Rice-Eating Rubber and People-Eating Governments: Peasant versus State Critiques of Rubber Development in Colonial Borneo

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Rice-Eating Rubber and People-Eating Governments: Peasant versus State Critiques of Rubber Development in Colonial Borneo

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Abstract. Two remarkable events took place in the 1930s in Borneo: a myth spread among the tribal societies of the interior, warning them that the introduced Para rubber tree was hostile to their swidden rice; and the International Rubber Regulation Agreement was established, in an attempt to protect plantation rubber production by restricting smallholder production through export duties and other measures. A comparative analysis of these two interlinked events makes the tribal dream look less fantastic and the international regulation look less rational than they otherwise do. This analysis contributes to current debates about the peasant tendency to differentiate the production of food crops and cash crops, the scholarly failure to link local and global histories, and the anthropological failure to integrate symbolic and political-economic studies.

> *As the bulk of the Javanese peasants moved toward agricultural involution, a small minority of the Outer Island peasants moved toward agricultural specialization, frank individualism, social conflict, and cultural rationalization. The second course was the more perilous, and to some minds it may seem both less defensible morally and less attractive aesthetically. But at least it did not foredoom the future.*
> —Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (1971)

This is a study not only of how some agricultural development choices "foredoom" the future, but of how social recognition of this fact is attained, and also of how broader recognition of such facts may be obfuscated. The historic development of smallholder rubber cultivation in Borneo was marked by two remarkable events, both of which occurred at about the same time, and both of which can be read as highly revealing commentaries on this development. One of these events was the International Rubber

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Regulation Agreement (IRRA), which was ostensibly designed to stabilize world rubber prices by limiting production through taxation, sales quotas, and prohibition of planting. In practice, the agreement was used to attempt to perpetuate the early domination of the industry by European estates against an increasingly competitive smallholder sector. It imposed onerous duties on smallholder rubber, which at one point reached over 2,000 percent of net profit. The second event was a tribal omen-dream, which bore the message that rubber was hostile to swidden rice (the basis of tribal economy and society). A typical account of the dream runs as follows: "Rice that people were drying in the sun kept disappearing. Then one day the people found this rice in a hollow rubber tree that they felled to use for firewood" (Dove n.d.). The story of this dream spread throughout Borneo, much to the consternation of the tribespeople (collectively known as Dayak) of the interior—so much so in some cases that they felled their rubber trees upon learning of the dream.[1]

The dream and the regulatory agreement merit attention because they coincided in time, place, and subject but were completely different in perspective. Their analysis affords an unusual opportunity to compare indigenous and official views of the same phenomenon, to "naturalize" a native view that normally is seen as bizarre and to "denaturalize" an official view that normally is not seen as bizarre.

This analysis is, at the most concrete level, an attempt to say something about the ubiquitous tendency of peasant societies to segregate or differentiate the production of food crops and cash crops. At a more abstract level, this analysis attempts to link local history (which is more about rice) and global history (which is more about rubber) (Roseberry 1991: 132) and to show that the global history of international rubber regulation in the 1930s is interconnected with the local tribal history of commodity production. Whereas local culture is (in part) a product of interaction with the global political-economic system, it is more than a simple product of this interaction (see Marcus and Fischer 1986: 39, 78). There is more history here, in short, than that which "arrives, like a ship, from outside the society in question" (Ortner 1984: 143).

The case of the rice-eating rubber dream suggests that, contra Wallerstein (1974, 1980), incorporation—or, more accurately, an increase in the level of incorporation of local societies into the world system—does not initiate a sequence of predetermined change (see Kahn 1982: 9). The Dayak response to the international market conditions and regulatory policies of the 1930s followed just one of multiple possible trajectories and was determined as much by the dynamics of local environment and society—such as the swidden rice tradition—as by the dynamics of the world economic sys-

tem. The Dayak response also reveals more assertiveness on the part of the local system, and more vulnerability on the part of the world system, than has previously been thought. If we problematize not just Dayak actions in the 1930s (namely, the dream) but also the actions of the world system (namely, the IRRA), then the former looks more rational (and less "exotic") and the latter less rational (and more "exotic") (see Bloch 1989: 167).

Finally, this analysis adds to the growing demonstration within anthropology of the benefits of linking the study of political-economy with the study of symbols (see Roseberry 1991). Analysis of the dream of the rice-eating rubber not only reveals something about how the Dayak interpret the world but also tells something about how they manage local environmental relations and extralocal relations with both markets and political authorities. In his pioneering work, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (1980), Michael Taussig shows that devil beliefs formerly dismissed as either unimportant or anachronistic are in fact a gesture of resistance to a new production mode. Taussig (1980: xi) asks, "What is the relationship between the image of the devil and capitalist development?" I ask a similar question, "What is the relationship between the dream of the rice-eating rubber and export crop development in Borneo?" Taussig (ibid.: 96) calls devil belief an "image illuminating a culture's self-consciousness of the threat posed to its integrity." The dream of the rice-eating rubber illuminates Bornean tribespeople's consciousness of the threat posed by overcommitment to global commodity markets.

Rubber in Borneo

The bulk of rubber from Borneo (as from elsewhere in Indonesia and Malaysia, the two nations that share most of the island [Figure 1]) is produced in tiny gardens of a hectare or so, by "smallholders" (those having less than twenty-five hectares [Barlow and Muharminto 1982: 86]).[2] Most smallholders are ordinary farmers who cultivate food crops—often by extensive swidden agricultural technology—to meet their subsistence needs while cultivating rubber to meet their market-oriented needs (Dove 1993a; Gouyon et al. 1993). (Smallholders usually sell or trade their product—the semiprocessed rubber slabs—to Dayak or Chinese traders in the interior, who in turn sell it to middlemen on the coast.) The combination of market-oriented agriculture and extensive, subsistence-oriented agriculture has long been common in Southeast Asia (see Pelzer 1945: 24). Other examples (from Indonesia) are swidden agriculture and rattans in East Kalimantan (Lindblad 1988: 59–60; Peluso 1983; Tsing 1984; Weinstock 1983); swidden agriculture and coffee in Sulawesi (Burch 1986); swidden agricul-

Figure 1. Borneo.

ture, coffee, and dammar (resins) in Sumatra (Mary and Michon 1987); and sago palm and spices in the Moluccas (Ellen 1979).[3]

The rubber smallholders' commanding market share is, remarkably, the product of more than seventy-five years of direct competition with the estates. The estates held a commanding share of Indonesia's rubber production during the industry's early years in the decade before 1920, and they have steadily lost ground to the smallholders ever since. The smallholders' historical success has been attained without support from the successive central governments of Indonesia and often despite active government hin-

drance. Until recently, the central government directed all its technical, material, and regulatory support to the estate sector (see Booth 1988: 206, 225); the only attention that it gave to the smallholders was punitive.

