

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN RURAL CENTRAL JAVA**

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## Local Government in Rural Central Java\*

### I

Rural settlement patterns on the island of Java conform in general type to the dominant mode throughout the rest of monsoon Asia: a nucleated residential unit surrounded by the lands cultivated by the residents, forming a community with political, economic, and religious dimensions. The dominant form of agriculture depends upon irrigated lands planted primarily with rice. In upland areas, where the topography has limited the spread of the irrigated land, the residential units are relatively small and isolated, and a characteristic village organization has developed in which the daily patterns of interaction can encompass the entire village. The much larger part of Java's population, however, lives in lowland areas where gentle even gradients, plentiful sources of water, and the seasonal rains have permitted the establishment of widespread systems of irrigation. Here the residential units have expanded and coalesced into large blocks and strips of several square miles, alternating with large uninterrupted areas of irrigated land. Under these conditions, village units have expanded far beyond the daily interaction group, and vaguely defined neighborhoods (barisan or lingkungan) have developed within which most of the daily patterns of mutual interest and aid take place. Within the area

studied the average population of the lowland rural village is roughly 600, with a range from 200 to 2000. The average area encompassed by each village is roughly 1/4 square mile, with a range approximately proportional to the population.

Population density in the area studied (1,490 per square mile), which includes both mountain and lowland areas, is substantially in excess of the average Java-wide population density (1,000 per square mile).<sup>1</sup> This excess reflects the soil fertility and consequent relative prosperity of the locality. The figure for the purely lowland portion of the area averages about 2,260 per square mile. This high, but by no means the highest concentration of population in rural Java. The ratio of residential (pekerangan) to agricultural (sawah and tegal) land varies from about 1:2.5 to 1:1. Density of settlement in residential areas is indicated by the ratio of population to residential area, which usually varies between 5,000 per square mile and 7,500 per square mile. Such concentrations of population extending over broad and continuous areas, scarcely answer our conception of "rural" but are more comparable to suburban conditions in the United States. Such densities are accompanied by a narrow scope of social awareness, complete ignorance of and indifference toward those living more than a short distance away. This high degree of what may be called social density is an important factor in the political structure of the village. Thus for all but a few occasions most social interaction is limited to a geographical area of very small scope. In the village with which I was most concerned, interest in the affairs of other families, except close kin, for most people extended no farther than a radius of 100 to 150 yards.

The population density of rural Java leads to a heavy incidence of small urban and semi-urban centers.<sup>2</sup> In the area of study, these are located at distances from each other of about ten to fifteen miles. They serve primarily as centers for collection of agricultural produce, and for the distribution of retail goods and services to the countryside. Each has at least one local market where all kinds of retail goods may be bought and where the small rural farmer or tradesman can bring his produce for sale. The bulk of the rural cash produce passes through the hands of a small group of town traders, formerly almost all Chinese, but now including a number of Javanese. Another sector of the urban population serves the countryman with prepared foods and small goods, repairs to equipment, entertainment, and transportation. Finally every such center has an administrative function, and contains a number of government officials and their staffs. These centers, varying in size from ten to thirty thousand people, are thickly scattered throughout Java. Very few villages are located more than ten to fifteen miles from one of them.

Communications with more distant areas usually funnel down through the local urban centers. Radios are non-existent in the villages. Newspapers and magazines reach only a very small fraction of the villagers, though these are usually influential persons who relay some information to a wider circle. A vast majority of the villagers, however, receive such information by word of mouth from someone who has just returned from a visit to one of the local towns. Most villagers have only the most casual of contacts with town sources of information--a chat with a market vendor or with those he may encounter in a coffee stall. The groups with special

communication links beyond the immediate neighborhood and village are bigger traders, well-to-do farmers who can maintain a wider network of kinship communications, those men--often but not necessarily well-to-do--who for one reason or another have taken advantage of opportunities to cultivate relationships with townspeople, and higher village officials whose business takes them frequently to central government offices. Their influence within the village, especially that of the last group is reenforced by the prestige which accrues from having town and government contacts. In addition to such informal channels the Government Information Service from time to time organizes meetings of the villagers to publicize and explain important government projects--a local anti-illiteracy program or most recently, the forth-coming general elections. Specific government services, particularly, the Public Health Service, the Agricultural Service, and the Ministry of Religion, also send out their officials to push their individual programs. Beyond these occasional official visits, private political organizations enter villages to hold public rallies and private meetings for their members. Information brought in through these channels seeps out over the countryside through numberless casual conversations and discussions at village coffee shops, guard posts, and road sides.

A very extensive network of roadways connect rural areas with each other and the towns. Village houses are aligned symmetrically along rectangular roadway grids, and the main roadways of each village continue to other villages and to main highways. The road network is thus not centered upon a particular nearby town but rather stretches out symmetrically in all directions. Towns and cities are linked by better surfaced and ballasted

roads, normally all-weather and suitable for auto and truck transport. Bus lines and small private jitneys connect all the towns and cities. The transportation network is thus extensive, heavily traveled and technically sufficient for most of the traffic demands. From the perspective of the village it permits ready access to a variety of local markets, and brings almost every villager at least occasionally into direct touch with the nearby towns.

