

Martin van Bruinessen, "'Duit, jodoh, dukun': Observations on cultural change among poor migrants to Bandung", *Masyarakat Indonesia* jilid XV (1988), 35-65.

## **“DUIT, DJODOH, DUKUN”:**

### **Observations on Cultural Change Among Poor Migrants to Bandung**

If one would wish to single out, among the many interrelated processes of social, economic and cultural transformation in the Third World, one factor as the most central, the migration of increasing numbers of people from villages and towns to large urban centres would be a likely candidate. Almost all other important processes of change are directly related to this rural-to-urban migration, some of them primarily as causes or contributing factors (population growth, modernization of agriculture and the accompanying economic polarization), others mainly as effects (the growth of urban slums, the rapid expansion of an “informal sector” in the economy, mass political participation and the emergence of new types of political movements). The emergence of ethnic nationalisms all over Asia during the 1960s and 1970s has been attributed to migration, which made many migrants to the cities more aware of their ethnic differences with the dominant group. The ethnic reaction seemed strongest among those migrants whose high expectations were frustrated and blamed their economic failure of lack of progress to ethnic discrimination.[\[1\]](#)

Similar experiences of migrants seem to lie at the root of the religious resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s, especially where the economy was perceived to be dominated by foreign capital, and political life by highly westernized elites. Both these reactions seem to give the lie to the optimistic “melting-pot” ideas of the 1950s, when it was expected that migration would lead to ethnic integration and the emergence of new, national, cultures in the newly independent states. To some extent, nevertheless, such ethnic and cultural integration has actually taken place too in most countries. Some researchers have seen the slums of Third World cities that house a major share of the migrants as the breeding spots of a well-nigh universal “culture of poverty”, characterized by fatalism and apathy.[\[2\]](#) Others have argued, to the contrary, that perhaps the vast majority of slum-dwellers are neither radicals nor fatalists, but decent hard-working, achievement-

oriented people, who are relatively well integrated in big-city life.<sup>[3]</sup> All the various responses sketched here, and others as well, do in fact occur. How a particular group of migrants will react depends on a complex of factors — social and economic backgrounds before migration, education, work opportunities and general economic situation, political climate — that defies generalization.

This article discusses migration and some of its effects from one particular angle: the changes in social life and culture in one community of poor migrants to Bandung, among whom I lived for almost a year.<sup>[4]</sup> Migrants to the cities do not belong to one particular social stratum: rich and poor, educated and uneducated migrate to the cities to seek fortune. Some are highly successful, others fail and return or lead a marginal existence in the cities. The poor community that I studied in Bandung can therefore not be considered as in any way representative of migrants as such, and one should be careful in generalizing my findings. However, they are not yet the poorest of the poor, about whom we talk so much and know so little. A considerable part of Bandung's population — I would estimate at least 20% — live in similar circumstances as the people of Sukapakir. This community is therefore, perhaps, exemplary for the poor in one of Indonesia's richest cities.

The (almost) alliterating words in the title of this article allude to the three groups of topics that most frequently came up in conversations in this community: economics, sexuality and the supernatural. I believe they constitute a key to these people's view of their world. *Duit*, or money, is obviously the major obsession in a community many of whom live well below the poverty line. The important matter of finding a *jodoh* (old spelling: *djodoh*), a suitable marriage partner or other sexual arrangement, is intimately related to financial problems. The economic aspects of sexuality do not escape anyone living here; the presence of a large number of prostitutes among this community and the frequent marital problems caused by economic distress are permanent reminders. The lack of control people feel they exercise over their own lives is illustrated by the important role granted to the *dukun* or magician. These three themes constitute the framework around which the second part of this article is organized.

### ***Migration to Bandung***

Indonesia is in many respects much more fortunate than many other Asian countries. Its urban problems, though considerable, bear no comparison yet to those of other large countries such as India and Pakistan. Indonesian cities do not yet have anything

resembling the nightmarish slums of Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi, where the problems have long outgrown hopes of a remedy. But urban poverty seems to be increasing, both in the numbers of the very poor and in the extent of their poverty. The economic recession of the past few years is hitting the urban poor disproportionately hard. If the present trends continue unremedied, rapidly growing numbers will be excluded from the nation's development, their human potential remaining undeveloped and unused, their energies and frustrations occasionally exploding in violent riots instead of being directed in more constructive channels.

One reason why the slums are not growing so rapidly as elsewhere is that a high proportion of rural-urban migration in Indonesia is *circulatory*, i.e., many migrants to the city return to their villages after a relatively short time.<sup>[5]</sup> Many villagers, for instance, go to one of the cities during the *paceklik* season only and return when the harvest season is approaching. Others go for a few years and return when they have saved enough for an investment they wish to make in their village. Thus it happens that in spite of high migration rates, the cities do not grow at the high rates to be observed elsewhere.

Jakarta is the only big city in Java that shows rapid growth as a result of migration. The population growth of Surabaya and Bandung amounted to an average 3.0% per year between the census years 1971 and 1980, which is not far above the 2.3% average natural rate of increase recorded during that period. The contribution of net migration (the numbers arriving minus those leaving) into these cities to their population growth was therefore only around 0.7%.<sup>[6]</sup> The growth of the population within the administrative (*kotamadya*) boundaries of these cities is even below the national average (2.2% in the case of Bandung), which reflects a net movement from the *kotamadya* to housing projects in the surrounding districts.<sup>[7]</sup> Many permanent residents with stable work move to suburban areas, where housing conditions tend to be better. Many incoming migrants, on the other hand, especially those trying to make a living as itinerant salesmen, *becak* (pedicab) drivers, etc., seek lodging where their work is, in the heart of the city.

Villagers coming to the city do not spread out evenly but tend to cluster in specific districts. The place where they first settle depends, of course, on the rate of housing rents, and especially on the presence of a relative or someone from their village. A migrant from a certain village may, in the course of years, be followed by tens of fellow villagers, who all demand his help in finding work and lodging. All tend to settle in the

same neighbourhood at first. In certain districts — such as the one where I did my research — immigrants may thus make up as much as 80% of the total population.

### *Sukapakir*

The district to be described here bears the apt name of Sukapakir. It is part of the *kelurahan* Jamika, which is the most densely populated one in Bandung. In 1980, no less than 32,000 people were registered as living on its 0.35 km<sup>2</sup>, to which should be added those temporary residents who officially lived elsewhere. The population density therefore was over 900 per ha, probably one of the highest in Indonesia. Jamika is not homogeneously settled, and the density in Sukapakir is well over the average for the *kelurahan*. This shows itself not only in the densely packed little houses and the virtual absence of greenery but also in problems of waste disposal, pollution of water wells, and the high incidence of (respiratory) problems and intestinal diseases.

Sukapakir lies in the southwestern quarter of the city and is connected with the centre by Jalan Pagarsih, a secondary street running east-west that is plied by *bemo*, small three-wheeled public vehicles. The street is lined with (mostly Chinese-owned) little shops, workshops, an old cinema building that has fallen into disuse, a few modest doctors' offices, a small hotel, a Chinese temple. In the evenings, food stalls are set up along the street, and life goes on until late at night. A few narrow lanes, in front of which *becaks* (pedicabs) are waiting night and day for passengers, lead south into Sukapakir. For the first hundred yards, the houses lining these alleys are solid and well-built brick constructions dating from more prosperous times; then these give way to more chaotic recent constructions. In the 1950s, a large part of Sukapakir still consisted of rice and vegetable fields. It was built up haphazardly when people bought little plots and put up houses there, some of brick, others of wood and bamboo matting (*bilik*). With the influx of more and more people, the remaining space was gradually filled up. Houses were partitioned, parts rented out to lodgers. There is now an average of almost three households living in each house.

One part of Sukapakir stands out visibly as even more depressed and poorer than its surroundings. In the 1940s, the land here was a graveyard and bamboo forest believed to be haunted. Only the brave and desperate dared to settle here. Unlike their neighbours, they never bought the land on which they built their houses (or rather sheds). At present, the inhabitants pay land rent to an absentee landlord. Because many of the early settlers here were from the Javanese speaking north coast districts of

Cirebon and Tegal, and some from the Sundanese districts around Bandung, this area was given the name of *Sendawa* (which means “saltpetre”, but is explained as a compound of Sunda and Jawa). The surrounding neighbourhoods were originally more homogeneously Sundanese, and more consciously Muslim. The people of *Sendawa* were perceived to be socially marginal, and bad Muslims, partly because of the magical practices of some of the north coast Javanese, partly simply because they lived on a former graveyard and haunted bamboo forest. The passage of time and the influx of large numbers of new migrants has not changed prejudices against *Sendawa*. And because of these prejudices it is only those who are actually marginal and those who cannot afford to live anywhere else that are willing to stay there.

