



The main settlement at Rarak: side view showing three paddy storehouses in the center.

## RARAK: THE ANNUAL SWIDDEN CYCLE\*

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### The Village Lands

Rarak village is situated in the foothills of western Sumbawa about a thousand feet above sea level and some ten miles to the west and south of the town of Sumbawa Besar. It lies upon a broad, sloping ridge which gradually declines from the southwestern highlands into the coastal lowlands to the northeast. Adjacent ridges parallel the Rarak ridge both to the north and south and enclose the several short rivers of the area. The tract of land surrounding Rarak and traditionally farmed by its citizens extends across three of these parallel ridges. The extent of this tract is not formally known. Only certain small portions have ever been accurately mapped,<sup>1</sup> and the traditional pre-1925 boundaries are known to only a handful of the village's oldest men. However, a rough survey of the villagers' tract suggests that it is shaped like an elongated trapezoid with a "height" (the SW to NE dimension) of almost two and a half miles and a "base" (forming the lowland boundary, extending NW to SE) of some two miles. These dimensions probably contain about a five-square-mile tract of land which, across its rolling profile, provides the farmland area for the Rarak community.

Within this village tract the citizens of Rarak recognize several major categories of land property. These are as follows:

(1) *omal*:<sup>2</sup> This is previously cultivated terrain which has undergone the swidden cultivation cycle at least once, and usually many times. Particular parcels of *omal*, as delimited by a variety of natural features, are recognized as the "property" of individual villagers,

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\* The field research for this paper was conducted in Sumbawa between March 1954 and April 1956. I am indebted to the Ford Foundation and the Institute of Linguistic and Cultural Research of the University of Indonesia for making this research possible. The data in this paper apply to the period of my work in and around Rarak. The contents are solely my own responsibility and do not reflect the opinions of the institutions or individuals who have assisted me in this research.

1. These areas were mapped by the Netherlands Indies' Topographische Dienst about 1930 shortly after initiation in west Sumbawa of a new system of land taxation. These mapped sections are the kelasir parcels now held by some villagers (see below).
2. The orthography of the basa Semawa, Sumbawan language, terms used in this paper is as follows: for consonants it matches the Indonesian spelling current in 1959 (now changed to render the tj, dj, and sj digraphs as, respectively, c, j, sy); for vowels it presumes eight phonemes, that is, i, é, è, e, a, u, o, ò. See my "Rarak, A Swidden Village of West Sumbawa," in Koentjaraningrat (ed.), Villages in Indonesia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 31, for preliminary phonetic detail.

who consequently have disposal rights over them, including those of clearing, cultivation, fallowing, or allowing others to work such plots in the same ways. Probably between two-thirds and three-quarters of the entire Rarak land tract falls into the omal category.

(2) *tua*: These are timber reserves, or woodlands, scattered throughout the village tract in small isolated parcels. Such parcels are recognized as village property. Consequently, timber from any of them may be used by any villager in need of lumber of his own use.<sup>3</sup> The timber reserves are almost all located in semi-inaccessible areas--such as ravines or beneath valley headwalls--which cannot otherwise be used for regular swidden cultivation. They do not constitute a large portion of the total village tract and generally contain fairly young secondary forest. As an important natural resource for the villagers, the *tua* stands are also separate and distinct from the vastly more extensive upland forest reserves which at present lie outside all village boundaries, are controlled by the regional government's Forest Administration, and are generally closed to use by the villagers.<sup>4</sup>

(3) *kelasir*: Best defined as the only mapped, formally titled real estate which is registered and recognized as such by the present regional government, this category was initiated by Netherlands Indies' land registration measures in 1928. The term *kelasir* is itself derived from Dutch and is the only term currently designating this category of land. Beginning about 1931 individual villagers began to register their *kelasir* claims with the regional Land Tax Office and thereby formally began to assume tax obligations on them. Until 1942, as each such parcel was claimed it was surveyed by the Office, and the owner's name was formally registered for the due annual tax. During the 1931-42 period and since 1946 some ninety-two hectares of land have been so registered in Rarak. These parcels are mostly located close by the central village settlement.

The first of these three land categories is of the greatest economic importance to most villagers. From the omal parcels is derived the overwhelming annual bulk of the villagers' staple rice crop. To outline the role of the village household in the local agricultural cycle it is necessary at this point to give extended consideration to this one category of land.

Strictly speaking, when a villager refers to a former swidden parcel as his "own" omal, it means that he has been the most recent farmer to harvest paddy from it. Accordingly, he holds the tacit rights of disposal over it until it again becomes sufficiently fallowed for another paddy crop to be grown there. With few exceptions the Rarak farmer plants his swidden with crops that mature and are harvested within a single calendar year. This means that after a full year his most recently tilled parcel lapses entirely into a fallow period during which it becomes increasingly infested by *sang mamong* (Latin, *Lantara camara*) and other forms of secondary bush. If the parcel is relatively productive, the farmer will probably return to cultivate it after

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3. Generally these reserves have been under the supervision of the village headman and today may still be used with the permission of either the headman or his deputy.
  4. Officially this area is known as forest reserve and is closed to all farming and lumbering activity. There are signs, however, that considerable "land poaching" has begun in unpatrolled and uninspected sectors.

three years. On even the best omal parcel within the Rarak tract the stated maximum frequency (in 1955-56) for paddy cultivation was once every four years. The minimum fallow period between successive adequate paddy harvests was almost universally reckoned at three calendar years for any given parcel. Older village men would be quick to add that this fallow period was not really sufficient and that current paddy yields could not match in quantity those from the same land twenty years ago. At that time, they indicated, the usual fallow period was about ten years.<sup>5</sup>

Within the presently accepted swidden fallow period, and usually well beyond it, the individual who holds the omal for a given swidden parcel remains its legitimate custodian. His permission must first be sought by anyone who wants to use the parcel even for such activities as woodcutting, livestock pasturing, or gardening. In most cases his permission must also be obtained if another man wants that swidden for paddy cultivation even after the currently normal fallow period has elapsed. However, if the swidden parcel described by a villager as his omal happens to be on level ground, of considerable size (three or more hectares), at a location not far from the village, and clear of boulders, it is obviously an exceptionally desirable piece of land. This, in turn, means that the present omal claim almost certainly extends back unbroken in time over many cycles of clearing and planting. It means that the villager himself, his father (or mother) or other more remote lineal forbears have, in fact, worked the parcel steadily and with maximum frequency. In so doing they have clearly maintained the recognized omal claim over the parcel within the family line for several generations.

Although the most desirable land parcels of the community are now probably tilled regularly according to a four-year cultivation cycle, it does not follow that most villagers claim omal on no more than four parcels. All those questioned on the extent of their holdings claimed between five and eight omal. On the whole, these are probably reliable claims but certain other villagers were described by their neighbors as having as few as two or as many as ten such parcels. Two newcomers to the village in 1956 possessed no omal rights but were being allowed to farm land which had long been the omal of established residents. Due to the lack of maps or measurements of the Rarak tract, the villagers' lack of facility in making or reading sketch maps, and the sometimes conflicting verbal claims to omal, it is difficult to check the accuracy of individual claims. As a result, neither the total number nor the individual size of a villager's parcels is known. Neither can the precise extent to which some villagers control disproportionately large areas of choice land be clearly demonstrated with the data at hand.

Despite the absence of quantitative data, very real differences clearly exist among the villagers in terms of their access to land resources. Three factors are basic to these differences. The first is that of omal inheritance: omal claims have been kept alive within particular family lines and, even today, descendants of the earlier settlers at Rarak maintain generally better parcels than those who have settled more recently in the village. The second factor is the inheritance of kelasir parcels. Here again, although the data are not

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5. There is probably no way to check through written records on the accuracy of the older villagers' estimates of the situation a quarter of a century ago. Yet the inferences from the calendrical data remembered by many clearly support this assertion of a much longer fallow cycle throughout the village tract.

entirely clear, the descendants of apparently earlier settlers maintain an unusually large amount of the first-established kelasir land. Finally, there is the factor of difference in the quality of land throughout the Rarak tract: the villagers recognize the diversity of agricultural potential from one subarea to another. It is this third factor which must be described at this point.

For the Rarak farmer the locale variables of soil quality, approximate degree of slope, and exposure to rain and sun determine much of the overall quality of a land parcel. Several categories designate qualities of soil: sandy soil (*tana gersék*) is generally poor; black soil (*tana pisak*) is usually rich. Red soil (*tana mēra*), intermediate in fertility, is able to hold rainfall fairly well. Soil which is scattered with large boulders (*tana batu*) or with small and medium-sized rocks (*tana batu ngarèsa*) may be extremely fertile because it is realized that the rocks help retain the groundwater, especially on parcels of considerable slope. In order to describe the approximate fertility of a rocky stretch of soil the villager may state that it is one of the types listed above. Otherwise, he may merely say that it is either infertile (*tana maté*) or fertile (*tana telas*). If he is an older villager, he may also nostalgically refer to the "fat soil" (*tana èrat*) of about thirty years ago, when virgin timber was still being cleared from the edges of the village tract and the area was being planted with paddy.

To some extent the fertility of a parcel may also be judged (particularly in peripheral sectors) by the rapidity with which brush cover grows up again after the post-harvest abandonment of the swidden. Yet today, over most of the village tract the secondary cover which invades the fallow swidden is largely restricted to sang mamong, the thorny bush ubiquitous throughout Sumbawa's savannah regions.<sup>6</sup> Hence the local terms designating either the stage of fallowing or the comparative fertility of a swidden as judged by its covering flora refer primarily to this one type of growth. Such a general term as *omal rēja* (big omal) may designate a parcel of five to ten years' fallow growth or a longer-fallowed parcel which now has fair-sized trees among its sang. The latter may have been tilled only within the memory of the older villagers--perhaps some twenty-five years ago. On the other hand, *omal odéq* (small omal) usually indicates a sang growth of no more than four years. At the same time the villager usually knows who cut such a parcel and how many years ago; hence he can specify more accurately its characteristics as *omal dua tén* (two-year-old omal) or *omal telu tén* (three-year-old omal) and so on.

The additional consideration of slope is less specifically enumerated in the evaluation of land parcels. Although seldom expressed as an independent factor, it is, nevertheless, often tacitly included in the villager's appraisal and is subsumed in the vocabulary of soil fertility. The relationship between land declivity and attrition through rainfall is clearly realized and, on the more precipitous hillsides, rock cover and unburned tree trunks are regarded as important in checking the wet season's erosion. Within the Rarak tract during the 1955-56 season it appeared that about one-third of the village swiddens were located on hillsides of fifteen-degree slopes or more.

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6. For a summary description of these zones, based largely upon the geographical work of G. Kuperus, see my Aspects of Local Government in a Sumbawan Village (Eastern Indonesia) (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Monograph Series, 1961), pp. 3-6.

Villagers universally admitted that such land was definitely inferior to more level parcels. The latter were prized for their more stable soil composition, better yields, and greater ease of tillage.

The factors of sun and rainfall exposure, while explicitly acknowledged for their combined importance to swidden productivity, seem seldom to be gauged separately for their effect. At least in discussing swidden yields from within the same swidden cluster (in 1954-55, usually those swiddens confined to a common valley) and for the same year, villagers characteristically appeared to assume a generally uniform effect. If, for example, the low early morning sun warmed only a ravine's north bank swiddens while the south bank still lay in shade, the late afternoon sun would presumably be felt that much longer--and with equal effect--on the south bank. Nevertheless, the effect of these individual variables upon the ripening-speed--if not upon the volume of harvest--is clearly recognized, even among villagers working the same swidden cluster. In 1955 those farming the Telar river valley (about one mile north of Rarak) pointed out the ten-day lag in the ripening of the south bank swiddens as compared to those cut along the north bank. They ascribed the difference to the localized, late afternoon rainfalls (of early April) which had acted to reduce the sunshine on the south bank swiddens.

#### The Villager's Calendar

At Rarak the calendar year is seen primarily in terms of two alternating seasons. The *balét* (dry season or east monsoon) begins during May or June, spreads its initially cool drought across the island, and gradually parches the land dust-dry during the lengthening days of August and September. Before October the landscape has turned sere and tan. Its dust is suspended in eddies and patches over the lowlands; its hillside waterholes have been reduced to muddy wallows for drowsy water buffalo; cacti and poinsettia bloom. Then the dry season gives way to the sharp squalls and brief showers of October and November. These cluster in thunderheads above the highlands as the early northwest winds begin to parry the faltering southerlies from the Indian Ocean. Finally, as the northwesterly winds stiffen, the heavy November rains of the west monsoon (*barat*) sweep in. By December they dominate the daily round; in prolonged bursts both day and night they drench the island, glutting streams and rivers with roaring torrents of brown topsoil and mangled vegetation. Soon the sun reaches its southern solstice and the damp heat of a January midday is such that even the farmer cannot remain long in an unshaded roadway or rice-field. Yet the chilly night rains drum down persistently until March. In April they have begun to slacken. By May the sun has again swung far north, and the west monsoon breaks up into sharp thunderstorms, uneasy clouded calms, and sporadic eddies of dry wind. The west monsoon then dissolves quickly again into the dry warmth of the early *balét*. The upland rice harvest is under cover by this time and another yearly cycle has been concluded.

Although basically defined by these alternating seasons, the villager's calendar year is not consistently subdivided into smaller units of time. Those who have learned to *mengadji* (recite Arabic scriptures from memory) can list by rote the names of the twelve Islamic months in their correct order. Yet most do not keep track of the days and weeks of either season according to such formal periods. The names of the Christian months, although used by the provincial government, are locally even less familiar. No more than three

villagers--all of whom had contact with the town population--had learned any of the months of the Christian calendar and could even approximately correlate them with the seasonal cycle. Of all the Islamic or Christian months only Puasa (Ramadan) is universally familiar in Rarak. Since, as the fasting month, it is associated with explicit religious obligations and is climaxed by Hari Raja (or Lebaran--the most elaborate single feast of the year), it is the major landmark of every calendar year.

