

Book of Subak

*A Trilogy of Past Wisdom,
Present Challenges, and Future Possibilities*

Indigenous Knowledge System

Tracing the Sacred Flows

volume 1

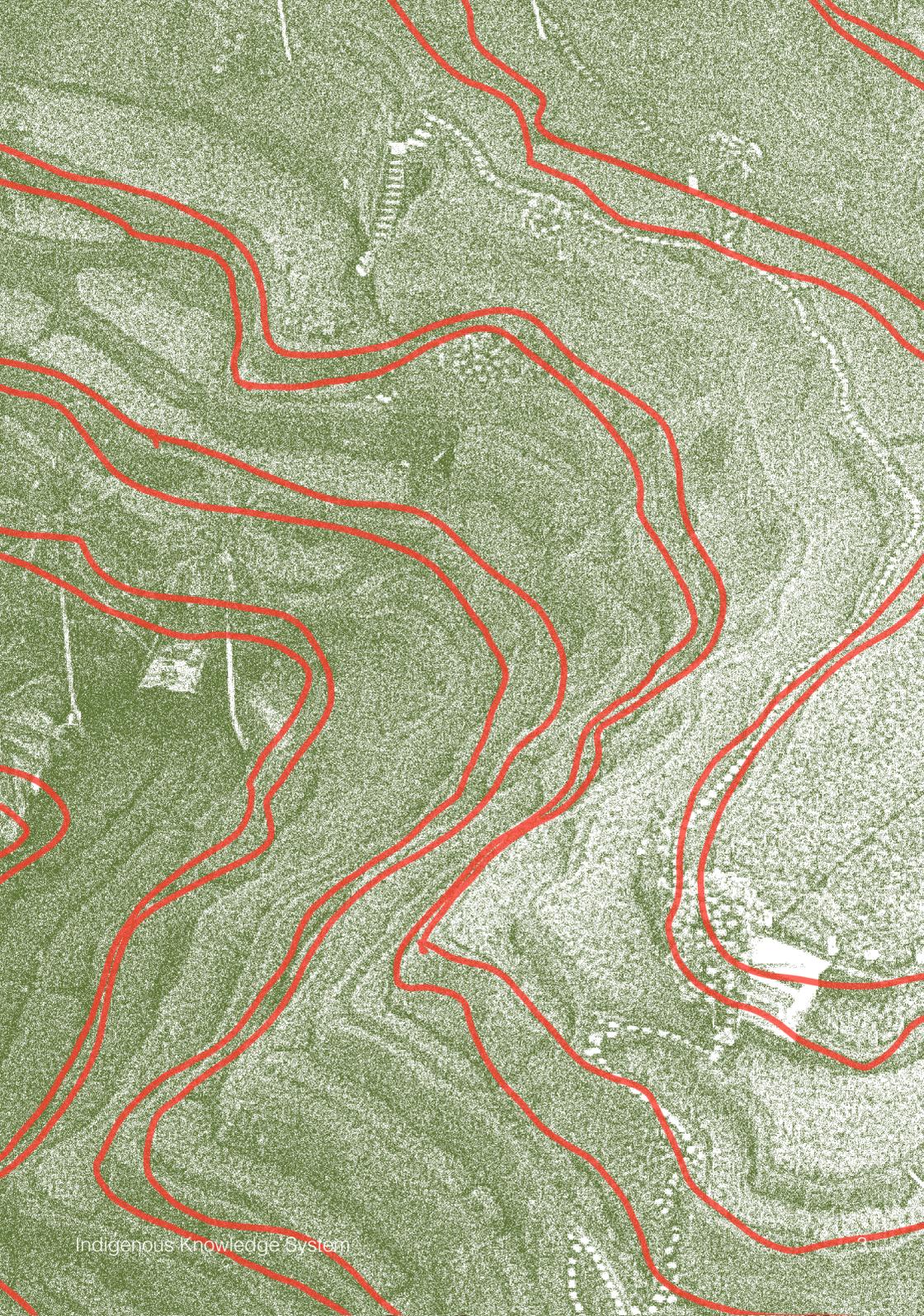
How to Read The Book?

This booklet is part of a three-part journey through Subak the living water system that has shaped Bali's landscapes, livelihoods, and beliefs for centuries.

