

*The Jarai Subgroups*

## CHAPTER 7. THE JARAI

### SECTION I

#### INTRODUCTION

Numbering approximately 150,000 persons, the Jarai form one of the largest tribal groups in the Republic of Vietnam. The Jarai tribe consists of seven distinct subgroups and is spread throughout a large section of the Central Highlands. Of Malayo-Polynesian ethnic stock, the Jarai speak a language related to that of the Rhade, another large and important tribe which lives south of the Jarai.

The Jarai are a matrilineal group and live in villages which, individually, form the highest political structure attained by the Jarai. They have a subsistence economy based primarily on the slash-and-burn cultivation of dry rice. The Jarai also engage in hunting, fishing, and a limited amount of trade.

The Jarai are an intensely religious people who believe they live in constant interrelation with animistic spirits. In the past, the Jarai had a reputation for being fierce, aggressive warriors, and until recently the Jarai have remained relatively isolated from outside influences.

#### **Name and Size of Group**

In their own tribal language, the tribe's name is Nak-drai. They are called Charai by the Vietnamese, Djarai by the French, and Chalai by the Laotians. Jarai is the spelling used by American observers.

Anthropologists generally agree upon the following Jarai subgroups: Ho'drung, Habau, Arap, Sesan, Chu Ty, Plei Kly, and Cheo Reo. The entire Jarai tribe numbers approximately 150,000.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Location**

The Jarai tribe inhabits an extensive area including most of the provinces of Pleiku and Phu Bon, the southwestern corner of Kontum Province, and the eastern portion of the Cambodian province of Ratanakiri. Scattered Jarai settlements are also found in the northern areas of Darlac Province and the western part of Phu Xuyen Province. There are three major areas of Jarai concen-

tration—around the towns of Pleiku and Plei Kly in Pleiku Province and Cheo Reo in Phu Bon Province.

The Jarai Ho'drung are found in the region around the town of Pleiku; the Habau in the Lake To'nueng area; the Arap in the Plei Tell area, in northern Pleiku Province, and in the eastern part of Ratanakiri Province in Cambodia; the Plei Kly in southern Pleiku Province and northern Darlac Province; and the Cheo Reo in the region of Cheo Reo in Phu Bon Province.<sup>2</sup> See the map for the location of Jarai subgroups and neighboring groups.

Neighboring groups include the Halang to the northwest, the Rengao and Sedang to the north, the Bahnar to the northeast and east, the Hroi to the east, and the Rhade to the south. The Jarai in the eastern portion of the tribal area also have contact with the Cham and Vietnamese. The western portion of Jarai territory is bordered by various tribal peoples of Cambodia.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Terrain Analysis**

The Jarai tribe is located on the northern part of the Darlac Plateau, which is separated from the coast by the Annamite Mountains. Ranging from 1,000 to 2,500 feet in altitude, the Darlac Plateau has a foundation of basalt covered by reddish soil in some areas and a granite and rhyolite rock base (volcanic rock) covered with a thin mantle of soil in others. Above the generally rolling land of the plateau north of Pleiku, rise a number of extinct volcanoes, some of which contain crater lakes.

In the east, the Jarai area is drained by the Song Ba River and its tributaries. The Song Ba flows eastward through the Annamite Mountains and empties into the South China Sea. In the west, the Jarai area is drained by the Srepok River and some of its tributaries. The Srepok flows westward into Cambodia and joins the Mekong River.

Two important highways cross the Jarai area. National Route 14, a major north-south highway, runs from Ban Me Thuot through Pleiku and on to Kontum. National Route 19 runs east from the Cambodian border through Pleiku to the coast at Qui Nhon. At this writing, travel on these two highways is often hazardous due to Viet Cong activities.

The climate of the plateau area inhabited by the Jarai is influenced by both the summer (April—October) and winter (mid-September—March) monsoon winds which provide a regular seasonal alternation of wind. In the summer these winds come mainly from the southwest; in the winter, from the northeast. Agriculture is greatly dependent upon the rain brought by the summer monsoon. The winter monsoon also provides precipitation, though this rainfall varies greatly. On the whole, the Darlac Plateau receives from 50 to 150 inches of precipitation with most rain falling

in the higher areas in the north. The greatest rainfall occurs in July and August. There are local elevational variations in rainfall and wind patterns.<sup>4</sup> Temperatures in the highland area are lower than along the coastal lowland areas, differing by more than 15 degrees during the winter months.

Much of the Jarai area is covered by monsoon forest which is fairly open and relatively easy to traverse, as it is without dense undergrowth. The monsoon forest turns brown during the dry winter season, and many of the trees lose their leaves. During the summer or rainy season, travel becomes very difficult because of flooding and quagmires—elephants are then the best means of travel. Some of the forest undergrowth is *tranh* (*Imperata cylindrica*), a coarse, tall grass used as thatch for the roofs of Jarai houses. *Tranh*, when young, provides fair herbage. Bamboo growth is frequently found in low, wet areas where the monsoon forest has been cultivated and then abandoned by the tribesmen. In a few years these areas are again covered by forests, for the bamboo protects the seedling trees.<sup>5</sup>

## SECTION II

### TRIBAL BACKGROUND

#### **Ethnic and Racial Origin**

According to their language and culture, the Jarai may be grouped with the Malayo-Polynesian peoples of the East Indies. The Jarai language is like those of peoples on islands as widely separated as the Philippines and Sumatra, as well as similar to those of the highland tribes of the Raglai and the Rhade.

Opinions vary about the geographic origin of the Malayo-Polynesian peoples in the Indochinese peninsula. Some authorities believe that they migrated from the Indonesian area to Indochina. Others think they originated in the Indian subcontinent, migrated eastward, and then spread from the Indochinese Peninsula to Indonesia and the islands of the Pacific. Still another conjecture is that the tribes migrated to Indochina from China proper. The latter theory holds that the Polynesians were originally settled in the Chinese coastal region of Kwangtung before sailing south and east.

#### **Language**

The language spoken by the Jarai falls within the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages. Other mountain tribes speaking related languages include the Raglai and the Rhade. The Cham, descendants of a once powerful kingdom in Indochina, also speak a Malayo-Polynesian language.<sup>1</sup>

The Jarai language has many sounds foreign to English, such as a trilled "r," glottal stops, and the vowel sounds "uh" (ú), and "oo" (ó). However, other sounds are somewhat like English sounds.<sup>2</sup> The Jarai language is understood by neighboring Rhade, Bahnar, and M'ngong who have regular commercial contacts with the Jarai. Some Vietnamese merchants or traders in the area may also be familiar with the language.<sup>1</sup>

The Jarai have written language, devised by the French, which generally follows the Vietnamese system of writing. However, the written language is little used; in 1964 a visitor reported only about 500 Jarai tribesmen could read it. Of the few tribesmen who can read their language, most have learned it from missionaries, in Government schools, or from experience in the military or Government service.<sup>4</sup> Since 1960, missionaries have been accelerating efforts to improve Jarai literacy.

Although some Jarai Tribesmen speak Vietnamese, the number is probably less than among tribes such as the Jeh, Sedang, or Hroi who historically have had more contact with the Vietnamese.<sup>5</sup> Recently, as contacts between the Jarai and Vietnamese have in-

creased, a growing number of Jarai have learned to speak Vietnamese.

Some Jarai understand French, but this seems to be limited to tribesmen trained by the French for military duty or to those who were employees of the colonial government.<sup>6</sup> In addition, some tribesmen, especially the younger men, are learning English as Americans in the area develop more and more contacts with them.

Because of the difficulty of the Jarai language and its strangeness to Western ears, a missionary with long experience among the Jarai considers it impossible to learn their language without frequent or long contacts with the tribespeople.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Legendary History**

The Jarai myth of the ancient origin of the tribe recounts the story of a flood which covered all the earth. To save themselves from the flood, a Jarai man and wife got into a huge drum, in which they floated for many days. When the waters receded, the man and woman landed on Cu Hodrung, a two-pronged mountain south of Pleiku, which the Jarai call the "belly button of the world." The tribe has remained in the highlands, centered around Pleiku, since that time.

The Jarai also have a legend to explain the superiority of the Vietnamese. According to this legend, there was a sword with its scabbard in a small pool. Both a Vietnamese and a Jarai tried to get the sword; the Vietnamese succeeded, while the Jarai retrieved only the sheath—hence, the Vietnamese, to this day, control the Jarai.

In addition, each clan of the Jarai has a myth to explain its origin, identity, food prohibitions, and other customs and taboos. These legends are considered as folklore in this study and will be discussed in the section on "Customs and Taboos."\*

#### **Factual History**

Like most of the Montagnard tribes, there is only limited and fragmentary factual material on the Jarai. As far as can be determined, studies of Jarai political and administrative history are almost nonexistent. For the most part, this gap is explained by the lack of documentation before the arrival of the French in the 1860's; the Jarai had no written language before that time. The Annamese (ethnic Vietnamese), who theoretically exercised authority over the Jarai, had, in practice, very little to do with the tribespeople.

Although recorded factual history of the mountain tribes was developed after the French arrived in the area, even this information is incomplete; most investigators found that Jarai ideas of

\* See "Tribal Folklore," p. 281.

their history are expressed in legends and folktales. Thus, only a brief sketch of the actual history of the Jarai can be given.

Before the fall of the Cham Kingdom in the 15th century, the Jarai had little contact with the Annamese although it is probable that the Jarai, as allies of the Cham, fought the Annamese during the long Cham-Annamese wars. The Cham were eventually defeated by the Annamese, who then consolidated the entire country under a succession of dynasties.

Traditionally, the Annamese never wanted to inhabit the highland regions of Indochina; thus, conflict between the Jarai and the ethnic Vietnamese was kept to a relative minimum. Yet all Annamese dynasties consistently followed policies to restrict the tribesmen to the mountain areas, to exact tribute, and to control and monopolize all trade with them. These policies were only partially successful for the following reasons: the historical isolation of the tribes, the traditional antipathy between the tribes and the Annamese, the mutual suspicion and distrust of the tribes for each other, and the high incidence of malaria, which kept the Annamese out of the Jarai territory. Consequently, although the Jarai raided weaker neighboring tribes or villages, they did not molest the Annamese except in Jarai territory.

