

## B. Excerpts from conversation in Duku Ilir Village, Curup, 1974

Participants:

A : Mr. Abdul Gani, farmer (aged 54)

IS: Mrs. Said, wife of farmer Haji Said

Z : Dr. Zainubi Arbi (aged 19)

YM: Young man named Alui, cousin of Zainubi

### 10. Origin of Three Place Names

A: I was in Kepahiyang a long time, about two and a half years, temporarily assigned there in the Education Department's elementary school. So I was able to ask about the origin of the place names.

Buteu Bandung (Twin Rocks), then, was named Buteu Bandung because there are two large stones right next to each other. That is the where it got the name Buteu Bandung.

After that is Buteu Kalung (Stone Necklace). There really are such stones there. They are about as long as this table, connected by, uh, roots as if strung on a necklace. If you see the situation, understand? that<sup>1</sup> probably (took) perhaps eighty years. It is named Stone Necklace.

Finally there is Buteu Belarik (Stone Row). Buteu Belarik is a row of stones that are not really stones at all but human beings. They date from the time of Majapahit, or what we Rejangs call 'Bitter Tongue.' At that place there are stones which I counted to be, how many, nine, all in a row. Long ago, Bitter Tongue once passed by that place. He passed by those people, yes? They failed to salute him. Na, so he turned them all to stone. They still bear the very clear outlines of human beings, even today. The name of the place is Buteu Belarik.

### 11. Lalan Returns

IS: Do you want to sing or not?

Child: I don't know how.

IS: Don't any of you know? Stop that! Quiet, or I will send you beneath the house! You don't know any songs, is that what you mean?

A: Does anybody know "Lalan Returns?"

Z: We don't know very much of it, not very much.

A: The song "Lalan Returns," is said to be from the legend which is called "The Legend of Lalan's Return." People say, do they not, that if the teller fails to finish the story he might suffer - catch a fever for example. If he gets sick, it can be serious. But once you start the story it is not that hard to finish it.

The story is actually about before she became such a<sup>2</sup> miserable child. Her

---

<sup>1</sup> do'o = that = subject

<sup>2</sup> anak lumang do'o = such a miserable child

father was not there any more, only her mother. That's the basis, yes? After that she takes<sup>3</sup> a long journey. She runs far away and climbs up Mount Tekuyung. (She did that because) her mother had not wanted to give rice to her father. Her father, when she did not give him rice, bitterly complained. The father died, the mother was left. That is (why) she was so unhappy. That is (why) she climbed Mount Tekuyung (and) disappeared into the sky.

At certain times, the mother was able to see her at the time of the full moon<sup>4</sup>. Sometimes Lalan would descend from the sky on the night of the full moon. When that happened, the younger children would say, "Oh, Mother, there is Lalan returning." The mother became so feverish that her back stuck to the straw mat and pillow, because she was always thinking about her child. Because of her sorrow she never got well again. It was really her child that returned. That is the story of Lalan's Return.

Naa, because of the power of this story, parents behavior has to be more kindly toward each other for the sake of their children. People like that say: "Let's not go too far. That's why Lalan went away. That's why she disappeared." In the end Lalan turned into a tiger. That's why when friends sing "Lalan Returns" a tiger is likely to come near. The tiger is Lalan, who took the shape of a tiger. In the end Lalan Returns. That's why it is sometimes forbidden to sing "Lalan Returns." Other times it is all right. People know if they know the story.

Z: There are tigers around here. We'd better not talk about it<sup>5</sup>.

YM: Tigers, I think, sometimes enter the villages, don't they?

A: Yes. Sometimes they eat so many goats that the village doesn't have any at all.

Z: ...eaten by tigers.

A: Enough! What subjects does he<sup>6</sup> teach you, Bi<sup>7</sup>?

Z: He doesn't teach me. He is an instructor at the University of Sriwijaya. I am in the Nursing School. He helps me with English. I help him with Rejang.

## 12. Adaptability of the Rejangs

Z: We Rejangs don't want to study our own language, I say. Foreigners in fact may

---

<sup>3</sup> bé = narrative present

<sup>4</sup>The full moon is referred to as the fourteen-day moon.

<sup>5</sup>There is a general reluctance to discuss the subject of tigers. When walking the forest roads between villages there is a strict taboo against uttering the word imu tiger, although one may use the circumlocution tun tuei old one. This behavior has been observed throughout southern Sumatra.