You can read each book on its own, or follow them in order to understand the full story: from its sacred roots, to its fragile present, and toward the futures we can imagine and create.

Each booklet invites you to reflect, observe, and listen — not only to the words, but to the voices of the land, the water, and the people who still live by it. At the end of each book, you'll find a path leading you to the next.

We invite you to follow the flow.



What is Subak?

Pilars of Subak

*Agriculture
Production*

*Pillar on
Tradition and
culture*

Subak is a traditional irrigation system in Bali managed by farmers autonomously.

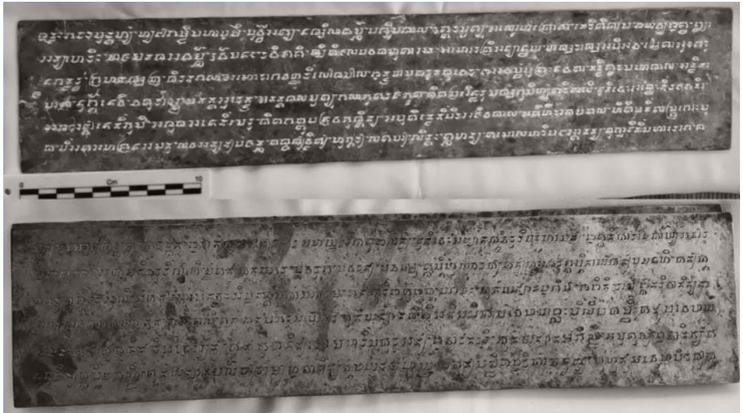
*Indigenous
Water
Management
System*

*Ecological
Management*

*Manage by Indigenous
Community, Subak*

History of Balance

since 1071 AD

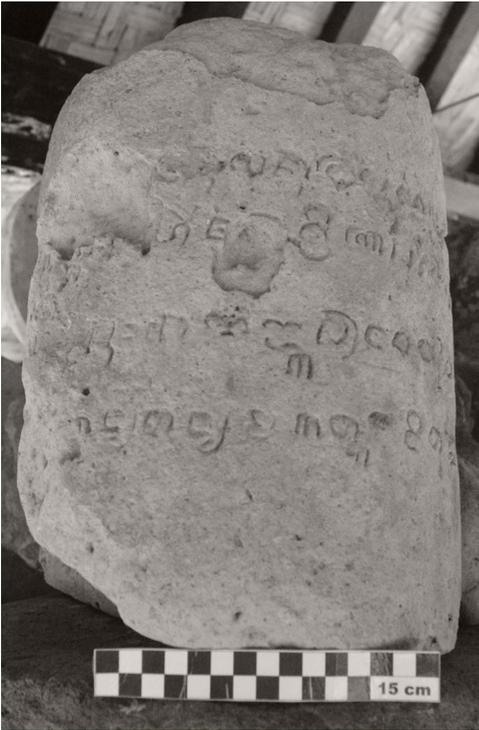


“sang mikukuhang **sawah** kewastanin **subak**, sang mikukuhang toya kewastanin **pekaseh**, ika mawenang mangepah toya punika,”

