocalyptic vision is accentuated by the marginal conditions Bateks live in and their first-hand experiences of serious environmental degradation. In chapter 4, I examined how songs and spells, obtained from spirits in dreams contain high levels of Malay words and phrases. Rather than reflecting a loss of original knowledge which is replaced by an integration of Malay ideology, the incorporation of foreign lexicons into this domain serves to both express the alterity of the spirits and domesticate foreign influences. All these examples represent incorporation and transfiguration of exogenous knowledge and imagery through indigenous cosmological idioms and animistic forms.

It is clear that on one level the Batek remain open to the outside world and knowledge; ideas and stories of events from faraway places permeate the forest and travel between communities as people move from place to place (K. Endicott 1979a, 221; Lye 2004, 16). Another pertinent example, that we saw in chapters 1 and 7, concerns the interpretation of various catastrophes (floods, tsunamis and earthquakes) which occur in distant locales that Bateks learn about through global media flows. Generally, such catastrophes have been comprehended as proof that the thunder deity (who is also sometimes identified with Malay otherness) and the rainbow snake are increasingly angered by the immoral activities of humans living outside the forest and are reacting with heightened ferocity. As we saw in chapters 1 and 4, during their soul journeys, shamans visit and draw upon the power of a variety of unseen agencies and places within and exterior to the forest world to make sense of their current situation.

Recounting these soul journeys and their fantastical exploits, shamans position themselves as powerful transnational agents or cosmopolitical negotiators between different worlds. Through combatting disease-causing agents like the *penyakit* and appeasing powerful non-humans such as the underworld rainbow snake to prevent flooding, earthquakes and tsunamis in the local area and faraway countries, shamans not only cure individuals of sickness and protect their communities, they empower themselves and their communities and revert the consequences of their political and economic marginalization. As we saw in chapter 1, Manya' shamans even establish relations with *'ai djum* spirits in distant locales to aid them in restraining the rainbow snake with magical threads to prevent earthquakes, tsunamis and other catastrophes. Such fantastical exploits and actions, which establish relatedness with foreign agents and powers, should be

comprehended alongside real world attempts to forge alliances with outside persons and groups to help counter political marginalization and challenge structural inequalities between Bateks and other ethnic groups.

Relatedness and Separation

The idea that humans and nonhumans are fundamentally related due to their shared personhood and the idea that different categories of species, objects, places and people must be kept separate to avoid plunging the world into chaos are central to Batek animism. In some contexts, Bateks affirm and create relatedness and connections with nonhumans and human outsiders. In other contexts, they stress boundaries and separation. Maintaining boundaries relates to the idea of keeping things cosmologically separate and upholding distinctions between humans and nonhumans, but also pertains to the socio-cultural and political dimensions of their worldly existence. In everyday life, Bateks maintain cordial relations with Malay and Chinese middle-men in order to maintain trade relations. Whilst they also try to cultivate friendly relations with representatives of government agencies and local Malays to avoid political conflicts, sometimes rising tensions provokes them to cut off these relations and relocate to different areas. As we saw in chapter 7, people often evoke idioms of relatedness and similarity to highlight structural inequalities between themselves and other parts of the Malaysian population. But at other times Bateks go to great lengths to identify themselves as forest peoples who are radically different to Malays and other ethnic groups. As a people of the forest (*batek həp*), Bateks see themselves as 'guardians' of the forest (Lye 2004, 50,54). Only they know the other inhabitants of the forest intimately and only they can perform this role.

An important dynamic of bicultural oscillation is that Bateks are well aware of two fundamentally different modes of social relations and subjectivity. Relations with in-group members are marked by the intimate sociality of face-to-face relations that are typified by trust, sharing, egalitarian ethics, individual autonomy and peacefulness. On the other hand, social relations with outsiders, particular Malays, are often characterized by asymmetrical power relations, social distance, rank, exchange and inequality. Although Bateks are adept at shifting between these two cultural regimes, they will actively choose to avoid the latter if possible, and especially if violence erupts, even as they use strategies of mimicry and dissimulation when living in resettlement villages. Both these modes of relating have shaped the various ways that Bateks relate to spirits.

For Bateks, the personhood of humans and nonhumans is not established *a priori*, it emerges through what Ingold (2000a) has termed 'progeneration', a process of continuous becoming involving ever-ramifying entanglements and mutual constitution within the world that humans live in. Ingold's relational model

is radically different from what he calls 'genealogical models' which assume that "every person is a substantive entity, whose make-up is a function of biogenetic and cultural specifications received from predecessors, prior to its involvement with other entities of like or unlike kinds" (Ingold 2000). Bateks continually establish and affirm relatedness with other persons through rhizomatic connections that unfold throughout life's activities. They comprehend the world as an already socialized, transformational environment which is still in the process of being shaped by the activities of humans and non-humans. Their "more-than-human sociality", in Tsing's (2013) terms, is most apparent in cosmological myths about the time of origin, the altered states that shamans enter, and in their conceptions about the afterworld which we saw above.

