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Part Two
In Part Two, I present three kinds of family stories gathered from different kin groups. Two of these kin groups are related ancestrally while the other does not share any ancestral links. All three kin groups nevertheless believe that their ancestors originally lived in Simatalu. Some of the kin groups are directly involved in current land conflicts. Other kin groups are not involved in the conflicts; however, their family stories tell about migratory movements and their stories illustrate features of Mentawaiian family stories. Each family story conveys a particular theme, such as dishonesty, humiliation or self-esteem. The three stories are the story of *sipeu* (story of mangoes), the story of *sakkoko* (story of a pig) and the story of *siberi* (story of wild boars). Each story is discussed in one of the three upcoming chapters. All the stories are relevant to the location of the place of origin and the identity of the kin group. The three stories each narrate an initial conflict that caused the early migration of a few Mentawaiian families. A significant consequence of the departure of these families was the separation of members of the initial group thereby a few families existed in separate places and created new kin-groups. In addition, each of those stories illustrates particular aspects of Mentawai culture. The story of *sipeu* for instance describes about planting, growing and harvesting crops or plants. Meanwhile, the story of *sakkoko* speaks of another aspect such as animal husbandry and the story of *siberi* depicts a hunting activity in the forest. Besides, the stories of *sipeu* emphasize an idea of equality in sharing meals, which is very important for the Mentawaians. The stories of *sakkoko* illustrate the process of migratory actions and the separation of Mentawai families. The stories of *siberi* are specifically used to support the groundwork of the current land conflicts.
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The mango story

5.1 Introduction

Descendants of particular kin groups in Mentawai believe that their ancestors once had a harsh conflict about harvesting the fruits of a mango tree. During my fieldwork, I collected several versions of the mango story, from different kin groups. According to the story, the mango tree belonged to a particular kin group. All families of that group therefore had equal rights to the fruits of the tree. However, one person took advantage and took the biggest fruits for himself. The other family members were angry because the person had secretly exchanged the smaller fruits of his own share for larger fruits meant for other members of the family. He took the biggest fruits and left the small ones for others. This behaviour increased tension among the kin group. Because of this conflict, many of them began to move away from the homeland and they split into several new kin groups.

A similar description of the mango story is reported by Schefold (1988: 93). Schefold regards the mango incident as an example of events that had forced Mentawai ancestors to leave the valley of Simatalu. The description of the mango story in Schefold’s book is short, and it involves two mango trees rather than just one. Furthermore, it does not tell about the further migratory movements of those ancestors and the places they passed through. Schefold’s synopsis of the mango incident is thus different to stories I collected during my fieldwork. Before turning to the mango stories I collected, I would like to mention a few points about the mango story and how mangos naturally grow.

The mango story has themes similar to the two other main stories discussed in this book, the pig story (Chapter 6) and the wild boar story (Chapter 7). However, the mango story differs from the other two. The mango story does not clearly establish the identity of the ancestors of the kin group involved in the initial conflict over mango fruits. It focuses on telling about the rights to the fruits of the tree, which may be seen as representing the agricultural aspect
of Mentawai culture. This story is often told by other kin groups even though it does not belong to their own group. It relates a noteworthy past event and is a story that is easy to remember.

I regard the mango story as important for understanding the role of family stories in Mentawai communities. This story is a good example of how Mentawaians treat their family stories, and the family stories of other kin groups. In Chapter 8 I analyse the themes of the mango story and the similarity of the mango story to the pig story and the wild boar story.

In the following section, I present botanical information on mangos. Thereafter, I present several storytellers’ versions of the mango story. After each version, I give some comments. In the concluding section of the chapter, I discuss the social significance of the mango story. In this chapter as well as in the next two, I include genealogy charts as well as maps showing the expansion of some of the kin groups. The charts are based on the content of stories told by a number of storytellers.

5.2 Features of the mango

Mentawaians depend heavily on sago, banana, and taro to meet their daily needs for food. In addition, they commonly eat pork of both domesticated pigs and wild boars as well as diverse species of fish caught in nearby rivers or in the sea. Besides collecting foodstuffs from nature, Mentawaians customarily cultivate crops as well. Another important source of nourishment is a variety of fruits.

Some fruit trees grow naturally, while others are planted. In traditional gardens, common fruit trees are durian (*Durio zibethinus* L.), jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*), and mangos (*Mangifera indica*). Mentawaians distinguish several varieties of mangos: *sipeu*, *bailoi*, *abbangan*, *lakkau*, and *limu*. To differentiate *sipeu* from other kinds of mango, Mentawaians look at the size of the trees and the time needed for those trees to grow enough to bear fruit.

*Sipeu* has a smaller fruit than the other varieties of mango in Mentawai but it is highly valued for its delicious flavour. At maturity, the size of the *sipeu* fruit is only a little bigger than a chicken egg. Nevertheless, the *sipeu* tree is bigger than the others. The tree may reach a height of 10 to 15 metres and the thickness of its trunk can be over one metre in diameter. In contrast, the *abbangan*, *lakkau*, *bailoi* and *limu* varieties of mango have smaller trees but larger fruits. *Abbangan*, *lakkau*, *bailoi* and *limu* begin to bear fruit within eight to ten years after being planted. *Sipeu*, in contrast, grows slowly, taking ten to fifteen years before it bears fruit. Mentawaians do not intensively care for their planted trees. After planting the trees, they leave them for a few months or even years, until one day they return to check whether the trees are still
The mango story

growing. They then clear the vegetation around the trees in order to protect
the trees from being overgrown by grasses and other plants. A few years later,
the trees are big enough to bear fruit. People again clear the vegetation around
the trees in order to ensure that the fruit will be easy to gather during the fruit
season, *rura*.

The size of the annual harvest, and whether there will be any fruit to har-
est, is highly unpredictable. After three or four small seasons (*rura siboitok*),
there is one great fruit season, or *rura sabeu*. At that time, a lot of trees pro-
duce enormous numbers of fruits. In between great fruit seasons, there may
be several years of small fruit seasons and one or more years of no fruit at all.
*Sipeu*, unlike other varieties of mango trees, seem to need a few regular sea-
sons to rest before another great fruit season.

