

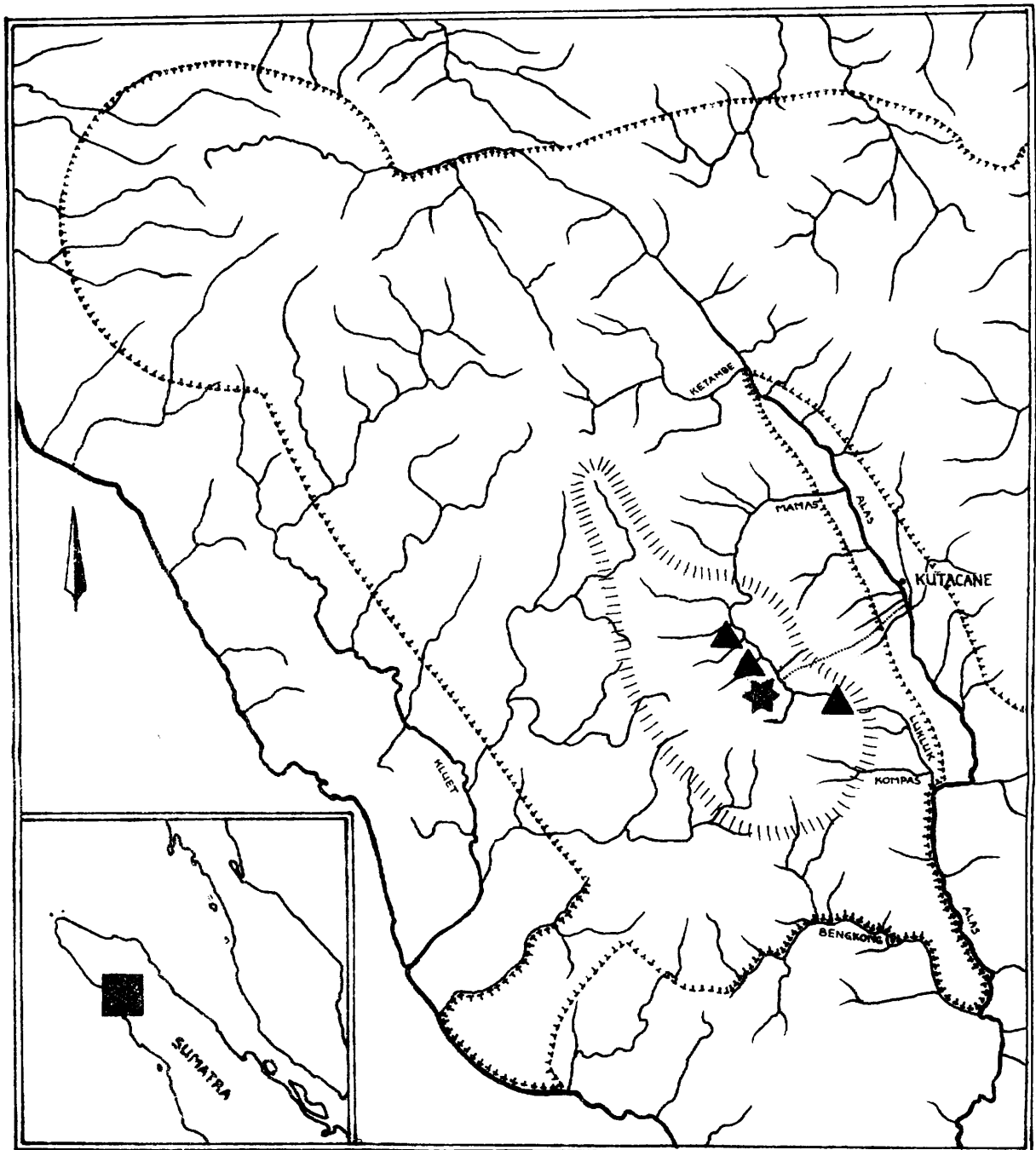
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Rhino-traps in the Gunung Leuser Reserve

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..... BOUNDARY OF RESERVE    \\\|\\|\\|\\| RHINO-AREA    ..... FOOT-PATH  
 ★ RHINO-TRAPS    ▲ HUMAN TRAILS

MAP 1; GUNUNG LEUSER RESERVE, NORTH SUMATRA. SCALE 1:750,000.

