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**FARM LABORERS TOWARDS THE MIDDLE CLASS: THE AMAK AWAK
GROUP IN NAGARI LABUAH GUNUANG KEC. LAREH SAGO HALABAN,
WEST SUMATRA 1980-2015**

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Abstract

The emergence of farm laborers in Nagari Labuah Gunuang has been going on since early 1949. Their presence was related to the lack of agricultural production, which affected the economic survival of their families. From 1960 to 1966, the survival of the laborers' families was tested again. Women who were previously engaged in the domestic sector, then shared work with their husbands by doing labor. The method used in this research is the historical method which consists of heuristics (data collection), source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The purpose of this research is to see the activities and influence of the Amak Awak group in family resilience. The results of the research obtained that the women's labor group formed since 1980, then legalized as Amak Awak (2011) had an impact on the economic conditions of their families. They initially only worked in the agricultural sector, but also in animal husbandry. In fact, from their labor activities, they were able to buy 1 hectare of land, which they cultivated and enjoyed the results for the common good. They are no longer in the lower class, but have entered the middle class.

Keywords: farm laborers, women, class, economy, Amak Awak.

INTRODUCTION

In Minangkabau, in the pages of the past, women had a unique role, and were nicknamed *Bundo Kanduang*. They are responsible for the implementation of men's decisions in their roles as *penghulu* (tribal chief) and *mamak* (uncle, or maternal brother).

Women in the cultural sphere, associated with the symbol of *limpapeh rumah nan gadang*, are often associated with their high position in managing their households. However, in the reality of life, a Minang woman also struggles with her outside life, such as earning a living - for the survival of her family.

The symbols of greatness, then shifted, when economic demands forced them to take on the role of a man, as a farm laborer, or in the home industry - which is scattered in Nagari Labuah Gunuang, Lareh Sago Halaban District, Lima puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra.

Amak Awak, located in Nagari Labuah Gunuang, is a representation of a farm labor group, formed by 20 women, to offer services in processing and harvesting agricultural products. The issue of low education, as well as the poverty that surrounds their lives, forces them to take on and share roles, which are mostly carried out by men as tenant farmers. *Amak Awak* is one of three groups of female laborers whose services are often used by the people of Nagari Lareh Sago Halaban.

The low wages paid to them have not deterred them. A small number of *Amak Awak* members continue to take up this line of work, as an additional income rather than their main source of livelihood. For the most part, women laborers who do not own farmland use this platform as their main source of income (Pancawati, 2012).

Since it was formed in 1980 and had yet to formalize its name, the group of farm laborers - initially only 15 women - has been fulfilling requests from owners of rice fields and farms. The wages they have received since 1980 have been modest, receiving a daily wage of Rp. 2500, which has gradually increased. Entering the 1998 monetary crisis, the wage they received was Rp. 15000, and seven years later (2015) they received a service of Rp. 40,000.

The small wages received by women laborers who are members of *Amak Awak* indicate that they are powerless to bargain for land cultivation services. However, this condition does not have much financial impact on laborers who already own rice fields. They claim it as an additional income, not the main one.

Even less money is received when the landowner provides food and drinks. The net wage they receive per day, after deducting the food and beverages, is Rp 35,000. The *Amak Awak* farm labor group was officially recognized by the Labuah Gunuang government on 26 April 2011 (SK No 028/WN-LBG/IV., 2011)

Even less money is received when the landowner provides food and drinks. The net wage they receive per day, after deducting the food and beverages, is Rp 35,000. The *Amak Awak* farm labor group was officially recognized by the Labuah Gunuang government on April 26, 2011. The activities of this group of women laborers, not only provide services, but also engage in religion, fisheries, animal husbandry and plantations. Since transforming into a farmer group, they have received facilities and training programs. In 2014, the *Amak Awak* group had a register number 0096.10.05.2012.2014 assigned by the BP4K of Limapuluh Kota Regency.

Since transforming into a Farmer Group, the wage system in *Amak Awak* - consists of three models, namely *masak padi*, *gado-gado*, and *rayo haji*. And, this is the interesting side of the women gathered in the group - who work to offer services, for the processing of rice fields and fields in Nagari Labuah Gunuang.