Why did Mentawaians traditionally not spend much effort on caring for
mango trees? Mentawaians were actively engaged in such other activities as
collecting food and tending domesticated animals, activities that were also
time-consuming, so they did not have enough time to take care of mango
trees. In addition, they obeyed particular taboos, and that meant that activi-
eties of cutting and clearing were often temporarily postponed, for instance in
the nine-month taboo period for a pregnancy. During this taboo period, a
husband would not do activities considered risky to his wife's pregnancy. Men-
tawaians traditionally believe that to cut a tree may adversely affect the baby's
life in the mother's womb. Therefore, a husband would not work in the garden
much until after his wife gives birth. Although Mentawaians only irregularly
care for their planted trees, they do remember the place where young trees
have been planted

5.3 The mango story

During my fieldwork I spoke with storytellers of several different kin groups
about the mango story. Some storytellers believe that their ancestors had to
move away from their homeland because their family members quarrelled
over the mango harvest. Besides these storytellers, I also met several other sto-
rytellers from other kin groups who were not directly connected to the mango
incident. Nonetheless, they continued telling the story of the mango incident,
wholly or partially, before telling the family story pertaining to the migratory
movements of their own ancestors. They usually mentioned the mango inci-
dent briefly, in just two or three sentences. For instance, they would say 'our
ancestors spread out from Simatalu because of mangos’, without mentioning
the rest of the story.

A few other storytellers honestly admitted that the mango story was not
their own ancestors’ story, although they knew the story thoroughly. They had
a family story of their own, which was totally different from the mango story.
An old man residing in Sipora is a clear example of how a member of a kin group may be familiar with the mango story without necessarily having any links to it. Takmanggai Taikatubutoinan (see Photo 5.1), a 76-year-old farmer and a landlord in the village of Saureinu on the island of Sipora, told me about the mango story, even though he said it did not belong to his kin group. His version is given in translation in Story 6.

![Photo 5.1 Takmanggai Taikatubutoinan](image)

**Story 6**

Some groups of people moved away from Siberut to Sipora and Sikakap (Pagai islands). Their ancestors fought over mango fruits and there is a story about the incident. My ancestors did not come to Sipora because of mangos. They moved away from Siberut because they were afraid of being killed by a particular kin group residing in the northern part of Siberut. The mango story is about

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10 This picture was taken in 2004. Two years later I got an e-mail from one of my relatives telling me that this informant had passed away.
two brothers: the older (kebbu) and the younger (bagi). They were from the same family. They had agreed to share the branches of the mango tree. Half of the tree was claimed by the younger brother and half was claimed by the older brother. They made circles on the ground under the tree to show the branches claimed by each of them.

Early one morning, the older brother went to the tree together with his son. He saw that his fruits [lying on the ground] were smaller than those of his younger brother. The older brother therefore exchanged his smaller fruits for the bigger ones belonging to his younger brother. Thereafter, the younger brother went to fetch his fruits. He was surprised to see that all of his fruits were small. He suspected that his older brother had exchanged the fruits. The younger brother collected all the fruits and returned home. Upon returning home he immediately accused his older brother of exchanging the fruits. They thus got involved in quarrels. The older brother did not like to be accused. He threw the fruits on the ground. Because of his act of throwing the fruits on the ground, the older brother and his family were called Sabeleake (people who threw fruits on the ground). Due to the incident, the families decided to separate from each other and leave for new places. They did not like each other anymore. After then, the families began to disperse. Other families living in the valley where the mango incident took place followed the migratory movements of the families.

We, the Mentawaians, did not move away from our homeland all at once. We moved one by one. After one family departed, others followed. From Siberut, they went to Sipora and later they moved further to the Pagai islands. (Narrated by Takmanggai Taikatubutoinan, age 76; Saureinu – Sipora, 2004)

Analysing the content of the story, I note that the mango story indeed does not belong to the kin group of the storyteller. Nonetheless, the storyteller shows that he was quite familiar with it. He recollects the content of the story but not the names of the people who instigated the incident. But the storyteller’s knowledge is not comprehensive. He does not recollect the destinations where the first families had gone after the mango incident. He does not know the names of the groups that had left the homeland because of the mango incident. This means that the storyteller does not know which plots of land were claimed by the migrating families.

I was convinced by storytellers of several kin groups residing in separate places on Siberut that their groups have a direct link to the mango incident. These groups are: the Siribetug kin group dwelling in Sirisura in the upriver valley of Saibi Samukop (in 2006 they moved to a new settlement called Simoilaklak), the Salakkau kin group living in Saibi Muara in the downriver settlement of Saibi Samukop, and the Satairarak kin group living in a place called Maileppet. The three kin groups seem to have preserved the content of
the mango story. From each of these three kin groups I listened to a storyteller tell the mango story; their versions are given below.

5.3.1 The mango incident as told by the Siribetug kin group in Sirisura

My two cousins and I visited the upriver place in the valley of Saibi Samukop called Sirisura in 2002. There, I met several persons of a kin group called Siribetug. I spoke with a man named Marinus Siribetug (see Photo 5.2). The man is a shaman (si kerei). I decided to interview him because other villagers recommended him when I asked them who could tell me about the mango incident. He is an acknowledged storyteller of the Siribetug kin group as well as in the village. From him I collected another version of the mango story, when he kindly shared the story of his ancestors.
As a shaman, he cured a lot of people living in the village. He and his family did not live in the village permanently because he raises pigs and practises shamanism in an upriver place in the valley of Saibi Samukop. It was not that he was taking a stand against the government by staying away from the government-established village, but the government did not allow him to have any livestock in the village. He therefore built a communal house in the upriver place called Sirisura. Every weekend, he and his family return to the village in order to join other villagers in activities like going to church services every Sunday and to social meetings organized by the village council to discuss and find solutions to problems in the village. His knowledge of Mentawai culture is extensive. He had been invited to mediate in conflicts in the region where he lives.