Through their inter-personal relationships with the spirits Bateks obtain knowledge about songs that act as paths through the invisible world, spells to cure illnesses, and the medicinal properties of plants. However, as we saw in chapter 4, such relations are fleeting and temporary. In everyday life, prohibitions are strictly followed in order to keep categories of things, species and people apart. Life involves a fluctuating movement between an immanent mode of consciousness, and a more transcendental mode of consciousness. The former depends upon direct and subjective personal experiences of particular concrete events and phenomena that particular individuals experience, while the latter relies on what is generally socially accepted to be the case, on discourse-reproduced collective knowledge such as myths, cosmo-rules and established categories of people and things (cf. Benjamin 2005, 263). The immanent mode of consciousness is especially important in regards to the personhood of spirits, which emerges in the interpersonal encounters between humans and non-human agencies in dreams and trances but also in waking encounters with certain human-like animals in the forest (particularly tigers and elephants) who may reveal themselves to be shamans, benevolent spirits or predatory non-humans by metamorphizing into a human form.

The Batek's transcendental mode of consciousness is most apparent in the prohibitions and cosmo-rules that concern keeping categories of kin, animals and odours separate which I analysed in chapter 3. There are nonetheless significant variances between different groups and individuals on the exact details of these rules, for example, in regards to which food-stuffs may be cooked alongside each other. Such variance reflects a lack of established dogma which is typical among egalitarian groups (Woodburn 1980; Morris 1982; Turnbull 1966). However, the underlying logic that certain categories of kin, foodstuffs and odours cannot be mixed are well known by all Bateks due to their establishment in various myths and because these rules are often invoked to structure the minutiae of everyday life.

The reasons why food prohibitions, cooking rules and other taboos are of such importance for peoples like the Batek has puzzled anthropologists for many years. Building upon Mary Douglas' (1966) work on purity and danger, Signe Howell has highlighted the importance of these "cosmo-rules" among the Chewong of Malaysia which "form the basis for correct behaviour and maintenance of order" (Howell 2014, 107). She highlights the relationship between an interanimated view of the cosmos populated by numerous non-human persons and the adherence to strict proscriptions and prescriptions which she claims are rigorously adhered to as a means of avoiding risk in the form of punishments caused by non-human persons when different conceptual categories are confused or moral behaviour is transgressed (Howell 1984; Howell 2012; Howell 2014).

Another approach to understanding prohibitions was proposed by Valerio Valeri in his work on the Huaulu's concepts of taboos (*maquwoli*) in the Moluccas (2000). Also building upon Douglas, Valeri argues that Huaulu prohibitions, many of which are very similar to those of the Batek and Chewong (laughing at animals, dressing animals in clothes, eating certain animals or combining certain foodstuffs) and which cause similar misfortunes (floods, storms, earthquakes, tidal waves and diseases), not so much serve to keep categories of things apart but rather "prevent mismatches that depend on what subject and object stand for" (Valeri 2000, 136). Due to the fundamental underlying similarities between human and non-human persons (including animals), alterity must be continually maintained through the heavily ritualized minutia of everyday life (prohibitions). If alterity is not maintained by creating separatedness and boundaries between humans and nonhumans, the identity of human beings is threatened. As Bovensiepen and Delgado Rosa have argued in their development of Valeri's (2000) work, "when subjective characteristics are identified in a non-human other, distance and differentiation have to be established through specific taboos or prohibitions" (2016, 672).

A similar argument was put forward almost twenty years earlier by Wazir Jahan Karim in her book *Ma' Betisék Concepts of Living Things* (1981). Karim describes how the Ma' Betisék of Malaysia alternate between two very different views of the world. During everyday activities such as hunting and fruit harvests, a *tulah* view comes to the fore in which the subjectivity of animals and plants is downplayed. The term *tulah* can be translated as 'cursed' in reference to a mythical episode in which plants and animals were cursed by the ancestors of the Ma' Betisék and transformed into food for humans (Karim 1981, 33). Karim argues that the *tulah* view "gives emphasis to the physical differences between humans and plants and animals [and] also suggests that plants and animals have a fixed and constant position within the total cosmos and that they belong in a different physical domain, from humans" (Karim 1981, 34). The contrasting *kemalik* (tabooed) view of the world emerges in states of danger and manifests in illnesses,

diseases and catastrophes. It is related to the idea that "all plants and animals originate from the souls (*mangat*) of dead humans" (Karim 1981, 45) and are all thus interconnected through their shared anthropomorphic origins. Calling to mind Amazonian ideas of circuits of predation and counter-predation between humans, animals and spirits (Viveiros De Castro 1998; Fausto 2007), Ma' Betisék perceive that "all plants and animals seek vengeance whenever humans attempt to destroy them in any way" (Karim 1981, 45). Carlos Fausto has similarly argued, an animistic view of a cosmos filled with multiple conscious human-like agents, means that food consumption equates with cannibalism unless animals and plants can be transformed into "object[s] devoid of intentionality" (2007, 497 also see; Descola 2013, 337–45). Although Batek ideas of counter-predation are only explicitly recognised in cases where an individual has encountered the *hala'* hypostasis of a particular species in an altered state, it is clear that a similar logic is applied in their hunting practices where the personhood of animals is downplayed and deliberately concealed through the employment of trick names.

