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Products and producers of social and political change: elite activism and politicking in the Mentawai Archipelago, Indonesia
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4 NGOs

2-IX-2002, Maileppet, Siberut

Just arrived in Maileppet together with Nina and four staff members from Yayasan Laggai Simaeru (YLS). We have been travelling to Siberut, or *turun ke lapangan* (descending to the field) in order to implement YLS' first field activities sponsored by UNESCO.¹⁰³ In the next twenty days we will visit three settlements in the Rereiket area in the interior of Siberut, e.g. Buttui, Attabai and Sakaliou. The village of Ugai will be used as a base camp. Each of the settlements will be visited for three or four days during which sowing and cooking activities with the women from the local communities will be implemented. During evening hours workshops about tourism and preservation of local culture are on the agenda. Nina, a 20-year old Batak girl from Medan is especially hired for the organisation of these workshops. Apart from making my canoe available for transportation during this trip, I have promised the UNESCO consultant to look into the feasibility of constructing a water gravitation system, supplying the settlement of Sakaliou with potable water.

4-IX-2002, Ugai, Siberut

Today we have added two elderly women who will be responsible for the sowing and cooking activities and a missionary nurse from Muara Siberut to the team. The nurse will provide healthcare consultations twice a day in each of the settlements to be visited. Together with my field assistant, Lukman, and boat operator, Samuel, the team now counts eleven people. Quite an impressive team. Two of the YLS staff I have never met before. Taking into account the division of tasks, it seems that the four YLS staff are basically without a clearly determined task. That, however, does not affect the good mood. The team is obviously excited and our cheerful chatter is absorbed by the dense vegetation on the riverbanks while we boat upriver. Amongst other things the canoe is packed with a lot of newly purchased camping gear brought by the YLS staff. They even brought a large tent. Seeing all this equipment, I start having doubts about my own baggage consisting of one waterproof bag with clothes, a mosquito net, a notebook, a flashlight, my photo camera and twenty kilos of rice. Somebody brought the wrong equipment. Hope it is not me.

¹⁰³ Both politicians and people working for the Padang-based NGOs are 'descending to the field' when they are to run campaigns or to implement project activities on the Mentawai Island. The term *turun* (descending) indicates that both politicians and NGO personnel ascribe themselves a superordinate position with regard to the communities on the Mentawai Islands. Such stands in contrast to the phrase *pulang kampung* (going home) when travelling to Mentawai without a political or project agenda.

8-IX-2002, Buttui, Siberut

After having spent four days in Ugai during which we nearly finished all twenty kilos of rice, we have arrived in Buttui today. It has been raining during the last four days. Whereas there were no activities planned in Ugai, we have killed time by playing domino and hanging around in the village. Over the last few days this event has started to remind me of the summer camps in the 1990s when I used to take a bunch of over-excited teenagers horseback riding. While the horseback riding is off course absent here, other typical summer camp activities like hiking, canoeing, swimming, campfires, chatting up and making out are cheerfully enjoyed by all. Meals for the team have not been organised in advance and are eventually prepared with whatever food available by the two elderly ladies, the missionary nurse and myself, as always assisted by Lukman and my boat operator.

The first meeting with the locals tonight is meant for the YLS team to introduce itself and introduce the workshop programme to the community. The locals started the meeting by introducing themselves using false names, creating a playful atmosphere. But despite the cheerful mood the locals have some serious questions they like to pose. Now that YLS is made responsible for the logistics with regard to the UNESCO-initiated Pinatoro Uma project, the locals rather discuss these new arrangements instead of the workshops ahead. Neither of the YLS staff members were able to adequately answer the questions posed. Instead they have spent considerable time quarrelling with each other over leadership and budgets, leaving the locals without a clear presentation of the arrangements between YLS and UNESCO, causing distrust and suspicion. Apart from myself, nobody has been taking notes in order to recollect the topics discussed.

10-IX-2002, Ugai, Siberut

Yesterday sixteen local women and all of their children attended the sowing and cooking workshops organised by the two elderly ladies. Whereas there were not enough sowing materials it was decided to make kids cloths only. Later during the afternoon various sorts of cookies were produced. The cookies formed the starting point of irritations on behalf of the local women, as the cookies were not to be taken home but to be served during the evening workshops.

The evening workshops were attended by seven local men only. All turned out to be in a rowdy state of mind. Nina was wearing a very short pair of jeans and seemed rather nervous about her first workshop. I wonder why no one (not even Nani, the only female in the YLS staff, who is a Mentawaian herself) has taken the opportunity to inform Nina about the fact that for women to show your thighs is considered offensive in Mentawai. Because Nina does not master the Mentawaian language, her presentation was translated by one of the YLS staff. With the presentation being rather dull, the locals lost interest soon. They became noisy, walked around, prepared coffee while uttering naughty comments. A loud fart by one of the participants eventually marked the starting point of a new topic: the preservation of Mentawaian culture. Jimmy, one of the YLS staff I never met before, tried to get the attention of all present by slipping into teaching mode. But the participants were out of control and soon the meeting came to an inglorious end.

While part of the cookies produced during the afternoon were indeed served during yesterday's evening meeting, the remaining cookies were served as breakfast for the team this morning, confirming the suspicion of the local women that the team is making them bake cookies for the team to eat. Only five women attended the workshops today. The sowing activities that started yesterday were rapidly finalised and the following cooking workshop was also hastily finished. The team returned to Ugai before lunch.

12-IX-2002, Attabai, Siberut

Today we walked from Ugai to Attabai. Poor Nina has been in tears almost all day. She is exhausted and today's hike in her brand new jackboots made her feet blistering. Local communities were apparently not properly informed about the visit of the YLS team. Apart from several elderly women and children there seemed to be no one present in the settlement. One of the children was ordered to collect his parents from the field houses located in the gardens at considerable distance from the settlement. Tonight's workshops were cancelled.

15-IX-2002, Ugai, Siberut

After only one and a half days in Attabai, the team returned to Ugai yesterday. Today the YLS team convinced the local community in Ugai to sell them a piglet to be slaughtered for dinner. Mentawaians normally do not slaughter pigs just for dinner so it took the team quite some convincing power to persuade one of the locals to sell them a piglet. Once the piglet was handed over, no one in the team had a clue how to slaughter the animal. With obvious reluctance one of the locals slaughtered the piglet after which it was handed over to the kitchen team for further preparation. The locals were obviously not amused by this event and started to ask Yohannes, the Pinatoro Uma teacher, about the usefulness of the YLS team residing in their village. While locals may for the sake of cash income accept this kind of behaviour from tourists, they certainly did not seem inclined to accept it from fellow Mentawaians.

23-IX-2002, Padang

Today the YLS staff is meeting with Richard Paulsen, the UNESCO consultant. Whereas the YLS team did not have the time yet to produce a written report, reporting about the Rereiket fieldtrip is done orally. Justification for the finances used during this trip contains of one A4 paper that shows considerable overspending. Due to the negative balance, the honorary salaries of the two elderly ladies and Nina can not be paid. While both the elderly ladies and Nina are not present during this evaluation meeting, their salaries not being paid is easily accepted. Also striking is the lack of reflection on the events during the fieldtrip. Apart from Nina probably, whom I have seen in tears every day, the YLS staff did seem to have a splendid time. To my surprise the YLS staff did not at all seem to be disturbed by the deficits in their programme of work, their obvious detachment from their cultural background, and the fact that they jeopardised the position of the Pinatoro Uma teacher within the community while residing in his house. Striking was their lack of reflection on the events. They never seemed to wonder why people were farting during their meetings or why constantly diminishing numbers of people attended their workshops. Completely bypassing their own shortcomings and sometimes hilarious

performances, the YLS staff only talked about those funny, but treacherous locals and the, indeed huge, amounts of sugar they are able to consume in very little time. I am sure that the fact that they themselves caused disorder, distrust and had not been taken serious for just a single moment never came to their minds.

Introduction

During the 1980s and the 1990s the majority of Mentawaians who enjoyed higher education in Padang were not sure about what to do after their graduation. Those who had enjoyed specific or higher education from the church often returned to Mentawai in order to fulfil their *ikatan dinas*, but for those who went through more general university studies the prospect of finding employment in Mentawai was rather bleak, not to say non-existent, in those days. Whereas a return to Mentawai came with little other options than to become a farmer or a fisherman, most of the, mainly tertiary, educated Mentawaians decided to stay in Padang. They thought they stood a better chance finding employment in the city rather than on the Mentawai Islands. But despite their university degrees, finding employment in Padang turned out to be rather painstaking as well. In general sense people were not overly enthusiastic about employing a Mentawaiian. Many Mentawaians told me that they had faced multiple disappointing rejections based on discriminatory ethnic and religious grounds.

With not much else to do, the restless minds of these people soon focussed again on the Mentawai Archipelago and the multiple problems it faced. The increased analytical power and the fact that they had been detached from the Mentawai Archipelago for quite some time, enabled these people to look at Mentawai and its inhabitants from a new perspective (Eindhoven 2002). In the course of time they formed new insights and developed a certain political engagement. Rather than to categorise the lack of sound development on the Mentawai Islands as an intrinsic aspect of the backwardness of the Mentawaians, they started to blame the incompetent Padang-Pariaman policies as the sole cause of the wretched state of the archipelago. They simultaneously started to classify the loss of both cultural identity and natural resources on the islands as a threat to their ethnic singularity and an ecological disaster rather than an aspired outcome of a carefully considered development plan. While the cry for change and more access to local politics became stronger over time, the Mentawaians remained to have little to no real influence on the policies engineered on the mainland. Apart from one Mentawaiian, Agustinus Sabebege, holding a seat in the local parliament of the Padang-Pariaman district during the late 1990s, there were no Mentawaians involved in legislative functions. Due to the lack of direct political influence, several of the educated Mentawaians decided to address some of the problems identified by means of non-governmental interference. Inspired by both political as well as personal circumstances and most certainly fed by their experiences with organisations as IPPMEN and Yayasan Laggai Simaeru, the starting of one's own non-governmental organisation became a popular activity amongst the educated Mentawaians residing in Padang during the late 1990s. Sometimes enthused by the success of others, sometimes as an offshoot of an already existing organisation, the

number of local organisations kept on increasing at fast pace. By the turn of the century, I was able to count over 30 officially registered local organisations, all somehow focussing on the Mentawai Archipelago. Given the relatively small population of the Mentawai Archipelago, this rather overwhelming number of local organisations is in itself already a quite remarkable phenomenon. Adding to my curiosity was the fact that the composition of this collection of local organisations was not fixed. At times it was rather confusing to maintain track of the organisations. New organisations constantly popped-up while others silently disappeared, changed their names or were - as became obvious only later - just temporarily out of office to awake again from their dormancy as soon as new opportunities arose.

