5

MASCULINITIES IN CONFLICT IN WEST SUMATRA¹

A Minang
Harp Example

Reflection and introduction

In July 1983, I moved from Hawaii's urban centre, where I'd been working as a 'Women in Development' specialist, to the rural forests of Sitiung, West Sumatra, initially as a 'Farming Systems Specialist' in an interdisciplinary team trying to improve agricultural production (Figure 5.1). Our initial, US-based team was composed of myself and two men: an agronomist, near retirement, from Island University² (team leader) and a soil scientist from Southern State University. These men were complemented by a team of Indonesian soil scientists from the Soils Center on Java—all men and all save one, quite junior. We were implementing a farming systems approach, which involved, among other things, close collaboration with local farmers and adaptive and holistic views of their farming systems.

My own situation differed again from previous research experiences. Now, I was part of an on-site research team, requiring me to take into account the needs and interests of colleagues. Initially, I stressed my need for daily contact with local people, both to my American and Indonesian colleagues. One of my American colleagues was amused, the other understood; both were willing to humour me, despite the inconvenience of village living to them and their families. Our Indonesian colleagues/partners had hoped we would reside several hours by car

FIGURE 5.1 Map of Sitiung, within the island of Sumatra.

Source: C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91-02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

from our field sites, in some unused government housing; they were a bit harder to convince.

I have often experienced the paternalism of high status, Javanese men (*protection, caring and control* harp strings). They were concerned, genuinely, that we, as visitors (and me, a woman, particularly), would be uncomfortable in a village setting. We later learned how my insistence on being near 'the people' also complicated the housing arrangements for our collaborators. For a time, Indonesian team members were housed in one room of a cinder block building, sleeping on mats on the floor with no amenities whatsoever. Again and again, my status as an educated white American (with a generous research budget) intersected with and overshadowed my gender, in terms of privilege.

In the end, we rented two houses in Sitiung 1A (formally, Piruko),³ which was the longest-established community⁴ in the transmigration area: one for me and my son and one for our soil scientist with his wife and four children. Our team leader lived on the Trans-Sumatra highway, ten minutes away when the road was in good condition. Later, in 1985, I married an American man who joined me, as did my then-15-year-old daughter.

I found Minang masculinities most fascinating, because of the cultural mixture of matrilineality, matrilocality and Islam. I lived in a Javanese community adjacent to a Minang one, so had ample interaction with the men of both these ethnicities over the three years I lived there. My understanding of the Sundanese⁵ masculinities found in Sitiung 5 is shallower than that of the other two ethnic groups.

In my late 30s, and by the end of the research, newly married to a monogamous man with conventional views on sexuality, I found myself far less lonely. I also had become good friends with my co-workers. But these friendships and teamwork, my private housing and my subsequent marriage also meant I spent less time than previously with the people whose lives I sought to understand. The fact that three ethnic groups (Sundanese, Javanese and Minangkabau) and five languages (those three plus English and Indonesian) were involved also interfered. Formal studies played a bigger role than previously, despite my use of participant observation here as well. My knowledge of the masculinities in this environment feels shallower than for Bushler Bay or Long Segar, though my understanding of inter-ethnic relations and their impacts on gender grew. Writing clearly about masculinities in Sitiung has proven more challenging than in the previous two contexts.

My Central Javanese neighbours had been moved en masse in 1977–1978, due to dam construction in their home area of Wonogiri. Our team initially also worked in Sitiung 5 (officially Aur Jaya) with East Javanese and Sundanese transmigrants and Minangkabau *Tran Lokal* ('local transmigrants'). 'Transmigrants' are people settled by the Indonesian government on islands off Java and Bali. In this transmigration area, transmigrants included Javanese and, in Sitiung 5, also Sundanese (both from Java). *Tran Lokal* was a programme to reduce antagonism to the transmigration programme by providing benefits to the poor in local communities (here the Minang).

These folks had all newly moved to this remote, heavily forested and only seasonally accessible community, as part of a more typical transmigration programme.⁶ Gradually, as time went on, we were able to expand our collaborations to include the original inhabitants, the Minangkabau—in Pulai (adjacent to Sitiung 1) and Koto Padang (home village of the *Tran Lokal* in Sitiung 5). Residents of Pulai and Koto Padang previously owned Sitiung 1 and 5 lands, respectively.

When we arrived in Sitiung, I imagined that I understood conditions in Indonesia. I'd worked in the country for over a year and spent a fair amount of subsequent time analyzing results from Kalimantan. But Sitiung presented a very different face—one reminiscent of the Makassar in Gibson's (2005) Makassar–Buid (Philippine) comparison (see also Gibson 2011). The history of the Makassar included kings and aristocracy and the various accoutrements of a dominant 'civilization' (à la Scott 1990). Buid were an upland group that would once have been called 'primitive' and remained marginalized by the wider society. Gibson summarizes their differences thusly: "The values of social equality, individual autonomy and moral solidarity coexist in most societies with their opposites: hierarchy, dependency and factional loyalty" (p. 233). The Buid and the Kenyah tended toward the former (widely termed 'uplanders'); the Makassar, Javanese, Sundanese and to a lesser extent, the Minang, toward the latter (glossed as 'lowlanders').⁷

I make these observations to set the stage by highlighting (a) the broad cultural differences between the people of Sitiung vis-à-vis the Kenyah (Chapter 4); and (b) more centrally to this chapter, the cultural harp frames available to Sitiung's residents with differing [high] cultural histories/traditions. I have found that interactions among Indonesian ethnic groups with differing power and prestige can result in greater gender differentiation and cultural emphasis than when such interactions are absent (see also similar examples in Chapter 7 on the more recent Kenyah contexts, or Colfer et al. 2015, for such contrasts in southern Sulawesi).

Forests, soils and biodiversity

These communities, like Long Segar, were surrounded by lowland tropical rainforest. Caudle and McCants (1987) summarize the context thusly:

Sitiung's position is 1°S latitude, 100 m elevation; it has a mean annual temperature of 26°C, and mean annual rainfall of 2,471mm, with a weak dry season, undulating topography, virgin rainforest vegetation, and soils that are predominantly clayey Ultisols and Oxisols.

(p. 121)

There is a brief dry period, usually in February, with a more sustained dry season in July and August.

Whitten et al. (1984), writing about lowland forests of Sumatra more generally, identified the key emergents (some reaching 70 m) as Dipterocarpaceae

(*Dipterocarpus*, *Parashorea*, *Shorea* and *Dryobalanops*) and Caesalpiniaceae (including the dramatic *Koompassia*, *Sindora* and *Dialium*). In an area near the Batang Hari River (on which Pulau's land was located), the dominant families were Dipterocarpaceae and Olaceae, particularly *Scorodocarpus borneensis* (p. 262).

Large areas of Sitiung, including Sitiung 1, had been cleared by bulldozers beginning in 1977, resulting in removal of topsoil, soil compaction and erosion. One experiment designed to rehabilitate these soils for crop production concluded that "this soil cannot be reclaimed without chemical fertilizer and lime applications. No tillage practice will be effective unless accompanied by chemical fertilizers" (Cassel, Makarim, and Wade 1987, p. 124). Sitiung 5 farmers had the option of having their lands cleared by bulldozer—as some did—or clearing it themselves by hand (a very labourious task, primarily of men).

These highly weathered soils were acidic, many having pH of less than 4.5, with exchangeable aluminum greater than 2 meq/100 ml soil, and aluminum saturation greater than 60%. Attempts were made to address this problem by applying lime, both no-till and hoeing (Wade, Kamprath, et al. 1987), phosphorous (Wade, Santoso, et al. 1987), green manures (Wade, Heryadi, and Gill 1987) and potassium (Gill, Adiningsih, and Kasno 1987)—with green manure being one of the more effective additives.

Forest animals found in lowland Sumatran rainforests included tigers (*Panthera tigris*), elephants (*Elephas maximus*), tapirs (*Tapirus indicus*), rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*), orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*), siamang (*Hylobates syndactylus*), gibbon (*H. lar/agilis*), pig-tailed macaques (*Macaca nemestrina*), long-tailed macaques (*M. fascicularis*), leaf monkeys (*Presbytis melalophos* and *P. thomasi*), black giant squirrels (*Ratufa bicolor*), hornbills (*Rhinoplax vigil*, *Buceros rhinoceros* and *Anorrhinus galeritus*) and the great argus pheasant (*Argusianus argus*) (Whitten et al. 1984, p. 318). Although rarely seen, tigers and tapirs were definitely present locally; gibbons and siamang, common in the forest canopy, could be heard every morning in Sitiung 5 and periodically in Sitiung 1. Leaf monkeys and macaques were also evident, as were hornbills and squirrels.