<sup>6</sup>The foreign visitor.

<sup>7</sup>Bi is short for Zainubi. Dr. Zainubi's answer refers to his early nurse's training before entering the medical school at the University of Sriwijaya.

study it, but we ourselves leave it behind. Our own language is fading away.

A: In fact, I have made an evaluation. If we try to figure out what it means to be a real Rejang, there is only this measure of our language (shows a small measure with part of his finger) that derives from foreign languages. So in my<sup>8</sup> opinion, a Rejang is a pea that forgot its shell. He doesn't remember his origins. In fact, we Rejangs are people - uh, I'm looking for the right word - we Rejangs are an adaptable<sup>9</sup> people. We can speak many languages, English, Rejang, Sundanese, Javanese, and Malay so he<sup>10</sup> can join in. In fact if he were not taping this, we would all be speaking Malay since we all speak Malay. So that he could follow along we would speak Malay. We can speak Malay, we can speak English. And for people who finish high school and finish university, studying for four or five years, many have become doctors.

Indeed, we understand languages. Only we Rejangs haven't done any scientific investigation of it. If a Rejang has lived in Jakarta, I reckon, lived in Jakarta for six or seven years he can lose his ability to speak the Rejang language.

Z: La, we just forget our traditions, our Rejang language. We just don't know anything about them.

A: What about our dress? Our costumes from the time of the principedom? It's a pity there aren't any in the house, in the house of my elder brother, but there are some in the house of my younger brother. There are authentic costumes called 'Round Neck.' The buttons are wide, there are four pockets, and the neck is sewn as just a slit. Too bad they are not here. That was for a real Rejang prince. Here he dressed like this, with a number eight topper with a feather tied here and with Rejang writing on it. No, that was the real way the Rejangs dressed.

Z: That was the<sup>11</sup> tradition, yes?

A: (Yes) the (tradition).

Z: Are there still people in this village who do not speak Malay, who refuse to speak it even a little bit?

A: Amir's father cannot. We didn't invite him to chat with us. It's surprising, but the man doesn't speak Malay. So we didn't invite him.

---

<sup>8</sup>The speaker uses the deferential kémé 'our opinion' which I have translated into English as 'my opinion.' See n. 13.

<sup>9</sup>The word perenggut implies a person who "takes" or "grabs" what he wants. The implication is that the Rejangs freely borrow cultural items from contact cultures.

<sup>10</sup>The foreign visitor who is taping this conversation. Note that he is referred to with the Malay term Pak; for a Rejang the term is Bak.

<sup>11</sup> the = lit: That was this tradition.

### C. Excerpts from Conversation in Daspetah Village, Curup

Theme: The cultivation of rice

Participants:

S: Mr. Saibul, farmer

IS: Mrs. Saibul

Z: Dr. Zainubi Arbi

#### 13. Opening New Fields for Cultivation

Z: Will you explain from when people begin...?

IS: Saibul will explain it!<sup>12</sup>

Z: Yes, explain everything from the time people open a new field, until they harvest, until they get the rice, the polished rice. The whole process, like that. And how about pests? And I would like to ask about the seasons. What month, for example, do people begin to prepare the soil in the fields?

IS: You seem to have a misunderstanding of the way we Rejangs farm. We do not have a plantation to start with, not yet.

S: That's right. People take various kinds of land (and) soil. There might be rice stubble (or) there might be a fallow field. If a field is fallow then we are going to<sup>13</sup> prepare it. We do the clear-cutting the month of what? during Rajab (seventh month). In Rajab (everything) is cut down. The Rejab cut-down takes about twenty days. Then we clear everything away--that is a story in itself--then immediately we plant tobacco. Immediately after that the rice.

Z: For example we<sup>14</sup> work a (previously harvested) stubble-field, the land is full of stubble?

S: Yes. The stubble fields, all the stubble fields are staggered with various crops: tobacco, beans, or if not that, corn. After that we plant rice again. But if there are thickets, we clear the underbrush first.

IS: Fell trees. Fell trees first before clearing (the field).

S: Yes, (everything is) cut first, everything is cut before (it is) cleared, cleared then burned; everything is burned before (we) would<sup>15</sup> start spreading the ashes around.

