Violence, fear and anti-violence: the Batek of Peninsular Malaysia

Ivan Tacey & Diana Riboli

2014

Contents

Ivan Tacey is a PhD Candidate, based at Faculty of Anthropology, Sociology and Political Science, University Lumie‘ re, Lyon, France.

Diana Riboli is an Assistant Professor in Social Anthropology, based at Department of Social Anthropology, Panteio University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens, Greece.

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify and analyze socio-cultural and political forces which have shaped anti-violent attitudes and strategies of the Batek and Batek Tanum of Peninsular Malaysia.

Design/methodology/approach – Data collection during the authors' long-term, multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork among the Batek and Batek Tanum in Peninsular Malaysia. Methodology included participant observation, semi-structured interviews and a literature review of texts on the Orang Asli and anthropological theories on violence.

Findings – Traumatic experiences of past violence and atrocities greatly influence the Batek's and Batek Tanum's present attitudes toward direct and structural forms of violence. A variety of anti-violent strategies are adopted, including the choice to escape when physically threatened. Rather than demonstrating "weakness," this course of action represents a smart survival strategy. External violence reinforces values of internal cooperation and mutual-aid that foraging societies, even sedentary groups, typically privilege. In recent years, the Batek's increasing political awareness has opened new forms of resistance against the structural violence embedded within Malaysian society.

Originality/value – The study proposes that societies cannot simply be labelled as violent or non-violent on the basis of socio-biological theories. Research into hunter-gatherer social organization and violence needs to be reframed within larger debates about structural violence. The "anti-violence" of certain foraging groups can be understood as a powerful form of resilience to outside pressures and foraging groups' best possible strategy for survival.

Keywords Violence, Malaysia, Anti-violence, Batek, Foraging societies, Orang Asli

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

This paper examines the impact of external violence and the fear it creates on attitudes, behavior and strategies of anti-violence among the Batek De‘ ' and Batek Tanum, two indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia. Unquestionably, there is plenty of evidence of foraging societies, and indigenous peoples in general, suffering violence inflicted by a variety of local, national and international actors (Mander, 2006, pp. 3-10;

Sellato and Sercombe, 2007, pp. 30-46; Butovskaya, 2013, pp. 289-92; Tonkinson, 2013, pp. 269-76). By violence we do not only mean direct violence, which causes very real physical pain and suffering, but also what theorists have termed structural violence: inequalities embedded within political, economic and social structures and institutions in hierarchical societies which indirectly cause the suffering of marginalized individuals or social groups (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Farmer, 2005). Structural violence often hinges upon marginalized groups living in fear of direct violence. Yet this is not to say all forms of structural violence depend on the use, or even threat, of direct violence. To fully understand the ways violence is imposed upon foraging societies, it is imperative to take both direct and structural violence into consideration, particularly the stark realities behind their interactions.

Hunter-gatherer groups have low-population sizes, low-population densities and lifestyles associated with particular ranging patterns covering large geographical areas. When resources are depleted in one area, a group moves on. These demographic and ecological factors make hunting and gathering a low-impact and viable long-term economic strategy which enables forest flora and fauna to replenish over time. The common fate of hunter-gatherer groups as the subjects of violence is partially down to their low-population sizes compared to that of potential aggressors. However, given their continuing existence in the face of such imbalances, these very same minority groups must have created successful strategies of resistance. Any reciprocated direct violence would tend toward the annihilation of small groups, an idea mentioned by Skeat and Blagden (1906, p. 533) over 100 years ago. Other modes of resistance are required and, indeed, that is what can be found: strategies of anti-violence. We use anti (from the Greek "anti") in the sense of "instead of" rather than the more commonly used sense of "in opposition to." Anti-violence suggests not only a lack of violence, as in "non-violence," but an alternative to violence, one which is both active and strategic.