In the mid-1970s the Indonesian national government began to direct some resources toward the smallholder sector, but only a small number of smallholders benefited (in the 1980s, just 8 percent of rubber smallholders had been involved in government extension programs [ibid.: 217]). The predominant development pattern—involving satellite smallholder estates surrounding a nuclear government estate (called *Perkebunan Inti Rakyat* (PIR), "Peoples' Nuclear Estate")—was less an attempt to improve traditional smallholdings than an attempt to remake them in the image and under the control of the government estates (see Barlow and Tomich 1991: 44). The explicit premise of this program was to share the estates' expertise with the smallholders, not the reverse (see Barlow 1991: 100). The implicit premise, therefore, was that nothing in the traditional system of smallholder rubber cultivation was worth building on.[4] The entire smallholder system is thus denied, denaturalized (as it was under the IRRA).[5]

The favoritism shown by central governments for the colonial-era European plantations and the postcolonial parastatal estates is based on straightforward political-economic reasons: it is far easier for a central government to control and share in production on large-scale, heavily capitalized estates than in production on tiny, scattered smallholdings. In part as a result of this favoritism, the vast majority of smallholdings today are little changed from those that could have been observed seventy-five years ago (Barlow and Tomich 1991: 31).

Dreams in Borneo

Many tribal peoples of Southeast Asia traditionally have regarded the relationship between waking and sleeping, and between dreams and everyday life, differently than is the case in most Western, industrialized societies (Dentan 1982; Domhoff 1985; Roseman 1991; cf. Tedlock 1992: 5).[6] Gomes (1911: 161) writes that "the Dayaks place implicit confidence in dreams. Their theory is that during sleep the soul can hear, see, and understand, and so what is dreamt is really what the soul sees." The Dayak traditionally regarded dreams as omens (Dove 1993b; Tsing 1984: 225–26). As such, dreams could affect the decision whether or not to undertake a journey, what type of work to do on a given day, and even where to locate a field.

Dreams deemed particularly meaningful are told to other members of one's own household or longhouse, and occasionally they are disseminated to other longhouses as well. The motivating factor in such "close"

dissemination is the dreamer's interest in seeking assistance to interpret and respond to the dream. As Richards (1972: 80) writes, "It is the custom to seek the help of others in interpreting dreams." In these cases, it makes a difference who had the dream: since the tribal elders are thought to be more skillful in interpreting messages from the spirit world, their dreams are the ones most likely to be retold and analyzed. However, in a case of "distant" dissemination, such as that of the rice-eating rubber dream, the significance of the dream for the wider society motivates its retelling. In such cases, the original dream agent is less relevant.

The great dissemination of the rice-eating rubber dream marks it as, in effect, a myth, a "collective representation" in Durkheim's sense.[7] The circumstances of its original production—who first dreamed it—are less significant than the circumstances of its proliferation—the fact that many Dayak in many different areas were receptive to its message. It seems likely, indeed, that these circumstances (in particular the sensitivity to potential competition between the rice and rubber sectors) were prior—causally as well as temporally—to the historical occurrence of the dream. Thus it seems likely that the dream reflected concern over this perceived competition; if so, the dream helped to crystallize and express this concern, but it did not generate this concern de novo.

The Political-Economic Context of the IRRA

At the time that the dream of the rice-eating rubber occurred, tribal rubber was also much in the thoughts of colonial policymakers. If tribal anxiety over tribal rubber was manifested in the dream, then government anxiety was manifested in the International Rubber Regulation Agreement, which was an extreme episode in a long history of efforts to extend state control over the resources and peoples of Borneo (and the rest of Southeast Asia). At the turn of the century, each time that the indigenous peoples of Borneo developed a natural resource that became economically attractive, the colonial powers stepped in and wrested control of it away from them (see Brookfield et al. 1990: 499). Exploitation of the two principal natural forest latexes—gutta percha (from trees of the family Sapotaceae, especially the genuses *Palaquium*, in particular *P. gutta* (Hook.); and jelutong from trees of the genus *Dyera* (Apocynaceae), in particular *D. costulata* (Miq.) (Hook.f.), whose economic niche was subsequently filled by the introduced Para rubber (Dove 1994)—are the most prominent examples. In both cases, commodity booms prompted government regulation that allocated resource rights to European concessionaires and prohibited further exploitation by local communities. Similar attempts were made to wrest

exploitation of the Para rubber tree away from smallholders.[8] The first, called the Stevenson Scheme, attempted to maintain high prices for rubber on the international market by restricting the amount of rubber that could be sold by producers, in particular smallholders (Drabble 1973; Lim 1974). The scheme was limited to the British colonies and was in effect from 1922 to 1928.[9] The second and more important effort to regulate smallholder cultivation of rubber was the International Rubber Regulation Agreement.

Enacted by the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, India, and Siam in 1934 and eventually extended to 1944, the agreement was in theory designed to stabilize world rubber prices by limiting production through taxation, sales quotas, prohibition of planting, and even in some cases the felling of planted trees and the uprooting of naturally grown trees (Bauer 1948; Lim 1974; Thee 1977).[10] In practice, however, as Bauer's authoritative work (1948) makes clear, the agreement (like the Stevenson Scheme before it) served to preserve the status quo: to protect the European estates' dominant role in the rubber industry from an extremely competitive smallholder sector (Barlow and Jayasuriya 1986: 647–49). The smallholders held a distinct edge because they could establish rubber for less than 10 percent of the cost incurred by the estates (Bauer 1948: 68)[11]—by integrating the rubber into their swidden cycles and using few, if any, capital inputs. Furthermore, they willingly tapped rubber for prices that were as little as one-fifth of those that the estates insisted on as a reasonable return (ibid.: 206), because they did not have to depend on the rubber for their daily subsistence (see also Barlow and Jayasuriya 1986: 640).

The same factors that made the colonial estates and governments deem regulation of smallholders essential ensured its eventual failure. Despite the fact that special export taxes on smallholders alone were increased to the point where the ratio of tax to average net return ranged from twenty- to as much as sixty-to-one (Bauer 1948: 38–39, 142, 142n), smallholders continued to increase both the quantity and quality of their production. In retrospect, the IRRA proved to be no more than a brief holding action by the estate sector against the smallholder sector. The smallholders' share of national rubber production in Indonesia steadily rose from under 10 percent in the second decade of this century to almost 75 percent today.

