**Mentawai – Souls of the Forest** – Auszüge des Sprechertextes und Untertitel in Englisch und Indonesisch

Film Version 56 Min.

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| No | ENGLISH | Notizen |
| 1 | **Intro**  Indonesia—a Noah's Ark of mankind, with 16000 islands and a diversity of flora, fauna and culture. Four continental plates collide in the Ring of Fire. Indonesia is also a crossroad of cultures. | - |
| 2 | I have been traveling Asia for many years, first as a photographer then as a filmmaker.  I was always in love with the nations motto: diversity in unity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika). But indigenous cultures had a struggle to survive. | - |
| 3 | At the film festival in Ubud, I met a young activist named Martison from Mentawai. He told me about the vibrant ancient culture on Mentawai islands and his foundation working to preserve it. I became curious. I accepted his invitation. | - |
| 4 | **History**  Researchers the likes of Ernst Haeckel travelled through Sumatra in the 19th century, also meeting people from Mentawai. Like many others during the colonial era, Ernst Haeckel was caught up in his prejudices, but he sought the soul in nature and was fascinated by the charisma of the indigenous people. The German physician Max Morris researched their language and myths, together with the anthropologist Alfred Maaß. |  |
| 5 | They first reached Sipora in the archipelago and encountered the original culture that still existed on all the islands of the archipelago at that time. But missionaries soon followed, forcing upon the people their pattern of values. The original culture retreated inland, disappearing almost completely on the southern islands. Soon the last retreat was deep in the forests of Siberut Island.  The coasts once followed own traditions, many of which were lost. |  |
| 6 | Some of the indigenous people remained faithful to their old way of life. The bravest went to the capital in the 1980s to stand up for their ancient culture - with success and discovered: It pays to speak out. Boroi Ogok was one of them. Aman LauLau managed to make it to the governor's palace 30 years ago and was assured that the oppression must end. We visited these two and other indigenous people who have been working for years to preserve their culture.  They are the guardians of the jungle. The history of the indigenous people symbolizes the origin of mankind, the deeper roots of all of us. |  |
| 7 | **Main characters**  I visited three shamans: Gelei LeLeo, Aman Boroi Ogok and Aman LauLau. They have been defending their culture for many years.  The culture of the indigenous people on Mentawai needed neither pottery, nor weaving. Cooking is done in bamboo cane and they make their traditional clothes from bark and banana leafs |  |
| 8 | **Life in the jungle**  But how do you make your own clothes in the jungle?  We follow Gelei LeLeo into the forest. He is looking for a baiku tree. Its bark can be made into a loincloth within an hour.    "The inside is not soft. It is still hard.  I will cut it in half once more”    "Ready for the next step"    At home, the bark is hung up to dry. After that, it will be ready for use as a loincloth |  |
| 9 | Meanwhile, the women are preparing to catch fish. They are making skirts from banana leaves. For fishing this has ritual meaning; the palm leaves appease the spirits. At night you can fish by the light of the torches, during the day you catch the fish in dark hollows under the shore.  The song tells of the futile longing for a lover, beauty in nature, and transience. |  |
| 10 | **Social and spiritual life**  The indigenous people live in freedom and equality. According to their beliefs, everything has a soul, everything in nature as well as all objects of daily life.  The forest is shared by humans, animals and spirits. Ancestors are part of the spirit world.  Like living human beings, spirits and ancestors have livestock, in this case, the wild animals. Hunting has spiritual meaning - it always represents a communication with the souls and spirits of the forest. The population of game is also an important indicator of whether their forest habitat is still intact.  Everything is interwoven within the forest. |  |
| 11 | The soul is like a bird, it can leave the body and roam the forest. It can also get lost in the dark forest with its ghosts. With flowers in the hair and body ornaments the wandering soul should be lured back, feel comfortable in the body, because, if it does not return from the forest, the person becomes ill. If the soul remains completely with the spirits and ancestors in the forest, the person dies. |  |
| 12 | Shamans can see the spirits.  There are also many spirits in the waters. The crocodile spirit is regarded as one of the most important spirits. Mentawai is home to saltwater crocodiles still found in many regions of Indonesia. Saltwater crocodiles are the largest crocodiles in the world, able to swim from island to island over great distances by following the current. Their jaws have the strongest bite in the entire animal kingdom. Although rare on Mentawai, their role in spiritual life there is all the more important. In the myth, the crocodile teaches people how to build a canoes. |  |
