6. Gunung Terang: Social Organisation of a Migrants’ Village

In Indonesia, legally each person and each parcel of land has to be integrated within an administrative village. This requirement was imposed by colonial administrations in Java (Breman 1982; Tjondronegoro 1984) and further strengthened in the post-colonial era. This nationwide integration was achieved by the introduction of the National Village Law of 1979, which imposed the adoption of a Javanese style administrative village (desa) throughout the archipelago. Within this context, ordinary Indonesian villagers were seen as members of an administrative community.

After discussing the region of Sumber Jaya and Way Tenong in the previous chapters, this chapter and the next chapter will discuss a single village in the region. Gunung Terang is an administrative village created by Semendo migrants in colonial times and afterwards inhabited by migrants from Java. This chapter explores elements of village social organisation in relation to village formation, leadership, and community cohesion.

In Sumber Jaya and Way Tenong, the administrative village functioned primarily as a vehicle to attract state resources to the villages. This fits the conceptual framework that positions local social organisations as intermediaries in rural development (Esman and Uphoff 1984; Tjondronegoro 1984; Quarles van Ufford 1987; Warren 1993). Along this line, Antlov (1995) suggests that under the New Order, rural leaders in Java based their power on administrative authority as state clients and/or on their ability to meet villagers’ aspirations.

On the issue of village cohesion, Tjondronegoro (1984) notes that many communal tasks carried out by the rural communities in Java took place at the sub-village/hamlet/neighbourhood level. Carol Warren (1993) has also noted the flexibility of Balinese villagers in organising themselves, depending on the nature of the tasks to be completed. Tjondronegoro (1984) and Warren (1993) further note that villagers’ communal tasks range from planned development, to religious matters, to the household economy. It is in these ways that the residents of Gunung Terang have socially organised their lives.

The Creation of an Administrative Village

The village of Gunung Terang took its name from the oldest hamlet in the village. In this hamlet, the Semendo population is dominant. Most houses and fields in Gunung Terang hamlet are tunggu tubang properties passed down from parents.
to the eldest daughter. All of the Semendonese villagers in the hamlet are the descendants of puyang Tendak, a founding ancestress, as well as in-marrying wo/men (jeme masuk, incoming persons). Four generations ago, puyang Tendak’s parents brought her and her two brothers from Ulu Nasal in Bengkulu, first to Mutar Alam and then to the new hamlet (susukan) of Gedung Surian. The new hamlet soon developed into a populous settlement (dusun) under the administration of Mutar Alam village. In the early 1940s, puyang Tendak and her husband Kemuli took their children and grandchildren and left Gedung Surian to open a new settlement at the present location of Gunung Terang. Their kin soon followed. The decision to migrate from Gedung Surian was largely driven by the need to find more land for rice fields, since there were not enough fields and no more land could be transformed into rice fields in Gedung Surian. In Gunung Terang hamlet, the riverbanks of Way Besai were transformed into rice fields, and families from neighbouring Gedung Surian and Mutar Alam, and also from Ulu Nasal (Bengkulu) came to settle in Gunung Terang.

Plate 6-1: Semendonese houses in Gunung Terang.

Source: Courtesy of the author.

According to a few elders, puyang Tendak was not supposed to leave Gedung Surian. As the only daughter, she was the tunggu tubang and thus entitled to inherit her parents’ house and rice field. However, her brothers’ refusal to observe the tunggu tubang rule forced puyang Tendak to find new land elsewhere. Some Semendonese in Gunung Terang hamlet believe that this refusal to recognise the tunggu tubang rule led to the Gedung Surian population suffering from illnesses and harvest failures so often that eventually the area was abandoned. In the
In the Islamic month of Muharam each year, the Semendo community in Gunung Terang hold a *sedekah pusaka* ceremony. In the ritual, descendants (*keturunan*) of *puyang* Tendak gather in the house where the dagger heirloom (*keris pusaka*) is kept. The heirloom has been passed down from *puyang* Tendak to her eldest daughter, then to her eldest daughter’s eldest daughter, and so on. Now the *pusaka* is kept by her great-great-granddaughter. The *sedekah pusaka* ritual involves reciting Qur’an verses and the cleaning of the *pusaka* dagger. Each family that joins the *sedekah* brings meals to be shared and served. According to some of the elders, the main purpose of the *sedekah* is to remember their origin (*asal usul*) and to ask God for his blessing (*berkah*) and for the well-being (*selamat*) of the community.

Like the Semendo, the Gumai — another Pasemah speaking group in highland Palembang (Sakai 1999) — stress the importance of an ancestry that places a person and a region as points of reference. Throughout the year, the Gumai perform many types of *sedekah*. The ritual specialists possess spiritual power and are highly respected in the ritual realm. This differs from the Semendo in Gunung Terang hamlet where the *sedekah pusaka* has been held only once a year, and was previously held only occasionally in difficult years such as during the Warman insurgency, or when there were harvest failures due to severe drought, or when there were epidemics of life-threatening diseases. The post-*krismon* drop in coffee prices and production after 1999, as well as post-*reformasi* political turmoil, has encouraged Gunung Terang residents to perform *sedekah pusaka* every year. The man who has been in charge of cleaning the dagger (*keris*) is regarded as one who knows how to do the cleansing properly but, unlike the ritual specialist in Gumai, he does not possess spiritual power and is not highly respected. The gathering on *sedekah pusaka* is arguably a way for *puyang* Tendak’s descendants to maintain their social ties. Since most of them live in Gunung Terang, the ritual serves to strengthen community ties among the Semendo who live in Gunung Terang hamlet.
Map 6-1: Gunung Terang village.
Other hamlets in Gunung Terang village (Table 6-1) were created between the 1960s and 1980s, mainly by migrants from Java. In Talang Jaya, the second oldest hamlet, there were initially less than half a dozen families from different parts of Java (Serang, Bantul, Nganjuk) who arrived in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They approached the Semendo in Gunung Terang and were allocated forest land, which they transformed into housing lots and coffee gardens, and turned local creeks into rice fields. More migrants from Java arrived and settled there, so by 2001, Talang Jaya had a fairly equal number of both Javanese and Sundanese inhabitants and both languages are spoken there. A few more Semendo people have also moved to the area.

**Table 6-1: Population of hamlets in Gunung Terang village.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hamlet</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunung Terang</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedeng Sari (incl. Talang Buluh Kapur)</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinar Jaya (Talang Jaya)</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukakarya (Petay Paya)</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpang Tiga</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigis Jaya I (Rigis Bawah)</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigis Jaya II (Rigis Atas)</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temiangan and Talang Selingkut</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2931</strong></td>
<td><strong>706</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Profile of Gunung Terang conducted by village administration, 2001.

