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Divisions Within : Changing Women's Work in the Balinese Hand- Weaving Industry

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Every Balinese girl must learn to weave and in every house there is at least one loom. Particular proficiency or artistry is admired. With about 200,000 looms Bali could even be called one big weaving mill (Goris n.d. : 181).

Introduction†

It seems difficult to ascertain whether weaving was actually practised as widely as Goris and other foreign observers reported throughout the island of Bali, Indonesia, earlier in this century. Yet what is said in the above quotation certainly accords well with the situation of the presentday 'Singarsa', the village where I carried out field research between 1991 and 1993⁽¹⁾. Singarsa has been known for the hand-weaving of *songket* (supplementary weft ikat using golden thread) and more recently, that of *endek* (single weft ikat). The villagers, both men and women, assured me that songket production was a long-standing tradition in this village: a craft which had been practised *turun tumurun* (for generations), as something they inherited from their ancestors. A closer investigation, however, has revealed a quite different picture in the light of historical process. Truly, songket has been woven for great many years in Singarsa, but it was not as extensively spread as it is at present. Rather, the production and the use of this glittering, expensive cloth were unequivocally confined to the peoples of privileged status. It was only when traditional sanction was lifted and the demand for songket grew that did women (and to a lesser extent, men) become

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involved in this sector regardless of their social status.

This paper is thus intended to present a case study of a development of small-scale weaving industry in a Balinese village with a special emphasis on the complexity and changing nature of its economic, social and cultural contexts. Against the backdrop of socio-economic change of the island, Balinese hand-weaving has developed significantly during the past two decades. Thanks to the cultural definition of cloth production as 'women's work', women play leading roles in this industry as weavers, dealers and traders. At the same time, those women are increasingly put under pressure to augment their income to meet the household needs above subsistence. The nature of weaving has also dramatically changed: songket making has lost its exclusivity and speciality; instead it has attained a status of something like a cash crop, which must be produced as much as possible in shortest possible time.

The growth of hand-loom weaving industry in Singarsa and in Bali as a whole contrasts with the drastic decline in the hand-loom sector in other parts of Indonesia during the past decades. With the emergence of a capital-intensive, highly-mechanised factory sector, traditional weaving industries using backstrap looms (*alat tenun gedogan*, Ind.) and treadle looms (ATBM, *alat tenun bukan mesin*, Ind.) have rapidly declined in Java and West Sumatra (Casey 1989; Hill 1992). The rapidity of its decline can be verified by the fact that the number of registered looms in official statistics greatly exceeded the number of active looms in 1975, as revealed by the

survey of the Department of Industry (Hill 1980: 87). The notable exception to the above tendency was Bali Province, where the hand-loom industry had been 'growing faster than the local department [could] update its statistics' (Hill 1980: 87n7). Accordingly, the number of active looms exceeded that of registered looms. This also obtains in more recent statistics in Singarsa, which contrasts with, for example, Casey's findings in her survey in Silungkang, a weaving village in West Sumatra (Casey 1989: 263). Hardjono (1990a; 1990b) similarly observes that in Majalaya of West Java small-scale hand-weaving is facing irreversible decline and perhaps eventual disappearance, losing out to modern technology.

In this respect, it seems worth while to explicate the historical context of development of weaving industry in Singarsa and its implications for local women's work patterns. In what follows, I shall first examine major changes in the village economy under the 'New Order' government of Indonesia, after introducing my main research area. The subsequent sections then describe the growth of songket making as a major cottage industry in this village and the actual systems of songket production. In the fifth section, three case studies are given to illustrate the ways in which individual women organise their time and labour for producing songket, while meeting other culturally prescribed obligations.

The Village

The village of 'Singarsa' is located in the east-central part of Bali. Despite its administrative inclusion into the Karangasem Regency, it is better connected with the capital of the Klungkung Regency, Samarapura, by frequent services of *bémo* (mini-bus). The town of Samarapura, twelve kilometres to the south, has a major market. One can take a long-distance bus from Samarapura to other villages and towns, including Denpasar, the provincial capital of Bali. Singarsa is relatively well off among the villages of Karangasem, having the second largest proportion of irrigated rice field (46.4 per cent of the total area). Moreover, given the annual rainfall of 2,000 to 3,000 mm, it is never short of water. The total population of this village was 9,131 in 1991.

Peoples of all four categories or estates (*warna*) reside in Singarsa. These categories, designated as *brahmana*, *satria*, *wésia*, and *sudra* respectively, correspond with the so-called caste system found in India. However, the uncritical application of the notion of caste to the Balinese system of ranking is questionable, though we cannot go into detail due to the limited scope of this paper (see Nakatani 1995a: 56-60). Suffice it to say here that Balinese hierarchy lacks an important feature of its Indian counterpart, namely, the formalised division of labour in line with caste differences. Neither is each *warna* exclusively associated with a certain occupation except that

only *brahmana* can be consecrated as high priests (*pedanda*) or the groups entitled *pandé* has traditionally produced smiths.

In Bali, the first three groups (*brahmana*, *satria*, and *wésia*), forming less than 10 per cent of the total Hindu population, are collectively known as *triwangsa* (literally, 'three peoples'), as opposed to the rest, *jaba* (alternative designation of *sudra*). Within the territory of Singarsa, *brahmana* compounds (*gria*) are only found in a particular area where they exclusively form their own *banjar* (sub-unit of the village). Similarly, most *satria* houses are built close to the court (the Jero Gedé) of the former local overlord, from which they supposedly stemmed. While a vast majority of the residents are Hindu Balinese, there is a Muslim enclave with a population of less than 700. They are, for the most part, the descendants of Sasak people who originally came from Lombok. Presently, there are also Javanese migrants who temporarily settle in this community to work as food vendors. Hindu and Muslim populations appear to maintain an amicable relationship, though they hardly mix with one another in daily life. The notable exception is at the morning market where many of the sellers are Muslim. These Muslim residents form a separate *banjar* on their own.

