

Willie's Borneo blog January 2012 part 2



Praying Mantis

Simpang Ampar. The name of the stop along the road from Sintang to Pontianak, where I am sitting catching up on this blog in a road side restaurant with trucks and buses constantly passing by. The driver, Jamin, has influenza and is sleeping on the wooden deck specially made for the night drivers. I am the only passenger this night. He told me four to five passengers is best. Then you can still get over the bumps and through the holes in the road while the car is more stable in the curves and at higher speeds for the few parts of the journey where this is possible at all.



We left Sintang at half past nine in the evening, it is now 3 a.m. and Jamin badly needs a break. This is his 28th trip within 30 days! Each night he drives the 450 kilometers over horrible roads. Each night he faces the dust and the lights of the many trucks bringing goods to the interior where prices are so much higher and Chinese shopkeepers have big houses. Jamin is a 24 year old Dayak and he gets 100.000 Rupiah per journey. Mr. Abbas, the owner of the car gets 1.000.000 per trip. So with 250.000 Rupiah for gasoline and oil he makes a handsome profit, even though the cars only last three years with the heavy duty use on this route.

Jamin is driving every night so he has no time for girlfriends. What will you do when you are no longer fit enough to do this, I ask. I don't know, is the simple answer. I hope he is saving some money for the future... He wants to sleep till 4 a.m. then we will drive the good stretch of road to the airport, which should only take another two hours. I should be just in time to check in for my flight to Jakarta and Jamin can go to the house in the city where he can sleep more. Well his break gives me some time to catch up where I ended my last blog, writing from the roadside near Putussibau



24 yr. old Jamin



when the car we were driving had two flat tires at the same time. So lets continue from this roadside with the 26th of January 2012.

A helpful Toyota Kijang driver stopped and recognized Father Jacques, Father Gunarto and Father Arifin so we could borrow his spare tire till the next place where we could repair the punctured tires. A chainsaw operator walks by, his saw having had removed all its safety features and of course he does not have any other bodily protection either. So stealing trees, I ask. "No, just fire wood!" he says. A few minutes later we hear the all too familiar sound of the chainsaw roaring in a good piece of forest.

Then we drive to Putussibau and stop at the workshop from where Father Gunarto points us to the house of a Catholic member of parliament, Mr. Gupung. He was the first Dayak of his sub-tribe to be baptized. His wife immediately recognizes Father Jacques and phones her husband who shows up ten minutes later and enthusiastically greets us. Father Jacques had married them 38 years ago! Father Jacques points out that the photocopy machines in Gupung's little book shop are on high tables and then points to the incredibly high mud marks on the walls of his house from recent floods...



I wander through his little garden and I find some turtles and a mouse deer inside a screened area with flowers... They look good but need to be dealt with some time soon... Gupung is a member of parliament and should give the good example.

We are offered some hot sweet milk to drink, but I prefer to eat the Cempedak fruit. It is a foot long cylindrical fruit with a reptile like thick leathery skin. A local jungle tree actually named after the local

name: *Artocarpus cempedak*. Inside the fruit is one stalk with attached to it many yellowish, strong smelling but wonderfully sweet tasting fruits. It reminds Jean of durian that he dislikes, so he is not eager to try. He prefers taking pictures of the ubiquitous children as he always does. We get some small books by Mr. Gupung on the Dayak culture and laws and the uses of the forest. I like it for the facts, not for the horrible bureaucratic prose, typical of civil servants. And two days later I happen to have the opportunity to use the fact about Mali, the law and punishment for incest, in the house of Pak Abeng, the Dayak leader! It came quite as a shock to the people there... Father Jacques is recognized as knowing more about the local culture than most of the Dayak themselves and he works



hard to preserve that know how through the museum he initiated and the recording of all the special oral stories.

We leave Mr. Gupung and his family and go to the church in Putussibau. A huge new

church, seemingly vying for the status of world's second largest, is being built next door to the old wooden one with glass in lead window frames. Father Jacques wonders if oil palm money is involved... Some priests are known to have gratefully accepted donations for new churches...



A hired car shows up, we say goodbye to Father Gunarto and Arifin, and we start the next 9.5 hour drive towards Sintang. Fantastic shaped mountains and lousy



roads entertain us for as long as there is still daylight. But then, another flat tire! And more people show up out of nowhere to hug Father Jacques! "Remember you baptized us in Sedjiram, your first post here!" That was more than four



decades ago, and of course they look different now, but Father Jacques remembers their parents very well. Of course we have to eat with these nice people and we don't pay for the repair. Pictures are taken and promised to be sent and we continue our journey. Before Sintang we stop for the driver who is "thirsty" but strangely enough his sister is accidentally in that roadside restaurant, all packed to join us in the packed car to Sintang! Father Jacques is again recognized in this restaurant and is hugged to pieces by a woman that he says once was very beautiful. Late that night, shaken and tired, we reach Kobus and after a good glass of rice wine everybody is ready to hit the hay.

