
Rubber Erasures, Rubber Producing Rights: Making Racialized Territories in West Kalimantan, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article makes connections between often-disparate literatures on property, violence and identity, using the politics of rubber growing in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, as an example. It shows how rubber production gave rise to territorialities associated with and productive of ethnic identities, depending on both the political economies and cultural politics at play in different moments. What it meant to be Chinese and Dayak in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia, as well as how categories of subjects and citizens were configured in the two respective periods, differentially affected both the formal property rights and the means of access to rubber and land in different parts of West Kalimantan. However, incremental changes in shifting rubber production practices were not the only means of producing territory and ethnicity. The author argues that violence ultimately played a more significant role in erasing prior identity-based claims and establishing the controls of new actors over trees and land and their claims to legitimate access or 'rightfulness'. Changing rubber production practices and reconfigurations of racialized territories and identity-based property rights are all implicated in hiding the violence.

INTRODUCTION

'In Dayak gardens all crops are planted mixed; the Chinese separate the crops, their land is clean and divided regularly; the Malays are in between' (Sandick and Marle, 1919: 132)

The contentious relationship between rubber and swidden rice production has long caused dilemmas in Borneo, and is increasingly an issue in other parts of Southeast Asia where rubber has recently been introduced. Swidden rice, a staple food crop with great ritual significance in Borneo, is quite literally losing ground. Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) is not only an alien species, it

I am grateful to a number of people for providing comments on various drafts of this paper, including Kate Brown, Mary Somers Heidhues, Denise Leto, Tania Li, Nick Menzies, Kit Olivi, Scott Prudham, Simon Takdir, Peter Vandergeest, Arthur Van Schaik and Hui Few-Yoong. The suggestions of participants in the Bornholm Property Workshop (September 2006), as well as those of colleagues and friends at the University of Toronto and the Ohio State University Geography Department, where I presented earlier versions of this paper, have also had a role in shaping the article. The usual disclaimers apply.

is inedible. This could have presented a daunting deterrent to its production from the point of view of an early twentieth century smallholder, yet rubber was widely sought after and rapidly became Borneo's most common exotic.¹ By the late 1960s, rubber revenues paid for the daily rice of most households in Bagak Sahwa² village, an Indonesian administrative village located on the road leading from Singkawang into the interior of West Kalimantan. Most villagers today identify themselves as Salako Dayak farmers. By 2004, the visible result of nearly a hundred years of local rubber production was a landscape of karst hillsides covered with 'forests' of mostly rubber and fruit trees, and the near elimination of swidden fields and unmanaged fallows. As Michael Dove (1993) has famously written about a different area of West Kalimantan, rubber had clearly 'eaten' the rice.

Rubber has played a pivotal role not only in shaping the landscapes and livelihood strategies of Bagak Sahwa and its environs, but also in the production and hardening of ethnic and national identities. Authorities' selective recognition and ignorance of certain production and property practices in everyday life — practices that differed under colonial and contemporary modes of rule — helped construct the notions of 'Chinese', 'Dayak' and 'Indonesian' smallholders as distinctive groups having particular 'ethnic' characteristics and competing interests, though obviously with some overlap acknowledged among them. Rubber production associated with these smallholders generated ethnic, or what I call below 'racialized' territorialities. By both creating rights and justifying their elimination, rubber production rendered some smallholders more visible than others at different historical moments.

Physical violence and the continuing threat of it have further solidified the association of rubber production with racialized territories. Through displacement and dispossession, violence made ethnic identity a life-or-death question in this corner of West Kalimantan. These identities, in turn, have been entangled further with spatialized and violent politics of citizenship in Indonesia and have strongly influenced which smallholders have gained access to land for growing rubber. The socio-natural history of rubber serves as an effective vehicle for exploring the relations between violence, property and the production of ethnicity and landscape history in this notoriously troubled region, because the origins of property often involve violence and enclosure to enable accumulation (Blomley, 2003; Marx, 1967; Thompson, 1975).

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1. The rise in rubber production area pre-dates Borneo's oil palm revolution by nearly a century.
 2. In this article, I use the names Bagak Sahwa and Bagak. Bagak was a historical settlement in the Gunung Raya-Pasi area, dating back to the eighteenth or nineteenth century; when administrative villages were formed in New Order Indonesia, several settlements, including Bagak, were combined in the administrative village of Bagak Sahwa. The name Bagak is still used to refer to the hamlet north of the road.

POWER RELATIONS WRITTEN ON THE LANDSCAPE

This essay focuses on power relations and landscape production as manifested through *claims*, *rights* and *territory*. How are rubber territories created through rubber production, fixing place and people in particular ways? Further, which claiming practices, histories and memories have been recognized in the form of rights, and which have helped produce ethnic subjectivities and racialized territorialities? How have the politics of rule affected the racialization of bodies, land and territory?

A major segment of what might be called ‘the property literature’ often leaves violence out of the discussion when explaining changes in property rights. This may be because, in this segment, the initial political-economic conditions under which property arises are taken for granted. Yet, recent work by political ecologists and political economists has reiterated the supposition that unless the initial conditions of enclosure and property legislation are maintained through time and in space, the benefits of property cannot continue to be realized (de Angelis, 1991; Blomley, 2003; Glassman, 2006; Perelman, 2000).³ Such conditions, which we might also think of as arenas of opportunity and constraint, frequently entail violence (Peluso and Watts, 2001: 29). This reasoning affirms that property relations and their collective territorial effects, like all social relations, require constant work and investment, or risk replacement by new practices for gaining access to or control of land and resources (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). Thus property studies need to explore political economies of power and accumulation — the forms of access to and control over resources — to clarify the construction of property rights and other forms of resource access (Blomley, 2003; Peluso and Watts, 2001; Ribot and Peluso, 2003).

The manner in which rubber produces rights and creates territory requires an understanding of contemporary and historical regimes of access to land, property and rule. In as much as these social relations and resource practices produce the very contexts in which they are enacted, they need to be understood as socio-spatial (Li, 1999; Massey, 1994; Raffles, 2002). Socio-spatial relations in Bagak Sahwa are considerably different today than they were fifty or a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, the categories that emerged out of colonial legal pluralism continue to influence and reproduce the hardened ethnic categories attached to both bodies and territory. These categories are so embedded in both contemporary and historical practice and understanding that I have not been able to avoid using them to make some of my arguments

3. The classics on this, of course, include Marx on violence and primitive accumulation and Weber on structural violence. Some of these debates have been revived and recontextualized, as in, for example, Harvey (2003). Much of the extensive literature on political ecology deals with conflict turned violent: see, for example, Peet and Watts (1996/2004) or Peluso and Watts (2001) for a glimpse into this now extensive literature.

here; but I am keenly aware that they are problematic.⁴ This is particularly the case in using the terms ‘Chinese’, ‘Dayak’ and ‘Malay’, denoting ethnic identity. As explained in greater detail below, these terms are used in everyday practice and are generally unproblematized, yet they refer to people with different associations with or experiences of the specific ethnic heritage, and whether or not contemporary subjects or their ancestors were ascribed by law or self-identified as one of these categories. I will show, in relation to rubber production and rights, how they have been produced and reproduced over history through socio-spatial practice and violence.

The categories became particularly important in the nineteenth century under Dutch indirect rule because one’s ascribed ethnicity determined legal status, which in turn determined rights to land and forms of legal jurisdiction. Land rights were racialized under colonial-era legal pluralism in the Netherlands’ East Indies (NEI). Initially, only people defined as ‘Natives’ (*Inlanders*) could legally occupy and use ‘customary land’. Chinese were defined as ‘aliens’, migrants, ‘Foreign Orientals’, and could not — like Europeans and anyone else not defined as Native — legally own land in the eyes of the colonial state. In the decade following the formation of the Republic of Indonesia (1950s), when the nation was led by President Sukarno, land rights were discussed and legislated in terms of Indonesian citizenship and class. Under the ‘New Order’ government of the second president, Suharto, discussions of class and ethnic conflict were literally outlawed and concealed by emergent discourses on community (Brosius et al., 2005; Li, 1996). Since the fall of Suharto in 1998 and subsequent decentralization, multiple categories of legitimacy, including a revitalization of customary claims to territory, have come back into play.

My analysis of rubber’s racialized history in this northwestern area of West Kalimantan allows us to see how people have been produced as rights-bearing, racialized or territorial subjects through complex negotiations and contestations over identity, property and territory (Gordillo, 2005; Maurer, 1997; Moore, 2005). It speaks in some ways directly to recent work by Pauline Peters (2002), who has argued that such significant strides have been made toward ‘de-economizing’ analyses of property that the broader economic and political *effects* of resource-claiming mechanisms and negotiations are often lost. In particular, she argues, the emphasis on negotiations has deflected attention from the fact that struggles over access to resources produce winners and losers.⁵ Negotiations must be fit into larger patterns and processes of resource distribution and differentiation. Adding to the confusion is the often uncritical use of Katherine Verdery’s (1998) notion of ‘fuzzy’ property rights. As Verdery points out, the specificities of access

4. For that reason, I use the terms Chinese and Dayak without scare quotes every time, and without adding qualifying phrases such as ‘people called. . .’.

