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Good to produce, good to share: Food, hunger, and social values in a contemporary Mentawaian community, Indonesia

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Propositions
Relating to the Dissertation

Good to Produce, Good to Share:
Food, Hunger, and Social Values
in a Contemporary Mentawai Community, Indonesia

By Darmanto

1. The official concern about food insecurity in the Mentawai Archipelago is geared toward a bias of grain production and consumption and the ability to access modern infrastructures, but it does not reflect the actual status of food availability, access, utilization, and stability (this thesis).
2. The claim of being hungry (*malaje*) does not refer to a lack or absence of food, but it is a social and cultural statement about the lack of sharing and eating together and the emergence of social hierarchy and inequality (this thesis).
3. Planting sago, cultivating taro, or tending pigs is not just about producing sustenance necessary for biological needs and physical satisfaction but it can better be understood as part of the broader process of constructing social persons and reproducing social institutions (this thesis).
4. Sharing and eating food together are creative and essential cultural devices with the ultimate aim not to control gluttony and avarice but to bring the most important social values, namely equality and egalitarian, into being (this thesis).
5. Food is neither just a symbolic and social metaphor ('good to think') as the structuralists have argued nor basic material ('good to eat') as the cultural materialists have proposed, separate from the dynamic functioning of a social reproduction but an active and transformative social medium which can reaffirm, transform, or realign social processes.
6. Hunger is not a universal biological phenomenon as the result of scarcity, food shortage, or unequal distribution of food and power but a culturally-specific subjective and embodied experience, endowed with morally significant meanings, emotions, and sensations.
7. Anthropology of food has much devoted to examining symbolic, the nutritional, and the political aspects of an edible item but lacked attention to the importance of mundane human activities and actions related to food (see for instance, cooking and eating together that fosters egalitarian ethos and maintains kinship relations or cultivating sago that generate social actor's autonomy).
8. The importance of sharing and eating food indicates that humans are not entirely rational-economic animals driven by self-interest calculation and competitiveness but they are also social beings longing for generosity, solidarity, and relatedness.
9. Knowing Siberut as a research site and being known on the island for a long time does not make Siberut the easiest place for doing ethnographic research.
10. Producing a dissertation is, metaphorically speaking, not very different from producing food in a Mentawai community, or scoring a goal in a football match: the student gets the credit, the pig keeper gets his prestige, the striker is celebrated, but the ultimate happiness in all cases is attributed to and shared by the whole team (family, supervisors, friends, and colleagues).