The identities of animals and humans are closely associated with their perceived olfactory qualities which play an important role in how people decide which things should be kept apart. Odours are considered to easily traverse the porous boundary between the visible and invisible worlds and Bateks go to great lengths to keep different categories of people, animals and objects separate; any mixing of incompatible odours can cause the anger of the thunder lord and rainbow snake. Following Valeri's logic, if two categories of animals are cooked over the same hearth, the mixing of their odours confuse their subjective characteristics and "undermines the system of differences on which that identity evidently depends" (Valeri 2000, 146). As we saw in chapter 6, sensorial criteria are also particularly relevant for determining the boundaries between the forest and the outside world which Bateks have tried to keep separate through adapting existing cosmo-rules which are applied to the new peoples and objects that have entered their lives. Despite the Batek's openness to the outside world, in resettlement villages where they are obliged to live and behave in similar ways to their Malay neighbours, these rules take on particular importance as a means for preventing them from losing their identity as forest peoples. In any context where fundamental similarity or interconnection arises, there is a simultaneous need for differentiation (Cf. M. W. Scott 2007).

The Bateks' need to distinguish themselves from Malays essentially depends on the degree of threat or encapsulation that they are experiencing. It is no surprise that the Batek groups most concerned with establishing symbolic and sensorial boundaries between forest and the outside world, and between themselves and Malays, are those groups living in poverty-stricken resettlement villages where they interact with Malays regularly. However, sometimes Bateks highlight their shared origins with Malays, especially when discussing their political and

economic marginalization. Despite the Malays' status as their prototypical Other, the Batek arguably do not perceive of a fundamental ontological difference between them, they are all humans.

It is important to note that the relationships that Bateks have with different categories of nonhumans — like those with humans — take very different forms. For example, *penyakit* spirits, which Manya' blame for causing disease, are related to as archetypal predators and must be combatted by benevolent *'ai djum* spirits who act as shamans' allies. The violent behaviour of these entities, like the *sakai pangan* were-tigers, echoes the predatory actions of outsiders that, in the past, sporadically erupted in ferocious violence. I have argued that they are historical transformations of violent slave raiders who regularly attacked Batek communities until the early twentieth century. They may indeed be seen as predators in the Amazonianist idiom, although as modelled on other humans rather than animals. By contrast, however, the *'ai djum* and *hala' 'asal* mainly exert a benevolent influence and are central for human well-being and the regeneration of life, and the relations with them are essentially couched in an idiom of relatedness.

Powerful entities like the thunder lord occupy an ambiguous medial position between predator/cannibal nonhumans and benevolent spirits. If humans follow the prescriptions and proscriptions of everyday life, the thunder lord remains calm, is said to look rather like a Batek and is associated with fertility in the forest (causing the fruit blossoms to fall to earth and releasing bees to pollinate flowers and make honey). However, he is also variously associated with stupidity, Malayness and catastrophic power when taboos are transgressed or the forest environment is degraded. When he is enraged some Bateks say he takes on the therianthropic characteristics of the most dangerous animals of the forest. The thunderlord is both insider and outsider and his shifting characteristics and behaviour are homologous to the historical relations between Bateks and Malays. Sometimes these have been cordial, peaceful and based upon exchange, at other times they have been mired by violence and avoidance. Complete identification with either spirits or Malays is neither desirable nor possible in most situations (one exception occurs when someone dies and their soul is incorporated into the celestial world of the *hala' 'asal*).

What is important is that Batek relations with spirits cannot be reduced to one particular modality in the way that some anthropologists have characterized animists relations with nonhumans in other contexts: predatory in Amazonia (Descola 2013; Viveiros De Castro 1998), sharing/giving in South India (Bird-David 1990), exchange-based in the subarctic (Ingold 2000) and deceitful in Siberia (Willerslev 2007). Similar multifarious and shifting relations with spirits have been described by Gibson (1986, 180) for the Buid of the Philippines and Sillander (2016, 174–75) for the Bentian of Borneo, and such diversity is probably the rule rather than the exception everywhere (ibid.). As Sillander observes: "spirits are both alike

and unlike. Sometimes connection and integration with the spirits is sought, sometimes separation and alterity." (2016, 157). The Batek's multiple and fluctuating modes of relating to spirits are closely entangled with empirical reality, historical conditions and political circumstances. Like the Bentian spirit relations that Sillander describes (2016, 174–75), the Batek's modes of relating to spirits all resemble "one or another form of interaction that has either been historically prominent or occurs in some present-day context". Ontological relations are woven through the warp and weft of history and everyday life.