While not proficient in reckoning time by formal calendar, the villagers realize that the major Islamic festivals such as Lebaran and Maulud occur from year to year at slightly different times within the familiar agricultural year. Yet due to the discrepancy of about eleven days between the *hidjrah* (Islamic year) and the astronomical year, a villager must be almost forty years of age before he has experienced each period of the Islamic calendar associated with every stage of the agricultural cycle. This gradual shift between the two systems encourages the more informal local method of relative time reckoning through close association of events. Those events not associated with an absolute calendrical year number tend, instead, to be linked with unusual personal or agricultural experiences--the death of a child, the large flood that washed out the town market, or the year of the severe paddy shortage. In this fashion major events and crises are recounted and, by interpolation, may also become absolutely datable.

As farmers most villagers find a lunar month to be the most useful time unit in reckoning seasonal progress. Whether or not these lunar months coincide exactly with the Islamic months is a matter of concern only to the head of the mosque and his assistants. It is their job to inform the village of the proper ritual periods while most village men pay attention only to the moons of each season. As in Malay, the word for month is also that for moon (*bulan*) and, by counting the moons since the end of the preceding season, a villager knows approximately how far a season has advanced. Approximately six moons is assumed to be the length of each.

For certain of these lunar months the farmer remembers rhymed adages which designate the agricultural chores appropriate to each.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, at the beginning of the year, in the first month following the end of the barat, it is appropriate that "the first month, make one the iron" (*bulan saiq, basaig besi*). This means that during the month of June it is time to haft the blade of the *batéq*, or brush knife, to its long handle, and generally prepare for the labor of clearing. In 1954-55, however, the *batéq* preparation and clearing did not actually begin until mid-July or August. By this time the east monsoon had already dried out the hillsides for over two months. Yet the lag between the traditional "schedule" and current activity aroused no local concern. In fact, the ignorance of the old adage among younger villagers (aged twenty to thirty-five) coupled with the mere existence of a traditional lore so at variance with modern practice, served to support the nostalgic claims of the elder villagers. Less than half a century ago, they asserted, the wood felled for the rice fields was *kaju rangòq* (large timber), there was less restriction on where one could cut swidden and, in order to prepare for the normal planting time, one had to begin felling the trees literally during the first

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7. There are ten of these adages about the phases of time and work of the annual cycle; they still await explanation by older villagers from whom I have so far been unable to obtain unequivocal data.

month (June) in order to allow the big trunks and stumps to dry out sufficiently for burning before the barat rains began. Today, with vegetation on the village tract reduced almost entirely to quick growing sang brush, the farmer no longer needs to begin his cutting operations during this first month. Should he do so, in fact, the sang brush would again be waist-high when the time came for burning and planting.

### The Phases of the Annual Subsistence Calendar

#### Phase One: Swidden Clearing (August-September)

The first phase of the agricultural year begins during August as the balét approaches its climax. The normal diversity in village activity begins to dwindle and the villager becomes increasingly preoccupied with the most basic chore of the subsistence cycle: the cutting and clearing of new swiddens.<sup>8</sup> As September approaches isolated patches of cleared land appear in the tangled brush cover across the village tract. Increasingly the central settlement is deserted by its men during the bright morning hours and the relaxed verandah-group sociability of June and July gives way to the prolonged, arduous effort of clearing. Nevertheless, community life proceeds: village women continue their perpetual daytime routine of rice-threshing and household maintenance, take time to visit their friends and relatives in adjoining houses, and await the afternoon or early evening return of their husbands and sons from the scattered hillsides. Sometimes they make trips out to the swiddens to help in, or inspect, the work. In some cases their men return at sundown from swidden locations over two miles from the village. By early October the fields have been almost completely cleared and the first farming phase thus completed. By then the uncertainties of the seasonal weather change have also become a prime topic of local conversation as the men begin to gather in the village to await the second phase of the cycle: burning.

In the process of clearing, the villager uses only two simple cutting tools and works with few rules of procedure. His primary implement is the batéq, used principally to cut the sang bush. The steel blade of the batéq (*besi*) measures between eight and ten inches, is slightly curved at its tip, and it sharpened only along its concave edge. At its hilted end this blade is set into a straight, three-foot wooden handle by means of a short tang (*suki*). The socket is strengthened with pitch (*ngar*) and the hilt-end of the handle is then bound tightly with braided coconut fiber or steel wire. Joined in this fashion, blade and handle become an effective tool for heavy brush cutting. The other main implement is the villagers' familiar machete (*bèrang*). Having a steel blade ten to fifteen inches in length, it is the most useful all-purpose tool the villager possesses--one worn or carried by men everywhere. Few villagers except the village carpenters own axes and these are seldom used in swidden clearing. If it is necessary to fell or pollard an exceptionally large tree, one of these axes may be borrowed for the purpose. But even to cut the occasional large trees encountered on Rarak's swiddens a heavy bèrang will often suffice.

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8. The Indonesian term is ladang; Sumbawan: rau.



Apart from cutting tools the villager's equipment may also include sandals and leggings to protect his feet and legs while clearing. Crude sandals, made of short rubber tire sections traded from Chinese town merchants, are attached clumsily by coconut fiber thongs to the ankle; they help protect the feet against sharp sang stumps and thorns. Occasionally villagers will also improvise leggings--using strips of reed matting and lengths of string--to protect their shins.

With this simple tool kit the clearing operation begins. There is no apparent pattern of procedure: the shapes and contours of individual swiddens, their accessibility to footpaths leading from the village, and the variable height of the bush cover, all influence the villager's decision on where to begin his cutting. Frequently cutting will begin at the boundary between contiguous parcels, and two neighboring farmers, having jointly cut a two-yard wide swath into the brush along the common boundary, will then work away from one another in opposite directions. If the brush is especially high in one section, a farmer will often cut this section first, perhaps having to start by clearing a narrow path to reach it. In this way the thicker, heavier bush will be allowed a longer period to dry out before the burning. In other cases the farmer may choose to cut back his swidden systematically along one or both sides of the footpath which either crosses it or skirts one edge.

In 1954 the sang mamong growing on swiddens that had reportedly fallowed during the three previous years stood from five to seven feet in height. In many places along the footpaths, this brush arched across from both sides forming a tunnel of dense, matted greenery through which villages had to walk in stooped gait. Such dense sang growth not only sends its wiry mesh into all adjacent brush, but it further interlaces the tangle with hundreds of sharp, tiny thorns. The resulting mass of snarled thicket becomes as impenetrable as a bank of barbed wire. To clear such brush requires arduous, piecemeal hacking of the peripheral tangle until the main members of each sang bush can be exposed and then sheared off close to the ground. To do this the villager usually attacks the sang by swinging his brush hook at arm's length into it. He continues until he has severed a substantial mass. Then, by hooking a clump of the brush with his batéq, he can disengage it and stack it loosely in a cleared area behind him. He never tries to handle the thorny mass with his bare hands; the long handled batéq can be used equally as knife and crude pitchfork.

The cutting itself is grueling and difficult work. The villager may either work at it alone, with assistance from his family, or in the company of several neighbors. Yet cooperative swidden-clearing relationships among the villagers in 1954 appeared generally haphazard and of little predictable duration.<sup>9</sup> Most consistent were the patterns of assistance between villagers and the members of their own immediate families. While wielding the brush-hook is entirely a man's job, a villager's wife and adolescent daughters often help with the chores subsidiary to the actual cutting. If the swidden were not too far from the village, these women might accompany their small dependent children or siblings to the swidden at midday. They usually brought along the noonday meal to the head of the family and on their return collected loads of wood for the family kitchen. Depending upon the amount of work to be done, they might also assist by piling the cut

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9. For a summary of the several kinds of cooperative labor in Rarak, see my "Rarak," pp. 43-45.



Swidden-clearing: cutting Lantara camara (sang) with the long-handled brush knife (batéq).

poles for later use in the swidden fence, chopping small brush for firewood, or fetching drinking water from a nearby spring. Such visits by the village womenfolk seemed unplanned and appeared prompted by no explicit work obligations. In addition, it should be noted that the villager himself would usually leave the village in the morning well supplied with food, even if his swidden lay close to the village. Dangling from his brush knife--carried slung across one shoulder--would be a covered basket (*belasé*) stuffed with cold rice and a bamboo (*latok*) of drinking water for the noon meal. He would often return in the evening carrying a load of firewood for his wife. In both these respects his routine, in itself, would tend to absolve his womenfolk of any responsibility for clearing assistance at the swidden.

In contrast to the women of his immediate family, the villager's son learns at an early age that he is expected to take a direct part in land clearing and related chores. Boys of six or seven years (and probably younger) were often observed accompanying their fathers to the swidden. Here their daily activities included watching their father's labors and playing either alone or, occasionally, with children from neighboring swiddens. The villager's son is encouraged to assume an active role in clearing when his father presents him with a miniature *batéq*, an exact replica (two-third scale) of his father's. The age when he receives this prized tool varies. Most of the dozen pre-adolescent village boys seen using these small brush hooks were past the age of circumcision and hence already seven or eight years of age, or even older. Until the boy is tall and strong enough to wield even a small *batéq* effectively, the assistance he gives his father on the swidden consists largely of stacking cut brush, trimming poles and stakes for the swidden fence, and accumulating small caches of firewood for the household. By the time he has reached the age of eleven or twelve the boy has already begun to use an adult-size *batéq* and can be seen working beside his father in all the activities of clearing. By this age, too, he has spent at least four or five seasons on the swidden with his father during the clearing period. He has become proficient with the simple but arduous techniques of preparing the swidden for burning.

#### Phase Two: Burning the Swidden (September-October)

As the climax to the labor of clearing there comes the second phase of the swidden cycle: the burning. Ordinarily this occurs either in the final week of September or during the first half of October. The exact time (usually a two-day period) is officially scheduled by the Forestry Service in town in consultation with the district head (*demonq*). To the villagers the firing of the swiddens is an extremely crucial, often dangerous, and always dramatic annual event. The success or failure of the burning hinges upon the idiosyncracies of the seasonal change and the villagers' preparation for that change. The efficacy of the burning will, in turn, largely determine Rarak's margin of real subsistence during the ensuing year.

Ideally when the prepared swidden is ignited it should burn clean at a single sweep. To the villager a cleanly burned swidden is among the best omens of a good harvest and, as a rule of thumb, he feels this is best insured by scheduling his burning about a month before the end of the *balét*. While not a precise sign, the brief September showers which usually break the scorching, prolonged August heat are thought by many villagers to augur the onset of the rains in forty-two more

days (i.e., one and one-half lunar months).<sup>10</sup> Ideally, their arrival will then allow twelve days to complete the cutting. Hence, if local clearing operations have been correctly gauged, by late September the matted rows of cut brush will have been parched dry by the sun, the recent light showers having barely dampened them. Nevertheless, the villagers state that burning conditions are best if there has been no rain during the preceding two days.

On the day of the burning the brush-laden swiddens are, despite their appearance of total dishevelment, well prepared. Along the entire periphery of each *pe-liok*, or swidden cluster, is a cleared margin (*ola rau*) two or three yards wide from which all cut brush has been removed. These serve to prevent the flames from breaking out into the surrounding sun-scorched bush. The highest mounds of dried brush have been piled near the center of the swiddens where their combustion will not endanger the peripheral bush. The remaining debris usually lies in wide rows one or two yards apart set at right angles to the slope. Where the slope is especially steep these rows act as internal firebreaks, slowing a fire which may be fanned by a strong updraft and allowing the torchbearers to ignite the hillside more evenly. If valuable saplings or other trees (such as bananas, *mangga*, *kapok*, or bamboo) remain on the swidden, the area surrounding them is cleared in a five- to eight-yard radius. Occasionally their lower limbs are also pollarded. Stockpiles of poles, branches and logs, to be used later for fencing or housebuilding will have been collected and leaned against such "fireproofed" trees. Wide protective alleyways or peripheral strips of swidden may have been carefully preburned. If a fenced homestead is located adjacent to (or totally within) a large swidden cluster and sudden wind shifts could carry live embers onto the buildings, preburning becomes an important protective measure. Nevertheless, in 1954-55 it was a rare precaution at Rarak. Because there were only a few Rarak homesteads outside the main village and the secondary growth of the swidden is usually quickly consumed without generating prolonged heat, the fire danger is sufficiently minimized simply by clearing peripheral firebreaks.

The firing of the swiddens is entirely a man's job. Although the villager's entire family will almost invariably turn out to watch the spectacle, only the males put the torches to the hillside tinder. Cooperating in small groups, the men of one *pe-liok* generally fire their area as a single unit. The time of burning is almost always set well before noon; yet on individual swidden clusters the cooperating farmers may await locally specific conditions of midmorning wind direction or updraft to aid the firing. Occasionally, remote single swiddens are fired by their owners before the morning dew has disappeared so that the dampness will provide an additional measure of control over the blaze when only two or three villagers are at hand to supervise it. In 1954 the two most isolated swiddens in the Rarak tract were actually fired the morning before the village's main scheduled day for burning. On the main day the first cluster (held by eight farmers on contiguous swiddens) was fired just after nine o'clock. Within the next hour and a half the remaining four swidden clusters near the village followed.

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10. The accuracy of this estimate is generally confirmed by examination of average rainfall data for a period of some twenty years before World War II--data presented in the appendices to W. G. van der Wolk, "Memorie van overgave van den gezaghebber van Soembawa" (unpublished manuscript). These data are derived from coastal western Sumbawa (around Sumbawa Besar) as well as from the interior area around the village of Batu Rotok.



View of swiddens being burned south of Rarak on the south side of the Telar river valley.



Looking downslope across a freshly burned Rarak swidden area. Notice how clear the swidden area is and the paucity of large trees in view. Blackened stumps in foreground are shorn-off sang bushes; these will begin to generate new leaves within just a few days.

Drying conditions were said to have been excellent in the preceding weeks and that day's firing was correspondingly quick and efficient.