Gouyon, Foresta and Levang (1993) likened the biodiversity implications of the then ubiquitous rubber gardens (their 'jungle rubber') that characterized local Minang farming systems to those of secondary forest.

An assessment of biodiversity on the Jambi plot [Muarabuat, Kec. Rantau Pandan, Kab. Muaro Tebo, near Sitiung] revealed 268 plant species other than rubber, all originating from natural forest, distributed into 91 tree, 27 shrub, 97 vine, 23 herbaceous, 28 epiphytic and 2 parasitic species . . . This is equivalent to the plant diversity in an old secondary forest. A comparison with weeded, estate-like plantations that included only a few species other than rubber underlines the importance of jungle rubber for the conservation of forest plant diversity.

In short, a jungle rubber plantation presents the features of a rubber-based secondary forest that usually lasts up to 40 years or more before being

replanted, while secondary regrowth seldom exceeds 20 years in a shifting cultivation cycle.

(p. 188; see also Michon, Mary, and Bompard 1986 for similar Minang agroforestry systems at higher elevations to the west)

Unlike the cases in Chapters 3 and 4, formal forest managers were not in evidence in Sitiung. Kerinci Seblat National Park, a considerable distance on difficult roads, was the closest protected area, with minimal management. I knew of no formal timber concessions nearby, though local communities did some informal (and thus illegal) logging in the area (discussed briefly later in the chapter). One small, experimental rubber plantation operated nearby, trying to convince locals to plant improved rubber in orderly rows and improve their collection methods, thereby producing higher quality rubber, and local people managed trees with edible produce as well (discussed later).

Narratives and practice of gender relations

I emphasize three chords, on many of Sitiung's songs of masculinity: The first loosely links the religion, sexuality and parenthood harp strings. The second considers politics and hierarchy. The third examines breadwinning and provisioning. A fourth section examines other individual harp strings with less centrality: expeditions, knowledge, violence, sports and arts.

Different men can create different chords from among the harp's strings, with varying ethnic tendencies/preferences. Clearly the interconnections within these examples of possible chords vary in their intensity, from person to person and from time to time, and there can be overlapping effects as one plucks one string or another, one chord or another. Such interactions among elements characterize any system (including gender systems). Figure 5.0 reflects a common Minang song. The discussion in this section recounts the kinds of options visible to my 'outsider' eyes.

In each section, I differentiate the Minang and transmigrant masculinities, occasionally differentiating Javanese and Sundanese patterns within transmigrants. Ethnicity here plays a role comparable to occupation in Chapter 3, as the most significant social structural differentiation. At the end of this chapter, like the others, I summarize the dominant harp strings and the links with forests.

Sitiung was characterized by serious resource competition and conflict between the Minang and the transmigrants, whether Javanese or Sundanese.⁸ The transmigrants came as part of the government's transmigration programme designed partly to 'civilize' Indonesia's 'Outer Islands' (à la Geertz) and earlier, to reduce Java's population pressure. They had governmental support and were part of a coherent and long-lasting national policy. The Minang were the long-term inhabitants of the region, losing out to rather unwelcome in-migrants, foisted off on them by the central government and distant Minang decision-makers, mainly from the Minang heartland.

Although physical violence was rare among ethnic groups in Sitiung, there was significant mutual antagonism and adverse stereotyping.⁹ Javanese tended to see Minang as lazy, sneaky and dishonest, with very peculiar social structure and extreme religiosity; Minang saw Javanese as unwelcome invaders, immodest and bad Muslims, with a peculiar affinity for hoeing and physical labour. Kahin (1999) recounts a famous Minang legend unsuccessfully pitting the Javanese against the Minang, leading to a Minang “conviction of superior intelligence to the Javanese” (p. 24). Elmhirst (2018) provides a nice summary of the Javanese orientation, which assumes Javanese superiority. Such views were also operative in 1980s Sitiung. Differing ideas and practices related to masculinity contributed to these stereotypes, as should become clear next.

Religiosity and parenthood harp strings and gender dynamics

Initially, the most surprising element of Minang masculinities was its overt religiosity. Knowing that the group was matrilineal,¹⁰ I had not realized how important Islam was to them. With my Middle Eastern background, and its more conventional, strongly patrilineal version of Islam, I found the combination of matrilineality and Islam jarring. How could the two be combined?¹¹

Islam’s role in Minang daily life had penetrated more deeply than had Christianity among the Kenyah of East Kalimantan. The Kenyah had been given three choices in 1965, when Indonesian soldiers had come to central Borneo as part of the confrontation with Malaysia: accept Islam, Christianity or die. Christianity allowed continued consumption of pig, central to their cuisine, so they chose it. Islam, on the other hand, had been dominant in West Sumatra for centuries. And with that had come a more elaborate ideology of women’s inferiority and a stronger valuation on manhood.

A central conflict between the Minang and the in-migrants pertained to religion, and much of that was expressed as disapproval of the other’s gendered behaviour and ideas. The matrilineality of the Minang was considered peculiar and vaguely un-Islamic by the transmigrants, but stronger disapproval came from the Minang, who saw the Javanese lack of concern about women’s (and to a lesser extent, men’s) modesty as evidence of gross disregard of Islamic strictures.

A few Javanese men did pluck the religious harp string. But few Javanese community members observed Islamic rules very seriously. Many willingly ate pork when it was available, and neither men nor women were particularly modest about their clothing; a few older men wore the black religious hat. Community members tended to link overt religiosity with the educated, who admired its public expression. My Indonesian soil scientist co-workers (of mixed ethnicity, virtually all educated men), for instance, attended the mosque every week, fasted during Ramadan and some prayed regularly. They were proud of being good Muslims.¹²

Such religious observances represented a crucial ethnic differentiation for community members however, with the Minang men considering themselves far ‘better Muslims’ than the transmigrants. Besides Minang observance of Islamic

strictures (regular mosque attendance, fasting, praying routinely and observing Islamic dietary restrictions), the Minang objected to what they considered Javanese immodesty, particularly among women. Nudity was simply not a big deal among the Javanese. One of our neighbours, an old man, liked to bathe nude by our outdoor well, holding a hand over his genitals; his wife and younger neighbour women wandered around the neighbourhood with only a bra on their upper torsos. Minang men particularly found such practices offensive and counter to Islam.

But within their own communities, Peletz's (1995) observation on the Malays of Negeri Sembilan—"In most social and cultural contexts gender is of relatively little concern and does not constitute a highly salient marker of social activities or cultural knowledge" (p. 81)—applied to all these ethnic groups as well. In 1985, we conducted a cognitive mapping study ('Galileo') similar to that reported in Chapter 4,¹³ confirming this observation. We found the concepts, *man* and *woman* vis-à-vis *good* to be very similar within each ethnic group, with *woman* consistently slightly closer to *good* than *man*: for the Minang, *man* averaged 49 units from *good*, *woman*, 46;¹⁴ for the Javanese, *man* averaged 25 units from *good*, *woman*, 24; and for the Sundanese, *man* was 27 units from *good*, *woman*, 26 (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2). In the nine open-ended interviews conducted to identify the relevant concepts, only one interviewee mentioned any gender differentiation.

TABLE 5.1 Measure of community values and soil management concepts by ethnicity, Sitiung, 1985

<i>Good and Fertilizer</i>	<i>Minang</i>	<i>Javanese</i>	<i>Sundanese</i>
Soil	s 60	m 31	m 23
Garden	s 60	m 27	m 19
Unirrigated field	s 59	m 27	m 25
Wet rice field	s 58	m 30	m 23
Home garden	s 56	m 28	m 20
Rubber	s 64	ms 41	mj 26
Fruits	s 56	m 29	m 20
Rice	s 55	m 25	m 24
Other field crop	s 62	ms 30	mj 19
Vegetables	s 62	m 24	m 23
Water	s 46	m 25	m 24
Fertilizer	s 34	s 28	mj 16
Pests	s 68	ms 52	mj 26
Yield	s 61	m 26	m 27
Cultivation	s 66	m 23	m 24

Note: The smaller the number, the closer the concepts. If there is a letter before the number, there is a significant difference between ethnic groups. In the Minang column, the distance between "good" and "soil" (60) is significantly greater than that perceived by the Javanese (j) and the Sundanese (s).

Source: Colfer, Newton, and Herman (1989); C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91-02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

TABLE 5.2 Measure of community perceptions of men and soil management concepts by ethnicity, Sitiung, 1985

<i>Men and</i>	<i>Minang</i>	<i>Javanese</i>	<i>Sundanese</i>
Garden	14	22	19
Unirrigated field	17	22	26
Wet rice field	13	23	26
Home garden	26	24	22
Rubber	js 14	ms 50	mj 32
Fruits	29	24	23
Rice	j 10	m 24	16
Other field crop	33	24	23
Vegetables	s 34	s 28	mj 16
Water	s 52	s 56	mj 21
Fertilizer	js 47	m 27	m 25
Pests	s 50	s 55	mj 28
Yield	js 44	m 26	m 25
Cultivation	23	16	18

Note: The smaller the number, the closer the concepts. If there is a letter before the number, there is a significant difference between ethnic groups. In the Minang column, the distance between “men” and “rubber” (14) is significantly smaller than that perceived by the Javanese (j) and the Sundanese (s).