In 2004 he decided to leave his house and join another 100 families to inhabit a new government village. At first he was not really happy to live there, but after living there for some years, he felt better because he enjoys current developments in the new village more than in the previous one. He sometimes visits his old gardens near the previous village and takes care of his pigs there. He has opened new gardens near the new village where he plants cacao plants and banana trees.

When Marinus Siribetug told me his version of the mango story in 2002, he was still living in Sirisura. The story was as follows:

**Story 7**

*Sipeu* (mango) was an early conflict that caused the separation of our family. Because of the incident, some of our ancestral families had to leave our homeland. Our ancestors have told the story of the mango incident through the generations until it was told to me. The mango story is as follows: Si Boklutettet was our ancestor. As my grandfather said to me, our ancestors numbered seven altogether. They lived in Simatalu on the riverbank of a place called Mongilailai. They were called Samongilailai because they occupied Mongilailai.

My ancestral families planted a mango tree. The branches of the tree were divided among the eight families: seven branches for the seven brothers and one for the father’s family. In order to show the ownership of any fruit fallen, each family made a circle precisely underneath their claimed branch. There were thus eight circles. No one should take fruit that fell in other families’ circles. Every morning, women of the house visited the mango tree to collect fruits that had fallen.

One day, the mother went to the tree to find out whether any fruits were ripe and had fallen in her circle. She went early in the morning while others were still sleeping. She saw that most of the fruits in other families’ circles were bigger than hers. She took the bigger fruits and replaced them with the smaller ones that were supposed to be hers. Her daughter-in-law (*taliku*) came to collect her fruits too. She saw that her fruits had been exchanged. The daughter-in-law no-
ticed depressions in the ground. She saw that most fruits were smaller but they were all resting in bigger hollows on the soft ground. The small fruits did not make depressions in the ground. The daughter-in-law decided that someone who had come earlier that day had definitely substituted her fruits.

After asking everybody in the house, the daughter-in-law found out that the person who had exchanged her fruits was her mother-in-law. The daughter-in-law told her husband what she had seen when she arrived at the mango tree. The wife and her husband concluded that their parents disliked them. Due to this incident, the family decided to seek another place to live. Afterwards, other families affected by the incident decided to move away as well. Consequently, the majority of family members decided to move away (musa-bu) to find new places to live. They left their parents alone. This dispersal was known as pusabuat sabeu Samongilailai, the great separation of Samongilailai, because it affected many members of the group.

Several families joined to become one new group called Saeppunu. They settled in a place called Bat Polime. My ancestral family was part of the Saeppunu group. Later, a few of the Saeppunu families decided to move away again. They occupied a place located at Bat Bajak, an upriver place in the valley of Saibi Simatalu. My own ancestor stayed in Bat Polime. He and his family did not join the Saeppunu [the families who went on to Bat Bajak]. He and his family stayed, stayed, and stayed in Bat Polime. One day, his father felt so sorry because his sons had left him because of the mango incident. The father decided to visit his children and persuade them to return home. The father visited my ancestor’s place. In the past, people used to address each other as bolaik, which literally means ‘friend’. We do not frequently use the word anymore currently. ‘Bolaik, I come to visit you, because the rest of our family and I have missed you all so much,’ the father said to his son. ‘Well… actually we were seriously disappointed by you and our mother. Because of your misconduct, we finally had to decide to stay away from you. You and our mother were deceitful to us. This occurred almost every day. We think that is more than enough.’ My ancestor kept refusing what his father tried to propose. ‘You should not think so… if you would return to us, I have decided to sacrifice my pigs in order to bring all members of our family together,’ the father attempted to persuade his children again. ‘If you intend to do so, you should go and inform my other brothers in Bat Bajak,’ said my ancestor. The brothers living in Bat Bajak were the ancestors of the Saeppunu. All the brothers decided to discuss their father’s proposal, but they did not say anything about their mother. They just disliked her. After discussing their father’s plan, my ancestor’s brothers residing in Bat Bajak eventually returned home with their father. My ancestor living in Bat Polime did not join his brothers. He continued to reject his father’s invitation even though his father had proposed to give a festivity for the family reconciliation.
The storyteller took a break at this point and lit a cigarette. I put the recorder on pause. He investigated the tape. He was surprised to see the small recorder. It seems that he had not seen it before. A lot of smoke was pouring out through his nostrils while his lips kept pinching the cigarette, and he was holding the recorder in his two hands. He replaced the recorder in its initial place. Meanwhile, I made notes of questions to ask after he finished telling me his story. After a few blows of smoke, he drank his cold tea that had been placed on the table about an hour earlier. He gave me a sign when he was ready to continue telling his story.

While living in Bat Polime, the relatives of our ancestor decided to form a new group, called the Satobbou. They accordingly left for a new place located in Paipajet. They left us behind because of humiliation and a misunderstanding having to do with pigs. The story of the Satobbou is as follows. One afternoon, when all members of our family were settling down in the front part of the house, pigs returned from forests in the vicinity of the house. Pigs were usually fed in the front yard of a communal house (uma). While most of the pigs were eating, two pigs were mating (palukkehek), and everyone could see that.

Father looked at the embarrassing occurrence and he was ashamed, because his daughter-in-law was sitting on the veranda of the house and also seeing the two pigs mating. The father went inside the house without saying a word to anybody. He took his spear, and he threw the spear and it hit one of the two pigs and killed it. The killed pig belonged to his son and the other belonged to him. Other members of the family in the house were amazed at what the father had just done. The father’s son, who owned the pig, found out that their pig had been hit by his father’s spear and said angrily ‘Our father shot my pig. It was fine if the spear had hit his own pig.’ They asked their father why he had speared the pig. Hence, serious quarrels emerged between the father and his son. The father disagreed with what his father had just done. He could not accept that his father’s spear had hit his son’s pig. The son seemingly misunderstood his father’s act. He thought that the father disliked his son and his son’s family, as he lived and shared everything with his father in the same house.

