

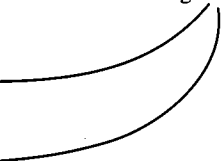
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4 / The Goddess and the Green Revolution

INTRODUCTION

The village of Sukawati lies between two rivers, the Oos and the Petanu. Between the village and the sea, there is a large block of about five hundred hectares of rice terraces that keeps over a thousand Sukawati farmers busy, wet rice being the world's most labor-intensive crop. On the last little knoll before the beach, where the rice terraces end, there is a magnificent old temple called the Masceti Er Jeruk. I became interested in this temple during my fieldwork in Sukawati in 1975. But while I wanted to learn about the legendary history of the temple, the local farmers were more interested in talking about its current problems. I learned that in the old days the temple had set an irrigation schedule for all the rice terraces in its vicinity. But as a result of a new agricultural policy called the Green Revolution, the temple had lost control of the irrigation schedule, and everyone was planting rice as often as they could, without regard for the temple's irrigation schedules.

The term "Green Revolution" refers to the replacement of native rice with specially bred high-yielding varieties (HYVs), which require the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The Green Revolution began in the laboratories of the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines in the 1960s, and spread swiftly across Asia, gaining a firm foothold in Indonesia by the early 1970s. In Bali, the Green Revolution was accompanied by new government agricultural policies, which promoted continuous cropping of the new HYV rice in an effort to boost rice production. With a fast-growing population, government planners were eager to find new ways to increase agricultural yields, and farmers were encouraged to plant HYVs as often as possible. But in Bali, the immediate gains in rice yields soon began to be offset by water shortages and unprecedented outbreaks of rice pests and diseases. In Sukawati, the farmers were required to grow HYV rice continuously, which provided an uninterrupted source of food for all the local rice pests.

In 1979, I returned to Bali for two short trips connected with the making of a documentary film. I spent several weeks in Sukawati, and learned that the old temple had managed to regain control of the irrigation schedules. The farmers had decided that the policy of continuous rice cropping had failed to increase harvests, because it made the water supply too unpredictable and led to increasing losses from pests. But policy makers were still pushing the Green Revolution, and there was a political struggle going on between "conservative" farmers who preferred to return to the old

