CHAPTER 5: AGRONOMIC STUDIES REGARDING SOILS, NUTRIENTS AND SHADE

This chapter reports on some experiments with certain environmental factors, i.e. soils, nutrients and shade. In a pot experiment with seedlings different soil types were compared; in a field experiment the response of seedlings to shading and nitrogen was observed. Finally, in an experiment on bearing plants the effect of a compound fertilizer on the growing fruits was studied.

5.1. Seedling growth in different soils

Introduction

Salak palm grows well in a range of soils. Schuiling and Mogea (1991) reported that Ultisols and Entisols are the typical soil types in the salak production centres. Based on a survey in five salak production centres in East Java, Ashari (1993) found quite a variety of soil types, i.e. Entisols in Bangkalan and Jombang, and Inceptisols in Bangkalan, Malang and Bojonegoro. Moreover, Kusumainderawati et al. (1992) reported that Oxisols are predominantly found in Karangasem of Bali province, where the Balinese salak is widely cultivated.

'Pondoh' is now increasingly grown in the above production centres on Java, replacing the varieties which are characteristic for each centre. Because the soils differ so much, a pot experiment was conducted to assess the early growth of 'Pondoh' in these different soils. Fast growth of the young seedlings should shorten the juvenile phase; this brings orchards into production sooner which facilitates the change-over to other varieties such as 'Pondoh'. Moreover, it was hoped that the effects of soil type on seedling growth can be linked to more specific agronomic factors such as organic matter requirement and nutrients needed.

Materials and methods

The soils used in the experiment were taken from four salak centres, namely Sleman ('Pondoh' grown at 411 m a.s.l.), Suwaru (in kabupaten Malang, 358 m a.s.l), Kacuk (in kota Malang, 400 m a.s.l.), and Bangkalan (on Madura island, 2 - 15 m a.s.l.). These soil types were compared to Jatikerto soil (300 m a.s.l.), also located in kabupaten Malang, into which 'Pondoh' is to be introduced. The climatic conditions of Sleman and Jatikerto are presented in Appendices 1 and 2.

Three orchards were randomly chosen in each of the 5 locations. With a soil auger, soil samples (0 - 45 cm depth) were taken at five sites in each orchard. Four samples were taken from each orchard corner (2 m away from other orchards) and the fifth from the centre. Fifty kg of soil was taken from each site. Total soil weight collected in each orchard thus was 250 kg. The bulk of the soil was mixed, air-dried, gently crushed and sieved (erroneously to < 2 mm, using a sieve that is meant for samples in soil analysis) in order to make it homogeneous. The soil of the three orchards in a location was mixed to obtain a composite sample representing the type of soil in that location.

With each of the five soil types, polybags, 10 cm in diameter and 25 cm in height, were filled with 1.5 kg soil. There were 30 bags per treatment replicated four times. The total number of potted plants in the experiment thus was 600. The bags were kept under natural light in a house covered with white polyethylene. The temperature during the experiment ranged from 18 to 32 °C.

Fully mature 'Pondoh' fruit was picked directly from a salak garden of a farmer in kabupaten Sleman. After the flesh was removed from the seeds, the seeds were washed thoroughly with tap water and dipped into insecticide solution, Dursban 20 EC (2ml/l water) for 3 minutes. The seeds were put into the polybags, which had previously been watered, 1 cm deep. Each polybag received 50 cc of distilled water, pH 5.5 - 6, weekly.

Detailed observations on the germination process are reported in Chapter 6. Criterion for germination was as described in Chapter 4.2. The first root was the root that grew at the centre of the cotyledonary sheath. Tomlinson (1960) called this root the rudimentary root, because it soon ceases to grow and is replaced by adventitious roots. The growth of the ligule was considered to start when the swelling growing point turned red. The adventitious roots were recorded by carefully removing the soil from a sample of the seeds. Germinated seed of cv. Pondoh is shown in Plate 4. The time of emergence of the first 3 three simple leaves, and the duration of the growth stages of these leaves were recorded as described in Chapter 2.1.

The experiment was terminated 6 months after sowing by determining dry weight of the plants. The mature (dark green) third leaf, counting from the spear leaf was used in destructive sampling, to analyse leaf content of N, P and K by standard procedures. In soil samples total N was determined by the Kjeldahl method, available P by the Olsen method and exchangeable K in 1 N NH_4OAc, pH 7.0. The pH, organic matter, Ca content, texture and field capacity of the five soil types were also measured. Soil pH was measured after mixing soil and a 1 N KCl solution in a ratio 1:1. The data collected were analysed, using a complete randomized block design and regression and correlation following Steel and Torrie (1980).

Results

Soil properties. Soil pH ranged from 6.1 to 7.0 (Table 5.1). The organic matter and the nitrogen contents of the soils were very low to low. Soil-P content of Suwaru was high, while others were low to fair. The five soils tested contained fair to high levels of K and Ca. This indicates that K and Ca would not be major factors limiting seedling growth.

The texture of the soils ranged from sandy-clay loam (Sleman, Bangkalan, Suwaru) to clay loam (Kacuk and Jatikerto) and is presented in Table 5.2. The table also shows that water volume at field capacity (in %) of the heavy-textured soils in Kacuk, and particularly in Jatikerto, is much higher than for the lighter soils from the other locations.

Germination. The growth of the primary root was slower than that of the adventitious roots. The adventitious roots, which originated from around the base of the ligule, grew strongly and became feeder roots. The time of emergence of adventitious roots was not convincingly affected by the soil types, but the emergence of the scale-leaf was retarded in the heavy-textured soils of Kacuk and Jatikerto (Table 5.3).

Leaf growth. Figure 5.1 shows the time of emergence of the first three leaves and the successive growth stages for each leaf. The first stage, spear extension, covers the period from emergence of the spear till it is fully extended, but also a possible period of

Table 5.1. Selected properties of the soils studied.

Soils	pH	C-org. (%)	N-total (%)	P (mg kg^{-1})	K (cmol kg^{-1})	Ca (cmol kg^{-1})
Sleman	7.0	1.50 l	0.16 l	16 l	0.33 f	4.44 f
Bangkalan	6.1	0.58 vl	0.10 l	13 l	1.93 vh	17.05 h
Suwaru	6.3	0.90 vl	0.13 l	57 h	1.11 vh	6.83 f
Kacuk	6.9	1.27 l	0.16 l	29 f	0.40 f	12.79 h
Jatikerto	6.6	0.28 vl	0.06 vl	11 l	2.39 vh	8.60 f

* vl: very low, l: low, f: fair, h: high, vh: very high (according to Hardjowigeno, 1987).

Table 5.2. Soil texture and field capacity.

Soil types	Percentage of			Textural class	Water volume at field capacity (%)
	Sand	Silt	Clay		
Sleman	72	3	25	Sandy-clay loam	24.5
Bangkalan	63	15	22	Sandy-clay loam	25.4
Suwaru	54	22	24	Sandy-clay loam	29.2
Kacuk	42	20	38	Clay-loam	39.6
Jatikerto	42	28	30	Clay-loam	48.2

Table 5.3. The germination of the salak seeds, in days after sowing.

Soil types	Emergence of	
	Adventitious root	Scale leaf
Sleman	11.8 a	14.2 a
Bangkalan	10.9 a	13.5 a
Suwaru	11.5 a	15.2 ab
Kacuk	12.8 a	16.2 bc
Jatikerto	13.5 a	17.5 c

Means in a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different at p=0.05.

'spear rest', i.e. without apparent activity after the spear has attained its full length (which ideally should have been recorded separately).

As shown in Figure 5.1 it took more than 30 days from sowing before the first leaf emerged, but it grew and matured quickly, completing its development in 31 - 36 days. The second and third leaves took much longer (resp. 41 - 51 and 37 - 45 days) to complete their development. The interval between emergence of successive leaves also increased, from 25 - 30 days between Leaves 1 and 2 to 39 - 51 days between Leaves 2 and 3. In the Suwaru soil both leaf growth and leaf succession proceeded fastest, but the only significant effect was the slow growth in Jatikerto soil, associated with delayed emergence of all three leaves.

The bars in Figure 5.1 suggest that unfolding proceeded faster when spear extension took longer. Since spear extension and spear rest were not recorded separately, it is likely that long periods of extension hide a rest period, during which the preparations for unfolding proceeded, so that the actual unfolding needed less time.

Plant dry weight. Total dry weight of the plants sown in Sleman and Suwaru soil was higher than that of plants in the other soils. Root weights did not differ much (Figure

5.2); in fact similar root weights differed greatly in the quantities of top growth which they could support. Consequently the top/root ratio ranged from 3.2 for plants in the Suwaru soil to 1.9 for plants in Jatikerto soil.

Leaf nutrient contents. The leaf-N, -P and -K contents were not significantly different (Table 5.4), but the mean values for N- and P-content were lowest for seedlings in the Jatikerto soil, whereas seedlings in the Kacuk soil had the lowest K-content. Thus the large differences in soil nutrient content (Table 5.1) were only weakly reflected in the nutrient status of the leaves.

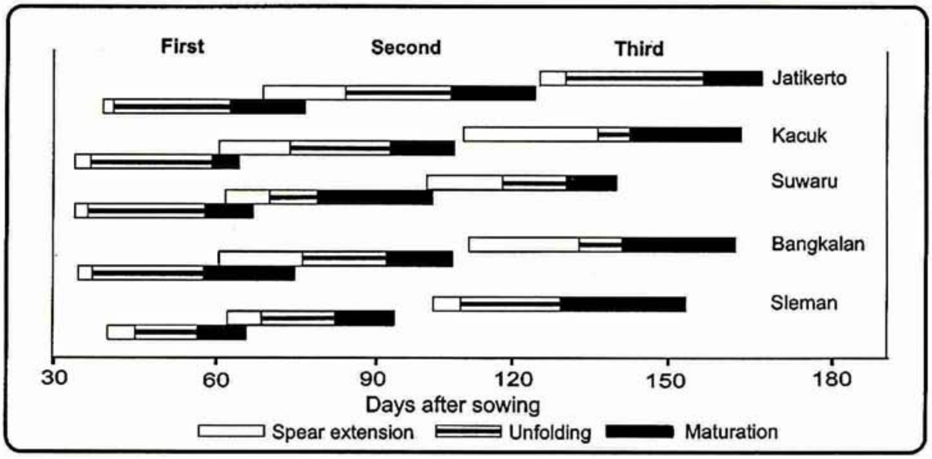

Figure 5.1. Growth stages of the first 3 leaves, in days after sowing.

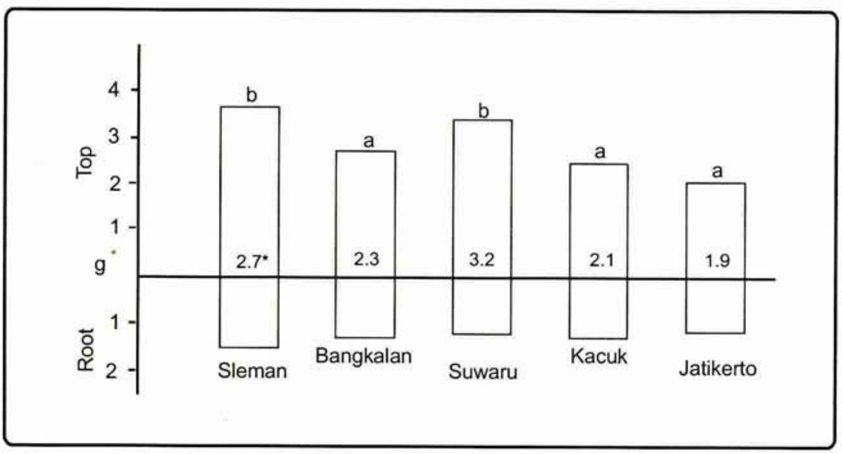

Figure 5.2. Dry weights of tops and roots, in g.
*) Figures are top/root ratios (g per g).
Columns bearing the same letter are not significantly different at P = 0.01.

Table 5.4. Nutrient content of the leaves in mg per g leaf dry weight.

Soil types	Nitrogen (mg/g)	Phosphorus (mg/g)	Potassium (mg/g)
Sleman	21.2	1.6	14.7
Bangkalan	22.8	1.4	12.2
Suwaru	23.8	1.6	12.8
Kacuk	21.4	1.7	10.6
Jatikerto	19.6	1.2	12.2

Table 5.5. Relationships between soil and leaf nutrient status, and between soil organic matter and nutrient content in leaves and soils.

Variables (Y) (X)	Regression equation	Remarks
Soil-N and leaf-N	Y = 0.4 X + 19.8	-
Soil-P and leaf-P	Y = 1.4 X + 12.5	-
Soil-K and leaf-K	Y = 0.5 X + 12.9	-
Soil-C and leaf-N	Y = 11.3 X + 18.6	*
Soil-C and leaf-P	Y = 59.9 X + 28.4	*
Soil-C and leaf-K	Y = 34.1 X + 59.1	*
Soil-C and soil-N	Y = 8.4 X + 4.6	*
Soil-C and soil-P	Y = 8.7 X + 17.3	-
Soil-C and soil-K	Y = −1.8 X + 2.8	*

-: correlation not significant; *: correlation significant at $P < 0.05$.

Nutrient uptake. The relationship between nutrient levels in soil and leaf is presented in Table 5.5. At the age of 6 months the leaf nutrient levels of the seedlings were not correlated with the soil contents. However, soil organic matter and the leaf nutrient contents were significantly correlated. Soil organic matter was also positively correlated to soil-N and soil-K, not to soil-P.

Discussion

Although the soils from the 5 locations differed both in texture and fertility, it still is surprising that they affected germination and growth so strongly and so consistently. In the heavy-textured soils of Kacuk and Jatikerto emergence of the ligule and the adventitious roots was delayed, and seedlings had the lowest dry weight and the lowest top/root ratio. From a fortnight after sowing till the age of 6 months the plants growing in these soils lagged behind, the only exception being the emergence and rate of development of the first leaf of plants in Kacuk soil. Growth was most delayed and least vigorous in the Jatikerto soil, the heaviest soil in the experiment. The initial delay in growth may be attributed to heavy texture of the soil. Perhaps inadequate watering before sowing played a role, because that would have made it harder for the seeds in the heavy soils to imbibe moisture. With the exhaustion of the endosperm, following the maturation of the first leaf, soil fertility may have come into play. The Jatikerto soil had the lowest N- and P- content and the extremely low organic matter content must have aggravated the deterioration of soil structure, which is a well-known problem in the research farm. Goldberg et al. (1990) reported that application of organic matter to an arid zone soil may enhance clay dispersion, thereby improving soil structure through binding of soil particles by roots and hyphae into aggregates.

The soils brought from Sleman, Suwaru and Kacuk were relatively fertile, with better than average contents of organic matter, N and P. Higher organic matter content was associated with better leaf nutrient status and higher N- and K-levels in the soil. For potassium this is supported by a study of Elkhatib and Hern (1988), who reported a positive interaction between organic carbon and exchangeable K in the soil. However, a possible problem with the Kacuk soil was its high Ca:K ratio, which may hinder the uptake of potassium; this might explain the low ranking of this soil later in the experiment and the low leaf-K value.

In as far as the results of a pot experiment are indicative, the Jatikerto soil is not really suitable for salak. Successful introduction of 'Pondoh' will require substantial improvements in both soil structure and fertility. Generous applications of manure are recommended, starting before planting; these should be supported by fertilizer N and P.

The dry weight ratio of tops and roots may be a useful indicator of the suitability of a soil for salak seedlings. The findings suggest that the ratio should be above 2.5.

It took the leaves in this experiment much longer, particularly for the second and third leaf, to complete their growth stages than was the case in the experiment described in Chapter 2.1; moreover the interval between the emergence of successive leaves increased so much that the second leaf matured before the third leaf emerged. Hence the mean interval of 33 days for 'Pondoh' calculated in Chapter 2.1 probably has no general validity for field-grown plants.

Conclusions

1. Germination of 'Pondoh' seeds was retarded on the heavy soils; subsequent growth of the seedlings presumably was increasingly affected by differences in fertility. Growth was most retarded on the heavy-textured, infertile soil from Jatikerto. The growth rate was highest in soils from Suwaru and Sleman, important production centres.
2. Organic matter presumably played an important role in the growth of the seedlings. A higher organic matter content increased nutrient levels in the leaves, organic matter also being correlated to the levels of N and P in the soil; moreover organic matter is needed to improve the physical properties of the soil, particularly of heavy soils.
3. Soil types from four production centres and from Jatikerto were very low to low in organic matter, nitrogen and phosphorus, but medium to high in potassium and calcium. Application of nitrogen and phosphorus and especially organic matter is recommended.

5.2. Effect of nitrogen and shading on seedling growth

Introduction

The results of the previous section (Chapter 5.1) indicated that lack of soil nutrients may limit salak seedling growth. Salak seedlings grew poorest on the (chemically poor) Jatikerto soil. For further experiments with salak in the Jatikerto research farm both the physical structure and the nutrient status need to be improved, in particular the nitrogen supply. It is well established that young salak plants need shade and that there is a general interaction between nutrient uptake and light intensity. Therefore, a field experiment was conducted to test the influence of different shading intensities in combination with different levels of nitrogen supply on the growth of seedlings. Considering the functions of light and nitrogen, it is hypothesized that there will be synergism between these factors in determining salak seedling growth.

According to Tjahjadi (1989) and Soetomo (1990) salak needs 30 - 70% shade. Shade is considered essential for young plants. Growers plant salak under the shade of established trees such as rambutan, banana, langsat, etc. and in addition plant banana or *Sesbania grandiflora* to intensify the shade during the first years. When these short-duration intercrops have disappeared, the dense stand of salak with its large leaves ensures extensive mutual shading of the palms. Growers around Malang are not very concerned about shade in mature gardens and do not replace permanent shade trees which die.

Nitrogen is one of the major nutrients. The annual deposition of atmospheric nitrogen available for crop growth is less than 25 kg N per ha. Mineralization of soil nitrogen is about 100 kg per ha per year in the temperate zone (Neeteson and Zwetsloot, 1989). In the tropics mineralization should be higher, but losses of nitrogen (denitrification, ammonia volatilization, etc.) will also be larger. Nitrogen losses in dry regions are determined mostly by the temperature. The higher the temperature, the greater the nitrogen losses.

Materials and methods

The experiment was done at Jatikerto research station near Malang, in the dry season from April to November 1990. The temperature ranged from 25 to 29 °C and RH from 65 to 71%. During the investigation rainfall was nil.

Four months old 'Pondoh' seedlings were planted in the field at 75 x 75 cm. Two factors were combined, i.e. shading at 4 levels: 0, 25, 50 and 75% reduction of incident light at mid-day and also 4 urea levels: 0, 10, 20 and 30 g per plant (or 0, 4.6, 9.2 and 13.8 g N per plant). Application of urea was in four equal monthly doses, starting at transplanting. Each of the treatment combinations consisted of two seedlings and the treatments were arranged according to a split-plot design, with shading as main factor and urea as split factor. The trial was replicated three times.