The son used that pretext to move away to Paipajet. From Paipajet, he went on to Sagulubbe. In Sagulubbe, his family changed their kin-name from Satobbou to a new one, called Sabaggalet. I do not know why the name was changed. Our ancestor moved from Bat Polime in the valley of Simatalu to the valley of Saibi Samukop and his family became Siribetug. The family dwelled in Sakreake for a few generations. When my great-grandfather was leading the family, they moved again to Sirisura, where we are currently living. We departed from Bat Polime voluntarily. [Recently, a few Siribetug families live in the place called Simoilalak.]

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11 See Schefold 1986 for further discussions on taboos of family relationship.
The rest of our families remaining in Mongilailai in the valley of Simatalu were still called Samongilailai. What I remember about them is that they were engaged in a hostile conflict with a kin group called Sapokka residing on the riverbank of Saibi Simatalu. They had a disagreement about a pig. The pig had been obtained from the Sapokka kin group as the bride price for one of our female ancestors, who married a male member of the Sapokka kin group. Members of Sapokka shot the pig to death and this signified that they wanted to get the pig back. Customarily, the Sapokka could not do that. It was against the initial agreement of the couple’s marriage and it disrupted the harmony of the relationship between the two neighbouring groups. Therefore, one of our relatives killed some Sapokka. Thereafter, our ancestor who killed the Sapokka migrated to another place together with his family.

The majority of our relatives moved to a place called Bat Koddobat, after which they were called Sakoddobat. While a few families remained in Bat Koddobat, others continued migrating to the valley of Rereiket. They were called by the new name Salabok. And the rest of our relatives in Bat Koddobat moved away to inhabit an area called Sirileleu [currently called Taileleu]. They became the Salamao, Samongilailai, and Salakkokoai [kin groups]. Although we are currently living under different kin-group names, we were all descended from one ancestral origin called Samongilailai. (Marinus Siribetug, age 65; Sirisura – Si-berut, 2002)

In this story, the narrator tells us about his ancestor who led the storyteller’s ancestral kin group after the mango incident. He also mentions the first place-name where the ancestor and his families dwelled in Simatalu at that time. According to the storyteller, the mother of his ancestral families instigated the family conflict. She was deceitful towards her daughters-in-law by taking bigger fruits and leaving smaller ones for her daughters-in-law. The mother appears as an evil character in the mango story. Hence, sons of the ancestral family decided to move away from their parents. However, the father of the family visited his sons and asked them to return home. The father’s efforts eventually turned out to be a great success as a few of the sons came home. Some of the sons kept refusing to return home and they migrated to other places and became new kin groups. The following chart (Chart 5.1) summarizes the migratory movements of the storyteller’s ancestors, as indicated by his story.

The storyteller mentions another occurrence in the same story, which had caused further migratory movements of his ancestral family. The story says that the occurrence did not involve the same father who was involved in the mango incident. The father who was involved in the second conflict was from a different generation. However, both incidents are similar in that parents are at odds with their children. In the first occurrence, the mother behaved wrongly, but in the second occurrence it was the father who made a mistake.
The father was embarrassed by two pigs mating in the yard in the presence of his daughters-in-law. In Mentawai, such a situation was indeed – and still is – unacceptable. Two individuals related by blood or marriage should not be in a sexually embarrassing situation. A male person should avoid seeing animals mating in the presence of his female relatives. The father did not avoid the situation. He was annoyed and tried to bring the embarrassing situation to an end by throwing a spear at the mating pigs. He probably simply wanted to separate the pigs; however, his act turned out to kill one of the pigs. The son saw his father using a spear to hit his pig and kill it. On the one hand, the son to whom the pig belonged interpreted his father’s act mistakenly. It was simply that the father did not wish to be humiliated by the two pigs mating in front of his daughter-in-law. On the other hand, the son’s response was not fully wrong. In Mentawai, if someone uses a sharp tool to intentionally damage someone else’s property, he may be assumed to have a harmful intention toward that person. Because he used a sharp tool, the father’s act of spearing his son’s pig was understood as an indirect hostility against his own son. The unfortunate consequence was that the father was separated from his sons and their families. Similar events thus repeatedly occurred over time, affecting the same kin groups.
5.3.2 The mango incident as told by the Salakkau kin group in Saibi Muara

The next version of the mango incident was collected from a kin group called Salakkau. This kin group lives in Saibi Muara, a government village located in the valley of Saibi Samukop. My mother is a member of Salakkau. My mother once told me that her ancestral kin group had left their homeland because of the mango incident. She also told me that she was a relative of the Sakerebau12 kin group, which was her initial kin group. Accordingly I wanted to interview my maternal grandfather. The opportunity of doing so was offered when my grandfather came with my maternal uncle to visit their Salakkau relatives in Saibi Muara to discuss the status of their ancestral land located in an upriver place of the valley of Saibi Samukop. They had to travel to visit Saibi Muara, as they live in another village called Totoet.

I took this opportunity to interview my maternal grandfather; however, instead of answering my questions he advised me to meet with one of my uncles. My grandfather was much older than his nephew, but his nephew supposedly knew more than my grandfather about their past. I thus turned to my uncle Jakobus Salakkau. My grandfather and my maternal uncle sat on the floor next to me while Jakobus Salakkau sat about a metre from us on the opposite side. My Sony tape-recorder was placed between us. A few other Salakkau members were also present at this gathering. They sat around us. My uncle told me the mango story as follows.