Apart from being a political act, many local organisations in Mentawai serve an income-generating purpose. Being without a job and an income, many Mentawaians residing in Padang started an NGO in order to get access to funds. And several local organisations have indeed been able to link themselves to influential donor organisations. The Mentawaiian discontent about the way in which their archipelago and the resources therein had been managed by those in power, was easily incorporated within the conservation rhetoric of international conservation agencies. Together these, often generous, conservation agencies have invested millions of dollars in programmes and projects aiming at conservation and sustainable development implemented by local organisations.

This chapter will start with general information about non-governmental organisations in Indonesia and those established for the Mentawai region in particular. This introduction is followed by the case studies of five local organisations active in Mentawai. Data for these case studies was collected by myself during field work in both Padang and Mentawai. In these case studies I describe the vision and mission statements of these organisations and their programmes of work. I also describe the predominantly difficult relationship of these organisations with both their constituencies and their donors. Rather than asking myself the question whether or not these NGOs succeeded in what they had planned – their lack of planning made it fairly impossible to answer this question to begin with – following Mosse (2005) I asked myself how succes is produced by the different parties involved in NGO-ing. Different from the first four organisations described in this chapter, I was personally involved in the fifth, Yayasan Kirekat Indonesia. Acting as a board member for the Dutch Kirekat Foundation, I was closely involved in the establishment as well as the financing of the healthcare project implemented by Yayasan Kirekat Indonesia, a local offspring of the Dutch Kirekat Foundation. This chapter is finalised with a rather elaborate conclusion where I present an analysis of modes of operation of local NGOs in the Mentawaiian setting.

Let's start an NGO!

While accurate data on the exact number of NGOs is lacking, it is believed that the number of NGOs in Indonesia has grown significantly from 10,000 in 1996 to around 70,000 in

2000 (Hadiwinata 2003: 1). The NGO movement is, however, not a new phenomenon for Indonesia. During the 1960s throughout the early 1980s NGOs in Indonesia were foremost dedicated to community development activities, assisting the New Order government in reaching out to the poorest; providing low cost healthcare, small credits and training on micro-enterprises (Hadiwinata 2003: VII). From the mid-1980s the New Order government further neutralised NGO activities as a manifestation of President Suharto's 'de-ideologisation' and 'de-politisation' strategies. No organisations, including NGOs, were allowed to pursue any ideology other than the *Pancasila* (the five moral principles) and they were not allowed to implement any activities without the government's consent. As a result Indonesian NGOs were unable to develop a strong ideological basis (considered crucial in generating a movement) and adopted a low-profile approach with regard to political controversies. After the fall of New Order regime, the post-Suharto government allowed the formation of new political organisations and the removal of all regulations controlling their activities. The impact of these new regulations was obvious. During the era of *Reformasi* that followed the fall of New Order regime, NGOs were able to openly disclose their (sometimes radical) identity and their numbers boomed (Hadiwinata 2003: 115).

The history of local organisations in Mentawai pretty much follows the national trend. While there was only a handful of registered organisations active in Mentawai during the 1980s, their numbers swiftly increased by six times at the least during the late 1990s. Most of the local organisations in Mentawai are registered as *yayasan* (foundation). Before law 16/2001 (later further specified in law 28/2004) became operative in August 2002, it was fairly easy to register a *yayasan* in Indonesia. A simple notarised deed, containing the articles of the foundation including the names of the people taking position in the first appointed board sufficed. Due to the alleged social and non-profit character of its activities, the *yayasan* enjoyed favourable tax benefits and only little regulation with regard to accountability of the finances. These easy conditions made the *yayasan* a popular form of NGO in Indonesia, especially in the areas of education and healthcare. The firm legal status of the *yayasan* furthermore allowed these NGOs to act as an enterprise (Hadiwinata 2003). Though income-generating business activities were thus allowed for the *yayasan*, its non-profit nature required the organisation to invest all revenues obtained from its business activities in its socially oriented purpose.¹⁰⁴

Despite the easy procedure, the registering of a *yayasan* requires a small starting capital. Whereas most Mentawaians did not have such capital themselves, they had to seek financial support from more wealthy individuals (e.g. local businessmen, teachers or foreign tourists) or persons with access to possible funds (e.g. people involved in the church, local government officials or overseas donors). It goes without saying that this financial dependency affected the relationship between the *yayasan* and the donor. Donors often determined the underlying idea of the organisation and exercised significant influence on their programme of work. Donors of starting capital were sometimes

¹⁰⁴ In conjunction with the minimal regulation, however, flows of finances within these organisations are often shadowy, creating an inviting environment for people to enrich themselves at the expense of the social nature of the *yayasan*.

responsible for the establishment of the local *yayasan* and therefore claimed part in the organisation's future programme of work, blurring the organisation's vision and mission in advance.

Apart from the starting capital, the registration of a *yayasan* furthermore required a board of three people at least; a chairman, a secretary and a treasurer. Despite the fact that the formation of the founder board is actually nothing more than a formality, this proved to be an issue over which Mentawaians tend to disagree with each other. In most instances the initiator of the *yayasan* also acts as the chairman and the organisation's director, rendering all decision-making power in his hands and making the position of treasurer as well as that of the secretary less interesting. This resulted in people occupying various positions in several organisations. One can be a director of one organisation while acting as the treasurer for another organisation. Despite the fact that fellow founder board members were often sought amongst close friends and relatives, distrust and envy amongst board members are common, resulting in NGOs with uncertain bases due to frequent shifts in people constituting the board. The world of Mentawaiian NGOs is a men's world. Amongst the founders of the Mentawaiian organisations there were no women. Only few organisations have at a later stage, when additional staff became recruited, employed a small number of women.

New organisations for the Mentawaiian region focus solely on Mentawai and in most instances on the island of Siberut in particular. In order to appeal to as many donors as possible, the organisations' overarching objectives are stated in broad terms, often oriented towards the empowerment of the Mentawaiian community in general. Fields of interest that are most often mentioned are economy, agriculture, education, tourism, healthcare, finances and access to natural resources as well as the sustainable use thereof. Advocacy is often also mentioned as a field of interest rather than a method of work. Most Mentawaiian NGOs do not have a predetermined annual programme of work and simultaneously lack an annual budget. As soon as NGOs link with a donor, a programme of work, often confined to the implementation of donor designed project activities only, is eventually formulated.

Whereas for most newly established *yayasan*, operational funds were not immediately available, new organisations often lacked offices, inventory and the means to pay their staff. As a result many of the newly established NGOs operated from one of the many Internet cafes in Padang. Staff was only hired when project funds become available and until that time activities of the voluntary board were often reduced to an absolute minimum. Organisations unable to attract a donor often remained hanging in this start-up phase. These organisations were not abolished but continued to exist in a sort of hibernation. Their names and that of their directors continued to linger, popping up every now and then at public consultation meetings and/or occasional protest actions. The first major concern to be tackled after operational funds became available was the setting up of an office. By far the majority of Mentawaiian NGOs hold office in Padang. Although the absence of facilities (e.g. electricity) and means of communication (e.g. telephone and Internet) on the Mentawai Islands make office holding in Padang

defensible, it simultaneously positioned the organisations at quite some distance, both physical as well as emotional, from their constituencies. While, as addressed in the previous chapter, there was already a gap to be recognised between the communities living on the Mentawai Islands and the Mentawaians that went to Padang to further their formal education, this positioning of the local NGOs in Padang has not helped to narrow that gap. It has, on the contrary, distanced the elite group of Mentawaians even further from their fellow Mentawaians on the islands. The fact that having an office is very important in the perception of many Mentawaians can be read from the fact that an office manager is often already appointed even before an actual office is found. Both the office and the business card in the hands of the organisation's director are the only two objects that give proof of the actual existence of the organisation, adding respect and status to the one making use of it.

Having access to an office is furthermore important because an office may simultaneously serve as permanent accommodation for (some of) the people involved in the organisation as well as their relatives. More than once I heard about intimate relationships being established in the office. Whereas cohabitation and affectionate acts such as kissing and even holding hands in public are not done in Padang, the office offers a perfect place to hang out and stay the night over.

Yayasan Kondisi

Established in 1986, Yayasan Kondisi is probably the first official Mentawai organisation. It were members of the Saleleubaja clan, closely connected to the Protestant church on the Pagai Islands, that established this organisation with the aim to assist Gereja Kristen Protestan Mentawai (GKPM), the Protestant church in Mentawai, with the spreading of the gospel and simultaneously strengthen the local protestant communities on the Pagai Islands. Yayasan Kondisi was primarily responsible for facilitating and financing activities of the Protestant Church amidst the Protestant communities on the Mentawai Islands. Apart from the close relationship with the church, Yayasan Kondisi also maintained a close relationship with PT Minas Pagai Lumber Corporation (MPLC), a logging company active on the Pagai Islands since the late 1970s. In order to finance the corporate structure of the Yayasan as well as its church-based activities, Yayasan Kondisi obtained funds from MPLC on a fairly regular basis.

Edison Saleleubaja, a Protestant reverend who had been active for the GKPM on both Sipora and the Pagai Islands since the early 1980s, became Yayasan Kondisi's managing director in 1996. Under Edison's supervision Yayasan Kondisi actively sought for a new sponsor whereas MPLC was under severe pressure from an anti-logging campaign. Owned and financed by an acquainted Jakarta-based Chinese businessman, PT Sinula Mentawai was established in 1997. Operating as part of the corporate structure of Yayasan Kondisi, PT Sinula Mentawai got involved in the fishing industry around the southern Mentawai

Islands.¹⁰⁵ A certain percentage of the gainings of PT Sinula Mentawai was transferred to Yayasan Kondisi, which after deduction of their expenses, transferred the remaining amount to the GKPM. In search of the approval of and cooperation with the locals on the southern Mentawai Islands, Yayasan Kondisi's activities mainly consisted of the 'conditioning' of these communities; enticing them to accept, or even better, to participate in the fishing business at hand. Edison's nephew, Yonlifran Siritoitet, was officially involved in Yayasan Kondisi from 1997 to 1998. During that time he acted as a *humas* (short for *hubungan masyarakat*), responsible for the relationship with the public. At a later stage Yonlifran worked directly for PT Sinula Mentawai. Local communities on the Pagai Islands could, however, not remember the implementation of any project activities by Yayasan Kondisi at any time in history. Moreover, many local people had never heard of Yayasan Kondisi altogether before I asked them about this organisation. The daily management of PT Sinula Mentawai was in the hands of a Padang-based Chinese who earlier worked for PT Hiureksa Perkasa in the same capacity.¹⁰⁶ Whereas both the business as well as the faces involved were the same, many local people understood PT Sinula Mentawai as a restart of PT Hiureksa Perkasa, which is explicitly not the case. When Edison was elected *bupati* in 2000, he withdrew from Yayasan Kondisi. This was also the moment that Yayasan Kondisi went again in sleeping mode.