Source: Colfer, Newton, and Herman (1989); C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

However, Peletz goes on to say “there are certain areas in which gender differences are culturally elaborated” (p. 82), such as that between reason (*akal*) and passion (*nafsu*). Within Islam, *akal* is linked to men, *nafsu* to women (also noted by Laderman 1996). However, as Brenner (1995) has shown regarding Javanese men, these qualities are somewhat reversed in everyday life—a pattern visible in all three Sitiung communities. Spiller (2010) reports the Sundanese perception of ‘misbehaving men’ as ‘cute’ squirrels (p. 34, unlike their common American representation as ‘rats’; see also Lentz 2017; or Hall 2011, on ‘naughty boy’ expectations for men in Jamaica; Barker et al. 2011, similarly for men in Brazil).

All groups tended to link the idealized men’s *akal* with spiritual strength, not necessarily related to Islam. More conventionally magical beliefs were engrained along with Islam. My Minang field assistant, Syarif, for instance, linked love with *ilmu sihar*, black magic:¹⁵

[I]f someone fell in love with [a woman intern on our project] and . . . [she] refused him, he might use magic on her to make her *bodoh* [stupid].¹⁶ . . . as with the woman he’d told me about who’d been made afraid of people and unwilling or unable to talk.

(notes, 11 June 1986)

Notions of *akal* and *nafsu* link directly to sexuality (see Krier 1995, on Minang views of young men's sexuality as dangerous and threatening, with *akal* bringing it under control) and gender dynamics. In one case, Pulau community members used religious grounds to blame an unmarried mother's parents for her condition, as well as the girl herself (notes, 1 May 1986). Among the Minang, neither boys nor girls under 15 were seen to sin; they were not yet held 'responsible' (notes, 8 January 1986).

Fatherhood was important to men of all three ethnicities, though the emphasis tended to be more on parenting by the couple as just described. A group of Minang men asked me once why my husband had married me if I could no longer have children.

They said Minang men wouldn't want to marry a woman with whom they couldn't have children. Taking care of another man's children didn't appeal to them.

(notes, 8 January 1986)

The importance of both boys and girls was reflected in a Minang proverb, with reference to having only one child: "He/she¹⁷ is my son and my daughter", which they further explained: "There is only one narrow thread and when it breaks, that's it" (notes, 11 June 1986). The lineal nature of the Minang kinship system likely strengthened the importance of having at least one child of one's own. The Javanese and Sundanese, both bilateral in their kinship, readily adopted, and though men and women generally very much wanted and delighted in children, I did not sense the same commitment to a sort of genetic or familial continuity.

Physical strength is an important masculine feature among many groups. The Minang recognized men's greater strength, likening it to that of male vs. female water buffalo (notes, 18 June 1986). Such strength was not, however, an overt matter of sexual attraction. As with the Kenyah, Sitiung girls and women (and men, for that matter) did not show admiration for men's muscles (unlike in the US).

Among the Minang, the process of choosing a spouse was said to begin with either the parents of the girl or the boy; then the opinion of the young people was sought (notes, 22 November 1985).¹⁸ However, among all three ethnic groups, there was ample opportunity for young people to meet (though not to 'date' in the American fashion) and form opinions about each other's desirability. Minang agricultural work parties, for instance, could provide opportunities for young people to dance and sing together late into the night. The Minang did not allow marriage within one's clan, but young people's wishes were usually considered seriously in marriage decisions in all three groups.¹⁹

A Minang truck owner/driver in Sitiung 5 talked about his views on the marital relationship (presaging the breadwinning discussion later). He considered it

sensible for a man to be mad at his wife if he came home and there was no rice cooked. He felt in the long run though that either, if wrong, should

just be quiet when the other was angry. The wrongdoer should temporarily leave the house and return later. If the wrongdoer argued, there'd be a divorce, and that wasn't good for the kids, who'd grow up with no source of money for schooling and whatnot, since men are usually the obtainers of money. . . . He told me I shouldn't argue with my husband.

(notes, 29 January 1984)

One of my American soil scientist colleagues asked a group of Minang men testing soils together if women were ever smarter than men, something they denied. He then suggested perhaps women's use was being pretty, to which they responded, "What's the good of pretty if they're not hard working?!"—rather like Kenyah women's views of men (and of each other). Minang women spent a *lot* of time on agricultural labour; Javanese and Sundanese men (and women) conversely highly valued and stressed *men's* hard work, especially with regard to agriculture and linked it with both men's physical strength and their gender role. These different patterns were a further source of mutual ethnic antagonism and disrespect.

Data from a time allocation study²⁰ provided evidence that men's control of women among the Minang, despite their being a matrilineal group, may have been greater than among transmigrants coming from Java or the Kenyah:

We have postulated elsewhere (Colfer et al. 1984) that the amount of leisure activity, by sex, might be one index of gender equality within a given culture. In Pulai, this ratio (186 observations of females at leisure to 237 of males at leisure) computes to .78. The comparable ratio for transmigrants was .89; and for a very egalitarian group in Kalimantan (the Kenyah; see Chapter 4), .98.

(Colfer 1981, p. 44)

The Minang men's strategy of waiting for economic opportunities to come along the road (discussed in the section on breadwinning) means that their public 'leisure' has the potential to become 'productive', however.

Political and hierarchy harp strings

The Sitiung folk all have histories of 'high' culture, ones in which the *hierarchy* harp string was key along with many other features identified with 'low-land groups' by Scott (2009) and contrasting with 'uplanders' like the Kenyah. The Javanese and Sundanese transmigrants come from long lines of powerful kingdoms, going back centuries. The 15th-century Minang kingdom of Pagar-ruyung was more recent, centrally located in the Minangkabau heartland, far from Sitiung and more a loose federation than a 'proper' kingdom. Kahin (1999) notes that "in practice, [the 'king'] had no authority or executive, legislative, or juridical power whatsoever with respect to the *luhak* [districts] and *nagari*

[described below]" (p. 22)—suggesting a more *egalitarian* harp. She contrasts the Javanese and Minang approaches:

The traditional Javanese belief is that the well-being of the state depends on the strength of the ruler at the centre [à la Ben Anderson] . . . In the traditional Minangkabau view, in contrast, the welfare of the polity depends on the harmony and agreement among its components—the extended villages (*nagari*) . . . These *nagari*, which have often been described as ‘village republics’, exercise their own political and consensus democracy, a form of government very distant from that of the Javanese ideal.

(p. 16)

Kato (1982) describes the *nagari* as “the highest order of human settlement acknowledged by the *adat* [custom]” (pp. 41–42). The local Minang system contained multiple hierarchies that differed from those of the transmigrants. They were also considerably more obvious and more formally interconnected than those of the Kenyah—via longstanding adherence to Islam (a world religion), governance structures spanning various and intersecting scales and formalized customs widely shared.

I begin here with the Minang political realm because this is the arena in which forests co-evolved in this region. However, the more agriculturally oriented Javanese system is closer to what the central government was attempting to spread throughout the country in the 1980s.

Minang political and hierarchy harp strings

Politics was an important harp string for local Minang men. Before agreeing to my conducting research in Pulaui, the senior men grilled me about whether I’d be engaging in *politik*, by which they meant primarily attempts to convert them to Christianity. The questions they asked led me to conclude that they were “rather political, savvy sorts of men” (notes, 15 October 1985).²¹ There was a backstory to this suspicion, an event that began right before I approached the community to conduct research there.

BOX 5.1 RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN WEST SUMATRA

In mid-1985, one of our team members kindly (and innocently) picked up a couple of families of Christians in Sitiung 5 to take them to church in Sitiung 1. Only later did we learn that Christians were not allowed to join this transmigration project (a stipulation of the provincial decision-makers), though a few Christians had snuck in among the transmigrants. This became an issue shortly thereafter when a Minang man came to my colleague’s home

in Siting 1, interrupting a housewarming party for the members of this tiny Christian 'church'. The Minang visitor wrote a report to the *Bupati* full of complaints about our project, some—like providing electricity from our generator to our neighbours—quite nonsensical. We went to Sawahlunto-Sijunjung, the district capital, to explain. The letter went up to the governor. We went to Padang to explain. It then went to Java, where it made its way eventually to the American embassy. Despite our serious efforts to resolve the issue at all levels our colleague was removed to Java for six months and then expelled from the country—among the more unjust events I've witnessed in my life.