The Batek De‘ ’ and Batek Tanum belong to the larger Orang Asli ("Original People") group that constitutes around 0.7 percent of Malaysia's total population. The Batek, and other Orang Asli groups, including the Semai and Chewong, are quintessential examples of what some anthropologists have called "peaceful societies" (Dentan, 1968; Howell, 2011; Endicott, 2013). The Batek De‘ ’ and Batek Tanum live in and close to the Taman Negara National Park in the states of Pahang and Kelantan. Both groups often hunt and gather, but their economies are mixed and feature a variety of economic activities including cultivation of fruit orchards and rubber small-holdings, trade in collected forest products, wage-paying labor and tourist-guide work. Large numbers of individuals from both groups are now sedentary or semi-sedentary and live in villages on the edges of the forest. However, roughly half the Batek De‘ ’, about 600 individuals, are still nomadic forest-dwelling foragers. Although similar, the Batek De‘ ’ and Batek Tanum are two distinct ethnic groups. They have different histories and cultural practices. Their languages also differ considerably and each group associates itself with different, although bordering, territories. The Batek Tanum only began to auto-identify as Batek following several massacres in the early twentieth century. Prior

to this they called themselves Maia. In stories collected by Tacey, the Tanum people claim three entire communities in their area were wiped out during these massacres. One group was said to have been hiding in a cave when they were discovered by Malays. The Malays blocked up the entrance to the cave with firewood and set it alight causing the deaths of everyone inside. In another story the Tanum people say Malays gave Orang Asli villagers rice laced with poison to kill them all[1]. In another story Malays are said to have entered a village at night and hacked all men, women and children to death. The Batek Tanum understand these massacres as an attempt by settling Malay populations to take over Orang Asli lands (Tacey, forthcoming).

The Batek De‘ ’ and Batek Tanum[2] have been, and still are, greatly affected by outside pressures, influences and peoples, including countless acts of violence and terror. Although they share many social forms with other egalitarian “immediate-return hunter gatherers” (Woodburn, 1982), their attitudes toward violence have emerged – along with other forms of sociality – from interactions with other social groups and experiences of outsider violence. Violence is often caused by complex processes linking local peoples in particular places to national and international markets and politics. Following Peluso and Watts, we choose to “treat violence as a site-specific phenomenon deeply rooted in local histories and social relations but also connected to transnational processes of material change, political power relations, and historical conjuncture” (Peluso and Watts, 2001, p. 30). It is this interaction between history, memory and actual events which has shaped Batek social forms and action and which inevitably structures and informs Batek responses to, and uses of, violence and anti-violence. Rather than trying to place Batek responses to external violence within a broader understanding of humans as either inherently aggressive or peaceful, we chose to precisely analyze the socio-political forces – both external and internal – which have forged their historically proven effective strategies of cultural survival.

Central to the paper’s discussion of Batek experience of and responses to outsider violence is an incident we witnessed which occurred in the Batek Tanum village of Kampung Ki Ying in April-May 2013. This event pivoted around a visit of representatives from the ruling political coalition preceding the national elections[3]. We consider the

[1] Killing indigenous peoples by giving them poisoned food or disease infected blankets was a common strategy used in Southern Africa, Australia, the Americas and elsewhere by settler populations intent on clearing and colonizing land (Moses, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, pp. 62-3; Bodley, 1999, pp. 468-9). Bodley (1999) estimates that “[d]uring the 150-year colonial period from 1795 to 1945 European settlers and venture capitalists may have killed more than 50 million tribal people” (p. 465). The use of violence during the European colonial period was particularly systematic but these horrifying statistics would be even more frightening if violence committed by other “State societies” was also included.

[2] From here on we shall refer to both these peoples as Batek except when specifically referring to only oneof these groups when we shall use either the term Batek De‘ ’ or Batek Tanum.

[3] In Malaysia the ruling party, Barisan Nasional, have been in power continuously since decolonization in1957. However, their level of popularity has fallen steeply in the last two general elections. Political parties in Malaysia follow sharp ethnic lines and Barisan Nasional is a coalition of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the Malaysian

event particularly relevant to the logic of our argument due to the different forms and responses of and to violence involved. These responses were shaped and determined by the Batek's deeply held historically based fears and traumatic memories of violence.

