

Imagining Javan tigers: Ghost, monster, *siluman*

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In 2017 the Indonesian army demolished Macan Cisewu, a tiger statue in West Java that had gone viral on social media for looking cute rather than fierce. In a late-nineteenth-century photograph, a tiger walks across an arena ringed by men with spears at a *rampog macan*, a ritual tiger-killing staged by Javanese regents, often before Dutch officials. And in 2026, as I camped in a forest in Aceh, a guide whispered to me that a young male from Sumatra's critically endangered tiger population was roaming nearby in search of territory of his own.

The Javan tiger has been extinct for decades, yet it keeps returning. This talk asks what it means to care for such an animal. Recent work in the environmental humanities reads lingering presences as ghosts or as monsters; in Java, relations with tigers suggest a third mode, the *siluman*, neither ghost nor monster yet both, a being that persists by changing form

**Moderator****Hatib Kadir**

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