

THE AGRARIAN DISPUTE AND SOCIAL BASIS OF COLONIAL PLANTATION IN JAVANESE PRINCIPALITY: VIEWS FROM JAVANESE SOURCES¹

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ABSTRAK

Masuknya sistem perkebunan kolonial pada akhir abad 19 di Indonesia menimbulkan berbagai perlawanan/konflik dari rakyat. Secara struktural konflik terjadi antara rakyat lemah dan elit desa di satu sisi, dengan perkebunan kolonial dan birokrasi di sisi yang lain. Namun menarik untuk dicermati apakah konflik tersebut hanya disebabkan sistem kapitalistik dan hegemoni bangsa Eropa terhadap Asia ataukah ada faktor lainnya. Tulisan ini menggambarkan proses dominasi perkebunan kolonial dengan latar belakang penentangan kolektif, berdasar struktur konflik di dalam perkebunan kolonial, kerajaan Jawa, dan rakyat desa. Penelitian ini juga menjawab pertanyaan mengapa suatu wilayah dengan tipologi ekonomi kolonial yang sama menghasilkan tingkat penolakan/perlawanan yang berbeda. Studi kasus yang diteliti adalah perusahaan gula Sewu Galur dan perusahaan nila Sumberrila di wilayah Pakualam pada akhir abad 19, dengan aktor-aktor perlawanan rakyat beserta persepsi hidup mereka. Konflik terjadi tidak hanya secara kolektif, melainkan secara individual yang dilatarbelakangi ketimpangan dan persaingan ekonomi. Konflik di perkebunan kolonial disebabkan adanya struktur lingkungan ganda (*hybridal environment*) antara sistem agraria lama dan sistem kapitalisme perkebunan kolonial, selain juga karena struktur politik penjajahan.

Kata kunci: sistem perkebunan kolonial, sistem *apanage*, Peraturan Bekel, perlawanan rakyat.

INTRODUCTION

In response to the rapid spread of the plantation economy, peasant rebellions became endemic in the 19th and early 20th centuries Javanese countryside. Since Sartono Kartodirdjo's famous *Peasant Revolts of Banten*, we know that many of these resistance movements were inspired by a messianic ideology and

hopes of a revival Java's glorious past under the "Ratu Adil" (Just King). In his studies, Sartono applies a structural approach identifying collective movement and conflict between two interest groups, the peasant and village elites on the one hand and the colonial plantation economy and bureaucracy on the other. The widespread peasant movement of that time was a reaction against colonial exploitation.² It is however questionable

¹ This article is a revised version of my paper presented on the conference 'Sugarlandia: Rethinking of Sugar Colony in the Asia and Pacific in a Global Context,' Amsterdam, 5-7 July 2001. I would like to thank Dr. Roger Knight and Dr. Ratna Saptari who had commented on the first draft of this paper and Dr. Ulbe Bosma who had made this article better structured.

² Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasant Revolts of Banten in 1888* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1966). The author had enlarged this study in *Protest Movement in Rural Java: A Study of Agrarian Unrest in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973).

whether we can apply this European-Asian dichotomy to all facets of labour conflicts in the plantation economy. This question was also thrown up during the debates on coolie labour conditions and violence. In his study on the European plantations of Deli, East Sumatra, Breman emphasizes that the colonial plantation system was a fertile soil for virulent racism and violence.³ The social construct of white (European) superiority was imposed to discipline Asian workers; violence was condoned because of the assumed inferiority of this labour force. Houben nuances this perception and pointed to the “intra-Asian” coercion as part of this structure of violence.⁴

The structural approach to colonial oppression is now generally considered to be too blunt for its exclusive focus on the conflict between colonial domination and collective resistance. It fails, for example, to explain why areas with a comparable degree of economic oppression did not produce the same level of resistance. When, for example, a widespread labour strike took place in Yogyakarta in 1882, it did not reach every part of this residency. This in spite of the fact that the strike lasted for at least three months and involved around 10,000 workers from thirty estates in Yogyakarta. The majority of the strikers came from the sugar and indigo plantations of the three main regencies, i.e. Sleman, Kalasan and Bantul. The Adikarto regency, the domain of

the Pakualaman, stayed out of the strikes.⁵ Yet, the two estates located in this regency, Sewu Galur and Sumbernala, were notorious for heavy oppression and economic exploitation.

Part of the explanation for these apparent differences of patterns of resistance, I will argue, resides in the fact that peasant resistance is not always channelled into collective action but can be individual as well. It is taking place in a context which is not the static and homogeneous village, but a local environment which is governed by social inequality and competition.⁶ Above all, and the Principalities are a case in point, the struggles were often taking place in an extremely hybridical environment in which plantation capitalism had inserted itself in older agrarian taxation systems. Conflicts were often framed in terms of legal struggles and villagers not only resisted the heavy burdens of the plantation economy, but also tried to use the political structures of the colonial government and the plantation to settle the scores among themselves. In this study I will ground my argument on the archival documents of the Pakualaman administration, one of the four Principalities of central Java. These archives have only recently been opened for research, and only now historians begin to grasp the level of opposition against and the intense negotiation with the plantation economy.⁷ The intervention of both plantation interests and colonial *government* led to an intensifying

³ Jan Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order* (Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 193-198; For more broader context see also, Jan Breman (ed.), *Imperial Monkey Business: Racial Supremacy in Social Darwinist Theory and Colonial Practice* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1990) CASA Monographs 3.

⁴ Vincent J.H.Houben, “History and Mortality: East Sumatran Incidents as Described by Jan Breman” *Itinario* 12, 2, (1988), pp. 97-100; See also his broader studies in Vincent J.H.Houben and Lindblad, *Coolie Labour in Colonial Indonesia: A Study of Labour Relations in the Outer Islands, 1900-1940* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999)

⁵ Djoko Utomo, “Pemogokan Buruh Tani di Abad ke-19: Kasus Yogyakarta,” *Prisma*, No. 8 Agustus 1983, pp. 68-78.