The relationships that Bateks have with benevolent spirits such as the *hala' 'asal* and *'ai djum* are clearly homologous to Batek forms of in-group sociality. These spirits are generally considered as being very human-like; their appearances and qualities are essentially idealized versions of the Batek themselves (K. Endicott 1979a, 124, 128). Batek relations to these benevolent spirits is, in the main, very similar to those described by Bird-David among the Nayaka, and Batek's often relate to the forest as a "giving environment" (Bird-David 1990). However, although the forest is generally perceived as an abundant environment in which Bateks can obtain food, materials for constructing shelters and tools, they do not generally "look on the forest as they do on a mother or father", and they do not refer to or essentially perceive the benevolent superhumans as mothers and fathers (Bird-David 1990, 190). Rather, they look to the forest as a cool, healthy and abundant environment created by the *hala' 'asal* and their relations with benevolent nonhuman persons are as varied as their forms of in-group sociality and take the form of friendships, marriages and filial relations. Furthermore, as we saw in chapter 5, the behaviours, forms and qualities of entities like the thunder lord and rainbow snake sometimes hold striking resemblances to powerful *outsiders* who have historically exerted political dominance over Bateks, and they do as we have seen exert punitive and destructive influence. Indeed, different modalities of relating to benevolent (and other) of non-humans are activated in different contexts.

Ontology and Politics

The anthropological interest in indigenous beliefs of spirits, animals, plants and other phenomena as sentient beings harks back to the very beginnings of the discipline in the nineteenth century. The term 'animism' was first popularized by Edward Burnett Tylor in his two-volume treatise *Primitive Culture* published in 1871. In accordance with the evolutionary framework of his time, Tylor considered indigenous people's beliefs in an animated environment as 'childlike', 'mistaken' and 'misguided' (Tylor 1871). The term then gradually slipped into increasing unpopularity until the publication of Irving Hallowell's (Hallowell 1960) paper *Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View* in which the author argued that the

Ojibwa consider not only humans to be persons, but also animals, stones, trees, thunder and certain objects of material culture. Hallowell's work presented a clear break with Tylor's ideas through proposing that the Ojibwa recognized other-than-human persons to possess agency and related to them in the same way as human persons. For Hallowell, the Ojibwa did not mistakenly attribute personhood to non-humans, or confuse metaphor with reality, their "entire psychological field" was unified through the conception of relatedness and "sanctioned moral values … guide[d] the relations" between different persons both human and non-human (1960, 46). It took more than thirty years for Hallowell's ideas to begin shaping the ideas of a new generation of anthropologists who returned to study animism as ontology from the 1990s onwards.

The ontological approaches of new animists have been central to the theoretical framework of this thesis and have enabled me to illuminate the ways that Bateks relate to the various non-humans they share the environment with as human-like persons. Similar conceptions have been described by numerous other anthropologists working with other Orang Asli groups (Dentan 1968; Howell 1984; Karim 1981; Roseman 1993; Benjamin 2014) and a growing body of literature which has emerged over the last thirty years, demonstrates the ubiquity of ideas of sociality extending beyond the human among indigenous peoples (Viveiros De Castro 1998; Bird-David 1999; Willerslev 2007; Kohn 2013; Descola 2013; Jokic 2015). Despite differences between structuralist and phenomenological variants of these approaches, they all agree that extending personhood to a plethora of other entities—which most commonly includes: spirits, animals, plants, ancestors, meteorological phenomena, and certain objects — is of fundamental importance for many animistic peoples. In this manner, the entire environment becomes a source of potential social relatedness between humans and nonhuman persons thus rendering any distinctions between nature and culture irrelevant.

In an insightful conclusion to his monograph on the Siberian Yukaghir, Willerslev (2007, 181–91) boldly proclaims that anthropologists should "take animism seriously". For Willerslev, this involves rejecting representational and symbolic models and accepting the ontological basis for animistic thought in which "not only spirits but all beings, including humans relate to each other in context dependent circumstances" (2007, 186). Replacing representational models with ontological theory, avoids the conceited epistemological violence of symbolic and representational theories which suppose that anthropologists are somehow privy to an underlying truth about the 'real' nature of things that remains elusive to the people they study (Ingold 2000; Willerslev 2007). Whilst I firmly agree with Willerslev that we should take animism seriously, I would add that animistic forms and practices cannot be properly understood without also *taking seriously* the particular historical, political and ecological conditions and the wider webs of connectivity in which social life in specific conditions unfolds.