The principal reasons for selecting Singarsa as the site for my research were: first, the co-existence of two types of textile production—traditional hand-weaving of *songket* and modern, semi-mechanised production of *endek*; second, women's significant roles in both production and marketing of textiles; and third, its increasing

integration into the regional and national economy through the cultivation of cash crops and development of the handicraft industry.

The Village Economy

Matching the general trends in the island as a whole, agriculture has lost its predominant importance in the village economy, although it is still a major productive activity of this area. The agricultural sector includes both wet rice cultivation and the cultivation of tree crops in the dry land. All the irrigated rice fields (*sawah*) in this village were once under intensification programs (BIMAS, INMAS and INSUS) due to the coercive measures taken by the local government in the late 1970s. Realising inherent problems in the new rice technologies, however, many local *subak* (irrigation associations) decided to return to the traditional system by the early 1980s. Apart from the augmented cost incurred by the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, farmers find continuous double-cropping most problematic. Since the rice field is constantly filled with irrigation water, the soil gets more prone to fungus diseases and, in result, fertility declines. It must also be noted that these farmers prefer the traditional farming system because the sale of secondary crops, which are grown after the rice harvest, are reasonably profitable. The secondary crops used to be only vegetables and *keséla* (sweet potatoes, *Ipomoea Batatas*), primarily for subsistence. Thanks to the improved communications, however, cash crops such as chillies

(*Capsicum Annum*), garlic (*Allium Sativum*) and shallots (*Allium Ascalonicum*) can now be easily transported to the major markets in Klungkung and Denpasar. Furthermore, traditional types of rice fetch higher prices than new varieties; thus farmers are reluctant to run the risk of uncertain yields with new rice. In 1992, 53 per cent of the total sawah area in Singarsa was planted with traditional rice, while 47 per cent was under the new system.

The average plot cultivated by farmers, both land owners and tenants, was 0.37 hectares in 1992⁽²⁾. Given the average harvest of 39.7 kg per *are*⁽³⁾, the land of 0.37 hectares yields 1,469 kg (milled rice). In the case of sharecropping arrangements, sharecroppers get only one-third of the above harvest, that is, 440.7 kg. The average household of four or five cooks daily 1.5 kg of rice, which well exceeds this amount. Provided that most sharecropping farmers cultivate even less than 0.2 hectares, the yields from sawah alone can hardly support the entire household.

There are also a number of dry land farmers who tend dry land plantation (*tegal*) on the lower part of mountain slopes. The dry land farming has also been subject to market-oriented crops as seen in other parts of Bali. There used to be only sweet potatoes (which was the main staple supplementing rice until the mid-1970s), bananas, coconuts and some coffee trees planted in the dry land, but the cultivation of cloves and vanilla started in the mid-1970s. Now that the market price for these cash crops has fallen significantly, many farmers have started to grow *salak* (*Zalacca Edulis*) exten-

sively for the past few years⁽⁴⁾.

Since neither wet nor dry land agriculture provides sufficient income to meet the needs of the household⁽⁵⁾, a great number of households, especially those in the centrally located banjar, are heavily dependent on the off-farm employment for a substantial proportion of their income. In particular, Singarsa is characterised by textile production which has grown into a notable home-based industry. According to the official census of Singarsa village in 1981-82, 747 persons were engaged in cloth production. This accounted for 18.0 per cent of the working population⁽⁶⁾, next to the agricultural sector which was 33.6 per cent. By comparison, the 1988-89 census showed that the weaving sector absorbed 34.8 per cent of the work force (1,109 persons) compared with 34.0 per cent (1,083 persons) in agriculture. The results of my household survey of Banjar Tengah, a centrally located sub-unit of Singarsa, further indicates a high degree of involvement of its residents in textile production. Out of 382 residents who constitute the work force according to the census definition, 53.4 per cent work for either songket or endek production (see Table 1). As indicated by Table 2, 83.8 per cent of the households in my survey have one or more members who work in this sector.

Table 1 Percentage distribution of primary occupations for men and women aged between 15 and 52 years old in Banjar Tengah

	Men	Women	Total
Textile production	18.9(%)	83.9(%)	53.4(%)
Agriculture	27.5	1.4	13.7
Civil service and other office work	18.4	1.0	9.1
Trading	2.2	9.4	6.1
Household-based manufacture (excluding textile production)	7.6	1.9	4.6
Manual labour	5.4	0	2.5
Skilled labour	4.8	0	2.3
Animal husbandry	0	1.0	0.5
Unemployed	6.5	0.4	3.3
Other	8.7	1.0	4.5
Total	100	100	100

(Source : Household Survey, Banjar Tengah, 1992.)

Note : Villagers who are older than 52 years still engage themselves in a variety of income-generating activities. The age limit is set in this table only to make it comparable to the census figures quoted above.

Table 2 Distribution of textile workers by households in Banjar Tengah

Number of workers	0	1	2	3	4	> 5
Number of Households (N = 179)	29 (16.2%)	56 (31.3%)	56 (31.3%)	21 (11.7%)	11 (6.1%)	6 (3.4%)

(Source : Household Survey, Banjar Tengah, 1992.)

Although it is clear from Table 1 that involvement in textile production is much more significant for women than for men, cloth-related activities are certainly some of the important options for men who seek non-agricultural employment. Unlike in the past, an increasing number of sons refuse to take over sharecropping contracts from their fathers and accept different jobs⁽⁷⁾. Many well-educated young men have migrated to cities, especially to tourist areas, to try their luck. Those who remain in the village also engage in a variety of occupations: school teachers, government officials, carpenters, tailors, drivers, manual labourers and textile workers. There is also a recent development of tourist-oriented home industries: the production of *jukung* (miniature, wooden boats) and *komik* (lontar palm leaves engraved with Hindu epics and drawings) to be sold in the tourist spots along the coastal area of Karangasem or in Sanur.