This is the interesting and unique side of *Amak Awak*-who has survived, and whose social status has begun to move into the middle class. The *Amak Awak* group whose members are between 35-65 years old, and have experience in agriculture. Due to financial difficulties during their childhood, they also became farm laborers in the 1980s.

To further analyze the issue of the *Amak Awak* labor group, there are several questions asked, what are the geographical and community conditions in Nagari Labuah

Gunuang, what is the process and role of *Amak Awak*, and what is the impact of *Amak Awak* activities on its members and the community? And, the purpose of this article is to analyze the geographical and community conditions in Nagari Labuah Gunuang, analyze the process and role of *Amak Awak*, and analyze the impact of *Amak Awak* on society.

To the best of the author's knowledge, writing about the *Amak Awak* sharecropper group has never been studied in historical narratives. However, writings related to sharecropping laborers have been written. Juandi, Alfiandi, and Indraddin (2019) in "Strategi Bertahan Hidup Buruh Tani di Kecamatan Danau Kembar Alahan Panjang", outlines that farm laborers come from lower-middle-income families and have relatively low levels of education. They usually face difficulties in surviving if they depend solely on their wages as farm laborers. To avoid economic pressure, farm laborers use various strategies. However, in the description discussed are male laborers located in South Solok District (Juanda et al., 2019).

Imansari, and Sarmini (2021) in "Strategi Inovasi Buruh Tani dalam Pemenuhan Kebutuhan Hidup di tengah Pandemi Covid-19: Studi Desa Satreyan Kabupaten Blitar" outlines three new ways that farmworkers used to make ends meet during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely the tactical adaptation strategy, which involves participating in social community activities and borrowing money from their closest relatives; the behavioral adaptation strategy, which involves farmworkers developing personal potential by utilizing the surrounding environment; and the adaptation process carried out by reducing the costs of clothing, food, shelter, and education, as well as receiving Covid-19 social assistance (Imansari & Sarmini, 2021). However, it discusses the role of male laborers and the resulting research refers to the concept of contemporary time.

Research on the *Amak Awak* women's labor group in Nagari Labuah Gunuang, Lareh Sago Halaban Sub-district, is closely related to the concepts of farm labor, poor households, and women's history. According to Gianawati (2013), farm laborers are productive individuals between the ages of 15 and 50 who work for other farmers. They own land but have low productivity, which impacts their family's livelihood. Usually, they start laboring after settling their land.

Marx described laborers as people who sell their labor for survival, have no means or factors of production other than their own labor, and work to receive wages (Marx, 1973). With the inception of plantations and mining during the period of Dutch colonialism in the 19th century, labor as a social group itself was closely linked to the entry of capitalism into Indonesia (Djumadi, 2005; Sulisty, 2015).

The *Amak Awak* labor group is also closely related to women's history. There are also themes in women's history, including the role of women in various socio-economic sectors, biographies or women who have connotations of independence, women's movements. Women's history is also a history that examines women and their existence in society towards gender equality (Kuntowijoyo, 2003, 2008).

Anthropology and sociology studies narrate women closely related to their role and function as mothers. In this context, Mead sees women in their position as mothers as a source of morality. For her, the mother's voice provides the basic principles for the formation and development of children's morals. Friedan specifically sees the impact of women's saturation as housewives only, not a few women who work part time or part time (working in the informal sector). This relates to their role as mothers responsible for the household, as well as laborers. (Nurrachman, 2016).

RESEARCH METHOD

Article Farm Laborers Towards the Middle Class. The Amak Awak Group in Nagari

Labuah Gunuang, Lareh Sago Halaban District 1980-2015 uses a historical method which includes four stages, namely heuristics, source criticism, synthesis analysis (interpretation), and writing. The first stage is heuristics. Heuristics is the stage of searching and collecting historical sources (Gottschalk, 1950). The sources used in this paper are written sources and oral sources.

Written sources include archives produced by both the Indonesian government and individuals from after Indonesia's independence until now. These sources include the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia, the Archives and Library Office of West Sumatra Province.

The archives obtained are in the form of population data, decrees, individual manuscripts, RPJM, and Nagari Labuah Gunuang Profile. Other sources that can be used are newspapers and magazines both published after Indonesia's independence, until now.