The avoidance of violence in small-scale societies

Many anthropologists have attributed the non-violence of small-scale hunter-gatherer groups and some swiddening societies to "anarchic social forms." Anarchic social forms include: egalitarianism, mutual-aid, sharing, high levels of individual autonomy and voluntary and fluid social ties (Kropotkin, 1902; Morris, 1982; Fry, 2006; McDonald, 2009; Dentan, 2010; Endicott, 2011; Gibson and Sillander, 2011). Recently, Dentan (2010) has examined the connections between non-violence and the high levels of autonomy individuals have in anarchic societies. He argues autonomy "maximizes" flexibility which, in turn, "minimizes conflicts" (pp. 141-2). It is a compelling argument and one which echoes the findings of Brian Morris, a pioneer in examining the links between foragers' individualism and the anarchic qualities of their social organization (Morris, 1982). Unfortunately, Morris' work has often been overlooked by anthropologists. Morris critiqued the exotic dichotomies some anthropologists set up between western individualism and non-western, supposedly sociocentric, concepts of the subject, highlighting the differences between individualism as expressed by foragers and the various kinds of individualism associated with a capitalist economy (Morris, 2013). The Batek, like the Malapantaram of southern India who Morris worked with, place "a fundamental focus on the individual as an independent person [y] as self-reliant and autonomous [y] [and] socialization patterns – as a dialectical process – are largely geared to making a child socially, psychologically and economically independent at a very early age, and to respect the autonomy of other individuals" (Morris, 2013). This extreme autonomy does not develop into egoism, selfishness and possessiveness – all factors which could theoretically lead to increases of violence in societies – but on the contrary, encourages an "inherently social" individualism associated with egalitarianism, sharing and an antipathy toward authority (Morris, 2013) – factors ostensibly associated with the maintenance of anti-violence.

In addition to the autonomy and individual freedom that is instilled in Batek children, cooperation and anti-violent attitudes are also taught and valued from infancy (Endicott, 2011; Endicott and Endicott, 2008). Although adults keep a close watch on children all the time, they rarely interfere in children's activities. As soon as they start walking, children form autonomous groups and, imitating the behavior of the adults, rarely show antagonistic or competitive attitudes when playing together (Endicott and Endicott, 2008, pp. 115-26, 2014).

Indian Congress (MIC) and several smaller political parties. The coalition is dominated by UMNO a Malay-dominated political party.

The role of the trade of forest products between Orang Asli and Malay communities in maintaining peaceful relations has also been discussed by anthropologists (Dentan, 2010, p. 153; Endicott, forthcoming). This trade has formed a significant aspect of many Orang Asli groups' lives for at least 2,000 years (Dunn, 1975, pp. 125, 135; Andaya, 2010, pp. 202-34) and, as Geoffrey Benjamin has argued, been a major factor leading to the "institutionalized societal patterns" of Orang Asli and Malay groups in the Peninsula (Benjamin, 2002, pp. 7-76). Peaceful relations between local Malay middlemen and foragers were necessary to safeguard this important trade, and any violence would have been extremely detrimental to it.

Batek and other Orang Asli societies encode strict sanctions on any use of violence within their socio-religious rules (Endicott, 2011, 2013; Howell, 1989, 2011; Dentan et al., 1997; Dentan, 2008; van der Sluys, 2006). As Endicott has remarked, "even hitting someone [is] seen as a serious breach of Batek moral obligation – the Batek term sakel means both to hit and to kill – and also a threat to cosmic order." The Batek consider violence as both lawac (taboo, prohibited) and tolah (the most serious form of inappropriate social behavior). The two most important other-than-human beings in Batek and Batek Tanum cosmology, the thunder lord (Gobar or Karei) and underground rainbow snake (Naga' or Baji), punish the Batek and other humans for any transgressions of these taboos. Punishment for lawac acts targets whole communities while the punishment for tolah offences only targets the specific individuals involved (Endicott, 2013, p. 246). Gobar/Karei and also Naga'/Baji, to a certain extent, embody violence. In Batek philosophy, extreme weather and natural cataclysms such as tsunamis, flooding, hurricanes and earthquakes are often seen as punishments sent by these powerful other-than-human beings for either human violence, such as the wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East, or environmental violence, like deforestation and climate change (Lye, 2005; Riboli, 2013; Tacey, 2013). In this sense, these beings can be considered powerful reminders of the catastrophic effects of violent acts (Riboli, 2013, p. 139; Endicott, 2013; Dentan, 2008, pp. 68-70).

Violence in the past

For at least 500 years, landscapes and social relations in Malaysia have been reshaped by interactions between local, national and international actors. From the sixteenth century onwards, European colonialism restructured political power in the Malay Peninsula, intensifying internecine conflicts between warring Malay polities, sometimes drawing Orang Asli into conflicts, and sometimes causing their displacement and retreat further into the interior (Leary, 1995, p. 21; Noor, 2011, pp. 27-30).