On the two swidden clusters where burning was observed in 1954 the farmers used as torches yard-long sticks stripped of their bark and smeared at one end with *djarak* (castor) oil. Four torchbearers spread out along the foot of the hillside to ignite the lowest row of brush (about 150 feet long) at intervals of about three yards. By firing the lowland fringe the men sought to utilize a gentle breeze fanning up the lower hillside to spread the flames. After firing this row, they divided into pairs to ascend the hillside along the edges of the *peleok*. Shouts from the hilltop indicated that another group of villagers had simultaneously ignited the brush row along the hillcrest in the same *peleok*. As the groups of men gradually converged from above and below, they kept careful watch on the progress of the flames and put the middle brush rows to the torch one by one. Aided by the breeze, the lower flame line mounted rapidly toward the hillcrest and spread evenly between the crude, irregular rows of brush. In several cases large pockets of unburned brush were detected below the lower flame line when the smoke lifted; these were reignited by an alert torchbearer who approached the pockets wearing sandals to protect his feet. On one swidden cluster (estimated at almost five hectares) the main fire had died away within half an hour leaving the entire field clean and consumed. The other cluster, somewhat larger in size (perhaps five and a half hectares) and littered with larger brush rows, took well over an hour to burn completely. Both were fired in approximately the same fashion by about the same number of cooperating villagers (between eight and ten men).

Practically no member of a villager's family willingly misses the drama of firing the swiddens. On the 1954 burning day (October 12) the main village at Rarak was virtually deserted by nine o'clock in the morning. Wives, small children, and even aged parents left in groups following or accompanying their menfolk to the scattered *peleok*. In sheltered vantage points (usually at the foot or windward margin of the swiddens), in nearby clearings, homesteads, or nearby rocky stream beds the families gathered to watch--and the children to shout in anticipation and excitement. At first all were able to follow the operation as the men darted across the fields spurring the fire across ever larger stretches of hillside. Quickly, however, the picture was obscured when flame spurted through the tinder and great lobes of tan smoke swelled out from the tangled debris, rose, and dissolved into dirty billows. Smoke smudged the morning sky, tingeing the scene with a tobacco-colored twilight. Below, the entire lower half of the hillside disappeared beneath thick rolling ground-smoke. From the billows emerged tongues of orange flame devouring a rapidly receding front up the slope.

As the fire took hold across the entire hillside the conflagration of dry brush mounted gradually to a roar. Punctuated by staccato crackling and the hiss of vaporizing sap it drowned out all other sounds. Many farmers managed to circle the swidden cluster after setting their fires and rejoined their families to watch the enveloping holocaust. Others remained in isolated knots at the further end shouting excited observations to one another through the noise. Whatever the onlooker's location, the choking swirls of smoke--whipped by eddies and erratic downdrafts--added sporadic attacks of coughing, eye-watering, and smoke blindness to the excitement. Only from far above the writhing smoke was any measure of detached observation possible. Here in the tawny sky half a dozen russet-colored *klèjang* (a kind of large

red hawk) wheeled casually beyond the reach of the fumes while searching through gaps in the smoke for small animals fleeing the flames.

Within a few minutes the roar across the blackening land abruptly began to diminish. The fire had reached the firebreak margins or lapsed into slow evanescence around scattered islands of unconsumed stumps, fallen logs, or stony outcrops. The scorching heat of only moments before diminished to a pleasant warmth. The voluminous brown smoke subsided into thin grey puffs from rapidly dissolving cinders. A pungent, sterile smell of freshly charred wood pervaded the murky air. No longer buoyed on swirling updrafts, showers of ash and flakes of charred debris hovered, settling slowly. Where the brush had lain thick and tangled, splotches of white ash now dotted the land. The previously unkempt tan and green hillside was gradually revealed beneath the dwindling smoke as black, lifeless and uncluttered--and totally silent except for the ticking of expiring embers. Dusted with a fragile layer of ash, the blackened rocks, the rills and the contour lines of the eroded lateritic hillside lay everywhere exposed. Short blighted stumps of sapling and sang jutted ubiquitously from among the bare rocks and creases of the slope. Half a dozen gaunt, smudged trees stood out as the only surviving landmarks; charred twigs and twisted branches lay strewn haphazardly as chance remnants of the burning. The abrupt silence of the swidden, its lifeless profile, and the patches of white ash beneath the scattered trees suggested the grotesque vignette of a sudden snow scene in the calm tropical hills.

### Phase Three: Transition (October-November)

The third phase of the agricultural cycle comprises those inter-related activities which follow the burning but precede the actual planting of the swidden. These are the final swidden clearing, the fencing of each swidden cluster, the construction of the swidden house for each household, and each household's shift of residence from the main settlement to the swidden house. This is essentially a transitional phase, irregular in duration, and delimited by the two short and relatively intense activities of burning the swidden and later planting it (phase four). Usually extending through much of October and part of November (in 1954 the period lasted about five weeks from mid-October), it does not impose any clearcut sequence of activity upon the villagers. Instead, each family works out its individual allotment of time and energy for each of the necessary tasks.

After the major day of burning, most of the village swidden areas must be still further cleared in preparation for planting. Some debris always remains even after the most ideal burning and this must be removed if the land is to be used to best advantage. In 1954 practically the entire area cleared by the Rarak villagers was burned clean on burning day. The local prognostication was that the forthcoming rice crop of 1955, if not too heavily attacked by *timal*, or "enemies," would therefore be at least adequate, and probably good. Yet scattered, unconsumed piles of brush and stumps still cluttered the swidden areas and, in the days after the main firing, small clean-up fires (*api ongén*) were lit in many sectors to finish the burning operation. Along the lower reaches of a ridge west of Rarak and in several ravines to the north where the land had fallowed longer than usual (and the growth had consequently been somewhat heavier) isolated fires glowed day and night for almost three weeks. Gradually these fires dried out the remaining stumps and logs and released the hillside enclaves for planting.

While clearing the remaining debris from their swiddens, all farmers sharing a peliok must also plan to contribute to its fencing. Whatever the size of such a swidden cluster, it is essential that a sturdy fence be built around it as the first line of defense against animal marauders. Free-roaming domestic goats, water buffaloes, and horses are potentially among the most destructive of these pests. In addition wild pigs, deer, monkeys and small rodents are common throughout the uplands. The peliok's exposure to these dangers depends upon its location within the village land tract. A location bordered by a stream and by tracts of recently fallowed swidden is liable to be in relatively greater jeopardy from foraging domestic animals than one hemmed in by village woodlands or forest reserve. This latter location, however, increases the relative risk of depredation by wild pigs, monkeys and deer. Yet in no situation is a swidden cluster even remotely secure without its surrounding stake fence (*pagar sematang*).

What is true for the swidden cluster as a whole also holds for the component swiddens within it. Those tilling peripheral swiddens will generally be the first to suffer from animal incursions. Accordingly, it is usually these marginal farmers who take the lead in fencing activities. Each assumes the responsibility for constructing, and later maintaining, the fence section bordering his own particular swidden. By solicitation or persuasion--or, if necessary, cajolery or threat--he must then gain the assistance and material support of the swidden occupants further in, those whose harvest may depend equally upon the efficient maintenance of the peliok's perimeter fence. Most families within a given peliok will cooperate readily in this operation. This reflects not only their awareness of the mutual advantage involved but also the factor of interpersonal congeniality which from the start affects the composition of the swidden neighborhood.<sup>11</sup> The most familiar cooperative arrangement for fence-building is a small group of male neighbors. If a man cannot find time to help his swidden cluster neighbors in fence-building, he will be expected to supply substantial material support in the form of cut stakes or bamboo strips instead. Fencing is essentially a male occupation; only rarely will wives or daughters be seen helping out and their assistance is restricted to collecting and carrying bundles of sticks to the men, who do the actual cutting and setting. During the weeks before planting, the fences are gradually extended so that, when the rains arrive in November, each peliok has been completely enclosed.

Even by the villagers' own standards such a stake fence is a temporary structure and cannot compare to the permanent, well-built fence of a homestead (*keban*). Made of whatever timber is available from the recent brush-cutting operations, it is formed of a line of irregularly shaped stakes (*djenang*) set closely together and horizontally linked either by tough vines or lashed bamboo crosspieces. It is usually about four or five feet high and the component stakes vary greatly in diameter and strength. The stakes are set between eight inches and two feet into the ground depending on soil conditions and the size of the stakes. In sectors where the stakes are especially slender they may be reinforced by piles of stones set against the inner, swidden side. In certain convenient places--usually where the fence crosses

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11. A few instances were observed of villagers swapping swidden areas among themselves in order to avoid having to cultivate an omal bordering that of someone whom they had come to dislike. There is thus some reason for assuming that a degree of congeniality in planning the swidden neighborhoods is thought necessary among villagers.



the main footpaths to the village--openings are left to allow human entrance but to block that of animals. For this the villagers use several types of "ladder-gates" (*lawang rau*), the most common of which consists of two short bamboo ladders leaning against one another on opposite sides of the stick-fence barrier.<sup>12</sup>

The third major task of this period is the construction of the small temporary swidden house, or *balé rau*. The location of this structure is of paramount importance to the farmer: it must be situated to make possible maximum vigilance against marauding animals. If the swidden falls across level or gently rolling upland, the swidden house will usually be built in a central location from which all sections of the growing area are equally open to surveillance. If there are trees on such a parcel, the swidden house may be set close to, but not beneath, them. If his swidden borders a streambed and extends up the adjacent hillside, the villager will usually place his house midway along the lower margin, either on or near the bank. He will then build its verandah (see below) to face the slope in order to maintain a sweeping uphill view of the entire swidden from this vantage point. His house will also, of course, be conveniently near a source of water. But effective vigilance will usually not be sacrificed for either access to water or tree shade.

Two other considerations may also affect a decision on the location of a swidden house. The declivity of the land is one: a swidden cut on a thirty-degree slope (as in one of the several ravines north of Rarak) will usually require exceptionally long pilings (six to ten feet in length) to level the house on its downslope side. Because these may be difficult to obtain, the villagers will usually favor less precipitous locations or even rocky outcrops in the swidden, providing that visibility is not too severely impeded. The position of the swidden within its cluster can also influence site selection. For example, if a villager has an especially close relationship with a neighbor, friend or kinsman on an adjacent swidden, the advantages of a particular location may be gauged somewhat differently. The difficulties that A has in surveying his entire swidden from an otherwise appealing building site may be alleviated through B's agreement, as his neighbor, to locate his own swidden house to cover A's "blind areas." A, in such a situation, then reciprocates by guarding B's "blind areas" from his neighboring vantage spot. Although such agreements are seldom made explicit, they become important facets in cooperative patterns and can often affect swidden house locations.<sup>13</sup>

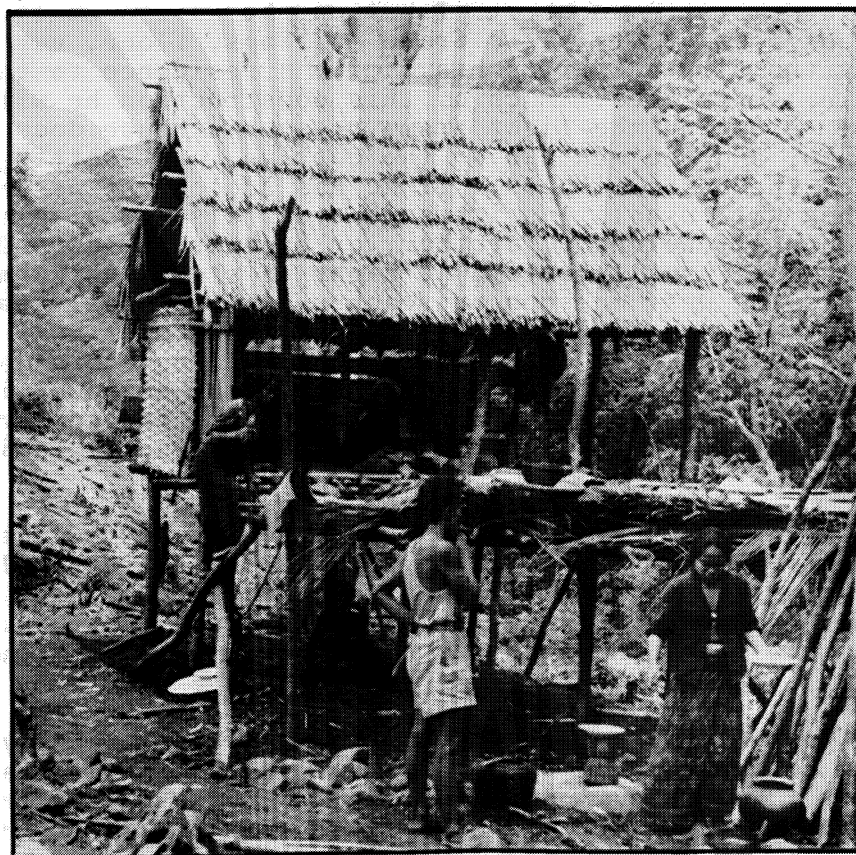
The swidden house itself is regarded as a distinctly temporary shelter. In shape, size and construction it is far more humble than the villager's main house in the central village. The frame is made of small logs and poles saved from swidden clearing; many of them are of green or unseasoned wood. Usually only the roof and wall materials are of seasoned wood and these are often borrowed from the main village house. The floors are made of unevenly cut sticks laid across the

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12. For fence-building the villager's tool kit is supplemented by one specialized and somewhat unusual implement. This is the long-handled *pangkali*, or shovel, with a narrow, socketed steel blade. The *bèrang* is the other main tool involved. In the main, the stakes of a fence are dug into the soil, not sharpened and pounded in.
  13. Some villagers refer to this mutual guarding duty as a *basiru* type of cooperative labor. See my "Rarak," p. 45, for a summary of *basiru* labor.

lower horizontal members of the frame but are neither systematically bound in place nor surfaced with bamboo laths as in the village houses. They are made comfortable for sitting or sleeping only by goatskins or woven mats (*tipar*). Roofing is made of *atap* leaves folded across bamboo rods and set in overlapping rows along both sides of a two-slope gable roof. The external appearance is thus always bedraggled: the roof fronds are curled and jagged while the hacked stumps of uprights and crosspoles inevitably jut out at odd angles from all parts of the structure. Frame joints are in part socketed by natural forks in the pilings and in part formed of paired notches which are chopped into intersecting beams and then lashed in place with liana.