⁶ Jan Breman, “The Village of Java and the Early Colonial State,” in Mason Hoadley & Christer Gunnarsson, (ed.) *The Village Concept in the Transformation of Rural Southeast Asia* (Richmond: Curzon, 1995).

⁷ An enormous indigenous document dealt with the peasant and agrarian world of nineteenth and early twentieth century can be found in The Widya Pustaka’s office, of Pakualaman Palace Yogyakarta. This collection is now under reconstruction and reservation and open for public. The archive’s number indicates in this paper is used temporary and could be changed due to this reconstruction.

legal discourse of social relations at the village level. For 1899 alone, the *pradata* (judicial records) of Yogyakarta mention 355 agrarian disputes, a number which rose to 519 in 1911. In 1899, 60 disputes were about tax and compulsory services, 54 about *bekel* (village notable and tax collector) dismissals, 51 about other *bekel* related issues, 55 about house taxation disputes, and 50 cases about land taxation.⁸ On basis of these judicial records, we can bring the various actors in these struggles, and their perceptions, to life. I will draw upon a few cases from the domains of the late 19th century sugar estate Sewu Galur and the indigo estate Sumbemnila, located in the domain of the Pakualam.

THE SOCIAL BASIS OF THE COLONIAL PLANTATION ECONOMY IN THE PRINCIPALITIES

Our case studies are located in Pakualaman, one of the four principalities of Central Java, which enjoyed a semi-autonomous status under Dutch colonial government. The European estates of the Principalities leased *apanage-lands* from members of the royal families and were therefore part of the *apanage* system, though they were able to change it considerably. Let me first sketch briefly the situation before the arrival of the European plantation holders.

The *apanage* system was based upon the assumption that all the land belonged to the king, who distributed it to the *priyayi* (royal families and officers). At the apex of the Pakualaman principality stood the monarch (Prince Pakualam), who had delegated the daily administration of his realm to his *patih* (the chief minister), who was in the service of both the Javanese ruler and the Dutch colonial government. The elite of the principality consisted of the *sentana* (the royal family) and *priyayi* (aristocratic officials). The royal

domain had to provide for the income of the ruler and his immediate relatives, whereas the apanages provided the income of the extended royal family and the high-ranking Javanese officials. Apanage holders, or *patuh*, had to surrender two-fifth of the agricultural produce of their estates and supply a certain number of statutory labourers to the palace. The *patuh* were entitled to choose their *bekels*. In practice, the *bekel* did not only collect taxes but gave out the land to several *sikeps* or *kuli* (peasant who cultivate the land) under the *maron* system (yield division). As the *bekel* had to deliver 2/5 of the harvest to the *patuh* and was entitled to keep 1/5, the remaining 2/5 was left to the peasant. The taxes (*in natura*) were collected twice a year, namely just before the *Garebeg Maulid* (the celebration of the birth of prophet Muhammad) and the *Garebeg Puasa* (fasting time).

The landless people or so-called *ngindung* played an important role in this agrarian structure. They often worked for the *sikep* and did the compulsory work for the *patuh*. Though they were landless they were often provided with a house and *pekarangan* (its premises), which as a matter of fact made them eligible for house tax too. The amount of the tax or the volume of work that he should carry out was related to the size of his house and its premises, which was usually around 78 *cengkal* (140 m²). In many cases *ngindung* shared houses which made them eligible for only half of the house tax, but they were still considered to be a *cacah* (household unit) and therefore subject to that particular tax.⁹

Concepts of ownership and property hardly apply to Javanese agrarian relationships. The Javanese ruler was supposed to have usurped the ownership of the land from the original native inhabitants and then to have relinquished the right he had won to his vassals. The distinction later claimed to exist in Javanese between *ingkang andarbe* (the

⁸ C. van Vollenhoven, *Adatrechtbundels*, Serie D, No. XXXIII, 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1924), p. 206.

⁹ C. van Vollenhoven, *ibid.*, pp. 213-215.

owner) and *ingang manggoni* (the occupier of the land) cannot be put on equal footing with the European distinction between property and possession. Javanese agrarian relationships are basically fiscal, through which the person in power or his representative could claim certain rights to a piece of land, the value of which was traditionally determined. *Jung* and *cacah* did therefore not apply to areas but were fiscal units which combined notions of the amount of labour one person could carry out, the size of the land involved, and its productivity. Since one *cacah* to the size of a rice field that could be cultivated by a single household, it was the central notion in the trinity of land-labour-productivity.¹⁰

When the plantations emerged in the Principalities in the early 19th century, the role of the *bekel* had already developed from being a simple tax collector to ‘the petty king’ of the village performing a range of administrative duties.¹¹ Though the *bekel* clearly belonged to the village elite he/she was not the village head, as *apanage* units were usually smaller than village units, and might be located in more than one village. The position of *bekel* was usually auctioned, and its price was the *bekti* to be paid to the *patuh*. The new *bekel* got a *piyagem* (letter of appointment), which indicated the size of the land under cultivation, the amount of tax to be paid, and the compulsory work (*kerigaji* and *gugurgunung*) to be carried out. If the *bekel* failed to deliver, she/he would be declared *kether* (careless) and the *patuh* could replace her/him.¹²