After the arrival of the French in the 1860's and during the period of instability while the French were taking control of the country, Jarai raids increased. By the 1880's, the French were firmly in control and took steps to eliminate Jarai aggression. However, the Jarai continued their raids even though it was dangerous for them.<sup>8</sup>

The Jarai, emboldened by a few successes, ambushed an important convoy bringing supplies to a French religious mission at Kontum. Father Guerlach, a French missionary in Kontum, called upon the neighboring Bahnar and with a force of 1,200 (reportedly the largest force of Montagnards ever united under one leader) attacked and defeated the Jarai in 1897. From then on, the supply route from the coast into the Kontum area was free of Jarai interference.

To halt further Jarai aggression and to check Jarai expansion, the mission at Kontum encouraged the Bahnar, the Rengao, and the Bonom to form a defensive alliance. The French administrator in Hue later recognized this agreement.<sup>9</sup>

The most serious incident involving the Jarai and the French occurred in 1904, when Odend'hal, a French official attached to the *École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, traveled into Jarai territory without military escort to persuade a Jarai religious leader, the Sadet Oi At, to submit to French rule. Odend'hal was warmly received by the Sadet; but after drinking much ceremonial wine, he

became sick and refused further offers of wine and chicken. The refusal annoyed the Sadet, as did Odend'hal's request to see the sacred sword, symbol of the Sadet's office. The Jarai interpreted a letter Odend'hal wrote to another French official as a request for reinforcements, and on April 7, 1904, they attacked and killed him. This murder brought more French troops into the Jarai area, and the Jarai were soon subdued.<sup>10</sup>

Historically, the Jarai have been the first mountain tribe to break away from the authority of an empire in decline and the last to succumb to a new overlord. Early Jarai accounts tell of their wars to break away from Cham domination during the 14th century. At one time or another, the Jarai have paid tribute to Cham, Cambodians, Annamese, and French, and then rebelled against them.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Patterns of Jarai Migration**

Despite the general paucity of factual information, available sources indicate that in modern times the Jarai in Vietnam have consistently, although very gradually, migrated westward toward the Cambodian border. There are several reasons for the migratory movement of the Jarai. Reputedly warlike and predatory, the Jarai have invaded the territory of their weaker neighbors. The major reason, however, appears to be that when increased numbers of outsiders enter the tribal area the Jarai tend to move away. The Jarai, like other mountain tribes, are fiercely independent, resent strangers, and generally avoid contact with them. This attitude is especially true in their relations with the Vietnamese.

Under French rule, the Jarai area was included in the *Domaine de la Couronne* which encompassed the entire High Plateau. Here, the French created a hunting preserve; established tea, rubber and tobacco plantations; and restricted entry of Vietnamese, except as plantation workers or as minor merchants. The Jarai, like other mountain tribes, vigorously resisted settlement of their tribal areas by outsiders; in counteraction, the Jarai continued to migrate westward into Cambodia. However, early in the 20th century, the Jarai were pacified, and the westward migration abated somewhat.

The Jarai were subject to few restrictions under the French and apparently appreciated the French policy of denying the Vietnamese entry into the highland areas.

During the Indochina War (1946-1954) the situation in the highlands again became unstable. Some Jarai, either as individuals or as village units, allied themselves with the Viet Minh or the French forces. Still others, taking advantage of the general insecurity of the period and of the breakdown in French authority and control, once again turned to banditry and the plundering of neighboring villages. However, many Jarai, by this time almost

completely pacified and nonaggressive, fled into the forest to avoid taking sides in a war they thought was not their concern. Some tribesmen again moved westward into Cambodia in order to escape the fighting.

After the war, the situation in the Republic of Vietnam gradually became stable. By 1956, as the Government began to exert its authority and control, many Jarai tribesmen returned to their villages and to their traditional way of life. However, the westward migration of the Jarai has resumed in the past few years.

#### Settlement Patterns

Jarai villages—called *plei* in the north and *bon* in the south—vary in size from 4 to 50 multifamily dwellings called longhouses.<sup>12</sup> Each longhouse is inhabited by the extended family group—the female members of the family plus their husbands and young children. Thus, in a longhouse all the women are related to each other in a direct line; all the men are from other clans and families and have married into the female group. In a small village, all the families may belong to the same clan; in a very large village, the families belong to a number of different clans, with one clan being economically (and hence socially and politically) predominant.

Jarai villages are usually located near a good water source. Normally, the choice of the location for a village and the arrangement of houses within it are decided by the village elders, rather than by a tribal leader or the Central Government. The principal determining factor is religion. Only after the wishes of the spirits have been ascertained—through divination in accordance with tribal beliefs—is the decision made. Villages may be moved periodically within the lands controlled by the village, but seldom does a village move outside the immediate locale. During the interval between the abandonment of one village and the construction of another, the Jarai live on their cultivated lands in temporary shelters which are also used as living quarters during the planting and harvest seasons.

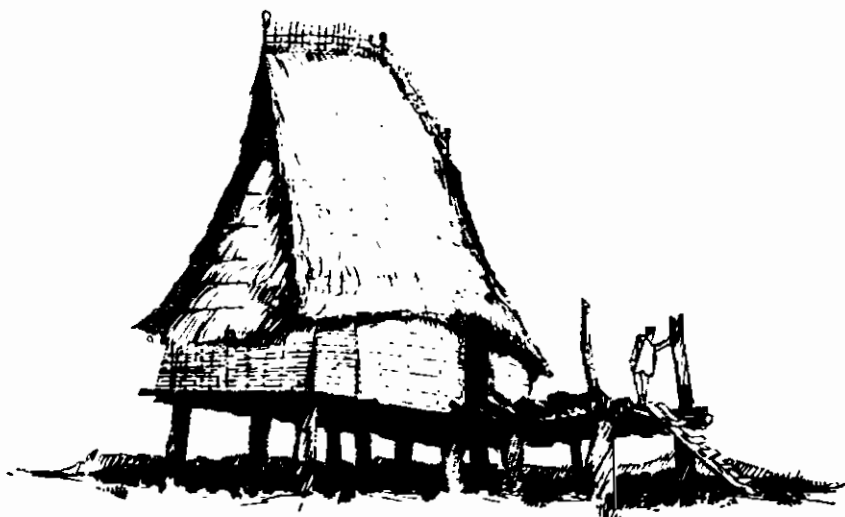
Jarai villages have various boundary marks. Before the French pacified the area, villages were heavily fortified and bounded by a fence of trees, walls of earth, and a stockade. After pacification, villages were usually surrounded by only a hedge. Now villages are again fortified, this time with defenses suitable for modern warfare.<sup>13</sup>

A Jarai village consists of a group of longhouses, rice storehouses, and enclosures for animals. Like those of the Rhade tribe, houses are oriented in a north-south direction, are rectangular in shape, and are constructed of bamboo on pilings from 8 to 10 feet above the ground. The selection of the site for a house in-



*Figure 11. Jarai longhouse.*

volves divination to learn the will of the spirits; a house must be placed where it will not incur the wrath of the spirits. The size of the family determines the size of the house—some are as long as 100 feet. At each end of the longhouse is a platform or patio with ladders for access to the ground. Inside, at one end of the house, is a large common room where guests are received and religious ceremonies performed. Here also is a long bench as well as rice wine jars, gongs, and weapons. Along one side of the house is a long corridor, and off of it are partitioned rooms in each of which lives a nuclear family—mother, father, and children. The longhouse has a thatched roof with no openings for the passage of smoke: smoke blows through the loosely woven bamboo sides of the house.



*Figure 12. Jarai communal house.*

Among the Chu Ty, Sesan, and Arap subgroups in the western and northwestern portions of Pleiku Province, a communal house is in the center of the village. Like those of the neighboring Bahnar, the communal house serves as lodging for travelers, as a meeting place for the village elders and the tribunal (tribal court), and as sleeping quarters for bachelors. The communal house is characterized by a high, thatched roof of 30 feet or more and is very solidly constructed. The area in front of the communal house is used as a village market place. In the Cheo Reo area, the Jarai village tribunal meets in a circular hut built on the ground.

Other structures in Jarai villages include storage huts for rice, chicken coops, log cages for keeping pigs at night, and pens for cattle and buffalo.

## SECTION III

### INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

#### **Physical Characteristics**

Jarai males are generally the same size as Vietnamese but have a sturdier build. They average about 5 feet 5 inches in height. They are generally a very strong people with strong calves, well-developed chests, and strong arms. Their feet are usually quite wide. Their skin pigmentation varies from light to very dark brown, and they have very wide noses. They have dark, coarse hair that ranges from straight to curly, and their eyes are usually brown.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Health**

On the whole, the health of Jarai tribesmen is poor. The tribe suffers from many diseases: skin irritations, respiratory ailments, leprosy (almost 10 percent of the tribe), malaria, typhoid, cholera, dysentery, tuberculosis, yaws, and ailments resulting from vitamin and iodine deficiencies.

The Jarai believe that the activities of evil spirits cause illness. To cure an illness, it is necessary to find which spirit is the cause and what sacrifice must be made.\*

The Government of the Republic of Vietnam and various missionary groups have made some effort to improve the health of the tribe; however, the isolation of Jarai groups limits the effectiveness of such aid. Generally, the tribesmen are receptive to Western medicine. They have either heard about it or had some experience with it; hence, some Jarai will travel relatively long distances for medical aid. However, availability of medical aid is, as yet, relatively limited.

#### **Endurance**

According to one source, the endurance of the Jarai is good if they are allowed to set their own pace. They have very good endurance for walking over mountain trails but relatively poor endurance for lifting heavy objects or for running.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Manual Dexterity**

The Jarai tribesmen have a high degree of manual dexterity, and they are accustomed to making things with their hands; one

\* See "Principal Deities," p. 284.

of their principal activities is basket weaving, a craft requiring great manual dexterity. They also build their longhouses with only simple cutting instruments, which they handle with great skill.