January 27th

After visiting Jojo and Juvi, who are doing wonderful, we have breakfast. Then it is time for what becomes a two-hour conference call with the Ecowarriors. Miraculously the connection holds. It is good to see so many of the eco-warriors on line. Dr. Sri reports on Jojo who from 6.5 kilogram at arrival now exactly has



Father Jacques and Veterinarian Dr. Sri addressing the eco-warriors in the conference from around the world

doubled her weight and is one ball of energy, bouncing around as if the world is about to end. I love it when she shows me her newest trick. She goes to the far away corner, grabs a handful of leaves, sticks them in her face, then rolls like a ball towards me while holding them in her face.

Then at the last moment, when she is very close to me, she removes the mask to smile about her out of nothing appearance trick! During the conference call Jojo looks intent at the screen of the computer and is sometimes simultaneously pulling my hair. Wonderful! Juvi is now exact the same weight and the two almost look like identical twins!

Then at the last moment, when she is very close to me, she removes

We took the computer to Jojo and she was amazed at the voices coming from the speaker and the picture of Cathy Henkel moving on the screen. Many of the eco-warriors wrote how much they enjoyed seeing Jojo so healthy and active and full of tricks!



Well the meeting is finished and recorded so I skip to the afternoon when we went to the sugar palm village of Tertung. The trip on the boat to the village that cannot be reached by road is nice. The speedboat is too heavy so the stern needs to be pushed down and I decide to just stay there and enjoy the wind in my hair while looking at the floating wash rooms on the river and sugar palms on land.

We meet up with Nico and Harry from Tomohon who have brought selected plus trees to this village and to the Kobus Foundation. Harry has given a nursery training and discussed sugar palm silviculture. Nico has been recording data on productivity of the trees in Tertung. They turn out to produce an average of 13 liters of juice per day with a sugar concentration of 13% so that represents more than 1.5 kilogram of sugar per tree per day. It is not great, but also not really low. After all they only tap trees that grew up spontaneously and never planted seeds

of the higher producing trees as the people in North Sulawesi have been doing. So they can get one liter of 98% ethanol per day per tree, which makes the trees very valuable since gasoline for generators, motorbikes and cooking costs a premium here!



Training by Masarang experts Harry Kaunang and Nico Tatontos in the village of Tertung

First the people ask how we will buy the sugar from them if they tap more trees. Then I go through a simple calculation with them. How much fuel do you need to cook with for food and drinking water? Two liters per day? Okay. That means that you need two sugar palms for that, which will take you only an hour per day to tap. And if you have more trees it becomes more efficient because then you don't need to walk up and down so much per tree.

The villagers start calculating with the prices and conclude that it is more beneficial to use the ethanol locally instead of buying fuel or of having to make sugar for which fuel wood always is the main issue. Nico shows me the data on the new oven he made already for the tappers here. The local people used oil drums to keep more heat for the pans with sugary juice. They need four hours for one pan and six pieces of good wood. Nico's oven does it in two hours! And even better with only three pieces of good wood! So the visit of our Masarang Foundation to Tertung has already been a great success just because of this! Then the villagers tell about how Nico has taught them how to extend the tapping life of one flower with 6 weeks! So I estimate that with this one training we have doubled the ease with which the villagers can utilize sugar palms!

What a difference this first training already has brought to the village of Tertung! The provision of the good quality seedlings and the experts was financed by the Sirtema Foundation from The Netherlands. It goes to show that you do not always need big investments to get important results. And this model can now be implemented for many more villages in West Kalimantan as a proven methodology! So often when you come with ideas that have not been tested before, you get the incredulous reaction of "if it is not known it cannot be possible!" What a sad world. But fortunately not everybody is like that.



Then Father Jacques, Dwi and myself explain the parts of the agreement we have prepared for the villagers in order to get more seedlings, to run the nursery, to have trainings for other Dayak here in this Muslim village, and

how to manage the whole thing honestly and transparently. We reach full consensus on all aspects. We talk about palm sugar being much healthier and the women calculate quickly that they should then change to palm sugar! It really comes down to making those calculations in the group and then everybody gets it. "It's the money stupid!"