5. See also Scott (1998). Perhaps more importantly, it is not only the state that is likely to win; see Ferguson (2005); Ribot and Peluso (2003).

to resources may seem complex and fuzzy to casual observers or short-term researchers but to the people who have lived with and developed them, they have logics of legibility.⁶ Moreover, fuzziness can be projected to mask conflict or avoid confrontation. When different parties have incompatible claims to the same resources or land, legitimated by multiple authorities, the idea of fuzziness obscures the terms of difference and power.⁷

The history of rubber production in this corner of West Kalimantan demonstrates that property and territory are not mere products of negotiations. Rubber and associated processes of racialized territorialization have been parts of larger, racialized political economies under Dutch and Indonesian rule. While law and practice alone have been intertwined in negotiations over access to land and rubber production in this area, ultimately neither law nor long-term practice alone determined who was allowed to grow rubber and own the land beneath it. Rubber production thus provides a lens through which to view changing conceptions and practices of claiming, producing and erasing rights, producing people and territory as racialized or ethnic subjects, and obscuring the violent political conflict that has constituted these socio-spatial processes.

Rubber Production in Bagak Sahwa

By the last decade of the twentieth century, West Kalimantan had more rubber trees than any other province of Indonesia. It was one of two Borneo provinces named ‘the heartlands of the industry’ (Brookfield et al., 1995: 38; Cleary and Eaton, 1992). Its success is in part due to rubber’s flexibility: if the grower does not tap the trees for a long time, their productivity and product quality are not affected. Rubber production also requires disciplined labour but not long hours. In 1990s’ Bagak Sahwa, farmers visited fifty to a hundred or more trees per day, depending on the sizes of their holdings and their cash needs. Early in the morning, a new cut in the tree’s bark would be made, using a special tool to let a small stream of rubber flow out during the day. Beneath the cut, collection cups are fixed to catch the oozing latex.

Smallholder production has been acknowledged as the most important production regime (as opposed to corporate plantation production) for rubber in West Kalimantan (Dove, 1994; Ozinga, 1940). In 1991, more than 90 per cent of Bagak Sahwa smallholders grew some rubber. Yet, as detailed in the next section, rubber smallholders of the past are not the same as those now and even the idea of who *might* be smallholders and who *could not be* has

6. Alternatively, locals may construct property and access ‘rules’ as fuzzy, to keep outsiders or observers from understanding what is actually going on. Scott (1998) makes this point in reference to the messiness of old-fashioned/ancient cities and markets, counterposing the ‘order’ inherent in intimate knowledge of these with the simplified street grids of contemporary cities and even whole new landscapes of ordered property rights.

7. Verdery mentions all of these in her book. See also MacPherson (1983).

changed. Rights and access have shifted with changing political economies, modalities of rule and the cultural politics of ethnic identity.

Hevea brasiliensis rubber — whether the original varieties brought to Southeast Asia from Brazil via Kew gardens, or the more recently appearing high yielding, clonal varieties — is as much a social product as a ‘natural’ one, with its own species history involving extensive human intervention. This socio-natural history is evident in the ways that its biological, ecological and commodity characteristics have all contributed to the stories of its property rights and its close associations with specific peoples in different moments. Rubber trees are planted close together — though not always in monocultures — to facilitate the collection of their sap, which is the valued latex. Because rubber trees produce for some forty years, their relationship to landscape and land tenure is important. The agrarian environments where rubber is grown can be seen as socio-natural territories because of the way this tree fits into local agroforestry practices.

PRODUCING RACIALIZED IDENTITIES THROUGH LAND RIGHTS

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, people living in western Borneo often identified themselves by the names of the rivers near which they lived (Harwell, 2001; King, 1993; Pringle, 1970). Some people identified themselves and each other by the language they spoke (Ba-Nana, Ba-Ahe, Ba-Dameo, Khek), or the regions they were from (Fukien, Guandong, Hainan) (de Groot, 1885). To Dutch administrators under legal pluralism, in Borneo the category of ‘Natives’ (*Inlanders*) included only those people categorized as ‘Dayak’ or ‘Malay’. The term ‘Dayak’, as used by colonial administrators, missionaries and scholars, as well as by those who embraced Dayak (or a Dayak language-group’s) subjectivity, encompassed many different language-speaking groups living in the interior of Borneo. In this part of West Kalimantan, most of the peoples identified as ‘Dayak’ spoke Salako (Ba-Dameo) or Kenayatn (Ba-Ahe) and have been differentiated from Malays here by religion: Dayaks are those Dutch-identified *Inlanders* who did not convert to Islam, as Malays, by definition, did.

The Netherlands East Indies colonial state began its indirect rule of the Sultanate of Sambas in Western Borneo (*Westerafdeeling Borneo*) after signing a ‘short treaty’ in 1849. Dutch administrators and other European observers collapsed people of different language groups from China into a single ‘Chinese’ category even before they began taking censuses, although when it served their purposes they differentiated them by language group, occupation or ascribed characteristics.⁸ By use of the term, they meant people

8. On the British practice of the census, see Cohn (1996) and Shamsul (2004: 123). For a more complete discussion of colonial racial policy in the NEI, see, for example, Fasseur (1994) and Stoler (1995).

who had migrated to Borneo from China, or their children. Official and non-official visitors to the region in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had often used these categories to refer to local people even before they became formal legal categories (Doty and Pohlman, 1839; Earl, 1837). After Western Borneo became part of the NEI, the usages of these terms by colonial officials, missionaries, historical geographers and anthropologists further reinforced, and hardened, these legal categories (Ellen, 1999).

By legal definition, ‘Chinese’ were foreign, though not European in origin; hence they were legally categorized ‘Foreign Orientals’, along with ‘Arabs’ and ‘Indians’ (or ‘Tamils’) — themselves huge categories (see Wolters, 1999). The first waves of Chinese immigrants to western Borneo in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were all male. These men had come to farm and to mine gold. While some thousands came and went back to China, others chose to settle permanently in the region. Thousands of them married or fathered children with local women.⁹ As late as the 1840s, in a report on his travels to Montrado east of Singkawang, van Rees (1858: 49) noted the obvious fact that all early immigrants had Dayak wives, ‘resulting in a majority of the population being mixed’. Even after the Kongsi wars of 1850–54, when nearly 25,000 Chinese left the Montrado area, some 24,000 remained, constituting a significant population (Vleming, 1926: 256). By 1918, the rural sub-district in which Bagak was located — *Onderafdeeling Singkawang* — housed some 17,410 people classified as Chinese, 16,000 of whom were smallholder farmers (Sandick and Marle, 1919: Appendix BIII: 127).

Local residence or birth in the Indies did not generate Native status for Chinese. Chinese might be referred to as either *totok* (meaning ‘pure’), or *peranakan* (‘mixed’, in Indonesian), but they were still legally treated as foreign. Although *peranakan* means ‘mixed’, the term was always associated with outsiders, thus *peranakan Cina* or *peranakan Tionghoa*.¹⁰ It would be odd to say, *peranakan Dayak*, even though children of such a union would be of both heritages, that is, mixed. However, in the Montrado and rural Singkawang areas, people recognized such distinctions. The children of Chinese fathers and Dayak mothers were called *Bantangfan* in Mandarin, a word that meant ‘half-chinese barbarians’ (Yuan, 2000: 70). The word must have been pronounced in various ways locally, because Veth (1854, Vol 1: 302, cited in Yuan, *ibid.*) recorded it as *petom pang*. A Dayak friend told me that some people felt so mixed in Bagak Sahwa and surrounding settlements that they refused to be called ‘Chinese’ or ‘Dayak’, preferring *Pantokng* instead. As a Salako or Badameo word, therefore, *petom pang*

9. All sources insist that the women who married Chinese were Dayak not Malay, though an occasional Malay is noted as an exception.

10. Suryadinata (1978); Mary Somers-Heidhues (pers. comm., 2007) pointed out that in Java the term *peranakan Arab* and in Malaya, the term *Jawi pekan/peranakan* refer to mixed descendants of Indian Muslims. Both terms identify outsiders in their respective contexts, but I have never heard this term in West Kalimantan.

seems to have been transliterated as ‘*Pantokng*’ (Heidhues, pers. comm., 2008). Yet to the villagers who told me the word means ‘mixed’, literally, it represented much more than genetic heritage.

Legal classifications were highly gendered, and they generated gendered effects. In particular, the legal ascription of ethnicity or racial identity had to do with men and their children. Dutch administrators categorized the children of a Dayak woman and a Chinese man as ‘Chinese’. Dayak women who married or lived with Chinese were said to have *masuk Cina*, ‘become Chinese’, and if they were formally married to Chinese they were counted on the census as such. Census takers counted unmarried women living with Chinese as ‘Native’ (and generally noted as Dayak) (Cator, 1936: 30–1).¹¹

Of course, there were dimensions of everyday practice that enabled someone to perform or live their lives as Chinese or Dayak or *Pantokng*, and to be recognized as such in everyday interactions. Second and third generation males might wear queues, for example, to demonstrate ‘Chinese-ness’, and wear trousers and jackets rather than loincloths. Women married to Chinese men would wear Chinese-patterned sarongs from Java or cotton trousers, rather than the woven cloth and rattan rings worn by Dayak women in this area. Chinese men lived with their wives in *kongsis* houses or single-family houses, often, but not always, along roads; Dayaks tended to live in the hills set back from the roads, in longhouses.