The Ideological Context of the IRRA

The International Rubber Regulation Agreement failed, in part, because it was motivated—in fact if not in theory—by an ideological commitment to estate cultivation, not by an empirical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of smallholder cultivation compared with estate cultivation.

There was a remarkable discontinuity between what colonial-era observers believed and what they saw with their own eyes, which persisted into the postcolonial era. For example, with reference to smallholder production in the interwar years, the famous tropical geographer Robequain (1955: 361–62) writes (in successive paragraphs) both that native agriculture had to be "protected" against the "rude blows" of the external world and that the natives were, nonetheless, less damaged by the depression of the 1930s. "In 1935 the economic depression was seen to have less serious effects on the people of the country than on Europeans, 10,000 of whom were unemployed in Indonesia. . . . The elasticity of native economy was admirable" (ibid.: 362).

This disjunction between the ideology of the IRRA and the reality of smallholder rubber cultivation was not deliberate: most colonial officials appear to have sincerely believed that the IRRA supported not a particular class of rubber producers but rather rubber production in general. They sustained this belief by denying the existence of smallholders as rubber producers. Throughout the duration of the IRRA (and to some extent down to the present day), rubber has been associated in the minds of government officials with estates, not smallholdings. In the early post–World War II years, Bauer (1948: 212) writes, "Officials, research workers and others closely connected with the industry still regarded the smallholder as a minor and rather inefficient factor in rubber production." It was (and still is) common in official circles for the product of smallholdings to be derisively referred to as "forest rubber" (Lindblad 1988: 66), thereby likening Para rubber to the native forest latexes that it supplanted (Dove 1994). (In fact, little evidence exists to suggest that there was much distinction between the product of the smallholdings and the product of the estates.)

The critical official view of smallholder rubber was based, in part, on the distinctive character of smallholder cultivation, which was characterized by planting densities over twice as high as those on estates (Bauer 1948: 56), no clean weeding during tapping (as was formerly common on estates), and spontaneous coverage of the rubber groves by secondary growth during extended periods of nontapping. Colonial planters and officials believed that these characteristics promoted, among other ills, "rampant root diseases" (ibid.: 68). This was a serious problem on European estates at the time (and the implication was that the source of this disease was the smallholdings). The specter of diseased and abandoned smallholdings was used to help justify the IRRA (Lim 1974: 109–10).[12]

But when Malayan smallholdings were finally surveyed in 1931–33, almost no evidence of root disease was found (Bauer 1948: 58): only eight out of nine thousand trees examined were infected. Root disease proved,

ironically, to be a product of the peculiar microecology not of smallholdings but of estates, not despite but because of the latter's cleaner and more open character (ibid.). This case typified the European view of the smallholders (and, more generally, it typifies how smallholders are viewed in any oppressive political system): what typically draws criticism is not the smallholders' weakness but their strength, not their comparative disadvantage but their comparative advantage.[13]

European observers believed that smallholdings were threatened not only by disease but also by degradation. It was an article of faith among colonial officials and planters that a majority of smallholdings were degraded. This belief was invoked repeatedly during the years of rubber regulation to explain how smallholder yields could exceed estate yields (as they did) both on a per acre and overall basis. Colonial observers attributed the yields to the purported "slaughter tapping" of smallholder trees, meaning the cutting of rubber tree bark at a rate exceeding that of natural bark production (Bauer 1948: 37, 68). Again, when the Malayan smallholder survey was carried out, the rate of bark usage was found to be well in line with the rate of bark production (ibid.: 36). Not a single tree examined had been degraded by overtapping, a result of both rational tapping practices and, again, a favorable microclimate. The dense vegetative cover in the smallholdings produced higher air temperature and humidity than in the estates, which in turn promoted quicker bark renewal after tapping (ibid.: 58). The belief and the reality were nicely juxtaposed in a period exchange in the *Sarawak Gazette*. A European observer who had spent a year inspecting the rubber in Sarawak wrote, "Practically all of the Asiatic-grown trees have been ruined by bad tapping" (*Sarawak Gazette*, 2 May 1938). But the next number of the *Gazette* included the following reader's rebuttal of this critique: "Nor is this high yield [among smallholders] due to severe knife-work, as this [previous] author would have us believe. On the contrary, experts consider the bark reserved on this type of rubber as good, and the tapping conservative" (ibid., 1 June 1938).

Colonial planters and officials also maintained that the smallholders were not "efficient producers." The concept of "efficient production" was central to the regulatory environment of the day. The guarantee of a "reasonable return to the average efficient producer" was the purported and oft-repeated purpose of the IRRA (Bauer 1948: 200). When the Rubber Manufacturers Association (representing the principal international buyers of rubber, and thus representing a group inclined to be skeptical of a scheme to "stabilize" rubber prices) requested a definition of an "efficient producer" from the International Rubber Regulation Committee, the latter could not provide one (ibid.: 195). The closest the committee ever came was

to state that "efficient producers are those who produce efficiently" (ibid.: 196n).[14] Ironically, the principal beneficiaries of the IRRA were, as Bauer (ibid.: 215) makes clear, the *least* efficient producers, the high-cost estates.[15] There was less obfuscation of this sort during the prior Stevenson Scheme, which was explicitly justified as a defense against the purported prosmallholder philosophy of "the survival of the fittest," the estates by implication not being the fittest. Drabble (1973: 167) writes, "The R.G.A. [Rubber Growers' Association] group stressed the need for unanimity among producers, the importance of the industry as an Imperial asset and the unwisdom of a policy of 'survival of the fittest.'" By the time of the IRRA one decade later, the rubber industry ideology had sufficiently matured so that the estates could identify and obfuscate their smallholder opponent not as the survivor of Darwinian competition but as just the opposite, as the loser of a competition against both ecological and economic forces.[16]

The true efficient producers, the smallholders, were severely penalized by rubber regulation. In a remarkable demonstration of this efficiency, they continued to plant rubber, tap rubber, and even improve production techniques (see Barlow 1991: 93), despite low incentives (low prices) from the market and severe disincentives (export taxes) from the government. The colonial planters' and officials' inability to understand the distinctive tribal economics that made this possible is reflected in the fact that they were continually surprised—and their plans upset—not just by the persistence but by the continued growth of smallholder planting and tapping.