We go to the nursery land that has been cleared from the brush, to be measured. Orangutan caretaker Danny doubles as GPS specialist and gets us the accurate dimensions. 1.3 hectares, flood free, good soil, perfect! The villagers promise to finalize their cooperative structure in the coming days then the contract can be signed and we can start making the new nursery here from where we can help many Dayak with sugar palm seedlings! Wonderful!



Back to Kobus. A group of farmers that call themselves Shopping. Getting ready to visit various Chinese families for Chinese New Year. Everywhere the same kinds of cake and lots of snacks and drinks. They all offer various alcoholic beverages to Father Jacques who "reluctantly" accepts. The houses are big, some completely bright pink, others with pillars like a castle and some of them combined with their shops in which case the whole house is filled with wares into every crevice.



Visiting the Chinese community for their Chinese New Year celebration, going from house to house. Very rare and interesting insights in their life. Father Jacques is a great networker that promotes peaceful co-existence for all based upon respect and a sustainable approach for the future of our planet. Outside the fireworks continue even several days after official New Year celebration.



Several of the Chinese that we visit are with the private voluntary fire brigade that Father Jacques set up with some pilot friends from Holland several years ago. They are always first when there is a fire and they got a lot of equipment donated from the Maastricht fire brigade. Father Jacques does his skillful motivating routines to ensure they will keep up the good work. Arthur, a somewhat rounded pig seller with loud voice, insists on getting everybody drunk, but I am the driver so I escape unscathed. Late that evening I finished the first blog and worked on loads of emails and SMS.

28-1-2012

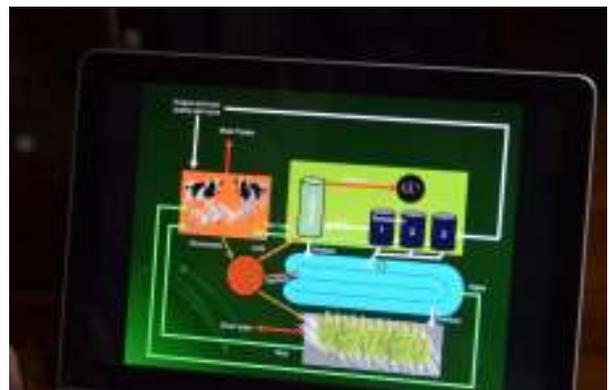
Various meetings with Dayak groups from Ketunggau, from Tembak, Serawai, Ambalau, they all have heard I am here and come to ask Father Jacques for sugar palm seedlings. The head of the environmental impact assessment team came to get the final signatures from Father Jacques. I spent time with Juvi and Jojo. Just some pictures with captions will give you a feel for what it is like:



Ketunggau farmers cooperative



Formal paperwork for Father Jacques



Above: meeting on the setting up of the ethanol units for West Kalimantan. Because the technology is rather complex and people need to understand the principles very well a training school will be set up at the compound of the locally highly respected technological expert, Piet van Hoof in Sintang. Once the people from the village have worked satisfactorily with his unit we can then send them off with a complete unit to install. People need to learn about cattle and their care, about fermentation, about distillation, about bio-digesters, etc. So we anticipate that the training course will take some six weeks before a village can handle an ethanol unit themselves.

29-1-2012

I am working my mails and an hour later at 5.30 a.m. I can hear Father Jacques waking up. We have to be earlier than normal since we are invited to the Village of Tembak to join the governor who will come to close a soccer competition that was organized by this remote village. Very cleverly done by the influential brothers Nayau and Lambung! They belong to the Seberuang Dayak tribe to which also Dwi the secretary of the Kobus Foundation belongs. This tribe once lived close to Martinus, far north in the province, but were chased out by Ibans over two hundred years ago and then settled in the remote Compong mountain area in the Tempunak district. For me this village is one of the most promising locations to work in Indonesia. The people have chased out a logging company belonging to the Suharto family in the past and they consistently have refused palm oil concessions to come in their area. Just last week there were "invitations" from two oil palm companies to attend meetings in Jakarta, Balikpapan and Samarinda. But they said they would only talk with everybody of the village present too and in their own village. None of the oil palm companies has dared that in view of the fierce resistance these people have put up to protect the forest!

So a few interesting days coming up in Tembak! We go from the Kobus Foundation to the official house of the vice-Bupati where the governor has spent the night and where we have breakfast. The Bupati himself is not present?... Well he wants to run for governor against his fellow Dayak, the incumbent governor Bapak Cornelis... Lots of important bureaucrats and women on high heels are accompanying the chain smoking Dayak governor with deep black painted hair. Father Jacques and myself make the rounds for networking. The governor tells me he likes sugar palms. Then the long convoy of some 60 cars is ready to go. The governor is driving in a Hummer! A huge red car with a low roaring engine sound and some of the darkest windows I have ever seen. He explains to me that a wealthy friend has borrowed it to him.