The hamlet of Bedeng Sari has a rather different story. In the mid-1960s, a group of more than a dozen Javanese families arrived in Gunung Terang, including Pak Kono and his parents when he was 12 years old (in 1962). A native Lampung family sponsored their migration. Pak Kono’s parents were assigned to take care of a citrus garden in Tegineneng, which was near Bandar Lampung. While caring for this garden, his parents also cultivated vegetables and raised goats. Despite good harvests, the situation in Tegineneng was difficult for the family because cash and goods were frequently stolen from their home. Five Javanese families in Tegineneng, plus another ten from different parts of Central Lampung, soon decided to migrate to Way Tenong. When they first arrived in Mutar Alam, they were advised to proceed to Gunung Terang, where the village head organised housing lots for these newcomers. He managed to persuade other Semendonese families to give the newly arrived Javanese land for housing lots (*kapling*). A bunkhouse (*bedeng*) made of bamboo walls and a grass (*imperata*) roof was built as a temporary communal house for them. From there, each family subsequently built huts in their allocated housing lots. The current hamlet took its name from the communal bunkhouse.
Labouring in the Semendonese coffee gardens and being paid in cash or in food (cassava, maize, rice, or bananas) was the main mode of survival for all of the newly arrived migrants. Access to land was also obtained by clearing the Semundenese forest or fallow plots in exchange for a portion of the newly cleared fields. Sharecropping was another way to accumulate enough money to buy a coffee garden. Of the dozen Javanese families who arrived from Hajimena/Tegineneng in 1962, only five remained in Bedeng Sari in 2000, while the rest had moved elsewhere.

When the Javanese groups from Hajimena/Tegineneng arrived, there were already labourers and sharecroppers from Java living in scattered huts in the coffee gardens. The building of the bunkhouse (bedeng) and subsequent housing lots initiated the creation of more hamlets. More Semendonese lands along the path were sold at low prices to be transformed into housing lots for these sharecroppers and labourers, causing subsequent numbers of migrants to further extend the Bedeng Sari housing lots. Initially part of Talang Jaya administrative hamlet, Bedeng Sari separated and formed a single administrative hamlet. Later, Petai Paya and Simpang Tiga split from Bedeng Sari. In the late 1960s, Petai Paya was settled by two or three families who previously lived in BRN transmigration villages in Sumber Jaya before moving to Gunung Terang to work as labourers and sharecroppers in the Semendonese gardens. As in Bedeng Sari, the Javanese are dominant in Petay Paya, while Simpang Tiga is shared by the Javanese and Semendonese.
Until the 1980s, Rigis Bawah, Rigis Atas, and Talang Buluh Kapur were the locations of scattered gardens, patches of remaining logged-over forest, and fallow plots, many of which belonged to those living in Bedeng Sari and Gunung Terang. Javanese migrants, previously living elsewhere in Lampung, came to buy the land or to work as labourers or sharecroppers. Until recently, illegal logging has been an important economic activity in Rigis Bawah and Rigis Atas.

The hamlets of Rigis Atas and Temiangan have only recently been integrated into Gunung Terang’s village administration. Rigis Atas residents previously lived in a hamlet within the state forest zone which has since been abandoned. Arriving in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the residents were part of the BRN transmigrant village of Puralaksana. When they were told to leave their homes and gardens in 1994–95 because they were going to be replaced with plantation forests, some of them moved down to the present Rigis Atas. After not receiving any ‘attention’ from the Puralaksana administration for years, the hamlet was integrated into the Gunung Terang administration in 2000. Like Rigis Bawah, Javanese are the dominant group in Rigis Atas, with Sundanese and Semendonese being the minority.

The hamlet of Temiangan used to be part of the neighbouring administrative village of Sumber Alam. Similar to Rigis Atas, the villagers in Temiangan also felt neglected by their village administration, leading the Javanese community in Temiangan to decide to become part of Gunung Terang village.

Plate 6-3: Houses in Rigis Atas.

Source: Courtesy of the author.
Recently there have been more attempts to mark the boundaries of the administrative hamlets in the village. A few Javanese houses on the edge of Bedeng Sari, for example, are administratively within the boundary of the Gunung Terang hamlet. However, they maintain day-to-day relations with their neighbours who are residents of Bedeng Sari. A suggestion to include these Javanese villagers within the Bedeng Sari boundary was rejected by the village council. Buluh Kapur, on the other hand, is administratively eligible to form an administrative hamlet separate from Bedeng Sari, yet residents there wished to remain part of Bedeng Sari.

A hamlet is socially and territorially divided into several neighbourhoods. Both hamlet and neighbourhood have a communal responsibility or role. Community works (gotong royong) for paths, roads, small bridges, running water tanks, and pipes are sometimes undertaken by all of the residents of the hamlet, but at other times are done only by the neighbourhood men. Most hamlets have a mosque (masjid, mushalla) that is constructed and communally maintained. The residents gather in the mosque for regular Qur’an reciting (pengajian, yasinan), Friday prayers, and to celebrate Islam’s holy days. Some neighbourhoods have smaller prayer houses (surau).

Adults in Gunung Terang village are keen to be seen as devoted (taat) Muslims. Before sunset, men wear a sarong and cap (peci) and prepare for evening prayers. Most of them do the daily prayers in their homes, leaving the surau and mosques empty. Friday is the weekend in the village, and on this day villagers stay at home. The villagers come to the mosque for Friday prayers and a speech (khutbah) at mid-day. The khutbah consists of the imam reading a section from a book containing a collection of Friday speeches (buku kumpulan khutbah Jum’at). School-age children in Bedeng Sari and Petai Paya go to a small Islamic school (pesantren) to learn Al Qur’an reading, Arab script writing, and Islamic teachings (ajaran). In other hamlets this is done in the surau and the mosque in the afternoon or evening. Women form pengajian groups and meet once or twice a week in the surau or the mosque to recite Al Qur’an and hear Islamic teachings.

Community cohesion at the neighbourhood level is stronger than at the hamlet level. The Javanese in the village admit that, with regard to helping a member of the hamlet experiencing hard times (for example, death, illness, accidents, and personal conflicts with outsiders), cohesion (kekompakan) among the Semendo community in Gunung Terang is exceptionally strong. For religious feasts (sedekah and ruwahan) among the Semendo, and selametan or syukuran among the Javanese and Sundanese), it is the neighbours’ obligation to give sumbangan (a gift or donation) of raw food (for example, rice, sugar, chicken, or coconut) and snacks such as biscuits. Close neighbours also help in the preparation of the feast, and women who are close neighbours and kin usually help with the
cooking of the meals. In the case of a death, the burial and the subsequent prayer rituals would be the neighbourhood’s responsibility. It is quite common for a villager to have close neighbours (tetangga dekat) who are also good friends (kawan baik, akrab). Among the poor, the bond between close neighbours is particularly strong. Often their huts or wooden houses have been constructed communally, and they tend to organise a reciprocal labour exchange which limits their need to hire labour. Among themselves they often arrange zero-interest credit partnerships or form rotational savings groups (arisan).