However, not all events of community life are documented by the government, so oral sources are also needed. Oral sources can be obtained through the oral history method (Huen et.al, 2000). In the oral history method, the information needed is obtained through interviews with historical actors, who represent women farm laborers.

Interviews were conducted by means of in-depth interviews to reveal the origin and experience of a person as a farm laborer within a certain time span. Informants who were asked for information included: Maiyulis (head of Amak Awak farm laborers) aged 51 years, Anisuarti (70 years), Fitra Novianti (58 years), Jasmaniar (70 years), Yusnita (57 years), Yusmar (44 years), Nurmai (63 years), Lismar (67 years), Liana (71 years).

Interviews were also modeled on interviewing the life story of the perpetrator or a family member (family-tree interviewing), thus spanning two generations within the same family (Priyadi, 2020; Thompson, 2012).

The second stage is source criticism, which can be divided into external and internal criticism. This criticism aims to obtain the validity of the data it contains (Pranoto, 2010). The third stage is data analysis and synthesis (interpretation). Facts obtained from written sources are analyzed using processual and structural analysis (Sufyan et al., 2023).

The fourth stage is writing (historiography). Writing in the form of women's history with the object of archives, newspapers, documents from the Ministry of Information 1953- which helps to analyze the narrative of *Amak Awak* farm laborers in Nagari Labuah Gunuang.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of Nagari Labuah Gunuang

Labuah Gunuang is a nagari under the administration of Lareh Sago Halaban District, Limapuluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra Province. Labuah Gunuang has an area of 12.86 Ha. Geographically, Labuah Gunuang is located at 00°19'40 "N - 00°16'15 "N and 100°41'50 "E with an average temperature of 24°C and a height from sea level of 480 meters above sea level (Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, 2015a). Administratively, Nagari Labuah Gunuang has boundaries, namely in the north with Nagari Batu Payung, in the south with Nagari Tanjung Gadang Halaban, east with Nagari Sitanang, and west with Nagari Sungai Kamuyang.

Nagari Labuah Gunuang based on its government administration has 7 Jorong, namely Jorong Simpang Empat, Simpang Empat Balai Jariang, Kayu Tanam, Dusun Nan Anam, Banjar Sari, Talaweh, and Lareh Nan Panjang. The village government center is in Jorong Simpang Empat, so this area is the closest to the village government center. Meanwhile, Banjar Sari is the farthest jorong from the village center, which is 5 kilometers. (Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, 2015b).

The total area of Nagari Labuah Gunuang is 12.86 Ha. Jorong Lareh Nan Panjang is

the most extensive jorong which is ± 2.51 Ha, about 20.90% and the smallest jorong is Banjar Sari 1.11 Ha, about 8.90% of the total village area (Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, 2015b).

The topography of Nagari Labuah Gunuang is in the form of hills and lowlands which vary in slope. In general, the slope of the Labuah Gunuang Kenagarian area is divided into various slopes, namely gentle (1.80 Ha), slightly steep (7.60 Ha), steep (1.82 Ha), very steep (3.26 Ha). Meanwhile, the soil type of Nagari Labuah Gunuang is andosol.

Map 1 of Nagari Labuah Gunuang



Source: Office of the Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang.

Nagari Labuah Gunuang has a tropical climate with a temperature of 24 ° C. In general, from its hydrology, the water in Nagari Labuah Gunuang comes from the flow of Mount Sago, and is known as Batang Lakin. This water flow is utilized by the community, for daily needs, and irrigating rice fields. As for household needs, the community usually makes wells, and through a drilling process (Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, 2015a).

Regarding rainfall, in Kabupaten Lima Puluh Kota - the highest was in January at 443.00 mm with 24 days of rain. From the data obtained, it is known that rainfall in 2011 was 2,201.30 mm, 2012 (3,039.20 mm), and 2013 was around 3,120.80 mm.

For nagari rainfall, it refers to Limapuluh Kota Regency, because both are identical as areas located in the highlands of West Sumatra. From the data above, it can be seen that the highest rainfall occurred in January with 443 mm of rainfall and 24 rainy days, while the smallest rainfall occurred in May, which amounted to 147.70mm with 18 rainy days.

The morphology of Labuah Gunuang, consisting of land and hills, has a distinctive character. Land use in Labuah Gunuang is intended for settlements, rice fields, yards, gardens, irrigation and others. For land ownership status, as in Minangkabau, it is in the form of customary land (land owned by the community). This communal land status requires people who want to utilize it, to take diplomatic channels with the Labuah Gunuang customary leaders.

