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FROM FOREST TO VILLAGE: MYTHS AND TIGER ATTACKS IN KERINCI DURING THE DUTCH EAST INDIES (1903-1942)

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ABSTRACT

The people of Kerinci have their own interpretation of the tiger. Tigers are considered sacred animals, with various meanings. However, on the other hand, tigers that attacked the people of Kerinci during the Dutch East Indies were still killed. This study aims to look at the relationship between the myths that developed and the attacks carried out by Sumatran tigers against people in Kerinci during the Dutch East Indies Government. With the approach of human and animal relations in the perspective of local traditions, this research analyzes the influence of local mythological narratives, the causes of tiger attacks on the community, and the steps taken to overcome these attacks. This research uses the historical method as a scalpel, with the flow of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation and historiography. Data were collected from various historical sources, such as colonial archives, ethnographic records, as well as local oral traditions about tigers. The research findings show that tiger myths associated with spiritual symbols play an important role in shaping people's perceptions of the species. However, attacks by tigers caused by disturbed areas of their habitat led to a reaction by placing tigers as a threat to security and interfering with the exploitation of natural resources.

Keywords: myth, attack, tiger, Kerinci, Dutch East Indies

INTRODUCTION

The tiger is mainly present as a cultural symbol in Kerinci. The interaction between tigers and humans has resulted in the integration of these wild animals into the cultural fabric of Sumatra's communities. The existence of tigers for the people of Kerinci is interpreted in various perspectives, mostly in the form of myths, and these interpretations have also changed over time. These interpretations can be found in many sources, both Kerinci folklore about tigers and documents. From the many Kerinci tiger myths that have their own versions in each hamlet, one conclusion can be drawn that for the people of Kerinci, the tiger is a revered animal.[1]

According to Uryu et al. it is said that uncontrolled deforestation causes many flora and fauna habitats to disappear. Between 1985-2008, deforestation in Sumatra's forests shrank by an average of about 500,000 hectares per year.S Among the animals whose populations are in critical condition are tigers. Uncontrolled deforestation in Sumatra from time to time also affects the Sumatran Tiger (Panthera Tigris Sumatrae). The habitat of this Sumatran tiger has been disrupted due to massive poaching. In other areas, namely in Java and Bali, tiger populations are already extinct. The Bali Tiger was declared extinct in the 1940s and the Java Tiger was declared extinct in the 1980s. Uncontrolled tiger hunting dates back to the Dutch East Indies, followed by deforestation that led to habitat degradation and fragmentation. This deforestation is also associated with land clearing for plantations. In Kerinci, tea plantations in Kayu Aro triggered massive deforestation.[2] Nonetheless, the deforestation in Kayu Aro did not lead the colonial elite to issue a policy to hunt tigers.

Furthermore, hostility towards Sumatran tigers is also caused by conflicts with humans in their habitat.[3] This conflict arises due to the disruption of the tiger's territory

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[1] Steven Jonathan Adu, Messalina L Salampessy, and Sofian Iskandar, "Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Konservasi Harimau Sumatera (Panthera Tigris Sumatrae) Di Taman Nasional Kerinci Seblat," *Jurnal Nusa Sylva*, 19.1 (2019), pp. 22–29, doi:https://doi.org/10.31938/jns.v19i1.233; Febby Febriyandi YS and Anastasia Wiwik Swastiwi, "Tiger Dance: Transformation and Cultural Property Rights Discourse in Kerinci, Indonesia," *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 24.1 (2024), pp. 122–33, doi:10.15294/harmonia.v24i1.42508; Wivian Hui Yuan Neo, Muhammad I. Lubis, and Janice Ser Huay Lee, "Settlements and Plantations Are Sites of Human–Tiger Interactions in Riau, Indonesia," *Oryx*, 57.4 (2023), pp. 476–80, doi:10.1017/S0030605322000667.

[2] Michael Stüwe Yumiko Uryu, Elisabet Purastuti, Yves Laumonier, Sunarto, Setiabudi, Arif Budiman, Kokok Yulianto, Anggoro Sudibyo, Oki Hadian, Dian Achmad Kosasih, *Sumatra's Forests, Their Wildlife and the Climate Windows in Time: 1985, 1990, 2000 and 2009*, 2010; Matthew Linkie and others, "Safeguarding Sumatran Tigers: Evaluating Effectiveness of Law Enforcement Patrols and Local Informant Networks," *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 52.4 (2015), pp. 851–60 (pp. 851–60), doi:10.1111/1365-2664.12461; I.A Haidir and others, "Panduan Pemantauan Populasi Harimau Sumatera, Direktorat Konservasi S," 2017, p. 154 (p. 154); Agustin Putri Lestari & Nirwan Il Yasin, "Kehidupan Buruh Perkebunan Teh Kayu Aro Tahun 1925 – 1943," *Jurnal Siginjai*, 1.1 (2021), pp. 27–38 (pp. 29–30), doi:https://doi.org/10.22437/js.v1i1.11881.