---

<sup>12</sup>She points to her husband and laughs, meaning "Let him do it (not me)!"

<sup>13</sup>lak = have to; be going to

<sup>14</sup>The pronoun used here is ite we (incl.). A 2nd Person form would be too narrow in scope for this context.

<sup>15</sup>bé = 'would' (foregrounds the sentence)

After spreading the ashes, we broadcast tobacco seeds. After broadcasting tobacco seeds, we wait two months. After two months the tobacco shoots are transplanted. When the tobacco plants have grown one more month, we weed for the first time. The tobacco is about this high - about twelve centimeters. When it is this high, we begin to weed. We don't weed again until the tobacco has sprouted its first two leaves, at approximately two months, and the tobacco has flowered. We weed for the third time when the tip of the tobacco leaves split. After weeding the third time we immediately prune the first level of tobacco leaves from the lower part of the plant.

Z: How many leaves are taken?

S: Four or five leaves from the bottom. In about a month's time the first leaves are gone. The tobacco then has the second level, the middle leaves. In about another month we harvest the middle ones. Finally the third level at the very top. After another month the tips are already three months old. After three months the tobacco stalk is cut. Then we weed again and set the field afire. The field is weeded so we can burn the grasses. The stalks are thrown away and the grass is burned before we plant rice.

Z: So that's the story beginning from the uncultivated underbrush. If the field has not been cultivated usually one plants tobacco first?

S: Yes, we plant tobacco first. The reason is to improve the soil.

#### 14. Planting Rice

Z: So before dibbling<sup>16</sup> the rice seeds into the ground, are the seeds about one month old?

S: Six.

Z: Six months. So the seedlings are six months old. Then when the seeds are seven months old, what do the seeds look like?

S: The young rice-plants are easy (to plant), except that the rice-plants may be diseased. Many are diseased, one-third of them. After they have been growing for two months the second part (=second third) of the lot do not live. After seven months, um, now (we) dibble (them)( remaining shoots). = we transplant the shoots by making holes in the ground with a stick and placing shoots in the holes).

Z: How do people here do the actual planting?

S: That is what we call tong royong<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>16</sup>The term beto'o means to 'dibble,' i.e. to plant by making a hole with a stick and placing seeds into the hole.

<sup>17</sup>This word is derived from Indonesian gotong royong--the pan-Indonesian custom of mutual self-help among groups of farmers or villagers. Thus everyone in the area can be called upon to help build a house or harvest a field.

Z: So everyone helps?

S: Yes.

Z: The stick, what is its name?

S: Bamboo.

Z: Bamboo? What bamboo?

S: The one we call Se'i'. If not bamboo se'ik then bamboo amo, we call it. If not amo then se'i'.

Z: Don't people use kemanyen?

S: No, kemanyen is too heavy to carry, not even the smallest kemanyen.

IS: No, we use a stick from a coffee bush, or se'i'.

S: Kemanyen is far too big. We don't use bamboo, except only the kind called se'i'. If not se'ik then a wooden stick.

Z: When everyone dibbles in this cooperative way, how many seeds go into one dibble hole?

S: We plant at the most fifteen seeds, that's the most. The least is five, or better nine. Five is not enough.

Z: How many will live at this time, the most that will live for sure?

S: So the most and the least, for the most part they live. Sometimes they all live. The least that survive is one-third.

Z: If the weather is not very good?

S: It's not that they won't grow. It's not possible that they won't grow. As long as we plant during rainy season, even if we pay no more attention to them, the rainy season is the proper time, and when the proper time comes we plant. What I mean is the seeds grow very fast during the rainy season.

## 15. Seasons and Calendars

Z: Now let's go on to the seasons. How do our farmers plant rice? In planting rice, do they take into account the moon, or rather, its phases during rainy season when they plant? Do they consider the factors of rain and sun? How do these factors affect the seedlings?

S: When we plant the seedlings are one month old.

Z: How many days is that?

S: Thirty days.

Z: Thirty days? Why do people use the Arabic calendar?

S: Our progress begins from the Arabic time. People have always done it like that. Our knowledge dates back to that time.