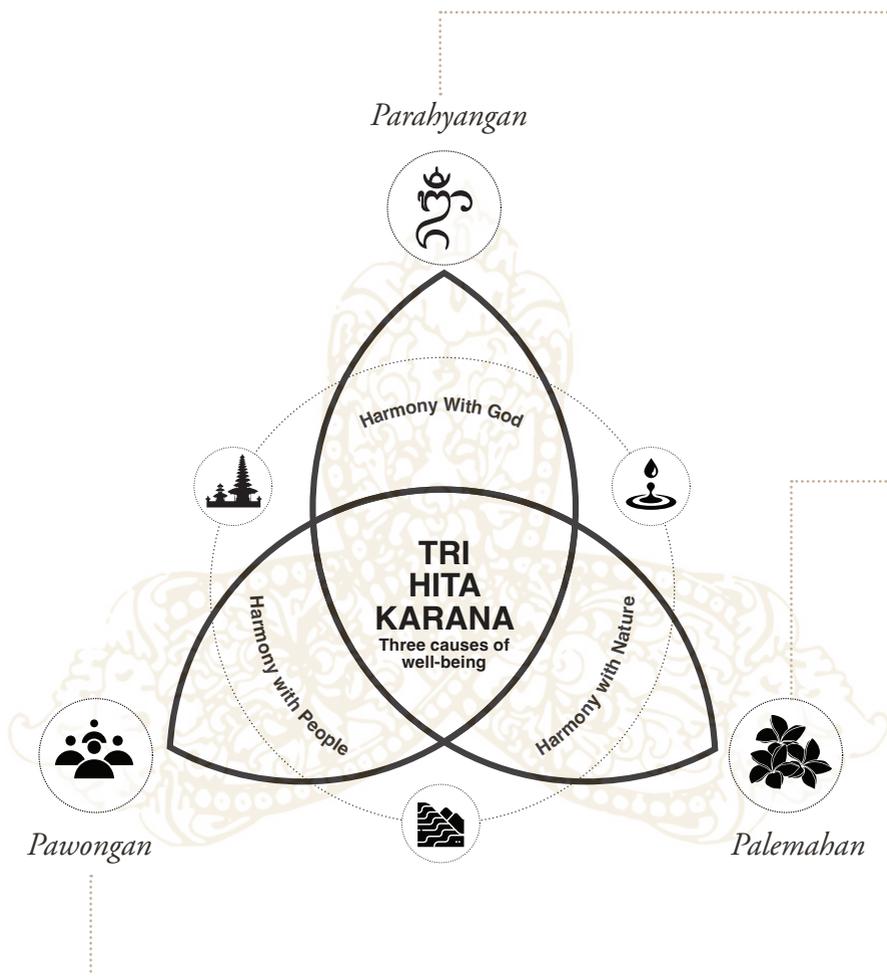
Klungkung Balinese lontar manuscripts

Pandak Badung inscription

“...masukatang **huma** di kedandan di
errara di **kasuwakan** rawas...”



Tri Hita Karana, The Wisdom Behind Subak





Parahyangan
Spiritual
Aspect

Rituals and Ceremonies

- Rituals and ceremonies to the goddess for the gift of water and productive land



Palemahan
Artifact/ Material
Aspect

Management of Land & Water

- Management of water resources
- Sediment control
- Design of irrigation system by consensus
- Agricultural activities by consensus
- Inlet-outlet system to facilitate sharing of water among farmers or subaks



Pawongan
Social Aspect

Subak Communities

- The subak organization
- Awig-awig (traditional regulations)
- Proportional distribution of water to member farms using the concept of tektek
- Cropping and planting are agreed by consensus
- Ability to lend and borrow water among farmers or subaks