Over the last century of great economic changes and population increases and shifts, large blocks of rural residents have moved into urban settings, <sup>to</sup> poorer villagers have been attracted ~~by~~ petty trade and manual occupations, and the process has been constantly accelerating; the children of the more well-to-do to schooling and clerical or more advanced government service. As a result, rural and urban societies share in a racially and ethnically common population. There are strongly felt distinctions between them, however, that set up a sharp dichotomy in their thinking between "we towns-people" and "we villagers." The city and townsfolk are conceived to be more refined, more aware of the wider world, more "advanced" in their thinking, yet more grasping and materialistic, inhospitable, and unwilling to work together. The villagers occupy the position in Javanese intellectual thought of "Natural Man." They are conceived as a society of relative equals, with no economic or political schisms, willing to share labor and goods with each other, courteous, generous, and hospitable to outsiders, yet lacking refinement, backward, and ignorant. It is significant that these contrasting conceptions are shared by both groups. These characterizations reflect strongly held values in Javanese society but, within my own experience of the rural population, they are to a very considerable

extent mythical. In actual fact Java has a metropolitan-based civilization that has for centuries penetrated down into rural society and set the standards there for social rank, speech, dress, manners, art, and music. Moreover, political influences from the urban-based royal courts have primarily determined the formal structure of village government, and economic influences from these courts have stimulated a cash economy in the areas by requiring taxes in cash since at least as early as the 17th century.<sup>3</sup>

Social rank in village society is well-defined and depends upon economic position, relationship to rank in the official hierarchy, and ability to maintain urban standards of social value. Economic position is primarily defined in terms of landholdings. There are two types of landholding, free hold (jasan) with free rights of disposal, and shares in village communal land (kongsen) with limited disposal rights. Both types are inheritable. It is interesting to note in this connection that landowners are almost all small holders; a household owning five acres of land is rated well-to-do. The distribution of local ownership is illustrated by the following figures based upon a reasonably representative desa in the area studied.

ca.	400	families own no land
	181	" " less than 1 1/4 acres
	149	" " from 1 1/4 to 2 1/2 acres
	89	" " from 2 1/2 to 5 acres
	60	" " from 5 to 12 1/2 acres
	4	" " more than 12 1/2 acres

It should be noted that the great majority of the non-landowners tabulated above are families early in marriage living on land held by their parents. It is worth noting in this connection that no antagonistic interest groups based on differences of landownership have yet developed. Absentee landlordism is not a serious factor in village power structure, and assumes economic importance only close to certain urban centers.

While economic differentiation is relatively slight, social gradations are considerable. The two great economic scarcities are cash and land. Patterns of kinship and neighborhood are used to establish sets of relationships between social unequals; the scarcities go down and in exchange services go up. The ability and willingness of a well-to-do man to maintain such relationships are very important factors contributing to his social and political status. In addition, the presence of urban standards within the village together with the great respect granted public office provide a scale of symbols for the establishment of position and the accordance of respect that commands universal social prestige. The existence of a well-developed social hierarchy based upon an urban scale of values makes it difficult to characterize Javanese rural society as peasant in nature.

The system of kinship throughout the Javanese-speaking area is bilateral in descent, mostly bilocal in residence--with neolocal as an alternative--and with no corporate bodies of kin beyond the immediate family. Under these conditions kinship ties are individual or single family affairs, rather than the joint concern of any wider kinship body.



The immediate family of father, mother, and children has a very high degree of social and economic autonomy. Kinship ties are maintained by the ability to reciprocate in an exchange of goods and services. For most individuals interaction beyond the village with relatives other than immediate family members is infrequent and limited to a close circle of kin. The more well-to-do can support a wider network of kin relationship, although in general they maintain ties only with those distant relatives from whom social advantage can be gained. Bilateral descent as the overwhelming mode of descent leads to the rapid fragmentation of property from generation to generation, and social privileges and hence social rank tend to vary accordingly. There is a constant turn-over of wealth and position. The heirs of the well-to-do must be economically effective to maintain their positions, for the heavy drain upon cash, and the absence of secure, effortless forms of investment mean that the real property each family can maintain matches very closely its actual economic ability.

There is a major social dichotomy in central Javanese society based upon religious differences which affects even the most remote rural area. On one side are those oriented toward the ritual and benefits of orthodox Islam, termed bangsa muslimin or bangsa santri. On the other, are those oriented toward more traditional systems of Javanese philosophy, theology, and arts, and strongly anti-Moslem. Abangan is a common Javanese village term for this group. Normally these factions follow community lines, and whole villages or neighborhoods will feel allegiance to one side or the other. This dichotomy varies in intensity from area to area and village to village. In some communities the synthesis achieved early in the

islamization of Java between the traditional Javanese theology and that of Islam still dominates the society; in others, the dichotomy varies in intensity in proportion as this synthesis has broken down under orthodox Islam pressures on the one hand and countervailing religious and political pressures on the other. Village officials equally share this bias and, where the split is intense, village elections are normally decided by the voting strength of each faction. This rift has deep historical roots, going back to the introduction of Islam in the 13th and 14th centuries. It only began to have political significance, however, with the growth of a nationalist movement in the second and third decades of this century. There is good evidence as a matter of fact that this split has become severe in the rural areas only since national independence in 1945. In the immediate area studied, serious political competition between the two factions started immediately after independence and culminated in bitterness with the so-called Madiun Affair in 1948.<sup>5</sup> While actual violence did not extend to the area studied, relationships between Moslem and non-Moslem communities in this area were badly strained, to the point that in certain severe cases communications between neighboring villages have broken down.<sup>6</sup>