#### Psychological Characteristics

For a psychological understanding of the Jarai, it is necessary to recognize the strong family ties that influence the individual tribesmen. In Jarai society, the family is preeminent, socially and economically. Little interest is shown in the individual; he is only part of the family group. Decisions are the business of the family, not of the individual.<sup>3</sup>

The Jarai are reportedly quite industrious and are generally reliable, though slow and methodical, workers. The Jarai ridicule lazy people and appear to try to do their best on any job. They are proud of their work; this pride shows in their homes, in their work in military camps, and in the upkeep of their uniforms and weapons.<sup>4</sup> The young Jarai receiving military training seem eager for knowledge and learn quickly.<sup>5</sup>

Since the individual Jarai submerges his personal wishes in deference to those of the family, it may be said that he is willing to take direction from others. He does so only in terms of submitting to the will of the family—doing only those things best for the family, not himself. When a Jarai group raids another village, the leader of the raid is one of the village bachelors. The tribesmen submit to the leadership of this person who, by reason of his bachelorhood, is not yet considered to be a full-fledged member of the tribe.\*

Traditionally, the tribesmen have not submitted to any external authority. This may have been modified by increased contact with non-tribal groups due to the improvement in transportation and military activities in the Jarai area.

In the past, the Jarai were an aggressive people.<sup>6</sup> The Jarai consider numerical superiority very important in any military action: they prefer to attack when they clearly outnumber their opponents and may even avoid conflict if they do not have a large enough force.<sup>7</sup> In a recent study it was reported that the Jarai become emotional in stress situations, such as actions involving modern weapons or patrols subject to ambush.<sup>8</sup> Since the Jarai have a long history of aggressive warfare, this report may not be completely accurate.

When dealing with members of their own village, the Jarai act in accordance with customs involving family and clan allegiances, as well as past history and activities. Primary loyalty is to the family; the individual knows his exact role within the family

\* See "Class Structure," p. 279.

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group and what obligations and expectations result. However, none of this knowledge is available to persons from outside the village: outsiders are strangers and are so treated. In the past the Jarai were suspicious of strangers and had no compunction about killing or robbing them. (Nowadays, this attitude may have changed to one of detachment and observation—their treatment of outsiders now probably depends upon the actions of the strangers.)

Certain non-Jarai people live in Jarai villages. Such strangers have been adopted by the village and have the Jarai clan name Kso'r. Although these people are never fully integrated into the tribe, they are afforded protection by the Jarai.

The Jarai respect men whom they believe are favored by the spirits. For example, a family becomes rich because it has the favor of the spirits, and a family poor because it has been marked by their disfavor. Riches are not measured by the number of family possessions but by the number of sacrifices the family has offered. Sacrifices indicate to the Jarai the wealth of a family.

Age is also a basis for respect. The elderly are considered, because of their long experience, to have much knowledge. Age is honored by positions in Jarai village councils.<sup>9</sup>

## SECTION IV

### SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Among the Jarai there are three social units of importance: the family, the clan, and the village. The basic social unit is the extended family—all the females descended from one particular woman, plus their husbands and children.<sup>1</sup> Usually the entire family lives together in one longhouse. In both social and economic affairs, the family is preeminent: the individual has little voice; his importance rests wholly on his role within the family group. Decisions are made in terms of benefit to the family as a whole, and the solidarity of the family, as a family, rests more on the mother than on the father.<sup>2</sup>

The social unit next in importance is the clan, a number of families bound together by a common name and common customs of prohibition against intermarriage and sexual relations. Each clan has a mythical ancestor and a myth or legend associated with its origin and prohibitions. The clan name is transmitted through the female line; that is, a married man takes the name of his wife's clan as his name. Children of the marriage likewise take the name of their mother's clan.

Members of the same clan may not marry or have sexual relations with one another. If this incest taboo is violated, Jarai tribesmen believe their crops will fail because they consider sexual relations connected with the fertility of the soil as well as with the fertility of the clan.

Clans believe they have alliances, contracts, or agreements with certain animals. Such agreements involve religious considerations and prohibit a clan from eating the animal with which it has an alliance; in return, the spirit of the animal is believed to protect the clan.

The village, the third important social unit, is formed by several families living together for the purposes of defense and mutual aid. Small Jarai villages may be composed of several families belonging to the same clan, while larger villages are composed of many families belonging to several clans. Other ties which bind Jarai families together include loans, debts, multiple contractual or alliance relationships, credits, and various bonds.

Although there is no political unit above the village, villages do

have social ties with one another. Marriage restrictions often necessitate going to a neighboring village for marriage partners, which results in family connections between villages. Villages also occasionally make agreements not to attack one another or to facilitate trade, but there appear to be no alliances for common defense.

#### Clan and Tribal Structure

Except for a few of the Habau subgroup, every Jarai tribesman belongs to a clan. The names of the Jarai clans and regional variations are:

| <i>Clan Name</i> | <i>Regional Name Variation</i>  |
|------------------|---|
| Ro'mah           | Muah in the Chu Ty area; Guah in the area of the Sesan subgroup.          |
| Ro'chom          | Cho'm in the area of Ho'drung subgroup.                                   |
| Siu              | No regional name variation.   |
| Ro'hlan          | Glan in the Ho'drung subgroup.  |
| Ko'pa            | Puih in the Ho'drung subgroup; Ko'pa and Puih among the Chu Ty.           |
| Ro'-o            | Nay in the area of the Cheo Reo subgroup.                                 |
| Kso'r            | This clan is divided into the Kso'r Prong and the Kso'r Net. <sup>1</sup> |

As noted above, each clan has a characteristic food prohibition. Tribesmen are forbidden to kill, to eat, or to take into their houses the animal with which their clan has a special connection. Actually, the affiliation is with the animal's spirit; violations of the prohibitions are believed to bring the vengeance of the spirit upon the tribesmen. It is believed that transgression of the food taboo will bring on a fit of vomiting and sickness; to ward off death, the offender must placate the spirit of the tabooed animal with a sacrifice of rice wine and a pig. Should a stranger bring a tabooed animal into a longhouse, the Jarai believe the head of the house will fall sick.

Members of each clan are said to have certain characteristics unique to their clan. For example, members of the Kso'r are supposed to be under the curse of the spirits and thus are condemned to fail in whatever they do. The Ro'chom, Ro'-o, and Ro'mah are believed able to affiliate with the spirits and thereby obtain riches and power.<sup>4</sup>

Although the clans are scattered throughout the Jarai area, they do not have a role in the political structure of the tribe. Political activity among the Jarai is not organized beyond the village level; thus, there is no central tribal authority to unify the Jarai clan and subgroups.

### Place of Men, Women, and Children in the Society

The husband is not his own master when he lives with his wife's family: he can not buy or sell property without her, and he is at the service of her relatives. This impels a Jarai father to try to get his daughters married as early as possible so that he has sons-in-law to help him in his daily work.<sup>6</sup>

The family is directed by a family council, whose leadership is usually held either by the eldest woman's brother or by an elder brother of one of the women living in the house. Thus, the men who marry into a family do not have power within that family. These men may, however, be members of the family council in their mother's family. Consequently, the man, although he has married into another family, still participates in the activities of the clan of his birth.<sup>6</sup>

### Marriage

Men and women become active participants in tribal affairs only when they marry and continue the family line. Unmarried Jarai over the age of 18 may not participate in tribal affairs and are the object of disapproval. According to the Jarai, only an abnormal person does not marry. The significance of marriage is emphasized by the fact that engagements are arranged primarily by family groups. Marriage is an alliance between two families, not between two individuals.<sup>7</sup>

Marriage is prohibited between members of the same clan, relatives in a direct line, and members of groups with which there is a special ritual relationship.<sup>8</sup>

Usually the Jarai girl takes the initiative in arranging a marriage. The marriage proposal is made through a go-between selected by the girl's parents. The girl's mother gives a bracelet or *kong* to the intermediary who, holding the bracelet in his hand, asks whether the girl consents to his approaching the boy. The girl indicates her consent by not touching the bracelet. The go-between then takes the bracelet and proposes to the boy's family. If the boy's parents oppose the marriage, they say, "Ask the boy what he thinks." The boy will decline, because referring the question to him customarily indicates parental disapproval.

When consent to the marriage is given, the go-between gives the bracelet to the boy's mother, who then places it on her son's wrist to show that the two young people are engaged. The boy's father gets a jar of rice wine, kills a chicken, and offers them, together with small gifts for the girl, to the go-between who then takes the reply to the girl's family. Acceptance of these gifts makes the engagement official. Usually the go-between will be sent to make a proposal only when the girl's family is sure that the young man and his parents will agree to the marriage.

The Jarai word for engagement is *bo'kom*, combination of the prefix *bo'* and the word *kom*, which mean "interdict for the betrothed," or that the couple are tied to each other and forbidden to have sex relations with any other person.

Customarily, no couple can be engaged until one of them is at least 5 years old. An engagement requires the consent of both partners and their families. If either parent is deceased, the consent of the mother's brother is necessary. An adopted child must have the consent of his adopted parents. The remarriage of a widower or widow requires the consent of a member of the female kin of the deceased spouse. Formal family consent to a marriage is an absolute requirement. If the partners do not want to be engaged, their families can put great pressure on them; on the other hand, families may refuse permission for the marriage. If the couple persists, their families may repudiate them; then, being outside the family, they may marry.

An engagement may be broken by the betrothed's refusal to bring the marriage sacrifice. An engagement is officially broken by return of the bracelet to the girl's family.

Some villages in the region of Polei Tsar reportedly practice trial marriage.<sup>9</sup> However, the trial marriage is not considered an engagement.

About a week after the engagement, the marriage ceremony usually occurs. It involves a ritual alliance or *bo'lih trong*, a pact between the families of the bridal couple. The young couple exchange bracelets and pieces of a sacrificed chicken. At this time agreement is reached on a dowry to be paid by the bride's family to the bridegroom's family. Then the groom pays homage to the spirits of the source of water for the village. A feast completes the marriage ceremony.

