The Baduy Calendar

It is important to have some knowledge about the complicated Baduy calendar, because it is connected to the agricultural activities and it determines the music seasons. Information on the Baduy calendar and its seasons (*mangsa, musim*) may be found in the literature, although it is not always very precise. In 1995 I noted that in my discussions with Outer Baduy 'it appeared that much confusion is caused by the complicated timetable for planting and harvesting rice on the various fields of the Inner and Outer Baduy'. (Van Zanten 1995: 528).

Already in 1822 Blume presented names of the twelve Baduy months: Kasa, Karo, Katiga, Kaopat, Kalima, Kanam, Kapitu, Kadalapan, Kasalapan, Kasepuluh, Hapit Lemah and Hapit Kayu. The names Katiga until Kasapuluh are in fact numbers: the third, the fourth ... the tenth (month). Blume (1993 [1822]: 37, footnote) also noted that the first month Kasa always starts with the new moon and, according to him, that was in 1821 (or 1822?) on the 25th November.¹ However, it should be noted that the Baduy consider the agricultural year, and therefore the agricultural calendar, to start with the month Kapat (or Kaopat, Sapar/Safar) with the activities of clearing the fields for the new agricultural year. Since 1970 this happened between April and June, in the dry season of west Java; see Table 31 below. Jacobs and Meijer (1891: 78) note that the Baduy 'know exactly in which month they are, which they calculate from the position of the sun and several star constellations' and that, when listing the months, they always start mentioning the month Sapar (Kapat, Kaopat), as it is the month 'in which they start to cultivate the *huma sérang*', that is the start of the new agricultural season. As most rain falls in the months October-December, the rice for the majority of the Baduy should be planted in September-October (see also Iskandar & Iskandar 2016: 700).

Proudfoot (2007: 123) states 'In broad terms Muslims expect their calendars to predict the phases of the moon, Christians expect their calendars to match the seasons of the year, and Hindus and Chinese expect their calendars to do both'. The Baduy calendar falls in the last category: in principle it follows the yearly seasons, and it is therefore based on the solar year. However, the Baduy calendar is also based on 12 lunar months of 29 or 30 days. Regularly adjustments are made to fit the shorter lunar year of 12 months (about 355 days) to the solar year of 365¼ days, a difference of about ten days. Further, the Baduy week consists of seven days, from Sunday to Saturday: Hadma,

¹ Van Tricht (1929:94) quotes Blume: in 1822 was 1 Kasa $\equiv$ 5 November (not 25 November). This is clearly a mistake by Van Tricht, as follows from his other information.

Nenpat, Salu, Bojuh, Mispan, Manep and Tupan (Garna 1975:86), although nowadays the Baduy mostly use the Sundanese/Indonesian names for the days; compare also Jacobs and Meijer (1891: 79) and Van Tricht (1929: 93).

Since the 1970s the beginning of the agricultural year (in Baduy month Sapar/Kaopat) has been in the range between the beginning of April to the beginning of June (see Tables 31 and 32 below). Even when accepting the shifting relation between the Baduy and Western calendars that Proudfoot mentions, it is difficult to explain the large differences between Blume and Pleyte's findings and those of later researchers. In 2003 the Kanékés date 1 Kasa fell on 4 March and the fourth month Sapar, in which the *séba* ritual takes place and the new agricultural year begins, started on 2 June ($\equiv$ 1 Sapar). Blume (1993 [1822]: 37) reports that in 1821 the Baduy year (1 Kasa) started on the new moon of 25 November, that is, more than 3 months earlier than in 2003. Van Tricht (1929:94) mentions that Blume's given relation between the two calendars, Baduy and Western, remained more or less unchanged from 1822 until 1907, as Pleyte (1909: 495) reported that in 1907: the Baduy date 14 Kasapuluh $\equiv$ Western date 30 August, which means indeed that in 1906 the date 1 Kaso was also around 25 November.

Spanoghe visited the Baduy area with the party of Blume in 1821–1822 and 'over a year later' again in 1823. On this second occasion there were religious festivities going on in the Inner Baduy hamlets. The notes that Spanoghe made about this journey were posthumously published in 1838 (Spanoghe 1838: 296–297). In his notes Spanoghe (1838: 300–301) wrote:

Kawalu is a feast that is celebrated with meals on some day in the first and also in the second month of the year. *Kawalu tutug* is celebrated on a particular day in the third month, like the previous ones, with meals. The day before each of these festive days will be spent with fasting. The fasting starts with sunrise and ends towards three o'clock in the afternoon.

Although it is not really clear which calendar is meant in the phrase 'in the first and also in the second month of the year', it seems that Spanoghe is referring to the Western calendar. If so, the three *kawalu* months would fall in January–March, which would be more in line with what we found for the period after about 1970.