For the purposes of my research, I chose two RTs (*rukun tetangga*, the smallest administrative unit) in Sukapakir. One of them, which I shall call RT B, is in *Sendawa*; the other, RT A, is immediately contiguous to it to the south. I rented a house in RT A and lived there for 11 months. Everyday my assistants and I went to visit neighbours and received visitors. We made long, unstructured interviews, focusing on life histories, with all 335 households in these two RTs and made efforts to take part in all social activities.

### ***History of settlement***

Towards the end of the colonial regime, as the oldest residents remember, there was only a small cluster of houses perched beside the graveyard that is now our RT B. The surrounding fields were still empty of habitation, but closer to the street there were other clusters of habitation that had, among the Dutch authorities, the reputation of being “unreliable”. When the PNI leadership was arrested in 1929, as local tradition has it, the police searched houses in this area and made arrests as well. In the first days of the revolution, many young men from this neighbourhood joined the various struggle organizations, returning to their homes in the late 1940s. After Independence, most of the *pemudas* (“young men”, the term commonly used for the members of the guerrilla organizations) from this neighbourhood were not integrated in the National Indonesian Army because they lacked sufficient formal education. Several of them joined the rebellious movement of frustrated demobilized activists, the *Barisan Sakit Hati*, that for a while was active in the Cirebon region in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This reinforced the reputation of the neighbourhood as troublesome.

The first inhabitants of *Sendawa*, living among the graves, were as marginal as their habitat. There was a troupe of *longser* artists, who gave circus-like dance and *pencak* (martial arts) performances, a group of itinerant tinkers (*tukang patri*) from Cirebon,

most of whom also practised as *dukun*. All of these people were extremely poor and little respected by society. After independence, their numbers were reinforced. The *Darul Islam* rebellion of the 1950s resulted in a large influx of refugees into the city, notably from Tasikmalaya, Garut and the southern parts of the kabupaten Bandung, which were the heartlands of the rebellion. The more fortunate among them, who brought money, could buy land and buy permanent houses. Parts of RT A were thus bought by people from Garut, who then built the first houses there. Some of them found jobs in the administration, others engaged in petty trade. The less fortunate, who could not afford to buy land, set up temporary shelters on “free”, not privately owned land: along the rivers running through the city, along the railway tracks and on other state-owned land, or on unclaimed land such as Sendawa. Thus the population in our district went on increasing. The gravestones were one by one removed, and gradually the entire graveyard was built up.

Migration to Bandung was not only caused by the “push” factor of the *Darul Islam*, but also by the strong “pull” exerted of its economic revival. Bandung became a flourishing city again, with large textile industries, a sizable military and civilian bureaucracy, and important institutions of higher learning. These created also numerous secondary employment opportunities in trade and services. Most of the refugees from the *Darul Islam* areas therefore readily found employment in a wide range of different jobs. Most of the present inhabitants of Sukapakir who settled there during the fifties originate from southern Bandung, Garut and Tasikmalaya; smaller numbers came from the Cirebon area.

Especially the former group became relatively well integrated, some as civil servants, others as factory workers; some established cottage industries while the majority engaged in various forms of trade. The very fact that they live in Sukapakir is a measure of their present lack of success; but most can tell stories of better times in the fifties and sixties.

In the sixties and early seventies the migration pattern changed and the largest groups came from the north coast: Indramayu, Cirebon, Brebes, Tegal. This is probably related to the changes in agricultural relations taking place there as a result of the introduction of new crops and agricultural techniques. By the time they arrived, the labour market in Bandung was already becoming saturated. Many of these migrants therefore depended heavily on the support of fellow villagers in finding a job, so that a pattern of regional specializations emerged. Most people from Brebes and Tegal in my sample, for

instance, are itinerant sellers of *mie baso* (noodles with meatballs); all of those from Indramayu are beggars.

Later still, from the mid-seventies on, the *kabupaten* of Majalengka began to dominate as the major source of migrants to RT A and RT B. Most of these are single males, and almost all engage in the same trade, making and selling *baso tahu* (meatballs with beancurd). Most of them are circulatory migrants, and the turnover among them is quite high. Many of them are still young and unmarried; they intend to stay in the city for a few years only and revisit their villages every year. Some of the older ones spend part of the year in the villages, part in the city, leaving their families behind. Only a small minority live in Bandung with their families and wish to make a definitive break with the village. It is only these who actively attempt to find other work and desire to move to another neighbourhood.

While the population of Sukapakir went on increasing, its administrative organization was revised several times; the district was split up into ever more RTs. Nevertheless, the average RT here is much larger than the official norm of 30 to 60 households. At the time of research, RT B comprised 126 households, and RT A even 211.<sup>[8]</sup> Although many immigrants later moved to other parts of the city or returned to their villages, the successive waves of immigration just mentioned are still evident in the present composition of the population, as shown in Table 1.

**Table I**

**Place of Birth of the Adult Population of RT A and RT B**

	RT A	RT A	RT B	RT B	Total	Total
		(%)		(%)		(%)
Kotamadya Bandung	101	22.8	61	24.3	162	23.3
Kabupaten Bandung	40	9.0	30	12.0	70	10.1
Cianjur / Sukabumi /Bogor /Jakarta	4	0.9	11	4.4	15	2.2

Garut / Tasikmalaya / Ciamis	81	18.3	53	21.1	134	19.3
Subang / Sumedang / Purwakarta	12	2.7	5	2.0	17	2.4
Majalengka	69	15.6	38	15.1	107	15.4
Indramayu / Cirebon / Kuningan	63	14.2	31	12.4	94	13.5
Subtotal West Java	370	83.5	229	91.2	599	86.3
Tegal / Brebes	26	5.9	11	4.4	37	5.3
Other Central Java	30	6.7	8	3.2	38	5.5
East Java	4	0.9	--	--	4	0.6
Subtotal Central and East Java	60	13.5	19	7.6	79	11.4
Other islands	13	2.9	3	1.2	16	2.3
Total (insofar as origins known)	443	100	251	100	694	100
Origins unknown <sup>[9]</sup>	40		66		106	

As these statistics show, the overwhelming majority of the present inhabitants are immigrants. Less than a quarter were born in the city of Bandung, and many of these too hail from other neighbourhoods. Most immigrants (around 80%) were born in West Java; those from Central and East Java are not much in evidence. The Javanese to whom Sendawa owes its name are mainly Javanese speakers from Cirebon and Indramayu. The relatively high representation of these districts in RT A is mainly due to a forty-person colony of beggars from Indramayu, who moved a few years ago from RT B to a marginal zone in RT A on the edge of the last open space, which is used as a garbage dump.

The statistics also show that both RTs experienced the same waves of immigration, and their compositions with regard to place of origin are now highly similar. Nevertheless the differences between them never disappeared; they were perhaps even reinforced because only the poorest people would settle in RT B, and whoever could afford it left Sendawa as soon as possible. A large part of the houses in RT B were brick-built, while Sendawa was a chaotic mass of wood and *bilik* structures, with little space in between. When a fire broke out in 1966, all of Sendawa burned down. It was then rebuilt in a more orderly fashion, the houses placed in rows, and several of them partly of brick. Nevertheless, the physical difference between RT A and RT B immediately strikes the eye. More striking even is the difference in atmosphere and behaviour between these two neighbouring RT, a moral difference of which the inhabitants are acutely aware. It shows in the impolite language used in RT B, in the low participation in social activities, the apparent neglect of religious duties and, most significant for the locals, the presence of prostitutes in RT B. Some righteous inhabitants of RT A believe that the fire that laid Sendawa waste in 1966 was a divine punishment. The backgrounds to the socio-cultural differences between these two RT becomes more apparent when we take a look at the occupational profile of their inhabitants.