To the Jarai, adultery is a serious crime. Their definition includes not only the usual extramarital relations, but also sexual relations by the survivor during the period between the spouse's death and the abandonment of the tomb. Adultery also includes sexual relations with other persons by either member of an engaged couple. If discovered, these offenders are subject to heavy fines. On the other hand, unmarried young people who are not engaged may freely indulge in sexual relations as long as they do not have them with any member of their family.

#### **Divorce and Second Marriages**

The Jarai accept three valid reasons for the dissolution of a marriage: divorce, absence, and death of a spouse. Divorce may be arranged by the repudiation of one spouse by another, by mutual consent, or for a cause. Grounds for divorce include mental or physical illness, practice of sorcery by a spouse, failure to con-

summate the marriage, refusal to have sexual relations, brutality, adultery, and refusal of the husband to work for his wife's family. Divorce cases are brought before the village tribunal for decision.<sup>10</sup>

If a married person leaves the village and is not heard from for a month, the village chief issues an announcement of the absence; 4 years after the announcement, a spouse is free to remarry.<sup>11</sup>

Death itself does not dissolve a marriage, for death to the Jarai is not final until the ceremony of the abandonment of the tomb has been performed.<sup>12</sup> A widower or widow may remarry after the abandonment of the tomb and the observation of rites prescribed by local custom for breaking off with the family of the deceased. Usually a widower or widow remarries only after the abandonment of the tomb, although a Jarai widower could, in exceptional circumstances, remarry as soon as 1 month after the wife's death. However, the marriage must have the approval of the family of the deceased wife. Justifications for early remarriage are poverty and small children. Likewise, a poor widow need not wait until her husband's tomb has been abandoned before she remarries. When a pregnant widow remarries though this is rare, her new husband will be the child's lawful father.<sup>13</sup>

In the southern Jarai area, the family of the deceased is obligated to find another spouse for the survivor. In the north the Jarai perform a mandatory, symbolic ceremony. A widower summons the unmarried sisters of his deceased wife to perform the *gai adro* ceremony, in which each of the unmarried sisters is asked to become his new spouse. If a sister consents, marriage follows; but if no sister consents, the widower is free to seek a spouse outside the family group of the deceased. A widow summons the unmarried brothers of her deceased husband and follows the same procedure.

#### Birth

Reportedly, in the past births had to take place outside of the village in the forest and on the bare ground without a mat.<sup>14</sup> No information is available about current birth practices.

After a child is born, someone blows into its ear. This blowing, the Jarai believe, sends the child's soul into his body.<sup>15</sup>

On the day after birth, the baby's eyes are rubbed with a bitter herb so that they can open to the world. The opening-of-the-eyes ceremony includes a religious sacrifice: a chicken's throat is cut and a jar of rice wine is offered to the guests. This sacrifice marks the beginning of a 7-day period during which the village is taboo to strangers and during which dancing and more sacrifices occur.<sup>16</sup>

During the week following his birth, the child is named in a family ceremony with little fanfare in the parents' home. The

ceremony is very important to the status of the child, as he is considered to be a thing rather than a person until he is given a name. A child is given two names: the clan name and a personal name. The clan name is that of the mother's family, and the child's immediate family chooses his personal name. Names of all girls begin with an "H." Occasionally a personal name corresponds to a physical peculiarity or an event; for example, during the Japanese occupation in 1945, some children were named Jap. A very pretty child is given an uncomplimentary name such as Urine or Manure to keep the evil spirits away. A personal name is not permanent; the parents or the child himself may change the name if it seems to be unlucky.<sup>17</sup>

#### Child-Rearing Practices

The Jarai share with most mountain tribes a casual regard for child rearing. Children are allowed great freedom, with few restraints on their behavior during their early years. Their education is informal: the older members of the family teach them crafts, farming, and warfare, as well as the details of their religion, the tribal customs and laws, and the rituals of sacrifice.

Unfortunately, the three R's are seldom included in a child's education. Due to the physical isolation of the tribe, there are few schools in the tribal areas; and where there are schools, Jarai children rarely attend. Recently, however, missionaries and the Vietnamese Government have been offering greater educational opportunities in the remote areas.

The Jarai observe various tribal rites and customs for children; for instance, the Jarai once practiced infanticide—a first child was always killed. According to tribal belief this sacrifice ransomed the children born later and also paid the spirits for the debt incurred by bringing up children.<sup>18</sup> The Jarai also killed defective babies, twins, and unweaned babies whose mothers were dead and who had no one to nurse them.<sup>19</sup>

In the past, when Jarai boys were about 12, their teeth were filed down and lacquered. Filed-down, lacquered teeth were once regarded as enhancing the male's sex appeal, but in recent years this practice has been dying out, presumably as a result of Jarai contact with the French and Vietnamese. Although no religious ritual was involved, this ceremony marked the boy's passage to manhood. Usually, the boy chose the person to do the filing, often his mother's brother. The filing down of the teeth was a very painful operation. First, to protect the lower jaw and to keep the mouth open a piece of wood was inserted in the mouth. The teeth were filed with an elongated piece of basalt stone. When the filing was completed, the mouth was washed and the teeth blackened with lacquer made

from a nonspiny shrub called *ana khea*. At first, the lacquer was clear and transparent, but after a few days it turned black.

For three days after the filing of the teeth, the boy could not eat red peppers and eggplant or talk to pregnant women.<sup>20</sup> He could, however, eat salt and rice.

#### Death and Burial

The Jarai have a mourning period, beginning with death and ending with the closing-of-the-tomb ceremony, during which the grave is visited daily and sacrifices are made monthly. During the

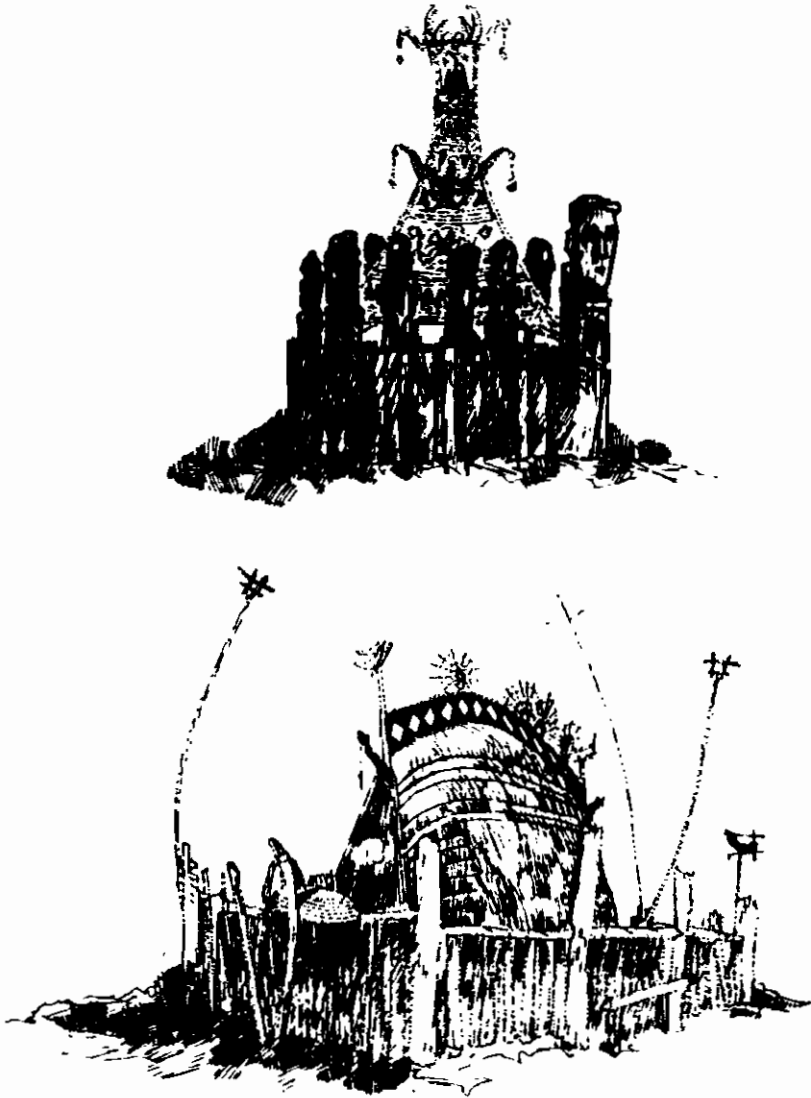


Figure 13. Jarai tombs.

mourning period, the deceased's family and the surviving spouse are obligated to perform periodic ceremonies, and the surviving spouse must maintain fidelity to the deceased. At the burial and at the abandonment of the tomb, the heirs of the deceased must sacrifice animals at the grave.