Like villages elsewhere in the region and other parts of rural Indonesia, Gunung Terang has two patterns of housing — nucleated (or compacted) and dispersed (or scattered). In the hamlets of Gunung Terang, Talang Jaya, Bedeng Sari, Petai Paya, and Simpang Tiga, the houses are nucleated and aligned in a row along the village’s main road. All of these hamlets, except for Talang Jaya, obtained electricity in the late 1990s. In Buluh Kapur, Temiangan, Rigis Bawah, and Rigis Atas, houses are dispersed along the unpaved roads and paths. In Rigis Atas and Rigis Bawah, there are a few small compact housing compounds with up to a dozen houses separated by coffee gardens.

Villagers refer to the construction of facilities and the provision of services by the government when discussing the progress (kemajuan) in their village. Suharto’s New Order era of the 1980s is said to have been the turning point in village progress. As some villagers put it, ‘before there was nothing (tidak ada apa-apa) in the village, everything was difficult (payah), and life was hard (susah).’

Clinic and health programs for women and children have been some of the most recognisable measures used to distinguish the difficult (susah) years before the 1980s. Sick, pregnant women and infants often died before arriving at the clinic in Fajar Bulan. They are now quickly taken care of by the nurse in the village or in the health clinic (puskesmas) in the neighbouring village of Sumber Alam. In serious and/or emergency cases, patients are cared for at the small hospital in Fajar Bulan. The well-being of women and infants has been further improved thanks to periodic posyandu (short for pos pelayanan terpadu, or integrated health service posts). These are clinics at which sub-district nurses and village family welfare functionaries provide information to women on infant health issues, vitamins, and immunisations. Many families in the main hamlets in Gunung Terang once received sacks of cement from the government to improve their housing.

Progress in the village during the New Order extended into the economic sectors. In the mid-1980s, hundreds of families received generous agricultural extension assistance, and extension officers regularly visited the village to advise the farmers on better farming techniques. Incentives in the form of cash,
tree seedlings and livestock were provided to encourage the application of soil conservation measures on sloping land, and credit was provided in the form of chemical fertiliser and tools. The annual output from coffee gardens, rice fields and other farmland increased dramatically. The improvement in agricultural production was followed by a cheap land certification project that allowed villagers to use the certificate as collateral to obtain loans for various purposes from the Bank Rakyat Indonesia branch at Fajar Bulan.

In Gunung Terang village, facilities and infrastructure were equally distributed among the main hamlets of Gunung Terang, Bedeng Sari, Petai Paya and Simpang Tiga. The village now has two elementary schools, one in Talang Jaya and one between Bedeng Sari and Gunung Terang. The village’s Islamic school (pesantren, madrasah) is located in Petai Paya, as is a health clinic run by a nurse. The junior high school (sekolah menengah pertama) is located in Simpang Tiga. The village hall (balai desa) is located in the hamlet of Gunung Terang, while the village weekly market is in Bedeng Sari.

In the 1980s, a road network was built to connect the villages on the southern part of Bukit Rigis with the West Sumatra Highway, which passes across the northern slope of Bukit Rigis. The village paths, previously constructed by village communities through gotong royong, were enlarged, gravelled, and asphalted, and the wooden bridges were replaced by sturdy concrete bridges. Before the construction of the road network, sacks of coffee beans had to be carried manually to coffee resellers in Fajar Bulan, which could take a whole day. To obtain household supplies, one had to walk to the weekly market in Srimenanti and later to Fajar Bulan. This meant walking to the market the night before market day and sleeping over in the market. Since the construction of the road, Fajar Bulan can be reached in less than an hour by motorbike, pickup, or minibus. The road was asphalted in the mid-1990s. A weekly market recently opened in the neighbouring village of Sumber Alam, where each Friday over a thousand people from neighbouring villages come to do their weekly shopping.

Before the construction of the current schools, children in Gunung Terang went to Mutar Alam. A few literate adults in the village voluntarily taught the children in the basement of a stilted house in the beginning, and then later in wooden classrooms that were built through gotong royong. The government finally developed this informal school into a formal elementary school in the 1960s. The second elementary school in Talang Jaya was built in a similar way. When the sub-district education office asked the villages to grant land for the construction of a secondary school in the early 1990s, the villages of Gunung Terang and Sumber Alam were quick to agree to grant land on the border between the two villages. Because of this, children only need to go to Fajar Bulan for high school education.
Progress has been a source of tension between the Semendonese and the Javanese in the area. On the surface, one might consider such tensions to be ethnic conflicts, but they are perhaps better seen simply as manifestations of the desire for progress.

As a Javanese man put it, ‘the Semendonese here are difficult (payah), they don’t want our village to flourish (ramai)’. Two cases of the reluctance of the Semendonese to release some of their land for the sake of village progress can be used as illustrations. Unlike some of the neighbouring villages, the main hamlets of Gunung Terang, Bedeng Sari, Petai Paya, Simpang Tiga, and Talang Jaya are separated by over a hundred metres of coffee gardens. This prevents the hamlets from being conjoined to form a larger village settlement. Some of the Javanese villagers suggest that this is largely due to the Semendonese reluctance to allow their gardens to be bought by fellow villagers and new migrants and transformed into house lots.

Another Javanese man criticised the Semendonese for not allowing their land to be taken to enlarge the current path from the asphalt road to the hamlet of Rigis Atas. Had the Semendonese agreed, it would have reduced the transportation cost and attracted more new migrants to the remote hamlet of Rigis Atas. This allegation is, of course, denied by the Semendonese. They say that their reluctance to sell the land between the hamlets is due to the fact that the village is now full of migrants from Java, so if they sell the remaining land it would be difficult to find another plot that they could buy as a replacement. The prohibition on selling tunggu tubang property is another constraint. The Semendo also maintain that the cancellation of the road to Rigis Atas had more to do with financial problems, and the technical difficulty of constructing a bridge crossing the Way Besai River, than with getting land to enlarge the existing path.

For their part, the Semendo complain that the Javanese are always trying to sideline them. In the eyes of some Semendonese, Javanese domination in the village will put the Semendonese in danger. All of the government projects go to the Javanese while the Semendonese are left behind (ditinggalkan). Such tension occurs especially between the dominant Javanese hamlet of Bedeng Sari and the old Semendo hamlet of Gunung Terang. The tension has led to talk of either Bedeng Sari or Gunung Terang splitting to create a separate administrative village.