Z: Yes. There is another scenario, too, because we can follow the times, we can think in the modern way. Nowadays we don't have to follow the traditional ways. We may cultivate our fields according to the Arabic moon calendar if we like, but on the other hand, nature, the condition of rain and heat, depends on the revolutions of the sun. And the influence of the sun and the influence of the moon are not the same. If we really think about it, when we use the Arabic calendar, we are following the moon. If we follow the national calendar or the Western calendar as we have recently, that is based on the revolutions of the sun. And the sun has the most influence on the weather. So if we follow the Arabic calendar, we slip behind little by little in our calculation of the expected weather conditions.

S: Yes, we fall behind.

Z: One month in the Arabic calendar is twenty-nine days, and that kind of reckoning can cause discrepancies. For example, if we first plant rice during the month of Rajab, it is likely that next year we will be planting during the month of Sa'ban. That happens because of the Arabic calendar.

S: Yes, because of the influence of the Arabic calendar that is inevitable.

Z: So?

S: Well, after each span of ten years we come around again to the original date when we planted the rice the first time.

Z: So for the duration of the ten years we keep falling behind, you mean?

S: We fall behind by regular intervals.

Z: I feel that if we follow the modern system - I make the suggestion, in fact, yes? - it is not really necessary. We can take heed of the fact that the relevant cycle is the cycle of the sun. It would be better for people to follow the revolutions of the sun so that in the designated month during the hot season we prepare the soil, and in the designated month, beginning at the start of the rainy season, our rice will be such-and such an age. Then the seasons<sup>18</sup> would not slip behind year after year. If we follow the solar calendar, I feel it would be more exact. This year and the following year will be the same.

S: Yes.

---

<sup>18</sup> What he actually says here is not the term for 'seasons' but *aséa umei* = production (lit.: yield of the field).

Z: The next year it will be the same. The most that we can fall behind is just a little bit, isn't that true?

S: Yes.

Z: Thus the national calendar has thirty or thirty-one days, whereas the Arabic calendar has twenty-nine or thirty. However, a thirty-day month is quite rare.

S: That's right.

## 16. Pests

Z: Now I would like to ask about the problem of pests and the problem of rice-plant diseases, about all matters harmful to the rice from the time it is first planted. What is harmful to the rice?

S: Rats.

Z: No, I mean, not the rats yet. If the field is near the village, are the seeds likely to be eaten by chickens?

S: Yes. Chickens and sparrows eat them, too.

Z: Sparrows fly down too?

S: Yes.

Z: What else?

S: Also several kinds of doves, and rats, too, but only a little. And squirrels.

Z: What else?

S: Only worms, various kinds of worms.

Z: They are after the seeds, yes?

S: Yes, they attack seeds.

Z: Now when our seedlings begin to sprout, what is most likely to destroy them?

S: Kesu'uk bugs.

Z: This kesu'uk, how does it look?

S: The kesu'uk has a large body. Some kesu'uk are as big as this (showing a section of his index finger). Very long. The white one is called lundey. It is like this. It

moves fast.

Z: Now when the rice begins to grow to be the size of a finger, aren't there more pests? What is it that destroys the plants? What sorts of things can happen? Things like the worms that we talked about?

S: Oh, grasshoppers. Many kinds of grasshoppers eat continuously. (They) eat the leaves. (When) the age of the rice is<sup>19</sup> this big, when it gets to be six or seven days old it is about so big. Needle-shaped we call it.

Z: What is it that is likely to kill the rice plants?

S: The term is dying by kill-off.

Z: What causes it?

S: I am not sure what eats it, or if anything eats it. Various things.

Z: Perhaps it is the kesu'uk bugs nearby eating the weeds, maybe for a while they hide in the weeds and then attack the rice...

S: (Does something have to) eat the rice? Ha, people say it just kills off by itself.

Z: Kills off? Surely the people here can not simply believe that! Saying (that something) "kills off" (means) there is no cause. A kill-off is just fate. For instance, if they are needle-sized, could the heat of the sun can destroy (them), or not?

S: (That could) destroy them, yes. It has happened that rice-plants that don't have many roots, especially if not covered, die. Plants whose seeds are not covered, or if the seeds are covered (but) the ground is not covered, they die.

Z: How about during rainy season?

S: Rainy season everything grows. The sprouts are everywhere.

Z: Now let's go on to the rice at twenty or twenty-five days, or when it's pretty tall, I mean. You have only weeded once. After weeding, do you transplant it yet?

