

Farm Agriculture In The Residency Of Kediri During The Japanese Occupation

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Abstract

This article discusses farm agriculture in the Kediri Residency in 1942-1945. The problems to be dealt with here are: (1) What was the condition of the Kediri Residency area before the Japanese occupation, (2) How was the Japanese occupation policy on the farm agriculture in the region, (3) What impact did the Japanese occupation on the the Kediri Residency. The method used in this research is the historical method with the stages of topic selection, source collection, verification, interpretation, historiography. The results showed that Japan's policy in the agricultural sector brought many changes, especially in rice cultivation. Changes occurred in the form of introducing new plant seeds, changing the planting system from a random system to an array system, increasing agricultural fertility using compost. The policies practiced by the Japanese military government in the Kediri Residency failed to achieve the target of increasing rice production. The failure of Japanese policy was caused by the scarcity of chemicals to eradicate rat pests, failure of land conversion, prolonged drought, depletion of farmers' labor to work romusha and the loss of enthusiasm of farmers in farming because it was pegged to mandatory handover of rice and the provision of cheaper rice prices. Japanese policies impacted on the decline of people's welfare, as indicated by a shortage of food needed by the population. This led to the occurrence of poverty, hunger, and the occurrence of the PETA rebellion in Blitar. It can be concluded that during the Japanese occupation which lasted for three and a half years, it was very miserable for the people, especially in the countryside.

Keywords: *Japanese occupation, farm agriculture, food production, living conditions, Kediri residency*

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I. Introduction

Japan's interest in Indonesia began during World War I. Japan viewed Indonesia as a country rich in economic resources and strategically and politically significant. Additionally, Indonesia's large population was favorable for marketing Japanese industrial goods (Aziz, 1955: 99). The expansion of the Japanese market continued to grow until the early 1930s when the economic crisis forced the Dutch East Indies society to turn to cheaper products, with Japanese industries being the most capable of providing them (Nawiyanto, 2010: 47-61). Japan's interests in the Dutch East Indies were threatened when the Dutch East Indies government imposed restrictions on imports of Japanese products to protect the domestic industry, especially textiles. This situation worsened when the Dutch East Indies government decided to embargo oil exports to Japan, which was vital for its industries (Post, et al., 2010: 5-7).

On December 8, 1941, Japan initiated war by attacking the United States Navy at Pearl Harbor. To support its war and industrial needs, the Japanese military government took control and occupied the Dutch East Indies. Natural resources were utilized, with Java serving as the main supplier for military operations in Southeast Asia and Sumatra as the primary source of oil (Pratama, 2014: 40).f On March 8, 1942, the Dutch colonial forces surrendered to the Japanese military, resulting in the Dutch East Indies coming under Japanese control. The Japanese military, arriving in Indonesia, aimed primarily to redirect the Indonesian economy to support Japan's efforts in the Pacific War and its long-term plans for economic domination in East and Southeast Asia (Kurasawa, 1993: 23). The Japanese military government began altering governance structures and formed the Three A Movement on April 29, 1942. This was aimed at garnering support for Japan's war efforts and the prosperity of Greater East Asia (Ricklefs, 1995: 294). Additionally, the Japanese military government initiated policies to increase land productivity, focusing on economic exploitation and tightly controlling the populace. Efforts to boost agricultural production included various programs and laws, such as the *Osamu Seirei Law* and the *Kinku Shokuryo Taisaku* policy (Putri, 2014: 42).

During their occupation, the Japanese military government established agricultural cooperatives in 79 regencies and 20,834 villages in Java and Madura, including the Kediri Residency. The main agricultural

commodities during the Japanese military rule were rice, cotton, jute/rosella, ramie, cassava, and castor oil plants. In the Kediri Residency, the agricultural commodities included rice, corn, tubers, and legumes (Putri, 2014: 104). The Japanese military government in Indonesia, starting in 1942 and ending on August 17, 1945, brought significant changes in both the social and economic aspects of society. During this period, fundamental changes occurred in the lives of the people. Among the numerous social changes experienced by the Javanese during the Japanese occupation, the most prominent were the transformations in village life.