But what of those who were *Pantokng*? ‘*Pantokng*’ did not constitute a clear legal identity category of its own. ‘*Pantokng*’ may have been used by local Dayaks to indicate people of mixed heritage living within predominantly Dayak settlements, but was not associated with a clear set of social practices that identified the people calling themselves such.¹² It was much more subtle, varied and contextual — almost a negative category that emphasized what kind of subject they were *not*, that is, not Chinese or Salako, but at the same time, both.¹³ It was a discursive category in local circulation, however, and perhaps indicated that those who called themselves such exhibited this mixed-ness in a variety of ways.¹⁴ It was also a category that did not survive in common everyday practice to the 1990s, as I had to be *told* about it, I never heard it used. The reasons for its falling out of public use will come clear below.

11. Census takers apparently were confident they knew which women were ‘Native’, because Cator provides an exact number — 10,791 — for ‘these women’ across the whole of the NEI. It would be impossible to know how many of the women married to Chinese, whether counted as Dayak or Chinese, were in fact ‘mixed’. Cator (1936: 30–1) cites Census 1930 Vol. VII, p. 33.
12. Under the *kongsis*, Chinese considered *Bantangfan* braver and more highly skilled in warfare, but they were looked down upon. For example, the punishment for murdering a *Bantangfan* was the payment of a much smaller sum of blood money than for a native-born or pure Chinese. See Yuan (2000: 70, citing Schaank, 1893: 84–6).
13. I am grateful to Hui Yew Foong (pers. comm., 2008) for encouraging me to clarify this point.
14. The contextual use of the term also requires further local research.

The normalcy of some kind of mixing, whatever people called themselves or were called, was also exhibited by the multiple languages or dialects commonly spoken on a daily basis — Dayak languages and various Chinese dialects.¹⁵ Moreover, while a few Dayak women may have been taken by force as wives, as some oral histories have it, so many thousands of women married to Chinese or Pantokng could hardly have been taken against their will. Similarly, even though women married to Chinese men changed many of their daily practices — not least entering into a much more male-dominated domain of everyday life — they did not all move so far away as to have to cut off all ties with their Dayak families. More likely is that many people in the region had more intermingled everyday lives than has been acknowledged in much of the literature. A study of intermarriage between Chinese and Dayaks bears this out, at least tentatively (Tangdililing, 1993). It is very hard to discern the precise historical relations, however, in part because of the gendered historical record — women are barely mentioned in either primary sources or the principal secondary sources of the period.¹⁶

As the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries progressed, new waves of immigrants from China arrived in western Borneo and took up residence, including relatively large numbers of women. In the twentieth century, whole families from China migrated to West Kalimantan (Tangdililing, 1993). While this increased the number of local people who might be considered ‘*totok*’, and provided opportunities for local Chinese or Pantokng to marry women of ‘purer’ Chinese descent, as well as to live more ‘Chinese’ lives,¹⁷ the numbers of people with mixed Dayak-Chinese descent, and some influence in their lives, would still have been significant at that time.

Race had been territorialized through colonial land laws and policies. The Agrarian Act of 1870, passed in Java and based primarily on the circumstances there, declared that all land was state land except for a few tracts alienated during the time of United East India Company (VOC) rule (on Java). Land over which native or customary rights prevailed was technically state land; however, customary land was considered encumbered (unfree) and subject to what colonial legal experts called ‘customary rights of avail’ (Burns, 1999). Locally, customary rights to land were called *hak ulayat*, while the territories produced from these laws were and are referred to as *tanah adat*. According to law, *tanah adat* could not be purchased or otherwise transferred to non-Natives. Chinese, therefore, could not legally own or buy ‘Native land’ because by definition they were ‘Aliens’. Chinese and other ‘Foreign Orientals’ were subject to commercial and civil law just like ‘Europeans’.¹⁸ The law was meant allegedly to protect Natives from

15. According to Heidhues (2003), few ‘Chinese’ spoke Malay.

16. Even Doty and Pohlman (1839), the missionary couple travelling through the region in 1838, make no mention of women in their report of their trek from Sambas to Pontianak.

17. This is what is emphasized in the literature on the Chinese of West Kalimantan.

18. As of 1899, ‘European’ included Japanese (Anderson, 1983).

losing control of the land on which they most depended, but actually limited them to particular tracts. The remaining state lands (the majority of the total land base) were then ‘free’ to be leased by the state to agricultural enterprises for development.¹⁹

During the colonial period, some 92 per cent of West Borneo Chinese lived and worked in ‘Native States’, so-called self-governing Malay sultanates, one of several administrative mechanisms of indirect rule that came out of and reproduced these racial politics (Cator, 1936: 162). Chinese individuals within these states were under the jurisdiction of Chinese Captains and Chinese officials who reported to Dutch administrators, an arrangement that was considered a kind of direct rule — of bodies, not territory — even in Native States which were by definition indirectly ruled territories (Natives living there were indirectly ruled) (Cator, 1936). Chinese subjects’ predominance in the western-most parts of West Borneo caused the Dutch to dub Singkawang, Sambas, Mempawah and other nearby areas ‘The Chinese Districts’, even though technically they were living in Native States (Cator, 1936; Heidhues, 2003). The coining of this name, and the subsequent references to it in official reports and ordinary conversations, helped maintain and shape the racialized territory as largely Chinese.

Though a full explanation of the reasons for and effects of these legal practices is beyond the scope of this article, some of their anomalies are worth pointing out. For example, long before the Dutch signed treaties in the mid-nineteenth century with Malay Sultans and constituted the colonial territories called ‘Native States’, Chinese smallholders in West Borneo had cleared land and improved it by draining swamps or creating irrigation systems. Chinese growers and their Dayak and mixed family members radically transformed the working landscape. According to contemporary informants, when Chinese first arrived, and throughout the times that they opened new forest or swamp for agriculture, contemporary Dayak leaders recognized these practices as constituting rights to the land and made agreements, sometimes involving rents, for their continued use of the land. Even after the passing of the NEI’s Agrarian Act, these local precedents of recognition did not subside.

Agrarian legislation recognizing some Chinese rights within the Native States was passed in 1916 but was not implemented until 1921 (Cator, 1936: 163). This regulation stipulated that, ‘with official permission, land could be hired [from Natives] by non-Natives for a term of 50 years for coconut or rubber growing’, in the Native States.²⁰ Chinese smallholders’ tremendous success in rubber and coconut production had, in part, forced the issue of land tenure regulation and provided the Dutch at least a semblance of

19. In Java, the same state territories were used to carve out state forest lands (Peluso, 1992; Peluso and Vandergeest, 2001; see also Burns, 1999)

20. A similar regulation was valid in other regions of Government Domain (under direct rule) (Cator, 1936: 163, 164).

control over what was already common practice, that is, Chinese acquisition and transformation of uncultivated or waste land, or their purchase or rental of local growers' ('Native') land (Cator, 1936: 165). There had been unrest in the years immediately prior to the passing of the legislation, unrest that Heidhues (2003: 159, 180–2) connects to Chinese dissatisfaction with Dutch approaches to these agrarian questions.²¹ The 1916 law was only a small step, however, as legally these holdings were leases, with the logic of the racialized law still imposing limits on Chinese land rights (Cator, 1936: 164).²² The leases were easy to obtain, reflecting the state's acknowledgment of its own inability to change this locally sanctioned practice, and perhaps recognizing, in a very small way, a local moral economy regarding land rights. At the same time, opposition to the leases was registered by people who feared the rights of the Natives were not being adequately protected in the wake of the legislation (*ibid.*: 166).

In response Cator, in particular, and some other Dutch agricultural officials with experience in West Borneo, claimed that the practical differences between Chinese and Native smallholders in West Borneo were insignificant despite their different races.²³ The Regulation of 1916, however, had the contradictory effect of legally recognizing that many smallholders were Chinese, while concretizing the idea, in practice, of a discrete Chinese-ness, here in relation to land use and rights.

After the formation of the Republic of Indonesia in 1950, legal pluralism was ended. Indonesian citizenship was the important legitimating factor for land ownership — but no agrarian law was in place until after 1960. The agrarian law was manipulated to exclude Chinese from agricultural landholdings.²⁴ As under colonialism, however, land use practices could be and were used as racial identifiers.²⁵ Racial categories were not only derived from observations of land use practice, but became predictive of it, particularly for rice and tree crop production. It was common practice for anthropologists and other analysts to use subsistence strategies to categorize human–environment relations and to associate ethnicity or race with particular types of resource practices such as hunting and gathering, farming

21. The Chinese Districts of Western Borneo played a major role in the final nudge toward legislation. Two Chinese officials were murdered near Bengkayang and Anjungan and the unrest among the Chinese community — called 'The Troubles' unfolded (Heidhues, 2003; The, 1966).

22. Moreover, they indicated an acknowledgement of the 'rightfulness' or moral authority of the Chinese smallholders' claims — even though these did not fit with the Dutch way of seeing the broader legal landscape of the NEI.

23. De Groot (1885) argued that Dutch policy toward Chinese was already a mess at the end of the nineteenth century. See also Blusse and Merens (1993: 286–7) and Yuan (2000: 10). Cator (1936) was a huge proponent of changing Dutch policy toward Chinese land tenure.