S: Not yet. We only transplant after the leaves number two or three.

Z: What destroys the seedlings during the weeding period?

S: Only the rats. They eat the stems. By the time we begin weeding the élék grass, the rats have already started in. If we are a little slow weeding, that's where they eat, where there is a clump of grass.

Z: They totally destroy it, you mean?

---

<sup>19</sup> bé = 'will' = habitual present

S: They destroy it completely right down to the stem, gone. They eat the joints<sup>20</sup> of the plants as well.

Z: What are the rats like?

S: The rats are big and almost white.

Z: A, now let's jump ahead to when the rice begins to ripen. When the rice ripens, just before the rice ripens, what is it called?

S: Rice bloom.

Z: Does this rice bloom have pests at this time?

S: None yet.

Z: No sparrows yet?

S: Not yet. What attacks it are pissants.

Z: Ha, the pissants. When will the pissants urinate?

Those pissants will be when, the pissants will be, when the rice becomes black, almost (black) (when) pissed on by these pissants.

Z: Are there pests, like grasshoppers?

S: No grasshoppers. Pissants, yes.

Z: How do we combat them? I mean, do the pissants come around a lot or only seldom?

S: They stay from now until the rice stalks are full. After they are full they are seen no more. They run off, or rather, their time is up.

Z: Does your rice field ever have apes in it? Do apes like to eat rice?

S: Very much.

Z: How old is the rice when the apes eat it?

S: The problem here is, the apes eat the rice from the time of the first weeding of the élék grass until the harvest.

Z: What other kinds of apes are there? Are there different kinds of monkeys, like be'ié, and sipié?

S: No, none of those.

---

<sup>20</sup> xz matei ponoi 'eye of the dove' = ?? look up the original ! Augie missed a passage and so did not translate this term.

Z: How about cigok?

S: No.

Z: Now let's go back to the almost-ripe rice plants. When the rice is almost ripe, what starts attacking it then?

S: When it gets to be really named "rice" then the wild pigs start in. The wild pigs come until the rice is harvested.

Z: Do the wild pigs come every year or just some of the time?

S: It can be said that every year we have wild pigs. It is extremely rare that the pigs do not come.

## 17. Combating the Pests

Z: Now let's return to poisons. Now, for example, if there are lots of worms, how do we get rid of them?

S: Some seeds are poisoned.

Z: Seeds are poisoned? What kind of poison is used?

S: What we call it in the village is just worm poison. That's what people call it. Kesu'uk poison. I don't know the name for it. Ha, we kill the kesu'uk bugs by poisoning some seeds. Poison is mixed with seeds. We go with about three cans of seeds. Approximately one-quarter to a half will have poison in them. The poison is treated with water and then mixed in with the seeds.

Z: So much for the worms. How about the rats?

S: The rats are<sup>21</sup> poisoned. Rat poison is black. The poison we mix<sup>22</sup> with rice or we put it inside a bamboo pole.

Z: Do they eat this?

S: They eat whatever<sup>23</sup> they can see.

Z: Is that all we do to combat the rats?

S: That's it, nothing else. If our field is<sup>24</sup> clean nothing more. What we need (to do

---

<sup>21</sup> are poisoned = I assume this is background, as is the next sentence; foreground with bé occurs two sentences hence.

<sup>22</sup> bé = habitual present; here I translated passive (cenapur) as Object Preposing in English to achieve parallelism with the active verb (mepék) in the next conjunct.

<sup>23</sup> Nembuk ne do'o ba kemléak ne = They eat that which they see (it). See file do'o ba.

is)<sup>25</sup>, we weed the<sup>26</sup> élék grass quickly.

Z: We still have to deal with the sparrows, and then let's go on to another subject, the problem that you spoke about earlier. How about the sparrows?

S: We chase them away.

Z: But how do you keep them from eating up our field?

S: The method is just to wait for them to come and then chase them away. We just have to guard the field. From the time the rice blooms until it is harvested we have to guard it. Those are large pests, you understand. The point is from now on we cannot leave the field.

Z: Finally the wild pigs come to eat. Do they eat the rice or do they eat the stems?

S: They not only eat the rice, they destroy the stalks before they eat the rice. They begin eating the rice before it is ripe. They are very destructive. Well, there are lots of fields, yes? Also some are spread out, not adjoining. And of course there are very many wild pigs. The rice plants are eaten by the pigs. Oh, a good half is consumed by them. If the pigs weren't so numerous it wouldn't be so bad.

