Close to the stone, far from the throne: the story of a Javanese fishing community, 1820s-1990s
Semedi, P.

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CLOSE TO THE STONE,
FAR FROM THE THRONE
the story of a Javanese fishing community, 1820s - 1990s
Pujo Semedi
CLOSE TO THE STONE, FAR FROM THE THRONE
the story of a Javanese fishing community, 1820s - 1990s

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof.dr J.J.M. Franse
ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties ingestelde
commissie, in het openbaar te verdedigen
in de Aula der Universiteit
op dinsdag 6 maart 2001, te 14.00 uur

door
Pujo Semedi Hargo Yuwono

geboren te Temanggung, Indonesië
Promotor: prof.dr F.A.M. Hüskens

Co-promotoren: Prof.dr P.M. Laksono
                dr H.M.C. de Jonge

Overige leden: dr Irwan Abdullah
                prof.dr P. Boomgaard
                prof.dr J. Breman
                dr R. van Ginkel
                prof.dr O.D. van den Muijzenberg
                dr L.E. Visser

Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragswetenschappen
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Acknowledgments

While I have been writing this dissertation, I have been beholden to many different people and now I want to seize this opportunity to thank them all.

Prof. Frans Hüssken, my supervisor. With great skill, enthusiasm, and patience, Pak Frans has taught and challenged me to interpret data and to construct the edifice of ideas which forms the whole that is the study. Through his dedication Pak Frans has kept hope alive in my heart when I felt that I was stranded in a dark tunnel and didn’t know how to extricate myself.

The Late Prof. Masri Singrimbun agreed to join Pak Frans as my sponsor in my application to be granted a scholarship to follow this programme. It is a great cause of sadness to me that Pak Masri was not able to follow the development of my training right up to the point at which it reached fruition.

Dr P.M. Laksono and Dr Huub de Jonge have poured unstinted energy since the commencement of this study into reading and commenting of my research proposal and later doing the same for the various drafts of my book. Dr Rob van Ginkel, Dr Leontine Visser, Prof. Peter Boomgaard, and Dr Arthur van Schaik have all read drafts of my work and their criticisms and recommendations have formed a invaluable help to me.

To my friends and my adopted family in Wonokerto, who are far too numerous for me to mention one by one, I want to say: “Thank you, Mak, Pak, Aunts, Uncles, Brothers, and Sisters ...This dissertation would never have been written without the participation and help of you all. I ask your pardon, should you be mentioned individually in the story in some way which is not to your liking. My hope is that these stories will help to underline your existence in history and help to create an understanding of how you are able to deal with situations like those which you are having to face at this moment”.

For more than four years, the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research has been a ‘monastery’ for me, the place where I was able to enjoy an academic life with was brimming over with inspiration. In the autumn of 1994 Dr Hans Sonneveld invited me to the Amsterdam School to follow a pre-dissertation programme. Then from the autumn of 1996 until the summer of 2000 I was privileged to occupy a permanent position at the Amsterdam School to write my dissertation with the help of funds from The Amsterdam School for Social Science Research and a scholarship from the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO). I want to say thank you to Prof. Anton Blok, Prof. Peter Boomgaard, Prof. Jan Breman, Prof. Frans Hüsken, Prof. Otto van den Muijzenberg, Prof. Heather Sutherland, Prof. Abram de Swaan, and Prof. Peter van der Veer for all the education they have given to me. Dr Hans Sonneveld, José Komen, Annelies Dijkstra, Karin Peperkamp, Miriam May, Alberrine van Peursen, Anneke Dammers, and Teun Bijvoet at the Secretariat of the Amsterdam School not only took care of all the administrative red tape, making getting visas and finding a place to lodge much easier, they also cheered up my days immensely with their moral support and their sense of humour.
The help of and incisive discussions with Irwan Abdullah, Isabelle Antunes, Leena Avonius, Eric Bähre, Marieke Bloembergen, Matthijs van den Bos, Kamenko Bulic, Mbak Erwiza Erman, Cora Govers, Ferdinand de Jong, Abdoulay Kane, Juliette Koning, Pande Made Kutanegara, Giselinde Kuipers, Rosa Lehmann, Lizzy van Leeuwen, Hotze Lontz, Reinhilde König, Ruli Marianti, Marie-Trees Meerebroer, Gerben Noteboom, Teunis Nooteboom, Pepijn van de Port, Erwan Agus Purwanto, Manon Osseweijer, Farsijana Risakotta, Mario Rutten, Mbak Ratna Saptari, Margaret Sleeboom, Mas Agrar Sudrajat, Mas Kutut Suwondo, Song Ping, Ingmar Westerman, Wu Xiao An, Oskar Verkaaik, Sikko Visscher, and Damian Zaitch played a huge role in bringing this thesis to maturity.

The collection of the data used in this thesis was carried out with the assistance of Prasetyo Nugroho, Dwi Estri, Ery Setyawan, and Didit Daladi, with the cooperation of the administrative staff of the village of Wonokerto Kulon, the Mino Soyo Co-operative, the Fish Auction Wonokerto and Jambean, and the staff of the Fisheries Service Office of the Pekalongan Regency. In Yogyakarta I was provided with administrative and working facilities by my home institute, the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Letters, Gadjah Mada University in arranging my research permit and for data processing. I want to express my gratitude to them all, especially to Dr Soehardi, the Head of the Anthropology Department. I also received a great deal of input to develop the preliminary findings of this work from Dr Bambang Purwanto, Dr Heddy Shri Ahimsa Putra, Hendro Kumoro M.A., Manu Jayaatmaja M.A., Mulyadi M.Sc., Sarman M.A., Prof. Sjafri Sairin, Prof. Soehartono, and Dr Timbul Haryono.

Ibu Rosemary Robson edited this piece of work; the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) paid for the editing; Dedi H. Purwadi provided hand drawings for cover and illustrations; Manon Osseweijer translated my summary into Dutch, and Teun Bijvoet processed the computerization of the pictures so that they could be reproduced in the printed edition.

Pak Frans and Cora, Pak Ben White and Mbak Ratna, Mas Agrar and Mbak Atik, Made and Ninik, Hotse and Brigit, Saladin and Ike, Gerben and Jolanda, Abdoulay, Agustinus Agung, Mas Andri Harianja, Anna Lounela, Anna Wattie, Budi Tahsin, Cak Darminto, Dora, Erwan, Fiona, Hendro, Jacqueline, Juliette, Manon, Marie-Trees, Tante Ning, Sara Goetske, Mbak Yuni, all of you received me with a warm heart as a friend and as part of your family; all of you offered me a haven in the storm when home was so far away.

To my wife and children at home, Widuri, Sekar, and Maulana, I can only ask your forgiveness for being absent from you for such a long time. To my mother in Pekalongan, thank you for your love and prayers.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Glossary Item</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alang-alang</td>
<td>small boys engaged in fish thieving or picking up fish around the fish auction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANRI</td>
<td>Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Indonesian Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARA</td>
<td>Algemeen Rijksarchief, The General State Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arad</td>
<td>cheap, small version of trawl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arisan</td>
<td>savings association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>babang</td>
<td>overnight fishing trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bagen</td>
<td>share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bakul</td>
<td>trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>becak</td>
<td>pedicab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bengkok</td>
<td>salary lands granted to village officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>berek</td>
<td>rotten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BKD</td>
<td>Bank Kredit Desa, Village Credit Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bocahan</td>
<td>apprentice deck-hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPS</td>
<td>Biro Pusat Statistik, Central Bureau for Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>branjang</td>
<td>fish trap hut, erected in shallow coastal waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRI</td>
<td>Bank Rakyat Indonesia, People’s Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bundes</td>
<td>beach seine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buruh</td>
<td>labourer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buto ijo</td>
<td>a mythical being, an evil spirit, who is said to look like a green giant, this spirit being helps people to grow wealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cakruk</td>
<td>a hut erected at the corner of the hamlet or alley mouth, designed as a gathering place for neighborhood watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cantrang</td>
<td>mechanized payang seine, see potol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dalang</td>
<td>puppeteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dang dhut</td>
<td>Malay orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEZ</td>
<td>Departement van Economische Zaken, Ministry of Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGF</td>
<td>Directorate General of Fisheries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DI</td>
<td>Darul Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhe</td>
<td>aunt or uncle who is an older sibling of one’s father or mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dukun</td>
<td>spirit or supernatural advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gemplo</td>
<td>small type payang seine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gereh</td>
<td>dried fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestapu</td>
<td>Gerakan September Tigapuluh, the 1965 Communist Party affair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GKPI</td>
<td>Gabungan Koperasi Perikanan Indonesia, Union of Indonesian Fishing Cooperatives, later on transformed into GKPL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GKPL</td>
<td>Gabungan Koperasi Perikanan Laut, Union of Sea Fishing Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golkar</td>
<td>Golongan Karya, the New Order government faction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyo Gyoo Kumiai</td>
<td>fishing organization during the Japanese occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haji</td>
<td>Haj, a muslim who has made pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNSI</td>
<td>Himpunan Nelayan Seluruh Indonesia, All Indonesian Fishermen’s Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idul Fitri</td>
<td>Islamic festival day, celebrated to mark the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impes</td>
<td>shrimp trap used in fishponds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iwik</td>
<td>fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iwik lawuhan</td>
<td>a small portion of the catch taken home for a side dish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jedhot</td>
<td>big fish trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jukung</td>
<td>small type fishing boat, see kolek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juragan</td>
<td>crew member, deck-hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jurumudi/jermudi</td>
<td>skipper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kadol</td>
<td>slang for supernatural advisor, see dukun and kyai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>katie</td>
<td>former Javanese standard weight, equal to 0.6 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keihanco</td>
<td>group leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEPAS</td>
<td>Kelompok Penelitian Agro-ekosistem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kethoprak</td>
<td>Central Javanese popular drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KKO</td>
<td>Korps Komando Operasi, Indonesian Marines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kolek</td>
<td>small fishing boat, manned by five to seven crew members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kongsi</td>
<td>literally means trading company, but later on it gained new meaning as fish auction; it also has a totally different meaning, see tanah kongsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koyang</td>
<td>former Javanese standard weight, equal to 27 to 40 pikuls of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPL</td>
<td>Koperasi Perikanan Laut, Sea Fishing Co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KR</td>
<td>Kedaulatan Rakyat daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KUD</td>
<td>Koperasi Unit Desa, Village Unit Co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuli</td>
<td>coolie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kunteng</td>
<td>drinking party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kyai</td>
<td>Islamic teacher, often acts as spiritual, supernatural advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>langgan</td>
<td>regular customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>langgar</td>
<td>small mosque, prayer house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lekra</td>
<td>Lembaga Kesenian Rakjat, the Communist Party organ for arts movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lurah</td>
<td>village head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madrasah</td>
<td>Islamic school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mak</td>
<td>mother, Mrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAST</td>
<td>Maritime Anthropological Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mayang</td>
<td>type of fishing boat which equipped with payang seine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munting</td>
<td>type of small fishing boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWO</td>
<td>Mindere Welvaart Onderzoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIG</td>
<td>Netherlands Indies Government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FSO  Fisheries Service Office, Dinas Perikanan
otok  cheap, small version of trawl
pachter  tax farmer
Mak/ Emak  mother, Mrs.
Pak/ Bapak  father, Mr., sir
pandega  deck-hand
Pasukan Siluman  guerrilla units in Pekalongan area
payang  type of seine which designed to catch layang fish
peda  salted fish
percilan  apprentice deck-hand, charged with the task of settling the seine
pikul  former Javanese standard weight, equal to 62.5 kg
pindang  broiled fish
potol  mechanized payang
prawan bobor  spinster, old virgin
prau  boat
PRI  Pemuda Republik Indonesia
Puskesmas  Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat, Community Health Centre
Puskud Mina  Pusat KUD Mina, Center of Fishing Co-operatives
rajeg wesi  magical knowledge to prevent the dissipation of wealth
RAT  Rapat Anggota Tahunan, Annual meeting of Co-operative Members
rebon  kind of shrimp processed to produce shrimp paste
Regeerings-reglement  Administration Bill
REPELITA  Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun, Five Year Development Plan
riba  interest on capital
ronggeng  female singers and dancers who often also available for sex
rumah kongsri  fish auction building
rumpon  artificial fish "house", a strand of coconut fronds dropped into sea water to attract fish to shoal around it
sedulur  relatives, kins
serang rata  equal catch sharing arrangement
SM  Suara Merdeka daily
stattr  administrator
sumbangan  contribution
taisho  morning exercises during the Japanese occupation era
tahu  soya curd
taker  former Javanese standard weight, equal to 30 kg
tampah  flat container made of plaited bamboo
tanah kongsri  village communal lands
tarik tendhak  crew members charged with task of pulling tendhak back to the fishing boat
tempe  fermented soya curd
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tendhak</td>
<td>see rumpon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tjemplon</td>
<td>type of small fishing boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPL</td>
<td>Team Penelitian Lapangan; Fieldwork Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tukang galang</td>
<td>boat builder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tukang petung</td>
<td>numerologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tumpeng mbarep</td>
<td>honorary offering for village official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuyul</td>
<td>spirit being who is said looks like a small boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undho usuk</td>
<td>stratified catch sharing arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkscrediet Bank</td>
<td>People's Bank during the colonial era, after the Independence it was transformed into BRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wayang</td>
<td>puppet show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zakat</td>
<td>Islamix tax</td>
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</tbody>
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Ringkasan

Catatan mengenai penangkapan ikan laut sebagai aktifitas komersial maupun subsisten di Pulau Jawa dapat ditelusuri kembali sampai ke sekitar abad ke sembilan dan sepuluh. Pada masa-masa selanjutnya, secara bertahap kerja penangkapan ikan laut ini mengalami peningkatan sehingga pada abad ke tujuhbelas ikan kering merupakan salah satu komoditas yang diekspor dari Jawa ke negeri-negeri lain. Namun demikian, selama masa tersebut penangkapan ikan laut merupakan aktifitas ekonomi kecil-kecilan yang dikerjakan oleh masyarakat pelaut yang tinggal di kampung-kampung kecil di sepantang pantai utara Jawa. Baru pada abad ke sembilanbelas populasi nelayan dan aktifitas penangkapan ikan laut mengalami peningkatan dan menjadi aktifitas ekonomi yang penting bagi penduduk Pulau Jawa, bahwa pada pertengahan abad tersebut aktifitas ini melibatkan sekitar 250,000 nelayan dan menghasilkan tangkapan senilai 60 juta gulden per tahun.


untuk mengurangi atau membatasi upaya penangkapan tetapi justru membuka jalan bagi para nelayan untuk menambah jumlah perahu mereka. Selain itu kehadiran organisasi penangkapan ikan juga telah membuat perbedaan sosial antara pemilik perahu kaya dan awak perahu menjadi semakin tajam.


Samenvatting

Geschreven bronnen over de zeevisserij in Java, zowel de commerciële als de zelfvoorzieningsactiviteit, gaan terug tot ongeveer de negende, tiende eeuw. In de periode hierop volgend onderging de zeevisserij een stapsgewijze groei waarbij in de zeventiende eeuw gedroogde vis een van de produkten was die werden uitgevoerd naar andere landen. Niettemin was de zeevisserij gedurende deze periode een kleinschalige economische activiteit uitgevoerd door vissersgemeenschappen die in kleine dorpen langs Java's noordkust woonden. Pas in de negentiende eeuw nam de vissersgemeenschap/populatie en daarmee de zeevisserij toe, en werd deze activiteit een belangrijke economische bestaansbron voor de bewoners van Java. Halverwege de negentiende eeuw waren er ongeveer 250.000 vissers betrokken bij de zeevisserij en leverde de vangst zo'n zestig miljoen gulden per jaar op.

Er kunnen drie factoren voor deze groei aangewezen worden. Ten eerste, de toename in de vraag naar zeevis op de lokale markt. Ten tweede, de groei van het totaal aantal werkkrachten in de visserij als gevolg van de moeilijke sociaal-economische levensomstandigheden in de agrarische dorpen sinds de invoering van het cultuurstelsel. Ten derde, de verhoging van de financiële middelen om de vissersvloot uit te breiden met behulp van het pachtstelsel.

Onder invloed van het Regeerings-Reglement in 1854, werd de sociale positie van de vissers in noord Java meer geregeld en kwam dichter bij de staat te staan. Migranten van agrarische dorpen, die op zoek waren naar een nieuw bestaan in de zeevisserij, vielen niet meer onder de pachter, maar onder de dorpsregering, een nieuw in het leven geroepen onderdeel van het nationaal bureaucratisch systeem. Niettemin volgde de sociale positie van de vissersgemeenschap niet de economische groei, want vanaf 1870 daalde de visvangst door overbevissing. Gedurende vier decennia was de zeevisserij van een winstgevende economische sector veranderd in een armoedige zelfvoorzieningsactiviteit. Tot de jaren zestig waren de vangsten van de vissers hoger dan de oogsten van de boeren, maar tegen het einde van de negentiende eeuw had de situatie zich omgekeerd.

Gemotiveerd door de golf van de Ethische Politiek aan het begin van de twintigste eeuw, kreeg de staatsbemoeienis een diepere invloed op het sociale leven van vissersgemeenschappen. De regering steunde de oprichting van vissersorganisaties in de hoop dat deze organisaties ervoor zouden zorgen dat de economische situatie van de vissers zal verbeteren. Deze hoop werd tot het einde van de koloniale periode niet gerealiseerd. Weliswaar veranderden de visserijorganisaties de positie van de vissers ten aanzien van de geldschiers in die kringen, toch kon het basisprobleem van de te lage vangsten er niet mee worden opgelost. Ieder decennium daalden de gemiddelde inkomsten van de visser, omdat de visserijorganisaties geen stappen ondernamen om de visserij inspanning te verminderen of er grenzen aan te stellen, maar juist de weg vrijmaakten voor de vissers om het aantal boten uit te breiden. Daar komt nog bij dat de visserijorganisaties de sociale verschillen tussen rijke booteigenaren en de bemanning van de boten verscherpten.
Na de onafhankelijkheid van Indonesië koos de regering voor een beleid van economische zelfstandigheid en zag coöperaties als de belangrijkste zuil van de volkseconomie. De visserijorganisaties werden transformeerd in visserscoöperaties, die onder andere een rol speelden bij de verdeling onder de vissers van krediet voor gemotoriseerde boten. Ook deze verandering hielp de vissers weinig wat betreft hun lage vangsten. Ten eerste omdat het aantal en de technologische kwaliteit van de gemotoriseerde boten relatief laag lag. Ten tweede omdat Indonesië sinds het begin van de jaren zestig in een zware economische crisis zat, waardoor een snellere ontwikkeling om het visserijbedrijf te intensiveren niet mogelijk was.

Grootschalige modernisatie van het visserijbedrijf vond eerst pas plaats vanaf het einde van de jaren zestig, nadat de Nieuwe Orde in Indonesië aan de macht gekomen was. Het grootste deel van de buitenlandse financiële hulp en de investeringen van bedrijven aan de visserijsector werd besteed aan de infrastructuur en een modernere vissersvloot. De grote gemotoriseerde boten stelden de vissers van Java’s noordkust in staat buiten de traditionele visgronden, die gedurende tientallen jaren overbevissing hadden gekend, te komen. Vanaf dat moment steeg de vangst van de vissers en bracht het hen weer boven de armoedegrens.

Het incorporatieproces in het systeem van de nationale staat heeft ten grondslag gelegen aan de loop van twee eeuwen geschiedenis van de vissersgemeenschappen aan Java’s noordkust. Wat betreft de economie kan deze incorporatie geslaagd genoemd worden. Eerst vormden de traditionele vissers namelijk een marginale bevolkingsgroep, die bestaansmiddelen zocht in de frontier buiten het agrarische ecostroom van de landbouw, maar nu zijn zij een belangrijke steunpilaar geworden voor de nationale visserij industrie. Echter, wat betreft de politieke en sociale aspecten is deze incorporatie slechts gedeeltelijk geslaagd. De politieke partijen tijdens de Oude Orde (Orde Lama) en de Golkar tijdens de Nieuwe Orde (Orde Baru) zijn er duidelijk niet in geslaagd om van de vissers loyale aanhangers van de politieke partijen te maken. Ook de overheidsinstanties binnen de visserijsector is het niet gelukt om van de vissers burgers te maken die gehoorzamen aan de overheidsregels. Men gehoorzaamt alleen de overheidsreguleringen zolang ze belangrijk zijn en persoonlijke vrijheid geven. Daarbuiten houden de vissers meer van handelen in navolging van hun eigen spelregels.
1. Longing for boats

The second day of Idul Fitri 1993. Just like the *Idul Fitri* in previous years I went to Wonokerto Kulon on the flat coastal plain of Wiradesa district, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, to visit my foster family and friends. Ten years before, thrilled by the idea of doing ethnographic research in an ‘exotic’ community, my classmates and I had rushed to Wonokerto Kulon for a short spell of fieldwork training. To us, undergraduate students of anthropology mostly trained in agricultural research, a sea-fishing community really suited our imagination of what was exotic. Eager to know what the lives of the villagers were really like, we soon found ourselves mixing with them, observing their activities, and asking questions. In short, doing what we thought of as participant observation. At the end we felt satisfied with the programme, and were able to write our first “ethnographic” account (TPL, 1983). In the following years my relationship with the villagers grew closer and became more personal as I went to the village again and again to collect data for term papers in 1984 and 1988 and an MA thesis in 1991, and a publication in 1992/93. After the 1984 fieldwork, the villagers were less surprised when they saw me walking the village streets, interviewing their neighbours or washing the deck of a boat I had joined on its fishing trip. More than once I overheard a villager telling a friend who had been asking what I was doing there: “He is the son of skipper Kadir. A student on a job training”. That was that. To the villagers, some of whom have become close friends, I was known as a student on a job training and the son of skipper Kadir for I always lodged at his house in the Perumahan Nelayan (Fishermen Housing) hamlet during fieldwork; gradually I became the adopted son of Kadir and Maimun who had two married daughters.

Maimun was delighted to see us, when I came with my wife and Sekar, our two-year old daughter on *Idul Fitri* 1993. She immediately took Sekar and carried her around for the rest of our visit. We spent the time talking about many things. Maimun was alone at home; since eight in the morning Kadir had been away on the Sepait River to earn some extra money by offering *Idul Fitri* sightseers a sea trip. At one o’clock in the afternoon, Kadir came home. As his boat approached the river bank, a neighbour shouted to him; “Dir, your son is here visiting”. Like his wife, he too was delighted to see us. We stayed for another hour and then asked permission to leave but promised Kadir and Maimun to visit them again sometime in the future. When we were already sitting on our motorbike, Maimun said to me in a low tone; “*Le, mbok nasibe bapakmu kae tulung dipikirke. Apa sak lawase wrip arep dadi pendega terus. Kepriye jajal ben bisa nduwe prau dewe?*”. “Son, what’s going to happen to your father. Must he remain a simple fisherman for all his life. Will he ever be able to have his own boat?”. I was not surprised by her question. During my previous stay in
Wonokerto Kulon, Maimun and Kadir had often talked about their wish to own a boat themselves. Indeed they had tried to make this dream come true. In 1989, they had sold their old house in Penjalan hamlet for two million rupiah and moved into a new, smaller house on the Fishermen Housing, provided free by the Ministry of Social Welfare. They spent 1.2 million on buying an old, six-metre long boat, while the rest was used to cover the cost for repairing the boat. The trouble was another one and half million rupiah was still needed to buy an engine and the fishing gear. Unable to lay their hands on that money, Maimun and Kadir eventually decided to sell the boat. But the hope of an owning boat had not vanished, and Maimun and Kadir raised the issue frequently.

There was nothing I could say at that moment except “Yes Mak”, simply because it was impossible for me to say anything else; but the question intrigued me. Sea-fishing in Wonokerto Kulon was a far cry from a being healthy and profitable business. In 1981, the fishermen had received credit from the People’s Bank in the form of 130 fishing boats, a debt which they were supposed to settle within 5 years; but during the next few years, the catch was too poor to allow them to repay the credit until finally in 1998 it was written off by the People’s Bank. Since 1986 the fishermen have been confronting the fact that shrimp in the fishing grounds north of their village were in increasingly short supply, and their boats spent more and more time lying idle, while some had even been consigned the fate of lying along the banks of the Mrican River as dead hulks. Fishermen, deck-hands and boat owners all alike complained about the poor catch. Most boats on average were deployed on less than a hundred fishing trips per year. Together in 1993 they brought in a catch of around 344 million rupiah, which meant that each boat earned Rp 5,500 per day, the equivalent of eight kilos of rice. Distributed among three crew members and a boat owner, the income of each of them was less than two kilos of rice per day —as some part of the catch was used to cover the cost of their fishing supplies. Figures for the other years were no brighter. Maimun and Kadir were well aware of this and Kadir often complained to me how difficult it was to make a good catch nowadays.

Maimun and Kadir were certainly not the only ones in Wonokerto Kulon who wanted their own boat; nearly everyone in the village did. The deck-hands used to dream of their own boat, while those who already had one wanted a bigger one, with a more powerful engine. Some fishermen were able to realize their dreams. Every time I visited Wonokerto Kulon there always one or two or three new, bigger, and more powerful boats under construction. Between 1981 and 1996, the number of boats increased from 135 to 187. During the same period some fishermen also enlarged their boats so that in these years the average size of boats in the village fishing fleet doubled from 3 tons to 7.3 tons. In 1997 Sentiko, a boat owner of my age and a
graduate of the maritime academy in Semarang, even tried to get 21 million rupiah’s worth of credit from the National Bank to buy another boat besides the cantrang he already had. He wanted one which was bigger and more powerful — and he asked me to review his proposal. Upon reading the proposal I asked him whether he was sure that his plan was going to work because if it went ahead it meant that he had to repay the bank at least 5 million rupiah per year for the subsequent five years. In a firm tone, he answered; “Ora usah kuwatir, mangsa ora kebayara ... Angger praune gede, mesine gede, mesti beres!” “There is nothing to worry about, the boat will be repaid ... If the boat is big, if the engine is big, then everything will be all right!” I was astonished. How could it be that while the villagers’ boats failed to bring in sufficient catch, people were so determined to have their own fishing boat or to own yet another one; that they were so convinced that more boats and better fishing techniques were a sure remedy for their economic problems which were the direct outcome of their poor catch? Were they all extremely naïve in their calculations, or did they not calculate the cost and possible benefits at all. Or was I the one who did not understand the economic dynamics of sea-fishing?

This book has been written as an effort to explain the paradoxical reaction of these fishermen.
2. Fishermen and the state

Indonesia is an archipelagic country as the larger part of its territory is covered by sea. According to the 1957 Djuanda Declaration, its territorial waters cover an area of three million square kilometres. In the 1960/1970s, another two million square kilometres were added when the Indonesian government signed continent shelf agreements with Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, and India. There was yet another expansion in 1980 when the government declared all waters within 200 sea miles of the Indonesian coast as its Exclusive Economic Zone (Lembaga Pertahanan Nasional, 1999: 27-31; Valencia, 1990). This vastly fertile tropical seas which according to the calculations of the Directorate General of Fisheries' (DGF) harboured an abundant stock of biotic resources —fish, shrimp, molluscs, crabs— could be exploited at a rate of 6 million tons per year without endangering the sustainability of the resources (Comitinii and Hardjolukito, 1983: 38; Bailey, 1988)\(^1\). Sea-fishing is indeed an important sector of the Indonesian economy. It provides a source of income for over one and half million fishermen (DGF, 1995) —and many others are involved in businesses related to sea-fishing, such as trade, fish processing, and transport.

The Indonesian fishing community is spread along a 81,000-kilometre long coastal area around the islands of the country, large and small. But the largest concentration of fishermen is on the north coast of Java. This thousand-kilometre long coastline is home to around one-third of the country’s fishermen. If we sail through the north Java coastal waters every five to ten kilometres we will come across a fishing village on the river estuaries themselves or slightly upstream from there. In the coastal cities, we will see big fishing ports teeming with large boats. During the last three decades, sea-fishing has also started to mushroom along the rugged southern coast of Java. Here and there, in small bays a growing number of people are engaged in reaping the wealth of the Indian Ocean (Kendrick, 1993; Satriawan, 1997).

This economic activity which involves a large number of participants and produces a sizeable return has not surprisingly been the subject of many studies. They range from studies of fishing technology (Van Kampen, 1909; Subani 1972) to a fishery development plans (Joedo, 1951; Siswosoebroto, 1952; Krisnandhi, 1969; Sidarto and Atmowasono, 1977; Comitinii and Hardjolukito, 1983); from general assessments of the exploitation of fishing resources (KEPAS, 1987; Bailey, Dwiponggo and Marahudin, 1987; Orstom, 1995, Dahuri et al., 1996; Kusumo, 1986) to analyses of

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\(^1\) Indonesian government officials tended to view the fish stock in Indonesian seas as still under-exploited wealth (SM, March 15, 1969; May 19, 1970). President Soeharto himself maintained a view that until the mid-1990s only 50 per cent of the country’s sea fishery resources had been exploited (SM, Nov. 21, 1997). But, researchers doubted the number, as 6 million tons was too optimistic an estimation (Bailey, 1988). A marine biologist, Tatang Sujastani (1982), pointed out that by the early 1980s the country's most fertile seas such as the Straits of Malacca and the Java Sea were already suffered from overfishing. However apparently nobody paid any attention to that warning.
trading network or the socio-economic status of fishing households (Hermanto et al., 1980; DGF, 1978). Apart from those publications, there is also a growing number of articles and research reports published by the Indonesian Fisheries Research and Development Institute.


All of these studies provide a picture of social life in Javanese fishing communities in relation to state policies on sea-fishing. Nevertheless something is still missing here. The works of Natasubrata, Collier, and Emmerson, for example, describe the relationship between state policy and the local fishing community, but their description is like a still picture which excludes what had been going on before the picture was taken. On other hand, the work of Masyhuri shows a dynamic picture but concentrates mostly on the relationship between state policy and the development of the whole northern coast of Java, and thereby leaves out what had been going on in the local community.

Research question
When I started this work in 1994, my intention was to study the impact of the modernization policies of the New Order regime in Indonesia on the socio-cultural life of a fishing community. This topic as such was quite relevant. During the era of the New Order regime, Indonesian sea fishery experienced a drastic change, marked by
the emergence of a modern, large-scale fishing industry and simultaneous government intervention in the socio-economic and political life of fishing communities (Krisnandhi, 1969; Bailey, 1988; Antlov, 1993; Hüsken, 1990). Backed by foreign funds from the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of the Japanese Government, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank, no less than US$ 55 million was invested in the country’s sea fishery between 1968 to 1975, in an attempt to create a productive primary industry which would be able to increase the per capita income of the fishermen, to produce commodities for export, and to increase foreign exchange earnings (Director General of Fisheries, 1974; Comitini and Hardjolukito, 1983: 7). A programme for modernizing the whole set-up was introduced. In coastal cities modern fishing ports, equipped with fish storage and processing plants, were built to facilitate fishing enterprises undertaken by joint ventures and Indonesian urban investors. The character of Indonesian sea fishery changed drastically and kept changing in a single direction: from rural-based to city-based activities, from obsolete sail-powered to mechanized fishing boats. Within eighteen years, from 1960 to 1978, the number of motor fishing boats in Indonesia increased from a mere 1,456 to 22,800 (Knox and Miyabara, 1984: 59). This change, as the statistical reports of the DGF pointed out, was accompanied by an increase in sea fishery production, from 661 thousand tons in 1965 to 1.3 million tons in 1979 and to 2.6 million tons in 1992. At the same time, the country’s fish exports also increased from 23 thousand tons in 1968 to 78 thousand tons in 1979 and to 421 thousand tons in 1992 (Krisnandhi, 1969; DGF, 1979, 1980, 1995).

The New Order also launched an effort to change the fishermen’s politico-economic orientation. Fishing co-operatives which had operated as the main economic institutions, at least in Java, of the fishing community since the colonial times, were crippled. The right of the co-operatives to run fish auctions in their working area was taken over by the government and then handed over to a newly created and government-sponsored body named the Centre for Fishing Co-operatives (Pusbud Minah). In the same period, the government created another body, the All-Indonesian Fishermen’s Association (Himpunan Nelayan Seluruh Indonesia: HNSI), which was declared to be the only officially recognized association for Indonesian fishermen. Political aspirations and economic demands were supposed to be passed by the HNSI to the government faction Golongan Karya.

Despite the magnitude of its undertakings, a policy aiming at the modernization of Indonesia sea fishery was not something which the New Order government had

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At that time, the foreign market for sea fishery in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries began to flourish because of the improvement in the standard of living in developed countries (Yosuke, 1987; Suzuki, 1995).
invented. Similar efforts can be traced back as far as the second decade of the twentieth century when the colonial regime created the Batavia Fishing Research Station in Jakarta, sponsored the organization of fishing co-operatives among fishermen on the northern coast of Java, and later on introduced the fishermen to motorized fishing boats (Roosendaal and Van Kampen, 1909; Sunier, 1914; Van Kampen, 1922; DEZ, 1941). And, as Masyhuri (1996) has demonstrated, government intervention in the socio-economic life of Javanese fishermen had already begun in the early decades of the nineteenth century with the introduction of a tax-farming system in sea fishery. This marks the time from which the development of Javanese fishing community became inextricably mixed up with direct government intervention. The reason the government was tempted to intervene is obvious, it could not but be aware that the fishing sector is imbued with great politico-economic potential. However small the population of fishing villages is, their economic role in the country is crucial, in bringing the bounty of the seas ashore and providing protein-rich food for their fellow citizens. Colonial and post-colonial governments, therefore, have done their best to increase the productivity of the fishing sector.

Neither the process of commercialization nor social differentiation among the Javanese fishermen were the outcome of the New Order era and its policies only. Aware of the importance of this argument, at an early stage of my research, I decided to focus on the diachronic rather than synchronic context of the New Order. I reformulated my research question in order to uncover the relationship between national policies in sea fishery and local activities in a Javanese fishing community from the colonial era in the nineteenth century to the mid-1990s when the writing was on the wall for the New Order regime. What happens at the local level when fishermen are subjected to government policies which are designed to step up productivity? How do these policies affect social conditions within the fishing community as well as that of the community’s position in the wider social system as government thrust them into the role as participants in a sector important to the national politico-economic system? How do these policies affect the fishermen’s cultural view of the fishery resources? What is the nature of the cutting edge between government-sponsored sea fishery modernization and the fishing activities employed by the fishermen? Does the fishermen’s paradoxical reaction to resolving their problem of a poor catch, as I have illustrated in the introductory chapter, have something to do with their long and close encounter with government policies?

I will try to answer the questions above by describing historical processes which have occurred in a local fishing community as it comes to grips with the governments’ sea fishery policies. But in order to keep the description on track, it is necessary to discover a leading thread on which the fabric which builds up the
Coping with Asian fishing communities

Some fifty years ago, in his pioneer work on Asian fishing community ethnography, Raymond Firth proposed that:

"The Malay or Indonesian fishing economy has close structural analogies with peasant economy and, I would suggest, may even be treated as a species of it. The difference is one of nature, of primary resources drawn on, not of basic organization" (1946: 22).

Firth provided a set of arguments to support his statement. He argues that (1) both peasants and fishermen are small-scale producers; that (2) they are "closely linked by economic and social processes of exchange, inter-marriage, common residence and common institutions and values that they constitute a single unit"; that (3) "They have broad features which mark them off as a whole from societies based largely upon industrial technology and capitalist organization". Besides, he also emphasized that (4) they commonly have external market relationship, but that "the economy does not function mainly by its dependence on external markets", and; (5) both of them employ relatively simple working equipment (1946: 22-3).

Indeed, more arguments can be brought forward to underline similarity between a fishing community and a peasant community. Based on Alfred Kroeber's definition of a peasant, in his study on Rusembilan fishing community, in South Thailand, Thomas Fraser, Jr. (1966) joined ranks with Firth and stated:

"Rusembilan and the many similar village communities in South Thailand are, indeed, peasants communities: they constitute part-societies with part-cultures (Kroeber, 1948: 284)" (1966: 6).

Some fifteen years later, in his work on Gahavalla, a southern Sri Lanka, fishing community, Paul Alexander (1982) emphasized:

"Nevertheless [...] fishermen are the quintessential peasants. Definitive criteria of peasant societies including dependence on external markets, highly developed risk sharing procedures, multiplex patron-client ties and a factional mode of political competition, are evidently starkly apparent in fishing communities" (Alexander, 1982: 255).

And in 1984 Kenneth Ruddle and Tomoya Akimichi (1984) insisted:

"The exclusion of fishing communities from one widely accepted definition of peasant societies [Shanin, 1973] is all the more unacceptable when it is
realized that part-time fishermen—i.e. farmer-fishermen—constitute the majority of those engaged in fishing in most developing countries” (1984: 5).

Very well then. But something which quacks like a duck, walks like a duck, does not necessarily have to be a duck, does it?

I am afraid that Ruddle and Akimichi were missing the point. It is not the number of fishermen which really matters here, but the extent to which peasants are capable of maintaining their peasant socio-cultural characters once they leave agriculture and involve themselves in sea fishery. Yes, perhaps as Fraser argued, just like peasants fishermen constitute part-societies with part-cultures but who does not nowadays? Even so-called tribal communities are no longer living within the boundaries of their own culture. At the very beginning of his work Alexander already warned his reader that Gahavalla fishermen were somewhat unusual among their Sinhalese contemporaries:

“There is sufficient space on Gahavalla beach for two nets to be used simultaneously and making a generous estimate of the time required to set, haul and dry the nets, twenty beach seines would permit fishing around the clock. Yet there are 108 beach seines operating on Gahavalla beach and in 1971 the average net was used only seven times!” (1982: 2).

How can we call people who go out fishing no more than seven times a year fishermen? At best Gahavalla “fishermen” are peasants who take on beach seining as side line, just as their ancestors did in the 1850s (1982: 4), but they are not fishermen. Turning to what Firth said, I think it is quite clear that if we follow his arguments that we will end up in claiming that every community outside the industrial domain is a peasant community.

Firth’s argument that a fishing community is a peasant community because “the economy does not function mainly by its dependence on external markets”, is also difficult to accept. The reverse would seem to be true. The economy of contemporary fishing communities is functioning because it is totally dependent upon and totally integrated into the market system. Rather than as peasants, as Russel and Poptech (1990: 176) pointed out, contemporary fishermen are best regarded as petty commodity producers as they are “not in position to withdraw from commercial production and return to subsistence production in the event of unfavorable economic circumstances in the wider economy”. Fishermen are not in a position to withdraw from the market because the fish they catch from the sea are not enough to fill their subsistence needs as Alexander (1982: 208) put it: “Man can not live by fish alone”. The fish caught by the fishermen are meant for the market, and it is with the money they get from the selling that they sustain their lives. Bound by the nature of their work, fishermen are totally dependent on the market to acquire both their means of production and their means of subsistence. This strong dependence on the market system has made money the pivot of
the fishing community's economic system. More than anything else, a fishing community is a totally monetized world.

Certainly, if we pursue similarities between peasant communities and fishing communities we will find them. But I doubt that such an exercise will lead us to a point which allows us to reach a better understanding of a fishing community. First of all, a community is a fishing community because people earn their living from fishing; and this activity determines their economic, social, and cultural life. Fishing creates characteristics which are structurally different from those of a peasant. Firth obviously took a wrong step by stating that "The difference [of fishing and peasant communities] is one of nature, of primary resources drawn on, not of basic organization". This is not the case. This "difference of primary resources drawn on" produces in fishing community a different "basic organization" and on other socio-cultural elements (cf. Harris, 1980). For one, it is clear that the working relationship between skippers and crew members is weak, that as a structural unit the fishermen's working organization is brittle—a phenomenon which is quite common in Asian fishing communities (Alexander, 1982: 113; Bavinck, 1984: 96). Firth (1946: 104, 114)—and Alexander as well—failed to explain this. Similarly when confronted with poverty and the consumerist life-style among the fishermen—phenomena which are also common among Asian fishing communities (Firth, 1946; Mander, 1956; Natasubrata, 1965: 7; Fraser Jr., 1966; Kepas, 1986; Mubyarto, Soetrisno and Dove, 1986; Nasikun et al, 1997; Masyhuri, 1996; Bernas, May 1, 1999)—Firth was able to describe this but failed come up with an explanation for it.

Without necessarily becoming an infra-structural determinist or neglecting the influences of factors which come from outside fishing community, I think a work on a fishing community can more fruitfully begin from the observation that the very foundation of fishing community is fishing (see Dyer, 1988; Polo, 1985; Robben, 1989; Poggi and Pollnac, 1988; Palmer, 1989; Palsson, 1991; Gatewood, 1989; Peace, 1991).

Marginal position of fishing community

How sea-fishing activities affect the social position of fishermen has been eloquently revealed by Houtart and Nayak (1988) in their work on Kerala fishermen, India:

"The fishermen's group was only negatively integrated into the caste structure of local Hinduism and done so only very progressively. They remained at the bottom of the social structure, not only because of their tribal origin, but also because of the type of economic activity they performed, which was related to the destruction of animal life [...] they are socially marginalized in the caste social structure." (1988: 70-71).

The Kerala fishing community is not alone. Their colleagues in other Asian countries
where there is no caste system occupy a similar social position. In Asia, where agriculture takes pride of place as the dominant economic activity, fishing communities are—or, at least used to be—marginal. They reside on the fringe of the main agro-ecological system and are socially situated beyond the boundaries of the mainstream socio-cultural circles which were centred on royal courts or in the state capital. It is not a surprise then to find that there is no word to refer to fisherman in the Javanese vocabulary. Wonokerto fishermen, for instance, address themselves as *wong mbelah*, people of the oar, but this term is not recognized by people outside the fishing community. When the Javanese talk about fisherman they use an Indonesian language term, *nelayan*, which is an adoption from a Tamil word, *nallayar* meaning those who live from water and then Sanskritized into *nallayan* (Badudu and Zain, 1994).

Parallel to their marginal social position, fishermen tend to be politically passive. Fishing activities require fishermen to be away from their village almost every day the whole year round, and they work in small working parties separated from another. There is not enough opportunity for fishermen to create either formal or informal associations to represent their interests within the larger social circle, as Durrenberger (1988: 211) puts it: “fishermen fish for a living. They do not make a living by going to meetings”. Even if they had was the opportunity, fishermen still face social barriers to express out their views. From his experiences attending US fisheries management council meetings, Mc Goodwin (1990: 82) writes:

“... some small-scale fisherman who is either a member of the council or has been authorized by his fellow fishers to speak for their interest steps self-consciously to the microphone, and begins by apologizing for his lack of public-speaking abilities and scientific knowledge [...].

Then, after rambling for a few moments, the fishermen is interrupted by the Chair, who amonishes him, ‘Please, come to the point!’ Frustrated and exasperated, the fisherman blurt out something like, ‘We who work on the water every day of our lives—year after year—we know more about fishery and what needs to be done than you do. We’ve got families to feed, boats to pay off, weather to worry about. Why don’t you just let us manage the fishery for ourselves?’”

However, this is not always the case. As Acheson (1981: 289) states fishermen become politically active when they have to defend access to their traditional fishing grounds. Bailey (1988), Maiolo and Orbach (1982), and Valdez-Pizzini (1990) also argue that the modernization of sea fishery during the last decades of the twentieth century has provided a way for fishermen to express their political opinions. Modernization has put the fishermen in a more active interaction with state, and the upshot both sides are engaged in political negotiations on the formulation and implementation of fishery policies (Maiolo and Orbach, 1982: 7; Valdez-Pizzini, 1990: 164). Discussing the Indonesian 1980 trawl ban case, Bailey (1988: 36) pointed out that the national
The nature of sea-fishing

From a techno-economic perspective, a fisherman's life is completely different from that of a peasant. Fishermen are more like hunters and gatherers who never invest in their natural resources, while peasants contrastly do this. Likewise, fishermen merely reap the fruit of nature, they never involve themselves in the reproduction process of the resources they exploit. Just like hunters — and unlike peasants — fishermen cannot control the outcome of their efforts. All they can do is manipulate the degree of their effort — perform magical rituals, improve the technology, pick up the best crew members — based on a logic that better efforts mean better chances of a good catch. That is why the working organizations of fishermen are weak. Crew members tend to move from one boat owner to another in a constant search for a well-equipped boat which would provide a bigger chance of a good catch. The boat owners exhibit a similar behaviour in their search for good skippers and crew members. Another factor responsible for the weakness of the working relationship among the fishermen is the fragility of their material basis. The number of fishing boats — in contrast to farmlands — can easily be increased but they can be easily lost as well. Land in a peasant community is finite, but fishing boats can grow in number in a relatively short time. Land can last almost forever, and to a lesser degree its owner's family line too. But a fishing boat can disappear suddenly and at most, with good maintenance, it will survive for fifteen years. In a matter of days, should bad luck strike, or years, in the case of bad management, a boat owner can lose his social status and be downgraded to a crew member. Vertical social mobility among the fishermen is therefore structurally higher than among the peasants. Today's crew member could be next week's boat owner and vice versa. Economically there is no benefit for a deck-hand to stick loyally to one boat owner, because there is no guarantee that he will be a boat owner forever.

The only similarity between small-scale fishing and peasant communities at this point is that they both live, in settlements of villages or hamlets. However, a village means different things to peasants and fishermen. To the peasant, the village is a place where he lives and ekes out his living. While to the fisherman, the village is just a place where his home is. Indubitably, peasants are socio-economically organized into a single organization called village. Whereas fishermen are only socially and administratively organized in the villages, while their economy is organized in the different and often faraway world of the sea, beyond the reach of the village administration. Socio-economically fishermen are part of the different world of common property with its own rules (Acheson, 1980; Gordon, 1986; Knight 1977; DVL/OS, 1995; Poggie, Jr., 1992;
Until someone physically puts his hands on it, the fish in the sea practically speaking belong to everyone. Unrestrained by property rights, fishermen are driven to act selfishly by catching as many fish as possible to maximize their own individual benefit. Even small fry is not safe from the fishermen’s clutches, because each of them would think in a similar way “If I did not take this poor fish, it would be caught by other fishermen for their own benefit. What a fool I would be. Better me than them”. Garret Hardin’s (1968) tragedy of the commons is the eventual outcome of this economic practice; that individual selfishness compels the fishermen as a whole to exploit the fishery resources far beyond their carrying capacity which in turn drags the fishermen down to low catches and to low incomes (Anderson, 1977; Brox, 1990; McGuire, 1991).

Some anthropologists object to the concept of the tragedy of the commons. McCay and Acheson (1987: 34), for instance, argue that this approach tends to ignores the role of local social institutions in managing common property. Matthews (1993: 74-8) suggests that common property, sea fish in this case, is not perfectly common property but community property. The resource is free—to a certain degree—to be taken only by members of the community, and jealously guarded from the hands of people of other communities. Matthews’ view, which has a strong ethnographic foundation, shows how access to marine resources among fishing communities was safeguarded by reproducing fishing technology—fishing technique and fishing knowledge—from generation to generation strictly within the boundaries of the community (Britan, 1979), and or by rejecting outsiders entering both the community’s fishing grounds and the fishing business (see Baks and Postel-Coster, 1977; and Akimichi, 1984). In McGoodwin (1990: 92) words: “the [common property] model as it is usually conceived is too abstract and generalized to provide much understanding of particular common property fisheries”.

There are two, among many other, things we may learn from the debate. First, is that apart from variation per place, common property may vary through time. The same can be said about the marginal social position of fishermen and their passive political attitudes. Second is that the government policies has far reaching consequences for the relationship between the fishermen and their ecological niche as well as for internal social and political relation among the fishermen themselves, and the relationship between the fishing communities and their social surrounding. We cannot understand the development of fishing communities without paying attention to the role the government plays at the local level.
Data collection

I base this study on the fishing community of Wonokerto Kulon, or simply Wonokerto as the villagers used to say. The village history clearly shows the process and effects of sea fishery modernization in Java, and after all it is Wonokerto too which inspired me to do this work. The community was probably founded in the early decades of the nineteenth century when groups of migrants from agricultural villages in southern Pekalongan moved to the coastal area in an attempt to find a better living in sea fishery. Later on, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it developed as a centre of sea fishing in the district—even in the regency. In the 1910s, the colonial government sponsored the establishment of a fishing organization in the village which later on, after Indonesian Independence, was transformed into a fishing co-operative. In the 1970s the sea-fishing in the village nearly went bankrupt as most of the labourers moved away to work on modern fishing boats in Pekalongan city which was chosen by the New Order regime to become the centre of the country’s modern sea-fishing. Ever since Wonokerto fishing community has been part of the modern fishing industry of the country.

Data for this study were collected mainly through the fieldwork I carried out from October 1996 to September 1997. To be frank, the 1996/1997 fieldwork was a far cry from the classic picture often presented in many ethnographic works where a student of anthropology comes to a foreign community located in the middle of nowhere. The fieldwork was like a coming home for me, staying again with Skipper Kadir family, seeing old friends, visiting the neighborhood, the village fishing co-operative, the fish market and the village office with which I was so familiar. In spite of my familiarity, as I started to carry the data collection by reviewing my old data, the realization dawned that my knowledge about the community was limited mostly to the village sea-fishing sector in the 1980s, and that I did not know much about daily life in the village itself.

So while I deepened my work on the village sea-fishing prior to 1980s and the Pekalongan-based sea-fishing in which more than half Wonokerto fishermen worked, I started studying other economic activities carried out by the villagers as well as their social relations and political activities. Through observation and interviews my knowledge about the community began to develop and brought me to yet another realization namely that the community was quite large and complex; in each case too wide to be covered by my own efforts. When I joined the fishermen on a fishing trip, I was unable to see what happened in the village. The same was true when I collected data from the Regency Fisheries Service Office, the Regency Statistical Bureau, and the district and village offices or when I visited agricultural villages in south Pekalongan to interview farmers who had worked as deck-hands on Pekalongan boats. Apart from these, I also planned to do a household economic survey and analysis of “the newspaper of Central Java”, Suara Merdeka, to get information on Pekalongan and development
of the sea-fishing in the province since the 1950s. Yuli Prasetyo and Dwi Estrin helped me to solve my problem in the village. They joined me there to become my extra eyes and ears and to carry out the household survey. Eri Setyawan and Didit Daladi helped me to work in the Suara Merdeka library in Semarang. It was they who carried out the dusty toil of opening thousands pages of the daily since its first publication in 1950, locating news items on Pekalongan and sea fishery and rewriting these in an abridged version.

In October 1997 I finished my fieldwork, and started to read archives, historical records and other works kept in the National Archives (ANRI) Jakarta, the library of the Institute of Sea Fishery Research and Development in Jakarta, the Royal Institute of Anthropology and Linguistic (KITLV) in Leiden and the National Archives (ARA) in The Hague in an attempt to find more historical information about Wonokerto fishing community. Delving into these archival sources I obtained a great deal of quantitative data on the fishermen’s catches and fishing fleet which are, unfortunately, not always reliable because they were collected un-systematically and there is also no means of checking them as there are no alternative sources for verification. Therefore, most quantitative information presented in chapters dealing with the colonial period is better be appreciated as rough patterns rather than as precise delineations.

