

History of Rice Planting Tradition in Belintang Community (1937-1942)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas bagaimana latar belakang awal terbentuknya tradisi menanam padi di masyarakat Belintang (1937-1939) dan bagaimana perkembangan tradisi menanam padi di masyarakat Belintang (1940-1942). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah atau penelitian sejarah meliputi, heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis dan antropologi, teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini melalui observasi, studi pustaka, dan wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa awal terbentuknya tradisi menanam padi di masyarakat Belintang terjadi pada tahun 1937, 1938, dan 1939. Hal ini dikarenakan pemerintah Belanda yang berkuasa di Belintang menerapkan kebijakan politik yang etis, memindahkan penduduk dari Pulau Jawa dan membuat saluran irigasi. Selanjutnya, berkembangnya tradisi menanam padi pada masyarakat Belintang pada tahun 1940, 1941, dan 1942. Pada tahun 1940 dan 1941 tidak ada cara sempurna untuk menanam padi, setelah Jepang berkuasa pada tahun 1942, Jepang menerapkan sistem *Kinkyu Shokuryo Taisaku* yang memperbaiki sistem pertanian dari pengolahan tanah sampai teknik penanaman padi. Selain itu, masyarakat transmigrasi juga melakukan semacam ritual menghormati dewi Sri (dewi padi) saat menanam padi menggunakan *sesajen*.

Kata kunci: masyarakat belintang, sejarah, tradisi menanam padi.

Abstract

*This study discusses how the initial background of the formation of the tradition of planting rice in the Belintang community (1937-1939) and how the development of the tradition of planting rice in the Belintang community (1940-1942). This research uses historical research methods or historical research includes, heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. This research uses sociological and anthropological approaches, data collection techniques in this study through observation, literature studies and interviews. The results showed that the beginning of the formation of the tradition of planting rice in the Belintang community occurred in 1937, 1938, and 1939. This is because the Dutch government in power in Belintang implemented ethical political policies, moving residents from Java Island and making irrigation canals. Furthermore, the development of rice planting traisi in the Belintang community in 1940, 1941, and 1942. In 1940 and 1941 there was no perfect way to grow rice, after Japan came to power in 1942, Japan implemented the Kinkyu Shokuryo Taisaku system which updated the agricultural system from tillage to rice planting techniques. In addition, the transmigration community also carries out a kind of ritual honoring the goddess Sri (goddess of rice) when planting rice using *sesajen*.*

Keywords: belintang society, history, tradition of planting rice.

INTRODUCTION

Belintang is one of the areas located in Ogan Komering Ulu Timur Regency, South Sumatra. Formerly this area was in

Palembang Residency, *Onderaafdeling* Ogan Komering Ulu which had its capital in Martapura during the Dutch Government (Panji & Suriana, 2014:10).

Before colonization, this area was still wilderness. Belitang is famous for its fertile area that is suitable for use as agricultural land. The tradition of planting rice in Belitang is also inseparable from colonialism in the region, the tradition of planting rice emerged because of a policy abandoned by colonialism. Belitang became an area affected by ethical political policies by the Dutch Government. In 1937 the Dutch government officially moved the population from Java to the Belitang region (Setiawan, 2023).

Ethical political policies or politics of reciprocity include population transfer (migration), irrigation, and education (education). The Dutch began to implement ethical political policies in Belitang by moving residents from Java to Belitang (Asri, 2022).

Around 1938, the Dutch Government sent representatives who were experts in agriculture from the Bodemkundig Institute to research the types of soil in Belitang. The three people are Dr. Ir. A. G. A. Idenburg, Ir. M. Van der Voort and F. Ch. Wasch, after conducting research on soil conditions, the result is that Belitang is in a lowland, the land is very suitable as rice fields (Agung & Farida, 2013).

Therefore, the Dutch Government wants to make Belitang an agrarian area. The Dutch government invites transmigration communities to open land

for the purpose of planting agricultural crops such as rice. This is also supported by the irrigation project that began to be built in 1938 by the Dutch Government.

The Dutch government tried to duplicate irrigation developed in the Netherlands to be applied in Indonesia (Maksum, 2006). The existence of irrigation is very important in managing agricultural land. How to plant rice and land processing in Belitang in 1937-1942 experienced development.

