

FORCED DELIVERY OF PADDY AND PEASANT UPRISINGS IN INDRAMAYU, INDONESIA

—Japanese Occupation and Social Change—

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INTRODUCTION

THE Japanese occupation (1942–45) is often defined as an important watershed in modern Indonesian history. The policies of the Japanese administration in these years were crucial in breaking down the traditional social relations at the village level and shaping the conditions that constituted the background for national and social revolution of 1945–49. Among the various social changes which Javanese society experienced during the occupation, one of the most prominent was the transformation of village society. During the late Dutch period (mid-nineteenth century to 1942) basic colonial policy toward the village was to give the rural society autonomy and leave it intact as much as possible. But under the Japanese occupation the village institutions were more directly connected to the outer world in the political and economic sense.

One of the most important Japanese policies which made a strong impact on rural life was the “forced delivery of paddy.” In order to acquire necessary military provisions, the Japanese military government made utmost efforts to collect as much paddy as possible from Javanese peasants. Each peasant was ordered to surrender certain quota of paddy to the government at a very low price, which greatly influenced rural life. The most prominent and immediate outcome brought by this policy was the tremendous lack of food. Since the productive capacity of paddy in Java was not very large in comparison with the size of the population and most of the produce had been consumed by its own producers, the policies were bound to deprive the peasants of a considerable part of their own food. Consequently the peasants’ welfare was seriously undermined and general dissatisfaction and deterioration of socioeconomic life prevailed. The culmination of the policies was such that finally in 1944 peasant uprisings protesting paddy delivery broke out in Indramayu. This paper will examine uprisings in Indramayu as an immediate outcome of the Japanese rice policy. This is also a case study on rural social change during the Japanese occupation. But it can also be seen as a local history of Indramayu. So far not much has been written on Indramayu, not to mention on the uprisings in 1944 and its background.

The regency of Indramayu, located on the north coast (*pasisir*) of West Java, belonged to Cirebon Residency.¹ It is a peculiar area which is neither genuine

¹ Local administrative unit in Indonesia under Dutch and Japanese rule and at contemporary Indonesia, respectively, are as follows:

"Java" nor "Sunda."² Historically speaking, it was originally a part of the Hindu kingdom of Pajajaran until the victory of the Moslem kingdom over Pajajaran (1526). Since then until 1913 when this area is officially put under Dutch rule, the *pasisir* of West Java was rendered to Moslem rule; the west of the Citarum River was put under the authority of Banten Kingdom, while the east of the Citarum came under the rule of Kingdom of Demak. Indramayu, located east of the Citarum, came under the rule of Demak and received thousands of migrants from Central and East Java who settled down and according to legend, were the first rice cultivators of Indramayu [18, p. 113]. The Javanese origin of the Indramayu peasants can be traced in their customs and local language. They are essentially Javanese in their basic character, though transformed by Sundanese influences. The local language of Indramayu (*bahasa Indramayu*) is a dialect of Javanese, different from the language spoken in other parts of Cirebon Residency, namely, Sundanese. The Javanese origin can also be attested in village names. Such as Tuba, Majakerta, and Purwareja reminds one of Tuban, Mojokerto, and Purworejo, respectively [18, p. 114].

Indramayu was a prominent agricultural area with rice as the main crop. The area of the whole regency was 203,652 hectares, out of which paddy fields occupied 113,232 hectares or 65.5 per cent during the Japanese occupation [15, Part I, Appendix]. It is called *gudang beras* ("granary") of Java together with Karawang-Bekasi area and Jember-Banyuwangi area.

In this paper rather detailed analysis will be given in Section I on the Japanese rice policy and its implementation in rural society of Indramayu. Section II will describe a series of peasant uprisings in Indramayu and discuss the underlying causes of the rural unrest in a society undergoing rapid transformation.

I. FORCED DELIVERY OF PADDY AND THE RURAL SOCIETY

A. Rice Policy under the Japanese Rule

When Japan occupied Java during World War II, one of her main purposes was the acquisition of staple resources which would enable the continuation of further military operations and the maintenance of the occupied area. Java, being

English translation:	Province	Residency	Regency	District	Sub-district
Dutch:	Provinsi	Residentie	Regentschap	District	Onder-district
Japanese:	×	Shū	Ken	Gun	Son
Contemporary:	Propinsi	×	Kabupaten	Kewedanaan	Kecamatan

× denotes "does not exist."

It is only up to Onder-district/Son/Kecamatan that functioned as an official administrative unit of the government. A village, called Dorp/Ku/Kelurahan under the each regime, is simply an autonomous community of people and its leaders were not treated as government officials.

² "Java," in a strict sense, is the area where an ethnic group called "Javanese" are originally inhabited and covers the central and eastern part of Java Island, while "Sunda" is the western part of the island inhabited by an ethnic group, "Sundanese." Indramayu is located on the border of Central and West Java.

a rice cultivating society annually producing 8 million tons of paddy in the late Dutch period, was important especially as the supplier of military provisions. The rice taken from Javanese peasants was not only for consumption in Java, but also for military provisions in other parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Most Javanese peasants are, however, very small-scale cultivators, working on several small parcels totaling less than 0.5 hectare either owned by the peasants or rented, limiting their economic capacity to the subsistence level. Usually they produced crops just enough for their own consumption or even less. They suffered from chronic poverty, being deep in perpetual debt and bound to the *ijon* system.³ Because of this they did not have full control over the disposal of their own products: a few weeks after the harvest, when they returned the debt in paddy, very little was usually left in their own hands, with only a small part of their produce being sold for cash.⁴ During the late Dutch period only about 25 per cent of the total rice production in Java was processed in rice mills and sold on the urban market.⁵ It should be remembered that most of this marketed rice came from large-scale farmers and landlords, and not from ordinary peasants. This low percentage does not necessarily mean that the Javanese peasants had enough rice themselves. During the 1930s the average rice consumption per capita in Java was 84 kg per year or 230 g per day [3, p. 206], while the data indicate that a Javanese would rather eat 146 kg per year or 400 g per day if only he could afford to.⁶ For a Javanese, rice is the most important foodstuff (*makanan pokok*) and they often say *kalau belum makan nasi, belum makan* ("if one hasn't eaten rice yet, one hasn't taken one's meal yet"). They prefer rice to any other cereal, and so long as they can afford it, they would rather fill their stomachs with rice only. Therefore this low consumption of rice shows that their productive capacity per capita is far from sufficient to guarantee them an adequate diet.

It was under such conditions that the Japanese army, who invaded Java in March 1942, used the policy of "forced delivery of paddy" to acquire military provisions. The policy was executed more systematically from April 1943, the second year of the occupation, and the beginning of a new rice year. Various decrees were issued at the residency level to implement the details of this policy.⁷ Although the concrete policies were drafted locally and were not uniformly

³ One of the most common ways of peasants got into debt was to borrow paddy from *lumbung desa* ("communal rice granary owned by village") and not to repay it with interest at the time of harvest. They also borrowed money from Chinese moneylenders with higher interests. The *ijon* system, which literally means "green," is a system whereby produce is sold for a cheaper price before it is harvested.