[3] Riyan Sumitran, Yoza Defri, and Yossi Oktorini, "Keberadaan Harimau Sumatera (Panthera Tigris Sumatrae) Dan Satwa Mangsanya Di Berbagai Tipe Habitat Pada Taman

by humans themselves. Tigers as animals in the forest have their own territories, which are marked through their urine. The marking is not only a territory marker, but is also used as a medium of communication, a marker of the time of passage of tigers in certain areas, and also as a marker of erogenous feelings towards female tigers. Conflicts with tigers have caused the tiger population to decline over time. The cause of the tiger population decline is not much different from what happened in Kerinci. The decline of the Sumatran tiger population in Kerinci is also caused by the loss of their hunting territories, as well as conflicts that occur between the people of Kerinci and the tigers themselves. For the company, the tiger is considered a nuisance that must be dealt with. [4]

Nonetheless, if traced through the myths of the Kerinci community, the Sumatran tiger in Kerinci should be able to maintain its population. The mystical belief in tigers by the Malays - including the Kerinci people - is considered unique by Western scholars. However, the mystical relationship between the Kerinci people and tigers is not only unique, but ingrained in the Kerinci community itself. For the people of Kerinci, the tiger is a sign - good or bad - of something. The omens given by the tiger will be interpreted by the Kerinci community, so that the community takes certain attitudes to deal with certain situations signaled by the tiger.[5]

If seen from the narrative above, the myth about tigers in Kerinci should be able to maintain relationships with tigers. The Kerinci community's belief that tigers are a sign of something should not lead to attacks on tigers.[6] Furthermore, the people of Kerinci should not be in conflict with tigers, let alone deliberately hunting tigers. Therefore, this study seeks to historically examine tiger attacks on communities in Kerinci, despite Kerinci's myths about tiger emergence as a signifier. Not only that, there are many stories in Kerinci that tell the tiger is an animal full of wisdom. This paper focuses on how myths developed about tigers and tiger attacks, focusing on the period when Kerinci was under the rule of the Dutch East Indies Government (1903-1942). There are several previous studies that discuss the tiger myth in Kerinci society. The first of these can be found in Herbransyah Usman's article, which examines the myth of the tiger in the traditional customs of the Kerinci community in Jambi, Indonesia. Subsequently, Marvelia proceeded to analyze the inheritance of the Ngagah Harimau dance in Kerinci Regency. In his writing, it is explained that the *tari*

Nasional Tesso Nilo," *Jurnal Online Mahasiswa Fakultas Pertanian Universitas Riau*, 3.11 (2014), pp. 1–15.

[4] Ari Ganesa and Aunurohim, "Perilaku Harian Harimau Sumatera (Panthera Tigris Sumatrae) Dalam Konservasi Ex-Situ Kebun Binatang Surabaya," *Jurnal Sains Dan Seni Its*, 1.1 (2012), pp. 48–53, doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.12962/j23373520.v1i1.1327; "Buitenland. NED. INDIë. Brutale Indringer Neergelegd," *De Noord-Ooster* (August 1928).

[5] H Usman and others, "Mitos Harimau Dalam Tradisi Lisan Masyarakat Kerinci Di Jambi: The Tiger Myth in the Oral Tradition of the Kerinci People in Jambi …," *Jurnal Pengajian …*, 2014, pp. 24–44.