Father Jaques, Jean Kern and myself and some other people enter the Toyota bus that has a driver with one eye... And sure enough we hit lots of holes and have close calls with almost bumping in cars before us! The driver also goes so slow that even Father Jacques gets annoyed at the risky take-overs by other cars and orders the driver to go faster. His

car never made it through the mud so we had our baggage for staying in Tembak brought by motorbikes to the village. Well such drivers sure keep you awake!



Very soon after crossing the bridge to the south of the Kapuas river the endless oil palm plantations start. A long convoy of some 60 cars sneaks its way through the mostly abandoned trees. They have virtually no fruit bunches of importance! This is where the Dayak youth has burned down the camp of the company and when the tensions rose very high after 39 of them were jailed for a prolonged period until the governor had them released. It goes to show that these oil palms only produce when you bring in loads of fertilizer, some 1760 kilograms per hectare per year! And not to speak yet about all the pesticides, rodenticides, fungicides, herbicides, etc.! But I notice that they have resumed cutting of the dead

leaves... They must be planning on coming back...

When we finally get through the oil palm plantations we find the road to be in horrible condition. The last stretch of 6 kilometers takes as long as the last 100 and even the hummer of the Governor gets stuck in the mud, even though there was no real rain for the last two days! Our Toyota van stands no chance and I literally hang on to the back of governor's car which has a small pick up part filled with delicious smelling durians... What an exercise in self control! Although most people would find it a less appealing option to be vigorously shaken on steep roads with deep gullies and mud pools while smelling some 50 very good durians! But such is my love of this king of fruits... The governor gives up, grabs a motorbike and drives himself to the village for the last mile. When I reach the village, partly walking, partly having been met by a motorbike of the villagers the ceremony of the cutting of the bamboo and the stepping on the egg has already finished. Father Jacques somehow had gotten hold of a motorbike too and was chatting with the governor and everybody on the terrace of the biggest house in the small village, awaiting the ridiculous high heeled women and less athletic members of his party to join us before the official part of the day.



The governor standing in front of his Hummer with all the cars stuck in the mud. The women on high heels were standing under some shawls in the forest to the side of the road. Eventually the governor just took a motorbike and drove himself the remaining two kilometers to the village.

I notice a banner with the bull on it... Hmm, sports event? Looks more like a political rally... And sure enough, 90% of the whole event that takes place on the soccer field where the athletes are standing in the blazing sun while definitely much less athletically shaped important persons, including myself, take turns giving speeches, with only my presentation not giving an endorsement for the governors reelection! Officially this is strictly forbidden.



This page was published two days later in the biggest newspaper. The carefully choreographed picture shows me and Father Jacques in serious discussion with the governor. Good sign...



We are seated on a make shift podium with snacks and drinks and even rice wine. I see my friend Apui in the crowd with his hornbill feather from his traditional leader hat sticking above the other heads. I go down towards him and pull him with me on the stage.

Strange that they would not allow the keeper of traditions during such an event to be sitting on the stage? Later I learn more about caste systems amongst the Dayak... My action raises some eye brows but Apui is very happy and the "ceremony" starts.

Although I was asked beforehand to give a presentation, after Father Jacques, it turns out that neither Father Jacques nor me are on the program! Very strange... While the opening speech is taking place I talk with the governor about how good it is the villagers here want to protect the orangutans. "Orangutans? I eat them! They taste very good!" is his rude reply while lighting up a cigarette from again a new pack. Then I am suddenly asked through the speaker system to address the crowd to the surprise of both the governor and myself. Father Jacques, who I was told would talk first, just shrugs his shoulders and signals me to go down to the small speaker podium.



Hilarious. Of course I do not fit underneath that little roof with my European height and I start by saying that I rather prefer to share the same sun that the athletes are experiencing, which starts the first applause. Well not quite true, since there was polite applause with every statement about the reelection of the governor. Then I express my appreciation for the people of Tembak who have preserved their forest for the goods and water from it. Even having several mini hydro plants made by themselves. I speak about them having stopped timber and oil palm companies with great bravery, every time resulting in loud applause of the people but not from the stage where the governor is sitting with his bureaucrats... He is constantly turns around to his advisors behind him and seems agitated.

I explain that the people here want sugar palms (applause) and that these are much better than the oil palms. That we are starting the ecological longhouse here in Tembak and that I hope it will become an example for other Dayak communities how to live in harmony with nature.