⁴ When a need for cash income arises, peasants usually pound a small amount of paddy by hand and sell it at a neighboring market.

⁵ This percentage is very low compared with the case in Japan in the same period, where 55.7 per cent of rice production was commercial [5, p. 7].

⁶ A research report on Tasikmadu Village in Malang Regency in 1944 shows that an average well-to-do peasant would consume about 400 g a day and this can be considered an adequate dietary intake [20, p. 65].

⁷ For example, see: *Priangan shū kokuji* [Announcement of Priangan Residency], dated May 7, 1943, in [8, No. 19, May 1943] on the selling of paddy, unhusked rice, and husked rice; *Pekalongan shūrei No. 4* [Decree of Pekalongan Residency No. 4], dated July

administered, the basic formulation of the Japanese rice policy were the same and can be summarized as follows: (1) Rice was put under the state control, and for its administration a governmental organization called S.K.Z. (Shokuryō Kanri Zimusho, or food management office) was established.⁸ Neither private rice millers nor merchants were allowed to operate on their own initiative but they were made into government agencies (for details, see [11] and [16]). (2) Peasants were required to sell a certain quota of their products to the government at a fixed price. The paddy had to be delivered to the appointed rice mills through the local government. If they had any surplus for sale it was to be sold only to the rice mills and was not allowed to be sold to private middlemen (for details, see [12]). (3) The price of rice at all levels of exchange was regulated by the government.

In the following, a description will be given of how those policies were actually implemented at the grass-roots level in Indramayu Regency.

B. *Paddy Requisition in Indramayu*

In the villages in Indramayu, where the writer conducted interviews,⁹ the peasants referred to the Japanese period as *zaman kwintalan* ("era of quintal"). In rural Indramayu the "quintal" or the unit for 100 kg had not been familiar to the peasants as the weighing unit for paddy before the Japanese came.¹⁰ In the Dutch period paddy used to be calculated by the bunch called gedeng or sangga in the local languages, or by a unit of weight called dacing which is equivalent to 65 kg. The Japanese military government, however, introduced the "quintal" as the basic weighing unit for paddy at the village level as well as at urban markets. In the peasants' memory the "quintal" came into their world together with the forced delivery of paddy, and they were combined into one idea. Therefore when they talk about *zaman kwintalan*, it actually implies *zaman penyeteran padi* or "era of paddy delivery." Furthermore it seems that this term often represents the idea of "Japanese rule" to their general way of understanding. Paddy delivery was such an intense experience for the peasants that when

14, 1943, in [9, No. 8, August 1943] on unhusked rice; *Banjoemas shūrei No. 1* [Decree of Banyumas Residency No. 1], dated November 18, 1943, in [9, No. 13, December 1943] on regulations on the control of unhusked and husked rice; *Banten shūrei No. 1* [Decree of Banten Residency No. 1], dated February 4, 1944, in [9, No. 16, March 1944] on regulations on the control of rice and other staple foodstuff.

⁸ S.K.Z. was later (September 1943) incorporated into the newly established Jūyō Busshi Kōdan (corporation for staple commodities). But in April 1944 its food section was separated and an independent organ Shokuryō Kanri Kyoku (bureau for food management) was established.

⁹ This research was done by the writer in the following four sub-districts between December 1980 and March 1981: three villages including Kaplogan in Karangampel; eight villages including Bugis in Anjatan; three villages, namely Cidempet, Pranggong, and Arahan Lor, in Sindang; and three villages, namely, Paningkiran Kidul, Paningkiran Lor, and Cantigi Kulon, in Lohbener. Each information used in this paper, unless specified, is all based on the writer's interview during this research with more than two informants.

¹⁰ "Quintal" had already been used at rice mills and by the traders since the Dutch period, but not in rural society.

the writer mentioned, at the beginning of the interviews, that she wanted to ask about *zaman Jepang* ("Japanese period"), peasants' first response often was "Oh, *zaman kwintalan!*"

Paddy delivery was carried out in the following way. The S.K.Z. decided the total amount of rice needed, taking into consideration the request from the Sixteenth Army as well as the military government. Then the S.K.Z. stipulated the demand for each residency according to its capacity (for allocation to each residency, see [7]). In the same way the residency stipulated the demand for the regencies, the regency for the districts, the district for the sub-districts, and finally the sub-district for the villages.¹¹ Calculations and the allocation at each administrative level was made based on Dutch statistics for the annual production of rice. The village chief (*kuchō*), upon notice from the sub-district head (*sonchō*), divided the given quota by the total area of paddy fields in his village to find out how many quintals per hectare should be collected from peasants.¹²

In the villages in Indramayu, the peasants were ordered to deliver an extraordinary high quota per hectare, several times higher than in other neighboring regencies. The quota amounted to 15 quintals per hectare, which constituted about 70 per cent of the average yield of 22.19 quintals for 1940 in all Java [5, p. 5]. The quota was 2 quintals per hectare in Cirebon Regency and 4 to 7 quintals in Majalengka Regency.¹³ Since it is unnatural that the residential government assigned an extraordinarily high rate only to Indramayu, it is more likely that the increase was made at the regency level or below. For example, if a *sonchō* was assigned 1,000 tons for his sub-district, he might have ordered the villages under him to deliver 1,200 tons altogether. It seems partly for the sake of assuring a full quota: the actual amount of the delivery often fell below the quota, causing difficulties for the local government. Therefore the local government increased the allocation beforehand. The overassessment might have also been because the *pamong praja* ("local government officials") wanted to make a profit out of it and ordered extra delivery for their benefit.¹⁴ Concerning this, Prawoto [15, Part I, p. 4] remarks that "upon receipt of a bribe local government officials help Chinese rice merchants and rice millers and *there arised* [*sic*] *the extraordinary high quota . . .*" (Prawoto's italics). At any rate, the peasants

¹¹ This is the same method as the one used in Japan for forced delivery of paddy during World War II. In Japan it was legally prescribed in a decree named *Beikoku kanri yōkō* [Decree for control of rice] issued in October 1943.

¹² In residencies such as Jakarta and Bogor, the new system was introduced in 1945, where the quota for each peasant was not in proportion to the area under cultivation, but to the actual yield. The percentage was, however, not fixed, but decided according to the status of the peasant (i.e., owner-cultivator, tenant farmer, and landlord).