Where the Water Begins

Dalem Tamblingan Lake

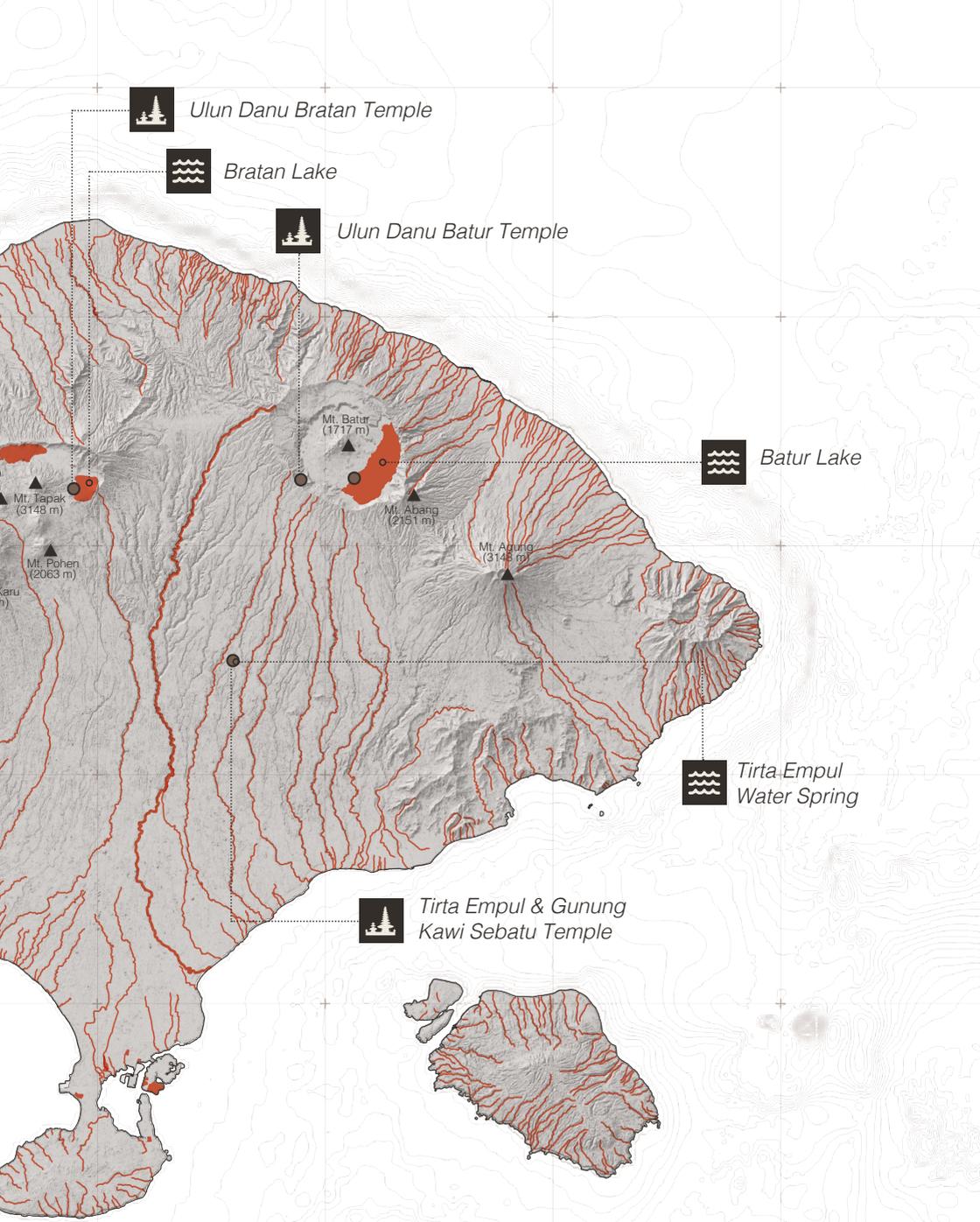


Tamblingan Lake

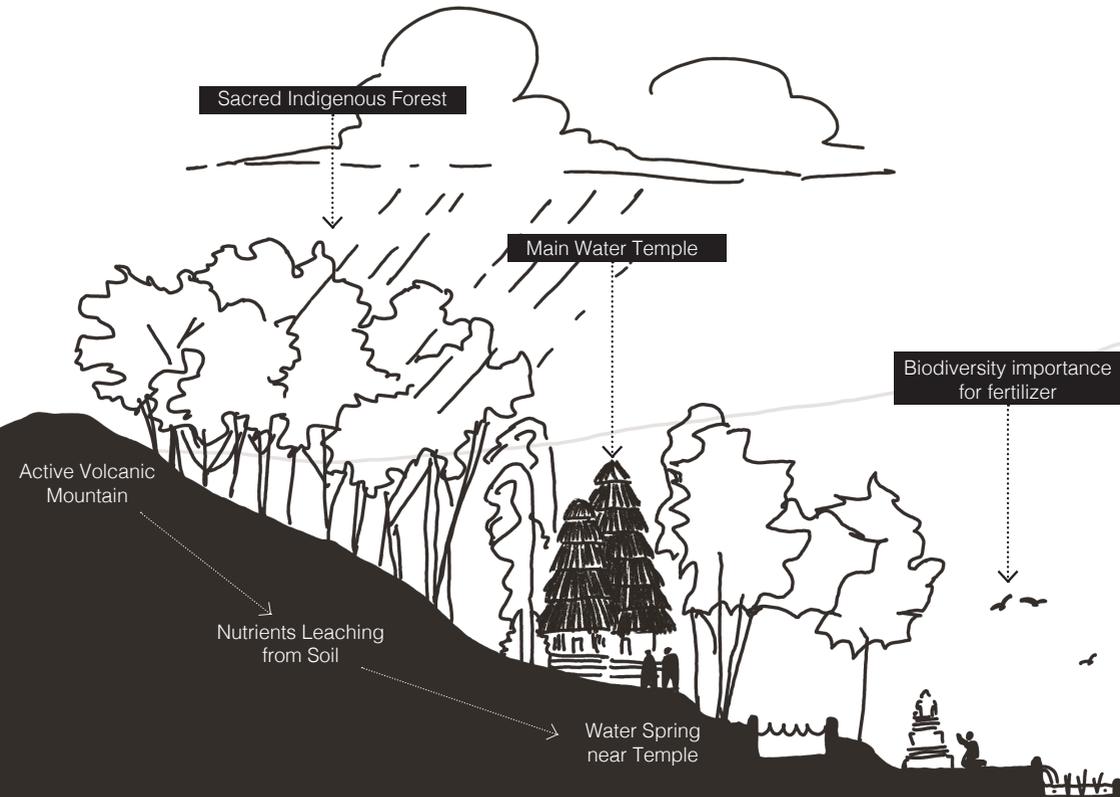


Through ritual offerings and temple ceremonies, Subak communities give thanks to Dewi Danu, the guardian of Bali's waters, acknowledging the sacredness of tirta (holy water).





