

# **Seismology and Human Settlement: Global Contexts for Local (Sumatra) Patterns**

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The human-induced global warming of our time, partly the fruit of massive deforestation over recent centuries, makes us very aware of what man can do to harm the planet. The earthquake and tsunami of December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004, on the other hand, reminds us of how dependent we all are on the basic beneficence of that planet, and how much its changes affect our lives. This paper arises from the striking fact that seismological events of this massive sort are scarcely mentioned in the histories we have of Indonesia, although they must have been extremely influential in the long term. In particular, recent research on the Sumatran historic preference for highlands for settled agriculture, including my own, has been strangely oblivious to the importance of past tsunamis in moving population away from the coast. Geological advances in the methodology of dating past seismological traumas offer a hope of better integrating science and history, and providing a more comprehensive picture of our past, including the disjunction between Hindu-Buddhist and Muslim kingdoms. Continuing to ignore the lessons of this kind of planetary trauma may have very severe consequences for humanity.