In the 1960s, the administrative village of Gunung Terang included the present neighbouring villages of Tri Mulyo, Cipta Waras, Gedung Surian, and Semarang Jaya (Air Hitam). Tri Mulyo was created by a group of Javanese villagers whose leader, Sumardi, had lived in Talang Jaya for a couple of years before moving on and founding Air Dingin, the main hamlet in Tri Mulyo. Sumardi brought 17 families with him from Central Java in the 1960s. Pak Cik Nawi, the village
head of Gunung Terang, gave them permission to clear the forest there, and Air Dingin hamlet was soon followed by others. These hamlets officially became the separate administrative village of Tri Mulyo in the mid-1980s. Pak Cik Nawi also gave permission to two groups of late BRN transmigrants from West Java to settle in the area. One group of a dozen families from Tasik Malaya, led by Pak Juhana, first came to Tribudisukur only to find that there was no more land available in this BRN transmigration village. This group then created the hamlet of Waras Sakti. The other group of about 40 families, mainly from Bogor, first came to the village of Puralaksana, but it had no more land available for them either. With Pak Cik Nawi’s consent, this group cleared the forest and created the hamlet of Ciptalaga. Initially both hamlets belonged to BRN transmigration villages (Waras Sakti being part of Tribudi Sukur, and Ciptalaga part of Puralaksana), but in the mid-1980s, both hamlets and the neighbouring hamlets formed a separate administrative village called Cipta Waras. Pak Juhana was elected as the first village head.

The abandoned hamlet of Gedung Surian soon filled up with Javanese and Sundanese migrants. It also separated from Gunung Terang’s administration in the 1980s, retaining its old Semendo hamlet name. A portion of Gunung Terang land was also given to hundreds of families from Semarang (in Central Java) who arrived in Mutar Alam in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They settled in Air Hitam and later created the village of Semarang Jaya.

**Village Leadership**

When one asked villagers in Gunung Terang about the people who could best tell the history of the village, they mostly pointed to three men: Pak Kasijo in Talang Jaya; Pak Timan in Petai Paya; and Pak Cik Nawi in Gunung Terang. Aged in their sixties and seventies at the time of my fieldwork, these three men were former village leaders and were now considered to be village elders (*sesepuh, tokoh*).

Pak Kasijo was well known for his prominent role in promoting children’s education in the village. He arrived in Lampung in the mid-1950s from Bantul, near Jogjakarta. Initially he planned to join his relatives who had migrated to Wonosobo in southwestern Lampung, but upon arrival in Lampung he took up an offer to work as a foreman (*mandor*) in a rubber plantation and factory in Kotabumi that had formerly belonged to the Dutch, but had since been nationalised. After a couple of years, he decided to migrate to the newly opened transmigration area in Sumber Jaya and Way Tenong. With his friend Sumardi, who later led a group of Javanese villagers to open the land in Trimulyo, he finally settled in Gunung Terang.
Unlike most early migrants, Pak Kasijo was a high school graduate. He opened the first community school in Gunung Terang in the 1960s. At that time, children had to go to Mutar Alam to get an elementary education. Pak Kasijo’s initiative was very much welcomed by the villagers. He and a few other villagers with junior high and high school education voluntarily acted as teachers. Initially the classes were held under the stilt house of Pak Cik Nawi, the village head. Later, through *gotong royong*, all of the villagers worked together to build a simple wooden house as the classroom. The community school later became the first formal elementary school in the village, located between the hamlets of Gunung Terang and Bedeng Sari. Pak Kasijo then continued his efforts to open a second elementary school in the village located near his house in the hamlet of Talang Jaya.

Pak Timan was another elder well known for his leadership in village affairs, especially agricultural extension. In 1962, as an orphan boy, he was taken by his uncle to Kota Gajah in central Lampung. When his uncle’s family broke up (*berantakan*), he was taken in by an indigenous Lampung family to maintain their pepper garden. Given a hard time by the children of his Lampung foster father, young Timan joined a friend who left for Sumber Jaya in 1964. For a few years he lived in Simpang Sari, farmed a small plot of coffee garden, and married a Sundanese girl whose father was an early BRN transmigrant. Later, Pak Timan decided to move to Gunung Terang to join (and later replace) his brother, who was working to maintain one of Pak Cik Nawi’s coffee gardens. Pak Timan eventually managed to establish his own coffee garden and build a decent house in Petai Paya hamlet.

Pak Timan and his wife were active in village affairs. His wife was active in assisting Pak Cik Nawi’s wife in various family welfare programs, like the *posyandu* program. When a group of migrants from Hajimena/Tegineneng arrived in Gunung Terang, Pak Timan became involved in the construction of the communal bunkhouse (*bedeng*). He was active in creating the hamlet of Bedeng Sari, but Pak Timan’s outstanding leadership was ultimately recognised for the work he did in organising villagers to receive government assistance in agriculture during the 1980s. He was chair of a village farmers’ group (*kelompok tani*) with over two hundred members for more than a decade. With an elementary school education, his literacy was an important reason the villagers chose him for this position. Pak Timan coordinated the provision of credit for members of the *kelompok* to buy chemical fertilisers from the sub-district agricultural extension officers who also routinely gave advice on better planting materials and cultivation techniques. Pak Timan was often selected as the farmers’s delegate in meetings in the capital of the sub-district, district,
and province. In his capacity as chair of the kelompok, he initially organised the villagers in the land titling program. According to Pak Timan, two thirds of the village population now had their land titled.

The most prominent leader in the village of Gunung Terang was Pak Cik Nawi. Unlike Pak Kasijo and Pak Timan, who were now retired, Pak Cik Nawi was still active in village politics. Born in Gedung Surian, he was still a little boy when his grandparents and their offspring moved to create Gunung Terang hamlet. He learned about village administration mainly from two relatives — the then village heads of Gunung Terang and Mutar Alam. Pak Cik Nawi was first appointed as the interim village head in 1962. He won the village head election in 1965, lost it in 1972, but was reappointed as caretaker head two years later. He failed to win the village head election in 1979, but was again appointed as caretaker head in 1983. In the 1990 village head election, his candidature was rejected by the sub-district office, mainly because his level of education was lower than the minimum requirement (junior high school graduate). Since then, he had been a key figure in the village council.

Many of the early migrants from Java in the village likened Pak Cik Nawi to a ‘parent’. He was remembered for his efforts from 1960 to 1970 to ensure that each migrant family had a house to live in and land to work with. Some early migrants from Java still remembered how, during difficult years, Pak Cik Nawi allowed them to take rice from his rice field and other food (like cassava, banana, and jackfruit) from his garden. He persuaded some Semendonese villagers to do the same, and actively persuaded the Semendonese to welcome the newly arrived migrants from Java.