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, violence in Malaysia intensified as Europe's industrial revolution increased demands for raw materials (Leary, 1995, p. 21). This period was characterized by heightened Malay slave raids on Orang Asli communities which were justified by Malays who viewed the Orang Asli as primitive

pagans without the same legal rights as Muslims. Children and young women were enslaved to work in Malay households, to provide labor for agriculture and to be used for sexual pleasure (Endicott, 1983; Dentan, 2008). The Batek have vivid memories of the horrors of these events and their local landscapes are filled with places where they claim Malay slavers captured and killed Batek in the past. Although the Batek usually chose to flee from violence when outnumbered, there is some evidence that they sometimes fought back. Lye has noted, "it seems that slave-raiding did not create a paralysis of fear [y] groups in the past were capable of aggression" (Lye, 2005, p. 106)[4]. Some Batek recount stories about past "wars" they had with Malays and often highlight the roles and superhuman abilities of heroic Batek shamans (*hala'*) in these conflicts. A Batek De' ' elder from Kelantan told Tacey that during attacks "Our *hala'* would teleport around appearing right behind Malay enemies and shoot them with blowpipes. Malays tried to shoot us with their guns but our hala' would cause the Malays' guns to explode and misfire." Batek Tanum men also recounted to Tacey the important roles a shaman played in a conflict when Malaysian government forces bombarded a Batek village in the early post-independence period. This event occurred during the night just after government forces had attacked a neighboring Chinese settlement suspected of harboring communists. A Batek Tanum elder described, "during the terror and panic of the bombing the shaman cried 'Stop! I can hold them off until the morning!' He conjured up a huge magical shield to protect the villagers. Bullets and mortar fire bounced off the shield all night long until fire ceased in the morning at around 8am. All the attacks were deflected by the shield. If we didn't have the Batek shaman we'd all be dead." Batek De' ' also recounted similar stories to Riboli. In one story, which took place during Second World War, airplanes were flying very low over the forest. A Batek elder, who was walking with his companions, pointed his walking stick toward an airplane and pretended to shoot it. The pilot immediately opened fire. A shaman with the group created an invisible shield and told everybody to remain still. The shield protected all members of the group from harm. The most interesting aspect of these claims, regardless of their veracity, is the ways the Batek are currently choosing to talk about and heroicize the roles of their shamans during conflicts in the past.

The movement of non-Orang Asli into Batek territories and the accompanying extraction of resources greatly increased after the British constructed the Gemas to Gua Musang railroad in the 1930s (Endicott, 1997, p. 38). This period roughly coincides with the time between the 1920s and 1930s when the Batek claim the British army intervened to stop Malay massacres of Orang Asli in their area – an intervention the

[4] Although supported by little or no evidence, there are also claims of Orang Asli groups using violenceagainst each other in this period (Anderson, 1824/1965, pp. xxxiv-xxxv; Middlebrook, 1933, p. 153; Benjamin, 1966, p. 8). Some of these stories are probably just that, stories. Anderson was a Malay interpreter for the colonial government in Penang and his remark that the Semang and Senoi "are often engaged in hostilities with each other" is based on hearsay from Malay informants. There is no evidence that he ever visited any Orang Asli communities.

Batek often discuss and which forms one of the bases for their beliefs about the British as friendly allies willing to stop Malay acts of aggression and violence.

From 1948 to 1960 and again from 1967 to 1980 the interior of Peninsular Malaysia was wracked by the violence of a conflict, known as "the Emergency," which was waged between mainly Chinese communist insurgents and government forces. The Batek were less affected by the Emergency than some other Orang Asli groups, and were not forced into British-run "jungle forts" with concentration camp-like conditions. However, several Batek groups remember terrifying assaults by government forces. Lye has described the terror these attacks caused: "Most gravely they recall the bombardments. They could shelter in caves – if they could reach them in time. Bodies were injured; children were lost; the feeble and infirm were left behind" (Lye, 2005, p. 49). An elderly Batek Tanum man recounted the following story to Tacey about these events: "During this period we had to keep moving all the time. Even cooking food was difficult as soldiers could detect our presence from the smoke. We had been hiding in this cave when suddenly we could hear gun shots and soldiers arriving. It was panic, we were frightened. Everyone picked up what they could and began running. One woman couldn't carry both of her children and had to leave her baby daughter crying in the cave. We never saw the baby again but there are stories a British soldier looked after her." These memories are both vivid and recent – the elder sibling of the baby girl that was left behind is still alive and resides at Kampung Ki Ying. Despite the violence of this period, the Batek frequently recount their nostalgic memories of British doctors, administrators and army personnel visiting their communities in helicopters to deliver medicines and other supplies. The Orang Asli were impressed by British technologies and as Leary (1995) remarked, "many [Orang Asli] rode in helicopters before they had seen a car or a train" (p. 187). These events further compounded Batek fears of violent outsiders and their beliefs about the British as powerful allies. Batek's stories about this period frequently rework the past through underemphasizing British and communist violence while highlighting that of the Malays.