| 13 | The spirit of the crocodiles is an old woman named Sikameinan. She keeps an eye on the community so its members share their food fairly, otherwise she sends diseases. Many rituals are therefore connected to the river that gives life and demands justice. Sharing and healing go together. |  |
| 14 | Water is associated with birth and creation, as well as transience and danger. In many cultures, myths relate to rivers; other waters and the seas play a major role. After the birth of a child, rituals are held at the river. Lia is the name of a major ritual performed at the river one week after birth. |  |
| 15 | Most important in Mentawai culture, are the children. The parents are named after the children. Our soul comes from nature and returns there.  It is our origin. Every child needs nature. Children are the original inhabitants of the earth. The forest is our home. |  |
| 16 | **Life in the Jungle – part II**  While the women are fishing, Aman Gelei goes into the forest to collect caterpillars. Sago trees are prepared in order to attract caterpillars that eat through the pith of the trunks. After a few weeks, the people cut down the tree and harvest the caterpillars. They are considered a delicacy and provide much protein. |  |
| 17 | **In the house of Gelei LeLeu**  I am Gelei LeLeu  I am Sikerei  I am medicine man. Shaman.  The flowers of Sikerei: they protect us.  We protect our life, our culture.  Those who need medicine and help, they call us.  We come to the sick. To the people in need. |  |
| 18 | Sago is the most important food on Mentawai. The marrow of the primeval trees is edible. As a result, the people here live in abundance: the forest is edible.  Sago is our father, our mother, our child.  Sago is like a human. According to the ancient myth, the sago tree turned into a human and a human turned into a sago tree. |  |
| 19 | The pulp of the sago tree is crushed, washed out, strained and stored in vessels. It takes a few days, but then a tree provides food for several months.  Sago is also used to feed animals. |  |
| 20 | The wooden drum is used to summon the semi-wild domestic pigs that roam freely in the forest during the day. The wooden drum can be heard far into the forest. Some tribes still know the old drum language, used to communicate between scattered settlements.  The notation of the drum language demonstrates its richness, as shown by anthropologist Schefold. |  |
| 21 | “At sunrise I get up, take care of the animals, get the sago, prepare sago, cook. In the afternoon we go to the river, look for fish and crayfish. We go to the forest, look for herbs and fruits. In the evening we take care of the animals again, cook, take care of the family.”    “My name is To-li-ocho.  and this is our home  Here, this house we built ourselves.  I have three grandchildren and four children.  I and all my children were born here, here in this house, in this Uma.  Every morning we prepare food.  Then we feed chicken with sago sticks  we release the chicken from the basket.  Then we eat.  After breakfast, we are busy all day.  We are fishing in the river. We collect bamboo.  We collect firewood.  At the evening we cook and share food again. “  A mixture of sago and shredded coconut is wrapped in sago leaves and made into a kind of stick bread.  This sago bread is the most important staple food on Mentawai which I learned to appreciate and enjoy  “Spirit help me,  so I stay close with my guest  When we part later on.  Connect us, that he comes back  Accept our guest” |  |
| 22 | **Myth of the origin of mankind**  In the beginning  in the egg of creation, mother and son came into being  In the egg, man came into being - mother and son  Man and woman  The first people from the egg separated  Wandered alone..... went their separate ways  "You have to find a partner...so that a family new family is born"  Years later they meet again  They have forgotten their origin  They become a couple  They look at the lines of their hands  They were the same lines  They realized we belong together  They fall in love, start a family  That's how the new world was born |  |
| 23 | **Preparing arrows for hunting**  The next day is spent preparing for the hunt. Aman Gelei prepares the poison for the arrows.  Preparing poisoned arrows has been handed down for generations. The poison is called omai.  The poison can also be used in the river to stun fish.  The bark of the plant Raggi is an important ingredient of the poison.  The bark is scraped off.  The root Laingi intensifies the effect of the poison.  The root Baglau is a kind of ginger.  Chili peppers.  The plants are crushed - mixed - pressed.  The juice contains the poison.  Then the liquid poison is applied to the arrowheads with a brush. |  |