## II

Settlement in the area studied is relatively recent, and took place rapidly during the 19th century. As a result, individual settlement units had no time to send out separate sub-settlements; instead, settlements expanded until they coalesced with others or until a balance was reached

between residential and cultivated land. Each village unit (dukuhan)<sup>7</sup> is the expanded core of an original settlement. It has its own communal shrine, which symbolizes the spiritual influence of the original founder; its own communal land, held by the village as a corporate body; and its own governmental apparatus which includes a system for levying communal labor for village work. The members of each village have a considerable degree of identification with each other, an esprit de corps that helps make effective the strongly felt value of social harmony. In the older settled areas of central Java, to the west of the area studied, village complexes exist in which one village is recognized to be the "mother" village, the others, offshoots. In such complexes, village loyalties and a sense of identification extend over the whole group. Patterns of communal cooperation and mutual aid exist between such villages, and the entire complex is usually united under the office of a single headman.

This kind of complex apparently served as a model for the structure of rural administration under at least the last Javanese empire of Mataram (ca. 1590-1800) and under Dutch administration as well. Under the Javanese kingdoms all land was crown land, and was distributed among the royal officials roughly in proportion to rank. At least by the Mataram period in the central Javanese areas exposed to strong royal penetrations the desa headman had been absorbed into the court hierarchy as a direct or indirect royal appointee.<sup>8</sup> At this time the basic unit of administration seems in general to have been the village complex referred to above (Javanese: kalurahan; Indonesian: desa). The traditional staff of desa assistants under such local appointees crystallized around these communities

and constituted the formal system of authority roles which is standard today. Under Dutch administration this system was standardized and extended to consolidate the entire rural area of the island of Java. The desa head (lurah) was thus initially a member of the imperial bureaucracy with advancement possible into the higher levels of government.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the office tended to become hereditary, helping to establish a kind of petty aristocracy with court ties within village society. About 1875, the "liberal" political movement in Europe began to make itself felt in Dutch colonial administration and, among other changes, the office of lurah was gradually made elective. One of the effects of submitting this office to local elections was to place the lurah in a much more intimate relationship to the villagers and thus set him apart from higher governmental levels. At the same time the growth of the urban sector of Javanese society led to its acquisition of a monopoly over higher positions in government and a consequent shutting off of village heads from political advancement. This change took place during the latter part of the Dutch era, occurring gradually between about 1875 and 1920. Simultaneously there was a gradual rise to local dominance of orthodox Moslem headmen, replacing the more traditionally oriented line of appointees.

Later, the Dutch administration began a program of consolidating village government to reduce the administrative burden and the size of staffs. Desa's were combined by two's and three's into single units, and dukuhan's were similarly combined and their government apparatus amalgamated. The consolidation was not successful however in creating a new sense of unity between the combined dukuhan's. The original village unit retained its own identity, esprit de corps, central shrine, and control over its

own communal land and labor. Today, these are still the units referred to when the local Javanese use the term "village." With the fall of the Japanese, there was in many villages a popular upsurge of resentment against the desa government officials, most of whom had been forced to cooperate with the Japanese in the initiation of harsh measures. In many cases, the lurah was deposed and a member of the opposite faction, often the anti-Moslem group, was elected in his stead. Thus a more even balance was reached between these two factions at the desa level.

After national independence, certain limited changes were introduced in the traditional village constitution. The assistant desa offices were all made elective, rather than appointive by the desa head. This change has become permanent, and has substantially reduced the patronage available to the desa head, as well as his control over outlying dukuhan's. Shortly after the fall of Japan, on the initiative of the new Government of the Republic, elective committees were formed in each desa to assist and check the authority of the headman and other desa officials. This change swept rapidly through desa's in the area studied on a wave of popular enthusiasm. The innovation failed after about a year, however, in almost all cases because of the inability of the desa to remunerate the committee members with land or money. The committee members were unwilling to put much time into the work, and chronic friction between them and the desa officials disrupted the administration of the desa. As a result the new system was dropped completely in the area studied, with the consent of both the villagers and the central government.<sup>10</sup>

A very important political phenomena in post-war Java has been the remarkable proliferation of private organizations and their penetration into village society. In central Java joint economic and political action, aside from that possible through the chain of pair relationships among kin and neighbors, can be initiated only within an organizational framework, complete with a formal structure of leadership. Informal groupings for such purposes do not exist. As a consequence, local government has had in the past a near monopoly over the power to initiate such action. Since national independence, however, the private organizations among the urban sector of the population, particularly certain political associations, have begun to organize in the village. They have been received with mixed feelings. On the one hand, the villagers admire the "advanced" nature of these urban exports and prestige accrues to their local leaders. On the other, they resent the way such organizations disrupt the sense of village unity. In strongly Moslem villages, however, where there has been a longer history of such organizations, reinforced by religious sanctions, they have been better received. Even so, in Moslem as well as non-Moslem villages, their membership consists principally of persons in some way oriented toward urban values and thus of higher social rank.