Yayasan Suku Mentawai (YASUMI)

Based on an idea and financed by an engaged German tourist who visited Siberut during the early 1990s, Yulianus Sabola' established Yayasan Suku Mentawai, otherwise known as Yasumi. Yasumi was officially registered in October 1992. Yasumi's vision and mission statement is to empower the Mentawaian communities in order to enable them to partake more actively within the small-scale but booming local tourist industry of the 1990s that until that time had been mainly in the hands of mainland Minangkabau tourist guides and Minangkabau migrants residing on Siberut. In an attempt to break through the Minangkabau hegemony over the local tourist industry and get a fairer share in the profits, Yasumi opened a *posko* (post) in Muara Siberut from which Yulianus and his two younger brothers, Robinson and Parmen (who had just suspended his study at Universitas Kristen Indonesia (UKI) in Jakarta), start to run their own tourist business amidst the Minangkabau. However, the little experience Yulianus had as a tourist boat operator in the Rereiket area proved to be insufficient to withstand the skilful and well-organised practices of the Minangkabau. Above all they experienced difficulties in attracting sufficient tourists to make their trips to the hinterland lucrative. Whereas they lacked both the means and

¹⁰⁵ PT Sinula Mentawai was fishing for live coral fish, mainly *ikan kerapu* (grouper). This fish, collected by local communities by means of both blast and cyanide fishing methods, severely damaging the coral reefs in particular and the marine environment in general, was exported to mainly Hong Kong and Singapore.

¹⁰⁶ PT Hiureksa Perkasa, owned by Jakarta-based Chinese Paul Junaidi, was also involved in the fishing industry around the Mentawai Islands. PT Hiureksa Perkasa, however, earlier saw its operation permit discontinued due to the fact that they instructed or allowed local communities around Bulau Bugei (Siberut's east coast) to fish on protected coral species for them.

the courage to travel to Bukittinggi to collect tourists there, they instead concentrated on those tourists that had come to Padang with the intention to travel to Mentawai without a guide. But this recruiting of free-floating tourists, who normally eventually went with one of the organised trips after all, because travelling to Mentawai on one's own initiative often turned out to be too precarious, caused Yulianus and his brothers to time and again end up in conflicts with the *preman* (villains) in the harbour in Padang, who made every tourist and/or their guide pay for their presence in the harbour and now saw their incomes decimated by these newcomers in the market.

The ADB/MOF project

As part of Indonesia's five year Biodiversity Conservation Project, the Indonesian Directorate General for Forest Protection and Nature Conservation or Ditjen Perlindungan Hutan dan Pelestarian Alam (PHPA) has with the help of an international team of consultants prepared a so-called Integrated Conservation and Management Plan for Siberut in which the management of the in 1993 established Siberut National Park or Taman Nasional Siberut (TNS) is a principal issue.¹⁰⁷ For this project, that included both Siberut and the eastern Indonesian island of Flores, a multi million dollar loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) was obtained in 1993.¹⁰⁸ The main objective of the project was to assist the government in their efforts to conserve tropical forest ecosystems and biodiversity within protected areas such as the national parks on Siberut and Flores. On Siberut, a lot of preparing activities (e.g. mapping, demarcation, training of park staff and the construction of supportive infrastructure) were completed during the first years of the project (1993-1995). In the mean time, however, the project management experienced difficulties in finding a suitable local NGO for the implementation of those project activities that actively included local communities. According to the ADB final report, Sumatran-based NGO were either considered unsuitable or unwilling to work on Siberut and established local NGOs working on the island were simply absent (ABD 2001: 14).

Despite the knowledge that YASUMI was an organisation with a different focus and expertise, PHPA contracted YASUMI in early 1994 in order to act as an intermediary between local communities and the Siberut National Park. Knowing that YASUMI was a young and inexperienced organisation, PHPA provided YASUMI staff with a one-month training course about general NGO practices and the so-called IPAS/ICDP approach by which the PHPA project was run.¹⁰⁹ Several YASUMI staff members and 23, already by YASUMI identified so-called field extension agents, most of them native to the villages to

¹⁰⁷ PHPA is part of the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, Menteri Kehutanan (MENHUT).

¹⁰⁸ Flores and Siberut were chosen for their uniqueness, representativeness of the biographic region, economic potential, priority in the national Biodiversity Action Plan, complementarity with regional development programmes, and, quite remarkably, the apparently assumed fact that there was inadequate or no financing from other institutions.

¹⁰⁹ The project made use of the so-called Integrated Protected Area System (IPAS), later termed Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP) approach aiming at the improvement of the policy, planning, implementation, and monitoring capabilities of the institutions responsible for biodiversity conservation.

which they were attached in the project design, followed this training organised by the provincial forestry department in Padang (PHPA/MENHUT 1995). During the training, however, several of the YASUMI staff got involved in a car accident with the taxi with which they travelled from the training venue back to the city centre. Yulianus Sabola' died on the spot while his friend, Stefanus Salamao, who was also working as a reporter for the social commission of the Catholic church (KOMSSOS) at that time, died shortly after being hospitalised in Padang. After his tragic accident, Yulianus' younger brother, Robinson became the new chairman/director of YASUMI and Kortanius Sabeleake and Levi Sirirui were added to the staff. They continued the training and started to implement project activities soon afterwards. It was YASUMI's prime task to implement a so-called Preliminary Awareness Programme (PAP), aiming at the increased awareness of local communities living within and adjacent to Siberut National Park about the purpose of the park, the activities of the survey and mapping team of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences or Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI), and the ICDP planning team. YASUMI staff was furthermore involved in various mapping activities, where intensive negotiations with local communities were needed.

Robinson, being a less charismatic and resourceful person than Yulianus, lacked the competence and leadership capacities that were so characteristic for his elder brother. He turned out to be unable to forge a solid team out of the old and the new staff members. As a result the new team did not seem to be able to work together in a constructive manner and both Robinson and Kortanius left YASUMI as soon as the first phase of the PAP was completed. Robinson's younger brother, Parmen Sabola', only 24 years of age at the time, became the new director of YASUMI. Parmen continued the collaboration with TNS and conducted several pilots studies, based on which it was decided that the village of Sagulubbe, situated on Siberut's southwest coast, was to receive development assistance in the form of a seedling project. TNS made 37 million Rupiah available for YASUMI to distribute cocoa and nutmeg seedlings and to instruct local communities on how to go about the process of planting, nursing and harvesting. Local communities in Sagulubbe still remember that a disappointing number of seedlings (only a few dozens) were distributed, but they did not recollect any follow-up activities being implemented afterwards. Soon after the seedling project, TNS discontinued their cooperation with YASUMI. Reporting was unsatisfactory and imprecision and blank spots in YASUMI's financial reports made TNS believe that Parmen was an unreliable person. Local communities on their turn had learned to understand YASUMI as an untrustworthy organisation, bartering away their lands to an incomprehensible institute called Taman Nasional Siberut. In line with the intent and purpose of the park, YASUMI had introduced and explained TNS to local communities in terms of prohibitions and restrictions rather than in opportunities and possibilities, causing the locals to reject TNS as an infringement of their self-determination and dismiss both YASUMI and Parmen as the advocates of this nasty devil.

That YASUMI was not the only party with an ill performance with regard to the implementation of the HPHA project can be read from the ADB final report. With regard to the weak capacity of YASUMI, the report states that considering the limited experience of YASUMI and the little technical support they received from the Ministry of Forestry and

other agencies involved, it was unrealistic to believe that this new NGO would be able to carry out all of the expected activities successfully. The report furthermore states that the long term (25 years) integrated conservation management plans that were prepared for Siberut suffered from inadequate input from the public and other local agencies, leading to insufficient ownership and acceptance of the plans. As a result of which the output of community awareness raising, resource mobilisation and the introduction of possible livelihood alternatives were far below expectations. Local communities were either oblivious of the project or did not understand what the project was supposed to lead up to.¹¹⁰ With respect to the park staff, the report furthermore states that although some 80 staff members were assigned to the park during the 1990s, none of them ever seemed to be present on Siberut. Rather sarcastically the report states that '[o]ften the only significant periods of time that Siberut staff spent on the island were during ADB missions'. It is also regarded as a weakness that the official Siberut National Park headquarters are situated in Padang and not on the island of Siberut itself. Not only led this to a certain alienation from the area and its inhabitants, but it also proved difficult to adequately manage the park from such a considerable distance. The continued lack of incentives to ensure an adequate staff presence on Siberut Island is also considered a major failure on behalf of the PHPA project (ADB 2001: 10-14).

Although Parmen has remained to present himself as the managing director of YASUMI, the NGO YASUMI has been inactive ever since the ADB withdrew from the field. After the cooperation with TNS was discontinued, Parmen struggled with a persistent lack of noteworthy activities, a financial deficit and a serious image problem. In his capacity as NGO director he acted as a Janus-faced provocateur, using the legacy of YASUMI to protest the presence of Koperasi Andalas Mandani (KAM), an Universitas Andalas based logging cooperative active in a nearly 50,000 hectares concession area on Siberut. After quite a period of vigorous protest against the logging activities, Parmen was commissioned by KAM, offering him a job as a community negotiator (*hubungan masyarakat - humas*), a task he fulfilled for almost four years. During these four years Parmen established a stevedoring company responsible for the storage and loading of KAM logs on the, especially for this purpose built, quay in the bay of Subelen. Parmen also went back to university. He studied law at Universitas Eka Sakti in Padang. After his graduation he again became involved the logging sector on the Mentawai islands. His stevedoring company is currently working with PT Salaki Summa Sejahtera, a logging company operating in north Siberut. Parmen was also a candidate for the local parliament in 2004 and 2009. Both attempts were unsuccessful. For the 2014 DPRD elections he was again on the list for Partai Golkar, but again his attempt to obtain a seat in local parliament failed.

¹¹⁰The PHPA project distributed a poster informing the public about the protected status of the shells of the giant clam. In Mentawai smaller specimen of these shells are often used as ashtrays. According to a lot of Mentawaians conservation efforts now really got out of hand because in their perception the Ministry now even started to protect and conserve their ashtrays. (Personal communication with Persoon, December 2016).

Yayasan Citra Mandiri (Mentawai)

On 17 July 1995, Kortanius Sabeleake' and Yudas Sabaggalet established Yayasan Citra Mandiri (YCM). Initially YCM aimed at the empowerment of the Mentawai community by strengthening their economic position and ensuring the acknowledgement of their rights to their lands and the natural resources available within the Mentawai Archipelago. The fact that the initial focus of YCM was divided into two had everything to do with the two founders of the organisation.

