

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JHM-15
LONG IKIS

P.O. Box 206
Samarinda, East Kalimantan
Indonesia
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Mr. Peter Bird Martin
Executive Director
Institute of Current World Affairs
4 West Wheelock Street
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Dear Peter,

A racket of gongs, drums, and a crowd of a couple of hundred people formed a protective ring around four young men. Straddling elaborately decorated plywood cutouts of stylized horses, the men strutted and dance-fought in macho postures. Under the late morning sun, they circled, backed, reared, and blocked each other's attacks in a combination of horse-motions and silat, Indonesia's best-known martial art. Every few minutes, one of the dancers would lurch to a huge enamel basin filled with rice wine, plunge his face in, and gulp until a couple of older men pulled him up and shoved him back toward the other dancers.

After about a half hour, the pattern of the dance broke, and each man sped off into his own horse-world, entranced by the dance rhythm, the music, the scorching sun, the potent drink, and calls from the crowd. Nostrils flaring, heads switching sharply from side to side, feet kicking up small clouds of dust, the spirit of the horse had responded to the summons of the kuda lumping dancers. Later on, the dancers progressed through the animal world, absorbing spirits of wild boars and even chickens. One kuda lumping team after another stepped into the circle, as the afternoon heat mounted. Experienced dancers alternated with school-age groups (who drank orange syrup instead of the older dancers' rice wine) who followed the horse steps meticulously, but ended their performance at the point where more experienced dancers would have gone into trance. Twice in the course of the day, spectators were suddenly struck by outrageous animal spirits. Immediately pulled into the dance, these men were wilder and less predictable than the regular teams, much to everyone's amusement.

The kuda lumping dance comes from Java, a traditional "safety valve" release from the respectful reserve that is recognized by people all over Indonesia as fundamental to Javanese character and social life. That this dance was the highlight of Independence Day celebrations (a week late) in Long Ikis, in East Kalimantan's southernmost district, Pasir, is remarkable. It is one testimony to the profound transformations taking place in this region as the result of national development policies that promote migration from densely populated Java to the "outer islands," including Kalimantan, supported by massive clearing of forest land for new Transmigration settlements.

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People wanting to see Development in Pasir normally head straight for the large oil palm plantation begun in 1984 by one of Indonesia's state-owned agricultural enterprises, PTP VI. The regional development planning office staff in Tanah Grogot, Pasir's very sleepy capitol, actually seemed happy that I had come to see something else, in search of locally based alternatives with less drastic effects on the land. The head of the office, a very young man named Ibnu Nirwani, went over some basic regional statistics with me, and explained how some recent changes in Long Ikis fit in with major areawide patterns. The area's population began to grow rapidly around the time the first commercial loggers came in the late 1960s. The subdistrict of Long Ikis was one of the fastest-growing, with two major logging roads used by five different companies. Four of the five companies had ceased operations by 1985, but in the early 1980s the upgrading and paving of the portion of the Trans-Kalimantan highway running through Long Ikis had brought new vitality to the areas by the road, and promoted the growth of a town at the junction of the highway with the soon-to-be abandoned logging road. In 1984, land clearing was well under way for the oil palm plantation, and the first Transmigrants, who would be settled in new villages within the plantation, had begun to arrive. In the past five years, Long Ikis subdistrict (kecamatan) population has doubled, to about 25,500 people. New migrants and their children born in Long Ikis now outnumber the original ethnic Pasir population.

I asked about rattan cultivation in the area, since that was one of the major things I'd come to see. This form of "agro-forestry" has a long history in Pasir, where rattan has been one of the region's most reliable sources of cash. The planning staff had noted the potential, and identified rattan cultivation as one of the only clear economic opportunities for the more backward, isolated areas of the district. Ibnu was excited to give me a copy of the planning staff's favorite project proposal of last year, which called for extending traditional-type rattan gardens onto several thousand hectares of land that is officially designated as forest, but has actually been cleared, for the most part, by the shifting cultivator villagers who would be assisted in growing rattan as part of the project. While many of these farmers are already cultivating rattan, they have no legal protection and very weak land rights, because they are based on adat law provisions only partially recognized in Indonesian national law. The project would provide rattan growers with technical assistance. Rattan growers who would plant, maintain, and harvest new gardens with guaranteed use rights. Much of the technical help would be based on very recent rattan culture research, and would be paid for out of reforestation guarantee funds forfeited by the logging companies that had ceased operations in Pasir. (The guarantee funds, or Dana Jaminan Reboisasi, were levied on logging companies at US \$4 per cubic meter of timber cut from their concession areas. Of the 10 logging companies that once operated throughout Pasir, only one is still there.) The project statement included detailed benefit/cost estimates, and some of the most down-to-earth, pro-conservation language I have seen in any Kalimantan development document. Unfortunately, the project was turned down by "higher-ups" in part because the funding sources required called for too much inter-agency cooperation, and along unorthodox lines.