The types of women's work, too, have changed over time. According to the villagers in their forties and above, many of their mothers mostly helped their husbands in the fields. Women's main work was, it is said, cooking meals and looking after their family. There were, however, a number of women petty traders, who dealt in farm produce and home-made snacks in other towns as well as in local markets. Before the shuttle service by minibus between Klungkung and Singarsa was started in the early 1980s, it was women's work to walk to the market in Klungkung carrying rice and fruit on their heads. In addition, the raising of livestock (chickens and pigs) has been a long-standing women's work for cash income.

Today, a vast majority of women is involved in textile production. Now that weaving has become *the* women's work in Singarsa and also it yields relatively high remuneration even compared with other types of 'men's work', the number of women who engage in farming even as secondary labour has dramatically diminished. While women of rice-farming households may help their husbands or fathers in time of second-crop harvesting, which must be finished quickly to catch good market prices, the harvesting of rice is often relegated to agricultural labourers from the vicinity of Singarsa. Similarly, market trading is no longer a prominent activity for Singarsa (Hindu) women, the village market predominated by Muslim women and traders from outside the village.

The changes in the labour force structure for both men and women correspond with, and in turn accelerate, the transformation of the overall village economy. As noted elsewhere (Cole 1983: 162-65; Edmondson 1992: 6), the expansion of the civil service (local administrators, school teachers, medical specialists, and police force) since the late 1960s has brought a considerable cash in-flow to the local economy⁽⁸⁾. At the same time, the parent's aspiration to higher education for their children have been enhanced with the prospect of acquiring stable, white collar jobs in the government sector; hence, the need for cash income has increased. Even though the tuition fee for primary school is free, the pupils now customarily buy snacks at nearby food stalls with the pocket money given by their parents. The enrolment in secondary school

requires monthly tuition fee (2,100 *rupiah* in 1993) and additional expenses for different sets of uniform, text books and school excursions. To send children to high schools and universities in the cities is a far more expensive venture because of the costs for lodging and transport. Medical consultations and treatments (including childbirth) at modern clinics require cash, while traditional healers (*balian*) received remuneration in kind. These trends coincided with commercialisation in the agricultural sector, i.e. the shift from subsistence-dominant production to market-oriented production (cf. Edmondson 1992 : 9).

History of Songket Production

As noted earlier, two types of textiles are produced in Singarsa : songket and endek. Due to its limited scope, however, this paper maintains its focus on songket production⁽⁹⁾. Also, I shall not include the position of dealers/traders in the present analysis. Songket cloths traditionally constitute the special ceremonial attire in the form of wrap-arounds (*kamben*)⁽¹⁰⁾, men's outer cloths (*saput*), women's sashes (*sléndang*) or men's head cloths (*udeng*). They are now also used for decorative purposes in the venue of ceremonies. Largely due to its high price, songket wrap-around cloth (both *kamben* and *saput*) is worn only for very special occasions such as hair-cutting (*moton gedē*), tooth-filing (*matatah*), and wedding (*semayut gedē*) ceremonies, though less expensive *seléndang* or *udeng* may be used for minor ceremonial

occasions. In recent years, it has gained wide currency, primarily in urban areas, to wear splendid songket cloths at official parties and graduation ceremonies when participants are required to attend in traditional costume (*pakaian adat*, Ind.). Unsuitable for further processing and washing, the sale of songket is in large part confined to the Balinese domestic market.

The weaving of songket developed as an aristocratic craft performed by women in courts whose activity was confined within their residence (Ramseyer & Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1991 : 34). Covarrubias, for example, describes :

Weaving is the main occupation of the women of caste who feel above doing heavy house labour, but they are not lazy and take to weaving with tenacity. In our house the wives and aunts of our host, all noble women with servants to do the housework, remained all day glued to their looms and often continued working into the night by the faint light of a petrol lamp (1937 : 100-101).

The above account seems to apply to the triwangsa women in the old days in Singarsa, yet not every triwangsa women practised weaving. The number of weavers was reportedly very limited until the Japanese occupation period. Even at the local court only a few women did cloth making previously. Those who wove songket did not do so as much for their own use as for selling to the rich, including the rulers of various princedoms, who placed orders individually.

The restriction of songket production in the past is often attributed to the limita-

tion of demand. The materials for a songket cloth, gold and pure silk threads, were so expensive and difficult to obtain that only extremely privileged people could afford it. There was also a larger number of women, both triwangsa and jaba, who wove other types of cloth such as plain or checked cotton cloths. Such cloths were more likely to be worn by the weaver or by members of her family. Some weavers also produced special cloths specifically used for religious ceremonies as a part of offerings⁽¹¹⁾.

The three-and-half year period under the Japanese occupation (1942-1945) saw a drastic change in cloth production. Due to a serious shortage of clothing materials throughout the Japan-occupied Dutch East Indies, the Japanese civil administration (*minseibu*) promoted cotton cultivation and processing⁽¹²⁾. Women of the entire village were ordered to engage in the weaving or other stages of cloth production. It was during this period that most Singarsa women took up weaving for the first time in their life. Young, unmarried women were called up to work in the workshop (*gudang*) which was set up by the Japanese for the spinning of cotton yarn (*ngantih*), the spooling (*ngulak*), and the warp-winding (*nganyinin*). School-age children also worked there for small wages. Married women were provided with backstrap looms (*cagcag*) to weave plain, coarse cotton cloth (*blacu*)⁽¹³⁾ at home. Songket and other types of weaving had stopped, because costly materials were no longer available.

During the years of political turmoil after Indonesian independence, cloth produc-

tion was limited except for home production of plain white cloth for daily wear⁽¹⁴⁾. When the political and economic situation began to improve in the mid-1950s, the weaving of songket and other types of cloth such as multi-coloured, cross striped cloth (*blékatan*) was taken up again. The weavers of songket, in particular, gradually increased in number.

Importantly, the rise of songket production in Singarsa is strongly related to general change of the Balinese economy, especially the improvement of the infrastructure throughout the island. In the late 1950s when the materials for songket, imported from Java and overseas, became more easily available, a few villagers with means started to provide materials to local weavers, while selling finished cloths to Denpasar and other cities. But it was after 1965 that Singarsa became better connected with other parts of the island and “modernization” got under way (cf. Jayasuriya & Nehen 1989: 341). The numbers of traders and weavers of songket increased especially in the 1970s and 1980s. At the same time, with the increased import of cheap, machine-made batik cloths from Java and the introduction of ‘western’ type clothing, the hand-weaving of other types of cloth for daily wear ceased.