Many of Pulau's men were more intimately integrated into the national political hierarchy than women, the Kenyah or the men of Bushler Bay. This integration was reflected in their insistence on confirming repeatedly that I had permission from the *Camat* (county head, part of Indonesia's national administrative structure) to conduct the research.

Such integration was especially intriguing because national governmental policies did not mesh well with either matrilineality or matrilocality.²² Indonesian national policy recognized men as heads of their marital households (Elmhirst 2011; see also Jakimow 2017), not their sisters' households, nor did it recognize clans or *kenagarian* (the traditional Minang supra-village organization).²³ Minang men have been unusually astute at manoeuvring national politics, due partly elsewhere to higher than average educational achievements and to their engagement in expedition-making, where they gained linguistic skills and established broader-scale relationships (see Kato 1982).

At a graduation from Pulau's small religious high school just prior to the 1986 national election, virtually all the officials, from the distant *Kabupaten* (district) capital attended, as well as the local *Camat* and the heads of three of the four Minang clans²⁴ in that village (notes, 24 April 1986)—all these officials men, all or almost all Minang themselves.²⁵ Only young women served the assembled multitudes;²⁶ and a beautiful young girl had been chosen, attended and dressed as their *Bundo Kanduang*, the key symbol of Minang womanhood, along with an older, also beautifully dressed woman I took to be the previous *Bundo Kanduang*.

A speech given by the *Bupati* (head of the Regency) nicely reflected important Minang masculine ideals (education, breadwinning, striving, religion, family):

First, he told how you had to keep learning your whole life, how you mustn't be unemployed even if you couldn't continue school, how those who hadn't passed shouldn't feel '*kecil hati*' ['small liver', demoralized] but rather just try harder, that this was a test from God. They should work and do their duties to their communities and try to help their parents.

(notes, 24 April 1986)

That a man's status depended on his own accomplishments as much as social hierarchy was also clear from his speech—reminiscent of American success stories:

He himself [the *Bupati*] hadn't had enough to buy one shirt [in earlier times], he said, but now he does. He [said he] makes Rp. 250,000 per month in salary and the newest employee can now make Rp. 40,000.

(notes, 24 April 1986)

Hierarchy was hardly however irrelevant, as shown by the repeated requests, during early days that I confirm permission from clan leaders, the village head and the *Camat*.

Pulai's four matrilineal clans were ranked (based on arrival in the area),²⁷ and the men within them (the brothers of the land-owning women) managed clan affairs and governed the communities politically. The permission of the leader of the first clan, Tigo Ninik, was needed before clearing new lands. Traditionally, Pulai and three other villages were *orong* (hamlets) of one *kenagarian*²⁸ (previously called Sitiung), a broader Minang political unit (see Firmansyah 2013; Kato 1982 or Naim and Hermann 1984, for descriptions of this hierarchical system and its variations).

Transmigrant hierarchy and equity harp strings

The very elaborate public governmental hierarchy among the incoming transmigrants (and others) was manned by men. Sitiung 1's four neighbourhoods (*orong*, ca. 100 households each) comprised a village (*desa*), within an area led by a *wali nagari*, smaller than a county (*kecamatan*, led by a *camat*), within a district (*kabupaten*, led by a *bupati*), within a province (*propinsi*, led by a *gubernur*) (notes, 17 Sept 1983). All such officials were men. As a *bedol desa*²⁹ transmigration site, the original economic inequities of the Central Javan community from Wonogiri were replicated in Sitiung 1. Landowners (mainly men) were compensated based on existing holdings.

Sitiung 5 was a more conventional transmigration site, composed of resource-poor participants from East Java who had applied to join. The Sundanese transmigrants were more diverse in terms of wealth, having transmigrated after Galunggung's volcanic eruption in 1982 from Garut Province in West Java. In Sitiung 5, household heads were all men.

The assumption and approval of hierarchy spread throughout Javanese social interaction. Our collaborating Javanese (and Sundanese) soil scientists initially complained when the American team members worked in the field with the farmers. The former saw such work as incompatible with their educated and elite statuses (notes, 19 Oct '83)—a view also expressed by Turks during my childhood in Turkey. Many Americans, whether educated or not, found hard physical labour totally compatible with their own notions of masculinity (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Javanese—both men and women—often reiterated the necessity of following governmental dictates. The views that Sumartoyo from Sitiung 2 (another nearby transmigration area) expressed about submission to authority were common (so

incompatible with the Bushler Bay Local view of masculinity). When asked if he preferred living in Sitiung 2 or his home community in Wonogiri, Central Java, he chose the latter.³⁰ But he added,

The government ordered me to move over here, and well, I had to come. If the government hadn't ordered me, I really didn't want to move here. I am a citizen; how could I refuse the government policy?

*(Constraints Study notes, 1985)*³¹

This attachment to hierarchy and willingness to submit were moderated by a concern for equity. There was a lot of complaining among Javanese men about the immorality (infidelity, lack of industriousness, dishonesty) of others and about the unfairness of events or distributions. Some of this could be attributed to understandable attempts to discredit others in order to obtain jobs or benefits themselves, but some seemed to be genuine moral pronouncements on the behaviour of others, as Elmhirst (2018) also found in southern Sumatra, among the Lampungese.³²

In my American experience, gossip was 'not manly'; it was considered feminine, petty and somewhat improper, 'poor form'. But Javanese men were quite willing to so engage. Complaints about inequity were also avoided by American men as evidence that one had not been in control, had not been able to get a fair deal for oneself, in itself an affront to one's masculinity.

Some of the more lucrative breadwinning activities depended upon good political connections. The political activities of Sitiung's men, especially their broader-scale involvements and their commitments to varying hierarchies, represented another important difference from Bushler Bay and Long Segar.

Breadwinning and provisioning harp strings

Although both Minang and transmigrant men saw breadwinning as part of men's roles and values, how this played out differed. Here, I begin discussing the Minang system, shifting in the second half to the transmigrant systems.

Minang breadwinning/provisioning

There were certain similarities between Minang and Kenyah divisions of labour, in that Minang women were also actively involved in rice production and Minang men were also clearly expected to provide cash. Still, Pulai's men also engaged in a significant amount of agricultural labour (see Figure 5.2). In addition, they were actively involved in forest harvesting, fishing, hunting and wage labour—all dependent on the surrounding forest. All in all, Minang men were twice as involved in 'productive activity' as women, reinforcing the notion that being a breadwinner was an important element in local masculinities.

Although dependent on agriculture, Minang men tended neither to consider it a desirable breadwinning strategy nor to identify being a farmer in a positive light. In Tables 5.1 and 5.2, Minang respondents considered these agricultural concepts

FIGURE 5.2 Time allocation to eight productive activities by sex, Pulai, 1985–1986.

Source: C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

further apart on average than did the more agriculturally oriented Javanese and Sundanese. Arni, a Minang woman in Sitiung 5, expressed her view: “Let’s *angkat kayu* [engage in timber transport] if there’s a chance, and if we can’t do that, well, just work in the *ladang* [upland rice field]” (notes, 5 December 1983).

Whereas in the Minang heartland, land and houses normally belonged to women and their clan (*suku*),³³ in Sitiung, people described a two-part division: (1) paddy rice lands (*pusoko*), belonging to women, managed by brothers (who inherited clan titles, *soko*), and inherited by women’s daughters; and (2) rubber and other dry lands belonging to the man who cleared the forest and which could be passed down to his own children.³⁴ Matrilocality was the rationale given for women owning land (notes, 3 December 1985). However, when we conducted a survey of land ownership in Pulai, in June 1986, people reported most land to be owned jointly, except for rubber gardens (over half of which were reported as owned by women!). See Suyanto, Tomich, and Otsuka (1997) for a nearby and somewhat similarly complex, fluid and [to outsiders] confusing system. The distribution of income from rubber gardens is also of interest, with men owning fewer fields and hectares, but gaining more income (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4).