The planners were ^{still} somewhat perplexed when I explained that I was going to look at environment and development issues in Long Ikis, rather than

some other part of Pasir since, in their view, the only exciting thing happening in Long Ikis was the growth of the oil palm plantation and Transmigration project. They pointed out the rest of the region's development highlights on a 1:250,000 scale map and, indeed, compared to all of these projects, I admitted that there was probably little going on in the villages of the Long Ikis hills. But that was the point: I wanted to see what was happening in an area where there is "nothing going on."

Environmental and social changes associated with -- if not completely caused by -- major "development projects" often have profound effects on areas where nothing appears to be going on at first glance. People residing near, but not in, development "project areas" often find themselves passive objects of development, whether the results help or harm them. Coping with and overcoming this sense of having been relegated to secondary, marginal status in Pasir's development seems to define many people's assessments of their future prospects in two villages I visited in the Long Ikis hills, Tiwei and Belimbing. People there are devising some innovative ways of making a viable place for themselves straddling a rapidly changing market economy and older, more traditional ways of life, while facing the prospect that they might be evicted from lands they consider theirs by the expanding palm oil plantation.

Within a couple of hours after arriving in Tiwei, a village of 142 people, 38 kilometers up the almost impassable former logging road from the newly paved highway, I had met at least one person from almost all of the village's 28 households. With 16 other people from Tiwei, I rode into the village in the Toyota "Jeep" of the one trader still brave, foolish, or greedy enough to take a four-wheel vehicle up the disintegrating road that far. I was welcomed by Lambu Yulipa, who took a break from turning the coffee beans drying on a mat in the sun in front of her house. Calling one of her seven children to carry the box of provisions I had brought from the Toyota to her kitchen, we apologized to each other for no vegetables -- me, for having come the day before the twice-weekly market, so I wasn't able to find any vegetables worth buying before we left in the morning; her, because no one was making vegetable gardens yet, since the weather had been too wet to start clearing ladang land, where she was planning to start a new garden. We established that we were the same age, 31, and she laughed that despite a hard life and seven children, she has no grey hairs and I've got plenty. She mentioned that her husband, the village head, was out in the forest, but would probably be back by dark. She was hoping he'd bring fish for dinner.

As I went to bathe in the Tiwei River, I was surprised to find it so clear that pebbles gleamed, even chest-deep in water. I wondered if it had been that clear when the loggers were still in the area, and learned that the village was lucky: there had been no logging close enough to the Tiwei's source to cause the kind of erosion that muddies so many of Kalimantan's rivers in all but the most remote areas. As the sun set behind the highest treetops, the women left the river and the men began to arrive. A few had brought weighted round throw-nets (jala), and actually got some fish upstream from where the women had been bathing. As the evening insects took over from the afternoon cicadas, it was hard to imagine that only three years ago loaded logging trucks rumbled across the log bridge spanning the river, now only a grass and vine-covered footpath.

As the sky darkened, Lambu lit thick-wicked, smokey kerosene lamps that produced a weak, reddish light. The village head, Mayoriansyah, returned with the anticipated fish as Lambu and her oldest daughter boiled rice and made tea. Everyone ate gathered around the rice and fish, on the bamboo-slat kitchen floor, slipping fish-bones through the gaps between the bamboo. Housecats devoured anything left on the bones, below. Soon the younger kids crawled under a large mosquito net in a corner of the house, and the two babies were hung up in their sarong-slings, gently swinging a few hands-widths above the rattan-mat floor.

I presented my letters of introduction to Mayoriansyah from the Pasir district secretary and the Long Ikis camat (subdistrict head), explaining that I was doing research on development and the environment, and requesting permission to stay in the village for a few days. This introduction and permission process is repeated throughout rural Kalimantan; the legal presence of any stranger in a village for more than 48 hours depends on permission from the village head, who is also then responsible for visitors' safety as long as they are in the village. As we put the letters and formality away, I thought, again, of what an imposition this can be on the head family's household, since any guest bearing a letter from the camat is, by custom, invited to stay in the village head's home.

