

THE TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL RITUALS AND PRACTICES OF THE KASEPUHAN COMMUNITY OF WEST JAVA

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INTRODUCTION

In West Java, there is another social group who still live like the more famous Baduy, within strict traditions. They are called the Kasepuhan. They live, spread in small groups, in the southern areas of Banten, Sukabumi and Bogor, especially on the slopes of Mt Halimun. They earn their living by collecting forest products, by gardening, and by rice planting in both wet fields (*sawah*), and in dry swidden fields (*huma*). In spite of the great variety of their activities, swidden agriculture (*huma*) still constitutes their main method of livelihood today.

For the Kasepuhan as a community, swidden agriculture in the forest is a prime source of livelihood. In order to continue to live and survive, the forests must be sustained and preserved. This attitude on the part of the Kasepuhan can be understood because swidden agriculture and the forest form a unity. The Kasepuhan interpret the word *huma* as *imah* (home). According to this perception, this "home" is not only for sleeping but also serves as the main source for their spiritual and physical life. The destruction of the forests means destroying their homes, and this means a destruction of the Kasepuhan as a community.

The Kasepuhan way of preserving the forests can be seen from their perception of the forests. They recognize three types based on their knowledge of the forests as the source of life. The three types of forests are as follows:

- a) the ancient forest (*leuweung kolot* or *leuweung geledegan*) is a type of thick forest, where large and small trees grow densely (*geledegan*). The characteristic of this forest is that the density of the trees is high, and various kinds of animals still live in it.
- b) the exploited forest (*leuweung sampalan*) is the one in which people establish their farms, tend cattle and collect firewood. This forest lies close to settlements.
- c) the sacred or holy forest (*leuweung titipan*) is a type of forest traditionally recognized by all the members of the Kasepuhan as sacred. It is not to be exploited without the

approval of the leader of the community (the *sesepuh girang*). The cultivation of this forest is only possible if a message of permission is received from the ancestors through the *sesepuh girang*. Thus, the preservation of this type of forest is continuously maintained. The *leuweung titipan* around south Sukabumi is located on Mt Ciawitali and Mt Girang Cibareno.

For the Kasepuhan, swidden agriculture in the present day is not just a continuation of their ancestral traditions (*tatali paranti karuhun*); it is also a form of survival in which a particular social organization has been identified as the basis for living.