Outline of the thesis

I have organized this study into eleven, mainly chronological, chapters based on a periodization of Indonesian administrative regimes, as every administration has had its own sea fishery policy. After describing my research problem in this chapter, I proceed to Chapter 3, the village of Wonokerto Kulon, to describe the general setting of the fishing community of Wonokerto. Chapter 4 is about sea fishery in Pekalongan Regency in the nineteenth century during the time of the tax-farming system. Chapter 5 is about the early developments and the enhancement of the status of Wonokerto as a fishing community under the influence of the ethical policy of the colonial regime. In Chapter 6, I discuss the situation in Wonokerto after Independence until the mid 1960s: the era of the Old Order regime, which was famous for its policy of establishing co-operatives as the main pillars of the national economy. Chapter 7 is about the development of industrial fishing in Pekalongan port from the 1970s to the 1990s under the New Order’s modernization policy. Chapter 8 is about the condition of the small-scale fishery in Wonokerto in relation to the development of large-scale fishing in Pekalongan. Chapter 9 is about changes in socio-economic institutions in Wonokerto due to the thorough intervention of the New Order regime into local level social affairs. Chapter 10 is about social life in Wonokerto from the
1970s to the 1990s as the New Order’ modernization provided an opportunity to the fishing villagers to expand their social and economic life beyond the boundaries of local sea-fishing. I will close this work in Chapter 11. There I will try to review the answers I have found to the questions I have formulated above.
3. Wonokerto Kulon

Although nowadays no more than 25 per cent out of around 8,000 fishermen in Wiradesa district live in Wonokerto Kulon, among the district population the village is known as the village of fishermen (BPS Pekalongan, 1995). The reason for this epithet is not far to seek, it is in Wonokerto Kulon that sea-fishing activities have been concentrated since the beginning of the twentieth century. There is no question that fishing is the main occupation in Wonokerto Kulon, in contrast to the other villages where the main economic activity is agriculture. Wonokerto Kulon’s main hamlets are located some three to four kilometres from the coastline. The hamlets are connected to the sea by the Mrican River of which the source lies at a point five kilometres south of Wiradesa, from where it flows north passing the district town and the villages of Mayangan, Bebel, and Wonokerto; there it joins the Sepait River just before it flows into the Java Sea.

Wonokerto Kulon is not an isolated settlement. The village is just four kilometres north of the district town through which the busy coastal highway passes. The village can be easily visited using either private or public transport. Semarang, the provincial capital, is a three-hour bus ride to the west. Passengers alight at Wiradesa. In Wiradesa it is possible either to hire a becak for Rp 1,000 or a horse cart for Rp 300 per passenger to reach the village through the main road. The way passes along an uninterrupted row of houses in Bebel village lying somewhat higgledy-piggledy along both sides of the tarmac road. Every hundred metres or so along the road there are alley (gang) gates, each embellished with a brick post having the name of a fish on it or even a statue of a fish on the top; a symbol used by the villagers to announce that the males in that area make their living by catching fish. The only sign intimating that the traveller is leaving Bebel and entering Wonokerto Kulon is a pair of brownish brick posts on either of the road side saying “Selamat Datang” (Welcome) and “Desa Wonokerto Kulon”.

Entering this ‘village gate’, another line of houses awaits us. On the left-hand side of the road the housing compound belongs to Gambiran hamlet; the right side to Wonokerto hamlet. Several hundreds metres from the gate the road comes to a crossroads. The road to the left leads to Tratebang village, the one ahead to Sineh hamlet where the village hall, school compound and the Public Health Centre (Puskesmas) are located.

1 The other 6,000 fishermen come from villages close to Wonokerto Kulon such as Bebel, Tratebang, Wonokerto Wetan, Api-api and from villages south of Wiradesa as well. All of them work aboard Pekalongan purse seine boats.
2 There is no public car transport that serves the Wiradesa - Wonokerto road, as the district government had esquiesced in the carters union vociferous request to save the road for them.
3 There is another road, an unpaved one along the east bank of Mrican River, from Wonokerto Kulon up south to Mayangan village in the district town.
Figure 2. Map of Wonokerto Kulon
before passing further down to the fishponds area. The road to the right brings us to Wonokerto hamlet and then on until the road reaches a bridge crossing the Mrican River. Across the river the road turns north, to the village of Wonokerto Wetan. Further north, we pass Api-api village until the road reaches another bridge, crossing the Old Mrican River. From that point the settlement sites end and we enter a vast open area of fishponds again belonging to Wonokerto Kulon. About three hundred metres before the actual coast line, the road turns left towards a patch of dry land, planted mostly with jasmine shrubs. This land belongs to scantily populated Pantairejo; a hamlet of farmers who still have vivid memories of how their parents or grandparents came down to this coastal land from agricultural villages in Sragi and Comal districts in an attempt to find farmland. The main road terminates at the Fish Auction building on the estuary of Sepait River, after which it continues as a narrow path circling Pantairejo hamlet.

But this is not the whole of the Wonokerto Kulon area. Just before the bridge to Wonokerto Wetan, the main road of Wonokerto Kulon turns left along the western side of Mrican River. Following this road, we encounter Sincen hamlet, Asem hamlet, then Penjalan hamlet, the old building of Mino Soyo Fishing Co-operative, and finally Perumahan Nelayan (Fishermen’s Housing), a hamlet which was built in 1986 under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Social Welfare. North of Perumahan is the fishpond area which stretches out to the southern fringes of Pantairejo hamlet. It is in these last three hamlets that visitors to Wonokerto Kulon become aware that they are in a fishing village. They see fishing boats moored along the river banks, a number of damaged ones half immersed in the water, a number of boats under repair docked on vacant lots, and once in a while one or two new boats under construction. In some houses nets are dumped in the yard, in some other houses a small part of a net has been hung up for re-knitting and sometimes a whole net is stretched out along the road for a total overhaul. If visitors come in the late afternoon during the high season, they see the river banks alive with fishing boats returning home and fishermen busy fixing up their boats after a day’s fishing trip; kids run toward their fathers asking them for snacks or small fry. If visitors come during the slack season, they find many men sitting around or lying lazily in the yards of their houses or gathered at the guardhouses (cakruk) talking to each other, playing chess, or just simply just hanging around. The boats, the river, the nets but particularly the smell of fish and the tang salty water certainly make the visitors aware that they are in a fishing village.

Nowadays the most lively site in a fishing village, the fish market, is no longer to be found in any of these three hamlets. Since 1980 the market has been moved from the Mino Soyo compound north of Penjalan to a spot closer to estuary in Pantairejo in attempt to attract fishermen from other villages to sell their fish there. Usually the fish trading lasts only a few hours, between 12 noon to 4 o’clock in the
Figure 3. A corner of Perumahan Hamlet
afternoon. After that, people drift back to the hamlets. There, the road-side stalls begin to fill up with fishermen who come for a drink or chat before they return to their homes. After darkness has fallen and evening meals of rice, vegetable soup and fish have been eaten, some villagers gather in houses where there is a T.V. set and comment loudly on almost every scene which appears on the screen. Outside, the stalls continue their business of serving beer and rice wine. An hour before midnight the whole village falls silent, which is sometimes broken by the pointless chatters and laughter of drunken youths returning home.

At 2 o’clock in the morning the village is already coming back to life, stirred into activity by the soft calling in the home yards by fishermen waking up their fellow deckhands, by the sleepy trudging of the deck-hands on the way to their boats, and then by the barely muffled roar of diesel engines as the boats set off for the day’s fishing trip. They have to reach the fishing grounds before the first light. Sometime later female fish traders emerge from their houses, prepare themselves, then quietly leave for the market to sell processed fish. In some houses, the kitchen is already busy as women cook rice, porridge, cassava, thick vegetable soup, fried tempe, and other simple side dishes, to be sold in the morning for the villagers’ breakfast. A second wave of women fish traders leaves the village at around 3 o’clock; with a pair of plastic buckets they head for the fishpond area to buy the wild shrimp caught in bamboo traps (impes). Wandering in the darkness from fishpond to fishpond they approach the fish farmers, haggle a little over the price, collect their wares and head to the market. They cannot afford to be late back at the shrimp market in Datulak, in Api-api village. It is already open at 5 o’clock and lasts no more than two hours. If they arrive late, the customers will have gone.

Before the sun is up at six in the morning, the village has totally woken up. Various kinds of music blare out from radios and tape recorders which are turned at full blast. As if this not enough, sometimes the noise is increased by the strident voices of quarreling women. Waking up in the morning in Wonokerto Kulon is like being thrown into the middle of a town fair, pasar malem. At the village public wells children merrily take a bath, soap each other’s backs, shout and splash water at friends handling the pump. The happy moments last briefly as other villagers are waiting for their turn and the school will begin at 7.15. Returning home the children find porridge or rice waiting for them; if not they run directly to find their mothers at the stalls which sell breakfast and have their meal right there. Having received their one or two hundred rupiah pocket money the children set out to their school in flocks, some bared-footed, some wearing cheap sport shoes. Not far behind the school children, wearing their fine, brightly coloured,
Figure 4. Giyarto mending his fish net
clothes, and chatting noisily while waiting for other members of the sisterhood to come, the village’s female youth are ready to cycle to their working place in the batik factories of Wiradesa. After they all have gone, the hamlets are left to the housewives, the small kids, the elderly, and fishermen who for one or another reason have not sailed that day.

The village population
Wonokerto Kulon is a village made up of migrants. A good number of the villagers can tell how their greatgrandparents came from other villages in an attempt to find a new life. In Wonokerto Kulon they engaged in sea-fishing and somehow were capable to secure a piece of land to build their house by purchasing it or by squatting on government land and bribing the village officials to get ownership rights over it. Migration is still going on now. Many men come to the village through marriages with the village women—nearly 40 per cent of the village housewives participating in my household survey (n: 195) are locals married to men from other villages.

Out-migration from Wonokerto Kulon is perhaps as high as in-migration. The rate of people who moved to other villages because of marriage is equal to the rate of people who entered the village through the same cause. Out-migration in order to find a job outside sea-fishing is rare. Often I heard villagers grumble about their living conditions saying that they would like another place to live and another better job to make a living. Indeed some villagers have tried to do so, but most of them have returned to the village empty handed. The only people who have left the village successfully for good have been the village rich. In the 1970s, in the midst of the village sea-fishing bankruptcy, Haji Kagum, the richest boat owner, moved his place of residence and his business to Pekalongan. In the early 1990s, Haji Wahidin, the most powerful fish trader in the village in the 1980s moved to his newly-built, big, luxurious house in Bebel village, south of Wonokerto Kulon. He left his big house in the village to his married daughter, but he took along the capital he had accumulated from the village fish trading to enter a bigger arena in the Pekalongan fish market. The rich purse seine skippers have acted likewise. Once they have struck it rich, one among many other ways to spend their money was buying a housing lot (tanah pekarangan) outside Wonokerto Kulon, building a big house on it, and then leaving the village.

It is not clear to what extent out-migration among the rich has affected the village economic performance, but it ineluctably shows that its inhabitants tend to see Wonokerto Kulon as a place to find a fortune and then to abandon once they have

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4 Observation on the village official land ownership record, Buku Leter C, pointed out that since 1930s the village heads and secretaries had been actively engaged in illegal selling of government land to the villagers. To allow the buyers ownership rights, the illegally sold lands had to be registered in the village land records, but since the land had already been systematically surveyed in 1937, the illegally sold lands could not be registered right away. Fake numbers which did not correspond to the cadastral map were used instead.
succeeded.

Just like other villages in Java, especially in the lowlands, Wonokerto Kulon is densely populated in the wake of a fast population growth. The 153.8 hectares village nowadays houses 5,460 people—2,727 males and 2,733 females—organized into 1,253 households. However, not all of the village land belongs to its inhabitants. The greater part of the village fishpond, 70 out of 98 hectares, is owned by people from the neighbouring villages of Api-api and Wonokerto Wetan which in effect has left the villagers with very limited access to land. The inexorable consequences is that most of the villagers, as their ancestors had done before them, were left to make their living off-shore in sea fishery.

### Table 1. Land Utilization in Wonokerto Kulon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Utilization</th>
<th>Hectares</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fishponds</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Paddy fields</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dry land farms</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>153.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Village record 1996/7

Compared to the old days, before the 1970s, nowadays villagers in Wonokerto Kulon have more job opportunities. Up to the 1960s, there was almost no other work for the villagers but sea-fishing and its related businesses of fish trading and processing. At that time, most of the village women and young girls were unemployed. “All we did during that time was frittering away our time waiting for our husbands to return from their fishing trips. There were no jobs for most of us. We could try our hands at the fish trade, but that required a large amount of capital which we didn’t have. There were a number of rich families who run a fish-processing business to make dried fish (gereh) or cured fish (pindhang), but it was just enough to employ a small number all of us.”, said Grandma Mirah in answer to my query. “How about the younger girls?”, I asked again. “Well, the girls just helped their mothers to do household chores, and waited for young men to propose to them. During that time most of the girls did not go to school and they married early, at an age of twelve to fourteen. Those who did not marry until the age of seventeen were considered to be prawan bobor, rotten virgin”.

Just as in the 1960s and even before, the majority of the village male population now works in sea-fishing, but most of the village women are no longer jobless. Since at least the early 1980s, batik industries have been springing up in Wiradesa and provide

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5 Wonokerto Kulon had been experiencing a steady population growth at an average annual rate of 2.4 per cent from 1960 to 1996/7. In 1960 the village population was 2,335 (BKD record, 1961).
jobs as batik painter for a good number of the village females (Chotim, 1994). Young girls are no longer afraid to postpone their marriage until late in their teens or in their early twenties because they have something to do. Most of the village girls now attend primary school and, after a junior high school was established in the village in the late 1980s, some of them continue on to junior high school. After finishing the school they work as batik painters.

Table 2. Wonokerto Kulon Villagers Main Occupation 1996/7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Farm labourer</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Boat owner</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Deck-hand</td>
<td>1,870</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Industrial labourer</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Construction labourer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Trader</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Govt. emp./armed forces</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,077</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Village record, 1996

Forty per cent of the village labour force, roughly 80 per cent of the village male labour force, are fishermen. Until the early 1960s, the majority of the male labour force was working in sea-fishing based in the village, but since that time the labour force has gradually left village fishery to work aboard purse seine boats based in the fishing port of Pekalongan. Nowadays only around 500 fishermen remain in the village to man the 200 fishing boats, while the other 1,300 are working in Pekalongan. Their involvement in sea-fishing started in their early teens. Boys, especially those from the deck-hands households, begin to work at the age of nine or ten. In the old days, when the fish auction was still active in the northern part of Jalanan hamlet, the boys learned to make money by stealing fish (alang-alang) or helping fishermen in the auction. From perpetrating alang-alang they moved to the higher stage of apprentice (bocahan) aboard the fishing boats and worked for several years until they had mastered the necessary skills. From that moment they would be regarded as full-fledged fishermen who deserve a full share of the boat’s catch. Somehow, after the fish auction had moved further north
to Pantairejo hamlet in the estuary in 1981, the village boys became less interested in yielding to the temptation of *alang-alang* for they had to walk between two to three kilometres through the sun-baked fishpond area to reach the auction. These days only five or sometimes seven boys keep up the *alang-alang* tradition, all from very poor families in the village (Linggasari, 1993). Nowadays most of the village boys start their career as fishermen right after they finish primary school or at most junior high school and take a job as apprentices aboard Pekalongan purse seines.6 After that, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, they are regarded as fishermen and, if they are talented and lucky enough they may move to higher positions as seine master or engineer or even masters mate and finally skipper.

Yet as Table 2 above indicates, it would be a mistake to state that economic life in contemporary Wonokerto Kulon is based solely on sea fishery; other sectors exist and play an important role. Most of these other sectors, it must be admitted, tend to be tied to fishery. Trading in the village, besides the sales of catches, consists mostly of supplies and equipment for fishing. Within households money earned by women from painting batik is generally combined with money earned by the men from fishing. Nor does it stop there, villagers who happen to be in possession of stable sources of income outside fishing are always inclined to engage in sea-fishing by buying boats. Even the village dry-land farmers in Pantairejo hamlet are seasonally involved in the sea-fishing expeditions to catch the precious tiny shrimps (*rebon*) with scoop nets. So, not withstanding the role of other economic sectors, it is sea fishery which plays as a central part in socio-cultural and politico-economic life of the villagers of Wonokerto Kulon.

**The village as a political-economic arena**

With social and economic life centred upon sea-fishing, village officials can only become powerfull if they themselves are involved in fishing or related businesses. “*Dadi pamong nang kene kuwe ora ana duwite*”. “Here village administration is a job without an income”, Grandpa Sarda’i, a village official, complained to me. “*Duwit kuwe nggone nang Kongsi Mbah*”. “In the Fish Auction, Grandpa that’s where the money is”, Dulwahab, another village official, reminded him. The village officials’ regular income is supposed to come from a number of ex-officio salary lands (*bengkok*)7, which are too dry to be planted with peanuts or corn all year round and which have now been greatly reduced in size after a large part of them was taken over to build the village schools, the health centre, and the village hall.

Hardly any single villager in Wonokerto Kulon was interested in becoming

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6 I intermitedly use the term purse seine for fishing gear and for the boats use this type of seine, as it is common among the fishermen to call a type of boat based on type of its fishing gear.

7 Most of rural villages administrators in Java are not government employees and they receive no salary. In return for their public services, they are granted agricultural land, *tanah bengkok*, to be farmed to provide their income. These lands belong to the village.
village head, much less taking on the task of the lower-rank village officials. Only one out of the six village heads since the Independence was born in the village (wong Wonokerto Kulon asli): Lurah Tjondro who was elected into that position during the Japanese Occupation and remained in office until the early years of Independence. He allegedly sold a considerable part of the village lands and kept some of it for his immediate family.  

The next five village heads were people from other villages who had settled in Wonokerto Kulon after marrying a female villager. The present village head, Abdul Jais, comes from Wonokerto Wetan and married a woman from Wonokerto Kulon. Only one out of nine of the present village officials, Sarawita, the village secretary, is asli Wonokerto Kulon. Perhaps the villagers’ reluctance to become village officials is related to the poor income; but it is also perfectly understandable that fishermen would not be interested in becoming village officials as sea-fishing and village administration are hardly compatible. The former requires people to be away from the village most of the time, the later requires people to stay in village most of the time. Although both these are feasible reasons, there is also another possible explanation. As far as the villagers could recall, most of Wonokerto Kulon village heads have come from rich, land-owning families in Wonokerto Wetan. This may be related to the village history. In the early decades of the nineteenth century Wonokerto Kulon and Wonokerto Wetan were a single village, named simply Wonokerto. Later on the old village was split up into two with Mrican River as the dividing line. The area west of the river was inhabited by migrants who made their livelihood from sea-fishing, while the area east of the river was inhabited by ‘original’ Wonokerto villagers who held traditional rights over the village agricultural lands and therefore the village administration. Since the village had been split up, people of Wonokerto Wetan, especially from the land-owning families, maintain the tradition of supplying the village rulers.

The village head in Wonokerto Kulon was not powerless. He was, as a matter of fact, the sole arbiter of village affairs. Only by his consent could the civil affairs of the villagers be brought before a higher authority for further settlement. He was also respected enough by the villagers to come to him for a final informal settlement of disputes among them. But that was all. The power of the village administration in Wonokerto Kulon was bound up solely with land which had little thing to do with most of the villagers’ economic activity. The real arena of the political economy in Wonokerto Kulon was not on the land but on the sea, therefore the real power lay not with the village administration, but in the village fishing business: in fish-trading circles.

1I was not sure what to think of this accusation. But it was true that in the late 1940s immediate relatives of Lurah Tjondro had acquired no less than 15 hectares which used to be village communal lands (Wonokerto Kulon, Buku Letter C).
and, especially in the old days, in the Mino Soyo fishing co-operative of the village, established in the 1910s. It was through the Mino Soyo that in the 1980s and 1990s two of its managers, Karman and Kenthus, won seats in the Regency House of Representatives when the government faction, Golkar, selected them as candidates from among the regency fishing community. It was Subur and Sentot, the shrimp and white anchovy bosses, who sponsored a campaign to challenge Abdul Jais in the 1990 village head elections. It was to Subur and Sentot too, rather than to Abdul Jais, the village head, that the Regency Head Arjuno paid discreet nocturnal visits on his motorcycle before the 1997 General Elections to ensure the total victory of Golkar in the village. When Kusaeri, a primary school teacher from Wonokerto Kulon was nominated as candidate for the Regency House of Representatives on behalf of Golkar in 1997, he did not succeed because of opposition from among the fish bosses. For reasons never made public and to Kusaeri’s own despair, his name was struck from the list even before the party campaign was underway. Rumor has it that Subur and Sentot had whispered in the Regency Head’s ears that Kusaeri was unpopular among the fishermen. Indeed Kusaeri is a quiet person and he is rarely seen socializing with fishermen.

So the village head in Wonokerto Kulon has no strong political influence over his people. The village administration, as in other rural villages in Java, is organized to administer an agricultural community, where people are settled and work their lands. But in Wonokerto, the situation is different. Though like agriculturists, fishermen and their families are inhabitants of the village, to them the village is just a place to live. As their main economic activities are rooted in offshore resources, they are beyond the reach of the village administration.

The local elite is drawn from the fishing business, more specifically from the group of fish traders. They own boats, and in many cases fishponds too. Quite rich by village standard they are able to dominate the fish trading, and they are in position to sway public opinion. In the old days, when the fish trading was run by the Mino Soyo fishing co-operative and most of the village labour force worked in the village sea-fishing, this elite consisted of the co-operative managers and staff, the big fish traders or jedhot, and the rich boat owners. Their number tended to fluctuate over time, but was never large; yet they were strong enough to control the wealth distribution within the village. But after the great exodus of the village deck-hands to Pekalongan in 1970s and after the fish auction was taken over by the Provincial Centre of Fishing Co-operatives (Puskud Mina) in 1978, managers of the co-operative lost their main source of income. They still enjoyed a high status among the villagers, but mainly because of tradition rather than because they had any real power. Fish market officials nowadays are merely employees of the Provincial Centre of Fishing Co-operatives or of the Fisheries Service Office. They have to follow strict financial procedures which leaves them little room to
play the fish market barons as they did in the past. The upshot is that nowadays the local elite, if they still can be called as elite, consists mainly of persons from among the big fish traders.

**The village economy**

Every time there is a wedding in Wonokerto, village officials receive a so-called *tumpeng mbarep* (the first offering). The offering, placed on a flat, round, bamboo tray (*tampah*), consists of rice in the shape of a mountain embellished with vegetables, fruit, side dishes and bank notes. Each bank note is attached to a thin bamboo stick like a flag. The largest denominations, sometimes a fifty thousand rupiah note, are placed on top of the rice mountain, while the smaller ones encircle the lower slopes. A delegation of relatives of the bride and bridegroom is then sent to present the offering to the village officials. They walk along the road to the village office and to allow the villagers to take a good look at the offering. At the village hall, they are received by the village head or the village secretary who will distribute the food and the bank notes among the members of the village administration.

Presenting food to the village administration is a common practice among the Javanese, but not with bank notes blatantly fastened on it. To Javanese males and public servants money is always a matter of delicacy. It must be talked and handled as subtly as possible. No public servant will openly ask for bribe, but will hint that the service is a little bit complicated and requires some amount of cash to ease the process. A person dealing with a public servant will act likewise. Knowing that some cash is expected, he will present the money as if it is a sincere token of thanks from a satisfied client, although deep in his heart he might be swearing vehemently. But it seems that compared to other Javanese, Wonokerto villagers have a different way of handling money, a way which relates to their economic system.

As symbolized by their *tumpeng mbarep*, the Wonokerto community is a highly monetized society, a society in which almost all of its members’ needs must be fulfilled through money-mediated exchanges. The village economy is a money economy. The villagers’ life depends totally on the market. They sell their main product and their labour to the market and seek their subsistence goods at the market. Money is the life blood of that system. As Kani, a housewife explained to me, “Life here means money. All is money. Everything has to be bought. Firewood is bought, salt is bought, water is bought, not to mention the main food and children’s snacks”. Just like in urban communities, without money, a person’s social existence in Wonokerto is impossible as the story of Citro Siti and Amat Jeki, two of the poorest persons in Perumahan hamlet, show:

The Citro Siti family lives four doors away from my house. For unclear reasons,
some people said that it was because of his poor health, while some other said it was simply because of laziness. Citro—the husband—hardly ever works. "Poor health my foot? Citro is just lazy and does not want to sweat for his family. How can a sick person have a good appetite and make his wife pregnant almost every year?" Ni'ah Iwim responded when I asked him about Citro's pitiful looking appearance. It is Siti—the wife—who takes care of almost all the household burdens. Siti's everyday work consist of helping her neighbours to fetch fresh water from the village public well. She get Rp 100 for two buckets of water she carried with her skinny arms, and she can make at most fifteen trips to the well a day: "My body cannot stand more than that, it is very tiring work," she sighs. When news arrives in the village that one or two purse seine boats under Wonokerto skippers are about to anchor in the Pekalongan fishing port, Siti hurriedly flies there to beg for fish which can be sold right away in the fish market for Rp 10,000 if she gets a good amount. As I noted, usually Siti went to Pekalongan once in two or three weeks. Citro Siti had four children, but the oldest one Wanto Butak (eleven) can take care of part of his own finances. He earns money as alang-alang boy in the village fish auction. With this job Butak can sometimes make Rp 750 a day. Some of that amount he uses to buy his own snacks, afternoon meals, and sometimes cheap toys; the rest he hands over to Siti to cover the household expenditure. While his wife is busy finding money for the family, Citro just sits silently in front of their house wearing only a sarong. When he gets bored, Citro toters on his weak legs to other spots where people gather, on Karni's yard or in the hamlet guardhouse, then sits again without uttering a word. Nobody talks to Citro. When Citro tries to open the conversation with an idle question or comment in his barely audible voice, people just snarl back at him: "What Tro?!". Of course, he falls silent again. If Citro wants to watch television in one of the neighbour's houses, he is rarely allowed to get into the house, so he just watches it through the window or the door. "Why? He no longer has control of his bladder, and I don't want him to mess up my house with his urine!", Kumbang says.

The Amat Jeki family circumcised their oldest son, who was really too old for circumcision because the ritual had been delayed from year to year because of financial reasons. A circumcision must be celebrated but the Jeki family could not afford it. They had no money to stage the celebration, and could not afford to invite guests, which is why they never come to other families' celebrations. In the evening when Jeki's barren house was supposed to be alive with people, it was dark and quiet. Upon seeing this sorry situation, Jeki’s neighbour volunteered to help him. Kumbang, Mulud, and Rasid brought tables and chairs and arranged them in front of Jeki’s house, while another neighbour lit up two pressure lanterns. Slamet Londo installed his tape recorder. All of a sudden Jeki’s house was alive with people. A moment later, purse seine skipper Bulus initiated a tioni pie gambling round which produced Rp 30,000 of duwit cuk (gambling host money) for Jeki who until the neighbours returned to their homes at 2 in the morning was too embarrassed to show his face. He just hid himself inside his house. Only once did Jeki venture out. Somewhere around midnight he came out from his house with two burning incense sticks in his hands. By the light of the pressure lanterns his face was like an expressionless bronze mask. One step out of his door, Jeki faced east, his fists against his breast, his eyes cast blankly at the sky, and his lips muttered perhaps a prayer. Upon seeing Jeki's act all of the guests stopped their talking and looked at each other for an explanation. Nothing was said. Finished with his private ritual and without uttering a word Jeki stepped back into his house as if there were no guests at all; or perhaps as if Jeki himself was non-existent.
Given the highly monetized nature of the village economy, it is no wonder that from an early age, Wonokerto children are taught the value of money. A song usually sung by toddlers when an aeroplane passed high above the village is, "Ontong abung... Aluk uwiite...". "Aeroplane, ... Please drop us money ...". As they grow bigger, the children start to earn their own money, as alang-alang or by catching crabs in the fishponds and by gleaning the left-overs from the shrimp harvest, before eventually entering more serious jobs in fishing or batik painting. It is the great attraction of money too which seduces many of the village boys to abandon their primary or secondary education before they finish it.

**Kinship**
Just as in other parts of Java, kinship organization of Wonokerto villagers is centred on the nuclear family. There is no marriage preference among the villagers and people can choose their spouse freely. After the wedding, the spouses may stay with the bride’s or the bridegroom’s family it is just a matter of where there is a vacant space or settle down in their own house if they have one. Children live with their parents until they find their own house. Usually, not all the children leave their paternal home. One of them will stay there to take care of the parents until they die. Technically, until a child leaves his parents’ house he or she remains economically attached to their parents. Until they find a job, in their early teens, or late teens if they go to high school, they depend on their parents. When they find a job, they may use part of their income for their personal use, while the remainder goes to their mother as a contribution towards the household expenditure. The situation will reverse when the parents grew old, as then they will depend on their child although in some cases they will also try to contribute to their child’s household.

From the nuclear family, the kinship system widens to an extensive web of kin. Cousins, second cousins, third cousins; uncles, aunts, granduncles, grandsaunts; nephews, nieces, grandnephews, grandnieces; and all kinds of in-laws are considered to be relatives (sedulur). Norms dictate that relatives must be warmly treated as one would a brother or sister if they are of same generation; must be respected as parents if they are a generation above, and so on. These explicit rules are said to provide the villagers with a sense of closeness, warmth, togetherness, and security; but at the same time people also realize that this arrangement is not easy to maintain. Relations with relatives are supposed to be closer than those of neighbours or friends as these are based on kin ties, rather than on locality or a shared occupation or taste. Relatives are supposed to provide help, more than neighbours or friends are. To refuse a relative’s request for help is considered to be breach of the moral of kinship; but what is to be done if a relative’s request for help conflicts with one’s own interest?
It is easy to find siblings or cousins working in the same fishing unit, or boat owners who appoint their brother as skipper on their boat. This may seem ideal but, if the fishermen are allowed to choose, they prefer to work with people who are not close kin or better still are not kin at all. Once Skipper Asim told me, “I don’t like to work with kin. It is hard to get rid of them if our working relationship breaks down”. Asim also told me that he had gently refused his older brother’s request to become a member of his crew by saying that all positions on his boat were completely filled, but this was not his real reason; “What if my brother’s work performance was not up to scratch? As a skipper I would have to replace him with someone else who can work better. But how can I say ‘I’ve had enough of you, brother. Please find another boat’?” A similar feeling prevails among the ordinarly deck-hands. “How can I criticize my elder brother or my uncle or my father-in-law when he does his job as a skipper sloppily. It is lot easier for us to work under the direction of skipper who is not our kin”, Karmin Gudel told me. Only if a fisherman is in really dire straits will he come to his brother or nephew skipper for a job, and normally he will leave as soon as he finds a position on another boat.

This tension in the relationship with relatives is also present in households. Broadly speaking, the relationship here is often coloured with suspicion and jealousy. It was not uncommon for a wife to say to her husband upon seeing an in-law coming; “Kae adimu mrene maneh, mesti pak luru utangan maneh”. “There your young brother is coming again, it must be for another loan”.

Darso Girah bought a new, a 14-inch, colour television set to replace his old black and white one. Later he sold the old television to Paryuti, his niece, for two hundred thousand rupiah. The old television did not stay in Paryuti’s house long, and was returned to Darso. She could not stand the story Girah’s, Darso’s wife, had spread among the neighbours alleging that Paryuti had got the television at far too cheap a price. Some people often boast about rich relatives to whom they could turn in time of need, but in practice they are hesitant to ask for help from relatives, as they fear being considered a beggar. When I asked her why she preferred to mortgage or sell her clothes rather than seek a loan from relatives, Grandma Sumbuk simply answered; “Nyong isin nek kon ngemis”. “I am not a beggar”.

When they need help, the villagers turn first to close neighbours and only when they do not succeed with them do they ask their relatives. But they will do so if they are sure that they can return the loan to their relatives at the promised time, and if they find themselves in really difficult circumstances, like when a member of the household has serious health problems and needed to be hospitalized.

**Social stratification and patron-client relations**

Although people hardly ever use the words explicitly in their daily conversations, they
classify their co-villagers into two main categories: those of the *wong sugih*, the rich, and the *wong biasa*, the commoners. The more commonly used expressions in that connection were those of *juragan* and *jurag*. *Juragan* means owner or in a generalized way boss, as the villagers have recently picked it up to refer to the *boss urang*, shrimp dealer, or the *boss teri*, white anchovy dealer. So there are *juragan prau*, boat owner; *juragan tambak*, fishpond owner, *juragan pindhang*, salted fish producer; *juragan gereh*, dried fish producer; and also *juragan mlati* to denote both of the owner of a large jasmine farm and the jasmine dealer. This is contrasted with *jurag*, meaning worker or labourer or more specifically a deck-hand. Social stratification among Wonokerto villagers is thus based mainly on the ways of making a living. A *juragan* is someone who makes a living through his capital, either a fishing boat, a fishpond, or trading capital; and *jurag* is a person who earns his income by selling his labour. It stands to reason that the village *juragan* differ in degrees of wealth. At the highest rung they might be big fish traders. At the lowest rung they might be the owner of just one, small, poorly equipped fishing boat or the owner of a small fishpond and they can hardly be called a rich. Small-scale fish traders who work with not more than two plastic buckets also fall in the *juragan* category, although they are generally not referred to as *juragan iwak*, but simply as fish trader, *bakul iwak*. Whatever their wealth, these *juragan* maintain a position above that of the village mass of *jurag*.

Since the 1970s, with the development of purse seine fishing in Pekalongan, the social stratification had been enriched by a new occupation: the *jermudi pursin*, purse seine skipper. As these persons do not earn their living by investing their capital or by working with their hands as labourers, but by managing the boat and their crews, *jermudi* do not belong to either the *juragan* or the *jurag*. Nevertheless, because most of the purse seine skippers earn a high income and eventually become really rich, they are in the same income brackets as the upper level *juragan* and outrank ordinary boat owners. As a matter of fact since the decline of the village sea-fishing in the 1970s, purse seine skippers have taken over the boat owners’ position as the main job providers in the village and therefore they have become prominent figures in the male labour force.

The relation between *jurag* and *juragan*, particularly between deck-hands and Wonokerto boat owners, or between deck-hands and skippers of the Pekalongan purse seine, resembles a patron-client relationship, but not in all aspects. All deck-hands are dependent upon boat owners or—if they work on board the Pekalongan boats—on purse seine skippers, but they rarely attach themselves to a certain boat owner or skipper for a long period. The common practice is that deck-hands are in constant state of flux drifting from one boat owner to another. Normally they stay on a same boat for some time, a season or perhaps even a year before they join another boat. During that time
they become the *jurag*, worker, of the boat owner. They man and maintain the boat and the fishing gear; they generate income for themselves and the boat owner. However, the relationship barely develops outside the context of work. Deck-hands, for instance, do not fulfill the role of the political followers of their bosses, as ordinary boat owners in Wonokerto are hardly involved in politics, either at a local level or at a higher level. This is reason enough but the real explanation is that the working relationship between crew members and boat owners does not last long. The only extra-work relation between deck-hands and their boat owner is in terms of economic support. In time of need, it is common for a labour fisherman to seek financial help, either a loan or a gift, from his boss. For some time the help will bind him to remain with the boss, but even this bond does not last for long. Sooner or later he will go off to another boat.

Social relations between deck-hands and Pekalongan purse seine owners are weaker than those between fishermen and Wonokerto boat owners. Pekalongan boat owners and the fishermen rarely see each other, they are not neighbours, or friends or relatives. Their relationship is purely a working one which is mediated by skipper. The fishermen know who the owner of the boat they man is and how many boats he owns, but that is all. To them their boss is the skipper of the boat. He has a highly responsible position as the boat owner entrusts his boat to him, after which it is up to him how the crew members are recruited and how the trip is organized. Who the crew members are, what their names are, and where they come from, are not the boat owner’s concern.

In the eyes of the fishermen, purse seine skippers are most certainly authorities, who bear responsibility not only for the success of the fishing trip but also for safety of the fishing boats and the crew members. The power of the skipper is such that in effect he can order his crew to do anything which he considers necessary to guarantee the success of the fishing trip or safety of the boat. This power has a temporal border as the power of the skipper ends when a fishing trip is completed and the crew members have received their share and leave the boat. A skillful, successful skipper may be able to maintain a crew who are willing to join him on every fishing trip and keep lingering around him when the fishing trip has ended. However, his power is very temporary and will dissipate when, for whatever reasons, his success begins to wane.

A closer relationship exists between a purse seine skipper and his assistants or *nama*—master’s mate, engineers, quartermaster, seine master, and seine attendants. Unlike ordinary crew members, these assistants do not change regularly from one boat to another. They stick to the skipper from fishing trip to fishing trip, but even their loyalty is not eternal. The first and most obvious reason for this is that assistant
positions are rungs from which to achieve a higher position aboard purse seine boats, as a master’s mate or skipper. When that happens, they move to another boat. Then being a purse seine skipper is an insecure position. The working relationship between skipper and boat owner is not laid down in a formal contract. As long as a skipper is able to bring in a good catch, he can retain his position, but once he fails to deliver the goods he will certainly be fired by the owner.

Like the boat owners in the village, purse seine skippers are also people to whom a deck-hand can turn when he needs financial help. Among their neighbours purse seine skippers are axiomatically rich persons who should contribute more money than ordinary villagers when the hamlet celebrates Idul Fitri day or when a neighbour stages a circumcision or wedding ceremony. So, ex-officio, purse seine skippers occupy a position as the financial sponsors of the hamlet, but just like boat owners they do not earn a patron-like status, and their position does not produce either political nor long-lasting economic support for them.

The relationship between fishermen and fish traders also tends to be limited to the purely economic sphere. It is common among the fishermen to sell —some— of their catch to specific fish traders (bakul langgan). In return, they enjoy some extra financial rewards, in the form of ‘cigarette money’ during the slack season, a gift of a shirt or a sarong or cash at Idul Fitri, and occasionally a loan to cover boat maintenance. All these rewards are given by the fish traders to secure their line of fish supply. However, it often does not work in the way the fish traders expect it to work. Fishermen normally maintain relations with more than one fish trader, so they can shift from one trader to another if they see an opportunity to earn more money. The reverse also can be true. Some big fish traders, like Subur and Sentot, have relations with a wider range of fishermen because of the large scale of their trade. The villagers often see them as the village big men who are able to mobilize and influence public opinion. Despite this standing, neither Subur nor Sentot has never attempted to run for a position of village head or co-operative head; it is therefore hard to say whether their client-fishermen would also act as their political supporters.

Religion and communal ritual
As Javanese, Wonokerto villagers are not lacking in manners; they are friendly, warm, polite and easygoing people. However when they are measured against the Javanese standard ideal of demeanor that displayed by people who reside in the area directly under the influence of the Surakarta and Jogjakarta courtly cultures, the villagers surely fall into the category of coarse, unrefined people. “Cedak watu, adoh ratu”. “Close to the stone, far from the throne”, as the Yogyakartans would say about them. This rather harsh judgement would be passed largely on the basis of the fact the fishing villagers in
generally are unable to speak, or do not feel properly at home with, the refined level of the Javanese language. The common, basic Javanese language, *ngoko*, is the villagers' medium of conversation, regardless of the social position or the seniority of the interlocutors. They have no difficulty understanding the refined level of language when it is spoken, but they are themselves unskilled in its use and have little interest in learning to speak it. When I interviewed Grandpa Sarda'i in the middle level, *krama madya*, of the Javanese language, Limbuk, the only female among the village officials, commented abruptly in an annoyed tone; “You spoke like a *kethoprak*, a Javanese drama, actor!” It is only when they talk to senior persons or to a person of high rank such as the village head that a slight adjustment in the language is made by replacing the word to address the second person from *kowe*, you into *sampeyan*, thou, while the rest of vocabulary is derived from ordinary Javanese. If the interlocutor happens to be a person of quite high position, such as the District Head or the Regency Head, the village youth will speak in Indonesian, while their elders will speak in a mixed language of Indonesian and middle level Javanese. Quite apart from consideration about language levels, the villagers' everyday conversations are richly salted with blunt, down-to-earth words, related to the anal orifice and genital organs, as well as to other body parts, to ugly animals, and misdeeds; for other Javanese these are only put into use in conversations among close comrades or on the rare occasion of an uncontrollable outburst of anger or deliberately to inflict painful insult on another person.

Despite what might seem a language handicap, the villagers do not feel either marginal or inferior because of the way they use the Javanese language. The reverse is in fact true, they use it as a symbol of openness and friendliness; “Yes, we are rough and ready people and do not speak the refined language. But when we speak, we don't beat about the bush, speak frankly, *ngomong apa anane*”, the villagers like to say.

Remarkably, religion does not play too important a role in the community. Officially nearly the whole Wonokerto Kulon population are Muslim, but most of the village adults are not really interested in living according to religious rules, like observing the daily prayers, fasting in Ramadhan, let alone paying the religious tax (*zakat*). Nowadays, there are six places of worship in the village: the village mosque, built in the nineteenth century, and five small prayer houses (*langgar*) recently built with money provided mostly by purse seine skippers. But even at the evening prayer times, generally the most lively hours of worship, the mosques are at most half full with people.

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9 *Krama*, the refined level of Javanese language is difficult to use, but perhaps its greatest impediment is that *krama* prevents people speaking in warm and friendly way. *Krama* is never a first language, even among the Javanese themselves, it is the official language of Javanese culture. As Siegel (1986: 292) points out, *krama* is a second language and for the people who is using it, it is like speaking to the interlocutor through a second person. It is not the real speaker who is speaking but a person at one remove; an imaginary person who is shorn of any human coarseness, extreme emotion, cleansed of any worldly dirt. Speaking in *krama* tends to put a person into the constant difficulty of translation and exposing himself to humiliation if he fails to present an appropriate term.
and then merely the elderly and the children. If we look at the village population, it seems there is an up-and-down pattern of religious involvement which varies according to age. Among the children, religious involvement is high. Many of them attend evening courses in Koran recitation in the prayer houses or in a six-grades Koran School (Madrasah) in Api-api village. The village itself, has a Muhammadiyah kindergarten in a house owned by Haji Dayono since the late 1970s. After childhood interest seems to become tepid and among the village teenagers and adults religious activities tend to be low. Their interest in religious things is mostly practical. Many villagers, especially purse seine skippers, are in frequent contact with religious teachers (kyai), and people who are believed to possess supernatural powers and knowledge (dukun) to procure amulets or charms or knowledge to boost their physical prowess and good luck, or if confidence is suffering a set back, to protect themselves against evil spirits. When amulets and charms, which are believed to be really powerful, are involved the skippers must observe strict rules of fasting or abstain from certain kinds of foods. Later on in life, finally, religion regain its place among the elderly, who tend more and more to observe the five daily prayers and the rules of Ramadhan.

There is also a pattern of religious involvement across the villagers social stratification in the sense that attention paid to religion tends to be more serious among the upper stratum of the community rather than the lower. The higher a person’s social level, the more serious the attention he pays to religious life and social symbols. It is a common aspiration among the village rich that as soon as their financial situation allows, they will make pilgrimage to Mecca and then return to the village with a haji title in front of their name. From that moment on people in the village will call him Haji instead of Pak, father, or Dhe, elder father, and it is really a great source of pride to be addressed as such.

The main communal ritual in the village is the sea offering, nyadran laut, which according to Grandpa Tanjung, a village elder 10, is related to the story of Budug Basu (see also Koostedjo, 1950):

Budug Basu was a nasty looking giant. From top to toe he was covered with scabs as if his body was rotten, basu, bosok, and he constantly gave off bad odour, budug, badeg. Budug Basu’s behavior was not nice either. He roamed from village to village robbing people’s rice and killing them for their flesh. He spread trouble among people. Eventually news of Budug Basu’s bad behavior reached the ears of Batara Guru (God Siva) in heaven. Budug Basu was summoned to heaven where he was executed by Batara Guru using a powerful magical lance that broke Budug Basu’s body into minuscule parts. Budug Basu’s remains were put into a coffin. Then Batara Guru had some people take the coffin away to bury it in the earth, with a warning that whatever they would hear

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10 Grandpa Tanjung was the oldest person in Wonokerto. He was born sometime in early 1900, as when Mino Soyo fishing organization was established in the mid-1910s he was already thirteen or fourteen years old. Grandpa Tanjung died in early 1998, not long after my 1996/1997 was completed.
or see during the journey to the burial place the coffin bearers were strictly forbidden to open the coffin. During the journey, however, mounting curiosity nagged at the coffin bearers as from inside the coffin they heard a great deal of noise as if it was full of living creatures. Unable to restrain their curiosity, in spite Batara Guru’s warning, the bearers opened the coffin. As the lid was opened, from inside the coffin many creatures jumped out and landed on the sea where they turned into fish. Upon learning what had happened to Budug Basu’s body, Batara Guru decreed that the fish are for people to eat, but once a year they have to give the sea an offering. If not Budug Basu will come to life again as nasty giant who will sow discard among people.

During the colonial time, the wayang kulit (shadow puppet) play staged in the sea offering celebration always gave the Budug Basu story. However, since the 1950s, the story has never been performed again. People prefer to watch a wayang play derived from an episode in the Mahabarata epic or sometimes from the Babad Pekalongan, recounting the history of the foundation of Pekalongan. Nowadays almost nobody in the village can tell the Budug Basu story, much less recite it at the sea offering. All they are concerned about is that the offering is important to the well-being of their fishing activities and must be carried out precisely on every first day of the month of Sura, although as a matter of fact, the ritual is not always performed at that date. In some years, since the 1970s, stymied by lack of funds, the offering has not been made at all.

Nowadays the villagers have no clear idea about how the offering must be staged. In 1997, villagers started to organize their annual nyadran laut, but the programme became quite chaotic. The ritual was due to start in the fish auction at nine in the morning. A set of offerings, consisting of snacks, fruits, and a set of cloths, had been arranged on a small raft made of banana trunks. People said that in the old days the offering was completed by a buffalo head, but for financial reasons this last item had been allowed to lapse for many years. At the said hour, people had gathered in the fish market compound to participate in the procession to escort the offering into the sea. According to tradition, a prayer should be read before the offering was borne off. But then it turned out that nobody knew what kind of prayer should be read and how the ritual should be performed. Kasino, who was in charge of the ritual, panicked; “Priye kiye?” “What should we do now?” He approached the village elders to ask one of them to read the prayer, but no one of them volunteered; “Aja nyong, ka e bae. Nyong ora ngerti”. “Not me please, that one over there maybe. But not me, I do not know how”. After long, uncertain moments Kasino was finally able to talk Dhe Marijan into accepting the task. Dhe Marijan hesitantly asked his fellow villagers to be silent for a moment. He started the prayer by saying Bismillah (In the Name of Allah), and then mumbled a few Javanese sentences which no one in the audience could hear. Having finished his short prayer, he raised his hands to his face and said “Amien” which was immediately echoed by the people.

From the fish auction the offering was carried out to the sea aboard a fishing
boat escorted by the fishermen’s flotilla. Approximately three kilometres from the estuary, at the edge of the blue water, the flotilla hove to. Once again people were confused; “Where is the right spot to drop the offering into the sea?” Sentiko suggested dropping the offering at the edge of the blue water. Kasino refused, “No! It must be dropped in the blue water. Not here!” Some older fishermen were consulted and it took some time before an agreement was reached that the offering was to be carried out into the blue water not far from the edge. When the spot was reached, the procession hove to once again. People watched from their boats, and as soon as the offering touched the sea water, they jumped from their boats and scrambled to retrieve a part of the offering. It was very joyful moment. They jostled each other in an attempt to lay their hands on the small offering raft and snatch as much as possible from it. Those who did not jump cheered and yelled from the boats. The event lasted until the banana trunk raft was totally broken up and not a single bit of the offering was left. Everybody swam back to their boat and raised the parts of the offering they had been able to snatch above their heads like winners of a prestigious competition show their medals.

Conclusion

Wonokerto Kulon is a rural village, but it differs from other Javanese villages in that its main resources are off-shore. As the villagers produce hardly any subsistence crops and as nearly all the fish they bring in is sold at the market, the village economy is characterized by a high degree of monetization. Perhaps as a direct result of the situation the villagers are generally not involved in any long-lasting labour arrangements, as fishermen often change boats and partners. These particular features prevent the emergence of strong communal ties among the villagers and stifle the emergence of important patron-client networks. Apparently, the villagers enjoy this degree of individual freedom as they are proud of it and want to keep it that way.

There is room to wonder whether this individuality and the ‘loose structure’ of the village which I found in the 1980s and the 1990s is a relatively recent phenomenon, the outcome of modernization and commercialization perhaps, or whether there is a historical explanation. In order to answer that question, I will turn to the early days of Wonokerto Kulon in the next chapters.
4. A fragile frontier: fishing in Pekalongan during the nineteenth century

When he held the position of governor-general of Java and Sumatra, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Raffles noted how the Java Sea provided abundant grounds for sea fishery:

"... so moderate are the seasons, that except perhaps for a few days at the change of the monsoon, they are seldom interrupted by the weather" (1982, I: 186).

Although Raffles' account on the impact of the seasons on the fishermen's working schedule is an understatement, compared to seasonal fluctuation in other seas like the Indian Ocean, the Natuna Sea and the Banda Sea it was true that weather conditions in the Java Sea are quite moderate. Also in the fishermen's favour is the fact that the Java Sea is rich in biological resources. This fortunate situation is caused by a combination of intakes of nutrients brought down by many rivers small and great from the highlands of South Sumatra, Java, and Kalimantan; and tropical sunlight which is capable of penetrating larger parts of the gently sloping seabed, which is nowhere more than 60 metres deep. Sea currents, which alternately sweep from the Banda Sea in the east and South China Sea in the north-west, have made the Java Sea a suitable habitat for a large number of demersal fish and a favoured feeding ground for pelagic fish which season after season come in great schools from the Banda Sea and the Natuna Sea (KNAG, 1990: Sheet 3, 7). Research conducted by the Batavia Fisheries Station in 1930 shows that this sea then contained some four tons of fish per square kilometre (Bottemanne, 1946: 15). Fifty years later, the Indonesian Directorate General of Fisheries estimated that these 268,240 square kilometres sea allowed fishermen to catch 484,000 tons of demersal fish and 221,000 tons of pelagic fish annually without running the risk of depleting of the marine resources (Comitini and Hardjolukito, 1983: 38-45).

With such bounty, it is little wonder that Javanese have made use of the richness

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1 It has only been since the fishermen adopted an engine to power their boats that they have been capable of dealing with the stiff breeze at the change of the monsoon. During the era of sail powered boats, the weather forced the fishermen to remain on land and the affected period lasted not a few days but between sixty to ninety days per year.

2 The DGF estimate is that every square kilometre of the Java Sea contains on average 2.6 tons of fishery resources, while the Fisheries Station estimate was 4 tons. Two possible explanations may clarify this difference. First, the DGF estimate is produced from a more detail and careful survey. Second, the Fisheries Station estimate was about the 'real' stock of the fishery resources, while the DGF's is about the maximum sustainable yield.
of Java Sea to support their life since ancient times. The oldest records which indicate the existence of sea-fishing in Java date from the ninth and tenth-century inscriptions. These tell us about techniques for catching fish using net and seine, and of dishes made of tuna (Scomberomus), white bawal (Stromateus cinereus), and squid (Jones, 1984: 34-58). Unfortunately, those inscriptions say nothing about the fishermen. Very likely at that time sea-fishing was not a greatly important economic activity, falling behind agriculture, animal husbandry and hunting. Some of the inscriptions dwell at length on regional trading in agrarian as well as animal products such as chickens and ducks, but not a word is said about the trading in sea fish.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, sea-fishing in Java seems to have been intensified. A European sailor who voyaged to Java noted that in the coastal areas of Java: “[t]he ordinary man occupies himself with fishing and tending his animals, for there is much livestock there” (Schrieke, 1955: 21). Schrieke also indicated that among the many commodities exported from Java in the seventeenth century was dried fish. It seems that development of inter-insular and international trading in Indonesia between the tenth and eighteenth century had offered to the Javanese a good opportunity to intensify their exploitation of sea fishery resources. For some reasons for which there is not yet an explanation, it seems that up to the eighteenth century not many coastal inhabitants of Java took up sea-fishing as their main occupation. At that time fishing villages along the northern coast of Java were merely small hamlets consisting of a few simple houses (Nagtegaal, 1996: 3). It might be presumed that up to the eighteenth century agricultural land in Java was still abundant and consequently there was no strong pressure on the Javanese to move away from agriculture.