The length of the mourning period depends primarily on the wealth of the family of the deceased. For widows the mourning period is long; for a widower the mourning period is shortened. If the widower has other wives, one of them visits the grave daily. If the deceased is unmarried, his parents, brothers, or sisters must have monthly ceremonial feasts at the grave until the tomb is closed.<sup>21</sup>



*Jarai tomb.*

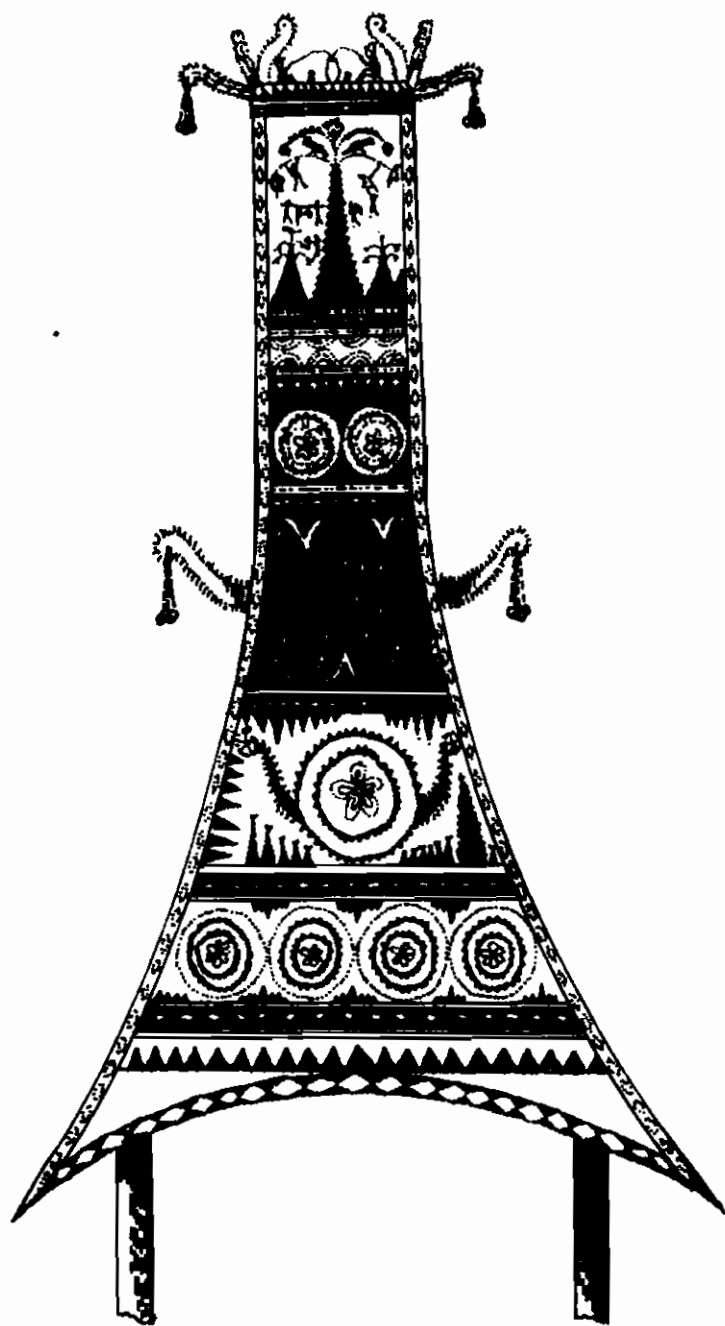


*Detail of tomb case.*

*Figure 14*

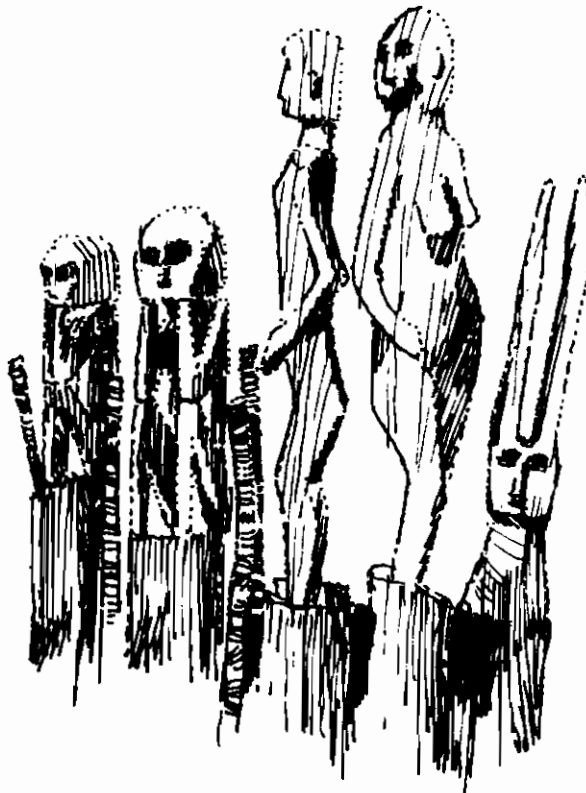
All Jarai tombs have certain common characteristics: On the tomb itself is a small, wall-less case of wood and bamboo. The case has a pointed roof, 10 to 15 feet high, in the form of an iron ax. There is a lattice of bamboo with ornamental motifs representing flowers and stylized persons. Sometimes there is a fresco of personages sculptured on wood placed high on the roof. Under the roof there is a wooden figurine, or doll, representing the deceased.

The tomb and its case are enclosed by a square fence measuring



*Figure 15. Roof of Jarai tomb.*

about 10 to 15 feet on each side. This fence is made of joined logs, about a yard long, placed vertically around the tomb. A few of these logs are topped by figurines carved in wood. Certain of these statues, those of the mourners, for example, are persons crouched with elbows on their knees. At the four angles of the fence are carved comic faces. On one of the sides of the fence are carvings of a man and woman standing face to face.



*Figure 16. Jarai tomb statues.*

#### **Class Structure**

There are various levels of social status in a Jarai village. Bachelors and spinsters are considered inferior to married people and have no social rank; thus, bachelors and spinsters cannot normally function as a part of the social group.

At the other end of the social scale are the elders of the village. Village elders are consulted in all matters of community interest; they are also the arbitrators of all serious disputes between village families.

Between these two extremes of the social scale are the ordinary tribesmen, whose positions are based on wealth. Rich families occupy privileged positions in the village, not because of their possessions, but because of the numerous buffalo sacrifices they make to the spirits. That a family has become rich means they are favored and protected by the spirits. The more sacrifices the rich make, the more the spirits favor them. The Jarai are seldom miserly; they believe the spirits punish those who are miserly, therefore the social prestige of those making many sacrifices is enhanced.<sup>22</sup>

Social mobility among the Jarai is dependent upon the will of the spirits. The spirits can bestow their favor for a time on one family and it will enjoy riches, while other families become poor. Then one day, the spirits may change their minds, and the rich family loses its wealth and associated social position. In the same manner a poor family can rise in wealth and social position.<sup>23</sup>

## SECTION V

### CUSTOMS AND TABOOS

#### Dress

Jarai men wear loincloths, about 8 inches wide, of a cloth woven by the tribal women from locally grown fibers. Sometimes loincloths are made of imported cotton cloth and are often ornamented with beautiful polychromatic bands woven into the cloth. Colored fringes and pearls decorate the ends of some loincloths. The more elegant loincloths allow the tail to fall the length of the thigh; some loincloths are even long enough to throw over the shoulder and return to the arm. In cold weather, tribesmen wear light woven blankets. They also wear various articles of Western clothing like parts of old army uniforms and T-shirts (the latter are especially favored). At formal tribal affairs, special ceremonial clothing is worn.

(No information was available about women's dress, except that they wear a cloth wrapped around their waists.)

The Jarai smoke silver ornamented pipes and wear necklaces of linked silver spirals.<sup>1</sup>

#### Tribal Folklore

Folklore permeates all phases of tribal life.<sup>2</sup> Legends are recounted not only at religious ceremonies, but daily, in the evening after the day's work. Folklore characters appear in songs, are referred to in tribal law, and are used as references in conversation.

In addition to the general origin legend of the flood and the drum,\* each clan has tales which account for its identity and food prohibitions. Below are some clan stories; the details, of course, vary from village to village:

One legend tells of members of the Ro'mah clan who fell into the water, and how they were sustained while in the water by nourishment from eels. Consequently, the Ro'mah do not eat eels. Another story tells of Ro'mah fishermen who used the technique of poisoning the water to catch fish. When they ate these fish, their skin turned to leather, and they became elephants; since then the Ro'mah have not eaten elephants.

Once two Ro'chom sisters washed a fishing net and put it out to

<sup>1</sup> See "Legendary History," p. 261.

dry. During the night the net disappeared; the older sister accused the younger of having stolen it. A fight ensued in which the older sister killed the younger one. Later when a cow was killed, the stolen net was found inside its carcass. Since then the Ro'chom have not eaten the flesh of cows because a cow caused the death of one of their people.

An ancestor of the Siu clan found an iguana skin in his house and a kite and a toucan (birds) perched on his house—this was a very rare occurrence. These events were considered to be the manifestations of the sympathy of the spirits for these animals and of the animals' desire to contract an alliance with that family.

Two sisters from the Ro'hlan clan once lived together. One day the oldest sister trapped a toad and cooked it for her dinner; while she was away, the younger sister ate the cooked toad. When the older sister returned, the younger one confessed her deed and swore that neither she nor her descendants would ever again eat toads.

Another Ro'hlan tale concerns a clan ancestor who had a valuable jar in which a grackle and a lizard lived; to the tribespeople this meant that the spirits of the grackle and lizard wanted to have a special connection with the clan.

Once, when a Ko'pa clan ancestor was near a river, she saw a gourd full of peppers and rice and a gourd of rice wine which she consumed. A little later some kinsmen came by the river, saw a lizard, and killed it. Upon opening the lizard, the kinsmen found inside it all the things the woman had eaten; they realized that the woman had been transformed into a lizard. Since then, the Ko'pa do not trap or kill lizards for fear of injuring their ancestor.

Once, among the Ro'-o, the people saw a toad sitting next to a newborn baby girl. The baby's father threw the toad into the river, but it came back, to be thrown into the river a total of seven times. The girl's family then realized that the spirit of the toad wanted to form an affiliation with their clan.

In the Kso'r clan, an ancestor once discovered the scales of a dragon in the rice storehouse. She asked a sorcerer what this meant, and he replied that the reptiles (according to an oral tradition all reptiles are descended from dragons) wanted to make an agreement with her clan and to help them. Therefore, the Kso'r do not trap and kill any reptiles.