[6] Dedi Haryanto, Yasrul Sami B, and Yofita Sandra, 'Gerak Tari Tradisional Mengagah Harimau Di Desa Pulau Tengah Kabupaten Kerinci Dalam Karya Lukis', *Serupa The Journal of Art …*, 1.2 (2013), p. 14

ngaggah harimau is one of the rituals to honor a dead tiger. A substantial corpus of research such as Bhatia et.al (2021), Jugli (2020) and Landim et.al (2024) has been dedicated to examining the relationship between animals and the cultures of East Asian and Himalayan societies. Animals such as wolves, snow leopards, and snow lions are assigned divergent symbolic meanings; some are regarded positively as protectors or symbols of strength, while others are viewed negatively due to their perceived threat to livestock or human life, and are consequently often hunted or driven away. Public perceptions of wild animals are subject to change over time. These changes can be attributed to direct experience, social change, and the introduction of new knowledge. The last is Gustaman's article entitled *Antara Mitos dan Realitas: Historitas Maung di Tatar Sunda.* This study fills a critical gap in existing literature by examining tigers in Kerinci from a historical rather than purely anthropological perspective. While prior research focuses on mystical interpretations by local communities, this work analyzes historical records and Dutch colonial-era sources to trace empirical patterns of human-tiger interactions, particularly attacks during 1903–1942. It uniquely bridges indigenous perspectives with documented history, challenging myth-dominated narratives.[7] The research contributes significantly to environmental history, conservation policy, and cultural preservation. By reconstructing colonial-era human-tiger conflicts, it offers historical context for modern conservation challenges in Kerinci, emphasizing how land-use changes shaped these dynamics. Academically, it pioneers an interdisciplinary approach combining myth analysis and environmental history, while its findings advocate for culturally informed conservation strategies that value indigenous knowledge alongside ecological data. The study not only enriches regional historiography but also provides actionable insights for mitigating contemporary human-wildlife conflicts through historical awareness. This study analyzes the existence of tiger myths among the Kerinci community, the influence of local mythological narratives, the causes of tiger attacks on the community, and the measures taken to address these attacks.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using historical methods to examine the history of Kerinci during the Dutch East Indies period.[8] Data

[7] Saloni Bhatia and others, "Understanding People's Relationship With Wildlife in Trans-Himalayan Folklore," *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 9 (2021), doi:10.3389/fenvs.2021.595169; André Santos Landim and others, "How Do Cultural Factors Influence the Attitudes of Human Populations Protecting Fauna? A Systematic Review," *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 79 (2024), p. 126605, doi:10.1016/j.jnc.2024.126605; Annisa Marvelia and Afifah Asriati, "Pewarisan Tari Ngagah Harimau Desa Pulau Tengah Kecamatan Keliling Danau Kabupaten Kerinci," *Dharma Acariya Nusantara: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa Dan Budaya*, 2.1 (2024), pp. 159–69, doi:10.47861/jdan.v2i1.789; Budi Gustaman and Hilman Fauzia Khoeruman, "Antara Mitos Dan Realitas: Historisitas Maung Di Tatar Sunda," *Metahumaniora*, 9.1 (2019), p. 18, doi:10.24198/mh.v9i1.22873.

[8] Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2007); Sujdarwo, *Metodologi Penelitian Sosial* (Mandar Maju, 2011); Nasution, *Metode Penelitian Naturalistik Kualitatif* (Tarsito, 1996); Sartono Kartodirjo, *Pendekatan Ilmu Sosial Dalam*

was collected through heuristic techniques, sourcing from online platforms such as academic journals, books, and Dutch archives like delpher.nl and jstor.org, as well as Google Scholar and Kemendikbud repositories. The historical method involves several stages: source collection, internal and external criticism to verify reliability, careful interpretation to minimize bias, and historiography−writing the findings according to the target journal's template.

The study explores two key concepts myths surrounding the Sumatran tiger in Kerinci, as reflected in local folklore and colonial-era publications, and tiger attacks, analyzed through the lens of deforestation and habitat disruption in Kayu Aro. These elements serve as analytical tools to understand human-tiger interactions during the Dutch colonial period. The research aims to compile historical perspectives on tigers in Kerinci while critically examining myths and ecological conflicts of the time.[9]

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tiger Myths in Kerinci Society

Kerinci, a region known for its natural beauty, also has a rich culture filled with folklore and myths. One of the most powerful myths in Kerinci's culture is that of the tiger. The local people not only see the tiger as a wild animal, but as a creature with whom they have a spiritual connection. In some Kerinci stories, tigers are seen as incarnations of deceased ancestors. They are not only seen as guardian animals of the forest, but also protectors of the village and the entire community. The presence of a tiger is often seen as a sign, either of threat or good fortune, and local people believe that tigers should not be killed except in the most desperate emergencies.[10]

Kerinci people call the stealth tiger Cindaku. These tigers or cindaku are believed to have the ability to transform into humans. In human form, they can walk among the population without being recognized.[11] It can also be noted that there are many folktales that mention encounters with the tiger man, where people who meet

Metodologi Sejarah I (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1991); Kuntowijoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Mizan Digital Publishing, 2005).