Most of the migrants were initially landless, including those who worked in his gardens. Pak Cik Nawi earned respect for not treating them as inferiors nor taking much material advantage from his position as village leader. Pak Cik Nawi possessed an average amount of wealth, and was not among the handful of truly wealthy families in the village. None of his children went to university, and he could not even afford to send his two younger sons to high school.

Pak Cik Nawi’s role in the village during the late 1990s was mainly that of an adviser to village officials on village affairs. He was formally the chair of the village council. Some villagers exaggerated this role by saying that ‘without Pak Cik Nawi’s approval (restu), village projects could not be implemented smoothly’. This did not mean that all of the village projects would be successful, even if they did have his approval, nor does it suggest that he had the power to impose his opinion on village decisions. Rather, it was recognition of his persuasive ability to encourage key actors in the village to come to a consensus. Development projects, such as the construction of schools, roads, bridges, and water networks, require villagers’ participation for their successful
implementation. Negotiations over such projects can easily be the source of tension between factions and/or sections in the village. Most often the tensions were between the Semendonese and the Javanese, and Pak Cik Nawi’s advice was mainly directed at resolving these tensions.

Village head Bu Mas Muda, village secretary Mas Paryoto, and village council chair Pak Cik Nawi were three key figures in the village administration. Gunung Terang was the only village in the region led by a woman, Bu Mas Muda. Her good leadership was recognised not only in the region of Way Tenong and Sumber Jaya, but also in the whole district of West Lampung. The villagers were proud to have her as the village head. One of the hamlet heads in the village once proudly claimed that ‘no village head in the region or elsewhere that I happen to know is better than our village head, Bu Mas Muda’.

Bu Mas Muda won the village head election in 1998. She was quite underestimated by her only rival, a man from Simpang Tiga. Apart from her ability to gain full support from the hamlet of Bedeng Sari where she lives, her success in the election was also due to her ability to win the votes of the Semendonese in the village, who lived primarily in the hamlet of Gunung Terang. She promised that the Semendonese would not be ‘left behind’ in the village development projects — an issue that especially worried the Semendonese if the village head was Javanese. She learned much about village administration and affairs, and also ways to bring development projects to the village, during her husband Pak Hasan’s term as Golkar village komisaris and village head between 1990 and 1998.  

Recognition of Bu Mas Muda’s leadership was largely due to her success in bringing development projects to the village. Between 1999 and 2001, there were several such projects as part of the package of loans and grants that the Indonesian government received from international development agencies to cope with the 1997–98 krismon. The path through Rigis Bawah was enlarged and gravelled to enable car transportation. The road from Simpang Tiga to Talang Jaya was also gravelled, while another local road construction project shortened the distance between the villages of Trumulyo and Fajar Bulan. A network of plastic pipes to supply running water was installed from the Bukit Rigis foothills to the hamlets of Gunung Terang and Bedeng Sari. For the villagers, especially the poorer ones, these works provided substantial wage earnings. For her success in bringing such development projects to the village, Bu Mas Muda was respected by the villagers.

Preventing tension among village sections was another item on her working agenda. By nominating Bedeng Sari and Gunung Terang as the intended

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1 In the 1990 village head election, Pak Hasan won by only 30 votes against an empty box.
beneficiaries of the running water project, she prevented tension between the two hamlets. Gravel — the main material for road construction in the hamlet of Rigis Bawah — was supplied by those living in the hamlet of Rigis Atas. The latter received the payments while the former received the improved road, so both hamlets enjoyed the benefit of the project.

Plate 6-4: Residents of Rigis Bawah doing gotong royong.

Source: Courtesy of the author.

Although active in seeking government projects to be implemented in the village, Bu Mas Muda was quite careful not to put the village (and her leadership) in a potentially difficult situation. A small group of men, including some hamlet heads in the village, once intended to engage in a soft credit scheme provided by a government agency of the district. The credit would have been distributed among households in the village to buy compost, fertiliser, and pesticides for commercial vegetable farming. A well-written proposal was prepared and was ready to be submitted. Intense communications had been established with district officials who would provide the credit, so the chance of obtaining the credit was deemed to be high. Yet Bu Mas Muda gently refused to approve the initiative. She pointed out that the village had had bad experiences in handling a government credit scheme in the past. The village had received cheap credit under an IDT program, which was used to buy sheep and goats that were distributed selectively to poor households. The credit was designed to rotate among the poor. Soon all of the sheep and goats were reported to be sick or
dead, and a number of village officials were taken to the district attorney’s office and accused of corruption. Although no one was proven guilty, it was a great humiliation for the village and its officials.

But despite her refusal, Bu Mas Muda did not totally ignore the proposal. She supported the idea of forming a village vegetable farmers’ group, and agreed to allocate village funds for village delegates to visit some ‘advanced’ (maju) vegetable farmers in neighbouring Sekincau. The newly formed group was to collect cash from each of its roughly 40 members, who would then decide how the money was used and monitor its use by the membership. Bu Mas Muda wanted to see if the farmers’ group — of which she herself was a member — possessed the ability to handle its members’ money before trying to engage in risky credit schemes provided either by the government or by private agencies.

According to many villagers, Mas Paryoto, the village secretary, had leadership skills in village affairs besides being able to process village administration paperwork. Before being appointed to this position by Bu Mas Muda, Mas Paryoto was appointed by the sub-district office as the village enumerator (or data collector) for the family planning and social welfare program (petugas pencatat keluarga berencana desa). Maintaining good communication among village officials and leaders was a task that Mas Paryoto managed quite well. He regularly visited formal and informal leaders in the village and kept them informed of village affairs. He maintained close contact with all of the hamlet heads in the village, either by visiting them, often with Bu Mas Muda, or inviting them to his or her home. In this way they were both were kept informed of things happening in all of the hamlets, while the hamlet heads were informed of government policies and programs related to village affairs.