Studies on the Japanese occupation, such as those by Aiko Kurasawa and Shigeru Sato, have effectively depicted the social changes in rural Java during this period (Kurasawa, 2015 and Sato, 1994). Some local studies reinforce the findings of Aiko Kurasawa and Shigeru Sato regarding major changes in rural Java. For instance, Nawiyo's study highlights changes in agriculture and plantations in the Besuki Residency, showing an expansion in agricultural areas and an increase in rice production during the Japanese era (Nawiyo, 2005). Delta Lidina Putri's study on Temanggung, Central Java, illustrates that the Japanese military government directed farmers' labor towards the war effort and implemented economic war policies aimed at exploiting resources and turning occupied areas into a rice granary (Putri, 2014: 42). These studies indicate local variations and agricultural conditions during the Japanese occupation. Similar patterns likely occurred in other residencies in Java, including Kediri.

This paper aims to investigate the impact of Japanese military government policies on the agricultural sector in the Kediri Residency. The key issues to be examined in this article include: (1) What were the conditions of farm agriculture in the Kediri Residency before the Japanese occupation? (2) What were the dynamics of farm agriculture in the Kediri Residency from 1942 to 1945? (3) What were the impacts of Japanese military government policies on the Kediri Residency's agriculture? This study aims to: (1) Describe the farm agriculture in the Kediri Residency before the Japanese occupation, (2) Explain the farm agricultural policies in the Kediri Residency from 1942 to 1945, (3) Assess the impact of the Japanese military government's economic policies on the farm agriculture in the Kediri Residency from 1942 to 1945. The academic benefits of this research include: (1) Enhancing the understanding of the Japanese occupation, particularly in the Kediri Residency, and the struggle of the Indonesian people, especially the Kediri community, in fighting for Indonesia's independence. (2) Adding to the discourse on historical studies, especially focusing on farm economics, and serving as a reference for similar research. (3) Providing a reference on farm agricultural conditions, particularly in the Kediri Residency, for students and the general public. The practical benefits include: (1) Offering insights for formulating policies related to the agricultural sector to better support community welfare. (2) Providing lessons and inspiration for society in responding to government policies in agriculture.

The spatial scope of this research focuses on the Kediri Residency or during the Japanese occupation known as Syuu, a unit of governance established during the Japanese occupation, headed by a resident, and consisting of Shi (City) and Ken (County). Kediri-Syuu or the Kediri Residency included Kediri-Shi, Kediri-Ken, Nganjuk-Ken, Blitar-Shi, Blitar-Ken, and Tulungagung-Ken. During the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, the Kediri Residency played a significant role due to its potential in both natural and human resources. Geographically, it was traversed by the Brantas River, which fostered rapid development in both fishing and agriculture (Wiretno, 2017: 24). The temporal scope of this study is from 1942 to 1945. The year 1942 marks the beginning of Japan's arrival in Indonesia, taking control of several regions, and the start of the Japanese colonial government's economic policies, including agriculture, introducing new crop varieties, techniques, such as the row planting method, and agricultural training for the people on planting rice, castor, and cassava (Djawa Baroe, 1943: 25). The year 1945 is the endpoint as Japan surrendered unconditionally to the Allies on August 15, 1945. This surrender effectively ended the Japanese occupation and its policies in Indonesia, including Kediri.

II. Method And Materials

This research uses the historical method, which is the process of critically examining and analyzing records and relics of the past (Gottschalk, 1983: 32). Kuntowijoyo divides the historical method into five stages: (1) Topic selection; (2) Source collection; (3) Verification (historical criticism, source validity); (4) Interpretation: analysis and synthesis; (5) Historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2005: 90). The selection of a topic is linked to researcher's interests. Source collection involves the effort of gathering relevant written, printed, and oral sources and materials related to the research topic. The primary sources used by the author in this research include data observation through the National Central Library (Perpusnas) to obtain newspapers and magazines such as Djawa Baroe, Kan Po, Asia Raya, and the Asia Raya Almanac from 1942-1945, which contain information about the dynamics of farm agriculture in the Kediri Residency. The author also conducted research at the East Java Archives Office to obtain the 1942 edition of the Kan Po magazine and at the Medayu Agung Library in Surabaya, where the author obtained the 1943 Asia Raya Almanac and Djawa Baroe magazine. Secondary sources were obtained from books, scientific works, or journals that align with the research theme.