### ***Employment***

The majority of the inhabitants of Sukapakir find employment in the so-called informal sector, but a closer look rapidly shows that a strict separation of formal and informal sectors of the economy is not possible. Civil servants have sometimes an “informal” job on the side; their wives often engage in petty trading that brings in more income than the husband’s salary. People move from one job to the other, sometimes working in a factory (“formal”), then turning to petty trading or a temporary job in construction (“informal”), and returning, when possible, to another factory job. A rough classification

of the employment of adult males and females at the time of research is given in Tables II and III.

**Table II**

**Present Chief Occupations of Men in RT A and RT B**

	RT A	RT A	RT B	RT B	Total	%
		(%)		(%)		
Civil servants/military (incl. pensioners)	18	7.6%	5	3.5%	23	6.1%
Factory workers	14	5.9%	5	3.5%	19	5.0%
Other workers	39	16.4%	30	21.1%	69	18.1%
Petty traders (market or <i>warung</i> )	17	7.1%	8	5.6%	25	6.6%
Itinerant vendors	87	36.6%	45	31.7%	132	34.7%
Pedicab drivers	4	1.7%	9	6.3%	13	3.4%
Craftsmen (home industries)	8	3.4%	3	3.1%	11	2.9%
Other self-employed	14	5.9%	5	3.5%	19	5.0%
Other occupations	11	4.6%	12	8.5%	23	6.1%
Beggars	10	4.2%	—	—	10	2.6%
Unemployed	16	6.8%	20	14.1%	36	9.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table III****Present Chief Occupations of Women in RT A and RT B**

	RT A	RT A (%)	RT B	RT B (%)	Total	%
Civil servants	--	--	2	1.4%	2	0.5%
Factory workers	19	8.1%	11	8.0%	30	8.0%
Other workers	7	3.0%	20	14.5%	27	7.2%
Petty traders (in <i>warung</i> or itinerant in the neighbourhood)	10	4.3%	25	18.1%	35	9.4%
Massagists / prostitutes	3	1.2%	21	15.2%	24	6.4%
Beggars	30	12.8%	--	--	30	8.0%
Housewives	154	65.6%	55	39.9%	209	56.0%
Other occupations	12	5.1%	4	2.9%	16	4.3%
Total	235	100%	138	100%	373	100%

These tables give only the chief occupations, i.e., those taking up most time and energy. There is much hidden unemployment that is not reflected in these figures. A number of construction workers who were highly irregularly employed (working one week out of three or four) were classified as “other workers” because they were working or had

recently worked when I made this compilation. Those classified as “unemployed” had been out of job for more than a couple of months. No women could be classified as unemployed since even those who had previously been factory workers and were doing their best to find such a job again had to devote much time and attention to household chores. Many of those classified as housewives had minor jobs on the side, such as sewing for non-household customers, but only when these jobs took a considerable part of their time they were assigned to one of the other categories. (Unemployed men generally refuse to do any household chores, even if their wives have full-time outside jobs).

Just over ten percent of the men worked in the formal sector. The factory workers were mainly in the textile industry; a few had lower jobs in a local high-technology industry, due to the good services of a local resident who worked in the factory’s personnel department. The textile industry strongly favours female over male workers (lower wages and fewer protests), and that is reflected in the higher number of women factory workers (all of whom worked in the textile industry). This industry accounted in the past for a larger proportion of employment than at present. Several persons in our sample worked at one time in a textile factory but were forced out because it was closed down or reduced its labour force. Some experienced such dismissal three or four times, and finally found themselves working as hawkers or pedicab drivers. The general drift has been, over the past ten, fifteen years, from the formal into the informal sector, with very few cases of movement in the reverse direction. The category “other workers” includes those employed in shops, cottage industries and mechanical workshops or in construction. Many of the women in this category (all of them in RT B) peeled and cut onions for a small factory that operated on the “putting out” system.

By far the largest occupational category, accounting for one third of the men, is that of the itinerant vendors and hawkers, who mostly sell food and drinks. The two varieties of *baso*, meatballs, that are the specialties of people from Majalengka and Tegal/Brebes, respectively, have been referred to above. Most other types of food are also largely monopolized by people from specific areas.

The differences between our two RT is most conspicuous in the unemployment figures: the percentage in RT B is more than twice that of RT A. Among the workers, those living in RT B were more likely to be employed regularly than those in RT A. Many of the “other workers” in the latter RT were unskilled construction workers or welders, spray-painters and plumbers without fixed employment, who depended on sub-

contractors (*mandor*) to find them temporary jobs. A higher proportion of those in RT A. had stable employment, in a workshop, a restaurant or cottage industry. Typically, most of the pedicab drivers in our sample lived in RT B. The only anomaly was the colony of beggars living in RT A. As said before, these had initially lived in RT B but moved to the edge of the garbage belt beside RT A.

The greater poverty of RT B is also reflected in the fact that a much higher percentage of women worked outside the household. Conspicuous is the presence, already commented upon, of a large number of prostitutes in RT B. To avoid misunderstanding, it should be stressed that these prostitutes were not the daughters or relatives of families living here (as might be the case in slums in other countries), nor did they all exercise their profession in the area. Some lived in actual brothels, others with an unrelated family to whom they paid a significant part of their earnings. A few lived entirely alone or with a male “protector”; these had their area of “operation” elsewhere, along one of the main streets.

### ***Duit, and how it becomes harder to find it***

When I revisited Sukapakir in 1985, people told me about a recent suicide. An itinerant vendor, who had failed to find the money to renew the annual rent of his little house, had hung himself, leaving a wife and six young children behind. *Putus asa*, “he had given up hope”, was the neighbours’ comment. Suicides are quite rare here (among men, at least; one hears more regularly of women drinking insecticide), but the reasons that brought the man to his final act are unfortunately common. Simply put: the incomes of most residents of Sukapakir do not rise as fast as the cost of living or even decrease, so that more and more families sink towards or under the level of simple reproduction. The textile industry of Bandung and nearby Majalaya, once a major employer of female labour, has been restructured. Many obsolete, labour-intensive workshops have been closed down and been replaced by large modern, capital-intensive factories employing only a fraction of the former labour force. The superfluous workers generally had to find employ in the informal sector, for without the proper patronage it is almost possible to find a job in the formal sector. (A small number of young men in RT , as observed above found such patronage in a local military man who worked in the personnel department of a local high-technology industry). The informal sector has a high absorption capacity, but on the whole a very low labour productivity; long working hours results often in rather low incomes.

Some niches in the informal sector are quite attractive, however, offering high returns. A vendor of *baso*, who has acquired the privilege of selling in the courtyard of a school, a factory or a government office, can make a handsome profit every day. In order to achieve this position, however, one has at first to learn how to make *baso* of the desired taste, to find money for investment and as working capital, and, most importantly, acquire the right to sell one's wares at one of those spots where there are many potential buyers. All of these involve forms of patronage that are not available to just everybody.

It is because of regionally based network's of patron-client relationships that various food products are virtually regional monopolies, as far as street sales are concerned.

Most *baso tahu* sellers from Majalengka, for instance, at first joined a friend from their region who already worked in Bandung. They would start working for an older man, who owned several carts or *pikul* (a yoke for carrying goods) with the proper equipment, and share the profit with this patron. As they learned how to make *baso* themselves and earned enough to buy their own *pikul* or cart, they would start for themselves, and some of them might even become patrons for later comers. For a person who lacks such a patron it is almost impossible to enter the trade.

Success depends to a large extent upon finding a safe and proper place to sell one's wares, or rather a route passing several such places at the proper time. This again usually involves the help of one or several other persons, and relations of dependence. The less fortunate keep moving through the *kampung* lanes and along the sidewalks, and their daily sales fluctuate heavily.

In recent years, the city governments of Bandung has seriously restrained the freedom of movement of street vendors and pedicab drivers; the main streets and the most busy parts of the city — those promising the best sales and most passengers — have been turned into forbidden zones for them. A special police force supervised these regulations, and confiscated pedicabs and carts of those seen to enter or pass the forbidden zones. In practice, this meant that the pedicab or cart had to be "bought" back from the police, at fees that rapidly rose during my stay, from Rp 5,000 to Rp 10,000, and Rp 15,000 in the following year. (The average net daily earnings of pedicab drivers and itinerant vendors varied between Rp 1,000 and Rp 4,000). Those lacking the necessary redemption money had to wait months for a court trial. Many vendors complained that their daily sales had declined by at least 10 to 20% between early 1982 and early 1984 as a result of these

restrictions (these figures do not yet take account of inflation; in real terms the decrease must have been well over 20%).<sup>[10]</sup> The situation of the pedicab drivers was, if anything, worse.