24. Thanks to Mary Somers Heidhues for pointing this out (*pers. comm.*, 2007).

25. Doing something that went against the grain of these stereotypes also reinforced them. Sandick and Marle (1919), for example, felt it important to explicitly point out that in Bengkayang, Dayaks as well as Chinese had pepper gardens — hundreds of them.

of *sawah* (paddy rice) and swiddens (hill rice and vegetables) (King, 1993; LeBar, 1972; Padoch and Vayda, 1983). In West Borneo, for example, it was assumed that Dayaks grew upland rice in swidden agriculture and Chinese grew wet or paddy rice in *sawahs*. While these assumptions were certainly grounded in local practices and histories, such categorizations reinforced an increasingly strict differentiation between allegedly Chinese, Dayak, Malay and other groups' recognized land uses. But what were the actual land use practices of people of mixed heritage, and what were the influences on land use practice, if any, of Dayak women who married into Chinese families? The answers are difficult to document, in part because practice varied. We have already seen that some Pantokng chose to make swiddens, others grew wet rice in paddies, still others refused simple categorizations and farmed under the influence of multiple traditions and practices.

Assimilation was more difficult for Chinese than for other groups included in the colonial 'Foreign Oriental' category. After Indonesian independence, people of Arab or Indian heritage who married local Malays were assimilated into the category of '*pribumi*' or 'native sons', literally 'sons of the soil'. They came to be treated legally as Indonesian citizens and local. Chinese married to Dayaks and the known children of these unions were not assimilated in the same way. Even Chinese who became citizens immediately upon the formation of Indonesia were subjected to a different set of rules. The labels WNI (*Warga Negara Indonesia*, citizens of Indonesia) or WNA (*Warga Negara Asing*, foreign nationals) were marked on their identity cards. Since the term WNI was applied only to Indonesian citizens of Chinese ancestry, it perpetuated a racialized and exclusionary system by signifying that anyone recognized as having Chinese blood was not truly Indonesian. This was discursively reinforced by the terms WNI, WNA or 'non-pribumi', making Chinese identity truly and uniquely 'other'.²⁶

Between Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945 and the passing of the Basic Agrarian Law in 1960, no significant agrarian legislation was adopted. However, nationalists of many political stripes decried legal pluralism as colonial and feudal, and worked toward legislating a unitary land law for all Indonesian citizens, amenable, at first, to those of Chinese ancestry (Heidhues, pers. comm., 2007). Nonetheless, the political tides turned against Chinese in 1959 with the passing of PP10, a presidential decree forbidding foreign nationals to trade in rural areas; it affected Chinese in West Kalimantan, as many had not become Indonesian citizens. Chinese land rights and identities remained ambiguous in practice and legally, even though their roles in generating state revenues through rubber and other tree crop production had long been undeniable. Throughout this process, Pantokng remained largely invisible.

26. See Hui (2007) for a detailed and nuanced discussion of West Kalimantan and Indonesian Chinese as 'Strangers at Home'.

In such mixed and ambiguous social and legal circumstances, what else made smallholders ‘Chinese’ or ‘Dayak’? Rubber production has played a key role in the answer to this question.

Chinese Rubber Smallholders

When rubber was first brought to the botanical gardens of Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) in West Java (Bogor) at the turn of the twentieth century, British and Dutch colonial governments attempted to prevent smallholders from growing it (Dove, 1994). They failed. In the late 1930s, rubber produced in West Borneo provided the biggest share of NEI rubber traded on the world market (Ozinga, 1940: 285). By 1931, rubber smallholders in Borneo and Sumatra had planted more land with rubber than all plantation enterprises combined (*ibid.*: 264). Smallholders in Borneo continued to plant rubber even when restrictions on its export or the financial constraints on its production affected prices (Brookfield et al., 1995; Dove, 1993; Ozinga, 1940: 267). Defying the economic logic of larger enterprises, smallholders produced more rubber during the lean years of the Depression than they had before, *because* the prices were so low (Heidhues, 2003: 154, citing Ozinga, 1940: 262–4, 289–90).

Who were these rubber smallholders? By 1940, the majority of rubber smallholders in the whole colonial district of western Borneo were ‘Natives’—Dayaks and Malays (Ozinga, 1940: 264). However, in the sub-districts (*onderafdeeling*) of Singkawang and Montrado, the heart of the Chinese Districts, more Chinese than any other population group in this area adopted the crop by the end of its first decade in West Borneo, even though the first smallholder to plant rubber was a Malay (Ozinga, 1940). After these first gardens became productive, Chinese farmers encouraged their Dayak friends, relatives and other associates to grow rubber, distributing seeds and seedlings. Dayak adoption picked up after the decline of forest product prices, which many Dayaks had collected for cash, in about 1915 (Heidhues, 2003: 145, 155). It is not clear when Dayak rubber planters in Bagak started planting rubber, but many explained that it became widespread in the late 1920s and 1930s. They also claim that their ancestors learned how from Chinese friends and family.²⁷

Rural Chinese identity in West Borneo became tied up with rubber almost immediately, and this lasted throughout the colonial period. Chinese increased the trade in rubber and other tree crops, and were valued for the revenues they generated. J. Oberman, Resident of West Borneo in the 1930s, stated the predominant assumptions as follows: ‘Every Chinese breadwinner

27. Cator (1936: 70) also claims that between 1915 and 1925, ‘large quantities of rubber-seed and stumps were supplied by [Chinese] to the Natives on the understanding that they should share in the profits of cultivation’.

has at least two plots, for growing food and a rubber garden'.²⁸ Sandick and Marle (1919), in their travels around the territory, made a point of differentiating rubber production in inland West Borneo generally and specifically in the Chinese Districts along the island's coast northwest of Pontianak. They point to class differences among the people they call the Chinese, declaring that rubber growers 'get their labourers by using new immigrants [from China]'²⁹ (1919: 132). This was allegedly because 'most of the natives were not interested in trade or commerce but mainly in subsistence' (Cator 1936: 155). Of course, this characterization depended on the legal fictions that Chinese and Natives were entirely distinct and helped perpetuate that notion. The fact that people of mixed heritage were farming in both 'Dayak swiddens' and 'Chinese rubber gardens' did not even enter into this rhetoric, as indicated by the epigraph at the beginning of this article.

Government officials and other observers represented the roadside rubber gardens of the early twentieth century Chinese as highly productive, efficient cropping systems. They wrote about Chinese planting their rubber in discrete single species plots, neat rows of trees unmixed with other trees and crops. Chinese growers (through a variety of labour arrangements such as share-tapping or wage-labour), hired Chinese labour, and in difficult times, their own family members. Chinese traders in rural areas and in cities dominated the trade in rubber, inside and outside the country, imports as well as exports (Heidhues, 2003: 156–7).

After the formation of the Republic of Indonesia, Chinese smallholders along the Singkawang–Bengkayang Road were still associated with dominance in the rubber trade and in production. A former village head of Bagak Sahwa told me that when he took up his post in 1965, Chinese growers were producing most of the metric tonne of rubber exported daily from Bagak alone. By 1965, a full one-third of Bagak's population were identified in the sub-district office records as Chinese, while according to the census, Chinese constituted nearly half of the neighbouring 'Chinese settlement' of Patengahan closest to the road (Poerwanto, 2005: 146, citing *Kecamatan Singkawang Statistics*, January 1965). Bagak residents sold their latex to any number of Chinese-owned shops along the roadside or to Chinese buyers who would bicycle from Singkawang to purchase it on their daily rounds.

In oral histories collected in the 1990s, older Bagak residents described their memories of the roadsides lined with Chinese rubber gardens. In 2004, during a drive along the road circling the Gunung Raya Pasi Nature Reserve, a Dayak friend affably pointed out places where rubber trees planted by Chinese growers could still be seen in the low hills behind the swath of

28. From: Memorandum of transfer, J. Oberman, Resident of West Borneo, 1938, ARA 2.10.39 MvO MMK 265, Appendix II, p. 5 (cited in Heidhues, 2003: 155).

29. Thanks to Arthur van Schaik for pointing out that the use of the word '*halen*' suggests they were active in 'importing' them.

irrigated rice fields. By this time, however, both sorts of landscapes, once indisputably Chinese, were occupied, owned or farmed by Dayak and other pribumi farmers, or cut down to make way for various 'Dayak' land uses.

The Origins of Dayak Rubber Gardens

Today, a student of property and political ecology dropping into Bagak Sahwa might note that there are three kinds of sites on which Dayaks there and in other villages along the Singkawang–Bengkayang road grow rubber. These different rubber-growing territories have different origins, types of claims and property rights, and 'indigenous' (the general term that has replaced 'Native') or 'nationalist' (Indonesian) associations. They are former swidden fallows, PPKR ('People's Rubber Schemes'), and transmigration areas. The ways these are used and talked about today make it nearly impossible to imagine that Chinese smallholders once farmed these 'Dayak' and 'Indonesian' sites. Contemporary rubber growing is entirely associated with non-Chinese Indonesians, and at many levels conceals the fact that Chinese and Pantokng were the most important early growers and traders of this commodity, buttressing a new racialization of rubber production and affecting general perceptions of racialized territorial and property claims.³⁰ As I show below, even histories of each type of rubber property disguise the prior occupation of much of this land by Chinese. As they confirm racialized categories of Dayak through associations between Dayak subjectivity and territory, they also mask the extensive mixing of Chinese and Dayak growers/smallholders and their practices that characterized this region.