The truly remarkable growth of songket production as a rural cottage industry was facilitated by ‘the increased democratization of Balinese society’ (Ramseyer & Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1991: 37) which weakened the traditional and exclusive link between songket and the people of upper warna. In 1980, Ida Bagus Mantra, then

governor of Bali province, encouraged the local population to buy Balinese traditional textiles for their ceremonial attire (Ramseyer 1987: 4; Ramseyer & Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1991: 37). This governor's appeal furthered the breakdown of the prerogative of the triwanga in producing and wearing songket cloth⁽¹⁵⁾. Although songket was still a prohibitively expensive cloth for the large part of the population, a rapid growth in the tourist industry produced more and more well-to-do Balinese who increasingly chose songket for their ceremonial wardrobe. The market for songket expanded rapidly, so did its production. Concurrently, several government programmes extended some funding through women-oriented organisations and the local co-operatives to support women songket producers in the early 1980s. By the beginning of the 1990s, songket production had spread throughout the district of Singarsa containing four administrative villages and even beyond it.

It is significant that the spread of this craft to the wider population of Singarsa has resulted in a high degree of specialisation of production. In former times, songket producers were generally involved in the entire process, from start to finish⁽¹⁶⁾. In other words, they were all independent weavers and individually controlled every stage of production including the marketing of finished cloth. However, with the emergence of dealers who took the role of organising the production process, a marked differentiation of tasks and remuneration has occurred among songket producers. Presently, songket production allows for a wide variety of production relations

according to the means and capabilities of its participants as we shall see in the below.

The System of Production

The process of making a songket cloth can be divided into three parts: the preparation of the warp beam (*papanen*), pattern programming, and weaving. A very limited number of women are engaged in all of these tasks today. Even when all the tasks are

Table 3 The process of *songket* production

1. <i>nyikat</i>	Preparing warp threads
2. <i>ngulak</i>	Winding bobbins
3. <i>nganyinin</i>	Winding warp
4. <i>nyuntik</i>	Threading warp threads through the reed
5. <i>nyasab</i>	Winding the warp onto the warp beam
6. <i>nuduk</i>	Pattern programming
7. <i>ngunun</i>	Setting up additional heddle rods for patterns
8. <i>ngunda</i>	Transferring supplementary patterns to the warp
9. <i>ngliying</i>	Winding weft threads onto spools
10. <i>ngecob</i>	Winding supplementary weft threads onto spools
11. <i>nunun</i>	Weaving

executed within one house compound, it is most likely that the divisions of labour are implemented to ensure a greater efficiency.

Most commonly, the preparation of papanen or a warp beam (the stages 1-5 in Table 3) is systematically organised by songket dealers with a piece-rate system (*borongan*). Those who perform these tasks are provided with the yarn and receive payment in return for their commissioned work. Some specialise in these preparatory jobs, while others combine such work with daily weaving. Normally a dealer has a stable relationship with a group of workers who regularly take commissions from her. These piece-rate workers are often, though not always, related to the dealer by kinship ties. The bobbin-winding (*ngulak*, stage 2) and warp-winding (*nganyinin*, stage 3) are more often performed by young men than by women, whereas all other stages are almost exclusively women's work⁽¹⁷⁾. It must also be noted that workers who undertake preparatory stages of songket production are invariably of noble origin except for a few jaba pattern programmers (*tukang nuduk*). This seems to be a reminiscence of the traditional link between the triwangsa and songket production.

In the entire production, the pattern programming (*nuduk*, stage 6) requires the highest skill of all, thus only a limited number of specialists are capable of this task. At the time of the research, there were fifteen programmers in Singarsa. Seven of them were women from triwangsa families who had practised songket weaving over generations. Another eight, however, were jaba women who learned this craft in

recent years and equally took commissions. Because of the scarcity in number, programmers are never short of work. When the warp frame (papanen) is ready, it is sent to a pattern programmer, then finally handed over to a weaver. The preparatory work, prior to weaving, takes 10~15 days. This period can be prolonged if, for example, all workers concerned are busy with major temple ceremonies or a certain pattern programmer falls sick. The ancillary activities of the last four stages are normally performed by individual weavers.

The length of warp in one set of papanen is 12 metres, enough for six half-pieces (*arirang*) of kamben (an outer wrap-around). That is, the weaver makes three kamben with every papanen. The amount of the time required for finishing cloths varies greatly according to the type and motif of a cloth, the skill of each weaver, and her working conditions. It takes a skilled, unmarried weaver around twenty days to finish a piece of *kamben bek* (two half-pieces to make a wrap-around covered with gold supplementary weft at length), using yarn of the highest quality. Provided that she can work through without interruption, therefore, her daily remuneration can be between 4,000 and 6,000 rupiah⁽¹⁸⁾. Due to their engagements in multiple pursuits, however, married weavers need much longer time for the completion of their cloth.

With regard to the means of production, the backstrap looms (*cagcag*) and other essential implements for songket weaving can be produced locally; a brand new set will cost around 35,000 rupiah. In most cases, daughters inherit old looms that

belonged to some family members who had stopped weaving. Upon marriage, the wife brings her own loom to her husband's house or uses her in-law's loom if any stays idle. Being valuable tools, *cagcag* are presented small *canang* offerings on ritual days. But they are also deemed polluting (*leteh*) for men because of their strong association with femininity.