¹³ This figure (15 quintals) was acquired from the writer's interviews and was confirmed by Prawoto [15, Part I, p. 7], while [10, p. 1] reported 17 quintals. Quotas in the regencies of Cirebon and Majalengka were cited from [10, p. 1], while Prawoto [15, Part I, p. 7] described the quota in those regencies as one-third of that of Indramayu.

¹⁴ This kind of dishonesty and injustice on the part of *pamong praja* and *pamong desa* in carrying out paddy requisition was seen more or less everywhere in Java. For example, see [14, pp. 93-94] [1, pp. 94-95] [4, p. 1].

of Indramayu were for various reasons required to deliver three- to four-times paddy more than other regencies.

After the quota was decided on the actual execution of the policy was totally entrusted to the *kuchō*. At an early stage, since there was no particular executive body for paddy delivery, it was mainly the *pamong desa* ("village officials") who were active in collecting paddy. They were further helped by the heads of newly established neighborhood associations. Starting in 1944, however, agricultural cooperatives were set up in the villages to help implement paddy delivery. The formation of cooperatives was a part of "New Economic Order for the People of Java" (*Jawa jūmin keizai shintaisei*).¹⁵ This new program, promulgated on the Japanese Emperor's birthday in April 1944, advocated five principles, among which was the encouragement of various types of cooperatives. According to official announcements its purpose was to protect the economic interests of Indonesian *pribumi* ("natives") from the Chinese. However, as far as agricultural cooperatives were concerned, it seems that the government's real intention was to smooth the way for acquisition of paddy and other necessary commodities with maximum efficiency. In Cirebon Residency an agricultural cooperative was organized on the basis of *Cirebon shūrei No. 2* [Decree of Cirebon Residency No. 2], dated June 15, 1944 [9, July 1944]. The basic unit of the cooperative was organized at the sub-district level and the *sonchō* concurrently served as its chairman. Each basic unit had branches at the village level, which was put under the supervision of the *kuchō*, and all agricultural households were required to join it. Collection of paddy was one of the main functions of the cooperative and for this it received a 3 per cent of handling charges.

The process of paddy collection was as follows. Prior to harvest the peasants were supposed to report to the village office (*balai desa*) so that the *kuchō* could send someone to supervise the harvest in the paddy field. After the *bawon* ("the wage paid in paddy for harvest laborers") was paid, all the paddy, which still contained a lot of moisture, was carried to a place called the *lamporan* to be scaled.¹⁶ The fixed quota per hectare was taken by the officials on the spot, and the meager remainder was allowed to be taken home. If the crop was less than the quota required, the peasant had to make up the deficiency from his home stock, which had been acquired as *bawon* for participating in neighbors' harvest. It seems that the collection of the paddy was not always fairly carried out. It has been reported that the *pamong desa* and cooperative staff sometimes did not deliver their own quotas, and the deficiency was made up from the crops of other peasants. It is also stated by the informants that those who were in charge of weighing the paddy at the *lamporan* often cheated the peasants by estimating the moisture of the paddy to be much higher than it actually was and deducting the weight.

¹⁵ As regards this new order, see [2, pp. 107-32].

¹⁶ The word *lamporan* cannot be found in standard Indonesian dictionaries. According to the peasants' explanation, the word had been occasionally used since the Dutch period to mean the place for drying paddy, but it became more familiar to them during *zaman kwintalan* because it was used as a collection point of paddy.

After being dried at the *lamporan*, the paddy was delivered to the appointed rice mill. Those who had delivered the paddy later received money from the government, but in the first year of the occupation a land tax was deducted from this payment, and only the remainder was paid to the peasants.¹⁷ Therefore, the peasants understood collection of paddy as a tax in kind. The money received was usually very little. First of all, the government price was very low, and because of rapid inflation the value was soon further diminished. In addition, the government strongly encouraged people to save as much money as possible at the post office and, once deposited, it was very difficult to withdraw it. In addition to the cash payment, clothing materials that were desperately needed by the peasants were given as incentives for performance.¹⁸ The distribution was uneven, however, and materials seldom reached the peasants because of the corruption of local officials at various levels.

Now let me analyze how this heavy burden of paddy delivery affected the peasants' household economy, by taking a case of "typical peasant household" with six members, who owned 0.5 hectare's paddy field. Since the average yield per hectare in the late Dutch period was 22.19 quintals, it might be reasonable to suppose that their harvest would have been about 11 quintals. Out of this, he had to deliver about 7.5 quintals to the government and had to pay *bawon* (usually one-sixth of the harvested crop) which would be about 1.8 quintals in this case. Then the remainder was only 1.7 quintals or 170 kg of paddy. Since the extraction rate of hand-pounded rice is about 70 per cent, it would be approximately 119 kg of unhusked rice. He had to support whole his family with this rice. Remembering that the annual consumption of rice per capita during the late Dutch period was 84 kg, it is obvious that the amount would be far from sufficient to feed the six members.

Even in the areas where requirement on paddy delivery was not as heavy as in Indramayu, the food shortage was a general phenomenon. And to make up for the wide-spread deficiency in rice in all over Java, the government encouraged people to eat porridge, introducing new recipes under such names as *bubur perjuangan* ("fighting porridge") and *bubur Asia Raya* ("Great Asian porridge"). Most of these government recommended menus used maize, cassava, soybeans, and other secondary cereals. The price of these substitute cereals had risen rapidly on the free market because of decreased production¹⁹ and increased

¹⁷ For this purpose the village secretaries from all over Indramayu were summoned to the regency office and engaged in detailed calculations. It was so complicated and took so much time to liquidate the paddy payment and calculate the tax deduction that from the second year on it was decided to completely separate the payment and taxation procedures.

¹⁸ The shortage of textiles during the Japanese occupation was so serious that people had to wear clothes made from gunnysack or rubber.

¹⁹ Production of the other major cereals in 1944 was:

	Average Production 1937-41 (Ton)	Production 1944 (Ton)	Changes (%)
Maize	2,056,000	1,211,000	-41
Tapioka	8,249,000	5,558,000	-33
Soybean	301,000	110,000	-64

demand. The situation was worse in rural areas than in urban areas, and ironically enough, the producers of foodstuffs were suffering much more from hunger than urban consumers. This was because in the cities rice was distributed through semigovernmental consumers' cooperatives at low prices. Rice shortage was further exacerbated by a very poor harvest in 1944. The total production in that year for whole Java was 6.811 million tons or only 80 per cent of the average production between 1937 and 1941 [17, p. 81]. For example, crop failure in Indramayu Regency in the rainy season of 1944 was reported to cover an area of 29,925 hectares or about 26.4 per cent of the total paddy field. Consequently, nutritional edema spread throughout rural society in all over Java. For example, it is reported that as early as in 1943 at the Central Hospital in Semarang, a north-coast town, 832 persons were treated for malnutrition in the six months between February and September, out of which 366 died [20, p. 8]. The deterioration of social welfare was such that in 1944, in all residencies except Jakarta and Priangan, the death rate exceeded the birth rate, and the population decreased for the first time in modern Javanese history. In Cirebon Residency the death rate was 80 among 1,000 persons, while the birth rate was only 65 among 1,000 persons [22, pp. 18-19]. From all those figures we can get some idea on how the peasants life was threatened by the food shortage during the Japanese occupation. In addition to this general tendency it is necessary to note that Indramayu Regency had been one of the poorest regions in Java in terms of most of the peasants' socioeconomic level. In spite of high production of paddy in the whole regency, the individual peasant was extremely poor partly because of its landholding system. The western half of the regency (west of Kandanghaur) was a part of *particulir landrijen* (privately owned estates which was free from government control) until 1921, and even after that, landownership was highly concentrated, and this sharp social division might have contributed to making the situation worse in Indramayu than in other areas.