One System, Many Flows



Contested Space

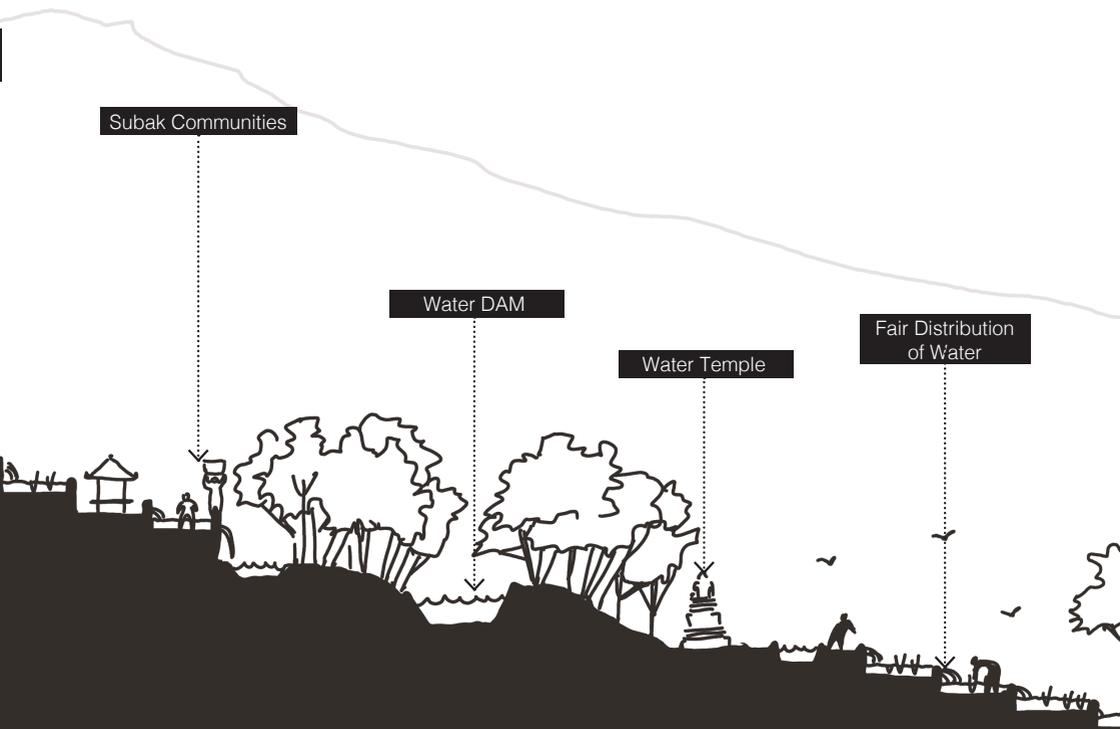
People & Institution

Hydrological System

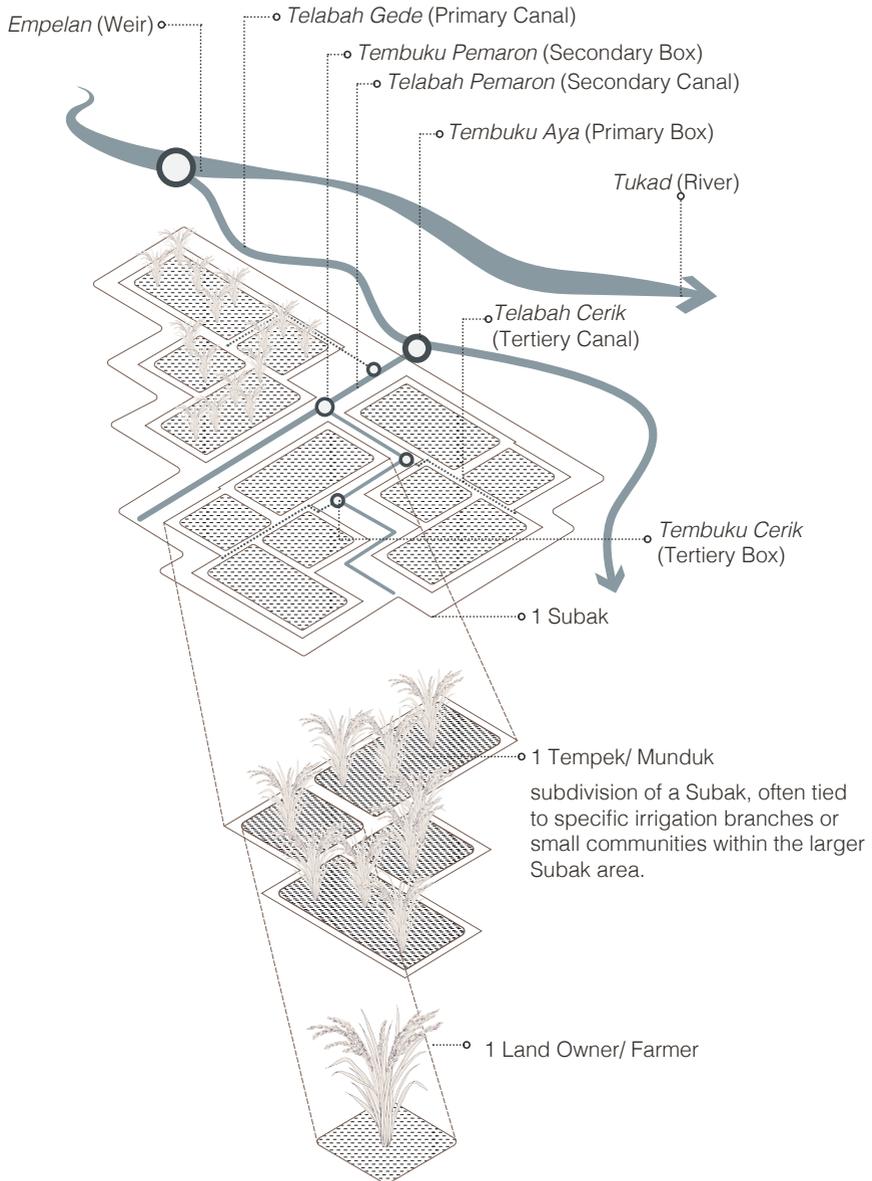
Rituals

Environment

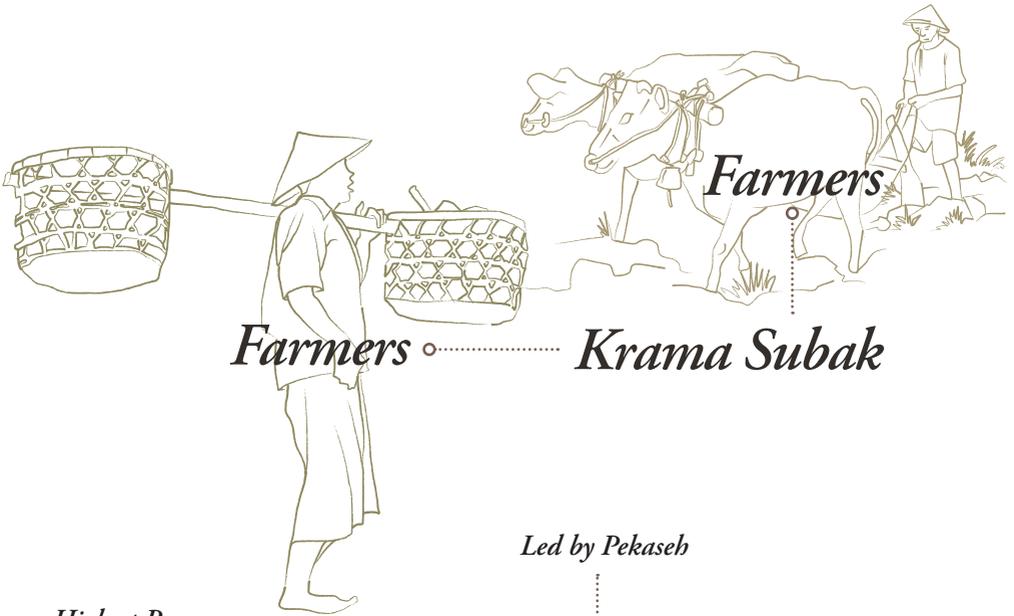
Subak works as whole system from upstream to downstream. Sacred forests located in highland, managed by indigenous groups, play a crucial role in as water catchment area. Water from upstream catchments, enriched by volcanic minerals, flows through canals fed by rivers, streams, and springs into rice paddies.