One principal theory used by the colonial community to account for smallholder behavior was "economic dualism" (exemplified by the writings of Boeke [1953]). The "inexplicable" aspects of smallholder production were attributed to the purported fact that their economy (and indeed mentality) was fundamentally different from that of the European planters. Therefore, it was argued that export cropping should be left to the European planters and the natives should concentrate on their traditional food crops. In Malaya, government policy (expressed through legislative and other means) explicitly discouraged native cultivation of rubber (and other export crops) and encouraged the cultivation of rice (Barlow and Drabble 1990: 197). The dichotomization of rubber and rice aptly expresses the disharmony and potential conflict that Europeans saw between export crop production and native society: if the natives did not destroy the export crop (through poor cultivation or overexploitation), then the export crop would destroy native society by competing with its basis, rice. The contradiction inherent in this view helps to explain the contradiction inherent in the IRRA itself: some of its key premises were based on the purported shortcomings of smallholder rubber production, and yet in practice the major impact of

the agreement was not to support but to (attempt to) suppress this production.[17] The dualism theory was correct in one respect: there were critical distinctions between native and European modes of production, but they made the native economy more—not less—suited to rubber production.

Complementarity of Rice and Rubber

The indigenous societies of Borneo also see rice and rubber as separate and distinct, but the relationship between them is conceived as—ideally—one of complementarity, based on exploiting two distinct arenas. One is the tropical forest: when ecologically generated perturbations in the forest result in swidden rice shortfalls (as may happen several years in ten), the tribespeople can fall back on the earnings from rubber tapping to tide them over until the following year. Similarly, when unforeseen developments in the second arena, the international commodity markets, cause rubber earnings to plummet, the existence of the subsistence rice base allows the tribesmen considerable freedom of response (Cramb 1993: 217; Geertz 1971: 122). They can continue to tap at the same rate (and live with less income), they can increase tapping in inverse proportion to the fall of market prices (namely, along an inverse production curve [Boeke 1953: 125–26; cf. Lindblad 1988: 71, 117]), or they can let their rubber stand untapped (and benefiting from the rest) until the next upswing in the international market (Robequain 1955: 355, 362).[18]

Complementary uses of land and labor make possible the combined cultivation of rice and rubber (see Dove 1993a). Rubber gardens use so much less land than rice swiddens that competition for land is rarely a problem.[19] If it does become a problem, rubber can be concentrated on land unsuited for the swidden cultivation of rice, or it can be put on land taken from but subsequently (after the rubber has passed its peak production years) returned to the swidden cycle. Of greater importance than minimizing competition for land is minimizing competition labor: rubber can be tapped with labor that is not just freed from, but made slack by, the fluctuating demands of the swidden cycle. In addition, periodic idling of rubber trees actually benefits them and results in higher peak latex flows when tapping is resumed.

The rubber dream must be interpreted with respect to the complementarity between rubber and rice. The literal meaning of the rubber dream is that rubber can eat rice, meaning that overinvolvement in rubber production could lead to less rice cultivation—*if* sufficient care is not taken.[20] Some versions of the rubber dream make it clear that the rice is "eaten" when no one is looking, and it is only when people mount guard that they catch the

predatory rubber tree in the act. The rice is "eaten" when it is being dried in the sun (in preparation for husking), which is in fact a period of vulnerability for the grain: drying rice is exposed to predators (e.g., domestic fowl, birds, rats), and constant protection is essential. The dream can be interpreted, therefore, as calling attention to the potential vulnerability of the rice base at a time of increasing involvement in commodity production, and to the need for vigilance in protecting this base against any ill consequences of this involvement.

The emphasis in the dream is not on the extermination of rubber but on the protection of rice,[21] not on rejecting new cash crops but on protecting the traditional subsistence crops. The danger does not lie in producing for the market but in producing only for the market. The tribespeople who responded to the dream by felling their rubber trees were guilty of an overly literal interpretation of the dream, of focusing on the threat from the rubber trees as opposed to the rubber sector. The most common response to the dream, in any case, was not to fell the rubber trees but to balance development of the rubber sector against the continued importance of the subsistence rice sector, a response far more important in the long run than any rubber-felling that took place. The felling that did occur is important more for what it says about the seriousness accorded the dream than for how the Dayak responded to it.

The interpretation of the rubber dream as a warning against overcommitment to rubber at the expense of rice is supported by the contrasting ecological logic of the dream and the reality. In the dream, rice is found in or among the rubber; no rubber is found among the rice. In practice, according to the customary ecology of Dayak agriculture, it is the other way around: rice is never found among rubber, but rubber often is found among rice. Rubber is usually planted in rice swiddens, after the planting and before the harvesting of the rice; and as a result, a rubber garden eventually grows up on the erstwhile swidden site. (In contrast, rice would never be planted among standing rubber trees: the shade would inhibit rice growth.) After the passage of several decades, when the rubber trees have passed their productive peak, the garden may be cleared and burned for a rice swidden again, bringing the cycle full circle.

In this cycle, rubber might be said to eat the rice—in the sense that it succeeds the rice on the land—but then even more clearly the rice eats the rubber, when the no-longer productive rubber is felled and burned for a new rice swidden. The relationship becomes asymmetrical—rubber eats but is not eaten by the rice—only if the swidden cycle is abandoned for complete dependence on rubber cultivation. This is what the dream illustrates and warns against, in a condensed expression of an undesirable trajectory

in agricultural development. At the time of the dream, neither the desirable nor undesirable trajectories had yet been experienced; they still lay in the future. The dream was not a comment about past trajectories, therefore, but about possible future ones. It did not reflect the existence of a cycle in which the rubber does not eat the rice; rather, it helped to bring about such a cycle.

The Timing of the Rubber Dream

Smallholder rubber development reached a critical juncture in the 1930s, in part because of the simple evolution of the industry: rubber planting stock was not widely available in Borneo until the first decade of this century; it was not widely planted in the tribal interior until the second decade nor tapped, accordingly, until the third decade. Not until the fourth decade, the 1930s, was rubber sufficiently well established to raise the specter of rubber-rice competition.[22] Not until then did the question have to be asked whether rubber would fit into the existing shifting cultivation cycle in a complementary fashion, or whether rubber would establish its own competing cycle of land use.

The 1930s was a critical time because of the global depression and plunge in rubber prices.[23] Some rubber cultivators reacted to falling prices by tapping less or not at all, simply shifting the labor previously devoted to rubber either to some other income-earning activity or to subsistence rice cultivation;[24] others reacted by tapping more (in an attempt to maintain the same level of income from rubber).

(The falling rubber prices provoked other responses as well. Sutlive [1992: 85–86] describes how Iban in Sarawak, who had planted rubber at the encouragement of the English Rajah, interpreted the fall of prices during the 1930s as a breaking of faith on the Rajah's part. They became angry, refused to pay their taxes, and joined in rebellions against the Rajah. This response stands in salutary contrast to the rubber-felling triggered by the dream, because it helps to show that the object of the tribespeople's ire was not a plant but a system.)