Sakirin,<sup>[11]</sup> born in Garut in 1932, first came to Bandung in 1945 and found work in a small textile workshop still working with handlooms. In the early 1950s, the workshop closed down, and Sakirin had to find another factory. This process repeated itself several times. In 1961 Sakirin moved to Majalaya, a town to the south of Bandung, which then had a very dynamic textile industry. After little more than a year he was fired again and returned to Bandung. Not finding other employment, he joined his brother, who then was selling *tahu* and *tempe*, processed soy bean products, in one of the city's markets. Their business was not sufficient to support two families and in the end they went bankrupt. In 1972, Sakirin became a pedicab driver, renting a *becak* from the man who still is his patron. In spite of several attempts, he never found another job again. He once owned his own *becak* but had to sell it in order to buy the dilapidated house in which his family lived. Since the restrictive measures and police control, Sakirin did not dare to ride his *becak* in the daytime anymore. He began working at night, from 9 PM until 7 in the morning, when the streets are free. His earnings were no longer sufficient to feed his family, which had become highly dependent on the eldest son, who had found a job in a repair workshop.

Sakirin still was fortunate in having an adult son, who brought in money. Another pedicab driver, Kosim, was less lucky. Finding that the restrictions left him with a much smaller range of passengers and shorter rides, and much lower earnings therefore, he took the risk of taking passengers who so wished through the forbidden zones. During my stay his *becak* was confiscated twice and he had to sell part of his furniture in order to redeem it. When we first visited his house, we noticed several luxury items; all these had disappeared by the time we left.

It has repeatedly suggested by the city authorities to *becak* drivers and itinerant vendors that they should seek other employment, because in due time they are going to be banned from the entire city.<sup>[12]</sup> In spite of their efforts, however, none of those in our sample had succeeded in finding alternative jobs. The only way in which they could compensate for decreasing earnings, and only partly so, was by making ever longer working hours. Few appeared to have the ability or the courage to make concrete plans for even the near future. Many will probably return to the village, the fortunate with some earnings that they may invest productively, the less lucky in the hope that relatives will guarantee their survival on a subsistence level. Those who have no ties with their

villages anymore prefer not to think about the future at all.

The restrictions imposed upon the itinerant vendors and *becak* drivers only aggravate the economic decline of the area resulting from the general economic slump. The sales go down anyway, and because of the severe competition most vendors have to content themselves with ever lower profit margins. Similar decline is felt in other sectors.

Construction workers, for instance (who make up a high proportion of the “other workers”, especially in RT B), had to wait much longer between construction projects for which they were hired than was the case a few years before. To find a job a construction worker, one has to have a patron-client relationship with one or more sub-contractors. The patron is usually a relative, someone from the same region of origin or neighbourhood. But even a well-established patron-client relationship is no longer sufficient for regularly finding work, for there is also a slump in construction. One small sub-contractor living in RT B did not secure a single contract during my stay in Sukapakir. The construction workers worked on the average only one out of three or four months. More or less the same was true of spray-painters and mechanics working on a contract basis.

The economic decline, to be sure, has not been uniform throughout the informal sector, and it was not uniform all over Sukapakir. Sendawa was the area worst hit, but Sendawa is not representative. It is one of those districts where, by a process of natural selection, the unsuccessful have come to live. Those who are more fortunate sooner or later move somewhere else, while many who failed elsewhere ultimately settle here. The economic differences between RT A and RT B (see Tables II and III) are at first sight marginal, but what is striking in the life histories of people in Sendawa (RT B) is that they are tales of almost consistent failure and, for the last few years at least, consistent decline. Their attitudes are coloured by a lack of self-esteem, distrust of others, and fatalism. These things are not absent in RT A, but there they are balanced by other attitudes that are also present: the will to overcome difficulties, ambition, stricter moral standards. The next sections will deal with some of these attitudes and other aspects of “culture” that are directly related to the socio-economic conditions of Sukapakir.

### ***Regional culture in Sukapakir***

Among a population of so heterogeneous origins, it is not surprising to see various regional traditions survive besides one another. This is most conspicuous in the case of traditional ceremonies such as the celebration of a marriage or a circumcision. There are

marked differences in life cycle ceremonies as celebrated by people originating from, for instance, Garut, Cirebon and Kebumen. Most people follow the *adat* of their region of origin, be it that the ceremonies are usually simpler, and especially cheaper, than in the village. The fact that the costumes and other paraphernalia used are rented limits the range of choice. The people who hire these paraphernalia often also act as masters of ceremony, thus imposing standardized versions of a few regional *adat*.

The general tendency in Sukapakir is for these ceremonies to become increasingly simpler. This is not a general effect of urbanization; Bandung's middle class, on the contrary, celebrates ever more elaborate ceremonies, imitating those of the colonial *priyayi*. The major reasons for the simplification in Sukapakir seem to be the combination of poverty and the loosening of traditional social relations, although some give a religious twist to their apologies. Long celebrations with many guests are the cement holding a community together; and in due time, every guest will be a host himself. In the more fluid immigrants' communities these ceremonies lose much of their function. As might be expected, the simplification is most radical in Sendawa; regional differences are almost disappearing there. In fact, several people there told us that their children had been married "in Sendawa style", meaning that they had given up the costly *adat* obligations of their region of origin and adapted to a new "melting pot" culture emerging in Sendawa. The emergence of this culture is facilitated by the frequent intermarriages there between persons from different regional backgrounds, so that the regional *adat* are gradually losing their relevance. In discussing these things, several people referred to their spouses or children-in-law as "*orang Sendawa*" rather than by the region of origin.

We find an even more radical simplification of traditional ceremonies among the followers of the puritan Muslim movement *Persis*, which has a mosque in RT A. Most *Persis* followers reject *adat* ceremonies both on religious and on rational economic grounds, just as they reject many other traditional practices. *Persis* has followers all over Sukapakir, but they constitute a small minority with a quite distinct subculture. More will be said about them below.

Many popular religious practices, with some regional variation, equally still persist. On Thursday evenings (the eve of Friday, *malam jumat*), many people, especially those from Cirebon and Tegal, burn incense to propitiate the ancestors and the spirits of the place. Especially in Sendawa, the former graveyard, this is believed to be absolutely necessary. Many people visit holy graves or other sacred sites, especially in their region of origin, in

the case of disease, misfortune or uncertainty. Numerous sorts of amulets (*jimat*, *isim*) are regularly used as protection against evil spirits, jealous neighbours, traffic accidents, the police or against the money-stealing *kencit*, a noxious type of *jin* of which there are many in Bandung. Each region of origin still has its own favourite (or feared) spirits. *Dukuns* find many customers for their services; some of these practitioners follow a traditional style from their region of origin but most are highly eclectic and combine various traditions.

In the language spoken in everyday life, regional backgrounds still show among first-generation migrants, both in vocabulary and in style. Among the second generation, these differences are rapidly disappearing. They often speak Indonesian rather than Sundanese, and when they do use the latter it is usually the “low” (*kasar*) form only. Especially in Sendawa with its many Javanese, for whom Sundanese is a second or third language, conversations are often extremely *kasar*, both in contents and in style. My two assistants and my cook, who had quite diverse social backgrounds, were time and again deeply shocked and revolted by the language they heard in Sendawa. The gradual disappearance of language levels in Sundanese is one of the most conspicuous aspects of the poor migrants’ culture that we may see emerging. This change corresponds with the erosion of other traditional forms of etiquette. These developments can be observed all over Sukapakir, but in their most radical form again in Sendawa.