In the midst of this already desperate situation, further pressure came from the local government during the harvest season of 1944. After having collected the fixed quota per hectare, the government again tried to squeeze the peasants' already meager household stock of paddy. Possibly these renewed efforts were due to poor results at the first stage of collection. According to Prawoto, paddy actually sent to rice mills in Indramayu between April and July 1944 amounted to 453,850.43 quintals, which was only 30 per cent of the quota for the whole regency (1,513,834.7 quintals) [15, Part I, p. 7]. This second stage of paddy collection was carried out by an inspection team, usually consisting of *pamong praja*, *pamong desa*, policemen, school teachers, members of the security association, and staff of communal granary. When the inspection team came to a village, they would select several wealthier farmers and search their granary for "excess stock," and if they found this to be the case, it was taken away on the spot. The definition of excess stock was very vague and not clearly stated in the decrees. It first depended on how much more paddy was needed to fill up the quota in that area and second on the personal consideration of the officials in charge of the requisition. In Kaplongan only two gedeng of paddy (equivalent to

about 10 kg) were allowed for household stocks, while in other areas of Indramayu Regency 20–25 kg were allowed. In any case this second stage of requisition was so severe that it frightened and offended the peasants very much, and it was at this stage that large-scale peasant protest first occurred. The next section will focus on the analysis of three main uprisings in Indramayu during 1944.

II. PEASANT UPRISINGS IN INDRAMAYU

A. *Outline of the Uprisings*

Very little is known about the peasant uprisings in Indramayu that took place in 1944 under Japanese rule.²⁰ The uprising first occurred in Kaplongan Village in Karangampel Sub-district (western tip of Indramayu) and then, like a chain reaction, spread to peasants in the border areas of the sub-districts of Sindang and Lohbener. After the big explosion in that area, the uprising extended to the sub-districts of Losarang, Siliyeg, and Kertasemaya and finally reached the eastern tip of Indramayu, namely, Bugis Village in Anjatan Sub-district.

All of this took place between April and August 1944, during the main harvest season. It was the first big peasant uprising in Indramayu since a series of anti-*pamong praja* and anti-Chinese uprisings in 1913 which occurred under the leadership of the local Sarekat Islam (Islam League, a nationalist organization established in 1912). Since it was worth paying attention to how the rebellion started and how it developed, a rather detailed description of these three important uprisings will be given.

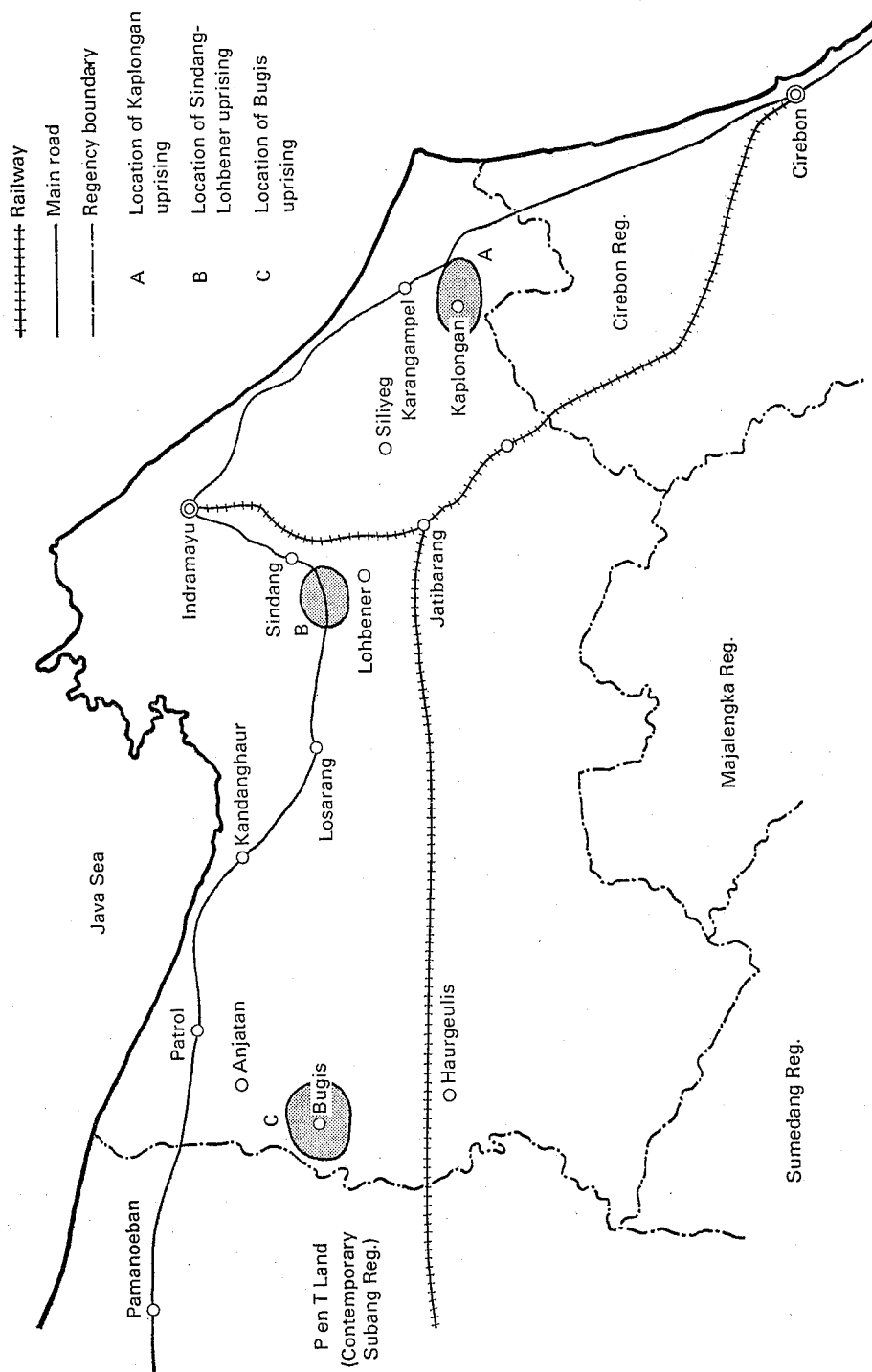
1. *The uprising in Kaplongan*

Kaplongan, located about 30 km north of Cirebon and 25 km south of Indramayu, was a large village (9.72 square kilometers), including contemporary Kelurahan Tanjungpura and Kelurahan Kaplongan proper. The village extended on both sides of the highway between Cirebon and Indramayu, and it had good communication with the urban sector. Residents of the village were known as devoted Muslims, and there were many *pesantren* (“informal institutes for Islamic learning”) in the neighboring villages as well as in Kaplongan itself. The percentage of the people going on pilgrimage to Mecca was high. Landownership was relatively uneven in those days, and there were several large-scale landholders. Among them was Haji Aksan, whose paddy became the focal point of the Kaplongan uprising.

