

Dear Future Collaborators,

I hope this letter finds you well. What I aim to share here is a narrative of possibility and a vision for the future, inspired by the rich history and potential of Indonesia, historically known as Nusantara.

Nusantara, an archipelago region inhabited by Austronesian and Melanesian people, is renowned for its fertile land, a blessing from its position within the Ring of Fire and its consistent climate and rainfall. This geographical fortune enabled the production of spices that were, and still are, highly coveted globally. However, the bounty of nature in Nusantara was not merely a source of sustenance but also a foundation for faith. Before the advent of major religions, the peoples of Nusantara harbored beliefs deeply intertwined with the natural world. For example, when trees are cut down, their ability to act as a natural water reservoir is lost, which increases the risk of flooding. At the time, people did not understand the hydrological function of trees, so they interpreted the floods that followed deforestation as punishment for cutting down trees. This interpretation gave rise to a set of beliefs that were passed down through generations: "Thou shalt not cut trees, lest you be punished by the tree god." While this may sound quaint or even absurd by today's standards, such beliefs effectively preserved the forests for many generations. The community, united in this belief, refrained from cutting down trees, and, unknowingly, played a crucial role in conserving their forest environment.

The arrival of Abrahamic religions in Indonesia notably altered the societal perception of nature and science. Islam and to a lesser extent Christianity, facilitated the accessibility of knowledge, encouraging intellectual curiosity and the adoption of a universal ethos of good deeds that surpassed social hierarchies. This shift propelled Indonesia into the modern era but also instigated a gradual decline of indigenous, nature-centric beliefs. The shift towards the worship of a more abstract deity, not of this earth but far above, meant that fears of natural repercussions diminished. This change in belief systems made previously taboo actions, such as cutting trees, more acceptable. It's tempting to directly correlate the ascent of Abrahamic religions with an increase in environmental exploitation within the Nusantara, but such a perspective overly simplifies the dynamics at play, ignoring the significant role of colonialism in exacerbating the exploitation of natural resources. Nonetheless, it's undeniable that these religions have been instrumental in democratizing access to knowledge in Indonesia and rendering some ancient, myth-based practices obsolete.

The crux of the issue, as I see it, is the erosion of a collective mental framework for environmental preservation. The solution, therefore, must be the establishment of a new foundational belief strong enough to revive and sustain this innate understanding and respect for nature. I contend that while Abrahamic faiths have significantly shaped Indonesian society, they alone may not provide the requisite framework for this environmental renaissance. My proposal seeks to harness an age-old motivator: Greed. Despite our aversion to the concept, greed arguably plays a pivotal role in driving human behavior, acting as a universal motivator. If it is greed that propels individuals to exploit natural resources, then it is an even stronger form of greed that can incentivize them to conserve and restore. Currently, the pursuit of wealth often leads to environmental degradation through activities like mining and logging. However, should conservation become more profitable than destruction, it could serve as an effective solution to this issue.

I am not merely suggesting carbon credits, although they are a step in the right direction. My vision extends to the untapped potential of the forest's biodiversity. Our forests are home to countless organisms whose properties and benefits are yet to be fully explored or understood. Recently, I had the opportunity to assist a Japanese startup in integrating spectral data of various materials from prestigious journals worldwide. Using their handheld Raman spectrometer, which can be connected to the database I helped build, users can rapidly gain insights into a new material's profile, its potential applications, and its real-world business value. While their primary market is pharmaceutical companies, the potential applications extend far beyond. Imagine expanding its use to various industries, including manufacturing, semiconductor production, and construction. The solution to many of our challenges could be hidden in the depths of the forest, such as safe automobile paints, natural adhesives for chip manufacturing, or innovative concrete mixtures that cool more efficiently in our increasingly warm world. The exploration of natural materials not only opens up new avenues for sustainable development but also reinforces the importance of preserving our forests as invaluable reservoirs of potential solutions.

My diverse skill set, spanning data analysis, an understanding of Indonesia's cultural history, and a keen insight into the potential for greed to drive positive change, positions me uniquely for this role. I offer not only a deep appreciation for the historical context but also practical strategies and technological solutions for harnessing nature's bounty responsibly. This blend of knowledge and skill, fueled by an insatiable curiosity and a commitment to innovation, is what I bring to the table, along with a rough plan for executing this idea.

Thank you for considering my perspective. I look forward to the possibility of partnering and making a meaningful impact together.

Best Regards,  
[Puja Romulus]