### ***The dukun: a remnant of rural culture?***

One of the phenomena that struck me most in Sukapakir was the high number of *dukuns* practising there, as well as the wide range of problems for which they were consulted. In the two selected RTs, with a total of 337 households, no fewer than seven persons were professional *dukuns*, and another four were occasionally called upon to treat diseases with holy water, consecrated by whispering an Arabic *doa* (invocation) or a Javanese *jampe* over it. One of my preconceived ideas that I had to change was that the *dukun* belonged to rural culture and that his role would decrease as a result of urbanization. I was aware, of course, that even many high-placed and educated persons have recourse to *dukuns* or other “spiritual advisers” for certain specific ends, but the high density of *dukuns* in this poor urban kampung was a surprise to me. One *dukun* for every fifty households (or one in thirty, counting the holy water dispensers as well) is probably a higher density than can be found in most rural areas. Moreover, these were not just rural *dukuns* who had moved to town: at least four of the seven had become *dukun* after they had moved to Bandung! In all these cases, simple economic reasons can be identified for

their choosing this particular career at a particular moment in life. But becoming a *dukun* is, of course, only attractive economically if the demand for *dukun*'s services is high enough. In defending the thesis that the *dukun* is part of village culture, one might suggest that the demand for his services in the city is rooted in persisting rural attitudes. Such attitudes, no doubt, do play a part. But I found that the *dukun* has found a number of new, typically urban, functions. The cases in which people request a *dukun*'s services may roughly be divided into four categories: disease, economic difficulties, career and partner problems.

Sukapakir has a very high incidence of disease, especially lung and intestinal diseases. Many people are under- or malnourished and many houses are humid. The density of the population and the general unhygienic conditions of the neighbourhood, moreover, contribute to the rapid spread of infectious illnesses. Besides these physical factors, economic hardship and tough, competitive relationship with neighbours cause stress, and many people appear to suffer from psychosomatic disturbances. Especially in the latter cases, the *dukun* may in fact be an effective healer; he or she is, among other things, the poor man's psychiatrist. Most people make a distinction between ordinary, physically caused, diseases and those that have a "psychic" origin. Many complaints are attributed to *guna-guna* or other forms of black magic, sent by an economic or sexual rival or someone with other grievances. In such cases, medical doctors are believed ineffective, and one tries to find an able paranormal healer, often travelling long distances in the course of this search.<sup>[13]</sup> Experiences with mysterious diseases and with various *dukuns* belong to the most favourite topics of conversation in Sukapakir.

Even when the disease is recognized as purely physical, however, there are still many persons who will try one of the *dukun* first, for the simple reason that modern medical treatment is too expensive. Even if one can afford to pay a doctor's consult — there was a government health centre (Puskesmas) at some distance, and some of the doctors in the neighbourhood helped poor people at reduced tariff — the cost of the medication he prescribes is often forbiddingly high. I often saw that sick people could only buy half or a third of the antibiotics course they were prescribed, and thus ended up as sick as before or even worse. Under these conditions, it is only too understandable that many would try the much cheaper *dukun* first, even when they are not convinced of his effectiveness.

Stagnating business and economic reverse in general is often regarded as a sort of disease. People frequently attribute it to causes outside themselves or the logic of economics. Street hawkers or *warung* (stall) holders, who find less money in their boxes

at the end of the day than they expected, sometimes put the blame on *kencit*, a thievish type of spirit peculiar to the Bandung area.

Several traders kept in their money-boxes protective amulets against these *kencit*, made by one of the local *dukun*. One woman, whose *warung* was frequented by *kencit*, even moved house to a more auspicious site (the former dwelling of one of the *dukun*!), which according to her made a great difference.

Street hawkers are vulnerable to all sorts of reverses: a porridge seller may find that his porridge goes bad before he has sold anything, a *baso* seller that his *baso* has an unexplainable bad smell. Buyers may be staying away, the police may prevent one from reaching the most promising locations or even confiscate their goods. All these difficulties may have natural as well as supernatural causes, and various services are requested from *dukun* in order to overcome them.

One frequent explanation of misfortune is that it is due to jealousy of one's colleagues or neighbours. *Warung* holders and street hawkers are aware that the number of sellers is increasing and the spending power of the buyers decreasing because of the economic recession. Nevertheless many of them blame declining sales on black magic. Neighbours, it is generally assumed, will become envious when they see that one has a measure of success, and they will do anything to keep him or her down.

The third class of services requested from the *dukun* consists of those related to a person's career. Few people believed that they can make progress in their lives by their own efforts alone. Civil servants and army personnel especially, who see most prospects of promotion blocked because their services are over-crowded, and who perceive that merit does not particularly count, often have recourse to the services of *dukuns*. Students seek their help in order to pass their examinations. One of the *dukuns* in RT A, a poor woman, regularly received some money from a high civil servant who, she claimed, owed his present position to her services. Once when visiting my neighbour, one of the *dukuns*, I met two young unemployed men who asked her help in finding jobs. She told them, perhaps because of my presence, that this was beyond her powers but nevertheless asked her spirit familiar to do what it could and gave the men holy water to bathe with. Two weeks later she proudly informed me that one of the two had found a job.

Career magic is of various kinds, but the most common one belongs to the class known as *asih*, magic techniques of making oneself liked or loved. Such magic can be used by salesmen to attract customers, or by civil servants to be liked by their superiors, but

the most frequent application probably is in love magic. Two of our seven *dukuns* occasionally help persons who have difficulties in finding the right marriage partner. For women in Sukapakir, not having a husband is extremely shameful. Unmarried women over twenty are called 'spinsters' (*perawan jomblo*), and it is taken for granted that something is wrong with them. It is not only such unmarried young women and divorcees who ask for the *dukuns*' services in this area but also quite a few married women, who feel that their husbands are losing interest in them. In some cases the woman's problems are attributed to some mysterious default causing men to turn away from them,<sup>[14]</sup> in others she simply has to be made more attractive by *asih*. Slightly different again, but often discussed (and tried out) by men and women alike are the magic techniques called *pelet*, by which one makes a person of the other sex uncontrollably and passionately fall in love with oneself. Demand for such magic is especially high among the prostitutes (many of whom often visit *dukuns* specializing in *pelet* and other sex-related knowledge), but some men also have recourse to it in order to conquer a desired woman.

Virtually all these services of the *dukuns* are directly related to the urban situation and the poor living conditions of Sukapakir. Bad housing conditions and economic hardship with fierce competition create numerous conflicts. These conflicts are rarely openly expressed; they appear in the form of psychological stress, mutual distrust and suspicions of black magic. Economic success or failure is not perceived to be strongly dependent on one's own efforts but on factors normally beyond one's control. It is tempting, therefore, to try influencing these factors by other means, even if one only half believes in the effectiveness of such means. Partner problems may be universal. Traditional arrangements for providing spouses can still be relied upon by recent or circulatory migrants, but not by those who have practically cut their ties with the villages of origin. Although it is hard to provide hard evidence, it would seem that sexual magic is more in demand in the city than in the village. The role of the *dukuns* is not a survival of their functions in village life but rather an adaptation to the conditions of life in a poor urban environment.

### *Urban culture: puritan Islam*

A polar opposite to the magical attitudes embodied in the *dukun* is the puritan Islam embraced by a minority of the inhabitants of Sukapakir. Among the reformist Muslim movements in Indonesia, *Persis* is the most radical in its rejection of spirit beliefs, *adat* rituals and traditional Muslim practices that have no sound basis in the Qur'an and

*hadith*.<sup>[15]</sup> It is precisely Persis (and not, for instance, the larger reformist association Muhammadiyah) that has found a small but devoted group of followers in Sukapakir. Each Friday towards noon, one sees two streams of men going in opposite directions through the alleys of Sukapakir. One stream, the weaker, converges on the mosque in RT A, that was built by local Persis followers and where the Friday sermon is given by a *khatib* from the Persis centre. The other, denser, stream leaves RT A and B for a more distant mosque, across Jl. Sukapakir, where the local traditionalist *ulama* Ajengan Latif is in charge of more baroque Friday services. A significant minority of RT A and the majority of RT B, it should be added, worships at neither mosque. The relations between the communities of both mosques are on the surface friendly, but many people privately express strong criticism of the other group. One Persis follower even called the majority of his neighbours, those who did not pray at all as well as those who did so in the wrong mosque, “Hindus” because of their alleged syncretism, while many of the others complained that Persis “*tidak tahu agama*”, does not know or recognize what religion is about. For both groups, the formalities of worship are important aspects of their social identity. Most of the *khutbahs* in the Persis mosque, apparently in response to the local situation, deal exclusively with the details of worship.<sup>[16]</sup> Most traditional Muslims find worship in the Persis mosque “dry” and lacking in religious emotion. Supererogatory prayers, the recital of *wirid* (litanies) and *salawat* (invocations for the Prophet), prayers for intercession, and ritual meals (*slametan*) are for them essential aspects of religion, whereas they are rejected as un-Islamic by Persis. The most conspicuous conflict between the two groups, however, concerns the attitude towards the dead.