The *balé rau* is inevitably small in size. Usually it has only one room and, although dimensions vary, it may measure as little as four by six feet inside. In this space, a man, his wife and even three children may spend the wet season period from November to May. A kitchen corner centered around a wood-framed, tamped clay hearth (*sanikan*) will be screened from the main portion of the room by a low plaited partition of bamboo. Smoke from the hearth escapes through the *atap* roof. The low walls of the small room will extend less than two feet above the floor before meeting the roof. In these narrow confines sleeping and cooking are the only activities and much family life must be spent outdoors. Activities requiring adequate house space must be reserved for the dry season in the central village.

Invariably attached to the swidden house is a verandah (*pantar*, open verandah; *djembangan*, larger roofed-over verandah). It often runs the entire length of the house at the same floor level as the central room and covering a considerably larger area. It gives access to the interior by the only doorway of the house and from one edge it is



Swidden house during planting. House still incomplete but cooking is under way to provide food for planting helpers.

connected to the ground by a short, wide ladder (*anar*). Trellis-forming poles (*batang sempara*) extend horizontally overhead linking the roof to the verandah's vertically extended outer pilings. This framework supports bean and squash vines and provides shade during the damp, midday heat of the growing season.

Such a verandah has many uses. Many of the housewife's daily growing-season chores are done on this platform. Although her hearth remains under cover, food preparation, dishwashing, rice culling, cotton preparation, and other jobs require the space and light of the verandah. Small children spend much time playing either on the verandah or in the clearing around it. Affluent village leaders will usually have larger verandahs designed to accommodate guests during planting or harvest feasts. Some villagers will also use their verandahs at harvest time as platforms for stacking and drying paddy. Most, however, will build separate drying platforms (*atang*) at a little distance from the swidden house. Whatever its secondary uses, the verandah serves all villagers as a vital watchtower during the long growing season. Swidden crops have many enemies and, as will be noted subsequently in detail, they require the utmost vigilance the farmer can provide.

Construction of the swidden house is initiated by the head of the family well before the anticipated beginning of the barat. In large measure the tiny house is shaped and its dimensions determined by the simple availability of building materials saved during the clearing operations. Before the burning each farmer stockpiles the small timber for his house; soon after the swidden fires have died, he sets to work to assemble it.<sup>14</sup> But because he is inevitably occupied simultaneously with swidden-clearing, fence-building, and even hunting and trading activities, his swidden house usually takes shape only gradually. Yet, after consulting his wife about its location, he will normally have managed to erect most of its basic frame (pilings, floor, verandah, roof frame) by the time he shifts his family's residence to the swidden for the planting activities. Much of this construction he will probably do alone: erecting the light frame of such a house does not require joint labor and one man can do the cutting, post-setting, and fitting of even the basic timbers. If he has adolescent or unmarried grown sons, they will usually assist and he may also receive sporadic help from a congenial neighbor, brother, or brother-in-law. During the construction he will usually return at night to sleep in the main settlement. Yet as the west monsoon approaches and the small house nears completion, his wife and children will tend to make ever more frequent trips to the swidden to help with small housebuilding chores and to move the family possessions little by little to the new dwelling. The more imminent the barat and planting time, the more the construction and preparation of the new swidden house becomes a general family concern.

Some villagers accomplish the move from village to swidden house in a single day's hard work. More characteristic is a gradual shift of household goods as the swidden house construction nears completion. Practically all the average family's possessions are eventually transferred to the balé rau. The interior partitions (*dinêng*) from the main

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14. There are a few villagers who feel that even the building of this small swidden house may be safely undertaken only at the time set by the mosque head (*lebè*) as auspicious. Most, however, state that the balé rau is only temporary and that, unlike the main village house, its date of erection does not need to be determined by a ketika lima (horoscope) or any other type of augury.

house frequently become wall sections in the swidden house during the wet months. Kitchen utensils, sleeping mats, tools, clothing, and tin suitcases are also transferred. They are carried to the swidden by carrying-pole if the distance is not too great, or on horseback if the swidden is far away. The entire family helps in the move. The bulky wood boats for husking paddy (*nisonq*) and their pestles (*ngalu*) must also be removed to the swidden together with the inevitable random assortment of valuable lumber pieces, the household paddy supply, and an assortment of dogs and chickens.<sup>15</sup> Only the few household objects which are of no use at the swidden are generally left behind (such as the main hearth, weaving frames, spare rice blocks) and the village house is then closed up and locked. A few elderly villagers whose children cultivate nearby swiddens will remain behind living in the vacated main settlement. They become the unofficial *djaga karang* (village guards) during the growing season.

#### Phase Four: Planting (November-December)

In Rarak it is widely believed that the exact time chosen to undertake an important project will have an important bearing on its outcome. Of all the events in the agricultural cycle the timing of planting appears most dependent upon a common, community-wide augury. The person best qualified to select the most propitious time for community planting is the *lebè*, or head of the local religious hierarchy and mosque. His qualifications are his religious piety, knowledge of Islamic doctrine, and occult familiarity with important horoscopes. He is also actually one of the oldest village men, with experience over many seasons farming in the Rarak area. When the *lebè* has determined the most propitious moment for planting, he will announce it to the community a week or ten days in advance, usually at the Friday prayer service in the mosque. Then, either at this service or at a special *besedeka* (confirmation) ceremony held in the mosque a few days later, he will further request the blessing of Allah upon the villagers' crops during the coming season.<sup>16</sup>

On the designated day for community planting--usually in the second half of November--it is again the *lebè* who takes the initiative. All the villagers able to attend gather on his swidden early that morning. The first paddy of the community is then formally sown, as the *lebè* again invokes the blessing of both Allah and Dewi Sri Menanti as guardians of the village crops. With this the annual *samulaq ngasak* (starting the dibbling) operation opens throughout the entire community. Those villagers who stay for the rest of the day to assist the *lebè* with his planting will be rewarded by the appropriate noonday meal of rice and meat. Others may, however, choose to scatter back to their own swiddens and begin their own planting.

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15. Relatively few chickens are kept at the swidden because of the difficulty of keeping them penned and out of the freshly seeded crop area, and protecting them from hawks. It is usual for the villagers to kill most of their fowl at the end of the dry season when food becomes scarcer and they must reduce the size of their livestock community. Dogs, on the other hand, are cared for only if they are good hunters.
  16. The announcement of the auspicious planting time comes after the rainfall known as the *ai dara manéng* (the waters of the bathing princess) of the "first wet season" (*barat sai*), the period of weather change recognized by some villagers as ushering in the full west monsoon.

Although the samulaq ngasak signals a generally auspicious moment for community-wide planting, it also reflects the lebè's estimate of soil and rain conditions on his own particular swidden. All villagers with experience in farming the Sumbawan uplands clearly realize this; conditions of hill slope, rockiness of soil, exposure, ash cover (from the burning), and young weed cover vary considerably from one hillside to the next. The early stirrings of the barat bring heavy rains to certain village swidden areas but may leave those on the next hillside dust dry. Every farmer must decide either individually or with the advice of his closest swidden neighbors the most opportune time for beginning his own planting. Often this will not coincide with the day which the lebè selects. Nevertheless, each villager can still easily insure his participation in the augured good fortune for the community, by planting a small (perhaps four square yards) token plot of paddy in one corner of his swidden on the day of samulaq ngasak. While he will hold no special ceremony of his own, he may utter several prayers to Allah for protection of the crop. This tiny planting is symbolic of the future main planting and allows the individual farmer to share the communal augury and blessing and to receive assurance of proper supernatural protection.

Because of diverse local topographic and weather conditions, the planting of even the staple paddy crop may take the villagers more than two weeks to complete after the samulaq ngasak at the lebè's swidden. However, by the end of the first week of December at the latest,<sup>17</sup> the planting of staple crops is complete. The leading crop is, of course, swidden paddy (*padé rau*) of which villagers recognize and use between twenty and thirty varieties, both glutinous (*padé legé*) and nonglutinous. Maize (*baso*) is the secondary starch crop grown. Cassava (*keta-bang kala*), although important at times as a supplementary item of the diet, is generally not grown on village swiddens but is cultivated in the several permanently fenced homesteads (*keban*) within the community land tract. Legumes raised on the swiddens include several types of vine beans, soy beans, and peanuts. In addition, vegetables and other useful plants (especially cotton, sugar cane, sesame and castor beans) are grown.<sup>18</sup>

Most of the villager's tree crops are grown not on swiddens but in the permanent homesteads of the community. The coconut is the chief exception, in that coconut palms grow throughout the community and are owned individually apart from the land they occupy. The villager's other main tree crops are bananas (*ponti*), papaya (*paya*), several sorts of citrus (*djerok*), jackfruit (*nangka*), and tamarind (*sepéng*).

Of all the village crops it is the staple paddy crop which demands the most concentrated and extensive labor in planting. When the swidden is ready, there is usually little time to lose in sowing it. It is essential that the seed be allowed time to germinate and if possible

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17. This is a tentative generalization based upon statements of the villagers themselves and upon the rainfall data listed in Wolk, "Memorie." There have been, however, rare years when no rain has fallen in the Rarak area until sometime in January, thus planting was delayed until far later.

18. I was not able to get the Agricultural Service in Sumbawa to help me identify plants of economic value to the villagers. Even though I initially made a collection of plants, the Service was unable to forward them to Java for precise identification by botanical experts at Bogor.

start rooting, before the really heavy barat rains begin in late December. Furthermore, the several types of paddy used by each villager to reduce the risks of relying on a single variety must all be sown at approximately the same time. The rapidly growing types (90-100 days) may be desperately needed for food by late February when household paddy supplies are virtually exhausted. The slower types (120-130 days), although deemed somewhat less susceptible to blight and disease, make up the bulk of any swidden planting and must be started as soon as the rains allow. The glutinous varieties of intermediate growing times and of several colors (red, black, and yellow) must also be planted promptly to be ready for ritual use at the end of the barat or early in the balét.

For these reasons paddy planting constitutes for each swidden household the most labor-intensive phase of the entire agricultural cycle. Apart from the additional labor needed to sow the necessary secondary crops at this time, the paddy planting in itself might be expected to promote working parties of some size among the occupants of each swidden cluster. Yet such larger cooperative labor groupings do not typically develop. The small groups of men from neighboring swiddens who tended to cooperate in their earlier brush-clearing operations are generally not seen working together at planting time. The reason is simply that planting in Rarak is the first operation of the agricultural cycle in which a man's entire family may take part.

If the neighbors who helped with one another's swidden clearing cooperate in planting as well, it will be according to their respective household groups. It is possible that even for fairly rapid planting (completed within two or three days) a man's family will provide sufficient labor. However, when for reasons of work efficiency, anticipated lack of time before the rains, or just plain camaraderie, a swidden family seeks assistance in planting, farmers with wives and children on adjacent swiddens are often called upon. Arrangements are made to swap working days between households on neighboring or adjacent swiddens. In November 1954, when planting parties were observed for some nine days, this was clearly the dominant pattern of mutual assistance. Nevertheless, planting operations on average-sized swiddens (roughly 1.5 to 3.0 hectares) remained largely the work of occupant household groups. Large-scale working parties (*basiru*) were held only by the *lebè* (at the time of *samulaq ngasak*) and two other village leaders who could afford the outlay of food appropriate as payment.<sup>19</sup>

The basic division of labor during paddy planting follows a simple pattern. The men and adolescent boys prepare the ground with dibles (*asak*), working together in pairs or trios. The dibles are slender, eight-foot lances with hafted steel points. They are jabbed into the hard lateritic soil to make shallow, irregular holes some ten to sixteen inches apart. Characteristically the dillers work the hillsides beginning at the downhill margin and progressing back and forth towards the ridge. In each cross-slope sally they prepare a planting swath two

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19. The households which received planting assistance from individuals--i.e., not from entire household groups from adjacent or neighboring swiddens--received it, insofar as I was able to observe, from unattached (unmarried or widowed) men who temporarily resided in the swidden house of the family they helped, but later moved on to their own swidden houses and tilled their own plots. In one case a single girl also followed this procedure--initially helping her brother's family with its swidden and subsequently moving with her widowed mother to their own swidden house and tilling its attached parcel.



Swidden-planting: men wielding dibbles, women seeding and brushing the loose soil over the planted seeds.

or three yards' wide. Each group of dibblers is followed by wives or daughters who carry *gantang*-sized baskets (*sompé*) of seed paddy. From these they toss (*mimér*) roughly ten to twenty seeds (*binéng padé*) into each hole. One to three other workers bring up the rear: boys, girls, or grandparents. They are equipped with short-handled brushes (*njapu*) with splayed bamboo heads. With these the earth around each seeded hole is raked back into place and slightly pulverized to conceal the seeds from marauding ants or birds. The workers, especially the dibblers, frequently spell one another and the planting usually continues without pause except for a meal at noon. The men alternate between dibbling, and either smoking or preparing more seed paddy at the swidden house. The women and girls alternate between *njapu*, the seed basket, and the verandah with its cooking duties. The division of labor remains clear but includes all family members except the very young and very aged.

#### Phase Five: The Long Vigil (December-April)

The fifth phase of the annual cycle, although centered on the vigil over the growing crops, includes several other important activities such as planting secondary crops, weeding the swidden, guarding the swidden, invoking ritual protection for the young paddy, and subsidiary subsistence operations.