**Story 8**

We were known as Sakerebau before we moved away from our homeland in Simatalu. We dwelled precisely in the upriver place called Lubaga, where our land in Simatalu is also located. The Sakerebau planted a mango tree (sipeu). When the mango tree had fruits, members of Sakerebau agreed to divide up

12 Persoon specifically studied the Sakrebou [Sakerebau] kin group residing in a settlement called Bosé, located in the northern part of Siberut. According to Persoon's findings, the Sakerebau once inhabited an upriver place in the valley of Sikabaluan. Some families moved to start a settlement located near the mouth of Sikabaluan river. While some families remained at the Sikabaluan river-mouth, a few Sakerebau families decided to migrate to a place called Bosé (Persoon 1994: 267-270). They seem to be relatives of the Sakerebau residing in other places of Siberut, such as those who are dwelling in Saibi Samukop.

Sakerebau can mean 'a group whose communal house (uma) has a kerebau', where kerebau is a piece of wood placed in between the front side of the entrance pillars of the house. This is a special construction making this house slightly different from those of other groups. Because only Sakerebau initially had that sort of house, this kin group was called Sa-kerebau, 'group of people whose house has a kerebau'. However, there is another kin group named Sakerebau, but their name was derived from the fact that the group resulted from a merger of two or more different groups. Therefore, they called themselves Sa-kere-bau, 'new group'. In the story text, Sakerebau refers to the group who once had a communal house with a kerebau.
The mango story

One morning an older brother of the family went to collect the fruits in his circle. He noticed the fruits in his circle were smaller than the fruits in his younger brother’s circle. Thus, he took the bigger fruits from his younger brother’s circle and replaced them with his smaller fruits. When the younger brother arrived at the mango tree, he was surprised to see small fruits lying in bigger depressions in the ground.

Our ancestors in the past got upset easily. Due to this mango incident, our ancestors made a dugout canoe out of a particular sort of durian tree called togtug. They wanted to leave the rest of the family. Togtag and Makkainou were our two ancestors who made the canoe, but they never succeeded. So, they decided to make a raft out of bamboo poles. This time they did succeed in making it. Thereafter, they collected taros and other fruits. Next, they drifted to the south and arrived at a place called Matobe in Sipora. Togtag stayed in Sipora and Makkainou continued to seek other places. He eventually arrived at a place called Matobe in the Pagai islands.

Meanwhile, the rest of the Sakerebau group in Simatalu began to split up. Some families migrated to a place called Sikatirik. After settling in Sikatirik they moved further to Sikabaluan. Later they moved to a place called Tatubeket. Other Sakerebau moved from Simatalu to Saibi Samukop and further to the southern islands, to Sipora and the Pagai islands, following the coastline on the east side of the archipelago.

Jakobus Salakkau paused in his storytelling while he drank a cup of coffee. I pushed the recorder button on pause. I offered a cigarette to the storyteller, but he refused it. I was surprised that he did not smoke. The majority of Mentawai adult men smoke; even in the interior of Siberut, boys of the age of twelve have already begun to smoke. They even smoke freely in front of their parents. Instead of responding to my offer, the storyteller asked me what I was doing in the Netherlands. He wanted to know how cold the winter is. He was curious about the cool weather as he once heard European tourists saying that the winter can be terribly cold. After describing what I experienced in the Netherlands in order to satisfy his curiosity, we continued the recording.

When our ancestors dwelled at the place called Tatubeket that was the moment we changed our kin-name from Sakerebau to Salakkau. It happened like this. There was a kind of tree called bailoi; in Tatubeket, people called it lakkau. This tree had fruits like mango but smaller than mango. There were three brothers. They ate the fruit of the lakkau tree. One fruit was shared by the three of them. The older brother took off the skin of the fruit. He then cut and shared the fruit with all of them equally. After they ate the fruit, each of them licked the lakkau seed. The younger brothers were allowed to begin first. When
Part Two

it was the older brother’s turn, he swallowed the seed. This disturbed the two other brothers because they had agreed to plant the seed in order to have a new tree. Therefore the two younger brothers said critical things to others about the older brother, saying he did not follow their initial agreement. ‘Our older brother was so fond of lakkau fruit that he swallowed it. He wanted to keep it for himself. He did not want to share it with us anymore.’ They kept telling this to other people in order to humiliate him. They, however, never talked about the matter with the older brother.

One day, the older brother heard from other people about his two brothers’ criticism of the lakkau seed incident. In order to avoid their tedious criticism, he suggested his wife that they leave for a new place. ‘Let us go from here, my two brothers always nag about the lakkau seed. They have started calling me sikoilok lakkau (person who swallowed the lakkau).’ They packed their goods and chickens, and placed them in a dugout canoe. They did not have many things to take at that time, and so they left Tatubeket.

From Tatubeket, they went to stay at a place called Berisigep. The place was occupied mostly by a group of people called Sateiku. The Salakkau ancestor lived there; they had a garden and domesticated animals. While living there, the two younger brothers came over to visit the family. The two younger brothers stayed for several months. They then decided to return to Tatubeket, and the older brother and his family took this opportunity to move further to Simalegi. They left their children to take care of their gardens in Berisigep. However, the two younger brothers were still able to reach the older brother’s family. Therefore, the older brother’s family left Simalegi for a place in Simatalu. They eventually settled in Simatalu. In Simatalu, he did not use the name Sakerebau anymore. Instead he used the name Salakkau. They dwelled in Simatalu; they dwelled, dwelled, dwelled, and dwelled in Simatalu. Meanwhile, most of Sakerebeu remained in Tatubeket; Pokai and Sikabaluan afterwards migrated to the southern islands of Mentawai.