| 24 | "It is time to renew the poison of my arrows. After all, I haven't gotten around to it for some time"  "I still have to apply the poison"  Finally, the poison is dried over the fire.  The arrow poison remains effective for about two months, then the procedure must be renewed.  There are different types of arrows for wild boars, deer, monkeys. There are also different arrowheads: Blade-like, barbed, or needle-pointed.    “Currently, we men on Mentawai protect our homes and clans.  We protect our forests and fields against theft and destruction.  If we are threatened, I stand ready with bow and arrow.  We must protect ourselves.  All our resources, medicine, fields  we must protect.  Protect the culture of Sikerei.  So that nothing is destroyed or lost. |  |
| 25 | **Silent Movie 1928**  In 1927 German missionaries commissioned a documentary on Mentawai. The silent movie shows the ancient culture on the southern Pagai Islands. First, the Missionaries offer medical help and education to gain the trust of the people. But later the indigenous people are forced to give up their old culture. The missionaries’ propaganda is aiming to destroy the old culture. The shaman is portrayed as a pagan imposter and evil sorcerer who would urge violence in the village court against those willing to be baptized. The missionary, on the other hand, is portrayed as a healer and liberator. The indigenous people would supposedly voluntarily bring their sacred objects to be burned. Soon they are marching in lockstep. The school serves as an instrument of uniformity. They have to cover their tattoos, their naked skin, wear western clothes. The objective is cultural alignment. |  |
| 26 | **Conflicts after independence**  Indonesias independence 1945 inspired new hopes for the countries future. However, could this also be said for the indigenous population and culture. The new government wanted to modernize Indonesia quickly and sometimes used force. It was the beginning of an era of great upheavel. |  |
| 27 | **Boroi Ogok speaking**  “The history of our culture  At that time, people started to suppress our culture.  Not only foreigners, even people from here.  They lost contact with their culture, unlike us  they rejected our necklaces  they were against our loinclothes  they rejected our headdresses  they were against us shamans  they burned our cult objects  many on Mentawai did not want to preserve the culture out of shame  they said they are also from Mentawai  but they have no connection to our culture anymore  They saw us in our loinclothes  And reproached us, took away our loinclothes.  They saw our long hair  and cut it off by force  They burned our necklaces  But later a man helped us who was himself a Christian.  He went with us to the mainland.  to Padang, the capital.  It was a German friend who helped us.  We could tell about our problems in the capital  Who did we disturb?  Our faith Sabulugan is our culture -  our belief -  otherwise we lose everything” |  |
| 28 | **Anthropologist Reimar Schefold**  In Amsterdam is living Reimar Schefold, who was the first anthropologist to conduct intense research on the indigenous culture on Mentawai. He recalls his arrival on Mentawai during the time of the oppression. |  |
|  | “That was in 1966. To be honest, I was scandalized at what I saw when I arrived. The people there were frightened, intimidated - everywhere. I found it pretty appalling, a type of genocide, eradication of a culture.” |  |
|  | “I had an official invitation to study traditional culture.  So I was able go to the police and tell them: you can't now, while I'm there, start with big raids, but have to let me do my work. Of course, they couldn't object to that. “ |  |
| 29 | But he knew, more has to be done than just a momentary relief from police raids. Together with Peter Scott from World Wildlife Fund and Survival International, Reimar Schefold started projects, which led to the creation of the first Nature Reservate on Mentawai 1976. His efforts have been an initial start to change politics towards protection of Mentawais traditional culture. |  |
| 30 | **Visiting Aman LauLau, the old shaman**  Time to move on - deeper into the forest. We are looking for an old Sikerei training a young generation of Sikerei- a key to preserving the old culture. We visit Aman LauLau - a healer who still knows the countless ancient medicinal plants.    “This is my house, I am Aman LauLau.  Here is the real Mentawai.  Come in into my words.  Come in into my body here.  This is my house.    That's how it is with our spirits, our faith.  I can see the spirit.  If the spirit is far away, in Ugai for example:  Play the drum, we go there and I see him.  When I'm down by the river  and I see someone floating high:  That's a spirit.  We can call the spirit and bring it into the house. |  |