One day in 1944, when the harvest had just started, the peasants of Kaplongan were given notice by their village leaders that the new regulations had been issued, and the peasants had to deliver all stock of paddy except two gedeng per household. Soon after that, one Friday morning in April, Majana Sastra, *sonchō* of Karangampel, and two policemen came to Kaplongan to put the new regulation into practice. When they arrived, the villagers were all summoned to the *balai*

²⁰ This was one of the three big anti-Japanese revolts in Java during the Japanese occupation. The other two were the revolt of the PETA army in Blitar (for details, see [19]) and the uprising of *Pesantren Sukamanah* in Singaparna, Tasikmalaya (for details, see [6]).

Fig. 1. Map of Indramayu Regency



desa. First, Village Secretary Hasim gave a speech on behalf of the government. He encouraged the peasants to deliver all the paddy stock except two gedeng. Some of the peasants grumbled and others hooted in disagreement, but no one dared resist openly at that moment. Then the peasants were told to come to Haji Aksan's house, where they were ordered to confiscate his paddy and carry it to the *balai desa*. Haji Aksan was one of the wealthiest peasants in the village, possessing some 20 hectares of paddy field. According to Mrs. Aksan, his widow, her husband still had about 10 quintals of paddy left at that time after having delivered his quota. When the order was given, the peasants became very embarrassed and hesitant, but they felt compelled to obey the order. Little by little the paddy of Haji Aksan was carried to the *balai desa*. The task had not yet been completed in time for them to attend Friday worship at the mosque. They asked the *sonchō* for permission to stop the work and go to the mosque, but he insisted on continuing the work. At this point a very heated quarrel developed between the peasants and the authorities. The *kuchō* and his men were very upset to see their people resist and tried to persuade them, taking the side of the government. But the peasants refused to listen any more and finally began throwing stones at the officials. The main targets of their hatred were the *sonchō* and the two policemen. In the hail of stones the *sonchō* fell down unconscious, while the two policemen were killed. The *kuchō* and *pamong desa* all ran away, thus escaping death. It was only after the uprising had been smashed that the *kuchō* came back to the village.

The people realized that they had crossed the point beyond which they could not return. They had to be ready for the worst. In their excitement and religious conviction, they made up their minds that they would rather fight against the government than die of hunger. That night hundreds of people went to the *langgar* ("small worship place") of Kiyai Haji Irsyad, a respected religious teacher in their village, and asked him for holy water that would give them immunity to any attack by the heathens. They also set up a barricade along the main village road connecting the village with the outside world.

The following morning the Japanese army arrived with Indonesian soldiers and policemen. They came in trucks and removed the barricade. A man named Saleh came with them and from the truck he made a speech in Javanese, appealing to the peasants to stop the resistance. The peasants became angry and shouted, "What should we eat then?" and "We would rather die in battle than die of hunger!" The peasants started attacking with all possible weapons available, including stones, bricks, bamboo spikes, and machete. The Japanese soldiers started shooting. In the fighting several peasants were killed, and finally the others ran away. At this stage two local *kiyai* ("Islamic teacher") from the neighboring villages were dispatched to Kaplongan to appease the peasants, and through their mediation the peasants finally agreed to calm down, and the Japanese army returned to Indramayu.

2. *The uprising in Sindang and Lohbener*

About a month after the incident in Kaplongan, the second wave of peasant

uprisings started in the border area between the sub-districts of Sindang and Lohbener. It is often referred to by the local people as *pemberontakan Cidempet* ("revolt in Cidempet") since the initiative was taken by the peasants of Cidempet Village in Lohbener Sub-district. Actually it involved twelve neighboring villages on the border of the two sub-districts. This area is about 15 km southwest of Indramayu City. It was agriculturally poor due to a lack of fresh water. The underground water contained salt because it is close to the sea, and the water shortage was such that at the peak of the dry season (July and August) people did not even have enough drinking water. The poverty of this area can also be seen in the fact that there was no *tanah bengkok* ("land given to the *kuchō* and *pamong desa* as a salary"). Instead, every household in the village annually contributed 5–10 kg of paddy to them, depending on the household's economic capacity. Income from this *panceng* is much smaller than that from *tanah bengkok*.

The uprising took place in May 1944, soon after the announcement of the new regulation on paddy requisition, which ordered the peasants to surrender all paddy stock except for 25 kg. When the people of Cidempet were told about it, they became so furious that some of the villagers kidnapped Kuchō Usman, carried him to the graveyard, and threatened to kill him. Usman, being frightened, was forced to promise that he would stop the requisition of paddy and thus escaped death. As soon as he was set free, however, he ran away to Cirebon and did not come back until after the revolt. When the villagers found that he had fled, they were so angry that they determined to resist the requisition by force. Under the leadership of Haji Madrias they gathered several times for discussion. It seems that there was no such thing as an "organized" meeting with fixed members; rather people just gathered together and talked about resistance to making further deliveries.

About a week later news came that the *sonchō* of Lohbener would come to Cidempet Village to manage the paddy requisition after attending the election of the *kuchō* at Kiajaran Kulon Village. Haji Madrias and his followers gathered at the *balai desa* and waited for their coming. They waited and waited in frustration, but the party of the *sonchō* did not come. Then, toward noon the unexpected news came that not their own *sonchō* but the *sonchō* of Sindang had just arrived in the neighboring village of Paningkiran Kidul to collect paddy. Although this village was in jurisdiction of Sindang Sub-district, it was adjacent to Cidempet, and many residents of Cidempet actually owned land in Paningkiran Kidul. The arrival of the *sonchō* of Sindang was just by chance, but the peasants of Cidempet, who were tired of waiting for their own *sonchō*, decided to go to Paningkiran Kidul instead.