Turning to the domestic context, Minang men were somewhat marginalized emotionally.³⁵ One visit to a Minang household sticks in my mind. An old mother sat at home with several of her middle-aged daughters chatting. A

TABLE 5.3 Ownership and hectarage of Pulai fields, using local field categories, June 1986

	<i>Total</i>		<i>Women's</i>		<i>Men's</i>		<i>Joint</i>	
	<i>No. of fields</i>	<i>Total ha</i>	<i>No. of fields</i>	<i>Total ha</i>	<i>No. of fields</i>	<i>Total ha</i>	<i>No. of fields</i>	<i>Total ha</i>
Paddy rice field (<i>sawah</i>)	63	18.9	11	3.2	2	0.5	50	15.1
Upland rice field (<i>ladang</i> and <i>soso'</i>)	28	22	0	0	2	1.5	26	20.5
Rubber orchard (<i>kebun karet</i>)	52	34.9	32	18.7	9	7.4	11	8.8
Other orchard (<i>kebun</i>)	8	2.3	8	2.3	0	0	0	0
Home garden (<i>pekarangan</i>)	82	15.1	17	3.2	4	0.4	61	11.4
Totals	233	93.2	68	27.4	17	9.8	148	55.8

Source: C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

TABLE 5.4 Ownership and control of income from the 52 rubber orchards reported in Pulai, June 1985 through May 1986

<i>Owner/beneficiary</i>	<i>Ownership</i>		<i>Control</i>	
	<i>Rubber trees</i>	<i>Hectares</i>	<i>Income in US \$^a</i>	<i>% total income^b</i>
Women (32 fields)	7800	18.7	1492	2.8%
Men (9 fields)	3100	7.4	4450	8.6%
Joint (11 fields)	3650	8.8	1422	2.7%
Total	14550	34.9	7364	13.8% ^c

Note: Thirty-seven families (43% of all Pulai families) owned these fields.

a US \$1 = Rp.1127 June 1986

b Percent of total village cash income, deriving from rubber, controlled by each category (women, men and jointly)

c Rounding error

Source: Colfer, Gill, and Agus (1988); C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*. TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

few men wandered in. They sat against the wall, separate, back from the circle of related women. The women were laughing and talking, having fun. The men's contributions were ignored, trivialized, even laughed at. On another occasion,

the women were working closely together, had close relationships. The men came in and out, without being terribly involved. But there was also an appreciation of them [the men] to some extent.

(notes, 19 May 1986; also noted by Tanner 1974)

Siskind (1973) notes the marginal and ambiguous position of men among the matrilineal and matrilocal Sharanahua of the eastern Peruvian Amazon.³⁶

Minang men expressed confusion as to whether Sitiung 5 land allocated to them then belonged to the men or to their wives, with one of the more powerful men considering it belonging to the men; but others saying it was their wives' (notes, 8 Nov 1983). Some of this confusion related to the disjuncture between their matrilineal system and the national identification of men (husbands, not brothers) as household heads and landowners; some to the inherent fuzziness of this system on the border between matrilineal and patrilineal kin systems.

Breadwinning for men was an entrepreneurial endeavour. In interviews on income,

a group of three men [mid-20s to mid-40s] emphasized the opportunistic nature of their income getting activities. That nothing is set, that they're always on the lookout, always comparing the relative profitability of different endeavours, and switching their activities accordingly. . . . Min emphasized the importance of using your brain; he 'lowed as how it might look as though Minang men were just sitting around, but they weren't really. They were figuring and fenagling and working on making money. He even mentioned IQ!

(notes, 18 April 1986)

Minang men were not known nationally for 'hard work', rather they were known for (and considered themselves to be) 'working smart'. One could regularly see groups of men just sitting and chatting by Pulai's main road (at the *pos ronda*, a small roadside structure with only a roof), apparently relaxing. However, they were also waiting for job opportunities that regularly appeared along roads—for logging, dredging for sand, driving trucks, moving goods, clearing land, etc.

Syarif, my locally admired field assistant, was jokingly called 'Ahmat Lungga' ('Ahmat Loose'). This name referred to his 'moving [*goyang*] and shaking' approach to life: "He's always doing a bit of this and a bit of that, accepting this work and that. A bit of everything" (notes, 6 February 1986). Minang men's breadwinning harp string has a strong entrepreneurial element.

Men also cleared the big trees from forest land intended for rubber and other tree crops;³⁷ men were almost never seen weeding or harvesting rice crops (though they *were* involved in transporting them).³⁸ A mixed group of people preparing a field told me though that "men and women don't have very separate work. There isn't anything, they said, that men can't do or women can't do. . . . Husbands and wives work together" (20 October 1985). On the same day, men were dibbling a

swidden field and women planting rice in the field intended eventually for tree crops. Men tapped most rubber. Men did a considerable amount of fishing (with nets they made) as well, in the beautiful Batang Hari River (Box 5.2). Old men and women both ran small stores (*warung*). As is common in Indonesia, most men turned over any income to their wives to manage.

BOX 5.2 BATHING IN THE BATANG HARI

[Two men and I] went on down along the bank of the [Batang Hari] river [about 5 PM]. The river was alive with people. Everyone was bathing, talking, fishing, etc. It was lovely! The greenery came down to the water's edge in places. The weather was cool. The sounds of monkeys in the bamboo and trees along the shore reached us regularly, along with other sounds. We saw two or three fruit bats pass overhead. Everyone was interested that I was in the boat and smiled friendly. It was so reminiscent of *sore* [late afternoon] in Kalimantan, although there are no *jambans* [bathing rafts]. The river bottom is rock—smooth rock but very hard on my feet (they found this interesting, since it doesn't seem to hurt their feet at all) . . . I loved it. Am so glad I went. The feel of doing something is so different from reading that at 5 PM people usually go bathe. Not only do they bathe, but it is a totally refreshing, comfortable, desirable feeling to look forward to all day! (notes, 18 June 1986)

Young strong Minang men in Pulau also logged, using a chainsaw and dragging the logs out of the forest by water buffalo, contracted by a Pulau leader (*lipati*). They differentiated wood for export and for local consumption and appreciated at least three kinds of *meranti*, or Philippine mahogany (Dipterocarpaceae): *meranti kawang*, *meranti ambai* and *meranti perang*, in decreasing order of value. Men also made *balok* (beams), harvested rattan in the woods and tapped rubber in their 'jungle rubber'. Work in the woods was not, however, appreciated more than other modes of making a living; indeed, less so.

Rais, a 37-year-old Minang farming man (from Koto Padang),³⁹ said,

In other areas, the women can get additional money for shopping, and the men can work hard on the land. In Koto Padang, men and women are the same, they work too little, are lazy, and the soil isn't good.

(4 April 1985)⁴⁰

Some of the jobs Sitiung 5's Minang men did included rubber tapping, transport to market, casual labour at a nearby smallholder rubber project (notes, 4 April 1985), village rubber merchant and making furniture (notes, 8 November 1983). Although the Minang expressed a preference for non-agricultural endeavours,

much of their time, both men's and women's, was devoted to farm work. There were few other opportunities.

Transmigrant breadwinning/provisioning

Among most transmigrant men—whether Javanese or Sundanese—being a farmer was a central part of their identity. But many had also to work for wages sometimes, to make money and perform another strong normative role as provider—the reverse of local Minang breadwinning prioritization. Javanese men consistently expressed interest in learning more about agriculture from our project team. A carpenter-farmer in Sitiung 1 told me, for instance, “Fundamentally, I am a farmer, but I do wage labour too. The income from wage labour doesn't last long, it's not really secure and lasting” (notes, 7 September 1983). When he was doing wage labour, his wife took up the agricultural slack. He considered these two ways to make money as alternatives in ensuring the family's subsistence—which was far more dependent on the availability of money than was the case in Long Segar (Chapter 4).

We studied annual income sources for 1983–1984 (Colfer 1991, p. 21) among 20 randomly selected families each in Sitiung 1 and 5. In Sitiung 1, 22% of household income came from home industry (probably predominantly women's work), 42% from wage labour (mainly men's) and 36% from agricultural production (both). In Sitiung 5, among a group our project was *not* working with (our 'control'), 28% of income came from home industry, 86% from wage labour and 10% from agricultural production. Our collaborating farmers in Sitiung 5 did considerably better agriculturally (possibly reflecting the selection process as much as the success of our efforts). Their income sources were 11% from home industry, 43% from wage labour and 46% from agricultural production.

Some of the unskilled off-farm jobs Sitiung 1's Javanese men did included cutting grass along the irrigation canal or digging on road or irrigation projects. Some professions in longer-established Sitiung 1 included being a tailor, traditional healer (*dukun*), driver or worker for the Irrigation Department. In newly settled Sitiung 5, men cleared land, logged and moved large logs off fields, made beams and repaired houses. There were few off-farm options in Sitiung 5, because of the remoteness of the locale and the recurring impassability of their road. Javanese women were involved in small-scale marketing, as elsewhere (Dewey 1962; Brenner 1995), though with remarkably little to sell.

Of the three ethnic groups observed in Sitiung, the Javanese had the least extreme gender division of labour (though more marked than among the Kenyah). Although there were tasks men were more likely to do than women and vice versa, there was willingness on both parts to do the work typically assigned to the other as needed. In the Javanese home, where I stayed periodically in Sitiung 5, for instance, the husband, Ratno, routinely cooked while his wife held their new baby. Both men and women were involved in both communities in making money and in agricultural tasks. Fathers and others were involved in births.