Originating from Siberut, Kortanius spent his childhood in Saumanganyna, a small coastal village on North Pagai's east coast where his father was a teacher in the Protestant elementary school. With a logging company active right on the doorstep of his parental home, Kortanius had witnessed at first hand how logging deprived his neighbours of their lands and how their gardens and rivers became devastated as a result of which their daily food supply came under pressure. Kortanius was especially stirred by the social and political subordination of the Mentawaians on the basis of the perceived backwardness and primitive stupidity of the ethnic group as a whole. It was Kortanius' conviction that these negative outsider stereotypes leading to both colonial and post-colonial governmental initiatives to uplift the Mentawaians from their state of backwardness have only further deprived the Mentawaians from their rights and livelihoods. Kortanius studied animal husbandry at Universitas Taman Siswa in Padang where he developed an eye for the importance of legally organised landownership and access to natural resources. Yudas, holding a degree in economics from Universitas Bung Hatta (Padang) was convinced of the fact that the standard of living of the Mentawaians could only be improved by the upgrading of their economic position. Although many Mentawaians under the influence of earlier government projects were familiar with the growing of cash crops, the marketing of these products was still weak. Due to a lack in management, facilities and contacts, Mentawaians experienced difficulties in getting their products on the market. Most cash crops (e.g. cloves, nutmeg, copra and pinang nuts) that did make it to the market, did so through the intervention of the migrant population in the harbour villages who acted as brokers in the local trade in agricultural products. The same goes for the non-timber forest products (e.g. rattan and agarwood) that many Mentawaians collected in the forest.¹¹¹ With the trade business almost solely in the hands of outsiders, the Mentawaians have always remained at the supplying end of the trade chain, making them vulnerable to arbitrariness and price negotiations elsewhere in the trade chain. It was Yudas' conviction that community-based agricultural activities supported by technical assistance, advocacy, education, training and credit facilities offered by YCM would strengthen the economic position of the Mentawaians.

In the first year after its establishment, YCM was managed by Yudas focussing on economic activities, the marketing of organic cloves especially. It was during this first year that

¹¹¹ Stocks of rattan have declined rapidly ever since the early 1990s and agarwood (a resinous hardwood valued for its fragrance used for incense and perfumes) is nowadays almost nonexistent due to overexploitation especially during the 1980s.

YCM linked with ForesTrade Indonesia (FTI), an independent subsidiary of the American product development and trading company, specialised in certified organic and sustainably harvested coffee, spices and essential oils, ForesTrade Inc. Through the intervention of Thomas Fricke, a German national affiliated with ForesTrade Indonesia, YCM obtained some 50 million Rupiah from the German embassy to run a project in the Rereiket area aiming at an increase in agricultural produce from that region. Seeds and seedlings of various cash crop species were distributed and local communities were instructed about organic agricultural techniques. Local communities were furthermore encouraged to start growing organic cloves and patchouli.¹¹² In addition, local communities were given the opportunity to get some credit in order to finance the relatively expensive distillation installations for the patchouli. With the help of ForesTrade, Yudas also managed to set up a workspace in the Jati Baru district in Padang. This building served as an office as well as a warehouse for the merchandise.

Unfortunately the cloves did prove to mature poorly in the hinterlands, as a result of which the locals focussed on the growing of patchouli instead. Due to the Asian monetary crisis, which consolidated its grip on Indonesia in the last quarter of 1997, the exchange rate of the dollar against the Rupiah increased significantly. Since the price for patchouli oil was coupled to that of the dollar, the market price for patchouli oil increased almost tenfold (from 40,000Rp to 350,000Rp per kilo) in less than 6 months time (Singgalang 1997b). People went crazy and cleared large plots of land at high speed in order to plant patchouli while using the cut vegetation from the newly opened plots as firewood for the distillation process.¹¹³ Those people that reacted to the developments in the market at the right moment were able to make a considerable amount of money in a relatively short period of time. Later in 1998, the market for patchouli seemed saturated and prices fell sharply. Many were not able to pay-off the loans they obtained from YCM enabling them to buy the distillation installations. As a consequence the project went bankrupt. With the growing of cloves unsuccessful in the hinterlands, YCM changed from instructing local communities in the interiors to grow cloves to acting as a broker in the clove trade between ForesTrade and local communities living on Siberut's and Sipora's east coast where the growing of (organic) cloves had been successful for years already. Working with communities in Muara Sikabalan, Saibi Samukop, Saliguma, Muara Siberut, Sioban and Sikakap, YCM tried to guarantee a more or less steady supply of organically produced cloves for ForesTrade. But it proved difficult to break in on the trade system the locals and the migrant brokers in these harbour villages had set for themselves. Local communities habitually bartered their cloves to the traders in the village in immediate return for food, articles or clothing from their stores. Whereas the risk of theft was high, the locals were in general inclined to monetise their cloves as soon as possible after harvesting.

¹¹² From the patchouli plant, native to Indonesia, an essential oil can be extracted through a process of steam distillation of the dried, sometimes fermented leaves. Patchouli essential oil is used in perfume, incense and food.

¹¹³ These practices were certainly no longer in line with the conservation oriented production practices of ForesTrade, which state that participating farmers should commit to no clearing of new forested land for agricultural purposes.

Although the price for dried cloves is considerably higher than that for raw, green cloves, the locals preferred to leave the process of drying the cloves to the broker. Whereas ForesTrade wished to receive dried cloves only, YCM time and again had to instruct local communities how to go through the process of drying while in the mean time avoid theft and guaranteeing the quality of the product.

Less than a year after the establishment of YCM, Yudas decided he wanted to go back to school and left for Yogyakarta. After his studies, Yudas returned to YCM in 1998. After Yudas' departure, Kortanius took over the management of the whole organisation, gradually shifting its focus to the advocacy-oriented approach aiming at empowerment of *adat* communities, legally organised landownership and access to natural resources that he had in mind for YCM all along. Kortanius' goal was not merely to empower the Mentawai communities in an economic sense only. He was on a quest to awaken Mentawai ethnic consciousness. YCM's initial vision and mission statement stated among other things that 'the empowerment of *adat* communities lies in the understanding of one's rights and duties, not only as a member of the local community, but also as a citizen within the context of the Indonesian nation state' (YCM 1997). Kortanius proceeded energetically. He opened a new office in Kampung Nias I (Padang) and successfully opposed plans for oil palm plantations in two locations on Siberut. At the same time YCM also campaigned against logging companies active on Sipora and the Pagai Islands. YCM furthermore successfully assisted local communities in the Rereiket area with their lawsuit against the provincial government. The provincial Department of Social Affairs had planned a resettlement project in the direct vicinity of the settlement of Rogdok for which local communities had ceded 36 hectares of their land to the provincial government. When the project was about to start it became clear that the amount of 36 hectares in the agreement had been changed to 360 hectares. With the help of YCM and Lembaga Bantuan Hukum, a Padang-based legal aid organisation, the case was taken to court and eventually the whole resettlement project was cancelled (Singgalang 1997a). Until the present day YCM still receives a lot of credit for this action amongst communities in Rogdok.

At a later stage YCM joined Wahana Lingkungan Hidup (WALHI) West Sumatra and Lembaga Riset dan Advokasi (LRA), in a campaign against the activities of the sago processing mill located on the shores of the river Siberut in South Siberut.¹¹⁴ The factory owned by a Padang-based Chinese was accused of polluting the river with effluent as well as solid waste, way beyond an acceptable level. People claimed to have difficulties navigating the river, while local women increasingly lost their desire for fishing in the river because the rotting water had seriously diminished the numbers of fish and shrimp. But despite all the resistance against the mill, people were not solely negative about it. The ambivalent attitude of the locals was that on the one hand they complained about the pollution, while on the other hand the mill could only exist by virtue of the locals willing to supply the factory with sago logs. And many locals were only too happy to supply sago logs precisely because this was one of the only few opportunities to earn a little cash income.

¹¹⁴ LRA is a Padang-based NGO aiming at the empowerment of traditional communities and farmers enabling them to gain control over their own resources as well as economic, political and cultural issues.

Apart from the fact that the locals were willing to supply they actually also desired a job within the mill, again for financial reasons. Despite the extensive media attention triggered for this case there were no measurements taken to limit the nuisances created by the factory. Due to its low profitability the factory was eventually closed in 1997.

Inspired by the Rogdok lawsuit and enriched with the knowledge Kortanius had gained during his work for the HPHA project with YASUMI, YCM started a land-mapping project in Rereiket and Saibi. Not completely surprising - landownership is probably one of the most complicated matters in Mentawai - YCM tripped severely over this project. Apparently unable to create a profound insight in the local situation, YCM came up with a severely simplified map, imaging only broadly the land claims of again only few clans present in the areas of Rereiket and Saibi. YCM furthermore made the mistake not to share the final map with the local communities involved. Obviously, local communities were angry with YCM not accurately presenting their land claims. The fact that YCM did not share the results with the locals, infuriated the inhabitants of Saibi especially. In fear of YCM selling the map to an investor without their consent, locals in Saibi dismissed the map and simultaneously expelled YCM fieldworkers from their territory. The mapping debacle marks an incident with which some residents of the Saibi area have long afterwards cherished their aversion against YCM or local NGOs in general for that matter.

Much to the aversion of the Asian Development Bank, financing the HPHA project, UNESCO started project implementation in the context of its Man and the Biosphere programme in 1998.¹¹⁵ Though Siberut and its direct marine surroundings were declared a Man and the Biosphere Reserve already in 1981, project implementation started only in 1998. In search for a decisive local NGO capable of assisting them in working with local communities, UNESCO (after a careful inventory of all local NGOs available) contracted YCM. Quite like the HPHA's choice for YASUMI, UNESCO's choice for YCM was based on the absence of other capable NGOs rather than on the competence or expertise of YCM itself. Together with some anthropology students from Universitas Andalas (UNAND), YCM staff conducted a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in the village of Maileppet in 1998.¹¹⁶ This PRA was about the traditional role of women in sustainable natural resource use. It was during this PRA that one of the students, unable to swim, drowned. This was an accident for which both the UNESCO and YCM staff were long held responsible by UNAND. At a later stage UNESCO implemented a coconut oil processing project and a seaweed-processing project in Maileppet based on the data gathered during the PRA. Throughout 1999 and 2000 YCM again conducted similar PRAs in Madobak, Rogdok, Ugai, Katurei, Tiop and again Maileppet. This time the results were disappointingly poor. As a result the cooperation between YCM and UNESCO diluted. Soon afterwards UNESCO composed its own fieldwork team and took responsibility over project implementation in its own hands. The fact that PRAs had disappointing results probably had everything to do with the fact

¹¹⁵ It is suggested that the premature withdrawal of the HPHA project from Siberut was partly due to the fact that UNESCO started implementing their MAB programme activities in 1998.

¹¹⁶ Participatory Rural Appraisal is an approach often used by NGOs and other agencies involved in development. The approach aims to incorporate knowledge and opinions of local (rural) communities in the planning and management of development projects and programmes (Chambers 1994).