| 31 | **Medical plants in the jungle**  “This plant is called bagbang.  We use it for headache and stomachache.  Look at its good nature.  The best.  This is our medicine in Mentawai.  You use jars, we prepare it in the bamboo or in a leaf.  If someone gets sick, our medicine grows on the doorstep.  We make a juice, drink it from the bamboo.    This is called lemu-lemu. It's good for rheumatism, but only the ripe fruit.”    The Sikerei also know medicinal plants against snake venom. Of the many endemic species, some snakes are poisonous    “This plant is called pangasele  It helps with stomach and intestinal problems.  Leaves, bark and root are used.  All parts are used.  Medicine against worms is obtained from the roots.” |  |
|  | “This plant is called ubbau.  It also cures the respiratory tract.  These young shoots are the best.  It works well against cough.  The effect is best in a mixture with other medicinal herbs.  These ferns grow by the river.  .  We plant many flowers and herbs near the house.  Our medicine.  With our forest, they would also destroy us.  That is why it is vital to protect our land.  Here everything grows for us in nature.  Here all these plants of the forest are our medicine.  No companies should destroy our forest.  Nature is our wealth in Mentawai  Our life medicine” |  |
| 32 | Aman Laulau over 30 years ago. A photo by Charles Lindsey. And an unusual encounter. Then a photographer, Charles Lindsey is now a media artist working in New York and Kyoto. In the 1980s, as a photographer for National Geographic, he visited Aman Laulau many times and experienced how at that time the traditional culture was still suppressed. Aman Laulau had to hide the sacred cult objects in the forest when government officials approached his house. Back then it still happened sometimes that indigenous people’s houses were burned down. "We have to do something”, Lindsay said, “this should not happen". Lindsey took his friend to the capital of Sumatra to talk to the governor. Passing many policemen, they entered the palace of the head of the government. "Your culture is still suppressed?” the governor said “This shouldn’t happen anymore!" And the governor proudly had his picture taken with the shaman. Indonesia was ready for a change and was beginning to rediscover the diversity of its cultural roots. Soon after, the young Sikerei was invited to the capital Jakarta and other places to represent his culture and perform traditional dances in front of a large audience. |  |
|  | Under Governor Hasan Basri Durin, a large part of Siberut eventually became a national park. The efforts once started by Reimar Schefold were now showing results.    Today, the indigenous people are more respected, and the progress is encouraging - yet the ancient culture still remains endangered. |  |
| 33 | **Grass Root Movement since the 90s**  In the 1990s, grassroots movements like YCM foundation developed on Mentawai that fought back against palm oil companies and loggers. The movement gave rise to Mentawai's first newspaper and soon after, a radio station. The protests were taken to the capital city of Padang on Sumatra. Thanks to their creative leaders the movement won lawsuits against the corporations.  1998 president Suharto resigned and democracy was on the rise in Indonesia.  Self-government gained in strength.  Leaders of the protest movement went into politics and won elections on Mentawai.  Yudas, the new head of government on Mentawai, had already shown solidarity with the indigenous people as a youth, when he became friends with Reimar Schefold, who shot this photo in the 70's.  When Yudas was elected 2011, he stopped plans to build palm oil plantations on Mentawai and and always tries to preserve the rainforest heritage.  But today the new job creation law by Indonesians president Jokowi puts pressure on Mentawai pushing for new logging concessions. The efforts of the last 30 years to build democracy and create local self-government on Mentawai is in danger, because central government in Jakarta overrules resistance of Mentawai people to cut down rainforest.  Is it the eve of a return to an authoritarian state? |  |
| 34 | **New Generation**  How can the two worlds learn from each other? The indigenous people also want their children to learn to read and write.  But at school they have to wear uniforms, and the children there no longer learn in nature. The nearest secondary school is strictly Muslim, and girls must cover themselves except for their faces and hands. |  |
| 35 | In the villages on the coast, many have become alienated from traditional culture and have forgotten it.  But today there is also a new generation of activists, researchers, artists, young media professionals working for the preservation of the primary forests and traditional culture.    Together with the indigenous people they inspire a new generation in Indonesia to rediscover the ancient culture, to be proud of their heritage.  Some children of the indigenous people who had moved away, return from the big cities and get involved in preserving the heritage. |  |