At some point warfare (pasaggangan) broke out among the people living in Simalegi and in Simatalu, so the Salakkau in the valley of Simatalu moved to Sirilabat in the valley of Saibi Samukop. The leading person who instigated the migration from Simatalu and went to Sirilabat was si Boirosiat. Si Boirosiat was our direct ancestor and has ancestral connections to me. It was about seven generations ago. Boirosiat had two sons: si Gabaisailimut and si Ruhut. Si Gabaisailimut was my great-grandfather and si Ruhut was your maternal grandfather’s grandfather [my mother is a Salakkau]. They settled down at the place called Sirilabat near Sakreake. This place is located in the upriver place of Saibi Samukop. They found land in an area called Teitei Tabot, and Bat Kurejet. They dwelled in Sirilabat and their name was still Salakkau. They were Salakkau, Salakkau, Salakkau, Salakkau, Salakkau, Salakkau, Salakkau, Salakkau, Salakkau, and Salakkau. Our ancestors still lived in Sirilabat when a kin group called Satoutou assassinated a few of our ancestors. From Satoutou we received two plots of land, located in places
The mango story called Sikuret and Simatet, as the price [compensation] for the assassination of our ancestors (porak segseg logau). When we, the Salakkau, got involved in conflicts among us, some of our members decided to separate from us and form a new group called Sakeru. They went to dwell on the banks of a deep river and therefore they were called Sakeru (keru means deep river).

My uncle stopped telling his story for a while. He looked for something and found a piece of paper. He tore the paper in pieces and arranged the pieces one after the other in two lines. He showed me his ancestral generations after the group became known as Salakkau and moved from Simatalu. He then continued telling me his story.

Boirosiat’s descendants had been expanding within the Salakkau kin group over several generations. Boirosiat’s sons were Ruhut and Gabaisailimut. Ruhut’s sons were Bakkli and Gidjau. Bakkli had no son. Gidjau’s son was your maternal grandfather, named Agustinus [the storyteller is my mother’s relative], and from him descended your uncle, the younger brother of your mother, named Dominikus, and from him your cousin named Gustimar. Gustimar was the only son of your uncle, though Gustimar has several sisters. One of his sisters has a son called Marean, but we cannot count him because she [Marean’s mother] married into a different kin group and so her son belongs to her husband’s group. If we want to calculate the number of generations from Boirosiat to Marean, son of your cousin, we pass through seven generations.

The names of our ancestors are easily recognized because we of the Sakerebau and Salakkau kin groups often use the kin-name for our current individual names. Only our kin-group members, distinguishing us from other kin groups’ ancestral names in Mentawai, use such names as Timai, Sogaiebbu, Paule, Oitok, Manaiubu, and a few other Sakerebau and Salakkau ancestral names.

My daughter Timai went to North Sumatra to study. There, she met a female Mentawaian whose name was also Timai. My daughter was curious why this female Mentawaian had the same name as hers. After they introduced themselves to each other, they found out that they were related to each other. One of the two Timai was from the Salakkau kin group and the other came from the Sakerebau kin group. They were therefore ‘sisters’, because the Salakkau and the Sakerebau are related ancestrally. I could not use a name that was usually used by other kin groups. As a Salakkau, I am a [relative of] Sakerebau, and as a Sakerebau, I am obviously a Salakkau because of our historical occurrences and sharing the same origins. (Narrated by Jakobus Salakkau, age 60; Saibi Muara – Siberut, 2002).

The storyteller believes that his ancestral family decided to split up and departed from their homeland because of the mango incident. That happened when his kin group was still part of the Sakerebau kin group. However, it was
misconduct of the older brother of the family that split up the whole family. By taking the bigger fruits and leaving the smaller ones for his younger brother, the older brother instigated the conflict. The storyteller, however, does not identify the two brothers by name, nor does he say clearly which of those brothers had decided to leave to seek a new place to settle elsewhere on the island.

In the next passage of his story, the storyteller discloses two names of individuals who made canoes in order to migrate to the southern part of the Mentawai Islands. However, it is not clear whether the two brothers were the same persons who were engaged in the mango incident. The storyteller describes the further migratory movements of the two brothers until they reached particular places in the southern islands. After describing the journey of his two ancestors, the storyteller goes back to telling about what happened to the rest of the family residing in Simatalu. At this point, he continues relating how his ancestors moved to the northern part of Siberut island.

The storyteller focuses on one specific occurrence while his ancestors stayed in a place called Tatubeket. This occurrence became a new story of origin, explaining the creation of a new kin-name, Salakkau. In this occurrence, three brothers are involved in a conflict over a mango seed. This is a similar motif to the earlier conflict over mangos in Simatalu.

The mango conflict in Tatubeket had led to the existence of a new kin group called Salakkau. Members of this new group were originally from the Sakerebau kin group. Because of this, the storyteller does not tell any more about the Sakerebau kin group, since his focus is on the expansion of the Salakkau kin group. Due to the mango conflict, the ancestors of Salakkau gradually moved from one place to another until they returned to Simatalu. These migratory movements are shown in Chart 5.2.
The storyteller carries on narrating the story of his ancestors’ migration. The ancestors left the valley of Simatalu to seek a new place (Sirilabat) in the valley of Saibi Samukop. At the point in the story when the Salakkau arrive in Sirilabat, the storyteller begins to recollect the names of individual ancestors. The first ancestor whose name he remembers is Boirosiat. The storyteller also recollects a few plots of land that belonged to his kin group when they lived in Sirilabat in the valley of Saibi Samukop, including the land they received from another kin group as payment for his ancestors’ assassination in a headhunt-
ing raid. The storyteller hereby recollects a memory of his ancestors seven generations ago, which was after the ancestors left the valley of Simatalu for the second time. This memory is summarized in a genealogical chart (see Chart 5.3).

![Genealogy of the Salakkau kin group]

* indicates the ancestor who was part of the migration marked with an asterisk in Chart 5.2 above.

5.3.3 The mango story as told by the Satairarak kin group in Maileppet

The next version of the mango story was told by a kin group called Satairarak.\(^{\text{13}}\) I met a storyteller of the Satairarak kin group in his house on a Sunday afternoon. Like most other villagers on Sunday, the storyteller stays at home

\(^{\text{13}}\) This kin-name is derived from *satai* = a group of people, *rarak* = relatives, meaning 'a group of people with many relatives.'
enjoying his leisure time after working in the fields on weekdays. When I arrived, the storyteller was sitting in his house together with his wife and a fellow villager. The storyteller’s sons were not at home. They were playing football with their friends, a popular sport on Siberut island. They usually do that every Saturday and Sunday afternoon. The house was thus fairly peaceful, and even more peaceful after the neighbour went home, leaving the old man, his wife, and me alone.