A list of the Jarai clans and their food taboos is below.

|         |                               |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| Ro'mah  | Eels and elephants.           |
| Ro'chom | Domestic and wild cattle.     |
| Siu     | Iguanas, toucans, and kites.  |
| Ro'hlan | Toads, lizards, and grackles. |
| Ko'pa   | Monitor lizards.              |
| Ro'-o   | Toads.                        |
| Kso'r   | Reptiles.                     |

Some variations of these taboos have been noted in different regions of the Jarai area; for example, the species of reptiles taboo for the Kso'r varies from region to region and even from village to village.<sup>3</sup>

#### Folk Beliefs

The Jarai are afraid to cut their hair; they believe that the soul of a man dwells especially in his head and that to cut a man's hair is to take away his soul. Sight of the man's hair enables the soul to recognize its home when it returns from its nocturnal wanderings during dreams. However, if the hair is cut and buried, the soul will search for it and, finding it buried, will think "my subordinate (body) is dead." This will cause the soul to flee to the realm of the spirits. Deprived of its vital principal, the body will then be obliged to die.<sup>4</sup>

A grotesque figure of straw and bamboo, complete with bow and arrow, is placed on the path near Jarai village entrances to ward off harmful spirits that may have brought death to the villagers. The Jarai reportedly place great faith in the power of this figure to guard the village against hostile spirits.<sup>5</sup>

A Jarai guide warned a traveler not to touch the big liana plant called ana khea which bears fruit like the Indian horse chestnut, because it caused a weakness in the knees. The Jarai believe the plant is the home of a spirit which steals the soul of those who touch it.<sup>6</sup>

A closed door and branches tied to a wooden post before a Jarai house indicate the house is taboo.<sup>7</sup>

An epidemic in a village results in a 7-day taboo which prevents strangers from entering the village. The following sign is erected as a warning: The heads of monkeys, the shackles of elephants, and spears are suspended at the entrance gate of the contaminated village; all indicate a dangerous sickness. If the epidemic becomes widespread, the entrance gate, as well as all paths leading to the village, are closed by numerous tangled branches.<sup>8</sup>

A missionary who once tried to tie his horse to a post supporting a floor on which rice was ground was forbidden to do so by the angry Jarai proprietor who said the threshing floor was kom—taboo. The Jarai believe they cannot nourish their horses and other animals without sacrificing one of them to the spirits.<sup>9</sup>

## SECTION VI

### RELIGION

The Jarai religion is based on a multitude of spirits—*yang*—who created the earth and rule it. The spirits are masters of the world, as well as guardians of society and religion. Any action contrary to social or religious tradition is considered an attack upon the spirits and requires the tribesmen to make amends to the spirits in order to escape punishment. The belief that the spirits can interfere in everything—economics, customs, morals, and social actions—dominates every facet of Jarai life; the tribesmen must consult these spirits through divination before taking any action.

#### Principal Deities

The Jarai believe that the spirits or *yang* govern the movement of the entire cosmos. They control the rhythm of the seasons, the movement of the stars, rainfall, the fertility of the soil, the growth of the plants, riches and poverty, and the multiplication of herds. Particular spirits have importance for the entire Jarai tribe, while other spirits have only local or regional importance; some spirits—such as the spirit of a special rock—may be worshipped in only one village. The good spirits, fewer in number than the bad spirits, receive special attention from the Jarai. Household spirits, such as the spirits of the hearth and the broom, are accorded special treatment. There are two types of evil spirits: those which cause epidemics, accidents, and death among animals and plants and those which punish men for acts contrary to the established customs of the tribe. These latter spirits are responsible for temporary illnesses and nonfatal accidents. Again, regional variations determine the significance and manifestations of the various spirits: a spirit believed in one area to punish with drought might in another area punish with rain.<sup>1</sup>

#### Principal Religious Ceremonies

Feasts and religious ceremonies are one and the same for the Jarai. One such holiday, called Do Buy, occurs in August to celebrate the maturation of the rice. There are also two harvest feasts—Dong Pua in November and Tyep Bong in December—that have religious significance as well as being festive occasions. The

Jarai have a long spring festival called Arap which is celebrated throughout February and March: numerous feasts and ceremonies take place during this period; some of them honor ancestors, and others are associated with clearing the land and planting the rice.

The Jarai also have ceremonial feasts on many other occasions: a feast is always associated with marriage ceremonies, with departure for war, with return from war with prisoners, and with the inauguration of a communal house. Buffalo sacrifices (*mut bong pao*) and feasts of the tomb (*po thi*) also take place; but the reasons for them, and the times of the year in which they are celebrated, vary from region to region.

#### Religious Rituals

Jarai religious rituals involve prayers, sacrifices, and drinking. A religious practitioner presides over ceremonies large (sacrifice of a buffalo) and small (sacrifice of a chicken). He offers prayers to the spirits to which the ceremony is directed, asking for their attention and for action; for example, to make the rice crop grow or to end a plague. Then an animal is ceremonially killed; in the case of a buffalo sacrifice, a long ceremony is involved; a short ceremony, in the case of a chicken. During the ceremony, one or more jars of rice wine are drunk, and the sacrificed animal is eaten by the celebrants.

A technique of divination designed to ascertain the desires of the spirits and the exact sacrifices required for ceremonies is called Topa Gai. In the Topa Gai ritual, a special religious practitioner questions the spirit of the stick (Yang Gie) by holding a stick parallel to his outstretched arm. Replies from Yang Gie are derived from the motion of the muscles of the extended arm: the Jarai believe the distances the muscles, in contracting, move away from the stick indicate the spirit's answers. Only married men may question the spirits with this technique, which is also used to select longhouse sites, interpret dreams, determine the cause of sickness, and choose land for cultivation.<sup>2</sup>

#### Religious Practitioners

Rarely do the Jarai recognize political authority beyond that of the elders or headman of their own village, although occasionally they will respect a rich and powerful individual as the leader of several villages. Frequently, however, a sorcerer is the most powerful single individual in a Jarai village—further evidence of the influence of religion and spirits in the everyday life of the tribesmen. Even the village headman owes his position partially to his influence with the spirits.<sup>3</sup>

#### Missionary Contact

French Catholic missionaries began to work among the Jarai in

the 19th century. The Christian and Missionary Alliance opened its first mission in Jarai territory in 1947. By January of 1961, the records of the Alliance showed some five hundred Jarai converts, four trained Jarai pastors, and a translation into Jarai of the New Testament and three books of the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup>

A major obstacle to conversion of the Jarai to the Christian faith is the intolerance of other tribesmen toward the convert, his family, or his village. The Jarai believe the refusal of the convert to join in the traditional ceremonies and sacrifices incurs the anger of the spirits and will bring disaster for both the convert and his village.

Medical work by the missionaries, especially among the lepers, has been successful and has resulted in many conversions.<sup>5</sup>

## SECTION VII

### ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

#### Type of Economy

The Jarai economy is based on agriculture. Rice, the principal crop is cultivated on lands cleared by the slash-and-burn technique and depends solely on rainfall for irrigation.<sup>1</sup> Briefly, this technique involves cutting down, during the winter months, all vegetation in the new area and burning it to clear the fields. The ashes produced serve as fertilizer which permits crops for 3 to 4 years. When the fields no longer support a crop, the village moves to a new area, allowing the old fields to return to jungle, and repeats the slash-and-burn clearing process in the new area. The Jarai are reported to practice the slash-and-burn cultivation so recklessly that large barren areas have resulted.

In the areas around Pleiku, Plei Kly, and Cheo Reo, the Jarai also cultivate permanent fields. These fields are kept clear of brush, allowed to remain fallow for 2 years or more, and then replanted.

More than seven varieties of rice are cultivated, and the Jarai also raise squash, beans, corn, bananas, papayas, and tobacco.<sup>2</sup> The Jarai raise buffaloes, oxen, horses, pigs, and poultry. These animals are raised principally for use in religious sacrifices, although they are eaten during the ceremonies, thereby supplementing the Jarai diet.<sup>3</sup>

#### Predominant Occupations

In addition to tasks associated with farming and the raising of animals, Jarai men make everything from baskets to longhouses from wood and bamboo. Some work is also done in iron. Jarai women weave cloth, from which they make clothing and blankets, in addition to performing tasks in the house and the fields. However, since World War II, Jarai weaving has declined, as the tribe is using more and more imported cloth and clothing.<sup>4</sup>

In the town of Cheo Reo, the Jarai operate shops which sell articles of clothing and a Vietnamese alcoholic beverage, *choum*. In larger villages, some tribesmen are salesmen for Vietnamese and Chinese merchants; other Jarai are peddlers, working on their own or as distributors for Vietnamese and Chinese merchants.

### **Trade**

The Jarai trade, on a small scale, with neighboring groups. They trade food—pineapples, bananas, and rice—and other items such as baskets, for salt which they prize highly for storing meat in great jars.<sup>5</sup> Salt is also considered an excellent gift. The Jarai also engage in some intertribal trade in buffaloes, oxen, and gongs.<sup>6</sup>

### **Property System**

Although no leases or titles exist on paper, the Jarai have very strong concepts of ownership. Ownership of the land is vested in individuals and families rather than in villages and is, with all other real property, in the hands of the female members of a Jarai family. Real property is usually inherited by daughters, although sons may receive small shares if the inheritance is large. Personal property is owned by individuals, both male and female. The payment for military service received by many Jarai tribesmen has created a new factor in the traditional family economic picture, and the property system may have changed somewhat.<sup>7</sup>

### **Distribution of Wealth**

Wealth among the Jarai is reported by one source to be evenly distributed, as villagers share equally in everything.<sup>8</sup> Another report notes the presence of both rich and poor in Jarai villages, with the rich displaying their wealth by making expensive buffalo sacrifices.<sup>9</sup>

## SECTION VIII

### POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

#### General Political Organization

The Jarai have never achieved political unity on a tribal level. Allegiance is normally given only to the village, led by a headman and a council of elders; occasionally strong leaders win the respect of several villages in a local area. Although temporary alliances between villages exist, they are designed only to insure that the villages will not attack one another.

The village is the basic political unit among the Jarai. The village political system consists of a headman and a council of elders. The council of elders functions as an advisory body to the headman and serves as a tribunal for resolving disputes.<sup>1</sup>

In the past, the Jarai gave allegiance to two kings; the King of Fire—Sadet of Fire—in the Pleiku area and the King of Water—Sadet of Water—in the Cheo Reo area. According to the legendary history of the Jarai, the Sadets were powerful rulers; however, factual sources indicate their power was more religious than political.