Changes in this pattern began to emerge in the nineteenth century. Raffles (1982, I: 186) observed that in the early decades of that there was already a large number of people along the northern coast of Java who worked the year round as fishermen. Boomgaard (1989: 117; 1991) suggests that by the 1820s there were already around 35,000 fishermen along the northern coast of Java and that sea-fishing at that time had already taken its place as an important primary occupation alongside agriculture among the Javanese. Some fifty years later, in the 1870s, the number had increased to around 250,000 fishermen who produced 60 million guilders’ worth of catch annually (Masyhuri, 1995: 111).

All the evidence would seem to indicate that the nineteenth century marked an
decisive stage in the development of sea fishery in Java. It was the time when this primary industry fishery began to occupy an important role in the economy of the island as it involved a large number of people and brought in much money. How and why this development took place in the nineteenth century can be explained by the three following factors: first, a high demand for fish in local markets in Java. So high was the demand that in the early nineteenth century 1,100 pikul (seventy tons) and two million pieces of fish were imported through the port of Jakarta, and 550 pikul (thirty-five tons) and 565,000 pieces through the port of Semarang (Masyhuri, 1995: 76-77). The second reason for the upsurge would seem to have been the availability of capital necessary to build up the fishing fleet plus an improve in the fish trading network, which was a consequence of the application of a tax-farming system in sea fishery (Masyhuri, 1995: 75). The sea-fishing tax, like the taxes from the trading of opium and rice wine, slaughter of cattle, buffaloes and pigs, and on pawn shops, in the first half of the nineteenth century was not collected directly by the colonial government. Instead, the government auctioned the right to farm the tax to, mostly Chinese, tax farmers who in return were granted a right to claim 10 per cent of the fishermen’s catch. Tax collecting was a very profitable occupation, as it offered a good opportunity to gain a positive balance between the amount of tax collected from the fishermen and the amount of tax submitted to government[^4]. To make the deal more attractive, apart from the right to collect tax, the tax farmers were also given the monopoly over fish and salt trading in their working area —salt was essential to the preservation of the fishermen’s catch. Through their monopolies, tax farmers became the accumulators of wealth among the fishermen along the northern coast of Java. Boosted by their growing capital, the tax farmers moved further into the capitalist market. They bought fishing boats and sold these to the fishermen on credit while they also took care of the marketing of the fishermen’s catch (Masyhuri, 1995: 82-87). The third factor which encouraged the growth of the industry was the availability of a labour force which was willing to take up sea fishery. This was closely related to the introduction of the forced Cultivation System and the advent of big sugar plantations in Java, which had in effect instigated socio-economic problems among the agricultural villagers (see Van Schaik 1996: 54). It was reported that during the forced Cultivation System period many agricultural villagers ran away from their

[^4]: Indeed, tax-farming was not without risk. A tax farmer might suffer a loss if he failed to collect tax at amount which was bigger than the tax he had to hand to the government. To spread the risk, it was common among the tax farmers to divide their working areas into some sub-areas for which they sub-contracted their taxation rights to sub-tax farmers.
villages and headed closer to the coastal areas in an attempt to seek a better place to live (Ricklefs, 1981: 116-7; Van Niel, 1972). Another cogent reason is that sea-fishing at that time offered a better income than in agriculture.

Unfortunately for the fishermen, by the 1870s sea fishery along the northern coast of Java had started to decline. This decline was set in train according to Masyhuri (1995: 125) mainly by the abolition of the tax-farming system, which in turn upset the flow of investment into fishery. The haul of the fishermen’s diminished and so did their revenue.

The Pekalongan fishing fleet 1820s-1860s

In the Pekalongan region sea-fishing had perhaps been developing since the seventeenth century like in many other parts of Java’s northern coast. By the early eighteenth century Pekalongan was already quite a busy coastal town where the Regent resided and enriched himself by supplying large amounts of rice, coffee, and indigo shipped to the VOC in Batavia aboard mayang sailing boats (Nagtegaal, 1994). Very likely at that time some people were already actively engaged in sea-fishing, for mayang were originally designed as fishing boats to catch layang (Decapterus Kurra) fish (Masyhuri, 1995: 46); though in many cases they were also used for general sea transportation\(^5\). By 1820\(^6\) there were forty prau mayang, eighty-three prau munting, and forty jukung deployed in sea fishery in the Residency. From this number of craft it can be estimated that in 1820s there were around 1,000 fishermen in the residency\(^7\).

Data from the Residency annual reports in the 1850s reveal that the number of fishermen in the residency was around 1,000, which did not differ much from the number in the 1820s. This is a bit strange. All the more so when we consider that in 1858/1859 there was a remarkable increase in their number from 1,058 to 1,337. How come then that within the previous four decades there was hardly any change? There are several possible explanations. My estimation of the number of fishermen in the 1820s is based on the number of fishing boats, including the small jukung. There is also a possibility of overcalculation in my estimation. Errors might also have crept in as it is very likely that the late 1850s data consisted of statistics of fishermen who worked on fishing vessels

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\(^5\) ANRI, Algemeen Verslag, 1820: 175; Afdeeling Statistiek, 1880: 142-146.

\(^6\) ANRI, Pekalongan Statistic 1820: 175.

\(^7\) Van Kampen’s (1909: Plaat I) account shows that jukung boat required three fishermen to man it. A menting also required three fishermen (ibid: 30). While a mayang could varying in size, the largest one had to be manned by thirty fishermen and the smallest one required just thirteen (ibid: 26), but the most common vessel of this type among the fishermen was the small one which require thirteen to twenty fishermen to man (see Masyhuri 1995: 81).
larger than one koyang — and that fishermen who worked on smaller boats were not registered (see Table 4). Or the data were obtained from tax farmers and, therefore consisted only of fishermen who were permanently attached to them. Those fishermen who had less to do with the tax farmers were simply unregistered. My estimation is that the number of fishermen in the 1860s was bigger than as presented by the Residency data. As Pekalongan regency experienced the same socio-economic tensions in the agricultural sector as other regions along the northern coast of Java did, and as also in Pekalongan income from the sea-fishing sector was higher than that from agriculture, it seems safe to assume that the number of fishermen during the years from 1820 to 1860 must have been higher than the figures indicate.

Data from the 1850s/1860s also point out that during that time sea fishery in the Pekalongan Residency took place in seven districts: Pekalongan, Wiradesa, Batang, Sragi, Subah, Masin and Pekajangan. But it was only the first three districts which housed a good number of fishermen, while the other four had only between two to forty fishermen. This situation is perhaps related to the fact that the Masin and Pekajangan districts were situated ten kilometres up the Pekalongan River, while Sragi and Subah, although close to sea, were located far from any big market. By contrast, Pekalongan, Batang, and Wiradesa were close to the sea, all of them were relatively big towns with their own markets and very likely it was there that the tax farmer and his sub-tax farmers and other owners of capital, such as large-scale Arab traders, lived.

Table 3. Number of fishermen, Pekalongan Residency 1857-1864

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pekalongan</th>
<th>Batang</th>
<th>Wiradesa</th>
<th>Sragi</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,058</td>
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<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: ANRI, Algemeen Verslag 1857-1864.

Table 3 also reveals that, compared to other districts, Pekalongan was the biggest base for fishermen in the Residency. Pekalongan was a big town, where there were well-to-do
people, and the profit from sea fishery attracted them to invest some of their money in fishing boats, which gave an added spurt to the growth of the industry. Despite the capital advantages available in a big town, it was Wiradesa which experienced the sharpest increase in numbers of fishermen in the late 1850s, rising from merely 120 in 1858 to 390 in the following year. I have no obvious information to explain this increase. Perhaps, as Wiradesa district was surrounded by sugar factories, it had to do with the growing claims of sugar-cane plantations on the villages' rice fields and village labour which increased sharply during the 1850s (Knight, 1993: 20), and exerted further pressure for people to move out of agriculture.

**Fishing boats ownership and the fishermen income**

According to the Residency's annual report of 1864, in the 1860s there were —at least— seventy-three fishing boats of various sizes in the Pekalongan Residency. The actual number must have been higher than this, because the report did not include fishing boats smaller than one koyang (2.75 cubic meters) in size—that of the jukung type which was manned by three crew members or less. Jukung were cheaper than other boats and it is possible that a good number of jukung existed among the fishermen. How large the actual number of fishing boats in the residency at that time was, is therefore hard to estimate; but some forty years later the number was around 800.

The report also pointed out that all of the big mayang boats were owned by non-Javanese; five were owned by Chinese and one by two Arabs. Among the five boats owned by Chinese, two —the biggest ones— belonged to Oey Ingsoon, the Pekalongan tax farmer at that time who held taxation rights to opium trading, rice wine trading, the slaughter of animals, pawn shops and sea fishery. Out of the seventeen cemplon boats, eight were owned by Chinese —two of whom were close relatives of Oey Ingsoon (perhaps his sons), three belonged to Arabs, and the remaining six belonged to Javanese boat owners. Out of the thirty-three mayang, five were owned by Chinese, seven by Arabs, and the other twenty-one were in the possession of Javanese boat owners. All seventeen small boats of less than three koyang were owned by Javanese. The Chinese and Arabs were not fishermen, but saw sea fishery as a challenging business venture. Most of the Chinese and Arabs in Java during the colonial period made their living through trading and other business. It was the prospect of profit too which motivated them to invest in sea fishery. As larger boats brought in more profit, they tended to buy the largest boats if their capital allowed them.
Table 4. Number and ownership of fishing boats, Pekalongan Residency 1863

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of boat</th>
<th>Non Javanes e</th>
<th>Javanese</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Arabs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large mayang (72-212 lasten)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemplon (5-7 koyang)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayang (3 koyang)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small boat (1-3 koyang)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ANRI, Algemeen Verslag 1864

Masyhuri (1996:110) claimed that it was common among nineteenth century Javanese fishermen to share boat ownership, i.e. that a boat was owned by a group of fishermen who also acted as crew members. This was made possible because of the rich tax farmers who started to act as money lenders. From tax farming and their monopoly on fish and salt trading, they moved a step further and began to loan capital to fishermen. The loan was given in form of a fishing boat. In their turn the fishermen submitted 50 per cent of their catch as repayment until the loan was settled —normally within 2 years. Apart from the 50 per cent, the fishermen sometimes had to submit up to 30 per cent of their catch too as tax. According to the regulations the tax was supposed to be only 10 per cent of the fishermen’s catch but it was common practice among the tax farmers to jack the tax up to 30 per cent. The price that the fishermen who obtained their boats using a tax farmer’s loan had to pay, for a period at least two years, was that they received only 20 to 50 per cent of their catch as their net income. As most Javanese fishermen had insufficient collateral to be eligible for a loan from the tax farmers, they decided to join forces and buy and exploit the boat collectively.

However, shared ownership of a larger fishing boat was not common in Pekalongan. Except for the two Arabs sharing a mayang, the Chinese and Arabs did not

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8 Very likely these large boats were not fishing boats but cargo vessels used to carry merchandise from port to port along the northern coast of Java as well as between Java and other islands.
9 One last is equal to 2,000 lbs or 32 pikul or approximately equal to onetric ton. One koyang is equal to 27-40 pikul of rice, one pikul equal to 100 katie or 62.5 kilograms (see Knapp, 1996: 192).
10 Capital offered by the tax farmers along the northern coast of Java was not cheap. A medium-sized, manned by fifteen crew members, mayang was sold to the fishermen at 500 guilders, 150 guilders more expensive than its market price, and a large, manned by thirty deck-hands sold at 1,000 guilders, 300 guilders higher than its market price. Normally, the loan could be settled within two years and during that time the fishermen had to submit 80 per cent of their catch to the tax farmer; 50 per cent as capital rent and the other 30 per cent as repayment of their loan. Masyhuri (1996: 109-110) estimated that for every large-sized mayang, sold at 1,000 guilders to the fishermen, the tax farmer gained 4,400 guilders of gross return.
have to share ownership, since they could buy the boats using their own capital. Shared ownership of a fishing boat was far more usual among the Javanese, but it did not apply to all of the Javanese boats. On the 1863 Pekalongan boat owner list there was one Javanese Haji, Haji Saudenan. He must have been a rich person who did not need to share his boat. There may have been others who were as rich as Saudenan and owned their boats individually but so far they have not been identified.

There is no pertinent and reliable information on the total annual catch of fishermen in Pekalongan Residency in the nineteenth century. The amount can only be estimated from the taxes paid by the tax farmer to government. In 1828 the Residency earned an amount of 3,360 guilders of sea fishery tax collected from the fishermen (Masyhuri, 1995: 88). By 1830, 1840 and 1850 respectively, the annual tax from sea fishery increased to 6,960, 8,964 and 12,060 guilders (ibid: 88). Say that the tax was 10 per cent of the total catch of the fishermen and that the price of fish —using the 1860s fish price as a standard— was eighteen cents per katie (0.6176 kg) or twenty-nine cents per kg\(^{11}\), an estimation on the fishermen’s annual catch would be as follows:

\(^{11}\)ANRI, Algemeen Verslag 1860.
Table 5. Estimation of Pekalongan Fishermen’s Catch 1828 - 1860s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tax (f)</th>
<th>Catch (f)</th>
<th>Catch (katie)</th>
<th>Catch (ton)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>3,360</td>
<td>33,600</td>
<td>186,667</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>6,960</td>
<td>69,600</td>
<td>386,667</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>8,964</td>
<td>89,640</td>
<td>498,000</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>6,363</td>
<td>63,630</td>
<td>353,500</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>12,060</td>
<td>120,600</td>
<td>670,000</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>5,460</td>
<td>54,600</td>
<td>303,333</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>7,380</td>
<td>73,800</td>
<td>410,000</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>10,272</td>
<td>102,720</td>
<td>570,667</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>9,120</td>
<td>91,200</td>
<td>506,667</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>9,660</td>
<td>96,600</td>
<td>536,667</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>13,200</td>
<td>132,000</td>
<td>733,333</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>9,720</td>
<td>97,200</td>
<td>540,000</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>9,720</td>
<td>97,200</td>
<td>540,000</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>13,332</td>
<td>133,320</td>
<td>740,667</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>17,040</td>
<td>170,400</td>
<td>946,667</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>16,920</td>
<td>169,200</td>
<td>940,000</td>
<td>581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 5 above shows that from the 1820s to the 1860s the fishermen catch was increasing steadily from 115 tons to 581 tons. However, I suspect that the fishermen’s actual catch must have been quite a bit higher than listed in the table. The figures in the table were extrapolated from the tax paid by the tax farmer to the government, assumed to be 10 per cent of the fishermen’s catch which was sold to the tax farmer. The fly in the ointment was that not all the fishermen’s catch was sold to the tax farmer. To avoid taxation —and obligation to repay their loan as well— often fishermen had no compunction about diverting some of their catch to the black market. Officially, according to government regulations, it was only tax farmers who were allowed to buy fish from the fishermen and then sell it to fish traders. The latter were forbidden to buy fish directly from the fishermen. In an attempt to obtain a lower price, fish traders however, discreetly bought fish directly from the fishermen. Obviously this practice was resented by the tax farmers, and they employed people to prevent this illegal trading (Masyhuri, 1995: 89). There is no data from the mid-nineteenth century to reveal who the fish traders were, but data from the turn of the twentieth century indicate that after the tax-farming system was abolished, fish trading in many fishing ports was in the hands of Chinese businessmen and local, Javanese entrepreneurs (MWO, 1906). Very likely it was
from among those groups who ran the illegal fish trading in the mid-nineteenth century.

How was the increase in the catch between the 1820s and the 1860s achieved? The most popular fishing gear operated by the fishermen at that century was the so-called payang, a type of seine which has a form of a sack with a pair of wings. When it is casted to sea water, the wings will spread like a curtain and then steadily they will be pulled back to the boat makes the curtained area getting smaller and drives the fish which swims inside the curtained area to enter the seine sack (Van Kampen, 1909: 47). During the nineteenth century there was no great change in fishing technology among the fishermen. Until mid of the twentieth century payang seine was the fishermen’s main fishing gear. Therefore the only possible way to increase catch during the nineteenth century was through intensification, both in the number of fishermen and of the fishing trip. How much then was the annual revenue of a Pekalongan in the nineteenth century? Based on data presented in Table 3 and Table 5 above, it can be estimated as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Catch (ton)</th>
<th>No of fishermen</th>
<th>Catch/ fisherman (kg)</th>
<th>Catch / fisherman (f)</th>
<th>After 60 per cent of tax and loan interest (f)</th>
<th>After 10 per cent of tax (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>1,068</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>1,058</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>1,448</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>1,538</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Algemeen Verslag 1857-1864

The annual revenue of the fishermen presented above is an average revenue, taking no account of a person’s position in the organization of production of a fishing boat, whether he was an ordinary deck-hand, a seine master, a skipper or a boat owner. According to Masyhuri’s calculation (1996: 113) in the 1870s the gross revenue of an owner of a mayang boat was three to four times higher than the revenue of an ordinary deck-hand. There are two columns of revenue in Table 6, the first one is the revenue of a fisherman working aboard a boat which did not yet belong to him. The boat was being bought on credit from tax farmer and was still being paid off, so the fishermen had to surrender at least 60 per cent of their catch to the tax farmer and in effect received only 40 per cent of their catch. Once their credit was settled, the fishermen naturally received higher revenue,
that of their catch minus 10 per cent of tax. What the fishermen could do with such an income is difficult to assess. But compared to Javanese peasants who on average had 70 guilders as their annual revenue (Boomgaard, 1989: 176-7), Pekalongan fishermen in the mid-nineteenth century were certainly better off.

The decline of sea fishery and the 1854 Regeerings-Reglement

By 1870s sea fishery began to decline along the northern coast of Java. The catch gradually decreased, the number of fishing boats went down, and the fishermen’s income dropped. In the 1870s there were 15,000 fishing boats of three koyang (8.5 cubic metres), among the fishermen, some three decades later the number had decreased to 6,000; while in the same period the annual catch of the fishermen dropped in value from 60 million guilders to 10 million guilders (Masyhuri, 1995: 133). Masyhuri (1995: 141-57) suggests several factors which were responsible for this decline, but the most important one was the abolition of the tax-farming system in 1864, a system which was considered as exploitative by liberal colonial officials, which in effect, thus Masyhuri argued, forced the tax farmers to pull out of the fishing business:

“Abolition of the tax-farmer system had deprived the tax farmers of their role in the sea-fishing sector. Previously they had been pivotal figures and occupied the top position in the organization of production of sea-fishing. After the system was abolished, their position was marginalized. They were no longer either the suppliers of fresh capital to the fishermen, or the collectors and distributors of their catch. Investment in sea-fishing decreased drastically and can even be said to have come to a complete standstill” (1995: 125).

I agree that to some degree the abolition of tax-farming system must have affected sea-fishing performance along the northern coast of Java. At least it deprived the tax farmers of an important source of revenue as well as of their monopoly rights in fish trading and salt distribution. But after having played the sea-fishing barons for decades, many of them must have hoarded a fair amount of capital, and there was no reason for them to abandon the fishing business altogether just because they had been stripped of their taxation and trading monopoly rights. Even if, for some reason, they had had to withdraw from sea-fishing, it did not logically follow that they had to withdraw from their position as

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12The other factors were; (a) increase in the salt price; (b) difficulty in finding teak wood for boat-building materials, and (c) a ban on the bronjang, an off-shore fish trap, around eastern tip of Java brought in to ensure maritime safety. Just like the abolition of the tax farmer system, these other three phenomena might have produced effects on sea fishing but not to the extent that it would have caused sea fishing to decline. There were alternatives to deal with the problems above without necessarily sacrificing the fishing activity. The salt price might be increased, but the fish traders could increase the price of their commodity too, and so on.
providers of capital and as fish dealers. Moreover, there were others to fill the vacant positions. Villages in nineteenth-century Java were heavily infested by all kinds of money lenders: Chinese, Arabs and natives (Ricklefs, 1981: 119), who would have been only too happy to take over the former tax farmers’ profitable niche among the fishermen. Also some local, Javanese petty fish traders or would-be fish traders must have been only too glad to see the Chinese tax farmers leave their villages.

There are good reasons to hypothesize that nineteenth-century sea-fishing along the northern coast of Java declined not because there was no further capital investment, but because of overfishing. It was not because the ex-tax farmers ceased to provide capital to the fishermen, which forced the sea fishery into bankruptcy, but the other way around. It was because the sea-fishing went bankrupt, that the ex-tax farmers and other capital owners stopped investing in sea-fishing, for there was no more profit to be had from it. Catches in the first half of the nineteenth century were so good that they could provide the fishermen with an income higher than that of farmers and very likely allowed the owners of boats and capital owners a lavish profit too. It was the scarcity of fish which eventually brought the fishery into a decline. The good catches in the 1860s had encouraged boat owners to buy more boats—in an attempt to make more money; and they had lured more people into becoming fishermen to share in the bounty of the sea. As a result, from year to year pressure on the natural stock of fish in the fishing grounds along the northern coast of Java built up, until eventually it exceeded the carrying capacity of the fishing grounds.

According to Masyhuri’s (1995: 104) estimation, in the 1860s the annual catch of fishermen on the north coast of Java was around 260 thousand tons—this sum is a low estimate because it was calculated on the amount of salt used to preserve the fish. This was one-third of the maximum sustainable yield of natural stock of fish in the Java Sea, which was 705 thousand tons per year (Comitini and Hardjolukito, 1983: 38-45). This all seems very reasonable, but we should consider the following. The 705 thousand tons was the maximum sustainable yield of the whole of the Java Sea; a marine area of 268,240 square kilometres wide, stretching from the northern coast of Java, to the east coast of southern Sumatera and southern coast of Kalimantan. That it was an area much larger than that worked by nineteenth century fishermen living on the north coast of Java.

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13 Research to estimate the natural stock of fishery resources in the Java Sea and other Indonesian seas has not been conducted until the early decades of the twentieth century. Somehow, considering that factors which affect the reproduction rate of fish like sunlight intensity, sea currents, nutrient intakes from rivers, and the breed rate of fish are relatively stable factors (Bardach, 1968: 109-115), I assume that the carrying capacity of Java Sea in the nineteenth century was not different from that of the twentieth century.
Restricted by their fishing technology, at most they could fish in waters just forty kilometres from the coastline (see Van Pel, 1938; Bottemanne, 1938). All in all, the fishing grounds worked by nineteenth-century fishermen on the north coast of Java cannot have exceeded 92,000 square kilometres; less than one-third of the whole Java Sea. It should be borne in mind that mayang boats were capable of taking the fishermen to more distant fishing grounds and allowing the fishermen to fish overnight (babang), but that most of the nineteenth-century fishing boats on the northern coast of Java fishing boats were too small to provide a closed compartment in which the fishermen’s catch could be salted and preserved. The only on-board fish preservation technique available to the fishermen at that time was open salting, which was not good enough to protect the fish from a rapid rate of decomposition. Within twelve hours, the fishermen’s catch would be half rotten (berek), good only for cheap, low-quality dried fish. Given the circumstances, fishing in grounds far away from any fish market was not a viable proposition.

Measured by the size of their fishing grounds it is bleakly apparent that the fishermen’s catch in 1860s was close to or even surpassed the carrying capacity of the fishing grounds. These fishing grounds were less than one-third of the overall size of the Java Sea, and the catch was more than one-third of the maximum sustainable yield of the Java Sea. More critically, by the mid-1860s 94 per cent of the fishermen’s catch was landed by middle and large-sized mayang, which were designed to catch layang and other kinds of pelagic fish (Masyhuri, 1995: 104). The maximum sustainable yield for pelagic fish in the whole Java Sea is 221,000 tons per year (Comitini and Hardjolukito, 1983: 38-45). Say we take a moderate percentage of 75 from the annual catch of the 1860s, or 193,500 tons, consisting of pelagic fish, this would mean that 87 per cent of the whole maximum sustainable yield of pelagic fish in the Java Sea had been taken by the fishermen. Considering the size of the fishing grounds available to the fishermen, no more than 66,000 tons of pelagic fish should have been caught off the north coast of Java per year, one-third of the maximum sustainable yield of the whole sea. In fact almost three times that number was caught. This must have been disastrous, because it meant that a large proportion of fish which should have been saved to reproduce had been taken away (Anderson, 1977). The result was inevitably, that in the years which followed, the stock in the fishing grounds decreased steadily and dragged the catch into a decline too.

With the decline in the catch the profit in sea-fishing was being spread more thinly. As time went on and the writing was indelibly on the wall, city-based capital owners stopped their investment. Some even pulled out from the sea fishery straight away. Between 1875 to 1903 the number of Chinese involved in agriculture and sea-
fishing along the northern coast of Java had decreased from around 1,729 to a mere 252 (Masyhuri, 1995: 127-8). Those who remained in the fishing business were no longer involved in the process of production, but opted for more secure positions in fish trading and money-lending by establishing trading companies (*kongsi*). They took advantage of the scarcity of cash among the fishermen to buy the fishermen's catch up cheaply in advance and to lend money at high interest (De Wilde, 1911: 21). By the turn of the century there were no longer either Chinese or Arab fishing boat owners among the fishermen in Pekalongan Residency; all boats were in the hands of native boat owners (MWO, 1905: 7).

So what was the impact of the abolition of tax-farming system in 1864 on the fishery on the northern coast of the Java Sea if it had nothing to do with the decline of the sea fishery decline in the last decades of the nineteenth century? To answer this question we have to take a closer look at the tax-farming system itself. Taxation rights over the fishermen had originally been rented to tax farmers because in the early nineteenth century the colonial government did not have the manpower to exercise bureaucratic control over the sea fishery. Financially farming out taxation rights was not too advantageous to the government, because the sums paid by the tax farmers were considerably lower than their returns. But until a colonial tax system which could reach the fishermen was put into place, it was the only way to tax the fishermen. It is clear that the replacement of the tax-farming system with poll tax and fishing boat tax in the 1860s had not very much to do with a growing altruistic awareness among the high-ranking officials that the tax-farming system was exploitative. Rather, it was the upshot of the government's incapacity to impose direct taxes on fishermen without the intervention of tax farmers. It is important to remember that the new poll tax and boat tax implied a systematic registration of both the fishermen and their boats. The infrastructure to accomplish this was laid down ten years before the tax-farming system was eventually abolished, when the government issued the so-called *Regerings-reglement*. The Administration Bill, in 1854 which made the villages official parts of the state administrative system (Margadant, 1895; Kartohadikoesoemo, 1965: 301); this policy in effect broadened the capability of the government to impose taxation (Breman, 1980: 32). From then on, tax farmers were no longer needed by the government to tax the fishermen. The village administration could take over the function of the tax farmers, by

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14 The Bill, of course, was far more than just a decree to create village-level administration among the Indonesians. It was issued to provide a general basis to establish a state administration in the Indies as a Dutch colony.
registering fishermen who resided in the village and then subjecting them to a poll tax and by registering fishing boats in the village to be subjected to a boat tax. Therefore, the abolition of the tax-farming system was the outcome of the incorporation of the fishermen on the northern coast of Java into the state administration system rather than a cause in the decline of the sea-fishing.

Although they found themselves in a precarious position, unlike the rich owners of capital, most of Pekalongan fishermen continued staying in the sea fishery. From the data in the Declining Welfare Commission report (MWO, 1905: 24), it appears that between the 1860s and 1895 the number of fishermen in Pekalongan Residency remained more or less the same. Their boats also continued in a more or less stable number. Why then in spite of the decline did the fishermen not pull out of sea fishery? One very conspicuous cause can perhaps be understood by observing that most of the participants in sea fishery had turned to this profession because they had been driven out of agriculture. It was as if the fishermen were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea and there was almost nowhere else to go but to persist in the fishery, even when overfishing had brought it to crisis point. As I am going to show in a moment, the declining catch did not cause an outflow of fishermen; the fishermen dealt with the problem by reducing the size of their fishing units.

Despite its desperate straits, the working organization in sea fishery was a soft berth compared to the lot of an agricultural workers. By the beginning of the twentieth century, fishing boats among Pekalongan fishermen were owned individually. Apparently during the last three decades of the nineteenth century there had been a process of individualization of boat ownership as boats which were previously owned by a group of fishermen were gradually bought by individuals. However, although boat ownership was no longer shared, the crew members still enjoyed a great degree of freedom. Deck-hands were relatively independent share-holders in the production process, rather than being wage labourers or coolies. They were not called buruh, labourer, or kuli, coolie, but pandega, meaning someone who holds responsibility. Basically, it was up to them to decide when and what fishing boat they might join on a trip.

The catch among Pekalongan fishermen who worked aboard a large-sized boat such as a mayang, was distributed through the so-called undho usuk, a stratified sharing arrangement. The boat owner received around 30 per cent of the catch, the skipper 10 per cent, and ordinary deck-hands each received 3 per cent\(^5\), according to an intricate system

\(^5\) The application of a stratified share arrangement is related to the large number of boat crew required to work aboard mayang. At least eleven deck-hands were needed to row the boat and to pull the payang seine.
of division reproduced in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Boat owner</td>
<td>8/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Skipper</td>
<td>3/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Quartermaster</td>
<td>2/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Seine master (juru arus)</td>
<td>3/56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Boat guard (jaga prau)</td>
<td>1/56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bakul (catch-selling leader)</td>
<td>1/56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Equipment guard</td>
<td>1/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tarik tendak (seine attendant)</td>
<td>1/56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Deck-hands</td>
<td>11/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28/28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MWO (1905: 12)

Among the smaller sized boats, such as kolek (a bigger version of jukung to be manned by seven crew members), the catch was distributed through a simpler arrangement called serangserang rata, equal arrangement. The catch was just divided equally between the boat owner and the deck-hands. Boat owner, skipper and common deck-hand all received equal shares.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Boat owner</td>
<td>¼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Skipper</td>
<td>¼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Deck-hands</td>
<td>2/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MWO (1905: 12)

Apart of this, there were several tasks which had to be carried by specialists, such as recruiting the crew, casting the seine, keeping the fishing equipment in shape and so on. As a result, apart from the skipper and deck-hands there were other positions, ranging from quartermaster to seine boys (tarik tendak). Each was responsible for a special task and rewarded with an extra share. The quartermaster down to the tarik tendhak also took positions as deck-hand, each of them therefore received 1/28 share as a deck-hand plus an extra share (3/56) as a seine master and so on.

The application of the equal share on small fishing boat was related to two things. First, that the tasks aboard a small boat were simpler than aboard bigger sized boat. They could be carried by all members of the crew without any need for specialists. Secondly, a small boat normally produced a small catch too. Since all the tasks were carried out together, it would have been unfair if the small catch was not shared equally. Very likely, as happened in the 1980s, owner of a small-sized boat also took the position of skipper, therefore he could receive a better income than if he asked another fisherman to skipper his boat.
As pointed out by Scheltema (1985: 384), this sense of freedom and being their own master is an important key to understanding why people like to persevere in work which is carried out through a sharing system:

“Even though in a sharing system a person sometimes has to stand up to his lips in economic mud, he still can think himself as a small entrepreneur or a free farmer. Therefore, this feeling of being free and of having a stake in the outcome makes people prefer receiving a share over receiving a wage”.

That sense of freedom and being masters of their own labour must have motivated the nineteenth century Pekalongan fishermen to stay in fishery, although their business no longer offered them a good income. This explains why in 1905-1908, it was difficult to recruit workers to dig a one kilometre canal to connect the Merican River with the Sepait River. Although this project was organized right in the village of Wonokerto Kulon where a large proportion of the fishermen resided, villagers were not interested in participating. Most of the labourers were people from Kandangserang District, some forty kilometres south of Wiradesa.

It stands to reason that the fishermen’s determination not to leave the sea fishery badly affected their living conditions. By not reducing their number, the fishermen had had to live from an ever declining catch. The consequence was, that within three decades sea fishery in Pekalongan had turned from a profitable economic field into a poor subsistence activity.

**Poor fishermen and a deficit state**

At the turn of the century Pekalongan sea fishery was in dire straits (MWO 1905). Sea-fishing activity had ceased to exist in the Sragi, Masin and Pekajangan districts. In the meantime, the position of Pekalongan district as the biggest nineteenth century sea-fishery base in the Residency was taken over by Wiradesa. Finally, although there were more fishing boats than four decades before, it looked as if the fishermen's fleet was economically far from healthy, as most fishing boats spent their time tied up idly along the river banks rather than out on fishing trips. In 1903 one-third of the fleet consisted of boats which were twenty-five years old and presumably were no longer operable. Apart from that, the fleet consisted mostly of small-sized boats which were operated to catch demersal fish in waters closer to the coastline.
Table 9. General performance of Pekalongan fishing fleet 1900s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1895</th>
<th></th>
<th>1903</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mayang</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Mayang</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of fishing boats</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pekalongan</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>256</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batang</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>328</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiradesa</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>814</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1888</td>
<td></td>
<td>2488</td>
<td>734</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of boat owners</td>
<td>164</td>
<td></td>
<td>196</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pekalongan</td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
<td>196</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batang</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
<td>266</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiradesa</td>
<td>615</td>
<td></td>
<td>658</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>196</td>
<td></td>
<td>2568</td>
<td>814</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of fishermen</td>
<td>577</td>
<td></td>
<td>704</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pekalongan</td>
<td>356</td>
<td></td>
<td>372</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batang</td>
<td>486</td>
<td></td>
<td>865</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiradesa</td>
<td>1409</td>
<td></td>
<td>1941</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MWO (1905: 24)

So bad was the overfishing that the Declining Welfare Commission (MWO, 1905: 21), with a view to the fishermen’s long-term well-being, produced a recommendation urging that the fishermen’s activities be reduced through; (a) the seasonal closing of fishing grounds along the Pekalongan Residency coast and a temporary closing, for at least three years, of the waters of Jakarta Bay; (b) the prohibition of any kind of net and seine with a mesh size of less than two cm; (c) prohibition on beach seine and fish traps in estuaries; and (d) prohibition of catching spawning fish. Until the colonial government came to an end in the early 1940s, these suggestions were never actually put into practice, perhaps impeded by the difficulty of exercising consistent control once such regulations were implemented. The fishermen themselves would certainly have been against the regulations, fielding as their argument that their immediate economic survival was far more important than their well-being in the future. From their day-to-day experience the fishermen themselves must have realized that the fishing grounds nearby their home base —‘their’ fishing grounds— no longer contained enough stocks of fish; and they were canny enough to realize that a reduction in fishing effort would allow the fish to build up
its stock to a healthy level again. But why bother with a seasonal off-period or keep their mesh net size larger than two cm or whatever if there were other fishing grounds available?

Rather than reducing their fishing efforts, what the fishermen did at the end of the nineteenth century was to split themselves into small working units to fish aboard small-sized boats. Through this strategy, they could avoid the high investment required to buy larger boats and spread the risk of a bad catch as widely as possible. From a practical point of view, the small boats also helped the fishermen to provide jobs for the growing number of labourers in their community. Another trick engaged by the fishermen to get a good catch was by deploying tendhak, a strand of coconut fronds, to lure fish school. With help of a weighing stone a tendhak was put in certain fishing spot, after the fish had shoaled around the tendhak the payang seine was casted (Van Kampen, 1909).

Apart from these moves, what the fishermen did to escape from overfishing in ‘their’ fishing grounds was to intrude into the grounds of other fishing communities. By the turn of the century it was common practice among fishermen of every district along the northern coast of Java to poach on each other’s fishing grounds. At that time expansion further to the north, beyond the 40 kilometres limit, was still not feasible, as the technology available to the fishermen had not changed very much from what they had had at their disposal half a century ago. Six months out of every year mayang fishermen from Tegal migrated to other waters; between February and April they went to Pemalang or even further east to Kendal and Semarang, while from June to September they went to Jakarta Bay. A more or less similar pattern was also followed by fishermen in other places. Pemalang and Comal district fishermen frequented Cirebon waters in the west and roamed as far as Jepara in the east (Van Moll and s’Jacob, 1913: 60). Batang fishermen frequented fishing grounds fifty kilometres both west and east of their own place, which meant they infringed upon the fishing grounds of Pekalongan and Kendal fishermen. Surprisingly enough, I found no information about whether this intrusion led to conflicts among the fishermen. Probably it did not, because poaching on fishing grounds by outside fishermen was offset by their own intrusion of other fishing grounds and because the fishermen deployed fishing technologies of a more or less equal standard.

Apparently by the turn of the twentieth century fishing resources off the northern coast of Java were not considered to be the common property of the community. In the 1930s Van Pel (1938 cited in Masyhuri, 1995: 49) drew a map of the fishing grounds of the Java Sea. He pointed out that generally every fishing community along the northern coast of Java had certain fishing grounds, adjacent to the villages. But, considering that
the fishermen were regularly poaching on each other's fishing grounds, it was certain that no single fishing community possessed an exclusive right to specific fishing grounds and so basically the fishing grounds were open to any boat from any fishing community.

The crux of the matter was that intruding on the fishing grounds of other districts was not really a solution to the problem of overfishing, since every fishing ground along the northern coast of Java was already exploited by local fishermen and was being overfished too. True, by moving east and west the fishermen could escape the idle season on their own fishing grounds. Therefore they could keep fishing all-year round to meet their daily needs by whatever amount of income they could snatch from fishing in other districts. Despite all these contrivances, the fact remains that the natural stock of fish along the northern coast of Java was getting too scarce to support all the fishermen. In subsequent decades, fishermen in Pekalongan Residency as well as along other parts of the northern coast of Java witnessed their fishing fleet greatly diminish. By 1903 there were 556 fishing boats in Pekalongan and Wonokerto; some thirty years later the number had dropped into 295\(^{17}\).

A poor business, obviously could not produce a healthy income. The Declining Welfare Commission reported the annual revenue of the fishermen as follows:

Table 10. Pekalongan fishermen's annual revenue 1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner of a:</th>
<th>Gross revenue</th>
<th>Net revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>mayang</em></td>
<td>f 1,000</td>
<td>f 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bese</em> (small <em>mayang</em>)</td>
<td>f 800</td>
<td>f 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kolek</em></td>
<td>f 500</td>
<td>f 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mlatenl jukung</em></td>
<td>f 400</td>
<td>f 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deck-hands</td>
<td>f 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisherman without boat</td>
<td>less than f 0.25/ day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MWO (1905: 12)

Although enshrined on paper, in my opinion, such revenues were too high to be true, as they imply a total catch which would have been impossible to produce on the Pekalongan fishing grounds. Without day-to-day observation for at least a period of one year, a fishermen’s income is hard to measure because of seasonal fluctuations and variation in boat types. The fishermen themselves rarely know how much their annual catch is, and

\(^{17}\) ARA, Memorie van Overgave Resident van Pekalongan 1931.
when asked by outsiders about this matter they normally give peak numbers as an answer. Data in the Commission report were collected by distributing a list of questions to government officials at the regency level who very likely gave answers based on estimations provided by the fishermen. Considering the capacity of Pekalongan fishing grounds to produce a catch, it seems that the fishermen’s income in 1900s must have been lower than the figure presented in the Commission report.

Table 11. Value of total catch to provide the fishermen with revenue
as listed in the Commission report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue of</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mayang owners</td>
<td>$61 \times $1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other type of boats owners</td>
<td>$495 \times $400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deck-hands</td>
<td>$1,569 \times $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have been unable to find any information on average price of fish at that time, but data from 1930s show that the price was between 56 to 68 guilders per ton. Assuming that the price in 1900s was not greatly different from that of the 1930s; then in order to arrive at the annual revenue listed above, the Pekalongan sea fishery in 1903 must have produced no less than between \( \frac{415,000}{56 \text{ to } 68 \text{ guilders}} \) 6,102 to 7,410 tons of fish\(^{18}\). That would have been impossible. Pekalongan fishing grounds covered a water not more than 800 square kilometres: 40 kms (the maximum range of a sail powered-boat from the coastline) by 20 kms (the span of coastline between Pekalongan and Comal). Using the Batavia Fisheries Station’s estimate that every square kilometre of Indonesian sea-water could produce four tons of fish stock annually, the Pekalongan fishing grounds could have provided the fishermen with 2,400 or perhaps as high as 3,000 tons of fish per year; there is absolutely no question of 6 to 7 thousand tons. Data from 1930s, 1950s, and early 1960s point out that using a fishing technology similar to that of the 1900s, the Pekalongan fishing grounds produced an annual catch of around 2,000 tons. So how much was the annual revenue of Pekalongan fishermen in the 1900s? It is hard to be sure, but it would be impossible for it to have been higher than 3,000 tons. If we take 2,000 tons as the total annual catch of the fishermen in the 1900s; and if we take the proportion

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\(^{18}\) If we take a lower fish price, say 30 to 40 guilders per ton, then we will see that in order to obtain the revenue listed in the Commission report the fishermen must have produced more than 10,000 tons of catch per year.
of revenue in Table 11 as a standard then we will find that instead of 100 guilders, on average each deck-hand received somewhere around 32 guilders annually, if the fish price was 68 guilders per ton, or 27 guilders if the price was 56 per guilders ton.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue of</th>
<th>Assumed fish price/ton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner of a mayang</td>
<td>f 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner of a boat of other type</td>
<td>f 269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deck-hands</td>
<td>f 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average*</td>
<td>f 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The adjusted estimates in Table 12 also point out that compared to four decades earlier, the average annual revenue of Pekalongan fishermen decreased sharply from 136 guilders in 1864 down to 53 to 64 guilders in 1895; and it would keep decreasing in the following decades.

Van Moll and s’Jacob work (1913) on the village economic in Comal District, which is situated to the west of Wiradesa District, at the beginning of the twentieth century indicates that the economic performance of a fishing village, named Limbangan, just eight kilometres west of Wonokerto, was quite good. Compared to their neighbours in agricultural villages, the inhabitants of Limbangan enjoyed a healthier nutritional intake, thanks to the seafood, and they consumed less opium. If ownership of agrarian land among the agricultural villagers is excluded from calculation, Van Moll and s’Jacob (1913: 61) concluded, then the average value of personal belongings among the fishing villagers was higher than among agricultural villagers. However, if we take a look at the agricultural villagers’ income from their land plus the income they earned from working in sugar plantations, and compare it to the income of the fishing village, it appears that the economic condition of the fishermen were poorer than those of the farmers.

Van Moll and s’Jacob work is based on a detailed household survey in twenty-four villages in Comal District which was conducted in 1903 to 1905.
Table 13. Comparison of annual income between agricultural villagers and fishermen, 1900s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Annual income (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural village official</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner of a <em>mayang</em></td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agr. Villagers 1st class</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner of small-sized boat</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agr. Villagers 3rd class</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deck-hands</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: -Agricultural villagers income is after Hüsken (1996: 96)
-Fishermen income is after Table 12

At sea the fishermen were threatened by overfishing, and on shore another menace loomed in the form of the money-lender and the fish trader who were lying in wait for them. At the turn of the century, there were at least three types of money-lenders who did business with the fishermen. There were local native traders and, Arab, as well as Chinese money lenders.

Trading in Pekalongan at the beginning of the twentieth century was in the hands of local Javanese traders (MWO, 1905: 13, 16). Just like the Chinese *tax farmers* before them, the local fish traders stood at the head of long marketing chain before the fish finally arrived on the consumer’s plate. People outside the circle of local fish traders were prevented from making direct transactions with the fishermen. Only through the local traders hand, could fish traders from the southern districts like Kedungwuni and Kajen obtain the small fish to be processed into dried fish (*gereh*). The same thing happened to local fish processors. They could not buy fish directly from the fishermen. The raw material for *pindang* (boiled fish), *peda* (fermented fish), or dried fish had to be bought from local fish traders. Probably the modus operandi of the local fish traders in Pekalongan was similar to that in other places along the northern coast of Java where fish traders bought the fishermen’s catch in advance at a sum below the market price. In Tegal, that was as low as 30 to 60 per cent below the market price (Besseling, 1913).

In Pekalongan, the position of providers of capital was in the hands of Arabs. In accordance with their religion, which forbid interest (*riba*), the Arabs did not ‘lend’ capital to the fishermen at a rate of interest. Instead they ‘bought’ a share in the fishermen’s boat, which in return gave them a right to a share of the catch. For every 50 guilders loan ‘invested’ in a *mayang*, the Arab money-lender got 1/28 of the boat’s catch.
If the loan was invested in a small fishing boat, the share was a quarter of the boat’s catch. That was equal to the share of a deck-hand. Since it was the boat owner who borrowed the money, the share of the catch for the Arabs was taken from the owner’s portion, not that of the deck-hands.

Among the fishermen who frequented the waters of Jakarta Bay in an attempt to avoid the slack season in their own fishing grounds, two Jakartan money-lenders/fish traders named Beng Lo and Yeng Seng, were notorious (MWO, 1905: 14). Normally the fishermen moored in Jakarta Bay for four months every year. To go fishing for such a long time far away from home the boat owners had to find sufficient money to make advance payments to their crews, otherwise the crews’ families would be left behind in the village without money to cover their living expenses. Normally a skipper got 20 guilders in advance payment, a seine master got 17 guilders, a sail master 17 guilders and each of nine to twelve common deck-hands 15 guilders. Apart from this advance money, the boat owners themselves also needed credit for their own households. It was to Beng Lo and Yeng Seng fish trading companies, kongsi, that owners of the migrant mayang turned to to obtain the credit they needed. Under a formal contract signed before a notary, an owner could borrow “without interest” 300 guilders from Beng Lo or Yeng Seng for every boat he owned. In return the fishermen were obliged to sell their catch to the money-lenders at fixed prices; 7 guilders for every takeran, approximately 30 kg (ENI, 1918 II: 687), of big fish, 3 guilders for middle-size fish and 20 cents for small fish. The prices were allegedly 4 guilders, one and half guilders and fifteen cents below the market price. The crunch came with the loan repayment, when the money lenders directly deducted 7 guilders out of every 10 guilders of the price of the catch. If the fishermen failed to settle the loan within the four months which they spent in Jakarta waters, they were allowed to repay it the following season by applying for a new loan part of which was taken to cover the previous loan. How much did Beng Lo or Yeng Seng gain from every 300 guilders they loaned to a mayang owner? If the boat owner settled his debt within the four months period, Yeng Seng got approximately 260 guilders20. If he failed to pay before the deadline, Yeng Seng or Beng Lo received more than 260 guilders or 87

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20 To settle his debt the boat owner had to sell at least fish valued at 429 guilders to Yeng Seng, 70 per cent of it, that of f 300, was deducted directly to settle the debt. If the sale consisted of big-sized fish, the fishermen must sell f 429/ f 7 = 61 takeran of fish. From every takeran of big size fish Yeng Seng gained direct profit of 4 guilders, therefore from 61 takeran he got 245 guilders. If the fish were of medium-size, Yeng Seng got 214 guilders of direct profit. If the fish were of small-size, Yeng Seng got 321 guilders. If the sale consisted of big, medium, and small size fish in equal proportion, Yeng Seng at least got 260 guilders of direct profit.
per cent of their 300-guilder loan\textsuperscript{21}.

Economic conditions among Pekalongan fishermen by the dawn of the twentieth century had deteriorated. Their income was far lower than it had been in the 1860s. Whereas in those years their income was above that of farmers, in the 1900s it had dropped below. A similar decline also occurred among the fishermen in other places. The fishermen’s day-to-day economic life was trapped in a vicious circle of bad catches and indebtedness to fish traders and money-lenders.

In the Declining Welfare Commission’s view, the money-lenders and fish traders practices were so detrimental to the fishing economy that the Commission recommended that there was an urgent need to establish a credit service institution to help the fishermen (MWO, 1906: 2-6). At the same time, there was also growing concern among the government officials about improving the economic performance of sea fishery in the Indies; a concern which was related to the need to increase internal revenue in Indonesia which for years had produced a deficit. Instead of sending money to the Netherlands, as in the years of forced Cultivation System, in the late nineteenth century Indonesia was absorbing money from the Netherlands and it seems that in the 1900s the mother country was tired of feeding the colonized country. In 1903 a law was passed to detach the Indies from the Netherlands’ budget and from then on the Indies were supposed to be financially self-sufficient (see Van der Kroef, 1954: 8). The basis of modern Indonesian sea fishery was laid by the government through the establishment of the so-called Batavia Fisheries Station, a research and development institution designed to design the technology to turn Indonesian sea fishery into a more profitable business. Soon after it was established, the Station engaged in extensive research on the technological and biological aspects of fishery, estimated the country’s natural stocks of sea fish and experimented with more effective fishing gear to increase the fishermen’s catch (Sunier, 1914; Van Kampen, 1922). In 1920s the Station introduced motorized fishing boats to the fishermen. This was no more than a toe in the water because until the colonial era ended in Indonesia in 1942, not many motor boats were in use among the fishermen, most probably because the price was beyond the reach most of them.

The growing concern about the economic role of sea fishery was also the reason that the administration of sea fishery was transferred from the Department of Internal Affairs to

\textsuperscript{21} Eventually in 1930s the government banned the Chinese fish \textit{kongsi} (Masyhuri, 1995: 130). Just as what happened with the abolition of tax-farming system in 1864, I suspect the ban of \textit{kongsi} was not only related to any consideration that the economic practice employed by the \textit{kongsi} were detrimental to the fishermen’s economy, but was related more to the fact that by that time the government already possessed semi-official agencies, those of fishing organizations, to run fish trading and credit service among the fishermen.
the Department of Agriculture in 1905—which some eight years later was expanded into Department of Agriculture and Small-scale Industry and Trading. Another transfer occurred in 1934 when fishery became part of the Department of Economic Affairs (Masyhuri, 1995: 179). These transfers indicate that to the government's eyes sea fishery had become economically so important that its administration must be handed over from a general department like Internal Affairs to specialized departments like Agriculture and Economic Affairs.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the development of sea fishery in Pekalongan in the nineteenth century: a development which was based on a fragile natural resource. During that century a growing number of people engaged in fishing and embraced it as primary occupation. Among these nineteenth century Pekalongan fishermen, sea-fishing was not only a way to earn an income but also a way of life: in spite of declining catches people preferred to remain fishermen rather take up other occupations. As I will show in the specific case of Wonokerto Kulon in the next chapter, the nineteenth century was also the time when participants in sea fishery began to establish their own communities, which occupied a specific niche in the wider socio-economic arena. During the nineteenth century too, as the state bureaucracy was assuming a more systematic shape and the state needed more internal revenue, sea-fishing which had existed as a marginal economic activity on the fringe of Java's agro-ecological system for centuries was gradually incorporated into and taken up as an official part of the state economic system. The fishing sector was administered by the Department of Agriculture and—later—Department of Economic Affairs, at the same level as agriculture, industry, and trade. Seen from this perspective, it also makes sense that from that time on fishermen were entitled to receive government benefits like a credit service, protection from money-lenders and 'bad' fish traders, and institutional support from specialized agencies.
5. A sea of diminishing returns: 1900-1940

After almost one hundred years of draining the wealth of Indonesia the colonial regime was confronted by the moralistic dilemma that it was burdened by a debt of honour to the colony and thus was obliged to pay attention to the welfare of the colonized people. In 1905 the so-called Ethical Policy was introduced\(^1\). Prior to the implementation of the policy a large-scale inquiry was carried out by the Declining Welfare Commission on the findings of which actions essential to improve the economic conditions of the population of Java and Madura would be based. Projects to improve sea fishery were part of this blueprint. After the inquiry, the government set in motion a broad implementation of this maritime policy. This included the establishment of fishing organizations on the northern coast of Java in the 1910s. One such organization was established in Wonokerto Kulon. But before we discuss the impact of the organization on the Wonokerto fishing community during the late colonial period, I would like to step back once more to the nineteenth century to see how this fishing community had come into being.