In their fierce critique of new animism, *Ontological Anthropology and the Deferral of Critique*, Lucas Bessire and David Bond (2014) deride ontological approaches for being exoticist, reactionary, apolitical, and blind to the impacts of extractive industries and dispossession on indigenous peoples and contend that "the spirited materialism of ontological anthropology cannot register, let alone resist" (2014, 446) the violence that takes place in these interconnected locations marked by frictions, socio-political inequalities and environmental violence. Many ontological examinations of animism have avoided any discussion of the ruptures that have transformed the life-worlds of indigenous peoples as their landscapes have been plundered for resources and people have been shunned to the margins of political life. However, my research with the Batek of Malaysia forms a counter-example to Bessire and Bond's claims and is part of a growing body of literature (Tsing 1993; Bacigalupo 2016; Roseman 2012; Kohn 2013; Jokic 2015; Bovensiepen 2014; Rutherford 2002; M. W. Scott 2011; Kirksey 2012) that has used ontological theory to examine the life-worlds of indigenous peoples living in conditions characterized by marginality, structural inequalities and interconnectedness. Indeed, as I have argued throughout this thesis, a central means by which Bateks comprehend and contest their experiences of marginalization, political exclusion and rampant ecological degradation is through their animistic concepts and practices.

Animistic concepts and practices clearly extend the boundaries of society to include various others (human and non-human) some of which originate from distant locales. Whilst most dangerous non-humans are actively avoided for obvious reasons, the ways that Manya' shamans combat *penyakit* spirits in altered states to cure individuals suffering from illness caused by soul loss should be understood as a means by which violence is shifted and re-enacted to the invisible world where shamans are masters. My interpretation of predation is thus rather different than that espoused by anthropologists working in Amazonia (Viveiros De Castro 1998; Fausto and Rodgers 1999; Descola 2013) who have interpreted predator-prey relationships between humans and spirits as stemming from venatic ideologies.

The multivocal qualities of the thunder lord and rainbow snake which blend elements from both within and beyond the forest in complex rhizomatic assemblages, are typical of the kinds of "disruptive beings" that Bessire and Bond claim "travel between ontologies" (2014, 446). One aspect of the rhizomatic qualities of animism has been previously described by Ingold, who, drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari (1987), reasons that the image allows us "to conceive of a world in movement, wherein every part or region enfolds, in its growth, its relations with all the others." (Ingold 2000). The rhizomatic and fractal qualities of Batek animism, unfold through the practices of everyday life as people engage with the world around them through movement in the forest (Cf. Lye 1997, 166). However, they

also emerge through interactions, exchanges and connections that take place with people and places exterior to the forest which also constitute important parts of the Batek's lived experiences. Traditionally, fear of the rainbow snake's and thunder deity's explosive anger has served as a powerful motive for Bateks to adhere to their prohibitions and ethical codes. In the contemporary context, changing weather patterns and a perceived increase in catastrophes such as tsunamis, earthquakes and floods is interpreted by many Bateks as indications that the actions of outsiders are also subject to the wrath of these beings. Another way in which Bateks contest their economic marginalization and political exclusion is through the weaving together of narratives that combine mythology and claims to autochthony with political discourse as we saw in chapter 6 (cf. Lye 2004, 19). This second aspect of rhizomatic interconnectivity has been examined in similar ways by Bovensiepen (2011; 2014) in Timor-Leste, Rutherford (2003, 2012) and Kirksey (2012) in West Papua and Scott (2011) in the Solomon Islands. Ontology and politics are not only closely entangled but mutually constitutive. Michael Scott's concept of 'ontology politics' offers a useful way to understand these complex entanglements of humans and non-humans as entities who "work in tandem as different modalities of a unified category of being qua field of agency" (2011, 19).

Dreams and Nightmares

As my fieldwork in Malaysia drew to an end, I became more aware of how the modalities of interconnection that conjoined Bateks with the outside world shifted between two rather different magico-realist visions of the future. On one hand, there was a dark apocalyptic outlook that the now out-of-control destruction of the environment would result in enraging the *naga'* (rainbow snake) to such an extent that her rocking and writhing would cause a world-ending flood that would engulf the planet (Cf. Lye 2004). On the other hand, people expressed a somewhat unrealistic and weakly supported hope that logging would end, their political rights would be granted and catastrophe would be averted.