In this system the European landleaser came in, positioning himself between the *patuh*

and the *bekel*. He was considered to be a ‘*super-bekel*’ by the *patuh* but in his relation to the *bekel*, the landleaser took over the role of the *patuh*. Perhaps not in the immediate beginning, but in the course of the 19th century it became clear that the population of the Principalities was worse off under the European leaseholder, because he took the best land and increased the labour services. We can safely assume that the position of the *sikep* generally deteriorated, as the plantations increased the number of *sikep* to enlarge their labour force. As a consequence *sikep* land was reduced to a size that was just sufficient to sustain the people on the plantation. I therefore do not subscribe to Houben’s view that the number of *sikep* fell while the number of wage-labourers rose. It was true that *sikep* could become *ngindung*, but we should take into account that *sikep* could also perform wage labour to earn some additional income. Moreover, in the 20th century, when the colonial government finally succeeded in reforming the agrarian system in the Principalities, its social conditions were often compared to serfdom.¹³

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN THE PRINCIPALITIES

The changes in the agrarian structure of the Principalities that were brought about by the plantation economy were attended by continuous government interventions to prevent the planters from establishing a kind of hacienda system within the *apanage* system. Gouverneur-General G.A.G.Ph. van der Cappelen was the first to take drastic measure and abolished the landleasing in the Principalities altogether, with disastrous results, as his decision is generally considered to be one of the main causes of the Java War (1825-1830). Van der Capellen’s successor

¹⁰ Vincent J. H. Houben, *Kraton and Kompeni: Surakarta and Yogyakarta, 1830-1870* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), pp. 309-10.

¹¹ Suhartono, *Apanage dan Bekel: Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan Surakarta, 1830-1920* (Yogyakarta: Tiarawacana, 1992)

¹² S. Margana, “Soerorejo versus Kartosudiro: Bekel and Bekel System in the Principalities of Central Java during the Colonial Period 1880-1912, *Lembaran Sejarah*, Vol. III No. 1, 2000, p.186.

¹³ V.J.H. Houben, *Kraton and Kompeni: Surakarta and Yogyakarta, 1830-1870* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), p.

reversed abandoned this policy, and allowed landleasing from 1828 onwards, after which landleasing increased rapidly to a maximum of 251 estates. Governor-general J.C. Reynst and the resident of Yogyakarta J.I. Sevenhoven, were among the greatest critics of the system in the 1830s and 1840s,¹⁴ but the landleasers, who were well connected to the courts, were able to resist many attempts to encroach upon their power. The government contended itself with regulating existing practices to mitigate the social ills of the plantation system and to make it serve Dutch colonial interests. The first regulation on land leasing was introduced in 1839, which was particularly aiming at excluding Chinese and European foreign entrepreneurs, stipulating that leaseholders in the Principalities had to be either Dutch or Indies born Europeans.

In 1857 social unrest in the Principalities was such that the government in Batavia announced a new regulation on the landleasing, but it met with stiff resistance of the European leaseholders, who were able to block further restrictions on their enterprise for the rest of the 19th century. The *Pranatan Bekel* (Bekel regulation) was only introduced in 1883 and authorized the administrator a legal punishment against the *bekel* who did not hold the *piyagem*, but did not stipulate any sanctions against administrators if they did not issue the required *piyagem* to the *bekels*. The strong implication of the *bekel* regulation was the increasing of the *bekel* dismissal. Most of the article included within this regulation was about the enforcement of the *bekel* sanction. By this regulation *bekel* can be easily discharged because of trivial blunder, such as the carelessness of keeping *piyagem*, unable to provide workforce properly, involved in the

petty criminals such as stealing a piece of bamboo, ignoring one or two time night watch etc. Whereas the government was not able to curb the power of the landleasers over the village authorities, in particular the *bekel*, with regard to the administration of justice the situation was more balanced. Whereas the plantation administrator began to control more and more of the lower echelons of the police and administration of justice in the Principalities, the resident controlled the higher echelons. The lowest institution was *pradata distrik* (district court), which was led by the *wadana polisi*, who was appointed by the Javanese regent, but in the plantation areas it was usually the administrator who nominated the *wadana*. Javanese who had a dispute with the plantation management therefore went to the *pradata kabupaten* (regency court, or so-called *Landraad Kabupaten*). The *pradata kabupaten* was led by a *bupati polisi*, was appointed by the Prince Pakualam in consultation with the Dutch resident. Finally, there was the *pradata ageng* or the *politeirol*, led by the Prince of Pakualam and if Europeans were involved led by the Prince and the resident jointly.¹⁵

THE AREA

The estates Sewu Galur and Sumbernila, the location of our case study, were situated in the Adikerto regency, which counted about 4000 *cacah* (households) dispersed over 56 villages and which covered 12,250 km². Adikarto was lowland and perfectly suited to the cultivation of paddy, indigo, tobacco and sugar. Sewu Galur was founded in 1881 by E.J. Hoen, O.A.O. van den Berg and R.M.E. Raaff as a Public Limited Company with a capital of 750.000 guilders.¹⁶ In 1883 this

¹⁴ Concerning the political debates about the landleasing in the Principalities area see, Vincent J.H. Houben, 'Private Estate in Java in Nineteenth Century: A Repraisal', in J.Th. Linblad, ed., *New Challenges in the Modern Economic History of Indonesia*, Leiden: PRIS, 1993; See also, *Kraton and Kompeni*, *ibid.*, pp. 268-278.

¹⁵ With regards to the judicial system in Javanese Principalities see, C.C.H. van den Haspel, *Overzicht in Overleg: Hervormingen van Justitie, grondgebruik en bestuur op de Vorstenlanden op Java, 1880-1930*. (Dordrecht-Holland: Foris Publication, 1985).