The shading was made from thin cut bamboo and placed 150 cm above the plants. At planting time, each seedling was fertilized with farmyard manure of cattle, triplesuperphosphate and potassium chloride at the rate of 1 kg, 10 and 10 g per plant, respectively. Each seedling was watered every two days with 100 ml of water during the first month. Later on, 500 ml of water was given weekly or as required.

Number of leaves and leaf area per plant were measured fortnightly. The results were analysed using analysis of variance of a split-plot additive model and regression analysis according to Steel and Torrie (1980). In addition dry weight, of the above-ground part of the plants and leaf-N content were measured at the end of the experiment, nearly 4 months after the start. Leaf area was calculated by multiplying length and width of the largest leaflet with the number of leaflets and a shape factor. To determine dry weight of tops, the material was dried in an oven at 80 °C for three days or until the weight was constant.

The light intensity was measured by using a silicon light meter at mid-day. The light meter was placed in a north-south and an east-west direction; the two values were averaged. N content of leaves was measured at the Soil Science lab of Brawijaya University using the Kjeldahl method.

Results

The shade treatments corresponded to the intended levels, as shown by the averaged light measurements over 5 days (Table 5.6). The table also shows that the shade treatments substantially lowered temperature at soil level and more importantly that in full light nearly one-third of the seedlings had died by the end of the experiment. In fact the plants in full light declined almost from the start of observations, confirming the common wisdom that salak seedlings have to be raised under shade. Therefore the unshaded treatment is excluded from the analysis, leaving only the 25, 50 and 75% shade levels.

At transplanting the seedlings selected for the experiment had three mature leaves. At the final count – nearly 8 months after sowing – the number had increased to 5 - 7.5 (Table 5.7). The effects of urea exceeded those of the shade treatments: the number of leaves per plant was smallest in the absence of urea and highest with 10 g urea per plant. The curvilinear relationship between quantity of urea applied and number of leaves was significant ($P < 0.05$; $n = 12$). The two highest shade levels were slightly (non-significantly) better than 25% shade.

Table 5.6. Shading level, light intensity, temperature at soil level and death of seedlings.

Shading (%)	Light intensity (%)	Temperature (°C)	Death of seedlings (%)
0	100	39.2	31.9
25	74.5	31.2	0
50	49.2	30.4	0
75	24.8	30.2	0

Table 5.7. Mean number of leaves per plant at the end of the experiment, nearly 8 months after sowing in response to shade and urea application. For statistical data analysis based on regression, see text.

% Shade	Urea, g/plant			
	0	10	20	30
25	5.0	7.3	6.6	6.4
50	5.6	7.5	6.9	7.0
75	5.7	7.4	7.0	6.9

Leaf area per plant 112 days after transplanting ranged from 4.7 to 7.0 dm^2 (Table 5.8). As was the case for number of leaves per plant, the effects of urea were stronger than the effects of more shade. Plants receiving no urea had less than 5 dm^2, those dressed with 30 g urea about 6 dm^2 and the intermediate urea levels gave leaf areas approaching 6 dm^2 at 25% shade and 7 dm^2 at 50% and 75% shade. The 25% shade treatment was only clearly less effective at the intermediate N-levels. The curvilinear relations between urea level and leaf area or leaf area increase were statistically significant ($P < 0.05$), but differed for the three shade levels: the response to urea was less pronounced at 25% than at the two other shade levels.

This interaction between shade and urea resulted in the largest leaf areas for the combination of intermediate urea-level with the highest shade levels. This interaction can also be observed for the increment in leaf area during the second half of the experiment (Table 5.8): the increments were generally 50 - 60%, but for the four best treatment combinations they ranged from 76 to 90%.

The curvilinear relation between amount of urea applied and dry weight of the tops (data presented in Table 5.9) was significant ($P < 0.05$) for all three shade levels, but showed a more pronounced optimum for the shade levels 50 and 75%. The data on the dry weights of the tops clearly show that dry matter production was highest for the treatment combination of 10 g urea and 50 or 75% shade. The corresponding treatment combinations with 20 g urea, which attained nearly the same leaf areas, fell back somewhat in respect to dry matter yield, almost to the level of plants which received 30 g urea; dry weights were lowest in the absence of urea. Shade levels made no difference at the highest urea-level, but at 10 or 20 g of urea per plant 50% and 75% shade were advantageous.

The curvilinear relationships between amount of urea applied and leaf-N content (for data see Table 5.10) were statistically significant ($P < 0.05$) but very different for the three shading treatments, and even different for the shading levels 50% and 75%. As such a pronounced difference between 50% and 75% shade is unlikely, no general conclusions can be drawn.

Table 5.8. Mean leaf area per plant 112 days after transplanting (dm^2) and (between brackets) percentage increase (in % of the leaf area 56 days earlier). For statistical data analysis based on regression, see text.

% Shade	Urea, g/plant			
	0	10	20	30
25	4.8 (55)	5.7 (59)	5.8 (53)	5.7 (54)
50	4.7 (59)	7.0 (90)	6.9 (89)	6.2 (59)
75	4.8 (52)	7.0 (82)	6.8 (76)	6.0 (63)

Table 5.9. Dry weight of tops (g/plant) in response to shading and urea application. For statistical data analysis based on regression, see text.

Shading (%)	Urea, g/plant			
	0	10	20	30
25	8.6	14.7	13.1	13.0
50	13.4	23.3	15.6	13.6
75	10.1	19.9	15.0	13.1

Table 5.10.Leaf-N content (%) of the seedlings, 112 days after fertilization. For statistical data analysis based on regression, see text.

% Shade	Urea, g/plant			
	0	10	20	30
25	4.0	4.8	4.4	3.3
50	4.2	3.9	4.1	4.7
75	3.9	4.3	4.6	4.5

Discussion

Whereas the need for shade in mature salak orchards is disputed, it is common wisdom that young salak plants need shade, so it was going to extremes to include a treatment without shade during the dry season in the experiment. The results showed that fairly deep shade is desirable: plants grew almost equally well under 50% and 75% shade, and clearly better than those under 25% shade.

Young plants are generally more susceptible to stress and the main function of shade at the seedling stage appears to be to limit stress. That is why tree nurseries commonly are shaded.

Clove seedlings also do not tolerate full light (Hasan, 1986). The leaves gradually withered and in the end 95% of the plants were killed in the absence of shade. At 50% shade + 2 ppm plant growth hormones (Mixtalol) the death rate was still 24.5%.

Shade and urea interacted in such a way that plant growth was most vigorous in the treatment combinations of the highest shade levels and the intermediate N-levels. This finding is not in agreement with results in coffee and cocoa, plants which – like salak – are at home in the understorey of forests. In cultivation the optimum N-dressing for coffee and cocoa is higher at lower shade levels; moreover the combination of higher light intensity and extra nitrogen leads to higher yields (Beer et al., 1998; Wessel, 1985). However, these findings refer to bearing plants; extra nitrogen enables the leaves to function better and sufficiently long for the plants to sustain the heavier fruit load until the fruit matures.

The salak seedlings apparently require intensive shade and they did in fact respond strongly to nitrogen. That the plants grew less strongly at the highest N-dressings requires explanation, for an abundance of N as such need not depress growth. Perhaps watering was not quite adequate, raising at 20 and 30 g N per plant, hampering uptake by the roots from time to time.

With respect to number of leaves per plant and dry weight of tops, 10 g urea was somewhat better than 20 g. The experiment lasted only 4 months; if an advice for the entire first year after transplanting has to be based on the findings, 50% shade and 20 g urea per plant are recommended, in combination with a generous application of manure before planting.

The number of leaves – 7 per plant 8 months after sowing in the best treatments – reflects a similar leaf appearance rate as the 12 leaves in 13 months from sowing found for Pondoh in Chapter 2.1 and a much higher rate than the rates of leaf production by young Pondoh seedlings in Chapter 5.1.

Conclusions

1. Shade is essential for young salak plants; during the dry season in East Java the reduction of incident light at midday should be 50% or more.
2. Urea application - in addition to manure before transplanting - improved growth, 10 g per plant being best.
3. Plants grew best with 50 or 75% shade in combination with 10 g urea. Extrapolating the findings from 4 months to one year after transplanting, 50% shade, 20 g urea per plant and generous manuring are recommended.

5.3. Fertilization of adult salak palms

Introduction

Most salak gardens in Indonesia are quite old as they are handed down from father to son, sometimes over 4 - 5 generations. The aging plant parts are cut off and decay in the garden, thus recycling the nutrients (Schuiling and Mogea, 1991). Additional fertilizers are rarely used, so it is not surprising that the fertility of the garden soils tested in Chapter 5.1 was generally low, particularly with regard to organic matter, nitrogen and – in some production centres – phosphorus.

According to Kusumainderawati et al. (1992), 'Pondoh' needs about 50 g N, 100 g K, 32 g Ca, and 20 g Mg per plant per year. These authors found the desirable levels of elements in young, fully-extended (but still yellowish) leaves to be 1.7% N, 0.8% K, 1.2% Ca, 0.2% Mg and 0.8% S (P-fertilizer was not included in their study). Moreover, Sholeh et al. (1994) reported that besides N, P, K and Mg, 'Pondoh' also needs micro-elements such as Bo and Zn, respectively, 0.4 g and 1.4 g per plant per year. Their work also indicates that the kind of fertilizer and the rates needed by the palm depend on (1) the soil type, (2) climate, (3) cultivar and (4) age of the plant.

Growers are reluctant to use fertilizer because they believe that inorganic fertilizer harms the soil structure, causes fruit drop, increases the occurrence of split and decaying fruit, and shortens fruit life after harvest. To test the effects on the fruit, an experiment was laid out in an old garden near Malang with different rates of compound fertilizer on plants bearing young bunches.

Materials and methods

The trial was laid out in the garden of a farmer in desa Suwaru, Gondanglegi, kabupaten Malang, from April to September 1994. The palms in the experiment were more than 50 years old. The maximum temperature ranged from 21 to 29 °C. The relative humidity ranged between 81 and 92%.

Salak palms with two bunches (1 - 2 months after hand-pollination) were selected; the number of leaves was between 9 and 13 per plant. Before fertilization withering leaves were cut off and a soil sample from 0 - 45 cm depth was analysed to determine chemical and physical properties. The sampling and analysis procedures were as described in Chapter 5.1.

The NPK-fertilizer used was 'Nitrophoska' 15:15:15. The application rates were: 0, 30, 60, 90, 120, 150, and 180 g per plant. The fertilizer was mixed with the soil, 35 cm from the trunk, 10 cm deep. The experiment used was a randomized block design, each treatment consisted of three plants and was replicated three times. The variables measured were: area of the first leaf to emerge after fertilization, number of good and defective fruits per bunch, and the weight of fruits, flesh, skin and seeds.

Results

Soil properties. The soil properties are presented in Table 5.11. Nutrient contents for this soil, classified as loam, were low to very low, except for soil-K.

Table 5.11. Texture and fertility in the soil layer 0 - 45 cm.

Soil elements	Values	Remarks*
pH	7.0	Neutral
C (%)	1.26	Low
N (%)	0.14	Low
P (mg P/kg)	6.00	Low
K (cmol/kg)	0.36	Medium
Soil particles:		
a. Sand (%)	44	
b. Silt (%)	36	
c. Clay (%)	17	
d. Texture class		Loam

* According to Hardjowigeno (1987).

Emergence and growth of first new leaf. The first leaf to emerge after fertilization attained a significantly larger area at higher fertilizer doses. Rates of 120 to 180 g NPK per plant gave the largest leaf area (1.2 - 1.3 m^2); the control had the smallest leaves. The positive relationship between leaf area and fertilizer rate showed a quadratic response, with an R^2 = 0.817*. The calculated optimum rate is just above 200 g fertilizer per plant (see Figure 5.3).

Leaf nutrient content. Positive linear relationships between fertilizer rates and leaf nutrient content were found (Figure 5.4). N-content of the leaf increased steadily with an increase in fertilizer rate (R^2 = 0.787*). Leaf-K was significantly better at higher fertilizer doses (R^2 = 0.715*). The increment in P-content was less significant (R^2 = 0.225).

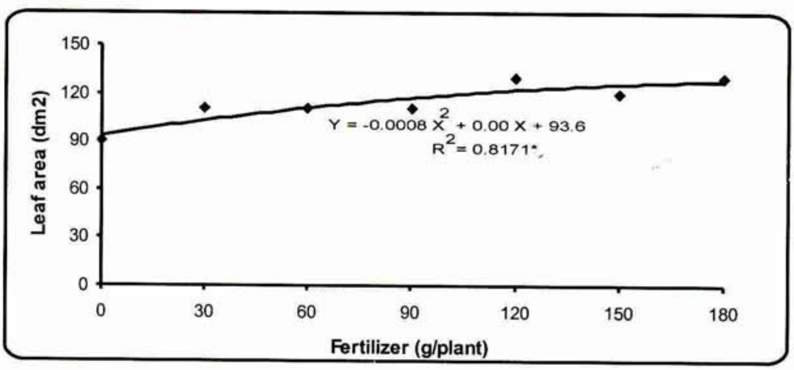

Figure 5.3. Area of the first leaf emerging after NPK application.

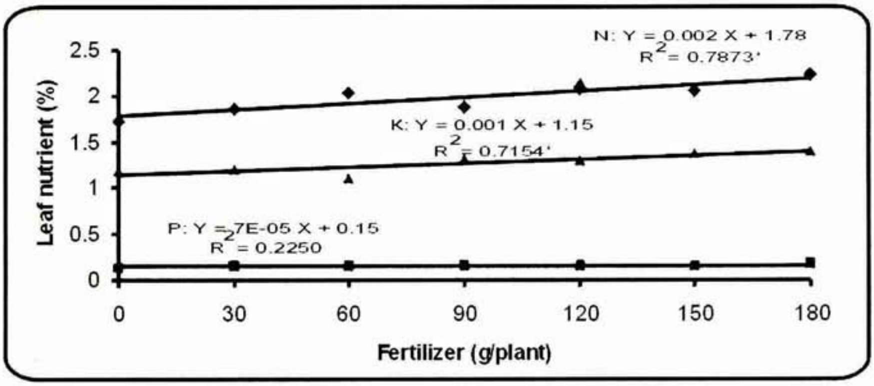

Figure 5.4. Leaf nutrient contents in response to NPK application.

Fruit yield. There was a strong tendency for the fertilizer to increase the number of fruits per bunch. Since fruits had already set before the experiment started, this can only be explained by reduced premature drop of fruits. This is supported by the observation that the numbers of defective fruits (split skin, rotting) declined with an increase in fertilizer rates. Consequently the number of good fruit per bunch showed a more marked response to fertilizer.

The relationship between fertilizer rates and number of fruits per bunch is presented in Figure 5.5. These responses are quadratic. The fertilizer strongly increased fruit numbers per bunch (R^2 = 0.770**), decreased the number of defective fruits (R^2 = 0.795**), and therefore increased the number of good fruits significantly (R^2 = 0.803**).

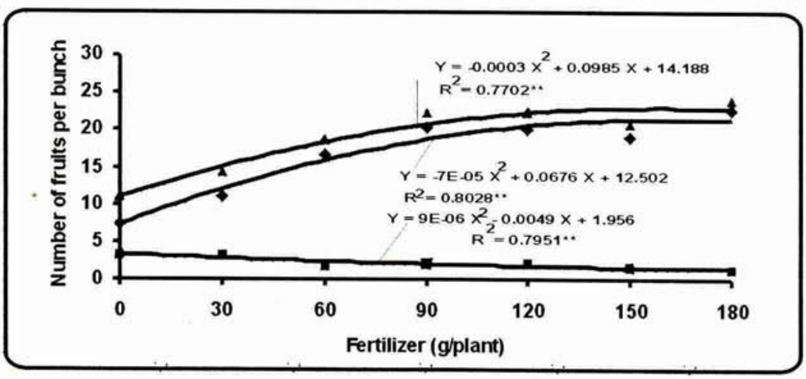

Figure 5.5. Number of fruits per bunch after NPK application.
Squares: number of defective fruits; diamonds: number of good fruits; triangles: total number of fruits.

Table 5.12. Means of weight per fruit and its components, in gram.

Fertilizer (g/plant)	Fruit weight	Flesh weight	Seed weight	Skin weight
0	70.0 a	48.9 a	13.2 a	7.8 a
30	72.3 ab	49.8 a	14.4 a	8.1 a
60	72.3 ab	51.2 a	15.6 a	5.9 a
90	73.8 bc	50.3 a	17.0 a	6.6 a
120	72.6 bc	51.0 a	14.2 a	7.7 a
150	75.6 c	50.2 a	16.6 a	8.7 a
180	75.0 bc	55.9 b	14.3 a	5.1 a

Means in a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different at 5%.

The fertilizer application increased both mean weight per fruit and flesh weight slightly, but did not increase the seed and skin weight (Table 5.12). The rate of 180 g NPK per plant gave the highest flesh weight per fruit, but in general fertilizer tended to increase fruit size.

Discussion

In this experiment the records were taken from organs which had already been formed before the trial started: the measured leaves had been developing for a long time in the bud and the fruits had already set. The full impact of fertilization can only come to light when the enhanced nutrient uptake can influence the growth of new organs from their meristematic beginnings till they mature or senesce. In salak, as in other palms, this takes a long time, because leaves and inflorescences are long-lived. Thus the 6-month experiment lasted much too short a period to fully assess the effect of fertilization; experiments of this kind should be planned to continue for several years.

In spite of the short duration, the experiment does show beneficial effects of fertilization both on growth and yield. Presumably the increased size of leaves and fruits is due to enlargement of the cells, because increased nutrient uptake occurred too late to affect the number of cells. Larger leaf size with higher nutrient levels should favour the growth of the axillary inflorescence and ultimately – when subsequent leaves also grow larger – increase the size of all the plant's organs. This explains the expected long-term effects, referred to above.

The results do not justify the notion held by growers that fertilizer may cause the fruit skin to split and enhances fruit rot and drop; on the contrary. Fruit drop may have been reduced by fertilizer application; it also reduced the numbers of split and rotting fruits. That the long period of cultivation without adding nutrients exhausts soil fertility is indicated by the low soil nutrient levels at the start of the trial. However, the contents of N and P in Table 5.11 are suspiciously low, not only in absolute terms, but also in relation to the organic matter content. Moreover, N, P and K levels for salak gardens in the same area (Suwaru) reported in Chapter 5.1 (Table 5.1) are so much higher, that the low values can hardly be correct.

It is not known what amounts of nutrients are removed from the orchard with the harvested fruit. The edible portion contains 0.4 g protein, 20.9 g carbohydrate, 28 g Ca, 18 g P and 4.2 mg Fe per 100 g (Sosrodihardjo, 1982) and considerable amounts of nutrients are contained in the seeds too. Manures and fertilizers therefore should be applied to attain high yield. The maximum fertilizer dose in this experiment (180 g

15:15:15, or 27 g each of N, P and K) is about half the annual dose recommended by Tjahjadi (1989) and Kusumainderawati et al. (1992) for N; the quantities of P and K correspond to those recommended by Tjahjadi (1989). Considering that this experiment lasted only 6 months, the results are in agreement with these recommendations.