[9] Sri Iswidayati, 'Fungsi Mitos Dalam Kehidupan Sosial Budaya Masyarakat Pendukungnya', Harmonia Journal of Arts Research and Education, 8.2 (2021), 180–84 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v8i2.790>, pp. 180-181

[10] A.Ph. van Aken, *Mededeelingen van Het Bureau Voor de Bestuurszaken Der Buitenbezittingen Bewerkt Door Het Eur Encyclopaedisch Bureau* (NV. Papyrus, 1915); Ahmad Nanda, Kevin Samudra, and Padli Rahman, "Filosofi Tari Ngagah Imau Pada Festival Kerinci," in *Prosiding Fakultas Ushuluddin Adab Dan Dakwah*, 2024, II, 254–65 (p. 258); Idris Djakfar Depati Agung, *Seri Sejarah Kerinci I: Menguak Tabir Sejarah Di Alam Kerinci* (Percetakan Anda, 2001).

[11] Ovi Zurah Mei and I Gusti Putu Suryadarma, "The Utilization of Traditional Conservation of Sumatran Tiger as a Potential Development of Biology Teaching Materials," *Journal of Science and Science Education*, 4.2 (2023), pp. 126–37 (p. 133), doi:10.29303/jossed.v4i2.5557; C.W. Watson & Roy Ellen, *Understanding Witchcraft and Sorcery in Southeast Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 161.

him feel a strong mystical aura. Even these encounters with tigers are also believed to imply that the person has "certain knowledge", and should be dealt with in a "certain" way. As a result of this belief, many people in Kerinci believe that tigers are not just ordinary animals, but creatures that exist between the real and supernatural worlds. This belief is closely related to the spiritual beliefs of the Kerinci people about the relationship between humans and nature. Tigers, in this context, are seen as natural balancers who have the power to maintain harmony between the human world and the spirit world. The presence of tigers is often associated with traditional rituals that aim to maintain the balance of nature. Tigers are considered a symbol of strength, courage, and protection of the forest ecosystem that is highly valued by local communities.[12]

There are many tiger-related rituals in Malay society, including Kerinci. In daily practice, Kerinci people often hold rituals to honor tigers. Many ceremonies or rituals are performed in the form of dances, as a form of expressing themselves towards nature, including tigers. Tigers entering the village are also considered omens, especially as a sign of impending disaster. People need to read the meaning of the tiger's arrival, when someone in the village sees tiger tracks around the settlement. The tracks are considered a sign that the spirits of the ancestors are watching over them. The tiger in Kerinci myths is often portrayed as a just creature, who will protect good people, but can also punish those who violate customs or commit crimes against nature. [13]

Despite this, the relationship between humans and tigers is not always harmonious. As human populations grow and settlements expand, tigers are often forced into populated areas. These conflicts sometimes lead to incidents where tigers attack livestock or even humans, especially at night. However, in most cases, Kerinci people prefer to chase tigers away rather than kill them, due to the belief that killing a tiger will bring bad luck or a curse. [14] Myths about tigers in Kerinci also play an important role in nature conservation in the area, through sacred concepts that manifest into prohibitions.[15] Local communities, who revere tigers as sacred creatures, naturally

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[12] Budhi Vrihaspathi Jauhari & Eka Putra, *Senarai Sejarah Kebudayaan Suku Kerinci* (Bina Potensia Aditya Mahatva Yodha, 2012), p. 187; Annisa Marvelia and Afifah Asriati, "Pewarisan Tari Ngagah Harimau Desa Pulau Tengah Kecamatan Keliling Danau Kabupaten Kerinci," p. 164; Walter William Skeat, *Malay Magic: Being Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of the Malay Peninsula* (Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 2005), p. 178, doi:https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjk2ttc.

[13] Peter Boomgaard, "Death to the Tiger! The Development of Tiger and Leopard Rituals in Java, 1605-1906," *School of Oriental and African Studies*, 2.2 (1994), pp. 141–75; "BEREN EN TIJGERS OP SUMATRA," *Dagblad van Noord-Brabant* (July 1935), p. 2; Patricia Leigh Beaman, *World Dance Cultures From Ritual to Spectacle* (Routledge, 2024); Padhil Hudaya and others, "Menjalani Kehidupan Di Tengah Malapetaka : Gempa Kerinci 1909," *Citra Lekha*, 8.1 (2023).