Swidden Fallow Lands

Until the local introduction of rubber, the hillside landscapes created and managed by Bagak's Salako-speaking Dayaks consisted largely of swidden fields and fallow sites cut into forests of various ages and sizes, dotted with heavily managed, mixed fruit forests. Most grew rice and vegetables, and some maize and cassava in hillside swiddens, a practice which both defined and performed their ethnicity. Increasing needs for cash and the decline of prices for non-timber forest products under colonial rule partially sparked interest in planting rubber. Dutch colonial, and later Indonesian, officials represented Dayak production of rubber, mixed with fruit and other useful trees in swidden fallows, as disorderly and inefficient, similar to the ways they saw Dayak swidden agriculture.

30. Mary Somers Heidhues' 2003 book may dispel this kind of thinking about the origins of rubber production, but her work is unlikely to affect Chinese land rights.

Before the government established and enforced political forests, and before sedentarization was realized in law and practice, creating territorial village boundaries, Borneo swidden cultivators and other small farmers were minimally constrained by access to land locally.³¹ Rubber could be planted in swidden fallows and, unless land was a constraint, did not hinder rice production in adjacent swidden fields. When swidden cycles were sharply reduced by political pressures to sedentarize and changes in resident populations occurred, it became more difficult for farmers to cultivate rubber and swidden rice simultaneously, as both crops needed land for a long-term production cycle. As rubber (and fruit) took up more land, swidden fallow times were shortened and rice yields lowered. Families could not produce enough rice to live on for a year. Consequently, farm-dependent families needed to produce rubber to buy rice and other goods (Peluso, 1996).

Salako readily admit the importance of what they and their ancestors learned about planting rubber from Chinese planters. Some had had credit and provision arrangements with Chinese wholesalers, shopkeepers or growers. By the 1930s, they could exchange rubber for government-issued coupons to buy food and other supplies on credit. Still, it was not until Dutch colonial officials forced Salako farmers to move their longhouses from the uppermost slopes of their ancestral lands to create a watershed protection area that Bagak Salako became serious about producing rubber. This move was the first in several steps that led to their sedentarization and the end of their 'shifting' when the landscape filled up with useful trees.³²

Planting trees, or what Salako call 'hard' crops (*tanaman keras*) meant tying up swidden land for longer periods of time than it took to plant a season of rice and vegetables, after which fields could go fallow and then revert back to secondary forest. In theory, all descendants of a forest-clearing ancestor could claim rights to make a swidden in that spot. In practice, family members' claims varied depending on whether they were close or distant kin of the original planters. During cultivation, however, a single household or individual controlled the product and the plot, effectively individualizing commonly held rights for the season.³³ With field crops, the short production seasons restored other family members' access to the land much sooner, obviously, than would productive tree crops.

Over time, a household's labour investment in the production and maintenance of rubber was considerable and lengthened the period of effective individual land tenure. Still, in times of relative local land abundance, old, unproductive rubber trees could be abandoned on a fallowed plot, signalling

31. 'Political forests' are state-authorized and regulated land use zones that are demarcated, mapped, legislated and reserved for long-term or 'permanent' maintenance under forest cover. See Peluso and Vandergeest (2001); see also the Law on Village Authority, 1979.

32. On this sedentarization process in Bagak Sahwa, see Peluso (1996).

33. On myths about communal and private property rights in swidden agriculture, see Dove (1983). For debates about land tenure among swidden cultivators in Borneo, see Appell (1997); Weinstock (1979); Weinstock and Vergara (1987).

the land's 'return' to the descent group. Land for swiddening became restricted as more people planted rubber and fruit trees immediately after harvesting a rice crop, laying claim to descent group land for longer periods. By the 1970s, when fallow periods in Bagak Sahwa lasted at most ten years, some rubber planters began to directly pass the gardens on to their children. Alternatively, when forty-year-old rubber trees stopped producing, planters might make a swidden the next year, followed by more rubber or fruit. Previously, these gardens would have returned to the descent group pool. By the 1990s, fallows had been reduced to five to six years, 'empty' swidden fallows had become much less common, and swidden fallows planted with rubber had been effectively privatized. They were called *kabotn getah* (rubber gardens) which had come to indicate not only a land use, but a kind of individualized, territorial or property category.³⁴

Salako growers have long viewed rubber production as a way to demonstrate their movement toward modernity (author interviews, 1990, 1991). Rubber's status as solely a cash crop meant that growers were commodity producers. While they had limited success in changing the stereotypes of themselves as 'subsistence cultivators', many hoped to deflect the accusations that Dayaks were 'wild farmers' or 'irrational'. Such colonial stereotypes were perpetrated since Indonesian independence largely by Indonesian foresters and large-scale plantation entrepreneurs competing for the same landscapes during the Suharto regime (1966–98). This move toward modernity changed the kinds of practices that constituted Salako or Dayak identity, especially land and tree tenure. The process of adopting rubber production helped define Dayaks as 'smallholders' or 'peasants', partly because it tied them to place in different ways than had their swidden landscape practices. In other words, being Dayak was not restricted to growing rice in swiddens and sharing access to land with other members of a descent group; it also came to be expressed and interpreted through growing rubber — a commodity — in old swidden fallows.

In 1979, the passing of the national Law on Village Authority fixed village borders, legally keeping villages, including Bagak, 'in place'. Entire villages could no longer move to new sites, as they had in the past when a longhouse's settlement territory filled up with productive and long-living trees. Easy access to the urban markets of Singkawang and Pontianak, facilitated by the repaving of the road in the 1960s and the entry of Japanese vehicles (motorcycles and vans) in the 1970s, added additional incentives for planting trees. By 1991, 85 per cent of the villagers owned productive rubber trees. People could still move, but they no longer brought place with them (Li, 1999: Ch. 1; Thongchai, 1994; Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995).

34. In 2004, some people still held on to small (200 m²) plots to plant enough swidden rice for ritual purposes. These were being fallowed only a year or two before planting again.

Although still called customary land (*tanah adat*), the uses and tenure practices on these former swidden lands had changed considerably. So had the racialized association with rubber; it was becoming a 'native' commodity. Its adoption all over West Kalimantan by Dayaks (a process begun in the 1920s), was being widely documented and used as part of development strategies (see, for example, Dove, 1993, 1994, 1998; Ward and Ward, 1974).

PPKR: The People's Rubber

A second type of privatized rights to rubber land associated with Dayaks came in the early 1980s, through a project/scheme called PPKR — *Proyek Perkebunan Karet Rakyat*, The People's Smallholder Rubber Garden Project. Clonal varieties were introduced, and smallholder Dayak families were still the main growers. Funded by the World Bank through the Indonesian People's Bank, this project was introduced immediately after the formal consolidation of several hamlets into the administrative village of Bagak Sahwa. The land and tree tenure relations created on project lands were completely new. Individuals or households, not descent groups, were to become title holders to discrete plots of land.

There were some conditionalities imposed prior to the assignment of a PPKR scheme to a village. For example, although the loans and titles were held individually, the village had to identify a contiguous tract of land for planting PPKR rubber, both to facilitate project administration/surveillance by World Bank personnel and to ensure common adherence to the production regime. This requirement generally meant that villagers had to agree to use customary land, and assumed that in any swidden-based system, 'unmanaged fallow lands' would be extensive. The project also required participants to take credit packages to finance the clearance of the area with herbicides and fungicides and buy the high-yielding seedlings. Finally, though it is not clear that this was actually stated, it was assumed that the land and the loans were *not* for Chinese or non-pribumi. Indigenous Dayaks and other pribumi citizens were defined as the targets of these economic development schemes.

The implementation of these rubber production schemes had major territorial and racializing effects. PPKR rubber became a mechanism for the central Indonesian state to assert authority over village land. From the state's point of view, the status of such land would be effectively changed from customary land (*tanah adat*), a category subject to local authority during the colonial period and immediately thereafter, to private property administered directly by the state.³⁵ Once the loans were paid off, the land became private property (*tanah milik*) and the owner received a land title. The title was

35. Although in reality, the bank (BRI — People's Bank of Indonesia) owned the trees until the loans were paid off.

registered with an Indonesian government agency and legally would thenceforth have to be transferred or sold exclusively through state mechanisms. In this way, the state strengthened its local power and presence. By changing the land's status, the villagers' relations to the land itself was changed, with the state recognizing and adjudicating only certain kinds of property rights. *Tanah adat* thus became a commodity, stripped of the social meanings invested in it through its history and genealogy. It was not talked about in this way, but this was effectively what was meant to happen.

Yet curiously, perhaps, the move legitimized a re-racialization of this land. Its legal status had been murky. From local Dayak points of view, the land had always constituted part of their territory. As discussed above, the predecessors of their leaders had given Chinese settlers, living in the region until 1967, permission to convert and farm nearby forest and swamp lands (author's interviews; see also Heidhues, 2003; Jackson, 1970; Yuan, 2000). Before the colonial government took over in 1854 and during the period of Chinese *Kongsis* in this area from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese settlers had either asked permission of local Dayak or Malay authorities to gain access to land, or, if no one was using it, simply assumed control and converted it. In those times, if land was abandoned and the user had not designated an heir or a new rights-holder, it would return to *tanah adat* status (Peluso, 1996). As one Salako leader stated, even if the swamp forests and lowlands from which these Chinese settlers had initially carved productive *sawahs* and gardens had been undesirable to Salako farmers at the time of their original allocation to Chinese, if the current Chinese holders abandoned the land it still could be defined as *tanah adat*. Another added that all village land became *tanah adat* in the eyes of local people when village boundaries were established in 1979. Using this land for PPKR, therefore, served to legitimize Dayak claims to this territory.

