

CHAPTER XI

OTHER CROPS

Express condition 3(1) of Schedule III, Approval of Application for Land - which accidentally at present is the only form of legal document in respect of every lot in the Block - specifically sets out that "Lot No. (Bendang) hereby alienated shall be used solely for the cultivation of wet rice".¹ If anything can be understood from this, it is that precisely no crop other than wet rice is allowed to be cultivated in the Block.

This study, however, reveals that this express condition is not strictly adhered to in the Block. As can be seen from the total column of Table 11.1, 63 lots are cultivated with other crops. This constitutes 60.6% of the total number of 104 lots in the Block. The express condition is thus violated to a considerable extent here.

The crops cultivated range from a secondary staple such as maize to one of decorative value such as flowers - included here under crops for similarity of implications and for convenience. As depicted by Table 11.2, regardless of the extent of cultivation, there are in all fourteen other crops cultivated in the Block, viz. banana, coconut, fruits, keladi, maize, mengkuang, pineapple, sugarcane, sweet potatoes, tapioca, nipah, pandun, kapas and flowers. A lot may be cultivated with one or more of these, in some cases even with as many as eight or nine of these. A Comprehensive Summary of the lots in the Block with their cultivated other crops is set out in Appendix IX at the end of this study.

Table 11.1 presents the number of lots cultivated with other crops and the number uncultivated in the Block, after having categorised them into those with permanent dwellings and those without. It can be noticed that out of 50 lots with permanent dwellings, as many as 49 or 98% are cultivated with other crops. Only one is not cultivated. On the other hand, out of 54 lots without permanent dwellings, only 14 or 25.9% are so cultivated. The remaining 40 or 74.1% are not.

The Table thus shows a very close relationship between the existence of permanent dwelling and the cultivation of other crops on a lot. Closer examination shows that the unique lot 2810, which is with a permanent dwelling but without other crop cultivation, is

¹See Appendix II.

TABLE 11.1

DISTRIBUTION OF LOTS WITH/WITHOUT PERMANENT DWELLINGS
CULTIVATED/UNCULTIVATED WITH OTHER CROPS

	Lots	Cultivated		Uncultivated	
		Lots	Percentage	Lots	Percentage
With Permanent Dwelling	50	49	98.0	1	2.0
Without Permanent Dwelling	54	14	25.9	40	74.1
Total	104	63	60.6	41	39.4

dwelled neither by the owner nor the operator of the lot, as is the case with all the other lots with permanent dwellings, but by a relative of the owner. On the top of that he has just moved in.

It is not difficult to see why the relationship exists. A permanent dwelling set up on a lot does not only occupy the land necessary for its solid foundation, but takes a considerable area for its compound in front and around the house as well. This house foundation and compound is reasonably raised from the rest of the lot for fear of flooding, and not therefore cultivate with padi. Hence it serves thus an inviting area for cultivation with other crops. Further, as there is a house now on the lot, there is an immediate need for some crops of everyday home consumption for food. Thus coconut, banana, fruits, keladi, sugar-cane, pineapple, sweet potatoes, tapioca and the like are cultivated primarily to fulfil this immediate need. There is also an immediate need for crops of frequent home consumption uses other than food, such as kapas, mengknang, pandan and nipah. Hence the cultivation of these on the lots. Besides, there are other reasons as well why the compound should be cultivated. For example, a house in a vast open area like that of the S.S. needs shade and protection, both from sun and wind. Tall trees such as coconut and fruit trees are cultivated partly to provide this shade and protection. Crops are also cultivated in the compound to preserve it from elosion.

Only 25.9% of those lots without permanent dwellings are cultivated with other crops in the Block. This is likewise easily intelligible. There is the problem posed by the distance. Further, some of them may have land, such as coconut-land elsewhere to work, or some other jobs to attend to. More important still, however, is that the cultivation of other crops for immediate food and other home consumption shifts its scene from the lot to where the house of

the relevant owner and/or operator is. Moreover, there is now no problem of shade and protection on the lot, neither is there any raised compound that need be cultivated with crops other than padi. Most of those lots which make up the 25.9% concentrate on banana, coconut and maize. We shall in due course see why this is so.

With the help of Table 11.2, we shall proceed to look into these crops one by one.

Banana

From the point of view of the number of lots cultivated with, banana is the most popular other crop in the Block. It is cultivated in 58 lots or 55.7% of the total number of lots.

It is popular both with regard to those lots with permanent dwellings as well as those without. For, out of these 58 lots, 10 are those without permanent dwellings. It is thus cultivated in 96% of those cultivated lots with permanent dwellings and in 71.4% of those cultivated lots without the dwellings.