The songket weavers can be classified into two types. Both types of weavers own their looms and necessary weaving implements, but their difference derives from ownership of the materials they are working on. The first category is independent weavers who have paid for the warp and weft which they weave. They are free to choose the market for their finished products due to the lack of constraining ties with dealers. Sometimes they accept orders from outside Singarsa through their family or other connections, or bring woven cloths to the market in Klungkung by themselves. More often, however, they sell their cloth to traders within the village for the sake of convenience. They make their own decision about the type of cloth to weave, the colour of warp and weft threads, and its motif every time. Some of them individually commission each stage of warp frame preparation to their family members or neighbours. Otherwise they buy a ready-made *papanen* and other materials from the shops owned by songket dealers. Then they bring the *papanen* to *tukang nuduk*, pattern programmers, who set up motifs for them.

The other type of weavers are tied to the dealers for whom they work on a

piece-rate basis. These weavers receive from their 'bos'⁽¹⁹⁾ all the necessary materials—prepared *papanen*, weft yarn, and supplementary weft threads—for weaving. They get paid for each piece of cloth they finish. The costs of materials as well as the commissioned work for the preparation of *papanen* are deducted from the price of the last cloth from the present *papanen*. As a rule, the dealer controls the disposal of their finished cloth.

A piece-rate weaver can become independent when she saves enough capital to buy expensive materials. At the same time, an independent weaver may become dependent upon a dealer if her savings run out and thus she cannot afford the next *papanen* to weave. A number of weavers do shift their position vis-à-vis dealers in both ways. In many cases, however, piece-rate weavers are tightly bound to dealers, not only because their weaving materials are owned by the latter, but also because they receive some cash advance. Especially during the months when many religious ceremonies take place, women weavers tend to ask for an advance from their 'bos' in order to buy the ingredients for temple offerings or gifts. In consequence, the final payment they get from their finished cloths are only used to liquidate the cost of materials and debts. This incurs further debts for living expenses. It must be added that the prices of materials and finished cloths are determined by the dealer. However, given that married women have less time for weaving compared to single women, and that they often bear a larger extent of financial responsibility, married weavers actually tend to

prefer to work on a piece-rate basis. Even within a family, it is common that unmarried daughters retain their position as independent weavers while their mothers work as piece-rate weavers.

Songket Weavers as Mothers and Daughters

Presently, throughout Singarsa except for its remoter parts and Muslim quarters, women of different generations commonly work on *cagcag* side by side in the open space of their compound. Typically, several looms are located on the elevated ground of an open pavilion (*balé*) or on the veranda outside walled rooms. Some women may operate wooden tools for bobbin- or spool-winding next to their mothers, sisters or friends who concentrate on weaving. There are also many women who weave inside their own rooms.

Girls normally start to learn songket weaving at the age of ten, with the materials for sashes first. By the time they leave primary school, at about age 12, they are already fully-fledged weavers, producing proper *kamben* like their mothers and elder sisters. Those who still go to school sit at their loom in the afternoons and on Sundays. Most weaving daughters pay their school fees and personal expenses with their own income; nearly all of them contribute to the household economy. The unmarried women who have become full-time weavers work literally all day long. Many of them carry on weaving until late into the night, while some relax in the evening to enjoy talk

with friends at the roadside food stalls. Married women normally start to weave around noon, having finished cooking and serving mid-day meals to their husbands and children. They, too, resume weaving after evening meal and work until late at night.

One of the major problems for songket weavers in Singarsa today is the fluctuation of the amount of time available for weaving. Women in general, married women in particular, are busy preparing offerings, taking gifts to other house compounds and attending life-passage rituals throughout the year, in addition to their daily reproductive tasks. It is practically impossible for them to carry on weaving when there are temple ceremonies in the community or large-scale rituals in their own compound. Furthermore, the songket weaving is subject to a number of taboos in relation to the Balinese calendar. During the Galungan-Kuningan period, for example, the weaving should be stopped five days before the Galungan when ancestors descend to the family compounds. From then on weavers may not sit at looms until the following day of Kuningan, which is 15 days later⁽²⁰⁾. In many households, *cagcag* looms are dismantled and stored away so that people can use space for the massive offering-making. On the days of the full moon (*purnama*), *kajeng kliwon*, the new moon (*tilem*), and *tumpek*, which account four to five days every (Gregorian) calendar month, the weaving of songket is not allowed. Moreover, many rituals tend to take place on these days of the month.

The following case studies will serve as illustrations of the ways in which songket

weavers under different circumstances organise their work.

CASE 1

I Déwa Ayu Puspa, an unmarried, *satria* woman of her early 20s, is an independent weaver. She buys all the necessary weaving materials and organises every stage of cloth production, though she herself performs the last three stages only. The preparation of the warp beam (*papanen*) and the pattern programming are commissioned (*mupahang*) to three different people. When ritual activities do not disrupt her weaving, it takes her around 20 days to finish two half pieces of songket cloth, which makes one kamben. The preparatory work for every three kamben takes 15 days. It means that she must plan ahead and start the next preparation before finishing the present *papanen*. Otherwise she would waste time, waiting until the *papanen* is ready. With the interruption by the Galungan-Kuningan period or some other major rituals, the completion of one *papanen* (i.e. three kamben) requires more than 80 days.

Her finished cloth is normally sold to a *jaba* woman in the village, who trades songket in Denpasar. Sometimes her relations in Denpasar place an order for a specific type of cloth, in which case the price of the cloth is very high. She is a skilled weaver and her products sell well. The cloth she weaves is kamben bek (a wrap-around covered with golden supplementary weft at full width), using the

yarn of the highest quality. Having sold each kamben for 140,000 rupiah on average, the net profit from one *papanen* can be 266,500 rupiah. She is also aware of her strong bargaining position vis-à-vis the trader due to the high quality of her work as well as her high *warna* title.

Living with her parents and three unmarried brothers, Ayu Puspa contributes a part of her earnings to the household income to meet daily needs and ritual expenses. She also partially supported the schooling of her younger brother, who has remained unemployed since graduating from a local high school in 1991. Although most of domestic chores are undertaken by her mother, Ayu Puspa performs a number of ritual duties, such as presenting family offerings to temples (*maturan*) on the days of annual celebrations (*odalan*) and taking ceremonial gifts to the compounds of extended family members and neighbours (*madelokan*).