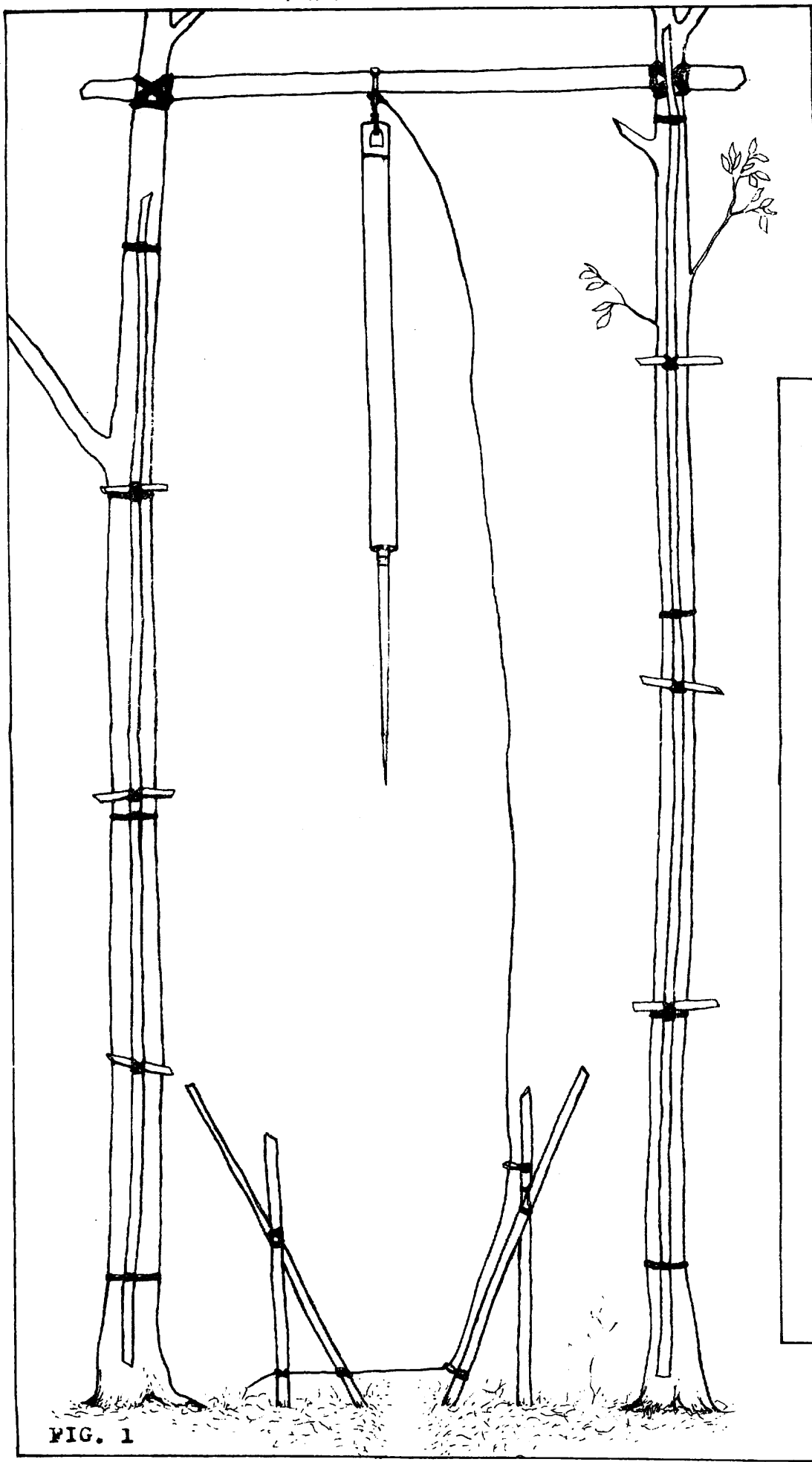


FIG. 1

FIG. 1: FRONT-VIEW OF RHINO-TRAP IN THE GUNUNG LEUSER RESERVE.