Mas Paryoto was active in promoting commercial vegetable farming in the village. With his two neighbours, he started the commercial and highly intensive cultivation of vegetables. It started with capsicum chilli, and then other vegetables such as tomato, eggplants, and beans were also introduced. Villagers frequently gathered in his house to hear his technical advice on how to start commercial vegetable farming. He was also frequently invited to see fellow villagers’ vegetable fields and give suggestions. He made contacts with traders or salesmen of agricultural inputs for commercial vegetable farming (seeds, fertilisers, chemicals, and so on), and a small group of villagers gathered frequently in his house to hear a salesman promote his products. Mas Paryoto kept persuading the salesmen to give free demonstration samples, allowing a variety of brands to be tested and compared. He was also one of the initiators of the newly formed village farmers’ group whose purpose is to assist members with growing better commercial vegetables through the provision of agricultural inputs and better marketing of outputs.
With his skill and ability in village administration, maintaining good communication among village leaders, and promoting commercial vegetable farming, some villagers believed that Mas Paryoto was the most suitable candidate to be the next village head when Bu Mas Muda’s term ended in 2006. But Mas Paryoto was reluctant to be seen as too ambitious. Secondly — and this was a far more serious concern — he felt that his family was not yet economically established (cukup, mapan). According to him, an economically established family is one of the prerequisites for an ideal village head. In 2002, Mas Paryoto was still struggling with his family’s economy, and therefore decided not to run for village head. He did not own a coffee garden, but was a sharecropper who took care of less than 1 hectare of coffee garden belonging to another villager. He had just started farming commercial vegetables in his 0.25 hectare house garden. He was still not sure whether he could afford to send his two little daughters for higher education. Although his father was a large landowner in Rigis Bawah, with over 10 hectares of coffee gardens, and had been able to support Mas Paryoto’s high school education in Java, the land was equally distributed among his children from two wives when he died. Mas Paryoto’s share was then sold to buy a house lot and to build his present house.

Each ‘administrative’ hamlet in the village had a head, but unlike the village head, all of them were appointed by the hamlet residents by consensus (musyawarah) instead of being elected. Since 2001, village officials had been receiving a monthly allowance from the district government. Among the administrative tasks of the hamlet heads (pemangku, kepala dusun, kepala suku) are those of recording monthly and annual data on the demography of the hamlet and collecting the annual land tax (pajak bumi dan bangunan). They represent the hamlet at village meetings and are responsible for delivering messages about new government policies from the village administration to the hamlet community. Within the hamlet they are expected to maintain social harmony (rukun, tentram, guyub), which includes the task of settling disputes amongst neighbours, giving advice on official matters, organising the hamlet’s religious rituals (such as yasinan, the celebration of Islamic holy days, and burials), and encouraging gotong royong activities to construct and maintain community facilities.

There were variations in the leadership role of the hamlet heads in the village. In the hamlets of Gunung Terang and Bedeng Sari, the role of the hamlet heads was rather limited and focused only on the collection of demographic data and land tax. These were the two hamlets in which Bu Mas Muda, Mas Paryoto, and Pak Cik Nawi resided, so the villagers in both hamlets heard about village affairs from them directly rather than through the hamlet heads. In 2001–02, the hamlet heads of Bedeng Sari, Gunung Terang, and Talang Jaya had little
involvement in community work. In other hamlets, such as Rigis Bawah, Rigis Atas, and Temiangan, where the residents only rarely met higher ranking village officials, the leadership role of the hamlet heads was more prominent.

Like other village officials, hamlet heads were recognised for their efforts to integrate the community into the village administration and tap state resources. The name of Talang Jaya hamlet was taken from the name of its first head, Pak Jaya, who put a lot of work into creating the administrative hamlet and integrating it into the village of Gunung Terang in the early 1970s. Pak Maryono followed a similar strategy in the 1980s in what was now the hamlet of Rigis Bawah, formerly known as Talang Maryono (a name which was still used informally). Pak Maryono was a key figure in Golkar’s success in the village during the general elections from the 1980s until the 1990s. As Golkar komisaris, he actively persuaded the Javanese villagers — now the majority people in the village — to vote for Golkar. Pak Simun, the then hamlet head of Temiangan, had more recently taken a similar role in separating the hamlet from the village of Sumber Alam and integrating it with Gunung Terang. Mas Kaulan, the then hamlet head of Rigis Bawah, gained his reputation thanks to the recent government road building project in his hamlet and a community water supply project. Conversely, Muayat Wagimin, the then hamlet head of Rigis Atas, organised his community to supply the gravel for a road building project in Rigis Bawah which provided much needed extra paid work. But his most prominent leadership role was in organising the hamlet’s residents who farm the state forest zone to engage in a community forestry agreement (HKm).

The official village administrative structure had other posts as well. Under the village head, there were several heads of special affairs (kaur, short for kepala urusan). Under the hamlet head there were also several heads of neighbourhoods (kepala rukun tetangga). The village council had about a dozen members and the village also had several civil security officers (hansip, short for pertahanan sipil). Aside from village officials responsible for witnessing and recording marriages, divorces, and reunions (petugas pembantu pencatat nikah talak dan rujuk) and neighbourhood heads in some hamlets, these were mostly nominal offices. The position of chair of the family welfare program was usually occupied by the village head’s wife, but in Gunung Terang the position was given to another woman who had previously assisted Bu Mas Muda when she was chair during her husband’s term as village head.

The religious leaders in the village, including the board of the mosque (pengurus masjid) and teachers and preachers in the village’s small pesantren, concentrated on religious teaching and rituals. Each mosque in the villages had one or more

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2 In Buluh Kapur, which is part of the administrative hamlet of Bedeng Sari, the neighbourhood heads were active in gotong royong and religious rituals.
imam or kiyai whose role in everyday affairs was minimal. Functionaries from national political parties in the village had no great role in everyday village affairs. There was no sign of political activity from the major parties’ komisaris and cadres other than putting up signboards and attending party meetings in the sub-district or district.

The village had no official office. The village hall was only used during village meetings attended by higher level government officials. For internal village official meetings, Bu Mas Muda’s house was used. The village paper work was done at the village secretary’s house where Mas Paryoto had a study. All of the village officials in Gunung Terang were full-time farmers, and consequently part-time village officials. They worked in their gardens in the morning and afternoon every day. They came home for lunch and dzuhur (mid-day prayers) during the working week, and except for busy seasons in the farming calendar, they were at home the entire day on Fridays. Within this time-frame, any villagers wanting to see the village head and village secretary had to find them early in the morning, during the mid-day break, just before sunset, or else in the evening.

A Village Development Meeting

In June 2002, the village held a village development meeting (musyawarah pembangunan pekon). The meeting was supposed to be the venue for the village community to outline the village development plans they wanted the government to fund. The meeting was organised at the request of the sub-district office (kecamatan). About a week before the meeting, an official letter of invitation was sent to village officials, members of the village council, hamlet and neighbourhood heads. The letter was signed by Bu Mas Muda and distributed by Mas Paryoto himself. Mas Paryoto also visited all of the hamlet heads personally to promote the occasion and advise them to be prepared. In the following days, many hamlet heads and a few other village officials were seen visiting either Bu Mas Muda or Mas Paryoto to further discuss the preparations for the village meeting.