The unclear boundaries between forests managed by the community and protected forests and natural reserve forests, triggered the Nagari Labuah Gunuang community to be hesitant in managing existing potential. The land utilized by the community for rice fields and fields is only those on sloping and slightly steep plains. Apart from farming, the community also planted their land with corn, sweet potatoes, chilies, and vegetables (Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, 2015b).



Figure 1 Mainstay agricultural land in Nagari Labuah Gunuang, Lareh Sago Halaban District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency. Source: Nahdatul Hazmi documentation.

Labuah Gunuang covers an area of 12.56 hectares and is inhabited by 5,467 people, and 2,977 families - consisting of a male population of 2,701 and a female population of 2,768. So the density level in this nagari is 425 people/km². And, of the seven jorongs under Labuah Gunuang's administration, the most populous jorong in 2015 was Simpang Empat, with 1,459 people, followed by Kayu Tanam (851 people), Talaweh (808 people), Lareh nan Panjang (747 people), Simpang Empat Balai Jariang (741 people), Dusun nan Anam (674 people), and Banjar Sari with 189 people (Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, 2015a).

Dari 5.467 jiwa yang mendiami Nagari Labuah Gunuang, diketahui tingkat pendidikan masyarakatnya, tamatan SLTP menempati urutan atas, yakni 1.053 orang, SLTA 575 orang, SD 532 orang, Perguruan Tinggi 184 orang, dan TK 158 orang. Dari data ini diperoleh gambaran, bahwa mayoritas masyarakatnya tamatan dari TK–SLTA adalah 2.318 jiwa, dan yang tamatan D3–S2 adalah 184 orang.

The livelihoods of the people in Nagari Labuah Gunuang are diverse - occupied by 1,807 farmers, 500 farm laborers, masons (120 people), carpenters (120 people), civil servants (61 people), mechanics (25 people), livestock breeders (12 people), weavers (15 people), sewers (6 people), and well diggers 4 people (Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, 2015b).

From the 2015 data, it is known that the majority of the Labuah Gunuang community's livelihoods are farmers and agricultural laborers. The high number of farm laborers, compared to other livelihoods, indicates that in Labuah Gunuang village, there are people who are on the poverty line, do not own land, and make this work as a side job for additional income.



Figure 2 People working together to help rebuild the Muslimin Mosque in Jorong Kayu Tanam, Nagari Labuah Gunuang. Source:Haluan, 2023.

Based on BPS statistics from Kabupaten Limapuluh Kota, poor households in Kecamatan Lareh Sago Halaban in 2011 in Nagari Labuah Gunuang totaled 335 people. The highest number of poor households was in the jorong closest to the government center, Simpang Empat, with 67 households. The next order is Simpang Empat Balai Jariang (48 families), Talaweh (48 families), Kayu Tanam (46 families), Lareh nan Panjang (42 families), and Banjar Sari 22 families. (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Lima Puluh Kota, 2015).

Based on the poverty rate indicators in this area, from the level of welfare in Nagari Labuah Gunuang, there are 1,263 households that are prosperous households, while 335 households are poor households (Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, 2015a).

The government system in Labuah Gunuang is the nagari, led by a nagari wali, who is directly elected by the community. The change in government system from village to nagari occurred during the reformation period - prompting *ninik mamak*, *alim ulama*, *cadiak pandai*, and politicians in West Sumatra to demand that the government *babaliak ba nagari*.

During his leadership, a village head must work together and his performance is supervised by the Labuah Gunuang Nagari Consultative Body (BAMUS). For community institutions in Labuah Gunuang, there are the Nagari Customary Council (KAN), Community Empowerment Agency (LPM), Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK), Youth Organization and farmer groups. All community institutions in Labuah Gunuang are active and coordinate with the village government.

2. Farm Labor in Labuah Gunuang: Its History and Dynamics

The existence of individual farm laborers in Nagari Labuah Gunuang dates back to late December 1948. Due to the security situation after the attack on the Indonesian capital in Yogyakarta, and followed by the formation of the Emergency Government of the Republic of Indonesia, it has affected the people in Central Sumatra Province (Djawatan Penerangan Sumatra Tengah, 1956).