Conclusions

1. Compound fertilizer increased the size of leaves and fruits which were in an advanced stage of growth already; presumably this is due to enlargement of the cells rather than an increase in number of cells.
2. Contrary to what growers believe, fertilizer application reduced the numbers of split and decaying fruits somewhat, associated with an increase in the number of good fruits per bunch.
3. There is a need for long-term on-farm fertilizer experiments, to establish application rates and timing of dressings and to convince growers of the usefulness of fertilizers.

CHAPTER 6: TOWARDS A PATTERN OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SALAK

The experimental work with salak was supplemented by botanical studies and observations on growth and development of the palm. The results are presented in this chapter. Experimental findings described in the previous chapters are recapitulated here in as far as they clarify aspects of growth and development. In combination with published information this material should add up to an outline of growth and development of the salak palm, drawing attention to aspects which require further study.

The discussion here follows the five phases of growth and development distinguished by Tomlinson (1990) and presented in the General Introduction of this thesis:

- embryonic phase
- seedling phase
- establishment phase
- mature vegetative phase and
- reproductive phase.

Because most experiments started with seed, this study contributed most to insight in the seedling and establishment phases; contributions to clarifying aspects of the embryonic phase, the mature vegetative phase and the reproductive phase are modest.

6.1. Embryonic phase

This phase, from the formation of the zygote till the mature seed, was not studied; the pollination experiments (Chapter 3) only served to clarify aspects of the reproductive phase. However, Plates 2 and 3, taken after hand pollination, show the position and the size of embryos of 'Pondoh'. Plate 2 was taken 2 months after pollination; it shows the circular whitish embryos in the endosperms of a fruit with 3 seeds, the endosperm surrounded by the sarcotesta (the seed coat which is to become the fruit flesh; as long as the embryo is transparent 'Pondoh' kernels are edible too). Plate 3 shows the squat conical embryos, 1-1.5 mm in diameter, excised from a mature fruit. In its natural position the base of the cone is visible as the 'eye' of the seed kernel, the tip pointing inwards.

6.2. Seedling phase

The germination process was observed closely in the experiment described in Chapter 4.1, where the endosperm was partly excised and growth of the haustorium and the embryo was followed. In Chapter 5.1 seedlings were raised in different soil types and further observations were made. On the basis of these findings the germination of salak can be described – in the terminology adopted by Tomlinson (1990) – as adjacent-ligular (Figure 6.1):

- the cotyledonary sheath extrudes only 5 -10 mm from the germ pore, so that the plumule is adjacent to the seed;
- the cotyledonary sheath forms an upright tubular extension, the ligule, through which the scale leaf and the first bladed leaf emerge.

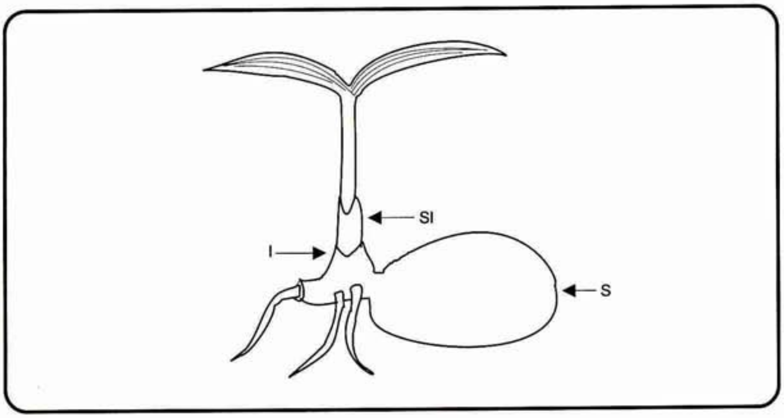

Figure 6.1. Germination in *Salacca zalacca*, adjacent-ligular germination
S: seed kernel, l: ligule, Sl: scale leaf.

About 9 days after sowing the embryo starts to develop, the cotyledonary sheath is being pushed out of the seed kernel. From the base of the extruded cotyledonary sheath the radicle emerges; about 12 days after sowing it is fully extended and the first adventitious roots have already broken through the cotyledonary sheath. Very quickly these secondary roots make the radicle obsolete.

The ligule is 15 - 20 mm long and the first part to appear above-ground, about 19 days after sowing (Plate 4). There is only one scale leaf; it is followed by the first of a series of simple-bladed leaves.

While the developments outside the seed proceed, the distal part of the cotyledon, inside the seed kernel, is modified into a haustorium (Plate 4). The growth of this organ as it digests the endosperm is described in Chapter 4.1. Removal of half of the endosperm greatly reduced the rate of growth. This is once more demonstrated in Plate 5 which shows seedlings with intact and halved endosperm 77 days after sowing. Corner (1966) states that the endosperm of palms does not contain starch or sugar; in that experiment, however, it was shown that starch is the main constituent of the salak endosperm.

The seedling phase comes to an end as soon as the young plant depends on photosynthesis (autotrophic growth) instead of on the mobilization of seed reserves by the haustorium (heterotrophic growth). Chapter 4.1 indicated that this is the case shortly after the first simple leaf matures. The literature and the experiments reported in this study show that the age at which this stage is completed, varies greatly depending on growing conditions; in the poorly lit growth chamber of Chapter 4.1 it took 4 months, for the seedlings in Chapter 5.1 it took only 2.5 months. Chapter 4.2 showed that seed storage for one or more weeks also slows down germination and early growth.

6.3. Establishment phase

By increasing the number of leaves and leaf size, and by producing suckers the seedling establishes itself. The stage is completed when the growing point and the leaves emerging from it reach a more or less constant size. Probably this is also the time at which the rosette stage comes to end and the formation of the trunk starts.

The limited size of the plant during this stage facilitates the study of leaf growth, including phyllotaxis and bud positions in relation to the leaf axils, and the way in which suckering proceeds. The plants in Chapter 2.1 and 2.2 and additional 'Pondoh' seedlings planted simultaneously, were used to clarify these aspects.

Leaf growth stages. Each leaf emerges from the apical growing point through the sheath of the previous leaf and extends as a slender spear, which upon reaching its final length unfolds, after which the tender tissues mature. In some experiments it looked as if the spear, having reached its full length, did not immediately start to unfold. However, because of the sigmoid curve of leaf extension (Corner, 1966; Tomlinson, 1990), measurements of spear length are usually not sufficiently frequent and precise to establish exactly when extension is completed.

The unfolding leaf is light brown with longitudinal green streaks, quite different from the bright to dark green mature leaf. In Chapter 2.1, spear extension took about 33 days for both simple and compound leaves; simple leaves matured on average 48 days after emergence, compound leaves after about 65 days. Chapter 5.1 showed that the duration of the growth stages can vary considerably from one leaf to the next.

Leaf forms. More simple leaves follow the first bladed leaf, formed during the germination phase; in Chapter 2.1 the number of simple leaves ranged from 4 to 7 for the different varieties. In subsequent leaves one or several leaflets are separated from the main blade, so that the leaves are compound. With the increase in size of each new leaf the pinnate character comes more to the fore, but at the tip of the rachis a few leaflets usually remain united, a vestige of the simple leaf blade in the young seedling.

Apart from the larger pair of blades at the tip of the rachis, leaflet size varies little, but near the rachis base there are some smaller leaflets, sometimes including very small ones. The arrangement of the leaflets along the rachis is irregular: they are neither opposite nor alternate; some short or longer sections of the rachis bear no leaflets at all or only a leaflet on one side. The impression is of some – often quite a few – 'missing' leaflets here and there along the rachis.

The irregular distribution of the leaflets along the rachis is a rare feature in palms. It is hard to reconcile with the notion that in the early stages of development the palm leaf has a single, intricately folded lamina, which splits into separate leaflets along certain folds (Tomlinson, 1990).

Rate of leaf production. If the palm grows well each new leaf is larger than its predecessor and the spear of the new leaf will be extending before the previous leaf has matured. The interval between the emergence of successive leaves, the phyllochron, is often expressed as the reciprocal value, the rate of leaf production, e.g. 'one leaf per month' (coconut) or '24 leaves per year' (oil-palm). This suggests a constant phyllochron, characteristic for adult palms of the species.

However, during the seedling establishment stage of salak the phyllochron is far from constant; there is much evidence in the experiments reported in this study that the interval depends on the variety (Chapter 2.1) and growing conditions (Chapter 5.1); moreover there are indications that it increases with leaf size. The highest rates of leaf production, counted from the date of sowing, were observed in 'Pondoh': 7 leaves in 8 months (Chapter 5.4) and 12 leaves in 13 months (Chapter 2.1).

Phyllotaxis. Leaves are usually arranged in spirals along the stem. In some palms the arrangement can be studied by the leaf scars left on the trunk after abscission. In salak, however, the leaf bases adhere tightly to the stem; it has no 'self-cleaning' trunk. Therefore phyllotaxis was determined by dismantling 57 3-year-old 'Pondoh' plants, raised from the same seed lot as used for the experiment in Chapter 2.1 and grown next to it. Fifteen palms were unraveled right up to the growing point. The crown base was cut horizontally and drawn on millimeter paper. Each leaf scar was numbered and its position linked by a line to the centre of the crown.

It was found that the line for the sixth leaf coincided with that of the first, that for the 7th leaf with that for the 2nd, etc. (Figure 6.2 and Plate 6). Hence there are 5 orthostiches and the angle of divergence between the lines for successive leaves is about 144°. Thus salak fits in the Fibonacci series with a phyllotaxis of 2/5. The leaves are arranged in a spiral towards the growing point; out of 57 'Pondoh' plants the spiral ran in anti-clockwise direction in 50 plants or 88%, in a clockwise direction in the remaining 7 plants (12%).

Counting the numbers of exposed leaves in 15 crowns and that of the leaves still enfolded in the bud resulted in 10 - 13 and 5 - 6 leaves per crown, respectively. Thus there were twice as many exposed leaves as unexposed leaves. This is most unusual. Counts in other palms show near-equal numbers; in the few cases where this is not the case, the number of leaves in the bud is larger than the number of exposed leaves (Tomlinson, 1990). However, no microscopical dissection of the apex was attempted; the smallest leaf counted was about 2 mm high (Plate 8) and inside it there should be several more leaf initials.

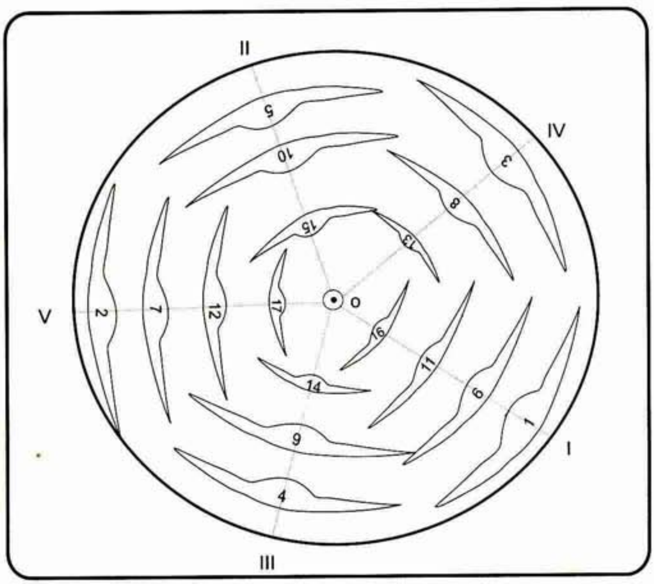

Figure 6.2. Phyllotaxis of salak: 2/5 with angle of divergence 144°.
1, 2, 3,...n: leaf traces, starting with the eldest leaf; I, II, III, IV and V: orthostiche; o: centre of the growing point.

Position of lateral buds. The inflorescence bud is situated in the leaf axil, i.e. inside and near the middle of the leaf base. Each leaf has a bud in that position. The suckers arise from a flange that clasps the stem for about one-third of its circumference; the bud on the flange is positioned on the leaf axis directly below a longitudinal groove in the leaf sheath (the groove being the site where the sheath will be split by the protruding inflorescence spear). The position of both buds in relation to the leaf base is shown in Plate 9.

Thus both the inflorescence bud and the vegetative bud are in line with the leaf axis, the inflorescence bud in the leaf axil, the vegetative bud directly below it. Fisher and Mogea (1980) reported that the sucker is initiated at the base of the leaf sheath, and positioned 130 - 180° away from the median of its subtending leaf. However, because the sucker bud is positioned so close to and in line with the leaf above it, it must be associated with that leaf, the shift with respect to the leaf below it of 130 - 180° corresponding to the 144° angle of divergence between successive leaves.

Suckering. At the age of 15 months, the palms in the experiment described in Chapter 2.1 started suckering; after 33 months the mean numbers of suckers ranged from 3 to 5 among varieties. Growers reduce the number of suckers to 2 per plant, but in a neglected plantation of 3-year-old 'Pondoh' larger numbers of suckers were found, including second-order suckers, resulting in compact clumps or stools of numerous stems.

Flach (1983) reported suckering behaviour of sago palm which belongs to the same tribe as salak. The sago seedling produced suckers in the first year after planting, and suckers may also produce second order suckers. Unchecked natural suckering appears to slow down the growth of the main trunk; therefore farmers practise desuckering to advance the harvest (Flach and Schuiling, 1989). Hence there are many similarities in suckering in the two crops. According to palm architecture models, the salak palm is to be grouped in Tomlinson's model as trees which branch exclusively from the base, subdivision pleonanthic palms (Tomlinson, 1990).

Emerging sucker buds form straight horizontal stems growing radially away from the trunk; the stems are short and soon become erect (see Plate 7). The suckers grow around the base of the trunk in different arrangements (Figure 6.3), the angle of divergence corresponding more or less to the phyllotaxis. The arrangements differ because the order of emergence of the suckers deviates to some extent from the order of emergence of the associated leaves.

6.4. Mature vegetative phase

The mature vegetative phase starts when the growing point has reached its ultimate size, so that the organs it initiates also attain a more or less constant size. Presumably this size varies in response to the growing conditions. Little attention was paid to characteristices of this phase, which is found in older plantations.

Leaf growth. Measurements of leaf growth in 20-year-old palms by an undergraduate student in a fertilizer trial (Indarwati, 1993) are presented in Figure 6.4. The mean length of the first leaf which emerged after the trial started, increased according to a sigmoid growth curve, which seems to be characteristic for palm leaves (Corner, 1966; Tomlinson, 1990.). However, it is hard to explain why this leaf grew to about 4 m length, whereas the previous one, which was already extending when the trial started,

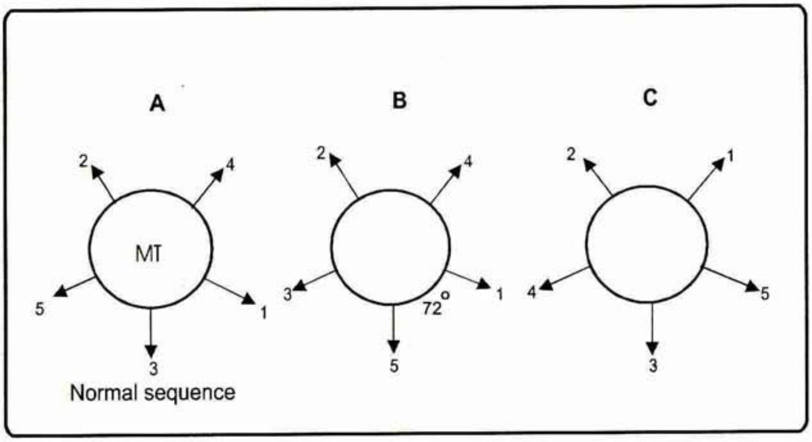

Figure 6.3. Spatial arrangements of suckers around the mother palm.
MT: mother plant; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: sequence of suckers.

reached only 2.25 m. The interval between the emergence of these two leaves – about 30 days – was very short too, the third leaf emerging more than 50 days after the second.

These large differences cannot be attributed to fertilizer application, because the growth curves for leaves in all treatments, including the unfertilized control, were similar and have been averaged in Figure 6.4. At the start of the trial some old leaves were removed to improve access for observations; perhaps this affected growth of the new

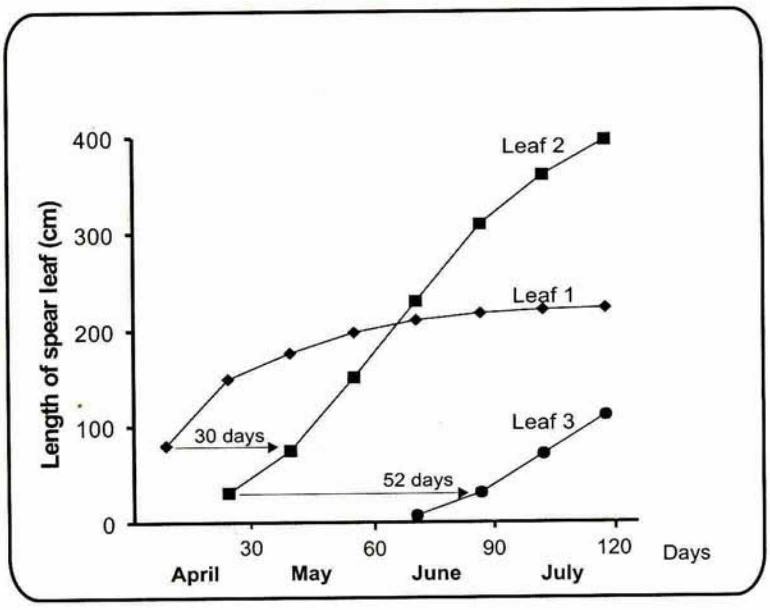

Figure 6.4. Mean growth curves of leaves in a nitrogen application trial; palms about 20 years old.

leaves, the more so as it coincided with the end of the wet season and hence higher light levels in the crop. The findings show that a constant interval between emergence of successive leaves and a constant leaf size cannot be taken for granted; effects of seasons and crop care need to be studied.

Suckering. In the mature vegetative phase the palms seem less inclined to form suckers. This may be a consequence of the dense stand leading to very low light levels in the crop. The suckers, which do emerge, are nearly always at the base of the trunk, i.e. close to the soil surface.

The walking palm. The mature palm has a trunk, which extends slowly. It never reaches a great height because the palm becomes unstable and topples before the trunk is a meter long. The growing point of the fallen palm is turned upright again by one-sided extension growth of the internodes. This is shown by salak 'Bali' from Karangasem (Plate 10). Re-erection starts by the unequal growth of the upper and lower sides of the internodes. The lower side of an internode in the curved portion of the trunk is about twice as long as the upper side (Figure 6.5 and Plate 11). This indicates that the plant is strongly orthotropic.

By repeating the process the salak palm 'walks' the ground, taking one step in 10 to 20 years! Falling over appears to restore the vitality of the palm, perhaps because roots no longer emerge far above ground level. Growers sometimes push trunks over and earth them up to fill gaps in the plantation and to revitalize the palms (Schuiling and Mogea, 1991).