One differentiation ripe with ethnic symbolism—and promoting inter-ethnic disapproval—was the Javanese masculine affinity for hoeing (*cangkul*) and fertilizer use. The Javanese belittled the local Minang for their unwillingness to hoe. Javanese men linked hoeing with their own commitment to industriousness. The Minang, on the other hand, disdained both hoeing and fertilizer use (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

I had some interesting discussions with Ratno about their land and land preparation. [T]he thought of *not* hoeing does not seem to have occurred to him.
(notes, 23 January 1984)

[Suminah, a Javanese woman] would want a man to *cangkul*.
(notes, 29 January 1984)

[Hoeing] seems to be the symbolic thing that women shouldn't have to do, and . . . Minang, Javanese and Sundanese . . . feel sorry for women who have to do that. Most [ethnic groups] maintain that other [ethnic groups'] wives have to [hoe], though I've seen [women hoeing] in all groups.
(notes, 29 January 1984)

The fact that Minang women more often hoed—in paddy rice cultivation, where they were particularly involved—was also seriously disapproved and considered further evidence in Javanese eyes that Minang values had gone awry. Numerous examples of negative comments about Minang men's laziness were recorded in my fieldnotes (notes, e.g., 4 October, 19 November 1983). Minang men (like the Kenyah men of Long Segar) readily acknowledged this trait in themselves as well: 'working smart' rather than 'working hard', and this did *not* include hoeing on upland fields, as we discovered when we designed collaborative experiments that required hoeing a section of their fields.

Part of our Sitiung 5 work involved collaborating with farming families about their upland agricultural fields. We made great efforts to involve the farm women in the planning and report-back meetings . . . but none came. Such meetings, focused on upland fields, were in their eyes, men's work. At planting time, women came to the fields to supply labour. Indeed, they were quite involved in planting, as well as other agricultural tasks. Figures 5.3 to 5.7, based on the time allocation study described earlier, show the involvement of both genders in agriculture in all three ethnic groups. Figures 5.3 and 5.6 show the dominance of men in field crops—the context most likely to be defined as 'agricultural' and where most agricultural research was focused.

Land clearing was a job reserved for men. In Sitiung 1, there were spikes in January and August, in preparation for dry periods (when fields could be burned) and in Sitiung 5, men were busy in their upland fields, again making use of the shorter of the two dry seasons.⁴¹ Among East Javanese in Sitiung 4,

FIGURE 5.3 Seasonal variation in allocation of labour to upland fields by gender, Sitiung 1, 1983–1984.

Source: C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

FIGURE 5.4 Division of labour by gender in paddy rice, Sitiung 1, 1983–1984.

Source: C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

FIGURE 5.5 Division of labour by gender in home gardens, Sitiung 1, 1983–1984.

Source: C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

FIGURE 5.6 Division of labour by gender in upland fields, Sitiung 5, 1983–1984.

Source: C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

FIGURE 5.7 Division of labour by gender in home gardens, Sitiung 5, 1983–1984.

Source: C. J. P. Colfer, *Toward Sustainable Agriculture in the Humid Tropics: Building on the TropSoils Experience in Indonesia*, TropSoils Bulletin No. 91–02, North Carolina State University, 1991.

another transmigrant village, “No women helped with land preparation” (notes, 23 February 1984).

Expeditions, knowledge, violence and sports harp strings

Here we turn to four harp strings with more varying relevance in Sitiung. These harp strings pop up among some men, less consistently than those just discussed.

Expedition harp string

Minang men were famous nationally for their wide travels; to *merantau* means to go in search of adventure, knowledge and one’s fortune (as among the Kenyah, Chapter 4). A common Indonesian joke at the time recognized this Minang stereotype: What was the first thing the astronauts found when they landed on the moon? Answer: A Padang restaurant (ubiquitous purveyor of Minang food). The Minang in this study, however, were somewhat disdained by those from the Minang heartland. Sitiung was considered part of the *rantau*, a pioneering area and thus seen as culturally somewhat impure.⁴² The men I met had not travelled far, nor were there many others reported to have left home for distant places.⁴³ Naim and Hermann (1984) found only 3% of the men of Koto Padang away at the time of their 1984 survey. However, there was considerable local mobility, moving houses, moving villages, while remaining in the Sitiung area.

Although transmigrants who had come to Sitiung could be considered to *merantau*, these Javanese and Sundanese men did not refer to their move in that way. Rather, the motivation, if voluntary, was to ‘change their fate’ (*ganti nasib*), or improve themselves, and to obtain free land for farming. I never heard the idea of adventure—as often expressed by Americans, Kenyah and Minang from other regions—expressed.

Knowledge and magic harp strings

Local Minang men *did* comply with the stereotypical Minang love of education and knowledge. Although not well educated themselves, they had established and maintained a private religious boys’ school in Pulau. They expressed intellectual interest in the studies I was conducting and a willingness, once they’d determined that I had no ulterior motive, to participate.⁴⁴

Of the 40 families we interviewed in Sitiung 5 (project ‘cooperator’ and ‘control’ families), Minang men had the highest educational achievement, averaging 4.2 years of education, 1.7 more than Minang women. Although I do not have data on formal educational achievement in Pulau or Koto Padang, I suspect both are somewhat higher than this, as the poorest inhabitants were recruited to join the local transmigration programme. In contrast, East Javanese men averaged 2.7 years and Sundanese men, 3.8 years of education. In both these latter cases, the gender difference was smaller, only 0.2 years.

Minang men held many magical beliefs, including the belief that *sheytan* (Satan) and *Jihin* (djinn) caused many problems. People expressed a reluctance to go into the forest on Friday, reportedly because of an earlier experience in which ‘some people’ had done so and been eaten by tigers (notes, 3 January 1986).

[My field assistant] said he’d gone halfway [to Pekanbaru, walking through the forest] himself seeking *barang kuno* (protective amulets) . . . said if you have one then a knife won’t cut through your skin. But he didn’t find one.

(notes, 23 October 1985)

Kari, Pulau’s old *dukun* (magical healer), when asked if he feared staying alone in his field hut in the rice field, responded that he had *ilmu* (magic/science), which protected him from tigers and other dangers (notes, 23 October 1985). He also blessed rice fields, with ginger and onions; a young Minang man felt that “no matter how long into the future, this custom would not disappear” (notes, 14 March 1986). Fear of tigers was a recurring concern. One woman sang while she tapped rubber to frighten away tigers and wild pigs (notes, 20 February 1986)—a downside of lush forests.

Although transmigrant men admired the educated and valued the availability of schooling in Sitiung 1, I did not sense the wide-ranging intellectual curiosity I saw among the Minang. Transmigrant men were, however, always interested to learn new agricultural techniques and try out new crops. Like the Minang, the transmigrants

had elaborate magical beliefs about many aspects of human existence—though these were not as likely to pertain to the forest, agriculture or natural resources.

Violence harp string

Although violence was uncommon among the local Minang, on the most important religious festival, *Hari Raya* ('Id al Fitri'), little boys were seen (and heard!) exploding kerosene in 'guns' made from 6"-diameter bamboo from nearby forests. Although I only saw this once, this same bamboo was used to carry an alcoholic drink made from the "very healthful" (notes, 11 June 1986) *anau* (sugar palm, *Arenga pinnata*). A group of Minang men also expressed their shock and disapproval of widespread American gun ownership (notes, 9 May 1986).

I knew of several instances of wife-beating among the Javanese of Sitiung 1 and it seemed to be accepted by the community (if the woman had seriously transgressed) (notes, 3 Nov 1983; 26 November 1983; 17 December 1983). One of our drivers (half Javanese, half Madurese)—among the most macho men I met in Indonesia—liked the idea that his family was afraid of him. My next door neighbour and household helper was known to repeatedly stray sexually and ignore norms of women's 'appropriate comportment'. My driver was not fond of her, and said once apparently seriously, "If I'd been her husband, I'd have killed her".

On a subsequent occasion, this woman and another neighbour man were caught by her husband *in flagrante*; the husband badly beat the neighbour, but left his wife unscathed (notes, 4 January 1984). Indeed, he was reported to brag about his wife's attractiveness, as shown by other men's sexual interest in her.⁴⁵

Another case of violence occurred among the Sundanese: In the early days of Sitiung 5 settlement, tensions ran high:

Dody⁴⁶ himself was the one who beat up the transmigration official a long time ago, because of irregularities with *jata*.⁴⁷ After the beating . . . the official was honest and '*damai*' [peaceful], but someone else reported the incident to the police. This all came up because Omar . . . tried to kill Obing. Omar thought Obing was taking his *jata*, though Obing was getting three *jata*'s for other families. Someone grabbed the knife just in time, and Obing's wrist was only hurt, not his neck cut. The men were all at the mosque, as it was Friday . . .