The pressure to tap more rubber to maintain given levels of income was exacerbated by the onerous exactions of the IRRA, which taxed smallholder production at the exorbitant levels cited earlier. The IRRA and the rubber dream occurred at the same time (the 1930s) because both addressed the same concern: a competitive and threatening production environment. The estates were threatened by loss of market share to the smallholders; and the smallholders were threatened (although perhaps less severely) by the punitive regulations that the estate lobby implemented against them.

The association of the rubber dream with a particular stage in the political-economic evolution of tribal Borneo society is reflected in contemporary, indigenous assessments of the dream, such as the following one by a Kantu' elder in West Kalimantan: "This story of [the rice-eating rubber] dream was spread by those who opened the first rubber gardens at Sejiram [the name of a Catholic missionary settlement in West Kalimantan], so that they could develop their own gardens more rapidly than otherwise" (Dove n.d.). The elder appended a derogatory reference to the lack of foresight among those who felled their rubber upon hearing of the dream. This whole commentary is—if we view the Catholic Church as a symbol of the colonial state—an indigenous version of a conspiracy theory (see the following section), which interprets the dream as a government scheme for promoting European estates at the native smallholders' expense. In fact, Pringle (1970: 203) says that the Christian missions generally encouraged the Ibanic peoples of western Borneo to plant rubber. And indeed, the Kantu' say that they obtained some of their first rubber seeds from the mission at Sejiram.

Thus this comment about the church is less an identification of a specific agency that opposed the development of Dayak smallholdings than a commentary—and an accurate one—on wider political-economic structures that opposed this development. The comment is indigenous history. The fact that it critiques the thinking of the Dayak in the 1930s marks it as a noncontemporary comment on that era (namely, the fact that it criticizes the Dayak for being duped by the church in the 1930s suggests that suspicion of the church was not current in the 1930s). That the comment has currency among contemporary Bornean smallholders reflects the changes that have taken place since the 1930s, in part because of the historical development of rubber cultivation. (Given this development, change in indigenous interpretation of the rubber-eating dream is inevitable; it would only be surprising if there were no change.)

Change and Continuity

Although the smallholders avoided the historic threat that rubber posed to their basic way of life, they did not avoid all rubber-related change. The smallholders' response necessarily incorporated some of the conditions that stimulated the threat in the first place. Rubber cultivation contributed to greater socioeconomic differentiation; it played a key role in the development of individual household rights to land; and, perhaps of greatest importance, it reduced household interdependence (Dove 1985, 1993b). The traditional mechanism for coping with environmental constraints on swidden agriculture was the reciprocal exchange of labor among households; and

the traditional mechanism for coping with uncertainty in agricultural yields was the interhousehold exchange of rice for labor. But rubber, whose cultivation requires no reciprocal exchanges of labor or anything else, has become increasingly important to cover harvest shortfalls; and the ability to rely on rubber has lessened the need to rely on others. These changes are reflected in the difference between the aforementioned comment by the Kantu' elder and the rubber dream itself: in the 1930s the Dayak were preoccupied with the contest between subsistence agriculture and commodity production; today, they are more concerned with the contest between peasant and state. The change in concern reflects the political, economic, and cultural changes that the tribal societies of Borneo have undergone in the past six decades.

On the other hand, the previously cited comment from a contemporary elder on the rubber dream reflects not just the changes that have taken place since the 1930s but also the continuity. The comment came from a man whose society has engaged in the same system of commodity production for over seventy-five years without imperiling its subsistence base. A historic threat to this base was successfully met at the time of the dream. The values that needed to be demonstrated then do not need to be demonstrated today because they are not imperiled today as they were then (at least not by the same forces, in the same ways). Rubber cultivation underwent tremendous expansion in Borneo during the half century following the dream, in part because it was not a system of cultivation to which an exclusive commitment was made; it was not a system of rubber cultivation that "eats" the rice cultivation. That threat did not come to pass; and this is perhaps presaged in the dream. The dream has, after all, a happy ending: in it, the missing rice is found. And in real life, the rice base whose disappearance was threatened was safeguarded.

The Origins of the Rubber Dream

Conspiracy Theory: The State against the People

The rubber dream has drawn passing comment from several Bornean ethnographers, most of whom—focusing on the felling of rubber that followed the dream—concluded that the dream was not in the best interests of the smallholders. Sutlive (1978: 128–29), for example, says that the story of the rice-eating rubber and the subsequent responses to it reflect the conflict between the values of traditional rice-farming and modern rubber-tapping, and the benefits of choosing the latter over the former. "Those men who refused to destroy their trees [when hearing the story of the rice-eating

rubber]—[who refused] to accede to tradition—reaped large profits during [subsequent] rubber booms."[25] This is quite true, but there also is more to the picture. If the men whose behavior Sutlive endorses had completely rejected traditional values and rice cultivation, they would have profited greatly from the periodic rubber booms, but they would have been hard put to survive the inevitable busts without a subsistence base to fall back upon.

The ethnographers who took a negative view of the dream's impact on smallholders looked for its origin in an external, malign agency. This decision was influenced by the obvious historical "irony" that at the same time the colonial governments in Borneo were taking steps to restrict smallholder plantings, for fear of their impact on European commodity production or native food production, the smallholders themselves were gripped by a fear of rubber's impact on rice cultivation and (in a well-publicized minority of cases) also were taking steps to restrict plantings. Several ethnographers noted this coincidence in timing and outcome and suggested that the rubber dream may have been disseminated as part of a government "disinformation" campaign (Geddes 1954; Uchibori 1984). Even if this suggestion is true (and there is no evidence to suggest that it is), it is beside the point: the dream would not have achieved the currency that it did if (regardless of its source) it had not accurately expressed the smallholders' interests. The questions to ask, therefore, are, How did the dream express these interests? Why did a cautionary image about involvement with rubber have such an impact? What was the smallholders' own interest in restricting rubber cultivation?

The interests of smallholders and government in restricting smallholder rubber cultivation were the reverse of those imagined by some of these observers. History has shown that the real threat to the estate sector was not total commitment to rubber by smallholders but partial commitment. The smallholders' ability to resist political and economic forces—that the estates either generated or were themselves vulnerable to—was based on their retention of a subsistence agricultural base. A healthy fear that rubber would eat the rice—a fear that commodity production would usurp subsistence production—far from supporting estate production, was the basis of the smallholder threat to this production. The threat to the estate sector lay in the fact that the Dayak would not let rubber eat their rice. Conversely, the threat to the smallholders lay not in any short-term loss of either rubber profits or rubber trees (which can be regrown in less than ten years) but in any weakening of the composite nature of the economy that protected them from the forces affecting the estate sector.