People began arriving, to sit and talk, eager to discuss all of the things that were "not going on" in Tiwei. I explained that I was interested in learning about how they were using the land around their village, what they take from the nearby forest, and about the crops they plant, especially rattan. When I mentioned rattan, several people laughed. It was the wrong time to see anyone harvesting rattan, they explained, but plenty of Tiwei people were planting it.

In July, the government surprised all but Indonesia's biggest rattan factory owners by slapping on a complete ban on exports of any but completely-finished rattan products, six months earlier than the date originally announced (see JHM-10). No exports of raw rattan or semi-finished products would be allowed in the future. The Indonesian rattan products industry, mainly making furniture and mats for export, still can't absorb anywhere near the amount of rattan harvested from gardens and gathered from the jungle in the past few years. So in most rattan producing areas of Indonesia, by mid-August (when I was in Long Ikis) the price of rattan had plummeted to only half of what it had been a year before. The cynical in Kalimantan believe that the sudden imposition of the ban on rattan exports was engineered by the large factory owners, mainly in Java, to provide them with a ready supply of dirt-cheap raw materials. Rattan producers in Tiwei responded rationally: no one is harvesting rattan when its price is only Rp. 250 to Rp. 300 per kilogram, as opposed to Rp. 450 to Rp. 550 last year. Rattan growers and gatherers throughout Indonesia are biding their time until the price goes up again for the most common species.

So, I asked, with prices so low, why was anyone still bothering to plant rattan? A few more people laughed. Mayoriansyah explained that he has great faith that Pasir's best-known product would make a comeback. Tiwei people planting rattan are looking to the long-term, since rattan gardens planted or revitalized now would be harvested ten, twenty, even thirty years in the future. And in the mean time, there is coffee. But coffee prices have also dropped to only half of last year's level, and now are only Rp. 1400 per kilogram.

For the first time last year, coffee brought more money to Tiwei than rattan, and several families began considering spending more of their time growing these two cash crops, less on their traditional swidden rice fields, even if that meant they might have to buy much of the rice they needed at inflated market prices.

But the most pressing topic the people gathered on the village head's floor wanted to talk about that night was their strategies of how to deal with the uncertainty caused by the coming of the oil palm plantation. This discussion was clearly taking place at least in part for my benefit, since it was conducted in Indonesian, rather than the local language of Pasir, which I don't understand. It seemed that the details had been reviewed and reconsidered many times in the past few months.

In 1987, surveyors from PTP VI, the plantation company, had placed markers cutting through Tiwei to show the border of possible expansion for the plantation. Most of the people I asked that night and later expected that at least some of Tiwei's land would be cleared for oil palms in the near future, including many of the best coffee and rattan gardens. The village center, where most of the houses were located, was also within the proposed plantation expansion area. Lambu had become upset when the border markers were erected, bright numbered white posts claiming the land where several hundred of her coffee trees were just beginning to bear harvestable fruit. Recent experiences in nearby villages, including those where several Tiwei spouses still have family, warned Tiwei residents what to expect if the plantation took their land, and they were apprehensive.

When the markers went up for the plantation borders in Tiwei, company staff had told villagers that if their land was cleared for the plantation, they would get priority for resettlement in the Transmigration sites, and would receive a basic house, oil palm land, a garden plot, and moving-in expenses identical to the standard package provided to all of the new settlers at the plantation's People's Nucleus Estate (Perkebunan Inti Rakyat, or PIR, as it is usually called). I mentioned that the district development planners had told me the plantation would not actually use all of the 83,000 hectares the governor had designated for it, and might return up to 30,000 hectares for legal redesignation, probably with some sort of forest status. No one had heard of this possibility, and people seemed to find it encouraging.

One man got particular satisfaction hearing that the PTP would give up rights to some of the designated land. Sani, whose parents came from Tiwei, but who grew up in Balikpapan until he was a teenager, was especially bitter about plans to take Long Ikis land for the oil palm plantation. His grandfather had held a deed, granted by Pasir's sultan to his grandfather, five generations ago, to 10,000 hectares of "rattan garden land" included in the designated plantation area. Sani said that his grandfather had been "tricked" into giving up all claims to his legacy by East Kalimantan's vice governor when plans for the oil palm plantation were being drawn up in the 1970s. While such land claims have been of questionable legal status since independence, and other villagers thought the way Sani harped on the subject to be silly, they sympathized with his frustration at the loss of hereditary social status inherent in even such a dubious claim.