Actually the people put up a banner saying ***Welcome To In Global Community, Please Life in Harmony***. This is another great banner of the villagers, clearly made by themselves! I remember when we were here a few months ago with the eco-warriors and the banner then specially made read ***Welcome economic warriors!*** Fantastic! Pak Nayau explains to me that they took that slogan from my Life in Harmony motto for Samboja Lestari.

He also tells me an astounding and hard to believe story that they had been looking around for alternatives to keep the oil palms out and had come accross my work already ten years ago. A few years ago they decided my approach was the right one and started doing due diligence on me! Amazing! They had plucked a huge amount of data from the Internet and even had sent people to Balikpapan

and Tomohon to talk to the local people and find out if I was for real!! I could not believe my eyes to see those documents and reports! Well they decided I was and started massaging Father Jacques to bring me to their remote village, which he did... They even offered a helicopter as long as I would come. Well I preferred the off road vehicles and motorbikes, I did come and I definitely fell in love with this special Dayak community.

Anyway, I ended my presentation with some nice words and big applause and walked back to the stage. The governor blew out a big puff of cigarette smoke and leaned toward me. "Just wait, I have something to say to that Sir!" Hmmm, I already had noticed that he hardly paid attention to me and was more busy talking eagerly to his advisors behind him on the stage which probably meant bad news. And sure enough when it was his turn he started blasting away!

"For three hundred years those foreign colonials have come to take our treasures and exploit us, we don't need this anymore!" I very impolitely call from his back: "Sorry governor, but I am an Indonesian national please!" He turns around and asks "Are you really?" And he sees from Father Jacques and others that this is indeed the case. Then he started a talk about that people are much more important than orangutans and that he would not care if those orangutans became extinct. And those sugar palms? Palms! Just the same as oil palm! Both palms! He obviously is upset with the resonance I had but his skillfully spoken words only get lukewarm reactions from the villagers. The rest of the speech is about politics, why they don't have a road yet, just ask your Bupati, etc.

Then four subdistrict heads step forward and announce three things they have decided, the first one is that they, all the tribes around the Saran mountain range have decided that the 20.000 ha forest on this mountain must be preserved forever, for the water, the natural goods and wildlife! That it has value as an ecotourism forest with its caves, waterfalls and thousand colored flowers. Here follows the translation of their official statement:

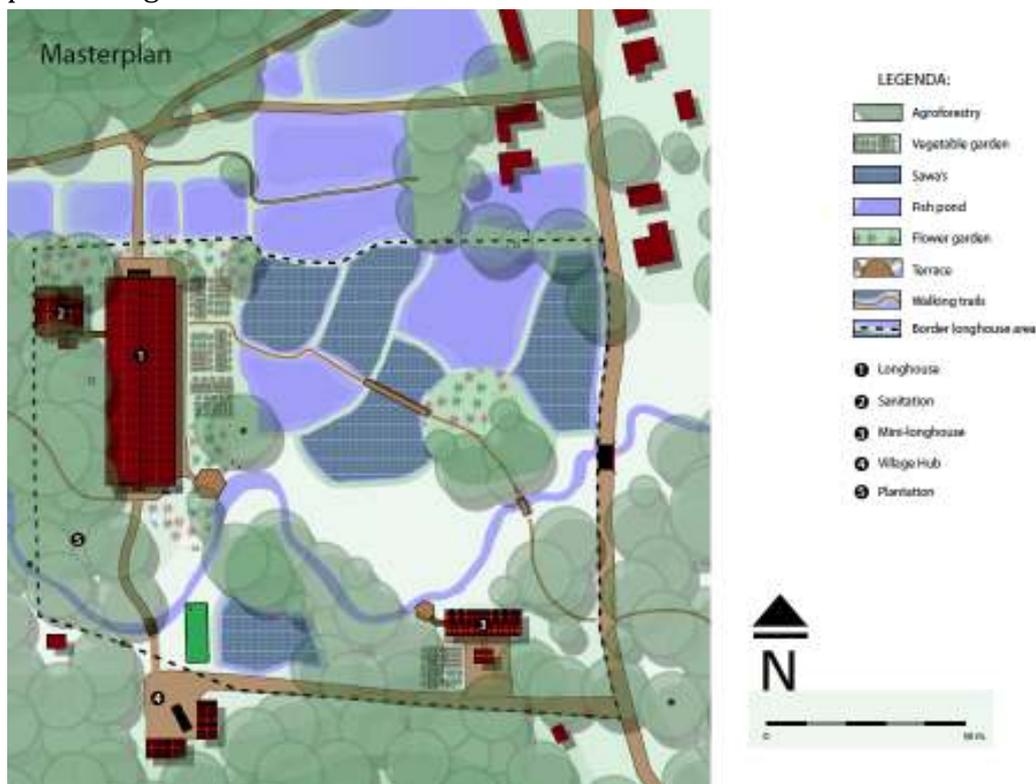
Declaration:

Today, on the January 29th 2012, we the people of the Saran mountain range area and around it declare:

1. The Saran mountain, as the source of the springs of the Belimbing, Tempunak and Sepauk rivers, will be our conservation area.
2. The area of the Saran Mountain and surroundings, consisting of the sub districts of Belimbing Hulu, Tempukan, Sungai Tebelian and Sepauk are preparing themselves to become the autonomous district of "Saran Mountain".
3. We are ready to support Drs. Cornelis, MH, to become governor of West Kalimantan for a second period.

When the governor sits down again, pulling out his next cigarette, I tell him “you are very good with words governor!” which he takes as a big compliment. While more presentations are taking place Father Jacques and myself enter a serious discussion with the governor. That we are exactly here to help the people and that the people understand what it is about and that they have asked us here to come and help them. Sugar palms no fertilizer? I have experts that know about organic fertilizer! You don’t know about bureaucracy! Oh, you were in the government for many years? But you don’t know about politics! Married to a high political figure? What?!! Sugar palms can make more profit than oil palms?... Silence... But that is healthy competition, I support that. Actually my own village refused oil palms. We should talk some more pak Willie. Later the head of the planning office, Dr. Robin, asks me when we can meet and talk some more.

The local people come very sad towards me and apologize for the words of the governor. And state that they will stick to the plan we have made and will not allow the oil palms in. Later that afternoon I go around with the village elders to survey the location of the ecological longhouse. I quickly find out that the meeting that Arjen Spijkerman and Tim had with the villagers resulted in an unpractical location and the head of traditions, pak Apui, points out an area that is not prone to flooding and where the longhouse can stand against a majestic background of large forest trees and when seen from a distance with the Sarang peak rising in the distance behind it.



Back to the computer and we rework the plan. A second survey and we decide that we have found the right location. The lay out fits beautiful and all components are in the right places. Then it is time to swim in the river with the villagers for the evening bath. After the bath we have dinner followed by a meeting with the village elders on the improved design and everybody is very happy, especially the architect Arjen. Then drinks are brought in and the mode becomes rather festive. It turns out it is Tim’s girlfriend’s birthday!



In the village near the stage where the ceremony took place all the local people from far around are gathered and have an open air disco with some of the most clear star skies ever above us. Lots of dancing and drinking and singing. The band gets almost everyone moving. They ask me to sing a song, and while waiting for the keyboard person to find

the right settings I tell a joke that few seem to get. Well, the traditional Indonesian love song I sing does get to them. After a few too many hugs from drunk loving Dayak I retire to the house of pak Nayau.

30-1-2012

In the morning I join pak Nayau to the neighbors of the 1.3 hectare large longhouse location and they all agree and are happy with the decision of the elders. Then we prepare to have a ceremony for the placing of the first pole of the smaller longhouse that can sleep 32 persons more efficiently and has to be ready on the 20th of March. Pak Apui runs to get some good rice wine and pak Niat does the Dayak prayer. He calls to all the 20 gods of the forest, the rivers, the mountain, etc. He even ends with asking the support of some new gods including the god of the cars and motorbikes! This draws some laughs! I have to drink the rice wine first, then some of it is poured in the hole for the ironwood pole and then we all drink after which Arjen proudly places the first pole of his first longhouse!



Pak Apui comes running with the rice wine. You can clearly see that he is going to enjoy this ritual with their gods!



Pak Nayau drips some rice wine in the hole for the first pole of the small longhouse. After that we all drink. Pak Niat in the back has just finished praying to more than 20 gods!

Then we go for a walk through the 70 hectares treasure forest of pak Niat. Amazing what this bee honey collector has achieved! He has reforested these former grasslands with an amazing mix of local tree species! And how they grow! He knows exactly when he planted what tree! More surprises! An overgrown nursery with thousands of very large seedlings? It turns out pak Niat was once visited by some government officials of the Ministry of Environment and they had told him he should get the Kalpataru, the highest environmental award in the Republic of Indonesia, if he just did one more thing like make a nursery and grow more seedlings to be planted elsewhere. So pak Niat with the little money he had bought polybags and went about doing that. Now he sadly tells that those people never came back... And he did not have the money to keep this nursery up! Well now he has. On the spot we hire Agung, a good, hard working, bright young Dayak, who is delighted to take this challenge on!