[14] Agung, *Seri Sejarah Kerinci I: Menguak Tabir Sejarah Di Alam Kerinci*; Adu, Salampessy, and Iskandar, "Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Konservasi Harimau Sumatera (Panthera Tigris Sumatrae) Di Taman Nasional Kerinci Seblat.", p. 37

[15] Haidar Trisna Tanaya, "Belajar Dari Sejarah: Refleksi Atas Warisan Kolonial Dan Praktik Pelestarian Sumber Daya Alam Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Sejarah Citra Lekha*, 8.2 (2024), pp. 120–29, doi:10.14710/jscl.v8i2.40992., p. 123

have a heightened awareness of protecting forests and tiger habitats. In this context, the myth functions as a social mechanism to preserve the environment. Tigers are considered a sign of a healthy ecosystem, and their disappearance from an area is often seen as a sign of severe environmental degradation.[16]

Kerinci's tiger myths are not just entertaining folklore. They are a reflection of the spiritual and ecological views of local communities in Kerinci who see tigers as an integral part of nature and their lives. Respect for tigers, both physical and supernatural, is the foundation of the harmonious relationship between humans and nature in Kerinci. Through this myth, local communities are able to maintain local wisdom values that are important for the preservation of their culture and environment.

This is in contrast to the tiger myths that developed during the Dutch East Indies. A newspaper published news about the Legend of Kerinci. The news explained about the community's belief in tigers, which in the storytelling when one night, a young man who was not a resident of a village. During the night, he heard that a chicken coop in one house had been attacked and the chickens were missing. The next morning, the young stranger visited the house where the chicken coop was attacked, and the young man suddenly felt sick. He then vomited something, which contained chicken feathers. The story spread in the community, and people believed that the young man was a tiger demon.[17]

Myths about tigers that developed during the Dutch East Indies also caused the people of Kerinci at that time to be afraid to attack tigers. The people of Kerinci were afraid to hunt or kill tigers, because the belief in tiger demons was still strong. Kerinci people believe that some people have the power to transform themselves into tigers at certain times. When someone tries to kill the animal, they may become the target of the tiger's demon or even the tiger's demon will become a threat to neighbors, or families who disturb the tiger.[18]

Tiger Attacks on Kerinci Community: The Ethical Stakes of Human-Wildlife Conflict

One of the early nature reserves of the Dutch East Indies government was in Kerinci, which served to conserve flora and fauna, including tigers. The reserve around Mount Kerinci covers 10,000 hectares of land, making it one of the most attractive of the national parks. For the Dutch East Indies government, the reserve is expected to attract travelers from all over the country in the future, and become an attraction for science and tourism.[19] This is also related to government policy through the Natuurmonumenten Ordonantie, contained in Staatsblad number 278 of 1916, which

[16] Tonny Soehartono, *Strategi Dan Rencana Aksi Konservasi Harimau Sumatera (*, *Departemen Kehutanan*, 2007., p. 89

[17] "KORINTJI-LEGENDEN. Spooktijgers, Vampyrs En de „vrouw Met Den Boozen Geest," *De Locomotief* (July), p. 1.

[18] "BEREN EN TIJGERS OP SUMATRA."

[19] "NATUURMONUMENTEN OP SUMATRA," *Deli Courant* (January 1930), p. 13.

emphasizes that flora, fauna and other natural elements must be protected.[20] This shows that officially, the Dutch East Indies Government provides protection to flora and fauna, including tigers in Kerinci. Especially when Kerinci is included in the nature reserve area, where flora and fauna are protected. However, the nature reserve in Kerinci was limited to 10,000 hectares, while tigers roamed outside the area, even near the settlements of the Kerinci people, whose houses were still very sparse at that time. Nonetheless, in some cases in Kerinci, tigers had to be killed because they were considered a nuisance and a danger to the community. Tigers have attacked villages in Kerinci, specifically in Sungai Penuh. According to reports, a tiger chased a small child who was playing until it entered the residential area. The tiger was killed after being shot by Sergeant Jansen.[21] In other news, it was also explained that a tiger killed two people in Kerinci who were looking for firewood. In this case, security officers managed to kill the animal.[22]

In Kayu Aro, tigers were considered a pest for the company NV. HVA (Namblodee Venotschaaf Handle Vereniging Amsterdam) which was engaged in plantations.[23] In 1929, a tiger attacked a coolie who was working on a tea plantation in Kayu Aro. At the time, the coolie was encroaching on the forest to expand the tea plantation. The encroachment of the dense forest disturbed the tiger's territorial area. The attack by the tiger was perceived as hampering the company's work. Despite this, the attacking tiger was caught.[24] No further details on how the tiger fared after the capture were provided.