The name of this rubber planting scheme offers another clue to the political intentions and racializing effects of this project. The 'R' in PPKR stands for '*rakyat*'. *Rakyat*, meaning 'the people', is a strange word to use in this place and at this time. By 1980 it had become a dated word, associated more with the Sukarno regime than that of Suharto, largely because of its populist and communist associations. Suharto regime programmes tended to use the more depoliticized term '*masyarakat*' to mean 'the people'. Both terms are correct in Indonesian; each is inflected by the discourses of different political eras. Despite these associations, the word *rakyat* under Suharto could be used to mean 'the little people'; it actually differentiated people by class. It also carried a racialized meaning: *rakyat* was *never* used to refer to someone deemed Chinese, no matter how poor. The so-called little people's rubber was not for Chinese in New Order Indonesia.

PPKR was thus for pribumi — non-Chinese Indonesians, sons of the soil, smallholders, little people of West Kalimantan. Some pribumi — local — people who were not Dayak, were granted or bought PPKR plots: Madurese, Javanese, Sundanese, and Malays owned PPKR plots at the time of my 1991

survey. Besides providing land titles and modern agricultural techniques to pribumi, the scheme helped change the representation of Salako farmers from 'shifting cultivators' to 'smallholders', and was intended to end shifting cultivation where PPKR rubber was planted.³⁶ PPKR produced the place (Bagak Sahwa) as a territory belonging to Indonesia, and the people farming it as pribumi: non-Chinese, Indonesian citizens.

The first PPKR area of 42 ha was planted in Bagak Sahwa in 1981–2; another 87 ha were planted in 1982–3, and a further 80 ha were planted over the following three years — a total of 209 hectares. Finding available contiguous customary land could be tricky in an area that was densely populated, by local standards, by the 1980s. However it starts to become clear how it was possible when we realize that most of the land used for PPKR had previously been the rubber gardens, fallows and vegetable and fruit gardens forcibly abandoned by Chinese in 1967 (see below). PPKR was possible only because of the sheer amount of land left behind by former Chinese or *Pantokng* residents who had left, and in the process left land in fallow.

An unintended effect of the state programme was the enabling mechanism of PPKR — not only enabling an increase in Indonesian state authority and presence, but also enabling 'the people', in this case a Salako *adat* community, to assert customary authority over the land. PPKR thus contributed to the racialization of territory and bodies in Bagak Sahwa, whether Salako or Indonesian state narratives of its history are taken as accurate.

Transmigration Rubber: Post-colonial Citizens and Symbolic Subjects

The third type of site associated with Dayaks and other pribumi growing rubber is the transmigration area. Rubber plantations associated with transmigration became an explicit symbol of Indonesian citizenship, national belonging and a kind of smallholder modernity in many parts of West Kalimantan. Although not on Bagak Sahwa village lands, a transmigration area was established in 1989 on an extensive tract of fallow or abandoned adat land in a neighbouring village with close historical connections to Bagak (Peluso, 1996).³⁷

The transmigration project planned to resettle 400 families from West Java and other densely populated areas of Indonesia on 800 ha of land. Such projects incorporated the local resettlement of Dayaks and other villagers willing to give up their land in exchange for 2 ha of project land per nuclear household, to be planted in high yielding varieties of clonal rubber. Dayak residents of this 'host village' were required to join the resettlement scheme,

36. Even though the Dayaks of Bagak Sahwa had not shifted for a very long time (Peluso, 1996).

37. This was the village that some residents leaving Bagak in the 1930s moved to, seeking new farming areas when the Dutch established a watershed protection area on the mountaintop.

as negotiated by their village leader. Again, access to transmigration land was defined by racialized citizenship. Only pribumi were allowed to participate. This was because transmigration was represented as being for the poor, a characterization which, in Indonesian state ideologies and practices, did not have room for Chinese (Hui, 2007). The public assumption was that Chinese, being 'rich', would not want to participate. Moreover, though transmigration was often represented as symbolic of Indonesia, promoting the mixing of Indonesia's ethnically diverse populations (Elmhirst, 1999), many Dayaks viewed it as a process of losing their land. They also had to take out the same loans as other participants for the inputs necessary to grow clonal rubber and, when it was all paid off, they received a land title.

Again, re-racialization resulted from the establishment of this transmigration area. While Salako Dayaks had long lived in this village, so had Chinese and Pantokng. Dayak swiddens, fallows, rubber gardens and *tembawang*s here were not enough on their own to account for all the fallow land used for transmigration, even if each household was estimated to have had 5–10 ha in various stages of field or fallow. Historical materials show that area's most populous group was Chinese (Cator, 1936; Poerwanto, 2005; Sandick and Marle, 1919). This area constituted the agricultural hinterlands of Buduk, one of the region's earliest and most productive gold mines, and Patengahan, an early agricultural settlement of Chinese (Yuan, 2000). From my work with maps, local histories and these published historical accounts, I can show that parts of Patengahan were integrated into the administrative village of Bagak Sahwa and adjacent villages when the new administrative villages were being formed. The bulk of the 800 ha came from the hundreds of hectares of productive land abandoned by Chinese and Pantokng evicted in 1967.

The presumption underlying this government project was that by the time land titles were distributed and the loans paid off, the land would be fully commoditized and held by pribumi, a category which did not differentiate Dayaks from other 'native Indonesian' ethnic groups. Yet from local Dayak perspectives, creating the transmigration area both reconstituted the land as Dayak and recognized them as pribumi. Participation in such a project by local 'Dayaks' hid any mixed heritage in their families. When I naively asked the village head in 1991 why he had 'given away' the village land to the transmigration authorities, he said he had done no such thing. He was, rather, acting on behalf of his people, contributing to their development and cementing his authority over the land under the new governance mechanisms (interview, 1991).

Even the process by which this land was slated for transmigration confirmed Dayak authority and territory. When he and other village heads travelled to Jakarta to negotiate transmigration deals, the government in a sense recognized the land as *tanah adat* — Dayak territory under a Dayak leader's authority. By simultaneously ignoring that the land had been leased to and registered by Chinese, it also denied the history of the vast Chinese

holdings, and of the forms of colonial state authority over those lands and people. The rights-creating practices of Chinese farmers, recognized by Dayaks and other local authorities during an earlier era, were also erased. Those who had made that long-avoided land liveable and arable, became irrelevant to the historical record.

Land allocation and occupation began in 1989 and, within six years, rubber was produced from the newly planted trees on the 800 ha tract. Like PPKR trees, transmigration rubber varieties were clonal and high yielding and, ironically, like Chinese rubber, were planted in 'orderly' and 'modern' plantation style. Several hundred Javanese and Sundanese families moved into the jurisdiction of this Dayak village head and became rubber smallholders alongside the resident Dayaks integrated into the project. Having lost several hundred constituents and subjects to the 1967–74 evictions and counter-insurgency operations, the village head now had a new and expanded pribumi constituency, simultaneously cementing his position as both a Dayak and an Indonesian leader.

Further assisting in the rewriting of the local history were larger narratives about Borneo rubber, and the other practices around smallholder and Dayak rubber production. By this time, Borneo rubber was already 'known' as a Dayak or 'indigenous' crop, and came to be known more widely as a commodity produced by native growers, as more and more reports by economists and anthropologists came out on other parts of West Kalimantan (such as Dove, 1983, 1993; Ward and Ward, 1974). The story of how the Dutch had tried to monopolize rubber production but had been confounded by their Indonesian rural subjects was a well-known story and a source of pride. Planting rubber in transmigration sites seemed to be a natural, normal extension of local production practices and a true 'Indonesian' crop grown by pribumi migrants and transmigrants and 'indigenous' locals. By deflecting attention from this region's specific history with rubber and Chinese growers, the Chinese role in producing these landscapes was also lost. The final section of this article shows that the elimination of Chinese and some Pantokng and the masking of their presence would have been less likely without violence.

RACIALIZED TERRITORIES, VIOLENCE, ENCLOSURE

So where were Chinese and Pantokng rubber producers as these Dayak histories came into being? We have already seen that PPKR and transmigration required contiguous land, and that the Chinese smallholders discussed in the previous section were no longer part of the rural land-use conversation in New Order Indonesia, as non-pribumi. This is because physical violence and eviction underlie today's rubber landscape; indeed it is hidden also by rubber production in those same spaces. Violence generated by the change of regime politics between Sukarno and Suharto, in the period from 1965

through 1974, hardened the differences between people considered or self-identified as Chinese or Dayak, and led definitively to the decline of the public use of the term and also to the subjectivity of people who had lived their lives as Pantokng.