¹⁶ *Handboek voor cultuur en handels ondernemingen, 1888-1940 (De Busy, 1888-1898)*.

factory leased 5289 *bahu* of land from the Prince Pakualam and his close relatives (see appendix 2).¹⁷ The plantation was good for 34%, or 50,400 guilders, of the Pakualaman's yearly tax income.¹⁸ The *bekti* was established at 750.000 guilders *bekti* (advance payment or amount of money to be paid by the landlords every time the lease contract had to be started or extended, usually once in 20 years). The production capacity by the end of 19th century was about 70,000-80,000 *picul* making Sewu Galur a middle ranging sugar factory.¹⁹ The indigo estate Sumbemila, occupying an area of 6304 *bahu* (see appendix 3) in the west of Adikerto was founded in 1880 by the Prince Pakualam and administrated by the Eurasian J. Hofland. Its first capital was supplied by *De internationale crediet en handels vereeniging* (Internatio Rotterdam) Pakualam transferred his rights to exact compulsory work and to appoint village officers to Internatio.²⁰ While the sugar estate Sewu Galur was owned by the creole planters of Yogyakarta, belonging to the well known Weijnschenk clan and the indigo estate by the Pakualam, the daily management in both cases was entrusted to creole administrators.²¹

THE ADMINISTRATOR AND THE BEKEL

To illuminate the tension between the *bekel*, who was loosing his/her strong position as village notable, and the administrator who tried to manipulate the *bekel*-ship in a position of *mandoor*, which was between the peasants and the *overseers*, I will begin to narrate a story from Kalikopek, a village under the administration of Sumbemila.

On 27 September 1883, Ngabehi Mertadikrama, a *paneket* (village head) of Kedungdawa summoned Secodikromo, a 59-year-old widow and *bekel* (tax collector) of Kalikopek to come to the office of Sumbemila's administrator J. Hofland. Secodikrama came and kneeled on the verandah waiting for the administrator to come. After having waited for half an hour, Ngabehi Jagaprasosa, the police officer of Tambak, came over to her with a message from Hofland. He told her that the administrator had decided to fire her as a *bekel* of Kalikopek and that he himself would take over her position. The reason conveyed to her was that she had apparently been unwilling to provide the compulsory workforce for indigo plantation. An allegation Secodikrama vehemently denied. After a while Hofland came out to the verandah and stood right before Secodikrama. Then, he called Nagawirya, a *jugul* (vice *bekel*) of Secodikrama to testify against her. Nagawirya confessed that the area under her supervision was were 27 *bahu* but that only for 18 or 20 *bahu* the workforce came out to fulfill its obligations. Secodikrama persisted that she had been fulfilling her obligations. Hofland became outraged by her perseverance, walked to her, while she was still kneeling, and kicked her right in her face and cursed; "*bangsat, oblo, lonthe aku ora caturan karo kowe*" (bastard, whore, hooker, I am not talking to you). Secodikrama fell down out of conscious for a while. Then she rose up and said that she

¹⁷ PA, 2705

¹⁸ Soedarisman Poerwokoesoemo, *Kadipaten Pakualaman*, (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1985), p.316.

¹⁹ *Handboek voor Cultuur en Handels Ondernemingen, 1888-1940 (De Busy, 1888-1898)*

²⁰ In addition, the contract stipulated that in return for a yearly advance of 60,000 guilders to pay for the planting of the indigo, over which 9% interest had to be paid, Pakualam would relinquish 1/3 of the estate's profits to Internatio. In 1886, Pakualam indicated that he felt that these conditions were unfair and after long and unfruitful negotiations the plantation was sold. PA, 860.

²¹ Concerning the relation between Weijnschenk clan and the Javanese ruler in the principality of Java, see Ulbe Bosma, "Sugar and Dynasty in Yogyakarta", Paper Presented in the conference 'Sugarlandia': Rethinking of Sugar Colony in the Asia and Pacific in a Global Context, Amsterdam, 5-7 July 2001.

would not accept this treatment and promised to bring the case to court.²²

Two weeks later, on 15 October 1883, she wrote the resident about her case. She filed a complaint against the abuse and contested her dismissal as *bekel* of Kalikopek. The resident referred the case to the *Landraad*. In court, she argued that she had the right to defend her position as *bekel*, a position which she had been holding for a long time since the reign of Pakualam II (1829-1858). At that time her terrain was wasteland, which she had made fertile. But the seventeen witnesses summoned to the court were against her and testified that she should be regarded as *anglempit bahu* (unable to provide workforce properly) for *intiran* (compulsory work). They corroborated the accusation that she had 27 *bahu* but made only 18 or 20 available to Sumbemila. In addition, she had allegedly relieved six *kuli juguls* (landless peasant) from their task of preparing the indigo seed. In brief, she acted in clear violation of the *Pranatan Bekel* (Bekel Regulation) and her dismissal was justified. The court decided accordingly but it also sentenced Hofland guilty, though not for his physical abuse but for his rough language. His behaviour was considered to be inappropriate for a 'white and honourable' gentleman and hence in violation of the Landleasing Regulation of 1839.²³ Secodikrama had not much support among other members of the village, and some had clearly their own interests. Ngabehi Martadikrama for instance, testified that Hofland only raised his foot to frighten her, and actually did not touch her face. But he was the village head, who took over Secodikrama's position as *bekel*.

TRANSFORMING THE APANAGE SYSTEM: WEAKENING THE POSITION OF THE BEKEL

Secodikrama's case is a micro-history of the ongoing struggle between the *bekels*, the 'little village kings', defending their economic positions, and the administrator who increasingly considered his *bekels* as his *mandoors* or foremen. Secodikrama could base herself on *adat*, in which tax and tribute had been central, for the landleasers the recruitment of labour was of paramount interest and therefore Hofland based himself on the *bekel* regulation. Most of the taxes of the *apanage* system were replaced by the obligation to plant crops for the plantation or to do other work to maintain the plantation infrastructure. The *bekel* was appointed and fired by plantation administrators, who had obtained the right to issue the *piyagem* or letter of appointment.²⁴ And it is this very *piyagem*, which became a rich source of conflict. The plantation administrator was often late or negligent in issuing the *piyagem* to the appointed *bekel*. Since the administrator preferred to see the *bekel* as just a *mandoor* in charge of the recruitment of compulsory labour and was not interested in formalizing his/her position.