According to Hartley (1988) the oil palm which in cultivation is seen as an erect palm, is in fact procumbent (procumbent: 'lying along the ground') (Jackson, 1971). An erect habit may be maintained for as long as 15 years, but thereafter a procumbent habit is generally assumed though the crown is in an erect position. A trunk lying on the ground over a distance of 7.6 m has been reported.

6.5. Reproductive phase

End of the juvenile phase; dioecy. The reproductive phase starts with the emergence of inflorescences. In Chapter 2.2, the first inflorescence was seen 28 months after sowing; 34 months after sowing flowering plants were found in all varieties and at the end of the experiment, after 42 months, the percentage of flowering plants in different

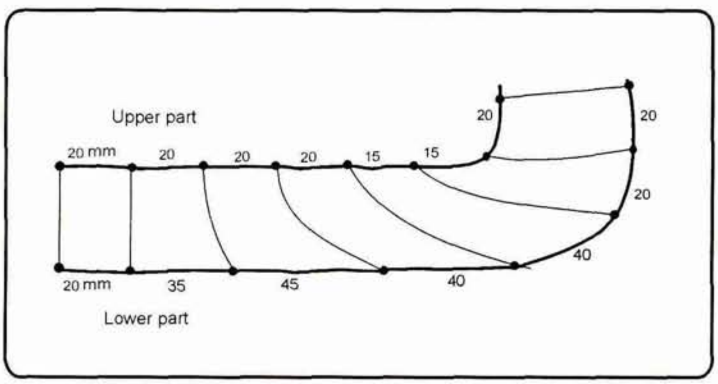

Figure 6.5. Diagram of re-erection growth of a salak stem.

varieties ranged from 50 to 83. These findings confirm those of Tohir (1983), Tjahjadi (1989), and Schuiling & Mogea (1991), indicating that juvenility comes to an end 3 - 4 years from sowing.

The salak palm is usually dioecious. In Chapter 2.2, the ratio of female to male-flowering plant varied greatly for different varieties, but the number of plants was too small to conclude that the ratio indeed deviates from one. Plates 12A and B show a female- and a male-flowering inflorescence, respectively.

Emergence of inflorescences. The inflorescence bud develops into a spear, which splits the basis of its subtending leaf to break into the open, helped by the groove in the leaf base. The leaf bases adhere to the trunk after the leaves have withered or have been cut by the grower. By inspecting whether or not these leaf bases have been split, emergence of the bud in their axil can be ascertained. Representative counts have not yet been made, but preliminary observations suggest that most of the buds do indeed produce an inflorescence.

It was also observed that in a few instances inflorescences emerged from leaves, which had withered long ago. This implies that these buds failed to emerge according to the normal age sequence ('when it was their turn'); it also shows that inflorescence buds can remain viable for a long time. Moreover, there are two harvest peaks in East Java, the major one in December to January, the other in June - July, which suggests seasonal variation in the emergence of inflorescences. This was indeed observed in Chapter 2.2, most inflorescences being issued early in the wet season, corresponding with the June - July harvest period. However, observations in mature stands are needed to clarify the pattern of seasonal flowering. Towards the end of the December - January harvest period many fruit bunches are lost due to decay in the wet season.

Anthesis; pollination. The female-flowering inflorescence consists of 1 - 3 spadices; the male-inflorescence consists of 3 - 10 spadices (Plates 12A-B). Anthesis is reached when the bracts enclosing the spadix open up to expose the flowers. This takes about one month from the time the inflorescence spear breaks through the leaf base. The salak floral unit is a dyad, made up of a pistillate flower and a sterile staminate flower in female-flowering palms (Uhl & Dransfield, 1987).

Pollination appears to be necessary for fruit set (Chapter 3.1). In the experiment described in that section intensive pollination led to heavy fruit set (75% of flowers) and seed set (90% 3-seeded fruit), showing that (almost) all ovules were functional. It follows that imperfect pollination, with respect to intensity, compatibility or timing, can easily become a yield-limiting factor.

All the varieties tested in Chapter 3.2 were self-fertile, but the occurrence of incompatibility factors is suggested by the very poor fruit set of two varieties in the reciprocal crosses, compared to fruit set after selfing.

Fruiting. The mean number of fruits per bunch (i.e. per spadix) varied from 6 - 9 for 'Kacuk' to 6 - 24 for 'Nganjuk' in Chapter 3.2, depending upon the pollinator variety; the 'Suwaru' palms in Chapter 5.4 had 11 - 24 fruits per bunch. Mean weight per fruit, 28 g, was lowest for selfed 'Nganjuk' and highest for 'Kacuk' selfed or pollinated by 'Suwaru' or 'Bangkalan', nearly 100 g (Chapter 3.1); 'Suwaru' fruit in Chapter 5.4 weighed 70 - 75 g on average.

Fruits with 2 or 3 seeds grow larger than single-seeded fruit; the shape of the seed (round or one or two flattened sides) shows whether it came from a single-, double- or triple-seeded fruit (Chapter 3.1; Plates 1A-C and Plate 13).

CHAPTER 7: GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this chapter, aspects of growth and development presented in the previous chapters will be considered first, followed by a discussion of the agronomic implications of the experimental work.

7.1. Growth and development

For this discussion the remaining gaps in the pattern of growth and development are more interesting than those that have been filled in the course of this study. The two main missing links in the pattern refer to the mature vegetative phase:

- the deviations from a steady pattern of growth,
- the scope for enhancing yield.

Palms grow continuously and in the mature vegetative state the terminal bud has reached its ultimate size, the size being influenced by the prevailing growing conditions. This should lead to a steady rate of growth, resulting in the appearance of leaves of near-equal size at fairly constant intervals. Leaf area measurements in palms are indeed based on the supposition that it suffices to measure a single leaf and multiplying its area with the number of leaves to obtain a fair estimate of leaf area per plant. Moreover this leaf area is supposed to be constant, each withering leaf being replaced by an unfolding spear leaf of similar size. The terminal bud of a palm stem is so obviously designed for a steady pace of leaf production, that suckering or flowering/fruiting may be the balancing item in the budget, leaf production being kept steady during a season with adverse growing conditions at the expense of suckering or bunch production.

It is common knowledge that salak in Indonesia has two harvest peaks; there is a clear periodicity in flowering and fruiting. Suckering becomes incidental during the mature vegetative phase. With regard to leaf growth this study shows that the interval between the emergence of successive leaves, the phyllochron, varied substantially in all the experiments with young plants as well as in the only experiment with mature plants where it was measured. And in the latter experiment mean length of two successive leaves was 2.25 and 4.00 m, respectively. Thus the indications are that leaf production is far from steady; if this is confirmed it implies that the periodicity of bunching may not be meant to allow for constant leaf growth.

The periodicity of flowering/fruiting is agronomically most important. It must be caused by seasonal changes in growing conditions, but it occurs in the humid climate of West Java as well as in the monsoon climate of East Java, indicating that no strong environmental trigger is needed.

In pejibaye (*Bactris gasipaes* Kunth) the development of the inflorescence stagnates until the subtending leaf withers. Mogea & Verheij (1991) explained seasonal fruiting of this suckering palm on the basis of accelerated withering of leaves after the dry season sets in, releasing within a short time all the inflorescences in their axils.

In salak peaks and troughs in flowering may result from two mechanisms:

- the flower bud in a leaf axil may remain dormant when it is its turn to develop and grow out at a later stage, even after the subtending leaf has been cut;
- the development of the inflorescence may stagnate at the spear stage, delaying anthesis.

In East Java the dry season normally starts in April and there is a flowering peak in June - July. Possibly improving growing conditions early in the dry season lead to accelerated emergence of flower spears resulting in a peak in bloom. Later in the dry season few inflorescences reach anthesis and those that do bloom, often fail to set fruit (the flowers appear to be desiccated and the male flowers may not release viable pollen). Probably the paucity of flowering is due to both mechanisms listed above.

The start of the wet season in November brings on better flowering with a secondary (minor) peak in December - January. The increase in the number of inflorescences reaching anthesis at this time may result from the resumed growth of delayed spears and belated emergence of flower buds in axils of very old leaf bases.

The interval between the two peaks in bloom is six months and since it also takes about 6 months for a flower to produce a mature fruit, the peaks in bloom and harvest tend to coincide: the main harvest period is December - January and the secondary peak is in June - July.

The above explanation for the occurrence of flowering peaks is only tentative; there clearly is a need to study the periodicity of flowering/fruiting in relation to growing conditions. Such a study can be combined with observations on the variations in leaf size and the phyllochron. If these variations are large it will be worthwhile to also check the variations in numbers of exposed and unexposed leaves in the crown in different seasons. Observations may include a closer look at where, when and why the few suckers in a mature stand emerge.

Whereas periodicity of flowering is the main cause of variations in yield in the course of the year, peaks and troughs in yield do become more pronounced because of events following flowering. The poor fruit set towards the end of the dry season has already been mentioned; in addition there appears to be a considerable loss of bunches due to moulds as the wet season advances. As a result there usually are brief periods without any crop in both seasons. In East Java truly continuous cropping throughout the year is only possible in irrigated gardens, but even irrigation does not completely level out the peaks in flowering/harvesting. In the much wetter conditions of West Java the yield is also highest during the wettest months (October to December, rainfall 200 - 500 mm per month). This was shown in a study of the salak harvest in Manonjaya (Mogea, 1979). This author concluded that heavy rainfall is most detrimental during flowering, leading to decay of spadices.

For the growers the overlap between flowering and maturation of fruit means an accumulation of work; harvesting has to be combined with hand pollination and cutting of the leaves subtending the harvested bunches. The practice of growers to cut ageing leaves may be a factor, which complicates periodicity in salak. Leaves are cut once or twice a year after a harvest peak. Usually the leaf below the harvested bunch is cut. The main reason is to keep the garden accessible, in particular for hand pollination; the leaves are left in the garden as mulch.

The second issue – enhancing yield – requires consideration of the different yield components: which part of the flower buds produces inflorescences, what is the mean number of spadices per inflorescence, how many flowers are found in a spadix, which percentage of the flowers sets fruit, what is the mean weight per fruit? The study contributed quantitative data, but there is still far too little information on most of these components. The issue is complicated because both genotype and environment may affect each component. Moreover, agronomically the question is not how a solitary plant behaves in a given environment, but how much a well-designed salak stand yields per hectare in that environment, the well-designed stand itself having a strong modifying effect on the environment.

This complication is illustrated in the first question: can an inflorescence develop in every leaf axil? Observations in the course of this study suggest that a high percentage does develop, but these observations were made in a fairly dense stand. A solitary plant may be more inclined to produce suckers than a plant in a well-designed stand, and increased suckering may impede development of flower buds, in particular the ones in the axils of leaves associated with a sucker. If there is indeed antagonism between suckering and floral development, the fruit yield of a plant growing under considerable competitive stress in a dense stand may be higher than that of a solitary plant of the same age!

The number of spadices in an inflorescence appears to be fairly stable, although within a female-flowering inflorescence it can vary from 1 to 3. The spadices are about the same size and the number of flowers in a spadix also does not seem to vary much.

The importance of adequate pollination was supported by the experiments in this study, but where all three stigmata of a flower were well-pollinated percentage fruit set and percentage seed set were quite high. It can be concluded that fruit set and seed set need not substantially limit yield. Fruit size did increase with the number of seeds per fruit. However, whereas in Chapter 3.1 fruit size improved with increased seed set in spite of a doubling of the number of fruit per spadix, in Chapter 3.2 there was evidence of competition between fruits, heavy fruit set resulting in smaller fruit size. This suggests that growing conditions must be favourable to limit competition between fruits at high yield levels.

Once the deviations from a steady growth pattern have been elucidated and the periodicity of flowering/fruiting has been explained, this information can be combined with the extent to which each of the yield components limits yield, in order to estimate potential yield of salak in production centres in Indonesia. The same information will be crucial in identifying growing techniques which can most enhance yield, perhaps including the best time to carry out these techniques to take advantage of the observed periodicity.

7.2. Agronomy

Climate and soil. Salak shows adaptation to varying climatic conditions, from the humid parts of Sumatera and West Java with 2000 - 3100 mm (Mogea, 1979; Anonymous, 1977) fairly well-distributed rainfall, to the monsoon climate of East Java, where rainfall is less than 2000 mm per year and limited to a 5 - 7-month wet season. In Bali the dry season is even more severe, but the Balinese salak is grown on the mountain slopes at elevations up to 400 m (Machfoedi, 1953) and in Turi up to 600 m (Lahiya, 1974), where temperatures are lower and rainfall may be higher. Salak is usually planted in areas with a high water table and even along river banks, but salak gardens are also found where the roots cannot reach the water table. Few growers apply irrigation water, but they plant salak under temporary and permanent shade trees.

In the experiment in which different shade levels were compared during the dry season, fully exposed young seedlings were killed and it was concluded that the shade above young plants should reduce incident light at midday to 50% or less.

There is also much variation in soil types in the salak production centres, including Inceptisols with a high clay content; the Kersikan clay cracks during the dry season. When 'Pondoh' seedlings were grown in pots filled with soils from 5 distinct areas, growth was poorest and the top:root ratio lowest in the 2 soils with the highest clay content. Thus heavy-textured soils may be less suitable for salak. All five soils were low to very low in organic matter and nitrogen; the phosphorus levels ranged widely and the potassium and calcium contents were fair to high; the pH ranged from 6 to 7.7. Presumably growth on heavy soils can be much improved by raising organic matter content to improve soil structure; in any case in this study the response to farmyard manure was always positive.

The soil of the Jatikerto research station, where most of the experiments reported in this study were conducted, proved less suited to salak: it has the heaviest texture and is lower in organic matter, N and P than any of the other soils which were analysed. K-content on the other hand is very high, but fixation may reduce the availability of this nutrient.

Most growers in Indonesia do not apply manure or fertilizer to salak; they think that fertilizers have adverse effects on fruit quality and usually only recycle the ageing leaves, which are cut and left to decompose in the garden. However, both experiments with nutrient application in this study stimulated growth and raised leaf nutrient levels, including the experiment in a mature garden where fruit grew larger and losses due to split and/or decaying fruit were reduced in response to compound fertilizer.

The limited scope of the fertilizer experiments (basically single applications, observations limited to a few leaves and bunches which had already been formed before the treatments were applied) leaves the question about quantities, frequency and timing of fertilizer applications in orchards open. Nevertheless the results show that deficiencies in organic matter and major nutrients are common.

The response to nitrogen needs to be studied further in connection with soil moisture; the extent of potassium fixation should also be investigated.

Propagation, cropping system. Salak seed is recalcitrant. Seeds should be sown fresh; viability decreases sharply, even after short periods of storage, as shown in Chapter 4.2. To transport seed to distant destinations a successful storage method should be found. The principle seems to be to establish a favourable balance between seed moisture content and ambient humidity. Charcoal is a good storage medium because it maintains a higher humidity around the seed, slowing down dehydration. Other materials may also be used, but substrates should be fine-textured and able to absorb water vapour. Before application the substance has to be exposed to attain equilibrium moisture content with the ambient air.

Seedlings are usually raised in a nursery. Until the first leaf has matured seedling growth depends on reserves stored in the seed. So if seedlings are transplanted before that stage, care should be taken not to detach the seed. If all the endosperm is excised (Chapter 4.1) the tiny embryo is still able to survive for a few days. This suggests that embryos can be cultured in artificial media, making embryo conservation possible for breeding purposes.

In Indonesia salak is intercropped with other perennials such as banana, rambutan, langsat, duku, durian, coconut, etc. It is generally accepted – and this was confirmed in this study – that shade is essential for young plants, i.e. in the nursery and in the first year(s) after planting. However, in a well-designed mature stand mutual shading by the salak plants is so intense that the importance of shade trees is doubtful. For one thing competition from the salak is too strong for most plants which are not much taller (e.g. banana) or not well-established (e.g. young fruit trees) to survive. Moreover, growers in Malang never replace dying shade trees in mature salak gardens. Leaves from shade trees tend to get trapped in the heart of the palms, where it is hard to remove them because of the spines. Therefore the growers prefer shade trees with fine leaves such as the leguminous Sesbania ('turi') and Parkia ('petai'), rather than large-leaved trees such as rambutan, durian etc. On the other hand it is not clear whether the debris accumulating in the heart of the palms is harmful.

The question about the need for permanent shade is related to the problem of designing a good salak plantation. Growers tend to plant closely, say 2 x 2 m for 'Pondoh', under the shade of established trees, supplemented by temporary shade provided by banana or *Sesbania grandiflora*. The young salak plants grow progressively and after about 1.5 years growth is further accelerated by the emergence of suckers; with the closure of the stand about one year later the number of suckers reaches a maximum.

Growers reduce the number of suckers to reduce competition with the main crown and to maintain access to the plantation. From the age of 3 years flowering starts and growers remove most male-flowering plants. By the time the roguing of male plants is completed the temporary shade has succumbed to the competition of the salak and a stand with gaps and crowded areas remains, because of the irregular distribution of the male plants and the scattering of permanent shade trees. If initially half the plants were male and after roguing one in ten plants are male, the mean spacing has increased from 4 to 7.2 m^2 per palm. The irregular distribution of males implies that some palms are still growing at 4 m^2, most have about 7 m^2, but there are also some enjoying more than 10 m^2. By thinning female plants in crowded parts the spacing can be evened out to the extent that the large majority of the plants has an area of 7 - 10 m^2.

Growers usually reduce the largest gaps in young gardens by planting 3 - 5 seeds close together where there is space for a plant; as soon as the sex is known all but one female plant are removed. In older gardens gaps occur only occasionally and growers fill them by planting suckers.

The current trend to propagate 'Pondoh' vegetatively makes it possible to plant at the optimum spacing, e.g. 3.5 x 2.5 m, since roguing is no longer needed. In so doing, the male pollinator plants can be sited strategically, e.g. as the first plant(s) in each row; the grower can collect the male-flowering spadices at anthesis and move down the row for hand pollination. It has been estimated (Ashari, 1993) that 30% of the annual production costs are for hand pollination, so improvements in efficiency are very welcome. In this study it was found (Chapter 4.1) that the pollinator variety may strongly influence both yield and fruit quality. If a superior pollinator for 'Pondoh' is identified, it should also be propagated vegetatively to fix its superior characters and to make sure that all plants are male.

Overall, it appears that understanding of deviations from a steady growth rate, and in particular the reason for periodic flowering, as well as determining the scope for enhanced yield are the important aspects to be considered. Concentrated flowering and fruiting during two short periods of the year increases the efficiency of hand pollination, harvesting and marketing. Possibly yield per plant will be higher if this periodicity can be eliminated, but the cost of pollination, harvesting and marketing will go up substantially if a few bunches have to be dealt with each week of the year. Manipulation of periodicity to advance or retard the peak harvest seasons would be much more advantageous, because it would combine high off-season prices with high labour productivity.