At the beginning of the Dutch Government in Belitang, the technique of planting rice and tillage was still fairly simple. How to plant rice in early 1939 and 1940 still using the *nugal* method, which is planting rice plants on dry land by hollowing out the soil using wood that has been tapered at the end then rice is inserted into the soil that has been hollowed out, how to plant rice in the *nugal* way is still very dependent on rainwater. This makes the harvest less satisfactory. Then the Dutch government looked for a solution to overcome the problem. After irrigation, people began to switch to wetlands (rice fields), but how to plant is also unclear even though yields are better than the previous year.

The Japanese Government came to power in Palembang on February 16, 1942, the Japanese Military Government changed all existing systems in the Dutch Government (Munawaroh et al., 2022). The system was changed, especially in

agriculture, the Japanese Government considered the agricultural system of the Dutch Government not in accordance with the wishes of the Japanese Government. Especially in planting rice, the Japanese Government is not satisfied with the results processed. The Japanese Government introduced the *Kinkyu Shokuryo Taisaku* (Urgent Measures on Foodstuffs) system, the Japanese Government changed and introduced a new way of growing rice to increase food productivity. This method of planting rice has been implemented by farmers until now (Iryana, 2017: 22).

This method of planting rice is known as planting backwards (*tandur*). This way of planting rice has become a tradition in the Belitang community. Based on the above, researchers are interested in studying more deeply the history of the tradition of planting rice in Belitang in 1937-1942, how the beginning of the formation of the tradition of planting rice and how the development of the tradition of rice planting in Belitang in 1937-1942. This is very important because previous studies only discussed the development of colonization in Belitang.

METHODS

The writing of this article uses historical method. In this study using sociological and anthropological approaches. Historical research methods are ways or steps used in writing down historical events. The

historical method is a method of research and writing that uses methods, techniques, and procedures that are in accordance with the rules and rules of historical science (Wardah, 2014).

The historical method is divided into four procedures, namely heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics are steps to search for historical sources and collect data as a goal in historical research. In data collection must be appropriate and there must be no errors because it will greatly affect data analysis and conclusions. After the data is collected, the next step is to verify or critique the data obtained, in criticizing sources, a researcher must determine the truth of the information submitted to historical documents or historical sources (Wardah, 2014).

Criticism is divided into two, namely internal criticism and external criticism. The next step is to interpret historical facts called interpretation. The main function of interpretation in the historical method is to provide interpretation of historical facts in the context of reconstructing the past. Historiography here is the final step in the writing of historical events. After getting a clear picture, the next step is to write the results of historical research reports that have been carried out (Wasino & Hartatik, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Process of Forming a Tradition of Planting Rice

The Initial Move of the Javanese Population to Belitung 1938

The first ethical political program of the Dutch Government in Belitung was to move people on the island of Java to Belitung. On August 17, 1937, the Dutch Government succeeded in moving around 250 families to the Belitung area precisely in villages named Sidomulyo and Sidomukti villages (Agung & Farida, 2013).

Before moving the population to the Belitung area, the Dutch Government made an agreement with the indigenous people represented by the *Pasirah* (marga leader) of Belitung, the result was that the Dutch Government and the Belitung clan agreed to give part of the land to be used as land for the transmigration community. After the Dutch government moved the transmigration community, the Dutch gave some kind of instruction to the transmigration community to cut down tall trees to be used as people's homes. Because at the beginning of the arrival of the indirect transmigration community, they were ordered to directly plant rice. After the arrival of the transmigration community in the first period in 1937, the Dutch government guaranteed all the needs of the population for one year (Boty et al., 2023).

Sourced from informant Suratman (89 years old), the indigenous people of Belitung before colonization already knew

how to cultivate, the crops planted were more root crops and seeds. Rice plants have also been planted by indigenous people, the rice planted is almost similar to the gaga rice plant, indigenous people in huma (farming) do not settle but they move from one land to another. This is because the land that has been planted has to wait for months to wait for fertile land to return. Indigenous people prefer to occupy on the edge of swamps or rivers in Belitung. In addition to huma, Marga Belitung also likes to hunt fish in swamps or rivers.

In addition to moving people from Java to Belitung, the Dutch government realized that the Belitung region needed water sources to meet agricultural needs such as rice crops. This made the Dutch Government make irrigation canal technology sourced from the Komering River in 1938.