Pleyte (1909: 494) also reported that 'around Christmas', December 1905, when he stayed with the Regent of Sérang, he saw a group of seven Baduy men 'who had come down from the mountains to pay their yearly homage to the Regent and offered him honey, bee wax, a complete set of kitchen utensils, and a piece of *boéh larang* cloth'. Here Pleyte clearly talks about the *séba* ceremony of three days that takes place in the fourth Baduy month (*Kapat, Kaopat, Sapar*), and which during the last fifty years took place between the beginning of April and the beginning of June (see below). Further, Van Tricht noted that in 1929 (or 1928?): 14 Kasapuluh $\equiv$ 30 September which means

that in 1928 the date 1 Kaso was around 25 December and – if no ‘pragmatic adjustments’ were made by the spiritual leaders – in 1929 the date 1 Kaso would have been around 15 December which is also mentioned by Van Tricht.

Proudfoot (2007: 107, footnote 56) sees a confirmation in Van Tricht’s own account (Van Tricht 1929: 92–5) that the Baduy calendar remained seasonal from 1822 to 1928. I have no explanation why there is a difference of about three Western months between the Baduy years since the 1970s and the period between 1822 and 1928.

Proudfoot (2007: 107, footnote 56) writes that the Baduy ‘rustic calendar could be managed through continuous pragmatic adjustment, rather than with the overheads of calendrical rules’. It seems that these adjustments are mainly done by changing the duration of the month Hapit Kayu. This was confirmed to me by Ayah Mursid in 2014. The exact start of a Baduy ceremony or the agricultural year is determined by the spiritual leaders in the *tangtu* hamlets Cikeusik, Cibéo and Cikartawana. In practice the dates on the calendar are determined by using a small piece of wood (*kolénjér*) and a longish bamboo piece (*sastra*) both with signs on them; see pictures and explanations in Van Tricht (1929: opposite p.88) and Garna (1988: 244–265).

According to Proudfoot (2007: 107, footnote 56) the Baduy ‘track the seasons by observing the positions of the stellar constellations Orion (*kidang*, *guru desa*) and the Pleiades (*kartika*), and the flowering of certain plants’. The position of the Orion sign of the zodiac determines the main agricultural activities concerning the rice.² Dana-sasmita and Djatisunda (1986: 41; see also Garna 1988: 205 and Iskandar 1992: 70–71) present the following sayings and their meaning:

- a. ‘Orion starts to be seen, and the *kujang* knife for working in the fields comes down’ (*tanggal kidang turun kujang*), that is, the agricultural work starts in the months Kapitu and Kadelapan, around July–September. Before the *kujang* knife is used, it has to be purified by a sacred formula (*mantera*).
- b. ‘Orion approaches its highest point at dawn’ (*kidang rumangsang*). At this time of the year the cut branches and grass have to be dry and piled up to be burnt in the month Kasalapan (September–October).
- c. ‘Orion is in the zenith [at dawn]’ (*kidang muhunan*). At this time of the year the (rice) fields have to be clean and ready for planting (*ngaseuk*). The planting happens in the month Kasalapan (September–October).

2 In the region of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar, about 40 km southeast from Kanékés, the beginning of the agricultural season is also marked by the appearance of the constellations Orion and Pleiades (Budi 2015: 15–16, 333), although Budi calls them ‘the orient belt’ (Orion) and ‘bin-tang kerti’ (Pleiades: Kartika/Kerti/Kereti(ka)).

- d. 'When Orion disappears, the *kungkang/walang sangit* insect [very harmful to the rice] comes down' (*kidang ilang turun kungkang*). The planting of rice (*ngaseuk*) has to start in time. When the planting starts too late the rice will be struck by the insects when it starts to form the grains. It is also believed that during the time that Orion cannot be seen (this happens during about 40 days) the good and bad spirits will roam around (December).

It seems that, in general, odd numbers are better, more fortunate than the even numbers; see, for instance, Geise (1952: 47–48, 51, and 246). In this book I gave a few examples. At the planting ceremony (*ngaseuk* and *muuhan*) each hole should be filled with five or seven rice grains (see Section 4.2). The *séba* ceremony should start on the day 1, 3, 5 or 7 of the Sapar month (see below), and the number of dancers with *angklung* music should always be an odd number larger than 1: 3, 5 or 7 (see Section 5.2).

Further information on the Baduy calendar may, for instance, be found in Jacobs and Meijer (1891: 78), Van Tricht (1929: 92–95), Geise (1952: 32–46) and Iskandar (1992: 65–67).

Table 31 above gives the correspondence between the Baduy and Western months in a few years since the 1970s. For 1973 I used the data supplied in Garna (1974–1975, Part II and III: 38) with some additional information from my fieldwork in June and July 1976. For 1985–86 I used the information provided by Iskandar (1992: 65–67); for 1992, 2003 and 2013 I used my own fieldwork data. Square brackets, like [1 Kasa ≈ 1 Febr.], mean that this statement has been derived from other correspondences of the calendars in that year, going back in the Baduy year.