Office Yayasan
Citra Mandiri in
Maileppet

that from 1998 onwards YCM staff was primarily occupied with political processes that were developing rapidly at that time. Various staff members were personally involved in the political turmoil that gathered intensity and complexity during 1998 and eventually lead to the political independence of the Mentawai Archipelago in October 1999. Both Kortanius and Yudas went into local politics in June 1999. They both became members of the political party Partai Demokrasi Kasih Bangsa (PDKB) successfully pushing for a seat in the local parliament of Kabupaten Padang-Pariaman. Yudas eventually left YCM for the second time after he obtained a seat in the local parliament of the newly established Kabupaten Kepulauan Mentawai in December 2000.

In January 2001 Kortanius changed the statutes of YCM, adding the promotion of democratisation and the development of information exchange and media to the initial focus on economic development and advocacy. Whereas organisations were, according to new legislation on *yayasan*, now also required to have a board of founders, a legislative board and an executive board, new people were added to the notary deed. Kortanius remained the executive director. Jan Winnen Sipayung remained secretary and Roberta Sarogdok became treasurer. At the same time Jan Winnen became responsible for the economic division, while Sandang Paruhum Simanjuntak (a Batak who has been involved in YCM ever since its establishment) for the democratisation division and Indra Gunawan Sanenek for the also newly established information and media division. In 2004, both Kortanius and Yan Winnen Sipayung enlisted themselves for the 2004 parliamentary elections in Mentawai. Sandang Paruhum Simanjuntak then took over Kortanius' position, becoming YCM's executive director. Sandang remained director until 2010 when he became the director of Radio Sura' Mentawai FM. In 2010 Roberta Sarogdog became the director of YCM. She is the first Mentawaian woman to ever take on the position of director of an official local organisation. In 2010 the statutes of YCM were modified again. This time legislation on *yayasan* required organisations to register themselves to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. When YCM registered it turned out that another organisation was already registered under that name. YCM then registered under YCMM,

Yayasan Citra Mandiri Mentawai (YCMM). While Roberta became executive director, Kortanius remained attached to YCM as the chair of the executive board.

Organising indigenous communities

Shortly after the completion of the so-called Rogdok trial, YCM made a start with the creation of several local village councils consisting of experienced *adat* leaders. These so-called *dewan adat*, an idea YCM copied from Yayasan Pancur Kasih - a local organisation from Kalimantan with which YCM was sharing knowledge, information and experiences at that time - were supposed to strengthen the position of local *adat* communities vis-à-vis governmental institutions.¹¹⁷ With the use of the word *adat* (custom, tradition), YCM made a clear political statement. Instead of using the much-contested terminology *masyarakat terasing*, YCM started to use the term *masyarakat adat* (traditional, indigenous community) already in 1995. By 1997, YCM had succeeded in creating *dewan adat* in the villages of Madobak, Rogdok, Ugai, Tiop and Puro. These *dewan adat* consisted of mainly *rimata* (each of them representing their own clan) and were presided by a chairman chosen from their midst. Whereas the autonomous clans did not accept a leader from another clan, these chairmen explicitly had no decision making power attached to their position as chair. But despite this footnote, quarrels over decision-making power within the *dewan adat* were multiple, not particularly adding to its credibility as serious interlocutors in governmental negotiations.

In 2002 YCM organised a public dialogue in Tuapeijat. Some hundred people, among whom *adat* leaders, religious leaders, activists and young intellectuals from all over the Mentawai Archipelago and myself attended this meeting. During five days the democratic exploitation of natural resources in Mentawai was discussed amongst the participants themselves and with local government officials who were invited to the meeting as well. As a result of this meeting Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Peduli Mentawai (AMA-PM), or the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples caring for Mentawai was established. Whereas AMA-PM had to represent indigenous communities from all four Mentawai Islands, it was decided that all *dewan adat* became members of AMA-PM. YCM, however, never established *dewan adat* on Sipora and the Pagai Islands (Puailiggoubat 2004a). In order to avoid a hegemony of representatives from Siberut within AMA-PM, Sipora and the Pagai Islands appointed representatives for AMA-PM at village level. During the public dialogue in 2002 it was decided that AMA-PM would be responsible for the implementation of 11 recommendations with regard to the democratic exploitation of natural resources within the Mentawai Archipelago that were formulated during this meeting.

In the years that followed, AMA-PM was, under the inspired leadership of reverend Urlik Tatubeket, actively involved in actions against illegal logging, oil palm plantations and the issuing of IPK logging concessions. AMA-PM intensively, but unsuccessfully, campaigned against PT Summa Salaki Sejahtera obtaining a large logging concession for north Siberut in 2004. Apart from active campaigning and lobbying with governmental

¹¹⁷ *Dewan adat* as an advisory body were also already mentioned in the ADB/MOF project proposal. (Personal communication with Persoon, December 2016).

institutions, AMA-PM always remained in touch with local communities discussing not only environmental issues with them but also social issues like drug and alcohol abuse, gambling and undesirable sexual behaviour especially amongst youngsters. AMA-PM has also been involved in the improvement of education and education facilities all over the archipelago. AMA-PM and YCM organised three archipelago-wide congresses in 2006, 2009 and 2012 each with differing subjects and ever growing numbers of participants. It is said that AMA-PM counted over 800 members in 2012.

YCM linked itself with the national Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN), or the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago already in 1999.¹¹⁸ Whereas the financing of activities by AMA-PM remained the responsibility of YCM – a responsibility weighing heavy on the YCM budget – it was decided in 2011 to affiliate AMA-PM to AMAN, hoping that AMAN would bring in some finances. From then on AMA-PM continued its activities under a new name: AMAN Mentawai. Urlik Tatubeket was asked to lead AMAN Mentawai, but he stated that in his opinion AMAN Mentawai should be chaired by someone younger (Puailiggoubat 280: 10-11).¹¹⁹ Kortanius Sabeleake then became the new chair for AMAN Mentawai. The new name and the affiliation with AMAN did, however, not solve the financial problems AMA-PM had been struggling with earlier. AMAN Mentawai remained largely dependent on YCM for project activities and the corresponding finances. It is only in 2015 that YCM released AMAN Mentawai after they had become an official member of AMAN in February 2014.

Media, information and democratisation

Until the end of the 1990s it has been difficult for the Mentawaians to gain access to information. While many households had a small radio, the signal was often weak and people often lacked the finances to buy batteries. Newspapers that came in from the mainland only did so once a week when the ferries to and from the mainland frequented the Mentawai Islands. These newspapers, however, did not make it into the hinterlands very often. Even if people had the finances to buy a television set, electricity was confined to the four main harbour villages and even there electricity was only available during several hours in the early evening. By far the larger part of the information that became available to the Mentawaians was produced by and for people on the mainland. These people, almost without exception, perceived of the Mentawaians as being primitive and their surroundings ill developed.

While the exchange of information between the different Mentawai Islands was limited, people simultaneously had little to no access to information about developments taking place outside the Mentawai Archipelago. As a result they were not able to oversee the

¹¹⁸ AMAN was established as a result of the historic first Congress of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (KMAN I), which was held in Jakarta in March 1999. As an independent organisation, AMAN means to act as a medium through which *masyarakat adat* (indigenous communities in Indonesia) can reinforce their rights, existence and autonomy vis-à-vis the Indonesian nation state. See also: <http://www.aman.or.id>.

¹¹⁹ Urlik Tatubeket had been ill already for a while when he made this statement. He passed away in December 2013 (Puailiggoubat 2014).

PEMILU DIMULAI 2004

PEMILIHAN UMUM



**SAMARATUL
FUAD:**
Pemda
Manfaatkan
Kebodohan
Masyarakat



REBOISASI:
Ratusan
Hektar Manau
Ditanam
di Siberut



SIMALEGI:
Empat Guru
Honor SD
Diberhentikan
Tanpa Gaji

DUH, PENDIDIK MENTAWAI

DITANGKAP, PELAKU PEMBAKARAN

Puailiggoub

Untuk Kebangkitan Masyarakat

Sedang Dipinjam
4 Kapal Rute Antarpulau

Berkenalan dengan
Anggota Dewa



KELUAR DARI MASALAH

TERBIT SEKALI SEBULAN @ PENGANTI ONGKOS CETAK Rp2.500,-

KEMBALI KE LAGGAI

TERBIT SEKALI SEBULAN @ PENGANTI

PAPAT TUP 2003

KEBANTUAN
KABUPATEN KEPULAUAN MENTAWAI

KEBAKARAN:
Rumah Warga
Saureimu
Habis
Terbakar

OKTAVIANUS:
PP 110 Masih
Berlaku
untuk
APBD 2003



**Ombak Besar
Rakyat Beruntung**

Potensi ombak Mentawai untuk wisata surfing (selancar) dicari banyak pengusaha asing dan lokal. Bagaimana mengelolanya agar masyarakat Mentawai juga dapat untung?

ramai
otes Guru Bolos

LPJ EDISON, APBD ANTONIUS

KECAMATAN

Yow

Untuk Kebangkitan Masyarakat

consequences of these developments for their own situation. The lack of access to information on the one hand and the coloured nature of the available information on the other, rendered the Mentawaians vulnerable to deceit and manipulation. And, even more important, made them powerless in the process of democratisation for they were not able to stand up for their civil rights and just decisions by the authorities (Syofiardi Bachyul et. al. 2015).

Through his contact with Komunitas Konservasi Indonesia (KKI) Warsi, Kortanius came in contact with a representative from the Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) already in 1999.¹²⁰ ¹²¹ With this representative Kortanius lobbied for funds with which YCM could set up their own media. In 2000 RFN funded YCM with some 5000 Euros, money that was used to produce the first edition of what would later become the first local newspaper for the Mentawaiian region.

It was in April 2001 that the information and media division of YCM published the first edition of Puailiggoubat, an A4-size magazine of 12 pages filled with news and information concerning Mentawai. Six editions - the first in April 2001 and the final one in September 2001 - of 600 copies each were distributed among the public in Mentawai every month. The Puailiggoubat magazine was received well and therefore it was decided to upgrade Puailiggoubat from a magazine into a real tabloid-sized newspaper of 16 pages appearing once a month. For this purpose YCM hired several local journalists, all Mentawaians originating from different parts of the Mentawai Archipelago, and they managed to publish the first Puailiggoubat in tabloid format in December 2001. A thousand copies were printed and distributed in both Padang and the Mentawai Islands. From December 2002 onwards Puailiggoubat started to appear every fortnight and extended from 16 pages to 24 pages in the years that followed.

The name, Puailiggoubat, is taken from the Mentawaiian language meaning self-reflection. Puailiggoubat's subtitle reads: *Untuk kebangkitan masyarakat Mentawai* (for the revival of Mentawaiian society). The Puailiggoubat magazine was distributed for free in Padang as well as on all four Mentawai Islands. The Puailiggoubat tabloid was initially sold for 2500Rp a copy. In 2013 the price went up to 3000Rp and has remained like that ever since. Of every copy of Puailiggoubat sold, 100Rp will be set aside for an educational support fund. On the back page of every Puailiggoubat there is an overview of how much money there is in the fund as well as a list of names from people that donated to the fund on a personal basis.