Construction of Irrigation Canals and Land Clearing in 1938

Making irrigation canals is one of the policies of ethical politics. Construction of irrigation projects by the Dutch Government began in 1938 which was targeted for completion in 1940. In addition, in 1938, the Dutch Government also observed that to make Belitung an agrarian area there must also be a supportive water supply to meet the water needs for rice plants, so irrigation

technology emerged in overcoming these problems (Agung & Farida, 2013).

In 1938, the Government also moved around 550 families from Java to be moved to Belitang (Agung & Farida, 2013). The Dutch government also ordered transmigration communities to clear land that was still heavily forested for agriculture. Transmigration communities work hand in hand and work together in clearing land using simple tools. An area of 160-200 *bahu* (1 *bahu* = 0.8 ha) was prepared by the Dutch Government to be used as rice farming. After clearing the land, the Dutch government also directed the transmigration community to start planting rice on dry land by *gejek* or *nugal* (hollowing out the soil with wood that has been tapered to plant rice).

The Early Period of Rice Cultivation in Dry Land in 1939

Sustainability in moving Javanese people to Belitang was also carried out in 1939, as many as 1500 families were moved to Belitang (Agung & Farida, 2013). Before carrying out the population transfer process, there was an agreement between the Dutch Government and the Belitang clan. The Belitang Marga represented by *pasirah* (*marga* leader) requested that the division of paddy fields passed by irrigation canals could be carried out fairly so that there would be no social conflict or social jealousy between the Belitang clan and the transmigration community.

After land clearing by the transmigration community, in 1939 the process of rice cultivation began. Planting rice is carried out in the field or called *tegalan*. How to grow rice is still very simple with simple equipment. How to plant rice in 1939 is called the *nugal* way or in Javanese called *gejek*. In planting rice. Planting rice in this way is done only once a year. In the next planting needs, the community must open new land, this is because the fields that have been planted are no longer fertile and have to wait one year before they can be planted again (Abdullah dkk, 1986).

The first way to plant rice using the *nugal* method is to prepare the rice to be planted, the land that has been opened is then hollowed out using sharpened wood, and the soil that has been hollowed out is then put in the prepared rice seeds, the rice seeds that have been planted are then given fertilizer. Using natural fertilizers such as ash from burning wood. Meeting the water needs for rice plants is very dependent on the rainy season, and the results of rice harvesting using the *nugal* method are not very satisfactory.

The Period of Development of the Tradition of Planting Rice in the Belitang Community in 1940-1942

Development of Rice Planting Tradition in the Belitang Community in 1940
In 1940, the Dutch government began implementing the rainfed rice field

program, and the transmigrant community was given orders to manage the existing land converted into rice fields. Although irrigation was targeted to be completed in 1940, it cannot be operated immediately. The tillage system is still simple because it is constrained by makeshift equipment. The irrigation system is also still dependent on rainwater, to plant rice still uses a simple way, there is no modern technique for planting rice, planting irregular rice makes rice productivity less well developed, because irregular rice planting distances make crop yields not optimal.

Development of Rice Planting Tradition in The Belitang Community In 1941

In 1941 was the end of Dutch government rule in Indonesia, especially in Belitang, the Dutch government succeeded in implementing ethical political programs, especially migration and irrigation. Although not all policies implemented run well. In agriculture, Belitang wants to be an agrarian area with the largest rice supplier in Palembang Residency. After the irrigation canal that can be used, the Dutch Government directs the community to rice fields irrigated, after irrigation the Dutch Government wants good and satisfying harvests. This is still not accompanied by a good way of planting rice, not using a modern planting pattern system (Setiawan & Kumalasari, 2018).

According to informants in rice field processing, it has led to a good tillage system. Equipment used in processing rice fields includes hoes, sickles, rakes, and plows. These tools are only used during processing in wetlands (rice fields). The Dutch government allowed crops to be consumed or sold by transmigrant communities because they occupied new territories.

Development of Rice Planting Tradition in The Belitang Community In 1942

Japan began to rule Indonesia in 1942, and Palembang began to become an area that the Japanese wanted to control after controlling Tarakan, North Kalimantan on January 11, 1942. Then the Japanese Government began to deploy troops to occupy Palembang, this was also motivated by Japan's desire to control the oil refinery in the Plaju area. After deploying troops to the Palembang area, the Dutch Government who was still in power in the Palembang Residency finally could not do anything. On February 16, the Japanese took control of Palembang and changed the name of Palembang Residency to *Palembang Shi* (Mita, 2020).

