

## PROLOGUE

Oil palm killed the sago  
Oil palm killed our kin  
Oil palm choked our rivers  
Oil palm bled our land

Valuable like agarwood, sago is not  
Expensive like red meranti, sago is not  
Elegant like the frangipani, sago is not  
Majestic like the banyan, sago is not  
But life it brings and growth to share  
Food it gives and water it cleanses  
Shade it offers, rest it promises

So, jail me, shoot me, burn me, kill me  
But bring my shattered bones to the sago grove  
To rest among the suckers, to drink from cleaner rivers

Sago, sago, you first came into being  
In a place called Timasoe  
There, our children grew strong and bold  
Our wives had shiny skin and abundant sweat  
Our men were tall and fit  
Timasoe, Timasoe, Timasoe  
You are west of the cassowary mound near Doeval  
East of the last bend of the Milavo tributary  
North of the juniper bushes  
Where my ancestor Khiano gave birth to Yom  
A sacred place, a peaceful place

Where wild deer and pigs and birds came  
For water and shade and protection from the rain

Oil palm killed the sago  
Oil palm killed our kin  
Oil palm choked our rivers  
Oil palm bled our land

Timasoe, Timasoe, Timasoe  
Dare I visit you now?  
With sorrow and shame, I tread your soil  
My bones weak from riding trucks  
My skin grey from eating rice  
My hands bloodstained from the dollar bills

Timasoe, you are now a bare and barren place  
Lodged between the Trans-Irian Highway and plantation blocks  
Between roads and dust, you stand  
Hostage to oil palm, the settler palm, you weep

For no sago here will grow  
No rivers here will flow  
No gentle winds shall blow  
No songs tomorrow know  
Our bones your earth shall stow

—The song of Marcus Gebze, elder of Mirav village, West Papua