(notes, 4 January 1984)

The considerable inter-ethnic hostility between the Minang and in-migrating Javanese has been mentioned, but most played out in adverse stereotypes rather than violence *per se*. As Elmhirst (2018) observes in Lampung Province,

pressures on livelihood and resources meant that what might otherwise be delight in diversity sometimes manifested itself through metaphors of

moral disapproval about the practices of the other group [in this case the Javanese and the Lampungese]. . . . struggles over land and livelihood were frequently articulated through an idiom of cultural difference.

(p. 11)

This was the case in Sitiung as well. Understanding these cultural differences—many of which relate to gender norms—can enhance our attempts at good forest management and related conflict management.

Sports and arts harp strings

In the US, sports are an important part of the formal educational system. In Pulaui, a youth sports event was scheduled in connection with the boys' graduation. The fact that a group of Minang men expressed ignorance about the derivation of foreign words used in Indonesian soccer (keeper, out, offsides) reflected this sport's lack of centrality there. I heard once, during my last month in residence, that the people of Pulaui sometimes had canoe races, though I heard no routine discussion of sports among them, nor did I see people engaged in sports there—a rarely plucked harp string.

Among the transmigrants in Sitiung 1, sports were more common. There were regular soccer games between the men on our research team and the village's young men. However, the funds to pay for uniforms and sports equipment (when not bought by the research team) was a constraint. Sports did not play the central role we found, for instance, in Bushler Bay.

Javanese men were more obviously involved in Javanese arts (gamelan, puppet shows, puppet making) than were Minang men in Minang arts.

Dominant masculinities summarized

Both local Minang and Javanese men were Muslim. The Minang were concerned with the day-to-day dictates of Islam (praying, fasting, avoiding pork, covering their heads, etc.); the rural Javanese, less so. The lack of Javanese attention to personal modesty (particularly women's) was a key bone of contention—linking, in Minang minds, such religious 'failings' to probable disapproved sexuality.

Both local Minang and in-migrating Javanese were intimately involved in their respective political hierarchies. Whereas the Minang men emphasized political action and entrepreneurship, at and above the local level, most Javanese men emphasized the need to comply with governmental directives, to submit to authority.

Men in both groups had provisioning responsibilities, but with different priorities: Minang men prioritized entrepreneurial income generation, with farming as a secondary choice; Javanese men emphasized farming, with earning supplementary cash of secondary import. Opportunities to enhance incomes

came up serendipitously, which meant Minang men were often visible, sitting and waiting for such opportunities to emerge (as often happened). This pattern though, reinforced Javanese stereotypes of Minang laziness.

Hoeing and fertilizer use were seen by Javanese men as important for production, evidence of personal industriousness and symbolic of men's roles. Minang men were reluctant to hoe or fertilize, whereas Minang women hoed routinely in their care of paddy fields. The Javanese saw the Minang pattern as evidence of Minang men's laziness and an uncaring attitude towards their wives (a source of Javanese disdain). In fact, our project found that hoeing in that environment did not have a significant effect on yields.

Forests and conclusions

None of the main ethnic groups in Sitiung had the deep cultural narratives pertaining to forests that were so obvious among both the American loggers of Bushler Bay or the Kenyah of Kalimantan. Minang lifeways manifested a closer connection to the surrounding forest than did the in-migrating Javanese, who tended to fear the forest. Both the Javanese and the Sundanese were used to modes of making a living on Java that valued intensive cultivation of cash crops over subsistence agriculture—field crops in the Javanese case, with horticultural tendencies among the Sundanese, though in Sitiung 5, neither had sufficient excess to sell much.⁴⁸ This orientation largely removed their agricultural activities from direct forest connections.

The Minang in Sitiung depended on the availability of forest lands to grow upland rice in swiddens, and men and women of all ethnic groups were involved in rice production, both paddy and upland (see Figures 5.2 to 5.4 and 5.6)—a product the Minang considered shameful to sell. But the men particularly were more interested in the tree crops they planted soon after the rice, and which took over from the rice in subsequent years. The resulting fields of mostly rubber agroforestry (or 'jungle rubber') produced a landscape that looked like a forest to the uninitiated and provided much of the biodiversity and other environmental services extant in nearby secondary forests. It also required less day-to-day maintenance than conventional field crops.

Politics was a particularly significant part of Minang and Sundanese men's lives, and all three ethnic groups were far more intimately integrated into the lower reaches of the national political hierarchy than were either the Kenyah or Bushler Bay loggers. This integration held the potential for local people of these ethnic groups to influence at least provincial forest policy.

The different behaviours and beliefs related to masculinity can impinge importantly on forest management. The Javanese, the Sundanese and to a lesser degree, the Minang, are intimately interlinked with complex bureaucracies and the important tensions between submission and resistance that accompany such intimacy. Formal forest management occurs within such bureaucracies. The strong sense of duty to submit among many Javanese, for instance, can be an

advantage for implementing forest management plans. On the other hand, such communities are likely to have developed sophisticated skills at subverting and resisting as well (à la Scott 1985).

Forest management can also be affected by bringing together groups with differing cultural preferences and practices—as is often done by governments seeking to ‘rationalize’ governance. In Indonesia, this has often included the inclusion of local peoples among Javanese transmigrants. Attempts, for instance, to banish shifting cultivation have included bringing in Javanese used to settled agriculture. This particular policy often resulted instead in *more* shifting cultivation in these areas of infertile soils and minimal access to agricultural inputs (e.g., Fulcher 1982). In no cases, to my knowledge, do such policies include mechanisms to cope with the resulting inter-ethnic conflict.

Governments have also ostensibly sought to provide improved infrastructure in remote areas, by resettling groups closer together (thus also ‘liberating’ forest-rich areas for lucrative concessions). Again, inter-group hostilities are likely to complicate forest management efforts, as forest managers cope with ongoing cultural and resource-related conflict (Peluso and Harwell 2001 document one of the more dramatic instances of inter-ethnic violence, in West Kalimantan, 1997).

Although I have not been back to Sitiung since 2008, at that time the landscape was already primarily oil palm, with some remnants of rubber cultivation in more orderly rows.⁴⁹ One concern, besides the loss of the forest (which has already happened), is the question of land tenure. Before the transmigrants arrived, the Minang communities had traditional land tenure that seemed reasonably secure. But in most parts of Indonesia’s Outer Islands, land was also being allocated under President Soeharto to industries (timber concessions [HPH], *Hak Pengusahaan Hutan*; oil palm; industrial timber concessions [HTI] *Hutan Tanaman Industri*; mining; etc.), with little or no attention to pre-existing, local tenure rules. The Minang, with a broader base of educated people nationally, may have been able to protect their traditional lands better than average, though I do not know their degree of success.

This chapter has emphasized the differing concepts of masculinity, of men’s (and women’s) appropriate behaviour, so central in the antagonisms that beset inter-ethnic interactions in Sitiung. In Chapter 6, I turn away from formal research results, again drawing on my personal experience, as I examine masculinities among my colleagues in forest-related international conservation and development spheres.

Notes

- 1 Original material for this chapter comes from fieldnotes (in Cornell University’s archives), memory and the following published works: Colfer (1991), Colfer, Newton, and Herman (1989), Colfer, Gill, and Agus (1988), Sigman et al. (1989a, b); and unpublished site reports, including Naim and Hermann (1984). The harp produced here is a likely example of the harp strings an imaginary Minang man might pluck from time to time.

- 2 I occasionally use pseudonyms in this chapter.
- 3 Sitiung included at that time five numbered areas, each including smaller hamlets identified by letter, interspersed with local, long-resident Minangkabau ('Minang') communities. We called the hamlets where we worked Sitiung 1 and 5, as I do here.
- 4 Between 1976 and 1986, some 6000 transmigrant families moved to the area (Colfer 1991, p. 10); more came later.
- 5 The dominant ethnic group in West Java.
- 6 Transmigrants typically applied to join such a programme and were sent to areas where they had no pre-existing community relations (see Elmhirst 2011, p. 177, for a gender-sensitive discussion of this programme).
- 7 Although all three Sitiung ethnic groups represent 'lowlanders' in Scott's (2009) sense (similar to the Makassar Gibson studied), this differentiation does not accurately represent the actual homelands or current geographies of the groups I studied; the Minang, though dominant in West Sumatra, lie somehow between the upland and lowland 'ideal types'. The Minang in (lowland) Sitiung also bring to mind Li's (1999a) warning about the simplifications and reifications of Indonesian ethnic groups (along with related political implications), some of which have very fuzzy boundaries. The Sitiung Minang, for instance, seem to have been somewhat influenced by the more patrifocal Jambi groups to the southeast.
- 8 See Jones (2019), for a discussion of the frequency of these issues in Indonesia.
- 9 Elmhirst (2018) discusses a similar context in southern Sumatra:

In transmigration, where Javanese transmigrants and Lampung people were brought together, contestations of meaning and identity were most intense in the space between the two communities and struggles over land and livelihood were frequently articulated through an idiom of cultural difference. These struggles rarely took on an overt physical or violent form. Rather, by far the most common way in which the two groups interacted and challenged each other's legitimacy was through the hidden and sometimes not so hidden "transcripts" (Scott 1990)—gossip and rumour—through which one group represented and resisted the actions and representations of the other.