With pak Niat in his overgrown nursery. Pak Niat is 65 years and climbs once a month his bee trees to collect real jungle honey.



Together with our sugar palm expert from Tomohon, Nico Tatontos we visit many of the sugar palms in the mixed forest of pak Niat. Good growth, but no tapping? No! In the last year he had given away 300 sugar palms to be used as vegetables for big parties! What a pity! But he has many left and will protect these to become one of the feedstock sources for producing ethanol for the ecological longhouse.

Nico is looking at a six year old sugar palm. They grow extremely well mixed with the bamboo and jungle trees.

We walk back for some coffee and then we go to say goodbye to the school. When we walk in a biology lecture is going on so I decide to take over with permission of the head of the school and ask the children to tell me the principal difference between an orangutan and themselves. They can earn 50.000 Rupiah! Wow know how is worth money! And then they start. They get close but not good enough. I could have gone on for two more hours but then decide to buy cookies



for all of them for trying so hard. The main lesson? If it is so hard to tell the real difference... then do we have the right to destroy the home of the orangutans? NO!!! is the straight and loud answer! It makes my heart fly! So is the governor right to say just let those orangutans become extinct? NO!!! Again very clear answer. Outside we go for

some pictures and the students are all coming one by one, what great energy from those wonderful smiles!



Time to go to the special bathing river to the east of the village. On the way we eat cempedak. Pak Apui meets his niece and we take some pictures of them with us. The river is beautiful. Special Tristaniopsis trees with peeling red bark line the river banks. The water is clear and fast flowing. They want to ask someone from Bandung to help them design a mini hydro here as well. Then a very good sign! Pak Apui shows me a brightly colored orange spider with special long protrusions from his back! This is the connector spider he says. When special guests come they get connected with luck to us! This is a very good sign! Things will be good! We take pictures of the beautiful spider and river and then it is time to go back to Sintang. Time for goodbye.





Tim and Arjen will leave the village for long times. It is a really emotional goodbye for Tim, for whom the Nayau family has been his own family and small house for 5 months! What love these people share with anyone visiting them. What beautiful trusting children!

The car shows up but pak Apui asks to have some pictures taken with his daughter who is there to visit in beautiful



Mr. Joe, alias Jean Kern

Dayak clothing. We make a lot of pictures with her and the proud father and then we get in the 4WD vehicle for the arduous trip to the oil palm plantations. All along the road children stand and wave while shouting "goodbye Mr. Joe", all of which is

addressed to Jean Kern who has found his home amongst wonderful Dayaks.



The lucky spider



Nico Tatontos, our Masarang sugar palm tapper thoroughly enjoys his time with the Dayak people of Tembak. He even gave his shirt to head of traditions pak Apui.

When we finally arrived at Kobus after many hours of driving, Father Jacques immediately wanted to know all the latest developments. And I think it is fantastic how he knows how to place so many things in the historical and interpersonal context. What a true treasure house of knowledge Father Jacques is. He sometimes needs a bit of time to look for the right words and names but he is as shrewd as ever. He knows exactly what he wants and whom he needs to get it done, to which I can personally testify...



And I love it when his eyes shine mischievously when he recalls all his youth adventures. How he supported the soccer loving students at the seminary with a cleverly hidden illegal radio so they could listen to the latest soccer results. The supervisors never suspected Jacques who did not like soccer at all of being involved! How he got his drivers license in 1957 as 18 year old during the summer break. And how he learned to fly and got his pilot license. And how he made a journey around the world.

The latter was paid for by the present his mother asked from the guests for his priest initiation. She wanted her priest son to at least see something of the world before he would be send of to dark and still partly unknown Borneo. It was also his mother that was behind the driver license and pilot brevet. Father Jacques also fondly recalls the Christmas song “De herdertjes lagen bij nachte...” which he “slightly” modified with a tape recorder at higher speed, something that almost cost him his place in the seminary because of the great indignation felt by the older members of the order at the Christmas celebration!

Yes Father Jacques is a rebel, but just like my deceased friend Prince Bernhard, one with a golden heart. Always happy and cheerful and ready to lend a helping hand to anyone, irrespective of status, income, race, age or gender. Fruits in his garden are there to be stolen by the little rascals from across the street, because he did the same when he was a kid! And he can be forgiving, to anyone, even towards the person that still tries to destroy all his good works because of the great dislike for his secretary. What an amazing guy.