Labuah Gunuang in early 1949, was still administratively under the Sinamar Regency - which consisted of Payakumbuh, Luhak, Tanjung Pati, Pangkalan Koto Baru, Suliki, Guguk, Sumanik-Sungayang, Sungai Tarab, Batusangkar, Tanjung Emas, Salimpaung, Rambatan, Lintau Buo, and Pariangan (Sufyan et al., 2023).

January - March 1949 were the most difficult months for the people of Central Sumatra, including in Labuah Gunuang. The economic downturn was known as the *guntung* season. This was when the rice in the fields had been weeded, and the rice from

the last harvest had been spent and eaten for eight months. As a result, food supplies were depleted (Kementerian Penerangan, 1953).

Since the guntung season, there have been farm labor groups in Labuah Gunuang. Every group that existed at that time was male. There were no female laborers. The main reason for the formation of this labor group was the economic famine, crop failure, which shook their economy.

The male laborers were not able to expect results from the land owned by the women's pusako land, which they participated in cultivating. They also had to look for additional income, namely providing services for landowners. The wages they received at that time were still low, and were paid per day (Samsudin, 1960).

Another reason for simply surviving was the low level of education. Until 1950, many of the people who inhabited Labuah Gunuang were illiterate, around 10% were SR graduates, and 5% completed their education at secondary school. The economic downturn, crop failure, and low level of education were the main reasons for the emergence of farm labor groups in Nagari Labuah Gunuang.

The emergence of women as agricultural laborers in Luhak Limopuluah Koto, including in Nagari Labuah Gunuang, occurred in 1963 (Yunus, 1984). They have not yet formed a group. Only individuals are asked for their services for the work of planting seeds and harvesting rice, or picking corn.

Why do Labuah Gunuang women offer themselves as farm laborers? Firstly, married women, as well as young girls, are forced to choose to become farm laborers to help their husbands/fathers for additional income. Secondly, the difficult economic situation was characterized by high inflation rates. Throughout the 1960s, inflation averaged 196.08% with the most severe level occurring in 1965 at 500%. To mediate the critical economic conditions, on December 13, 1965, the government simplified the value of the rupiah or redominated from IDR 1000 to IDR 1. (Haryanto, 2006; Kurniawan, et.al. 2023).

Instead of improving, the economic situation at the end of Bung Karno's rule became even more worrying. In 1966 the inflation rate was at 635.35% (Sufyan, 2012; Wuryandari, 2015). The bitter life experienced by Labuah Gunuang women forced them to share their roles with male laborers in cultivating rice fields.

The attraction of women to labor in the fields was triggered by time efficiency and tenacity. As farm laborers, they arrive on time, work directly in the fields, and do not want to waste time. The work ethic of these women laborers is much different from that of men. Arriving late, smoking and having coffee before work, and delaying work are all reasons why landowners have switched to women laborers.

At the beginning of the New Order, around 60% of Indonesians lived in the countryside, and 70% of the 21,141,273 rural households depended on agriculture. Most farmers produced rice and horticulture, while others worked in plantations, livestock, forest products and fisheries. Half of the farmers, or 50%, have smaller landholdings, even less than 0.5 ha, so most work as farm laborers and plantation laborers (Hidayat, 2008).

In addition, as a result of development in rural areas, some people work as middlemen, loan sharks, artisans, rural industry workers, odd-job workers, plantation employees, company security officers, drivers, civil servants, police, military, educated people, and others (Darsono, 2009).

3. Amak Awak Laborers: Fighting Myths for a Living

In 1980, women farm workers reorganized themselves in Labuah Gunuang. The formation of the association at that time had not yet been followed by the formalization of the group name, administratively. Each of the farmworkers was connected by family, emotional closeness or gender.

It is certainly interesting to see why women in Labuah Gunuang choose to work on the land of the landowner and organize themselves. If we look back at references to Minangkabau culture, especially about women, there are many expressions that describe the role and high position of Minang women.

Limpapeh rumah nan gadang and sumarak anjuang nan tinggi are symbols. These phrases are very common. And the term bundo kanduang - which is attached to the symbol of a married woman, or mother. Bundo kanduang is more than just a term.