FIG. 2: SIDE-VIEW OF THE WEIGHTED SPEAR AND TRIGGER-MECHANISM.

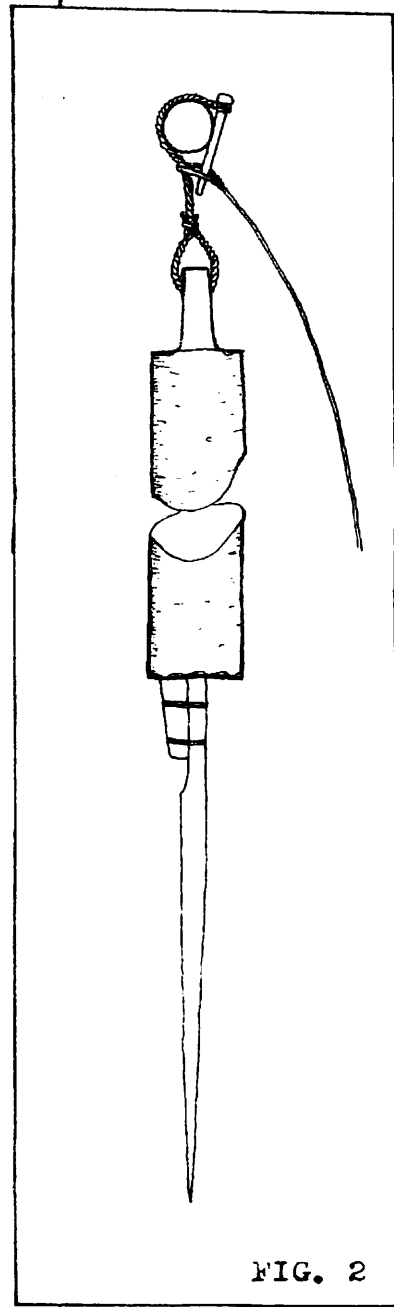


FIG. 2

## Introduction

On July 17, 1975, a series of new rhino-traps were found in the centre of the Gunung Leuser Reserve in Aceh, Sumatra. This reserve is one of the last strongholds of the Sumatran Rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) and poaching in this area is a serious threat for the survival of this species.

In this report the construction and the functioning of the traps, spear-falls, is described. Information is given on the people responsible for this poaching and on the consequences for the management of the reserve.

## Location. (See map 1)

The traps were found in the southern part of the central Leuser Valley. This is a long valley running lengthwise through the reserve. The southern half, which drains through the Mamas river, forms the core-area of the Sumatran rhinoceros in the Leuser reserve.

Here the valley-bottom is rather flat and the ridges leading up to the mountains east and west of the valley are nowhere very steep.

The whole area is very easily accessible through an extensive net-work of elephant- and rhino-paths.

The traps were built along a rhino-path on a small ridge west of the Mamas river, at an altitude of about 1250 m. Seven traps were made on a traject of about 1.5 km, 50 to 400 m. apart.

## Construction. (See fig. 1 and 2)

The traps consist of a weighted spear, hung several meters above a rhino-path and a trigger-thread stretched over the path. When a rhinoceros touches the thread, the spear drops and is forced in the back of the animal. This doesn't kill the rhinoceros instantly, but it will expire within a few kilometers from the place where it is hit.

The spear is a little less than 1 meter long and made of a hard kind of wood. It is made slowly tapering, very smooth and sharp. It is losely attached, with a few thin strips of rattan, to a long trunk, which forms the weight.