These considerations about a well-designed stand and periodicity indicate that there is great scope to make salak growing more profitable. However, if vegetative propagation has to be generally adopted, more efficient systems of layering suckers need to be developed or alternative propagation methods – e.g. tissue culturing – must be pursued. In the existing gardens the scope for improvements in pollination needs to be investigated. The percentage of male palms varies from 2 to 20, and growers too often depend on pollen supplied by colleagues, partly because anthesis of the staminate spadices does not always coincide with that of the pistillate spadices. The whole pollination process must be better managed. This includes pollen storage, application techniques, frequency of pollination and timing in relation to anthesis. In date palms dustblowers are used for pollination (Nixon and Carpenter, 1978) and these might also be tried in salak gardens.

Varieties. The growers' preference for 'Pondoh' is based largely on the fruit quality of this variety. Unfortunately 'Pondoh' could not be included as one of the bearing varieties in the comparison of pollinators (Chapter 3.2), so that the fruitfulness and fruit quality of 'Pondoh' could not be compared with other varieties in this study.

However, in the variety trial (Chapter 2.1) a few other characteristics of 'Pondoh' came to light:

- it grows less vigorously than other varieties because the leaves are smaller; so more plants can be accommodated per ha;
- leaves emerge in a rapid succession, leading to a potentially large number of bunches per year.

The combined effect of more plants per ha and more bunches per plant should substantially enhance yield per ha. Thus 'Pondo' may prove to be a high-yielding variety as well as a high quality fruit! Moreover, the smaller plant size makes 'Pondoh' easier to manage in cultivation. These advantages can be quite important. The 'Pondoh' fruit's price per kg and the price of a marcotted sucker of 'Pondoh' in 1996 were almost comparable i.e. Rp. 2,000.00 and Rp. 1,750.00 (Kasijadi, 1996). To improve the success rate in marcotting, farmers in Bali, Malang and Pasuruan use shallot extract which is cheaper than the growth substance IBA (Kasijadi et al., 1999). Recently, a type of 'Pondoh' which has thick flesh has been found to thrive at elevations of 400 to 600 m a.s.l. (Purnomo and Sudaryono, 1994).

The Balinese salak also has a reputation for fruit quality. Moreover it is monoecious which is a great advantage. Unfortunately the plants did not thrive in the variety trial at Jatikerto; perhaps the plants lacked vigour due to the seeds being too old. In Chapter 4.2 it was shown that if seeds are not sown fresh, the growth rate of the seedlings is reduced, even after storage in the best media. This salak type deserves a better comparison with the best varieties in Java. Salak 'Gula Pasir' is the sweetest among the Balinese salak types, found only at elevations above 650 m a.s.l. by Purnomo and Sudaryono (1994).

Purnomo and Dzanuri (1996) crossed 'Pondoh' with 'Gula Pasir', and reported a heterosis effect in the progenies, but a further assessment of the inheritance of specific traits – in particular the monoecy of the Balinese parent – is still awaited. Evaluation of the salak varieties has in fact only just begun. In view of the preference for 'Pondoh' and the increasing vegetative propagation of this variety, the likely development is that clones of 'Pondoh' will be named and compared in experiments. The consequence might be that the other varieties are phased out before their characteristics have been assessed, leading to a narrowing of the gene pool. To avoid this negative effect, in situ or ex situ conservation of varieties should be employed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Climatological data of Sleman (1988-1993).

Months	Rainfall (mm/month)	Temperature (°C)	Relative humidity (%)
January	413.5	26.2	85
February	387.3	26.2	85
March	319.0	26.9	82
April	250.6	27.0	83
May	119.3	27.7	80
June	85.3	27.2	77
July	37.5	26.2	74
August	72.5	26.0	78
September	31.2	26.2	81
October	127.0	26.4	82
November	264.5	26.2	84
December	327.0	26.2	83

Source: Agric. Depart. of Sleman regency.

Appendix 2. Climatological data of Jatikerto (1978-1980).

Months	Rainfall (mm/month)	Evaporation (mm/day)	Temperatures (°C)		Relative humidity (%)	
			Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.
January	303.7	4.8	31.1	21.4	98.7	58.7
February	241.3	5.5	30.4	21.2	100.0	56.3
March	206.3	4.8	31.1	21.3	100.0	57.3
April	159.0	5.5	31.4	21.7	99.8	60.3
May	124.3	4.1	31.9	21.1	98.5	58.5
June	68.0	4.0	31.7	20.4	99.3	48.0
July	40.0	4.0	30.7	19.5	98.0	36.0
August	67.0	4.0	30.8	19.8	96.7	42.3
September	56.0	4.8	32.1	20.8	96.3	43.0
October	155.3	4.5	31.6	21.6	97.3	44.0
November	220.7	4.0	31.0	21.8	97.7	52.3
December	306.5	4.9	31.1	22.2	100.0	56.0

Source: Widianto et al. (1988).

Appendix 3. Glossary of terms.

Abaxial	on the side facing away from the stem or axis.
Acaulescent	lacking visible stem or stemless.
Adaxial	on the side facing the stem or axis.
Adjacent-ligular	in germination, the cotyledonary sheath axis is unextended, the ligule is positioned close to the seed.
Adventitious	in root, the roots emerging after the death or malfunction of the primary root.
Alternate	in leaf, one leaf at each node of stem, leaf face towards the stem. in stamina, between the petals
Androecium	the male element; the stamina as a unit of the flower.
Anemophilous	wind-pollinated.
Anther	the terminal part of the male organs (stamina), containing the pollen.
Anthesis	the time when pollen shedding takes place.
Apex	the growing point of a stem or root.
Apical	at the tip of any structure.
Apomixis	reproduction by seed formed without sexual fusion.
Armed	bearing some form of spines.
Axillary	borne in an axil.
Axis	the point or central line of development of a plant or organ.
Basal	borne at or near the base.
Basipetal	developing from the apex toward the base.
Bifid	cleft into two parts at the tip.
Bipinnate	the primary divisions (pinnae) of a pinnate leaf being themselves pinnate.
Bract	modified leaf associated with the inflorescence.
Bracteole	a small bract borne on a flower stalk, often present even when the flower is essentially sessile.
Calyx	the outermost or lowermost whorl of floral organs (the sepals)
Carpel	the single unit of the gynoecium.
Catkin	an inflorescence having a long stalk.
Cirrate	bearing a cirrus.
Cirrus	climbing organ, structurally a whiplike extension of the leaf rachis.
Clustered	with several stems.
Corolla	the second whorl of flower organs (the petals) inside or above the calyx.
Costapalmate	intermediate shape between palmate and pinnate leaves.
Cotyledonary sheath	extension of the cotyledon in germination, which carries the embryo out of the seed kernel.
Crown	the cluster of leaves borne at the tip of a palm stem.
Decumbent	reclining or lying on the ground.
Desa	village.
Dichotomous	stem, equally forking.
Dimorphic	with two different forms.
Dioecious	male and female flowers borne on different plants.
Distal	farthest from the place of attachment.
Distichous	arranged in two ranks.
Dyad	a pair.
Elliptic	oblong with regularly rounded ends.
Emarginate	distinctly notched at the apex
Embryo	the rudimentary plant present in a seed.

Endocarp	the innermost layer of the fruit wall.
Endosperm	in palms, the nutritive body of a seed.
Entire	undivided.
Eophyll	in a seedling, the first leaf with a blade.
Epicarp	the outermost layer of the fruit wall.
Fibrous	composed of or including fibres.
Flabellate	fan-shaped or wedge-shaped.
Flagellum	a whiplike climbing organ derived from an inflorescence, bearing reflexed spines.
Funiculus	the stalk of an ovule.
Glabrous	smooth, lacking hairs.
Gynoecium	the female element; the pistil as a unit of the flower.
Hapaxanthic	individual stems flower once only and then die.
Haustorium	structure which contains reserves used in the germination process of the palm seed
Hermaphrodite	flowers having both male and female elements.
Imbricate	overlapping like tiles.
Indeterminate	not bearing a terminal flower or other organs, capable of extending the axis in which it is borne.
Induplicate	V-shaped in cross section.
Inflorescence	one peduncle containing many flowers or florets.
Infrafoliar	borne below the leaves.
Interfoliar	borne among the leaves.
Internode	the space or part of a stem between the attachments of two leaves.
Kabupaten	regency.
Kecamatan	district.
Kotamadya	medium city.
Lanceolate	narrow, tapering at both ends, the basal end often broader.
Ligule	an organ preceding the growth of the scale leaf.
Linear	several times longer than wide.
Locule	the cavity in which the ovule is borne.
Mesocarp	the middle layer of the fruit wall, usually fleshy.
Micropyle	an aperture through the integuments of the ovule.
Midrib	the central or largest vein of a leaf.
Monocarpic	fruiting once then dying completely.
Monoecious	describing a plant bearing both male and female flowers.
Monopodial	with a single main axis.
Node	the stem level at which a leaf is attached.
Obovoid	egg-shaped, broader distally.
Ontogeny	the development of an individual through its various stages.
Orthostiche	in phyllotaxis, a vertical row.
Ovary	the ovule-bearing part of the pistil.
Palmate	leaf lacking a rachis.
Pedicel	a floral stalk.
Peduncle	the lower unbranched part of an inflorescence
Perfect flower	or hermaphrodite, a flower with functional male and female organs.
Perianth	the sepals and petals together.
Petal	one unit of the inner floral envelope or corolla.

Pinna	a leaflet of a pinnate leaf.
Pinnate	leaflets are borne on a rachis.
Pistil	female flower part, comprising ovary, style and stigma.
Pistillate	bearing a pistil (gynoecium).
Pit	a cavity formed by united bracts, enclosing flowers.
Phyllochron	the interval between the emergence of successive leaves.
Pleonanthic	stem capable of flowering continuously, flowering not leading to the death of the stem.
Plumule	the primary bud of an embryo or germinating seed.
Procumbent	lying along the ground.
Proximal	nearest to the attachment.
Rachilla	the branch that bears the flowers.
Rachis	the main axis of a compound leaf or inflorescence.
Radicle	the first root formed by the embryo.
Reduplicate	in leaf, inversely V-shaped in cross section.
Remote-ligular	in germination, the cotyledonary sheath axis is extended, the ligule is positioned at some distances from the seed.
Rhizome	underground diageotropic stem.
Rosette	a group of leaves arising closely together from a short stem, forming a radiating cluster on or near the ground.
Rudimentary root	a root which is unable to grow further.
Sarcostesta	a fleshy layer developed from the outer seed coat.
Scale leaf	unbladed leaf.
Sessile	without a stalk.
Sheath	the base of the leaf encircling partly or entirely the stem.
Shrub	a woody plant which branches from the base, there is no trunk.
Solitary	single stem, lacking suckers.
Spadix	a flower cluster.
Spear	folded leaf formed as a sword.
Stamen	the male organ of a flower.
Staminate	bearing a stamen.
Stigma	the pollen receptor of the pistil.
Stool	several stems rise from the same mother plant.
Sucker	horizontal branch originating from the trunk base.
Unisexual	of one sex, having stamens or pistils only.
Vein	the visible strands of conducting and strengthening tissues running through a leaf.
Whorl	the arrangement of leaves, petals, stamina so they are at the same level in an encircling ring.
Zoophilous	animal-pollinated.

SUMMARY

This study of the salak palm, *Salacca zalacca* (Gaertner) Voss, was started in 1989. Most of the experimental work has been conducted in the laboratories and the Jatikerto research station of Brawijaya University, Malang, and in farmers' orchards in East and Central Java. Additional information has been obtained by visits to West Sumatra and Bali. In most of the experiments the popular cv. Pondoh from Sleman (Central Java) has been used. 'Pondoh' is now quite well distributed in Indonesia.

The General Introduction (Chapter 1) argues that Indonesia requires more fruit to meet nutritional requirements of the population as well as to earn foreign exchange from export. This is a matter of raising productivity rather than mere area expansion, because to enable people to eat enough fruit the price should be lowered. Salak so far has received little attention from science and since it is very much an Indonesian crop it is in the first place up to Indonesian scientists to improve its productivity. The introduction continues with an overview of growth and development of palms, briefly outlines the genus *Salacca* and general aspects of salak growing in the country. The chapter closes with an outline of the thesis work and its limitations, in particular the short duration of most trials and the scarcity of experiments with mature palms.

Agronomic field experiments are presented in Chapters 2 to 5. In Chapter 6 botanical observations are combined with published information to outline a model of growth and development of salak. Chapter 7 contains the general discussion.

Chapter 2 presents the only long-term experiment, a variety trial which was followed from sowing till the end of juvenility, a period of 3½ years. Seedlings of 'Black Bali' were stunted; perhaps the seed of this monoecious variety was too old. The remaining 6 varieties produced on average 4 - 7 simple leaves, subsequent leaves being compound. 'Pondoh' plants (sown 3 months later than the other varieties) produced 12 leaves in the first 13 months, the other varieties 9.5 - 11 leaves in 16 months. 'Pondoh' leaves were smallest, but leaf area per plant (0.66 m^2 after 13 months) increased faster than in the other varieties. At the age of 15 months suckering started; at 19 months the average was 2, at 33 months 4 suckers per plant, 'Yellow Suwaru' having relatively few suckers. Farmers desucker to limit the density of the stand and to facilitate access for pollination.

The first plant flowered afer 28 months. At the age of 34 months several plants (had) flowered in all 6 varieties, and 42 months from sowing the percentage of flowering plants ranged from 50 to 84 (25% for the younger 'Pondoh' plants). The female:male ratio was 1.4; more extreme ratios were found in some varieties, but the numbers of plants were too small to exclude a sex ratio of 1.

The facts that leaf area measurements are cumbersome and of doubtful value because of the unusual and irregular leaf shape of salak, led to a comparison of different methods to assess leaf area. Two direct area measurements, using the photometer or a square centimeter grid (the area being given by the number of grid points covered by leaflets), were compared with estimates based on measured leaf attributes such as petiole diameter, rachis length and number of leaflets, etc. It turned out that these three attributes are good predictors of leaf area, whereas a method based on measuring length and width of the largest leaflet – used successfully in some other palms – did not yield a predictive value for salak leaves. The study did not result in a practical non-destructive method to estimate leaf area, but growers cut the senescing leaves and these may provide suitable samples for measurement.

Salak is pollinated by insects but in Java hand pollination is necessary for good yields and this labour-intensive work accounts for 30% of the production costs. Chapter

3 describes two pollination experiments. The first involved hand pollination of intact stigmata of bagged spadices in comparison with stigmata from which one or two of the three lobes had been excised, and with unpollinated controls. The results showed that pollination is necessary for fruit set and that most, if not all, ovules are functional: with intensive pollination 75% of the flowers set fruit and 90% of the fruit contained 3 seeds. This treatment more than doubled fruit number per bunch as compared with bunches in which stigmata lobes had been excised; nevertheless fruits were larger, showing that in a good orchard, competition between fruits in a bunch can be avoided.

In the other experiment 'Nganjuk' plants at Nganjuk were selfed or cross-pollinated with pollen from four other varieties; likewise 'Kacuk' plants near Malang were selfed or crossed with five other varieties. In both localities the pollinator strongly influenced yield, qualitatively (longevity, chemical constituents of the flesh) as well as quantitatively (numbers and weight of fruits per bunch, edible portion). The reciprocal crosses of 'Nganjuk' and 'Kacuk' suggested that incompatibility factors occur. The work reported in this chapter shows that intensive pollination is essential and that the choice of the pollinator can be an important factor.

Chapter 4 describes experiments regarding germination. In the first one it was studied how partial or total excision of the endosperm affects the haustorium and growth of the embryo. In the second experiment germination was studied after seed storage for 0 - 4 weeks in ambient air, sawdust or charcoal. In spite of complete removal of the endosperm the embryo gained fresh weight, but died within 12 days. Germination percentage was somewhat reduced and seedling growth retarded by halving the endosperm, but much more so where the endosperm had been cut longitudinally than in case of a transverse cut. In seedlings with intact endosperm the haustorium grew steadily and finally completely filled the space where the endosperm had been. Of the initial starch reserves in the endosperm little was left after 18 weeks and about half had been converted into sugar/energy, the remainder being recovered in the haustorium and shoot plus root. Eighteen weeks after sowing dry weight of the seedlings slightly exceeded the initial weight, showing that photosynthesis more than compensated the respiratory losses.

Salak seed is recalcitrant and the second experiment suggested a close correlation between seed moisture content and ability to germinate. Only 60% of the seeds germinated after storage in ambient air for 1 week; after 4 weeks storage germination failed completely. Storage in sawdust and particularly in charcoal helped greatly to sustain viability and the rate of growth of seedlings, but 100 days after sowing every extra week of storage was still reflected in smaller leaf areas.

The experiments in Chapter 5 dealt with environmental factors: soils, mineral nutrition and shading. Seedling growth was followed in a pot experiment comparing soils from four production centres with the soil of the Jatikerto research farm. This latter soil had a heavier texture, higher field capacity, and even lower organic matter and nitrogen contents than the other soils. P-content ranged from low to high, K from fair to very high and Ca-content was fair to high in all soils. Germination was delayed in the heavy-textured soils; subsequent growth appeared to be increasingly affected by differences in fertility, growth in the heavy, infertile Jatikerto soil being most retarded. Organic matter content may have played a large role in seedling growth, because it was correlated with N- and P- content in the soil and nutrient levels in the leaves.

In a factorial experiment with 4-month-old seedlings combining levels of shading and urea application, shade proved essential for survival; during the dry season in East Java the reduction of incident light at midday should be 50% or more. Growth was best under 50 - 75% shade in combination with 10 g urea per plant.

In an old salak garden palms with 2 bunches, 1 - 2 months after pollination, were treated with 0 - 180 g compound fertilizer. The experiment lasted only 6 months, but nevertheless the fertilizer led to an increase in size of new leaves and of the fruit in the selected bunches. Also, contrary to what growers contend, fertilizer application resulted in more good fruits and fewer split and decaying fruits per bunch.

In all three experiments, the effects of the environmental factors were measured on leaves and bunches which had already been formed before the treatments were applied. To assess the full impact of these factors the experiments should have been planned for much longer periods, preferably several years. Nevertheless the short-term results confirm that shade is essential for young plants. Moreover, generous applications of manure are recommended, and N-dressings for young plants. In further studies of these environmental factors, more attention should be paid to the role of soil moisture.

The five phases of growth and development, which are distinguished in palms, are the framework for the pattern of growth and development of the salak palm, outlined in Chapter 6.

The embryonic phase, from the formation of the zygote till the mature seed, was not investigated, but Plates 2 and 3 show the position of the embryos in the young fruit and shape and size of embryos from a mature fruit.

With respect to the seedling phase the germination process was given much attention. The timing and sequence of the emergence of the different organs was studied, as well as the mobilization of reserves in the endosperm by the haustorium and their incorporation in shoot and roots. The duration of the seedling phase was shown to vary greatly depending on growing conditions and duration and medium of seed storage.