To connect these events to the property and landscape outcomes of these changes, I need to explain the geopolitical context, however schematically. Briefly, West Kalimantan in the 1950s and 1960s was a site where global and national conflicts were both staged and played out. Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, took an anti-colonial stance to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia and launched his *Ganjang Malaysia* (Crush Malaysia) campaign from West Kalimantan. In the course of this, the province became heavily militarized. The turnabout of Sukarno's political fortunes by an alleged coup attempt in 1965, and the appointment of Suharto as second President, led to the criminalization of the Communist Party and other leftist organizations and a transformation of Indonesia's positioning in Cold War politics. Despite the extremely complex circumstances on the ground, the official position in West Kalimantan became that all rural Chinese were either illegal communists or their supporters, and therefore enemies of the new Indonesian government (Coppel, 1983; Soemadi, 1974: 92).³⁸

The famous Indonesian massacres of communists, other leftists, and alleged associates in 1965–66 in Java, Bali and Sumatra were followed by pogroms against Chinese in major cities of Java and Sumatra. Anti-Chinese violence in West Kalimantan followed in 1967–8, with a different twist.³⁹ This was not spontaneous anti-Chinese action. The military was clearly behind the event called *Demonstrasi Cina* (by Dayaks today) or *Demonstrasi Dayak* (by government and journalistic accounts then) (Davidson and Kammen, 2002; Peluso and Harwell, 2001). From late 1967 to early 1968, Dayaks and other local residents responded to organized and pre-planned provocations by Indonesian soldiers and intelligence officers, with the assistance of some Dayak leaders, to evict Chinese from their rural homes and businesses.

According to local and military sources, Indonesian Special Forces alerted Dayak leaders of the impending order to mobilize collectively against the Chinese. Once the plan was known, Dayak villagers in Bagak and several other villages told their Chinese and Pantokng friends and relatives what they heard was going to happen. In Bagak, what were thought by some would be temporary evacuations took place peacefully; no-one was killed. This was the case in some other villages in the early days as well (Heidhues, 2003).

38. I can only provide a schematic account here of this highly complex and relatively long period of conflict in West Kalimantan. For more in-depth analysis of the 'Confrontation' in English, see Coppel (1983); Mackie (1974); Poulgrain (1998). In Indonesian, see, for example, Kustanto (2002). On the period after *Konfrontasi*, see, in English, Coppel (1983); Davidson and Kammen (2002); Peluso (2003); Peluso and Harwell (2001); and in Indonesian, Effendy (1995) and Soemadi (1974).

39. One of the best discussions of these politics is still Coppel (1983).

These Chinese were accompanied to Singkawang in the days preceding the actual ‘Demonstration’,⁴⁰ another indication that it had been planned.

The signs to begin the Demonstration and other aspects of the violence were explicitly racialized as Dayak: in addition to a radio announcement from the former Dayak governor of West Kalimantan, the red bowl (*mangkok merah*) a Dayak symbol for war, was to be circulated. The red bowl summoned Dayak men and boys to perform as headhunters and warriors. They wore red headbands, bark bracelets and loincloths — things not done for decades. For weapons they used elongated bush knives (*mandau*) of ancient headhunting renown, and homemade hunting guns. As the bowl arrived in each village, gongs were sounded and people went into action. One village head from a settlement in the hills behind Montrado market said he and his ‘troops’ (villagers) were told to descend into Montrado market, evict the Chinese shopkeepers, kill people who refused to leave, and take over the shops and the Chinese *sawahs*. He used the Sukarno-era phrase ‘*Ganjang*’ (crush) to describe what they had been told to do: ‘*Ganjang Cina*’.⁴¹ The evictions spread from Sambas to Pontianak and Sanggau districts, engulfing all settlements where Chinese lived and becoming increasingly violent as they moved further inland (Coppel, 1983; Feith, 1968; Soemadi, 1974).

But who was Chinese and who was Dayak? The very mixed nature of this district, as we have seen in the term ‘Pantokng’, often made it difficult if not impossible for troops — most from Java, Sumatra and other external places — to separate the two groups. In many cases, political affiliations and a family’s explicit orientation to a political position or organization made it clear; Chinese not only acknowledged and performed their identities as such, but were recognizable to military and government officials through social practices and ways of life. For some, more recently migrated people — those who had come over the past few decades — it was not too difficult for military to decide that they were Chinese; many did not even speak Indonesian. Stereotyped views of agrarian practice had become indicators of racialized identities: ‘Chinese worked *sawah* and Dayaks made swiddens’ was one way the military and officials differentiated them, though Pantokng were involved in both. The creation of a pre-Demonstration panic in the months before can be understood also as a psychological warfare tactic meant both to mobilize people and to differentiate ‘Chinese’ from ‘Dayaks’. The military’s plan was to compel Dayaks to enact racialized violence and evict Chinese from the former Chinese Districts.⁴² But they still needed help,

40. van Hulten (1994) and author’s interviews. How many people actually died during the worst violence and in the aftermath is difficult to ascertain. Most estimates of deaths ranged from 300 to 500. Many thousands more became refugees: Feith (1968: 134) reported some 53,000 of them by the end of December. Later estimates are much higher. Soemadi (1974) estimated about 75,000; Douglas Kammen (pers. comm.) has estimated nearly 117,000.

41. He told me this in an interview in 1998; this same term was used by Soemadi (1974).

42. Soemadi (1974) discusses these strategies explicitly. See also Kustanto (2002) and Davidson (2002), as well as Davidson and Kammen (2002) and Peluso (2003).

in large part to root out the Pantokng — a term which had no meaning to the military, as they would have defined any *peranakan/Pantokng* as Chinese.

Pantokng thus had to choose an ethnicity, if there were any doubts. Dayaks both in Bagak and elsewhere (see Tangdililing, 1993) say that, as far as possible, they protected anyone with a close Dayak family connection — a wife, a child or parent married to Dayaks, practising a Dayak way of life — who wished to stay in the village. Ten or more families chose to stay in Bagak. Yet whoever stayed had to depend for their very safety on their neighbours not giving them away. A few Dayak men whose wives were Chinese or Pantokng who appeared Chinese talked about hiding their wives for the duration of the violence (interviews, October 1998).

People today maintain that it was never clear that Chinese would *not* be allowed to return. Chinese farmers, shopkeepers and householders asked Dayak friends to watch out for their farms, shops, houses, stores of rice and other supplies, while they went to Singkawang or stayed with relatives until things cooled down. In the end, however, most were not allowed to return, reclaim, or sell their homes, shops, agricultural land and rubber gardens. Even if friends had not *planned* on taking over their property for the long term, national and regional politics left Chinese land and shops in their hands for good.⁴³ The land was either expropriated by the state or directly appropriated by Dayaks and other local Indonesians of Madurese, Malay and other ethnic backgrounds.

The politics of the years following the Demonstration were a politics of racialized fear. While most of the evictions had ended by mid-1968, the military (now purged of its Communist and other left-leaning soldiers) continued to occupy barracks and houses in interior villages (including two or three encampments in Bagak) until 1974, to ‘root out’ alleged communist guerrillas — now all formally defined as Chinese — who had hidden in the forest.⁴⁴ During this time, Dayak villagers were taken as ‘trackers’ into the forest — again, due to racialized notions of their ‘forest expertise’. Refusal to take part was interpreted as complicity. The military commander appointed Dayak villagers to decide who would go into the forest with the soldiers each day. Other villagers were assigned to guard Chinese communist prisoners and patrol the village at night. Special Forces tortured Dayaks who refused to participate in forest operations.⁴⁵ To be Chinese or sympathetic to Chinese

43. For much more detailed discussions of these events, see Davidson and Kammen (2002); Heidhues (2003); HRW (1997); Peluso and Harwell (2001); conflicting accounts by ‘eye-witnesses’ include Coppel 1983; Effendy (1982); Feith (1968); van Hulsten (1994); Soemadi (1974).

44. See the dissertations by Hui (2007) and Davidson (2002) for a discussion of the shifting alliances and compositions of the military arms of PGRS, PARAKU and PKI during this fraught time.

45. Soemadi (1974) claims the military had ‘finished’ by 1970 in the western parts of the province.

meant women could be subject to rape by soldiers, and men to other forms of torture and sometimes death, often on a whim.

Caught in the middle of all this were those of such mixed heritage that they had long ago stopped calling themselves Chinese or Dayak — they were simply farmers or peasants — *petani*. Dayak farmers or leaders perceived by occupying forces as too sympathetic to Chinese could find themselves hung by the ankles or partially drowned until they gave up the names or hiding places of ‘Chinese’ or called Pantokng neighbours ‘Chinese’. Some Pantokng families who chose to remain in the village paid a heavy price. One Pantokng farmer I met had had a Dayak mother and was married to a Dayak woman. He had been tortured by electric shock, interrogated and jailed. He survived but today is one of the poorest people in the village. Another has a shop on the main street. He worked with the military during the searches, translating for captives and guarding the village perimeter with the military and local village patrols. Other Pantokng villagers, some of whom I did not know until very recently, had Chinese or Pantokng ancestry, literally became Dayak: making swiddens, learning rituals, studying healing, and so on.