As they proceeded to the village, they invited more people to come along, until finally the group numbered around 300 peasants by the time they reached the *balai desa* of the village. There they found the *sonchō* and two *upas* ("local officials in charge of security") from the sub-district office, as well as Kuchō Durgani and Village Secretary Darwia in the middle of receiving paddy from peasants. Looking at the angry villagers, they were very surprised. The *sonchō*

of Sindang stood up and began to ask in the local language, "What do you want?" Then the peasants shouted, "This is not the *sonchō*, but a rat!" In those days rats were the biggest pest the peasants had because they ate their paddy in the field. The *kuchō* rose up and tried to stand between the *sonchō* and the peasants. But being already old and weak, he was easily pushed aside by the peasants and killed with bamboo spikes. The irrigation official of the village also resisted and was injured. Then the *sonchō* and the two *upas* were killed. Village Secretary Darwia escaped and ran out of the village. Although he was once stopped on the way by peasants, he escaped by giving them Rp. 90, an official fund for buying paddy which he happened to have in his pocket. Going through several villages safely, he finally arrived at the sub-district office of Sindang and reported what had happened in his village.²¹

Meanwhile, the peasants went to Pranggong Village in Lohbener Sub-district. It was already about four o'clock in the afternoon. They came to the *kuchō*'s house, but he happened to be absent attending a meeting in Lohbener. The peasants, frustrated at the unexpected absence of the *kuchō*, went to Cantigi Kulon Village in Sindang Sub-district, where *Kuchō Kalipa* happened to be at the *balai desa* collecting taxes from the villagers. The rioters attacked him on the spot. He ran into his house, but the peasants broke into the house with stones. Then the *kuchō* ran into his neighbor's house, where a wedding ceremony was being held. Since nobody but his own son tried to defend him, he was finally caught and killed together with his son. Informants told the writer that although the peasants of Cantigi Kulon did not intend to kill their own *kuchō* and did not join in, they were, as a whole, very apathetic to his death. They even felt somewhat relieved. He was one of the wealthiest peasants in the village, having about eighty hectare paddy field and a gorgeous house. Since he had been working as the *kuchō* for thirty-two years, he had helped very much in the development of his village. But he was said to be very strict and even cruel in carrying out his tasks.

In many other neighboring villages, the *kuchō* were attacked, unless they escaped beforehand. In Arahan Lor Village in Lohbener, for example, *Kuchō Abdul Aziz*, who had been informed by some of his client peasants of the attack on the neighboring *kuchō*, promptly left the village. After reporting to the sub-district office at Lohbener, he ran away to Cirebon and then to Indramayu to hide himself. It was only after a fortnight that he came back to his village, which, by then, had been put under police montrol.²²

Various efforts were made on the part of the government to settle things down. A well-known religious leader, *Khalifah Haji Abdullah Fakhri*, was sent to the area to effect a reconciliation between the people and the government. The government spread pamphlets from helicopters, appealing to them to calm down and promising that the government would not seek revenge. However, the government finally laid a trap: *Haji Madrias* and other prominent figures in the uprising were cordially invited to Cirebon for a meeting, and on their arrival they were arrested [18, pp. 279-80]. Then followed the arrests of a great number of minor

²¹ Interview with Darwia on December 19, 1980 in Indramayu.

²² Interview with Abdul Aziz on December 16, 1980 at Arahan Kidul.

figures in the village. In Paningkiran Kidul a *kiyai* from Rambatan Kulon came and advised the peasants to surrender. After the peasants had surrendered their weapons on his advice, a Japanese, who had also come, said, "whoever wants to get something (the name of which the informants cannot recall), come along with me!" Many people believed him and followed. They were taken away in truck and never came back. It is unknown how many persons simply disappeared or were arrested altogether.

The uprising and disturbances spread outside this area as far as the sub-districts of Kertasumaya, Losarang, and Siliyeg. In Siliyeg the sub-district office and the residence of the *sonchō* were looted, as were the Chinese stores [15, Part II, p. 3]. In Kertasemaya people started to come to a Kiyai Muchtar in Tenajar Village, asking for holy water. However, the uprising was aborted because the government preventively arrested the *kiyai* and discouraged the peasants [18, p. 278]. Thus the disturbances finally reached Bugis Village in Anjatan Sub-district located at the western border of Indramayu Regency and brought about much fighting between the peasants and the authorities.

3. *The uprising in Bugis*

Bugis Village in Anjatan Sub-district is located at the western border of Indramayu Regency and was across the Cipunegara River from a *particulir landrijen* called P en T (Pamanukan en Tjidsam) Land in those days (contemporary in Subang Regency). The village stands in a rather secluded place, away from the road between Patrol and Haurgeulis. However, it has an important role as a center for water distribution to the neighboring villages. In the late 1920s the Salam Darma dam was built on its border with P en T Land and this dam has since provided irrigation water to the large area covering the western part of Indramayu Regency and the eastern part of P en T Land. From the main canal which runs in the middle of Bugis Village, various smaller canals transmit water in all directions. The name Bugis comes from the original inhabitants, who came here as political refugees from Makassar a few hundred years ago.²³ In the old hamlet where the Buginese refugees settled to open the forest, their language still shows a strong Buginese influence.

None of the informants remembers exactly when the uprising occurred, but the writer believes it was around June or July 1944.²⁴ The uprising began as follows. One day a man called Mi'an, who was from Jatibarang, but had lived in this village since the late Dutch period, started to distribute holy water to the peasants in preparation for holy resistance. He is sometimes referred to as *kiyai*, but he was not a real *kiyai* at that time.²⁵ He was not teaching religion, but was one of the *santri* ("pesantren student") of Kiyai Suleiman at Srengseng, who was arrested

²³ Buginese villages are found in many places in Java. But these are mostly fishing or commercial villages on the seashore. Bugis is, as far as the writer knows, the only agricultural village of Buginese origin.

²⁴ Perwata, the *kuchō* of Bugis at the time of the uprising, said that the revolt took place after he had been in office for seven months. Since he was elected *kuchō* in December 1943, the breakout of the revolt was around June or July of 1944.

²⁵ There were several *kiyai* in Bugis, but none of them participated in the uprising. It is therefore not accurate to say that the uprising was led by religious leaders.

in connection with the uprising in Kaplongan. Because of his connection with Kiyai Suleiman, many villagers understood that the revolt was instigated by the "leftovers" of the Kaplongan uprising. It is true that some of those who had avoided arrest in Kaplongan happened to come to this area to hide themselves and later joined the uprising. But it is not clear where the real initiative came from.

The uprising started with an attack on the houses of *pamong desa*. The house of Kuchō Perwata was damaged slightly, while those of the village secretaries, Tohir and Daspin, suffered considerable damage. The latter two men were working at that time as the staff of the cooperative and were said to have been unfair in distributing kerosene. Almost all the informants, however, suggested that the immediate cause of the peasant uprising was, like in other areas, opposition to paddy requisition. There was also information indicating that the peasants tried to boycott paddy delivery because the textiles, given as a reward for selling paddy, never reached them.