At Kampung Tom Ki Ying, these rather different visions emerged most clearly. Many villagers told me that a catastrophic deluge (tsunami) was sure to occur in the near future and was part of a long-term cosmic cycle of birth and destruction. These ideas are clearly reminiscent of, and undoubtedly influenced by, Hindu-Buddhist cosmologies. The Manya' told me that in the near future the world would be turned upside down, waters would rise uncontrollably and colossal waves would engulf the land. Although the entire world would be destroyed, my informants told me that only the Manya' would escape by entering a large cave at the Batu Bidan karst (see map 2) which would be protected from the floods. This karst takes its name from the powerful and ancient *'ai djum spirit* which inhabits the place (*bidan* means 'old person' in the Manya' language) and which is perceived as a guardian

of the surrounding area. Many Manya' claim their ancestors had previously sought refuge at this cave during an earlier world-destroying deluge which had left the dead bodies of animals and humans scattered across the landscape. Among the dead had been "birds, gibbons, common banded leaf monkeys, dusky leaf monkeys, crocodiles, fish" as well as "Malays, Chinese and white people"[17]. If another 'tsunami' occurred the Manya' say they would enter Batu Bidan and journey into the underworld where they would be protected by the *'ai djum* until the floods had receded[18]. Similar ideas about benevolent chthonic nonhumans aiding marginalized indigenous peoples have been described by Bovensipen (2011; 2014) in Timor-Leste and Michael Scott (2011). Bovensiepen describes historical stories from the Laclubar region which detail how autochthonous 'spirit troops' were raised from the ground in potent *lulik* areas (places imbued with spiritual potency) to defend ancestral territories from neighbouring groups as well as more recent stories in which similar chthonic armies were raised to protect local inhabitants from Indonesian troops during the 1999 struggle for independence (Bovensiepen 2011, 56-58). Michael Scott describes very similar ideas on the island of Makira about an underground army "equipped with super-normal technology devised by Euro-Americans with the aid of dwarf-like Makiran autochthons called *kakamora*" which "are the guardians of a pure Makiran language and *kastom* (tradition or custom) that has become obscured and depleted among Makirans in the surface world" (2011, 197). These accounts clearly highlight similarities between Southeast Asian and Melanesian cosmologies. More importantly, they demonstrate the complex entanglements of ontology and politics. Such imbroglios are drawn from local cosmologies which are fused with wider historical and foreign sources.

Alongside these apocalyptic visions many Manya' also expressed a fantastical belief that the American government would intervene to protect them from Malays, end their marginalization and establish relations with them based upon equality. These hopes emanated from a series of dream revelations received by numerous villagers in which President Obama communicated that he would soon be coming to Malaysia to help the Manya'. Various informants told me that 'everyone' living at the village was receiving dreams in which Obama was encountered in a similar way to the *'ai djum* spirits who the Manya' relate to as allies, guides and helpers. In the dreams, Obama told individuals that Americans would establish

[17] This information was obtained during a group interview with 'ey Wauh, Mayam, Um and Akoi in the presence of around ten other villagers from Kampung Tom Ki Ying on June 4th 2013.

[18] Earlier in my fieldwork, Batek Dè' living at Post Lebir in Kelantan told me similar stories. In their versions, their ancestors had escaped catastrophic flooding by climbing up the mountains that divide Pahang and Kelantan and they told me one of the reasons they lived in this area was so to be able to climb nearby mountains to escape from any future deluge.

collaborative mining or logging ventures with the Manya' in which profits would be equally shared, that they would expel Malays from the local areas, and even assume governance of Malaysia and establish a new political order in which the Orang Asli were treated with respect. People supported the validity of their dreams by referring to news events seen on television offering "proof" of Obama's imminent arrival. Similar findings have been reported by Rutherford for the Biak people of West Papua who both fetishize and domesticate foreign powers in their emancipatory struggles against the Indonesian state (Rutherford 2002).

Although Manya' dream revelations may seem naïve at first glance, they took place alongside more concrete attempts to establish political alliances. On the very first day I arrived at Kampung Tom Ki Ying, I was shown piles of letters addressed to various NGOs and human rights groups — including the Malaysian Human Rights Commission and the Malaysian Bar Council — and also to foreign governments and their leaders in which people expressed their desires for change. Letters outlined an array of requests: the granting of political autonomy from the Malaysian government, help in gaining recognition of their ancestral lands, and collaboration on equal terms with international partners to develop local resources. In the marginal and interconnected context of the forest periphery, dreams provided immediate subjective responses to the demands and aspirations expressed within these letters. Transnational media flows were thus entangled within a recognised mode of relating to non-human persons with the goal of establishing political alliances. Although President Obama never came to aid the Manya', their calls for help from different Malaysian NGOs were taken seriously. Since I left the field several NGO groups have visited the villagers to try to help them resolve some of the problems they are facing. Similarities between Manya' and Batek cosmopolitical struggles and those described by Rutherford (2002), Bovensiepen (2001; 2014), M. Scott (2011) and Kirksey's (Kirksey 2012) ethnographies are clear. Of particular interest is how ontological politics frame not only the ways in which myth and history influence the present day, but also how they shape future possibilities in what could be seen as developing a form of indigenous-futurism.

