

The Nature of "Cultivators" in Rural Java at the Time of the Introduction of "Land Rent" System: An Analysis of the Detailed Settlement Record of Malang Region

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One of the most important administrative reforms which Thomas Stamford Raffles put into effect in colonial Java at the time of his rule as the Vice Governor of the British East India was the introduction of modern land tax system in the name of "land rent". Under this system Javanese peasants were regarded as leaseholders of the state domain and were obliged to pay "rents" directly to the colonial government without intermediary tax collection by native local chiefs.

To confirm the area of land held by each individual "cultivator" and to settle the amount of "rent" levied on it, so-called "detailed land settlement" survey was proclaimed by Raffles in 1814. When the present author carried out a small scale archive survey in 1988 at the National Archive of Indonesia on the local socio-economic history of Malang area, East Java, he discovered a manuscript document entitled *Detailed Settlement van het Regentschap Malang*. This document listed more than three thousands "cultivators" in 465 villages in 6 districts of this region and the area of cultivated land (*sawah* and *tegal*, namely irrigated rice field and dry land) held by each "cultivator" together with the amount of "land rent" levied on it. Evidently, this document was recorded by a local British official who was ordered to carry out land settlement survey in this area.

By analyzing the data recorded in this document as well as some regional statistical data in Raffles' famous work: *History of Java*, this paper tried to throw light on the stratified feature of "cultivators" class and the actual mode of the newly introduced land tax system under which the colonial government controlled them. In addition, it was also tried to find out present villages which names are identical with those of old villages recorded in the *Detailed Settlement van het Regentschap Malang* to examine the continuity of village institutions in this region. The major findings of this historical data analysis are as follows:

(1) Malang region at the time of Raffles was located in the frontier zone of Java from the viewpoint of either the degree of reclamation and peasants' settlement or the penetration of effective colonial rule. This is confirmed by the interregional comparative analysis of Raffles' statistical data and the comparison of the names of old villages recorded in the *Detailed Settlement* with present villages or hamlets in this region. The colonial government control of land and people was still so loose in this frontier zone that the population size of villages, the number of "cultivators" and the area of cultivated land were extremely underestimated. In addition, most of the villages seem to have not yet been firmly established and easy to disappear unlike villages in some areas of Central Java which had much longer history of settlement.

(2) "Cultivators" class recorded in the *Detailed Settlement* was actually never the homogeneous group of independent farmers but was highly stratified in terms of land tenure. Such stratification among "cultivators" was most obviously observed in the north-central plain of the region where the traffic route ran through to the core area in the north coast where the center of colonial rule and commercial activities was located. This part of region seems to have had the

longest history of reclamation and peasants' settlement. On the contrary, the stratification of "cultivators" was less prominent in newly settled zone in the mountaineous or hilly areas at the remote corners of the region. While the highest strata of "cultivators" were considered to constitute the ruling class of peasant societies, the lowest strata of "cultivators" with the minimal land holding size were regarded to be dependent peasants who could not keep subsistence without working as wage laborers or share-croppers in the field of upper strata of "cultivators." Besides these tiny "cultivators" there must be fairly large number of landless people within villages whose names were not recorded in the *Detailed Settlement* but constituted also the pool of dependent labor for upper classes of villagers.