The researcher uses secondary sources in the form of books related to the history of farm agriculture. Books related to the research topic were collected from various places, namely the University of Jember Library, the Faculty of Humanities Library and the Collection of Books from the Department of History.

III. Kediri Before The Japanese Occupation

The Kediri Residency is a region located in East Java. Geographically, the Kediri Residency includes several mountains and coastal areas. One of the active volcanoes is Mount Kelud, which stands at 1,731 meters above sea level. This mountain is located at the border between Kediri, Blitar, and Malang. The Kediri Residency covers an area of 7,000 km², shaped by the fertile valley of the Brantas River (Graaff, 1918: 291-292). To the west of the Kediri Residency lies the Wilis Mountain Range, while to the east are Mount Kelud and Mount Kawi, with Mount Kendeng situated to the north. The Kediri Residency consists of four regencies: Kediri, Berbek (Nganjuk), Blitar, and Tulungagung. After the end of the Diponegoro War, the Kediri Residency was handed over by the Kasunanan Surakarta to the Dutch East Indies government as a replacement for war costs (Kasdi, 2005: 28).

During the Dutch East Indies period, the Kediri Residency was inhabited by people from various ethnic backgrounds, including Europeans, natives, Chinese, Arabs, and other foreign Orientals. The majority of the population was Javanese, along with other ethnic groups such as Madurese, Sundanese, Banjarese, and others who migrated and settled in the Kediri Residency (Cohyarini, 2013: 32). During the Dutch East Indies administration, there was significant migration. The Chinese ethnic group came to the Kediri Residency, leading the government to implement trade policies. The increase in population immigration in the Kediri Residency was due to the arrival of people from various regions seeking employment in companies, plantations, and agriculture. The mountainous terrain of the Kediri Residency also attracted European migrants (Paulus, 1917: 301).

In the Dutch East Indies era, the social stratification of the Kediri Residency's society was generally divided into three groups: Europeans, foreign Orientals, and indigenous people. The settlement pattern in the Kediri Residency was linear, meaning it stretched along and followed the roads. This pattern was designed to facilitate communication. Most middle-class groups, such as the Chinese, lived in large and small cities or near busy main roads, particularly in densely populated areas (Nederlandsch-Indie, 1935: 11). In Blitar Regency, the Chinese ethnic group resided along the western road of Blitar city's main square up to the Chinese temple (Basundoro, 2009: 237).

Various economic activities that supported the livelihood of the community developed in the Kediri Residency during the Dutch East Indies period. The plantation sector was the most important economic sector and experienced expansion during this period. By the 1920s, the Kediri Residency had become a sugarcane plantation center with about 20 sugar factories, as well as other factories such as 128 coffee factories, cocoa factories, and quinine factories (Cohyarini, 2013: 208). Hundreds of plantations in the Kediri Residency were successfully developed by Europeans, with 45 plantation companies cultivating coffee, rubber, quinine, tea, sugarcane, and agave. There was a cassava and agave company named Kaligambang located in Blitar Regency (Sasmita, 2011: 5). The development of plantations in Kediri was supported by the growth of the transportation sector. The main transportation player in the Kediri Residency was the Kediri Stoomtram Maatschappij, established on September 27, 1895. This company rapidly developed in the transportation of goods and passengers, supporting the economic growth of the Kediri Residency (Pradana, 2018: 206).