(p. 11)

See also Algiovan, Umami, and Amanah (2016) who attribute the sources of ethnic disagreements and conflict in East Lampung to "economic issues . . . theft, spoliation, and violence", as well as low educational levels and poverty (p. 560).

- 10 Matrilineality does *not* imply a matriarchate (i.e. that women hold the political power). Formal political and clan power were held by women's brothers. Still, the fact that certain kinds of land ownership followed the female line granted women powers that were less available to women in a patrilineal society. See Blackwood (1995) for a good discussion of a Minang system in their heartland.
- 11 The historical process of combining the two was not smooth. See Dinata's (2013) brief account or McKay (2013), who examines the history of Islam and its integration with custom in West Sumatra.
- 12 In contrast to this overt religiosity, few Bushler Bay people attended church, and far fewer men than women. I do not remember a Bushler Bay man ever mentioning religion positively in the 1970s. Many considered the nearby Pentecostal 'Faith Farm' amusing. In the international professional community (Chapter 6), there was a similar reluctance to profess any religious beliefs or practices. Highly educated Americans also seem reluctant to profess adherence to formal religious beliefs publicly.
- 13 In this study, 21 locally relevant concepts about agriculture were paired and their perceived distance from each other measured by 100 respondents from each of the three ethnic groups. We used a 'measuring stick' of each respondent's own cognitive distance between *black* and *white*, set at 100 units apart (see Colfer et al. 1989, Colfer 1991).
- 14 Minang respondents considered these agricultural and soil management concepts overall to be an average of 44 units apart, in contrast to the more agriculturally oriented Javanese (mean of 30) and Sundanese (mean of 22; Colfer et al. 1989).

- 15 *Ilmu* also means science.
- 16 In contrast, magic used in such a case among the Kenyah would have resulted in her falling in love with the perpetrator (as I was told happened to me).
- 17 No gender differentiation in pronouns in any of these languages.
- 18 In the Minang heartland, the woman's family proposes marriage (e.g., Fahmi and Aswirna 2014).
- 19 There were exceptions: When a Javanese widow in Sitiung 1 was in desperate financial straits, she arranged a marriage for her reluctant 13-year-old daughter, despite general disapproval.
- 20 Three, year-long, observational time allocation studies were conducted in Sitiung 1, 5 and Pulai, based on 5634 observations, showing considerable ethnic and gender variation. The data from Sitiung 1 involved cyclical visits (date and time of day throughout the year) to Central Javanese homes; from Pulai, to Minang homes; and from Sitiung 5 to East Javanese, Sundanese and Minang homes—all covering the entire settlements.
- 21 Although here, I emphasize the conflicts among the Indonesian residents, there were also conflicts between the residents and our research team members (Box 5.2). Politics and religion are closely linked for many in Indonesia.
- 22 Matrilineal systems have often confused broader-scale actors. Davison (1997) discusses the problems created by colonial powers in southeastern Africa whose representatives considered matrilineality to characterize an earlier stage in human evolution. Spall (2016) describes the Christian church's preaching against matrilineal inheritance in Angola, concluding,

Indeed, fathers' responsibility for their children seemed to be growing, with the influence of maternal uncles declining in the face of state legislation limiting inheritance to spouses and children (rather than siblings, nephews and nieces) and churches preaching against matrilineal inheritance.

(p. 157)

- See also Kato (1982) for good discussion of matriliney's capacity to endure in West Sumatra.
- 23 Peletz (1995) notes that "Malay societies typically gloss over the strong emphases on matrifocality . . . and matrilinearity characteristic of all Malay systems of social relations" (p. 81), as in Indonesia.
 - 24 The fourth clan head was away making money.
 - 25 The highest official I ever saw in Long Segar, which admittedly was more remote, was the *Camat*, once. Extra-local officials in East Kalimantan were almost always Javanese men, appointed by higher-level government officials.
 - 26 Cf. Long Segar, where both young women and men served on formal occasions.
 - 27 Kato's (1982) work suggests that these folks may have initially migrated to this area in the 17th century (though possibly as early as the 15th, p. 112) in search of gold—a resource women still panned for in the Batang Hari River.
 - 28 See Kahin (1999) for a careful historical analysis of West Sumatran administrative structures and Vel and Bednerb (2015) for a nice update on how the Minangkabau have creatively adapted and made use of the changes wrought after Indonesia's 2001 decentralization, returning desired aspects of the earlier *nagari* system of local governance. Vel and Bednerb mention also the "triangle of state-*adat* [custom]-religion" (p. 496)—evident in the mid-1980s as well: the elements I chose for the Minang harp itself.
 - 29 This refers to communities that were moved en masse, in this case the area now inundated by the Gajah Mungkur dam.
 - 30 People answered this question variably: Some people were extremely poor on Java and felt wealthy with the minimal amenities available in Sitiung; others, particularly those who moved to make way for the Wonogiri dam or to escape Galunggung's eruption, had been better off on Java.
 - 31 Such submissiveness was also common among Javanese women, who accepted family planning required by official policy with the same spirit.
 - 32 Consider the strong norm on sharing (and generalized reciprocity) among the Kenyah and the sort of 'Image of Limited Good' (Foster 1965) reflected here in this context

once termed 'peasant'. Thanks to Michael Cummings for reminding me of this, in different terms.

- 33 This *suku* is Minang for 'clan', unlike the Indonesian cognate meaning 'ethnic group'.
- 34 This may have reflected cultural influence from the nearby patrilineal Jambi ethnic group, reminiscent of the ethnic continua emphasized by Kahn (1999) and the ethnic ambiguity discussed in Li (1999b).
- 35 When clan decisions were being made however, the men were not so marginalized.
- 36 Davison (1997) reminds us that marginalization equally characterizes in-marrying women in patrilineal groups.
- 37 E.g., coffee, rambutan, bananas, stink bean, coconut, lemon, papaya—planted among rubber trees and in home gardens.
- 38 On 8 January 1986, I weeded with Minang women for two hours while my assistant sat watching us, never lifting a finger, answering my questions and translating as needed. I did see one old man weeding and one handicapped man harvesting, on other days.
- 39 Koto Padang was a *korong* (administrative district) of the *Kenagarian* Sialang Gaung, in Sawahlunto/Sijunjung.
- 40 Similar inaccurate self-deprecatory remarks were also common among the Kenyah, in recognition of the uncomplimentary views other ethnic groups held of them.
- 41 During the first year of habitation, 1983–1984, the people were busy with all the myriad tasks involved in making their homes and community livable. They also were able to survive on the government rice subsidies during this first year.
- 42 A different perception from American notions of the frontier—a rather central meme in white American ideology.
- 43 Kato (1982) also noted the lower rates of expedition-making in the *rantau*, with an estimate of 8% in Sawahlunto–Sijunjung, the Kabupaten in which Sitiung was located (p. 143).
- 44 False rumours about one of our team members' purported religious activities (see Box 5.2) heightened local tension about my own motivations. There were many local beliefs about the tricks Christians purportedly played to gain converts. My help to a woman in danger of dying in childbirth was a major help in overcoming community reservations (Colfer 1992). Initially the level of suspicion was high, as it had remained in Bushler Bay, where there was less intellectual interest in our work.
- 45 Lending some credence to this interpretation relating to the Sundanese: "Although men may appear to be competing for the women, more significant is their jousting with other men for prestige" (Cooper 2000, p. 627)" [quoted in Spiller 2010, p. 40].
- 46 Dody and Omar are Sundanese; Obing's ethnicity is not recorded.
- 47 *Jata* is the benefits provided to transmigrants by the government, including monthly food and agricultural equipment, during the first year (1983). The former was very important in Sitiung 5, where crops had already failed when we arrived.
- 48 Wessing (1999) seeks evidence of a strong love of forests in West Java without much success (except historically and among some remnant populations like the Baduy and the Kasepuhan). The collection by McKay (2013) makes a more convincing argument for the role of nature and forests among the Minang.
- 49 www.forestpeoples.org/en/palm-oil-rspo/press-release/2019/press-release-report-shows-widespread-human-rights-violations: This website, which includes discussion of West Sumatra's problems with the oil palm giant, Wilmar, suggests problems similar to those found in East Kalimantan (Chapter 7).

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