The failure to correctly interpret smallholder interests is based, in part, on a tendency to see the quandary of the rubber dream as the need to choose

between rubber and rice. It is true that the danger the dream warns against is the abandonment of rice for rubber; but the ideal that it supports is not the abandonment of rubber for rice. The historical success of the Dayak smallholders stems from embracing both rubber and rice. The inability to see this is associated with a broader tendency within anthropology to overdraw the contrast between monetary and nonmonetary economies and, as a result, to assume that monetary/nonmonetary divisions are possible only between, but not within, societies (Bloch and Parry 1989: 7, 29).[26] A related problem is the tendency within anthropology to overlook the mutualistic interaction between global and local-level political-economic processes (Edelman 1990: 736; Smith 1984: 193, 224) and instead to see local-level phenomena (like the rubber dream) as simply the world system's impact on the local community.

Different Transactional Orders: Society against the Individual

The rubber dream is not simply the product of global, monetary forces impacting local, premonetary structures. Rather, it is the product of the threatened convergence of two distinct transactional orders (Bloch and Parry 1989: 23–24), which are as much inherent to Dayak society as they are foreign: the system of rice cultivation and that of rubber cultivation. The principal difference between them is that the rice system focuses more on the long-term reproduction of the social and cosmological order, whereas the rubber system focuses more on the short-term maximization of individual benefit (ibid.: 23–24, 25, 26). The reciprocal (and socially obligatory) exchange of labor and grain is, as noted earlier, central to the rice system but absent from the rubber system. The group-focused rice system addresses the needs internal to the community, whereas the individual-focused rubber system addresses the need for articulation with external political-economic structures. The rice system is heavily ritualized; the rubber system is strictly secular (as reflected in the application of omen-taking—an elaborate system that governs relations between the Dayak and the spirit world [Dove 1993b]—to all of the stages of rice cultivation but to none of the stages of rubber cultivation).

The differences between the rice and rubber systems make the rubber dream possible in the first place. The central image of the dream, the consumption of rice by rubber, is a powerful statement of opposition. The dream did not just reflect this opposition, however; it enhanced it (and thereby helped to counter the threatened convergence of the two sectors). By showing that rubber and rice are opposed, the dream showed that the two are fundamentally distinct. The dream symbolically dichotomized rice

and rubber, probably for the first time in Bornean tribal history. The dream helped to further define two distinct indigenous sectors—one monetary and market-oriented, the other nonmonetary and subsistence-oriented. The dream was one episode, in short, in an ongoing, historical process of differentiation between the two transactional orders, rice and rubber. This was probably not the first time these two sectors were distinguished in this fashion—the Dayak were engaged in trade in native latexes and other forest products for centuries (if not millennia) before they obtained Para rubber—but it may have been the sharpest distinction up to that point in their history.

The rubber dream helped to differentiate the two transactional orders by portraying their threatened convergence. The threat of this convergence, of the transformation of rice into rubber, is the dream's central message. Rubber is not evil, something to be feared by itself;[27] rather, rubber is something to be feared when it is eating rice. It is significant that rubber does not destroy the rice in the dream but instead "consumes" it. The consumption represents transformation by one of the most universally understood means, alimentary processes (Bloch and Parry 1989: 25). The dream, indeed, is about transformation.[28]

Most transformations between the short-term transactional order of the individual and the long-term transactional order of the community move from the former to the latter (see Bloch and Parry 1989: 25). Transformations that move in the opposite direction cause anxiety (and attract attention) (ibid.: 27–28). An example is the belief, held by the Kantu' of the Empanang Valley in West Kalimantan, that the nearby Catholic mission (at Sejiram on the Kapuas River) is inhabited by a *naga*, "dragon," which is fed human dead and excretes gold coins. The rubber dream, with its transformation from the rice system to the rubber system, clearly falls into this category as well. All transformations in this (wrong) direction are associated with excess consumption. In the case of the Catholic dragon, the excess consumption is inferred from the perceived material wealth of the church's missions in the hinterlands of Borneo; in the case of rubber, it is inferred from the wealth to be had during rubber booms.

In most Bornean societies, excess wealth or consumption is seen as a violation of indigenous norms for redistribution or reciprocity; indeed, it is seen as being made possible only by such violation. Rubber, as has been discussed, involves little if any reciprocity either in inputs (there is no exchange of either land or labor in rubber cultivation) or outputs (unlike rice, rubber sheets are not given, loaned, or exchanged among households to cover economic shortfalls). The rubber dream, which shows the reciprocal (rice) order succumbing to the nonreciprocal (rubber) order, thus shows the

threatened end of reciprocity. It shows the last exchange: like the "devil contract" made by sugar plantation workers in Colombia, it is "the exchange that ends all exchange" (Taussig 1980: 118).[29]

Historical Singularity: The Past against the Future

The event that threatened the "end of exchange," the dream of the rice-eating rubber, is in one respect not unusual in Borneo. To this day alarming stories regarding head-hunting or human sacrifice periodically sweep across the island (*Newsweek* 1989).[30] Drake (1989: 271) calls such phenomena "diving rumors," because they characteristically appear, disappear, then reappear, and so on (see also Barnes 1993). The rubber dream, however, occurred only once and has not recurred since, which suggests that it was a product of a unique historical circumstance: the increased involvement in commodity production represented by the cultivation of Para rubber and the increased pressure against this involvement by national and international political-economic structures that had vested interests in (namely, opposed to) this cultivation. Wolf (1982), in his influential study of the relations between peripheral societies and the dominant world system, regards transformation in the trade relations of these societies—from something that supplements the subsistence economy to something that supplants it—as a critical turning point in their histories.[31]

External pressures against Dayak rubber production reached their peak during the International Rubber Regulation Agreement, which brought the attention of five nations to bear on the activities of all tribespeople living in the hinterlands of Southeast Asia who owned rubber trees. This level of state attention may have been the most intense that these interior populations had ever received (see Robequain 1955: 361). The exploitation of native forest latexes had drawn some state attention, but it was less intense (the state could more easily wrest exploitation of unplanted forest trees from local control than exploitation of planted rubber trees). Nor is there any record of a perceived threat that the native forest latexes would "eat" the swidden rice. This possibility was first raised by involvement in cultivation of the introduced Para rubber.