AGRICULTURAL RITUALS AND PRACTICES

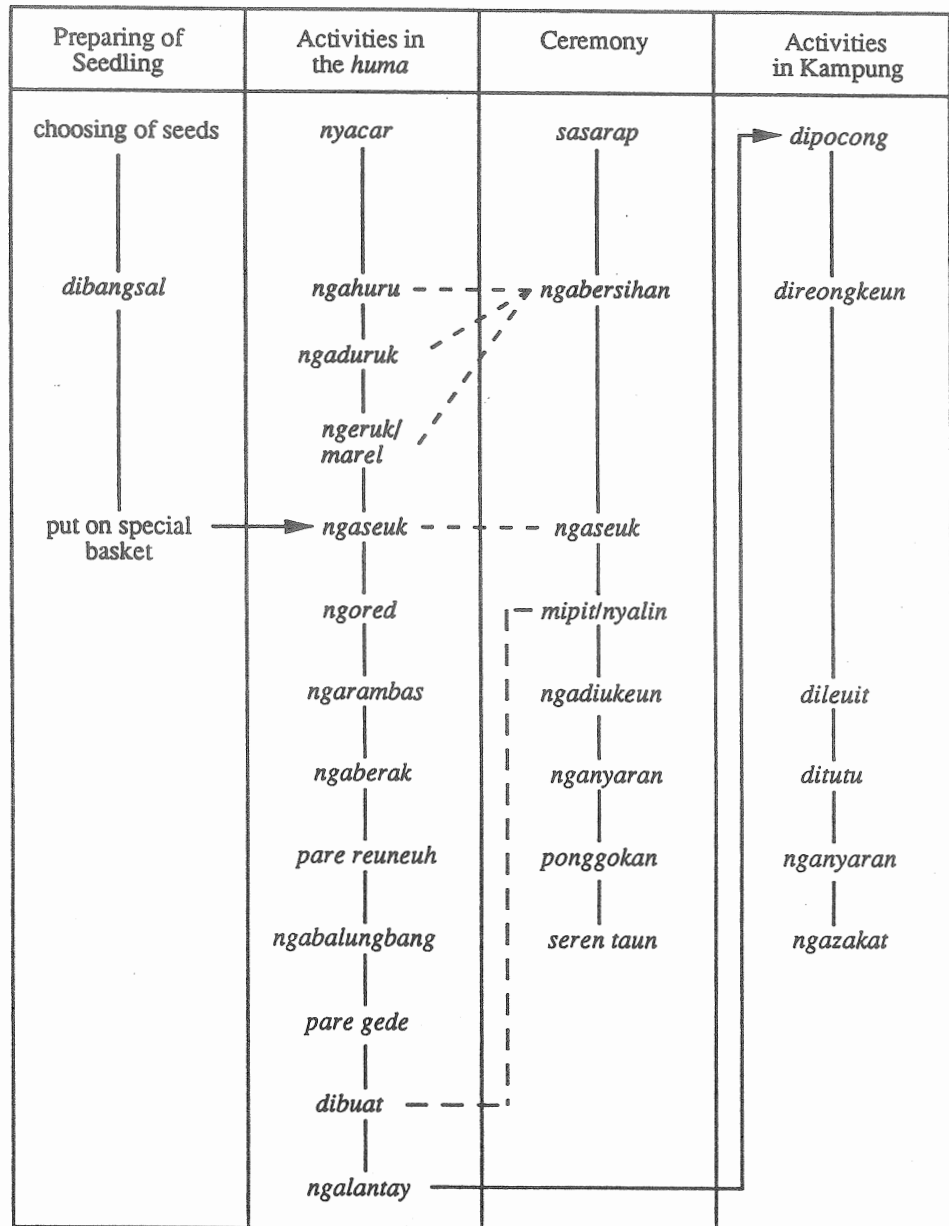
Most of the Kasepuhan inhabit state forestry lands where they continue their ancestral traditions. The activity of swidden agriculture is bound up in a system of beliefs with an orientation towards ancient values. Each stage of swidden farming is followed by a ceremony to avert disaster and to ensure the protection of the ancestors. The Kasepuhan hope that by performing the ceremony they will obtain a good harvest from their *huma*.

Swidden farming among the members of the present Kasepuhan is no longer the only method of cultivation. Among them there are those who cultivate wet rice fields. Nonetheless, *huma* cultivation for them is a compulsory social activity which has to be carried out because all the ceremonies for tending rice are still based on swidden agriculture.

On opening a *huma*, the cultivator applies to the leader of the community, either the *sesepuh girang* or the *sesepuh kampung* (for those who live far from Kampung Gede), to ask for blessings. With these blessings, he receives a packet of *kemenyan* (*Agathis* sp.) and *panglay* (*Zingiber cassumunar*). When he has found a proper location, he fixes the location by binding tree trunks so that they are easily seen by other people.

Before the *huma* location is opened, a simple ceremony is first carried out at the place. The cultivator sits down and meditates (*chusu*), facing the land which will be cultivated. He burns the *kemenyan* and chews the *panglay*, which he sprays from his mouth in several directions. Then, he utters a *do'a amit* (prayer for permission) to his ancestors that runs as follows:

<i>Pun ampun</i>	(I) ask forgiveness
<i>ka luhur</i>	to the power above
<i>ka sang rumuhun</i>	who masters the sky
<i>ka handap</i>	to the power below
<i>ka sang batara</i>	who masters the earth
<i>ka para dewa-dewi</i>	to the gods and goddesses
<i>ka siluman ka sileman</i>	to the evil and good spirits
<i>ka dewa kalakai salambar</i>	to the god of the fallen leaf
<i>anu nyicingan ieu bumi.</i>	who stays on this earth.