In the field of rice agriculture, the Japanese government began to update the system of how to grow rice which was considered successful. The purpose of the Japanese government to renew this method of rice cultivation is so that the harvest can support the needs of Japan

in World War II which maintained its power in the Asia Pacific region.

After the Japanese Government made innovations in agriculture, especially how to manage rice fields and how to grow rice, improving agricultural infrastructure, training farmers, and propaganda known as *Kinkyu Shokurvo Taisaku* (Urgent actions to recognize foodstuffs), (Anista, 2023: 5).

Tandur is planting rice in wetlands (rice fields) where the soil is cultivated first. *Tandur* is no stranger to people in Indonesia. The tradition of *tandur* itself entered Belitang after the occupation by the Japanese government in Indonesia. This tradition is said to be a tradition that has a positive influence on economic development in the Belitang community.

According to the informant, the difference between the Dutch and Japanese governments lies in the agricultural policy towards the people. During the Dutch Government, the community was still concerned about its economic condition and slightly facilitated in meeting economic needs. While during the Japanese Government, the people seemed to be made to suffer because of the war economic policies implemented. However, the Japanese government also teaches transmigrating communities in Belitang how to cultivate land to how to plant rice. How to cultivate rice fields and how to plant rice then became a tradition

that is still carried out by the Belitang community to this day.

Ritual Veneration for *Dewi Sri*

The Belitang people who were transmigrated or moved by the Dutch Government to Belitang were the majority of Javanese people. This is of course the community brings a custom or *ritual* inherited by its ancestors which is implemented in various lives, especially rituals in planting rice. The transmigrating community in Belitang believes that the role of the *Dewi Sri* or *Dewi Padi* is still strong in the role of crops such as rice. *Dewi Sri* also implements a persistent work ethic in Javanese society.

As stated by the informant, indeed during the colonial period there was already a form of persecution against *Dewi Sri*. The reverence is manifested as a kind of ritual. When going to plant rice, the transmigrating community makes an offering in the form of food wrapped using leaves. The offerings that have been made are then placed in the corners of the rice fields. The purpose is as a form of petition for the *dewi padi* to provide abundant harvests.

Table and Picture Development of Rice Planting Tradition of Belitang Community (1940-1942)

The following is a table and figure of data on the development of rice planting

traditions of the Belitang community from 1940 to 1942:

Table 1. The development of the tradition of planting rice in Belitang in 1940

NO	Types of Activities	Year 1940
1	How to plant	<i>Nugal</i> and how to grow rice is rudimentary
2	Tillage	The soil is pre-processed loose
3	Water Requirements	Rainwater



Picture 1. The Form of the Transmigration Community House 1937 (OKU East Library and Archives Office, 2023)

Table 2. The development of the tradition of planting rice in Belitang in 1941

NO	Types of Activities	Year 1941
1	How to plant	How to grow rice is rudimentary
2	Tillage	The land has been processed into irrigated rice fields
3	Water Requirements	Irrigation canals



Picture 2. Construction of irrigation canals by the Dutch Government in Belitang in 1938 (East OKU Library and Archives Office, 2023)

Table 3. The development of the tradition of planting rice in Belitang in 1942

NO	Types of Activities	Year 1942
1	How to plant	Tandur (How to plant rice with backward planting technique)
2	Tillage	The land has been processed into irrigated rice fields
3	Water Requirements	Irrigation canals



Picture 3. Rice harvest in 1941 (OKU East Library and Archives Office, 2023)

CONCLUSION

The beginning of the formation of the tradition of planting rice in the Belitang community was inseparable from the ethical political policy of the Dutch

Government, which occurred in the first three years, namely in 1937 the first Javanese population was moved to the Belitang Region numbering 250 families. Continued in 1938 about 550 families, accompanied by clearing land and making irrigation. In 1939 about 1500 families migrated to the Belitang Region and first planted rice on dry land. The development of the tradition of planting rice dates from 1940 to 1942. When the Japanese Government came to power, all the agricultural systems left by the Dutch were changed by the Japanese Government. Land processing techniques and how to plant rice are also a concern of the Japanese Government, the technique is called *tandur* (how to plant rice using backward planting techniques).

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