

## A SOCIAL HISTORY OF PEASANTS IN THE PRIVATE LANDS OF INDRAMAYU AND KANDANGHAUR IN JAVA IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

M. RADIN FERNANDO

The study of social history of rural Java under colonial rule has achieved a new dimension in the last two decades both through the increasing use of contemporary source materials and through a concentration of attention at the local level.\* The picture of rural society that emerges from these new historical writings is a vivid one and it gives us a deepening image of change among peasants whose lives were being increasingly affected by the plantation economy. Nonetheless, the portrait of peasants is largely impressionistic in the colonial records, for it represents the views of local officials, native and Dutch, about the peasants rather than what the latter felt themselves about changing life in the countryside. True enough, we can and often do presume what peasants were likely to have felt under given circumstances, unfortunate that we are for the most part unable to give any identity to the peasants depicted *en masse* in the official records. There is in addition a serious lacuna in that our understanding of peasant life in areas outside the orbit of the plantation economy in Java is very limited. The administration was indifferent towards elements of indigenous society adrift from the mainstream of the colonial economy, and it was only when something unusual happened that the monotony of prosaic local reports was broken, to be replaced, usually by detailed reports prepared in the most bureaucratic fashion.

Such an unusual event occurred in Cirebon Residency in the early 1880's, when famine struck in the private lands of Indramaya and Kandanghaur.

\* This is a paper presented at the Fourth National Conference of Asian Studies Association of Australia, held at Monash University, Melbourne, May 10-14, 1982.

Following abbreviations are used in this paper.

- AD : Arsip Daerah (local archives)
- ADK : Archives of the Office of Director of Cultivations
- AMK : Archives of the Ministry of Colonies
- ANRIJ : Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta
- ARADH : Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag
- ARAS : Algemeen Rijksarchief, hulp depot, Schaarsbergen
- BKI : *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*
- KV : *Koloniaal Verslag*
- MR : Mail Report
- TITLV : *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*
- V : Verbaal (minute)