During the post-independence period, the Malaysian state has actively pursued the internal colonization of the Peninsula. Movement of non-Orang Asli into the Batek area radically accelerated from the 1970s onwards as most forested areas outside Taman Negara were cut down for timber and replaced with vast palm-oil plantations (Endicott, 1997, p. 38). Dentan (2008) has contended that as lands were grabbed from indigenous groups, hinterland "refuges" were absorbed into state control through land transformation and development programs. He has also argued that violence associated with these processes has meant "[o]pression has become routinized and continuous, not vicious and sporadic" (p.9). In other words, structural violence has largely replaced direct violence. A particularly effective tool of Malaysia's project of internal colonization has been the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) and similar state-run institu-

tions[5] which have promoted and facilitated the transformation of Orang Asli forested lands into plantations, relocated Malays into resource-rich Orang Asli territories and displaced the Orang Asli into impoverished government resettlement villages like Kampung Ki Ying. These processes depend on structural violence – in this case, unequal land rights between Orang Asli and Malay communities. While large areas of land are recognized as Malay Reserves, almost no land has been recognized as belonging to the Orang Asli (Nicholas, 2000).

Batek landscapes are rich with mineral wealth as their territories are situated on "a highly mineralized belt reaching from Yunnan in south China to the islands of Bangka and Belitung [in Indonesia]" (Andaya and Andaya, 1982, p. 11). Mineral wealth currently being exploited in the Batek area includes gold, iron-ore and limestone. In 2013, Verde Resources discovered valuable, heavy rare earth elements in the area and plans have been mooted to begin mining in the near future (PRWEB, 2014). The Batek have never been compensated for timber or mineral wealth taken from their traditional territories.

Control over resources has been, and still is, a principal source of conflict between the indigenous groups and their neighbors. Peluso and Watts (2001) have argued that environmental violence "frequently intersects with other forms of violence emerging from racial and ethnic tensions, state forms of violence, and social tensions that either come to the surface during transitional periods when social and spatial power relations are rearranged or create those transitional periods" (p. 31). The last 200 years have been punctuated by several such transitional periods. Ethnic and racial tensions run deep in Malaysia and the Orang Asli are the most impoverished category of citizens in the country (Dentan *et al.*, 1997, p. 7; Nicholas, 2000, pp. 30-2). Distrust and disillusionment of other populations is magnified as wealth generated from local resources is syphoned out of Orang Asli communities to different ethnic groups and stakeholders.

The Kampung Ki Ying incident

During our fieldwork at the Batek Tanum village of Kampung Ki Ying, just before the Malaysian national elections in 2013, a delegation of about 15 Malay men representing the ruling Barisan National coalition visited the village. This visit took place within a fairly polite atmosphere despite Batek disbelief and distrust of the delegation's demagogic propaganda. Many women, scared by the gob (outsiders) who they greatly fear due to rumors and experiences of sexual harassment and rape, quickly fled in the forest and hid (Riboli and Tacey, forthcoming; Riboli, forthcoming). A local Malay politician gave an open air speech, emphasizing the role of the ruling coalition in maintaining peace and promoting development in the country, declaring that the Malay and the Batek were "the same," both being Bumiputera "sons of the soil" of

[5] These include the South Kelantan Development Authority (KESEDAR) and the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Agency (FELCRA).

Malaysia. Finally, he announced the visit of a high-ranking politician for the following day. After the speech, Malay Barisan supporters distributed bags of food to the village inhabitants.