On 10 August 1916, Mangun Sentana, a villager of Panjatan village filed a complaint²⁵ against the administrator of Sewu Galur because his *bekel* land would be transferred to Suradiwiryono, the *bekel* of Genthon village. He claimed that he had held the position of *bekel* for 15 years. He had been appointed by Mr. Van der Pals, the head of overseers of Sewu

²² PA, 4156

²³ PA, 4156

²⁴ "Pranatan Bekel" in J.D. Hunger, ed. *Javaansche wetten, verordeningen, regelingen, besluiten, bevelschriften en bepalingen op agrarische gebied geldig in Jogjakarta*, Vol. 1, (Jogjakarta: H. Buning, 1910)

²⁵ PA, 4868. From the local archive I found that usually people who had complain against the plantation they went to the village police, then the police assisted to write the complain letters, addressed both to the local official (usually *Bupati Pulisi*) and Dutch resident. Usually the local official will only take attention to the matter after the Dutch resident urged the local official.

Galur to which Ngabehi Wongsodimeja, the police chief of the district of Galur had been standing witness. Though he had no *piyagem*, Mangun Sentana went on, his position as *bekel* had never been contested neither by other villagers nor by the plantation management. But according to Suradiwirya Mangun Sentana was just a *jugul* or vice *bekel*. Fifteen years ago he had first tried to have Prawiradana from Tayuban to become as *jugul* or vice *bekel*. But this was rejected by the administrator. Then, Suradiwirya tried to give this office to another villager Admadiwirya, but again the administrator rebuffed him. Eventually, it was the administrator, Van der Pals, who appointed Mangun Sentana as *jugul*. Sentana did not receive a *piyagem*, because he was just a *jugul* and for this position a *piyagem* was not required.²⁶ Yet, Mangun Sentana had met all the *bekel's* obligations and hence felt that he ought to be treated as a *bekel* and receive a *piyagem*. Clearly, Suradiwirya had settled his scores. Others had experienced the same uncertainty about their legal position. Someone like Mertawijoyo had been a *bekel* in Tanggul for 25 years without a *piyagem*. Ali Mustar, *bekel* in Gesikan village, worked 30 years without a *piyagem*.²⁷ They were not exceptions to the rule, as the regent of Adikarto reported in 1909 that in Sewu Galur, 202 *bekels* had not been given their *piyagem*.²⁸

What was going on? According to the *bekel* regulation, the *piyagem* included the size of land and compulsory labour to be delivered by the new *bekel*. If the *bekel* agreed with the *piyagem*, he would be appointed. Clearly, the administrator and many of his *bekels* could not agree on a contract which stipulated the amount of work to be delivered. And no wonder, as this was precisely the subject of unabated struggle between administrators and *bekels*, a struggle of which our Secodikrama who was kicked in her face, was one of the

participants. Not having a *piyagem*, however, seriously weakened the position of the *bekel* and in practice undid the government ordinance of 1868 determining that the position of *bekel* was hereditary.

TRANSFORMING THE POLICE

To achieve a full command of labour, the administrators deliberately informalized the position of the *bekel*. An additional element in their strategy of obtaining full command over the labour force they had been able to put the local police at their service. The district police was initially established to provide security for European residents in the area²⁹ but it gradually became a tool to ensure the supply of labour to the plantation. The police officers were provided a house some land and a salary by the plantation. Their task was to monitor the attendance of the labour force. Though the European administrator had not the right to appoint he was entitled to nominate police officers for appointment and dismissal.³⁰

In November 1886, Hofland filed a request of *angantung* or fired Kartodipura as the police officer of Kulwaru, and proposed to transfer the duties to Satiirta. The policeman was considered *kether* (ignore his duties). Firstly, he did not reported to him that three out of six *bekels* he was monitoring did not meet their obligations. Secondly, Hofland also discovered that one of his *bekels*, Santadikrama, never stayed in his village and never reported to him. Hofland also reported that Katodipura had ignored his order to bring the *glidigan* (wage labourer) to the field.³¹ Here we see two mechanisms in play. The police was not only used to enforce labour but also to recruit new workers. For police officers

²⁶ See "Pranatan Bekel", *op. cit.*

²⁷ PA, 322

²⁸ PA, 2602.

²⁹ I haven't found the exact time when this institution was established. In the case of Surakarta region, such institution had appeared after the Java War (1825-1830) they called "gunung".

³⁰ The police was formally appointed by local regent but by the Resident's suggestion and the approval of the European administrator.