Despite such limitations these organizations are becoming increasingly effective. Their leaders exert pressure upon the desa and dukuhan governments to secure privileges for themselves and their supporters. They work for the election of favorably inclined desa officials and organize efforts to effect the dismissal of officials friendly to the opposite faction. All such organizations are aligned on one side or the other of the Moslem vs.

non-Moslem dichotomy, and are usually linked through the towns with nation-wide organizations. Their activities have had a great deal to do with the intensification of strain between communities of opposite religious inclination. The issues they exploit in rural areas all relate to the central religious problem and are all nation-wide in scope--polygamy and women's rights in general, laws concerning marriage and divorce, theological differences between orthodox Moslem and traditional Javanese religious beliefs, the question of support for parochial (i.e., Moslem) schools, etc. In the non-Moslem villages, these activities increasingly bring the new organizations into conflict with the village officials. Though usually sympathetic with a political faction, many officials resent the pressures brought to bear, and dislike the threat to social harmony implicit in the presence of such organizations. In Moslem villages, however, integration of the officials with the dominant political organizations is much more complete, and such conflict is uncommon.

### III

Local government in present-day Java lies at the bottom of a series of administrative units of diminishing size arranged in seven levels each of which has grouped under it a set of units of the next lower level.<sup>11</sup> In their form and in the functions of their officials these units closely parallel each other. Authority is strongly centralized and chains of command carefully worked out and strictly adhered to. The selection of officials for all but the bottom two (village) levels is by appointment

of the central government. Lately, local bodies of elected representatives have been created at the third level of administration (kabupaten) to stand beside the central government and apply the checks of representative government at this level.

One of the critical planes cutting across this system lies between the fifth (katjamatan) and sixth (desa) levels, for it is here that the closest contact occurs between the local population and the central government. Above this plane, the officials are all appointed by the central government. They are mostly town-bred and town-oriented, comparatively well-educated, often not from the local area, and are frequently rotated from region to region. Their loyalties and hopes for advancement are directed toward the higher levels of the central government. Below this plane, the officials are elected (with permanent tenure) by the populations of their administrative units, depend heavily for support upon their neighborhood groups, have not normally acquired superior educations, and identify themselves largely with the values of the rural population. There is no chance for advancement through the sixth to the fifth level. These officials may be deposed by local agitation bringing sufficient pressure to bear upon the higher administrative levels, or by action of higher levels independent of local feeling. Thus the officials of the lowest levels--desa and dukuhan--are subject to pressures and severe sanctions from above and below.

The desa as an administrative unit draws together from two to seven



or eight villages, with from four to five the mode. In the area studied, the average rural lowland desa has a population of about 3,200 with an area of 1 1/4 square miles. The desa consists of a set of dukuhan governments capped by a single headman (lurah) with a small staff of specialists who serve the entire desa. The members of the desa government thus consist of two groups: those attached to the central desa government, and those attached to each dukuhan government. The former are the desa secretary (Tjarik), desa Islamic religious official (Modin), and the desa irrigation official (Djogotirto). These three officials, in addition to their subordinate position to the lurah, have special ties to agencies of the central government. The secretary is primarily responsible for the various kinds of census material required by the central government, and in addition has delegated to him by the lurah the task of accounting and conveying tax money to the local office of the Interior Ministry. The special skills required of the secretary give him a prestige second only to that of the lurah, though normally he has no authority over the other village officials. The religious official attends to legal matters that come under the control of hukum or religious law, e.g. the initiation of marriage, divorce and related property settlements, and inheritance. Furthermore, the Modin is called upon to conduct the ritual for funerals. For this occasion, his services are called upon by every family regardless of political faction, and this role secures him widespread good will.

Irrigation water is received from an irrigation system operated by the national government. Each desa has control over the distribution of its own water. The irrigation official is responsible to the lurah for

the proper maintenance of the irrigation canals and dams, and for the supervision of the distribution scheme decided upon by vote of the landholders. He is also the liaison man between the desa and the Irrigation Service, which operates the government system and passes on decisions concerning inter-desa irrigation problems. Water is a burning issue during the dry season, and occasionally the farmers of some dukuhan may resist, even by violence, changes ordered in inter-desa distribution by the Irrigation Service. Such forms of resistance rarely gain their ends, since the central government police together with the desa officials act firmly to enforce the government regulations.

Below the desa one encounters the basic unit of local government, the dukuhan or village. This has a head (Kamitua) and under him a staff consisting of at least one security or police official (djogobojo), and at least one herald or messenger (kebajan). Traditionally the police official is responsible for calling out and overseeing the nightly village watch and for reporting to the central government -- on orders from the desa head -- any crimes or serious misdemeanors. He is also the first called to the scene of crime, fighting, serious accident or emergency. The herald transmits orders, summons, and notices from the desa or dukuhan head to the individual villagers. He is the direct, though essentially passive, initiator of action; for without an official notice -- even though aware of the occasion -- the villagers will not begin to assemble for any official activity. In practice the holders of these two offices usually share most of their official duties and divide their work on the basis of neighborhoods. As a consequence of the consolidation of dukuhan governments, many

villages have been left with only a partial dukuhan staff. Under these conditions, the village unit turns to the senior of the remaining officials in length of service as its de facto head, and the subordinate roles are taken over by the junior officials, if any. This distribution of official activities on the basis of locality rather than assigned roles reflects the primary function the villagers expect from their officials, i.e. acting as the responsible agent for the local group in dealings between that group or any member thereof and government at higher levels.