Tying Things Together

In this study I have argued that interconnection is fundamental in shaping animistic forms and practices. For far too long, images of hunter-gatherers and other indigenous peoples as isolated exotic others have persisted in the anthropological imagination. Until the 1980s, the socio-economic forms of hunter-gatherer-collectors, horticulturalists and other indigenous peoples were seen to exemplify a pristine and ahistorical form of human society. The emergence of world systems theories in the 1970s (Wolf 1982; Wallerstein 1976) and the following revisionist debate within hunter-gatherer studies (Wilmsen 1989; Lee and Guenther

1993; Bailey et al. 1989) obliged anthropologists to rethink the socio-economic conditions of indigenous people within wider regional economies (Myers 1988; Barnard 1992). In recent years, reappraisals of the political dimensions of hunter-gatherers' and horticulturalists forms of sociality have culminated in a recognition that their plastic socio-economic forms have allowed indigenous peoples to preserve their freedom from incorporation into the state in particular ecological niches by alternating between state avoidance and the maintenance of trade (J. C. Scott 2009; Benjamin 2002; Gibson and Sillander 2011).

There has been a significant lag in anthropological reconceptualizations of how the religious and ontological concepts and practices of indigenous peoples, often glossed as animism, might also have been shaped by their historical and contemporary interconnections with the state and the downstream groups that neighbour them. This is despite the shift in anthropological theory which occurred during the 1990s when Foucault-inspired cultural studies pushed for a study of globalized imaginations (Appadurai 1996; Bhabha 1994) and questioned "classic notions of culture as too static, too bounded, too internally homogeneous, too exoticizing, and too local" (Tsing 1994, 282). The study of indigenous peoples' religions has tended to focus on radical ontological differences between animism and naturalism rather than on how historical conditions and interconnectivity have shaped animistic forms and practices. This focus on ontological difference has often involved an assumption that myths, cosmologies and the relatedness between humans and non-humans are bounded within particular ecological contexts. Although the proponents of the ontological turn share a criticism of representational theory with Foucauldian analysis, it is surprising that the astute political awareness of power relations of the latter has not been more explicitly integrated into the ontological theories.

Margins provide very particular perspectives and conditions through which the world is seen and experienced. As the cultural theorist Homi Bhabha has argued "[t]he right to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority'" (Bhabha 1994, 3). The contingent, contradictory and interstitial conditions characteristic of the margin that Bhabha describes have clearly shaped the Batek's socio-cultural and ontological forms. On the periphery of the forest, Batek communities are simultaneously encapsulated by Malay communities, integrated into wider socio-political structures and marginalized to the periphery of Malaysian political life. The vulnerability caused by these socio-political conditions has prompted various socio-cultural Batek strategies such as bicultural versatility, sly civility, mimicry, peacefulness and avoidance. But they have also shaped the modalities of animistic Batek concepts and practices. Encapsulation does not only result in exaggerated

copying of colonizers' behaviour and 'double vision' in the ways Fanon (1952) and Bhabha (1994) describe, it may also have ontological effects. Bateks are highly anxious about dangers from the outside world which are entering the forest. Encapsulation has encouraged the erection of a boundary between the forest and outside world, which governs the flows of sensorial phenomena that easily permeate the boundaries between the worlds of humans and non-humans. Maintaining this sensorial boundary is especially important because olfactory and auditory qualities of people and objects that originate beyond the forest are considered to anger non-humans who may then retaliate by causing storms, floods, accidents or illnesses.

Fears about the destruction of the forest, especially of places within it that are associated with powerful non-human persons, has led to heightened topophobia and the emergence of what I have termed tropes of fear. Marginalization and interconnectivity have also contributed to the blending of cosmological forms from different sources and to the transfiguration of experiences of historical and contemporary violence. Certain predatory non-human beings, who are modelled upon agents of historical violence such as Batak cannibals and Malay slave raiders, are avoided, negotiated with or even combatted during the dreams and trances of shamans. Myths of cannibalistic others and the predatory beings within Batek cosmologies can also be understood as ontological effects of contamination or the danger of 'association by identification'. In everyday life on the periphery of the forest, Batek lifestyles are very similar to those of their Malay neighbours. As Bateks oscillate between two cultural worlds there is a very real danger of becoming the Other, in lifestyle, economy, marriage practices and so forth. Monster myths and the behaviours of predatory non-humans serve as models not to emulate. They are diametrically opposed to the benevolent *ai djum* and *hala' 'asal* who provide continuity with the past and who are related to following in-group type of sociality associated with care, love, nurture and solidarity. Experiences of violence, especially ecological violence, has also led to a kind of millenarian mentality in which the destruction of the forest environment and associated climatic and ecological changes are perceived by Bateks as apocalyptic signs of the world's end (Cf. Lye 2004).