Her father is a dry land farmer, tending a plot of shared inheritance with his three brothers. He, however, spends most of his time performing duties incurred by his official position as *klian adat* for his hamlet. Ayu Puspa's mother had been weaving songket for many years, but much less efficiently than her daughter. Unlike her daughter, she was working for a dealer on a piece-rate basis. It was a more suitable arrangement for her, because it took her long time to complete a cloth due to the other tasks she had to perform. Recently she finally stopped weaving because of her failing eye sight.

CASE 2

Ni Madé Sayang, aged 42, is a married *sudra* woman with two unmarried sons. Her daughter is already married and lives in a different banjar. Madé Sayang has been weaving for two songket dealers so that she can obtain the ready warp beam (*papanen*) without delay. Unlike I Déwa Ayu Puspa who weaves cloths with full motifs, Madé Sayang mainly weaves *kamben pinggiran* (a wrap-around with motif at one edge only) with the yarn of lesser quality, the price of which is lower. Each finished *kamben* priced 60,000 rupiah and the costs of the materials deducted by the dealer, she earns 107,000 rupiah from one *papanen*. It takes her 30-45 days to complete one *papanen*, depending on the amount of ritual work required during the period. Busy with multiple tasks as a married woman, and needing cash income for daily subsistence, she prefers to work on lower-quality materials which can be finished more quickly, though the profit may be smaller. In any case, without sufficient capital she has no other option but works as a piece-rate weaver.

Her husband, a part-time tailor, contributes his income mainly to the physical maintenance of their house. Madé Sayang is therefore the sole provider of the expenses for daily food, religious offerings, and ceremonial gifts. While her older son, a local high school student, does not contribute to the household economy, her younger son works for a village tailor, doing errands and ancillary tasks, whereby

he pays for his own school fees for secondary school (SMP).

Madé Sayang laments on the fact that her only daughter is now gone and that she has no weaving daughter presently who can support her financially and as a companion. The absence of daughters and any other adult females in the household also implies that she has to bear all the duties in different domains. Although her husband and sons wash their own clothes, other reproductive tasks such as shopping and cooking are undertaken by Madé Sayang only. Besides, all the ritual obligations related to family temples, communal temples, ritually significant days, and *makrama dĕsa* (ceremonial ties between related households), which require participation of a woman from each household, are also her responsibility. When the daytime hours are taken up by those activities, she would get up around 5 o'clock in the morning to get some weaving done before going to the morning market, and resume weaving after the evening meal, working until 10 or 11 o'clock at night.

CASE 3

I Déwa Ayu Raka is a *satria* woman in her early 60s. She is an elder sister of the present heir (Cokorda) of the local court of Singarsa and has never married.

She started to weave songket when she was around twelve years old. She learned the craft from her mother, the former Cokorda's wife of *wĕsia* origin.

They bought undyed yarn in Klungkung or Denpasar and applied natural dyes made by themselves. It took her months to complete one kamben, for she performed all the tasks from the very beginning to the end, including pattern-programming (*nuduk*) by herself. She was, and still is, known as a skilled weaver and took individual orders from the aristocrats of different parts of Bali. Even the raja of Gianyar commissioned her to make songket for him. Although she earned money from weaving, she wove not so much for economic returns as for her own satisfaction and pride. Besides, she could not go out of her compound freely, thus had to fill her time at home.

Her younger sisters know how to weave songket, but they cannot perform the entire process. Ayu Raka finds it a cause for regret that all these songket weavers know nothing but weaving, and that they are incapable of undertaking other stages of production. They are also much too economic-oriented, in her view. According to Ayu Raka and some other satria of her generation, Singarsa women nowadays only think of money: every act of beating reeds means some rupiah!

I Déwa Ayu Puspa (case 1) and Ni Madé Sayang (case 2) have different marital status and *warna* title, and yet they share a strong concern with the time available for weaving, which is negotiated vis-à-vis other time-consuming activities in the religious as well as domestic domains. A serious dilemma facing female weavers during ritually

busy periods is that they inevitably spend money buying ingredients for offerings and gifts, and yet they cannot weave, i.e. cannot earn income. Women in Singarsa, both married and unmarried, are unanimous in recognising this problem as the source of incessant stress and anxiety⁽²¹⁾.

Let me take an example of I Gusti Agung Sri, an unmarried girl in her early twenties. When I went to visit her one day, she was at her loom although she had been sick since two days previously. As she looked very tired and weak, I asked her, 'Why don't you take a rest? You are very sick!' She replied, continuing her weaving, 'I cannot. I must finish this cloth before Galungan (which was 23 days later)'. I repeated similar conversations with many other women during my fieldwork. At the time when some major rituals or ceremonial days are approaching, every woman works very hard to ensure she has enough money in hand before the weaving must be stopped. Another young woman, also frantically trying to finish a piece of kamben, complained:

'If I had not be obliged to help the preparations for this wedding, I could have finished this cloth by now. But it will take me another day to complete it, because I am going to attend the ceremony later today. This cloth has taken so long, for I was busy helping out the wedding of Dw Gd Ngurah (her mother's brother's son). There are always obstacles (*halangan*)'.

On that day, she had been to the compound holding the wedding ceremony (*semayut gedé*) early in the morning for greeting, and had come home. She was then working

on her loom for some two hours before the ceremonial feast (*magibung*), which she had to join, would start. Commenting on the degree of intensity seizing these songket weavers, a satria woman in her early fifties remarked:

‘When I was still single, staying with my parents, I was much more relaxed than unmarried girls of these days. I often played sports or engaged in some other activity. Well yes, I did weave songket, but not in a demanding way.

Nowadays, all girls force themselves to work hard. They weave and weave only. To such an extent that back of their waist has become blackened. Their bottom must have also become very hard, because they sit all day long. They leave their loom only when they eat’.