As a symbol of honor and glory, a woman who becomes a Bundo Kanduang, must not only be an ornament in physical form, but must also have a personality that is in accordance with Minangkabau customary norms. In addition, a Bundo Kanduang must have a good understanding of customs, have the ability to speak properly, understand pleasantries, and know how to dress properly.

Kato pusako, describing the nature of women Bundo Kanduang is reflected in the following sentence:

dihias jo budi baiak, malu sopan tinggi sakali, Baso jo basi bapakaian, nan gadang basa batuah, kok hiduik tampek banzar, kok mati tampek baniat. Tiang kokoh budi nan baiak, pasak kunci malu jo sopan, hiasan dunia jo akhirat, awih tampek mintak aia, lapa tampek minta nasi (Batuah, 1987; Djamaris, 1991; Tandiko, R. St. Batuah, 1977).

This expression has a deep meaning; a woman's presence as bundo kanduang serves as a moral example for her community, her people, and her household. Bundo kanduang is described as a mother who is authoritative, wise, and a role model. She wears raso, which means taste, and pareso, which refers to the word check, and the mother speaks softly and politely.

Formal education does have a big impact on the character of women in Labuah Gunuang. Those who enjoyed secondary and tertiary education mostly chose to migrate in search of decent work.

In contrast, women with only primary to secondary education are faced with the choice of migrating, staying in the pusako land, or doing labor. Labuah Gunuang only provides agricultural land for women, or breaking stones by the river. In fact, during the economic downturn, the role of women in the community has changed from that of housewives to breadwinners.

At least in the early days, there were three groups of farm laborers in Labuah Gunuang. Two groups were predominantly male, and the other was female. These three groups had not yet been officially named, and were determined by decree of the Village Head.

The early female-dominated farm labor groups included: Anisuarti, Fitra Novianti, Jasmaniar, Yusnita, Nurmai, Lismar, and Liana. The age of each member at that time was 15-25 years old. There are several factors that led these seven women to choose farm labor as their main source of livelihood.

First, they are only elementary school graduates, and some even did not finish their education at the People's School. Meanwhile, if they want to enter the job market, the demands of education have dashed their hopes. Meanwhile, relying on income from cultivating rice paddies and fields owned by their families or tribes is also far from satisfactory.

“It was difficult to live in 1980. I didn't finish high school. If I relied on my livelihood, to help my husband from the rice fields, it was not enough. Because we are a big family, there are five women. Our customary land is small” (Lismar, 2023).

In the 1980s, the wage of farm laborers in Labuah Gunuang was still relatively small, Rp 2,500. The daily wage received after working was not enough to meet the needs of their families. To fulfill their needs, husbands, wives and children who were already 15 years old helped their parents to earn additional income.

Entering the 1997 monetary crisis, the lives of women laborers were further shaken. They did not only work as laborers with their group, but also as stone-breaking laborers in Talaweh hamlet. When there were no orders, five female farm laborers mingled with men as stone breakers in the Batang Lakin stream.

“Yes, we are forced to work on the side to survive. We can't afford to buy cooking oil, sugar, and other things. We are paid Rp 10,000 per day to work as stone breakers,” said a 65-year-old female laborer (Jasmaniar, 2023). They started breaking rocks around the Lakin trunk at 8am and ended at 2pm. The broken stones are then collected and sold to building contractors.



Figure 3 Female farm laborer-who also works as a stone breaker in Labuah Gunuang. Source: Nahdatul Hazmi's documentation.

Doing these two draining jobs, they were able to survive, amidst the increasingly strong economic pressure. The wage they received as farm laborers at that time was Rp15,000 per day. This group of women laborers generally resides in Jorong Kayu Tanam and Talaweh.

Three years after the reformation, women began to organize themselves into farm labor groups. The group of farm laborers, dominated by women aged 45 to 65, are often addressed by landowners as amak. For example, Maiyulis is called Mak Mai, as are the other members.

Amak in the Minangkabau language refers to a mother, or an adult woman. Meanwhile, the word Awak, which is attached to these female farm laborers, means us. Since then, this group has become a byword in the community, as Amak Awak (Maiyulis, 2023).

In the household, this female farm laborer plays the role of a mother, who is involved in domestic affairs, ranging from washing, cooking, caring for children, and looking after her grandchildren. Outside the home, she shares her role with her husband, to earn a living, through a farm labor group. In this group, they have a relationship of mutual influence, mutual help and benefit.