An Architecture of Sharing



Governing the Flow

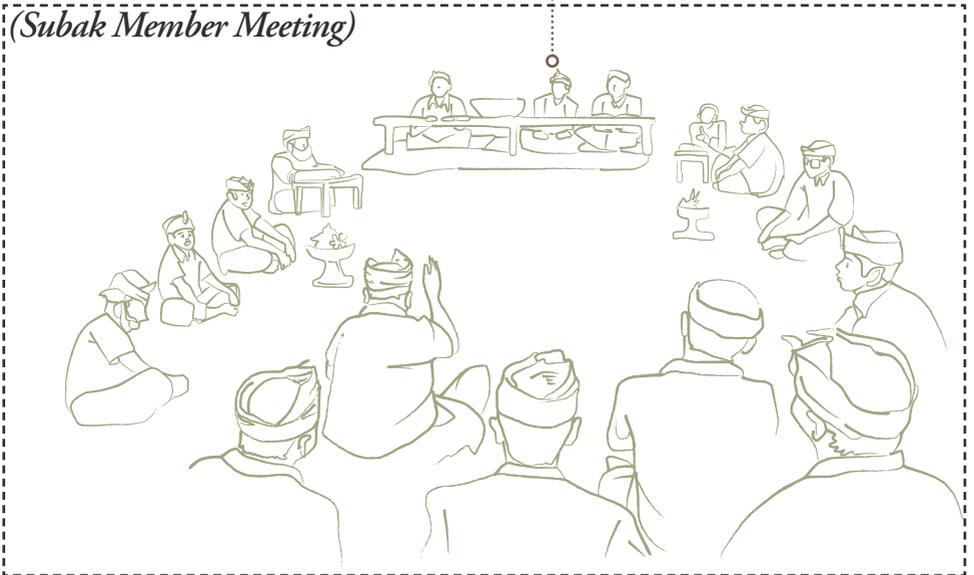


Farmers ○ *Krama Subak*

Led by Pekaseh

Highest Power

Paruman krama subak
(Subak Member Meeting)



The Rhythm of Cultivation

To schedule which date of every event is based on Hari Duasa/ Auspicious Day

Pademahan
Pawongan
Parhyangan

Ngawiwit
Sowing seeds in the nursery

Memula
Carried out at the time of planting

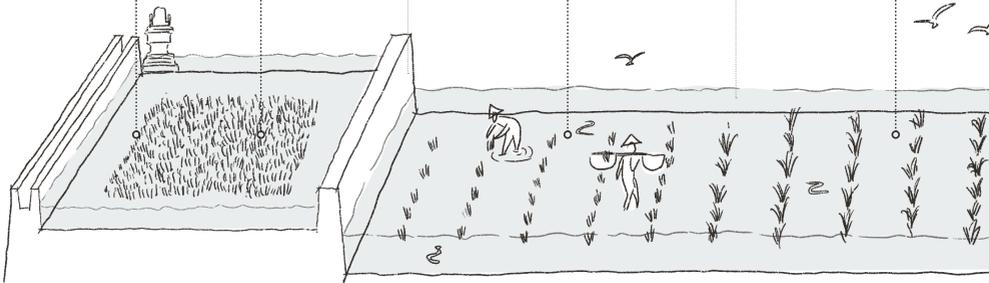
Nedub
When the rice is 1 month old, so that it is not attacked by pests