There was a great deal of confusion in Tiwei about whether people would receive any compensation for land, rattan or coffee gardens, crops, and trees in the forest owned by customary law that would be destroyed by the plantation expansion. They had been told that no compensation would be paid for land, since under Indonesian law the land technically belongs to the state, which can give it to a state-owned enterprise in the name of development. The PTP staff that explained the border markers also told them that the house, land, etc. supplied to local Transmigrants would be adequate compensation for their loss of village customary right land and other property. Yet, a couple of Tiwei people explained that they knew cash payments had been made when the PTP took over land in nearby villages. (Later on, I asked PTP VI site managers about this. With some embarrassment, one admitted that even though the terms of the World Bank loan financing much of the plantation development prohibited compensation payments to people displaced by the project, villagers had recently received payments from the project's land clearing contractors. Technically, these payments were not compensation for land or crops, but fees for "land clearing services," as many of the villagers cut trees and took out rattan and other valuable forest products before the contractors bulldozed everything on their adat land.)

During the time I stayed in Tiwei, and later in Belimbing, a three-hour walk away, the camat had scheduled meetings to promote village political organizations aimed at supporting government development programs in rural areas. A few villagers were hoping to use the rare official visit as an opportunity to ask what was happening with plans to take over their land. On the appointed day, in Tiwei, the whole village, dressed in their best clothes, waited near the village center rather than going out to their coffee or rattan, or to work in the more distant forest. Neither the camat nor his assistant ever showed up, everyone lost a day of work, and the village's future is still a mystery.

The uncertainty was having a disruptive effect. Major family decisions were being made with plans for how to back out of them; the possibility of being evicted in the next year or two seemed to affect choices on almost everything. There were some positive results: while many of the women were annoyed by not being able to plan for improvements in garden plantings, village houses, and field shelters, the possible move was one of their motivations for attending the women's literacy classes just started by the wife of one of the three school teachers at Tiwei's new elementary school. The women did not want to feel ashamed about not being able to read if they were confronted with new neighbors in a Transmigration village.

Several of the men pointed out that the uncertainty was affecting their decisions on whether to plant new rattan or coffee kebun (gardens), since it was entirely possible that new kebun planted within the PIR borders might never be harvested. In trying to figure out where existing kebun are located and where people are putting new ones, I expected to learn that everyone is meticulously avoiding investing any energy in areas within the PIR boundaries, except perhaps to harvest old rattan gardens before they are destroyed. While a few of the most conservative people are staying away from the PIR expansion area, many others are deliberately working within the proposed PIR boundaries. Their rationale is not unsound. Much of the best land within the village's area is within the PIR expansion boundaries, and many of the best old kebun are located there, particularly old rattan in healthy old secondary forest. Several households are devoting an enormous amount of work

to rejuvenating these old gardens by promoting the growth of young shoots where they are found in high concentrations. But they are also taking the almost unheard-of step of marking borders of the old rattan gardens with bark slashes and red paint blazes on trees around the peripheries! In Pasir custom, even long-abandoned rattan gardens planted by a family's ancestors are clearly differentiated from other secondary forest in local concepts of land use. And since almost everyone in the village is related to everyone else, virtually anyone who wants to claim an abandoned garden can figure out some hereditary basis for doing so. Rejuvenating these old gardens while maintaining large hardwood trees on the land is producing one of Kalimantan's most interesting, profitable, and environmentally conservative agro-forestry systems.

There has also been an upsurge in registration of kebun lands in village records, strongly encouraged by the village head. While these local registrations do not confer legal title to the land, they can be used in intra-village land disputes, and serve as confirmation of adat claims. They may also be used in future attempts to deal with the PTP and regional authorities on land issues. (And the regional authorities may use them in future attempts to levy taxes on the village.)

The village head hopes that if the PTP is unwilling to pay compensation for kebun that may be destroyed in plantation expansion, the village's land use records and kebun registrations could be used to show the high productivity of the land in its current condition. Perhaps the PTP would then agree to spare the village's kebun land, as well as other lands deemed essential for Tiwei's continued existence. This strategy had partially succeeded in the nearby villages of Modang and Munggu. As plantations engulfed these two villages, many villagers' resistance to being displaced finally convinced the PTP and regional government to allow a narrow band of land to remain around these villages for traditional use. In Munggu's case (where the expanding plantation is rubber rather than oil palms) the rationale was that many of the households in the village were older people who were technically beyond the age where they could qualify to receive the full package of Transmigration program benefits. If they moved into Transmigration sites, it would have to be with their children, and Munggu has a strong tradition of independent old age and nuclear family households. In Modang, along the Trans-Kalimantan Highway, the effort to retain some local control of village lands took more drastic measures. After long negotiations and arguments, villagers opted for more direct action. When the land clearing contractors' chainsaw operators and bulldozers came to level the village's kebun and forests, Modang people stood on their land and refused to budge. They implored the land clearing staff not to ruin their kebun (there are whisperings that they threatened, as well), and the contractors' workers refused to move onto land that was so defended. Eventually, all of the parties sat down to negotiate again, agreeing to leave a substantial portion of the village's customary land intact, including many of its famous rattan gardens. And a one kilometer band is left on either side of the highway by PTP land clearing, with the regional government's insistence that these areas can best be developed with private efforts rather than direct government investments. In other areas of land clearing, however, villagers report that army personnel accompany land clearing contract crews in order to deal with any opposition.