Amak Awak as an association of women farm laborers was legalized on April 26, 2011 in Jorong Kayu Tanam, Nagari Labuah Gunuang. The basis for the ratification of this group comes from the awareness, willingness and seriousness to participate in the association.

In addition to work activities, Amak Awak is also used as a way to stay in touch by its members. Those who are officially registered in the Decree on the formation of Amak Awak are around 20 people, namely Maiyulis, Roswita, Rama Yulis, Liana, Yusnita, Tarisna Putri, Yusmar, Elvis Elmiza, Samsidar, Nurfida, Rosna, Fitra Novianti Eka Sari, Nurmai, Elva Yulita, Murtianis, Lismar, Nurhuda, Rosni, Anisuarti, and Nita.

The Amak Awak group is made up of members since its formation in 1980, and thereafter - chaired by Maiyulis, secretary held by Rama Yulis, and treasurer held by Roswita (SK No 028/WN-LBG/IV., 2011). An Amak Awak leader acts as a coordinator, to explain, advise and schedule the work ordered by the landowner (employer).

Each member of the Amak Awak plays a role and participates in the group. The acceptance or dismissal of a group member is determined at a members' meeting. Since its establishment, the Amak Awak group has received assistance from the central and local governments.



Figure 4 Members of the Amak Awak group receiving information from the Lima Puluh Kota District agricultural extension officer. Source: Nahdatul Hazmi documentation.

In 2014 the Amak Awak group already had a register number 0096.10.05.2012.2014 which had been given by BP4K Lima Puluh Kota District. After being inaugurated by the nagari, the Amak Awak group was given the convenience of obtaining information from extension workers from the Department of Agriculture, and assistance with equipment, including fertilizer. This fertilizer assistance has been received since 2014, and is obtained twice a year.

In its deed, the Amak Awak Group with its mutual cooperation nature, aims to improve the welfare of members in particular and the progress of the work environment in general; create a source of financing and provision of capital for members; develop thrifty nature and encourage saving activities; grow productive businesses of members; and strengthen the trustworthiness and communication network of members.

3. Amak Awak Rises to Middle Class

Since receiving the decree from the Limapuluh Kota District Government, the

activities of the Amak Awak group have become more complex, especially in the rice fields owned by their respective members, from planting, weeding, fertilizing, to harvesting. The planting of seeds is carried out in accordance with information and directions from agricultural extension officers. This program is known as *jajar legowo*. This means that they have abandoned the traditional system that has been inherited by their ancestors since the beginning.



Figure 5 Amak Awak farm workers cultivating fields in Jorong Kayu Tanam. Source: Nahdatul Hazmi's documentation.

The *jajar legowo* program is a procedure for planting rice with the rules of four to one, six to one. The *jajar legowo* program makes it easier for Amak Awak members to increase rice production. Then in terms of weeding is done once a month, cleaning weeds, or nuisance plants. Furthermore, fertilization is done twice in three months. Meanwhile, harvesting is done after three months after fertilization.

When working on other people's land, each Amak Awak member also divides their working hours. The working hours start at 07.00 and end at 13.00. For six hours, they work on other people's land, after 15:00 processing their own rice fields.

Each laborer needs 15 members. However, the number of laborers in the rice fields and fields depends on the agreement of the landowner. The work is done relatively quickly. They only stop when they enter the rest period. They also eat together while joking.

The wage received from the landowner until 2015 was Rp 40,000 per day. However, this amount can be reduced if the landowner provides lunch. So the wage they receive is Rp 35,000. However, beyond the daily wage system, each member of the group also has a unique payment system, which involves both labor and money.

The labor payment system is called a turn. In the turn system, each member helps work on the land of a fellow member. "If one member works on the chairman's land, the

next time he has to help work on other members' fields. With this model of work system, their sense of kinship is even stronger." (Maiyulis, 2023)

For wages received from landowners, which are handed over to the group treasurer and received by members, there are three models. First, the masak padi group is a wage given after six months of work, or after the harvest period. Second, the gadang group is a wage given to Amak Awak members, before the month of Ramadan. Third, the rayo haji group is a wage received by members before Eid al-Adha. The wages received range from Rp 3,000,000 to Rp 4,500,000.