Regular rubrics are local and mainland news, editorial as well as submitted public opinion

¹²⁰ KKI Warsi, initially set up as a discussion forum in 1992, uses the concept of community based conservation in order to bring about sustainable development. Their focus is mainly on forest-based communities living in Sumatra. See also: <http://www.warsi.or.id> (visited December 2016).

¹²¹ Established in 1989, RFN forms part of the international Rainforest Foundation network and has sister organisations in the United Kingdom and the USA. RFN supports indigenous peoples and traditional populations worldwide in their efforts to protect their rainforests and secure their rights to their land. RFN is active in Indonesia since 1997. See also: Rainforest Foundation Norway 2014)

pieces, local economy, education in Mentawai, local culture, tourism and environmental and conservation issues. Every Puailiggoubat furthermore contains a cartoon called *Si Bajak* (the father, mister). *Si Bajak*, personified as a friendly looking, innocent traditional Mentawaian who is otherwise making keen observations and asking sharp questions about local politics, is a highly critical and often very funny cartoon. Another regular is *Suara Daun* (literally: sound of leaves, hinting at grassroots voices), a column until 2004 written by Kortanius himself. Kortanius' *Suara Daun* are sharp, analytical writings often offering balanced insights in local economics, politics and development issues. The column *Suara Duan* was later changed into *Suara Puailiggoubat* and from then on knew constantly changing authors.

By July 2002 Puailiggoubat had grown too big for the YCM office and moved into its own accommodation in the near vicinity. This move of course put strain on the already tight budget of YCM, but fortunately RFN committed itself to further finance Puailiggoubat, at least until the end of 2016.

Puailiggoubat went online in 2003. A simplified electronic version of the tabloid then became available on www.puailiggoubat.com. This website, however, was poorly managed and the e-papers were never up to date. The Puailiggoubat website was more seriously managed from 2010 onwards. Apart from the e-version of Puailiggoubat the site now also offered a news feed that was regularly updated. Puailiggoubat went offline in 2015 and was then replaced by the news portal www.mentawaikita.com. Managed by the editorial office of Puailiggoubat, this fresh-looking website offers up to date news divided over seven sections, a blog and the e-version of the latest edition of Puailiggoubat. With a highly diverse group of dedicated and well-trained journalists originating from (and interested in) all four Mentawai Islands, YCM has created a medium exactly serving the purpose it was created for. Though Puailiggoubat may not have created the unity within the Mentawaian community that YCM had wished for at its launch, this tabloid certainly had a tremendous impact on both the quantity and the quality of information available to the public. With a circulation of 1000 copies every 2 weeks, Puailiggoubat is probably one of the most visionary and successful activities executed by YCM.

Radio Sura' Mentawai FM

In accordance with YCM's mission to make information available to all Mentawaians, they further upgraded the access to and spread of information with the establishment of a radio station. On 23 October 2010 Radio Sura' Mentawai FM started broadcasting.¹²² In doing so, YCM was the second to broadcast straight from within the Mentawai Islands. In 2005 local government had already started a radio station, also broadcasting from Tuapeijat, called Radio Sasareina. Radio Sura' Mentawai had a limited range, reaching all of Sipora and part of the Pagai Islands. The radio station was immediately put to full use when two days after its launch the Pagai Islands were hit by an earthquake and a subsequent tsunami. People came to the radio station located in Tuapeijat in large

¹²² Sura' Mentawai stands for suara rakyat Mentawai, the voice of the Mentawaian people.

numbers in order to share the latest news about the event with the general public. Because of the earthquake people working with the radio station came in contact with SurfAid International, who were assisting casualties in the field. At a later stage SurfAid International financed a new antenna which gave Radio Sura' a larger range, now reaching further into the Pagai Islands and also covering south Siberut. On ordinary days Radio Sura' Mentawai brought local (political) news, general news and information, dialogues with the public, entertainment and music in various programs throughout the day. Broadcasting started at six in the morning and ended five minutes to twelve in the evening, seven days a week. Reactions from the public were very positive. In February 2015 the radio station was hit by lightning, damaging the broadcasting equipment to such an extent that Radio Sura' went off air.

Education within reach for all

In 2003 UNESCO handed over their non-formal education programme, *Pinatoro Uma*, to YCM. Unfortunately, however, YCM did not seem to be able to remedy the negative legacy the earlier unsuccessful acquisition of the project by Yayasan Laggai Simaeru had left behind. Some of the locals as well as the three teachers involved were unwilling to cooperate with YCM and soon after YCM had taken responsibility for the project, *Pinatoro Uma* faded. As a result activities in the Community Learning Centers (CLC) in Sakaliou and Attabai expired. The CLC in Buttui became the personal project of a spirited Italian priest who had left his congregation a few years earlier. With his personal funding, this liberal priest continued the non-formal education activities in Buttui under a different name: Parurukat Togat Sikerei (PATAS). In 2002 YCM had already established a small library annex study centre in Salappak on YCM's own initiative. According to Tarinda, a local anthropologist occasionally working with YCM, children living in Bekkeiluk, located at more than an hour walking away from the library in Salappak, were so enthusiastic about the books and the prospect of learning how to read, that YCM built a small school in their settlement in 2004. One of the locals from Salappak was contracted as their only teacher. Less than two years later the responsibility for the daily affairs in this *sekolah hutan* (forest school) was handed over from YCM to the parish in Muara Siberut. In 2008 Tarinda came in contact with yet another group of children eager to learn; this time in the Sangong area. With the help of YCM, Tarinda started a class there attended by some 20 children originating from miles around. Aman Sabba Ogok agreed for the class to use his *uma* as classroom. With the help of YCM, a small school was later built by the locals. In 2009 several families from Masapsap, Gojo and Bat Sirauk relocated to a new settlement called Magosi. From 2012 onwards the forest school in Sangong was moved to Magosi where it was allowed to use the facilities of the catholic church in order to teach. In 2009 YCM started a second *sekolah hutan* in Tinambu. Both forest schools, though sometimes lacking learning materials, were successful. In June 2013 YCM signed an agreement with the headmasters of governmental elementary schools in Muntei (SDN 12 Muntei) and Saliguma (SDN 16 Saliguma). Through the agreement both forest schools became part of the official education system. From then on *sekolah hutan* was called *sekolah uma*. As a result, children that have made it successfully through the third class in the forest school may now continue to the fourth class in one of the two governmental schools.

Yayasan Krisau

Since the late 1990s the waters surrounding the Mentawai Islands have been discovered as one of the world's most spectacular surfing hotspots. Numbers of surf tourists and foreign investors coming to Mentawai have kept on increasing ever since, now exceeding the islands carrying capacity several times.¹²³ There are simply too many charters, bringing in too many surfers. While the surfers compete with each other over waves, the surf operators quarrel with the local communities and the local government over access and accommodation.

In attempt to put some regulation in place, already in 1996, the governor of West Sumatra in cooperation with Australian business man Rick Cameron established five surf zones around the Mentawai Islands. Cameron's enterprise, PT Mentawai Wisata Bahari (MWB), an Indonesian subsidiary to the Hong Kong registered enterprise Great Breaks International, would be responsible for the daily management of the five surfing zones as well as the collection of a local tourist tax that next to the issuing of permits would serve as an income for the provincial government.¹²⁴ Part of the appointments made included the collection of a five US\$ tourist tax per surfer per day, serving as an income for the provincial administration. This taxation, however, never really got of the ground. In his quest to master the surfing industry within the Mentawaian waters, Cameron made himself nearly impossible collecting the taxes he negotiated with the provincial authorities amongst his fellow business competitors. His maligned performance, which eventually earned him the title of 'Dark Lord', caused the fleet of foreign charters present in the Mentawaian waters to dig in their heels and omit all attempts to regulate with overwhelming non-compliance. Cameron's position and performance in the field as that of a dictator was increasingly questioned. Cameron was even taken to court by Paul King, founder of the Surf Travel Company, in 1999. The lack of clear legislation and the absence of compliance with and the enforcement of the existing regulations, turned the Mentawai surfing industry into a battle ground where the 'law of the jungle' seemed to rule. Local communities were critical of Cameron as well because they were disappointed by the extent to which he was willing to comply with their swiftly introduced village tax, beach use tax and fishing ground disturbance tax imposed on the surfing industry. Apart from fighting off fellow Australian investors, Cameron also had to deal with increasing numbers of dissatisfied Mentawaians visiting MWB, holding office in the prestigious Hotel Bumi Minang in Padang. Most of these local village heads and clan leaders came to Padang to claim a fee for the tourists using their resources (e.g. beaches and parts of their fishing grounds). Now that the locals heard of the provincial tax imposed on the surfers, several village heads were quick to install a so-called village tax for tourists to be paid whenever they came ashore making use of facilities on land.

¹²³ Center for Surf Research at <http://csr.sdsu.edu/> (visited June 2013).

¹²⁴ When at a later stage, Cameron experienced difficulties with the prolongation of his residence permit, government authorities in Padang denied that a business agreement between themselves and Rick Cameron had ever existed.

Whereas local communities became increasingly disinclined to cooperate and asked for compensations at random, Cameron felt the need to establish a local organisation responsible for the communication and the making of appointments with the locals guaranteeing the smooth operation of his surfing business. MWB's director, Bangun Hutagalung, gathered four Mentawaians (Ray Mondus Sababalat, Levi Sirirui, Juniator Tulus and Ferdinand Saogo) he thought of as being capable and together they established Yayasan Krisau. Although the majority of its activities were presumably located on the Mentawai Islands, Yayasan Krisau issued a budget proposal for an office in Padang to MWB. With the people involved living in pitiable circumstances elsewhere in Padang, the prospect of a more comfortable basis, to be used as office and residency simultaneously, was understandably attractive to them. But unfortunately the budget proposal did not meet with any response as a result of which Yayasan Krisau never had its own office. Instead, Yayasan Krisau made use of the computer and Internet facilities available in the MWB office. Although its general aim was clear, Yayasan Krisau never had a coordinated programme of work and factual activities in the field were never undertaken. Apart from Ferdinand, all others involved in Yayasan Krisau had obligations elsewhere. Levi and Juniator were still full time students and Ray was a secondary high school teacher at SMP Maria. Yayasan Krisau thus never had their primary attention. As a result of the lack in finances and targeted activities, both Levi and Juniator became bored and disappointed and withdrew from the organisation after being involved for some 18 months only. After that nothing was heard of Yayasan Krisau for a long time and one might have thought that the organisation had annulled itself. Apparently MWB found other ways to keep the disgruntled locals at bay, because MWB developed no new initiatives in order to fill the gap created by the withdrawal of Yayasan Krisau. In 2013, however, a small message in Puailiggoubat (2003f) mentioned Ray as the managing director of Yayasan Krisau. Apparently Yayasan Krisau remained to exist in some kind of dormant stage during all those years.