For traditional Muslims, both the strict ones and those who take most rules of religion lightly, the most important rituals are those following a death. For the first seven nights after a death, and often on the fortieth, hundredth and thousandth day as well, relatives and neighbours come together in the house of the deceased to recite prayers, chant the *tahlil* (the first half of the confession of faith, *la ilaha illa'llah*) and share a communal meal or *slametan*. Parcels of rice from this *slametan* are distributed to neighbours who could not attend in person. People's interpretations of the meaning of this *slametan* differ, but it is generally believed to support the spirit of the deceased and to guide it to its proper place in the nether world (where it awaits the Day of Judgement). The social aspect of the ritual is obvious. It implies a communal responsibility for the welfare of the deceased member, but it is also a way of rounding off relations with the departed and reaffirming those among the survivors. For Muslim puritans, however, this is a heathen practice. Once a person has died, no relations with him are possible; a *slametan* for the dead is a form of spirit worship irreconcilable with Islam. It is *syirk* (“polytheism”) and

places those practising it outside the bounds of Islam. When one of their neighbours dies, therefore, they visit the house to offer their condolences but refuse to eat and will certainly not take part in the nightly *tahlilan*, explaining that such things are forbidden by Islam. When people send the rice of a *slametan* they send it back, usually with a comment on the sinfulness of the practice. Their neighbours generally do not judge this behaviour on its theological merits but see it as a rude break of solidarity and a personal insult. As a consequence, quite a few people are very outspokenly anti *Persis*, which in their eyes destroys good neighbourly relations and threatens those aspects of religious life that they themselves hold most dearly.

Anti-*Persis* feeling is strongest in Sendawa, whose inhabitants feel often attacked by the *Persis* followers. More people here than in RT A burn incense on the eve of Friday to propitiate the spirits, and traditional celebrations such as *slametan*, though simple, are held in high esteem. Many of the inhabitants are unhappy about the prostitution, gambling and drinking taking place around them, but they feel unjustly blamed for them by the self-righteous *Persis* followers. The unpopularity of *Persis* here came to the surface in a minor conflict around the *tajug* (a little mosque) in RT B.

For several years this mosque had been under the care of Pak Acep, who taught children there elementary Qur'an recital and the basic forms of worship. Pak Acep was a *Persis* sympathizer (the only one in RT B), but most of his neighbours were not aware of this until another *ustad* settled in the neighbourhood and also began teaching the basics of Islam. Suddenly people noticed the differences between the proper forms of worship as taught by both teachers. They realized that Pak Acep was a *Persis* man, and sent their children to the other *ustad* instead. In a matter of a few weeks, Pak Acep had lost control of the mosque: when he was *imam*, nobody joined in prayer; and no children came to his lessons anymore. He left the *tajug* to his rival, and from then on worshiped at home or in the *Persis* mosque only.

Given their highly negative attitude towards spirit worship, it is only natural that *Persis* followers take also a very negative view of the *dukuns*. Their practices are condemned in no uncertain terms — although I came to know several *Persis* sympathizers who silently did consult a *dukun* in cases of obstinate disease. For phenomena that their neighbours tend to explain in terms of the supernatural, *Persis* followers tend to seek “rational”, natural explanations.

Thus, during the month of Ramadan, a half lame man came each night to the *Persis* mosque and attempted to take part in the late evening *tarawih* prayers. By

the end of the month, he noticed that his paralysis was almost overcome: he could walk again. Normally, people would attribute such a minor miracle to blessings bestowed by the prayer, but my Persis friends offered another explanation: the floor of the mosque was covered with a carpet, while in his house the man walked and sat on the naked concrete floor. His paralysis, they believed, was no doubt due to the cold and damp floor in his house, which he had escaped during Ramadan. They therefore advised the man to buy a carpet.

Although they have a firm belief in predetermination, Persis followers strongly condemn fatalism. Economic failure, in their eyes, is not due to uncontrollable supernatural causes, let alone black magic, but largely to one's own mistakes or laziness. They have a solid work ethic and highly value initiative. Their general rejection of *adat* ceremonies is not only based on theological arguments but also informed by the conception that one should use one's limited means productively.

The world view and attitudes of the *Persis* followers are in many respects diametrically opposed to those of their neighbours. To some extent at least they are a reaction against the conditions of their environment. Interestingly, none of them was a Persis follower before settling in Sukapakir: they were all converted to the Persis view in the course of their stay here and had been traditionalist Muslims before. Some even claimed to have studied magic and occult knowledge before, and to have shed these when they "understood". These conversions are about the most radical attitudinal change to be observed in this migrant community. It involves a break with friends and sometimes relatives. It is worth while, therefore, to analyse who the converts are and why and how they were converted.

The first striking observation is that all Persis followers have lived in the city for at least fifteen years, and had indeed lived there long before they chose to join Persis. There is also a significant correlation with the region of origin, but this seems due, to some extent at least, to the fact that people from certain regions have lived in the city longer than those from others. Most members of the Persis core group, for instance, originate from Garut. This can hardly be attributed to more puritan inclinations among the inhabitants of that *kabupaten* in general; other people of Garut origins professed a strong aversion to Persis, and only quite recently has Persis been making some headway in the *kabupaten* Garut itself —apparently due to people returning there from Bandung. Most families from Garut migrated to Bandung in the early 1950s, and they have therefore been much longer subject to urban influences than most others. On the other hand, none of the

people hailing from the Cirebon-Brebes-Tegal region, many of whom have lived in Bandung for almost as long or even longer, have so far joined *Persis*. Among the people from other regions, religious allegiance has at times torn families apart, when one or two members went over to *Persis* and their relative strongly opposed that move.

This last observation points to one motivating factor. Those who have lived long in the city and have little desire to return to their village of origin increasingly feel the traditional social and ritual obligation as a burden without benefit. This makes them more responsive to *Persis*'s condemnation of tradition. The *Persis* world view, moreover, provides a religious legitimization for adopting a more frugal and economical attitude, and the community around the mosque offers them a new solidarity group to replace that of relatives and co-villagers. This is, of course, only one among several factors. The life histories of *Persis* followers show no uniform pattern of conversion; most, however, were initially drawn to *Persis* by a colleague, friend or neighbour, and conversion was in all cases a slow and gradual process.

Around the core group of followers there is a large peripheral group, almost entirely consisting of residents of RT A, who attend the Friday prayers in the *Persis* mosque but privately admit not to agree with *Persis*'s puritan conception of Islam. They pray in this mosque rather than another, they say, in order to maintain good neighbourly relations; mentally they keep a distance. In due time, however, their weekly *khutbah* and social control are likely to result in changes in religious attitude among them too.

There is, moreover, a channel of religious propaganda that appears to be more effective than the *khutbah*. The Friday prayer is a men's affair, and most return home immediately after the prayers. Women attend *pengajian*, religious sermons in more informal meetings, that are an important part of their social life. Every week there are various women's *pengajian* in Sukapakir, the one organized by *Persis* is only one of them. A *pengajian* may take place in a mosque, but they are more commonly held in private houses, the relatively well-to-do taking turns as hosts. The host offers refreshments and often a full meal as well. The women who take part in them are mostly housewives, although some who have other work take time off for them as well. For most, these *pengajian* are the only social entertainment in their daily lives, and the major occasions to meet others. Many attend more than one *pengajian*. The sermons form only one part of the meetings; usually many other things also are discussed. Strong ties of friendship and mutual help may develop between women who often attend the same *pengajian* (*teman sepengajian*). Those regularly attending *Persis*'s *pengajian* appear to be more

readily influenced by them than their husbands by the *khutbah*. Several families could be seen shifting to a more puritan attitude in ritual matters under the influence of a mother who followed these *pengajian*.