Reexamination of this involvement—through the rubber dream—was a historically decisive act for institutional, not agricultural, reasons. Ethnographers who focused on the scattered fellings of rubber that followed the dream, concluded that the felling had a "fatal" impact on the subsequent economic fortunes of the tribal populations involved (Freeman 1970: 286; Uchibori 1984: 231). This overlooks the fact that rubber can be planted and brought to exploitation in less than ten years. The error in this conclusion stems from focusing on the shorter-term effects of undercommitting

to rubber, as opposed to the longer-term effects of overcommitting. A complete shift from a rice-based economy, or a mixture of rice and rubber, to one based on rubber alone (as happened among some smallholders in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra [Geertz 1971: 122–23; Pelzer 1945: 24–25]) likely would have proved difficult to reverse. It may be that the rubber-rice transformation could be embraced, or avoided, just once. As Murphy (1978: 159) writes regarding the impact of rubber tapping in the Amazon: "Once a social change is made and a new adjustment found, it is almost impossible to turn the clock back and reestablish what has been lost" (see also Murphy and Steward 1956: 336). (Even if this particular transformation could be embraced or avoided just once, it seems likely that other transformations will periodically emerge and challenge Dayak society in similar ways.)

Conclusions

The "interpretive" school of anthropology advocates a shift from developing external critiques of other societies to unearthing or "retrieving" these societies' own self-critiques. For example, Marcus and Fischer (1986: 132, 133) write:

> By representing their critique of society, the ethnographer makes the cultural criticism more authentic: it is no longer the critique of the detached intellectual: rather it is the critique by the subject unearthed through ethnographic engagement. . . .
>
> The cultural critic becomes in effect a reader of cultural criticisms, discovered ethnographically, rather than an independent intellectual originator of critical insight.

The rubber dream represents just such an indigenous critique (of involvement in commodity production), the "reading" of which has been the subject of this essay. This reading shows how one of the exotic plants (and systems of cultivation) introduced by Europeans was absorbed into Dayak mythic structures, just as Sahlins's (1985) study shows how the Europeans themselves were absorbed into native mythic structures in different parts of the Pacific.

This essay has not limited itself to the indigenous critique, however. As Taussig (1980: 10) writes: "It would be a mistake to emphasize the exotic quality of the reactions of these peasants if, by virtue of such an emphasis, we overlook the similar beliefs and ethical condemnations that characterized much economic thought in the history of Western culture." The aim of this essay has been both to naturalize the native behavior represented

by the rubber dream and to critique and denaturalize the Western beliefs and condemnations (regarding smallholder cultivation) represented in the IRRA.

A prominent component of the ideological underpinnings of the IRRA, as described earlier, was the belief among colonial planters and policymakers that the smallholder rubber stands were diseased and that they therefore posed a threat to the plantations (which were then experiencing serious problems with disease). On the contrary, the ecology of smallholder cultivation (densely planted and partially overgrown stands) minimized disease, whereas the ecology of estate cultivation (sparsely planted and clean-weeded stands) exacerbated it. The ecology of rubber cultivation in each case was linked to the economy of rubber cultivation: the intermittent nature of tapping and the integration into the swidden cycle in the smallholdings, and the unremitting exploitation and heavy capitalization in the estates. And this difference did pose a severe threat to the estates: smallholder disease did not threaten the estates, but smallholder economics did.

The perception on the estates of a threat from disease on smallholdings was incorrect (and perversely so, since it reversed the facts of the matter); but the perception of some type of threat was not incorrect. Therefore, it may be most useful to see the perception of smallholder disease as symbolic of the estates' perception of a threat—a competitive threat—on the smallholdings that was truly beyond their understanding. The perception of diseased smallholdings was in effect a perception of smallholdings and smallholding disease that attacks estates. We might, indeed, say that it was a perception of "estate-eating smallholdings."

The history of competition between estates and smallholdings suggests that the estates were quite right to see the smallholdings as threatening, attacking, or "eating" the estates. The smallholdings did, over time, in fact "eat" most of the estate's market share. The official myth of the diseased and threatening smallholdings was thus quite as structurally correct as the smallholder myth of the rice-eating rubber. Both were equally correct—and equally partisan—expressions of real economic tensions. The difference is that the tribal myth has been recorded and represented as a myth, whereas the official myth has been recorded and represented as economic policy.

The artificial distinction between myth and policy is a distinction between matters that are problematized until they are shown to be nonproblematic versus matters that are taken to be nonproblematic until they must be problematized. This difference has vast implications for the structure of power. As Bloch (1974: 79) writes, "It is precisely through the process of making a power situation appear a fact in the nature of the world that traditional authority works."

Notes

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1 Pringle (1970: 203n) cites independent records of the dream in the First, Second, and Third Divisions of Sarawak (Figure 1).

2 The "Para" rubber trees of Kalimantan are descended from seedlings that the British gathered in Brazil in 1876 and initially planted in Singapore. The first seedlings from the Singapore trees arrived in Sarawak in 1882 (Eaton 1952: 53; Tremeer 1964: 52). By 1908 the Sarawak government was distributing rubber seedlings to natives in the interior (Cramb 1988: 111; Tremeer 1964: 52). On the Dutch side of the border, rubber was introduced to West Kalimantan—which today ranks first among the provinces of Kalimantan and fourth in the nation as a whole in smallholder rubber acreage (Government of Indonesia 1992b: 9)—in 1909 (Uljee 1925: 74); and it was introduced to Southeast Kalimantan—which became another stronghold of rubber production—in 1906 (Luytjes 1925; cited in Brookfield et al. 1990: 497). Rubber was first planted in West Kalimantan by coastal Chinese and Malay farmers (Ward and Ward 1974: 36; cf. Robequain 1955: 353).

3 These communities are examples of what Wolf (1955, 1957) called "open corporate communities," which developed in response to the nineteenth-century expansion of global commodity markets.

4 Cf. the call by Barlow (1991: 102) to reverse this stance (in all smallholder development in Indonesia) by starting development "from within the initial framework of traditional agriculture."

5 This model of smallholder development proved to be so unsuccessful that the government has now largely abandoned it (Barlow and Tomich 1991: 48).

6 Tedlock (1992:2) notes that the sharp, Western dichotomization between dreaming and waking has roots in classic Aristotelian philosophy and, more recently, in Cartesian dualism.

7 Durkheim (1953: 25–26) writes: "If one can say that, to a certain extent, collective representations are exterior to individual minds, it means that they do not derive from them as such but from the association of minds, which is a very different thing. No doubt in the making of the whole each contributes his part,

but private sentiments do not become social except by combination under the action of the *sui generis* forces developed in association. In such a combination, with the mutual alterations involved, *they become something else*. . . . The resultant surpasses the individual as the whole the part. It is *in* the whole as it is *by* the whole. In this sense it is exterior to the individuals. No doubt each individual contains a part, but the whole is found in no one. In order to understand it as it is one must take the aggregate in its totality into consideration."