It is not until sometime in March when the barat is half over that many villagers finish their last planting. There is considerable variety in the secondary crops a farmer will plant in any particular year. Climatic conditions, the size and slope of his swidden, the availability

of seed, and the number of people he must feed are among the factors shaping his decisions. Furthermore, his own experience and judgment may prompt him to interpret the weather signs of the barat differently than his neighbor, and so lead him to select an idiosyncratic combination of crops each year. There are comparatively wide differences of opinion among villagers about the annual planting times and viability of secondary crops. This contrasts sharply with the quite homogeneous body of opinion on planting times and techniques for such staples as paddy, maize, and peanuts.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever the ultimate combination of swidden crops, the farmer will certainly sow several varieties of climbing beans and squashes in the weeks following paddy planting. Some of these will not mature until well after the rains end. The beans are planted either close to the swidden house or beside five-foot poles along the hillside paths to other swiddens. Squash seeds are usually planted close to the verandah so that the vines can later climb and envelop the pilings and trellis poles. Red peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers and eggplant are sometimes started from seeds in small nursery gardens (*pangampar*) located on level ground near the swidden house. Fertilized with river mud and goat dung, and protected by low stick-fences, such small plots (five feet square and larger eventually provide the three-inch seedlings which are transplanted to the swidden in mid-January or February. Villagers may also choose to plant these crops directly in sheltered sections of the swidden without raising seedlings separately ahead of time. Several types of fast-growing berry-bearing bushes may be planted around the swidden house to provide fruit for the early part of the dry season after the paddy harvest.

Broadcast sowing is used for planting other swidden crops. Seeds of the castor-oil plant (*djarak*) are spread widely across the swiddens in December to provide a rapidly maturing and hardy source of plant food (its seed pods). *Djarak* oil, pressed from the seeds and smeared on sticks, provides the fuel for village torches (*dila*). Another source of seeds and oil is the *betam* plant; *betam* seeds are broadcast widely at the time of paddy planting or just afterwards and develop into four-foot high plants topped by fuzzy heads loaded with edible seeds. "Greens" are another category of plants sown by the seed broadcast. Tough and quick to mature, they provide essential, although often bitter-tasting, sources of green leaves that are boiled by the villagers and eaten with rice. *Kesawi*, one of the main greens of the local diet, may be harvested and eaten in February.

Of special interest to many village men and women is tobacco cultivation. There are several techniques of planting: some villagers raise seedlings at the main settlement during the dry season and then transplant them to the swidden immediately upon moving to the swidden house. A somewhat more successful technique is that of planting tobacco seeds in small seed beds close to the swidden house in December or early January. The seeds are fertilized with buffalo dung and burned rice chaff (*ongên*) and the seedlings transplanted in early March into a level, fenced garden on the swidden. As seedlings, the tobacco plants are carefully tended, and protected against excessive rain and sun by banana-leaf shields (*pajong dén ponti*). With a favorable incidence of sunshine the crop will be ready to harvest in June, after the

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20. This is a somewhat tenuous judgment because only four village men were quizzed at any length about the planting of secondary crops. Two of them volunteered this generalization.



villagers have mostly left the swiddens and moved back to the central village. When harvested and dried, tobacco is used by the village men in their cheroots and by older men and women as part of their betel chews.

The sporadic labor of planting these secondary crops is shared by the villager and his wife with whatever adolescent children they may have. Ordinarily it is the wife who has collected, dried, and stored these seeds (seed paddy remains strictly the responsibility of her husband) from the previous growing season. Accordingly, her husband also tends to leave their planting in her hands. This is especially true for the catch crops planted immediately around the swidden house; for these the wife assumes primary planting and cultivating responsibility.

Another major activity of the growing season in the villager's weeding of his swidden (*nudok, merebu*). Throughout Rarak's swidden areas where the land is burned over once every four years and where today there is only recent forest growth, any land which has been recently cleared is quickly reinvaded by rapid-growing types of bush. The tough fire-resistant *Lantara camara* (*sang mamong*) is the most troublesome of these. But hardy grasses (*rompot rebu tekén, rebu rebén*), ferns, shrubs, and vines of several varieties (the most common: *busér* and *gowal*) are also quick to spring up.<sup>21</sup> Within two weeks of Rarak's burning in 1954, small shoots (three to four inches) of *sang* had already peppered the fire-blackened swiddens. This very rapid brush growth constitutes a relentless threat to all the villager's crops. No matter what the farmer's efforts to keep the weeds from choking his paddy, even his most successful harvests must today be cut from a swidden which is already thick and unkempt with secondary growth of weeds and young brush.

Villagers explain that swidden weeding is necessary for reasons beyond keeping the young paddy from being choked. For one thing, the swidden must be kept clean in certain areas (especially flat portions and along the margins) to receive plantings of other seeds, or the transplanting of seedlings. Furthermore, the cleaner a swidden the easier it is to notice the early stages of ant hill damage, rodent incursion, and paddy blight. Frequent inspection and weeding will potentially reduce all these dangers. Yet it is difficult to determine how often villagers actually make such inspections. The weeding process seldom seems either systematic or thorough. Several villagers maintained, when asked about weeding activities, that they managed to weed their swiddens completely four times during each growing season (each estimated a growing season to be about 150 days). Five, however, tilled swiddens which were on relatively level ground. Here the *sang* and grass cover generally springs up more heavily than on the steep hillsides. Therefore, their estimates, even if accurate, probably do not apply to the less choice swidden sectors of the community.

In all areas weeding is usually concentrated during the first half of the barat (December through February). In this period it is essen-

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21. The Dutch introduced *Lantara camara* into Sumbawa probably just before 1930 as an instrument to check the rapid erosion of the uplands. Since this time it has spread rapaciously and now virtually monopolizes the savannah landscape. Today around Rarak there is no longer even adequate stock wood because of the predominance of the *sang* brush and its preponderance over other forms of secondary growth. For data about *sang* predominance on a neighboring island of Nusa Tenggara see F. J. Ormeling, The Timor Problem (Groningen and Djakarta: Wolters, 1956).

tial to insure that the paddy and catch crops gain sufficient size to stay ahead of the weeds and scrub. During the latter part of the barat few villagers continue to weed their swiddens methodically. By this time illness or reduced physical energy (due to inadequate diet) forces many to curtail their exertions. However, by this time the safety of the paddy is also greater and they can afford to slacken their efforts somewhat.

Men or youths will seldom be seen clearing undergrowth from swiddens and prefer to devote themselves in this period to the subsidiary activities of subsistence (see below). Several men were openly scornful of weeding as a male task. Hence it is the women of a household--the wife, adolescent or grown girls, and, perhaps, a resident grandmother--who bear the brunt of the weeding. When weeding, they are usually seen stooped under wide-brimmed hats pulling or cutting clumps of sang from the swidden. Their tools include the man's machete knives, the *sobéq* (small hoe-shaped implement) and even their bare hands. Weeding to any villager is an onerous, solitary task which, if possible, would be gladly avoided.

As already mentioned, the maintenance of a clean swidden is often crucial to the success of another major task of the growing period: guarding the swidden against pests. Most dramatically this means fending off domestic animals which, although owned by the villagers themselves, are allowed most of the time to roam free. It can also include the wild animals such as pigs (*bawi*), mice (*tikés*), deer (*mendjangan*), and monkeys (*botéq*) which pose an additional threat and are best detected when the swidden is not choked with weeds. At the same time swidden protection also includes measures against other destructive agents such as disease and insects. Guarding a single swidden for an entire growing season can become a highly complicated operation.

During the growing season a swidden is seldom left long unguarded by at least one responsible member of its resident household. Vigilance is maintained over the growing paddy either from the swidden house verandah or from some other vantage point. As the paddy approaches maturity the owner, his wife or a competent child will be constantly on the alert, especially if the swidden is situated on the edge of its cluster. Domestic goats (*bedés*), water buffaloes (*karbau*), or horses (*djaran*), upon crashing through or infiltrating the fence, will usually be quickly detected from the noise of their neck clappers (*geroq*) and driven out before doing much damage. Grey monkeys often scold noisily in the uncut brush along the swidden but, with sly cunning, can also slip quietly into the planted area and consume substantial quantities of maize or the pith of young paddy. Having no firearms and few effective snares, the villagers' only defense against these agile marauders is constant vigilance, shouts, coconut fiber slings (*batu aman*), and thrown stones. As the harvest approaches and the paddy stalks become heavier, vigilance against monkeys must be redoubled. Stockpiles of throwing stones are often collected at strategic locations throughout the swidden and close to swidden houses.

The most formidable of all predators is the wild pig. Because the pig is particularly dangerous as well as *haram* (unclean) to the Moslem villagers, he is both feared and despised. Striking as easily by night as by day, he is a far more versatile scourge than the grey monkey. He cannot be stopped by stick fences alone and he requires an active and relentless defense. Even the stoutest swidden fence must be inspected each day for traces of pig rootings. In an actual encounter the villager's entire arsenal of weapons may be used: *bèrang*, *dompas*

(hunting spear), sticks and stones.<sup>22</sup> It is also against pigs that the villagers employ their few types of snares (*penangkap*) and their only reported type of animal poison (*ratjén bawi*). These are set on the hillside trails and along the swidden cluster fences and are occasionally effective. The villagers' best means of retaliation are actually not snares or poisons, but the occasional pitched battle in which they manage to spear a wild boar or sow.

Smaller and less conspicuous predators are partially countered through other mechanical means. The threat of mice is one which the villagers are particularly inept in meeting. These rodents are especially devastating for those who raise peanuts. When close field inspection reveals mouse nests, they are removed either by digging or burning. The fleeing survivors are then clubbed to death when possible. Small box traps and poison (bought in town stores) may also be used against mice. Ants (*semét*) are even less tractable, and the villagers have greater general respect for them. Rather than attempting to destroy or scatter an ant colony, the villager ordinarily neutralizes it. Using the dried pulp of grated coconut (*ampas njér*), sugar cane (*tebu*), or a sweet paste made from certain tubers (including *gedong*), he deposits a substantial food supply around the nest and in this way distracts the ants from his crops. Sometimes he attacks the ant nest directly with fire or by pouring water into it. Other small pests such as ground insects (*batar*), which eat their way up the stalks of paddy plants, and borers (*bubok bang*) which devour the topmost paddy panicles, may be painstakingly captured by hand, stored in small baskets, and later destroyed by burning. Paddy birds and crows (*pijo kedét*, *pijo gagak*) are driven away from the swidden by crude scarecrows, flappers, and aeolian alarms. Even kites (*lajang*) are occasionally attached to the swidden fence to wave about at low altitudes and scare away flocks of marauding birds. As with grey monkeys, defensive vigil against these pests becomes ever more essential as the paddy ripens.

All adult and adolescent members of the swidden household share the responsibility for guard duty. When the head of the family is away from the swidden his wife or a child will be specifically charged with mounting guard from the swidden house. Women and girls can be as effective as men and boys in driving away monkeys and goats with their shouts and sallies. Even middle-aged village women tend to be accurate over short ranges with a thrown stone. On the other hand, fending off migrant water buffaloes or pursuing wild pigs remains strictly a man's job. So also do setting traps, spreading pig poison, and the daily inspection and repair of the swidden fence.

The grueling night watch against paddy predators is also specifically a man's job. From December until the April harvest period the villager, sometimes assisted by adolescent or grown sons, spends an increasing number of long nights guarding his swidden--especially if it is located adjacent to the encircling fence. In cooperation with close neighbors he will erect several small lean-to structures (*atang bawi*) on pilings to serve as guard stations around the adjacent swiddens. Set at crucial curves in the fence, on small hummocks, or beside potential animal trails, they are provided with crude frond roofs and

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22. A few villagers also maintain *senapang kawat*, a crude type of crossbow which propels wire arrows for some distance with no great force. Although it is said that such a weapon could be effective against a pig, its only common use was for bringing down occasional small birds.

caches of firewood for protection against the chill of the nightly barat rainfalls. The farmer on guard moves irregularly along the circuit between these shelters from sundown till dawn, catching warmth and brief catnaps at their small fires. At the same time he stays sharply alert for sounds: the scuffle of foraging pigs, the rustle of deer, or the neckclappers of approaching goats and water buffaloes. Large sputtering torches of wood and djarak oil provide his light as he picks his way, huddled in a cotton sarong and carrying his machete and spear, across the sodden slope between the lean-tos.

Deep concern with swidden protection is also evident in the local practices of crop medicine. The villagers recognize the symptoms of many of the afflictions affecting their crops, in particular paddy. Often such symptoms are deemed susceptible to successful treatment with various kinds of *médo*, or natural medicine. Many such medicines are applied by individual farmers to their own crops and presuppose the transmission of much medical lore from father to son. Although the exact formulae for these medicines may be closely guarded, the major ingredients always appear to be vegetable products--the roots of certain shrubs (*akar kaju*), the leaves of various plants and grasses and, often, the burned chaff of paddy (*ongén*). These are ground together in secret proportions to make pastes or liquids which are then applied directly to the diseased paddy in the field.

Other types of *médo* involve an overt element of magic. For example, the condition known as *bongak* (a kind of paddy blight) is diagnosed when paddy leaves turn red, the rice kernels swell, and the entire plant looks as though it were burned. To the farmer the condition is analogous to the human disease of the same name in which a person suffers pains and stomach swelling, turns pale, and usually dies. Treatment of *padé bongak* must be handled by a recognized shaman (*sanro*) using a special medicine which has, through prayer or augury, been specially endowed with healing power.<sup>23</sup> Another need for magical elements in medicine may arise during, or just after, the planting of maize (which may precede the *samulaq ngasak* of November), when a farmer will prepare a medicinal concoction (*sergas*) designed to make his maize grow tall and preserve it from disease. This is compounded of a mixture of *djambu* fruit (probably *Anacardium occidentale*), rice chaff, and water which has already been used to wash husked rice. A considerable amount of this (several *patinang*, or large earthenware bowls, per hectare) is then sprinkled thinly over the newly planted field. The route which the farmer walks in sprinkling this *médo* over the crops must follow the original path taken when he planted the maize,<sup>24</sup> and certain special gestures are apparently also necessary in applying it. The *sergas* may also be spattered in quantity along the uppermost maize row of a freshly planted hillside and allowed to wash down with the rainfall across the entire slope. Again, however, certain secret gestures and prayers are allegedly also necessary if the medicine is to become effective. At the same time it is recognized that *sergas* should not be applied to a swidden once paddy has also been planted. Paddy, it

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23. Classification of shamans (*sanro*) is difficult because each has unique skills and is valued for these by the community in which he lives. In general, however, *sanro* is a term applied to anybody with extraordinary powers which may, or may not, gain for him recognized status in the village religious hierarchy. For more data on the *sanro* at Rarak see my *Aspects*, pp. 59-64.