The establishment phase lent itself to studying aspects of leaf growth, the morphology of the crown and suckering. The leaf growth stages from emergence and spear growth till unfolding and maturation were described and timed in several experiments; the duration can vary considerably from one leaf to the next. Leaves are simple in the young seedling but leaves emerging later are pinnate and the number of leaflets increases till the phase comes to an end. The size of the leaflets varies greatly and their arrangement along the rachis is most unusual. The phyllochron is not as steady as is generally supposed to be the case in palms; it was shorter in 'Pondoh' than in other varieties. Healthy growth implies that each new leaf is larger than the previous one and emerges before the previous one matures.

The phyllotaxis was shown to be 2/5, the angle of divergence of successive leaves being 144°. Lateral buds were found in line with the leaf axis, one in the axil (the inflorescence bud) and one just below the insertion of the leaf sheath (the sucker bud). Three-year-old 'Pondoh' crowns had 10 - 13 expanded leaves; 5 - 6 leaf initials were counted in the bud, the smallest one being 2 mm high; further microscopic dissection should clarify whether the number of initials is about equal to the number of unfolded leaves, as is the case in most palms which have been studied.

Suckers stand on short horizontal stems radiating from the mother stem. Growers leave only 2 suckers per stool, but in a neglected 'Pondoh' garden numerous suckers were found, including second-order suckers.

In the mature vegetative phase the palm crown has reached its ultimate size and in many species extension of the trunk is the only obvious change in vegetative features. In salak the palm soon becomes unstable when the trunk extends and topples over. The way in which the tip becomes erect again was studied by measuring internode length. In this way the palm 'walks', taking about 10 years for each step and rejuvenating itself in the process.

Measurements of leaf growth in a 20-year-old garden revealed large differences in leaf size (2.25 - 4 m long) and in days till emergence of the next leaf (30 - 52 days). The observations followed cutting of old leaves by the grower and coincided with the start of the dry season, but whatever the explanation may be, they show that even in the mature vegetative phase constant leaf size and phyllocron cannot be taken for granted.

In commercial gardens few suckers are formed in this phase, presumably because the dense stand leads to very low light levels in the crop.

The start of the reproductive phase is indicated by the emergence of the first inflorescence. The inflorescence bud develops into a spear and splits the base of the subtending leaf to break into the open. Because the leaf bases adhere to the trunk, slits in old leaf bases show which buds produced an inflorescence. Inflorescence buds do not necessarily develop in the order in which the leaves were formed. No convincing explanation could be proposed for the seasonality of flowering, resulting in a major and a minor harvest peak in the course of the year.

The heavy fruit set and seed set following intensive pollination showed that imperfect pollination, with respect to intensity, compatibility or timing, can easily become a yield-limiting factor. Yield records in the experiments show 6 - 9 fruits per bunch for 'Kacuk', 6 - 24 for 'Nganjuk' and 11 - 24 fruits per bunch for 'Suwaru'. Mean weight per fruit ranged from 28 g for selfed 'Nganjuk' to nearly 100 g for selfed 'Kacuk'; 'Suwaru' fruit averaged 70 - 75 g.

Because Chapter 6 already recapitulates much of the experimental work of the foregoing chapters, the general discussion in Chapter 7 focusses on the major gaps in our understanding of salak, both botanically and agronomically.

Botanically the deviations of a steady growth pattern in mature palms are most intriguing; if they prove as large as suggested by the few instances in this thesis work and can be adequately explained, this will improve the understanding of the growth of palms generally. One such deviation, the seasonal flowering peaks, is of direct agronomic importance; an explanation – starting with identification of the stage at which the development of the inflorescence stagnates – is badly needed, the more so if it provides clues enabling growers to extend or shift the harvest periods.

The other botanical issue – also of obvious agronomic importance – is to clarify in how far different components limit potential yield: do all buds produce inflorescences, how variable is the number of spadices and flowers per inflorescence, which percentage of flowers sets fruit and does competition between fruits affect fruit size. Does the contribution of each of these components to yield differ much:

- for different varieties?
- when a solitary palm is compared with a palm in a densely planted commercial garden?

This study mainly points to pollination as a factor which often limits yield.

Agronomically it would be a great bonus if sex would be known at planting, so that instead of ending up with an irregular crop stand following the removal of most male plants 3 years later, an orchard could be planted at the optimum spacing and including pollinator plants from the start. The possibilities are vegetative propagation, if necessary through tissue culture, or introduction of genetic markers which reveal the sex of seedlings. Permanent shade trees do not fit well in this approach; thus their indispensability needs to be questioned and alternatives (irrigation?) should be considered.

Evaluation of salak varieties has only just started. Growers' preference for 'Pondoh' is justified, but phasing out of other varieties will narrow the gene pool even before the available germplasm has been assessed.

SAMENVATTING

Deze studie van de salak palm, *Salacca zalacca* (Gaertner) Voss begon in 1989. Het onderzoek werd grotendeels uitgevoerd in de laboratoria en het Jatikerto veldstation van Brawijaya Universiteit, Malang, en in tuinen van telers in Oost en Midden Java. Aanvullende informatie werd verzameld tijdens bezoeken aan West Sumatera en Bali. In de meeste proeven werd de populaire cv. Pondoh van Sleman (Midden Java) gebruikt. 'Pondoh' is nu wijd verbreid in Indonesië.

In de Algemene Inleiding (Hoofdstuk 1) wordt gesteld dat Indonesië behoefte heeft aan meer fruit, terwille van een evenwichtige voeding zowel als om deviezen te verdienen door export. Daarbij gaat het niet om areaaluitbreiding maar om verhoging van de productiviteit, want om de bevolking in staat te stellen genoeg fruit te eten, moet de prijs omlaag. De wetenschap heeft tot dusverre weinig aandacht aan salak geschonken en omdat het in hoge mate een Indonesisch gewas is, ligt verhoging van de productiviteit in de eerste plaats op de weg van Indonesische onderzoekers.

De Inleiding vervolgt met een overzicht van groei en ontwikkeling van palmen, behandelt kort het geslacht *Salacca* en algemene gegevens betreffende de teelt van salak in eigen land. Het hoofdstuk eindigt met een overzicht van de onderwerpen die in het proefschrift aan de orde komen en de beperkingen van het onderzoek (met name de korte duur van de meeste proeven en het geringe aantal proeven met volgroeide palmen).

Teeltproeven worden beschreven in de Hoofdstukken 2 - 5. In Hoofdstuk 6 worden botanische waarnemingen gecombineerd met informatie uit publicaties tot een proeve van een model dat groei en ontwikkeling van de salak beschrijft. Hoofdstuk 7 bevat de algemene discussie.

Hoofdstuk 2 betreft de enige langdurige studie, een 3,5 jaar durende rassenproef die de periode van zaai tot het einde van de juveniele periode behandelt. Zes rassen hadden gemiddeld 4 - 7 enkelvoudige bladeren, alvorens samengestelde bladeren verschenen; het 7e ras, 'Black Bali', moest worden uitgesloten wegens zwakke groei (mogelijk was het zaad te oud). 'Pondoh' planten (3 maanden na de andere rassen gezaaid) kregen 12 bladeren in de eerste 13 maanden, de andere rassen 9.5 - 11 bladeren in 16 maanden. Hoewel het 'Pondoh' blad klein was, nam het bladoppervlak bij dit ras het snelste toe (tot 0.66 m² 13 maanden na zaai). Uitstoeling begon toen de planten 15 maanden oud waren; na 19 maanden waren er gemiddeld 2, na 33 maanden 4 zijscheuten per plant; 'Yellow Suwaru' vormde minder scheuten dan de andere rassen. Telers beperken het aantal zijscheuten om de beplanting toegankelijk te houden, met name voor handbestuiving. De eerste plant bloeide na 28 maanden. Na 34 maanden hadden bij alle rassen tenminste enkele planten gebloeid, en 42 maanden na zaai varieerde het percentage bloembare planten van 50 - 84 (25% voor de jongere 'Pondoh' planten). De verhouding vrouwelijk:mannelijk bloeiende planten was 1,4 : 1; bij sommige rassen was de verhouding meer extreem, maar de aantallen planten waren te klein om een verhouding van 1 : 1 uit te sluiten.

De bladoppervlakte werd gemeten volgens een methode ontwikkeld voor andere palmen, gebaseerd op het aantal blaadjes per blad en lengte en breedte van het grootste blaadje. De voor een palm zeer onregelmatige bladvorm van salak wekte twijfel aan de bruikbaarheid van de methode; daarom werden in een vervolgstudie enkele methoden vergeleken. Kenmerken van een aantal 'Pondoh' bladeren, zoals doorsnee van de bladsteel, rachis-lengte en aantal blaadjes werden gemeten; de bruikbaarheid van combinaties van kenmerken als schatter van de bladoppervlakte werd getoetst middels vergelijking met rechtstreekse oppervlakte-meting van de

blaadjes op mm-papier (waarbij de oppervlakte gelijk is aan het aantal bedekte punten van een cm²-raster) en op de gangbare foto-electrische apparatuur. Het bleek dat de drie bovengenoemde bladkenmerken goede schatters zijn, maar dat de breedte en lengte van het grootste blaadje bij salak geen voorspellende waarde hebben. De vergelijkende studie leverde geen praktisch bruikbare non-destructieve methode op, maar telers kappen de oudste bladeren en die kunnen wellicht voor oppervlakte-meting worden gebruikt.

Salak wordt door insecten bestoven, maar op Java is kunstmatige bestuiving nodig voor een goede oogst en dat is zo arbeidsintensief dat het 30% van de productiekosten uitmaakt. Hoofdstuk 3 beschrijft twee bestuivingsproeven. De eerste betreft handbestuiving van intacte stempels op ingehulde bloeikolven, in vergelijking met stempels waarvan één of twee van de drie stempellobben zijn gecoupeerd en een onbestoven controle. Zonder bestuiving trad geen bevruchting op, maar de meeste – zo niet alle – stampers konden worden bevrucht: 75% van de bloemen zette vrucht na intensieve bestuiving en bij 90% van de vruchten vormden alle 3 zaadknoppen zaad. Deze behandeling verdubbelde het aantal vruchten per tros ten opzichte van de behandelingen waarbij een of twee stempellobben waren verwijderd; niettemin waren de vruchten groter, hetgeen aangeeft dat in een goede boomgaard geen concurrentie tussen vruchten in een tros behoeft op te treden.

In de tweede proef werd zelf- of kruisbestuiving toegepast op 'Nganjuk' planten in Nganjuk; evenzo op 'Kacuk' planten nabij Malang. In het eerste geval werd stuifmeel van vier andere rassen gebruikt, in het tweede geval stuifmeel van vijf rassen. In beide gevallen werd de oogst sterk beïnvloed door de bestuivers, zowel kwalitatief (houdbaarheid, chemische samenstelling van het vruchtvlees) als kwantitatief (aantal en gewicht van de vruchten per tros, eetbare deel). In de reciproke kruisingen van 'Nganjuk' en 'Kacuk' leken incompatibiliteitsfactoren een rol te spelen.

De resultaten van beide proeven benadrukken het belang van intensieve bestuiving en de keuze van een geschikte bestuiver.

Hoofdstuk 4 behandelt kiemproeven, de eerste om de groei van haustorium en embryo te volgen na gedeeltelijke of gehele verwijdering van het endosperm, de tweede om kieming en groei te meten na opslag van het zaad gedurende 0 - 4 weken in houtskool, zaagsel of zonder medium. Het vers gewicht van de embryo's nam nog wat toe ondanks verwijdering van het complete endosperm, maar de kiemen stierven binnen 12 dagen. Het kiempercentage lag wat lager en de groei bleef achter na halvering van het endosperm, maar veel meer waar het embryo in het snijvlak lag dan waar haaks op de as van het embryo was gesneden. Bij zaailingen met intact endosperm groeide het haustorium tot het de ruimte vulde die eerder door het endosperm werd ingenomen. De zetmeelreserves van het endosperm waren vrijwel opgesoupeerd na 18 weken en ongeveer de helft was omgezet in suiker/energie; de rest werd teruggevonden in het haustorium en scheut en wortels. Na 18 weken was het drooggewicht van de zaailingen ook wat hoger dan het oorspronkelijke zaadgewicht, een bewijs dat fotosynthese de verliezen door respiratie ruimschoots had goedgemaakt.

Salakzaad is recalcitrant en de tweede proef wees op een nauw verband tussen het vochtgehalte van het zaad en kieming. Slechts 60% van de zaden kiemde na 1 week opslag zonder medium; na 4 weken kiemde het zaad in het geheel niet. Bewaring in zaagsel en vooral in houtskool verlengde de levensvatbaarheid van het zaad aanzienlijk en bevorderde de groei van de zaailingen, maar 100 dagen na zaai vond iedere extra week zaadopslag nog steeds zijn weerslag in een kleiner bladoppervlak per plant.

Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft proeven met omgevingsfactoren: bodem, bemesting en schaduw. In een potproef werd de invloed van de grondsoort (van het Jatikerto veldstation en van vier teeltcentra) op de groei van zaailingen onderzocht. De grond van het veldstation is zwaarder, heeft een grotere veldcapaciteit, en een nog lager gehalte aan organische stof en stikstof dan de andere grondsoorten. Het P-gehalte varieerde van laag tot hoog, K van matig tot zeer hoog en Ca van matig tot hoog in de vijf grondsoorten. De kieming was vertraagd in de zware gronden; de verdere groei leek steeds meer te worden bepaald door verschillen in vruchtbaarheid, zodat de groei in de arme Jatikerto grond het zwakst was. Het organische-stof-gehalte speelde vermoedelijk een grote rol in de groei, want het was gecorreleerd met N- en P-gehalte van de grond en de gehalten van nutriënten in het blad.

In een factoriële combinatie van schaduw-niveaus en ureum-trappen bij 4 maanden oude zaailingen bleek schaduw onontbeerlijk voor overleving; gedurende de droge tijd in Oost-Java is een reductie van de instraling midden op de dag van meer dan 50% gewenst. De planten groeiden het best onder 50 - 75% schaduw in combinatie met 10 g ureum per plant.

In een oude salaktuin werden palmen met 2 vruchttrossen, 1 - 2 maanden na bestuiving, bemest met 0 - 180 g samengestelde mest. De proef duurde slechts 6 maanden, maar niettemin waren de nieuwe bladeren groter, evenals de vruchten in de geselecteerde trossen. Bovendien waren er, in tegenstelling tot wat telers verwachtten, meer verkoopbare vruchten en minder vruchten met een gespleten huid of rot.

In alle proeven in dit hoofdstuk werd de invloed van omgevingsfactoren gemeten aan bladeren en vruchten die al waren aangelegd vóór het begin van de proeven. Veel grotere effecten zijn te verwachten op organen die vanaf hun initiatie aan de behandelingen zijn blootgesteld, maar dit vereist een veel langere, liefst jarenlange, proefduur. Niettemin bevestigen de korte-termijn-resultaten dat schaduw nodig is voor jonge planten. Bovendien rechtvaardigen ze royale stalmestgiften, alsmede stikstof voor jonge planten. In nadere studies van deze omgevingsfactoren moet de vochtvoorziening van de planten meer aandacht krijgen.

De vijf fasen van groei en ontwikkeling die bij palmen worden onderscheiden, vormen de basis voor het in Hoofdstuk 6 beschreven model van groei en ontwikkeling. De embryonale fase, van de vorming van de zygoot tot het rijpe zaad, is niet bestudeeerd, maar twee platen tonen de plaats van de embryo's in de jonge vrucht en vorm en afmetingen van embryo's in rijpe vruchten.

In de zaailing-fase kreeg het kiemproces veel aandacht. Volgorde en tijdstip van verschijnen van de verschillende organen werden bestudeerd, evenals de mobilisatie van reserves in het endosperm door het haustorium en hun assimilatie in scheut en wortel. De duur van de zaailing-fase bleek sterk af te hangen van de groei-omstandigheden, en de duur en wijze van opslag van het zaad.

De 'vestigings'-fase (engels: establishment phase) leende zich voor observatie van de bladgroei, de morfologie van de palmkroon en de uitstoeling. De bladstadia van uitlopen en lengtegroei van de speer tot het ontvouwen en afrijpen van de blaadjes werden gevolgd in een aantal proeven; de duur van deze stadia kan sterk variëren voor opeenvolgende bladeren. In de jonge zaailing zijn de bladeren enkelvoudig, maar later zijn ze geveerd en het aantal blaadjes neemt toe tot het einde van de fase. De afmetingen van de blaadjes lopen sterk uiteen en hun rangschikking langs de bladsteel is zeer ongewoon voor een palm. Het phyllochron is niet zo constant als het geacht wordt te zijn in palmen; het was korter in 'Pondoh' dan in de andere rassen. Een goede groei houdt in dat ieder blad groter is dan het voorgaande en ontluikt vóór het voorgaande blad afrijpt.

De bladstand bleek 2/5 te zijn, bij een divergentiehoek tussen opeenvolgende bladeren van 144°. Zijknoppen liggen op de bladas, één in de oksel (de bloemknop) en één net onder de aanhechting van de bladschede (de bladknop). Drie-jaar-oude 'Pondoh' kronen hadden 10 - 13 ontvouwde bladeren; in de knop werden 5 - 6 bladbeginsels geteld, de kleinste 2 mm hoog. Verdere ontleding onder de microscoop moet duidelijk maken of het aantal initialen ongeveer gelijk is aan het aantal ontvouwde bladeren, zoals bij de meeste onderzochte palmen.

Zijscheuten ontstaan uit bladknoppen, die straalsgewijs vanuit de kroon een stukje horizontaal uitlopen, alvorens de scheuttop zich opricht. Telers houden niet meer dan 2 zijscheuten per plant aan, maar in een verwaarloosde 'Pondoh' tuin waren het er veel meer, inclusief zijscheuten van de tweede orde.

In de volwassen vegetatieve fase heeft de palmkroon zijn uiteindelijke afmetingen bereikt; bij veel soorten is verlenging van de stam de enige opvallende verandering in vegetatieve kenmerken. De salakpalm wordt instabiel als de stam zich verheft en valt om. De top richt zich weer op door eenzijdige verlenging van de internodiën. Zo 'wandelt' de palm, in stappen van een jaar of tien, en verjongt zichzelf gaandeweg.

Bladmetingen in een 20-jaar-oude salaktuin brachten grote verschillen in bladlengte (2.25 - 4 m) en in aantal dagen tot ontluiken van het volgende blad (30 - 52) aan het licht. De waarnemingen volgden op het kappen van de oudste bladeren en vielen samen met het begin van de droge tijd, maar wat de verklaring ook moge zijn, ze tonen aan dat zelfs in de volwassen vegetatieve fase bladgrootte en phyllochron bepaald niet constant zijn.

In commerciële tuinen worden in deze fase nauwelijks zijscheuten gevormd, waarschijnlijk omdat het gewas zo dicht is dat weinig licht onder de kronen doordringt.

De reproductieve fase dient zich aan met de verschijning van de eerste bloeiwijze. De bloemknop loopt uit tot een speer die de basis van het bijbehorende blad splijt om zich een weg naar buiten te banen. De bladbases blijven zitten, zodat achteraf nog aan de hand van de spleten kan worden vastgesteld hoeveel bloemknoppen zijn uitgelopen. De bloemknoppen lopen niet altijd uit in de volgorde waarin ze zijn aangelegd. Voor de jaarlijkse pieken in de bloei, die resulteren in een hoofd- en een neven-oogstperiode, kon geen bevredigende verklaring worden gegeven.