8 Barlow and Jayasuriya (1986: 641) write: "The usual response of what have most often been colonial governments to these smallholding developments is one of unfolding surprise, sometimes accompanied by measures to 'protect' the farmers concerned from what is regarded as a much too wholesale switch from traditional to commercial agriculture. As the output of the tree crop increases, however, its revenue potential is appreciated, and some form of tax is commonly imposed. Where estate interests are also cultivating the same crop, the official response may involve positive hostility. Thus attempts may be made, generally through land regulation, either to suppress smallholder cultivation or push it to remote peripheries beyond the interest of estate bodies. Where smallholder output of the crop poses some threat to estates, as often occurred in the 1930s, discriminatory attempts are made to reduce it. In no case is any substantial positive assistance given to promote smallholder cultivation of the new crop, except as a flow-on of measures to help the estate subsector."

9 The Stevenson Scheme applied, therefore, to Sarawak, Brunei, and Sabah or North Borneo (the western and northern parts of Borneo that are today included in the independent nations of Malaysia and Brunei) but not to the eastern and southern portions that lay then within the Dutch East Indies and are today part of Indonesia (Figure 1).

10 This agreement, with the Netherlands as a signatory, extended to the portion of Borneo that fell within the then Dutch East Indies. Most of the remainder of Borneo was held in the autonomous Rajahdom (called Sarawak) of the Englishman Vyner Brooke. Under pressure from the British colonial office, Rajah Brooke "reluctantly" brought Sarawak under the IRRA too (Pringle 1970: 334).

11 Barlow (1990: 32) puts the smallholder cost of establishment at 12.5 percent of the cost of estates.

12 Lim (1974: 109–10) describes the baseless stories spread by government officials regarding problems of disease and abandonment on smallholdings.

13 For example, Dove (1983) shows how central governments have tended to criticize shifting cultivators for precisely those characteristics that render them least vulnerable to intervention and exploitation by central governments.

14 Circumstances show that what the committee really meant was, "Efficient producers are those whom we *say* are efficient."

15 Marcus and Fischer (1986: 13–15) note that irony is especially salient at times when reigning paradigms are threatened, and they identify the 1930s as one such time.

16 The obfuscation of the economic basis of planter-peasant conflict, the representation of it as something else that is less threatening to prevailing power relations, has characterized planter rhetoric in both colonial and postcolonial Indonesia (see Stoler 1985a, 1985b).

17 The IRRA signatories' worries about the state of smallholder agriculture were not backed up with policy actions. Thus the Dutch colonial government promised to use the massive revenue from the IRRA duties on smallholder rubber to develop

the smallholder industry (in particular, and the rural economy in general), but it never did (Thomas and Panglaykim 1976: 196).

18 Smallholders who lacked this subsistence base, such as the Chinese immigrants in Sarawak, were hard put to survive years with low rubber prices (Pringle 1970: 305–6; cf. Pelzer 1945: 24).

19 In one longhouse studied by the author in West Kalimantan, less than 10 percent of the average household's landholding of 52 hectares was planted in rubber. Hudson (1967: 310–11) calculated that even if the planting rates that obtained at the time of his study among the Ma'anyan of South Kalimantan were maintained without letup for fifty years, rubber would still cover no more than 2.5–4.4 percent of their territory.

20 See Taussig's (1980: 17) recommendation that analyses be based on readings as *literal* and nonreductionist as possible: "Instead of reducing the devil-beliefs to the desire for material gain, anxiety, "limited good," and so on, why not see them in their own right with all their vividness and detail as the response of people to what they see as an evil and destructive way of ordering economic life?" Although the dream addresses several different issues, it is important to recognize that it is first and foremost about rice being eaten by rubber.

21 The dream portrays the felling of rubber for firewood, but it does not explicitly advocate the felling of rubber to keep rice from being eaten. Felling rubber for firewood serendipitously solves the puzzle of the disappearing rice, but this act itself does not address the problem of the rubber-rice balance.

22 The significance of the 1930s in the evolution of smallholder rubber production is reflected in a comparison of production statistics for the 1920s (the first decade in which significant smallholder production took place) and the 1930s. Smallholder rubber production for all of Indonesia (not just Kalimantan), but excluding Java, increased by over 900 percent between 1920 and 1930 (from 10,000 to 90,496 metric tons), compared with less than 300 percent between 1930 and 1940 (from 90,496 to 264,464 metric tons). It took almost fifty years for another 300 percent increase (from 264,464 in 1940 to 795,200 metric tons in 1987). The figures are from Creutzberg 1975: 93–94, Table 10; and Government of Indonesia 1992a: 232, Table 5.2.5.

23 Allen and Donnithorne (1962: 34) say that the Netherlands East Indies were among "the chief victims of the depression," with its attendant crash in world staple prices.

24 Aspengren (1986) suggests that the general impact of the depression on Indonesian peasants was to cause a decrease in cash cropping and an increase in subsistence cultivation (see also Allen and Donnithorne 1962: 123–24).

25 The same conclusion is implicit in Freeman's comment (1970: 286) regarding Iban who felled rubber because of the dream: "Today they bewail their stupidity, but because of it, many Iban families in the Baleh region are now without productive rubber plantations."

26 This tendency is illustrated in Taussig's sharp distinction between peasant agriculture and so-called capitalist mining in his (1980) analysis of "commodity fetishism" in South America. Other scholars have suggested that his distinction is overdrawn and that mining and agriculture are in fact linked in native South American classification (Harris 1989: 251; Sallnow 1989: 217).

27 In the commodity fetishism described by Taussig (1980) for South America, in contrast, the capitalist commodities are portrayed as evil.

28 The image of consumption also applies to other aspects of upland rice production in Borneo and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The clearing of forest for swiddens is often called "eating" the forest, with the cultivators or their cultigens being characterized as the "eaters." Cf. the title to Condominas's classic work (1977) on shifting cultivation in Vietnam, *We Have Eaten the Forest* (*Nous avons mangé la forêt*).

29 Murphy (1978) analyzes the progressive domination by rubber of a tribal Amazonian economy and concludes that, indeed, reciprocal exchange died as a result, and the community died with it.

30 An 11 December 1989 story in *Newsweek* reported how the rural population of Sabah (namely, North Borneo) was driven to panic by a rumor that the Sultan of Brunei, looking to extend the life of his oil fields, sent his subjects to Sabah in search of trophy heads to offer as a ritual sacrifice.

31 The dream was provoked by a true fork in the road in the history of these communities, not by the end of the road or "the end of history." The dream was not the "last gasp" of a dying way of life. There was no millenarian character to it: the crop destruction (tree-felling) aside, it lacked most of the other features associated with millenarian movements (such as a prophet). See Drake (1992: 2) regarding an example of a true millenarian movement from West Kalimantan.

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