Conversely, the dukuhan head is also the normal funnel through which contacts pass from higher levels of government to members of the dukuhan. Contacts by the desa head with a dukuhan member are made only through the channels of dukuhan government, while representations to the desa head by a villager for any reason, e.g. securing papers for travel, marriage, divorce, transfer of land, a dispute with a member of a different dukuhan are made in the company of his dukuhan head.

Authority structure in village government, as in other levels of administration, is pyramidal. Decisions for final action of any kind must be made by the head of the administrative level concerned. Within the dukuhan, decisions on the allocation of communal labor, on requests to the desa for maintenance and repair funds, on the time and form of village celebrations, on participation by the village members in some projected central government program, all must be made in the last instance by the dukuhan head. The process of decision-making in informal, non-official circumstances has a fairly general pattern. The proposition for action is initiated by the party most keenly interested in seeing the action

carried out. He or they propose it individually or in small informal groups to those whose support or consent must be gained. Arguments pro and con, followed by some kind of head count of opinion are not used. No overt decision ever appears to be taken. Instead, the absence of objections is taken to connote consent, and the initiator and his party immediately set out to execute the action. Any objections raised and counter discussions are always delicately phrased to avoid direct contradiction, which Javanese etiquette forbids. The task of gaining support and talking down objections rests with the initiators. Factors of social influence, such as those previously mentioned, bear strongly upon the effectiveness of individual discussants. Other things being equal, however, the more aggressive speaker, acting with due propriety, will gain his point. If any objections persist, and the Javanese are very sensitive to the nuances of expression that indicate objection, the proposal is tacitly dropped. Decision-making in an official setting shares these characteristics, but also contains the authoritarian element. The lower the level of administration, the less there is of the latter. At the dukuhan level, the element of authority, though present, is distinctly subdued. In the decision-making process, the dukuhan head acts normally as first among equals in conjunction with his officials and influential members of the village.

The role of desa head permits a greater amount of authority to be exercised in the decision-making process. The office carries considerably more prestige than that of dukuhan head. Weekly meetings are held at which the desa head passes on directives and information he has received from the central government. Decisions are reached on the details of necessary

desa activity and the budgeting of desa funds, with the desa head having the final say.

The desa headman is also the point of contact for any central government action; all entrances into the village, for any official purpose whatsoever, must be channeled through him. Affairs that involve an individual's or dukuhan's obligations to the central government -- payment of taxes, maintenance of minimum standards of sanitation and order, participation in certain government projects, obedience to government laws and directives -- all move through this office, and the desa head is held responsible by the government for the orderly discharge of these obligations. Ineffectiveness or negligence may be cause for dismissal. This responsibility is the crux of the relationship between desa head and dukuhan head. Government pressure is applied directly to the former, never to the latter. The former needs the cooperation of his dukuhan heads to discharge his responsibilities. He may request the government to dismiss any subordinate official who has violated his orders; if found to be justified, such a request is usually granted. But he must take care that the local loyalties disturbed by this action will not result in loss of necessary cooperation. The critical balance lies between authority exercised and cooperation secured. The greater the physical or social distance between the desa head's village and a particular dukuhan, the more authority must yield to dukuhan autonomy. In one desa studied, severe factional antagonism led to the desa head's authority being reduced to a shadow in a village of the opposite faction.

The level of administration directly above the desa is entirely a part of the central government bureaucracy. The relations between this level (katjamatan) and the desa are strongly authoritarian. Most interaction takes place at weekly conferences between katjamatan head (Tjamat) and the head of the fifteen to twenty desa's under him. These are rarely decision-making groups. Decisions fully formed are passed down; any objections and complaints are respectfully passed up and small details worked out. The existence of objections rarely reverses a decision. The pattern of interaction at these conferences is modelled on the teacher-pupil relationship. The Tjamat instructs and admonishes; the Iurah's answer queries, take notes, and raise hands to ask questions or make suggestions, but seldom offer direct objections. Traditionally, the central government has maintained a close interest in all aspects of village affairs. Its directives and admonitions thus cover a wide range of minor and major matters. The Iurah has, however, two means of opposition. He filters out those minor directives he feels are impracticable and softens the application of the more unpopular. Again occasionally during a conference, the Iurah's jointly balk at some proposal or decision by simply remaining silent and failing to make the proper verbal responses. If they remain in adamant in this way, there is nothing the Tjamat can do but accept the situation gracefully.

The desa head thus acts as a buffer between the villagers and higher levels of authority. At the present time, the scope of desa autonomy is in a state of partial flux. Popular political thinking in the country favors sharp limitations on the authoritarian exercise of government

control and a widening of the scope of local autonomy. This change is being worked out at the desa-katjamatan level mainly through pulling and hauling between the Tjamat and the desa heads. The size of funds the desa may handle to finance its own projects, and the control it may exercise over its corporate land are the points most frequently at issue. This again reflects the two major scarcities, cash and land.