The storyteller knows me, as I once worked in Maileppet village on a UNESCO sanitation and clean water project in 1999. Moreover, he is familiar with my paternal and maternal families. I was treated as one of his relatives. He approached me and asked what I wanted from him. Meanwhile, his wife went to the kitchen to make cups of tea for us. I asked him whether he would tell me his family story about mangos. He chose a wooden wall where he could lean his back against it while seated on the floor opposite to me. I was seated in front of him, and my notebook and the tape-recorder were placed between us. While he was preparing to tell me his family story, the storyteller’s wife sat a few metres from us on the front side of the house. She was making fishing net. She did not really notice what we were doing or she just did not want to disturb us, as we were talking about a male matter. Women in Mentawai usually are not involved unless they are asked to contribute their opinion to the conversation. Men's matters sometimes are kept separate from women's matters. The storyteller began telling me the story after giving me a sign to press the ‘on’ button of my tape-recorder. His story of the mango incident was told as follows.

**Story 9**

Our place of origin was in Simatalu, on the riverbank at a place called Lubaga, and our kin group was called Satairarak. We moved away from our place of origin because we did not want to get involved in the conflict about mangos. This conflict had led to our initial expansion. My ancestors told the story through the generations until it was told to me. The story was as follows:

At that time, the mango tree was bearing fruit. There were two brothers. They waited for the mangos to fall, as a sign that the fruits were ripe. Beforehand, they had agreed to divide their rights to branches of the tree in order to get access to the fruits. The two brothers and their families each claimed certain branches. The younger brother said, ‘So, brother, you can have the branches on the east side of the tree and I will take the other side of the tree.’ The younger brother thus took the initiative in sharing the rights to branches of the tree. ‘You should wait until the fruits in your part have fallen into your circle, then you take yours, but you may not take mine.’ They thus made a kind of rule about what they should do when the fruits dropped. When the fruits were ripe, the moment had come for the two brothers and their families to collect their fruits.
Unfairly, the younger brother went to visit the tree earlier than the older brother. The younger brother exchanged the smaller fruits that had fallen from his branches for the larger fruits that belonged to the older brother. When the older brother came to collect his fruits, he saw that his younger brother had replaced his fruits. He noticed this by investigating the holes where the fruits had fallen. ‘My younger brother may have exchanged my fruits. Depressions where the fruits fell indicate that the fruits should be bigger, but now these smaller fruits are in the bigger depressions.’ He returned home and argued with his younger brother about the fruits. His younger brother did not want to admit what he had done. The older brother felt that his younger brother had cheated him, therefore he asked his younger brother to leave the place in Simatalu; consequently, their family relationship was over. The older brother remained in Simatalu. The younger brother decided to seek a new place to live in order not to see each other again. The younger brother went to Paipajet. He lived in Paipajet and had a family. He lived there for quite some time. Afterwards, he decided to leave the rest of his family in Paipajet and go to a new place in Sikabaluan. From Sikabaluan, the offspring of the younger brother moved to Saibi Muara. They stayed there a short time. Then they came to live in Maileppet. They built a communal house (uma).

The older brother remaining in Simatalu moved to a place situated on the riverbank in Rereiket. From there the offspring of the older brother went to a downriver place called Muara Siberut. They temporarily settled there. Afterwards, they permanently built an uma in Maileppet. While dwelling in Maileppet, the offspring of the older brother met descendants of the younger brother. ‘Who are you?’ they asked each other. The descendants of the younger brother explained, ‘We came from the riverbank of Matalu and our ancestors moved to Paipajet and later went to Sikabaluan. Our ancestors continued moving to Saibi Muara and then arrived at Maileppet.’ The offspring of the older brother also explained their journey, ‘We also came from Simatalu and moved to Rereiket and later arrived at Muara Siberut, but we finally settled down at Maileppet.’ Thus, they asked the descendants of the younger brother, ‘So… what is your group called?’ The descendants of the younger brother answered, ‘We are Satairarak, and you?’ ‘We are also Satairarak, so we are relatives.’ Since then, we lived in Maileppet together. We opened new gardens.

One day, some kin group set fire to the house of the part of the Satairarak kin group who formerly came from Saibi Muara. After that incident, they returned to Saibi Muara. And we went to Katurei. We, the offspring of the older brother, lived in Katurei and opened our gardens on other people’s land. People in Katurei were not so nice to us. They always took our gardens after they were already sowed well, even though they had initially given us permission to make our gardens on their land. We realized that we could not live in this situation, so we returned to Maileppet. We already had gardens in Maileppet. Thus, we split up into two parts. Some of our relatives remained in Katurei and we
The mango story

returned to Maileppet. Currently, although we have been dwelling in different places like in Saibi Muara, Rereiket, Katurei, Maileppet, Sikabaluan, Paipajet and Simatalu, and even though the names of our kin groups have also changed, yet we have still kept in touch with one another.

Some years ago, we became known as the Samaileppet kin group, because we had started living in Maileppet together with other families before many other people came here. But we did not know who had occupied this place before us. We heard that other people who migrated to Sipora had occupied this place in an earlier expansion. It was recently, just this year that we began to use our old name, Satairarak, rather than Samaileppet. We decided to do this because in Maileppet we always argue about land. Other families see us not as real Samaileppet. Therefore, we returned to using our former kin-name, Satairarak.