Notes: see glossary
 Source: Observation, 1986

TABLE 1: THE CYCLE OF HUMA CULTIVATION (SEE GLOSSARY)

After having delivered the *do'a amit*, the cultivator adds the following words:

<i>Ema</i>	Mother
<i>bapa</i>	father
<i>abdi neda widi bade muka ieu huma</i>	I ask your permission to open this swidden field
<i>ulah aya nu ganggu ngaguna sika</i>	so that no one will disturb it
<i>berkah du'a salametna kalawan rahayu sadayana</i>	bless us with safety and prosperity.

When the prayer is over, the cultivator cuts the branches of the trees that are likely to shade the growth of rice. This activity of cutting branches takes about 15-30 days, depending on the area of the *huma* that is opened. The trees themselves are not cut down. This activity is usually done in August; the tools which are used consist of sickles (*sabit*) and axes (*baliung*). The ceremony before the cutting is called the *upacara sasarap* (the breakfast ceremony) (Table 1).

After *nyacar* (cutting), the cultivator then performs a small ceremony called the "enlightening" (*nyaangan-ngabersihan*). He sits in front of his field and again delivers a *do'a amit*. After that the branches, twigs and grass are collected in the centre of the field. An earthen border is made around it so that fire will not spread to other places when the burning is done.

This process of burning is called *ngaduruk* and is usually performed in the month of September. Then the area is left for about ten days, after which it is cleaned up. Five days later a very important activity is carried out; the activity of *ngaseuk* (making planting holes) which occurs in the month of October.

The ceremony of *ngaseuk* is a very glorious and fabulous ceremony. The day before, important people of the social group gather in the house of the *sesepuh girang*. Among them are various traditional figures (*baris kolot*) such as the village leaders, and also members of the Kasepuhan living near Kampung Gede. They all sit in rows face to face (usually in three rows) to perform the ceremony of *ngirim do'a* (sending prayer) to their ancestors. After that they have supper together. While having supper, the *juru pantun* usually tell a story of the *ngaseuk*. In the yard in Kampung Gede, there are performances such as *topeng*, *wayang*, *jipeng* and others.

The next morning, around 5 am, work begins on the *huma*. A *pupuhunan* is prepared at a certain place in the *huma* area. *Pupuhunan* is a symbol of the "centre" and the place to carry out the planting ceremonies. For the Kasepuhan it stands for the beginning and the end of human life. The *pupuhunan* is located on the specially made central area called the *paparakoan* where the various kinds of tools for the *ngaseuk* ceremony are placed.

In front of the *pupuhunan*, the *sesepuh girang* or his representative, the *dukun tani*, sits and prays a *do'a amit*, while burning *kemenyan* on a coconut husk. Chewed *panglay* (*Zingiber cassumunar*) is spat out on the *pupuhunan* towards the four compass points. After that, *co'o binih* (seeds) which were previously kept in the *paparakoan* are taken and gathered with the seeds that are kept in a *bakul* (*boboko*). In that *bakul* are found not

only rice seeds but also some other kinds of seeds, including those of maize, pigeon pea (*hiris: Cajanus cajan* (L) Huth.), sesame (*wijen: Sesamun orientale*), squash (*labu: Cucurbita moschata* [Duach] Poir), and beans (*jaat: Psophocarpus tetragonolobus* DC). Some of these seeds are planted together with rice.

After the *do'a amit* has been uttered, the *sesepuh girang* takes a stick (*aseuk*), the end of which has been sharpened, to start making holes so that the planting of rice can start immediately. He begins in the right-front direction, and in the back-left direction, around the square sides of the *paparakoan*. While doing this, he utters a prayer (*jangjawokan*), the words of which are as follows:

Bul kukus do'a Rasul

nya menyan pancerning iman

nitipkeun Sri Pohaci Purnama Alam Sajati

ka sukmaning bumi

ka rohaning bumi

ka sukmaning geni

ka rohaning geni

ka sukmaning angin

ka rohaning angin

titip ka Prabu Susuk Tunggal

aku-akuan anak incu

putu Nabi Adam

umat Nabi Muhammad

mihape bisi aya nu ngaganggu ngagunasika

bisi aya jin siluman, iblis

bisi aya nu ngaganggu rongrong gogodongan

muga-muga pangnyilarkeun aku-akuan

anak incu

putu Nabi Adam

umat Nabi Muhammad

nyuhunkeun lulusna

mulusna

beresna

perelena

sing arenekeh alahbatan sereh

sing arukunuh alahbatan dukuh

May this incense rise as a prayer to the Prophet

this incense is the root of belief

entrusting Sri Pohaci Purnama Alam Sajati

to the earth's spirit

to the earth's soul

to the fire's spirit

to the fire's soul

to the wind's spirit

to the wind's soul

to Prabu Susuk Tunggal

entrusting the livelihood of his children and grandchildren

grandchildren of the Prophet Adam

followers of the Prophet Muhammad

trusting not to be disturbed and destroyed

if there is an evil spirit, a devil

if there is one who disturbs all kinds of plants

may the crops of his children and grandchildren

of the grandchildren of Adam

of the followers of Muhammad be

protected

we ask you to order the rice

to bless it

to arrange it

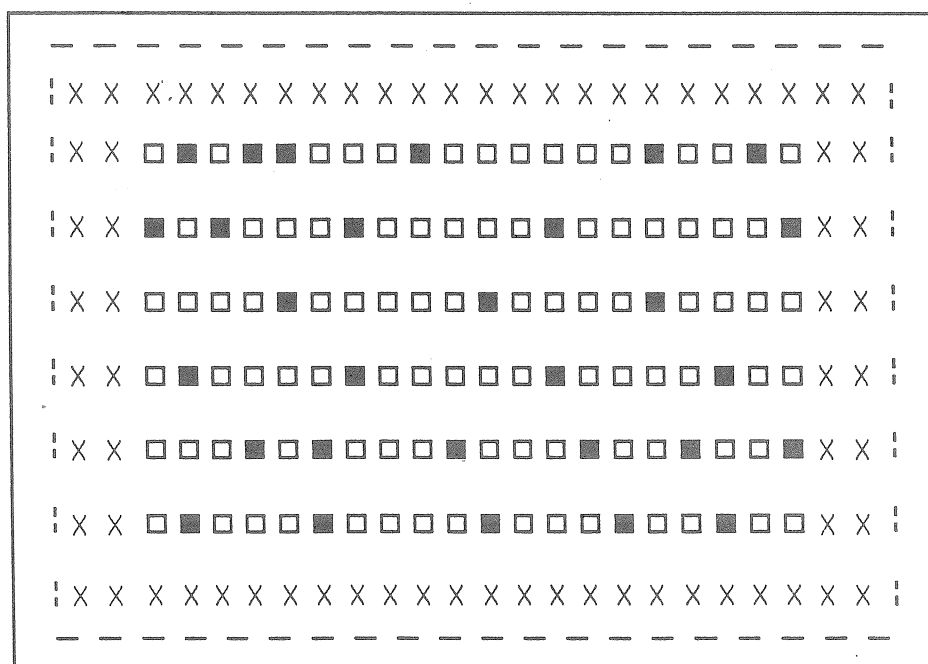
to multiply it

more than the *sereh* bush (*Andropogon*

nardus L.)

greater than the *dukuh* (*Lansium domesticum* Corr.)

Thereupon everyone starts the *ngaseuk* activity together merrily and in a spirit of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). The overall plan of planting of different crops within a *huma* is shown in Figure 1. About 15 days after finishing the *ngaseuk*, the grass which has grown around the *huma* is cut and cleared (*dikored* or *dioyos*). This second cleaning in November or December is called *dirambas*.



- Notes:
- X = Rice seed (*Cereh* variety: *Pare gede*)
 - = Rice seed (*Angsana* variety) mixed with millet (*kunyit: Panicum viride L.*), pigeon pea (*Cajanus cajan L.*), sesame (*wijen: Sesamun orientale L.*), etc.
 - = Job's tears (*Hanjeli: Coix lacryma jobi L.*) as boundary between *huma*
 - = Arbila (*roay: Dolichos lablab L.*), maize (*jagung: Zea mays L.*) and cucumber (*mentimun: Cucumis sativus L.*) etc.