I became especially aware of his impact upon the local people and their love for him during the more than 12 hour trip back from Martinus when we made four unplanned stops and at each location people popped up out of nowhere to enthusiastically greet and hug him. And they would tell about 30 or 40 years ago when he had married them, had helped them with a sick child, etc. I was so touched by the love these people expressed so freely to this buoyant priest. The taxi driver told me he now realized he was driving a very important and famous person!

Jacques is still very fit. Sure enough he needs his afternoon nap, or in the evening when he decides that is time to sleep, notwithstanding whoever is there, he just goes. He works every day hands on till he sweats in his beautiful garden behind the Kobus house. And hours long walks in the forest do nothing to him, easily outperforming the young people. I am sure it has to do with his positive attitude to life, with the knowledge of the good he is doing for the local people and nature. Also his self-depreciating humor and great insights as well as the great social life he leads with all his guests and emails from around the world must contribute to his perfect health. Everyone is served his famous Tuak local rice wine, every day lovingly brewed for him by a group of old Dayak women, at the terrace overlooking the garden and the jungle behind his house. Father Jacques inspires people to work together and to find solutions to the problems that do not have losers. He is really the only person here that can talk to the Chinese, the Muslims, all the Dayak tribes, the bureaucrats and people like myself. He listens and shares and is stern in his advice not to use violence. He is a wonderful man, and he is my friend.

After Father Jacques has absorbed and analyzed all the information we go to the nearby hill and survey the graveyard with the very old trees, for which Father Jacques is already scheming ingenious plans! I also visit, together with Dudung, the land of Father Piet. I work through the drawings of the small longhouse with him and then we continue our work on the mini ethanol plant design. He knows exactly the spot where to make it, and he is right! We survey and set out the markers of where it will be installed. Perfect slope, big enough open area, secure. From here we will train many people how to make this set up themselves and bring the technology and good quality seedlings to their villages.

In the evening some more visits for networking and for a rare occasion Father Piet with his eyes needing an operation . Tomorrow we will have a meeting with the Bupati and all officials of the Sintang district. My good friend letcol Firly has a few weeks ago been promoted and was told to deal with a special restless region. I hope to get to know his successor, letcol Oktavianus. It is 2 am when I switch of the light.

31-1-2012

Early breakfast on the beautiful Kobus terrace. You cannot express this in terms of money! Dr. Sri arrives and we bring Juvi and Jojo together. They immediately have eye for nothing else as eachother. So good Juvi has cleared all the tests and is now parasite free! After an hour we allow Jojo who has found his match to go in a separate adjacent cage. Jean has taken beautiful pictures of the first meeting!





Father Jacques with all the law enforcement officials of the Sintang district.

Then it is time to go the Bupati. Row after row of officials, some athletes standing on the lawn and then the formal sequence of the national hymn, the five basic principles reading of the Pancasila and the moment of silence for the fallen takes place. The Bupati has lost weight, but some of his staff has grown considerably in size I notice... Good networking with new head of police Drs. Oktavianus, with head of Parliament, with army chief and of course the Bupati himself. Follow up appointments made. I have to rush back now to pack up and catch the plane to Pontianak and Jakarta.

While packing at Kobus... No flight, sorry plane not fixed yet! Awwwww. I have some important meetings in Jakarta tomorrow, amongst others with the British Ambassador. Not good. So I book a ticket for a car ride to Pontianak which will cost me a night of sleep and receive some more groups of people to talk about sugar palms! A nice last dinner under the painting of the last supper in the Kobus Foundation and then after a last visit to a Mr. Hendra who was not here during Chinese New Year, I get into the car. And that brings me back to the road side from where I wrote part of this blog.

Well lots to catch up on in Jakarta, and in Samboja Lestari where I will fly next. In Jakarta especially looking forward meeting Wisnu, my former assistant who was called back to duty in the Ministry of Forestry. Thanks for reading and following these glimpses of life for conservation in far away Indonesia. Below a few more images.

Willie Smits



Meeting with Father Piet in the middle, the constructor of the longhouse on the left and Arjen Spijkerman on the right. Discussing the first phase of the construction.



This is where the longhouse will be built in between the large forest trees and on the edge of a cooling pond. All around it are jungle sounds and streaming water.



This is how the new longhouse will look like. A cooperation between award winning Indonesian architect Yori and Dutch landscape architect Arjen Spijkerman.



The poster over the road for the visit of the governor shows the logo of a political party... On the right the majestic Saran mountain about which many stories exist.



In the front Arjen Spijkerman and Tim van Gorkum top right who stayed in the house of pak Nayau (to my right, Nico to my left) and his family. Also in the picture pak Apui and his daughter.



These pictures were taken by one of the village children with the big camera of Jean Kern. It is really interesting to see what the children photograph on their own!