The following morning, a caravan of cars, small trucks and motorbikes adorned with dozens of Barisan blue flags arrived in Kampung Ki Ying honking their horns wildly. The high-ranking politician's entourage, composed of Malay men, women and children, all wearing smart clothes and Barisan t-shirts, outnumbered the entire population of the village. Quickly, young Barisan supporters planted flags all over the village and set up chairs and more flags in the dilapidated village hall to create a "suitable" environment for the politician's speech. In front of the audience sat the politician with other dignitaries, the Imam from a nearby Malay village, the Batek headman and a Batek elder. After general introductory remarks made by a member of the political coalition, the Batek headman, a particularly charismatic figure in the area, took the floor and briefly expressed, in a polite but firm way, his disappointment about the Batek's situation and the lack of development in the village. Following the headman's complaints the politician's anger became evident as his facial expressions changed from astonishment to obvious irritation.

Despite the already tense situation, the politician tried to start his speech smiling, underlining how, in his opinion, the lives of the Batek had greatly improved since the government had provided them with houses and electricity. Malay men rowdily cheered through the windows in his support. After the politician requested Batek votes so he could better help his Batek "friends," the headman asked for the provision of 5,000 rubber trees which had been promised to the village five years earlier during the previous election campaign. The politician, trying to save face and show his magnanimity, put his hands on the headman's shoulders, trying to convince him that he was not directly responsible for what he described as the government's "delay" in providing the trees. The headman then reiterated his position clearly stating that nobody in the village would vote for Barisan unless the demands about rubber trees were met. The headman's stubbornness, together with his unexpectedly unforgiving attitude, enraged the politician who stood up and shouted to his followers it was time to leave immediately. Everybody quickly left the hall and the Batek, visibly worried, retreated into the village. After being stopped and questioned by two men who told us they were policemen, we joined the headman and his companions.

Untouched lunch boxes distributed by Barisan supporters were scattered around the village but the Batek refused to eat the free food stating they were afraid it was poisoned. The atmosphere was extremely tense and the headman asked us to leave the village and return to Kuala Lumpur since he feared for our safety. We packed and quickly left. On the drive back, the headman called to tell us three policemen had visited the village looking for him. He had been out in the forest during this visit, where he stayed for well over a week. Later in the evening another Batek friend called us and claimed a group of Malay men had returned to the village looking for us saying

they would *sakel* (beat or kill) us if we ever returned[6]. The next day most of the Batek fled the village, split into three groups and set up camps in the forest.

On May 5, 2013, the Barisan Nasional coalition won the election and formed a new government with a majority of seats and 47.38 percent of the popular vote. The Batek stayed hiding in their forest camps and frequently phoned us to check on our safety until several days after the election.

On May 8, a week after the incident, we returned to the village. Although tensions had receded and the Batek had returned to their homes, they were still worried about their local relations with Malay neighbors, which had worsened since the Barisan visit. After visiting the Imam and a few influential men in a nearby Malay village to calm the situation, we were taken to the forest camps where the Batek had hidden out during the crisis. Each Batek camp was situated close to limestone caves. When we asked the Batek why they had chosen these sites they replied they had been worried Malays would kill us in Kuala Lumpur and that the British army would have responded by bombing the entire area as retaliation for the Malays killing Tacey who is a British citizen. The Batek planned to survive by hiding in the caves.

"We are not the same": structural violence, fear and resistance

The poverty, discrimination, lack of human and legal rights and poor health conditions of Kampung Ki Ying – all aspects of structural violence – are widespread in Orang Asli communities (Baer, 1999; Nicholas, 2000). The political symbols and acts in the above description: flags, clear disparities of wealth between the Batek and Malays, charity in the form of food for the poor and demagogic speeches about rights and equality are all aspects of what Galtung terms cultural violence – the manifestation of structural violence (1969, p. 291, 1990). For the Batek these symbols sharply defined the structural inequalities which exist between the Orang Asli and the wider Malaysian population. During the first visit, the local politician repeatedly told the headman that the Batek and Malays were "the same," to which the Batek headman replied, "We are not the same. Look at your clothes and your shoes and look at the clothes and shoes my people and I are wearing, look at our homes." Differences between the Malays and the Batek were dramatically visible.