Source: Observation, 1986

FIGURE 1: THE PLANTING PATTERN WITHIN A HUMA

Then, the *huma* is fertilized with a mixture of chemical and organic fertilisers. The area around the edge of the *huma*, called *dibalungbang*, is also cleaned. After that, *huma* cultivation involves waiting for harvest time. This period lasts about 3 months from January to March. In April, the harvest begins. Before harvesting the rice (*ditegel*), a certain ceremony called *mipit*, or sometimes *nyalin*, is performed.

In the evening, a thanksgivings party of *ngirim do'a* is held at the house of the *sesepuh girang*, but it is not attended by the *sesepuh kampung* and other traditional leaders living far from Kampung Gede because the same ceremony must also be performed in their own villages. By 5 am the following day the *sesepuh girang* and his wife (*ema*), followed by the agricultural shaman (*dukun tani*), neatly and cleanly dressed, go to the *huma*. As usual, the *sesepuh girang* sits with his legs crossed in the front of the *pupuhunan*, uttering the *do'a amit*, burning the *kemenyan* and spitting/spraying from his mouth the chewed *panglay* towards the various corners. Then he utters a *jangjawokan* (a certain prayer) that runs as follows:

Bulkukus do'a Rasul

*nya menyan pancerning iman
hatur salam panarima
hatur sanga pangabakti
jisim abdi bade ngamitkeun ieu Sri Pohaci
Purnama Alam Sajati
dumeh geus nepi kana bukuning taun
geus keuna mangsaning bulan
Nu ngumprang ngumbara di alam dunya
ayeuna geura marulih ka gedong
Si Ratna Inten.*

May this incense rise as a prayer to the Prophet
this incense is the root of belief
thank you for kind blessing
receive this faithful offering
wish to return Sri Pohaci Purnama Alam Sajati
because the time has come
because the month has arrived
they who roam this world
now, let them return to the house of Si Ratna Inten.

After reading this prayer the *sesepuh girang* or the *dukun tani* walks around the *huma* in a righthand direction sticking *daun aren* (*Arenga pinata*) in each corner. The end of each *daun aren* is bound firmly (*simpul mati*). While placing the *daun aren*, the *sesepuh girang* and/or the *dukun tani* utters a *jangjawokan* which runs as follows:

*Nini akut-akut
Aki akut-akut
pangangkutkeun tinu rengrongna
ayeuna geura karumpul ka gedong
Si Ratna Inten.*

Grandmother, carry it
grandfather, carry it
carry them from far away
now gather at the house of Si Ratna Inten.

Then another *jangjawokan* is uttered to drive away evil creatures that may disturb the coming harvest. It runs as follows:

*Nini gajah balungbungan
aki gajah balungbungan
anggeus bagian sia mah samet dieu
tah anu aya dicirian pucuk kawung
dina juru.*

Thief elephant grandmother
thief elephant grandfather
here is your portion
which is bounded by an *aren* leaf at each corner.

Besides this *jangjawokan*, the *sesepuh girang* or *dukun tani* utters another *jangjawokan*, as follows:

<i>Ulah ngaganggu</i>	Please, don't disturb us
<i>ulah ngagunasika</i>	please, don't destroy
<i>ieu mah lain keur sia</i>	this is not your portion
<i>ieu mah bagian aing</i>	this is ours
<i>saukur nu dicirian di sakurilingna.</i>	all that is marked round.

While uttering the *jangjawokan*, the *sesepuh girang* may not talk to anyone and all his attention must be concentrated on this activity.

Around the *pupuhunan* during harvest time a small hut (*sanggar*) is set up, known as the "building (*gedong*) of Si Ratna Inten". In it are placed offerings of *ketupat* (rice boiled to a sort of paste and wrapped in young coconut leaves), *tangtang angin* (rice covered by a triangular-shaped leaf), chewed *sirih* (*tek-tek*: betel leaf with lime and *sambir* ready for chewing), small pieces of coconut, a piece of sugar-cane, one block of *aren* sugar, seven kinds of *rujak*, bananas, *asem*, jamboo, *buah honje* (*Icolaca speciosa* horan), boiled eggs, *congcot* (rice cooked by steaming in a bamboo steamer), five pieces of *kelepon* (cake made of rice flour and palm sugar), rice flour wet with *kunyit* (*Curcuma domestica* Val.), water and a *paisan* of red and white rice flour.