For the weight a straight stem, about 15 cm diameter an 230 to 300 cm. long, is selected. At the lower end a projection is left for attachment of the spear. It is made slightly excentric so that the spear can be placed exactly on the centre of the log. At the top end an eye is made for the hanging-cord.

The weighted spear is hung to a horizontal beam over the path, tied with rattan to two trees, left and right from the path, 8 to 9 meters above the ground. To facilitate the climbing a small stem, with a few cross-bars, is tied to the stem of these trees.

The hanging-cord is made of a strong string of rattan, about 40 cm. long, with a wooden peg, about 25 cm. long, at the end. The end of the cord is hung over the horizontal beam, with the peg pointing downwards. The whole is fixed by a rattan ring, holding the peg and the cord together. This ring is connected to a long rattan trigger-thread. When an animal passes the trap, it will pull the trigger-thread, the ring is pulled down over the peg, and the spear drops.

On the ground, left and right of the path, two sticks are placed, sloping to the path and leaving below an opening of about 40 cm.

In the opening the trigger-thread is stretched about 30 cm. above the ground.

It is fixed on one side and on the other side guided up through two rattan rings.

At the time of finding the traps, six had already dropped. Four had clearly missed, the spear stuck in the ground, but two spears were not found. Probably one rhino ran into several traps and was hit twice, but the dead animal was not found.

### The poachers

The traps are made, according to local information, by a man from Kampong Porang near Blangkedjeren, assisted by four people from Kampong Kuning, close to Kutacane. Kampong Porang has a reputation for rhino-poaching, there lives a great number of the so called "pawang badak". Formerly they hunted in the surroundings of Blangkedjeren, but they seem to shift their activities, because of the extermination of the rhinoceros in that district.

They enter the Mamas-area over a path starting near Kutacane. It follows a ridge to about 1600 m. altitude and then descends rapidly to the Mamas river. The distance is about 17 km. This path is already in use for several years. The recent poaching started probably in 1974, but before at least one other group of 11 people followed this path.

The present day group consist of 5 people and they visited the area about three weeks before the discovery of the traps. They probably were there also around April 20, 1975, they cut this date in a tree.

They made a camp along the river, close to the traps and another one 3 km. downstreams, which they only used for one night. They probably were looking for another suitable location, but could not find it there.

Also on other places old human trails were found (see map 1).

Already long ago people entered the Mamas-area along an elephant-path from the Lukluk-area. All along this path old and very old trails were found, among others of a group of 8 or 9 people. Also on two places on ridges west of the Mamas river trails were found, all very old, of a group of 3 persons.

Note: The local people have the habit of making a number of cuts, according to the number of people in the group, in large trees along the path.

### Conclusions

Until now the rhino's in the central Leuser Valley were considered safe for rhino-poachers, only the extreme south was known to be within their reach. The area was thought to be unknown and still untouched.

Through the discovery of the traps and of many human trails all along the upper Mamas, the very centre of the rhino-habitat, is known to the rhino-poachers and is within their reach. When poaching continues in this area the Sumatran Rhinoceros can easily be exterminated in the Gunung Leuser Reserve.

As long as the present research-program in this area continues, the whole of the upper Mamas, and probably also the adjoining areas, will be patrolled every few months. This will prevent further attempts to poach in this area. But when this program is finished and regular patrolling of the whole area is not continued, poaching will almost certainly start again.

There is still a large demand for rhino-products. Horns can easily be sold in the larger cities, probably mostly for export and also foreigners are travelling to Sumatra in search for rhino-horns.

Poachers can get as much as 60.000 Rupian for 100 grams of horn and they are mostly sent to the forest on advance money from the dealers.

Since the south of the Gunung Leuser Reserve is the only place where the rhinoceros has a good chance to survive in the long run, everything must be done to prevent poaching here. With continuing poaching here, the Sumatran Rhinoceros will disappear from the Gunung Leuser Reserve and probably from the whole of Sumatra.