24. This detail of following the *médo* path was given by only one informant. Several others said it was unnecessary.

is said, will be damaged by this preparation. To what extent this belief represents a blend of magical and empirical practices is impossible at present to ascertain.

A man and his wife may both participate in the manufacture and use of médo on their common swidden. Each often can contribute knowledge derived from his or her elders in these matters. Nevertheless, the man tends to be the most active and take the lead in deciding what measures to use for particular paddy diseases.

By comparison with other areas in Southeast Asia the rice-field ceremonial practiced at Rarak appears meager. Only one occasion for growing-season ritual is currently important to the villagers and this clearly reflects their personification of the paddy--a pattern familiar throughout much of the ethnically Malaysian area.

Several stages in the development of paddy are locally recognized. It is, however, only the older villagers who can give a detailed list of traditionally known stages of paddy growth. The most common "stages" are as follows (with the less familiar ones listed in order but without numbers):<sup>25</sup>

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| (1) binéng       | seed (at planting)                                |
| bontat kedét     | "like tail of rice bird"                          |
| kati angén       | "plaything of the wind"                           |
| tada simér       | "spiked"  |
| (2) balang susér | "beautifully wrapped" (small leaves)              |
| (3) ngidam       | "beginning pregnant" (flowers incipient: 1 month) |
| (4) batijan      | "pregnant" (2 to 2½ months; kernels forming)      |
| (5) belés        | "sprung" (flowers are out; 2½ to 3 months)        |
| gerap            | "rough textured"                                  |
| (6) ka manés     | "already sweet" (stalks developed, kernels heavy) |
| kunéng poto      | "golden edged" (about 3 months)                   |
| (7) balòng baong | "nicely smelling" (ready to harvest: 3-4 months)  |

Today only the stage known as *batijan padé*, "pregnant paddy," becomes the occasion of field ritual designed to protect and assure the paddy's development and harvest. During the last week in January or the first ten days of February development of the paddy parallels that of a pregnant woman whose belly is noticeably distended with child. Although not of concern to all villagers, this period is of great interest to those who invoke a paddy ritual modeled upon that appropriate for a woman before childbirth.

The ritual involved precedes the birth of a woman's first child. It is known as *biso tijan tau*, or "washing of the stomach," and occurs when the woman is approximately seven months pregnant. An auspicious date is prescribed by the lebè or other member of the religious hierarchy (*hukom*) and the ceremonial itself begins in the woman's house (either swidden or village). The lebè conducts a reading of scripture

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25. The translations here of the unnumbered "stages" are only approximate. There are no known proverbs available on the significance of all these terms. Note, too, that the terms are not as consistently anthropomorphic as those presented in J. D. Freeman, *Iban Agriculture* (London: Colonial Office, 1955), p. 57. See also generally W. R. Geddes, *The Land Dayaks of Sarawak* (London: Colonial Office, 1954); Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*; H. T. Chabot, *Verwantschap Stand en Sexe in Zuid-Celebes* (Groningen and Djakarta: Wolters, 1950); and H. C. Conklin, *Hanunóo Agriculture in the Philippines* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, 1957).

verses, offers some prayers, and there may then be chanting with *rebana* (goatskin drum) accompaniment by the male guests. A ceremonial meal is later served which, if possible, will include the meat of a chicken or goat. Immediately afterwards the pregnant woman (who has not eaten with her husband and guests) is taken by a *njai* (the wife of a village religious or civil leader) to a nearby stream, but the men are not permitted to attend. The *njai* bathes the pregnant woman from head to foot using a special bathing solution (*médo batijan*: a lotion having ash of paddy chaff and citrus juice as basic ingredients) which she has prepared for the occasion. In particular the *njai* massages the belly (*tijan*) of the pregnant woman with this liquid, then washes her clean in the stream, and smears her head with *sémé* (medicinal paste) of several colors. Finally, the woman is required to crush an egg under each foot and eat a third (boiled) egg. Usually within half an hour she has returned with the *njai* to her home and the ceremony is complete.

The *biso tijan tau* is conducted to insure safe and easy childbirth. The special bathing solution protects the woman from the capricious attacks of evil supernaturals (*lèjak* or *sètan*). The massage and bathing are thought to relax her both physically and nervously, to insure that the child will not be too large for an easy birth, and encourage a rapid expulsion of the afterbirth. The symbolism of the egg-breaking is locally recognized: the tiny chicken breaks through his shell into the world without assistance and, similarly, an ideal childbirth requires no help.

The analogous ritual accorded the "pregnant" paddy is known as the *biso padé tijan*, the "washing of the paddy's belly." In 1955 this took place in early February--almost two and one-half months after the *lebè's* *samulaq ngasak*. By this time many villagers had actually begun to harvest and eat their earliest maize, and the pannicles of the fastest-growing paddy (ninety to one hundred days to maturity) would seem beyond any presumed *ngidam* (pregnancy "craving" hunger) stage of development. But the seventy to seventy-five elapsed days of paddy growth were deemed equivalent to a woman's pregnancy of seven months.

Again it was the *lebè* who initiated the ceremony. A group of half a dozen farmers from neighboring swiddens (mostly within the same cluster)<sup>26</sup> each brought in a bound *pa* (a measure of paddy: the amount enclosed between thumb and first finger) of his earliest, pregnant paddy. A simple ceremony was then held over these paddy samples at the *lebè's* swidden house. The *lebè* had already established this time as auspicious and the participants were older men of the village--including three of the mosque officials. Their paddy, together with a *pa* of the *lebè's* crop, were laid out in a row on the verandah after which some fifteen villagers attended the brief midday ceremony that ensued. The *lebè* first repeated several prayers, recited a long section of the *Serakal* (a well-known chapter from the *Book of Bersandji*, the locally most venerated commentary upon the Koran) and, as representative of the entire community crop, asked blessing upon the paddy. His wife, *Njai Hamadjija*, then came forward and rubbed the small bundles (*pa*) with a bathing solution similar to that used for the *biso tijan tau*. She poured clear water over the stalks and sprinkled the pannicles with *sémé*. With this the ceremony was complete, and, after a light meal of coffee and cakes, the guests departed. Each of those who had

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26. I did not attend this ceremony. The account here is as described by two participants the following evening.

brought a pa of paddy recovered it and carefully hung it later in his swidden house as an object of good augury for his harvest.<sup>27</sup>

Several days afterwards at the normal Friday service in the mosque the lebè announced to the assembled villagers that he had carried out the *biso* ceremony at his swidden a few days before. He stated that it had been done on behalf of all members of the community and he recited supplementary prayers for a successful harvest. On several occasions after the ceremony at his swidden house the lebè and his wife were asked by other men of the village in more distant swidden clusters to repeat the ritual for them on their own swiddens when their paddy was ready (*batijan*). In all cases the lebè refused, again asserting that the original ritual was for the benefit of the entire community. In previous years the lebè was said to have been more obliging in holding a series of such rituals in several swidden areas. Nevertheless, in 1955 most villagers apparently accepted the community-wide ritual adequacy of this one performance.

However demanding the care of his growing crops the villager will find time for other activities during the *barat* months from December through March. Since much of the routine labor after swidden planting (the guarding and the weeding) is shared by his immediate family, the farmer can often devote time to secondary tasks to provide his household with either extra income or foodstuffs. At the *barat*'s outset, in November and December, caches of bees' honey (*ai madu*) are scattered in treetop nests throughout the village tract. These can be profitably plundered with one or two days' work (usually with two or three men working together and dividing the proceeds), once planting activities have been completed. Honey provides either a welcome change in diet for the household or considerable cash if sold in the town market. A day's journey to the west of the village lie tributaries of a major river (the Rhee); a three-day fishing trip there by a party of six villagers will ordinarily provide each with a week's supply of river shrimp (*udang berang*) for the household or for sale. Any trip beyond the boundaries of the swidden cluster brings opportunities for collecting (depending on the month) wild greens, mushrooms, berries, occasional wild fruit, roots, and herbs. Likely sources for these are the abandoned swiddens of nearby communities where, in spots, remnants of previous croppings may still be found.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, although the villager does most of his planned hunting during the dry months, there is always the possibility of chancing upon a deer while on foraging trips and making an unexpected kill. Timber resources of the village tract, although increasingly under formal control of the Regional Government, provide other rewards for collecting trips away from the swidden. Finally, the farmer must make periodic trips to inspect his animal herds, if any--his few head of goats, horses, or water buffalo. Especially during these months he may be compelled to sell part of his livestock to purchase extra paddy if the paddy shortage becomes too acute.

The growing-season life of the Rarak housewife is inevitably more focused around the swidden house. The care of small children, the endless chores of paddy threshing and cooking--plus the seldom alleviated

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27. Two of these pa biso were later seen at the swidden houses of their owners.

28. I know of no disputes which arose from such casual pilfering of crops left over from previous years, even when they occurred between neighboring communities and not merely within Rarak.

responsibility for guarding the swidden--absorb most of her daily energies. In addition, bamboos (*latok*) of water must be hauled (although the husband will help in this, it is not consistently his job). Moreover, the swidden must be weeded, firewood must be cut, chickens (if any) cared for, and clothing both mended and occasionally taken to the nearest stream for scrubbing. There are also the many small chores of household maintenance: collecting and drying seeds, rolling cotton (to make parcels, or *goto*, for later spinning), or haggling with neighboring housewives for town-bought supplies (sugar, coffee, cloth, tobacco). Only occasionally will the housewife with young children be able to get away from the swidden for, perhaps, a trading trip to the lowland market with other village women.

The children of a swidden household, if old enough, will also contribute variously to the family larder. By the age of eight years or older both boys and girls not only participate in weeding and guarding the swidden but also help with random collecting activities. Frequently they will be seen in small bands searching across the old swiddens and wooded stretches of the area for edible plants, grasses, or roots.

As the barat wears on and the household paddy supplies drop dangerously low, these subsidiary activities become of increasing importance. By January many villagers have felt the pinch of inadequate diet and their daily food rations may already have dropped to one meal per day. By this time local diet has become one predominantly of starch (boiled rice or maize) supplemented with little or no protein (either meat or eggs) and by only occasional vitamins (red peppers or drab, boiled greens) and rare bits of local trade sugar. Consequently, villagers feel the need to scrounge ever more widely for whatever wild plants and fruits they can find. At the same time, they are increasingly handicapped in doing so because of the sharply shrinking diet. Often they simply lack the strength to scavenge.<sup>29</sup>

Until the harvest begins in April many village adults gradually lose substantial amounts of weight and show a palpable loss in their physical productivity. This is the period of *remong entén*, or "bony knees," as the villagers term it--the time when one must look twice to recognize one's emaciated friends from the more distant swiddens. It is the period when sickness strikes almost every household. Pleurisy, pneumonia and even tuberculosis are activated, especially among the older villagers, by inadequate diet and lowered resistance to infection. The fevers of chronic malaria reappear with daily or weekly regularity. Tempers flare between hungry parents and sick children in their cramped swidden houses. Deficiency of vitamins and protein are evident in widespread eye irritation and in the orange tint of children's hair when seen in full sunlight (symptoms of kwashiorkor). Cramped living quarters and fever-prompted reluctance to bathe combine to promote skin rashes and attacks of scabies (*kerèk*). Outbreaks of framboesia become more noticeable. The lath floors, plaited sleeping mats and cotton sarongs of the swidden house afford but scant protection against the rain-drenched, bone-chilling barat nights which leave adults and children alike numb and inert with morning cold. These conditions add arthritis and severe muscular aches to the already widespread inventory of pulmonary afflictions. Few villagers escape the declining physical ebb of the latter barat months.

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29. This declining strength was observable when villagers came to my house to sit and talk during the barat months--only to drop off to sleep within five minutes, even at midday.



The "long vigil" of this season is thus a period of varied activity which for each family centers about the major duties of guarding and maintaining the growing crops. The period is grueling and difficult; villagers experience increasing physical debilitation as the wet months pass. Deprivations are heightened by anxiety over the outcome of the harvest: the uncertainty of highly variable weather and of many relentless natural enemies only accentuates this state. While uncertainties do much to enhance the social and economic self-sufficiency of the scattered swidden household groups, they also tend to emphasize the interdependence of the members within each. The long vigil generally lacks large interhousehold activities; the major working parties, the primary ceremonies of the life cycle, and even well-attended Friday mosque services characterize, instead, the postharvest dry season months between May and October. As the barat continues, even the loosely organized bands of foraging household heads are less frequently evident and the activities of the swidden household shrink to the most minimal essential tasks. Participation in common secondary subsistence activities coupled with the interpersonal dependencies fostered by illness increasingly serves, despite the frustrations of the period, to compel a group solidarity within each swidden household. In turn, this further underscores the separate effort required of each household group to shape its own economic survival during these most meager months of the annual cycle.

#### Phase Six: The Harvest (April-May)

This begins with the ripening of the villager's paddy, usually during early April, and then extends well into the month of May. For the individual household its termination is most clearly marked when, with the main harvesting chores completed, the household head moves his wife and children back again to their permanent settlement home. The main activities of this phase are as follows and will be described in order: cutting the paddy, storing and drying the paddy, bundling paddy, and final storage of the paddy in the rice barn, or paddy storehouse.

The time to begin harvesting paddy is essentially a matter of the farmer's individual judgment. Due to the variation across the Rarak land tract in ripening times of the crops and because of the frequently desperate paddy shortages within particular households, it could hardly be otherwise. In 1955 for two or three weeks before the start of large-scale harvesting activities, poorer families in the community had already taken to eating green paddy. As a result many villagers were sick with the annual preharvest outbreak of severe intestinal troubles. However, within the first ten days of April all villagers had actually begun to harvest their first ripe paddy of the ninety- to one-hundred-day maturing varieties. Nevertheless, there was no coordinated, ritually auspicious opening of the harvest; the local phrase *samulaq mataq* (to begin harvesting) referred entirely to the individual's single swidden. No villager was heard subsequently to indicate that consultation on dates with the *lebè* would have been desirable or necessary.