Z: You mean one field with only two wild pigs, is not too destructive?

S: What we often get is not less than fifteen (laughter). Fifteen pigs can eat a lot in ten minutes.

Z: But if we chase them away they won't come back, will they?

S: Oh, yes! We dare not shout. If we shout, we won't know if the pigs are in the field! They are quiet and on their guard. Na, when we hear the sound of (pigs) chewing, we must startle them, throw something. Only if they are startled will they stay away for a long time. Around here the pigs are tame.

## 18. Fertilizers

Z: How else does one go about combating these problems?

S: One method is to use fertilizers.

Z: For example, if the soil is poor, when do people fertilize it? What fertilizers do the people here normally use?

S: Urea.

---

<sup>24</sup> bé = narrative present

<sup>25</sup> do'o ba = F-Rel

<sup>26</sup> Engl the is presuppositional ("Let's get the teeth")

Z: Don't people use TSP<sup>27</sup>?

S: Not very often.

Z: So when people use urea, how many times do people spread fertilizer in a year?

S: Even when the soil is poor, we seldom use fertilizers in or near this village<sup>28</sup>. If the soil is good, we may fertilize every fourth year (in fields) near the village. Never more than every three years.

Z: Do you put the fertilizer on the well-used fields after harvest?

S: Yes, on the well-used fields, but only every fourth year. Because if we do it more frequently, the yield is just the same.

Z: When is the best time to fertilize?

S: We fertilize before planting.

Z: So the use of fertilizer is limited to urea. If you use one can of seeds, approximately how much uréa is needed?

S: In one field measuring forty square meters, a neighbor used four kilograms.

Z: Oh, that's not very much.

S: No, it isn't.

Z: Isn't there no effect if too little fertilizer is used?

S: Probably if our area here was also the cause (=at fault). (Then) one could argue it would be insufficient. If the soil (were) very bad (then) it would be insufficient (especially) because in our area here the weather is cold. However, one (neighbor), he fertilizes<sup>29</sup> thoroughly, he fertilizes thoroughly (and) plants rice again. He has a lot of weeds, lots of weeds coming up. The previous year he only had five kinds of weeds, but after fertilizing he gets nine types! That's why<sup>30</sup> my neighbor seldom ever used<sup>31</sup> fertilizer again. He much preferred to hoe thoroughly. The land (produced) extremely well, too.

## 19. Troublesome Spirits

---

<sup>27</sup>Trisulphate.

<sup>28</sup>The explanation I was given later was that it is considered a waste of money to fertilize a worn-out field. Better to go open a new bukoa (fresh field). This can be done without a government permit if there is no prior claim to the land.

<sup>29</sup> bé occurs several times in this passage = narrative present

<sup>30</sup> xz That's why = do'o ba

<sup>31</sup> I reverted back to past tense (=default) because bé stopped coming.

Z: Now at this time do we not make an offering<sup>32</sup> at the end of the field<sup>33</sup>?

S: No.

Z: No? Then where do you make it?

S: In the middle of the field, behind the shelter. It has to be behind.

Z: People don't make it in front of the shelter?

S: No.

Z: What is the reason for not making it in front of the shelter?

S: Evil spirits or semalei<sup>34</sup> as we say, as we say in Rejang.

Z: Semalei? What does that mean?

S: It means if our offering is touched by the shadow of the shelter we will all be sick. That's what is meant by the word semalei. Our fields form straight paths (going) straight to the village. We make it so the straight path is divided in two, by constructing a cross-path.

Z: What's the purpose of that?

S: Well, the offering will be built on the side of the road that is not a cross-path, on the side of the shelter. Thus the shelter will be on the other side. That is the side of the field that is not the cross-path. So you see, the offering is behind the shelter on the side that is not a cross-path.

---

<sup>32</sup> xz the word penei was removed from original and replaced by penan on the assumption that penei was a type

<sup>33</sup> I was told that the offering described in this conversation is made only in highland dry-rice fields that remain untended much of the time. The offering is not usually made in closely-guarded wet-rice fields close to the village, unless something unusual threatens the harvest.

<sup>34</sup> This word is a blend of semat lei 'big devil'.