³¹ PA, 318

this was a difficult job since peasants were not ready for such works because they had spent most of his time for the compulsory work. The rural officer knew however his salary would be cut or that he would be sacked if he did not provide the labour. Such a case took place in Genthian village. The administrator fired the *bekel* because of his failure to harvest indigo. In return, Kartodipuro's salary was deducted as much as the price of indigo supposed to be harvested.³²

THE ADMINISTRATOR AND VILLAGE CIVIL AFFAIRS

The administrator gradually transformed the apange institutions, which were basically fiscal into instruments of labour recruitment. But he extended his power even further by intervening into civil or governmental matters in his territory even if these had nothing to do with plantation interests. His interventions could easily counter decisions made by the civil government in villages. But most remarkably he challenged or reversed decisions by religious authorities. This was what happened in Dundang village. Here, Kyai Muhamad Ngapiya was a *naib* (local officer for religious affairs). In 1886, there was an eligibility test for this position. The *penghulu kabupaten* decided that Ngapiya did not pass the test. Therefore, he had to be replaced. He then proposed his son, Kasan Munawar as his successor. After the test was carried out, his son succeeded in replacing him. However, the *penghulu* refused Ngapiya's request of placing his son in Dundang village because the *penghulu* had chosen another man, namely Muhamat Sangit. Munawar was relegated to another village and requested to Hofland overrule the *penghulu*'s decision. Hofland gave permission to Munawar to be *naib* in the village because his father had always served the plantation well.³³

On 7 July 1889, Hofland dragged Karyadi, a villager from Kulwaru Wates to the police because he lived in the house formerly occupied by his father Ali Muhamat, a *kaum* of the village who had been for 3 years in Blitar, East Java, to study religious teachings. He had to pay for living in the house of which amount was 13,75 *rupiah*. He was also demanded to hand over his house to Kasan Ngumar who was put in his position by the plantation since 15 months, but had not occupied the house. Ali Muhamat's leave was never reported to the *bekel* and village police and the position of *kaum* in the village remained vacant. Almost three years after Muhamat's absence people in the village nominated Kasan Ngumar as the new *kaum*. The administrator approved this change. As a new officer, he was granted a *krayan* (the house formerly occupied by the older *kaum*). Karyadi did not want to hand over the house to the new *kaum*, because his father had asked him to take care of his house. The administrator however did not accept that Karyadi lived in this house for three years without paying or doing compulsory work.³⁴ Even in the appointment of new a *kaum* the plantation management intervened as they considered this too primarily as a labour issue.

COMPULSORY WORK AND PEASANT RESISTANCE

Part of village administration, the police force, and even religious appointments at the village level fell under the jurisdiction of the administrator. The only power outside was the colonial civil service and the higher echelons of the administration of justice. The amount of compulsory work was high and often too high. According to *Heerendienst-besluit voor suiker en indigo Ondernemingen*, as issued by Resident Yogyakarta J. Mullemeister in 28 June 1886, the villagers in sugar cane and indigo plantations had to perform *krigandiensten*, *gugurgunungdiensten*, and

³² PA, 318

³³ PA, 30

³⁴ PA, 4128

wachtdiensten. *Kerigan* was compulsory work done once in every five (according to Javanese day system) or seven days, from seven o'clock to half past eleven in the morning. The tasks included the reparation of roads, bridges, and digging ditches. *Gugur-gunung* was done once in thirty days. All villagers had to clean the areas where they lived. The *wachtdiensten* was an activity of watching the factory and houses of plantation administrators from six in the evening to six in the morning.³⁵

The local archives show that the plantation management tried to impose much more compulsory labour than it was entitled to and that villagers tried to evade these burdens. [The appendix 6 shows the volume of compulsory works taking the form of digging ditches in Wanadadi and Bogel villages under Sewu

Galur plantation areas.] As stated in the Resident regulation mentioned above, *kerigandiensten* had to be performed once in every five or seven days, but appendix 3 shows that these tasks had to be performed everyday in a week.³⁶ The same was true for the indigo plantation areas in Tambak (Appendix 7). *Gugur-gunung* was supposedly done only once a month, but in fact was required once in every five days according to Javanese calendar, as appendix 4 shows for Sumbemila. In addition, peasants were required to do *kerigan* work including keeping watch at sugarcane or indigo and planting them starting from preparing the land, seeds, planting the seeds, maintenance to harvest. The table 1 below shows that such work was conducted throughout the week..

Table 1. Kerigandiensten in Bugel and Wanadadi under Sewugalur, 25 September– 1st October 1901

Date	The Whole Number of Workforce	Number of the attendance (Bekel)	Number of the attendance (Sikep)
25 September 1901	5.341	438	1.645
26 September 1901	5.341	416	3.368
27 September 1901	5.341	3.757	1.516
28 September 1901	5.341	3.783	1.443
29 September 1901	5.341	3.755	1.390
30 September 1901	5.341	3.749	1.122
1 October 1901	5.341	3.703	546

RESISTING THE CORVEE

The judiciary records are full of cases in which peasants tried to escape from the taxes and compulsory labour. They risked however serious fines or imprisonment. On 30 June 1891, G.C. Spaan reported two *bekels* from Kedundang, namely Leda Sentana and Sadikrama as well as a *kuli*, Mertasetika to the police because they had neglected their duties.

Leda Sentana and Sadikrama had agreed to finish a job of digging an irrigation canal but did not meet the deadline. They were put in jail for five days. The *kuli* Mertasetika was even heavier fined, ten days in jail, as he had asked a little boy, who was clearly unfit for this heavy work, to do the job.³⁷ In other cases too heavy fines had to be paid. By the end of 1896, Wiradrana, a villager of Beran village, was reported to the police as he refused to plant sugarcane, and had not paid his house tax and police-watch tax for 11 months. He was sued

³⁵ J.A. Th., Gortmans, ed., *Het Landhuur-Reglement* (Jogjakarta: W.A.van der Hucht & Co., 1900), pp. 24-28.