The growth of public feeling against authoritarian government is further reflected in the attitudes of many Iurah's toward the central government. They resent attempts to force changes within the desa by direct edict, are antagonistic toward Tjamat's who try to exercise their full authority, and enthusiastically admire any Iurah bold enough to directly challenge this authority. The growth of a spirit of independence of both the villagers toward their officials and the officials toward the central government has considerably loosened the controls of government at the local level.

Taxation in the villages draws upon the land and labor of the villagers rather than their cash. A certain amount of land is owned communally by each dukuhan. The amount varies from village to village, but within each, it is fixed and inalienable. A portion of this is set aside for the use of the dukuhan and desa officials as recompense for their services. The proportions vary considerably from desa to desa, but in the area studied, land allotted to office holders in each desa averages roughly 1/9 to 1/10 of the desa's agricultural land. The amounts per official may be varied by popular vote of the whole desa, and such a decision is binding upon each dukuhan. A further amount of land is exploited for

the account of the desa treasury (there are usually no dukuhan treasuries), and its receipts are used for capital expenses of the desa. The amount of communal land assigned for this purpose is approved by popular vote. In some desa's no land has been appropriated for this purpose, and cash for desa expenses is raised by occasional levies initiated by the desa head and approved by popular vote. In any event, the amount of land appropriated or cash levied is very small. Budgeting disbursements are decided at meetings of the desa officials, and as previously stated, the lurah has the final word in such decisions.

Labor for community projects is generally secured as a form of tax from the villagers. The compulsory labor pools are organized by dukuhan's. The labor that must be performed within the limits of a dukuhan is provided from the labor pool of that dukuhan. The types of communal labor are graded, and each household is liable for service according to the type of land it owns or holds by communal right. The liability varies slightly from village to village, depending upon local tradition. The labor levy is strictly rotated, and books are kept at the dukuhan head's office to ensure that the levy is equitably spread. Labor is raised for the nightly watch, clearing irrigation canals, repairing roads, bridges, dams, public buildings, etc.

The central government also levies taxes on the villagers. Formerly, during Dutch times and earlier, villagers were required to provide a certain amount of free labor for central government tasks. This has been discontinued. Central government taxes are now assessed on certain types of visible assets deemed to be productive, i.e., land and vehicles for



transport or hire, and levied wholly in cash. The assessment is a flat fee for each kind of vehicle and unit of land of each class, based on the estimated productive capacity of that type of good. It is thus not a direct income tax. The rates for assessment are set by the central government, which retains all the tax receipts after deductions of the lurah's commission. Each household with an assessed tax must make payment to the local dukuhan head or directly to the lurah. The tax ledgers are kept at the lurah's office, and receipts are checked off against them, then transmitted to the central government. The lurah is responsible for any mishandling of receipts and receives 8 per cent of the receipts as compensation for this task and responsibility.

The desa has no juridical powers to try offenders or render decisions in disputes. Armed police power and the judicial apparatus are reserved to the central government. The lower courts are circuit courts with jurisdiction to handle mainly minor offenses such as assault and petty theft. These courts travel to governmental centers of the kawedanan (fourth) level. Higher courts with jurisdiction to handle civil suits, appeals and cases of major crime are located in the cities and larger towns, at the kabupaten (third) and higher levels of government. Individual complainants can secure legally enforceable decisions only from such courts. In practice however, disputes and cases of personal injury rarely reach the local courts, but are settled at the desa and dukuhan level. The desa or dukuhan head is sought out by the offended party and asked to act as a mediator in order to secure for the plaintiff some sort of restitution. Similarly an offended person from another desa goes

to the offender's lurah and presents his case for adjustment. The headman does not act as an arbitrator rendering a decision intended to secure justice. Rather his dominant purpose is to make peace. The headman through private talks brings pressure to bear upon both parties to agree to some kind of settlement. The nature of the final settlement is determined by who is willing to yield the most to being a restoration of peace. This pressure for harmony is a major social sanction which, coupled with the influence that goes with official position, allows the headman to succeed in almost every instance. The settlement is not legally binding, and either party, if still dissatisfied, may take the case to a government court, but the villager has a horror of getting so involved. Furthermore, public opinion strongly condemns the resort to courts as an act that destroys the ties of kinship or neighborhood.

Only the selection of officials is decided by regular elections. Other decisions that require full desa or village approval are made at special meetings, at which all residents aged 18 years or over and all married women of any age have a voice. Such meetings are usually initiated only by the desa or dukuhan government. Any changes in desa tax levies, in apportionment of corporate village land, in land allotted to office-holders, and in the division of irrigation water, must be approved by a full meetings of desa or dukuhan members. Proposals for such changes or for the setting up of some special project such as building a school or public meeting house, or establishing a desa cooperative may be initiated by the central government, the desa or dukuhan government, or some political organization or influential figure able to gather sufficient local support in favor of a meeting. During such a meeting matters are not decided by voting. The aim rather is to secure essential unanimity. Objection are freely offered especially by politically conscious young

men. Explanations, oratory and modifications of the proposal are advanced to achieve amity, but if the block of objectors is at all substantial and remains adamant the meeting is adjourned and the proposal tacitly dropped or postponed. If there are few sustained objections, the leaders of the meeting makes strenuous attempts to elicit vocal evidence of positive support. If unsuccessful, the meeting is continued until the objections are determined or support evinced and the matter is decided accordingly.