The formation of Wonokerto Kulon fishing community

As its fairly traditional name indicates Wonokerto is perhaps an old village, which came into existence several centuries ago. \emph{Wana} (forest) and \emph{kerta} (prosperous) are classical Javanese words. The name Wonokerto signifies that the village had begun as an agricultural village in a clearing in a forest. The oldest record I could find which mentions Wonokerto village was the report of Pekalongan Resident, S.C. Lawrence, on the specification of lands assigned to the Regent of Pekalongan addressed to Lieut. Governor Raffles dated June 20, 1813. Wonokerto was included in that report and \(2.5\) \emph{jung}, approximately seven hectares, of its land was assigned to the Regent\(^2\). No further information about the village was given except that it was led by a village head named Sono Ibong, and also there was no suffix like \emph{Wetan} or \emph{Kulon} appended to the village name. Probably at that time Wonokerto was a single agricultural village with enough fertile land that the Regent could exact part of it as a source of income.

Later information about Wonokerto comes from the Residency Statistics of 1820\(^3\), which mentions that Wiradesa district had a population of 19,578; 17,511 out of them

\(^1\) Morality was not the only consideration. In the eyes of Dutch capitalists Indonesia was a big market just waiting to absorb their products, its potential needed only to be thawed out by raising the living standard of the colonized people (Ricklef, 1981: 143; Cribb, 1993).
\(^2\) ANRI, Brieven van Resident Pekalongan.
\(^3\) ANRI, Statistiek van Residentie Pekalongan 1820.
inhabited 192 small villages—apparently too small to have had their names listed; while the other 2,067 lived in eight villages; 301 out of them were villagers of Wonokerto Wetan. The word Wetan, means east and, unarguably indicated that there had to be a West Wonokerto, Wonokerto Kulon, too, although its population was too small to be noted in the Residency statistics. Apparently at that time Wonokerto inhabitants had distinguished themselves into two different groups: those living on the east bank and those living on the west bank of Mrican River; a distinction which was probably more than merely a location of housing.

In 1863 the first topographical map of Pekalongan Residency was published. The map is quite detailed in that it reveals the names of villages and even hamlets. However, the map does not mention either Wonokerto Wetan or Wonokerto Kulon, although it does include the surrounding villages of Api-api, Pecakaran, Bebel, Tratebang, and Rowoyoso. But the map clearly points out that—at the time of the cartographical survey (1840s?)—there were several places where present-day Wonokerto Wetan and Wonokerto Kulon are located which had already developed into settlement areas. The northern part of the village extending down to the coast line was covered with a coastal forest, named Sekamal.

Who were the inhabitants of nineteenth century Wonokerto? The Wonokerto Kulon village map, published in 1937, indicates that the largest part of the village agricultural lands consisted of tanah kongsi, lands inherited from the first settlers who had cleared the forest and wastelands (Scheltema, 1985: 416); and that the bulk of these lands belonged to people from Wonokerto Wetan. This would seem to be pretty irrefutable evidence that inhabitants of nineteenth-century Wonokerto Wetan were the descendants of the village founders. They were peasants and shareholders of agricultural lands on the west bank of the Mrican River. Conversely, the inhabitants of nineteenth-century Wonokerto Kulon were new migrants. Present-day inhabitants of Wonokerto Kulon recount that their great-great-grandparents were people who came from the southern part of Pekalongan where they still have many distant relatives. The new migrants came to Wonokerto, settled along the west bank of Mrican River, and made a living from fishing because as migrants they had no right to exploit the village agricultural lands.

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4 Topographische Kaart der Residentie Pekalongan, 1863.
5 Kaart van de Res. Pekalongan, 1871; Topographische Kaart der Residentie Pekalongan, 1921.
6 Until the mid-twentieth century, the bulk of the agricultural lands in the village was still owned by people of Wonokerto Wetan or their descendants. Big landowners in Wonokerto Kulon up to the 1950s were; Nursalim with 18.081 ha; Haji Nur 5.832 ha; Mahim 2.245 ha; Kardani son of Mahim 4.511 ha; Dargan 7.411 ha; Haji Sukur 6.249 ha; Taman 3.617 ha; Kusnari 3.682 ha; Tasiwin 2.079 ha; Salaman 2.863 ha, and Sumo 7.907 ha (Buku Leter C Desa Wonokerto Kulon). They were people or descendants of people from Wonokerto Wetan. Together they owned almost half of the agricultural land in Wonokerto Kulon.
Wonokerto Wetan then was the nuclear village; the home of the descendants of the village founders, with rights over the village agricultural lands. Its counterpart on the other side of the river, Wonokerto Kulon, was at that time a marginal village, a new settlement of landless migrants. Wonokerto Wetan was also the home of the families who claimed the right to rule the village, both politically and economically. Wonokerto Kulon was the village of commoners. Later on Wonokerto Kulon developed into a fishing community with its own village administration, while Wonokerto Wetan continued to plough its agricultural furrow. It is still unclear when exactly the government granted Wonokerto Kulon the official status as an independent village. In each case in the early years of the twentieth century Wonokerto Kulon already had a village head and its own primary school (Sekolah Angka Loro). Perhaps the status was granted some time in the second half of the nineteenth century after the 1854 Regerings-reglement had been issued, by which time the fishing population on the west bank of Mrican River had grown considerably. “Since the time of our great-great-grandparents”, Wonokerto Kulon villagers like to say, “Wonokerto Kulon people have been fishermen. Neither land farmers or fishpond farmers”.

Although it was an independent village, at the end of the nineteenth century, Wonokerto Kulon was not yet the centre of sea fishery in Wiradesa District. According to the villagers, the hub of fishing tended to be located in Mayangan village, in the town of Wiradesa, 4 kilometres south of Wonokerto. As one of them said: “In those days, Mrican River was wide and deep enough for a mayang to sail up to Mayangan village in Wiradesa. At that time it was Mayangan which was the centre of sea-fishing in the district. The fish market was located there. The fishermen over there worked with payang seines aboard mayang. That was how the name Mayangan came into being”. There are no historical records which directly confirm the villagers’ story about the role of Mayangan village, but the 1863 annual report of the Residency points out that rivers in the Pekalongan area were big enough to allow mayang of four koyang in size to sail far upstream. The 1921 Residency topographical map also clearly indicates that indeed until virtually the close of the nineteenth century the Mrican River was a gracious waterway some twenty metres wide on average, which allowed twelve meters long mayang boats to reach Wiradesa from the Java Sea. It would be quite logical to assume that up to end of the last century Mayangan village did serve as sea-fishing centre in the district. The village was right in the heart of the

7 The school was opened by the government sometime in the late 1900s or early 1910s, before the establishment of the Mino Soyo fishing organization.

8 Topographische Kaart Residentie Pekalongan, Blad XIII A en C, 1921.
town of Wiradesa, and the fishermen could bring their catch directly to the town market without needing any further transportation. Compared to Wonokerto, Mayangan offered more advantages to the fishing business.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Mrican River was dammed off from the Sengkarang River, its main water source. The project was carried out to protect the town of Wiradesa and its environs from the threat of floods which had become more menacing because of the deforestation in the headwaters area of the Sengkarang. This effectively meant that the Mrican River was cut off from its main water supply. The gracious waterway shrank to a small stream and, as time passed its banks were systematically occupied by housing. This spelled the death knell for the fishing business in Mayangan village. Nowadays when people are digging in Mayangan, for house foundations or for a well, they regularly find large pieces of planks or beam which were once clearly parts of mayang.

As the Mrican River lost its main water supply, the district sea-fishing centre had to be moved downstream to the point where the river was still navigable; to Wonokerto Kulon. Even this move closer to the sea did not mean that it was a simple process for the fishermen to sail their boats from there. Deprived of a good water supply, Mrican River no longer had enough force to push aside the sands which were constantly piled up in its estuary by sea currents. The only way to keep the Mrican River navigable was by connecting its lower course to another big river. A canal, named the Kali Anyar (New River), was dug for that purpose. It connects the Mrican River with the Tratebang River and then with the large Sepait River, just half a kilometre before this last enters the Java Sea. The Mrican River works were carried out between 1905-1908 by labourers who were drafted in from Kandangserang District and were under the authority of an overseer from Wiradesa nicknamed Tanggul (Dyke). Tanggul took residence in Wonokerto Kulon, bought a fair chunk of agricultural lands and fishponds from Wonokerto Wetan people after the work was completed and built the first brick house in the village in 1932.

When Van Kampen (1909: 30) collected data on Indonesian fishing technology, the centre of sea-fishing in the Wiradesa District was no longer at Mayangan but at Wonokerto. When data were collected for the purpose of mapping the village in 1913, Kali Anyar was

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9 In the second half of the nineteenth century hundreds of hectares of forest in the southern Pekalongan area had been cleared to provide room for coffee, tea and rubber plantations (BPS Pekalongan, 1995: 194; Van Schendel, 2000: 92).
10 If we visit the town of Wiradesa now, we will find that the Mrican River is a dying watercourse, resembling garbage dump rather than a river. It would be really hard to believe that less than a century ago that pathetic brook only four metres wide and no more than a metre deep was a grand, navigable waterway.
11 Tanggul owned 11.6 hectares of land in Wonokerto Kulon (Desa Wonokerto Kulon, Buku Letter C).
already completed. The map notes a fish market on a piece of land, close to the confluence of the Kali Anyar with the Mrican River, called Rumah Kongsi (fish trading hall), which later, in 1918, was transformed into the Mino Soyo fish auction\textsuperscript{12}. Nowadays the lower part of the Mrican River, that between the Kali Anyar junction and the sea, has degenerated into a narrow, shallow watercourse and its estuary is totally blocked by sandbanks. But among the villagers the memory that a long time ago the fishermen entered the sea not through the Sepait estuary but through the so-called Moro Lawas (Old Estuary) is still alive.

At the turn of the century, Wonokerto Kulon had become the centre of sea fishery in the Wiradesa District and many people from other villages came there to work. Boat owners from Bebel and Mayangan in the south moored their boats in Wonokerto Kulon. Labourers from other villages also came to Wonokerto Kulon to take up jobs as crew members. Perhaps half of the crew members, whose total number was around 1,000, were from outside Wonokerto Kulon.

It was from the village that sea fish was distributed to markets all over the Regency. According to the villagers, at that time fish trading was carried out by local traders, big and small. It was virtually monopolized by local traders from Wonokerto Wetan, Api-api, and Wonokerto Kulon villages, mostly women. The first transaction from the fishermen to the traders was strictly in the hands of big fish traders (jedhot). They could control the fish supply by paying advances or loans to the fishermen who were then obliged to hand over their catch. From the hands of the jedhot the fish was sold to smaller traders, either from Wonokerto and surrounding villages or from further away. These small traders processed the fish into cured fish (pindang), fermented fish (peda) or dried fish (gereh) to be sold in markets as far away as Wonopringgo and Kajen—15 and 25 kilometres distant from Wonokerto. To reach the distant markets the fish traders used a rented horse cart or jumped on board of the sugar-cane lorries\textsuperscript{13}.

Although the majority of fishermen were from Wonokerto Kulon and the fish was landed and sold in the village, it proved to be difficult for the Wonokerto Kulon fishermen to become masters in their own domain. People from the east bank of Mrican River kept trying to control Wonokerto Kulon, both in the village administration and in the fishing business. The position of village head at that time was held by Haji Tojib who was the scion of a Wonokerto Wetan land-owner family. Actually, ever since the last decades of

\textsuperscript{12} Desa Wonokerto Kulon, 1937.

\textsuperscript{13} In the second half of the nineteenth century the Sragi and Wonopringgo sugar factories built a network of lorry tracks to connect the factories to the sugar-cane fields spread all over the lowland areas of Pekalongan Regency. In the north, the track reached Bebel village, south of Wonokerto Kulon, in the south it reached Wonopringgo (Topographische Kaart Residentie Pekalongan, 1921).
the nineteenth century, Wonokerto Kulon had not lacked rich boat owners and prominent public figures. One example is Belong, a third generation Wonokerto Kulon villager. His grandfather was a farmer from Masin District, south of Pekalongan, who moved to Wonokerto Kulon and became a fisherman in the mid-nineteenth century. Belong’s father, Satimin, was able to go a step higher than his father, by becoming a rich boat owner in the village with enough money to finance his pilgrimage to Mecca—a journey on which he died. Like his father, Belong was a rich man. He owned two or three mayang and was a prominent figure among Wonokerto Kulon villagers. Belong’s brother, Rasdan, who married a big fish trader, was a rich boat owner too. In the 1910s when a fishing organization was established among the fishermen, Belong, however, was given only an obscure position in the daily management of the organization. He resented, like other fishermen from Wonokerto Kulon, to be in an inferior position in the Mino Soyo and tried to break the domination of people from the East Bank. However, during the whole of the colonial period, Wonokerto Kulon fishermen would only be second fiddle in the board. The top positions were occupied by people from the east bank of the Mrican River; Haji Ibrahim, a rich landowner and boat owner from Api-api: Haji Sjarfat, a boat owner and boat builder from Wonokerto Wetan; and Haji Tojib, the village head.

The uneasy relationship between Belong and Wonokerto Kulon fishermen on the one hand and Haji Ibrahim and other prominent people from the east bank of the Mrican River on the other marked the beginning of a long history of competition over the political and economic control of the fishing village. As we will see, until the end of the twentieth century the positions of village head and manager of the fishing organization were invariably disputed between people of the west and east banks of Mrican River.

**Mino Soyo and development of Wonokerto sea fishery**

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the recommendation of the Declining Welfare Commission that a credit service institution be established among the fishermen materialized. Under the initiative of the Controleur of Tegal Regency, F.W.M. de Rijk van der Gracht, native fishing organizations were established as socio-economic vehicles to improve the welfare of the fishermen (Besseling, 1913). The first of these, named Misoyo Mino was founded by Tegal fishermen, in August 1912. Two years later, on June 24, 1914, the organization obtained legal status as a vereniging (DEZ, 1941: 38). Soon similar organizations were established in Pernalang, Pekalongan, Batang, Brebes, and Indramayu. In Pekalongan Regency the organization, named Mino Soyo, was established in Wonokerto Kulon, instead of in the city of Pekalongan itself, most likely because at
that time the sea-fishing business in Wonokerto had surpassed that in Pekalongan. In October 1, 1918, Mino Soyo obtained legal status (DEZ, 1941: 38). Its working area covered the villages of Wonokerto Kulon, Wonokerto Wetan, Api-api, Bebel, Mayangan, Jambean, Tratebang, and Pekalongan.

The plan to establish Mino Soyo in Wonokerto Kulon was criticized by boat owners and fish traders from Bebel and Mayangan. Apparently they were aware that a fishing organization could become the centre of politico-economic power. If there was to be a fishing organization they would have liked to have had it in their own villages so that they would have an opportunity to share in the power. Their protest was, however, set aside by the authorities as there were good reasons to locate Mino Soyo in Wonokerto Kulon. Ecologically, since the Merica River had been deprived its main water supply, it would be difficult for the fishermen to sail further south to reach Bebel or Mayangan. Socially, it was undesirable to have the commercial centre of sea-fishing outside Wonokerto Kulon where the majority of the fishermen of the district resided. So, the organization was established in Wonokerto Kulon.

In its attempt to rescue the fishermen from exploitation by money-lenders and fish traders, the new fishing organization offered two major services: fish trading and credit service. Later in the 1930s, other services like a shop for fishing tackle and a processing facility were opened. There was of course a price to pay for these services. After Mino Soyo was established, the fishermen were obliged to sell their catch at the Mino Soyo fish auction; fish trading outside the market was declared illegal. There is no longer an official document extant in which Mino Soyo was appointed by the government to control fish trading in its working area. However, even if this right was not official, who would have dared oppose the government-sponsored organization openly? De Rijk van der Gracht apparently was able to convince the Volkscredietbank in Tegal to lend capital to the new fishing organizations to run the fish trading and to start the credit service. From that bank Mino Soyo received a loan of 18,000 guilders as starting capital. Apart from this financial support from the Volkscredietbank, Mino Soyo also received eight hectares of government lands on which to erect the organization’s headquarters and fish auction and to provide the fishermen with an open place on which to dry their nets and tackle and repair their fishing equipment. Mino Soyo would provide the fishermen with a loan to

14 ARA, Memorie van Overgave Resident van Pekalongan 1932.
15 Until the 1960s, the payang seine used by the fishermen was all made of natural fibres which had to be dried right after it had been used on a fishing trip, otherwise it would deteriorate. Since most of their nets and tackle were large-sized, a payang seine could be 300 metres long, a wide open space was needed for its drying.
buy a new boat or to repair their old boat at an annual interest of 10 per cent for an unspecified repayment period. In turn the fishermen were obliged to sell their catch at the bidding held at the official auction and to hand over 10 per cent of the catch value to repay their loan and another 5 per cent for the auction fee. Either because the fishermen regarded the organization as their own or because the organization had sufficient power to compel the fishermen to sell their catch at the auction, the organization was quite successful in running its business. Dutifully the fishermen brought—the larger part—of their catch to the auction. The scheme seemed to have run quite well, as within two years Minoo Soyo was able to settle its debt to the Bank and to run the credit service with its own working capital.

I could not find any data on the number of boats among Pekalongan fishermen between 1905 and 1929, but it seems that between 1905 and 1918, after which year until Minoo Soyo was able to provide soft loans to help the fishermen to buy new boats or to repair their old ones, the number of boats had actually declined. In 1905 there were 584 fishing boats in Pekalongan and Wonokerto, while in 1930 almost half of them had gone: only 295 boats remained in use among the fishermen. In the early 1920s, the number of boats seems to have been lower than in 1930 but as Minoo Soyo began to give credit to the fishermen, boat building was given a real boost. Part of the explanation would seem to be in the fact that Minoo Soyo’s loan to the fishermen was too limited to cover the whole cost of the boats, but it was enough to help the fishermen to settle the initial payment. In 1939 the fishermen bought twenty-four brand new boats (eighteen large ones, one medium and five small) and nineteen second-hand boats (four large, one medium and fourteen small). In 1940 they bought fourteen large and seventeen small new boats. This was over and above the four large and twenty-five small second-hand boats which they bought as well (DEZ, 1941: 58-59). From the number of boats, I estimate the number of fishermen in Pekalongan and Wiradesa to have increased between 1930 to 1940 from around 1,700 to around 2,00016.

16 A mayang boat, required at least 12 fishermen to man, a kolek seven fishermen, and a jukung three fishermen. The figures produced from this calculation are better seen as an estimate of the number required to run the fishing fleet rather than an estimate of the actual number of fishermen.

[Page 78]
Table 14. Fishing fleet of Wonokerto and Pekalongan 1930-1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mayang (Large)</th>
<th>Kolek (Medium)</th>
<th>Jukung (Small)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No. of Fishermen (estimated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>2,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>2,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>2,060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: ARA, Memorie van Overgave Resident van Pekalongan 1932; DEZ, 1941: 57

Loans to the fishermen were regularly provided by Mino Soyo and it seems that the repayment rate was quite good. The records of the organization shows no bad debts among its clients. This achievement was related to two factors. First, the total amount of loans provided in each year never exceeded 10 per cent of the total value of the annual catch of the fishermen. Second, the repayment sum was directly deducted at a rate of 10 per cent from the fishermen’s catch each time they sold their haul at the Mino Soyo auction.

Table 15. Credit service Mino Soyo, 1937 - 1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount of loan (f)</th>
<th>To buy new boats (f)</th>
<th>Loan repayment (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>3,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>5,452</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEZ, 1941: 89

As my data on the annual catch of Wonokerto/Pekalongan fishermen’s annual catch in the 1920s/1930s are limited, it is difficult to make a complete year to year calculation of the effect of the increased number of boats on the total catch of the fleet. Generally speaking, there are reasons to believe that the growing numbers of boats did not lead to an increase in the total catch of the fleet or in the catch of individual boats. In the 1930s the total fishermen’s catch was around 1,100 tons annually. In 1937 the catch increased rather sharply to 1,700 tons (which was probably caused by the twelve-year
ecological cycle of El Ninó which in effect jacked up the fish natural stock), but in the following years the annual catch returned to 1,100 tons again. In 1933, on average each fisherman received an income of forty-nine guilders, which dropped to thirty-six guilders in 1938, to increase slightly again to thirty-nine guilders in 1939, and to rise yet higher to forty-two guilders in 1940 —fluctuations which were caused by an increase in the price of fish not by an increase in the catch.

Table 16. Annual catch 1919 - 1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ton</th>
<th>Value (f)</th>
<th>Price/ ton</th>
<th>Catch/ Fisherman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>(1,000)</td>
<td>60,200</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>(1,450)</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>(940)</td>
<td>56,365</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>(1,436)</td>
<td>87,607</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>(49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1,158</td>
<td>79,596</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>(43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>61,675</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>(32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>1,236</td>
<td>69,670</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>(36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>101,400</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>1,091</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>77,600</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,089</td>
<td>86,200</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEZ, 1924; 1941: 50-51; ARA, Memorie van Overgave Gouverneur van Midden Java 1937;
Note: -Total catch in 1919-1921 were estimation, based on assumed price of fish f 60 per ton.
-Annual catch per fishermen in 1933-1936 are estimations, based on the assumption that in 1933 the number of fishermen was 1,850 and increased by fifty annually in the following years.

Competition over fish among the fishermen in the 1930s seems to have been stiff. Hoping to get a larger share, the fishermen increased the number of their boats from 295 in 1930 to 353 in 1938, and to 363 in 1940. This was a forlorn hope, however, because as the natural stock of the fish remained stable, more boats did not bring a larger catch. Data from the closing years of the 1930s also show that the declining catch was divided unequally between fishermen on large mayang and those with smaller sized boats. Almost 40 per cent of the fishermen’s annual catch between 1938 and 1940 was landed by mayang which made up only 25 per cent of the fishing fleet. On average each big mayang landed seven tons of catch in 1940, while other, smaller, types of fishing boat
landed only 1.5 tons.

Table 17. Annual catch according to type of boat, 1930 - 1940

| Year | Mayang boats | | | Smaller boats | | |
|------|--------------|------|------|-----------------|------|
|      | Total catch  | NoFB| Catch/FB | Total catch     | NoFB| Catch/FB |
|      | Ton | f    | Ton | f   | Ton | f   | Ton | f  |
| 1937 | 1,000 | 58,100 | -   | -   | 701 | 42,300 | -   | -   |
| 1938 | 400  | 27,300 | 88  | 4.5 | 310 | 691  | 25,700 | 356 | 2.6 | 97  |
| 1939 | 400  | 29,700 | 96  | 4.2 | 309 | 788  | 46,100 | 239 | 3.3 | 193 |
| 1940 | 700  | 38,700 | 99  | 7.0 | 390 | 389  | 37,600 | 264 | 1.5 | 142 |

Source: DEZ, 1941: 54-55

In discussing these figures of the annual catches, one fact should be borne in mind. The official figures relate only to the fish which were actually delivered to the Mino Soyo fish auction. However, the introduction of a fish auction in Wonokerto had not stop the fishermen’s transactions with petty traders. Of course, they were aware that such practices were against Mino Soyo regulations, but selling part of the catch outside the fish auction was highly lucrative as they could pocket the revenue from these sales without paying the 5 to 15 per cent levy to Mino Soyo. This strategy was often resorted to, especially when the catch was small. Quite apart from this trading on the side, it had been a tradition among fishermen to save a small amount of *iwak lawuhan* (side-dish fish) out of the boat’s catch to be taken home. Sometimes, at their wives’ request the fishermen took the *lawuhan* home, but mostly they sold it and brought home the cash. Finally, it had been a common practice too among deck-hands to steal part of their boat’s catch to top up their income. Obviously they could not sell the stolen fish at the fish auction where it would be registered and reported to the boat owner but selling outside the auction was easy as there were many petty traders who wanted to get fish at a price lower than that offered by the big fish traders in the auction. The petty traders, some of them deck-hands’ wives, usually waited along the banks of the Mrican River to intercept the fishing boats before they entered into the Mino Soyo compound. What these unofficial sales amounted to in the 1930s is hard to measure. My observations in the 1980s and 1990s have led me to an estimate that approximately 40 per cent of the
fishermen’s catch was sold outside the fish auction\textsuperscript{17}. In the 1930s the rate must have been lower considering that at those times Mino Soyo had a strong control over fish trading in the village and also because the fishermen’s catch mainly consisted of fish which was not easy to sell out side the auction in large quantity.

If we estimate that 10 per cent of the catch was sold outside the fish auction and add the number to make an estimate of Wonokerto fishermen’s annual revenue in the late 1930s, the result is as follows:

Table 18. Average annual revenue of \textit{mayang} fishermen (in guilders)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fishing boat</th>
<th>Boat owner</th>
<th>Deck-hands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tabel 18 shows that in late 1930s Pekalongan \textit{mayang} deck-hands received an annual income of between twelve to fifteen guilders; while the owner earned 97 to 122 guilders. Compared to the 1900s, the annual revenue of Wonokerto/Pekalongan fishermen’s annual revenue in the late 1930s had gone down: the revenue of \textit{mayang} owners had declined from 269 guilders to 122 guilders: while the revenue of deck-hands dropped from twenty-seven to fifteen guilders. Average annual income of the fishermen, that is regardless of their type of boat and position, dropped from fifty-three to forty-seven guilders. Compared to the income earned by sugar plantation labourers and peasants who lived around sugar plantations, the income of Wonokerto fishermen in the late 1930s was lower. Survey conducted by the Koeliebudget Commissie in 1938 point out that on average garden labourers, the lowest level of workmen, on a sugar plantations earned 4.01 guilders in wages per month or 48.12 guilders per annum, while the peasant got 6.03 guilders per month or 72.36 guilders per annum (Koeliebudget Commissie, 1941: 47; Huizenga, 1958: 74; Locher-Scholten, 2000: 77).

\textsuperscript{17} As I was intrigued by the fact that not all of their catch was sold in the auction, in 1986 and 1989 I observed the fishermen closely in an effort to figure out their actual catch. The result was that the fishermen sold between 30 to 60 per cent of their catch outside the auction. When I went to confirm these amount with fish auction officials and Mino Soyo staff members, they gave a lower estimate of 25 per cent. The fishermen themselves estimated the average number was around 40 per cent. So I opted for the fishermen’s estimate. Although selling the catch outside the auction has been a tradition among the fishermen, the 40 per cent rate was only reached in the 1980s when big fish traders lost interest in the fish auction and the fishermen started to catch shrimp which is small in bulk but fetches a good price (see Ch. 9).
For ecological reasons the 1930s were a difficult time for the fishermen. Catches were not easy to come by. Among the fishermen stories abound claiming that some skippers possessed *ilmu pengirutan*, magical knowledge, which enabled them to produce meals out of the flotsam and jetsam of the sea to feed their starving crew members. They also could produce fish out of garbage. Apparently the fishermen did not relate their declining income to overfishing, which was the inevitable outcome of their strenuous competition to catch more fish. Confronted with bad catches the fishermen turned for advice to numerologists, *tukang petung*, to find out what was ‘meta-technologically’ wrong with their boats and to determine when to sail on auspicious days or hours only.

Although they were at a low ebb compared to other sectors of the economy of Java, Wonokerto sea fishery was doing fairly well in the 1930s. Struck by the depression of the 1930s, people in Pekalongan Regency faced hard times. Together with Lasem and Banyumas, the Pekalongan batik industry had an annual production of 25 to 30 million guilders between 1920 and 1930; during the depression this dropped dramatically to 5 or 6 million guilders. In the first year of the crisis alone, 600 batik makers in Pekalongan went bankrupt and 5,000 labourers lost their jobs. Since the collapse of the batik industry was dragging its supporting businesses such as batik trading, batik equipment making, wax and resin factories down into bankruptcy, the number of those who lost their jobs was far higher. In the agricultural sector, thirteen out of seventeen sugar factories in Pekalongan Residency were put out of business by the depression (Van Schaik, 1996: 49). Among them were the Kalimati sugar factory in Batang District and the Gondang sugar factory in Wonopringgo District—some 15 kilometres south of Wiradesa. It was reported that in 1935 the factory buildings of Kalimati had fallen into disrepair and that its machinery was sold. Sea-fishing was not much affected by the depression. When businesses in other sectors were going bankrupt, the fishermen steadily increased their the number of boats from 295 in 1930 to 363 in 1940. In the mid-1930s, Mino Soyo built a permanent fish auction hall, a warehouse, and an office compound to replace the old, bamboo structure, and not long after that it started a fish processing facility with twenty ovens to make broiled fish (*pindang*) (DEZ, 1941: 31). Even in Pemalang, in 1937 the fishermen were able to buy a motor boat (DEZ, 1941: 32). When thousands of people in other businesses lost their jobs, the number of fishermen in Wonokerto and Pekalongan

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18 So affluent was the Pekalongan batik community in the 1920s that it able to publish a local newspaper named *Bintang Pekalongan*. But in the 1930s the newspaper had folded, presumably swept away by the depression.

19 ARA, Memorie van Overgave Gouverneur van Midden Java 1932, 1937.

20 ARA, Memorie van Overgave Gouverneur van Midden Java 1937.
kept growing from year to year in the 1930s. Based on the data available, it looks as if the only impact of the depression on the fishing community was a decline in fish price due to the decreasing purchasing power. In 1934 the price was sixty-eight guilders per ton, in 1936 it went down to fifty-six guilders, but in the next few years the price started to go up until eventually in 1940 it surpassed the 1934 price at seventy-nine guilders per ton.

**Mino Soyo and growing social differentiation**

As a credit service institution Mino Soyo turned out to be quite successful. By controlling the fish trade and opening a credit service, Mino Soyo had freed the fishermen from their dependency on money-lenders whom they replaced as capital providers. Wealth which was previously siphoned off by the money-lenders began to accumulate in the community itself. Although the fishermen had to given 5 per cent of their catch to Mino Soyo as a bidding fee and paid 10 per cent interest on their loans, the money basically remained within their community. It seems fair to say that it was because of Mino Soyo that the fishermen were not much affected by the economic crisis of the 1930s: if during those difficult years the fishermen had still had to rely on money-lenders to find capital, they likely would have run into severe difficulties as because of the economic crisis capital was hard to come by.

As I said before, it were ecological rather than economic problems which the fishermen experienced in the 1930s: catches were poor as a consequence of overfishing. The process of the declining catches along the northern coast of Java had already set in since the 1870s. In spite of governmental efforts to establish fishing organizations and credit services to fishermen, in 1940 the catch landed on the northern coast of Java was only 131,253 tons, around half the annual catch landed in the 1860s when it reached 260,000 ton (BPS, 1957; Krisnandhi, 1969). The credit service was able to help the fishermen to solve their problem of capital supply, but it did not solve the dilemma of the poor catch. Inexorably it made the catch poorer, because easy access to capital enabled the fishermen to buy more boats, thereby increasing their pressure on the already overexploited fish stock. It would have been ecologically sound if the fishermen had allowed the fish stock to recover by reducing their efforts. The crux of the problem was that establishing a credit service to rescue the fishermen from the claws of the money-lenders was far easier than introducing regulations to make them reduce their fishing activities. Maybe the government officials had hoped that freeing the fishermen from the money-lenders by providing a fair credit service would relieve the fishermen of financial problems, which would in effect induce the fishermen to reduce their fishing effort. This
idea, however, is totally unrealistic. It ignored the basic fact that sea fish is common property and that the main factor which drives the fishermen to maximize their fishing effort is not pressure on the investment side, but the individualistic calculation that if they did not catch as much fish as they could for their own benefit, other fishermen would steal a march on them (Anderson, 1977). What the fishermen would have needed to improve their economic condition was not just easy access to fresh capital but fishing regulations as well. Regulations which would restrict them from indulging in strenuous activities to avoid overfishing, to shield them from the tragedy of the commons.

As a fishing organization Mino Soyo was unaware of or unable to organize the fishermen to avoid the tragedy of the commons. It did not take any measure to regulate sea-fishing with a view to achieving sustainability. In fact it did the exact opposite. Through its credit service Mino Soyo allowed the fishermen to intensify their efforts and supported them in their belief that low catches could be compensated by acquiring more boats which could reach the abundant stock of fish further off-shore. Even if Mino Soyo had been aware of the danger of overfishing, it probably would not have come up with the idea of regulating sea fishing. For one thing, enforcing such a regulation is a hard and complicated proposition—and such a task was simply beyond the capability of Mino Soyo. Leaving aside the legal angle and coming down to a practical level, fishing controls would not have been in Mino Soyo’s own interest. As an institution deriving the greater part of its revenue from fish trading, Mino Soyo’s main interest was neither in the individual fisherman’s productivity nor in the way the fishermen obtained their catch, but in the fishermen’s total catch. It was not really the concern of Mino Soyo how the fishermen obtained their catch, as long as they kept delivering it to the fish auction. Any suggestions about reducing the number of boats would only have triggered off animosity towards Mino Soyo, because the fishermen would certainly regard any such suggestion as a serious threat to their livelihood. A far more plausible assumption was that, by letting the fishermen do whatever they wanted to do with the fish stock Mino Soyo would not only be able to collect a steady flow of fees, but could also expect a steady number of clients for their credit service as there would be an endless demand for more and better boats.

Another consequence of the establishment of Mino Soyo was growing social differentiation among the fishermen. Although it bore the label of being a fishermen’s organization, membership of Mino Soyo was exclusively reserved for boat owners and fish traders; deck-hands did not need to apply (Besseling, 1913: 9). The upshot of this policy was to deepen the social divide between deck-hands and boat owners, not only
because boat owners now had the support of a government-sponsored institution but also, because of their membership, the boat owners had sufficient financial support to expand their business. The differentiation did not stop at the growing gulf between deck-hands and boat owners. Even among the boat owners, Mino Soyo created a small elite which consisted of the organization managers.

Mino Soyo became quite a powerful organization. Economically, it held an administrative monopoly on the fish trade and acted as the sole official capital accumulator and source of credit for the fishermen. Politically, it had the full backing of the government. Although organizations such as Mino Soyo were basically designed purely as fishermen’s organizations, run by fishermen for the benefit of the fishermen, from their establishment until the 1940s, the management board of the organizations included many high-ranking government officials. Only at the secondary management level were local boat owners and fish traders given positions as daily managers. In Wonokert o, it was the Pekalongan Regent himself who assumed the position of chairman of Mino Soyo.

### Figure 6. Mino Soyo Management Board, 1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>R. Adipati Ario Soerio, Regent of Pekalongan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>R.M. Herman Kartowisastro, Head of Wiradesa district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management board</td>
<td>W.J. van Haeften, Ass. Resident of Pekalongan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R. Soenario, Regency Secretary of Pekalongan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J.J.M. Visser, Controller of Pekalongan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R. Mohammad, Retired Head of Wiradesa district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>M. Amislamet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily managers</td>
<td>H. Ibrahim, boat owner (Api-api village)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wage, boat owner (Wonokerto Kulon village)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEZ, 1941: 42

The upper-level management was obviously not involved in running the business; there were too many other more important things for them to do rather than spend their daily working hours in running a fishing organization. Those tasks were performed by the administrator and the daily managers, who were drawn from the well-to-do members of the fishing community. M. Amislamet was an official in the district office; H. Ibrahim, a rich land and boat owner from Api-api village who had sat on the board since the 1910s; and Wage a boat owner of Wonokerto Kulon. Apart from these persons, there was also
Sami’an, head of Wonokerto Wetan, Belong and some other boat owners. Apparently the high-ranking officials did not reap any direct benefits from their involvement in the organization. As government officials, their motivation was to implement the government’s policy of promoting the welfare of the fishermen. However, by joining the management board of the organization, these officials had lent considerable political support to the organization —or rather to the daily managers— to do whatever they deemed necessary to achieve the goals of the organization. At the practical level, it was the daily managers who decided how the fish trading of Mino Soyo should be run, how credit was to be made available, to whom, and how much. Their position was not unlike that of the Chinese and Arab capital owners and fish traders prior to the establishment of Mino Soyo, except that the Chinese and Arabs controlled their own private capital while the daily managers controlled publicly owned capital.

The prominent role of the local elite in the management was the major reason that the credit available at Mino Soyo was distributed unevenly. The largest portion went to the elite, the rest went to boat owners and fish traders, and deck-hands were left with a few crumbs. The largest portion the revenue of Mino Soyo was spent to cover the managers’ salaries; 60 per cent in 1937; 78 per cent in 1938; 79 per cent in 1939, and 74 per cent in 1940. The rest was used to cover operational costs or added to the capital reserve. Apparently not one penny of the revenue was distributed among Mino Soyo members.

Table 19. Annual Revenue and Expenditure, Mino Soyo 1937-1940 (in guilders)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1937</th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Trading</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>4,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Interest</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>4,700</td>
<td>4,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Expenditure |       |        |        |
| Manager salaries | 3,500 | 3,600  | 3,700  | 3,400  |
| Material cost | 400   | 400    | 300    | 700    |
| Capital reserve | 400   | 200    | 300    | 900    |
| Other         | 200    | 300    | 400    | 300    |
| Total         | 4,500  | 4,500  | 4,700  | 5,300  |
| Profit        | 1,300  | 100    | -      | 600    |

Source: DEZ, 1941: 64-65
The beneficiaries of the credit service of Mino Soyo were mainly boat owners (who used it to buy new boats and equipment) and fish traders (who needed the money to invest in merchandise). Just as with the rest of the money these loans were not distributed evenly among the members of Mino Soyo as the larger share of the credit went to the rich boat owners, while small owners were only eligible for small loans.

Table 20. Distribution of credit to boat owners, 1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of loan</th>
<th>No. of creditor</th>
<th>Sum of loan (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f 1 to f 10</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 11 to f 25</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 26 to f 50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 51 to f 100</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 101 to f 150</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 151 to f 200</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 201 to f 250</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 251 to f 300</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 301 and higher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>237</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,432</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEZ, 1941: 84-85

Who were the fifteen boat owners (6 per cent of the debtors) receiving over 101 guilders each and together 53 per cent of the total loans from Mino Soyo? They must have been the rich boat owners who had sufficient collateral or boat owners who had good relations with the managers of the organization or perhaps the managers themselves. As far as the villagers nowadays remember, that was how credit in Mino Soyo used to be provided, with the lion’s share going to managers and rich boat owners.

The conditions for extending credit to fish traders were different in that these loans could be given on a daily basis. Every time the fish traders did not have enough money to pay for the fishermen’s catch, they could come to Mino Soyo for a loan to be repaid the following day\(^\text{21}\). In 1940 Mino Soyo received 3,256 requests for commercial credit (an average of ten per day), and a total amount of 10,456 guilders in loans was paid out (DEZ, 1941: 88). It is likely that the distribution was similar to that among boat owners with the biggest portion falling into the hands of big fish traders; simply because

\[^{21}\text{Fish trading in Wonokerto as well as in other fishing villages in Southeast Asia (Mubyarto, Lukman Soetrisno, and Michael Dove, 1986; Antunnes, 1995; Illio and Jaime B. Polo, 1990; Szanton 1971; Szanton, 1972) was traditionally regarded as a woman's domain. Most of the traders were women. Up to the 1960s most of the big Wonokerto fish traders, \textit{jedhot}, were women; wives of boat owners. It has only been since the 1970s that men in Wonokerto began to be more actively involved in fish trading and had encroached upon the position of the female \textit{jedhot}.}\]
it was they who were actively engaged in the official Mino Soyo’s auction. The petty traders normally had to buy their commodities from the big fish traders or obtain it through direct ‘illegal’ buying from the fishermen outside the auction hall.

Even without the credit, the big fish traders had already benefited from Mino Soyo. In praise of De Rijk van der Gracht’s initiative of establishing fishing organizations, Besseling (1913: 6) speaks about trading under the administration of the organization as a free market. Through the auctioning of the catch, the organizations were supposed to have introduced a fair market mechanism to the fishermen and allowed them to raise a higher price than what they would have obtained from traders to whom they were indebted. However, I am rather sceptical about Besseling’s view of free trading. Fish trading was—and is—a lucrative business. It is in the trading that the big money is made, not in the fishing itself. The larger the share of fish a trader could control, the larger the profit she would make. Among traders there was a constant competition over their market shares—whether by bidding or not. Once a trader or a group of traders had taken control, they would fight fiercely to keep it from falling into other traders’ hands. As Wonokerto villagers recall, bidding in the fish auction never weakened the oligopolistic position of big fish traders, the jedhot. When Mino Soyo was established, they simply joined the organization and maintained their control of the market. Until the 1980s, most big traders in Wonokerto were the wives of the organization managers. It was they who filled the auction hall and fixed the price among themselves. The large number of financially less solvent and less well-connected traders had no option but to buy their fish from the jedhot at the fixed, high price, or purchase the side catch and stolen fish outside the auction hall, at a risk of being accused of running illegal trading and being chased off the premises by the auction officials. No doubt, as Besseling asserts, the presence of the organization had been of benefit to the fishermen as they were able to obtain a better price for their fish; now that they were freed from their indebtedness. On the other hand, the jedhot may have lost their role as usurious money-lenders, but the cooperative had now provided them with an official place to carry out their business and had not prevented them to control the market price.

Social differentiation in Wonokerto rapidly increased in the early decades of twentieth century. Deck-hands had to rub along on low incomes, but a small number of boat owners and the village elite grew wealthier. In 1860s, all Javanese boat owners in Pekalongan possessed only one boat per person—only the most wealthy Chinese owned more than one, but by the 1930s, some owners in Wonokerto had several boats. H. Syafaat and Dhe Wajem each had twelve mayang; and Belong and some other boat
owners each had three boats. They were all far outstripped by the richest owner H. Ibrahim, with twenty mayang. With his wealth he built the first brick house on the east bank of Mrican River. So rich was H. Ibrahim that it was said that he piled up so many coins, that they turned green and were covered with verdigris. To clean his coins H. Ibrahim had to put them in a big rice container and wash them with tamarind juice.

The rich boat owners were closely involved in Mino Soyo—as a manager or as the immediate family of a manager. It is by no means astonishing then that the deckhands and common villagers were not so enchanted by Mino Soyo. Gossip and weird stories about Mino Soyo are still being retailed. Behind his back the villagers spoke of the Wiradesa district head who acted as the secretary of Mino Soyo, as Wedono Deyog, ‘the Limp’. Another story goes that the well in the new office compound of Mino Soyo began to produce water only after a Dutch official in the management had slept with a woman who had delivered her baby just 40 days before and then sacrificed the woman by throwing her into the well. There was a story too among the villagers that Administrator Amislamet had a very big penis, and that he had seduced a virgin fish trader, Tulkiyem, soliciting her to have sex with him in the Mino Soyo warehouse in repayment of her debt. Tulkiyem agreed and the intercourse resulted in the ‘destruction’ of her vagina. Another piece of gossip said that H. Ibrahim gained his wealth with the help of an evil spirit called the green giant (buto ijo) and that he prevented his wealth from dissipating by employing the mystical knowledge of rajeg wesi, iron fence.

Leaving this interesting diversions aside, what benefit did the deck-hands derive from Mino Soyo? There were at least three things. First, employment in the fishing increased. Second, a small charitable set in the form of cassava which was doled out in some slack seasons to relieve the hunger which assailed the stomachs of the deck-hands and their families (Natasubrata, 1965: 12). Third, Mino Soyo sponsored the community’s annual sea offering—in 1940 it contributed 52.50 guilders to the celebration (DEZ, 1941: 70-1; Koostedjo, 1950)22. By doing so Mino Soyo made the celebration more lively and received at least some social recognition as an institution which paid attention to the well-being of the community.

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22 When did the fishermen start to celebrate the ritual remains a mystery to me. However a story from Batang fishing community—some 15 kilometres east of Wonokerto—says that a similar ritual had been celebrated there ever since the community’s forefathers cleared the coastal forest on the estuary of Sambong River and began a new life as fishermen (SM, Feb. 24, 1996). When Mino Soyo was established, the sea offering was probably already institutionalized among Wonokerto fishermen.
Conclusion
So Wonokerto Kulon grew from a small settlement of landless migrants in the first half of the nineteenth century to the centre of sea fishery in Wiradesa District in the beginning of the twentieth century. In the second decade, it started to consolidate that position when the Mino Soyo fishing organization was established there. What effect did Mino Soyo have on the fishing community? As a credit institution, it helped Wonokerto Kulon to achieve the status of a more or less self-sustaining community, independent of external resources. Relations between the fishing community and society at large basically took place the export of fish to the Javanese market and the import of industrial products from outside.

Mino Soyo allowed the community to be able to become financially more or less independent by accumulating capital and redistributing it among the boat owners and traders. With that credit, new boats could be bought, old ones repaired and the village fishing fleet was rescued from further decline in the 1920s and even increased in the 1930s. It was Mino Soyo too which largely helped the economy of the community to survive the difficult times of the 1930s. From an economic point of view this seems entirely beneficient, but seen from an ecological perspective a different picture emerges. By providing easier access to credit to buy new boats, Mino Soyo had, in effect, pushed the fishermen further into the tragedy of the commons inducing them to undertake intensified fishing of an already overexploited natural stock. Predictably the outcome was that the increase in the number of boats in the 1930s did not raise the total annual catch, while individual incomes from fishery declined considerably between the 1900s and the 1930s. At the same time, Mino Soyo’s activities brought a growing social inequality among the villagers. The establishment of the fishing organization strengthened the position of the village elite by providing them with easy access to credit and positions in the government-sponsored organization, while the ordinary fishermen were left to their own devices.
6. High hopes and shattered expectations: 1940-1965

The relationship between the village and the state entered a new era when Indonesia proclaimed its Independence on August 17, 1945. At least two factors marked that transition. The first was the transformation of fishing organizations into sea-fishing co-operatives (Koperasi Perikanan Laut, KPL) and the incorporation of the co-operatives into a nationwide body called the Movement of Indonesian Fishery Co-operatives (Gerakan Kooperasi Perikanan Indonesia GKPI) in October 1945. Later on, in 1951, the movement was to be renamed into the Union of Sea-fishing Co-operatives (Gabungan Koperasi Perikanan Laut GKPL) (Dep. Penerangan, 1965: 765-769; Natasubrata, 1965: 14). As an institution run by the people the fishing co-operative was supposed to be independent of the government, which it was not. The idea of transforming the fishing organizations into co-operatives came from Muhammad Hatta, the then vice-president. It aspired to turn co-operatives into the main pillars of an economy run for the people (Hatta, 1954; 1960; 1972; Tirtodiningrat, 1953). The second factor which was characterized the transition was the adoption of multi-party system by the Indonesian government in October 1945 (Kahin, 1955: 154). One of the ways in which the political parties tried to recruit members from across the social layers, especially after the Independence War drew to a close in 1949, was by creating vocation-based front organizations. The Indonesian National Party created the Movement of Marhaen Fishermen (Gerakan Nelajan Marhaen), the Muslim Party, Masjumi, founded the Union of Indonesian Muslim Fishermen (Serikat Nelajan Muslimin Indonesia), and the Communist Party initiated the Front of Indonesian Fishermen (Barisan Nelajan Indonesia).

One of the effects of these developments on the Indonesian fishermen in general was the decision of the GKPL at its 1953 congress that—to the boat owners’ great reluctance—membership of the fishing co-operatives should be opened to deck-hands (Dep. Penerangan, 1965: 768). Prior to this decision, only boat owners and fish traders could be members of the co-operatives. This decision was the logical outcome of a process in which the co-operatives had to be transformed from locally-based fishing organizations in charge of fish trading and providing a credit service for boat owners into co-operatives which were designed to become a major social vehicle by which to bring welfare to the people. This decision might also have been motivated by a defensive policy adopted by the co-operatives leaders towards the

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1 There were also Persatuan Nelajan Indonesia, Persatuan Nelajan Pantjasila, Gerakan Nelajan Indonesia (Dep. Penerangan, 1965: 776). Very likely all were front organizations for political parties although it is not clear to me to which parties they were belonged. Apart of the front organizations there also locally based fishermen’s organization such as Ikatan Nelajan Indonesia, Indonesian Fishermen Union, established by a certain Bambang Sunarjo of Semarang in 1950 (SM, Jun. 26, 1950).

political parties. The co-operative leaders knew from experience that, as had been the case during the Independence War and shortly after, political parties were capable of dragging people into internal squabbling and strife which would damage the interest of the boat owners. The chance that deck-hands would join the militant front organizations of the political parties was greater if they were to be excluded from membership of the co-operatives, and this was a risk the co-operatives did not want to take. Once the deck-hands were safely in the fold of the front organizations, they would be inclined to put their party loyalty above that owed to the co-operative.

In Wonokerto the situation was, however, different. It was the elite who was attracted to the political parties, not the deck-hands. Under the influence of parties, the elite split into two factions: those of the National Party (PNI) and the Communist Party (PKI), and its members turned the fishing co-operative into an arena for political competition. But before we move on to discuss the situation in Wonokerto during the time of the co-operative and multi-party system, an era which lasted for more or less two decades after the proclamation of Independence, we have to take a look at the time of the Japanese occupation as it was the era when manipulation of fishing organizations to serve the government interest started.

The Japanese occupation
In March 1942\(^3\) the Japanese occupation forces entered Pekalongan and stayed there until the latter months of 1945. For senior villagers of Wonokerto the Japanese era, Jaman Jepang, is hard to forget. When the Japanese were virtually on their doorstep, the fishermen were given orders by the district officials to hide their fishing boats somewhere outside the village, so that these would not fall into the enemy's hands (Lucas, 1991: 28). Some of the boats were hidden in Karangjati village, along the banks of Sengkarang River; some were hidden upstream on the Mrican River in Bebel village. For a while fishing came to a standstill in the village. The fishermen were afraid to go to sea for there were gunboats patrolling the coast: "They fired their guns at this village, but nothing happened because we were protected by the magical shield from the sacred Kepuh tree and Asem tree, north of there\(^4\). So the shells landed there before they hit the coastline", Uncle Darjan told me. As soon as hostilities between the Japanese and the Dutch ended, fishing activities were resumed and the fishermen discovered

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\(^3\) I have no information on the exact day the Japanese came to Pekalongan, but it was in March. Lucas (1977: 94) mentioned the Japanese troops entered Pemalang, 20 kilometres west of Pekalongan in March 17, 1942.

\(^4\) Between Mrican and Tratebang Rivers, north of the Penjalan hamlet, there is a place called Sekamal where a pair of huge lonely old tamarind (kamal) and kepuh trees used to stand. The villagers believed that Sekamal is haunted by Kyai Gede Sekamal, the Grand Lord of Tamarind Tree, the village guardian spirit (danyang), who lived in the sacred tamarind and kepuh trees. But it seems that as time passed the trees lost their sacred aura. In mid-1997 Hajjah Wartonoh, the owner of the land had the kepuh tree cut down to make room for some new shrimpponds next to the numerous ones she already had.
that the Dutch officials who used to visit Mino Soyo had disappeared. "Where did the Dutch go?", I asked. "We did not know. But there was a car full of Dutch in Pekalongan. They drove the car so fast towards the sea and ran right into the water at full tilt. Neither the Dutch nor the car ever surfaced", Warmad who sat beside Darjan answered.