De zware vrucht- en zaadzetting na intensieve bestuiving wijst erop dat onvolkomenheden in de bestuiving, qua intensiteit, compatibiliteit, of timing, aldra tot oogstverliezen leiden. Vruchttellingen kwamen tot 6 - 9 vruchten per tros voor 'Kacuk', 6 - 24 voor 'Nganjuk' en 11 - 24 vruchten voor 'Suwaru'. Het gemiddeld vruchtgewicht liep van 28 g voor zelfbestoven 'Nganjuk' tot bijna 100 g voor zelfbestoven 'Kacuk'; 'Suwaru' vruchten wogen gemiddeld 70 - 75 g.

Omdat Hoofdstuk 6 al veel onderzoek – vermeld in eerdere hoofdstukken – recapituleert, spitst de algemene bespreking in Hoofdstuk 7 zich toe op de lacunes in ons begrip van groei en ontwikkeling van salak, zowel botanisch als teeltkundig.

Botanisch zijn de afwijkingen van een stabiel groeipatroon in volgroeide palmen het meest intrigerend; als ze inderdaad zo groot zijn als in de paar gevallen in dit proefschrift en als een passende verklaring kan worden gevonden, is dat een bijdrage tot het begrip van palmen in het algemeen. Eén zo'n afwijking, de concentratie van de bloei in twee piekperioden, is van groot belang in de teelt; een verklaring – beginnend met het stadium waarin de ontwikkeling van bloeiwijzen stagneert – is hard nodig, met name als die telers zou helpen om de oogst te vervroegen of te spreiden.

Een ander botanisch aspect – ook van groot teeltkundig belang – is opheldering van de beperking van de potentiële productie in opeenvolgende stadia: welk deel van de bloemknoppen vormt bloeiwijzen, hoe variabel is het aantal kolven/bloemen per bloeiwijze, welke beperkingen liggen besloten in bestuiving en bevruchting, en in de concurrentie tussen vruchten? Dit vereist systematisch onderzoek, temeer omdat verschillen tussen rassen en bij uiteenlopende plantdichtheden wellicht een grote rol spelen. De uitkomsten geven de potentiële ruimte aan voor verhoging van de productiviteit van salaktuinen.

Teeltkundig zou bekendheid met de sekse bij het planten een doorbraak betekenen. Het maakt van meet af aan een vast plantverband, inclusief bestuivers, mogelijk; nu wordt de teler na 3 jaar met een onregelmatige beplanting opgescheept, als gevolg van de verwijdering van het gros van de mannelijke planten. De mogelijkheden zijn vegetatieve vermeerdering, zo nodig middels weefselkweek, dan wel koppeling van kenmerken van de jonge zaailing aan de sekse. Permanente schaduwbomen passen minder goed in zo'n nieuwe teeltwijze en de vraag rijst of ze onmisbaar zijn of dat bijvoorbeeld irrigatie een alternatief biedt.

Wat betreft bodem en bemesting geeft deze studie niet veel meer dan de richting waarin verbeteringen moeten worden gezocht. Ook ten aanzien van vergelijking van rassen is deze studie slechts een begin. De voorkeur van telers voor 'Pondoh' lijkt gerechtvaardigd, maar met de vervanging van andere rassen door 'Pondoh' dreigt een beperking van de genetische variatie nog voordat het beschikbare kiemplasma in kaart is gebracht.

RINGKASAN

Studi mengenai tanaman salak, *Salacca zalacca* (Gaertner) Voss dimulai pada akhir tahun 1989. Sebagian besar penelitian telah dilaksanakan di laboratorium dan di Kebun Percobaan Universitas Brawijaya di Jatikerto, Malang serta di kebun-kebun petani salak di Jawa Tengah dan Jawa Timur. Informasi pendukung lainnya diperoleh dari hasil kunjungan lapang ke Sumatera Barat dan Bali. Sebagian besar topik penelitian menggunakan *cv. Pondoh* yang berasal dari kabupaten Sleman (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta). Belakangan ini salak tersebut sudah menyebar luas ke beberapa tempat di Indonesia.

Pada bagian pendahuluan dari disertasi ini (Bab 1) diinformasikan bahwa guna memenuhi kebutuhan nutrisi penduduk yang standart selain untuk mendapatkan devisa negara dari eksport, Indonesia membutuhkan buah-buahan dalam jumlah besar. Dalam kondisi seperti ini peningkatan produksi buah-buahan adalah lebih mendesak dibandingkan dengan areal tanam. Agar daya beli masyarakat terhadap buah-buahan meningkat maka harga buah harus murah dan terjangkau. Sejauh ini tanaman salak belum memperoleh perhatian serius dari kalangan ilmuwan dan ini dirasa sangat perlu dalam rangka peningkatan produksi. Lebih lanjut, Bab 1 juga menguraikan pertumbuhan dan perkembangan tanaman suku Palmae (Palem-paleman) secara ringkas, menguraikan genus *Salacca* dan aspek umum budidaya tanaman salak di negeri ini. Bab 1 diakhiri dengan gambaran ringkas pelaksanaan penelitian serta beberapa kelemahannya (terutama pendeknya waktu penelitian dan keragaman bahan penelitian pada tanaman salak dewasa).

Penelitian mengenai agronomi tanaman disajikan di Bab 2 hingga Bab 5. Pengamatan mengenai botani tanaman yang dikombinasikan dengan informasi yang ada dirangkum menjadi satu guna menggambarkan sebuah pola pertumbuhan dan perkembangan tanaman salak, diutarakan pada Bab 6. Selanjutnya, pembahasan secara umum diuraikan di Bab 7.

Penelitian jangka panjang (sekitar 3½ tahun) diuraikan di Bab 2. Bab ini menguji pertumbuhan beberapa jenis salak sejak biji ditanam hingga tanaman berbuah. Salak 'Bali Hitam' tumbuh kerdil; mungkin biji salak monosius ini sudah lama sehingga pertumbuhannya lemah. Sementara itu 6 varietas salak lainnya rata-rata mempunyai 4 - 7 lembar daun sederhana (simple leaves). Daun yang muncul selanjutnya adalah daun majemuk (compound leaves). Salak 'Pondoh' yang umurnya 3 bulan lebih muda mempunyai 12 daun dalam kurun waktu 13 bulan, sedangkan varietas lainnya pada umur 16 bulan mempunyai daun sekitar 9½ - 11 lembar. Ukuran daun salak 'Pondoh' paling kecil diantara jenis lainnya, namun luas daun per tanaman meningkat lebih cepat dibandingkan dengan varietas lainnya (0.66 m^2 dalam umur 13 bulan). Pada umur 15 bulan tanaman salak mulai menghasilkan anakan (sucker); pada umur 19 bulan, satu tanaman rata-rata mempunyai 2 anak, pada umur 34 bulan beranak 4, varietas 'Suwaru Kuning' kurang begitu banyak anaknya. Petani membuang sebagian anakan ini untuk menurunkan kepadatan tanaman sekaligus agar memudahkan penyerbukan dan perawatan tanaman.

Sejak dari biji tanaman salak mulai berbunga pada umur 28 bulan. Pada umur 34 bulan hampir seluruh varietas sudah berbunga, dan pada umur 42 bulan persentase tanaman berbunga berkisar antara 50 hingga 84% (untuk tanaman salak 'Pondoh' baru 25%). Rasio tanaman salak betina: jantan adalah 1.4; rasio yang lebih ekstrem juga terlihat pada beberapa varietas, namun jumlah ini masih terlalu kecil untuk mencapai rasio 1. Bentuk daun salak yang aneh dan tidak beraturan menyebabkan kurang akuratnya hasil pengukuran luas daun, sehingga perlu membandingkan beberapa

metode pengukuran. Dua metode ukur langsung yaitu fotometer dan sentimeter grid (luas daun ditentukan dengan menghitung jumlah grid yang tertutup oleh daun), dibandingkan dengan perkiraan berdasarkan pengukuran komponen daun seperti diameter tangkai, panjang rakhis, dan jumlah anak daun. Tiga komponen daun ini cukup baik untuk digunakan sebagai peramal pengukuran luas daun, namun metode panjang-lebar anak daun terbesar kurang sepadan. Studi ini tidak menghasilkan metode praktis pengukuran luas daun non-destraktif karena terbatasnya sampel, namun demikian daun salak tua yang selalu dibuang oleh petani dapat digunakan sebagai sampel untuk mengukur luas daun.

Walaupun penyerbukan bunga salak dapat dibantu oleh serangga, namun di Jawa bantuan penyerbukan oleh manusia (hand-pollination) sangat dibutuhkan agar produksinya tinggi. Pekerjaan penyerbukan ini memerlukan biaya sebanyak 30% dari total biaya produksi perawatan tanaman per tahun. Penelitian mengenai penyerbukan buatan disajikan pada Bab 3. Penelitian pertama mengenai jumlah kepala putik yang diserbuki. Bunga betina salak mempunyai 3 kepala putik. Kepala putik tersebut diserbuki semua, diserbuki 2, dan diserbuki 1. Sebagai kontrol tidak dilakukan penyerbukan. Sesudah perlakuan bunga salak ditutup dengan kertas tipis untuk menghindari kemungkinan terjadinya kontaminasi dengan tepungsari lainnya. Hasil penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa penyerbukan buatan masih diperlukan dan sebagian besar indung telur (walaupun tidak semua) adalah fungsional: penyerbukan yang intensif menghasilkan buah sebanyak 75%; 90% dari buah tersebut berisi 3 biji. Perlakuan ini meningkatkan hasil 2 kali lipat daripada yang kepala putiknya dibuang: buah yang dihasilkan rata-rata lebih besar, dan menunjukkan bahwa untuk mencapai produk yang baik kompetisi antar buah dalam tandan harus ditiadakan.

Penelitian penyerbukan buatan yang lain dilaksanakan di 2 lokasi, yaitu Nganjuk dan Kacuk. Bunga betina salak 'Nganjuk' diserbuki dengan bunga jantan salak 'Nganjuk' (selfing), dan disilangkan dengan 4 varietas salak lainnya. Bunga salak 'Kacuk' (terletak dalam kota Malang) juga diserbukkan sendiri dan disilangkan dengan tepungsari dari 5 jenis salak. Hasil penelitian di 2 tempat tersebut mengisyaratkan bahwa jenis tepungsari sangat berpengaruh atas hasil buah salak baik kualitatif (daya simpan, kandungan nutrisi daging buah) maupun kuantitatif (jumlah dan berat buah per tandan serta rasio bahan termakan). Silang balik dari salak 'Nganjuk' dan 'Kacuk' menandakan adanya gejala inkompatibilitas. Hasil penelitian penyerbukan ini memperlihatkan bahwa penyerbukan yang intensif sangat diperlukan disamping jenis tepungsari juga merupakan faktor yang penting dalam budidaya tanaman salak.

Bab 4 dari disertasi ini mengetengahkan perkecambahan biji salak. Penelitian pertama untuk mengetahui perkembangan haustorium ('kentos') dan pertumbuhan embrio, sebagian atau seluruh endosperm dihilangkan. Penelitian selanjutnya adalah penyimpanan biji salak. Biji salak disimpan dalam beberapa metode; di udara terbuka, dalam serbuk kayu dan serbuk arang. Embrio dari biji walaupun tanpa endosperm, terus meningkat beratnya, namun 12 hari berikutnya embrio tersebut mati. Pemotongan separo endosperm dengan arah memanjang menyebabkan turunnya persentase perkecambahan biji dan memperlambat pertumbuhan bibit. Walaupun demikian penurunan ini tampak lebih rendah dibandingkan dengan endosperm yang dipotong melintang. Sebaliknya biji dengan endosperm utuh menunjukkan pertumbuhan haustorium konstan dan akhirnya haustorium tersebut mengisi seluruh ruang bekas endosperm tadi. Pati sebagai kandungan makanan yang tersimpan dalam endosperm tinggal sedikit pada umur 18 minggu sesudah semai, sekitar separuhnya telah diubah menjadi gula/energi, sisanya tersusun kembali dalam haustorium, batang serta akar. Delapan belas minggu sesudah semai berat kering tanaman melebihi berat awal, hal ini menggambarkan fotosintesis telah menghasilkan asimilat melebihi dari kehilangan akibat respirasi tanaman.

Biji salak adalah rekalsitran dan penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya korelasi erat antara kadar air dengan kemampuan perkecambahan biji. Bila disimpan di udara terbuka selama seminggu hanya 60% biji yang berkecambah; sesudah 4 minggu disimpan semua biji tidak mampu berkecambah lagi. Penyimpanan biji dalam serbuk kayu dan terutama serbuk arang dapat mempertahankan viabilitas biji dan pertumbuhan bibit. Namun demikian akibat penyimpanan biji, hingga umur 100 hari sesudah tanam bibit salak menghasilkan daun yang rata-rata kecil ukurannya.

Penelitian pada Bab 5 mengenai kaitan tanaman salak dengan beberapa faktor luar: tanah, nutrisi mineral dan naungan. Pot plastik (polybag) berisi tanah dari 4 daerah sentra produksi salak dan jenis tanah Jatikerto digunakan untuk melihat perbedaan pertumbuhan bibit salak. Tanah Jatikerto selain tinggi kandungan liatnya juga tinggi pula kapasitas lapangnya. Akan tetapi, kandungan bahan organik dan nitrogennya lebih rendah dibandingkan dengan 4 jenis tanah lainnya. Kandungan unsur P-tanah berkisar antara rendah hingga tinggi, K berkisar dari cukup hingga sangat tinggi dan kandungan Ca bervariasi dari cukup hingga sangat tinggi. Tanah yang sangat liat menghambat perkecambahan biji salak; pertumbuhan bibit selanjutnya ditentukan oleh tingkat kesuburan tanah, bibit salak yang ditanam pada tanah Jatikerto yang kurus dan berstruktur berat mengalami hambatan pertumbuhan. Kandungan bahan organik tanah berpengaruh nyata terhadap pertumbuhan bibit salak, karena hal ini berkorelasi dengan kandungan N dan P-tanah dan status nutrisi daun.

Dalam percobaan faktorial kombinasi antara naungan dan urea pada tanaman salak muda umur 4 bulan diperoleh hasil sebagai berikut: naungan terbukti sangat potensial untuk kehidupan tanaman muda; selama musim kering di Jawa Timur tanaman muda memerlukan reduksi sinar matahari sebanyak 50% atau lebih. Pertumbuhan terbaik ditunjukkan oleh tanaman yang mendapat penaungan 50 - 75% dengan pemupukan 10 - 20 g urea per tanaman.

Penelitian pemupukan juga diterapkan pada tanaman salak dewasa. Pohon salak betina, mempunyai 2 tandan buah, umur buah 1 - 2 sejak penyerbukan dipupuk dengan pupuk NPK dengan dosis yang bervariasi mulai 0 hingga 180 kg. Penelitian berlangsung selama 6 bulan, walaupun demikian pupuk NPK masih mampu meningkatkan ukuran daun baru dan tandah buah. Pemberian pupuk NPK juga meningkatkan kualitas buah dan dalam 1 tandan hanya beberapa buah saja yang rusak (pecah kulit dan busuk).

Ketiga penelitian mengenai faktor luar diterapkan pada tanaman salak yang sedang berbuah dengan mengukur variabel daun dan tandan buah. Untuk menilai pengaruh yang menyeluruh dari perlakuan maka penelitian harus direncanakan untuk kurun waktu yang panjang, bila mungkin beberapa tahun. Sekalipun demikian, naungan dibutuhkan oleh tanaman salak muda. Selanjutnya dianjurkan agar pupuk kandang dan pupuk N diberikan pada tanaman muda secara berkala. Penelitian lanjutan yang perlu dilaksanakan adalah peranan air atau kelembaban tanah pada pertumbuhan tanaman.

Suku palem-paleman mempunyai 5 fase pertumbuhan dan perkembangan yang berbeda. Bahasan ini merupakan kerangka pokok dalam menyusun sebuah pola pertumbuhan dan perkembangan tanaman salak, disajikan pada Bab 6. Fase embrionik (embryonic phase), dimulai dari pembentukan zigot hingga masaknya biji tidak diamati, namun dari hasil foto dapat diketahui posisi embrio dalam buah muda dan bentuk serta ukuran embrio pada buah salak yang sudah matang.

Dalam kaitannya dengan fase pertumbuhan bibit (seedling phase) pengamatan lebih ditekankan pada proses perkecambahan. Waktu dan urutan pertumbuhan organ tanaman diamati secara detail demikian juga mobilisasi cadangan makanan dalam endosperm oleh haustorium serta kaitannya dengan cadangan makanan yang ada dalam batang dan akar. Kurun waktu pertumbuhan bibit mempunyai variasi yang cukup besar tergantung pada kondisi pertumbuhan saat itu selain media penyimpanan benih.

Fase kemapanan (establishment phase) meliputi aspek pertumbuhan daun, pembentukan mahkota tanaman (crown) serta pembentukan anakan (sucker). Tahap pertumbuhan daun, mulai saat munculnya, pembentukan stadia daun pedang (spear) sampai mekar dan masak diuraikan dibeberapa penelitian. Kurun waktunya sangat bervariasi dari satu daun ke daun berikutnya. Tanaman salak muda mempunyai bentuk daun sederhana (simple leaf), selanjutnya daun yang tumbuh adalah daun majemuk, yaitu mempunyai beberapa anak daun (leaflets) di kedua sisi rakhisnya. Jumlah anak-anak daun terus bertambah sampai berakhirnya fase kemapanan ini. Ukuran anak-anak daun bervariasi, selain daripada itu duduk daun pada rakhis tampak berbeda dari pola umum posisi daun yang sudah ada. Filokron tidak konstan sebagaimana yang umum dijumpai pada suku palem-paleman; filokron pada salak 'Pondoh' lebih cepat dibandingkan dengan varietas yang lain. Tanaman yang sehat mempunyai daun baru dengan ukuran yang lebih besar daripa daun pendahulunya, selain itu daun tersebut muncul sebelum daun terdahulu masak.

Filotaksis salak adalah 2/5, sudut divergensi antara dua daun berurutan sebesar 144°. Tunas lateral ditemukan lurus dengan poros daun, 1 tunas ada di poros (tunas bunga) dan 1 lainnya di bawah tempat duduk pelepah daun (tunas anakan). Mahkota tanaman salak 'Pondoh' yang berumur 3½ tahun mempunyai daun luar sebanyak 10 - 13; 5 - 6 helai daun masih terbungkus dalam tunas, tinggi calon daun terkecil 2 mm; pengamatan irisan pucuk secara mikroskopis selanjutnya akan dapat membuktikan apakah jumlah daun dalam kuncup akan sebanding dengan jumlah daun luar, sebagaimana yang ditemukan pada suku palem-paleman lainnya.