After the months of violent evictions, and then through their long subsequent absence, the agrarian Chinese of West Kalimantan, as either wet rice or rubber-growing smallholders, literally disappeared as a possible identity. The use of the term Pantokng also ended. It was no longer safe to be mixed. A six-year military undertaking had been necessary to wrest control of their rural homes, their land and their rubber, followed by a continued threat of violence in West Kalimantan under Suharto. West Kalimantan’s heavy police and military presence, enabling continued national surveillance of the area said to have a ‘Chinese problem’, helped wipe out those hybrid identities.⁴⁶ The violence of Chinese and Pantokng eviction was hidden from view, but this also helped protect those Pantokng who had stayed and re-identified as Dayak. Pantokng, Bendi, Peranakan in all their local iterations were literally rendered ‘people without history’ (Wolf, 1982) — because history was no longer safe.⁴⁷ Ironically, both then and a hundred years earlier, violent states mobilized previously sympathetic people who had no stake in the idea of Chinese as a competitive political or economic category, to fight them.

Despite some assumptions to the contrary, Dayaks were not the only pribumi to acquire Chinese land. Indeed, as the stories of property rights and rubber land uses reveal above, the re-racialization of this land was not a practice by ‘Dayaks’ alone, but as much a move to embed pribumi —

46. For more details of these events, and greater historical depth on this period, see sources mentioned in previous footnotes. However, racialized territorialization is not discussed by these other authors.

47. Heidhues (2003: 252) ironically points out that this was the first time a real ‘quarter system’ — living areas designated racially — was in full force, except for a few years under a particularly ‘pugnacious’ colonial official.

Indonesian citizens — in the local landscape. The comment of a village head in Montrado sub-district was telling: ‘the Madurese came to Montrado market at the same time as us (Dayaks) in 1967. Before that, it was all Chinese’ (author’s field notes, October 2004). Bagak’s village head allocated shares of abandoned Chinese land to anyone he considered ‘local’. Madurese and Malays appropriated abandoned houses and land; they were attracted to rice paddies more than most Dayaks, though many Dayaks were given *sawah* ‘shares’, which they attempted to farm, dispose of, or hold. Even with all these allocations, a great deal of land was ‘left over’ and went into fallow. The transformation of this land into pribumi property under rubber production has been described above.

Of course, the extent of ‘Chinese land’ abandoned would have been known locally but not made obvious to the wider Indonesian public. Some 50,000 to 100,000 people from rural areas of West Kalimantan had been expelled; we can assume that hundreds of thousands of hectares were abandoned. Estimates of the amount of land in West Kalimantan under *sawah* alone, harvested in 1967–71, ranged from 171,000 ha to 186,000 ha (Ward and Ward, 1974). While a small portion of this land was probably created by Dayak and Malay farmers (see, for example, Padoch et al., 1998), we have seen that the majority of it was constructed by Chinese and their *peranakan* or Pantokng offspring during and after the *Kongsis* period. Some 80,000 ha had been covered by the short leases for rubber and coconut production land, and much more remained beyond the government’s reach (Cator, 1936). In Bagak Sahwa, 209 ha of land were ‘available’ for PPKR, which had required contiguous land. In the neighbouring village, 800 ha of contiguous, fallowed land were given over to some 350 transmigrant families. These local projects in two small villages accounted for a limited area of the former Chinese Districts.

The 1967–8 evictions and expropriations were not written into the Indonesian history books available for the first ten years of my research in this area (from 1990 to 2000). Nor was it permissible to ask about ethnic origins on national censuses. At best, in *Kompas* newspaper, West Kalimantan Chinese were referred to as ‘refugees’, and after their resettlement and dispersal, the Indonesian press spent minimal ink on the subject. To the best of my knowledge, the question of compensation or land rights has never been raised formally by or for them.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: THE RACIALIZATION OF RUBBER TERRITORIES

The history of rubber in Bagak Sahwa has shown how rubber has both created rights and facilitated erasures in different ways and in different eras. The violence discussed above has been obscured by a ‘naturalness’ ascribed to contemporary patterns of indigenous people’s and pribumi’s

rubber growing. This article is not meant to deny that Dayaks and Malays have grown rubber for a very long time in West Kalimantan. However, the undifferentiated representation of rubber production in economic statistics and in terms of a national development that excludes hundreds of thousands of former smallholders has obfuscated a deeper understanding of rubber production and property rights in this important rubber-producing region.

As we saw above, Chinese smallholders were major revenue producers for the colonial government in Western Borneo but also an administrative anomaly. Local Malays and Dayaks recognized their holdings. Yet, Dutch agrarian law initially had no appropriate category for them as landholders, even though their practices had created rights by local reckonings. After a period of stop-gap Dutch legislation recognizing lease rights, the issues of Chinese land rights and citizenship were not resolved in the first decades of the Indonesian Republic. With the rise of the New Order, Chinese were evicted, many violently, and not allowed to return to rural areas. Government transmigration and PPKR schemes thereafter eliminated the long period of ambiguity regarding Chinese lands: they literally covered up the fact that Chinese had lived there and were forced out. Just as clonal varieties were brought in to replace the traditional varieties of rubber, the growers themselves were also replaced.

Historically, in this part of Kalimantan, rubber was racialized as Chinese, and Chinese were racialized as rubber smallholders. In the Chinese Districts, rubber expanded most rapidly among Chinese smallholders from Pontianak to Singkawang and into the interior beyond, often travelling through Chinese connections to Dayak growers. Rubber subsequently created private rights to land for Dayaks in three ways, within and outside their descent group holdings. The longevity of rubber, compared to the longevity of the field crops replaced by rubber, combined with the changing political ecologies of the region, facilitated *de facto* privatization when farmers repeatedly planted traditional varieties of rubber in their swidden fallows on customary lands. Rubber-growing on PPKR lands and on transmigration plantations generated land titles [private] for both indigenous-pribumi and other pribumi growers. Constraining access to these schemes racialized these territories. The development schemes reinforced the inclusion of local people in a larger territorial and political entity, the Indonesian nation, while inserting the nation quite literally and symbolically into the landscape itself. Planting clonal rubber in evenly spaced rows, treating it with chemicals, and making land a commodity with a title, could be understood as the creation of a new Indonesian frontier.

While producing rights and territories, rubber concurrently produced erasures of people, types of land use, and other systems of rights. Perhaps surprisingly, many Indonesians and Indonesianists remain unaware of this history. Recent NGO and development writings about 'jungle' rubber (for example, Penot, 1995) and PPKR rubber have reinforced the generic

indigenous associations, making them seem like a natural history. The history-making narratives of development have thus helped over-determine the ways rubber production and rubber smallholders have been represented, produced and perceived.⁴⁸ Stereotypical thinking about ‘the Dayaks of Borneo’ across regions conflated practices and histories in the interior with those of the former Chinese Districts.

Since the 1967–74 violence, the ‘blood and fire’ that lay beneath these ‘lands filled with tears’⁴⁹ has been rendered invisible in the quietest, most subtle ways.⁵⁰ Rubber helped erase people, practices and landscape history — at least from the most visible layers. Territory — and even a crop — once racialized as Chinese was reinscribed as simultaneously Indonesian and Dayak. So were the people, as smallholder Pantokng who had remained in the village after the Demonstration and practised their lives largely as Dayaks had little incentive to claim differently: it was life-threatening not to perform as such. In this way, amidst heated academic and policy debates about Dayak rights and marginalization, themselves extremely critical issues, the idea of the dispossessed Chinese smallholder was, at least for a time, lost to New Order social history. To be Chinese under Suharto was *not* to be a farmer. Chinese smallholders of West Kalimantan were relegated to a distant colonial past.

In this contribution, I have delineated connections among property, territory, violence and identity, using the production of rubber as a lens through which to see. In the process, I have shown how the commodity and production histories of rubber helped to create territories and entrench racialized identities and associations with territory. Violence ultimately played a larger role in erasing prior claims, in associating these claims with people of particular ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ categories, in establishing the control of selected old and new actors over trees and land, and in legitimating access or recognition. In fact, the use of race-cum-citizenship as a condition for access to land affected not only notions of territoriality but the very understanding of ethnicity or racialized bodies and citizenship. Violence subsequently transformed the racialized associations of this landscape, while rubber erased its history.

Examining rubber-growing practices and their changing associations with Chinese and Dayaks might have led to a conclusion that both ethnicity and property rights in this region were ‘fuzzy’, much as they often are to either

48. The Ward and Ward (1974) piece is particularly important because of its timing, just as the violence against Chinese and communists in the forests was coming to an end and development as a counter-insurgency measure was being put into place. One line in that piece states, ‘Since 1967, most Chinese rubber smallholders have left their former holdings, some of which have been occupied by Malays or Dayaks’ (ibid.: 36).

49. A name given the abandoned land by a woman in Bagak Sahwa (interview, 1991; Peluso 1996).

50. Davidson and Kammen (2002) tellingly refer to it as ‘Indonesia’s Unknown War’.

outsiders or to policy makers and government officials who have had to deal with them (Verdery, 1998). Histories of rubber production and land rights could also be represented as ‘negotiated’ (Juul and Lund, 2002; Peters, 2002), if we narrow our view and map rubber production in the Singkawang hinterland and past across ‘Native’ or ‘pribumi’ spaces, with ‘foreigners’ redefined over time from Chinese, to migrants and transmigrants. All these analyses could be seen as accurate or ‘true’. What is striking, however, is not how closely Chinese were once identified with rubber, but how rapidly and completely this association disappeared. There was nothing ‘fuzzy’ about this transformation: they were *made* to disappear, removed from the landscape and the history.

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