Not long after their victory, the Japanese co-opted Mino Soyo and other fishing organizations in Java and Sumatra. The fishing organizations were now called Gyo Gyoo Kumiai (fishing co-operatives) (Natasubrata, 1965) and they were united into a body called the Sangyo Kumiai (Departemen Penerangan, 1965, VII: 765). At the same time the villagers were organized into neighbourhoods, tonarigumi, each under leadership of a neighbourhood head, kumicho (Sato, 1994: 72). In the process of this Japanization, the management of Mino Soyo was reorganized too. Amislamet, H. Ibrahim, H. Sjarfat, Belong and other managers had to leave the board. Supodo, a district official, replaced Amislamet, and Belong's son, Tanjung, and some Wonokerto Wetan boat owners, Abdul Latif, Kasur, and Wasa'an, were appointed as the new managers. It is not clear whether the advisory board of Mino Soyo which during the Dutch time had consisted of high ranking officials was retained by the Japanese. But one morning the villagers were shocked when they found R. Soerio, the Pekalongan Regent, participating in the fishermen's morning exercises, taisho, in front of the Mino Soyo auction. But that was the last they ever saw of the Regent.

Through the Gyo Gyoo Kumiai the Japanese ordered the fishermen to sell half of their catch to the Japanese occupation forces at one quarter of the market price (cf. Soeprapto, 1952). The fish was broiled in the Mino Soyo processing facility and then transported to Wiradesa. To keep a close eye on the implementation of the orders, three young Japanese soldiers were stationed in Mino Soyo's office compound. They lingered around the compound, watched the fish trading and sometimes asked for white anchovy or skipjack. "They ate it raw, with only vinegar and soya sauce ...", Warmad recalls.

The fishermen were also told that alongside their work of catching and delivering fish, they had to serve as coastguards to prevent enemy ships from intruding onto the coast. To achieve this as efficiently as possible the fishermen were organized into small units, each consisting of ten boats under the leadership of a keihanco. Tanjung was one of the keihanco. "It was a joke actually. We were not armed", Tanjung recalls, "So what we were supposed to do if an enemy ship really ran into us? Attack it with oar blades? Ha-ha-ha-ha". Most of the fishermen participated in the coastguard because it was inescapable. Who would dare to

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5 A detailed description of the kumiai, their economic role, and the local elite involvement in that Japanese co-operative are presented by Kurasawa (1988).
6 R. Soerio remained as the Pekalongan Regent until 1948. In 1947 he moved his office to the Petung Kriyono District, as Pekalongan was occupied by the Dutch army. In June 1948, the Dutch appointed R.T. Danoesoemarto, patih of Purbalingga Regency, to fill R. Soerio position (ARA, Bestuurs Verslag, Pekalongan Juni 1948).
refuse a Japanese order? But some other fishermen took their duty seriously seeing it as a way
to get closer to the Japanese, to the source of power.

During the Japanese period, the managers of Mino Soyo treated the fishermen badly. They made use of the Japanese presence to maximize their own benefit and feather their own nests (cf. Sato, 1997: 75). Instead of half of their catch, Mino Soyo managers ordered the fishermen to sell all of their catch to the Gyo Gyoo Kumiai, and the payment was given in form of rice instead of cash. “The rice was awful. It stank and was infected with big caterpillars”, Jayus, who was a young deck-hand at that time, recalls. The fishermen were strictly forbidden to sell their catch to private traders. Those found trading fish outside the Gyo Gyoo Kumiai were severely punished; the ill-fated fishermen and the fish trader were ordered to stand half naked in the sun in front of the fish auction hall from morning till evening. Undeterred, the fishermen secretly continued selling part of their catch outside the Gyo Gyoo Kumiai because they were desperate to obtain cash. When a boat sailed into Mrican estuary it would be steered close to the river bank and some of the crew members would jump out and carry big fish to the traders who were waiting on the bank. Straight after handing over the fish, they would hurriedly swim back to their boats, and resume their trip to the Mino Soyo compound. To prevent this, the Mino Soyo managers moved the fish auction to the estuary. The managers certainly knew about the black marketeering and they thought the best way to deal with it was by putting the fish auction as close as possible to the estuary so that the fishermen would have no opportunity to sell part of their catch outside the official channel. This strategy did not work. Erecting a temporary fish auction hall was not a problem but transporting the catch from the estuary posed a problem. At that time between Wonokerto and the estuary there was only an unpaved pathway through a shrubby forest. After a short while, the auction in the estuary was abandoned and the trading returned to the Mino Soyo compound again.

During the Japanese occupation the fishermen faced great difficulties keeping their boats and fishing gear in a good shape. Sail cloth, rope, fiber, and other material needed for routine maintenance of their fishing equipment were hard to find. If they could be found, the price was beyond the fishermen’s pocket. Probably it was because of these difficulties that many boats were put out of business. When the Japanese left in 1945, it was reported that approximately 20,000 fishing boats or 30 per cent of the Indonesian fishing fleet was in disrepair (Dep. Penerangan, 1965, VII: 767; NIG, 1947: 48, 84). No clear information is available on the fishermen’s catch during the Japanese occupation. All over the country it was estimated that the catch landed was around 50 per cent of that in 1940 (NIG, 1947: 84). In the last years of the Japanese occupation, the villagers had a hard time making ends meet. Clothes and food were difficult to obtain. “People in many places ate the pith of banana trunks, and
wore gunny or rubber sheet clothes painted with a batik motif. Their bodies were so thin and weak. Indeed, our life here was a bit better than theirs. At least, we still had rice, although it was far from enough to still our hunger. Flocks of hunger-stricken people from other villages came to this village, and when our fishing boats landed they begged us for leftover fish”, Skipper Kadir told me.

While the fishermen in general were becoming poorer, Mino Soyo managers were becoming more prosperous. Money kept flowing into their pockets. Tanjung bought three brand-new large size mayang and named one of the boats “Dasi Sepatu”, “Tie and Shoes”, after his favoured fashion style. Among the villagers, according to Tanjung, it was only he and the grandson of H. Ibrahim from Api-api who were able to show up in formal dress: sporting shoes, trousers, shirt, and tie. For Tanjung the Japanese years were the best time in his life; “Money came in large amounts. Until I wondered, ‘Is this what it feels to become a rich man?’”.

His growing wealth aroused a bitter feelings towards Mino Soyo among the villagers. Of course, their hands were tied and they had to follow the orders of the managers, but they silently piled up their grudges. The Japanese soldiers who were close to the elite were better not irritated (cf. Lucas, 1977). But, when the Japanese left the village, in September or October 1945, the villagers’ hatred erupted. The Mino Soyo compound was set alight by a young revolutionary named Rahmat⁷. Not a single villager tried to extinguish the fire and they just watched the blaze from a distance. “We didn’t want the compound to be taken by the Dutch soldiers and turned into their headquarters”, an elderly villager said recalling the fire, but the primary school which was perfectly suited to be an army post was never set on fire. The Mino Soyo compound was just one of the targets of the general burning and ransacking of the symbols of oppression and social injustice during the Japanese time in Pekalongan; rice barns, houses of rich government officials, village heads and Chinese families felt the wrath of the people (Lucas, 1991: 103-129)⁸.

The Independence War
The early years after the proclamation of Independence (1945-1949) are a time which the villagers remember as “Pak Karno mbagi duwif” (President Sukarno distributes cash)⁹ and as

⁷ Rahmat was son of the Bebel village secretary, Darus. It was said that he joined the guerrillas because his father-in-law, in Comal District, had been killed by the Dutch. According to the story villagers tell, Rahmat was a brutal fighter. He killed many Dutch, beheaded them and then he rode around the village on horseback carrying his victim's head as a trophy. In the end Rahmat was killed by a Dutch soldier in Comal.

⁸ ARA, Bestuur Verslag, Pekalongan, 1947

⁹ This happened sometime in the last months of 1946. On the basis of Bill No. 17/1946 and No. 19/1946, the government of Indonesia issued a new currency to replace the Japanese Occupation currency. In Java and Madura every 50 rupiah of Japanese currency was valued as the equivalent of one rupiah of Indonesian currency. Every rupiah of the new currency was equivalent to the value of half gram of pure gold. To distribute
Many dead bodies drifted in the Pencongan and Sepait Rivers. Swept by the spirit to defend their newly born Independence many Wonokerto youths, especially from boat owner and fish trader families, joined a guerrilla group named *Pasukan Siluman* (Phantom Troop). During the daytime, the guerrilla fighters hid themselves in the coastal scrub, at night they moved out of their hiding places to harass the Dutch army positions in the Pekalongan-Pemalang area. The continuous armed conflict between the Dutch army and the Indonesian army and guerrillas brought distress to the villages. When the two armies were not fighting each other, the ever-lasting military presence caused severe tension among the villagers, who felt unsafe and were often terrorized. Of the two Chinese families in Wonokerto, one was detained by the Indonesian army and accused of being Dutch collaborators; the other was robbed by guerrilla fighters and their servant was killed. It was not all xenophobia. A Javanese villager also fell victim: Watim Saparah, a boat owner, was constructing a new fishing boat. One night, his house was looted by a group of Indonesian militia, and Watim's face was badly stabbed as he attempted to defend his belongings.

Horrifying though they were, these violent outbursts were an exception. The chaos was not an everyday occurrence. Between 1947 and 1949, when Dutch soldiers occupied the Pekalongan area, economic conditions were said to be almost normal. The Dutch delivered subsidized textiles to the people, the rice fields produced a good harvest, and local industries resumed their activities producing soap, lemonades, kretek cigarettes, batik clothes and sarongs. Markets in Pekalongan and the small towns in its surrounding area were opened, traders and buyers were busy with their transactions, although it was all under the tight control of the new currency, the government gave every Indonesian citizen, regardless of his or her age, one rupiah and every household head got an extra gift of three rupiahs (Dep. Penerangan, 1975). In Wonokerto, the money was embezzled by the village elite and the local government officials. Instead of one rupiah, every village received only eighty cents. The other twenty cents were to cover administration cost, the officials said.

They were guerrillas or suspected guerrilla fighters executed by the Dutch on the bridges over the Sepait and the Pencongan Rivers.

In August, 1947, the Dutch army occupied Pekalongan and forced the Indonesian army units to withdraw to Petung Kriyono District in the southern part of the Regency and by 1948 further south to the Batur District of Bandjarmagaran Regency (Groen, 1991: 104; ARA, Bestuurs Verslag, Pekalongan 1948, 1949). As the northern part of the Regency was occupied by the Dutch, many resistance units under the command of a Dewan Pertahanan Daerah (Area Defence Council) were becoming active. *Pasukan Siluman* was the nom de guerre of those units (ARA, Bestuurs Verslag, Pekalongan 1948). Anton Lucas' (1991) comprehensive works on Pekalongan Residency during the early months of the Independence do not mention *Pasukan Siluman*, but provide a lengthy discussion of *Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia* (Younger Generation of Indonesia), a revolutionary group which in October, 20, 1945 was declared a branch of the *Pemuda Republik Indonesia* which was established by Bung Tomo in Surabaya (Lucas, 1991: 192). Very likely the *Pasukan Siluman* which was joined by the Wonokerto youths was a guerilla unit of *API/PRI*. The village elders often said that during the war they joined *Barisan Pemberontak Republik Indonesia*, another name for the *Pemuda Republik Indonesia*. Apart from this, in the 1950s Wonokerto Kulon youths were said to have been members of the party of Bung Tomo, the hero of battle of Surabaya.

Watim then was brought to a doctor, and his wounds eventually healed. When his boat was finished, Watim named the boat *Dokter* and had a picture of syringe painted beside the *Dokter* legend.

But apparently material shortages were not over yet in Pekalongan. In May 1948, a Chinese boat smuggling 80 tons of nails and 300 boxes of gloves for kretek cigarettes was captured by the Dutch patrol in Wonokerto (ARA, Bestuurs Verslag, Pekalongan 1948).
of the Dutch army. The economic structure of Wonokerto does not seem to have undergone any major changes. The village land register shows that between 1947-1949 no less than eighty-six land transactions, involving a total sum of more than 14,000 guilders had been conducted among the villagers. At that time Tjaswani, a fish trader from Bebel village who married a Wonokerto woman, was appointed by the Dutch to be the village head or lurah recomba as the villagers said. During that period, the fishermen kept their businesses running but their catch was often bartered for food or other commodities instead of sold for cash. Although clear figures are lacking, the fishermen’s annual catch during that period must have been more or less equal to or somewhat better than the haul during the Japanese occupation period. In 1951, the first year after Independence for which there are statistics available, the fishermen’s annual catch had reached little over 1,000 tons.

Just like the fishermen, during the revolutionary years, Mino Soyo —then shorn of its Japanese title— remained active, although it had no proper office from which to run its business. Since the auction hall had been burned down, Mino Soyo ran the trading, under the leadership of Tanjung, in an open yard in front of the compound. Tanjung was, however, no longer the sole prominent figure in the Mino Soyo management. Shortly after August 1945, Thajib, the new district head of Wiradesa, had taken up an influential position in the management. When the Dutch soldiers came to Wiradesa in August 1947, the district office was moved to Karangjati, far away from Wonokerto and, it being an ill wind that blows nobody any good, Tanjung and his subordinates in Mino Soyo used this opportunity to oust Thajib from the board. From then on, until 1956, Tanjung kept a firm grasp on Mino Soyo leadership.

14 My grandfather described this situation to me. He was arrested by the Dutch army when he was running his batik trading in the market. He was detained but was then released after the Dutch army found no proof that he had any connection with the Indonesian army or the guerrilla fighters.
15 Desa Wonokerto Kulon, Buku Letter C.
16 Recomba is an abbreviation of Regerings Commissaris voor Bestuurs Aangelegenheden (Government Commissioner for Administrative Affairs). When the Dutch left Pekalongan in the last months of 1949, Tjaswani abandoned his position as the village head and scuttled to Comal. The position was then filled by Su‘udi Soleman.
17 The Departemen Penerangan’s account (1965: 767) of the deterioration of the fishing equipment probably referred to the fishing gear, not the fishing boats. The boats were made of—usually—first class wood which could last for ten to fifteen years. The gear was made of agel fibres of gebang palm (Corypha gebanga Bl), which always broke in several places after being used and had to be routinely mended (Kampen, 1922: 21). A good stock of the fibres to patch the broken meshes was required to keep the gear in working order. It was the fibres which were hard to get during the Japanese occupation. Although it was reported that in almost every village in Java women were ordered to spin fibres, most of what they produced was taken by the occupation forces for their own purposes. After the Japanese had gone, fibres in the market regained their normal stock; and the fishermen found no difficulty in repairing their fishing gear and resume their sea fishing.
In the 1950s

Until it was officially transformed into a sea-fishing co-operative in 1955, after Independence Mino Soyo was called a Persatuan Penjualan Ikan Laut (Sea-Fish Trading Union). Apparently, after Independence Mino Soyo paid more attention to deck-hands. To help the fishermen in coping with the slack season, Tanjung introduced a savings fund. He urged the fishermen to save 1.5 per cent of their catch in Mino Soyo, on which they were entitled to draw when the slack season came. From then on, every time the fishermen sold their catch in the fish auction they handed 6.5 per cent of their catch earnings to Mino Soyo; 5 per cent as a trading fee and 1.5 per cent as savings. This procedure allowed Mino Soyo to accumulate capital with which it could rebuild its office in 1951 so that the auction could be held once more in a proper bidding hall.

Not long after its office was rebuilt, Mino Soyo was robbed. The compound’s night watchman was knocked out and tied to the flagpole, and the robbers took away Mino Soyo’s cash which was kept in a safe. Who the robbers were, the villagers had no clear idea. The northern coast area of Central Java in 1950/51 was plagued by Darul Islam rebels as well as by more ordinary robbers (Koning, 1997: 86-8). Recalling that time, Skipper Kadir told me; “It was a very confusing time. Everybody had a gun in their hands, the soldiers, the Darul Islam (DI) rebels, the robbers. The soldiers were shooting the DI, the DI were shooting the robbers, the robbers were shooting the soldiers”. “The DI rebels were very provocative”, Kasdani, a village official recalled, “On tree trunks along the Wiradesa road they often stuck placards saying ‘Army meat for sale, Rp 5 per kilogram’, ‘Pioneer Troop (Pasukan Perintis) meat for sale, Rp 7.5 per kilogram’, and so on”. However, the trouble was soon subdued as the army was able to push the DI rebels back to the southern area, and social life in the coastal area could move back to normal (Van Dijk, 1981: 142). Mino Soyo was able to resume its activities peacefully and could make a nice profit as in 1952 it started to revive the sea offering ritual which had been interrupted during the Japanese occupation and the Independence War. The 1950s sea offerings were lively celebrations. The fishermen embellished their boats with beautiful banners and sailed them in a flotilla to carry the offering to the sea (cf. Mander, 1956; Natasubrata, 1965). On the evening of the celebration day, Mino Soyo staged a one night wayang performance in front of the auction hall. Apart from the annually held sea offering, it was common too among rich boat owners and fish traders to invite ronggeng (dancers and singers who were also available for sex) to entertain the villagers.

In the early 1950s, the annual catch was more or less equal to that of the pre-war

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18 SM, Jun. 6, 1950.
period. During these years on average the fishermen were able to land between 1,000 to 1,500 tons of catch. In 1952 the total annual catch was 1,055 tons which sold at Rp 1,508,000. This was a real achievement because it was not easy matter for the fishermen to reach that level.

Fishing technology in the 1950s remained similar to what it had been in previous decades, sail-powered fishing boats which required hard work were still universally used. If the wind was in the right quarter, reaching the spot where their tendhak had been set on a previous trip, would be easy. But if the wind blew in the other direction, they would have to sing a different song; “Nggih kudhu ndhayung sak rosane. Wiwit mangkat nganti dugi. Nek silite durung nganti metu kringete ... nggih mboten dugi!”, “We had to row the boat as best we could. From the port all the way to the fishing grounds. If we did not put our harts into it until our asses were sweating, we would have never reached the spot!” Uncle Tahan told me.

With sail-powered boats the fishermen were limited to fishing grounds no more than forty miles from the coastline. When the wind permitted or if they were willing to row further, they could still go on just a little way. But then they would have a problem of returning to the fishing port in good time, that is before the auction closed. During the peak fish season or mangsa kapat (from August to November), at the end of the east monsoon, the catch was usually not too bad. “It looked as if our boat was about to sink, because of the weight of our catch” Skipper Kadir boasted. But during the slack season, between December to March, the catch was hard to find. To solve this problem the fishermen often tried to poach the tendhak of other boats. When there were no other boats in the vicinity of a tendhak which belonged to someone else, the fishermen would drop their seine and bring in the catch. Sometimes they were caught in the act by the tendhak owners or spotted by other fishermen who then reported them to the owners. This would inevitably lead to a quarrel between the purloining fishermen and the tendhak owners. But it stopped at a quarrel, and never developed into a fight. Fishermen tended to accept the stealing as part of their game, as everybody seized the chance if it came their way.

Quite frequently, the fishing trip, with tendhak theft or not, failed to produce anything. “Once, we had ventured out to sea for two days. We got nothing, and our supplies were running out. We were reluctant to sail home. There was nothing to bring to our families who must have been hungry too, just like we were. So we kept trying our luck, scouring the water. Still we got nothing. In the second evening we decided to beach our boat at a spot adjacent to a cassava field and ransacked it, eating some of the raw cassava right on the spot for our hunger was unbearable. We brought loads of the cassava back to our boat, sailed home, and gave it to our families ... ha-ha-ha”, Skipper Kadir told of a bitter experience which in retrospect struck him as very funny. When they heard the news that some fishermen had happened to meet a good school of fish, Wonokerto fishermen, especially those working on
big boats, would immediately go to that spot to try their luck. It was common during that time for the fishermen to migrate seasonally to other districts in their attempt to prolong the peak fish season. One or two months before August fishermen with big mayang would go east as far as Demak where the fish season came earlier than it did in Wonokerto. Then they would move back to west, following the fish migration, until they reached Wonokerto. When the fish season near the village was over the fishermen would migrate again, now to the west, as far as Tegal and stay there for one or two months.

The peak of slack season falls during the west monsoon, between January and February. Sometimes it brings gales which can last for a week, to be followed by a less stiffish breeze and a strong sea current which is hard to negotiate in sail- and oar-powered boats. In the 1950s, the fishermen spent most of their time in that season idling. “All we did during the west monsoon was getting the measure of our bamboo beds, sitting around, and measuring the beds again ... ha-ha-ha”, explained Skipper Rakhim. When the weather looked mild enough, the fishermen would set out to try their luck. Sometimes they were lucky indeed, but in general during the west monsoon the catch reached its lowest point, as low as one third of what they would bring in during the peak season.

There is a saying among the villagers which encapsulates on the irony of the rainy, west monsoon, “Well, during rainy season the water flows from south to north, but the goods flee from north to south”, meaning that during the slack season, the only way to cover household subsistence expenses was by bringing the contents of the houses to pawnshops in Ulujami or Pekalongan or to sell them right away in Wiradesa. “If all valuables had gone to the pawnshop, and the slack season was not over yet, then it was the turn of the house itself to be taken apart. First, the windows, then the door, then the bamboo walls, and finally the roof. Believe us, there were lot of windowless, doorless, wallless, and roofless houses during the slack season in the old days ... ha-ha-ha. It was even common practice here for women to cut their long hair and sell it just to get money for the family meals”, Grandpa Sarda’i recounts with bitter humor.

On the basis of data from the early 1940s and 1963, I estimate that in the early years of the 1950s there were some 2,100 fishermen involved in Wonokerto sea fishery, a number which increased to around 2,200 in the later year of the decade. On the basis of those numbers and those on catch landings in 1950-1952, the average revenue of individual fisherman can be estimated as explained in Table 21.

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19 No data are available on the monthly catches in the 1950s. But data from the 1960s show that the catch during the slack season was around one-third of the catch during the peak season.

20 During the colonial period there was a pawnshop in Wiradesa but it was burned down in the early years of the Independence War. From then on, to pawn their belongings the villagers must go to either Ulujami or Pekalongan.
Table 21. Wonokerto fishermen annual catch 1950-1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total catch</th>
<th>No of Fishermen</th>
<th>Catch/Fisherman</th>
<th>In rice equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ton</td>
<td>Rp (000)</td>
<td>Ton</td>
<td>Rp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1,055</td>
<td>(1,507)</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>0.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>(1,862)</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>0.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1,055</td>
<td>1,508</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>0.502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Catch landing data from Ediwan, 1952b; Berita Perikanan, 1953.
Note : Number in parentheses are estimation based on 1952 fish price

From official trading in the auction, the average annual revenue for the fishermen was around Rp 750 and with an additional 10 per cent from catch selling outside the auction the sum would be Rp 875. Measured in rice (priced at one rupiah per kilogram in the early 1950s) the fishermen’s annual revenue was equal to more or less around 875 kilograms.

Using Sajogyo’s poverty line standard of 240 kg of rice per capita —120 kilogram to cover food subsistence and the other 120 kilograms to cover other economic necessities— apparently the fishing villagers’ economic life in the 1950s was below to that line (Sajogyo, 1996: 3). If we assume with reasonable safety that on average the villagers households in the 1950s consisted of six members, those of two parents and four children, an income equal to 1.440 kilogram of rice was needed by every household to be right on the poverty line. By this reckoning there was discrepancy around 525 kilograms of rice between the poverty line and revenue from fishing. Indeed, at those times jobs for women was very limited. Husband were the regular rice-winners of the households. Some families in the village ran a fish processing workshop, mostly the preserve of the women, but the scale of the industry was not large enough to absorb more than a small number of workers. There was also the opportunity to earn money in fish trading, but there were only a limited number of traders. Most of the village women in the 1950s were jobless. It was only during the rice harvest in the agricultural villages south of Wonokerto that village women had a chance to do something to increase their household income. In flocks they hastened to the fields to seek work as either a harvester or a gleaner (pengasak) and returned home carrying unhusked rice for their families.

From gleaning paddy fields and other miscellaneous jobs (kerja serabutan) perhaps the village women contributed the equivalent of around 100 kilograms of rice per year, to the income of the household. This raised the average income of a household to 975 kilograms of rice, which was still well below the poverty line.

For most of fishermen’s families it was difficult to get sufficient food in the 1950s. “During that time if we were lucky, we could get rice once a day for our meal. When we did
manage to lay our hands on rice, it usually was made into a thin porridge so it could be shared around and all the members of the family could have a taste. Every morning my grandma walked along the river bank to collect wild vegetables, such as biuntas, krokat, and lumbu leaves, to be cooked with salt ... that was our side dish”, recalled Maimun. Children were often allowed to roam so that they could do whatever they could to fill their stomachs. Recalling his childhood years Kasdk said;

‘Right after the school bell rang, we would run away to the Mino Soyo compound. We rarely to dropped by at our homes, for there was nothing to drop by for and there was nothing to do there. No food. Nothing. We did not have either a note book or pencil, it was too expensive for our parents. In the school we learned to write with slate-pencil. We played around the Mino Soyo compound, swam in the river, waited for the fishing boats to land at one o’clock. When the boats arrived and started to unload the fish, we begged for the fish or simply tried to steal it. The bigger ones among us did not beg or steal. They helped the fishermen to unload the fish and then washed down the boats. They got pieces of fish as reward or sometimes the leftover food. We sold the fish we got from the begging, stealing, or helping. And usually it was not much. Sometimes we got enough money to buy blendhung (boiled corn) or boiled cassava or rice porridge to fill our empty stomachs. Sometimes we did not strike it lucky. We got nothing. To dupe our hunger, we scavenged sugar-cane ends, that was the least sweet part of the cane, thrown out by the sugar-cane seller. We chewed it until the dregs were dry.”

A common practice among the deck-hands to increase their income was by stealing part of the catch of their boats and selling it directly to petty fish traders outside the bidding session. Fish stealing was an open secret among the crew members and boat owners. The boat owners could do nothing to prevent it, because every deck-hand resorted to it. At most, if the stealing rate went up too much the boat owners just fired the boat’s skipper and replaced him by someone who probably would steal less. The crew members themselves set their own limits to this stealing, “Nyolong ya nyolong, tapi ora akeh-akeh”, “You may steal, but not too much”. When the catch was good, the amount of fish stolen might increase, when the catch was poor often they did not steal at all. Another technique developed by deck-hands to improve their income was by moving to another boat. When their boat tended to produce poor catches because its tackle was not up to scratch, they would move to another, better-maintained boat which had a better chance of bringing in a greater catch. Abandoned by his crew members, of course the boat owner had to do something to improve the quality of his boat which in turn would induce other crew members to man it.

Pawning or selling household belongings, not seeking a loan, was a common way to earn cash during the slack seasons of the 1950s. The reason was simply that there were not many people or institutions providing such services. “Borrowing money? There was no way! There were no persons willing to lend us money. If they had money they would use it to cover
their own needs.”, Maimun answered when I asked about borrowing money. Actually there were a number of rich boat owners, but they were reluctant to give cash loan to their neighbours, “They would not repay the loan. Every time we asked them for repayment, they would simply answer ‘Next time please, we haven’t even got a brass cent’”, Jayus explained. The Village Credit Bank, opened in April 1953, provided credit service, but only for customers who could show they were capable of repaying; and they came mostly from the upper level of the village —members of the village administration, fish traders, boat owners, and fish pond owners. The Mino Soyo Co-operative had a credit service too, but it was available only to boat owners and fish traders. For similar reasons, there was no informal group like a rotating credit association, arisan, in Wonokerto during that time. People were just unable to pay their monthly contribution: “Ojo meneh mbayar arisan ... Lha wong nggo mangan bae kangelan kok Arisan kwre ra nembe wingi bae anane”. “No money to pay arisan ... Even trying to cover our meals we were up to our necks in hot water. The arisan came much later”, said Maimun answering my question about whether there were any alternative solutions for alleviating the shortage of money.

The villagers’ houses were mostly built of bamboo and had thatched roofs. A large number of deck-hands were totally landless and they had built their simple houses in a homestead of a neighbour or kinsman. Only families of rich boat owners and fish traders lived in brick houses. Up to late 1960s most of the village children were poorly educated. The only school in Wonokerto at that time was the two-grade primary school established by the colonial government in the 1900s. To finish primary education, that is completing the sixth grade, the children had to go to another school at Kepatihan village, Wiradesa; an effort which villagers usually regarded as too burdensome and of little use to their children. Sending children to primary school was not a priority among the villagers. If they did so it was to comply with the village head’s orders, and also because they thought at least the school provided the children with something good to do. At the age of ten, usually the boys began to get involved in sea-fishing. They commenced their career as alang-alang in the fish auction, then stepped on board to become bocahan before eventually being accepted as crew member. As bocahan, the children were paid a small wage for their labour, smaller than a crew

21 During the slack season Mino Soyo distributed the fishermen’s saving, this was not a loan, and the amount did not go very far since it was only 1.5 per cent from the catch sold in the auction. Considering that the annual catch in the early 1950s was 1,000 tons, then the amount of the saving was only 15 tons of fish, equal to 15 tons of rice. Distributed equally to around 2,000 fishermen, on average each of them received only 7 kilograms.

22 The first Wonokerto Kulon youth who took senior high school education was Karman, son of Tasman, a rich boat owner and the co-operative manager. That was in the mid of 1950s. Now Karman holds a position as the head of the Pekalongan Regency Branch of the All Indonesian Fishermen Association (HNSI). There was another youth, Dalari, son of Matlap, who also went to high school, but never finished it. Being a son of a rich boat owner, Dalari was very prodigal, he wasted most of his time with girls instead of to study. Karman and Dalari and few others who followed into their foot steps were a minority.
member's share. However little, it was still money which was badly needed to sustain their families. By taking a job as a bocahan, a boy provided a real contribution to the economy of his household. He brought home his wages and also saved the family the expense of one breakfast.

The only households which at that time enjoyed economically sound conditions were those of the big boat owners, big fish traders and the co-operative and auction managers — positions which in some households were held simultaneously. The Jayus household is a case in point. Jayus was the owner of three sail-powered fishing boats. His wife, Saliyah, was a big fish trader, a jedhot. Besides owning his boats Jayus also held a position in the co-operative, although only as a general assistant (pembantu umum). With their money, in 1957 the Jayus family built a nice brick house in Penjalan hamlet. Jayus' elder brother, Majid, also occupied a similar position and also earned enough money to build a nice house and to make the pilgrimage to Mecca to become a haji. Actually most of the wealth of the richer households did not come from either their fishing boat or position in the fishing co-operative, but from fish trading, as the story of Yatimin shows:

Yatimin is a son of a Wonokerto Wetan boat owner. His father owned three large mayang. However, he inherited nothing from his father except a set of beach seine, which he then sold for money. When the Japanese came, Yatimin had finished his two years of primary education in the village school, and he worked as a crew member on someone else's boat. Tired of being a deck-hand he quit and started a small-scale fish trading business which then expanded. In the early 1950s Yatimin got a position in the co-operative management. He was a talented person and the co-operative often sent him to attend management courses offered by the GKPL or the Fisheries Service Office in Semarang or Tegal. Yatimin's career in the co-operative was successful and in 1959 he took a position in the co-operative as the second secretary, a position which gave him access to credit for a motorized fishing boat in 1960. Two years later, he was already the owner of six motorized boats. Later, Yatimin's wife opened a fish processing business. The product was sold to Cirebon and Bandung, and one of Yatimin's sons took care of this trade. It was in the early 1960s too that Yatimin built a big brick house with a pavilion. This story is virtually typical for other rich people in Wonokerto during the 1950s/1960s. They obtained their wealth mainly from fish trading then used the profit to buy additional boats, became involved in fish processing, and took a position in the co-operative.

Everybody in Wonokerto knew and knows that it is in the auction that the wealth from sea-fishing can be most rapidly generated. However trading was far from easy. Competition among fish traders to get the fishermen's catch was stiff. The fishermen's limited catch was vied for by too many traders with a whole different range of capital at their disposal: ranging from peddlars, bakul cilikan, with a limited amount of working capital to the heavily
capitalized big traders, jedhot. It was jedhot who were in control of the fish trading in the auction. There was an unwritten rule in the auction, that if peddlars wanted to buy some fish which they liked, they had to contact a jedhot and ask the jedhot to bid for the fish on her behalf. Fish traders were not supposed to enter the bidding themselves. After the jedhot had taken their share of profit, the fish would be distributed to the smaller traders. Traders who dared to take part in the bidding, in an attempt to get a better price than the one offered by the jedhot, would soon find themselves running out of capital. When a peddlar was spotted making bids during an auction, the jedhot would drive the price mercilessly until it reached an impossible level. If the peddlar was determined enough to follow the jedhot's bid, she would wind up buying the fish at an exorbitant price; if the peddler shied away at the middle of the bidding then no single piece of fish would find its way into her hands. This did not mean that jedhot had it all their own way; to secure their position and to ensure that they would get fish, they had to cooperate with the auction management. A jedhot regularly paid a bribe —kom in the fishermen's language (from Dutch word commissie)— to the auction management in proportion to the value of fish she had bid for; the higher the value the higher the bribe. Failing to do so would prevent her from winning in a bidding session; the auctioneer would simply ignore her and give the fish to another jedhot.

These were the sort of shady practices by which big fish traders in Wonokerto could control the auction and add to their wealth. Big fish traders found no favour with either peddlars or fishermen. To the peddlars, big traders were an obstacle to making a decent profit. But, as the jedhot were also hand in glove with the auction management, together they were able to frustrate the peddlars in their attempts to try to buy fish directly from the fishermen at a lower price. By monopolizing the buying, the jedhot also antagonized the fishermen who saw them as conspirators conniving to push prices as low as possible —especially when they wanted the fish for their own processing businesses.

The assassination of Lurah Su'udi
In 1955 Mino Soyo was officially transformed into fishing a co-operative and it adopted the new title of Koperasi Perikanan Laut (Sea-Fishing Co-operative). A new era then opened in Mino Soyo's history, marked by strong competition among the elite of the community for which the co-operative was the stage. One major factor which promoted the competition was that as it was now transformed into a fishing co-operative, Mino Soyo had become economically more attractive. Apart of retaining its —traditional— role as the controller of
fish trading in the village\textsuperscript{23}, the Mino Soyo gained a new role as government agency through which the national credit programme was implemented.

While it may have unified the powerful to close ranks, the growing influence of political parties divided the community elite which dominate Mino Soyo into three major factions. Mino Soyo managers and staff who came from Wonokerto Wetan and Api-api villages joined the Communist Party, while managers and staff members who were natives of Wonokerto Kulon joined the National Party. The youth affiliated themselves with—as Amat Karib, a senior staff of Mino Soyo, said—the Partai Indonesia Raja (Greater Indonesia Party), a party led by the hero of the Battle of Surabaya, Bung Tomo\textsuperscript{24}. As a result competition for positions in Mino Soyo, which in the previous era had been an inter-personal conflict among the elite, was now being fed additional, more inflammable fuel derived from political differences.

After the transformation, Tanjung was able to secure his position as head of the cooperative, while Su’udi Soleman, the village head of Wonokerto Kulon who had replaced Tjaswani in early 1950, won the position of fish auction administrator. Neither was able to

\textsuperscript{23}In 1950 fishing organizations/co-operatives almost lost their right to run fish trading under the declaration of the 1950 Provisional Constitution which bestowed a large measure of autonomy on provincial administrations (cf. UUD S 1950, Art. 131; Pringgodigdo, 1964). On the basis of the new constitution, provincial administrations claimed that fish trading must be handled by government agency instead of fishing organizations/co-operatives and the 5 per cent out of the total fishermen’s catch fish bidding fee which so far had been claimed by fishing organizations/co-operatives, should be rerouted to augment the provincial income (Siswosobroto, 1952: 34; see also Legge, 1960). Ediwan (1952a), then head of the GKPL, rejected the claim out of hand. He argued that, (1) All small-scale traders and entrepreneurs in Indonesia pay a tax of less than 5 per cent out of their trading turnover, why should the poor fishermen pay 5 per cent?, and (2) the 5 per cent fund taken by the fishing co-operatives was meant to improve and reinforce the fishing community and their organization, and this 5 per cent fund must be regarded as a contribution paid by the members to their organization. Ediwan firmly believed that taking over the fish trading from fishing co-operative would eventually weaken the country’s fishing communities. Had the Indonesian administration been in a more stable condition and better shape, and had the fishing organizations in the country not been transformed into fishing co-operatives and united into a single national body, very likely the claim of the provincial administrations would have been agreed to. The fishing co-operatives came out as the winner in this dispute.

Ediwan also pointed out how the 5 per cent fish bidding fee was used:
-2.5 per cent (half of the fee) was to run the co-operative; to pay the co-operative managers and staffs;
-1.5 per cent (one third of the fee) was earmarked for the co-operative’s capital formation;
-0.5 per cent (one tenth of the fee) was earmarked for fishing equipment lost through accidents at sea; to help the boat owners getting the replacements, and finally;
-0.5 per cent was proposed as social fund; to help the deck-hands family if a fisherman suffered a fatal accident; to establish community health service; to contribute in the illiteracy eradication programme, and so on.

On the national scale in 1950, the fishing organizations/co-operatives were able to collect 260 thousand rupiahs to the fishermen’s social fund, and 87 thousand rupiah out of it was used for the cause (Ediwan, 1952a: 43).

\textsuperscript{24}Amat Karib told me that he and other young people in the village joined Bung Tomo’s party: Partai Indonesia Raja, “Why Bung Tomo’s party?”, I asked him, “Well at a practical level we knew nothing about politics. We joined the Partai Indonesia Raja because it sounded great and was led by a hero”, Amat Karib answered. I found out that Amat Karib’s information is not entirely correct. Bung Tomo’s party was not the Partai Indonesia Raja—this one was established by Wongsonogoro as a party for government employees and the aristocracy. In the early stages of the Independence War, Bung Tomo established a militia group named Badan Pemberontakan Republik Indonesia to defend Surabaya from the Allied troops (Kahin, 1955: 162). The group was also known as Pemuda Republik Indonesia (the Youth of the Republic of Indonesia). After the war, the group was transformed into a political party under name of PRI, an abbreviation of both Pemuda Republik Indonesia and Partai Rakyat Indonesia (Indonesian People’s Party) (Feith, 1962). The latter name was adopted in the late 1950s when the party was reportedly moving closer to the Communist Party. Very likely Amat Karib intentionally confused his information to cover up a period in his past when he was close to the Communist Party.
enjoy a long spell in the management: Tanjung was ousted in 1956 and Su'udi tragically met his death at the hands of his own people in 1958.

Some time in mid-1955, Mino Soyo managers received an order from the GKPL (Sea-fishing Co-operative Union) to send two representatives to the Office of the Fishery Service in Jakarta. “They were scared. They thought they had done something wrong, and the government in Jakarta was going to punish them”, Skipper Rakhim told me. Tanjung and his second-in-command, Lemu, set out for Jakarta. To everybody’s surprise two weeks later they returned home aboard of two brand new, Japanese-made motorized boats, *Majang 11* and *Majang 16*25. “Walah wong sak desa padha geger. Kabeh teka pingin weruh, pingin ngemek, prau montore. Praune dijejer nang ngarep kongs?”. “The whole village was buzzing. Everybody wanted to take a closer look, to touch the motor boats. The boats anchored by the river bank in front of the Mino Soyo compound”, Skipper Rakhim described the event. It was the boat which terminated Tanjung’s career in Mino Soyo. The motor boats were supposed to be owned collectively by the fishermen. In theory, each boat was to be owned by sixteen fishermen who would also act as its crew. Who exactly were supposed to become the owners had not been made clear by the government, but the villagers had the conviction that it should be decided democratically. The lack of official clarification meant that the boats fell into the hands of Tanjung and Lemu. The motor boats were highly prized by the fishermen, as they seemed to see them as a heaven-sent solution to their problem of poor catches. Motorized boats allowed them to sail far beyond their traditional fishing grounds, to break into fresh grounds where the fish stock was still abundant. Indeed when *Majang 11* and *Majang 16* were deployed, they always brought in a good catch. But it was only Tanjung, Lemu and some thirty deck-hands who tasted the fruits of the boats’ catch, and this created tension and aroused envy among the other villagers, both the local elite and the ordinary fishermen.

Soon gossip began to spread among the villagers and the local elite that Tanjung had been running the boat he had received from the government for illegal purposes. Apart from fishing, said the gossip, Tanjung’s *Majang 11* was also used to carry weapons used to fight in anti-government offensives. On some dates *Majang 11* set out to the sea far away from the coastline for a rendezvous with an alien ship to take weapons on board and then carry these to an appointed place on the coastline where a group of rebels were waiting for them. There was another piece of gossip which offered that Tanjung and Lemu as co-operative leaders had cheated the co-operative’s members and the fishermen. At the 1956 Mino Soyo general

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25These boats were part of a war reparations payment from the Japanese government. On top of that, since 1951 Indonesian government was also given a package loan from ECA (Economic Co-operation Agency) to develop the sea fishery. The first delivery of the package, consisting of thirty motorized fishing boats, arrived in Jakarta harbour in 1951. Each boat, priced at US $ 6,600 or Rp 90,000, was to be manned by sixteen crew members (Berita Perikanan, 1951 No. 3).
meeting Tanjung and Lemu were forced to resign from their positions and new managers were elected. Tanjung and Lemu, however, succeeded in keeping Majang 11 and Majang 16 to themselves until the boats wore out in the mid 1960s.

The new managing director was Haji Adnan — a rich landowner from Wiradesa who also owned a number of fishing boats. H. Adnan did not remain in Mino Soyo for long; people said that he was ousted because he was an outsider to the fishing community. In 1957 H. Adnan was replaced by Sardijan from Wonokerto Wetan, who brought along Thajib, the retired Wiradesa district head, with him to become his second-in-command. Somehow the changes in the Mino Soyo management did not affect Su’udi, who combined the position of fish auction administrator with that of village head.

Su’udi Soleman’s background is a bit of a mystery. He came from a big fish trader family in Wonokerto Wetan and managed to become village head of Wonokerto Kulon. Maybe this was possible because he joined the Pasukan Siluman and became a local, nationalist, hero with enough public support to replace Tjaswani, the village head who collaborated with the Dutch. Su’udi was certainly rich. His wife was a big jedadhot, he owned a number of fishing boats and as fish auction administrator and village head, he earned a good income. Given this background it is not surprising that Su’udi became a focus of envy in the community.

Some time before he met his tragic end in 1958, a rumour spread in the village that Su’udi was involved in a sexual affair with Daliyah, the wife of Skipper Wakiman. In the beginning, according to the villagers’ story, Wakiman was unmoved, as apparently he did not take the rumour seriously. But even if he had known that the rumour was true, there would have been no serious need to do anything. Sexual peccadillos with other people’s wives were not uncommon among the villagers. If exposed they sometimes led to quarrels and might end up in divorce, but it was also quite common to settle the matter quietly and peacefully. In this instance, however, the rumours and the gossip in the end became too much for Wakiman to tolerate. Discreetly he went to a blacksmith in Podo village, south of Pekalongan city, to order a sharp machete made from a car-spring blade. One morning, after he had obtained the machete, Wakiman set out for fishing trip. But nearby the estuary, Wakiman disembarked and walked home; there he found Su’udi, still fully clothed and shoed, inside his house with his wife and stabbed the village head. The badly injured village head ran away, but Wakiman cried aloud; “Thief, thief ...”, to attract the neighbours attention. The neighbours came, ran after Su’udi who was bleeding profusely, caught him and beat him to death. After the killing, Wakiman surrendered himself to the police saying that it was he alone who took Su’udi’s life, and went to jail for some years.

Nowadays, every time the story of Lurah Su’udi’s killing is brought up, the villagers
always relate it to Su’udi’s affair with Wakiman’s wife. Indeed the relationship was quite plain and straightforward, but there was more than Wakiman’s personal animosity lurking behind the killing. The killing was also inextricably linked with the escalation of conflict among the community elite engendered after they had split up according to their different political affiliations. In spite of Wakiman’s cry of “Thief, thief …”, the villagers who ran after Su’udi and beat him to death must have clearly recognized that the victim was the village head, for the incident happened in the bright morning light. Apart from that, as I said above, physical conflict was not the villagers’ way of settling adultery. In this case, however, the situation was different. Su’udi was from Wonokerto Wetan, and was, like other members of the local elite in that village, affiliated with the Communist Party, while the elite from Wonokerto Kulon were members of the National Party. For them, as an economic and political rival, Su’udi must have been an annoyance that they would have been only too happy to get rid of. His affair with Wakiman’s wife gave them the opportunity to do so. Spreading rumours about his affair was a useful way to get Su’udi out of his positions in the auction and the village administration, but then things got out of hands and the gossip aroused a general feeling of hostility towards Su’udi which finally led to his violent death, instead of just his resignation.

After Su’udi it was Tjarim, a fish trader from Cirebon married to a Wonokerto Kulon woman, became the Wonokerto Kulon village head. Tjarim was an evil person, Grandpa Sarda’i told me. In the eyes of the villagers, Tjarim was the worst lurah they ever had. As a big fish trader Tjarim was not much different from other fish traders, and liked to cheat the fishermen in his dealing with them, while in his position as village head, Tjarim used considerable amounts of the villagers’ land tax for his own purposes. Despite his evil ways, Tjarim fared better than Su’udi. He posed no threat to the local elite for he did not involve himself in the management of the co-operative. But among the village commoners he aroused resentment because his embezzlement of the tax money. Tjarim was hated by them. Many people had to pay their land tax twice a year, because the first payment had dissappeared in Tjarim’s pockets. The village youth affiliated with the Partai Republik Indonesia tried to teach him a lesson. “We, me and the other youths who were member of Bung Tomo’s party, brought Tjarim’s fraudulent behaviour to the notice of the district office in Wiradesa”, Amat Karib said, “but nothing happened to him. No single measure was taken to punish him”. Flourishing like the proverbial green bay tree Tjarim continued to defraud the villagers. The youth then went to report Tjarim to the Regency office in Pekalongan. Still, nothing happened. Frustrated that no one would lend them an ear, eventually the youth were determined to bring the case to an even higher office. So they went to the province capital, Semarang, and reported Tjarim’s misconduct —according to Amat Karib’s story— directly to
the governor. Not long after that Tjarim was dismissed from his position.

Tjarim was replaced by Djonowidjojo, a shadow puppet player (dalang) from Wiradesa who had married a Wonokerto Kulon woman. The new village head also owned fishing boats, but he did not involve himself in either fish trading or the co-operative — only much later, in the 1970s, when the village fishing business was already in decline was he offered a not too important position in the co-operative as a member of the inspection board. Although the villagers often ridiculed Djonowidjojo as an oversexed male\textsuperscript{26}, it seems that he had few enemies in the village as no attempt was made to relieve him of his position. His low profile and his non-involvement in the local fishing economy, the real political arena of the village, made Djonowidjojo one of the very few long-serving lurah: after twenty-five years as village head, Djonowidjojo retired in the mid-1980s.

It seems that village heads in the 1950s were always controversial figures. To the villagers’ Su’udi was not good, Tjarim was even worse, as were Sardijan and Thajib — the co-operative head and his assistant. In 1959, the news spread among the villagers that Sardijan and Thajib had embezzled the co-operative funds. Sardijan had used the money to buy a big house in Wiradesa. The fishermen, not only the co-operative members, then staged a mass protest in front of the Mino Soyo compound asking for an explanation from Sardijan and Thajib. Unable to give any, Thajib surrendered to the police, while Sardijan took to his heels. After two years on the run Sardijan was captured, brought to court, and sent to jail for two years while his big house was confiscated to recover the co-operative losses.

Like the killing of Su’udi, the imprisonment of Sardijan was mostly the outcome of political and economic rivalry among the elite. The abuse of the Mino Soyo funds by its managers and their staff members was in itself nothing new and ordinary villagers saw it almost as a fact of life; “A water course is, of course, wet”, they said. They may have resented the practice, but staging a mass protest was not their way of dealing with it. If a major peculation involving Mino Soyo funds became known or suspected, villagers would buzz with talk which ridiculed the culprit. The gossip would only be silenced when the managers repaid the money to the co-operative. But if they failed to do so this would still not occasion for violent action: the gossip would continue for a long time but generally the villagers shied away from direct interference. A mass protest as happened against the abuse of Mino Soyo funds in Sardijan case, occurred only once in the co-operative’s history, and not surprisingly this happened in the early 1960s during the heydays of political parties. Like Su’udi, Sardijan came from Wonokerto Wetan and was close to the Communist Party, and the local elite from Wonokerto Kulon, supporters of the National Party, used the embezzlement case to get rid of

\textsuperscript{26} Djonowidjojo has two wives—and mistresses too according to the villagers’ gossip.
a political rival who was the head of the co-operative.

After Sardijan had left, his position was taken over by Hudijono, the head of Wiradesa District. During his leadership, which ended in 1963 when Hudijono was promoted to a higher position in the Regency office, there were no incidents in Mino Soyo; as a civil servant the district head was affiliated with the National Party, like the local elite of Wonokerto Kulon, but Hudijono managed to find a suitable balance between the political parties.

The first wave of mechanized fishing

In the mid-1950s the Indonesian government had begun to modernize the country’s fishing fleet by ordering motor boats at the shipyard in Juwana, but it was only in the late 1950s that the first mass wave of mechanization took place in Indonesia. Through the Office of the Fisheries Service the government sponsored the large-scale production of wooden fishing boats of 12 to 14 metres long and with a beam of 4 metres, powered by a Japanese engine (two-cylinder Yanmar or Kubota 25 HP diesel) built in the Juana, Batang, Pekalongan and Tegal shipyards. The boats were then made available to the fishermen via a credit programme. In the early 1960s at least twenty of these boats had come into the hands of Wonokerto fishermen—or to be more precise to the hands of Mino Soyo co-operative managers. In theory the credit for a boat was supposed to be granted to a group of fishermen, one fishing boat per group—consisting of twelve to sixteen fishermen. In practice, this scheme did not work. Everything was fine when the fishermen applied for the credit, but once the boat started to catch fish in good quantities, the fishermen tended to quarrel and accused each other of pocketing a larger share and of not taking enough responsibility for boat maintenance. To settle the matter, then the boat was usually taken over by one of the group members who was willing to shoulder the responsibility of repaying the boat and to buy out the other members. Learning from the failure of collective ownership, some people decided to order boat for themselves and they used other people as strawmen. Sardjun, a Mino Soyo manager, for instance, approached fifteen of his friends to ‘borrow’ their names and thumbprints to be put in the credit contract. In return, Sardjun rewarded his friends with a sum of money, while he himself got a brand-new motorized boat.

Table 22. Number of boats and fishermen Mino Soyo Co-operative 1961 - 1963

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1962</th>
<th>1963</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motor boats</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large sail-powered boats</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small sail-powered boats</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonokerto Kulon population</td>
<td>2,728</td>
<td>2,575</td>
<td>2,579</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Natasubrata, 1965; Wonokerto Kulon Village Credit Bank (1963); OFS Pekalongan Record

As Table 22 shows, the introduction of motor boats among Wonokerto Kulon fishermen was followed by reduction of the fleet size from 294 fishing boats in 1961 down to 225 in 1963. This reduction occurred as a number of deck-hands—around 300 to 400—took jobs aboard the motor boats, which left some sail-powered boats unmanned. As Table 22 also indicates, the sail-powered boats which were edged out of business were usually the smaller and less productive ones. The introduction of the motor boats therefore opened up a new stage in the history of the sea-fishing of Wonokerto. Arguing that the Mrica River was not deep enough to be used by the motor boats, especially the larger ones, some owners of motor boats transferred their boats to the Pekalongan fishing port to be operated from there—a step they would deeply regret afterwards. Apart from the shallowness of the Mrica River, there was also another more covert reason behind the transfer. Pekalongan harbour was closer to the city market and more accessible to the fish traders. At that time the road from Wiradesa to Wonokerto was not yet paved, and during the rainy season it turned into a quagmire and almost impassable either by truck or by horse cart. As befitted its superior position the road to Pekalongan harbour was asphalted. Fish trading in the larger harbour was of course more lively than in Wonokerto. In order to join their boats, crew members from Wonokerto commuted from their village to Pekalongan. They set out from the village shortly after midnight and returned home in the late afternoon. Later on, some of the deck-hands left the village for good and found new homes in Pisangsi hamlet nearby the port.