This leads me to a final observation: the very poor are unlikely to be converted to the Persisview, if only because Persis propaganda does not reach them. Several poor women told us that they were too embarrassed (*malu*) to attend *pengajian* because they did not have proper clothes; others claimed they could not afford that luxury because their work did not leave them free time. Similarly, many though not all *becak* drivers and itinerant vendors forego the Friday prayer because they feel they cannot afford taking a few hours off. Among both the core and the peripheral group around the *Persis* mosque these categories, as well as the irregular workers, are very poorly represented. Persis has not been able to make an inroad into Sendawa. Conversely, the aversion of Sendawa's residents to Persis' puritanism is reinforced by an acute awareness of socio-economic difference. Somewhat simplifying and using European terms that are perhaps not entirely appropriate, one might say that the people around the Persis mosque in general have "petty bourgeois" attitudes and aspirations, while those of many inhabitants of Sendawa are "lumpen proletarians". The contrast is visible in all spheres of life, and it seems to be sharpening rather softening.

### ***Djodoh: sexual partnership and reproduction***

Production and reproduction are, of course, intimately linked; one is not possible without the other. The only accepted institution for reproduction — both in its narrow, biological meaning and in the wider senses of nursing and educating the young and of feeding and clothing those who are producing — is, for the people of Sukapakir as for most other Indonesians, marriage. Procreation is the primary function of marriage. Begetting children is seen as an important aim in life for its own sake, but also as an economic necessity. Even very young children help their mothers in the household and in other work such as buying and selling; many households are highly dependent on the contributions of older children, who already have jobs. The present economic decline only reinforces people's perception that children are an economic necessity.

It should not surprise, therefore, that the family planning programme is not exactly a success here, irrespective of what the unreliable official statistics may claim. In Sendawa, especially, many young women do all they can in order to mislead the family planning officials. Many women who have started practising contraception have done so

only after their sixth or eighth child. There are, it is true, women who accept the idea of family planning, but the official ideal of two children is often felt to be inadequate. The argument of high future unemployment rates does not convince people in Sukapakir of the need to have fewer children. And given their perceptions, their attitude is not at all irrational. To formulate a widespread sentiment as a rational calculus: if the ideal is to have at least one working son to support his parents in their old age, and if the future unemployment rate will be around 50%, they should have on average at least four children (two of whom will be daughters, and two sons, of whom one unemployed). Low life expectancies make an even higher number of children desirable. As long as a family planning aiming for two children per couple is not accompanied by guarantees of future employment or some other form of social security, this is simply too large a risk for the poor!

Procreation is, however, not the only function of marriage. It is only marriage that makes one into a complete human being. An unmarried woman — whether she is not yet married, divorced or widowed — is almost a non-person. It is not only the official “wives’ associations” of the Dharma Wanita type that are by definition closed to her,<sup>[17]</sup> but also the women’s *pengajian* are implicitly social events for married women’s. Although there is no official rule preventing them, unmarried women and divorcees do not attend these meetings because they would feel embarrassed (*malu*). Divorcees and even widows tend to be classed together with the prostitutes rather than with the married women.

There is, as almost everywhere in Indonesia, a strong pressure on girls of marriageable age to marry as soon as possible. In fact, quite a few women living in Sukapakir were married even before they had their first menstruation. This was not something that only happened in their villages of origin — Indramayu, Cirebon and Majalengka, especially, have a well-known and well-deserved reputation for the frequency of marriages contracted below the officially set minimum age — for some of these child marriages were in fact contracted in Sukapakir. Many girls marry within a few years after finishing primary school, a few even before. The pressure for early marriage, although based on traditional attitudes, seems to be even reinforced in Sukapakir, where population density and housing conditions make separation of the sexes impossible and where parents worry about their daughters’ virginity. Premarital affairs are believed to occur frequently, even though they are rarely proven. There were but a few premarital pregnancies during my stay, and in all cases but one the embarrassment was rapidly resolved through marriage. Neighbours’ vicious comments on easy-going teenage girls

— never expressed directly towards the parents but to other neighbours — add to the pressure.

Marriage and the problem of finding a suitable partner are among the subjects most frequently discussed. Girls are always asked whether there is already a candidate husband, and when they intend to marry. If a young woman is not yet married by the time she is 18 to 20 years old, it is often assumed that she has some defect preventing her from finding a husband. Such women are the subject of gossip and sometimes teasing. It is this situation that gives rise to the need for “supernatural” means of either curing the supposed defect or procuring a partner, that were commented upon above.[\[18\]](#) The stress under which unmarried young women live shows itself sometimes in psychological disturbances. I witnessed several cases of such women being attacked or possessed by a *jin* (such, at least, was the popular explanation).

For these reasons, a young woman will rather accept an undesirable husband than remain unmarried. For the same reasons, women are very reluctant to request a divorce even if they have otherwise good reasons to. Many marriages, especially of the younger generation that has grown up in or near Sendawa, are unpleasant arrangements from the woman’s point of view. The burden of economic hardship is disproportionately allotted to the women. Many women work very hard supplementing the family income with a wide variety of time-consuming activities: selling prepared food, peeling onions for a local factory, sewing, etc. When the husband is, temporarily or for a longer time, unemployed the family depends on her alone, and it is a rare husband who, even in those conditions, will help her in these or her household activities. Borrowing money, buying on credit and facing angry money-lenders is also left to the women. Many of them lived under severe stress and admitted feeling very unhappy in their marriages. But even those women who had played with the idea of divorce (especially when they believed their husbands to be unfaithful) were reluctant to take that step because of the social stigma attached to it. And when a woman is divorced, she will do her best to find another husband soon, more because of her reputation than for economic reasons.

The divorce rate in Sukapakir is high, much higher than the figures that I have seen reported elsewhere for Indonesia.[\[19\]](#) The majority of the middle-aged persons in our sample had married more than once, and several of them more than five times. (The “champions” were a man who had married nineteen times and a woman who remembered twenty marriages). The initiative to divorce is usually the man’s, as might be expected from the above observations. Only when a woman has actually been

deserted by her husband will she sue for a divorce herself. The divorce rate shows a clear correlation with the region of origin: it is highest among people from the divorce-prone *kabupatens* of Indramayu, Cirebon and Majalengka, low among those from Garut. The rate is also correlated with poverty: divorce occurs more frequently in the life histories of the poorest residents than in those of their better-off neighbours. The core group of Persisfollowers has a low divorce rate, while the rate is higher in Sendawa than in neighbouring quarters. The above correlations are of course not independent of one another, and the causal nexus is complex. Region of origin and poverty (which are themselves correlated: the migrants from Cirebon and Indramayu are generally poorer and have less promising employment than those from, say, Garut) seem to be the chief causal factors, but they have called into existence in Sendawa conditions that also contribute. All moral norms are more relaxed there; extramarital intercourse (especially by men) is allegedly quite common. Some prostitutes live in the same houses as families with young children, and even exercise their profession there. Sexual matters are frequently and openly discussed, and there are fewer inhibitions than in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

### ***Prostitution, marriage and economy***

In several ways, prostitution represents a special case of partner problems. Most prostitutes blamed their present occupation on a previous unhappy marriage or a lover who seduced and then deserted them. All had a very low education and no other skills; once left behind by their husband or lover they could not think of any other viable alternative way of gaining their living than by selling their bodies — such was, at least, their general claim.<sup>[20]</sup> In many cases this choice seemed to contain an element of revenge against their former husband, or against life in general. Few admitted being contented with their present lives, and almost all claimed that they would like to stop. The only concrete way out that they could imagine was through another marriage, and many in fact hoped to find a future husband among their customers — which is not so unrealistic a hope as one might at first sight assume.<sup>[21]</sup> Two former prostitutes, who had found husbands and had become faithful and loyal wives, lived in Sendawa as the envied reminders of this option. The great interest in this milieu in magical techniques for attracting men (*pelet*), remarked upon above, is not only related to the commercial desire for customers but equally to the sentimental wish for a husband and a family.

Prostitution is a relatively recent phenomenon in Sendawa. Until twenty years ago, no known prostitute lived here. The people of the neighbourhood themselves associate the

presence of several brothels now with a general decline in moral standards. In fact, several years ago a few prostitutes settled in RT A too, but they were soon expelled after a firm action of a group of residents (among whom Persis people were prominent). In RT B too, many people are unhappy with their presence, and the greater apparent tolerance of prostitution there is not only due to more flexible moral standards but at least as much to powerful protection. The first brothels here were opened by persons with military or police connections.