The meeting was held at the village hall. The delegates had already gathered at about 9 a.m. but had to wait for a couple of hours to start the meeting. This was a rare occasion for villagers from different parts of the village to meet and have a lively chat. Nearly 80 delegates attended the meeting. Adult males were dominant. There were numerous young men but less than a dozen women. The meeting began when the district officer arrived at nearly 12 o’clock. Mas Paryoto opened the meeting by greeting all of the delegates, explaining the purpose of the meeting, and outlining the agenda and timetable. The meeting
had three main agenda items: explanation of the new government policy on village administration; selection of the chair and members of the village community development council (lembaga pemberdayaan masyarakat pekon); and a workshop on village development plans that concluded the meeting.

Bu Mas Muda delivered the opening remarks. She began her speech by stressing that each hamlet should propose development programs that were deemed to be urgent (penting, mendesak) and actually needed (dibutuhkan). She reminded all of the village hamlets to collect the targeted amount of land tax on schedule; distribute the government-subsidised rice (beras miskin) only to those who were eligible, such as poor families; and not to wait for an order (perintah) to undertake gotong royong. The second speech was by Pak Cik Nawi in his capacity as the chair of the village representative council. First, he advised delegates that, in selecting the village community development council members, they must choose among those who lived permanently (menetap) in the village. He continued his remarks by stating that the village conducted village development meetings like this every year, but that the results of those meetings were never followed up. The village development plans only ended up piled high (menumpuk) at the district government office. Yet because there was a formal request from the sub-district office, the village must again hold a village development meeting. Pak Cik Nawi concluded his remarks by repeating Bu Mas Muda’s comments that the delegates should only propose programs that were urgently needed.

The district officer began his section of the meeting by explaining the new government policies in accordance with the newly enacted national, provincial, and district laws, regulations, and decrees on village administration and development. He continued by explaining that the village should now have two councils with complementary roles. The village representative council was responsible for formulation, ratification, and enactment of village decisions and regulations. The village community development council functioned as the working partner (mitra kerja) of the village official administration. Gunung Terang had already selected the members of the first body but still needed to select villagers for the second one, which has a chair, a deputy chair, a secretary, and a treasurer. There were to be eight sections in the village community development council: (1) religion and community harmony (kerukunan warga); (2) legal institutions (kelembagaan hukum) and laws and regulations (perundang-undangan); (3) youth, sport, art, and culture; (4) improvement of human resources, natural resources, and environment; (5) economic development; (6) family and women’s empowerment; (7) media, communication, and information; and (8) customs and tradition (adat isitadat).

The meeting continued with the election of members for the village community development council. One of the criteria for candidates for chair of the council was that he or she must live on the main road so the chair would be accessible
to the villagers when needed. Since the hamlets of Rigis Atas, Rigis Bawah, and Temiangan were not along the main road, they were not allowed to nominate a candidate. All of the delegates were given a small piece of paper to write down the name of the candidates. Nurdin, a Javanese, had the highest number of votes and became the chair, while Ka’i, a Semendose, came second and became his deputy. The secretary and treasurer were appointed by the village head, the chair of the village representative council, and the elected chair of village community development council. The positions in charge of the eight development council sections were filled with candidates from all of the hamlets.

The next agenda item was the discussion of the village development plans. The sub-district officer started by explaining that financial sources for village development programs and projects were available from three levels of government — central, provincial, and district. The funds would be divided and used for programs and projects by all liding sector (leading sectors) implementing agencies at the district level. Before beginning the discussion, the sub-district officer expressed his dissatisfaction with the DPRD members from the region. He said that although the Sumber Jaya and Way Tenong region had many DPRD members, none of them ‘fought’ for development in the region. Instead of backing up sub-district officers at the district level, they just did the ‘4Ds’ (datang, duduk, diam,duit or ‘came, sat, were quiet, and sought money’). As a result, he noted that there were piles of proposals for village development plans sitting on desks at the district government office — a reiteration of Pak Cik Nawi’s remarks. Yet because the district government required the sub-district office to submit village development plans that were actually proposed by the village community, this kind of village meeting had to be held.

The sub-district officer continued by reading the list of 24 liding sektor with which the village proposed plans should be matched. The officer read out the name of each sector and the delegates then mentioned a plan that might suit that particular sector. Most often he proposed the plans himself, and they were then accepted by the crowd with a loud ‘Agree!’’. He also frequently rejected plans proposed by the delegates if he thought they were irrelevant. For example, when delegates proposed a project for running water, it was simply rejected because Gunung Terang had already received such a project. When the discussion came to the irrigation sektor, a delegate proposed an irrigation project. The officer then asked whether the village had an intact area of more than 50 hectares suitable for rice fields because the government would not fund any irrigation projects if the area suitable for rice was smaller than this. Since none of the delegates could answer his question, the proposal for an irrigation project was simply erased from the list. The discussion became a bit lively when it came to the agriculture and natural resource management sector. In response to the decline in coffee prices and recent forest clearing, an agricultural diversification
program was proposed that included vegetable farming and tree and cash crop planting. The discussions focused on what crops would grow well in the area and have good market demand. Proposed projects for each liding sektor continued in this fashion until the workshop was completed less than two hours later.

The meeting concluded with the sub-district officer reminding the audience of the allocation of the annual village development fund (dana pembangunan desa). Since there had been so many allegations of corruption, the district government decided to stop providing this fund in 2000 or 2001, but the village heads had complained that they could not run the day-to-day village administration without the money. So the district government had decided that the annual village fund would again be provided, but that it must be used only for the operational costs of village administration. To use the annual village fund as a source of credit for income-generating activities or for physical infrastructure, as was done in the old days, was now totally prohibited.

The village development meeting finished at about 2 o’clock. Lunch was provided for all of the delegates. They all went home without knowing what would happen with the village’s proposed development plans, but they all knew that at some time in the following year, a very similar village development planning ritual would be organised, and they would again submit to doing what they had just done that day.

**Contingent Cohesion**

As a corporate group, an administrative village is characterised by clear membership and territorial boundaries. The village consists of several hamlets, and each hamlet is made up of several neighbourhoods, each of which might consist of only half a dozen families or households. Official village affairs tend to be taken care of by the village and hamlet, while other community affairs (like religious or emergency matters) are organised by the hamlet and neighbourhood.