At that time, fishing trips aboard motor vessels lasted for a day or sometimes two days at most. The boats fished pelagic fish using a payang seine in fishing grounds north of Pekalongan port. Although owners of the motor fishing boats liked to boast that their boats were capable of producing a very good catch, surprisingly enough only two or three them were able to settle their credit. The majority of the credit was never settled, remaining unpaid until the boats were totally worn out in the early 1970s. Repayment was supposed to be made through a direct deduction every time the boats sold their catch at the fish auction. But, the
boat owners could always find a way to circumvent this. Instead of paying the installments, they told the manager of the auction that they needed the money urgently to repair the boat or their fishing gear or that they were able to pay only a small amount. As it was not the cooperative’s money anyway, and as the managers were close to the debtors—some of them were even the debtors themselves—the managers would agree to turn a blind eye.

As the most productive boats were operated from Pekalongan and the number of sail-powered boats had decreased, the catch landed in the Wonokerto fish auction in 1960s was lower than it had been in the previous decade; and it kept decreasing from year to year.

Table 23. Fish landed in Wonokerto auction 1961-1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ton</th>
<th>Rp (000)</th>
<th>Equivalent to ton of rice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>1,498</td>
<td>11,984</td>
<td>2,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,502</td>
<td>15,020</td>
<td>2,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>22,110</td>
<td>1,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1,485</td>
<td>47,520</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>59,520</td>
<td>777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>75,003</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>382,173</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>4,115,832</td>
<td>832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>12,017*</td>
<td>1,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>23,553*</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>32,983*</td>
<td>974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>31,491*</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: -Natasubrata, 1965; FSO Pekalongan Regency
-Rice price from BPS 1970/71
* : New rupiah (equivalent to 1,000 old Rupiah)

As Table 23 shows the total catch landed in Wonokerto fishing port dropped from 1,502 tons in 1960 to 946 tons in 1963 and continued to decline until it reached 643 tons in 1970. The situation among the fishermen was not as bad as the figures imply because they did not mean a decline in the per capita catch of the fishermen. As motor boats with their crew had moved to Pekalongan, the catch landed in Wonokerto during the 1960s was brought in by a smaller number of fishermen. Apart from that, crew members working from Pekalongan produced their own catch which was not registered at the Wonokerto auction. Although fish sales at the Wonokerto auction in the 1960s were lower than they had been in the 1950s, it seems that the income of the fishermen in the village during the 1960s improved compared to what it had been in the previous decade. Measured in rice equivalents, their income in the early 1960s...
was 100-200 kilograms, some twenty-five per cent, higher their income in the early 1950s. As there were around 2,300 fishermen in the village, my estimation, based on 1963 data, is that on average a fisherman earned an income equal to 897 kilograms of rice in 1959. In 1960 the number increased to 916 kilograms, then dropped to 810 kilograms in 1961 when the rice price doubled from Rp 7 to Rp 15/kg.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian economy in general had entered a difficult period. During the latter days of the Sukarno era, the country experienced an overall economic collapse which caused the rupiah to enter a free fall. The hyper-inflation which struck Indonesia in 1963-1966 also severely affected the lives of the Wonokerto fishermen. The prices of all commodities skyrocketed. Even though the fish price increased, the price of fishing supplies and equipment increased even more, which made it difficult to continue fishing in the way in which the fishermen were used to. It led to a decrease in catch landing by 30 to 50 per cent (from 1,485 tons in 1962 to 560 tons in 1966). Although they suffered a set-back, compared to other villages in the area, conditions in Wonokerto were relatively better. This situation was reflected in the villagers' ability to cope with the food crisis in the 1960s.

In 1962/63 the crisis hammered the Pekalongan region—and many other regions in Indonesia as well. At the local level, the calamity was the outcome a plague of rats and successive droughts which caused a series of failures of both rice and corn and at the national level it was the consequence of the overall collapse of the Indonesian economy. Lots of people in the southern part of Pekalongan regency died of hunger. People ransacked the food stores of Chinese traders and the sugar-cane fields in a desperate attempt to find something to eat or to find money to buy food. The provincial government of Central Java tried to deal with this problem by dropping supplies of rice in Pekalongan, but these rice donations were too small to cover local needs. As in the Japanese period, flocks of hunger-stricken people came to Wonokerto to beg for fish; and the fishermen provided them with what they could part with.

Fishing villages in general seem to have fared relatively better during this crisis. The introduction of motor vessels along the northern coast of the Central Java had increased the total catch of Central Javanese fishermen. All over the province the fishermen were able to make a donation of one ton of dried fish to the so-called Komando Anti Lapar, Hunger Relief Command, to help their fellow countrymen who had been struck by the famine.
The story of Koperasi Murni

Socio-economic differences between the commoners and the elite in Wonokerto did not invariably lead to conflict. The villagers in unequal positions acted in unison, especially on particular occasions such as the annually held sea offering, or on a wedding and other life-cycle ceremonies. A very special event which was celebrated by the all villagers was the inauguration of the newly paved road from Wiradesa to the Mino Soyo compound in 1964. It was an expensive project which was totally funded by money from the co-operative. In 1963, the office of Gabungan Koperasi Perikanan Laut in Semarang had suggested Mino Soyo managers to appoint an experienced official, Supardi, as administrator of the co-operative. The managers agreed, and it was during Supardi’s administration that Mino Soyo was able to raise the funds to pave the five kilometres road from Wiradesa in a concrete move to boost the village fish trading. This person is well remembered by the villagers as Statir (from Dutch word administrateur) Pardi, the best person they ever had in the co-operative.

It was during Supardi’s time too that the conflict brewing among the elite reached a climax. Jasa Sudhamala, the secretary of Mino Soyo co-operative who was also head of Wonokerto Wetan village and member of the Communist Party, harshly criticized the economic practices of the other Mino Soyo managers and the Wonokerto Kulon elite’s economic practices. It was said that the Mino Soyo co-operative was not a co-operative at all, but only the organ by which the elite exploited the deck-hands; that the Wonokerto Kulon elite had mismanaged the government boat credit programme for their own benefit. Another factor which perhaps augmented Jasa Sudhamala and his comrades dislike of Mino Soyo was the introduction by the government of a 2 per cent tax on all sales at the auction in 1962, a move which increased the fishermen burden from 5 per cent into 7 per cent. Half of this 2 per cent was submitted as provincial tax while the other half was paid as a Regency tax and both were shouldered by the fishermen (Natasubrata, 1965: 25).

Jasa Sudhamala and his comrades spread their protest against the policy of the co-operative through gossip and theatrical performances staged by the communist Lekra organization. Their agitation, however, did not have a great impact on the deck-hands and the Wonokerto Kulon villagers, except for three youth: Trimo, Iman (the son of Tanggul) and

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32 Interestingly enough, none of the people who was involved in the Communist Party, was a deck-hand. Most of them were from Wonokerto Wetan village, from families with agricultural backgrounds, although there were three person who were boat owners.

33 Very likely Sudarsono’s criticism was not based only on his observation of the day-to-day activities of Mino Soyo but also on a general view held by the Communist Party, that “capitalist elements” often infiltrated the co-operative movement and manipulated the co-operative to serve their own, capitalistic, interests (Aidit, 1963: 16). The criticism was not totally wrong. The co-operatives were often used by local elites to maintain their own businesses (cf. Dam, 1954).

34 Lekra is an abbreviation of Lembaga Kesenian Rakyat (Institute of People’s Culture). After it was established in 1950, Lekra had close relations with the Communist Party. As the years passed by, the relationship was so close that by the early 1960s people tended to see Lekra as the official propaganda organ of the Communist Party to introduce communism to commoners through art performances (Foulcher, 1986; Peacock, 1968).
Mochari. This is not to say that every time Lekra performed its plays and shows in Wonokerto Kulon or Wonokerto Wetan, villagers did not crowd around the stage. But this was not because that the villagers were attracted to the Communist Party. “It was nice to see those people sing and dance and perform the drama about Pak Tani. We longed for entertainment and Lekra was the best among the political theatre groups, of which there were many at that time. Lekra always opened their performance with the Genjer-genjer song, then continued with the Pak Tani song, and the Lumbung Desa song. In the middle of the performance there would be one or two speakers, who would give talk of social justice and so on. They were very convincing”, Amat Karib told me describing his experience of watching Lekra performances.

The Wonokerto Kulon villagers, especially the deck-hands, were apparently more attracted to making money than entering politics. Having failed to awakening the deck-hands’ ‘class consciousness’, Jasa Sudhamala took a drastic step. With the help of Walujo, Sastro, Ngarsan, Kardani, Wajan, Wasdjuri, Darus, and Nalili (all were from Wonokerto Wetan and all members of the Communist Party), in 1963 Jasa Sudhamala established a new co-operative: Koperasi Murni (the True Co-operative). It was said to be based on the principle of equality (sama rata sama rasa) under which the profits of the new co-operative would be distributed evenly among the all participants. The new co-operative opened a fish auction hall, a temporary thatched-roofed bamboo hut, on a spot on the east bank of Mrican River almost directly across from the Mino Soyo compound. For practical reasons, the fishermen gladly accepted the Murni Co-operative, as it gave them a wider choice of places to sell their catch. “When there was a crowd of boats in front of the Mino Soyo compound, we went to the Murni Co-operative. If the Murni Co-operative was full, we stopped at Mino Soyo. So we did not need to waste time waiting for the auction and we got a somewhat better price too”, Skipper Kadir told me. What the fishermen liked was that the two co-operatives provided them with a kind of competition. As if they were participating in a cock fight, the fishermen

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35 Trimo was not a member of the Communist Party, the villagers like to tell. He was just a poor bloke who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Being close to Jasa Sudhamala, Trimo agreed to erect a stage in front of his house for a Lekra performance. After the 1965 affair, Trimo was captured by the Army and eventually sent to Pekalongan prison for many years. His family sold large tracks of land to bail him out from the detention but to no avail.

36 Songs by Lekra singers were full with social criticism, although not all were arranged by Lekra composers. Genjer-genjer, the song which then popularly known as the Communist Party song because it was taken as opening song in every Lekra’s performance, was arranged by a prominent, non-political, dalang, KJ Nartosabdho (SM, Jul. 04, 2000). The song tells about peasant wives who had to pick an edible but nutritionally poor wild water plant (genjer) to earn just a small amount of money to feed their children. Pak Tani (Mister Peasant) song is about the bright future for peasants under communist rule, that they would no longer be exploited by landlords for they would work on their own farm land. Lumbung Desa (Village Rice Barn) is about the prosperous life in village where people co-operate harmoniously to produce rice.

37 Three of them; Sastro, Wajan and Darus were boat owners. While the other persons were not really involved in sea fishing.
on the Mino Soyo compound kept a close watch at the incoming fishing boats. If the boat stopped in front of Mino Soyo, the fishermen who were there exploded into a burst of applause and joyful cries. If the boat kept sailing by, they fell silent, and then it was the fishermen at the Murni co-operative who shouted their cheers.

In the eyes of the Mino Soyo managers, Jasa Sudhamala and his comrades were really a pain in the neck; their Murni Co-operative effectively challenged the domination of the Mino Soyo. Tanjung, who was appointed to sit in the co-operative management again by Supardi, described the situation; “I told the managers and staff; ‘We are here to work for the co-operative. Not to play party politics. The PNI is all right, the PKI is all right’. But what Lurah Jasa did was really outrageous: instead of developing our co-operative he just destroyed it by establishing the Murni Co-operative”. Not knowing what to do with the Murni Co-operative, the Mino Soyo manager sent Supardi to Semarang to report to Mr. Subroto, the head of the provincial Fisheries Service Office and to Governor Mochtar of the Province of Central Java. The governor then ordered the army to close down the Murni Co-operative. The troops, under Capt. Wirasmo, tied a long rope around a pillar of the Murni Co-operative building, and tied the other end of the rope to the military truck which was parked on the west side of the river. Watched by the villagers crowding along both sides of the river, the truck was ordered to pull on the rope, and bring the bamboo hut down. Villagers gave the ill-fated co-operative which had lasted for only four months their last burst of applause. From that moment Mino Soyo recaptured its position as the single, dominant player in Wonokerto Kulon fish trading. Jasa Sudhamala, Walujo, Sastro, Kardani, Wajan, Darus, and Nalili were taken to Pekalongan by the Army, but were released after a while.

After the Murni Co-operative incident Jasa Sudhamala and his comrades kept a low profile. They were shocked that the result of their effort in establishing Murni Co-operative, had not brought greater prosperity but that it had earned them instead military detention. Undeterred by their bad experiences, they did not halt their opposition to the Mino Soyo managers. Every time Supardi, the co-operative administrator, passed through Wonokerto Wetan on his scooter some people threw stones at him. In September 1965, the so-called Communist coup exploded, and not long afterwards Central Java was soaked in a blood bath in which hundreds of thousands putative members of the PKI and others accused of belonging to the political left were murdered (May, 1978). Given the fierce political conflicts in the early 1960s, it is rather surprising that most members of the elite in Wonokerto Wetan and Wonokerto Kulon escaped this wave of revenge.

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38 In 1967 Supardi left Mino Soyo to take up a position as administrator of the Makaryo Mino Co-operative in Pekalongan, a position he held until he died in the mid-1970s. His position in Mino Soyo was filled by Saradi of Wonokerto Kulon.
In 1966 Jasa Sudhamala and his comrades plus some other villagers were arrested by the Army, accused of being members of the Communist Party. They were taken to Pekalongan prison. Three of them met their end there, either falling victims to arbitrary execution or poor treatment in the prison after they had been tortured publicly in the yard of the Military Police Headquarters in Pekalongan.\(^\text{39}\) The others, including Jasa Sudhamala, remained incarcerated in Pekalongan prison, or were sent to either Nusa Kambangan prison or to Buru Island. Not all persons involved in the Murni Co-operative were taken by the Army. Wasdjuri, for instance, had managed to escape arrest. He was a member of the \textit{Pemuda Republik Indonesia} before he joined Jasa Sudhamala’s group and participated in Murni Co-operative. Later on he changed sides: shortly before the September 1965 coup, Wasdjuri went to Tanjung and board members of the National Party and told them that he would like to join them and leave the PKI\(^\text{40}\). When the Army came to clean up Wonokerto Kulon and Wonokerto Wetan and rid them of ‘the communists’ supporters of the National Party testified that Wasdjuri belonged to them.

Besides the arrests of Trimo, Iman, and Mochari, the 1965 affair brought other changes to the life of Wonokerto Kulon villagers. In 1966 it was the Armed Forces policy to deploy strict security measures in which the fishing fleet was assigned a role similar to the one it had had during the Japanese occupation. While the Navy was charged with covering the coastal areas. Admiral Soedjono, the Commander of the IV Maritime Area, in a flag ceremony to celebrate the sixth anniversary of Fishermen’s Day in Semarang announced that besides their primary task of exploiting the country’s marine resources the fishermen were also expected to function as a tool of the National Defence and the Revolution. They had to be the “fence and ears” of the Naval Forces\(^\text{41}\). Troops were sent to the rural areas of Java ‘to protect the villagers from communist elements’.

In 1967 a small unit of the Navy and Marines was posted in Wonokerto Kulon, where they stayed there until 1974. One of the military, Sergeant-Major (Ret) Cilik, a corporal when

\(^{39}\)Their bodies then were buried in an unmarked mass grave along Pekalongan beach. After a while their bones were exposed by erosion of the beach, some were washed down into the sea and sometimes were caught in the nets of fishermen who happened to be fishing close to that beach. Kasdik told me a story, describing how one night he fished with his father and two of his younger brothers. Around midnight they heard sounds as if there were people singing \textit{Genjer-genjer} with its joyous music. Kasdik asked his father, “Father, where do you think the \textit{Lekra} performance is? Has the \textit{Lekra} not already been ground under heel?” His father replied, “I do not know son, I hear their voices too”. At that moment both Kasdik and his father noticed that they were fishing close to the beach of Pekalongan, the graveyard of the \textit{PKI} members. Upon realizing where they were, Kasdik’s father ordered his sons to put their oars to work and they scurried their boat away from the spot as fast as they could row.

\(^{40}\)Wasdjuri was not the only one to leave the \textit{Pemuda Republik Indonesia} party and join the National Party, but most of the members of the \textit{Pemuda Republik Indonesia} did likewise. Among them were Amat Karib, Suradi, Suwirjo, Rasjid, Kaspari and Jayus. The last five persons had been known among the villagers to be part of the communist-inspired action for land reform: who had forced Timbul, a landowner from Kalwungu District, to relinquish his ownership over a large piece of ex-communal land in the village.

\(^{41}\)SM, Apr. 06, 1967; Apr. 08, 1967.
he was stationed in Wonokerto Kulon, said that the Navy’s mission was mainly territorial
guidance (pembinaan teritorial), that is to drill some discipline into the community:

“When we arrived there, Wonokerto Kulon community was quite undisciplined. The
fishermen were difficult people (kurang ajar). If we had stayed low they would have
stepped on our heads. If we were a bit hard towards them, they would move against
us. There were many fishpond thefts, the co-operative management was chaotic,
everybody stole the co-operative money, especially Yatimin, the co-operative head.
We organized the village youth, created sport clubs and also a Malay Orchestra (orkes
melayu) group named Bulan Samudra (Ocean Moon) so they would have positive
activities rather than just hanging around in coffee shops. With our presence there, the
community was being licked into shape.”

Fine words but it seems that in its attempt to discipline the villagers the Navy went too far. Its
mezzled in the village administration to an unacceptable extent and involved itself in the
fishing business. Grandpa Sarda’i told me:

“While the Marines were stationed here, everybody was really terrified. If someone
was reported to the Marines post, he would be beaten. This happened to Tarma’i, a
batik trader from Buaran. The son of the village secretary of Wonokerto Wetan had an
affair with Tarma’i’s wife and wanted to get rid of her husband. He asked his father to
report Tarma’i to the Marines. These guys ordered Tarma’i to come to the post, where
they beat him up. In the afternoon he was released, but the following evening he died.
The Marines were really heavy handed. If people were caught riding a bicycle at night
without a light, they would be beaten. If someone passed in front of their post and did
not step down from his bike, he would be thrashed. Lurah Deleg of Bojong District
was indebted to someone and was unable to meet his obligation. Although it was not
their business, the Marines called him in. Lurah Deleg came to the post and was
beaten. A Marine raped the daughter of Paramedic Tasduri, Wonokerto Wetan, and
nobody dared to do anything about it.
The village had to make double administration reports. Before it reached the desk of
the district head, every report had to be submitted to the Marines first, and a copy was
left with the Marines.
One time, two fishpond thieves got caught. Siblings. They were stripped of their
clothes, and then beaten before the villagers in the fish auction yard, to within an inch
of their lives. And then the Marines stuffed their mouths with the fish they had stolen
from the pond. Even me who was the village policeman, was terrified.”

The Navy personnel acted as if they were the righteous body to take control over the
affairs in the coastal villages, especially if there was any money involved. “The areas south of
the Daendels road belonged to the Army. But north of the road, it was our Maritime Area”.

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42 According to Sardono, a mandolin player in Ocean Moon, the navy had nothing to do with the orkes melayu group. The
group was established by the village youths.
43 In Rembang, the Navy personnel “helped” the Sarojo Mino fishing co-operative managers to summon fish
traders who had debts to the co-operative. The Navy personnel were reported to be successful in “reminding” the
fish traders about their debts and in “counselling” them to pay the debts right away. This effort was able to
produce the payment of a sum of Rp 100,000 out of the 250 thousand rupiah of the fish traders’ debt. (SM
Feb.13, 1969). In the fishing village of Tawang (Kendal Regency) the Navy was involved in fish-auction hall
building, a 3.5 million rupiah project (SM, Nov.5, 1969).
Sergeant-Major Cilik told me. An armed conflict between the Navy and Army personnel almost erupted in Wonokerto. In 1969, a plan was made to build a breakwater in the estuary. The Regency Head, Police Colonel Soetedjo, gave the green light to finance the project.\footnote{Before the plan was implemented, Colonel Soetedjo was replaced by Army Lieut. Col. Harjono who was enthusiastic about the idea to develop Wonokerto fishing port. Unfortunately, Lieut. Col. Harjono died in the middle of his term of office, and his successor, Lieut. Col. Supardi seemed to have something else on his mind. The fund which had been previously assigned to build the breaker was then rerouted to open a road from Lebakbarang District to Petungkrirono District. So far, the breakwater has not seen the light of the day.} To the annoyance of the Navy personnel, they had never been asked to participate in the project committee. Instead, the committee was headed by an Army lieutenant, Dibyo, who was a Wonokerto village himself. Feeling that their rights had been blatantly trampled on, one night when a meeting was being held in Dibyo’s house, the Navy personnel surrounded the building. When the meeting ended, and the participants stepped out of the house, Corporal Bani opened fire with his AK rifle aiming at the house roof. In panic, the participants fled back inside the house. One of them escaped to Wiradesa and made a report to the district Army unit commander who then came to Wonokerto with a squadron of his men and drew up a fighting line in front of the Navy post. Eventually both sides were able to control themselves. In the morning, high-ranking officers from Pekalongan came to settle the problem. Corporal Bani was punished and pulled out of Wonokerto.

Remembering the Navy presence, villagers speak of menace and terror. The fishermen were very afraid of the Navy personnel. “Jaman ana KKO wong mbelahe payah. Malah soyo remuk”. “When the Navy was here we were really in trouble. Our fate was worse than ever”, Kumbang Karmin told me. Apart from establishing their post in the southern part of the village, a number of Navy personnel set up a control post at the co-operative’s compound to keep an eye on the fishermen and fish trading activities. Every afternoon, directly after mooring their boats at the Mrican River bank, the fishermen had to report to the Navy station, carrying their boat’s license and a sum of so-called reporting money. Failure to do so meant a brutal punishment for the fishermen. The villagers clearly remember how Ketong, an Api-api village fisherman, was cruelly beaten by Corporal Bani in the co-operative yard, because he forgot to report. “Nganti njengking. Nangis ampun ndoro tuan ... ampun ndoro tuan”. “Till he knelt down on the ground and cried ‘Have mercy with me Master ... mercy, Master’”, Kumbang Karmin recalled. The Navy personnel also forbade the village boys to play in the co-operative’s compound in a move to prevent them from stealing fish. If a boy was caught stealing fish, he was put inside the compound’s w.c. until the fish auction was over in the late afternoon. “Bocahe ya njerit-njerit njaluk tulimg. Ampun Pak. Ampun. Aku diculke ... Modar aku ... modar aku”. “The kids naturally were frightened and cried out for help. Mercy me Master. Mercy ... Let me out ... I am going to die ... I am going to die”, Skipper Kadir told
me. Of course nobody dared to release them, neither their fathers nor anybody else. For they were afraid of the Navy too. "They were cruel, even to kids. We, whose fish always got stolen, never punished the kids. At most we just shouted at them to stay away from our fish, but never punished them", Uncle Darjan said to me.

Selling fish outside the auction was regarded by the Navy personnel as another big breach of order. If they found that a fisherman had sold his catch outside the auction hall, both the fisherman and the trader were commanded to balance on one foot on a petrol drum in the co-operative yard from dawn till sunset. Navy personnel even patrolled the river banks north of the co-operative compound in their attempt to prevent such transactions or to catch the culprits red-handed. Trying to get their own back on the Navy, the fish traders, especially the women, sometimes tricked them into an embarrassing situation. Maimun told her story:

“One early afternoon, me and my sister were about to start up our trading. We were sitting on the east bank of the river, when two Navies approached us. I was determined to teach them a lesson, so with fish containers in our hands we moved away, not very fast to allow them to catch up with us a bit. We walked along a muddy path by the fishponds which was very muddy indeed. The Navies kept following us and they got their white shoes, socks and uniform besplattered with mud. They cried out to stop us, but we moved faster than they for we were barefooted and they were in shoes. We escaped and hid ourselves in a banana field. Hihih... they were mad and black with mud like monkeys ...”.

The only people in the village who enjoyed the presence of the Navy were the managers of the co-operative. They were given a squadron of dreadful guards to make sure their interests were protected. Whether or not the managers had requested the Navy personnel involvement in the village fishing business is not clear. There were never any reports that the co-operative managers ever tried to stop the arbitrary actions meted out to the fishermen by the Navy. What happened was that the co-operative’s managers actively participated in the Navy-sponsored Fishermen Brigade and that some of them acted as the naval pimps in seducing the young girls of the village.

Conclusion
A year after the so-called Communist coup, President Soekarno’s regime came to end. With the demise of the regime, the era of a multi-party system and a policy which saw co-

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45 The Fishermen’s Brigade (Brigade Nelajari) was the Indonesian fishermen paramilitary organization, formed in early 1960s to support to President Soekarno’s Dwikora, anti-Singapore and Malaysia, campaign. Under the order of the GKPL and the Office of Fisheries Service every fishing co-operative sent a number of cadres to the nearby Naval station to get basic military training. Upon returning to their co-operatives, the cadres were supposed to form a platoon of the Fishermen's Brigade (Dept. Penerangan, 1965: 774; Natasubrata, 1965: 33). Apart of the Fishermen Brigade, there was also the so-called OPR Lant, Coastal People Defense Organization which was attached to the village administration (SM, Dec. 27, 1961; Jan. 21, 1964). There is no information about when the brigade was disbanded, perhaps it was never disbanded at all but just died a natural death as there was nothing for the brigade to do.
Operatives as the main pillars of the people's economy was ended too: an era in which people of the newly independent country began with high hopes of a better living; an era which was remembered by the villagers in nostalgic feelings tinged with both happiness and sadness. For the village elite, the 1950/1960s, the heyday of the co-operative, were a glorious time. As Amat Karib told me: “These were good years for Wonokerto sea-fishing. Our boats lined both sides of Mrigan River, from the co-operative compound in the north up to the bridge over there—a distance almost one kilometre long. The business was flourishing. The co-operative was so rich, that it could pave the road from Wiradesa to the co-operative compound. When officials in Semarang talked about sea-fishing in the province of Central Java, they always quoted Wonokerto Kulon and Mino Soyo as an illustration”. The village commoners saw this period via totally different light; “Glorious what? Glorious fart it was! It was good time for the rich boat owners and the co-operative and fish auction managers, but certainly not for us, deck-hands and ordinary villagers. Life was hard during that time. More often than not our income was not even enough to cover our evening meal”, Karmin Kumbang said.

As usual when people talk of the old days, both Karib and Kumbang were exaggerating, but their memories did not stray too far from reality. Between the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, the local elite could play a dominant role in the Wonokerto fishing economy because of the state policy of establishing and supporting co-operatives. At the same time, however, competition among the elite had grown more heated because of the rivalry between political parties and also because there was more at stake, now the co-operative was so successful. Tellingly, in spite the position of Mino Soyo in the nationwide co-operatives network, which amounted to a strong political support, the co-operative had not been able to introduce any real development into the Wonokerto sea fishery. High hopes had risen among the fishermen that the Independence which was followed by opening of Mino Soyo membership for deck-hands, implementation of motor boats credit scheme, and active political movements would bring them into a better economic condition. However, the hopes proved to be almost empty. After two decades of Mino Soyo management, Wonokerto sea fishery remained an overcrowded economic field which was running on an already overexploited fish natural stock just as it had been during colonial times.
7. Under the banner of development 1: large-scale fishing in Pekalongan

In 1966, President Soekarno was ousted and the New Order regime, under General Soeharto’s leadership, assumed power. The New Order also implied a new course for the country’s sea fishery, although in many ways the New Order regime sang a similar tune to that of its predecessor. It was based on the same litany and it aimed at the same goal: in spite of the abundance of marine resources the sea fishery productivity of the country was poor and had to be revolutionized by technological modernization in order to achieve higher productivity. The difference between the fishery policies of the two regimes lay first in the aims of the modernization and second in the approach taken to achieve the increase. While the Old Order aimed at increasing national fish consumption and improving the fishermen’s welfare, in its first five-year development plan, REPELITA I 1969/1973, the New Order added a new objective: to strengthen the role of sea fishery in order to produce commodities for foreign markets to increase the country’s foreign exchange (Republik Indonesia, 1969). In the second REPELITA 1974/1978, yet another objective was added: that of providing employment (Republik Indonesia, 1974; Darmorejo, 1974). To achieve such goals large investments were needed, and in the eyes of the New Order regime the former policy of economic self-reliance (ekonomi berdikari) with its heavy emphasis on fishing co-operatives had failed to produce such investments. The fishery sector was economically poor and barely capable of achieving the internal capital accumulation necessary to achieve the modernization expected of it. Capital had to be obtained from external sources, either foreign or domestic or both, to improve the fishing fleet and the infrastructure such as fishing ports, fish markets and fish-processing facilities.

On the basis of the newly created 1967 Foreign Investment Law and the 1968 Domestic Private Investment Law, Indonesian sea fishery was opened up to external investment. This implied a relegation of the role of fishing co-operatives which were forced to take a back step. In January 1972, the old monopoly of fish trading held by the co-operatives was taken over by the government and later, in 1978, this right was handed over to a newly-created body: the Centre of Village-Based Fishing Co-operatives (Pusat KUD Mina) (Makaryo Mino, 1997). It retained the name Koperasi, but in practice it was a management organization. It was at this time that the fishing co-operative was also deprived of the right to administer the government-sponsored credit programme to the fishermen. The credit was distributed by the People’s Bank (BRI) instead, and the fishermen had to turn to the bank to obtain it.

Pekalongan fishermen experienced the New Order sea fishery policy in the form of a thorough modernization of the port facilities and the fishing fleet. In 1974 no less than US $ 21
million —US $13 million out of a loan from the Asian Development Bank— was invested by the government in the purchase of fifty purse seine boats, each of sixty gross tons, and three refrigerated carrier vessels of 120 gross tons, in the establishment of an ice factory which produced 100 tons of ice per day, and of a cold storage with a 600-ton capacity (Comitini and Hardjolukito, 1983: 22). All of these investments would be managed by a state-owned fishing enterprise named P.T. Tirta Raya Mina. In the meantime, the government also renovated the fish auction hall and improved the port quay project on which it spent Rp 350 millions. A new corrugated iron roofed, 48 m x 20 m wide, and clean fish auction hall was built on a 7,500 square metres land, to replace the old, wooden structure which had seen many years of services. By the end of 1974, the government had officially designated Pekalongan a national fishing port named Pelabuhan Perikanan Nusantara I (Indonesian Fishing Port No. I). Apart from these state-sponsored investments, since the late 1960s there had also a growing number of investments from the private sector injected into Pekalongan sea fishery, mainly in the form of large-size mechanized fishing boats. Supported by the huge investments, within two decades the Pekalongan fishing industry experienced a tremendous increase in catch landing: leaping from 1,238 tons in 1970 to 105,192 tons in 1994.

**The exclusion of Wonokerto boat owners from Pekalongan fishery**

During colonial times Pekalongan was a busy port from which sugar, rubber, tea, and coffee from the large plantations in the Regency as well as batik textiles were shipped to foreign markets. A railway connected the port with the city train station and with sugar plantations. The coming of Independence rang a change and activity in the port began to wane. Exports of plantation products were rerouted through Semarang and by the early 1960s Pekalongan had subsided into a quiet backwater and a not-too-busy fish market where a small number of fishermen from Krapyak village sold their catch. It was Wonokerto Kulon fishermen who had the honour of re-activating the port in the early 1960s by sending their motor boats there. Skipper Rakhim told the story:

“When the large sized motor boats of Wonokerto were sent to Pekalongan fishing port, that was still some years before Gestapu (the Communist Party affair, 1965). We also went there. Not all of us. Just some of us who were lucky enough to get a position aboard the motor boats. Right after midnight or in the late afternoon, we went to Pekalongan by becak, horse carts, or on bicycles. At that time Pekalongan was a very quiet fishing port surrounded by vast shrub forest inhabited by wild boars, monkeys and snakes. It was us from Wonokerto who opened up the port again. Tired of commuting, later on, a good number of us moved to Pisangsari hamlet nearby the port

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1 SM, Aug. 08, 1974.
2 SM, Dec. 05, 1974.
and settled there permanently”.

As the years passed, the number of motor boats in Pekalongan increased steadily and the number of Wonokerto Kulon deck-hands who worked in Pekalongan grew too. In the early 1960s there were less than fifty motor boats in Pekalongan, a number which then rose to around a hundred at the end of the decade, most of them belonging to owners from nearby fishing villages like Wonokerto and Krapyak. In the beginning, all motor boats in Pekalongan employed payang seines as fishing gear. Each boat was manned by sixteen crew members, including the skipper. Although their gear was somewhat old fashioned — similar to that used by the fishermen a century before — with their motor boats the fishermen were now able to move swiftly from one fishing spot to another or to chase a school of fish which happened to swim near the surface. The motor boats also allowed the fishermen to move farther away, travelling as far as the waters of Karimun Jawa island if necessary, some 12 hours’ sail northeast of Pekalongan. That was how the 100 boats of Pekalongan managed to produce a bigger catch than the more than 200 boats from Wonokerto in the 1960s.

Table 24. Fish landing in Pekalongan fishing port, 1963-1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ton</th>
<th>Rp (000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1,402</td>
<td>97,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1,171</td>
<td>201,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>866,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>8,155,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>21,658*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>43,589*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1,648</td>
<td>86,247*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,238</td>
<td>81,141*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FSO Pekalongan Regency
* : New Rupiah

Working conditions aboard Pekalongan motor boats spelled an improvement for the Wonokerto fishermen. They did not have to row the boat, food was plentiful, they got a packet of cigarette every day, the catch was good, and the trip lasted only a day. Even when the trip took longer, the fishermen still enjoyed it. While the boat sailed to another fishing spot the crew, except for the boat skipper, engineer, and seine master, had plenty of idle time. They could sleep peacefully, or play cards or chess with their friends. When the boat hove to the fishing spot and waited for the right moment to drop the seine (at three o’clock in the morning or seven o’clock in the evening, the times when the fish are active to look for food) the

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1 At that time the fishing trip mostly lasted 24 hours; each boat manned by sixteen deck-hands; the fishing supply consisted of 5 tons of ice blocks, 5 gunny sacks of salt, a gunny of rice, thirty packets of cigarette, and 400 litres of diesel fuel.
fishermen could try their luck, dropping their own fishing line to fish for their own side catch. The most important advantage for the Pekalongan fishing boats was that it allowed the crews to go home with a fair amount of money in their hands.

The share the fishermen on the motorized boats received was smaller than that on the sail-powered boats. After the catch was sold, the proceeds were reduced by the deduction of the fishing supply costs. These costs were higher than those of the sail-powered boats as the motor vessels required diesel fuel and lubricant, and as deck-hands aboard this kind of boat usually demanded better food. The remainder was reduced by 10 per cent to cover equipment depreciation costs, before it was finally divided into two halves. The boat owner got 50 per cent and deck-hands got 50 per cent, which would be divided again among them in an unequal proportion. The lion’s share of the catch went to the boat owner for he had invested a major sum in purchasing the boat and also to cover the high costs of boat maintenance. On average, each deck-hand got 2 per cent of the clean catch, which did not differ that much from the share of the deck-hand aboard sail-powered boat. However, this smaller percentage was compensated for by the larger quantity of the boat’s catch. As a result, in general deck-hands aboard motor boats received a higher income than their fellow crewmen who worked aboard sail-powered boats. As data on the number of Pekalongan boats in the 1963 are lacking, it was hard to assess the difference, but from other sources it seems fair to assume that the motor boat fishermen’s income was at least three times higher than that of those on sail-powered boats. A survey conducted by the Directorate General of Fisheries in the mid-1970s, pointed out that on average fishermen with mayang seine aboard sail-powered boat produced 66.3 kilograms of fish per fishing trip; while fishermen with similar fishing gear aboard 10 gross ton motor boat produced 387. 6 kilograms and those who worked aboard 20 gross ton boat produced 1.2 tons per fishing trip (DGF, 1978: 1-2).

Apart from being higher, the annual income from Pekalongan boats also had the advantage of being more stable to the income still derived from sail-powered boats. During the

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Sharing arrangement among deck-hands aboard of Pekalongan motorized fishing boat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skipper</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters mate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seine master</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat master</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Engineer</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deck-hands (14 persons)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra shares for deck-hands in charge of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seine (4 persons)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra share for 2 cooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dukun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tukang Petung</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 31 shares

The dukun was the spiritual advisor of the skipper, who provided him with amulets and mantra to ensure his success in leading the fishing trip. Tukang petung (numerologist) was in charge of “calculating” the right day to set out on a fishing trip. Neither person actually joined the fishing trip but they were considered to deserve shares in the catch. A detailed discussion on this matter is presented in the next chapter.

Although average catch of 20 ton motor vessels was twenty times bigger than that of sail-powered boats, the revenue of the motor vessels’ crew members did not automatically increase twenty times: big motor vessels required bigger share of the catch to cover the fishing supply, apart from that big motor vessels also requires bigger number of crew members, which in effect cut the average revenue of the crew members. Further discussion on fishermen and their revenue from motor vessels is presented in the next part of this chapter.

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slack season the catch of Pekalongan boats was also dropping; but this reduction was not as dramatic as that of Wonokerto boats. With a strong engine installed in the boat, the fishermen from Pekalongan were able to deal with bad weather during the peak weeks of the eastern and western monsoons. It allowed them to reach the fishing grounds even during the time of the heavy seas which prevented sail-powered boats leaving port; they could bide their time then drop their seines when the waves and currents subsided, and then return swiftly to the safety of a harbour when a gale struck. As far as the fishermen and their families were concerned the Pekalongan boats were really a relief. “During the west monsoon, my husband continued to go to the sea, the catch was lower, and so was the amount of money he brought home. But at least there was still a ray of hope, tetep ana sing bisa diarep-arep”, Grandma Mirah told me. With her husband employed in Pekalongan, she noticed too that the family’s old ‘tradition’ of pawning and selling household items during the slack season was no longer in such evidence; “The slack season was no longer as bad as before, during the time of the old boats”.

As early as 1968, another major change started to sweep through the Pekalongan sea fishery when textile entrepreneurs entered the fishing business. They bought fishing boats equipped with new gear, purse seine. These purse seine boats were bigger, required more crew members to operate, and was more effective than mayang seine boats. This provided new jobs for the deck-hands. “In the early 1960s”, Uncle Tahan recalled, “we had to beg to get a position on a motor boat. But later on, more motor boats appeared in Pekalongan and jobs were then no longer such a difficult proposition”. With this change of course, one by one of the old mayang motor boats began to fall into disrepair as their owners had problems in finding money for their maintenance. As explained in the foregoing chapter, all of the mayang motor boats had been obtained by their owners in the early 1960s with the assistance of the governmental credit scheme which was then administered by the co-operatives. When the mayang motor boats wore out in the 1970s, most of their owners had failed either to settle the credit or to save money to buy a new boat. Therefore in the 1970s, the government launched a new credit program to provide the fishermen with 5 to 7 gross ton motor boats (Comitini and Hardjolukito, 1983: 18; Bailey, 1987: 98). The trouble was that most of the credit fell into the hands of entrepreneurs rather than boat owners from the fishing community. In order to get the credit, borrowers had to have a sufficient collateral (generally real estate) and most of boat owners from the fishing community were unable to provide this. The situation was exacerbated as the People’s Bank which administered the credit was more accustomed to dealing with entrepreneurs rather than with the fishermen, and vice versa. At most the fishermen’s experience with financial institutions did not extend beyond their co-operative; once they were out of this sphere they were on unfamiliar territory. Pushed out of the races one by one the boat owners from Wonokerto and Krapyak lost their position in the Pekalongan fishing port during the 1970s. From the around thirty Wonokerto boat owners who had sent
their boats to Pekalongan in the early 1960s, there was only one left in the late 1970s: H. Kagum, but he also was eventually driven out of Pekalongan sea fishery in early 1983. The textile entrepreneurs who had taken over in Pekalongan were not there to stay for a long time: only a few years later they were, in their turn, pushed out of the fishing business by owners of trawls from Bagan Siapi-api in Sumatra and by local Chinese entrepreneurs. For Wonokerto, this change of ownership meant a marginalization of its role in sea fishery; from being the main fish producer it was reduced to the role of mere supplier of labour force.

The story of trawl

The first experiment with the employment of trawlers in Indonesia was carried out in 1914 aboard of the Batavia Fisheries Station research vessel Gier (Sunier, 1914). Further experiments were undertaken in the 1950s by the Directorate General of Fisheries (Bailey, 1987: 69). Both experiments showed that trawls were capable of producing a high catch. Trawl fishing is worked by dragging the winged trawl seine over the sea floor and practically scooping up all the sea creatures which happen to be in the seine’s way. Though their efficacy was not in doubt, the high costs involved, meant it was beyond the reach of the fishermen to adopt trawlers. Only in the late 1960s, stimulated by strong foreign market demand for shrimp and facilitated by the availability of marine engines, trawlers began to be widely accepted among the fishermen (Yosuke, 1987; Suzuki, 1996). The first to embrace a wide-scale use of the vessel were fishermen in Sumatran parts on the Straits of Malacca who were inspired by the profitable operation of the Malaysian trawler fleet (Unar, 1972). Brought by Bagan Siapi-api fishermen from the Straits of Malacca, the trawler spread to Java, being adopted both on the northern and southern coasts. Not long after that, Taiwanese and Japanese trawlers followed (cf. Soehardi, 1973: 87). From then on, attracted by the worthwhile profits to be made more trawlers were built every year, so that within a decade their number in Indonesia had soared to 3,109 in 1980 (DGF, 1984). The government encouraged the development of the trawlers for it was the trawler which boosted Indonesia’s shrimp export from around 6,000 tons (valued at US $ 790,000) in 1968 to 31,900 tons (valued at US $ 181 million) in 1980 (DGF, 1974; Bailey, 1987: 95).

The higher productivity of the trawlers also permeated down to the deck-hands: their income was considerably higher than on any other kind of boat. Trawlers became the the most productive type of fishing boat in Indonesia. The annual catch of a double rigged trawler was 45.5 tons; of an otter trawler it was 24.9 tons and of other type of trawlers it was 31.5 tons. These last two were lower than the annual catch of a purse seine which was 38.9 tons; but a trawler was manned by only ten crew members, while a purse seine boat required between twenty to forty crew members (Bailey and Dwiponggo, 1987: 84; Bailey 1987: 107). The price of shrimp, the fishing target of trawlers, was the highest among the fishermen catches: in 1973
the average price of all kinds of shrimp was three times higher than that of fish (Rp 392,000 per ton as against to Rp 103,000) (DGF, 1974). The trawl also produced a fair amount of

Figure 7. Trawler


bycatch which officially had to be thrown back into the sea to save the boat storage-hold for shrimps, the main fishing target. Rules are meant to be broken and crew members did not see the matter quite in that light. Low price fish was thrown back into the sea, but species which brought higher prices such as squid and white bawal would be saved for sale in the market to boost their own extra income. Domingo (in Bailey and Marahudin, 1987: 107) calculated that the average monthly income of a Pekalongan trawler crew member in 1978 was Rp 29,311, some 25 per cent higher than the income of purse seine boat crew members. That figure was lower than the actual income, since the sale of the extra income from the bycatch was not

7 Catch sharing on trawl boat was as follows: after deduction of the auction fee and the cost of supplies, and a further 10 per cent depreciation cost, the remainder was to be divided on a 50:50 basis among boat owner and crew members. Among the crew members, the shares were divided on unequal basis, where the skipper got three times the share of an ordinary deck-hand (Bailey and Marahudin, 1987: 107).
included in the calculation:

"It was good, very good, working aboard a trawler. We had loads of money. And we often visited other islands, Kalimantan mostly: Pontianak, Banjarmasin, Balikpapan to unload our catch onto the carrier ship, and to renew our fishing supplies. We seized that opportunity to sell our bycatch, and divided the money among ourselves", Anggada told me. "What did you do with your money?", I asked. "Well ... we bought beers and liquor and ... you know ... went to brothel ... Believe me, there were a lot of Chinese girls over there. Chinese!".

In 1976 and 1977, trawlers brought in a 6,000 tons catch per annum and contributed around 35 per cent of the fish landing in Pekalongan (Bailey and Marahudin, 1987: 106).

According to the records of the Pekalongan Regency Fisheries Service Office, the number of trawlers in Pekalongan in the 1970s was relatively low. The maximum number was thirty-two in 1975, while in other years the number was lower. The fishermen themselves dispute this, claiming that the number was higher, somewhere around fifty in the mid-1970s with a steady increase from year to year. I think their estimate is not far from the actual number. Differences between the Fisheries Service Office record's and the fishermen's estimates is perhaps related to the high mobility of trawlers: many operated far from the fishing port where they were registered, and there were also a number of illegal trawlers operating without a licence. Recalling his experiences as a military guard in Pekalongan and Cilacap port—after his unit was pulled out from Wonokerto, Marine Sergeant-Major (Ret.) Cilik told me that those illegal trawlers could operate safely because they were protected by port officials who were willing to turn a blind eye in return for lavish bribes.

While highly profitable to their owners and crew members, trawlers in Central Java and elsewhere caused serious problems. The greatest bone of the contention was the destructive impact on sea fishery resources because of non-selective trawling. Although trawlers were aiming for shrimp, in practice they caught practically any kind of marine creature which lives on and close to the sea floor. This bycatch, as mentioned above, was mostly cast overboard as a dead waste rather than brought to the market. To avoid further economic losses, the Ministry of Agriculture issued a Decree (No. 40/ 1974) stating that trawler bycatch should not be thrown back into sea. When the cats are away, the mice will play and because of a lack of proper control, the decree was largely ignored by the fishermen.

The second problem was a conflict which emerged between trawler fishermen and the village-based fishermen working in the coastal waters (Martosubroto, 1980; Bailey, 1986; 1987)8.

The conflict started because in pursuing their main target, shrimp, trawler fishermen often intruded on coastal fishing grounds which village fishermen worked to catch demersal

fish—as well as shrimp. Of course the simple fishing gear of the village fishermen were no match for the hugely effective trawl. The bulk of coastal fishing resources was taken by trawlers and almost nothing was left for the village fishermen. Angry because of the unfair competition, the small-scale fishermen protested. They sent petitions to fishing authorities and government agencies asking for a re-evaluation of the operation of the trawlers in the waters of the country. The government dealt with this problem by issuing Ministry of Agriculture Decree No 607/1976 which in essence laid down that a three-mile zone off the coastline was reserved for small-scale fishermen, while small trawlers should operate beyond that zone, and big trawlers were banished beyond a seven-mile zone. For at least three reasons this decree failed to settle the conflict. First, the three-mile zone was too limited to accommodate the huge small-scale fishing fleet along the northern coast of Java; secondly, trawlers often intruded into the three-mile zone because during the shrimp season it was the place to find a good stock of shrimp, and thirdly, when small-scale fishermen fished beyond the three-mile zone their seines and nets, in some cases even their boats, were often simply illegally rammed and smashed into smithereens by the trawlers. The small-scale fishermen reacted again. Aiming higher they sent a protest to the regional government. Some regional governments dealt with the problem by launching sea patrols to catch the trawler fishermen who transgressed the fishing zone and to bring them to court. But very often the trawler crew received a relatively light sentence of two months imprisonment or lost their fishing permit for a while. As if the government decree was not worth the paper it was written on the trawlers kept violating it, and rumour has it that most them were protected by high-ranking government and military officials.

Dissatisfied with the legal steps undertaken by the government, the small-scale fishermen took the law into their own hands, and attacked the trawlers themselves directly. In Cilacap, on the southern coast, accompanied by their wives and children they staged a rally in the fishing port and burned down the warehouses of trawler companies. In many areas the small-scale fishermen ambushed trawler boats which entered into their fishing grounds, killed the crew-members, and burned the boats (Bailey, 1986; 1988). In the waters of Wonokerto, two trawlers were seized by the village fishermen, and drenched with diesel fuel after which they were ignited into great bonfires at sea—one with its skipper tied alive inside a gunny sack in the boat’s engine room. After this incident the police came to Wonokerto to arrest the person who was responsible for the incident. Skipper Darsono told me; “Everybody confessed

9 SM, Jul 29; 1975.
‘It was us Sir ... all of us ... who killed that unlucky bastard ... If you want to take the killer to the station, take us all’”. The Police needed two trucks to transport the fishermen to Pekalongan police station only to release them the day after. “The cells were too small to accommodate more than a hundred of us ... ha-ha-ha-ha ... and they had to feed us during the night ... ha-ha-ha-ha”, Darsono roared with laughter. Although the two trawlers that were burnt by Wonokerto fishermen belonged to Tegal boat owners and were manned by Tegal fishermen, the trawler case was not purely a conflict between rural versus urban fishermen. Most of the trawler crew members came from rural fishing communities, including Wonokerto. “There were fishermen from this village who worked aboard trawlers. Kasimun, Taryono, and Rasmad even had themselves appointed skipper”, Darsono continued his story, “But we warned them never ever to try to intrude on our fishing grounds. Unless they wanted to face a fate similar to that meted out to those Tegal fishermen”.

To settle the conflict in 1978 the Directorate General of Fisheries imposed a check on the number of trawlers operating in the Straits of Malacca and in Cilacap waters. Chance would be a fine thing and nobody took the slightest notice. Their number kept increasing, some of them operating without a licence, and those which got no place in the Straits of Malacca simply slipped illegally into the Java Sea. As the years passed, the trawler conflict grew intensely bitter and flared out of government control. Eventually the government took a drastic step with the declaration of Presidential Decree No 39/1980, stating that all trawlers were banned in all Indonesian waters except those of the Arafura Sea in Eastern Indonesia (Bailey, 1988; Ismail, 1993). Bailey (1987;1988) attributed this drastic policy to the role of the All Indonesian Fishermen’s Association (Himpunan Nelayan Seluruh Indonesia, HNSI), a body created by the New Order regime to organize the fishermen under the umbrella of the regime’s party, Golongan Karya, which urged the government to pay serious attention to the welfare of small-scale fishermen. The HNSI was a functional organ of the regime’s ruling faction rather than a real fishermen’s organization. It was created as a political tool to mobilize the fishermen’s vote for the party rather than to represent the fishermen’s interest with the government. It seems that that the main reason behind the trawler ban might be that the New Order policy of putting heavy emphasis on socio-political order and stability, as Sardjono, then the Director-general of Fisheries, indicated in a statement (in Bailey, 1987: 93):

“Every sudden change in policies or regulations by a Government might indeed upset certain established systems or investment, but compared to the aim of reaching social peace and stability, by way of providing better protection to the poor traditional fishermen masses, the disadvantages become very minor” (italic mine).

As the policy of banning trawlers was put into effect, Indonesian shrimp production
declined. In Pekalongan alone the annual catch dropped to around 11,000 tons between 1980 and 1981. The country’s shrimp export decreased from US$ 200 million in 1979 to US$ 162 million in 1981 (Bailey, 1987; Martosubroto and Chong, 1980; BPS 1982; 1984). This was not permanent and there was a turn around in 1982 and the shrimp export started to increase again, supported by growing catches of small-scale fishermen and harvests from brackish-water shrimp cultivation (Wahyono, 1990). Perhaps because it was mindful of the social order, the government launched a credit scheme to provide the ex-trawl crew members with new purse seine boats so they would not be deprived of their source of income (BRI, 1980). In Pekalongan alone this credit scheme reached the total amount of 1.6 billion rupiah, equivalent to US $ 2.5 million (BPS Pekalongan, 1982). Unfortunately for the ex-trawler crew members, most of that amount found its way into the hands of ex-trawler boat owners. In the same year another credit scheme was launched, this time oriented towards the small-scale fishermen. In Pekalongan the amount was around 600 million rupiah, a considerable sum of money which was then handed over to the Wonokerto fishermen.