After the *sesepuh girang* or *dukun tani* has put the food into the small hut (*sanggar*) he utters the following *jangjawokan*:

<i>Nini akut-akut</i>	Grandmother, carry it
<i>aki akut-akut</i>	grandfather, carry it
<i>pangangkutkeun tinu rengrongna</i>	please, carry it from far away
<i>ayeuna geura karumpul ka gedong</i>	please, gather it now into the house of Si
<i>Si Ratna Inten</i>	Ratna Inten
<i>pipit aci samayang leuwih</i>	picked more than was promised
<i>sekar mulia sekar cendana</i>	like <i>mulia</i> flowers, sandalwood flowers
<i>candoli ti Kahyangan</i>	the authority of heaven
<i>nuruhruy jauh ka punduh</i>	as golden as hoped for
<i>saecek sareana.</i>	as much as possible.

Having finished this *jangjawokan* the *sesepuh girang* cuts stalks of the best rice among those on the *huma*. Then the wife of the *sesepuh girang* (the *ema*) cuts five other stalks of rice as well, all of them are bound together, and this binding is called *indung pare* (the rice mother).

After the ceremony is over, other people come to the *huma* and cheerfully snatch away the food which is inside the hut (*sanggar*). Together they start harvesting the rice on the *huma*. The harvested rice is not directly brought home, however. It is first dried in the sun, a process called *ngalantay*. When the rice is dry, it is then carried home and put in a rice

barn (*lumbung*), but beforehand a simple ceremony is performed called *the ngadiukeun* ceremony (to store in the rice barn). Before the harvested rice is used, there is still another simple ceremony called *nganyaran* (to use the newly harvested rice), after which the *zakat* (religious tax) is fulfilled whereby one-tenth of the harvest must be distributed to the poor.

In the first year, after the area of the *huma* is harvested, it is called a *jami*. There is a part of the land which is planted with useful trees such as durian, rambutan, *petai* or cloves. This area is commonly called a *talun*. The rest of the *jami* is planted with vegetables, sweet potatoes, maize, cassava, etc. Land abandoned to second growth bushes is called *reuma*. When the bushes have grown large and tall the *jami* is called "old *reuma*" (*reuma kolot*). Finally, after the land has been left for years, the *jami* is once more called "forest" (*leuweung*).

GLOSSARY

<i>dibangsal</i>	rice still in the husk but separated from the stalk
<i>dibuat</i>	harvesting
<i>dileuit</i>	storing
<i>dipilih</i>	choosing seeds
<i>dipocong</i>	rice is tied up in bundles of equal weight
<i>direongkeun</i>	bringing together
<i>ditutu</i>	pounding of rice
<i>marel/ngeruk</i>	digging
<i>mipit/nyalin</i>	harvesting
<i>ngabalumbang</i>	protecting the <i>huma</i> while waiting for harvest
<i>ngaberak</i>	fertilizing
<i>ngabersihan</i>	cleaning
<i>ngadiukeun</i>	collecting all of the rice bundles to prepare for storing
<i>ngaduruk</i>	to pile and burn
<i>ngahuru</i>	to burn
<i>ngalantay</i>	fresh cut rice is hung to dry (tied horizontally to stakes of bamboo)
<i>nganyaran</i>	first meal of the new rice
<i>ngarambas</i>	second step of <i>ngored</i>
<i>ngaseuk</i>	sowing seeds, especially rice seeds, by dribbling them from the fingers into the ground
<i>ngazakat</i>	paying the social tax
<i>ngored</i>	cleaning or scraping away with an iron instrument
<i>nyacar</i>	clearing/cutting the forest
<i>pare gede</i>	<i>cereh</i> variety of traditional rice
<i>pare reuneuh</i>	growing rice which is about to burst out into ear
<i>ponggoakan</i>	meeting of Kasepuhan leaders to settle the thanksgiving ceremony
<i>sasarap</i>	breakfast
<i>seren taun</i>	thanksgiving ceremony