

POPULATION AND OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE IN A COASTAL VILLAGE A Case Study of "Sumbersari" in North Central Java

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ABSTRACT

In "Sumbersari" there are three major types of productive work: rice farming, fish raising and factory work. The industrial estate which has been operating since the late 1970s has altered the pattern of employment, in part because the agricultural land previously used for rice fields and brackish water ponds has been converted to industrial use. Waves of migrants from other places have taken up residence in Sumbersari either on a temporary or a permanent basis. These migrants have contributed to population growth and comprise the bulk of work force in this village.

Keywords: Population; occupation; Central Java coastal village; migration; work force; agriculture; industry.

I. INTRODUCTION

"Sumbersari"¹ is one a village (*desa*) located in a coastal area in north Central Java, rather isolated from urban centers or the urban center. It is located about six kilometres from the district (*kecamatan*) town and thirteen kilometres from the regency (*kabupaten*) town to which it belongs administratively, and about thirty five kilometres from the provincial Capital of Central Java.

Sumbersari covers an area of about fourteen square kilometres in where two canals flow through the village, parallel with the road which cuts across clusters of houses, rice fields (*sawah*) and brackish-water ponds (*tambak*). The small canal in the west part of the village and the large canal in the east, both flow northward to the Java Sea and contribute much to the fertility of agri-

cultural land. Near the mouth of the Java Sea, the large canal passes along the eastern border of the plywood factory complex.

Sumbersari has its origin in three smaller villages called Tambakageng, Bumiasih, and Banyubiru. Tambakageng, which consisted of two subvillages, and its adjacent village, Bumiasih, which comprised three subvillages, were already in existence in the second part of the nineteenth century. In 1921 Tambakageng and Bumiasih – both in the south – were united into one village, with one village headman (*Lurah*), under the name of Bumiasih.

Banyubiru, in the north in the coastal area, has a rather different history. It was under the direct control of the Dutch, who – in collaboration with several local pioneers from another village – opened up the area in the late nineteenth century. Only after Indonesian independence when the Dutch

¹ The names of the villages (*desa*) and subvillages (*dusun*) in this article are pseudonyms.

had left, was Banyubiru unified with Bumiasih. Upon unification in 1951, the three former villages became collectively known as *Desa Summersari*, under the leadership of one *Lurah*. The names of the old smaller villages have been retained as the names of the individual *dusun* within the village.

Henceforth, Summersari consists of six *dusun*, namely Banyubiru, Bumiasih, Mitratani, Kalidawa, Sawahgede, and Tambakageng. At present, each *dusun* except Banyubiru, is headed by one *Kepala Dusun* (often called by its acronym, *Kadus*, or subvillage headman).

Banyubiru, the most densely populated *dusun* where I resided for a fieldwork in 1991-92, is taken care of by two *Kadus*: one, the senior, is in charge of the subvillage domestic affairs; the other, his assistant, of relations between the subvillage and the plywood factory located in an area of more than one hundred hectares in this subvillage.

II. POPULATION AND OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE

In Summersari, there are three major types of productive work: rice farming, fish rearing and factory work. It is obvious that the plywood industrial estate which has been operating since the late 1970s has altered the pattern of employment, in part because the agricultural land previously used for ricefields and brackishwater ponds has been

converted to industrial use.

However, an analysis of official records of village occupations from 1979 to 1990 presents a more complex picture as shown in Table 1. The most important statistic is that the labour force has grown nearly three times in eleven years. Whereas 70% of household heads were landowning farmers in 1979, only 28% were similarly engaged in 1990, although the absolute numbers had increased slightly. There were nearly 1500 industrial and construction workers by 1990, more than the entire labour force a decade earlier. The number of persons engaged in agricultural and industrial occupations have both increased, but the percentage of those involved in agriculture has declined overall while the percentage of those employed in the industrial and construction sectors have markedly increased. The village records, however, are insufficiently detailed in a number of respects: they record only household heads and thus neglect the occupations of other family members, especially women; they provide neither information on gender nor specific occupational categories, and they do not differentiate those construction workers who work for the factory from those who do not. Moreover, the accuracy of numbers is in doubt. For example, the 70 civil servants and army/police officers listed in the figures include villagers who lived elsewhere and when I carried out a survey in 1991, there were only 20 civil servants in this village.