Biukukung
Carried out when the rice is pregnant

Transplanting

Growing

Maturing

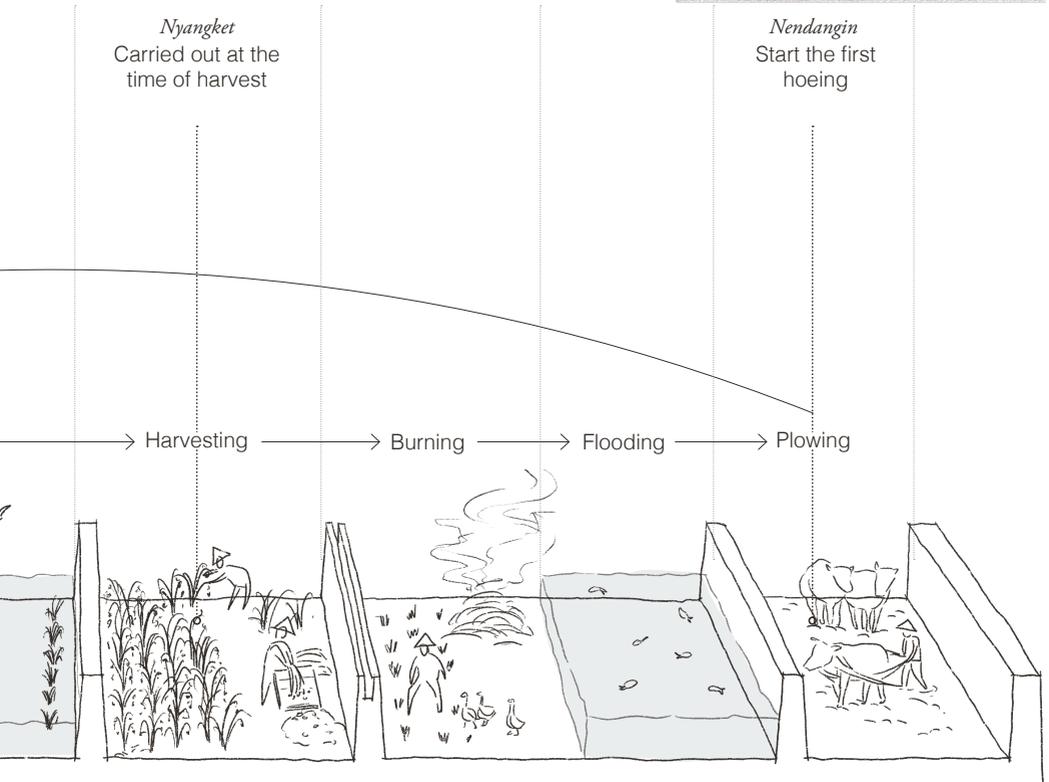


Hari Duasa
/ *Auspicious Day*
from *Balinese calender*



Nyangket
Carried out at the
time of harvest

Nendangin
Start the first
hoeing

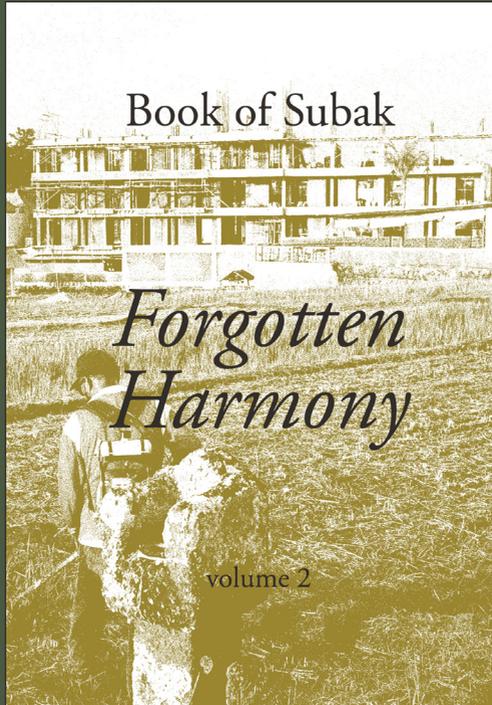




“Subak was a subject, a living system that balance the harmony of culture, ecology, & prosperity”

*From sacred flows system
to disrupted fields*

What has become of Subak today?



*Read Book 2
Forgotten Harmony*



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