Few reasons may be suggested to account for this popularity. It is certainly a very popular crop among the rural Malays. It is easy to cultivate in the sense that once planted no further care is needed, and it multiplies automatically. This partly makes it particularly popular among the 'absentee' operators. Its use is not only with regard to its fruits, but also its leaves and the shade it affords. Finally, places suitable for its cultivation are readily available in the lots.

It is suitably cultivated on the raised house compound around the house. There is yet another place equally suitable for its cultivation. Most lots in the Block, whether operated by one and particularly so by two, are divided equally lengthwise by the construction of a 'batas'. The batas is reasonably raised and rarely flooded. It is along this batas that bananas may suitably be cultivated. In fact, in most of those lots without permanent dwellings and hence no house compounds, it is cultivated so on these batas.

There are many varieties of banana cultivated. But in all cases it is cultivated on a small scale. No systematic and organised planting is seen anywhere in the Block. Obviously, the cultivation is primarily for home consumption, though on occasions bananas are seen sold to the local shop, usually on exchange for the daily necessities.

Coconut

Coconut occupies the second place of popularity in the Block. It is cultivated in 42 lots which make up 40.3% of the total number of lots. Only one of these lots is without permanent dwelling.

TABLE 11.2

NUMBER OF LOTS CULTIVATED WITH VARIOUS OTHER CROPS

No.	Other Crops	Lots	Percentage of Total Number of Lots
1	Banana	58	55.7
2	Coconut	42	40.3
3	Fruits	38	36.4
4	Keladi	35	33.6
5	Maize	36	25.0
6	Mengkung	21	20.2
7	Pineapple	13	12.5
8	Sugar-Cane	10	9.6
9	Sweet Potatoes	8	7.7
10	Tapioca	7	6.7
11	Nipah	2	2.9
12	Pandan	3	1.9
13	Kapas	1	1.0
14	Flowers	9	8.6

The scale of cultivation is in all cases very small. A lot with four or five trees is already well ahead of others. Most are with two or three. Quite a number are only with one.

The usual place of its cultivation is on the house compound, around the house.

Judging from the small scale of its cultivation, it is obviously meant for home consumption only. It is of interest to note that out of the 42 lots cultivated with it, ten of their owners and/or operators have coconut-land outside of the S.S.

It is useful not only with regard to the consumption of its fruits, but also with regard to its leaves and husks for firewood, and also in relation to the protection from sun and wind that it affords and the preservation of the compound from erosion that it provides.

Fruits

Fruit trees occupy the third place. They are cultivated

in 38 lots which form 36.4% of the total number of lots. Only two of these lots are without permanent dwellings.

The usual place of cultivation is again on the house compound. A number of such trees, however, are cultivated on the batas in the padi fields. There are many varieties of fruit trees cultivated. The most popular, however, is noticeably mango trees.

They are again cultivated on a small scale. Five or more fruit trees for a lot are off-season crop. As such, and as maize takes about three to four months to be harvested, its cultivation is not possible at all if double-cropping of padi is carried out.

Compared with other crops, it is cultivated mostly on the largest scale. The maize fields range from one-quarter to as large as one-half of an acre. The preparation of the fields is done by changkul, but in a few cases it is done by tractors.

The commercialisation of maize is rendered possible because of the existence of a market for it. Now maize is in demand by retailers who sell boiled maize everywhere particularly so in the 'pasar minggu'.

Maize cultivation is thus an added source of income for the people in the Block. It is noteworthy that those who are in connection with 19 of these 26 lots do not own and/or operate any other land except that in the Block. They cultivate maize thus as a means to obtain extra income. This similar motive also explains why, as we have just seen, as much as 50%. Of the cultivated lots without permanent dwellings are cultivated with maize. The operators who stay outside the Block make it a point to come to their lots to cultivate the income-earning maize. Hence maize is in fact the solitary other crop on four of their lots.

Pineapple and Sugar-Cane

Pineapple and sugar-cane are also cultivated in the Block. The former is found in 13 lots while the latter in 10. In both cases, the lots are all those with permanent dwellings.

Most frequently, the two are cultivated on the brink of a foot-path leading to a house, and on the brink of a house compound. Already comparatively abundant. The cultivation is thus solely for home consumption.

Besides of consuming their fruits, the trees are also cultivated for their shade and to preserve the compound or batas from erosion.

Keladi

Keladi is cultivated in 35 lots, three of which are without permanent dwellings.

In those lots with permanent dwellings, it is cultivated in damp places such as near the drain and well. In those lots without the dwellings, it is cultivated on the batas.

Many varieties of keladi are found. Most popular is the one variety, whitish in colour called 'keladi puteh'.