The perceptions of contemporary weavers in Singarsa certainly contrast with those of I Déwa Ayu Raka, the woman in the third case study above. Representing perhaps an archetype of traditional songket weavers, she takes pride in weaving a cloth of truly high quality, the production of which is entirely controlled by no one but herself. Time has not been an issue for her, nor have the ‘market trends’ affected her weaving, although she must endeavour to create an acclaimed piece. Skilled, independent weavers like Ayu Puspa in some way draw a sense of satisfaction and pride from their weaving, and yet the most important point for consideration in deciding motifs and colours of the yarns is whether their products will sell well (*laku*) or not.

These young, independent weavers are always keen to catch up with the current

vogue in terms of widely favoured colours or newly adopted motifs. Likewise, songket dealers look for samples of novel motifs from the court of Klungkung or Gelgel, where women actually create original designs for kamben songket. They then commission local programmers (*tukang nuduk*) to set the pattern for papanen according to acquired samples. Dealers try to restrict the number of weavers whom they commission the actual weaving so that their cloth with a new motif can fetch higher price at the market because of novelty and exclusiveness; such motif is of course bound to be copied by others and becomes widespread within a month or so. While I stayed in Singarsa, at one point a large number of women were weaving ‘songket endek’, combining pre-dyed warp (like endek cloth) with supplementray weft in gold threads. Some months later, every one was turning to a different type of patterns called *sajak*, which was actually a revival of a classic motif⁽²²⁾. Actually, the pressure on producing something ‘trendy’, or better still, something new, is mounting in the face of a sharp rise in the number of weavers in and around Singarsa, and the surplus of cloth supply as a result. In consequence, the price for songket cloth has dropped during the last two years or so. When business is slow everywhere, only high-quality cloths can get relatively good prices. It is piece-rate weavers who suffer most from this recent development, for they inevitably accept whatever price given by dealers for their products. Also importantly, they are more likely to be married women who cannot maximise their time and labour because of other requirements.

Another indication of pressure on songket weaving in the increasingly competitive environment is that women in general seem to feel more and more obliged to augment income. A wésia woman with three small children lamented that she could hardly sit at her loom because her children were all sickly and constantly demanded her attention. Indeed, it had taken her 2 months to complete just half a piece of kamben. Without any other adult female in the household, she spent most of her time engaged in child-care, household chores and, every now and then, ritual activities. Apart from financial difficulties (her husband was a sharecropping dry land farmer), she was particularly concerned with what others would think of her.

‘If I don’t work, I feel ashamed of myself toward my family (*lek taken sameton tiangé*, referring to the neighbours of the same descent in this context). They all weave. I just look after my children. I look as if I stayed idle doing nothing’. Although village women often affirm that daily subsistence of their family relies on their weaving, and it is certainly true to a large degree, women’s earnings are spent on many other things as well. It is abundantly clear, from the accounts of villagers and observers from outside, that the standard of living in Singarsa has tremendously improved since the early 1970s. As noted earlier, the growth of textile production into a major village industry coincided with a rapid process of monetisation of the village economy, facilitated by the gradual decline of the supremacy of wet-rice agriculture as subsistence production and expanding job opportunities in civil service. Incidentally,

the improvement of infrastructure and a booming tourist industry created demand for prestigious, hand-woven cloth and widened its marketing network. While the number of village males who could obtain secure positions in the public sector was rather limited, more and more women were drawn into the growing textile sector to meet increasing needs of cash income. Their relatively high economic returns, then, further stimulated the expansion of household consumption above subsistence, such as better education for children (more for sons than for daughters), better clothing, modern household utensils, and better housing.

One can also observe a general tendency toward more and more costly rituals at all levels of the society, including a partial commercialisation of offering making (Nakatani 1995a : Section 4.7 ; Poffenberger & Zurbuchen 1989). In fact, the changes in the village economy have given two-fold results in the domain of religious activities. On the one hand, as the financial status of most households has improved, people have started to spend more money sponsoring elaborate rituals than previously. This trend is particularly notable with regard to ceremonial clothing and the cost of entertaining guests. On the other hand, villagers, especially women, have become busier and more time-conscious. While engaging in some obligatory ritual work, they cannot put out of their mind their unfinished cloth and how much longer it will take before they can sell it, as illustrated by the remarks of a satria daughter above. Thus one can speak, without exaggeration, of the idea of ‘opportunity cost’ in Singarsa today.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has examined the remarkable development of Balinese textile production as part and parcel of the process of structural change of the village economy. Rural women's greater involvement in the non-agricultural sector, in response to changing economic circumstances, is in fact a common feature observed in different parts of Indonesia during the past decades (e.g. Stoler 1977 ; White 1991 ; Wolf 1992 : 44-45). However, in most other cases, women are in a way pushed into wage work in increasingly marginalised, traditional cottage industry, or into 'deskilled work' in production lines in large-scale factories (White 1991 : 23 ; see also Grijns et al. 1994 : 194-96). In the case of a Balinese village presented here, on the contrary, women flourish in the thriving hand-weaving sector. On the one hand, the conventional associations of songket weaving with femininity and aristocracy have enabled them to retain leading roles in this industry. On the other, precisely because of their augmented responsibility in the economic sphere, these women weavers are now facing the problem of constant juggling of their working hours to fulfil multiple obligations in different domains. Furthermore, with increasing competition among songket producers, a wider discrepancy is emerging between those married, thus more constrained by other activities, and unmarried daughters who can manage their time more productively.

Notes

- † An earlier version of this paper was given at the Third Bali Studies Workshop in Sydney, 3-7 July, 1995. The author appreciates valuable comments and suggestions from the participants of the workshop.
- 1 Field research on which this study is based was conducted under the auspices of the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI) and the Pusat Penelitian at Universitas Udayana. It was also made possible by the financial assistance by the INPEX Foundation (Tokyo) and the WOM/ACT Fund administered by the Royal Anthropological Institute (London).
 - 2 The findings in South Bali in 1978 reported that the land-owning families possessed 0.3 hectares on average, while the tenants farmed less than 0.2 hectares (Astika 1978, cited in Poffenberger & Zurbuchen 1980 : 98).
 - 3 1 *are* is 100 square metres, equivalent to 0.01 hectare.
 - 4 Salak is a fruit with sweetish but tart taste. Karangasem Regency is well-known for producing salak of a good quality, though its cultivation used to be confined to the area further north-east of Singarsa.
 - 5 Edmondson's findings in the village located in north of Singarsa indicate that agriculture contributed only 20 per cent of annual income for the upper and lower socio-economic strata, despite the positive gains through new rice technologies (Edmondson 1992). Cole (1983 : 164) also remarks on the insufficiency of agricultural income for household needs.
 - 6 Monografi Desa (1982, 1989), from which these figures are drawn, defines the work force

as the population from 15 to 52 years old.