**Ex-textile entrepreneurs and purse seine fishing**

As I said before, around 1970 Javanese textile entrepreneurs from Pekalongan launched onto a new venture and entered sea-fishing. After several decades in which Pekalongan had stood out as a major national centre of the textile industry, the glory began to fade away. The industry had become heavily dependent upon government subsidies and protection. Like in the fishing sector, in the 1950s and 1960s, Pekalongan textile entrepreneurs were organized into co-operatives. The government provided cotton yarn to such co-operatives at a price below the market rate and it was only the members of the co-operatives who were allowed to buy the yarn for the feed-weaving machines in their factories. But again, this was all theory because, rather than using government support to strengthen their businesses most entrepreneurs used the opportunity to make a short-term profit by selling their cotton yarn ration on the market (Chotim, 1994: 20; Sairin etal., 1994: 63). When the New Order came to power in the mid-1960s, the subsidy was withdrawn and the textile industry went downhill. Seeing no more future in the textile business, many entrepreneurs shifted their capital to sea fishery and poultry farming.

Using their capital the entrepreneurs bought dolphin-type fishing boats which were

---

15 The official exchange rate in 1981 was US$ 1 = Rp 625. Two years later, in March 1983, the rupiah was devalued to Rp 970. In the following years, the value of rupiah kept decreasing, so that in 1986 there was another devaluation which set the rupiah rate at Rp 1,644 = US$ 1. By the end of 1980s, the value of rupiah was already around Rp 2,000 for US$ 1.

16 As happened in other sea fishing credit schemes, this ex-trawler fishermen’s credit scheme was never fully repaid to the People’s Bank.

17 There were six big textile co-operatives in Pekalongan municipality and Regency in the 1950/1960s; those of Wiradesa, Wonopringgo, Pekajangan, Buaran, Setono, and Pekalongan itself.

technologically more advanced than motorized mayang; they were larger in size and had a more powerful engine which allowed greater speed and a wider range of operation, and equipped with a purse seine they were capable of catching pelagic fish more effectively than with payang seine. Unlike payang seines which trap schools of fish between a pair of winged nets, purse seines encircle a school of fish with a net fence hanging down to the sea floor. When the circle has been completed, the seine bottom is pursed and then hauled to the boat with the help of a derrick (McElroy, 1991: 261). In this way, a school of fish is totally trapped within the seine. On average a purse seine boat produced 38.9 tons of fish annually,

Figure 8. Purse seine

Adopted from Bailey, Conner., Dwiponggo, A. and Marahuddin, F (eds.)1987

almost four times the amount of the 10 tons a mayang could bring in (Bailey and Dwiponggo, 1987: 84).

Backed by the highly productive purse seine boats, in the 1970s the amount of fish landing Pekalongan port sharply increased, from 2,000 tons in 1971 to 32,000 tons in 1980.

Table 25. Fish landing in Pekalongan fishing port, 1971-1980
The bulk of the landings was from purse seine boats. In 1976 11,000 tons, 61 per cent, of fish brought into Pekalongan was from these boats and in 1977 the rate increased to 13,000 tons or 65 per cent (G.A. Baum in Bailey, 1987: 106). Official figures on the number of purse seine boats in Pekalongan during the 1970s are not available, but according to the fishermen, it was less than a hundred at the beginning of the decade, a number which then constantly increased to over two hundred in 1980, which means that Pekalongan was the principal home of the purse seine fleet of Central Java, and offered harbour to the 40 - 60 per cent of all Central Java purse seine boats (numbering 177 in 1975 and 463 in 1979).

As the fleet expanded, a growing number of the labour force was absorbed by Pekalongan sea-fishing. In 1969, there were around 2,700 people involved in this sector, not many more than in 1963 when it was 2,300. Some five years later their number had doubled to more than five thousand and the increase kept growing in the following years.

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19 There is a difference between the Makaryo Mino Co-operative records and Baum's data on fish landing. Baum's data are higher than those of the co-operative records. In 1976 the total fish landing according to Baum was not less than 17 thousand tons, while according to the cooperative records was 14.5 thousand tons. Similarly to 1977, according to Baum the amount was no less than 18 thousand tons, while the co-operative records mentions 16 thousand tons. As Baum's data is based on detailed monthly records, his data seem to be more accurate than that of the co-operative records.
Table 26. Number of fishermen in Pekalongan Regency 1969-1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wiradesa District</th>
<th>Pekalongan Regency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>5,366</td>
<td>5,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>6,304</td>
<td>6,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>7,243</td>
<td>7,793</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: -BPS Pekalongan, 1973-1995; FSO Pekalongan Regency

Most of the labour force listed above was employed in Pekalongan, and only a small number worked at Wonokerto where sea-fishing in the 1970s had become moribund. Apart from the labour force from Pekalongan Regency, there were also labourers from Pekalongan municipality itself and from nearby regencies, such as Pemalang, Batang, and Kendal. Most of them came from fishing communities and had deliberately abandoned sea-fishing in their villages to go to Pekalongan in search of a better income. Wages paid by the Pekalongan sea-fishing were indeed far higher than those to be obtained in their home villages. Although the sharing system in Pekalongan was less equal than the one applied in the villages because Pekalongan purse seine owners charged depreciation costs of 25 per cent out the boat’s catch before the catch was divided on a 40:60 basis between boat owner and crew members, the latter received a good income as catches were high. On average, in the Pekalongan purse seine fleet they earned Rp 21,720 per month in 1978, while a purse seine skipper earned at least three times more. On the other hand, as shown by Collier, Hadikoesworo, and Saropie (1977: 79) deck-hands in the villages of Kendal Regency working on medium-sized boats in 1976/7 received just Rp 2,230 monthly, while the boat owner received Rp 19,510, and the skipper Rp 16,320. These figures are close to the earnings of Wonokerto fishermen who worked in their own village. In 1978, around forty boats remained in operation in Wonokerto, which in total produced some 8.5 million rupiah. On average each boat earned Rp 200,000 that year, half of which (Rp 100,000) was shared among four crew members, who on average received Rp 25,000 or more or less Rp 2,000 per month.

Apart from attracting deck-hands, the good catches made by the Pekalongan boats also lured more capital owners to invest their money in an attempt to get a share of the bounty. In the mid-seventies, Chinese traders from Pekalongan as well as other cities of Java began to take up the fishing business. Just like the ex-textile entrepreneurs in the early seventies, the Chinese entrepreneurs began their involvement in sea-fishing by buying larger, more powerful boats. To run the boats, the best skippers were practically hijacked from older purse seine

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boats. This is perhaps one factor responsible for the marginalization of ex-textile entrepreneurs from Pekalongan sea-fishing in late seventies. Skipper Rakhim who was one of those who made the switch to the new boats had this to say:

“Compared to the Javanese —ex-textile entrepreneur— boat owners, the treatment of boat skippers by the Chinese was far better. The Chinese gave the skipper a lavish bonus from the boat’s catch and yet another bonus was given if the catch was really out of the ordinary. The Javanese boat owners were stingy. If they did give a bonus to the skipper, it was only a small one. The Javanese boat owners, most of them, were also really a pain in the ass. They irritated us by checking the selling of the catch thoroughly, afraid the crew members would steal it. And when the boat landed, in two shades of a duck tail the boat owner’s family, relatives, and friends swarmed aboard asking for fish which, of course, we could not refuse. When the Chinese came with new, bigger purse seine and offered us the job of running the boat we happily accepted”.

Another factor in their downfall was the inability of the ex-textile entrepreneurs to improve the technological performance of their boats. For some reason, most of them failed to save the capital necessary to buy new fishing boats which were capable of competing with the Chinese-owned boats. As a result, when the stock of pelagic fish in the Karimun Jawa waters was depleted around 1980, the ex-textile entrepreneurs’ purse seine boats could not venture beyond the depleted grounds, while the Chinese-owned purse seines moved to more distant and still rich fishing grounds. Inexorably the ex-textile entrepreneurs were driven out of the fishing business.21 While in the early 1970s almost all boat owners in Pekalongan had been Javanese —ex-textile entrepreneurs plus boat owners from the Wonokerto Kulon and the Pekalongan fishing community— a decade later the situation was totally different: only around forty-four out of 245 boat owners in Pekalongan were Javanese while the rest consisted of Chinese and two Arabs. The majority, 140 out of 245, of them had one fishing boat, while the other eighty-five owned between two to nineteen boats; and twenty-five out of twenty-six owners who possessed five to nineteen boats were Chinese (FSO Central Java Province, 1985b).

Expansion of fishing grounds
The advent of Chinese entrepreneurs willing to invest their fresh capital in the industry had boosted Pekalongan sea-fishing. After experiencing a decrease in 1979/1981 because of the

21 Just like the ex-textile entrepreneurs boat owners, PT Tirta Raya Mina, the state-owned fishing enterprise which started its business in 1974 with fifty purse seine boats, an ice factory and a fish cold storage, was also driven to the verge of bankruptcy. Plagued by corruption and mismanagement, eventually the state-owned enterprise was moribund. Its production assets eventually ceased to work. All we can find right now in the large compound of the enterprise are dead purse seine boats, empty garage of fish delivery trucks, an idle cold storage plant, and delapidated housing compound for the staff members.
The ban on trawlers, the number of boats increased from 363 in 1982 to 553 in 1996 bringing the catch landing between 1982 and 1994 from 29 thousand tons to 105 thousand tons in 1994. During that period the average annual catch of individual boats increased from 64 tons to 253 tons. This looks fine on paper but these increases were costly and appear to have been short-lived. To catch an amount of fish like that, the boats had to look for new fishing grounds and to do this more effectively more expensive boats and equipment had to be deployed, which meant that the duration of fishing trips became more protracted. As the years passed, fishermen complained that the catch was more difficult to get, until eventually in 1995 their total catch started to dropping alarmingly, from 105 thousand tons in the previous year to 92 thousand tons and to 80 thousand tons in 1996.

Table 27. Pekalongan fishing boat productivity, 1981-1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of fishing trips</th>
<th>No of fishing boat</th>
<th>Total catch</th>
<th>Catch/ fishing boat</th>
<th>Catch/ fishing trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ton</td>
<td>Rp (million)</td>
<td>Ton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>22,458</td>
<td>7,163</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>12,292</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>46,756</td>
<td>9,121</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>11,544</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>55,118</td>
<td>24,989</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>10,265</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>73,044</td>
<td>23,073</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>9,118</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>67,302</td>
<td>23,142</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>6,343</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>48,438</td>
<td>21,652</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>7,129</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>49,098</td>
<td>28,687</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>7,817</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>68,894</td>
<td>42,188</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>9,550</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>66,936</td>
<td>43,038</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>8,863</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>83,706</td>
<td>59,101</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>7,132</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>86,788</td>
<td>53,768</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>10,083</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>88,395</td>
<td>53,767</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>8,858</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>105,192</td>
<td>68,130</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>8,638</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>92,113</td>
<td>62,228</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>7,440</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>80,289</td>
<td>65,943</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FSO Central Java Province, 1983-1996
Makaryo Mino Co-operative, 1997

As indicated by Table 27, from 1983 to 1996 there is an increasingly negative correlation between number of boats and the number of fishing trips. As the number of boats increased the number of fishing trips decreased. A boat would make thirty-four trips annually in 1983 and only thirteen in 1996, because they stayed away for longer periods. Between the early 1970s and the present, the duration of a fishing trip undertaken by large boats of Pekalongan has increased almost 20 times. In 1970, most boats would fish in the waters north
of the Pekalongan area on trips lasting a maximum of three days. By 1975, the resources in Pekalongan waters had been depleted, the boats moved to a new fishing grounds near Karimun Jawa and the time spent on the sea increased to a week per trip. Within four to five years, when the fish stock in the Karimun Jawa fishing grounds had also been depleted, the boats moved further to Bawean and the Kangean Islands (Sujastani, 1981). Their fishing trips already lasted for two to three weeks (Suherman and Sadhotomo, 1985). Five years later, most of Pekalongan purse seine fished in the Straits of Makassar in the east, and around the waters of Natuna Island in the northwest (Nurhakim et. al., 1995). Some boats even ventured further away to the eastern part of Indonesia, trying their luck in the Arafura Sea\textsuperscript{22}. By 1987, trips were usually for four to five weeks. Nowadays, it is uncommon for a large size Pekalongan purse seine boat to return to the port in less than six weeks, the normal duration of a voyage being between nine to eleven weeks per trip.

Having to sail to the new fishing grounds further away had technical implications for the boats. They grew larger and larger. In the 1970s, the dolphin-type purse seine boats were eight to ten gross tons, powered by a 50 HP diesel engine. In 1990s, a larger type called \textit{tanker} of 100 or more gross tons, powered by a 300 HP engine was adopted. These larger boats were needed for fishing at great distances from home. As they could not come back regularly to Pekalongan to land their catch the boats had have a large storage hold\textsuperscript{23}. The other reason was economic as most of the Pekalongan boat owners, up to this time, still had the idea that sea-fishing was a profitable business. When the fish were obviously growing scarcer in some fishing grounds, it was thought, there still would be other fish in more distant waters; a larger, better equipped boat would settle the problem. A degree of recklessness was encouraged as it was not their own money which was invested in the boats, but money from the banks which was raised — I heard from some people— by putting up the overpriced boats as collateral.

\textsuperscript{22}Skipper Rakhim told me, that he had fished in the Arafura Sea, where he had made good catches. The problem was that there was no good fish market in the region, and it was too far away to bring the catch back to Java. He landed in the port of Merauke, sold the catch there but the price was not good. Eventually Rakhim pulled back to the west, to Masalemba waters which are closer to Pekalongan.

\textsuperscript{23}A purse seine has a fish storage space divided into nine compartments or \textit{lobang}, each, in a \textit{tanker} type, capable of holding 450 baskets of fish, each basket of fish weighs roughly 30 kg. In total, when all compartments are filled, a \textit{tanker} purse seine is capable of bringing 108 tons of fish. Among the smaller sized purse seines, this is considerably less, down to 60 tons among the smallest purse seines.
Table 28. Development of Pekalongan fishing fleet size and number of deck-hands, 1988-1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gross Ton</th>
<th>No of fishing boats</th>
<th>Avg. Gross Ton</th>
<th>Est. number of deck-hands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>20 30 50 100 &gt;100</td>
<td>337 35 6.440</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>116 120 194 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>102 15 133 7</td>
<td>248 33 4.615</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>148 38 19 163 39</td>
<td>407 36 7.819</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>147 44 29 209 12</td>
<td>441 33 8.592</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>160 33 22 210 11</td>
<td>436 33 8.387</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>156 32 31 205 11</td>
<td>435 33 8.517</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>108 20 20 145 77 51</td>
<td>421 58 7.901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>110 20 20 148 78 55</td>
<td>431 62 8.077</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>105 29 28 107 194 90</td>
<td>553 73 10.307</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Together with the growing size of the boats, new equipment such as radio for communication, a global positioning system, a power plant to light a set of 200 kilowatt mercury lamps, and a fish finder had to be installed in boats in order to enhance their capacity. Fishing in distant fishing grounds also required more fishing supply. In 1996, a tanker type purse seine fully fitted out cost not less than Rp 400 million. A fishing trip aboard that kind of boat, which would usually last for sixty days, required some Rp 18 million in fishing supplies. To shoulder the investment burden, at least since the mid-1980s, Pekalongan boat owners have introduced a new arrangement in the catch sharing; the fishing equipment depreciation was increased from 25 per cent to 35 per cent. Since the early 1990s, purse seine fishing supplies have become so expensive, that if a tanker-type boat produced a

24 The estimate of the number of deck-hands is based on the number of boats multiplied by the average number of crew members required. Small size purse seine required around seventeen crew members, medium- sized required thirty-five and the big ones required forty crew members (see Roch, Durand and Sastrawijaya, 1995: 82-84).

25 When purse seining began, the fishermen used only rumpon to attract the fish plus their traditional knowledge of interpreting natural signs which betrayed the presence of fish shoal under the surface of the sea. Included here were the sea water temperature checked by plunging a hand into water–fish prefer to stay in warmer water when the surrounding area was cold, and in colder water when the surrounding waters was warm; air bubbles on sea surface produced by the breath of the fish and movements which could be detected by experienced eyes two miles away in daylight; flocks of seagull over a certain spot, and; a layer of white fluorescence beneath the sea surface illuminated by the fish shoal movements—obvious to experienced eyes miles away when the sky was dark. As fish grew scarcer, a fish finder was used to detect shoal of fish, the radio was operated to communicate with other boats which might have found a good fishing spot, and to attract fish shoal around the boat the rumpon was replaced by powerful electric light.

26 The purhasing of a tanker type purse seine consisted of:
- diesel fuel 5,000 litres - lubricant 400 litres
- ice blocks 30 tons - salt 30 tons
- fresh waters 1,000 litres - rice 1 ton
- vegetables 300 kgs - green bean 300 kgs
- cigarette 450 packs - video cassettes 150 items
Purchase of these supplies was normally handled discreetly by boat owners and boat managers and they often jacked up the price for their own benefit.
below average catch, that is a catch worth Rp 40 million, the crew members’ shares would be
divided equally, *bagen serang rata*, regardless their position. It is only when the catch value
was above 60 million rupiah that the standard arrangement of sharing among purse seine
crew members, the stratified one (*undho usuk*) could be deployed. If the boat’s catch was less
than 20 million rupiah, the crew members would get a flat wage of Rp 25,000, regardless of
the duration of the trip.

In spite of the tendency towards a decline in the catch in 1994, Pekalongan fishing still
provided a good income to the fishermen; good enough for each of them to raise their families
above the poverty line. Nowadays on average, the fishermen’s per capita income is equal to
some 2 tons of rice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Boat catch</th>
<th>Boat clean catch</th>
<th>Depreciation 35 percent</th>
<th>Boat owner income (Rp mill.)</th>
<th>Crew members income (total)</th>
<th>Crew member’s income (Rp mill.)</th>
<th>Equ. to rice (kg)</th>
<th>Crew member’s income/month (Rp 000)</th>
<th>Equ. to rice (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2,143</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3,931</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2,384</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2,742</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2,852</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3,251</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2,987</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2,548</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1,878</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: -Processed from Table 27 and Table 28
-Price rice from BPS Pekalongan, 1992, 1995

The fly in the ointment is that an annual income equal to two tons of rice is not easy to
achieve. Fishing trips aboard Pekalongan purse seine boats, which in the beginning were
exciting have grown increasingly burdensome, weighed down by the long duration of the trip,
the lack of health-care facilities, and the scarcity of the fish. To the young, unmarried deck-
hands, working aboard Pekalongan purse seines might still be gratifying. It has provided them
with something socially meaningful to do, money to be spent when the boat returns to
Pekalongan or any other fishing ports, and the hope that someday they might become a boat
skipper. Without a family to be cared for they can spend their money how they wish. But for
the married crew members it is a different story.

The boats are equipped with a video player and usually carry some 150 video cassettes
on every fishing trip; seventy-five blue movies and seventy-five action movies. But it was not enough to dispel the crew members’ boredom. The innocuous card game of gin rummy has in recent years ceded ground to a more serious gambling involving double deck tiong pie which can accommodate ten players in a single round. Many deck-hands are already in debt because of their losses in the game, even before they are paid any money at all from the fishing. Snack and cigarette rations from the boat supplies are no longer enough to cover the crew members’ needs. On a single fishing trip, each crew member receives ten packets of cigarettes, which last only a week or even less. After this the crew members have to pay for their own cigarettes. Some clever crew members used this as an opportunity to make a money by starting snacks and cigarette trading aboard the boat:

In December 1996, Anggada joined a tanker purse seine fishing in the waters of Masalima, a trip which lasted for fifty-seven days. The trip produced Rp 30 million in sales, 17 million was taken out for fishing supplies, 35 per cent of the rest was taken out by boat owner for fishing equipment costs; in the end Anggada and his forty-eight fellow crew members got an equal share of Rp 70,000. As a deck-hand charged with task of settling the seine, Anggada earned some additional money Rp 15,000 from the boat skipper. In total Anggada got Rp 85,000 from the fishing trip. Thirty-five thousand of the money was used to pay for twenty packets of cigarettes, twenty packets of instant noodles, and five packets of snacks, he consumed during the fishing trip. Actually Anggada consumed ninety packets of cigarettes, fortunately sixty of these came into his hands by winning rounds of the tiong pie game.

When he came home, Anggada handed his 50,000 rupiah of his money after fifty-seven days away from home to his wife, Paryuti: “Nyah masa bodo ... Saurke utang jajan bocah ndhisik”. “This up to you ... Settle the debt of our children’s snacks first”.27

Conflicts at sea
The extension of the fishing ground also brought the fishermen into conflict with fishermen and fishing authorities from other islands, even putting them in danger of clashes with the military in the Natuna Sea. Conflicts with fishermen from other islands first took place as early as 1982. In that year two purse seines from Tegal were seized by fishermen from the island of Masalembo, north of the Madura28. To these island fishermen, the big purse seine from Java was a threat to their own fishing activities. Apparently, although pertinent information is unavailable, the two parties agreed to settle the matter peacefully. From then on there have been no reports about conflicts between Pekalongan purse seine fishermen and Masalembo ...

27During the last half year, Anggada has joined four fishing trips. All produced bad catches. First, the trip to Natuna Islands waters, lasted for two months, Anggada got Rp 55,000. The second trip to Masalima waters, lasted for forty-five days, Anggada got Rp 40,000. Then the boat went out again to Masalima, but Anggada did not sail. The third trip was to Masalima, lasted for thirty-five days, Anggada got Rp 90,000. The last trip was to Masalima as told above. Fifteen days before the Idul Fitri, the boat went out again with contracted crew members. Anggada did not go, for he thought Rp 80,000 offered in the contract was too low, he asked for Rp 100,000 but the request was turned down by the boat owner.
fishermen. Not that they heartily welcome the Javanese purse seines, but because discretion is the better part of valour and they realize that the Pekalongan purse seines are protected by law. The 1976 Ministry of Agriculture decree about fishing zones clearly stated that Zone IV, that of fishing grounds beyond five miles from the coastline of any Indonesian island, is open to Indonesian purse seine boats. Eventually, fishery officials from other islands lost patience. Protected by law or not, Pekalongan fishermen with their big, modern purse seines have exhausted marine resources in other regions. In May 1996, the papers of five Pekalongan purse seine boats were confiscated by officials of the Bangka Island Fisheries Service Office and their crews were charged with breaching the fishing zone regulation\(^{29}\). A month later\(^{30}\) the seines of nine boats from Pekalongan and Batang were confiscated by officials of Karimun Jawa on the same charge\(^{31}\).

A tragic incident took place in April 1996 in the Natuna Sea, when Skipper Gareng of *Tri Mitra Makmur* boat died of bullet wounds. For two decades Indonesia has been deploying a heavy naval task force in that area because of a boundary conflict with Vietnam (Valencia, 1990: 102). When they began to fish in the Natuna Sea in late 1980s, the fishermen realized that they were entering a dangerous fishing ground. From the navy and marine personnel they heard that pirates as well as foreign naval ships were active in the area. Apart from these dangers, the navy and marine personnel themselves also posed a problem to the fishermen. Undeniably when the fishermen ran into difficulties, like a mechanical breakdown or the illness of a crew member, the Navy and Marines were happy to help them by towing their boat to a nearby island or by caring the sick fisherman with their medical facilities. However, there was another face to the Navy and the Marines. Every time they went fishing in the Natuna Sea the skippers had to report to a number of marine posts on nearby islands. Besides this, they also faced routine sea patrols. The patrol vessel would intercept the fishing boat, some of the naval personnel would come aboard, and order the skipper to produce the boat’s papers; then they would ask for money or diesel fuel, a request which had to be complied with

\(^{29}\text{KR, June 19, 1996; Sept. 03, 1996; SM, July, 23, 1996; Aug. 08, 1996a.}\)

\(^{30}\text{KR, June 30, 1996; SM, Aug. 08, 1996b.}\)

\(^{31}\text{In June 1999, some two years after the New Order regime collapsed and the power of central government was somewhat in limbo, fishermen from Raas Island—east of Madura—seized twelve Pekalongan purse seine boats. They were released after a ransom of 1.5 million rupiah per boat was paid (SM, Feb. 15, 2000). In the following November, Masalembo Island fishermen moved again. This time, backed by local police, they captured seven purse seine boats from Pekalongan and Tegal. The island fishermen threatened to burn the boats unless a 50 million rupiah of ransom was paid for each boat. They also warned the Java purse seine fishermen not to fish in Masalembo waters again. Pekalongan and Tegal fishermen answered the threat by declaring their intention of calling a general strike and the government officials were thrown into confusion again. No less a person than the Commander of the Eastern Armada himself promised the fishermen he would settle the matter (SM, Oct. 23, 1999; Oct. 26, 1999; Nov. 5, 1999). Eventually the island fishermen’s demand was granted by the purse seine owners. They gave 70 million rupiah to the island fishermen to redeem the boats. Apart from this they also signed an agreement which says that (a) Pekalongan fishermen will not fish on Masalembo fishing grounds. If they do, their boats and its gear will be confiscated by the island fishermen, and; (b) Pekalongan purse seines are not permitted to land on Masalembo Island except in cases of natural hazard, engine breakdown, or crew member health problem (SM, Jan. 15, 2000).}
if the skipper wanted to get the papers back. If the fishermen made the slightest gesture or muttered a word of disrespect, the Marines or the Navy personnel would only be happy to reward them with a beating and a few kicks here and there.32

Perhaps it was in such a situation that skipper Gareng met his tragic end. In the small hours of May 30, 1996, Gareng anchored his boat in a preparation of dropping its seine. Some moments later, out of nowhere, an unidentified speedboat approached, and suddenly there was a burst of shots from the speedboat directed at Gareng’s boat. Shocked and terrified everybody aboard Gareng’s boat sought protection. Some fell flat on the deck. Some ran into the engine room down below. Only Gareng remained on the bridge. A second burst was heard again, now from the starboard side of the boat directed to the bridge. Then everything fell silent. Bagong, the engineer, dared to climb into the bridge, where he found Gareng slumped over the steering wheel, his body soaked with blood and his skull shattered. The fishermen were convinced that it was the navy or marines personnel who killed Gareng.33 Investigations made by the Armed Forces indicated that this was indeed the case, however neither the unit or the personnel responsible for the shooting, nor the motive behind it has ever been.

Conclusion
Modernization policies implemented under the New Order has greatly developed sea-fishing in Pekalongan, making the industry able to land a great amount of catch and to produce a good income to the fishermen. During the years of the New Order, Wonokerto sea-fishing saw its central role declining as Pekalongan became a powerful competitor having seized the advantage of the development of large-scale fishing. But, as I have shown above, the impact of large-scale fishing is not necessarily negative. In 1960s, the village sea-fishing started to decline because its motor vessels were transferred to Pekalongan and because more and more

33 SM, Apr. 06, 1996.
34 revealed SM, Apr. 08, 1996; Apr. 10, 1996; Apr. 11, 1996.
35 After the incident, government and military officials promised that they would see to it that navy and marines personnel behaved correctly. Indeed the marines and navy personnel were no longer as brutal with their fists or free with their heavy booted feet, although the practice of presenting security money to every marine post was keep going on. Anggada told me that some time after the Gareng incident, the commander of the marine task force in the Natuna Sea summoned all the Pekalongan purse seine skippers who happened to be fishing there. To the skippers the commander confessed that he was personally embarrassed by the incident, for he did not know who the personnel were who had carried out the shooting, from what outfit, under whose orders. More importantly he had not ordered any sea patrol at that very moment. The commander also said he was embarrassed because the incident led people in the army and other armed services to think that the marines only dare to beat up fishermen, their own countrymen. Later the commander asked whether or not the twenty thousand rupiah uang lapor was a burdensome to the fishermen. He explained too that the money was used to buy cigarettes for marine personnel stationed on isolated islands with only limited field duty incentive and salary. Even to cover their routine expenses sometimes they still had to ask money from their parents. If the uang lapor did burden the fishermen, it would be no longer exacted. However for their own security’s sake the fishermen were still obliged to report to the marine posts every time the entered the waters. The skippers, of course, said that they were not burdened by the uang lapor. Perhaps because they were afraid of the consequence if it was not submitted, or perhaps because they felt sorry for the hard lives of the marine personnel.
Wonokerto deck-hands sought a more attractive income in Pekalongan, until eventually Wonokerto motor vessels were driven out of business in the 1970s. Despite this decline, village economic life was improving because it no longer depended on a single, limited, source of income from local sea-fishing. Villagers could find work on Pekalongan boats and they brought more money back to the village. The development of modern, large-scale, fishing in Pekalongan has opened up the local economy and the local labour market of Wonokerto. Wonokerto fishermen have become part of an urban-based industry. While they still reside in the village, their social and economic world has widened. What the Pekalongan large-scale fishing has achieved is to release the fishermen from the thrall of low incomes which has held them in its grip for almost a century: so that eventually the fishermen have been able to pull themselves above the poverty line. However this achievement had been quite costly. To produce such catches, large investments were needed. The fishing fleet had to reach distant waters, because the Java Sea fishing grounds had long been exhausted. However, as the fleet fished beyond the Java Sea, they inevitably intruded on the fishing grounds of other islands and have come into conflict with local fishermen.
8. Under the banner of development 2: small-scale fishing in Wonokerto

The development of modern, large-scale, fishing in Pekalongan has brought changes to Wonokerto fishing. As I recounted in the previous chapter, with the arrival of textile entrepreneurs and Chinese capital owners in the Pekalongan fishing industry the position of Wonokerto boat owners was marginalized. In the 1970s, as more and more Wonokerto labourers moved to Pekalongan and Wonokerto motor vessels were driven out of business, the village sea-fishing underwent a further decline plummeting the depths, until it was almost totally bankrupt by end of the decade. Bailey (1988: 32) pointed out that the sea-fishing modernization set in train by the New Order had inevitably set the course of Indonesian sea fishery into a process of structural change. From a small-scale, rural-based fishing sector, it was transformed into a dualistic industry where small-scale fishermen were being progressively marginalized by the newly developed large-scale, city-based fishing enterprises (Bailey, 1988: 32). This change had drastic consequences for the fishing villages in Java, as Collier, Hadikoesworo and Saropie (1977: 31) concluded:

“As more of the fish and shrimp resource is captured by the trawlers and other motor powered boats, the amount of the catch that can be shared among the people of these fishing villages declines. It was shown that the returns to the labourers and traditional sail boat owners have greatly declined during the last few years. The trawlers and other motor powered boats are based at ports in the cities and hire labourers rather than sharing the catch. Since this common property resource is both limited and perhaps declining in volume, it means that much less of the total catch on the north coast of Java is shared among the rural villagers. Modernization of the fleet also means that operations are on a businesslike basis. No longer would small amounts of fish be sold to women traders, or boys allowed to pick fish from the baskets, or donations made at fish the auction market. The traditional fishermen’s philosophy that no one should go hungry (shared poverty) is obviously not part of the trawlers owners concept of his role in fishing industry.”

Rigorous though this transformation of the social organization of production was, its effect was not entirely negative for the small fishing communities. This would have been the case had two following conditions prevailed. First, that the two sectors worked on the same fishing grounds to catch the same target species which are in limited supply. Secondly, that there was no relationship between the two sectors, viz. that each of them worked with its own capital or its own labour force. If either the first or the second or both conditions were not present, then there was no reason to expect large-scale fishing to be detrimental for the rural-based, small-scale fishing.
Decline and recovery of sea-fishing in Wonokerto

As explained before, Wonokerto sea fishery had begun to decline in 1961, when the total sales in the Wonokerto fish market dropped from 1,500 tons to 900 tons. However, in the 1960s this was hardly considered to be a problem as the village fishermen were not directly affected. With the help of their new motor vessels, their catch was increasing. Only part of it was now landed in Pekalonga where the motor boats were tied up, rather than in Wonokerto. Therefore, the fishermen’s revenue had not take in a turn for the worse. It was a problem, though, for the Mino Soyo co-operative managers who had to stand by and watch the Pekalongan boat owners and fish market managers establish their own co-operative, Makaryo Mino in 1962. When the new co-operative subsequently received support from the GKPL and the government, the writing on the wall was there for all to see: Mino Soyo lost its monopoly on fish trading to Pekalongan.

By the mid-1960s, the Mino Soyo managers realized that the transfer of the village motor vessels to Pekalongan had been a big mistake. It had been, as the Javanese say, like raising a tiger cub. Competed by ex-textile entrepreneurs, Wonokerto boat owners were marginalized and could do little else other than pulling their boats one by one back to the village and letting them rot away along the banks of Mrican River. Lacking capital to buy new and more up-to-date boats and abandoned by their former crew members who had found jobs in Pekalongan, Wonokerto boat owners had to accept the bitter reality of closing down their business. “It really was a black page in our history”, said Amat Karib, “In the seventies the fishing business of this village seemed doomed because we were running out of crew members to man our boat. As the years passed, more and more deck-hands of this village were lured away by Pekalongan boats, until finally there was almost nobody left. In the late seventies there were only approximately twenty-five small fishing boats still in the village. The other hundreds simply rotted away, their hull littering the banks of the Mrican River”.

In an attempt to keep fish trading in the village alive in the late sixties Mino Soyo managers sent trucks to Pekalongan to collect the catch of the Wonokerto boats and bring it back to the village. This rearguard action lasted for three years. In 1972 the government withdrew the co-operative’s right to fish trading and the managers saw that it was no use the co-operative spending its money to save fish trading in the village. Under an initiative of the Regency Fisheries Service officials, in the mid-seventies the fish market was moved from the co-operative compound in Penjalan hamlet to a temporary bamboo hut down north into the estuary. It was hoped that by having a fish market close to the beach, fishermen of other villages would be attracted to sell their catch in Wonokerto. It proved a forlorn hope. The catch landing never recovered, because, just as in Wonokerto, sea-fishing in other villages also seemed to be on its last legs. By 1980 the catch landed by the village
Fishermen was a mere 19 tons.

Figure 10. Decline of catch landing in Wonokerto fish market, 1950-1980

![Graph showing the decline of catch landing in Wonokerto fish market, 1950-1980.](image)

Source: Ediwan, 1952; Berita Perikanan, 1953; FSO Pekalongan Regency

In the wake of the declining fish market and the subsequent dearth of sufficient raw materials, many household fish processing industries in Wonokerto were forced to close down their business. Only a few of them which possessed enough capital were able to continue their business using fish bought from Pekalongan, but their reprieve was only temporary. In Pekalongan new fish traders and fish processors who had access to more capital to provide their buyers with one or more months of credit—a favour which was far beyond the economic capacity of Wonokerto fish traders and fish processors—began to make their mark. “Kami kalah modal”. “Our capital just not up to it”, said Abdul Jais who had been a fish trader before elected as the village head of Wonokerto Kulon in the 1990s explaining the reason behind the bankruptcy of the local fish processing industry.

Just when the fate of sea-fishing in Wonokerto already seemed to be doomed, the situation suddenly changed for the better. In 1981 the village sea-fishing revived when the government sponsored a small-scale fishing boat credit scheme, as part of the trawl ban policy. One hundred and twenty-nine fishermen participated in the scheme which would entitle them to 130 of three-ton wooden-hulled boats with outboard diesel engines, of which the total price was Rp 622.3 million. Nine out of the 129 credit programme participants came from outside Wonokerto: they were people who in one way or another had close ties
with the People’s Bank or the Fishery Service and who therefore could be entitled to the credit without being fishermen themselves. The other 121 participants were local fishermen, or at least people who were close to Wonokerto sea fishery—like the village head and co-operative managers. The majority of the local fishermen who participated in the credit scheme were those who had been boat owners in the 1960s and 1970s or who came from boat owner families.

Unlike in the 1960s, Mino Soyo was not directly involved in the implementation of the new credit scheme. The scheme was managed wholly by the People’s Bank. Mino Soyo was only asked whether it could recommend a fisherman who applied for the credit or not (BRI, 1980). However, since the People’s Bank had no branch office in the village and the credit was supposed to be given in the form of a boat rather than in cash, the bank had to appoint some personnel to implement the credit programme. Its choice fell upon Mino Soyo managers, among them Yatimin, the co-operative head, and Jayus, the treasurer. It was they who had been “entrusted by the People’s Bank”, as Jayus said, to run the credit program. But Jayus himself did not participate in the credit programme. It was they, who bought teak planks and beams, nails, caulking, paints, engines, and nets, and invited boat builders (tukang galang) to come to Wonokerto to build the 130 boats. Throughout the whole process, Yatimin and Jayus were busy buying materials, keeping an eye on the work of the boat builders, and dealing with the participants in the scheme who wanted to have their boats as soon as possible. “Be patient please ... That one over there is yours, that one is yours, that one is yours, that one ... the one almost finished is Tahan’s, that one is Ali’s ...”, they said. Eventually, one by one the boats were made shipshape. But the fishermen felt rather disappointed, as according to their own calculations the boats turned out to be overpriced by almost 50 per cent. Most of them had signed a 5 million rupiah credit contract and submitted the deeds of their houses as collateral, but all they got was just a boat with an outboard engine equipped with a gill net of 500 metres long and 10 metres wide, far too short as its fishing gear. At most the price of this equipment, the fishermen estimated, was 3.5 million rupiah¹. Knowing that they had no choice but to accept the boats, the fishermen lodged a silent protest against Yatimin, Jayus, and the other co-operative managers by spreading a deragotary allusion; “tembelek diwungkusi, mata melek diapusit”, “The dog’s fur is crawling with lice, we were cheated with open eyes”.

Nevertheless, the new small-scale credit programme launched by the government in 1981 had revitalized Wonokerto sea-fishing. Its efficacy did not last because as time passed it

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¹The market price of the fishing boat, according to the fishermen, was as follows: The boat Rp 2.5 million; engine Rp 600,000, net Rp 400,000; total Rp 3.5 million. Moreover when the boats were handed to the fishermen they were not completely painted, the final coat had not yet been put on; and it also lacked other paraphernalia necessary for fishing boats, such as ropes, plastic sheeting for a temporary roof, anchor, dugo—dugo—depth gauge, hurricane lantern, and wrench kit. The credit participants had to fish their own pockets to buy those equipment and to complete the painting, which at least cost Rp 600,000 per boat.
turned out that the fishermen lacked the means to repay the credit. Originally it was arranged for the credit repayment to be settled within five years by a direct deduction of the fishermen’s catch at a 10 per cent rate every time they sold their catch at the auction. Indeed using the new motor boats, the fishermen were able to increase their catch, but they claimed that the increase was still too minimal to allow them to settle the credit. With an interest rate of 12 per cent, in the first year each participant had to submit 1.6 million rupiah to the bank, an amount which would decrease in the following years. Unfortunately, in 1982 the whole fishing fleet in Wonokerto in 1982 was only able to land a 106 million rupiah catch, which meant that each boat on average produced only 817,000 rupiah; and 10 per cent out of it was a mere 81,000 rupiah. This was a mere drop in the ocean compared to the amount the fishermen had to pay to the People’s Bank. Even if the fishermen handed over all their catch, it would just cover half of what they were obliged to pay.

Table 30. Credit repayment and the average fishermen catch, 1982-1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Credit repayment plan (Rp. 000)</th>
<th>Catch</th>
<th>Actual repayment capability (Rp. 000)</th>
<th>Deficit (arrear) (Rp. 000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Interest 12 per cent</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total / fishing boat (Rp. 000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the very reason that the fishermen’s catch has never been good, the original credit repayment schedule was a complete write-off. Obviously the fishermen were beset by worries on all sides with such limited catch: looming very large were the continuity of their fishing business which in turn depended on their ability to purchase sufficient fishing supplies, the maintenance of their boats, appropriate fishing gear, and of course an income to cover the daily needs of their families. It was understandable, that the fishermen gave their obligation to the People’s Bank the lowest priority in their patterns of expenditure. When the treasurer of the fish auction went to deduct the 10 per cent credit repayment, often the fishermen stopped him saying; “Not this time please. My catch is not up to scratch, and I need the money for boat maintenance”. Being a boat owner himself, and not personally responsible for the credit scheme the treasurer tended to sympathize with his fellow fishermen, and more often than not he allowed the fishermen to skip their obligation.

The People’s Bank tried another strategy. The bank sent officials to the fishermen’s houses to collect repayments directly. Feeling uneasy about the visit, some of the fishermen...
produced any money which they happened to have at hand, just to save face and to show their
good intention of not running away from their responsibility; “We are not planning to renege
on our obligation, Sirs. Our catch has never been good”, was a common explanation. During
the visits that followed as the months rolled by, the fishermen were better prepared. When the
bank’s car edged its way around the corner leading to the village, the fishermen who happened
to be at home hurriedly sought concealment in their neighbours’ houses, but not before telling
their wives; “If the bank people come, just tell them I am away at sea”. In the end, the bank’s
strategy of house-to-house collection also had to be written off. The bank then asked the
Regency Head and the Fisheries Service Office for help. Once, in 1985, the fishermen were
called for a meeting in the village hall, attended by the Regency Head himself and officials
from the Bank, the Fisheries Service Office, the Fish Auction, the Co-operative, and the
District office. The Regency Head, Lieut. Col. Basuki, reminded the fishermen that they owed
their boats to the bank and therefore they were obliged to repay and that routine repayments
had to start immediately. “Yes Sir. We are grateful for your kebijaksanaan, words of wisdom.
And we will dutifully comply”, was the fishermen’s answer. After inspecting the fish auction,
the Regency Head left the village; and then as had been happened before, the fishermen
continued their repayments if and when it suited them, sak legane. By 1986 the repayment
schedule of the credit program ended unsettled. In total, between 1982 and 1986 the bank had
been able to collect more or less 100 million rupiah in repayments. By 1986 the bank actively
ceased to ask for repayments and in 1998 the credit was written off. Seventeen years after the
start of the credit programme, only four out 129 participants had settled their debt by of all
means selling their boats. The other 125 remained in debt to the People’s Bank. In total, from
the Rp 622 million credit in 1981, until it was written off, the fishermen owed the People’s
Bank Rp 763 million —comprised of their original credit plus accrued interest.

If the truth be told, bad catches were not the only reason behind the failure of the credit
repayments. Not all the participants of the credit scheme were poor boat owners. Some of
them were from better-off families but refused to repay their credit. They saw better ways to
use their money. During the repayment period they started to renovate their houses and buy
more boats—like Turi Minah, whose wife was a money-lender and Cahyo Sinar who owned
two fishponds. It seems, therefore, that there was no serious intention among most of those
who had taken out the credit ever to settle their debts. This was understandable as they felt no
compulsion because no punitive measures were taken in the early stages period when they
failed to pay off any of their obligations to the People’s Bank. They also developed a
collective confidence that since their number was large, there would be nothing the bank could
do to them if they ignored their obligation. As one of the fishermen said to me, “Well, it’s true
that we are unable to repay our credit. So what? If the bank wants to confiscate our boat, let
them have it. Here is the boat. Let them carry it and park it on the bank’s premises”. Others,
like Jayus, upon knowing that the bank stopped asking for the credit repayment since 1986, regretted that they had stayed out of the programme: "If only I had known that in the end the credit would be written off like this, I would participated in the programme and have taken one or two boats for myself", he said.

Limited resources
Despite their complaints about the high prices of the new boats, in 1982 the fishermen were quite happy and full of high spirits buoyed up by their new equipment. After a simple offering ritual (silametan) for good luck had been performed, the boats set sail. Most of the boats were operated by their owners who worked as skippers. The new fleet provided the impetus which allowed the fish auction in Wonokerto to recover quickly from its decline. According to its records, the catch landed increased from a mere 20 tons in 1980 to 479 tons annually in 1981 - 1985; 864 tons in 1986 - 1990, and 736 tons in 1991-1995. As in earlier periods these figures are understatements, as the actual catch was higher. It was the same old story: the fishermen did not sell all their catch at the auction. When the catch was small it would simply be sold off directly to petty fish traders outside the market hall. It was also still common among the fishermen to save a small part of their catch to be brought home to supplement their domestic diet, and crew members usually took part of the boat’s catch for their own benefit. From observations on the boats in the mid and late 1980s, I estimate that at least 40 per cent of the catch was sold outside the auction hall annually. By adding the 40 per cent rate, the fishermen catch from 1980 to 1996 would have been as follows:
Table 31. Catch landing in Wonokerto fish market 1980-1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Fishing boat</th>
<th>No. of Shrimp (Ton)</th>
<th>No. of Fish (Ton)</th>
<th>Total No. of Ton</th>
<th>Total Rp (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>106</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>524</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>145</td>
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<td>646</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>207</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>313</td>
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<td>155</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>536</td>
<td>314</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,598</td>
<td>1,608</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
<td>702</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>178</td>
<td></td>
<td>879</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>366</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
<td>902</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FSO Pekalongan Regency

Compared to the late seventies, the catch in 1980/90s was quite impressive. However, if we compare it with earlier periods in the twentieth century, the 1980/90s catch was still low. In 1988 the catch was rather exceptionally high, boosted by the catch of the cheap jelly fish — a matter I will discuss below. This long-term decline is a direct consequence of Pekalongan purse seine fishing. Since purse seine fishing had begun to flourish there, Wonokerto fishermen were simply driven out of pelagic fishing. Originally the boats the fishermen bought via the credit programme were equipped with gill nets to catch pelagic fish; but, after several trips the fishermen found that their 500 x 10 metres gill nets caught only a few fish, which did not even bring in enough to cover the cost of the supplies. This caused bitter quarrels between the fishermen and ship’s chandlers in Wonokerto. The chandlers wanted their merchandise to be paid for, at least partially. But the fishermen were unable to pay their debts and continued to buy on credit which the chandlers reluctantly allowed. The fishing trips produced little, and what the fishermen did make would first of all be routed to maintain their own livelihood. The rest, if any, was handed over to the chandlers, to pay the debts accumulated on supplies they had taken on previous trips and to show their goodwill so that the chandlers would allow them another loan for the following trip. The fishermen blamed their failure on the inadequacy of their fishing gear. “The net was too small. A proper gill net should be 2,500 metres long and 50 metres wide”, Skipper Darsono explained. Inappropriate though it was, it was not merely the net size which caused the small catches: the sea adjacent to Wonokerto and Pekalongan
was already running out of pelagic fish. For a decade, the stock of pelagic fish north of Pekalongan had been depleted by purse seines. Realizing that pelagic fish are hard to catch, the fishermen changed their fishing tackle. Most of them sold their gill net and adopted a trammel net to catch shrimp as the price of the net was relatively cheap (around 300,000 rupiah per set in 1983), and the target species was easy to find in the fishing grounds north of the village. Some other fishermen adopted a small size payang seine called gemplo and around ten boat owners from rich households modified their gill net into beach seine to catch demersal fish. After two years the fleet's fishing gear had been replaced by more effective nets, although in 1984 some boat owners still ran their boats with gill nets. These adaptive strategies proved successful and the total catch of Wonokerto fishermen increased markedly.

**Shrimp fishing**

When the fishermen replaced their fishing gear from gill net to trammel net in the early 1980s, shrimp was easy to catch. But this bounty lasted only for a few years. After a peak was reached in 1984, at 45 tons, the shrimp stock was depleted and the catch steadily declined, down to 6 tons in 1992. To deal with the decline, the fishermen decreased the mesh size of their trammel net; in 1984 the mesh measured one inch diagonally, by 1986 it was reduced to three-quarter of an inch; and by 1990 it was reduced again to half an inch. In the meantime the fishermen also enlarged the net length. In 1984 a trammel net normally consisted of fourteen to eighteen pieces of detachable nets. By 1989 the number had increased to thirty-four to forty pieces. In 1984 a shrimp fishing trip lasted only for twelve to fourteen hours. The boats set out at 3 o'clock in the morning and returned home at 4 o'clock late afternoon. In 1989 some fishermen extended the trip to forty-eight hours, by staying at sea overnight. Despite their efforts, the shrimp catch kept declining because basically the problem was not the fishing technology, but the depletion of natural stock of the shrimp. In 1987 the average annual catch of a trammel net boat was 3.5 million rupiah and some five years later it had dropped right down to 300 thousand rupiah.

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2 In 1987 Haji Wahidin built a 10 metres long, 3 metres wide gill net boat, equipped with a 2,500 metres long gill net. After being in operation for two years the boat was sold, because it failed to produce a good catch.
Table 32. Trammel net fishermen’s annual revenue, 1983-1993 (Rp.000)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Avg. No. of fishing trip</th>
<th>Avg. catch/ fishing boat (Rp)</th>
<th>Avg. catch/ fishing boat trip (kg)</th>
<th>Avg. catch/ fishing boat/trip (Rp)</th>
<th>Avg. income of boat owner (Rp)</th>
<th>Avg. income of crew member (Rp)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2,335</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>800.8</td>
<td>267.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3,478</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>1,192.8</td>
<td>397.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2,509</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>861.0</td>
<td>287.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2,743</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>940.8</td>
<td>313.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>5,118</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>1,755.6</td>
<td>585.2</td>
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<td>82</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>1,269.8</td>
<td>422.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3,455</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>1,184.4</td>
<td>394.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4,724</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>1,619.8</td>
<td>540.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4,185</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>1,435.0</td>
<td>478.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>155.4</td>
<td>51.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>196.0</td>
<td>65.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Min Soyo Co-operative: Fishermen Saving’s Account
* The 40 per cent selling outside the auction is added

To cope with the problem of the scarcity of shrimp, the fishermen tried to catch anything they could net at sea. In 1987 they engaged in catching jellyfish (*Chrysaora hysoscella*) using a *bantol* (a bamboo pole with an iron hook on its end). In three months of that year they produced no less than a thousand tons of jellyfish. The quantity was satisfying but the income was not, for jellyfish was priced merely at Rp 30 per kilogram. When the jellyfish failed to come in large quantities the next year, for the first time in living memory the fishermen exploited clams, *bukur*, using a dredging device called a *garit*. At first, the clams could be caught easily in large numbers. After all it was a resource which had never been exploited before; but soon they too were depleted and the fishermen laid their *garit* aside.

In an attempt to keep working the year round, after the shrimp season which occurs from November to December, from February to April the fishermen caught *rebon* (*Acetes sp.*), a very small type of shrimp. The price was not good (only Rp 100/kg in 1987) and to make matters worse the stock was not large. In total the fishermen were able to catch only 50 tons in a month. From March to May, when squid came up in Wonokerto Kulon waters, the fishermen caught them too using a small scoop net called *caduk*. The squid price was not bad: Rp 3,600/kg in 1992. The problem was that the stock was very limited: at most the fishermen were able to catch 1.8 tons of them in a month. Another source of income which was available to the fishermen was when they were able to sell their services and charter their boats. Sometime during the weekends, two or three groups of Chinese from Pekalongan hired their service for a day of angling, at Rp 40,000 per trip in 1995. On other occasions their boats were chartered to carry shrimp-farming supplies and the harvest from and to the fishponds which

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Figure 11. Carrying catch to Wonokerto auction hall
are mostly accessible only by water.