Many of those who participated in the uprising were not villagers of Bugis, but outsiders. Some were said to be the "leftovers" of the Kaplongan and Cidempet revolts. Others were from neighboring villages, especially from the former P en T Land. This part of P en T Land, on the border of Indramayu Regency, had been forest during the Dutch period, but the Japanese started to open it up for rice cultivation on a large scale in 1943, and many migrants settled there as farmers. At the time of the Bugis uprising, these migrants had just experienced the first harvest, but the general situation of the newly opened area was still very unstable. It is quite understandable that these peasants joined in the uprising at Bugis.

Upon receiving word of the uprising from the *kuchō*, the sub-district office at Anjatan promptly took action and the military police were dispatched to the scene. The peasants confronted the police with the main canal in between them and the police. At the beginning the authorities tried to resolve matters peacefully through a combination of threats and persuasion. When these efforts failed, however, they finally started shooting from the other side of the canal. Many peasants were killed or injured. According to Wiratmaja, a resident of Bugis Village at the time, as many as two hundred persons died from the village, not counting the outsiders. Many others were arrested. Among them was Mi'an, the *santri* who had distributed the holy water.

4. *After the uprisings*

The peasant uprisings in Indramayu in 1944 thus spread from the eastern to the western end of the regency and involved a great number of peasants. The peasants' strength was such that an official sent by the central government to investigate reported that "since June 28 not a single *pamong praja* dared enter villages alone like before. . . . They only carry out the maintenance of order when accompanied by policemen" [15, Part II, p. 1] and that "normal government administration and control had ceased to exist. The discipline of paying taxes and of obeying the orders of government officials disappeared completely. There was no more recruitment of the compulsory coolie laborers, the volunteer army,

or assistant soldiers for Japanese army and no requisition of paddy" [15, Part II, p. 5]. On the other hand, the uprising also put the peasants in an precarious position. Bandits took advantage of the confusion and looted wealthy peasants and Chinese shopkeepers. Those who had saved their paddy from requisition by the government were thus robbed of it by the bandits [15, Part I, p. 4]. It is not clear how long this state of disorder lasted, but it is known that in the following year, 1945, paddy requisition was resumed and carried out by the cooperative in an orderly fashion. The quota was reduced, however, and this time the peasants obeyed the order.

After the uprisings were over a series of arrests of the popular leaders started who were considered to be the "behind-the-scene" provocators of the uprisings. It is worth noting that the arrests were usually engineered with the help of religious teachers who sided with the government. In the case of Kaplongan this role was given to a very famous *kiyai* from Cirebon named Kiyai Abas. He ran a large *pesantren* in Buntet Village, Sindanglaut Sub-district, Cirebon Regency.²⁶ He had a lot of former *santri* in Indramayu Regency, and he enjoyed prestige and a very high reputation. Kiyai Abas was an alumnus of Pesantren Tebu Ireng in Jombang, sponsored by Kiyai Hasim Asyari, the founder of Nahdatur Ulama (a conservative Islamic organization) and the head of the Department of Religious Affairs at that time.²⁷ Under the Japanese rule, he worked closely with the Section of Religious Affairs of Cirebon Residency,²⁸ and often made propaganda tours in the rural areas for the government. Because of this he was called *kiyai Jepang* (Japanese *kiyai*), and the *santri* of his *pesantren* got a special distribution of rice and were thus free from hunger.²⁹ Kiyai Abas, at the request of the Japanese security authority, came to Kaplongan Village on the pretext of inviting the leaders of the uprising to a meeting. Upon the message from him that he would guarantee the safety of the participants, twelve persons were summoned. Then, on their arrival in Cirebon for the supposed meeting, they were arrested and to this day none of them have ever come back. Those *kiyai Jepang* were also mobilized to make preaching tours to appease the peasants and restore order. It is reported that the above-mentioned Kiyai Abas was very aggressive in this activity, too, and that the peasants accused him, shouting, "Kiyai Abas abis, Kiyai tjap Jepang" (Kiyai Abas is over, a *kiyai* with a Japanese mark) [10, p. 3]. In other villages he was nicknamed *kiyai kwintal* [15, Part III, p. 1].

A series of dismissals, transfers, and replacements of the *pamong praja* also

²⁶ According to Kiyai Mustamin, son of Kiyai Abas, interviewed on December 12, 1980 at Buntet, this *pesantren*, established in 1750, was one of the biggest in Cirebon Residency and had about 2,500 *santri* during the Japanese occupation.

²⁷ According to the same interviewee, when Pesantren Tebu Ireng was first established in the 1910s, Pesantren Buntet was one of those that helped in the preparation and operation in the early days, and Abas was one of the first *santri* of Tebu Ireng.

²⁸ The Section of Religious Affairs was set up in the residency office in 1944 for the purpose of controlling the grass-roots *kiyai*. In Cirebon Residency several prominent *kiyai* were working under R. M. Hamid as its head (interview with him and his assistant, Kiyai Arhatha, on January 29, 1981 in Bandung).

²⁹ Interview with Kiyai Mustamin.

took place after the restoration of peace. On August 8, 1944, the regent of Indramayu, R.T.A.A. Mohamad Sediono voluntarily retired and was replaced by Dr. M. Moerdjani, a medical doctor by profession and a nationalist with the PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia) affiliations during the late Dutch period.³⁰ The district heads of Indramayu, Karangampel, Losarang, and Kandanghaur were all transferred to other posts on August 13 because of the uprisings [8, No. 49, 1944]. Majana Sastra, the *sonchō* of Karangampel who had been seriously injured, was replaced by Muchamad Hidayat; Majana Sastra retired to Cirebon with a pension.³¹ On the other hand, the murdered *sonchō* of Sindang, Soetadiredjo, was posthumously promoted to the rank equivalent to the district head on July 31 [8, No. 49, 1944].

B. *Analysis of the Uprisings*

Looking at the uprisings, we note several important features. First of all, it was purely spontaneous in its basic nature. It had no organizational backing and was nonpolitical and unplanned judging from the way that the peasants were mobilized and the revolt developed. There were no clear leaders and no particular ideology.

Second, the cause of the revolt was the peasants' anger over paddy requisition. It should be noted, however, that nobody dared revolt at the early stage, when only a fixed quota per hectare was demanded. The revolt came at the later stage when even the leftover paddy was to be handed over, for it threatened their own survival.