In Malaysian social etiquette it is considered extremely impolite to make someone lose face, and those considered lower in the Malaysian social hierarchy are expected to show their gratitude for any help from "benevolent superiors." The Batek are well aware of these social norms and, like other Orang Asli, often follow these rules of polite

[6] As we were not present at this time we cannot verify the Batek's claims. We feel that they could beexaggerated. However, it is important to note the Batek had previously told Tacey of local Malay's desires to sakel (kill or beat) him. The visits of the Malay men and police greatly heightened Batek anxieties and fears and led to their fleeing to the forest.

behavior. This can be seen as either an internalization of Malay social norms, or as a form of "sly civility" or "dissimulation" used to avoid confrontation (Tacey, 2013, pp. 257-60; Gomes, 2008). Within either interpretation, Malay social norms were violated as the Batek stood up to the politicians and their entourage. When the police came looking for the Batek headman, and later Malay men arrived making violent threats, the Batek were made very aware of the consequences of their transgression and quickly adopted their anti-violent strategy of fleeing when they felt in clear physical danger.

Fears, threats and rumors of direct violence for the Batek are compounded by memories of past atrocities, which are frequently recounted by village elders, and by contemporary – and very real – threats and fears of being arrested, jailed, raped or assaulted. The threat of physical violence and the Batek's consequent fear for their safety and lives was evident in their firm refusal to eat the food the Malays provided. In fact, rumors about individuals being poisoned by outsiders in local Malay food-stalls abound in Batek Tanum communities. These contemporary fears are amplified by frequent retellings of stories about Malay massacres of Batek Tanum and neighboring Orang Asli communities that the Tanum people claim took place in the early twentieth century.

The Batek Tanum are well aware of their marginalization and they frequently write letters to Malaysian NGOs and foreign governments asking for aid. However, their political goals are entangled with religious beliefs and experiences including dream revelations and premonitions that foreign powers (British, American or Chinese) will come to their aid and assume the governance of Malaysia (Tacey, forthcoming). They see the British as potential powerful allies for several reasons. The British are remembered for halting Malay massacres of Orang Asli in the local area, and the Batek also have nostalgic memories of British visits to their communities in the late colonial period.

Within this context the anti-violent strategy of hiding out near caves can be seen as a logical decision for the Batek, who imagined the British army would be spurred into bombing the entire area to punish the Malays if one of their citizens was killed. The choice of hiding in caves is further complicated by the fact that the Batek and Batek Tanum often consider caves as extremely dangerous places due to the presence of other-than-human beings who dwell within them (Riboli, 2013; Tacey, 2013). Women almost never enter caves and most men deliberately avoid them. However, when the Batek feel direct violence to be a clear possibility, for example during the Emergency and during the above-described incident, these are the very places they seek refuge in. In such extreme circumstances caves are safe refuges from bombing in a practical sense, but they are also unique cultural hideouts. It seems that Batek fears about powerful beings dwelling within caves momentarily shift into a conception of the beings as protectors against other violent humans.

This example also shows the Batek Tanum do see violence against external aggressors as a possible option, albeit if carried out by powerful "allies" such as the British. Rather than arguing they cannot carry out violent acts due to specific socio-religious

prohibitions, they state the obvious: they are outnumbered and under-armed. If they choose to counter violence with violence, they say they could only kill a few of their aggressors and the repercussions of their acts might lead to their annihilation. Despite these fantasies of violence, their fundamental ethical principles, which represent important components of their cultural identity, are indeed "anti-violent" in nature. Over a long period the Batek realized maintaining anti-violence as a socio-cultural norm was the best strategy to face aggression from outsiders. Anti-violent strategies are not only related to the anarchic social forms of Batek society. They are complicated processes developed through a strategic rebuilding of the past which is entangled with contemporary religious beliefs and practices, and also with Batek political strategies of forging links and alliances with a variety of international political actors and groups. In this way they are powerful and coherent modes of resilience for a marginalized group when faced with the forms of violence we have described.

Conclusions

In this paper we have sought to dismantle the dichotomy between violence and non-violence that has been espoused by certain anthropologists, socio-biologists and other academics over the last few decades. We hope to have demonstrated that social life is much more complicated than these simple dichotomies allow for. Although the Batek face far less direct violence than in the past, structural violence pervades their everyday lives and memories of direct physical violence, or threats of it, are common. The incident we described at Kampung Ki Ying is by no means isolated. Orang Asli villages are frequently visited by representatives of various national agencies, often in large groups who, behind the flag of "development," conceal very different aims. Through structural violence these actors try to impose political, social, economic and religious changes which rarely benefit the Orang Asli. Occasionally changes are carried out with threats of direct violence.