After independence the central government first required that such meetings be held regularly. In the immediate area of fieldwork at least these meetings so intensified factionalism that much bitterness was aroused. Rules of etiquette for informal discussion were ignored and open arguments, charges and counter-charges were exchanged in a manner deeply offensive to Javanese feelings. Finally, at the behest of the local officials permission was granted to discontinue the regular meetings, and at present they are only held when necessary.

Village officials are elected for life, but may be dismissed from office by central government officials for malfeasance and gross incompetence. In practice, if sufficient resistance can be mobilized in the desa or dukuhan, pressure can be effectively brought to bear upon the central government to remove an official. In one dukuhan the village herald, an elderly man, took a young woman for a second wife. The disparity in their ages threw into sharp relief the political issue of polygamy, an issue on which the Moslems are on the defensive. Seizing upon this issue, a youth organization aligned on the non-Moslem side succeeded in stirring up strong local resistance against the herald. A large part

of the village simply refused to heed the notices the herald delivered from the desa and dukuhan heads. Government business there came to a standstill. The desa head was forced to secure from the central government the dismissal of the herald, and a new election was held in which the candidate supported by the youth organization gained the office. This kind of politicking goes on constantly in the village, initiated by those with some claim to social influence. The various officials both participate in this politicking and at the same time seek to mitigate its effects for the sake of harmony.

The power and profits that can be derived from village office-holding, especially from the office of desa headman, are considerable. The attached land rights yield control over a relatively substantial amount of land, which in turn permits the establishment of a number of power relationships with sharecroppers. The Iurah's control over the ingress of central government gives opportunities for selection of friends as agents for the distribution of government aid. The desa and dukuhan headmen's control over the activities of political organizations, together with their political prestige give considerable advantage to their respective factions. These factors, together with the general growth of political factionalism, help to create the increasingly intense struggles of local politics.

Thus the outstanding problem facing contemporary Javanese society, both rural and urban, is the intensifying bitterness since independence between the Moslem and non-Moslem political factions. The problem is keenly felt within village society and causes a great deal of concern and

uneasiness. Very little effective action is being taken by any segment of the general public to ease this strain. Very few private organizations are able to maintain a middle position and provide any kind of bridge between the two groups. Local officialdom, however, has been exceedingly effective in keeping the peace. Their policy, both at the desa and higher levels, is one of firmness coupled with a balancing of favors to either side. Provocative political displays and demonstrations are kept to a minimum, and, where possible, representatives from both factions are drawn into joint public activities. A skillful Iurah can be particularly effective with such a policy, and there are a surprisingly large number of such Iurah's.

Another major problem felt by villagers is the increasing number of families who hold no farmland. The most frequently recurrent issue arising from this problem is the distribution of the corporate village land. Proposals growing out of this issue, initiated either by a political organization or by some influential neighborhood figure, may gather sufficient support to cause the desa or dukuhan head to call a full village or desa meeting. As a result of such meetings, several villages have made decisions to increase the number of holdings, and to cut the size of office land (bengkok) in order to distribute the saving among families without farm land. In certain areas where all or a large part of the farm land is communally owned, lines of interest are being drawn between the hereditary shareholders and the increasing number of families with no rights, who can only wait for some hereditary line to die out. Again the villagers are aware of this, and feel deeply unhappy over the resultant

growth of factionalism. It is this kind of threat to social harmony felt by all that causes even a majority to be willing to yield some of its rights.

#### IV

National plans for local government envisage sweeping changes, on paper at least. They aim at widening the scope of local autonomy and providing each autonomous area with a larger share of its tax receipts. Desa units would accordingly become more self-sufficient. In order to finance a wider range of governmental services, however, existing desa's would have to be amalgamated into much larger units. Under these circumstances local officials are expected to become more specialized and to have wider territories within their jurisdiction. It is not possible to say, however, if or when these plans will be put into effect. Major political and economic obstacles stand in the way.

Given an increasingly dense population, it is easy to see that a drastic consolidation of governmental functions is needed to produce any great advance in governmental services. At the same time it is hard to see how such consolidation can be effected given the villager's attitudes toward government and the high degree of "social density," existing in the countryside. Until the small village groups are broken up by diversification of occupations and more regular, fast transportation linking towns and villages, rural social life will continue to center around the neighborhoods, and local officials will continue to be treated as general

purpose mediators with the higher levels of government regardless of their assigned functions. Aside, therefore, from the possibility of sweeping governmentally initiated changes, the present system appears to have considerable promise of stability.

The most explosive issue for the immediate future is the power struggle between the Moslem and non-Moslem factions. General elections are scheduled for the very near future. While they have been postponed before and may be again, it now seems certain they will be held in the reasonably near future. The Moslem parties hope to gain an absolute majority in the national parliament, and if successful they avowedly aim to create a state with a constitution based upon Koranic law. The non-Moslems are fighting this possibility bitterly, partly on religious grounds and partly through fear that such a constitution would weight the government heavily with offices requiring orthodox Moslem personnel. How such a general election would turn out is not at all certain. The Moslem faction is by far the better organized, particularly in the rural areas, but for the most part has reached its organizational limits there. The non-Moslem political groups, especially the more left-wing elements, are very busily and effectively organizing the non-Moslem villages. Whatever course the election may take, it appears that the dichotomy between the two factions will be increasingly sharpened and that more and more villages will align themselves clearly with one side or the other.