Third, the initiative for the uprisings was mainly taken by the wealthier peasants, who were outside the village administration. In Kaplongan, Haji Aksan was the owner of about 20 hectares of paddy fields. And seven out of twelve persons who were arrested there had been rich enough to go on pilgrimages to Mecca and had the title of *haji* [18, p. 274]. In Cidempet, Haji Madrias and all other prominent figures in the revolt owned 20–100 hectares. It is quite understandable that it was the wealthier farmers who were active in the revolt, as the second stage of paddy requisition was directed mainly at them. But it also affected the fate of the many landless peasants as well, because their lives depended on the few wealthy landowners. They worked for the landlord in return for a daily wage and meal. If their patron did not have enough capital for the following year's cultivation, they would be jobless and suffer from hunger. As a result the uprisings were supported by landless peasants.

Fourth, attention should be paid on the diversion in the role of religious leaders: on the one hand as spiritual supporters of the revolt and on the other hand as the mediators between the government and the people in revolt. It has

³⁰ The new regent, Moerdjadi, had never worked in government before. It was unprecedented that someone without the *pamong praja* background should be promoted to such a high position. Because the paddy requisition was suspended for a while after this replacement by a PNI nationalist, people received the suspension as an act of charity from Soekarno [15, Part II, p. 5].

³¹ Interview with Abdul Syukur, a cousin of Majana Sastra, on December 6, 1980 at Karangampel.

been a historically common phenomenon that Islamic teachers took an important role as spiritual supporters of the revolt or as the very organizers of peasant resistance. This was also the case with the Indramayu uprisings. A new phenomenon here is, however, that some of them, on the contrary, took the side of the government and gave hand in persuading, appeasing, and even cheating the peasants. How did they come to collaborate with the Japanese? In the Dutch period Islamic teachers were considered to be strongly anti-government and therefore were excluded from official posts. Under the Japanese rule, however, the government positively sought their cooperation and gave them important political roles. The government tried to transform them from potential sources of social unrest to reliable agents of pro-government propaganda, and for this purpose the government organized a special indoctrination course for them.³² Those who were chosen to work for the Japanese were mostly highly respected and learned men. They cooperated, not because they were threatened, but often out of a solid conviction that the collaboration would benefit the cause of Islam and the development of the Muslims. In the people's eyes, however, those *kiyai* were taking the side of the government and opposing the interests of the masses. People therefore began to ignore them, calling them *kiyai Jepang*. The prestige of these *kiyai* was thus seriously undermined. The emergence of such diversity in the attitudes and roles of the religious teachers is one of the important changes that occurred in rural Java during the Japanese occupation, and it was also clearly seen in the Indramayu uprisings.

Fifth, the peasants' hatred was always directed at the *pamong desa* and the lowest *pamong praja*. The *sonchō* and the *kuchō* were especially main targets of the peasants' attack. Although more or less the same phenomenon was seen in almost all the peasant uprisings under colonial rule, the situation seemed more serious and significant in the case of Indramayu in 1944. The prestige of the *pamong praja* and the *pamong desa* was undermined to an extent that society had never seen before. This change in the peasants' perception of their village leaders derived largely from the fact that during the Japanese occupation the village administration was put under the more direct control of the central government, and the village officials worked as agents of the government and not as popular leaders. The hatred toward the *sonchō* and his men partly came from the fact that under the Japanese rule their appearance in the village often meant the unpleasant enforcement of things which were seldom done during the Dutch period. Under the Japanese rule the *sonchō* were assigned many more tasks and duties than during the Dutch period, when they had been called *assisten wedana* ("sub-district head") and had behaved as noblemen, detached from the world of the peasants. Everything was concentrated in the *sonchō*: the recruitment of forced coolie laborers, the drive for an increase in production, experimenting with new agricultural products, the requisition of paddy, and so forth. And this

³² The course was held seventeen times between July 1943 and August 1945, and about one thousand *kiyai* were trained altogether. Most of the subjects in the training concerned Japan's intension toward Indonesia and the purpose of the "Great Asian War." For details, see [13].

made the peasants angry with them. Deterioration of the prestige of both *pamong praja* and *pamong desa* was thus a common phenomenon during the occupation period, and it was also clearly shown in the Indramayu uprisings.

CONCLUSION

The peasant uprisings in Indramayu in 1944 presents us with various important problems that Javanese rural society faced under Japanese rule. The immediate cause of the revolt was "forced delivery of paddy." This policy which ordered peasants to deliver most of their paddy at low prices, seriously threatened their survival. Severe food shortages prevailed all over Java, and many people suffered from hunger and malnutrition. Combined with other harsh Japanese policies, general social welfare deteriorated to the point where finally a very high death rate was recorded. It was especially serious in Indramayu, where the peasants were assigned quotas three to four times higher than those in other areas.

However, the revolt should also be seen as the expression of more general unrest of peasants in a rapidly transforming society. First of all, a series of mass mobilization policies by the Japanese³³ brought about such psychological changes as the expansion of the peasants' world beyond their village boundaries, the formation of a sense of inter-village solidarity, increased social mobility, and the consequent diversification of the value system—all these factors were responsible for the growth in the peasants' identity crisis and feelings of insecurity. Furthermore, the undermining of the prestige and reputation of traditional leadership (both secular and religious) and the direct appearance of government authority in village society contributed to causing a loyalty crisis among the peasants. This sense of crisis broke down the moral fabric of the peasant community at the peak of physical difficulty and caused them to openly challenge the authorities. Two *sonchō* and their several staff were killed or injured, and many *kuchō* and *pamong desa* were threatened, kidnapped, or killed in the peasant uprisings in Indramayu. The disorder brought about by the peasants was such that normal government administration in the area was completely suspended for a while. This state of revolt chaos, which lasted for a couple of months, reminds us of the social revolution of 1945–49 in various parts of Java. Both in the Indramayu uprisings of 1944 and in the social revolution of 1945–49, the basic problem was the breakdown of traditional society and the open challenge to traditional leadership — the asserting of *kedaulatan rakyat* or "people's sovereignty." Of course, the peasants of Indramayu in 1944 were not consciously aware of it, but this was implied by their actions. The Japanese occupation was thus giving rise to a serious problem concerning the survival of the village community, which until then had been operating more or less harmoniously. This problem was not

³³ During the Japanese occupation, the military government organized various organizations and associations at grass-roots level through which to mobilize and politicize the masses. Among them were *Seinendan* (youth association), *Keibōdan* (security association), and *Fujinkai* (women's association). Participation in those organizations encouraged communication among the members from various areas and enlarged their world.

merely a local problem of Indramayu, but was one involving the nation as a whole.

Thus, the social revolution which occurred after the Japanese occupation might be seen as the immediate outcome of various social changes during the Japanese occupation. Of course the process of social changes had already begun during the Dutch period and is not solely a product of the Japanese occupation. It is true, however, that the policies of the Japanese occupation were crucial in accelerating this process of rural transformation. It is in this sense that the writer considers this period as the watershed in modern Indonesian history. This was the beginning of a new era, and the beginning of a new dynamism in rural society.

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