Yayasan Kirekat Indonesia

In January 2000 a Dutch foundation called Kirekat was established by Bea Bouman, who had become interested in Mentawai after a trip to Siberut, and Aurelius Yan, a Mentawaiian originating from Siberut, living in the Netherlands at that time.¹²⁵ During her trip to Siberut, Bea had developed the idea that she wanted to do something for the, what she considered, needy communities on the island. Yan, who studied medical anthropology in the Netherlands, had a longstanding wish to return to his island of origin and do something about the very poor healthcare conditions on Siberut. Together with five other people – four of them, including myself, anthropologists involved in research in the Mentawai Archipelago – Yan and Bea formed the board of the Kirekat Foundation.

¹²⁵The Kirekat Foundation supports the socio-economic autonomy of indigenous peoples in Indonesia, with special attention for the autochthonous population of the Mentawai Archipelago. Activities and projects undertaken by this foundation are financed by donations from the Dutch public mainly (Stichting Kirekat 2001).

One of the first and main activities of the Kirekat Foundation was the submission of a project proposal to a Dutch co-funding agency, Cordaid.¹²⁶ This project proposal was aiming at the improvement of the health care system in several more remote areas on the island of Siberut. The project focussed on villages and settlements in Rereiket and Simatalu as these two areas were considered worst affected by deficient healthcare. The main objective of the proposal was to create intensive cooperation between the health department of the local government, missionary health activities, and the indigenous health care system in which the *kerei*, and local healers (*simata siagai laggek*) play a major role (Persoon 2008; Stichting Kirekat 2002). Cordaid decided to fund the proposal with 250,000 euro on a three-year basis with the possibility of extension, but requested a local NGO to actually implement and take responsibility for the project. Despite objections from the Kirekat Foundation, Cordaid pushed through on its demand for a local organisation. Whereas an existing local organisation capable to take the responsibility for implementing the project could not be found, a local organisation had to be established from scratch. Therefore, in March 2001 Aurelius Yan, Yudas Sabaggalet and Bastian Sirirui filled a submission to a notary in Padang in order to establish Yayasan Kirekat Indonesia (YKI). Considering the reason for the creation of YKI, it is quite peculiar to notice that the notarised deed does not contain any reference to the Dutch Kirekat Foundation neither to the reason for its establishment, namely the prime donor of their only project, Cordaid. This is all the more peculiar whereas the document does refer to a possible partnership with SurfAid International (SAI). Negotiations about future collaboration between SAI and YKI have indeed taken place several times, but ideas developed during these meetings never materialised.¹²⁷

Almost simultaneously with the establishment of YKI, a new law on *yayasan* passed in Indonesian parliament. Operative from August 2002 onwards and further attuned in 2005 by law 28/2004, law 16/2001 states that a *yayasan* should contain of a board of trustees (*pendiri* or *pembina*), a daily board (*pengurus*) and a controlling organ (*pengawas*). Apart from the persons involved in the daily board (the managing director, the treasurer and the secretary), no one involved in the *yayasan* as *pendiri* or *pengawas* may receive fees, payments or honoraries of any kind.¹²⁸ Due to a lack of sound understanding of the new legislation and a constant quarrelling amongst all the people involved in the establishment of YKI, the composition of the organisation kept on changing continuously, seriously frustrating the start of the implementation of the healthcare project. Although there were more than enough people willing to take a seat in the various boards of YKI, only very few were willing to operate on the required voluntary basis. Although Cordaid had made some funding available for capacity building, honorariums for the foundation board were

¹²⁶ Cordaid is a one of the biggest international development organisations merged out of three Dutch Catholic development organisations in 1999. Their main objective is to help people in distress and fight poverty worldwide. One of Cordaid's focus areas is on structural healthcare.

¹²⁷ Personal communication with Aurelius Yan in his capacity as healthcare project manager (2001).

¹²⁸ This distribution of power in the management of the *yayasan* and the restricting of financial flows was meant to prevent or at least limit the tax evasion and the personal enrichment for which many *yayasan* were used.

obviously not part of that funding. The Kirekat Foundation received multiple requests from YKI to make additional funds available in order to tackle this issue. All of these requests were of course turned down. Eventually it was decided that Yudas should become the chairman of the daily board (managing director) and Bastian would take on the role of chairman of the advisory board. Whereas Yan was to become the healthcare project manager, he – in accordance with the new legislation – had left the founder board of YKI as well as the board of the Kirekat Foundation. Protestant reverend Panulis Saguntung was found willing to take his place as the chairman of the board of trustees. The implementation of the healthcare project eventually started in August 2003. At that time YKI had a total of eight board members, a project director, a project manager, a project field assistant, two project related secretaries, and two boat operators. Unfortunately, a medical doctor, nurses and a community healthcare worker were still not hired then.

Despite the lack in executive project personnel and the seriously disturbing institutional instability, Yan managed to organise several workshops and consultative meetings during which regional and district level (healthcare) institutions as well as villagers and representatives from the Padang-based Catholic hospital discussed the prevailing health and healthcare conditions on the island and formulated possible contributions for each of the parties to make in order to relieve the multiple problems encountered in the two project areas. Cooperation with the local government turned out to be problematic and remained to be so throughout the complete project period. Though local government persistently stated that no project activities should be undertaken without their prior consultation, government officials were only incidentally present at the stakeholder meetings.

One of the first project activities amongst the local communities included the establishment of so-called *punutubut uma* (a sort of local health councils consisting of several local individuals somehow related to healthcare) in all villages and settlements included in the project (i.e. Madobak, Ugai and Rogdok in the Rereiket area, and Simatalu, Limau, Simaligbek and Paipajet located on the northwest coast of the island). It was planned that the medical staff was going to train these *punutubut uma* in various preventive healthcare techniques and instruct them about basic hygienic practices. For this purpose, public toilets and clean water facilities were installed in several of the settlements. When in October 2004 a medical doctor was finally hired, she and the two (male) nurses, both hired a little earlier, struggled with local communities that did not understand the directive character of the project activities. Instead of being trained, the locals preferred to be treated by the doctor. Those locals who attended the training sessions expected to be paid for their presence. In order not to discourage the locals, YKI started to ship various medicines and medical resources to the two project locations, increasingly bypassing the main objective of the project. Only a few months after the start of the implementation of the project activities, the nurse stationed in the Rereiket area left the healthcare project because he was offered the opportunity to become a nurse in the civil service. The nurse stationed in Simatalu was then transferred to Rereiket. Whereas the vacancy for Simatalu-based nurse was never filled again, project activities in Simatalu faded.

In early 2003, the Kirekat Foundation, acting as an official mediator between YKI and

Cordaid, had already sounded the alarm. Worried about the future of the healthcare project, the Kirekat Foundation suggested Cordaid to perform a mid-term evaluation in order to save the healthcare project that was obviously in danger of perishing amidst all the institutional turmoil. After persistent urging from the Dutch Kirekat Foundation, Cordaid eventually visited the healthcare project in June 2004. Despite the fact that the medical doctor had, due to a serious conflict with the project field assistant, resigned just a few weeks before the Cordaid visit, the findings of the Cordaid staff about the progress of the healthcare programme were fairly positive, though their report acknowledged that 'a lot still needed to be done' (Cordaid 2004). On the basis of the evaluation visit during which Cordaid staff visited the project location in Rereiket, but never met with YKI staff in Padang, Cordaid decided to prolong the project with a second term.¹²⁹

Whereas the board of the Kirekat Foundation had little faith in the events taking place in Mentawai, two members of the board of the Kirekat Foundation visited the YKI office in Padang in late 2004. By that time the implementation of the healthcare project had basically come to a halt, a shortage of qualified staff in the field and a lack of vision and leadership capacities on behalf of the project leader being the two most important factors for this stagnation. In a discussion with the board of YKI, it became clear that YKI as an organisation was not interested in harbouring a project such as the Cordaid funded healthcare project. According to YKI, the fact that the healthcare project was not a product of YKI, but rather the other way around, had caused confusion with regard to ownership and responsibility for the project. YKI thought of the multiple problems the healthcare project was facing, rather as Yan's personal responsibility than their communal responsibility. During the meeting YKI distanced itself from the healthcare project, stating that Yan was welcome to continue his healthcare project as part of YKI's healthcare division, but that YKI would move on to other fields of interest and associated activities. Despite the plea from the two board members of the Kirekat Foundation for YKI to focus solely on the healthcare project, YKI started a partnership with the Dinas Kelautan dan Perikanan Kabupaten Kepulauan Mentawai (local Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries) already in early 2005. Under the banner of a programme called COREMAP (Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Management Program), financed by the Asian Development Bank, YKI was responsible for project implementation in ten villages situated along the coast of Siberut. Factual project activities were, however, only implemented in Saibi Muara and Saliguma. In Saliguma, Kristinus Andre Satoko (initially hired by YKI as one of the secretaries to the healthcare project) attempted to instruct local people about crab and fish breeding in ponds that were especially constructed for that purpose. In Saibi Muara, YKI did nothing more than handing out several so-called *kepompong* (light weight

¹²⁹The fact that, in spite of all problems indicated, Cordaid so implicitly granted YKI a second term, had in all probability to do with the fact that Cordaid had collected nearly a million Euros for the healthcare project in a very successful media campaign using poignant images from Siberut. It would have been difficult to explain to the public if Cordaid would not have used the money for which the Dutch public had donated it.

outboard engines) in order to ease coastal fishing activities of the local villagers.¹³⁰ The partnership between YKI and the local government lasted for less than a year and was, according to YKI, terminated by the end of 2005 due to the fact that the programme knew too little “mentoring”.¹³¹

When in early 2006 the campaigning for the election of the *bupati* (district head) started, virtually all involved in YKI turned their focus to politics. Yan busied himself supporting his younger brother, Stephanus Hok, to run for *bupati*. Both Panulis and Yudas were running for *wakil bupati* (vice head of district). Others were focussed on passing the examination allowing them to apply for employment in the local civil service (*Ujian Calon Pegawai Negeri Sipil Daerah* or *Ujian CPNSD*). Right after the elections in August 2006, YKI simply ceased to exist, or so it seemed. Yudas had been elected vice *bupati* and several others managed to obtain employment in the local civil service and left YKI for that reason. Cordaid had, after they had invested nearly half a million euros, turned down the request for a third term for the healthcare project. In an attempt to restart the healthcare project, Yan also decided to leave YKI. He established a new organisation together with his nephew, Kristinus Andre Satoko. This new organisation was called Yayasan Prof. Dr. Reimar Schefold Mentawai (YRSM), after the chairman of the Kirekat Foundation. With the personal assistance of Reimar Schefold, Yan tried to obtain funding for a restart of the healthcare project with a new German donor but this donor eventually turned the request down. Subsequently the healthcare project was never continued again.