- 7 As to the land-owning households, the fragmentation of the rice land has become a more and more serious problem owing to a system of inheritance which prescribes equal division of the land among all the sons. Streatfield (1982 : 388) notes the tendency that when the plot diminishes to a certain size, one of the sons takes responsibility for the whole land, while others seek non-farm employment. Such arrangements can widely be observed in Singarsa as well. A number of triwangsa families in the village have lost land through gambling and the sale of land to finance elaborate cremation ceremonies.
 - 8 According to Jayasuriya & Nehen (1989 : 342), the number of schools at all levels in Bali more than doubled between 1971 and 1984. In Singarsa, nine primary schools and one secondary school employ 107 teachers in total, the majority of which are from Singarsa or its vicinities.
 - 9 See Nakatani (1995a ; 1995b) for a more extensive analysis of cloth production including endek.
 - 10 Balinese wrap-arounds are slightly different from what has come to be known in English as sarongs. While a sarong is a piece of tubular cloth, a kamben is a 2.5 metre piece of cloth whose ends are not sewn together. Men wrap it around the lower part of the body from right to left and pleat the end at the front. Women start with the left end of the cloth and wrap it clockwise around herself. Although men normally wear sarongs (or trousers) in everyday life, they must wear kamben for religious or formal social occasions. A woman always uses kamben, unless she opts for western-style dress.
 - 11 For the production, usage and meanings of such sacred cloths in Bali, see Hauser-Schäublin et al. (1991).
- The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies No. 13 (1995)— 203
- 12 This policy was applied to Java, Bali and the Lesser Sunda Islands. In 1944, there were “300 sarong-manufacturing establishments on the islands of Bali and Lombok”, employing 13, 000 workers. “When private workers are included, the number of people engaged in this industry is said to be more than 50,000” (Office of Strategic Services 1945). For detailed accounts of cotton cultivation and cloth production in Java during this period, which seems similar to the case in Bali, see Kurasawa (1988 : 69-78).
 - 13 Blacu is a ‘coarse, unbleached cotton cloth’ (Barber 1979 : 27, 42). The cloths produced during this period are also called ‘kain Jepang’. Somehow the products seem to have all been taken by the Japanese administration in return for wages and villagers themselves did not have access to them (Robinson 1995). Villagers complain that they did not have decent clothing at that time. They used fibres from coconuts, pineapple leaves, sisal hems and banana stalks for making their own clothes (see also Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan 1986 : 141-42).
 - 14 Villagers of older generation recall the persistent shortage of clothing materials during the 1950s and 60s. Women of their forties remember that they had only one set of clothes for every occasion. Underwear was also made of a remnant of plain cloth woven with a backstrap loom. Batik cloths that are most widely used as a wraparound cloth in daily life were not easily available until the 1950s.
 - 15 Pelras (1962 : 230) reports that in some places where songket production had become a speciality women of common descent started to practise this aristocratic craft as home workers shortly before the time of his research. It means that ‘democratisation’ of songket production was already beginning in the early 1960s in some areas.
 - 16 Unlike the batik production in Javanese courts where aristocrat women employed a large

- number of village women as workers (Nakatani 1990 : 72), it is said that triwangsa women in Singarsa did not resort to the outside labour for their songket production until the 1950s.
- 17 For the detailed analyses of increasing male participation in textile production, see Nakatani (1995b).
 - 18 Take an example of I Gusti Agung Sriasih, an unmarried weaver, who wove three pieces of kamben with full motif within one and a half months. The warp frame cost 50,000 rupiah including the cost of warp threads and the commission fees for warping. She paid 7,000 rupiah to the pattern-programmer, and bought golden threads for 75,000 rupiah and weft yarn for 21,000 rupiah. So the materials for three kamben cost her 153,000 rupiah in total. When her finished kamben was sold for 150,000 rupiah, her profit was 99,000 rupiah per kamben, on which she spent 20 days. Thus her daily earning was, if calculated, 4,950 rupiah. It is considerably high compared with the daily wages of full-time tailors (3000 rupiah) or piece-rate weavers at endek workshops (2000~4000 rupiah), for example.
 - 19 'Bos' is an Indonesian term which is already incorporated into daily conversations in Balinese. Its origin is presumably a Dutch word, *baas*, meaning 'boss'.
 - 20 This taboo is explained as the device not to disturb the home-coming of ancestors by the loud noise of beating reeds. Interestingly, however, the operation of ATBM for endek weaving, which is even more noisy than cagcag, is not subject to such prohibition (see Nakatani 1995a).
 - 21 The instability of production rates mainly due to prescribed religious activities is one of the major reasons why a small-scale credit scheme specifically designed for handicraft production did not work in Singarsa. Most women could not earn income as steadily as envisaged by the scheme, thus failed to keep up the monthly payments (see Nakatani 1995a:

Section 6.4).

- 22 The villagers themselves contrast songket weaving in Singarsa with elsewhere, claiming that their cloth is of lesser quality because weavers try to weave as fast as possible. In contrast, weavers of Puri Klungkung or Gelgel, for instance, are said to weave each cloth much more slowly and attentively. In Gelgel, most songket producers still engage in the entire process, drawing help from their family members (Subagyo 1991 : 156), though the overall number of weavers is much smaller. A similar contrast seems to obtain in North Bali ; a handful of weavers in Bratan are said to make highly acclaimed cloth, while in Jineng Dalem where nearly every woman practises songket weaving, coarser cloths are produced.

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