Table 1. Village Livelihood, Summersari 1979-1990

Type of Livelihood [Population Total]	1979 [4849]	1983 [5460]	1988 [5666]	1990 [5810]
Landowning farmers [%]	867 [70.2]	893 [47.5]	987 [28.2]	992 [28.3]
Farm workers [%]	265 [21.4]	376 [20.0]	778 [22.2]	773 [22.1]
Fishermen [%]	n. a.	14 [0.7]	19 [0.5]	19 [0.5]
Industrialist [%]	1 [0.08]	1 [0.05]	1 [0.02]	1 [0.02]
Industrial workers [%]	55* [4.4]	295 [15.7]	725 [20.7]	723 [20.6]
Construction workers [%]	n. a.	158 [8.4]	768 [21.9]	768 [21.9]
Traders [%]	22 [1.7]	42 [2.2]	57 [1.6]	59 [1.6]
Transportation [%]	12 [0.9]	25 [1.3]	35 [1.0]	35 [1.0]
Civil servants [%]	8 [0.6]	12 [0.6]	13 [0.3]	13** [0.3]
Army/Police officers [%]	n. a.	12 [0.6]	57 [1.6]	57 [1.6]
Pensioners [%]	6 [0.4]	7 [0.3]	9 [0.2]	9 [0.2]
Others [%]	n. a.	43 [2.2]	44 [1.2]	44 [1.2]
Total [% rounded]	1235 [100]	1878 [100]	3493 [100]	3493 [100]

Sources: *Monografi Desa* [Village Monographs], 1979-1991.

Notes:

- * Beginning in August 1979, when the plywood industry started to operate.
- ** In 1991, the number became 20 and in mid-1992 became 22.

Increasing occupational diversity is clearly linked to population growth as presented in Table 2. The population of Summersari has increased from 4,168 in 1970 to 5,988 in 1991, an increase of 1,820 people within two decades (1970-1991) or on the average 75.8 persons per annum. In 1991 the population consisted of 1,322 household heads (170, or 12.8%, of whom are females), who lived in 1,040 houses. This figure

means that the average house contained 1.2 household, or 5.7 souls. The figures also indicate an average population growth of 2.1% per annum over the past twenty years. The family planning program introduced in 1974 has had an impact on natural population growth, but this has been counter-balanced by migration. The age and sex composition of the population is presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Summersari Population, 1970-1991

	1970	1983	1988	1991
Male	1957	2711	2846	2933
Female	2211	2749	2820	3055
Total	4168	5460	5666	5988

Sources: *Monografi Desa* [Village Monographs], 1970-1991.

Table 3. Age and Sex Composition of Summersari Population, 1991

Age	Male	Female	Male + Female
0-9	525	521	1046
10-19	569	583	1152
20-29	727	749	1476
30-39	331	358	689
40-49	316	337	653
50-59	287	312	599
60-over	178	195	373
Total	2933	3055	5988

Sources: *Monografi Desa* [Village Monograph], 1991.

III. CONCLUSION

With the establishment of the plywood industry in the late 1970s, waves of migrants have taken up residence in Summersari either on a temporary or a permanent basis. These migrants have contributed to the population growth and comprise the bulk of work force in this village. Many workers, especially those who work in the factory, commute from up to 50 kilometres away. However, recently more people from Summersari, including those who previously worked in the factory, also have migrated in order to seek work opportunities elsewhere. While most have migrated to other areas in Java, some have

migrated to the outer islands of Indonesia or even overseas, including Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. The phenomenon of job and population mobility is becoming increasingly familiar to Javanese villagers.

Even though numerous people of working age are considered unemployed by other villagers, it is difficult to identify the permanent unemployed since many persons do find casual and seasonal work. These casual workers (*pekerja serabutan*), or seasonal workers (*pekerja musiman*) can easily shift from one type of job to another, a by no means unfamiliar phenomenon throughout Java or Indonesia (See also, for example, Alihar 1985; Hardjono 1987).***

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