Anakan salak berasal dari batang pendek horizontal yang bersumbu pada tanaman induk. Petani biasanya hanya meninggalkan 2 anak per batang, namun pada kebun salak 'Pondoh' yang kurang rawat ditemukan beberapa anakan, tergolong pola anakan orde-2.

Pada fase masak vegetatif (mature vegetative phase) mahkota tanaman telah mencapai ukuran tertentu dan pada beberapa spesies peningkatan diameter batang merupakan tanda perubahan nyata dari fase pertumbuhan vegetatif. Batang tanaman salak terus bertambah tinggi sehingga tidak stabil dan akhirnya roboh. Proses penegakan kembali ujung tanaman dari rebah dapat diketahui dengan mengukur panjang ruas batang bagian atas dan bagian bawah. Dengan cara ini tanaman salak *berjalan* satu langkah selama 10 tahun atau lebih dan dengan cara tersebut tanaman salak telah melakukan proses peremajaan secara alamiah.

Pengukuran pertumbuhan daun tanaman salak yang berumur 20 tahun menunjukkan perbedaan panjang daun yang cukup besar (2.25 - 4 m) serta kurun waktu kemunculan daun berikutnya (30 - 52 hari). Pada saat penelitian berlangsung petani memotong daun-daun tua dan tibanya musim kemarau, sekalipun demikian faktanya pada tanaman salak dewasapun ukuran daun dan filokron tidak dapat dijadikan jaminan pengukuran.

Pada kebun salak komersial beberapa anakan juga terbentuk pada saat fase pertumbuhan vegetatif, hal ini kemungkinan karena populasi yang padat menyebabkan berkurangnya sinar matahari yang masuk ke dalam kebun/tanaman.

Awal fase reproduktif (reproductive phase) ditandai dengan munculnya bunga untuk pertama kalinya. Bunganya berbentuk pedang (mancung), tumbuh menerobos bagian dasar daun untuk keluar keudara terbuka. Karena pelepah daun melekat erat pada batang, celah pada dasar daun tua memperlihatkan ada atau tidak adanya kaitan dengan produksi mancung. Mancung tidak selalu terbentuk dengan mengikuti pola pembentukan daun, sekalipun daun, bunga dan anakan tumbuh pada titik yang sama. Belum ada penjelasan lengkap yang dapat diberikan mengenai pembungaan musiman, yang menghasilkan panen raya dan panen susulan setiap tahun.

Penyerbukan yang intensif akan menghasilkan banyak buah dan biji, hal ini menunjukkan bahwa penyerbukan yang kurang sempurna, intensitas dan saat serbuk serta kompatibilitas dapat merupakan faktor pembatas produksi tanaman. Catatan dari hasil panen dalam penelitian salak 'Kacuk' mempunyai jumlah buah per tandan antara 6 - 9; salak 'Nganjuk' 6 - 24 dan salak 'Suwaru' 11 - 24 buah. Berat buah salak rata-rata bervariasi antara 28 g untuk persilangan 'Nganjuk' x 'Nganjuk' hingga 100 g untuk 'Kacuk' x 'Kacuk'; sedangkan salak 'Suwaru' antara 70 - 75 g.

Karena Bab 6 merupakan rekapitulasi data dari Bab-Bab terdahulu, pembahasan umum pada Bab 7 ditekankan pada perbedaan pokok dari pemahaman tentang salak baik dari pandangan botani maupun agronominya.

Secara botanis deviasi pola pertumbuhan yang teratur dari suku palem-paleman sangat menarik untuk diketahui; apabila pola tersebut sama seperti yang diuraikan dalam thesis ini secara memadai, hal ini akan meningkatkan pemahaman pertumbuhan tanaman palem pada umumnya.

Salah satu deviasi sebagai contoh adalah puncak pembungaan musiman, juga sangat penting dalam bidang agronomi; informasi penting – diawali dari identifikasi pada tahap dimana pembungaan mengalami stagnasi – sangat diperlukan Lebih daripada itu hal ini akan memberikan petunjuk bagi petani untuk memperpanjang atau merubah/mengatur masa panen.

Isu lainnya dari aspek botani – yang juga penting dibidang agronomi – adalah klarifikasi sejauh mana perbedaan antar komponen membatasi potensi hasil: apakah semua mancung menghasilkan bunga, berapa variasi jumlah dompol dan jumlah bunga per mancung, dompolan yang mana dari bunga berkembang menjadi buah dan apakah kompetisi antar buah akan mempengaruhi ukurannya. Apakah kontribusi masing-masing komponen tersebut terhadap produksi berbeda nyata:

- untuk varietas yang berbeda ?
- bila tanaman salak tunggal dibandingkan dengan tanaman lain yang tumbuh dalam kebun komersial dengan populasi padat?

Jawaban atas pertanyaan tersebut harus mengarah pada aspek peningkatan produtifitas perkebunan salak. Studi ini terutama diarahkan pada penyerbukan sebagai faktor yang sering membatasi produksi.

Dari segi agronomi adalah merupakan suatu bonus yang berharga apabila jenis kelamin bibit (betina atau jantan) sudah diketahui pada saat tanam. Dengan demikian pertanaman salak yang tidak teratur karena salak jantan dibuang setelah 3 tahun kemudian dapat dihindari. Lebih jauh sebidang kebun dapat ditanami dengan jarak tanam optimal dengan rasio jenis kelamin tanaman tertentu sejak awal. Kemungkinan untuk menentukan jenis kelamin yang tepat adalah dengan perbanyakan secara vegetatif, bila perlu dengan teknik kultur jaringan, atau memperkenalkan tanda-tanda genetik yang mengisyaratkan jenis kelamin bibit. Pohon penaung permanen tidak sesuai dengan hasil penelitian ini; dengan demikian pohon penaung perlu dievaluasi lagi dan alternatif lainnya (misalnya pengairan) seharusnya dipertimbangkan.

Evaluasi terhadap varietas salak baru dimulai. Petani memang lebih menyukai salak 'Pondoh', sekalipun demikian mengganti varietas lainnya akan mengurangi satu kelompok genetik apalagi penilaian atas plasma nutfah yang tersedia belum dilaksanakan.

PLATES

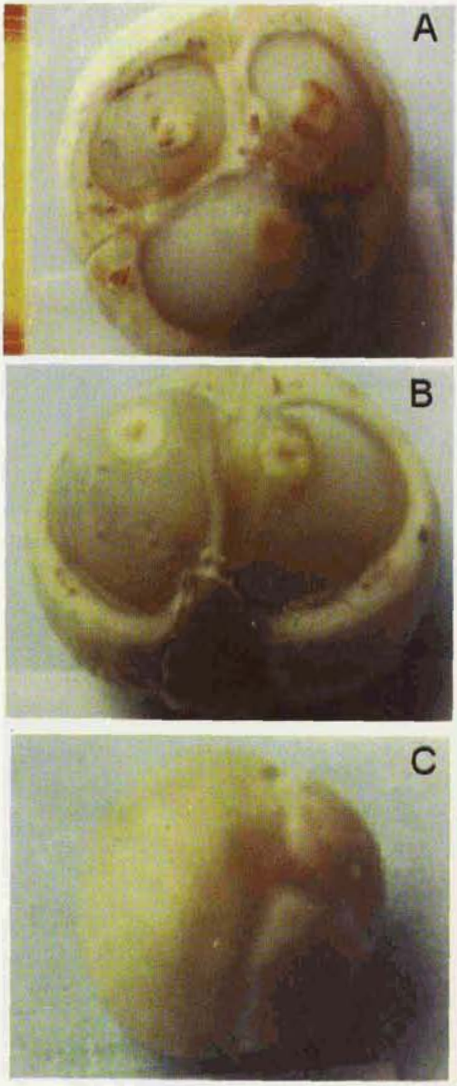

Plate 1. Seed forms of salak

A. Trigonous seeds in triple-seeded fruits
B. Flattened seeds and one rudimentary seed
C. A globular-seeded fruit with two rudimentary seeds in single-seeded fruit, 20 weeks after pollination

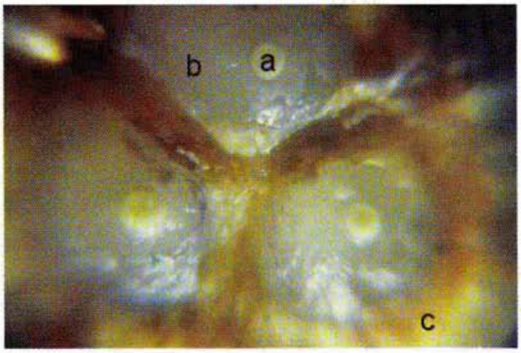

Plate 2. 'Pondoh' fruit with three seeds, 2 months after pollination, showing the position of the embryos
a: embryo, b: seed, c: seed coat

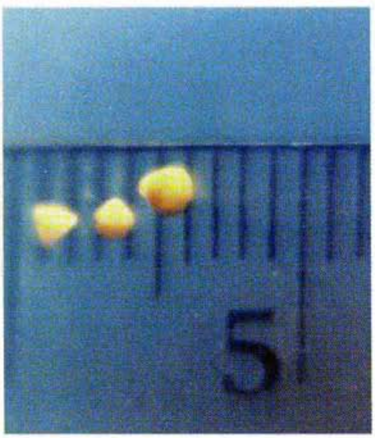

Plate 3. Mature embryos of 'Pondoh'

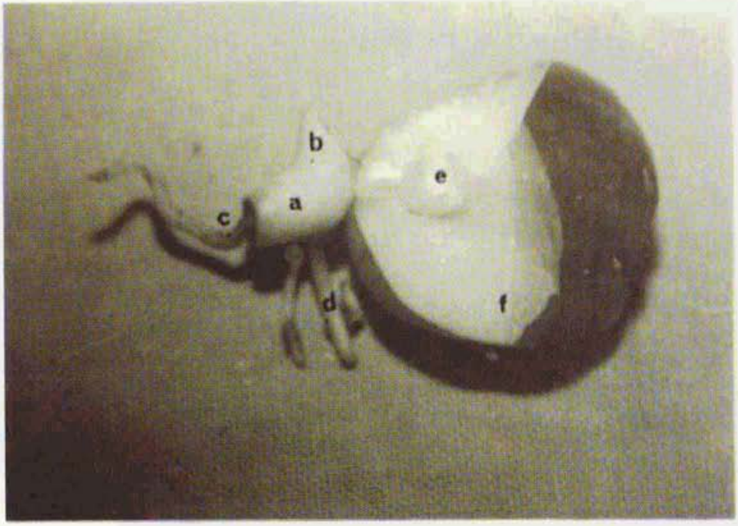

Plate 4. Germinated seed of 'Pondoh'
a: cotyledonary sheath; b: ligule; c: primary root; d: adventitious roots;
e: haustorium; f: seed kernel

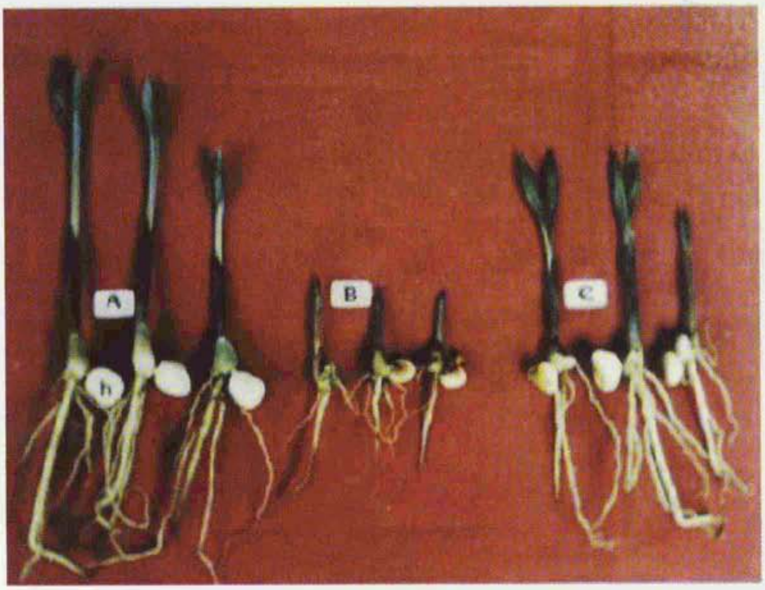

Plate 5. Seedlings 77 days after sowing with intact or halved endosperm
A. intact endosperm
B. endosperm halved longitudinally
C. endosperm halved transversely
h. haustorium

Plate 6. The leaf arrangement of 'Pondoh'

Plate 7. Pondoh plant with suckers, 30 months after sowing
Some leaf bases and spines have been removed; suckering follows pattern A in Figure 6.3

Plate 8. The apex after careful removal of leaves and leaf initials, down to a 2 mm height

Plate 9. Bud positions on a 'Pondoh' stem
A: leaf base, B: vegetative bud on a flange, C: inflorescence bud

Plate 10. The trunk of 'Bali', lying on the ground
a: trunk, b: crown base

Plate 11. The re-erection growth of the salak palm

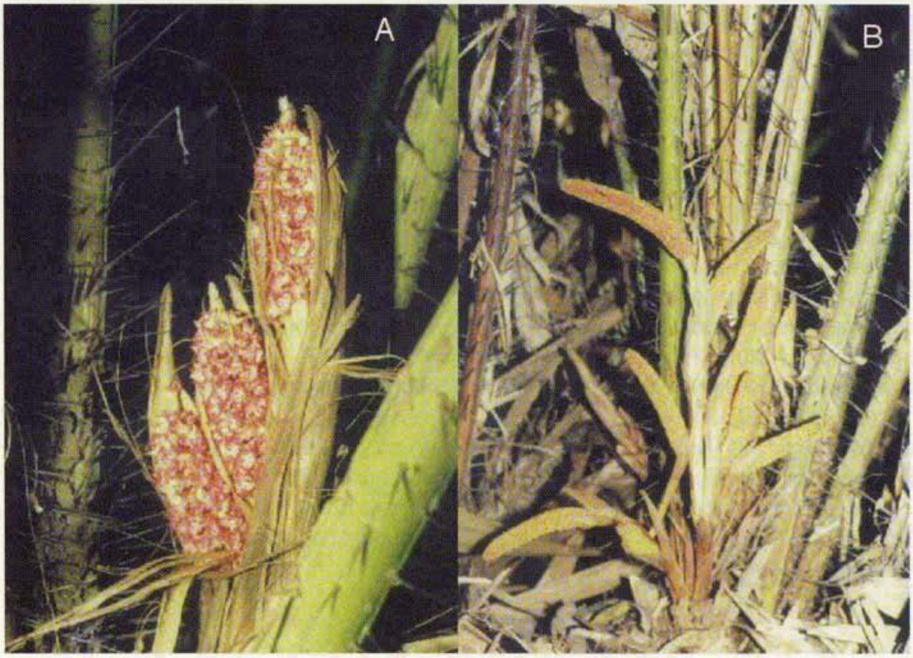

Plate 12. Inflorescences
A: female inflorescence consisting of 3 spadices,
B: male inflorescence consisting of 8 spadices

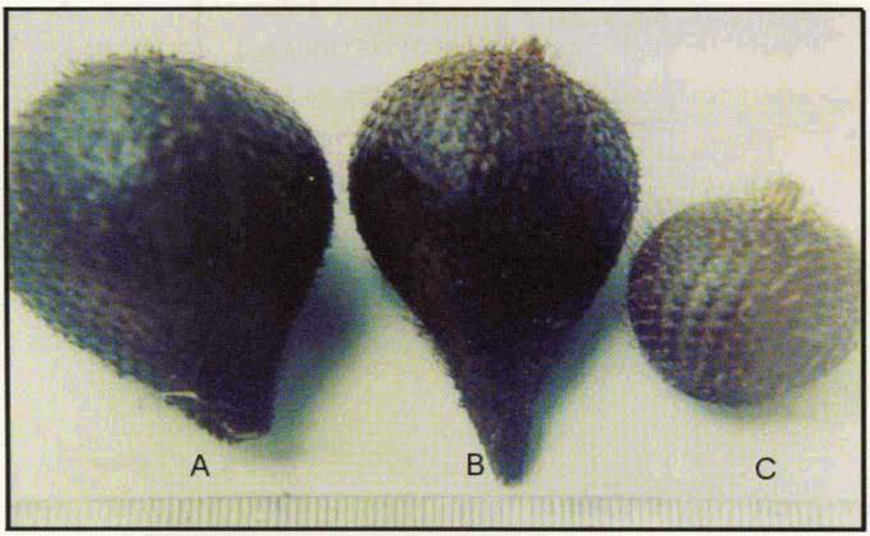

Plate 13. Size and shape of fruit, 20 weeks after pollination
Pollinated stigmata A: three, B: two, C: one

CURRICULUM VITAE

Sumeru Ashari, the youngest son of the late Mochammad Ashari, was born in Malang, Indonesia on 28th March 1953. He graduated from Sekolah Dasar Tjepokomuljo in 1966 and from Sekolah Menengah Pertama Muhammadiyah in 1969. Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri III Malang was his Senior High School. He left secondary school in 1972. In 1973 he joined the Faculty of Agriculture, Brawijaya University which is also located in Malang. He graduated from the faculty in 1979. During the years 1986 - 1989 he took an M.Sc. programme at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute of Adelaide University, South Australia.

During 1982 - 1985 he served as a manager of the Bank Indonesia Nurseries in Pasuruan. He also took part in the NUFFIC's fruit tree progamme. In 1990 - 1994 he was the Head of the Research Station at Jatikerto of the Brawijaya University. He organized the Study Programme on Horticulture from 1997 - 1999. Now, he is the Head of the Agronomy Department, Faculty of Agriculture, Brawijaya University.

He is a lecturer in Tropical Fruit Trees, Flowering Biology and Nursery Management. His research interests include propagation, cultivation, and flower development of tropical fruit trees (mango, jackfruit, salak, etc.).

He and his wife, Endah Sri Handayani, have three children, the oldest son: Dadang Meru Utomo; Astri Warih Anjarwi their daughter and Yordan Wicaksono Ashari the youngest son.

Propositions

1. In East Java, salak has been in cultivation for more than hundred years; it is time that research and extension start to contribute to the development of the crop.
This thesis

2. Imperfect pollination is a major cause of low salak yields. The improvement of hand pollination methods should therefore receive priority.
This thesis

3. The pollen source strongly influences the fruit yield of salak, both qualitatively and quantitatively.
This thesis

4. Cultural practices in salak production should be improved in such a way that harvesting can be spread more evenly over the year.

5. The pinnate leaf of a mature salak plant is unique for palms because of its uneven and irregular distribution of the leaflets along the rachis.
This thesis

6. Salak growers rogue plants without knowing their sex. This strongly impedes fruit production.

7. Some scientists have willingly introduced a 9-days working week.

8. Dondong apa salak duku cilik-cilik, gendong apa mundak mlaku timik-timik.
Javanese song

Proprositions with the thesis
On the agronomy and botany of Salak (*Salacca zalacca*)
Sumeru Ashari
Wageningen University
2 December 2002