Our ancestor was si Gurikpara, who moved to Rerireiket. Gurikpara’s son was Beu Leleggu. Beu Leleggu’s was known as si Paipaijetna. Si Paipaijetna had a son – who is my father – and then I myself am called Beu Asag and then my son is named Jeremias and my grandson is named Aloysius [Jeremias is actually an adopted son of Beu Asag but he regards Jeremias like a real son who will keep the name of Asag’s kin group]. We have already passed through seven generations. In Saibi Muara, our relatives are the Salakkau and Sakeru kin groups. We were from the same ancestral family, which was the Sakerebau. However, I cannot tell you how we are related to Sakerebau. I do not remember in detail, as our separation occurred in Simatalu long ago. In Paipajet and Rereiket, our relatives were always called Satairarak. In short, I may conclude that from Simatalu, our ancestors moved to Paipajet, Rereiket, Simalegi, and Saibi Muara. Our relatives in Rereiket moved to Sagulubbe, Silaoinan, Katurei, and Maileppet. (Narrated by Beu Asag Satairarak, age about 70. He did not know his age precisely. He lived in Maileppet – Siberut, 2002).

The storyteller describes a situation when his primary kin group resided in Simatalu. He narrates the mango incident, which occurred because the younger brother exchanged mango fruits, taking the bigger fruits and leaving the smaller ones for his older brother. By doing this, the younger brother seemingly broke the agreed rule for his own profit. However, his mistake had to be paid with a painful consequence: his older brother sent his family away in order to find another place instead of staying together. According to the storyteller, the families residing in Maileppet are the offspring of the older brother. Before dwelling in the village of Maileppet, ancestors of the storyteller lived in Simatalu. The ancestral kin group of the storyteller split into two groups. Each of the families followed a different path. After the early migration one family descended from the younger brother met the other family in Maileppet. The other family was descended from the older brother, and they recognized each other after telling the stories of their family origins. They lived in Maileppet.
for a while before eventually splitting up again because the communal house of the younger brother's descendants was burned down. The kin group of the storyteller moved to Katurei and the other family returned to Saibi Samukop, where the family had lived earlier. The group did not stay in Katurei permanently, as the Katurei villagers disliked the group. However, they did not want to give up what they had planted. A few families remained in order to take care of the planted trees and the other families returned to Maileppet, where they are currently living. The storyteller recounts the journey of his ancestors from Simatalu to Maileppet as summarized in Chart 5.4.

Chart 5.4 Expansion of the Satairarak kin group
*indicates the migratory movements of the storyteller’s own kin group

He also narrates a list of generations that he remembers since the time his ancestors left the place of origin. This genealogy is given in Chart 5.5. One thing that surprised me is that he recites a genealogical list, but he does not tell it accurately. He in fact does not have any sons but he raised the sons of his brother. He treated them like his own sons. When he told me his story he did not tell the accurate order of the sons. He mentioned the younger son's name instead of the older one. I know those sons. I presume that when he mentioned the
names of the sons, he meant to indicate the different generations of his family, rather than explaining the exact genealogical order.

The other point the storyteller tells is about a family connection. The group seems to be related to several other kin groups, for example to the Salakkau. However, he does not reveal that connection in detail. The Salakkau families live in the valley of Saibi Samukop and some families of Satairarak once lived in the valley of Saibi Samukop. Perhaps the two groups are related as they once lived in the same valley, or perhaps they are related because of the same past occurrence, namely the mango incident. Unfortunately, such connections are not included in their family stories. In fact, members of both groups indeed regard each other as relatives by visiting each other and staying at each other’s homes and avoiding marrying each other (as marriage within a kin group is considered incestuous).

Chart 5.5 Genealogy of the Satairarak kin group
*indicates the ancestor who is considered to be the direct ancestor of the storyteller
5.4 Social significance of the mango story

The various versions of the mango story all have similar elements. The storytellers proclaim a particular place of origin from where their ancestors departed. In that place of origin, a mango tree was planted. The family had one mango tree with a lot of branches. This tree symbolizes a kin group that has one origin and the several branches of the tree represent several related families of the kin group. In the stories each family has a branch of the tree and claims the fruits of their branch by placing a circle on the ground, precisely under the chosen branch.

The circle symbolizes a social boundary among members of a kin group related to a communal property. Every family has particular rights to a communal property and every family member of the kin group should respect each other’s rights. This is illustrated in the passage saying that a family should not take any fruits that fall into a circle belonging to another family. In order to avoid conflict, agreements about the tree should be respected. Such a conflict occurred in the past and Mentawaians learnt something from it. They learnt how to share their communal properties properly.

At present, people do not make circles under trees anymore. During the fruit harvest, all family members go to a tree and harvest the fruits all at once, and then they share the fruits equally among the family members. They do that in the presence of all family members so that everyone witnesses that every family receives the same share. This way of doing things has reduced tension among family members and the same way has been used in sharing other communal items like pork or money, for instance if forest land is surrendered to logging companies or if a piece of communal land is sold.

By analysing the mango story, we may identify some moral standards. For instance, the mango conflict occurred because of disobeying and disrespecting an agreed social rule. By taking bigger fruits from someone else’s circle, one family member showed that she or he wanted a bigger share than other members. Equality in having things is very important in Mentawai. In other words, an unfair and unequal act is totally unacceptable. The other families who found out that their fruits had been substituted interpreted the behaviour of the family that had exchanged the fruits as insensitive and deceitful. A few individuals’ selfish interests had ruined the social harmony among members of the kin group.

Besides relating places, events, and moral standards, the mango story conveys a general indication of the personal identity of prominent ancestors mentioned in the story. How many individual ancestors’ names are mentioned in a given version of the story may simply be related to how good a memory a given storyteller has. It seems to me there is no systematic attempt in this particular story to memorize the names of the disputing ancestors. Because of this
absence of names, I speculate that the mango story may be the oldest incident that is still remembered.

The last point I notice about the mango story is that none of the versions of the story explicitly link the migratory movements to the claiming of particular plots of land. The storytellers simply relate that their ancestors moved from one place to another. This point makes the mango story different from most family stories, which tend to emphasize ownership of particular plots of land. A storyteller may not know which plots of land were claimed by his ancestors because the mango story seems to focus more on the conflict and the migration and less on the plots of land that were claimed.