Despite the lack of central direction over this phase, many villagers actively maintain personal notions of augury to determine or rationalize the time of their particular *samulaq mataq* activities. One villager asserted that he waited until the birthday (by the Chris-

tian calendar) of his youngest, four-year-old boy.<sup>30</sup> This was deemed an auspicious moment because his son had proved to be blessed with health and strength. Two other villagers said that dreams had been the omens of their harvesting times. One dreamed that the spirit of the paddy (*semangat padé*) in the guise of a deer encountered him on his swidden and instructed him to begin harvesting on a particular date of the month. The other dreamed that on a certain day of the current lunar month a large group of friends and relatives were coming to live with him in his swidden house. This he interpreted to mean that they meant to help out at a *mataq siru*, or large harvesting party which he already intended to give at about that time. Accordingly, he planned to begin his cutting on that exact date. Several other farmers indicated that natural signs such as the flowering of particular plants or the position of familiar stars had helped them to select a date.<sup>31</sup>

Decision about an auspicious time usually does not lead directly to *samulaq mataq*. Many farmers feel that they must be circumspect before undertaking the wholesale cutting of their paddy and are reluctant to begin without further ritual. Their feeling is rooted in a lingering sense that paddy is of supernatural origin and that it has a spiritual essence of its own which must be respected. Certain middle-aged villagers have learned that Nabi Muhammed (The Prophet) was the creator of paddy, that he gave it to mankind, and that he endowed it with various colors as well as a spirit. This paddy spirit dwells alternately in heaven and on earth. Older villagers may remember more or less coherent legends in which Nabi Muhammed and goddess of paddy, Sri Menanti, figure as man and wife. As parents they then gave birth to mankind's paddy. The different degree of attachment to the old tradition is probably reflected in considerable local variety of form in the pre-*samulaq mataq* ritual.

Although not necessarily typical of the village as a whole, the preparations for *samulaq mataq* of three middle-aged farmers working in 1955 on adjacent swiddens was as follows. In the late afternoon of the three days preceding his *samulaq mataq* each man walked once around the boundary (*kamalat*) of his swidden. He stopped at four points--roughly at the "corners" of the irregular shaped plot--and at each he called out in a loud voice, "Oh Sri Menanti, please go home because I must collect the paddy."<sup>32</sup> With these words he both warned and implored the rice goddess to leave his rice field before the harvest. The late afternoon is deemed the ideal time for this: the goddess is thought to have returned from her daily trip to the heavens and to be still present in the rice field suckling the paddy. On the third afternoon, after making his call at each point, the farmer then grasped together four or five paddy stalks close beside him at each of the four places and bound them together. For this he used a short section of bamboo twine (*iwés*) and, as he did so, he uttered a brief prayer in Arabic. He then walked through the paddy to the center of his swidden and, for the first time, repeated his call there. Then he tied a

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30. This happened to fall on April 17th.

31. Much more readily verbalized and explicit were the dreams of two informants about the quantity of their paddy harvests. One interpreted a dreamed-of forthcoming visit by two virgins to mean that his harvest would be half as large as if two mothers were due to come visit him. Two other men agreed that this was a "reasonable" interpretation.

32. Sumbawan: "Wé, Sri Menanti, ba ma mo moléq lako langét, kami rowa ikat nè padé kami!"

handful of paddy stalks in this fifth spot. The explanation of these actions was that he was "tying the legs" of the paddy (*ikat nè pade*) and thereby prevented the spirit of the paddy from escaping before the harvest. In reciting the short prayer (*Kolohuq*) as he did so, he absolved himself from any supernatural danger or anger on the part of the rice goddess which his actions might precipitate.<sup>33</sup>

However extensive the preliminary ritual measures, it is also the prevalent village custom to pay special attention to the very first paddy harvested on *samulaq mataq*. A man usually initiates his cutting either alone or with his wife but the first *sepa* (the amount between thumb and first finger) of paddy cut, either individually or jointly, must be saved. This is known as the *padé otak*, or "paddy head." It is carefully bound, usually wrapped in a small piece of white cloth, and later hung over the hearth of the swidden house to dry. Subsequently, it becomes important in the ritual of storing the paddy. The first complete *gutés* (bundle) of paddy, cut after this (termed the *samalejan*, "choice piece") is also special; ideally it will become a gift to an orphan, widow, or some other needy individual of the community--even a needy relative. All other paddy harvested this first day may be regarded as *haram* (taboo) for eating during a period of from three to seven days. Although comparatively few villagers today seem to acknowledge this haram period, the three farmers previously mentioned declared that such paddy needed "to cool" (*dadi senap sedi*) before it could be safely eaten. Moreover, they rationalized, it would naturally need several days to dry out sufficiently to be milled and then prepared as food. The individual receiving a "choice piece" of harvest, on the other hand, need not wait to eat it. The haram condition does not apply either to that bundle of the harvest or to anyone who did not take part in the actual harvesting.

If a villager does regard the first day's paddy harvest as haram for a period after cutting, he will almost inevitably have to postpone the associated ceremonial (*besedeka*). For this he will invite a few close relatives and mosque officials to his swidden house either at noon or in the evening of the day of *samulaq mataq*. The guests join him in a meal, readings from the Koran, a prayer (if a mosque official turns up to lead it) and, perhaps, some drumming and chanting to conclude. If a would-be host has insufficient paddy for this celebration and if he also regards his new paddy as not yet "cool" enough for consumption, he may have to postpone his *besedeka* ceremonial for a few days. In 1955, although not more than fifteen (out of some eighty-five) village households actually held such a ceremony, none held it on the actual day of their *samulaq mataq*. Furthermore, more than half of these fifteen were relatively wealthy by village standards and included the households of all the major village religious and civil leaders. Most of these people managed to merge their *besedeka* ceremonies with large harvesting parties. The guests were invited in order to contribute labor to the host--and, in turn, were rewarded with a large noontime meal.

Central to the harvest activity is, of course, the cutting of the paddy (*mataq*). Participation in this activity begins early in life;

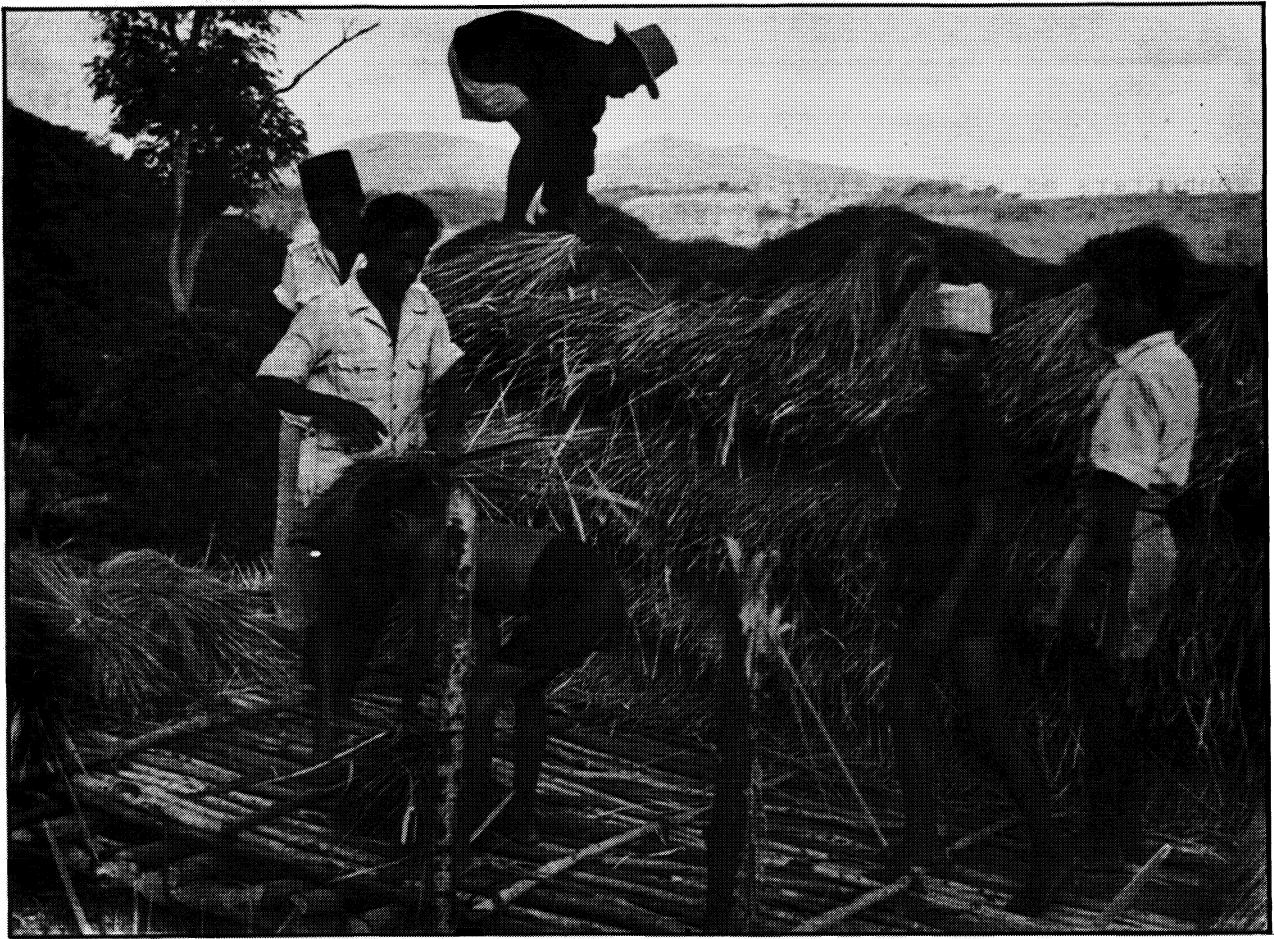
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33. It is possible to telescope these activities of three days into one afternoon--i.e., to give Sri Menanti just a short warning and to "tie the legs of the paddy" at virtually the same time. Although this was admitted as an alternative technique, these three villagers did not approve of it. They asserted that, however inadequate they themselves think it to be, many other men at Rarak conduct their ritual in this fashion.

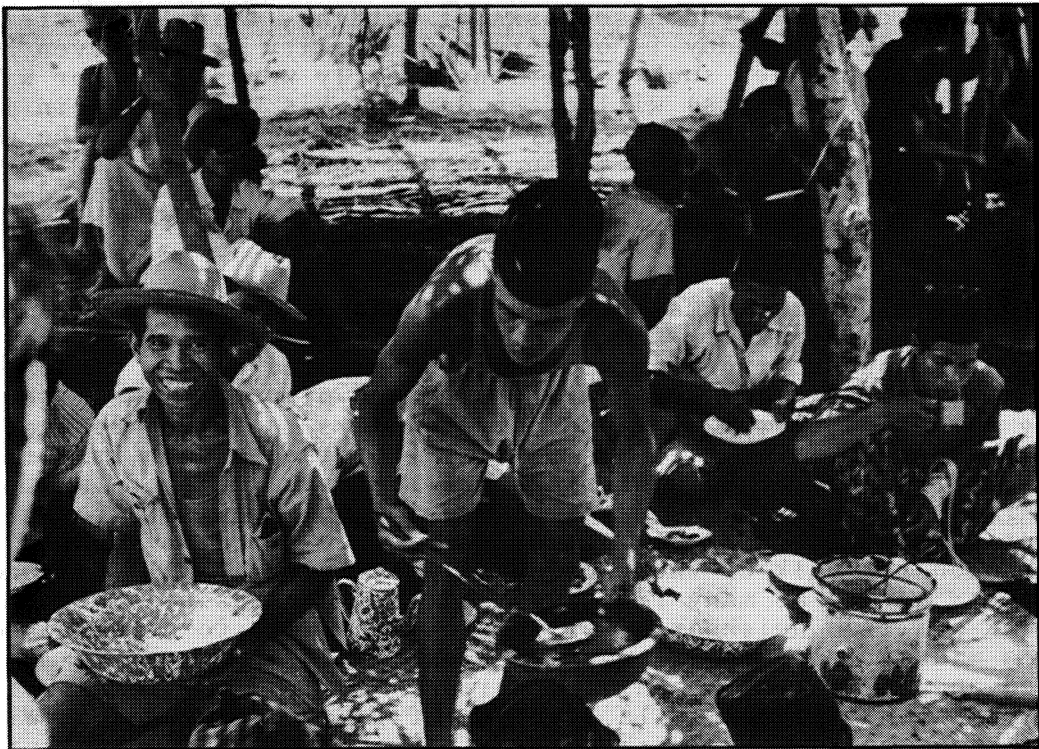
youngsters as well as their parents participate in every large working party devoted to this most satisfactory of all subsistence operations. The essential cutting tool used by all is the *rangap*, a tiny curved blade (two to three inches long) very similar in style to the Javanese *ani-ani*, or harvest knife. The *rangap* blade is set at right angles into a short wooden handle and is held in the palm of the right hand. Reaching some eight to twelve inches below the topmost pannicles of the paddy (usually at a point a couple of inches below the lowest pannicle node), a harvester grasps up to five closely growing stalks into his palm and shears them in a stroke (with four fingers) across his *rangap* blade. He then transfers the cut paddy to his left hand, strips away the larger leaves from the stems and arranges the stems in his palm. In doing so he clutches the bundle (which will constitute a *sepa padé* when packed tightly between thumb and first finger) just below the pannicle sections. He then reaches down with his right hand and *rangap* and repeats his cutting operation upon the next cluster of stalks.