YKI's second life

After a few years of being in a state of hibernation, YKI was revived in 2011 when Kristinus Andre Satoko reactivated the organisation. Together with the Research Center for Applied Geography (PPGT) of the Jakarta-based Universitas Indonesia (UI), PT Global Green (a corporation involved in agri-business), the Siberut Conservation Programme (a Bogor-based research group mainly interested in primates), and a communication forum consisting of local people called Forum Komunikasi Kehutanan Masyarakat (FKKM), YKI had formed a local consortium. This consortium, called Konsorsium Siberut received funding from Tropical Forest Conservation Action-Sumatera (TFCA-Sumatera) in order to implement a project aiming at the conservation and rehabilitation of forests on Siberut.¹³² The project that went under the name TFCA-Sumatera Project focused on two villages in Rereiket, namely Madobak and Matotonan and two villages on Siberut's southwest coast: Taileleu and Sagulubbek. The project was expected to last three years and for its first year it was planned for the Konsorsium Siberut to seek cooperation and partnership with both the local government and the Siberut National Park. It was furthermore planned to collect

¹³⁰The 1-1.5 meter horizontally extended shaft of the kepompong makes this light-weight engine extremely handy navigating on shallow rivers, significantly reducing travel time and physical exertion. These engines, however, lack sufficient power to be useful for travel or line fishing at sea.

¹³¹See: <http://kirekatindonesia.blogspot.sg/2013/02/sejarah-yayasan-kirekat.html#more>

¹³²TFCA-Sumatera is a Jakarta-based organisation that is responsible for the implementation of the Dept-for-Nature Swap schemes that exist between the Indonesian government and that of the United States. See also: <http://tfcasumatera.org>

literature on conservation, to collect data on various topics among which information about medicinal plants, to conduct participatory land mapping and to investigate the organisational and economic potential of the four villages included in the project. Apart from some consultations with the local government on behalf of YKI, the other activities planned for this project were not yet implemented by the end of 2013. And in December 2013 the Siberut Conservation Programme (SCP) announced that they temporarily ceased their activities on Siberut due to the fact that their primary German counterpart and donor, the German Primate Centre, had withdrawn.¹³³ The withdrawal of this donor led to the retreat of the Siberut Conservation Programme from the consortium. Apparently Konsorsium Siberut existed by the grace of the participation of the Siberut Conservation Programme and their donor, because the consortium and all its activities disappeared after SCP's withdrawal. YKI never developed any activities since then and seems to have returned to its dormant state since its director, Kristinus Andre Satoko, went into local politics in 2013.

Conclusion

The story of local NGOs in Mentawai is complicated. Seen from a superficial outsider's perspective one might say that it is a story of many failures and only few successes. Out of more than 30 registered local organisations only a handful matured to a level where one can speak of actual project implementation. Results were often disappointing. Donor dependency is paramount. Without a generous, often overseas donor, local NGOs in Mentawai have little to no means nor reason for existence. Those NGOs that do not manage to attract a donor remain post box organisations. The only proof of the existence of such organisations is often laid in one person running around waiving his business card claiming that he is the director of a particular organisation. But there is more to the Mentawaiian NGO world that at first glance is indeed rather hopeless.

Most local NGOs in the Mentawaiian context were established during the late 1990s. At that time young Mentawaians, educated on secondary and even tertiary levels, experienced serious difficulties finding a job in Padang. While job opportunities were frustratingly bleak, returning to Mentawai was not a welcoming alternative to these educated people either. While captured in this vacuum these young Mentawaians developed a cultural consciousness that led to a political awareness. Mentawaians were, however, not part of the political establishment at that time. Unable to influence local politics from within, many of them started an NGO in order to influence local politics from outside. But despite their political agenda and their being based on good intentions, local NGOs also had to serve as income generating organisations. Many people involved in local NGOs were financially dependent on that organisation. Closely related to this starting point is the fact that many organisations lack a clear vision and mission. Programmes of work are rarely written and developed into actual project activities. Local organisations

¹³³ See also: <http://www.siberut-island.org/index.html>

simply seem to wait for a donor to come along and present them with a programme of work and the corresponding budget. However, the programme of work as submitted by the donor does not necessarily coincide with the political and personal agenda of the people involved in the NGO. While the majority of the most influential international (donor) agencies aim at conservation and sustainable development, many of the local NGOs working with/for these agencies are also geared in this direction. Therefore, local NGO staff is often not completely involved in the objectives as formulated by the donor. This phenomenon often leads to the skimming of project budget allocated by the donor in order to use it for the implementation of activities that are experienced as more urgent than the programme of work as laid out by the donor. Programmes of work become blurred with activities that serve the political and personal agenda of NGO staff, resulting in disappointing results on both agendas.

In the belief that local organisations – often hiring local people – are, due to their presumed profound understanding of and intense contact with local communities, far better equipped for the implementation of projects activities amongst the project recipients than the foreign expatriate for instance, many international (donor) agencies increasingly assign local NGOs with the actual implementation of their programmes (Veltmeyer 2004). Though local NGOs might certainly stand at close distance from their constituencies, this is not necessarily the case. I would like to argue that most Mentawaiian NGOs stand at a relatively large distance from local communities. Mentawaiian youngsters involved in NGOs have often lived in Padang for years. They have been detached, both physically as well as mentally, from their Mentawaiian background. In order to survive in the city of Padang amidst the religious and culturally dominant Minangkabau, many Mentawaiians needed to attenuate their Mentawaiian identity. This has not only lead to occasional identity crises on an individual level, but also to an alienation between these youngsters and their fellow Mentawaiians who stayed on the islands. While these people claim to represent the entire Mentawaiian community, they in fact mainly represent themselves and are therefore not accountable.

Local communities on their turn are often suspicious with regard to NGOs and their activities in the field. Especially the older generation tends to see NGO staff as cocky youngsters who forgot about their culture and good manners that pertain of that culture. Local communities in Mentawai know a long history of non-governmental intervention within their villages and settlements. Local communities tend to be critical and suspicious of NGO activities. This probably has to do with the fact that most projects are designed *for* local communities, but not *with* local communities. Local communities have often not been involved in the process of project design. They just have to comply with the implementation of project activities. Local communities often do not fully understand the various project objectives and have diverging expectations of the activities implemented. Project activities that do not offer obvious short-term benefits are often dismissed by local communities. They simply refuse to cooperate or come into action. Locals just stay away or even obstruct the implementation of project activities. End results are often perceived of as disappointing and as not meeting the promises made during earlier stages of project implementation. At the same time local communities show high levels of project

dependency. They sometimes seem to live from project to project. As long as there is some sort of project in your village or settlement there is always something to gain from it. At the same time the presence of the project discourages local communities to think for themselves, to be creative and help themselves.

Whereas the largest part of more or less undisturbed forest is to be found on Siberut, donors - the majority of them focussing on conservation and sustainable development – have a tendency to develop programmes solely meant for Siberut. As a result, Siberut and its population have been at the centre of project attention, completely bypassing the island of Sipora and the Pagai Islands. Communities on the southern Mentawai Islands are very much aware of this donor-driven disregard of their islands. They feel like they have been denied the development opportunities that came along with these often generously financed programmes and they blame local NGOs for this denial.

Donor dependency, both financially as well as content wise, is disturbingly high. Overseas donors are generous, but often skip a critical evaluation. Analyses of success and failure are often not executed. Donor agencies display a tendency to remain optimistic about its favoured approaches and institutional solutions. In doing so donor agencies often overplay the impact of their programmes and blur the distinction between normative representations and actual outcomes. Donor ideas seem remarkably resilient in the face of contrary evidence (Mosse 2013). Many local NGOs are forced to follow the programme of work as well as the operational processes as dictated by the donor. Donors often overrate the qualifications of local NGO staff. People involved in local NGOs often do not master the English language enough. This leads to problems when writing proposals and reports. As a result proper reporting is often simply skipped. Inexperienced NGO staff is often requested to implement project activities that otherwise requires professional training; something local NGO staff often lacks. Despite the fact that many international agencies wish (at least on paper), for the sake of programme sustainability, to add to institutional capacity building at the local level, donors tend to show a blind eye for the relative distance to constituencies, the lack of qualifications, ignorance, self-interest, self-enrichment and even overt corruption that are sometimes prevalent in local NGOs. Once the programme budget is allocated to the local NGO, donors do not seem to care to conduct a thorough evaluation and take action based on the outcome of the evaluation. Interim adjustment of the programmes, factual implementation and the performance of the local NGO are rarely done. Donors seem to be unwilling to reveal and admit failure. It is painful to see how often local NGOs get the benefit of the doubt and get away with performances which are potentially harmful to both their donor and their constituencies. Local organisations that have not managed to attract a donor simply ceased to exist or remained as post-box organisation. No local organisation in Mentawai has managed (or even tried) to gain funding for their causes among the general public in Mentawai, in Padang or elsewhere in Indonesia.

The world of Mentawai NGOs is characterised by stiff competition over financial resources. This competition has ensured that other local NGOs are perceived of as rivals as a result of which long-lasting partnerships between organisations within the local network

are absent. Generally NGOs tend to be fairly uncommunicative about their comings and goings and secrecy is paramount when it comes to finances. Distrust not only occurs between people involved in different organisations. Even within organisations individuals involved do not always trust each other. When suspicion, imputations and sometimes even open conflict between people active within the same organisation become unworkable, organisations tend to split up. One of the quarrelling parties leaves the organisation to find resort with another organisation or starts an organisation of his own. In this respect the world of Mentawaiian NGOs shows a similar fluidity as the way in which Mentawaiian society is organised.

Regional autonomy has, among other things marked the end of the heydays of the Mentawaiian NGOs. The independency of the Mentawai Archipelago has caused many of the educated Mentawaiians to shift from 'NGO-ing' to more secure and more rewarding functions in either the local government or the local bureaucracy.¹³⁴ As a result of this drain of NGO personnel, local organisations weakened and many of them disappeared all together. Renewed national legislation on *yayasan* that became operative in 2002, has furthermore discouraged the founding of new local NGOs in Mentawai.

¹³⁴ NGO-ing is a term I borrowed from Hilhorst (2003). With the term NGO-ing Hilhorst is hinting at organisational practices and discursive repertoires of development agencies in civil society.



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PARTAI KEBANGKITAN BANGSA		
No. Urut	NAMA CALEG	
1	FIROMIDO NYO SATOKO	
2	NAMA CALEG	
3	NAMA CALEG	
4	NAMA CALEG	

FIROMIDO NYO SATOKO
Caleg DPRD Kab. Kep. Mentawai
DAPIL 2 (SIBERUT TENGAH, SIBERUT SELATAN, SIBERUT BARAT DAYA)

PKB
Membela Rakyat