Traditionally, Jarai village headmen and elders were selected by the villagers themselves. Usually the elders are persons the villagers regard as rich, influential, or as having the favor of (and influence with) the spirits. In short, anyone who has above average respect from the villagers will gravitate, through his own efforts or through good fortune, toward membership on the council of elders.

The village headman is usually chosen by the village elders from among themselves. Recently, the Vietnamese Government has been choosing Jarai village headmen. These Government-appointed headmen are technically responsible to the Government rather than to the villagers and are supposed to function as the representative of the Government on the local level. However, the duties of the appointed headman often overlap with those of the headman selected by the villagers themselves. This situation has greatly complicated the village political system, and there is often conflict between the two headmen.<sup>2</sup>

The village headman's authority varies. Occasionally his power may be successfully disputed by the Government-appointed head-

man, or a well-known sorcerer may emerge to challenge his leadership. It is also possible for a well-known headman to win the respect of a number of villages; in such a case, the headman may become influential in the political activities of several villages. Thus, the authority and influence of the headman depends upon the man, his accomplishments or good fortune, and the respect of the villagers.

The most effective restraint on the headman's authority is his relationship with the villagers. If he loses their respect, the headman will be ignored—as is often the case with Government appointees. The villagers will then look to someone else for guidance and advice. This change may occur overnight or over a long period of time; the cause may stem from some event interpreted by the villagers as an unfavorable sign from the spirits or from a series of mistakes by the headman.<sup>3</sup>

With the Geneva Agreement of 1954 and the creation of the Republic of Vietnam, the problems of establishing a rapprochement between the Montagnards in the highlands and the more culturally advanced Vietnamese in the coastal areas became acute. The French Government has supported a policy of permitting the Jarai and other tribes to be separate administrative entities. Now, however, the Government of the Republic in Vietnam has taken measures to incorporate the highlanders into the political organization of the nation.

Several factors make it difficult to integrate the Jarai into the national Vietnamese society. First, the Jarai sense of identity seldom goes beyond the village level. The Jarai have been isolated in the highlands for centuries, partly out of personal preference and partly as a result of fears of outsiders and strangers. Consequently, any sense of identity with or participation in the Republic of Vietnam is a rare exception among the tribesmen.

#### **Legal System**

Prior to the arrival of the French, the Jarai had numerous unwritten tribal laws expressed in terms of taboos and sanctions, known and respected by all members of society. Nearly all aspects of tribal, village, family, and individual behavior were covered in a well-defined moral order with clearly specified retributions and punishments for violations. Mediation of disputes and imposition of punishment for violations of customs are the concern of the family and village. Jarai laws were codified by the French administrators and scholars and are in the form of a collection of rhythmic poems.<sup>4</sup>

Traditionally, disputes have been settled by the elders of the village who would listen to both parties before rendering a decision. The verdict usually involves a fine—the guilty are required

to pay a fine of property or livestock to the injured party or sacrifice pigs, chickens, or buffaloes to the spirits. The disputants are free to accept or reject the verdict.<sup>5</sup> Capital punishment is almost unknown among the Jarai and is restricted to outsiders or to people considered to be "soul eaters"—persons accused of "eating" the soul of another, thereby causing the victim misfortune. The ultimate punishment is generally banishment from the village, which may be imposed by the village or by the guilty person himself. In the latter case, a Jarai who believes he has been unduly wronged or unjustly treated by the council and who is opposed to the majority of the villagers has no choice but to leave the village.<sup>6</sup>

Reportedly, the settlement of disputes among the Jarai on the village level occasionally become a complex and an almost comical series of events. Personal fights or differences between individuals continue for a long time, eventually becoming family feuds. When the feud becomes bothersome for the entire village, the village council sits down to discuss the problem with the two families or the disputants to arbitrate or resolve the issue. Frequently the decision requires the payment of buffaloes or jars of rice wine. The consumption of rice wine sometimes begins a chain reaction of disputes and fines,<sup>7</sup> a series of events ceasing only when drunkenness ends the cycle.

The French brought a formalized legal system into the Jarai area. French-appointed judges, selected from the tribe, listened to both sides of a dispute, referred to the appropriate law, and rendered decision. Cases were usually resolved through discussions between the two parties and the judge. Generally the cases handled by the French courts were those that could not be resolved on a village level by the council of elders.<sup>8</sup>

The legal system instituted by the French still governs the Montagnard tribes, but steps have been taken by the Vietnamese Government to revise the legislative code in the tribal areas. Under the Diem regime, an attempt was made to substitute Vietnamese laws for the tribal practices. This effort was part of the Vietnamese policy to politically integrate the tribal people into the Republic of Vietnam.

In March 1965, the Vietnamese Government promulgated a decree restoring the legal status of the tribal laws and tribunals. Under this new decree, there will be courts at the village, district, and province levels which will be responsible for civil affairs, Montagnard affairs, and penal offenses when all parties involved are Montagnards.<sup>9</sup>

Village customs law courts, consisting of the village administrative committee chief aided by two Montagnard assistants, will conduct weekly court sessions.<sup>10</sup> When a case is reviewed and a decision reached by this court, it will be recorded and signed by

the parties involved. This procedure will eliminate the right to appeal to another court. If settlement cannot be reached, the case may be referred to a higher court.<sup>11</sup>

District courts, governed by the president of the court (the district chief) aided by two Montagnard assistants, will hold bimonthly court sessions. Cases to be tried by the district court include those appealed by the village court and cases which are adjudged serious according to tribal customs.<sup>12</sup>

At the province level, a Montagnard Affairs Section will be established as part of the National Court. This section, under the jurisdiction of a Montagnard presiding judge and two assistants, will handle cases appealed from the Montagnard district courts and cases beyond the jurisdiction of the village or district courts. It will convene once or twice a month depending upon the requirements.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Relations with Neighboring Tribes**

Present relations between the Jarai and other tribes are limited to commercial contacts with the Rhade and Bahnar. However, the Bahnar have influenced the cultural habits of the Jarai groups in the regions bordering the Bahnar territory. The Jarai envy and respect the more advanced Rhade but generally regard the Bahnar with suspicion, partially because of the historical enmity between the two tribes.\*<sup>14</sup>

#### **Subversive Influences**

Their isolation and marginal subsistence make the Jarai susceptible to the subversive activities of the Viet Cong. With the end of the Indochina War, many Jarai left their villages for North Vietnam. Some have since returned and are a possible source of dissension within the tribe. These Jarai are often accompanied by North Vietnamese who speak the Jarai language.

The primary objectives of the subversive elements is to win allegiance of the Jarai and to turn the Jarai into an active, hostile force against the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.

The Viet Cong methods of subversion vary from simple, educational lectures to the most brutal terrorization. The Viet Cong agents try to win Jarai confidence, then they slowly indoctrinate the tribesmen with hostility towards the Vietnamese Government. If the tribesmen are willing, they are encouraged to train for participation in military or supporting roles in hostile action against Government forces.

\* See "Factual History," p. 261

## SECTION IX

### COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES

Word-of-mouth communication is the principal means of disseminating information in Jarai villages. The village elders are the most influential people in a Jarai village and are the key communicators. Dealings should be with these community leaders, and they could be informed or indoctrinated with desired information. These leaders could possibly be reached through provincial leaders.

Radios are rare in the tribal areas; but an aid program has been reported distributing Sony radios and loudspeakers to each village, thus making broadcasts from Saigon and provincial radio stations available to the tribesmen.

The Jarai like movies, and they have been receptive to films about malaria prevention; hence, it is very likely that movies are an important means of communication.<sup>1</sup>

Since the majority of the Jarai are illiterate, written information has little meaning for them. If directed to the few Jarai who can read, written messages might be effective as the literate tribesman could be expected to relay the information to their illiterate neighbors. It is reported that pictures are generally more effective than written messages.<sup>2</sup>

Storytellers, minstrels, and criers have been used effectively to convey messages to Jarai tribesmen from the Vietnamese Government. This approach is particularly useful when it makes use of Jarai folklore and legends.<sup>3</sup>

Consideration should be given to the possibilities of using Jarai music making in information programs, as it is an integral part of tribal life. The Jarai enjoy music at home, frequently gathering together for an evening of music making. Thus, music is a useful means to call people together and to attract their attention for an information session.<sup>4</sup>

## SECTION X

### CIVIC ACTION CONSIDERATIONS

Any proposed civic action should take into account Jarai religious, social, and cultural traditions. All initial contacts should be made only with the tribal elders because of the Jarai political structure. It is also essential that the Jarai be psychologically prepared to accept the proposed changes. This requires detailed consultation with village leaders, careful assurance as to result, and a relatively slow pace in implementing programs.

Because they are village oriented, the Jarai respond favorably to ideas for change when they are presented in terms of community betterment. Civic action proposals should stress the resulting improvement of village life rather than emphasizing ethnic or cultural pride, nationalism, or political ideology. The reasons for an innovation should be thoroughly explained; the Jarai resent interference in their normal routine if they do not understand the reason for it.

The following civic action guidelines may be useful in the planning and implementation of projects or programs.

1. Projects originating in the local village are more desirable than suggestions imposed by a remote Central Government or by outsiders.
2. Projects should be designed to be challenging but should not be on such a scale as to intimidate the villagers by size or strangeness.
3. Projects should have fairly short completion dates or should have phases that provide frequent opportunities to evaluate effectiveness.
4. Results should, as far as possible, be observable, measurable, or tangible.
5. Projects should, ideally, lend themselves to emulation by other villages or groups.

#### Civic Action Projects

The civic action possibilities for personnel working with the Jarai encompass all aspects of tribal life. Examples of possible projects are listed below. They should be considered representative but not all inclusive and not in the order of priority.