If prostitution cannot be entirely abolished, it has to be practised somewhere at least, and it was perhaps unavoidable that it came to be concentrated in the poorest neighbourhood, whose residents had the least ability to resist it. At present, some of the unhappiness with prostitution in the neighbourhood is offset by its significant contributions to the economy of the neighbourhood. The prostitutes buy food in the neighbourhood, order clothes from local seamstresses, have neighbours do their washing; several *warungs* have come to depend upon them and the men visiting them. They contribute more than their neighbours when money is collected for community purposes. Nevertheless, for many residents of Sendawa the presence of prostitutes in their midst is a cause of shame. They acquiesce in it because they feel it is only one more of those things over which they have no control, part of their having failed in life.

### ***Poverty or culture of poverty?***

In this article, I have repeatedly contrasted the two RT A and B or, as the most clearly opposite poles, the attitudes of the Persis followers and those observed in Sendawa. Readers acquainted with Oscar Lewis' work will have noticed the similarity of the latter to what Lewis called the "culture of poverty". The residents of RT A, on the other hand, resemble more the reasonably well-integrated slum-dwellers of Lloyd's study,[\[22\]](#) although some aspects of the "culture of poverty" can be seen emerging there too. The great differences seen between the two RTs, whose residents are only marginally different in background though perhaps not in experiences since their arrival, suggest that the economic conditions of the neighbourhood at large are close to a critical point. In Sendawa there are simply more people who have consistently experienced failure, lost hope and confidence in themselves. Their greater numbers and social interaction have called into existence a distinctive Sendawa subculture. There are many people with similar experiences in RT A, but their attitudes are balanced by social control exercised by neighbours who refuse to give up hope and cling to "petty bourgeois" aspirations. The role of the Persis community is significant there. It sees itself as a fortress against

religious and moral decay, and for its members the community offers protection against a threatening environment.

It is a modern, really urban, solidarity group, and its members offer each other mutual help — mainly moral, but sometimes also economic. Ironically, it shares this function with several communities that are ideologically almost its opposites, *tarekat*-like sects of dubious orthodoxy. These sects are small and widely spread, each has only a few members in Sukapakir. They offer the same sort of protection as *Persis* does: a small face-to-face community of brothers and sisters whom one can trust, and who share values rejected by the outer world. Both *Persis* and these sects lend their members a moral resilience and a determination to do their utmost to survive and succeed, which many of their neighbours lack.

The economic decline of recent years seems to have a strong impact on the emergence of “culture of poverty” attitudes, especially in Sendawa, which was hardest hit. The official restrictions, imposed on the movement of *becaks* and itinerant vendors, have not only aggravated the economic decline. They have also undermined people’s confidence in the city authorities and reinforced fatalistic attitudes. Unless concrete ways are found by which people can learn to help themselves, new fields of employment offered or the older ones allowed to remain, both poverty and the “culture of poverty” will be more and more firmly entrenched.

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## Notes:

[1] See e.g. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge 1981).

[2] Oscar Lewis, *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York, 1959), and, also by Lewis, the chapter entitled “The Culture of Poverty” in his *La Vida* (London, 1967, pp. 47-59). An Indonesian translation of this chapter appeared in Parsudi Suparlan (ed.), *Kemiskinan di Perkotaan* (Jakarta, 1984).

[3] Peter Lloyd, *Slums of Hope? Shanty Towns of the Third World* (Harmondsworth, 1979).

[4] Fieldwork was carried out from September 1983 through July 1984 in the *kelurahan* Jamika, Bandung, as a part of a research project on migration and social change. I wish

to thank LIPI for obtaining permission to carry out this research, and the *lurah* of Jamika, Pak Amor Makmur and his staff as well as the local community leaders for their hospitality and co-operativeness. Special thanks are due to Lies M. Marcoes and Titi Haryanti, who were my assistants for most of that period and who carried out many of the interviews.

[5] Graeme J. Hugo, "Circulatory migration in Indonesia", *Population and Development Review* 8 (1982), 59-83. See also his earlier *Population Mobility in West Java* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1978), one of the best migration studies.

[6] This rough calculation does not yet take into account the age distribution of the city population. Persons of reproductive age are over-represented in the city population, and therefore the reproductive rate of the city population is possibly above the national average. On the other hand, family planning is probably more widespread in the city in the countryside. The available data does not allow more detailed conclusions.

[7] The 3.0% growth figure given above is that of the entire urban agglomeration, based on the census data per *kelurahan* for the *kotamadya* and the surrounding *kabupaten*.

[8] Plans of the *lurah* to split up RT A failed because of a boycott by the community leaders, who claimed that this would oblige the inhabitants to pay higher contributions for the running of the extra RT apparatus. Their cynical neighbours commented that these protests arose out of fear that the money that these community leaders can pocket would be halved by such a division.

[9] For various reasons, not all adults in the two RTs could be interviewed, but there are no grounds for assuming that the non-respondents differed systematically from the others.

[10] These figures of daily earnings are based on my informants' own estimates only, and are therefore perhaps not entirely reliable. For practical reasons, however, it is almost possible to measure their present incomes by direct observation, while past earnings can of course not be observed at all.

[11] This name, like all other personal names in this article, is a pseudonym.

[12] *Becak* drivers, it was suggested, should switch to *bemos* (small three-wheeled passenger vehicles operating along fixed routes) or become grave diggers, itinerant vendors should hire a stall in one of the new market complexes. There are already, however, many more unemployed drivers than there are *bemos* available, and the number of *becaks* operating in Bandung is at least ten times that of *bemos*. For vendors selling prepared food it can hardly be attractive to hire a stall in a market, together with numerous competitors, and far from where most potential buyers can be found.

[13] In the case of suspected *guna-guna*, people usually search for a dukun outside their

own neighbourhood; the implicit belief is that 'the farther is the better; one informant scornfully called the dukun in his neighbourhood "*kampungan*" I suspect that people avoid the nearest *dukun* also because these could be somehow involved in the conflict lying at the base of the suspected raggic. The *dukun* in Sukapakir, in turn, received many patients from far away, and their neighbours do consult them for cases not involving black magic.

[14] *Tanda bodas* (Sund.), "white spots" on the skin (caused by an obstinate fungus) are often blamed as the causes of partner problems, and several dukun have special cures for getting rid of these spots as well as the other problems.

[15] Persis (short for Persatuan Islam, "Islamic Union") was established in Bandung in the early 1920s, and Bandung is still its major centre. Persis leaders of national importance, initially active in Bandung, include A. Hassan, Mohamad Natsir and Isa Anshari. A second centre in Bangil (East Java), that was established later, exerts a considerable nation-wide influence through its journal *Al-Muslimun*. On Persis see: Howard M. Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1970; Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 83-92, 259-66; Tamar Djaja, *Riwayat Hidup A. Hassan*. Jakarta: Mutiara, 1980; Syafiq A. Mughni, *Hassan Bandung: Pemikir Islam Radikal*. Surabaya: Pt. Bina Ilmu, 1980.

[16] It should be emphasized that these and the following observations are not necessarily representative of the attitude of *Persis* as a movement. They pertain to the particular situation in Sukapakir.

[17] Dharma Wanita is the association of civil servants' wives, of which membership is obligatory. It has an internal hierarchy that is a perfect reproduction of that of the husbands' offices. A member's status depends exclusively on that of her husband.

[18] If a girl of her parents have recourse to a *dukun*, however, they will not choose one living nearby, out of shame. The *dukuns* practising "partner magic" in Sukapakir receive their clients almost uniquely from other parts of the city.

[19] In the official statistics of the Ministry of Religion, divorce is under-reported because many divorces are not registered. These statistics nevertheless make clear that there are considerable regional differences. For the year 1982-83, for instance, the number of divorces per 100 registered marriages ranged from 3.5 in Banten and 9 in Garut (both regions being known as devoutly Muslim) to 30 in Majalengka and 40 in Indramayu. It is not possible to calculate from such figures the percentage of marriages that ultimately end in a divorce; this must be higher than the above figures. I have not been able to calculate the divorce rate in Sukapakir with great precision either, but it proved to be well over 50%.

[20] One of the few other form of employment available to young inexperienced women of this background is as a household help, but this involves usually poor working conditions and very low wages. Those prostitutes with whom I discussed alternatives rejected this one with disdain, and believed themselves incapable of others such as petty trading.

[21] Data collected by Bandung's Office of Social Affairs suggests that, in fact, the majority of prostitutes who succeed in leaving this occupation do so through marriage.

[22] Cf. notes 2 and 3.