### Footnotes and bibliography

\*The material for this article was drawn partly from the considerable literature—primarily Dutch—on the geography, history, economics and politics of Java, and in larger part from fieldwork done by the writer in central Java during 1953 and 1954. The fieldwork was sponsored by the Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation. The study was done in the eastern part of the central Javanese area. The statements made apply to the Javanese-speaking area in general, except where specifically restricted to the immediate area of study. I have profited in the preparation of this article from comments by Mr. Clifford Geertz, another member of the field group.

- (1) These figures are based upon the most recent population estimates available from the Indonesian government: Report on Indonesia, vol. 5, no. 11, pp. 13-14, March 22, 1954. For the area studied they rely upon census material gathered by the writer from local officials.
- (2) Reliable figures do not exist for an estimate of the present proportions of rural-urban population. A rough figure of 4/5 rural to 1/5 urban is sufficient for indicative purposes only.



Footnotes and bibliography - 2

(3) For penetration of court patterns into rural society during the Hindu-Javanese period, see any of the standard historical works on the period, especially:

N. J. Krom, Hindow-Javaansche Geschiedenis, 2nd ed., Den Haag, 1931.

W. F. Stutterheim, Het Hinduisme in de Archipel, 2nd ed., Groningen, 1951, pp. 114-124.

For more detailed discussion and analysis of the same point see:

D. H. Burger, "Structuurveranderingen in de Javaanse Samenleving", Indonesie, vols. 2/3, 1948-'49, 1949-'50.

For penetration of political and economic patterns during the Mataram period see:

Thomas S. Raffles, Substance of a Minute on February 1814, Part I, London 1814.

G. B. Rouffaer, "Vorstenlanden", Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indie, 1st ed., Part IV, pp 587-653, 's-Gravenhage 1905.

H. J. Van Mook, "Koeta Gede", Koloniaal Tijdschrift, vol. 15, pp. 353-400, 1926.

Footnotes and bibliography - 3

C. L. Van Doorn, Schets van de Economische Ontwikkeling der Afeeling Poerworedjo, Vereeniging Voor Studie Van Koloniaal Maatschappelijke Vraagstukken, Publicatie No. 18, pp. 16-36, Weltevreden 1926.

(4) A considerable number of individual desa studies touching on this point have been done by Dutch and Indonesian scholars. See for example:

L. Adam, "Enkele gegevens omtrent den economische toestand van de kaloerahan Sidoardjo", Economische Beschrijvingen, II/III, Weltevreden, n.d.

D. H. Burger, "Vergelijking van de economische toestand der districten Tajoe en Djakenan", Economische Beschrijvingen, IV, Weltevreden, n.d.

\_\_\_\_\_, "De Desa Ngablak, Regentschap Pati, in 1869 en 1929", Koloniale Studien, vol. 17, pp. 226-40, 1933.

(5) The "Madiun Affair" was an abortive Communist-led uprising centered in the area of Madiun, Central Java, in September 1948. Intended as "bloodless" coup, the revolt exploded the latent antagonisms between Moslems and non-Moslems and set off a very bitter and bloody civil war in and around the Madiun area.

Footnotes and bibliography - 4

(6) For the growth of factionalism in Indonesian politics both before and after national independence see for examples and further bibliography:

H. J. Van Mook, "Nieuw Koeta Gede", Koloniaal Tijdschrift, vol. 15, p. 566, 1926.

A. K. Pringgodigdo, Sedjarah Pergerakan Rakjat Indonesia, Djakarta, 1950.

C. T. Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia, Ithaca, N.Y., 1952.

J. M. Pluvier, Overzicht van de Ontwikkeling der Nationalistische Beweging in Indonesia, 's-Gravenhage, 1953.

(7) In the immediate area studied, the common Javanese term in use for the village proper is desa, and for the next higher level of administration, the collection of villages under a single headman, the term used is kalurahan. The official Indonesian terms, however, are dukuhan for the village and desa for the collection of villages. I have kept to the official terminology. Wherever the word "village" is used, reference is to the dukuhan.

(8) In addition to the form of village and desa government which developed under royal influence other forms, perhaps more traditional and certainly less authoritarian, existed at the perimeters of the central

Footnotes and bibliography - 5

Javanese area. See for description of variations as of ca. 1800

A.D. Thomas S. Raffles, op cit., pp. 82 et seq.

(9) Thomas S. Raffles, op cit., p. 90.

(10) For an outline and brief description of a more elaborate form of this system as it operated in another area of rural central Java, see:

C. L. Van Doorn, "De organisatie van het Javaanse dorp in de republieke", Indonesie, vol. 2, pp. 283-284, Nov. 1948.

(11) The administrative of local government, under the jurisdiction of the Kementarian Dalam Negeri (Ministry of the Interior), operates at seven levels. The island of Java is divided first into three propinsi ("province") of approximately equal area and each with a population of about 16-17 million. The propinsi is divided into 4 to 6 karesidenan, ("residency"), this into 4 to 5 kabupaten ("regency"), thence into 4 to 5 kawedanan ("district"), next into 4 to 5 katjamanatan ("subdistrict"). These are all under the direct control of the central government. Below them are the desa, 10 to 20 per katjamanatan, and the dukuhan, 2 to 6 or more per desa.