The local agriculture sector also experienced growth during the Dutch East Indies period. Agricultural production in the Kediri Residency included rice, tobacco, and secondary crops such as corn, cassava, soybeans, and peanuts. Among the various commodities, local sugarcane was particularly prominent, rapidly developing and having the largest area compared to other settlements in Java. Additionally, the Kediri Residency once became the main supplier of local tobacco in Java (Uitgave Van Den Dienst Der Belastingen In Nederlandsch Indie, 1925: 127). Local agriculture was practiced on both paddy fields and dry lands (tegalan). However, in the 1930s, international rice prices dropped sharply. As rice prices fell, all types of agricultural crops also affected the rural community. Therefore, the Dutch East Indies government decided to impose restrictions on rice imports and control commodity prices to protect domestic production (Kurasawa, 2015: 75-77).

IV. Farm Agriculture During The Japanese Occupation

On March 8, 1942, the Japanese military officially occupied the Kediri Residency and captured Dutch officials, including the Resident of Kediri, E.L.J. Tydeman (Muryantoro, 2011: 63). The arrival of the Japanese government brought changes to the Kediri Residency. The Gunseibu was abolished, and the Kediri Residency became Kediri Syuu. These changes in governance were followed by changes in agricultural policies. The Japanese military government implemented regulations through the Kinkyu Shokuryo Taisaku program to increase rice production by sharing their technology and knowledge with farmers. This policy aimed to enhance productivity per hectare and expand planting areas by introducing new seeds, especially new rice varieties,

innovative planting techniques such as row planting, and agricultural education and training schools. The main agricultural production focus was rice. The Japanese military government believed that the food production capacity in Java, particularly rice, could still be improved through technical and technological advancements (Kurasawa, 2015: 7).

The Japanese military government also expanded planting areas by clearing forests and converting plantation land into farmland. Additionally, they initiated irrigation and drainage projects. The Neyama Tunnel project in the Kediri Residency was constructed following a flood in 1942. This project aimed to drain water from swampy areas to the Indian Ocean and prevent flooding in the lower Brantas River area, particularly in the southern coastal region of Kediri, including Tulungagung Regency. The project required approximately 750,000 and 20,000 romusha (forced laborers) from neighboring areas (Kurasawa, 2015: 11). The Neyama Tunnel project began in February 1943 and was completed in July 1944, employing around two million workers. All the labor was manual as there were no adequate tools at that time (Sato, 1998: 192).

Unlike rice, secondary crops were not a primary focus for the Japanese military government. However, secondary crops were still cultivated because they were crucial for farmers, especially in adapting to seasonal patterns. During the dry season, when irrigation supply was limited, secondary crops such as cassava, peanuts, soybeans, sweet potatoes, and corn were preferred by farmers to ensure their land continued to produce yields to support their livelihoods (Asia Raya, March 31, 1943). Cotton cultivation was also encouraged in the Kediri Residency due to the area's high annual rainfall. The war made cloth imports difficult, leading to a shortage of clothing materials. Therefore, the Japanese military government expanded cotton planting areas. The Kediri Residency was chosen for cotton planting trials, and after two years, it produced the best cotton (Poesponegoro, 2012: 63). Farmers were also forced to plant castor plants, both in their yards and along the roadsides. Each household was required to plant more than ten castor plants. In the Kediri Residency, each family was instructed to plant castor plants on half of their yard and food crops on the other half. This was because castor seeds were useful as fuel and lubricants for weapons and aircraft engines during the Japanese military government era (Djawa Baroe, 1942: 10).

V. Impact Of The Japanese Occupation

In its efforts to implement policies in the Kediri Residency, the Japanese military government sought support from the Jawa Hokokai. Japan attempted to gain support in the religious sector by paying special attention to Islamic leaders, including kyai, Islamic leaders, and Islamic teachers. This was done to bolster resistance against the Allies under the pretext of defending Islam. Non-political Islamic organizations during the Japanese era, such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and MIAI (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia), were targeted. However, most kyai refused to be used as tools for Japan's war objectives. The Japanese military government failed to gain substantial support even through Masyumi (Kahin, 1952: 157-158).