| 36 | Australian Rob Henry, who lived among indigenous people for many years, helped establish a foundation. For a long time, the Mentawai language was banned, but now the schools will help preserve the heritage. Through field research, the foundation has developed a dictionary that is now available to schools. The foundation also collects the ancient knowledge of natural medicine and much more. YCM, another organization on Menatwai, is fighting economic exploitation through in-depth research and publishing. |  |
| 37 | Aman Goddai the son of Aman Laulau, belongs to the younger generation. While one of his brothers is is a student, he became a sikerei. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to live the traditional life. Hunting is also part of the spiritual life. But how to continue hunting when the wild animals in the threatened forests are slowly disappearing? |  |
| 38 | **Deforestation**  The ancient habitat of the indigenous people - the forest - is in danger. Eighty-five percent of the islands belong to the state, which grants concessions to companies. This year, the excavators are set to roll into new concession areas. The forest is to be burned as wood pellets and fuel for power plants. Other parts of it are to be destroyed to make way for monocultures such as palm oil. The hunger for the energy required for our urban and modern life is insatiable.  The consequences are dramatic: the soil becomes unstable and easily washed out, resulting in more flooding. The excess of sediments washed into the sea is killing coral reefs. Endemic animal species are endangered. In monocultures or fast-growing secondary forest, many endemic species can no longer find their food. |  |
| 39 | **Indigenous belief in nature**  Our monotheism originated in the desert, and now turns the world into a desert.  In monotheism the temples are made of stone. Before, we also had natural sanctuaries – most of which were destroyed, because they were said to be pagan. At that time we lost an important part of our roots.  Animistic beliefs have a strong relationship with nature. Everything has a soul.  Many cultures know a spirit of the forest, so in Borneo - a symbol for the web of life, all interwoven.  In Bali too, nature is full of spirits.  The tree of life in Bali is called Kayonan and brings all to life on the cosmic stage on the shadow theatre, gods, nature, humans.  Religion is home and community for people and forms their values - but where is nature located in temples of stone? Subdue the earth? In long-suppressed animistic beliefs, nature always belonged to the community. Without it, there is no balance. Instead of a supernatural afterlife disconnected to nature, indigenous culture is deeply rooted in the belief that our souls and ancestors live in nature. This can inspire us to rediscover our roots and connection to nature - and become part of the forest again ourselves - the forests we literally need in order to breathe. |  |
|  | **Aman Goddai comes back from hunting**  Right now my name is Aman Goddai.  I'm from the Salkirat clan.  I am a father and this is our Uma  We often go into the forest for3 days, 4 days.  Each time, it takes more time to find animals.  here close the village, it's near impossible to find.  I've just returned from the forest.  I've returned because we can no longer find deer and monkey.  many people chainsaw our forest.  the monkey and deer have disappeared.  Right now it is not possible to find monkey.  In future we want to stop all chainsawing within our forest area.  Don't destroy our forests.  The impact on our resources is devasting.  This land has been gifted to us by our ancestors.  We must prohibit people from using chainsaws and cutting down our forest.  When we protect our forest, the animals will come back.  When we are hungry, we will be able again to hunt and find deer and monkey. |  |
| 40 | **Investigative journalist Febrianti**  Indonesian journalist Febrianti Yanti has for years been researching the ways in which Mentawai is endangered by logging.  Activist maps show that forest loss in Indonesia is particularly dramatic in Borneo and Sumatra. The maps show the spread of palm oil plantations - and new concession areas for logging.    Where is palm oil used? In many finished products which are plastic-packed.  Supermarkets have only been on the rise in Indonesia for 20 years.  Some now ban plastic bags and see themselves as heroes of the environment, yet most products on the shelf are still wrapped or packaged in plastic.  Traditional markets in Indonesia look like this: Pure nature. |  |
| 41 | The southern Pagai Islands are already almost completely designated concession areas for economic exploitation. Even the last refuge of the indigenous people, the island of Siberut with its national park, is succumbing more and more to the logging saw.    The preservation of this heritage is still possible. It depends on us.    (End of film) |  |