³⁶ PA, 2705

³⁷ PA, 4577

to pay housing tax for 11 months amounting to f. 3,-, police-watch tax for 16 months (f. 3.20), lawsuit fee of f. 9,- and *pausur* f. 3.20,-.³⁸

The large fine accords with the amounts to be paid in the *glidig*-system, which allowed villagers to buy off the corvee in the sugar or indigo fields. The planting alone took many days, as appendix 4 shows, and if a *sikep* wanted to be exempted from these tasks altogether he/she had to pay f 109.10 for *wang glidig*. Most peasants did not have these amounts and police records give evidence of many peasants taking serious risks to escape from this work. On 5 June 1891 for example, Setradimeja, a *bekel* from Kecubung was reported to the police by G.C. Spaan, an administrator of indigo factory, because he had dared to charge 10 *dhuwit* to 29 villagers in his area to bribe an overseer of Sumbernila factory. Setradimeja had tried to arrange his task of planting of indigo near to his dwellings. The overseer, however, refused the bribery and reported him to the plantation supervisor. Setradimeja was fired from his position and put in jail for 14 days.³⁹

In other cases, villagers tried to get rid of an overseer they disliked. For example, G.C. Spaan reported Sawitana, a *bekel* in Kaligintung to the police on the allegation that he slandered an overseer named Kasan Talib. The event started with Sawitana's dislike of Talib, whom he tried to replace asking 56 villagers to demand for Talib's succession. Rebuffed he tried a different approach. Since Talib was planning to build a house, Sawitana visited him and offered 4 *rupiah* for a loan. After the money was lent to Talib, Sawitana told the factory supervisor that Talib had extorted 4 *rupiah* from him. The supervisor confronted Talib with this story who immediately reacted by returning the money to Sawitana. However, since some of the money had been used, he was able only to give back the remainder promising that he would pay the

full amount later on. But Sawitana reported to the police that Talib did not return the entire sum, hoping that this would be sufficient for Talib's dismissal. Eventually, the plantation management was fed up with Sawitana's manipulations and put him in jail for fourteen days.⁴⁰

There was however one matter in which the administrators showed leniency and these cases were always related to food production. On 17 October 1882, for example J. Hofland, asked Sogan police to free four *kulis* from Bendhungan, Jawikrama, Ranakarta, Kartawikrama and Citrataruna villages who were caught by the Kartodiwiryo overseer because they stole water for their farms. But Hofland felt that the factory did not need that much water during daytime. He knew that sufficient food supplies were vital to keep the labour force in tact. This offence was not serious enough to take again peasants out of the labour process by jailing them.⁴¹

If no options were left however villagers moved to another village, preferably outside a plantation. Not only landless peasants moved around to find work on the plantations, even owners of land left their belongings to escape from the heavy burden of compulsory labour. The planter would respond by bringing in new *sikeps*. This could lead to new legal problems if the original owners came back to their villages and found their lands and farms occupied by new *sikep*. Whereas migration was more or less an individual act, *seleh* (literally give up), i.e. surrendering the whole compulsory work all together, was an act of collective resistance. This is like a strike but followed by returning the facilities, such as house and land that were granted. This happened in the village Kecubung. R. Marteen, a supervisor of the factory Sumbernila got panicked because Sumawirya, *bekel* of Kecubung together with eighteen other peasants declared *seleh* and returned all the

³⁸ PA, 4869

³⁹ PA, 4577

⁴⁰ PA, 4577

⁴¹ PA, 4868

houses and farms to force the plantation to reduce the burden of compulsory work.⁴²

MERGING THE HOUSEHOLD

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned that 55 out of 355 cases for the Yogyakarta courts were about ‘house taxation disputes’. Since the household was one of the taxation bases, it was an option to merge two houses to split the burden of these taxes. The tribulations this could involve, is illustrated by a story located in the village Genthau. On 15th of November 1887, Hofland, the administrator of Sumbernila, reported Jamunawi, a villager of Genthau, to the police of Adikarta. Jamunawi was accused of merging his house⁴³ with Mustam’s, his neighbour, and refused to carry out the compulsory work. Neither did he pay his *intiran* (a compensation in cash for his regular duties as night watch, and other compulsory work for the plantation). Jamunawi claimed to be exempted from his duties, as he was now part of the Sewu Galur administration and longer of Sumbernila’s. And he continued that actually the house he lived in was granted to him by A. Vroom, the former administrator of Factory Sewu Galur, as a *kryan* (official house) for his position as a *kaum* (people who in charged for the religious affairs) of Genthau village. His argument seemed to be quite convincing as he could show his *piyagem* (letter of appointment) as a *kaum*, which was signed by A. Vroom.⁴⁴

Actually the roots of the dispute date back to the time when Genthau village was rented to the sugar factory Sewu Galur. The village was an *apanage-land* belonging to Kanjeng Ratu Sepuh, one of the Pakualam’s royal families. The range of land was 5 *jung* (1 *jung* = around 2-4 *bahu*) and divided into two parts; the first

2 *jung* was granted to Demang Mertawijaya, the other 3 *jung* to Demang Mertataruna. Later on, Sewu Galur leased half of the former land (1 *jung*) The remaining 1 *jung* was still *apanage-land* and soon leased out to the indigo plantation of Sumbernila too.⁴⁵ Twelve households were involved in this transfer, including Jamunawi’s who was then appointed by A. Vroom as *kaum* in Genthau. The problems began when his house was divided into two parts; one part was under Sewu Galur’s administration and the other was under Sumbernila’s. Jamunawi’s house was transferred into Sumbernila’s administration, while he was still employed as *kaum* under Sewu Galur’s administration.

The transfer to Sumbernila entailed Jamunawi’s assignment to compulsory work at this indigo plantation. He refused claiming that his house was now only the equivalent of half a *bahu* or workforce, the other half rested on Demang Mertawijaya who occupied the other half of the house. Jamunawi negotiated with Mertawijaya to take over his duties every other year in return for 6 *wang* per month. Mertawijaya accepted this proposal, performing every other year his duties and paying his part for the other year. Then, Demang Mertawijaya was replaced by *bekel* Nitimeja, who shifted his part of the work to Mustam, a villager who also had status half *bahu*. But after a few years, Mustam felt burdened and asked Jamunawi to substitute for him in planting indigo every year, for which he would pay him the 6 *wang* monthly. After Jamunawi refused, Mustam returned half of the house to Nitimeja, who asked Jamunawi to give back his house to him. Jamunawi however insisted that as a *kaum* he had every right to live there.⁴⁶

⁴² PA 285

⁴³ The term “house” includes the *pekarangan*-land (a piece of land surrounded the house), however such merging can only be done between the piece of land and house which were next each other.