At the village level, community cohesion is seen within the context of formal state ‘rituals’. The village development plan meeting, for example, is a venue that serves to symbolise the existence of a village community, and the participation of the village community in national rural development planning is then required. No one expected that the result of village planning would seriously be considered and followed up by the higher-level government decision makers. Nevertheless, the gathering itself strengthened the delegates’ feeling that they were members of an entity and were discussing matters that would benefit all of its members.
The celebration of 17 August — the nation’s independence day — is another occasion where the villagers’ sense of community is accentuated. For Independence Day in 2002, the sub-district office asked all of the villages to maintain tidiness (kerapihan) and raise the national flag. Following this request, the national flag and colourful banners (umbul-umbul) were erected in front of houses along the main road, with bamboo fences all painted in white. Sporting matches and games (volleyball, checkers, and dominoes) were held for a week. The celebration concluded with panjat pinang, where boys competed to climb the greased trunk of a palm tree to collect small prizes hung on top of it. The games were entirely a village initiative, and the money for the celebration was collected from all of the households in the village. Here again, the gathering served as a venue for the villagers to meet and do things together. Besides strengthening the sense of community at the village level, these ‘rituals’ also deepened the villagers’ feeling of being part of the larger Indonesian national community.

Maintaining the village graveyard is another activity in which the villagers act as a community. About a week before the fasting month of Ramadan, each hamlet sends about a dozen men to weed the village’s main graveyard located in the hamlet of Gunung Terang. Although not all deceased villagers are buried here, men from every hamlet are involved. The village graveyard itself is not very large and it could easily be weeded by less than a dozen men in less than half a day. Yet more than three dozen men gathered to weed it in 2002, proving that it was not the weeding itself that was important, but the fact that villagers from all of the hamlets in the village took part.

In the old days, the village gotong royong was the primary means to get a village project done. Through years of village projects, paths were enlarged and wooden bridges were constructed so that motorbikes or four-wheel jeeps could pass by. The use of the village annual development fund to buy material for the small bridges (gorong-gorong) was almost a necessity. The construction of elementary schools and the village market were also done this way, and many villagers from all of the hamlets spent days and even weeks on the projects. Often, when additional money was needed to buy materials to complete a project, cash was collected from all of the households in the village.

While successful in building mosques in all of the big hamlets, the villagers’ plan to have a pesantren in the village had yet to materialise. Through donations and gotong royong, the biggest mosque in the village was built at the border of Bedeng Sari and Petai Paya and a few classrooms were attached to the mosque. Following the drop in coffee prices, donations ceased to flow, and the plans to create more classrooms for the school and boarding houses (pondok) to house pupils from outside of the village did not eventuate.
The road networks of Bedeng Sari and Buluh Kapur are examples of unsuccessful village projects. Only motorbikes could navigate these roads. The problem was not in mobilising gotong royong to enlarge the path, but in getting the cash to purchase materials for some small bridges that needed to be constructed in order for the road to be passable by car or jeep. This upgrade would ultimately reduce the transportation cost for goods such as coffee beans, fertiliser, and building materials. Coffee gardens in Buluh Kapur and Rigis Atas do not belong exclusively to the residents of the two hamlets; many belong to villagers in the hamlets of Bedeng Sari and Gunung Terang. But despite the urgent need, there was no serious plan for road construction.

The construction of a weekly market was also an unsuccessful village project. The market, which operated on Wednesdays, failed to attract as many traders and buyers as the Thursday market at Ciptalaga and the Friday market at Sumber Alam. Even the Gunung Terang villagers themselves prefer to go to Sumber Alam for their weekly shopping.

Plate 6-5: A shop (toko) in Sumber Alam village market.

Source: Courtesy of the author.

The recent project for water supply is another example of failure. The project was heavily subsidised by the government. The government (in this case the Department of Public Works) provided all of the materials (like cement and plastic pipes) and paid for the labour. The project constructed a pipe network
from a spring in Bukit Rigis to several concrete containers or tanks in the hamlets of Gunung Terang and Bedeng Sari. Connections from the tanks to the houses was not part of the government project, but was the villagers’ responsibility. The plan did not materialise, the tanks were soon empty, and there was no supply of running water to houses in either hamlet. There were meetings to get the project done, but no concrete plan was decided on. One of the problems was the difficulty in getting agreement on a plan between the residents of the Bedeng Sari and Gunung Terang hamlets. One of the villagers noted that ‘there were too many smart men in those two hamlets. Each insisted that his opinion was right and the others were wrong. They could come up with nothing!’

In contrast to the failure of the running water project in the hamlets of Gunung Terang and Bedeng Sari, the community in the hamlet of Rigis Bawah successfully carried out exactly the same project. Almost all of the residents have running water in their houses, and through weekly gotong royong they have built water tanks and installed a piping network throughout the hamlet. To ensure that every household participated in the weekly gotong royong, certain measures were agreed upon. Those who were absent from the gotong royong would either be prohibited from using the running water (channelling water from the tank to their houses) or obliged to pay a cash sum equal to a day’s wage. The hamlet community found a clever way of obtaining cash to purchase the materials needed for the plumbing scheme. A few years previously, one of the hamlet residents had granted (hibah, wakaf) his coffee garden to the mosque in the hamlet. The accumulated profits from this garden were used to purchase the materials. The loan from the mosque was then paid back by each of those who enjoyed the running water.

Surprisingly, many residents of Rigis Bawah are also residents of both of the hamlets of Gunung Terang and Bedeng Sari where the water project failed. The problem of ‘too many strong leaders, too much debate’ in Bedeng Sari and Gunung Terang hamlets was often cited as the cause of the failure of the water project, but the fact that most of the houses in both hamlets had a well was also an important factor. The pressure of having the project done was high at the end of 2002, when wells were empty due to the long dry months in that year and their excessive use for watering the chilli gardens. Villagers with empty wells had started to go to the Way Besai River for bathing and washing clothes. There were meetings to discuss how to get the water project done, but as the discussions intensified, the rain came and the wells were filled. All talk on the water project subsided. In contrast, villagers in the higher altitude hamlets of Rigis Atas and Rigis Bawah still used springs and creeks as their primary water source. They had no wells, and failure to regulate water use created a serious crisis in these hamlets.
The people in Rigis Atas were now engaged in a community forestry contract. The head of the district granted them the right to farm in the state forest zone and they now had formal permission to use the land without worrying about being evicted or having their crops destroyed by the forest authority. It took two years for the community to arrive at a formal contract. The processes involved a detailed inventory, mapping, and formulation of rules and plans regarding the management of the cleared land and the remaining forest patch. The hamlet was involved in intense interactions with the field staff of WATALA and ICRAF who assisted them in the process, as well as local forestry officers. They were among the first of a small number of community groups in the province to engage in such a community forestry contract.

The cohesiveness of the village community was apparently contingent on need, urgency, resource availability or limitations, and finally leadership. The communal tasks performed by the villagers embraced development, religion and ritual, and the household economy. While extra-household relations played a role in villagers’ livelihoods, most of the tasks in agricultural production were carried out by individual households. The next chapter explores this topic.