In addition to cultivating rice fields and fields, the Amak Awak group is also paid to raise cows. The wage given by the cow owner is not in the form of nominal money. If the cow becomes pregnant, the Amak Awak members are entitled to one of the calves. For this cattle rearing, it is more personalized and entrusted by the owner due to honesty.

In addition to cultivating rice fields and raising cows, the Amak Awak group also owns 1 hectare of land that is planted with corn. They can also harvest three times a year. The harvest, which is then cashed in, is then kept by the treasurer, as savings and loan capital. "The corn that has been sold can be borrowed by Amak Awak members to be used as stall capital and for daily living expenses. In general, no interest is charged for repayment," explains an Amak Awak member (Lismar, 2023).

Not only engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, and cultivating fields, Amak Awak members, such as Yusnita, Roswita, Maiyulis, and Lismar formed a Yasinan recitation group. The group formed in 2015 numbered 36 people, with details of 32 people consisting of men and women, coming from outside Amak Awak.

The recitation group, called Yasin Al-Fallah Kubang, has been established by the Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang through a Decree (SK/WN/KLP/KYT-LBG, 2015). The purpose of the decree for this recitation group is to make it easier for them to receive assistance from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Lima Puluh Kota District.

Since its establishment, Yasin Al-Fallah Kubang has encouraged people in Labuah Gunuang to attend the recitation, which is conducted door to door, every Friday night. In addition to Yasinan, this group also pioneered wirid in mosques and surau in Lima Puluh Kota district. In fact, from the monthly dues of Amak Awak members, they help with the costs of Yasinan, once-a-month recitation, compensation for sick and deceased members.

From the activities carried out by Amak Awak farm laborers, who are women since 1980-2015, it appears that they have moved from the lower class to the middle class. Almost all of its members have their own land, which comes from pusako land or which they buy themselves.

The tendency to move into the middle class occurred when the group was legalized through the Decree of the Mayor of Labuah Gunuang Nagari, which had an impact on their finances. Initially, they were only engaged in the agricultural sector, but they were also given the mandate to raise livestock, as well as being able to buy 1 hectare of land, for their welfare.

An Amak Awak member who works for 30 days from 7am to 1pm is able to earn a wage in the range of Rp 1.2 million to Rp 1.5 million. This does not include those who are assigned to raise cattle, who can earn Rp 6 million per three months. So the income of a female farm laborer per year is Rp 60,000,000, while her husband's income per year is Rp 15 million. This means that the farm laborer's family earns Rp 3.5 million per month from agriculture.

With this increase in welfare, a female farm laborer's basic needs have been met from her own land. Expenditures outside of primary and secondary needs are in the form of Lebaran needs, house rehabilitation, buying electronic goods, and a new motorcycle.

CONCLUSION

The presence of female farm laborers in the 1960s became an interesting phenomenon at the end of Bung Karno's leadership. The end of the resistance from the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia, which led to economic problems, forced women in Nagari Labuah Gunuang to step in, help their husbands make a living. The meaningless value of money, the scarcity of basic necessities, are the main reasons for them to increase their income.

Apart from cultivating their own land, women laborers help their husbands to work on other people's land. In addition to laboring, a woman in her household still does domestic work, such as cooking, drawing water, looking for firewood, and taking care of children. The tenacity and time-efficiency of female laborers is what encourages landowners to choose them over male laborers.

The relationships that have been formed in the laborers' households also occur when they work. Eventually, individual workers organized themselves into an association in 1980 - later designated Amak Awak in 2011. If before 2011 they were in the lower class, after being established in the decision of the Wali Nagari Labuah Gunuang, they began to move to the middle class.

They do not feel ashamed that they have to leave the house to help their husbands. Although in Minangkabau customs they are called *limpapeh rumah nan gadang*, the economic conditions of the household, which force women laborers to meet their primary and secondary needs.

They not only hold the status of *bundo kanduang*, but also become fighters for the survival of their families. Since 2011-2015, Amak Awak members, whose average age is 45-70 years old, have persisted with their work. In fact, the perseverance and tenacity of 20 women from the Amak Awak group helped revive religious life in Nagari Labuah Gunuang, Lareh Sago Halaban District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra.

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