The following Table 32 presents the start of the yearly *séba* ceremony between 2003 and 2019. The departure from Kanékés should always fall on one of the days 1, 3, 5 or 7 Sapar.³ Hence the table gives an overview of the end of the agricultural Baduy year and the start of a new agricultural year: between the beginning of April, until the beginning of June in the period 2003–2019. As discussed in Section 2.4, in the *séba* ceremony the Baduy present several agricultural products and handicrafts to the 'rulers of the North': the sub district head (*camat*) of Leuwidamar, the regent (*bupati*) of Lebak in Rangkasbitung, the regent of Banten and the governor of Banten Province in Sérang.

3 My information contradicts what Danasasmita and Djatisunda (1986: 36) and Garna (1988: 338) wrote, namely that the *séba* starts on day 1 of the Sapar month. It may be that, with the increasing attention for the *séba* by the Banten authorities, the Baduy wishes of starting on 1 Sapar will have to be adjusted to the possibilities to receive them in Rangkasbitung, Pandeglang and Sérang. In Section 2.4 I mentioned that in 2019 the Baduy were not very happy about the change of the date in Sérang, from 9 May to 4 May 2019, apparently because the Saturday suited the tourists better.

TABLE 31 Correspondence between Baduy and Western calendars since 1970s

	1973	1985–6	1992	2003	2016
Kasa	January	January-February	[1 Kasa $\approx$ 5 Febr.]	1 Kasa $\equiv$ 4 March ^a	[1 Kasa $\approx$ 11 Febr.]
Karo	February	February-March		1 Karo $\equiv$ 3 April	
Katiga	March	March-April			
Sapar ($\equiv$ Kapat, Kaopat)	April	April-May	[1 Sapar $\approx$ 3 May]	5 Sapar $\equiv$ 6 June (start <i>séba</i>)	7 Sapar $\equiv$ 13 May (start <i>séba</i>)
Kalima	May (1976: opening gamelan season)	May-June			
Kanem	June	June-July			1 Kanem $\equiv$ 1 Syawal (Idul Fitri), 6 July 2016
Kapitu	July	July-August			
Kadalapan	August (20th August 1976: opening <i>angklung</i> season)	August-September			
Kasalapan	September	September-October	25 Kasalapan $\equiv$ 23 Oct: 'engagement' of rice Outer Baduy		
Kasapuluh	October	October-November	11 Kasapuluh $\equiv$ 7 Nov		
Hapit Lemah	November	November-December			
Hapit Kayu ^b	December	December-January			

^a It should be noted that the Baduy day starts at sunset and is therefore about six hours ahead of the day on the Western calendar.

^b Danasasmita and Djatisunda (1986:37) and Garna (1987:90; 1988: xxi, 84) place the month Hapit Kayu before Hapit Lemah. I think this is a mistake: it does not correspond with the older and newer publications and also in my own fieldwork the information was that Hapit Kayu came after Hapit Lemah.

TABLE 32 Date of the start of the *séba* ceremony and number of participants between 2003 and 2019

Much information can be found on www.Kompas.com, when searching for 'Seba Baduy'. My assistant Mumu often informed me about the number of participants and other details. Years marked with + contain information by Mumu. The 'great *séba*' (*séba gedé*) means that there had been a good harvest that year, and the 'small *séba*' (*séba leutik*) means that the harvest was less good.

Year	Start in Kanékés	Arrival in Sérang	Number of participants		
			total	panamping	tangtu
2019+	3 May	4 May	1.035	1019	16
2018	20 April (≡ 7 Sapar)	21 April	1.388: <i>séba leutik</i>	1343	45
2017+	28 April (≡ 3 Sapar)	29 April	1656: <i>séba gedé</i>	1576	80
2016+	13 May (≡ 7 Sapar)	14 May	1317	1300	17
2015+	24 April (≡ 4 Sapar)	25 April	1957: <i>séba gedé</i>	1763 + 125 dangka	69
2014	2 May	3 May	1120: <i>séba gedé</i>	1102	18
2013	[17 May]	18 May	1797	1727	70
2012	27 April	28 April	1388		
2011	8 April	9 April	1482	1383	99
2010	18 April	21 April	630 (950?): <i>séba leutik</i>	605	25
2009	2 May		<i>Séba gedé</i>		
2008	9 May	10 May	987	962	25
2007	21 April ≡ 5 Sapar		1030: <i>séba gedé</i>	1007	23
2006	1? May	2 May	781	759	22
2005	14? May	15 May	-		
2004	21? May	22 May	470		
2003+	6 June ≡ 5 Sapar?		597: <i>séba gedé</i>	527	70
1907	-	around Christmas	7 (Pleyte 1909: 494)		