The most noticeable impact of Japanese policies was seen in the food consumption of Kediri's residents. The already limited rice consumption was further reduced by mandatory deliveries. Farmers were forced to eat secondary crops due to their poverty. The Japanese military government's policies led to low welfare levels among the population, forcing people to wear clothes made from used sugar sackcloth. Rice prices were relatively high, leading many residents to eat corn rice, gaplek, and other supplementary foods (Muryantoro, 2011: 63). During the Japanese occupation, poverty was prevalent due to a lack of food. Many people suffered from hunger and death. The food shortage in 1943 in the Kediri Residency forced rural residents to seek alternative food sources to survive, such as snails, banana stems, and forest plants (Van der Eng, 1998, 492)

The resulting hunger also led to widespread malnutrition. The high mortality rate in the Kediri Residency was not only due to hunger and food shortages but also to a skin disease epidemic that claimed victims in 1944. The widespread skin disease was caused by a lack of clothing, with residents using makeshift materials to cover their bodies (Wiretno, 2017: 27). Poor food and health conditions led to high mortality rates. For the first time in its demographic history, the Kediri Residency experienced negative population growth. During the Japanese occupation, from 1943 to 1944, the growth rate was -0.08%, and from 1944 to 1945, it was -1.75%. Between 1943 and 1945, the population decreased from 3,018,000 to 2,963,000 (Van Der Eng, 1998: 498-499).

The suffering caused by Japanese military policies and forced labor (romusha) led to rebellions. One such rebellion in the Kediri Residency was the PETA Blitar uprising on February 14, 1945. This rebellion was led by Supriyadi, with the help of Dr. Ismail, Mudari, and Suwondo. The uprising aimed to free the people from the suffering caused by the Japanese military government (Pratama, 2018: 61-62). The PETA (Pembela Tanah Air) army was formed during the Japanese military government according to the Osamu Seirei decree (Raharjo, 1993: 18). The end of the Japanese military government in the Kediri Residency came when Japan surrendered to the Allies after its defeat in the Asia-Pacific War. The Japanese military government's rule ended, and it decided to abolish the policies imposed on the Indonesian people. Unable to maintain its occupied territories,

Japan unconditionally surrendered on August 15, 1945, and on August 17, 1945, Soekarno declared independence throughout Indonesia (Ricklefs, 2008: 440-444).

VI. Conclusion

During the Dutch colonial period, the Kediri Residency was an area focused on agriculture and plantations. The colonial government prioritized plantation commodities, including sugar cane, coffee, and tea, which were developed in the Kediri Residency. These commodities were managed by large plantation companies for export purposes. Numerous plantations and factories during the Dutch colonial era opened many job opportunities for both indigenous and foreign residents. The people of the Kediri Residency were not required to cultivate agricultural crops, leading to stable population growth year after year. However, this situation changed when the Japanese military government took over the Kediri Residency from the Dutch colonial administration.

It can be concluded that during the Japanese military government era in the Kediri Residency, both the government and its policies brought changes primarily in the economic and agricultural sectors. Under the Japanese military government, plantation lands were converted into agricultural lands for cultivating crops. For instance, sugar cane was replaced by castor plants, which were used for war needs as a lubricant for weapons and as fuel oil. The people had to plant crops determined by the Japanese military government in rows, and mandatory rice delivery was required to support the Japanese military government's victory in the Greater East Asia War.

The Japanese military government's occupation had both positive and negative impacts. The positive impact was that the people of the Kediri Residency were introduced to new planting techniques, transitioning from random planting to orderly rows with specific spacing. The Japanese military government also established the Nomin Dojo agricultural school for students to learn more about agricultural issues and the Nogyo Zosan Kumi agricultural cooperative to organize rice collection efficiently. The negative impact of the Japanese military government's occupation was the deterioration of the social and economic conditions of the Kediri community. The people faced food shortages, leading to famine. They also experienced a lack of clothing materials, forcing them to wear clothes made from burlap sacks. These dire conditions were caused by the Japanese military government's exploitative economic policies, resulting in a decline in population growth during the Japanese occupation. The unbearable suffering was eventually expressed in the form of the famous PETA Blitar rebellion.

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