In another case, the security guards' fear of tigers in Kerinci is described. The appearance of tigers around security posts in Kerinci is rare. Nevertheless, Dutch East Indies troops who were still on guard after the seizure of Kerinci still had a fear of tiger attacks. This can be seen when after sunset, Dutch East Indies security forces in Kerinci did not dare to leave the post. However, Dutch East Indies security guards who manned the post said that tigers were rarely seen compared to when they first entered

[20] Panjdi Yudhistira Kusumantri, *Peranan Sultan Dan Raja Dalam Sejarah Konservasi Alam Indonesia* (Direktorat Jendral Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam dan Ekosistem, 2022)., p. 55

[21] "Een Tijger in de Kamer," *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (July 1928), p. 2; "De Brutale Tijger," *De Locomotief* (July 1928), p. 1; "Een Tijger in de Kamer," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* (August 1928), p. 3; "Onve Ilig Korintji. Gespuis En Tijgers," *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden* (July 1928), p. 1; "BRUTALE INDRINGER NEERGELEGD," *De Telegraaf* (August 1928), p. 2; "Buitenland. NED. INDIë. Brutale Indringer Neergelegd."

[22] "Twee Tijgers Neergelegd," *Het Nieuws van Den Dag Voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (May 1934), p. 3.

[23] "Lijgerplaag. In Het Poerwakartasche," *Algemeen Handelsblad Voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (December 1929), p. 13.

[24] "Gemengd Indisch Nieuws," *Het Nieuws van Den Dag Voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (December 1929), p. 2.

Kerinci.[25] The security post is located between Indrapura and Kerinci, and the area around the post is known to be a pathway for tigers.[26]

The case of the tiger attack on the community in Kerinci during the Dutch East Indies gave rise to another perspective on tigers. From the perspective of the Dutch East Indies Government, tigers were considered a pest that had to be eradicated because they often attacked people and livestock. In many parts of Sumatra, reports of tiger attacks on humans were common. The Dutch East Indies government saw tigers as a serious threat to the safety of colonial society as well as the local population.[27] However, there are no written records of large-scale tiger hunts in Kerinci during the Dutch East Indies, even by the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch East Indies government would only kill tigers if they attacked them. In contrast to other regions, tiger hunting was considered part of a lifestyle to emphasize the status of the colonial elite as rulers of the colony.[28]

CONCLUSION

This study reveals the dual nature of tigers in Kerinci's worldview: as sacred beings embedded in myth and as physical threats. The tension between these conceptions—tigers as spiritual entities versus "pests" in Dutch colonial discourse—exposes a fundamental clash in understanding the tiger's *existence*, both as a cultural symbol and an ecological actor. The research navigates two distinct knowledge systems: indigenous Kerinci narratives (rooted in oral traditions and mystical interpretations) and colonial empiricism (documented in newspapers and administrative reports). By cross-examining these sources, the study demonstrates how historical tiger attacks were *known* and *represented* differently—through mythic allegory by locals and through exploitative pragmatism by the Dutch. The methodological synthesis of folklore analysis and archival criticism bridges these epistemologies, offering a more nuanced truth about human-tiger encounters.

The findings underscore the ethical stakes of human-wildlife conflict. While Kerinci's myths encouraged coexistence, colonial policies prioritized economic exploitation, framing tigers as disposable obstacles. This historical dichotomy holds contemporary relevance; it challenges modern conservationists to integrate cultural values with policy measures addressing attack prevention. The study thus advocates for an approach that honors indigenous ontologies while pragmatically mitigating

[25] "Uit de Indische Bladen," *Het Nieuws van Den Dag Voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (April 1904), p. 6.

[26] "Nederlandsch-Indië," *Sumatra-Bode* (April 1904), p. 2.

[27] Peter Boomgard, *Frontiers of Fear: Tigers and People in the Malay World, 1600–1950* (Yale University Press, 2001)., p. 88

[28] Carel HLM van Schaik, *Sumatran Tiger: A Study of Conservation and Conflict* (Oxford University Press, 2010)., p. 24

conflicts−a balance neglected during Dutch rule but urgent for today's sustainable conservation.

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Journal

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