1. Agriculture and animal husbandry

- a. Improvement of livestock quality through introduction of better breeds.
  - b. Instruction in elementary veterinary techniques to improve health of animals.
  - c. Introduction of improved seeds and new vegetables.
  - d. Introduction of techniques to improve quality and yields of farm lands.
  - e. Insect and rodent control.
  - f. Construction of simple irrigation and drainage systems.
2. Transportation and communication
    - a. Roadbuilding and clearing of trails.
    - b. Installation, operation, and maintenance of electric power generators and village electric light systems.
    - c. Construction of motion picture facilities.
    - d. Construction of radio broadcast and receiving stations and public-speaker systems.
3. Health and sanitation
    - a. Improve village sanitation.
    - b. Provide safe water-supply systems.
    - c. Eradicate disease-carrying insects.
    - d. Organize dispensary facilities for outpatient treatment.
    - e. Teach sanitation, personal hygiene, and first aid.
4. Education
    - a. Provide basic literacy training.
    - b. Provide basic citizenship education.
    - c. Provide information about the outside world of interest to the tribesmen.

## **SECTION XI**

### **PARAMILITARY CAPABILITIES**

Given the incentive and motivation and provided with the necessary training, leadership, and support, the Jarai can become an effective force against the Viet Cong. The tribesmen may be used as informers, trackers and guides, intelligence agents, interpreters, and translators. With intensive training and support, the Jarai can be organized to defend their villages against the Viet Cong; with good leadership, they can be organized into an effective counter-guerrilla combat unit.

#### **Hostile Activity Toward the Jarai and Tribal Reaction**

When the psychological pressures or conversion to subversive activities fail, the Viet Cong have resorted to outright brutality and terror. The tribesmen have been openly murdered, whole villages intimidated, food and money exacted as tribute, tribesmen forced to labor in the jungle to build roads and traps, tribesmen used as beasts of burden to carry supplies, and occasionally villages have been attacked and destroyed completely.

Frequently, the Jarai yield and cooperate with the Viet Cong. The isolated Jarai do not have the wherewithal to oppose the Viet Cong, and need Government training and support. Jarai villages have no able organization for defense except those equipped, trained and organized by the Government. Jarai villages with adequate training and support will defend themselves and will occasionally initiate aggressive action against the Viet Cong.

The inclination of the Jarai to fight aggressively is one that must be developed and supported with modern weapons and training. The Jarai defend themselves vigorously when they, their families, or their villages are threatened and when they have adequate resources and a chance for success.

#### **Weapons Utilized by the Tribe**

In the past, the Jarai relied upon crossbows, spears, lances, swords, and knives and were very skillful in their use. Recently, they have received training in the use of modern weapons. Their relatively small stature limits the weapons the Jarai can use; but they are proficient in handling light weapons such as the AR.15 rifle, the Thompson submachine gun, and the carbine. The tribes-

men are less proficient in the use of the M-1 or the Browning Automatic Rifle, although they can handle larger weapons which can be disassembled and quickly reassembled.

The Jarai pride themselves upon their hunting skill and their mastery of traditional weapons; they are equally as proud of their skill and marksmanship with modern weapons. If a Jarai can carry and handle a weapon conveniently, he will use it well.

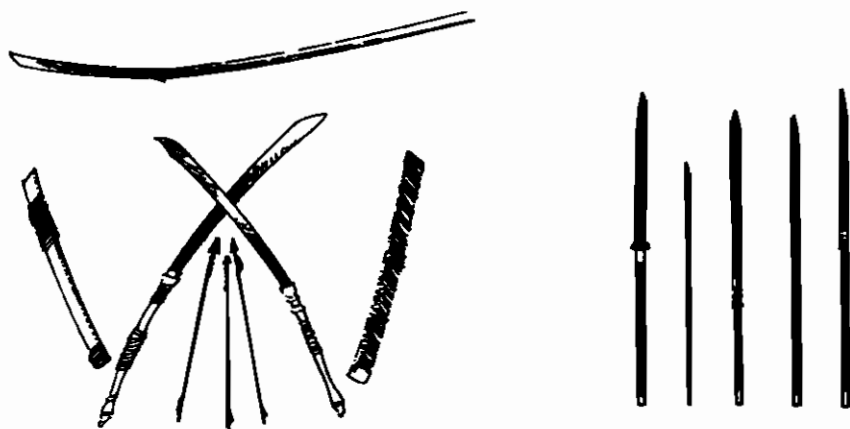
The Jarai are less proficient with sophisticated devices, such as mortars, explosives, and mines, than with hand weapons. They find it difficult to absorb the more abstract and technical aspects, such as timing trajectories, of such weapons.

#### **Ability to Absorb Military Instruction**

The Jarai can absorb basic military training and concepts. Their natural habitat gives them an excellent background for tracking and ambush activities; they are resourceful and adaptable in the jungle.

The Jarai learn techniques and procedures most readily from actual demonstration, using the weapon itself as a teaching aid. They do not learn as well from blackboard demonstrations; such an approach is too abstract for them.

Some Jarai are veterans of service with the French and are invaluable in training the younger tribesmen.



*Figure 17. Jarai swords, scabbards, crossbow arrows, and spears.*

## SECTION XII

### SUGGESTIONS FOR PERSONNEL WORKING WITH THE JARAI

Every action of the Jarai tribesman has specific significance in terms of his culture. One must be careful to realize that the Jarai may not react as outsiders do. The outsider should remember that a relatively simple course of action may, for the tribesman, require not only divination but also a sacrifice.

A few suggestions for personnel working with the Jarai are listed below.

#### **Official Activity**

1. Initial contact with a Jarai village should be formal. A visitor should speak first to the village headman and elders, who will then introduce him to other principal village figures.
2. Sincerity, honesty, and truthfulness are essential in dealing with the Jarai. Promises and predictions should not be made unless the result is assured. The tribespeople usually expect a new group of personnel to fulfill the promises of the previous group.
3. Outsiders cannot gain the confidence of Jarai tribesmen quickly. Developing a sense of trust is a slow process requiring great understanding, tact, patience, and personal integrity.
4. An attitude of good-natured willingness and limitless patience must be maintained, even when confronted with resentment or apathy.
5. Whenever possible avoid projects or operations which give the tribesmen the impression they are being forced to change their ways.
6. Items should not be given away without some form of payment. Something useful to the village, i.e., a drainage ditch in return for the loan of a set of shovels, should be obtained.
7. No immediate, important decision should be asked of a Jarai. An opportunity for family consultation should always be provided; if not, a flat refusal to cooperate may result.
8. Tribal elders and the village headman should also receive credit for projects and for improved administration. Efforts

should never undermine or discredit the position or influence of the local leaders.

#### **Social Relationships**

1. The Jarai should be treated with respect and courtesy. It is better to speak in a quiet voice than in a loud one because the Jarai consider a quiet voice more respectful and dignified.
2. The term moi should not be used because it means savage, and is offensive to the tribesmen.
3. Outside personnel can refuse a Jarai offer of food or drink if consistency and impartiality are shown. However, once involved in a religious ceremony, one should eat or drink whatever is offered.
4. A gift or invitation to a ceremony or to enter a Jarai house may be refused by an outsider, as long as consistency and impartiality are shown. However, receiving gifts, participating in ceremonies, and visiting houses will serve to establish good relations with the Jarai.
5. Outsiders must request permission to attend a Jarai ceremony, festival, or meeting from the village elders or other responsible persons.
6. An outsider should never enter a Jarai house, unless accompanied by a member of that house; this is a matter of good taste and cautious behavior. If anything is later missing from the house, unpleasant and unnecessary complications may arise.
7. Outsiders should not photograph the tribesmen until sure such action will not offend them or until permission has been given.
8. Outsiders should not get involved with Jarai women.
9. Generally, Jarai are eager to learn; however, teachers should be careful to avoid seriously disrupting traditional cultural patterns.

#### **Religious Beliefs and Practices**

1. Do not touch or otherwise tamper with Jarai tombs.
2. Do not enter a village where a religious ceremony is taking place or a religious taboo is in effect. Watch for the warning signs placed at the village entrances; when in doubt, do not enter.
3. As soon as possible identify any sacred trees, stones, or other sacred objects in the village; do not touch or tamper with them. The Jarai believe sacred objects house powerful spirits. For example, if a sacred rock is touched without due ceremony, the village may have to be moved or expensive sacrifices may have to be made.

4. Do not mock Jarai religious beliefs in any way; these beliefs are the cornerstone of Jarai life.
5. Do not kill or trap the animals taboo to the clan with which you are staying. The taboos have deep religious significance, and violation requires sacrifices. Study the animal taboos for each clan given in the section on taboos.

#### **Living Standards and Routines**

1. Outsiders should treat all Jarai property and village animals with respect. Any damage to property or fields should be promptly repaired and/or paid for. An outsider should avoid borrowing from the tribesmen. Animals should not be treated brutally or taken without the owner's permission.
2. When trading with the Jarai, outsiders should always allow time for family conferences, as the individual Jarai is obliged, by tradition, to consult his family before selling anything.
3. Difficult, rigorous work should be done early in the morning, from dawn to 10:30 or 11:00 a.m. A nap during the middle of the day is customary, and light work is done in the afternoon.
4. Learn simple phrases in the Jarai language. A desire to learn and speak their language makes a favorable impression on the Jarai.
5. The Jarai prefer to live in longhouses with their entire extended family. Whenever possible, housing projects should take this preference into consideration. The style of the house should not be changed; it is an integral part of Jarai environment.

#### **Health and Welfare**

1. The Jarai are becoming aware of the benefits of medical care and will request medical assistance. Outside groups in Jarai areas should try to provide medical assistance whenever possible.
2. Medical teams should be prepared to handle and should have adequate supplies for extensive treatment of malaria, dysentery, yaws, trachoma, venereal diseases, intestinal parasites, and various skin diseases.
3. In remote Jarai villages, it might be useful for medical people to work with the Jarai shaman or sorcerer. Frequently, the shaman welcomes cooperation, because his reputation improves as his healing average "rises."
4. Medical personnel must be discreet in treating tribal women, as they are extremely shy and modest.

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