With the possibility that much of the village's land would be taken by the plantation, Tiwei people began to wonder how much land they really need to continue the kind of life they have now, but with improving standards of living and higher cash income. Here is an outline of what they figured out, confirmed by a survey I did in the village, (I'm aware of ICWA's negative policy on Fellows conducting surveys, but the questions were always good conversation-starters, and gave me an opportunity to talk with over half the adults in Tiwei.) The estimates assume a stable population, not too unreasonable since the village's high birth rate has recently been balanced by some out-migration. (In this case, six families figured they were destined to be moved anyway, and joined one of the Transmigration projects. The men from these families frequently return to Tiwei while collecting jungle produce or help on remaining family's land. They complain of the difficulty of making ends meet on the Rp. 18,000 per month paid for their work on the oil palms plus the produce of their house-gardens there. This has not encouraged their relatives and former neighbors remaining in Tiwei.)

Tiwei residents generally agree that there are 300 hectares of rattan gardens in their customary land, including about 60 hectares of currently "active" gardens -- recently planted, harvested, or rejuvenated -- and inherited garden lands that could be rejuvenated. The families that cultivate rattan or simply harvest old gardens, about three-quarters of Tiwei's households, have between one and five hectares of "active" rattan kebun each. The average area of "active" kebun is about two hectares per household, with average harvests last year of about 3670 kilograms. (This brought in about Rp. 214,000 -- US \$130 -- equivalent to over two months of a typical urban salary in East Kalimantan.) There seems to be a consensus that five hectares is the maximum area of rattan kebun one household can handle on an active basis.

In addition to the rattan, there are now 68 hectares of mature coffee gardens around Tiwei, and 20 additional hectares not yet producing fruit suitable for harvest. The average is about three hectares of coffee per household, and virtually all of Tiwei's permanent residents have some coffee. Average coffee sales were about 138 kilograms per household last year (bringing in over Rp. 281,000). Because of the fairly constant levels of work needed to harvest coffee and take care of the trees, people feel that few households would ever be able to work more than four hectares of coffee gardens.

Figuring out land requirements for Tiwei's system of long fallow rotation ladang rice is a bit more complicated. In recent years, Tiwei has been clearing between 10 and 15 hectares of secondary forest per year for new ladang. (This secondary forest has been between 7 and 30 years old, some of it containing old rattan gardens.) In the future, to ensure that the site of the village's ladang land would be within an hour's walk of the village center and most people's houses, a ten-year rotation seemed to be acceptable to the group that got together at the village head's house most nights that I was in Tiwei. (This would also allow one rattan harvest on the old ladang before they would be cleared again.) The "average" Tiwei household, with five people to feed, opens one-and-a-half to two hectares of new ladang in a three-year period. No one could imagine the need to open any more land than they do now, assuming the land was "good," in a suitable location with old enough growth. So assuming a ten-year rotation with 14 hectares of new ladang opened each year, Tiwei would need 140

hectares of land for padi cultivation. So assuming increased production of rattan and coffee in the future (or at least the possibility that active rattan and coffee kebun could be extended beyond their current areas) but consistent use of ladang area, the total amount of land needed for staple food and cash crop production would be 140 hectares for ladang, 140 hectares for rattan gardens, and 112 hectares for coffee (assuming a maximum of 5 hectares per household for rattan, and 4 hectares for coffee). This gives a total of 392 hectares for the village, or 14 hectares per household.

Tiwei's land use planners enjoyed playing with these numbers. They pointed out, for example, that by growing rattan harvest on the ladang land during the fallow between padi rotations, you could effectively increase the area (and yields) of the village's rattan gardens without raising the total amount of land used. They also pointed out that if a family uses an average of two hectares of new ladang in three years (a hectare per year for the two years it opens a new field, and a year when no new land is cleared) the amount of land the village would need for ladang would be 187 rather than 140 hectares.