⁴⁴ PA, 4869

⁴⁵ PA, 4869

⁴⁶ PA, 4869

CONCLUSION

The level of resistance and its legal nature was striking. It was however the consequence of the hybridical character of the plantation system in the Principalities. It is the taxation system in which the *bekel* had traditionally been playing a central role, as farmer, village notable and tax collector, and of which the household was the basis. By the end of the 19th century agrarian laws in the Principalities were a peculiar blend of tax and labour regulations. Whereas landleasers and their administrators considered social relations in their plantation domain as labour relations, the villagers considered the administrator to be a *patuh* who violated the *adat* by excessive taxation. Continuous government intervention's gave both sides the idea that they were right, thus Hofland could escape from being sentenced for physical abuse through bribing and probably intimidating witnesses but was sentenced for violating the 1839 regulation which stipulated that he should behave as a Javanese nobleman towards his *bekel*, and Secodikrama because she did not comply with the *bekel* regulation, which had taken away part of her autonomy. The strong implication of the *bekel* regulation was the increasing of *bekel* dismissal. Most of the articles included within this regulation were about the enforcement of the *bekel* sanction. By this regulation *bekel* can be easily discharged because of trivial blunder. It is not that cultural determinant in the Principalities made labour relations less vexative than in the Outer Regions, as Wertheim suggested, because as I demonstrated it was both vexative and violent.⁴⁷ The village elites in the Principalities could however resort to *adat* and European legal institutions, which still recognized their position as taxpayers. Above all, they were not indentured labour and could migrate. Let us first be clear about one thing. Asian or European capitalism is irrelevant as regards the level of oppression or resistance.

Pakualam's indigo plantation experienced more social conflicts than the Sewu Galoor sugar plantation.

The escape route to higher echelons of the administration of justice was so well used, and perhaps it was a safety valvet, that the civil service became annoyed about the amount of work it involved. In 1902 Yogyakarta's resident, J.A. Ament (1896-1902) complained about the tendency of the strengthening peasant's awareness of legal mechanism. These complaints were especially addressed due to the piling up of small criminal cases at the *Raad Kabupaten*, (regency courts) such as the case of banana stealing, negligence of night watch, that were supposedly handled by the police;

*"I remind you once again that according to the article 83 of Angger Recht-Organisatie; some small cases such as negligence of maintaining of houses wall, road, canal, unattended night watch, or improperly night watch, stealing unworthy thing such as 1 or 2 bunch of banana, 1or 2 bunch of fruit, or 1 or 2 cent of money that supposed to be handled by Raad Kabupaten becomes unnecessarily anymore."*⁴⁸

Ament's proposal would have put the villagers even more at the mercy of the administrator, as the police officer was in fact an employee of the administrator. Until then the European administrator, in spite of his combined *bekel-patuh* power was not a slaveholder or employer. The lands were not his lands and the people were not his servants. Hofland had to show up at the court, and probably make bribes and use his power to appoint *bekels* to win his case. Police force was used to put people to work, to confine

⁴⁷ W.F. Wertheim, (Ulbe, please fill this notes).

⁴⁸ See, Resident Ament to Rijsbestuurder and Wd. Pakualam, 13 February 1902, in W.F. Engelbert van Bevervoorde, Assistant-Resident of Jogjakarta 1903, *Nota over het Rechtswezen in de Residentie Jogjakarta* (Djogja: Firma H. Buning, 1903), appendix III, pp. 106-107.

them and so on, but the administrator had not the right to take things in his own hands, even if he often did so, the people on his estate knew that he violated the law. And particularly the *bekels*, the village notables, were well aware of the fact that the administrators did not control the regency courts and the *Landraad*. Around 1900 almost every day a villager from Yogyakarta took his or her case to the court.

The main reasons of Yogyakarta's labour strike in 1882 were the low of wage and the burden of the obligatory work. In the case of Adikarto there is no much data or a judicial case about the problem of wage labourer. I assume that the wage labourer offered in this area was not as much as in the Sultan area, because in Adikarta there were only two western plantation, whereas in Sultan land more than 20 with various products. Therefore the opportunity for wage labour was quite small. Moreover, principally all the traditional obligatory services which used to be served for the apanage holder was transformed into cultivation services for the profit of business of the European plantation without there being any recompense. It was true that some obligatory service had been sold off by the plantation, however this work of this system was depended on the availability of strong peasant who able to pay *wang glidig*. The largest proportion of the wage labour which offered and paid by the plantation mostly only for the transportation of sugarcane or indigo leaves from the field to the factory, especially during the harvest time. It is meant that such work was limited and seasonal. The case of the dismissal of the police who unable to provide *wong glidig* (wage labourer) indicates that the wage labourer in Pakualam area was very rare. This group of worker was partly composed of residents who happened to be free at a certain moment and partly of a landless proletariat who had come in from elsewhere or of itinerant seasonal workers. Because of the limited in number, the rate of wage for daily labourer in Pakualaman area was higher than in Sultan area. Appendix 4 shows that the rate

of daily labour in Pakualaman area was f 0,30 whereas based on the government investigation, soon after the big strike of 1882 in Yogyakarta, the rate of wage of daily labourer in Sultan area was only f 0,25.⁴⁹

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