If a man is working alone or with only a few other workers, he will bundle each *sepa* just below the pannicles with two turns (in a clove-hitch knot) of a thin bamboo lashing, tighten it with his teeth, and drop the small bundle to the ground in the already harvested, trampled area of swidden behind him. Later he will return to collect these bundles and carry them to the *atang* (drying platform) or swidden house. If, on the other hand, he is a member of a large working party, there will be a corps of young boys or women following him and the other harvesters as they work across the field in a line. At frequent intervals these assistants relieve the harvesters of their accumulated paddy. They then assemble the stalks quickly into *sepa* units, bind them with strips of lashing, and either stack them temporarily at collecting points for yet other workers to gather up and stack, or carry them directly to the *atang*. The larger a working party at the time of harvest, the more diversified these tasks of cutting, tying, transferring, and stacking. If the paddy is of very poor quality or of uneven height, the harvester (who under such conditions usually works alone or with only one or two assistants) will often deposit his cut stalks in loose, untied bundles and continue directly with his cutting. Later he will collect these loose stacks (*awés*) in armfuls and transfer them to the swidden house. There the poor stalks will be culled and discarded before the well-developed paddy is tied into *sepa* bundles for storage and drying on the *atang*.

A villager's harvest may be completed either in rapid systematic fashion or only erratically and at dispersed intervals. This will depend heavily upon the ripening speed of the planted paddy. In each swidden substantial paddy areas will have been planted with slower maturing varieties that will ripen only ten days to three weeks after the earliest crops. The size and fertility of the swidden itself will also affect the mode of harvest since the better parcels of land tend to be farmed by men with the means to provide the requisite feast for a harvesting party. They will often, therefore, select a compromise date on which the bulk of their paddy of all varieties will be ready for harvest, invite as many relatives and neighbors as possible (both from Rarak and from neighboring village communities) to attend, and provide a midday feast to all working guests. With perhaps as many as a hundred and fifty men, women, and children turning out to assist on such an occasion, a large-scale division of labor can be made. With, say, forty good harvesters each cutting between ten and twelve *guté*s (bundles) of paddy in a seven-hour workday, the entire yield of a good-sized (three-hectare) and fairly fertile swidden can be cut, tied, and stacked in a single day. Yet such expeditious harvesting is excep-



Stacking paddy: villagers stacking paddy bundles on the atang for drying.



The midday meal at a harvest work party at the swidden.

tional. In 1955 not more than eight farmers were able to harvest their fields in such fashion in a single day's work. Far more characteristic is the single farmer either working alone or with the help of a few relatives or friends, each helping for a day now and then (and each friend paid in kind for his day's work). The single farmer is often able, with such limited help, to harvest his paddy as fast as it ripens and, during the latter half of April and the first days of May, will find time to intersperse his harvesting with other activities. Usually these include attending the harvesting parties held by the wealthier men of his own and neighboring villages.

For some ten to twenty days after cutting the villager's paddy remains on the atang platform close to his swidden house and is allowed to dry out. The small quarter bundles of paddy are neatly stacked with their pannicle ends laid in opposite directions in alternate rows. The villager has no other special way of arranging his paddy on the atang and, during the drying period, must inspect it frequently to guard against mildew and rot. If heavy rains unexpectedly continue into May and impede thorough drying, the farmer may have to unstack the atang from time to time when the sun is bright and scatter the paddy bundles about his swidden house yard to achieve more effective dehydration. Nevertheless, a man usually expects some paddy loss due to mold at this time. Bundles which are merely wilted, however, can often be salvaged by prompt milling and consumption at the swidden house.

Before finally moving to store the harvest in his village paddy storehouse (*djòmpang*), the farmer must complete one final preparation. His sun-dried quarter bundles of paddy must be assembled into the larger traditional units of subsistence and exchange, the paddy bundles (*gutés*). Four *sepa padé* comprise a *gutés* and it is in terms of these *gutés* that the villager computes his agricultural success and financial potential. Although many villagers will, of necessity, do much of their *gutés*-assembling (*ngèrat*) either singly or with the assistance of a few friends or relatives, a man with a total harvest of four to five hundred *gutés* is likely to hold a paddy-tying work-party at his swidden house. At such a party (*ngèrat ramè*) there will usually be a dozen or more workers present and, as with the harvesting itself, these numbers will allow for considerable division of labor and generally more rapid and efficient completion of the work. All such *ngèrat ramè* observed in 1955 indicated that this work is principally a male occupation. During paddy-tying the woman's role is restricted to watching or helping cook the meal for the working men and boys.

The *sèngkal* is the essential binding implement for assembling paddy bundles. It consists of a pair of identical hardwood levers, each between eighteen and twenty-four inches long, shaped like a shallowly curved sickle and equipped with grooves at its "blade" (nonhandle) tip to receive one end of the tough bamboo lashing used to bind a paddy bundle. In use the two *sèngkal* levers are aligned and laid against one another, back to back, along their convex, laterally flateened portions; the two ends of the paddy bundle lashing are then hitched into their respective grooved tips. When the *sèngkal* handles are then forced together, the tips spread apart drawing the bamboo lashing extremely tight around its enclosed paddy bundle. Usually there will be at least two men at a *ngèrat ramè* who work with the *sèngkal* levers: these men are fed the paddy sheaves by fellow workers who have assembled each one from four dried *sepa padé* and already loosely lashed it together with the bamboo hitch just below the rice pannicles. The *sèngkal* user then takes the sheaf (bundle), slips the ends of its bamboo lashing onto the grooved tips of his levers (fastening each with a clove-hitch knot),



Paddy bundling: work party of eight workers including two chopping excess stalk from the finished bundles (in background), four assembling the loose bundles, and one (right middle-ground) using the sengkai levers (hidden). Note extra pair of sengkai levers lying in foreground.



Paddy bundling: the sengkai levers in use.

and tightens the paddy binding as already described. He then tosses the tied bundle to another nearby co-worker who lays it on a chopping block and, with a deft stroke of his *bèrang*, cleaves off the excess paddy stalk just below the tight bamboo lashing. Each paddy bundle is subsequently stacked on the *atang* to await transport to the swidden owner's *djòmpang*.

For most households the harvesting phase of the annual cycle usually ends during the last half of May. It is most conspicuously signaled by the abandonment of the swidden house and the villager's reestablishment of his household in the permanent village house. As he makes this shift, he must also transfer his new harvest to its *djòmpang*. This is characteristically done over a period of several days either as he is able to transport the paddy in shoulder-pole loads (of six or eight bundles each) back to the village or as he has access to a horse to help him. Yet before he begins to fill his *djòmpang* with the new paddy he will, if he is circumspect, observe a final ritual act on behalf of his paddy.

This ritual is known as the *samulaq tunong padé*, "laying the paddy to rest." It takes place when the villager brings his first load of paddy to the *djòmpang* (or to the *lotèng*, or attic, of his main house where some villagers store their paddy) and it centers upon the *padé otak*, the first *sepa* of paddy that was cut on his swidden. It is this small bundle that he ritually "lays to rest," still wrapped in its bit of white cloth, directly on the lath floor in one corner of the *djòmpang*. Treating the pannicles of the little bundle as the "head" (*otak*, or brain) he lays them upon a small, specially made pillow (*bantal padé*) which, in turn, is placed upon a special tiny sleeping mat (twelve by eighteen inches in dimensions). With no further ceremony or prayers the bulk of the regular paddy is then stacked tightly around and above the *padé otak* until the storehouse is full. This "laying to rest," it is said, insures that the paddy spirit will be comfortable in the *djòmpang* and will not abandon the harvested paddy; in addition, it guarantees that the paddy yield itself will remain sufficient (by maintaining its spirit intact) to support the farmer, his family, and friends until the time of the next harvest. If the villager's wife is energetic and the couple can afford the luxury of eating a chicken, a small *besedeka* ceremonial meal may follow (usually held at the permanent village house) within a day or two. At this the *lebè*, *katib* or another invited mosque official can elaborate the ritual of the *djòmpang* through prayers or Koran recitation. Yet many villagers maintain that this additional ceremonial meal is unnecessary; many others state that the *samulaq tunong* itself is not really important.

#### Phase Seven: Return to the Village (May-June)

Although the return to the village house generally terminates the major activities of the household's subsistence cycle, it is not until mid-June or even later that Rarak's last swidden household makes its move back to the central settlement. For the community as a whole, then, the activities of the harvest give way only gradually to the subsequent phase, the final shift of residence. Variable conditions of crop-ripening and paddy-drying weather only partially account for this. Many villagers choose to linger in their swidden houses even after storing their bundled paddy in the village *djòmpang* in order to await the ripening of catch crops. Other villagers choose to shift residence as soon as all their paddy is stored and then maintain watch over their



swidden catch crops through frequent return visits there during the ensuing weeks. Considerations such as distance from the village to the swidden, the vulnerability of the catch crops if left to ripen unguarded, and the size of the household unit itself all enter into the decision about timing the shift of residence.

When considered more broadly, the last two "phases" of the annual round--the harvest and the household shift--together comprise a period which, in local terms, most closely approximates what might be called "the good life." As in many other parts of Southeast Asia, so in Rarak when

. . . the long tended padi reaches maturity . . . , the temper of the community changes, for this is the best time of the whole year: for everyone there is sweet smelling new rice in plenty, and abundance of catch-crops from which appetizing relishes can be made. Past privations are forgotten and everywhere there is a spirit of elation and eager anticipation.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the western Sumbawa uplands the villagers' elation stems not only from the basic realities of full stomachs and a temporarily well-stocked djõmpang. It also arises from the prospect of the year's most exhilarating few weeks of brilliant, clear weather, the resumption of integrated community living, and relaxation from the isolated monotony of the rice-field vigil. Well before the central settlement has reclaimed all its citizens from their scattered swidden houses, the community as a whole will throb with harvest period happiness: tacit ties of neighborliness acquire an active, new flexibility, community friendships are rediscovered, and the shrunken sociability of the barat months is infused with new energy.

This renewed camaraderie and élan become apparent on all sides: swidden house verandahs and yards attract animated groups of men and women to gossip, share their tobacco or betel, and volunteer their assistance with one another's unfinished tasks of stacking and tying paddy. Gangs of small boys roam across the trampled, harvested sectors of the hillsides, making unsolicited visits in nearby households and offering haphazard assistance to relatives or family friends there. In the central village such chores as housecleaning, new carpentry, or the corralling of livestock keep the newly resettled families active. Itinerant peddlers begin to make their appearance from the lowland villages and draw morning crowds of village housewives eager to barter part of their new harvest for cloth, meat, or tobacco. Other lowlanders--village relatives whose lower-altitude rice fields have already been harvested--arrive on foot or by horseback to visit, swap paddy, or take part in any imminent harvesting parties to be given by Rarak leaders. An almost palpable exuberance and gaiety pervades the reopening village and, even during the daytime working hours, bright new sarongs (*kerèq*) or shirts become conspicuous on all sides. If the time of year coincides even roughly with any forthcoming Islamic feast such as Maulud or Lebaran, this sartorial elegance is liable to be especially marked. It is above all the young and eligible men and women of the village who are most prone to dress brightly during these weeks. To them the period of harvest and the early balétis of vital interest: this is traditionally the period of flirtations, secret love affairs, matchmakings, and engagements.

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34. Freeman, Iban Agriculture, p. 61.

The return to the village not only offers a degree of relaxation from the chores of the swidden but, to the village man, it provides an opportunity for such activities as housebuilding, lumbering, repairing of tools and trading trips to the lowlands. At the same time, his wife will have time to spin and weave her swidden-grown cotton into cloth, spend morning hours haggling with visiting peddlers, or take day-long trips with neighboring women friends to the lowland market. Through certain of these activities the villager and his wife earn a little extra income for the family--even though village men will often complain that whatever extra money they earn is as quickly spent by their wives. More enjoyable--while equally important for the larder--are the men's cooperative deer-hunting expeditions or the women's nighttime gatherings to sing folk verses and thresh their household paddy. These occasions, blending sociability with practical accomplishment, are further supplemented by various purely recreational activities: the gossip groups of women endlessly forming and dissolving on village verandahs, the afternoon soccer games played by village boys and men, long evening sessions of drumming and song attended by the men of all ages.

Among such varied dry season activities are those which require discussion and some economic planning between the household head and his wife. For example, the building of a new house is an operation that may require the expenditure of an entire year's paddy; new clothing for small children must either be painstakingly made at home or purchased with scant funds at a Chinese lowland store. Above all, financial planning will be essential for the round of family ceremonies which usually occur during the dry months. These balét months are, in fact, those of ceremonial display throughout the western Sumbawa region and most such occasions require considerable expenditure of either cash or paddy to be successful.

Ceremonials of the dry season usually include both those of a family nature and those imposed by the Islamic calendar. Among the ceremonials are child-naming (*kèkaq*), circumcision for both boys and girls (*sunat*), celebration of a boy's proficiency in Koran recitation (*mengadji*), marriage and, on occasion, death. In 1954, the locally celebrated religious festivals which fell during the dry season months included Idul Fitri (Lebaran) at the end of the fasting of Ramadan, Idul Adha or Hari Korban, the Islamic New Year, and finally, Asjura, celebrating the tenth day of the first Islamic month of Muharram. In 1954, celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Munét*), usually the second largest Islamic festival in Sumbawa, did not fall until November 8 and so was limited in Rarak by the beginning of the planting season and the fact that most villagers had already moved from the village to their swidden houses.

Of all these occasions it is the family marriage feast which is the most demanding and important. In terms of ceremonial display and financial outlay no other rite of the life cycle matches that of the *pengantan*.<sup>35</sup> As magnificent a feast as possible is held desirable for every young couple of both are marrying for the first time. Whether a son or a daughter is to be married, the *pengantan* will inevitably be expensive--just how expensive will depend upon the taut negotiations

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35. This is not true of all other villages of western Sumbawa in that, especially in the lowlands, the death rites are apt to be extensive and, for a person of high status, as lavish as for marriages. For Rarak and the villages nearby, however, where there has never been resident aristocracy, marriage is the most lavish ceremony.

between the representatives for each spouse. Especially if a man has a daughter who is even approximately marriageable (that is, of the generally correct age group), he must be ready during the dry season to arrange a marriage for her at short notice. This has primarily to do not with the possibility that, while still single, she will have an affair and become pregnant but rather with the chance that she will evade her parents' careful eyes and wishes altogether and elope to be legally married in another village without their consent. This will then force them to acknowledge the union without the prestigeful display of a real wedding feast in the village. It is largely because of this anxiety that village men often say ruefully that "raising a daughter is like (as difficult as) raising forty head of water buffalo."