Cultivated on a very small scale, it is obviously for immediate home consumption. In some varieties, it is useful with regard to its leaves, in others to its roots, still in others to both.

Maize

Maize is the other crop in the fifth order in the Block from the point of view of the number of lots cultivated with it. It is cultivated in 26 lots which make up 25% of the total.

Nineteen of these lots are with permanent dwellings. The other seven are without. Maize is thus cultivated in about 38% of the cultivated lots with permanent dwellings and 50% of those without permanent dwellings.

If any of the other crops is considerably commercialized in the Block, it is maize. It is here cultivated systematically and with careful organisation in the padi fields.

Though by their very nature both crops are capable of commercialisation, they are cultivated nevertheless in the Block on a small scale.

They are thus obviously cultivated for home consumption. Sugar-cane is particularly popular among children.

Sweet Potatoes and Tapioca

Besides maize, sweet potatoes and tapioca are the only other crops which show an inclination towards commercialisation in the Block. But they are cultivated only to a small extent in the Block, the former is found in eight lots and the latter in seven. With the exception of one lot under sweet potatoes, all these lots are with permanent dwellings.

They are cultivated for home consumption or for sale. In the former case, the cultivation is done haphazardly on the house compound. The cultivation for sale shows a distinct organisation. It is cultivated in the padi fields after padi stalks have been cleared and burnt. Baras are properly constructed for the purpose. The scale in this case is usually about one-quarter of an acre.

There is a small market for both crops. Sweet potatoes are demanded for local consumption. Tapioca is particularly for export to other places.

Mengkuang, Pandan, Kapas and Nipah

Non-food crops cultivated in the Block are Mengkuang, Pandan, Kapas and Nipah. Of these, only Mengkuang is cultivated quite extensively, being found in 21 lots. Pandan, Nipah and Kapas are cultivated in only three, two and one lot respectively.

Mengkuang, Pandan and Nipah are cultivated in damp places such as in the neighbourhood of a well or pond.

All are for immediate home use. Mengkuang is useful for making mats and containers, Pandan for small containers and Nipah particularly for making atap.

Flowers

Of special interest is the cultivation of flowers in the Block. This 'crop' is cultivated in nine lots; all with permanent dwellings, certainly.

They are cultivated particularly on the path leading to the house, and on the compound in front of the house. No potted flowers are observed. All are planted in the ground.

Flowers are planted here obviously for their mere decorative value. The scale is very small and no slightest sign of commercialisation can be seen anywhere.

An observable characteristic is that in all these nine cases flowers are cultivated in the compound of those houses which appear to be comparatively well-to-do. This phenomenon may perhaps be economically explained by the fact that sophistication in flowers is a leisure. The marginal utility of leisure as an economic commodity to a person will become comparatively high when his marginal utility for money, representing those economic commodities other than leisure, becomes lower. The marginal utility of money becomes lower only because of its abundance, that is when the person becomes rich. Hence flowers in well-to-do houses.

We have thus seen the nature and extent of the cultivation of other crops in the Block. The first impression it gives us is that the express condition 3(i) of the Schedule III set out at the beginning of this Chapter is obviously extensively violated in the Block. This violation is largely brought about by the fact that many settlers build their permanent dwellings on their lots. Actually, even this is not encouraged. The same Schedule III provides that a special kampong lot will be alienated in conjunction with the Bendang lot which, according to the Schedule's express condition 3(ii) "shall be used solely as a site for one or more dwelling houses". We shall say more of this in the next Chapter.

That being so, we have also seen that nearly all the crops are cultivated on a small scale and solely for home consumption. It is conceivable that some of these crops, like the case of maize, can

be grown on a large scale and commercialised. Pineapple, sugar-cane, tapioca, sweet potatoes and banana are the particular crops we have in mind. That this does not occur in the Block can be explained in the following manner. Firstly, as we have seen, the operators in the Block are not encouraged by the authority concerned to do so. In fact, it is carried out on the violation of the express condition. Secondly, if any large-scale cultivation of these crops is to be carried out, the crops must be planted in the padi fields. This is possible only if padi double-cropping is not carried out. But it is the well-known government intention that the whole S.S. should be a padi double-cropping has in fact been carried out continuously. It was dropped only in the year before and, I am told, will be reintroduced soon. Hence there is no intention neither inertia for large-scale of these crops. Finally, there is only a limited market for these crop. The demand of the local market for sugar-cane and pineapple particularly is very limited. There is no marketing co-operative in the Block and the S.S. which can promote the marketing of these crops.

In conclusion, looking from the perspective of the Block being a specialised padi area, the cultivation of other crops and the erection of permanent dwellings which is largely responsible for this cultivation, serves only to reduce the area of the respective lots available for the cultivation of padi.