The low levels of violence found in immediate-return foraging societies like the Batek should not be confused with an incapacity for violent behavior. Anti-violence is a strategic decision small groups collectively make when faced with violence committed against them by outsiders under specific social conditions.

Violence lies within the realm of the dominant culture and of various national and international actors. Farmer has stated, structural violence and consequential suffering "is 'structured' by historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire [y] to constrain agency" (Farmer, 2005, p. 40). Since colonial times, and probably much earlier, the Batek have been victims of different expressions of direct and structural violence. Structural violence is always an important component of hierarchically structured societies but glaringly absent within Batek social organization and that of other anarchic small-scale societies. However, far from constraining their

agency, externally imposed structural violence has led to transformations of Batek modes of resilience.

Most anthropologists now understand "identity and violence [y] as being historically and culturally constructed" (Whitehead, 2007, p. 4). The affirmation of Batek cultural identity is a process which is connected to both Batek experiences of violence inflicted by outsiders as well as the maintenance of internal non-violence through norms. Processes related to the construction of identity always involve confrontation and alterity, with other individuals on a personal level, and groups on a collective level (Erikson, 1950; Ewing, 1990; Abu-Lughod, 1991). Both aspects of identity are part of the same socio-cultural matrix which has been forged through the Batek's relationships and contacts with outsiders.

Mutual-aid and support are fundamental for small groups who face threats and problems stemming from environmental and human causes. Even if inequality is increasing in Orang Asli groups in general (Dallos, 2011; Riboli, forthcoming), coercion, outsiders' unbridled exploitation of resources in Orang Asli territories, and other threats stemming from external structural violence have reinforced the need for cooperation and mutual-aid. The incorporation of extreme anti-violent attitudes is not a weakness. Instead of considering violence and non-violence as two opposite, fixed socio-cultural patterns, it should not be forgotten that they are socio-political relations. What we call anti-violence is differently negotiated over time according to historical, social, political, economic and religious circumstances and depends on the different forms of violence, conflict and coercions involved. The Orang Asli increasingly express frustration about their marginalization and are demonstrating an increased willingness to stand up for themselves. Malaysian anthropologist Kamal Solhaimi has remarked an increase of "officially nominated headmen and accepted representatives of local communities (*wakil ketua*) speaking out against the government – not necessarily a political party" (Solhaimi, personal communication). Their reactions to structural violence and injustices indicate an increasing political awareness which is perhaps related to campaigns carried out by the Indigenous Peoples' Network of Malaysia, the Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association, the Center for Orang Asli Concerns and the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia. This growing political awareness, the decline of outsiders' uses of direct physical violence and increases of structural violence are creating an unprecedented situation which should be carefully monitored in the near future.

Acknowledgement

Ivan Tacey's research for this paper was supported by a generous dissertation fieldwork grant from the Wenner-Gren foundation in New York. Tacey and Riboli's research was made possible by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, the governments of Pahang, Kelantan and Perak and JAKOA and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks PERHILITAN granting us permission to carry out re-

search. This permission would not have been possible without the help of Juli Edo from the University of Malaya who has acted as the local counterpart throughout the research periods. The authors also thank Kamal Solhaimi from the University of Malaya for all the time and advice he has given the authors. Particular thanks must go to Kirk Endicott who has been especially helpful and generous sharing his expertise and knowledge about all things Batek, offering the authors guidance throughout the research, reading drafts of the papers and of course editing this special issue. Special thanks must go to Robert Dentan from the University at Buffalo, New York, Geoffrey Benjamin from Nanyang Technological University Singapore, Alberto Gomes from La Trobe University, Melbourne, Hood Salleh from the National University of Malaysia and Colin Nicholas from the Centre for Orang Asli Concerns in Kuala Lumpur. Finally the authors would like to thank Richard Tacey and Adam Eppendahl who read through many previous drafts of this paper and offered valuable criticisms, suggestions and feedback.

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Corresponding author

Ivan Tacey can be contacted at: itacey@gmail.com

Ivan Tacey & Diana Riboli
Violence, fear and anti-violence: the Batek of Peninsular Malaysia
2014

Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, Vol. 6 Iss 4 pp. 203 - 215
Permanent link to this document: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-03-2014-0114
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ISBN ISSN 1759-6599