In addition to the crop and kebun land, Tiwei's current standard of living is highly dependent on access to extensive areas of old growth forest around the village. While some of this has been selectively logged, the most essential areas for hunting, gathering useful plants, and building materials are the swamp forests and ironwood (ulin) stands, which local adat recognizes as protected areas, not to be cleared. Luckily, the village's 700 hectares of ulin forest are not included within the PTP extension boundaries.

Tiwei people are aware that their style of extensive land and forest use requires considerably more land for a family to maintain an acceptable and improving standard of living than the $3 \frac{1}{4}$ hectares that the PIR/Transmigration project allocates to each household. But they consider their use of the land to be quite conservative and thrifty, and in no way wasteful or greedy. This is contrary to much of Indonesia's national land use policies (almost a creed) which are strongly oriented toward labor-intensive cultivation of small land areas, with heavy use of fertilizer and pest control systems. This model developed in Java, land-scarce and densely populated, with rich volcanic soils and a well developed market for agricultural surplus. It does not necessarily make sense in Kalimantan, except in development projects with heavy capital investments and high operating costs. Tiwei people have become self-conscious about their "primitive" farming methods. But they also point out that without the use of fertilizers, pesticides, or purchased seeds, they don't need to borrow money. And when the prices of the things they sell fall, as they did this year, Tiwei people can most of what they need for daily life from the forests and rivers around their village.

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After coming down from almost two weeks in Tiwei and Belimbing, I spent a few days at the Transmigration project/oil palm plantation. PTP VI managers explained that about 17,000 hectares had already been cleared for the project, and 6000 transmigrant families had been settled in new villages. At this time, definite plans have only been made to clear about 5500 hectares more, and bring in about 3000 more families, including up to 20 percent "local Transmigrants." The

company had made no definite decisions about what to do with the rest of the land designated for it to develop by the governor. With a total investment of about US \$181 million since 1984, most of the major capital spending for the project had been completed, and a new palm oil processing plant had begun operations a few hours per week. (I calculated to myself: \$181 million for 9000 families, even assuming no further investment was already over \$20,000 per family...I wondered what a family in Tiwei could do with that amount of money, or a family anywhere in Indonesia, for that matter.) The Indonesian government had supplied 51 percent of this amount (\$92 million) while about 34 percent (\$62.1 million) had come from a World Bank loan. British foreign aid had supplied another 11 percent, with 3 percent from "supplier credit." Giyanto, an agricultural engineer who is a PTP VI site manager, was happy to recite these and many other figures for me, have the palm oil factory engineers give me a tour of the plant, and free access to new village sites.

Before leaving the area, I asked him if he knew whether there were any plans to clear land in the village of Tiwei. He thought for a moment and replied: no. That was decided last year, after surveys in Long Ikis were completed. The land the governor had designated for possible use by the PTP in Tiwei was found to be too rocky, swampy, or steep for growing oil palms, and would not be needed. I asked if the company had informed the district government of that, and if the people in Tiwei could be told, to release them from their sense of being in a state of limbo. As far as he knew, no official decision on the matter had been made, let alone conveyed to anyone. Those were matters to be dealt with higher up. The company wanted to retain its options for awhile... I thought about going back to Tiwei, and explaining what I had learned. What if the company kept its options on the Tiwei land, and perhaps in the future used it for something other than oil palms? I realized that the most I could really do was explain that there had been no official decision, something that the people in Tiwei already knew.

In the last couple of days before leaving Long Ikis, I got to know some of the Transmigrants who had recognized me from the kuda lumping dance. The wildness of that afternoon seemed almost impossible from the dancers I met when they were weeding the vegetable gardens that were just beginning to green the bare soil around their houses. One of their wives, Sri, joked about the growth of interest in the village in kuda lumping. Most of these guys would never have done anything like that in Java. It must be the influence of the jungle, she joked.

I looked around the new village, and could see no sign of any forest to the horizon. As Sri waved goodbye to the minibus I rode back toward Balikpapan, I wondered what my responsibility was to tell the people in Tiwei, to tell them what I had learned about the future of their land. Coming for a few weeks, watching, asking questions, and then leaving, what right did I have to stick my hand in anything?

I've written to Lambu and Mayoriansyah, along with the pictures of the village I sent them. And I wonder when the camat will visit Tiwei...

Judith Mayer