Based on Ingold (Ingold 2000; Ingold 2016a), Batek animism may appropriately be understood as being about the continuously unfolding conditions of life in which persons and things mutually constitute each other through their interdependent relations and connections. This "progenerative" form of understanding, which assumes that "social relations are enfolded in the structures of consciousness, and contrarily, that consciousness unfolds in social relations" (Ingold 2016), differs significantly from genealogical models which assume that persons, both human and non-human, are "brought into being—that is generated—independently and in advance of their entry into the lifeworld, through the bestowal of a set of ready-

made attributes from their antecedents" (Ingold 2000). An Ingoldian conception does not assume that modes of relatedness are primarily premised on similarity. Like Bird-David's concept of "pluri-presence," it rather rests on the idea that "diverse beings, human and nonhuman, irrespective of origin, previous life history, and embodied form" can be related to (2017, 225). Neither does it, pace Brereton (2004) and Willerslev (2007, 22-24, 186-188) need to conflate self and other, consciousness and the world, or the person and the environment. In fact, like some of his structuralist counterparts (Viveiros De Castro 1998), Ingold argues that difference and separation form a central aspect of relatedness (Ingold 2000).

Ingold (2016b) has criticized Descola for assuming that many small animistic groups have homogenous experiences and are unaffected by interactions with the outside world. However, he also acknowledges that his own studies lack almost any political dimensions asides from being 'politically charged' in their critique of 'mainstream ways of thinking' (Ingold 2000). Although Ingold's contention that "the beating heart of animism" comes to the fore in "life, growth and movement—evidenced in wind and weather, in the seasonal flourishing of plants and reappearance of migratory animals"—may well be true, animism does not just concern emergent rhizomatic relations with animals, plants, weather patterns and other ecological phenomena. Political conditions, history, external social relations and global connectivity are, as I have argued throughout this thesis, central to the shaping of animistic cosmologies, practices and concepts. Just as Bateks are mutually constituted with the non-human beings they share their forest world with, so their subjectivities and practices are also shaped through relations and connections with other persons from within and exterior to the forest.

Fantastical activities such as the Manya' shaman's use of magical threads to restore Japan's damaged underworld and bind the rainbow snake instance a kind of 'climate politics' which has gained increasing urgency as Bateks attempt to reposition themselves as active agents in a world they perceive to be in grave danger. The incentives for Batek shamans to travel to faraway places arise first from experiences in their own transformed lifeworld and locally degraded environment. But stories about climate change and natural catastrophes, which are endlessly repeated in national and international media, echo these fears, sustain their sense of peril and shape the Batek's increasingly apocalyptic eschatology. The cosmo-political performances emerge herein as endeavours through which conditions of encapsulation, exogenous subjection, disempowerment and vulnerability are transfigured and mitigated as relatedness is established with human and nonhuman sources of power.

Songs and fragrant scents serve to establish temporary paths to other realms of the cosmos when contact with the benevolent spirits is sought. At other times, dietary prescriptions, behavioural norms and olfactory codes ensure detachment between realms. Conjoined principles of integration and separation inform efforts

of engaging and withstanding interconnection. Relations extending to the celestial and chthonic abodes of powerful nonhuman beings beyond historical time, close relations of intimate spheres of kinship and day-to-day life, together with relations with human and nonhuman others engaged in the quest for sustenance in and out of the forest—all shade the many-layered textures of interconnection and encourage a dialectical and proportional appropriation of Relationship.

Changing conditions of Batek life on the periphery of the forest nonetheless cause deep ruptures in relations with persons from the outside world, with nonhumans, and even in relations between Bateks. These conditions also come with ontological ruptures as we saw above in regards to Juhi's death. Interconnection fractures people's inner-life experiences and destabilizes life-world conditions in numerous ways through everything from ethnic stigmatization, political development, religious conversion, forestry laws, and re-settlement, to the influx of new objects and odours in the environment and the massive upheavals associated with radical landscape transformation that threaten the very stability of the world. Connection and separation are sources of empowerment but they are equally being debilitating. Beyond "friction" (Tsing 2005) we need perhaps to invoke the concept of rupture as a gloss for a less fecund condition to mark the nature of the convoluted entanglements in the marginal zone of the Batek forest periphery. The rhizomatic connections that Bateks fashion and maintain with other people, places and times under these conditions are particularly unstable; they may easily break off and need often to be re-established, replaced or redefined, depending on particular circumstances. Fluctuation, oscillation, and re-alignments are part and parcel of the modalities of relating to others. Ontological forms and practices should not be considered as hermetically sealed or objectified. They are unstable, shifting and leaky; history and politics impinge upon and interfere with them in numerous ways. As people are forced to relocate from degraded landscapes associated with memories, emotional attachment and non-human others, their relationships with these places and persons are distorted and modified, and frequently take on darker and more fearful qualities. But to cope with their experiences of reverberating ruptures in their rapidly transforming world, Bateks cannot but try to pursue relatedness and connectivity, while maintaining a stance of continuous vigilance to establish separation to mitigate the adverse effects of interconnection.

Political conditions are central in shaping the different modalities of Batek animism with the complex range of its modalities of relatedness and separation. To obtain a perceptive understanding of their life-worlds, the anthropology of animism would be well-advised to try to trace the multifarious lines of power that connect indigenous peoples to other places and times.

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