To the fishermen's —short-lived— relief, in 1986 a shrimp dealer from Wako (Lampung, South Sumatra) came to the village. He told the fishermen that shrimp was abundant in Wako waters and suggested the fishermen to go there. Around thirty-five boats undertook the five-day trip to Wako in that year; they worked there for almost four months, and the catch was pretty good. After the shrimp season there was over, they returned to Wonokerto Kulon with great stories about Wako and Sumatran waters. Inspired by their tales more boats went to Wako in the shrimp seasons of 1986 and 1987, when the catch was still good. Then their luck run out. The 1988 trip turned out to be a failure and most of the fishermen brought no money when they sailed home, towing two boats along with them as their engines had broken down. April 1990, ten fishing boats tried their luck, and failed. Some boats even spent over Rp 300,000 on fishing supplies over there. No single Wonokerto boat went to Lampung in either 1991 or 1992 for there was no news about a good shrimp season; but in 1993 some fishermen went again. Within a few weeks they returned, empty handed. As shrimp was getting difficult to catch, a rumour began to spread among the fishermen that somewhere north of the Pekalongan coast an oil exploration ship using its modern electronic equipment happened to detect a two metres thick shrimp colony which covered the sea floor all the way from Wonokerto to Pekalongan. When I came to the village in 1990, Skipper Darsono asked me whether the rumour was true. I said I did not know, "It's true, there is a device to detect fish schools, called fish finder, but I have no idea whether that two metres thick shrimp colony really does exist". Gradually the rumour died a natural death, and the fishermen had to face the bitter reality that indeed shrimp were hard to catch in their fishing grounds.

By 1994 the fishermen found that just like their gill nets a decade ago, trammel nets were no longer useful. To resolve the problem the fishermen adopted arad and otok, both simpler and smaller versions of trawl although this type of fishing gear was forbidden\(^3\). Arad is a winged trawl, and otok is a beamed trawl, costing Rp 250,000 and Rp 50,000 each. Just like the trawl arad and otok were quite effective as the equipment is capable of catching baby shrimps weighing five to ten grams valued at Rp 2,500 per kilogram. When they were lucky, with arad or otok the fishermen could get tiger shrimps, considered the paragon of shrimp as they weighed 50 to 100 grams each, which brought some 25,000 rupiah per kilo in August 1996. But their usual catch was the small peci shrimp, priced at Rp 6,000 per kg; and urang lembutan, tiny shrimps, priced at Rp 2,500 per kg. And even those tiny shrimps were getting harder and harder to catch by the day.

\(^3\) Otok, to my surprise, was not a new piece of fishing gear in the history of the fishermen of the north coast of Java. Van Kampen (1905: 55) wrote that under the name of arad, this piece of fishing gear was used widely by the fishermen in the early years of this century. Probably the use of arad at that time had something to do with the fish depletion which struck fishing grounds along the northern coast of Java at the end of the nineteenth century.
The use of arad and otok sometimes brought Wonokerto fishermen into conflict with fishermen from nearby villages such as Ketapang and Ulujami in the west, as well as with their fellow Wonokerto fishermen. On two occasions two Wonokerto boats were seized by Ketapang and Ulujami fishermen, because they had dragged their arad in the waters of these villages. One of the skippers, Toyo, was beaten up by Ketapang fishermen, and his arad was cut to pieces. “It is all right for you Wonokerto fishermen to drop your gemplo or cantrang or trammel net in our fishing grounds, but not your arad or otok”, Skipper Darsono quoted the Ketapang fishermen’s protest. Tebok, the other skipper, who was seized by Ulujami fishermen was saved by Subur, his boat owner, who rode his motorcycle to Ulujami right away as soon as the news reached him. Jayus, the credit programme organizer, also self-righteously accused his fellow fishermen who deployed arad and otok, “It is against the government regulation; as it destroys shrimp and fish stock at sea”. Reacting to Jayus, Subur said; “Why doesn’t he just shut up, buy his own arad and stop nagging”. The news about the fishermen’s conflicts about the deployment of arad and otok eventually reached the ears of the Regency Head, Arjuno. Without prior announcement, in November 1996 he paid a surprise visit to Wonokerto and Jambean to clarify matter. When Kuncoro, the head of Jambean auction found himself confronted by the Regency Head, he realized that he and Indrajit—head of the Wonokerto auction—would be up to their necks in hot water if they told what was really going on; “No Sir. The fishermen here do not deploy trawls, they still use nets and seines. We already have hung up the placard that any type of trawl are prohibited by the government, and the fishermen are very well aware of it. Yes, there were, sometimes, conflicts between the fishermen here. But they are just working for their daily rice. It is always settled peacefully. We can handle it”. The Regency Head seemed to understand the situation, because he told the fishermen; “I am offering you to reimburse the price of your arad. Please register your name. Within a week all fishermen here must replace their arad with some other sort of fishing gear”. The Regency Head also stressed that the fishermen should maintain social order, ketertiban, in their village; “Aja pada gelut” “Do not fight over the fish”, he said.

Not one single fishermen complied with the Regency Head’s request-cum-order. No one registered to claim the money and replace his arad with other gear. Kuncoro, Indrajit, and officials in the regency Fisheries Service Office were naturally very well aware that indeed the fishermen had broken the ban on the use of trawls in Indonesian waters. As a matter of fact, on the wall of the auctions there were leaflets with clear pictures of arad and otok explaining that such gear was classified as a trawl and their use was strictly prohibited. “But what can we do?”, Kuncoro complained to me, “They just struggle to make ends meet, simply to get rice.

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4Conflicts emerging from the rise of the arad apparently occurred in many places along the northern coast of Java; in Cirebon the Navy confiscated the arad (Kompas, Jan. 2, 1996; Jan. 6, 1996); in Tegal some arad were seized by the fishermen who burned them in the yard of the fish auction (SM, May 17 1996; Jun. 06, 1996b).

5SM, Nov. 09, 1996.
for their daily meal. Not to become rich as the trawl fishermen in the old days had done. We cannot stop them using *arad* and *otok*, because we can offer them no other option”.

There are no reliable data on the productivity of the use of *arad* and *otok* among Wonokerto fishermen, because their catch was rarely sold inside the auction. Indrajit, the fish market head, I heard from Paetun Mulud, a fish trader, was reluctant to accept catches from *arad* and *otok* because the use of this sort of tackle was against government regulations. Considering the poor condition of the shrimp stock in the Wonokerto fishing grounds any catch produced by the use of *arad* and *otok* could not have been high. Often, knowing that the catch would be too low, owners of *arad* and *otok* in Wonokerto preferred to leave their boats along the river bank rather than send them out to the sea on a fishing trip. As I observed from the sales going on at the back of the fish market building, an *arad* boat at most produced 15 to 20,000 rupiah per fishing trip, while on average the amount was somewhere around 10,000 rupiah. It was not uncommon too for the catch to be lower than the cost of the fishing supplies which was 5,000 rupiah per trip. As the income from shrimp fishing declined and finally dropped too low to make a living, more and more fishermen abandoned the local boats and went to Pekalongan to work aboard purse seine boats.

**Demersal fishing**

Beach seine, or *bundes* in the fishermen’s language, was the backbone of demersal fishing in Wonokerto in the early 1980s. Being unspecific to a special target species, beach seines caught practically any kind of fish, from stingray to squid, from black anchovy to shark; and so there was always fish at sea for this gear all year round. “Compared to other fishing gear, beach seine *asile lumintu*, produces a stable catch over the year”, Cahyo Sinar, a beach seine owner, told me. The problem was that not many Wonokerto fishermen could afford a beach seine. To send out a beach seine fishing boat in the early 1980s required at least 2.5 million rupiah. Two million to enlarge the size of the boat and to boost the engine power, since beach seining requires thirty-five crew members. The boats offered in the government credit programme were too small to carry such a crew. The other half million rupiah would have to be spent to modify the 500-metre long gill net to make it into a 600-metre long beach seine.
Figure 12. Loading fish into *becak*
Beach seining is a labour intensive activity. Aimed at catching fish which happen to swim pretty close to the coastline the seine is cast from the boat and the 600-metre long seine can then be pulled back into the shore from the beach manually. This was what required the labour of thirty-five crew-members. The catch of a beach seine boat was higher than the catch of any other type of fishing boat in Wonokerto, but as the fishing involved a large number of crew members, the remuneration for each of them was low. From a 100,000 rupiah catch, for instance, 20,000 rupiah went to cover the cost of the fishing supplies, 40 per cent of the remaining 80,000 rupiah —32,000 rupiah— was the boat owner's share and the rest, 48,000 rupiah, was to be shared unequally among thirty-five crew members who on average received Rp 1,350.

Table 33. Beach seine fishermen revenue, 1983-1996*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Avg. No. of fishing trip</th>
<th>Avg. annual catch/boat (Rp .000)</th>
<th>Avg. annual fishing trip (Kg)</th>
<th>Avg. annual catch/boat (Rp .000)</th>
<th>Avg. annual income of boat owner (Rp .000)</th>
<th>Avg. annual income of a crew member (Rp .000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2,537</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>5,531</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1,770</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4,026</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>5,340</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1,709</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>5,628</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6,168</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1,974</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>7,778</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2,489</td>
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<tr>
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<td>48</td>
<td>5,480</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1,754</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4,346</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,408</td>
<td>302</td>
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<td>451</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>2,895</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>927</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>4,585</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1,467</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mino Soyo Co-operative: Fishermen Saving's Account
* : The 40 per cent selling outside the auction is added

Only too aware of the low revenue to be earned from this type of fishing, no single deck-hand of Wonokerto was willing to work as a beach seine crew member. “It is a job for farmers, not for fishermen”, Skipper Asim once commented, “It brings in a low income and the work is cebrik, muddy, you have to jump into the water then walk to the shore”. To work their beach seines the owners had to rely on labour from agricultural villages to the south and west of Wonokerto. Outside the peak seasons in the rice fields labour supply was not a problem. Workers came to Wonokerto in droves. But when rice farming was busy, some boats were often forced to lie idle on the banks of the Mrican River as there were not enough deck-
hands to man them. “Our problem is labour force. I could easily buy another two boats, but what’s the use? We’re always going to run up against the same problem, not enough labour”, Cahyo Sinar complained, not without a large dose of boasting.

By the end of 1980s, crew members for beach seine boats proved even more difficult to recruit as labourers from agricultural villages preferred to seek alternative sources of income in city-based industries rather than in agriculture or fishing. At least three beach seine boats ceased operating because of this. Parjo Bantal who owned two boats, sold the first one and entrusted the second boat to a skipper from the distant village of Sendang Sikucing, Kendal Regency, to be operated from there. The skipper promised that once a month he would visit Parjo Bantal and bring him his owner’s share. But nothing happened. Agitated, Parjo Bantal went to the village to demand an explanation from the skipper. Instead of receiving his owner’s share, Parjo Bantal was simply overwhelmed by a flood of complaints from the skipper: that his boat never produced a good catch; that it needed frequent repairs; that the engine was not running well; and that the seine was full of holes. Losing his patience, Parjo Bantal rented a boat to tow his boat back to Wonokerto to moor it on the Mrica River. “That is the boat”, he pointed his finger to a broken boat, half immersed in the river water, “It has been like that for four years. Better for it to be like that than being cheated by a stinking skipper”. Another owner who stopped operating was Tobong, a very meticulous man, although he was totally blind. With the help of his bamboo cane, every morning when his boat was not out on a fishing trip and every late afternoon when the boat returned, he crossed the road and walked directly to the place where it moored to check everything aboard just to keep it all shipshape. He rejected the idea of transferring his boat to another village, “Let it stay here, let it rot and disintegrate here ...”.

Some boat owners entrusted their boats to a skipper from another village who were generally more reliable than the one to whom Parjo Bantal had entrusted his boat. Cahyo Sinar, Garpu and five other beach seine owners entrusted their boats to skippers from Comal District to be operated from there; and most of those skippers kept their end of the bargain with the owners. Perhaps it had something to do with the skippers’ integrity; but also because Cahyo Sinar and the other beach seine owners kept checking their boats in their new posts in Comal on a routine basis. They noted whether anything needed repairing or whether the seine had to be mended; and they also took their owner’s share without waiting for it to be brought to them by the skippers. Turi Minah, another beach seine owner, opted for yet another strategy. He sold his beach seine boat for 7 million rupiah and bought a second-hand *cantrang* boat from a Pemalang fisherman for 14 million rupiah. Capital was not a problem for him: he was rich as his wife ran a money-lending business in the village.

The beach seine boats were not the only craft engaged in demersal fishing: there were also the *payang gemplo* boats. With the decline of the shrimp catch, in 1986 some five boat
owners adopted the *gemplo*, a smaller version of the old-time *payang*, which can be operated by ten crew members. A set of this 400-metre long nylon seine cost 800,000 rupiah, and those five boat owners were taking a chance. They saw that *gemplo* boats from other villages which sometimes landed in Wonokerto produced a fairly reasonable catch; far better than the ones brought in by trammel nets. Indeed, 800,000 rupiah and ten deck-hands were not easy to find, but *gemplo* was a good solution for dealing with the decline in shrimp fishing. Unlike trammel nets, *gemplo* were not designed to catch specific targets. Operated in shallow coastal waters this sort of net could practically catch any kind of fish.

Manned mostly by temporary crew members (*pandega simbatan*), generally Pekalongan purse seine deck-hands who took a fortnight’s break, *gemplo* boats were able to produce a good catch, particularly during the season of white anchovy, another precious commodity for the foreign markets, alongside the shrimp. The success of this first batch of pioneers attracted other fishermen to adopt the *gemplo* seine and as the years passed the number of *gemplo* boat increased. By 1996 there were around fifty *gemplo* boats in Wonokerto. So far catches from *gemplo* boats have been good: since 1989 they have provided annual revenues of close to two million rupiah to their owners and around 400,000 rupiah to crew members. The crew members’ revenue is relatively small, but as *gemplo* fishing is a job on the side for them during their weeks off from Pekalongan purse seine fishing, it has added substantially to their income.

### Table 34. *Gemplo* fishermen revenue, 1987 - 1996*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Avg. no. of fishing trip</th>
<th>Avg. annual catch/boat (Rp.,000)</th>
<th>Avg. catch/boat/trip (Kg)</th>
<th>Avg. catch/boat/trip (Rp.,000)</th>
<th>Avg. annual income of boat owner (Rp.,000)</th>
<th>Avg. annual income of crew member (Rp.,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3,752</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1,201</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4,155</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1,330</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>8,040</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2,573</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4,186</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>7,624</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2,440</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5,331</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1,707</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7,974</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2,552</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5,317</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6,565</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mino Soyó Co-operative: Fishermen Saving’s Account

* : The 40 per cent selling outside the auction is added

Nowadays the most popular fishing gear among Wonokerto fishermen is the *cantrang*, a mechanized version of the *gemplo*. It is far smaller in size than that of the *gemplo* (its wing size is only 45 metres long) but *cantrang* covers a wider seining range than a *gemplo* for each
wing of cantrang is attached to a 600-metre long towing rope. After casting it into sea, the crew would pull the seine back at a fast pace with a traction engine so that fish which happen to be in the seining range have only a modicum time to swim away. Thanks to the traction engine too, cantrang seine deployment can be carried out by four crew members—three crew members handle the towing ropes and the seine, while the skipper keeps the boat on course. The catches of cantrang boats are so good, that in 1996 their crew members liked to boast that a share of Rp 15,000 from a one-day fishing trip was on the small side. “Cantrang fishing is far better than Pekalongan purse seine fishing”, Skipper Rakhim told me, “The income is good and we do not have to stay away from home”. The only problem is that the price of a cantrang boat is high. Before the 1997 economic crisis, a brandnew one cost over 15 million rupiah. Therefore only rich boat owners could afford it. In 1988 there were only two cantrang boats in the village and these were owned by Haji Wahidin and Subur, both big fish traders. By 1996 the number had increased to around twenty mostly owned by big fish traders and ex-Pekalongan purse seine skippers.

Table 35. Revenue of cantrang fishermen, 1989-1996*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Avg. no of fishing trip</th>
<th>Avg. annual catch/ fishing boat (Kg)</th>
<th>Avg. catch/ fishing boat/ trip (Kg)</th>
<th>Avg. annual income of boat owner (Rp.000)</th>
<th>Avg. annual income of crew ember (Rp.000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>6,089</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9,059</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>3,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>9,104</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>3,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>17,409</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>6,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>17,427</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>6,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>11,318</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>21,133</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>8,453</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mino Soyo Co-operative: Fishermen Saving Account
* : The 40 per cent selling outside the auction is added

Cantrang boats brought in a good catch partly because of the efficacy of the boats, but mostly because they could reach faraway fishing grounds. The village cantrang fleet fished in waters 20 kms to 30 kms off the coastline, a distance to be covered within 4 to 5 hours of sailing at full speed from the village, while the trammel net, gemplo, arad and otok boats fished in waters no more than 18 kms off the coastline. To reach the north part of the fishing grounds

Although technically cantrang was a kind of trawl, a static trawl to be precise, it did not fall into the category of the prohibited fishing gear; but it must be operated not closer than 3 miles from beach zone, i.e. at Fishing Zone II or more (SM, Apr. 02, 1996; Ministry of Agricultural Decree No. 607/1976). However in Rembang Regency adoption of this gear by some boat owners had aroused the ire of fishermen using other tackle who, in their wrath set about destroying the cantrang (SM, Apr. 10 1996) and then they brought a petition to the Regency House of Representatives (SM, Apr. 11 1996). The fishermen protested and said that their fishing grounds were being intruded upon by cantrang boats which shrank their catch. So far in Wonokerto Kulon the presence of cantrang boats is still permitted.
grounds at 6 o’clock and start to cast the seine right away, a cantrang boat must set out from the village at 1 or 2 o’clock in the morning. On average each seining lasts for thirty-five minutes and the boat is steered southwards from a fishing spot to another. At noon, the seining ceases and the boat is sailed back to reach the fish market before 3 o’clock in the middle of the afternoon. By August 1997 however, these fishing grounds 30 kilometres from the coastline no longer proved to be sufficient to provide the cantrang fishermen with a good catch. Since at least June of that year, the cantrang fishermen have claimed that their catch has been fluctuating at between a mere Rp 60,000 to Rp 125,000 per trip; after deducting Rp 28,000 for fishing supplies expenses, each deck-hand is receiving less than Rp 10,000 on average. In an attempt to recover their old revenue, by August 1996, some cantrang fishermen had started to extend their fishing trips to two days. By adopting this strategy, a cantrang boat can save ten hours cruising time and expand the seine deployment to twenty times for two days of fishing, and the crew members say that their income is improving.

Conclusion
Abandoned by its deck-hands in the 1970s, Wonokerto fishing was declining and it went almost totally bankrupt. Of the more than two hundred fishing boats in early 1960s, by the end of 1970s only around twenty-five remained operable. As trawling was banned and a small-scale fishing credit scheme was launched in the early 1980s, village fishing recovered. From year to year the number of boats in the village increased and so did their catch, although it was not as high as it used to be in the old days when the goal of the village fishing was pelagic fish. The development of large-scale fishing in Pekalongan has indeed demoted the position of Wonokerto from being the centre of regional sea-fishing to being just a fishing village. In spite of this marginalization of the position of the village, it seems that the development of modern, large-scale fishing has also had a positive effect on the village economy. As the majority of the village labour is absorbed by Pekalongan fishing, village fishing was is no longer overpopulated. Compared to the 1960s when village fishing employed a labour force of more than 2,000 fishermen, the situation now is somewhat more balanced in that the limited fishing grounds have to provide employment for only around five to six hundred fishermen. Nonetheless, that number is still too high for the fishing resources of the village. Within a relatively short period the shrimp stock in the village grounds had been exhausted and so had the demersal fish stock which forces the fishermen to extend their fishing trips to prevent their income from further decline.

has not ignited any conflicts, probably because the village cantrang boats operated beyond the fishing grounds exploited by boats using other tackle.

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9. The New Order in the village

Under the modernization and development policy promulgated by the New Order government a series of changes had swept through Wonokerto Kulon and drastically transformed the socio-economic life of the community. The first line of change was the development of industrial fishing in Pekalongan which had released the fishermen from confinement of their local economic setting, a process described in the previous chapters. The second line was the diminishing socio-economic role of the fishing co-operative, as the government no longer treated the co-operative as the sole and official economic institution in the community. These two changes had effectively cut the old local elite of Wonokerto off from the main sources of political and economic power which they had been monopolized since the 1910s. They experienced New Order modernization as nothing less than a catastrophic attack on their privileged social position. The situation became ever more complicated as the New Order replaced the multi-party system with what in practice a single party system. Under the new political system, all the fishermen’s organizations (except the communist one which was banned outright in 1965) were reorganized and united into the All Indonesian Fishermen’s Association (HNSI) under the auspices of Golkar. Everyone involved in fishing — elite and commoner as well— were supposed to join the Golkar faction as it was politely but inaccurately called (Ismail, 1993: 146). At state and provincial levels, this association was staffed with officials of the Directorate General of Fisheries and the Fisheries Service Office who were supposed to be representatives of the fishermen. It was they who represented them in official meetings with government agencies and it was they who on most occasions released statements on behalf of the fishermen. At the regency or municipal level, the board of the association consisted of officials of the fish auction and fishing co-operative and some boat owners. The fishermen simply had to register as members of HNSI as that was the only way in which they could have access to the national accident insurance system. The presence of Golkar and its HNSI had made the political arena in the village far more closed than it had been during the Old Order when the elite had more than one party as a means to gain access to political support from sources at the state level.

The declining role of Mino Soyo

As sea-fishing in Wonokerto Kulon in the 1970s took a downward path, the business activities of the Mino Soyo and its role in the village politico-economic arena were in decline too. Bad though the situation was, it was not the decline in sea-fishing as such which caused the downfall of Mino Soyo. When sea-fishing in Wonokerto began to take off again in the early

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2 Tiras, July 18, 1996.
1980s, the fishing co-operative remained poor and it never regained the important role in the local arena that it had enjoyed in the old days. It was the New Order policy of withdrawing government support from the co-operative —by stripping the right of the co-operative to run the fish trading—and making the co-operative compete with private business which damaged Mino Soyo.

The transfer of fish trading to the newly created provincial Fishing Co-operative Centre (Puskud Mina) on April 1, 1978 had put an end to the co-operative’s control over the fishermen’s catch and effectively to its main source of income. Without the fish trading, in the words of Amat Karib, a senior staff member of the co-operative, Mino Soyo was like a person suffering a hemorrhage, “menjadi orang kehabisan darah”. From then on the main business of the co-operative was limited only to providing a credit service for fish traders and fishermen. To carry out the service, when in 1982 the government built a new fish auction hall in the estuary the co-operative moved its office there too. The big old office compound north of Penjalan hamlet was deserted for good, and the co-operative now occupied a small, 5 x 8 metres, building adjacent to the fish auction hall. In the eyes of its members, the co-operative became less interesting, even disappointing, as the office was located far from their hamlets and, more critically, its credit service was not as good as it once had been. At many annual meetings, the managers could report only a small positive balance, if not a negative one, in the financial performance of the co-operative.

In 1983, the co-operative faced a liquidity crisis, as a large sums of money from its treasury were borrowed mostly by Yatimin, the head of the co-operative, and other members of the board. Apparently, the manipulation and defalcation of co-operative funds which had been common in the 1960s, had not been eradicated. Unable to settle his debt, Yatimin gave one of his fishponds to the co-operative. Yatimin was not the only one who used the co-operative funds for his own ends: according to local gossip almost all managers were involved. What made Yatimin’s case special was that he was unable to settle his debt and that this plunged the co-operative into a major liquidity crisis. From the annual reports of the co-operative it is easy to discern that the larger part of the credit fund of the co-operative was allotted to its own managers—to buy fairly unorthodox T.V. sets and motorbikes. Such loans left little funds for those members who applied for credit to repair their boats.

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4 Mino Soyo, RAT 1983.
Table 36. Amount of credit delivered by Mino Soyo, 1981-1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Receiver</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>8,191</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>8,145</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>8,590</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>23,332</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>19,978</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>22,484</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>29,695</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>22,507</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>29,693</td>
<td>n.a</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>24,617</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>10,421</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>13,904</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>10,085</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Mino Soyo, RAT 1981-1996

The fishermen's disappointment in Mino Soyo is understandable. As shown in Table 36, the credit provided to the fishermen by Mino Soyo was too small. Even since 1989, the total amount had been declining consequently as the average amount received by each debtor. How small the credit value was is reflected by the fact that not one single fisherman in the village was able to buy a boat, even a second-hand one, using Mino Soyo credit. Normally the credit was enough to cover only minor repairs to the boat or the fishing gear.

Yatimin and a number of 'old' managers were ousted from the management of the co-operative at the 1984 annual meeting. His position as co-operative head was taken by Kenthus, son of a former lurah of Wonokerto Wetan. Kenthus was an innovative and resourceful person. Determined to keep the co-operative alive he started a trade in diesel fuel, an enterprise which unfortunately did not bring its own rewards. Normally fishermen take the fuel and pay after they return from their fishing trip with a good catch; if the catch is not good, payment is postponed. In order to make it a success, the co-operative petrol station had to be managed well to secure payment. This was easier said than done, and the fishermen managed to procrastinate when it came to paying their debts. The co-operative petrol station was not the only outlet selling fuel; there were also a fair number of private shops which could out-compete the co-operative by providing better service. Whereas the co-operative station was next to the auction building in the estuary and only opened from 11 in the morning to 16 o'clock in the afternoon, the private shops were located in the village itself and opened practically from dawn till midnight. Whenever a fisherman needed fuel for his boat, he might knock on the door of a private shop and get his fuel. The private shop owners also had to sell the fuel —and other fishing supplies—
on a credit basis but they kept a careful eye on the transactions so the fishermen would not pile up too many debts which might endanger their business. Plagued by growing debts, the co-operative fuel trading venture finally found itself to be running out of capital and was subsequently closed down.

Failure in the fuel trade did not discourage Kenthus. He re-activated the chandler’s shop owned by the co-operative and enlarged it into a grocery shop. To make the shop —and the credit service as well— work, in the late 1980s he moved the co-operative office back to the village. Not to the old building north of Penjalan hamlet, but to a new office in Asem hamlet right in the centre of the village. By this strategic move, he hoped that the co-operative business would flourish as the office and the shop were in easy reach of fishermen and other villagers. Kenthus also went to the Government Logistic Agency (Dolog) and succeeded in convincing the officials there to supply Mino Soyo with rice and sugar for the co-operative. Despite these efforts, the co-operative business did not really flourish. The credit service languished, for there was not much money in the kitty. The grocery shop was outcompeted by many private shops and stalls scattered all over the village. After two years the contract of the co-operative with the Logistic Agency was terminated, because the former failed to comply with the agreed terms of payment.

Another effort made by Kenthus to raise the income of the co-operative was by renting out fishponds belonging to the co-operative. Since the early 1980s, shrimp culture had been spreading among fish farmers along the north coast of Java (cf. Hannig, 1986). In the mid-1980s it came to Wonokerto. The business was attractive, as shrimp prices were high and would bring an extra-ordinary profit. The problem was that a shrimp farmer not only needed ponds, he also had to have sufficient capital and technical know-how to run the business properly. As the co-operative had neither capital nor persons competent in shrimp farming, all it could do in 1985 was to rent out its four hectares of fishponds to a shrimp farmer for a period of three years at 5.7 million rupiah per year. In 1990, the co-operative managers were lured by the news about the exceptional profits to be made in shrimp farming so they ended the rental contract. Using a 14 million rupiah loan from a bank and the Centre of Fishing Co-operatives plus 18 million rupiah out of the co-operative’s own fund, they turned the co-operative fishponds over to shrimp farming. Their effort ended in failure. Suffering from a virus attack, the shrimps had to be harvested prematurely and brought in only 10 million rupiah. The co-operative suffered a 22 million rupiah loss. In 1991 and 1992 the ponds were rented out again, but in 1993 the co-operative managers tried their luck again. This time the effort was a success and brought in a profit of 16 million rupiah. This was the crest of the wave and it was not to be repeated in 1994, when the co-operative suffered another loss of 7.5 million rupiah. Eventually the managers realized that shrimp farming was too risky an undertaking for the co-operative, and gave up their efforts.

Along with the shrimp farming, on the initiative of Kenthus the co-operative opened a
shrimp seedling supplies shop. Like the co-operative fuel trading, the trading in shrimp farming supplies was carried out on a credit basis, on the implicit understanding that the farmers would pay their debts after the harvest, but repeating the history of the fuel trade fiasco many did not. This was not because they were unwilling to do so, but because since the late 1980s the shrimp farms along the northern coast of Java had been plagued by a virus and other ecological problems. The rapidly spreading infestation caused a series of consecutive harvest failures and most farmers were unable to repay their loans to the banks (Poernomo, 1990)\(^5\). Shrimp farming was like gambling: it might bring a farmer an impressive financial success, but it might also drag him down to total bankruptcy. In the 1995 annual meeting of the co-operative, the management reported that Mino Soyo had suffered a loss of more than forty million rupiah. Thirty million of it consisted of bad debts incurred by the trading in shrimp farming supplies, while the rest was from the co-operative shrimp farming project. Some of the managers said that the bad debts were the private responsibility of Kenthus and should be shouldered not by the co-operative as he had been running it as his private business, a privilege for which he had paid the co-operative a small commission. When the trade ran into difficulties Kenthus had handed it back to the co-operative. Despite their good intentions the managers were unable to force Kenthus to shoulder these debts as they could not sufficiently prove their accusations. Since 1993 Kenthus had no longer been active in Mino Soyo, although he still formally held the position of co-operative head. In that year he won a seat in the Regency House of Representatives on behalf of Golkar, replacing a member who had died. Kenthus was not very lucky either as by mid-1996 he suffered a stroke, which paralyzed him down one side. During his term in office, accusation of Kenthus’ financial mismanagement would have had little chance of being taken seriously, and after his stroke, people no longer want to press charges. Upon seeing Kenthus’ condition now the villagers used to say; “Lha ya kuwe entuk-entukane nek doyan mangan dawite wong akeh”. “That’s what comes when eating people’s money becomes a habit”.

In the 1997 annual meeting, Senggana, the youngest son of Tandjung, was elected as the new head of the co-operative. He was a person of broad experience. In his senior high school years he had been active in the Regency Boy Scout association. This had led him to become involved in another government-sponsored organization: the Young Farmers and Fishermen Contact Group (Kontak Pemuda Tani dan Nelayan, KPTN). After finishing his senior high school in 1981, Senggana remained active in the KPTN and was sent to participate in an agricultural field course in Japan for six months. In 1986 Senggana obtained a position as a staff member in Mino Soyo. But he remained there only for three years, then he quit as, in his own words, he could not stand the co-operative mismanagement a minute longer. After that, he worked in an oil drilling supply company in Cirebon but left again after two years because the


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company went bankrupt. Thereupon, Senggana returned to Wonokerto and opened an electronics workshop which tended to go downhill after he became head of the co-operative.

Under Senggana, the board of management was far better educated than any other board Mino Soyo had ever had. There were two university graduates among them. They were young and high-spirited, determined to put Mino Soyo into better shape, but the task facing them was Herculean. The financial status of the co-operative was poor in the wake of the 1995 debacle and its meager income.

Table 37. Mino Soyo performance 1981-1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turnover (Rp .000)</th>
<th>Gain / Loss (Rp .000)</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Dividend per member (Rp)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>16,897</td>
<td>2,116</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>33,757</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>1,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>38,427</td>
<td>2,825</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>1,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>44,075</td>
<td>1,507</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>50,727</td>
<td>3,216</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>1,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>56,401</td>
<td>3,379</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>1,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>58,572</td>
<td>2,272</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>1,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>65,827</td>
<td>2,563</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>73,955</td>
<td>3,168</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>90,276</td>
<td>1,818</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>177,357</td>
<td>4,406</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>233,622</td>
<td>5,868</td>
<td>1,034</td>
<td>1,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>210,843</td>
<td>2,775</td>
<td>1,058</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>185,809</td>
<td>(40,195)</td>
<td>1,081</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>186,016</td>
<td>(2,858)</td>
<td>1,087</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Mino Soyo, RAT 1981-1996

As Table 37 shows, from 1981 the turnover of Mino Soyo experienced a constant increase, getting steadily better from year to year. However, the members' annual dividend moved in the opposite direction. From 1981 the dividend had tended to decline little by little until finally in 1995 and 1996 the co-operative members had no return at all because of the losses in the shrimp cultivation business. The annual growth expressed in term of the co-operative’s turnover seems very impressive, but it was mostly boosted by capital or merchandise borrowed from many other sources, and not on the co-operative’s own assets. That is why, apart from mismanagement, Mino Soyo was able to produce only a tiny annual profit: on average only 2.4 per cent of its turnover, in the fifteen years from 1981 to 1996. Undeniably during those years Mino Soyo saw a steady increase in the number of its members, but the villagers did not seek membership because the co-operative offered a great dividend and lucrative credit. “The co-operative never provided us with great economic help. But it is felt good to put a ten
thousand rupiah note down to pay for the membership (tuku anggota). When times are hard we can go there for a loan, and perhaps our request will be granted, although not in full”, the villagers said.

In this atmosphere of doom and gloom members of the co-operative were generally pretty cynical, if not downright bitter. Often I heard people saying that the co-operative was there only for the managers’ and staff members’ benefit; “When there is profit, they grab it for themselves. When the co-operative is running at a loss, they let us to bear the loss”. On the other side, the staff regarded working in the co-operative as only slightly better than having no job at all. Jayadi, a senior staff, once said; “If only there was another job, I would not be sitting here”. It was to the private fish traders rather than to the co-operative that the fishermen often turned to when they needed a loan. In the early 1990s, owners of cantrang boats in the village created their own association: the Cantrang Group. According to Sentiko, a member of the group who also sat on the 1992-1997 Mino Soyo management board, the group aimed to help its members to find the capital to develop their business. They tried to apply to banks for a collective credit—an endeavour which so far has not been successful. Thereupon they opened a fuel station next to the fish market building on the very spot where the co-operative petrol station used to be. Backed by sufficient capital and careful management the group’s petrol station has flourished.

Although there was plenty wrong with it, it was not only the financial mismanagement which had caused the villagers’ disappointment in Mino Soyo. The co-operative no longer lived up to expectations as a village social organization. The real crunch came when since the early 1980s it refused to sponsor the annual sea offering any longer. The ritual cost plenty of money because, as tradition dictated, it must be accompanied by an all-night show of wayang kulit or wayang golek. Beset by all its financial problems the co-operative simply could not afford to foot the bill. But still the fishermen considered the ritual to be too important to be neglected and when the co-operative proved unwilling, they tried to stage the ritual themselves. Since the 1970s the sea offering had been organized and funded collectively by fish traders and boat owners, but they could not afford to do this every year. When collective funds were hard to pool, the fishermen made the offerings individually: each of them organized their own small parcel of food and came to the estuary to launch it as a gift to the sea.

Fish trading
In spite of the provincial decrees which stated that fishermen were obliged to sell their catch at the fish auction, transactions outside the auction in Wonokerto since 1980s had increased markedly. There were several attempts to prevent “wild transactions”, as the fish market officials chose to describe it, but no longer as fierce as these had been in the late 1960s. The co-operative managers were no longer able to exert the same pressure they once exerted in the years in which they were backed by Navy personnel, as the Navy unit was withdrawn to
Semarang in 1974. Since the early 1980s, fish trading had no longer been concentrated in one market building but was spread over a number of smaller trading points. Prior to the 1980s, such transactions had involved only petty fish traders, but in the mid 1980s the village jedhot joined the party as well. By now the big traders were losing interest in operating under the control of the fish auction administration. Wahidin WS, the richest man in Wonokerto who started his business as a petty fish trader, opened his own warehouse (depot) in the mid-1980s and bought shrimp, white anchovy and other expensive fish directly from the fishermen. Wahidin’s example was then followed by many others.

Since the fish trade had been taken over by the government and put under the authority of the provincial Fishing Co-operative Centre (Puskud Mina) local fish traders realized that the auction was no longer theirs. In the past, commissions on sales went into the co-operative treasury. These funds were accessible to the traders and other members of the village elite. Since the Puskud had been established, income from the Wonokerto fish market was controlled by the provincial centre and was beyond the reach of the villagers. Not long afterwards the government raised the auction fee from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. Half of that fee went directly into the provincial funds as a tax or a contribution depending on how one chose to describe it. The other half was partly used as a savings fund (2 per cent) to be paid to the fishermen at Idul Fitri, and partly as a slack season fund (1.5 per cent). The remainder (0.5 per cent) was to cover the operating costs of the auction. As by now most of the auction funds were under outside control, villagers, especially traders, lost interest in the weal and woe of the fish auction and gradually withdrew from the organization altogether.

As it had been for many decades, the fish auction of Wonokerto still is, in the terminology of the villagers, a place of money (panggonan duwit) where large amounts of cash, at least by village standards, change hands everyday. Nowadays the catch landed by the fishermen is vied for by some 100 fish traders with varying amounts of capital at their disposal. They range from small traders, bakul cilikan, with Rp 50,000 of working capital to jedhot (big traders) and juragan depot (fish trading station owners), who are capable of buying 10 million rupiah worth of shrimp or white anchovy in a one day transaction. All participants in the fish trading claim their own share of the profit. The fish traders take their portion from the price differential between buying and selling. The fish market officials take their portion through
Figure 13. Jono, the Wonokerto fish auctioneer
Jedhot, “the rulers” of the fish market, nowadays come in two kinds. The common jedhot are simply middlewomen who bid for fish on behalf of other traders. Jedhot juragan are big fish traders who bid directly to purchase their own merchandise. Usually the common jedhot are interested only in fish for resale at the local markets. In contrast, the jedhot juragan concentrate mostly on more precious merchandise like shrimp, white anchovy, squid, and bawal fish which is sold for export. From their hands the commodity is transferred to regional collectors, in Pemalong or Tegal, who subsequently send it to exporters in Jakarta. Apparently competition among jedhot is stiff, perhaps stiffer than ever as the amount of fish in the auction nowadays is less than in the 1960s, and also because the interests of the jedhorts are no longer united under the auspices of Mino Soyo:

In the mid-1980s a conflict erupted between Haji Wahidin, the most successful fish trader in the village, and his first cousin, Jalil. Having earned a large sum of money from his shrimp farming, Jalil told WS that he would like to enter into the sea shrimp trade at the auction—a business which was monopolized by Wahidin, Subur and Sentot. Wahidin answered that it would be better if they co-operated and pooled their capital. However, Jalil refused and was determined to play the autonomous trader. Mercilessly Wahidin, Subur, and Sentot beat Jalil out of his working capital at the bidding sessions. Jalil went bankrupt; not only did he lose his working capital but a some of his shrimp pond had to go as well to settle his deficit at the fish auction. Those two cousins never talk to each other now.

Subur and Sentot had been close friends since their childhood. After a fruitless attempt to make a fortune in Jakarta as tempe sellers, these two comrades returned to Wonokerto and decided to make a living from fish trading. They were very close, people said, closer even than brothers, “Koyo wong dilim”, “Just like persons glued to each other. Where there is Subur, then Sentot must be around too”. Joining forces, Subur and Sentot engaged in the village fish trade as small traders. Gradually they climbed their way up the social ladder. By 1990, after ten years, Subur and Sentot had positioned themselves at the top of the ladder as jedhot juragan who held a monopoly on sea shrimp and white anchovy—the most precious merchandise in Wonokerto. Perhaps with the growth of their business, Subur and Sentot began to feel that the field was getting to small for both of them—Haji Wahidin in 1992 left the village fish trade to go for the bigger game in Pekalongan fishing port. Personal relations between Subur and Sentot were then cooling; instead of cooperating they became competitors in their attempts to get a larger share of shrimp and anchovy. The final conflict exploded in August 1997, when Subur whispered to the Regency Head Arjuno that shrimp and white anchovy trading in Wonokerto was being carried out outside the auction. Unexpectedly, the Regency Head came to inspect the auction on August 11, and Sentot was caught red-handed buying white anchovy without entering the bidding session. The Regency Head flew into a rage

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6 Cimitan is one way by which the auction officials appropriate part of the fish. Every time a basket of fish is weighed on the scales before entering the bidding session, one or two large fish or a handful of smaller ones, are taken away. The officials do not do this themselves, they hire a cimitan boy to do it for them. The stolen fish is collected, and later at the end of the market hour sold to a fish trader. In a good day, 75 thousand rupiah can be made from this cimitan: the money then is distributed among the officials and the cimitan boy (Linggasari, 1994). Only if the cimitan boy took too many fish from their basket, the fishermen did openly protest. Apparently, although the fishermen are unhappy with this practice they accept it as a fact of life.
with the fish auction officials and Sentot also felt the heat of his wrath. He gave orders that from that moment on all trading in the fish market must strictly follow the official regulations, through bidding. Sentot lost his position in the shrimp and white anchovy trading, and since that day he only ventures along the river bank to buy side catches from the fishermen. The shrimp and white anchovy trading was then carried out according to regulations, with Subur as biggest player.

Apart from obtaining their merchandise at the auction, most of the *jedhot* also opened warehouses in the village to purchase their merchandise directly from the fishermen. Kumaerah of Api-api village, one of the warehouse owners (*juragan depot*), did not even bother to go to the auction. She ran her business from home waiting for the fishermen to come and sell their shrimp, squid, white bawal fish and sea crab. She also bought part of her trading stock from petty fish traders. The business of *juragan depot* has flourished since the adoption of *arad* and *otok* gear by the fishermen in the early 1990s. Since this sort of fishing gear is considered illegal, the auction officials decline to accept catches from fishermen operating with it. The fishermen do not really object to their exclusion because this will save them auction fee. Nor do the benefits stop there: they do not have to sell at the official auction hours but can approach the *depot* at any time of the day or night. The *depot* owners are anxious to maintain good relations with the fishermen and give them easy, interest-free loans, while during *Idul Fitri* they hand out *Idul Fitri* gifts —sarongs, T-shirts, or cash. Often the *depot* owners even do not want the fishermen to repay their loan completely because this is a way to ensure that they do not sell their catch to other traders. Despite such tactics, most of fishermen have dealings with more than one *depot* owner, and so are able to gain access to emergency loans. The fish auction officials have never made a single attempt to stop these illegal transactions. In fact the opposite is true, Indrajit, the former auction head, reportedly received a cut from these transactions as he privately “taxed” the warehouse owners. Kuncoro, who replaced Indrajit in 1997, merely complains that the warehouse owners did not show a proper sense of responsibility by running the trade from their own houses.
Figure 14. Wahyuni salting fish in a corner of the auction hall
Another big player in Wonokerto fish trading is PT Mahera, a large Indonesian fish processing company. In the latter half of the 1980s, it established a branch in Wonokerto to process white anchovy and jelly fish. It is the wont of the company to buy white anchovy from the big traders; the jelly fish, it obtained directly from the fishermen. As it is the only jelly fish processor in the area, PT Mahera has a monopoly and technically there was no need for bidding. All the fishermen need is weigh their jelly fish at the auction and carry it to the PT Mahera processing plant some 200 metres away. For a long time catching the cheap, ugly, slimy, and somewhat poisonous creatures was a work considered below the fishermen’s dignity and the jelly fish used to considered garbage when it became entangled in to the fishermen’s nets. As far as their memory goes, they never aimed to catch jelly fish before 1996. A kilogram of jelly fish was priced somewhere around Rp 50; too cheap in comparison to the effort and labour the fishermen would have had to invest. But, if there was nothing else they could catch at that season, they would go for the jelly fish; “Lha kepriye mane, timbang ora oleh duwit?” “What we could do, we needed the money?” In the low season, this catch is what the fishermen depend on and the processing plant tried to make use of this dependency by setting the price. Try as it might, it was not always able to manipulate the fishermen as the following case shows:

One day in 1996 PT Mahera dropped the jelly fish price from Rp 50 to Rp 25 per kilogram. The enraged fishermen gathered in front of the processing plant. An employee of PT Mahera tried to clarify the matter with the fishermen, but he was punched squarely in the his face by Slamet Londo and he fell into a jelly fish collecting pond. Every time he surfaced to breathe the fishermen beat his head repeatedly with a fish basket. The fishermen were determined to reject the price cut, and they continued to gather in PT Mahera processing plant yard into the late afternoon when a van of army men from Wiradesa arrived. Upon seeing the army men, the fishermen dispersed, without a word they boarded their boats and hurriedly returned to the village. In the evening, the army men came to Perumahan hamlet; they were looking for a person named Slamet, the one whom they thought of as leader of the protest. Knowing what would happen to Slamet Londo if the army men took him, the villagers denied any knowledge of his existence. They told the head of the army patrol; “There are many persons named Slamet here Sir. Which one are you looking for?” Frustrated by the villagers’ answers the army men then left the hamlet without taking anybody who could be accused of being the protest leader.

After this incident, the processing company raised the jelly fish price but still below the old price, to Rp 40 per kilogram and the fishermen reluctantly accepted the new price.

Peddlars (bakul cilikan) make up the majority of fish traders in Wonokerto. They are virtually never involved in the bidding process, first because they work with little capital and do not indulged in the heavy wholesale buying, and second because of the ever-vigilant presence of jedhot. Since dealing with jedhot means paying a higher price, most bakul also maintain relations with the fishermen to have an option on their side catch or even their purloined catch

\footnote{Actually Javanese fishermen had started to catch jelly fish in 1976 (KR, Nov. 20, 1976; SM, Dec. 16, 1977), but it was only some ten years later Wonokerto fishermen begun to catch jelly fish, when PT Mahera opened its branch there.}
directly at a lower price. There are even some traders (such as Paetun Mulud, Tini, and Pasrah) who totally depend on the fishermen for their merchandise and hardly ever deal with either \textit{jedhot} or the auction. The auction officials were determined to counter the impudence of the petty traders’ practice of buying fish directly from the fishermen. Since the early 1980s, they have employed Burisrawa, a mustached, bearded heavyweight to patrol the fish market compound and prevent petty traders from dealing directly with fishermen. Inevitably he became the object of ridicule among the village women, who saw him as someone who only dared to intimidate women. When Burisrawa fiercely patrolled the auction compound with a long wooden staff and approached the crowd of petty traders gathering on the river bank waiting for the boats to come, the women would disperse quickly like startled sparrows in a paddy field only to gather again in another spot of the bank.

Just as among the big traders, competition among petty fish traders is stiff too. It is not easy for a newcomer to get a place in the trading:

Paetun Mulud, she has four small children and a paralyzed husband, entered the trading in 1987s with a small amount of capital she had saved from her wages as jasmine-flower picker, and two plastic containers. She ventured along the river bank behind the fish auction to buy the fishermen’s side and stolen catch. Of course, other petty traders who were already in the business were not prepared to take this lying down. One afternoon Tini and Pasrah approached Paetun and picked a quarrel which ended in a fight. Paetun’s body was scratched by her two assailants. Every time she tried to fight back one of her opponents tore her hair or her clothes until she was almost naked. The fight was broken up by some fishermen before it could become nastier. Despite her humiliation Paetun was determined she would not quit the trading for it was her only hope of making a living for her family. She continued the trading and meticulously saved part of the profit to increase her capital. Now her business is good, many of the fishermen have become her customers and she no longer walks along the river banks to collect her trading. It is the fishermen who carry their catch to a temporary hut behind the auction where Paetun sits behind a table weighing scale. Paetun now is in process of opening her own \textit{depot} at her house in Perumahan Nelayan hamlet, where she receives catches from the fishermen after the auction has closed down for the day. Since 1995, as her business has expanded Paetun Mulud even provided \textit{Idul Fitri} gifts, a T-shirt and sarong, to every fisherman who regularly sells his catch to her. In 1997 alone, she spent 1.7 million rupiah to buy such presents to be given at the end of \textit{Ramadhan}.

Paetun is a success story, but many other women in the village have tried to break into the trading and failed. Some could not tolerate their rejection by other traders, while some others were not careful enough in managing their business and suddenly wake up one fine morning to discover their capital had evaporated.

What is traded in these ‘wild transactions’ along the river bank and behind the auction hall is mostly the highly priced catch, such as shrimp, white anchovy, squid, \textit{bawal} fish, and sea crabs, although ordinary fish is traded too. The more expensive catches come in smaller quantities and do not need big containers, allowing the traders to move swiftly from boat to boat. Not only are they easy to come by, but these kinds of fish are always in great demand.
Depot owners, back in the village, gladly pay a price which leaves a good profit margin for the traders. What is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander and also fishermen like to steal these fish from the boat and sell them in the village. Half a kilogram of shrimp or half a bucket of squid or a kilogram of bawal fish is enough to provide each crew member with Rp 2,000 of extra income.

Normally each boat deals with two or three regular petty traders, bakul langgan, and each trader has a number of prau langgan, customer boats. The fish traders are happy with the langgan relation as this rules out competition, and guarantees the continuity of their supply. The same goes for the fishermen who do not need to spend time trying to find prospective buyers. The moment their boat touches the river bank their bakul langgan approaches them immediately and asks what the fishermen have to sell her, and then both parties haggle over the price. If they do not reach an agreement, the fishermen wait for their other bakul langgan to come and the haggling starts all over again. The langgan relation between fishermen and petty traders is a long-lasting one and it is maintained through the exchange of small gifts. Apart from emergency loans and Idul Fitri gift I have mentioned above, it is a common practice among the petty traders to provide the fishermen with cigarette money during the slack season.

In many parts of Java the relationship between fishermen and bakul langgan and depot owners in many ways resembles a patron-client bond. Lacking sufficient capital the fishermen depend on the traders who in turn use this bond to secure their fish supply (De Jonge, 1988; 1989; Antunnes, 1995; Susilowati, 1995; Meerebroer, 1998). However, in Wonokerto this relation is relatively weak as it is not an exclusive bond: fishermen normally deal with more than one trader and the traders are not the fishermen’s only source of credit. Alternatively they can turn to the government credit scheme, the co-operative and the local banks, even though their terms are more difficult to meet.

Golkar in the village

Despite its might in other parts of Java, in Wonokerto Golkar had to paddle around on the sidelines. Since the 1971 general elections the villagers’ votes have always gone to the Democratic Party. “Since the old days”, Mulud Paetun said, “this village has been a Banteng (Nationalist Democratic Party) stronghold”. Until the mid-1990s, officials from the Regency and District office had employed all their ingenuity to convert the fishing villagers to Golkar. Village officials, the management board and staff members of Mino Soyo Co-operative, and senior villagers like Tanjung, Lemu, and Yatimin, who were thought by the officials to be the informal leaders in the village, were all approached and converted into Golkar cadres with a mission to talk villagers into voting Golkar. None of these efforts bore fruit. Most of the villagers tended to take the presence of Golkar as nothing more than a fashion, a political mode which changes from era to era and therefore not to be taken seriously. “Mbiyen jaman PNI, ya melu PNI. Saiki jaman Golkar, ya nganut melu Golkar”. “The previous era was the Nationalist
Party era, I supported the Nationalist Party. Now is the era of Golkar, no problem ... I support Golkar”, Grandpa Tanjung said.

In 1986 the Ministry of Social Welfare completed the building of 365 houses on 4 hectares of land north of the old Mino Soyo office compound and a new hamlet named Fishermen Housing (Perumahan Nelayan) was born in Wonokerto Kulon. Until the housing was built, many Wonokerto fishermen’s families did not own a place to live. They eked out an existence in poor huts erected on land belonging to a neighbour or relative. Upon hearing that the new housing was to be given for free, many families from Wonokerto Kulon, Wonokerto Wetan, and Api-API, registered their names at the village office to get a house. No single applicant was turned down, all were given a house. There were even around fifty houses left vacant which were then offered to people outside the fishing community—to pedicab drivers in Pekalongan fishing port and government employees in Wiradesa. At the time the housing was inaugurated by the Minister of Social Welfare, Mrs. Sudarsono, in 1986 officially every house was already occupied.

Everybody in the village was aware that the housing project was part of the government campaign to turn the fishermen into dyed-in-the-wool Golkar supporters. When the inauguration took place, the housing complex and street running through the village were embellished with Golkar banners, and it was all too clear to the villagers that the government was very, not to say overly, keen to see them become Golkar voters. Even after all this effort, in the 1987 general elections Golkar did not win in Wonokerto Kulon. For almost two years after its inauguration the housing complex was sparsely occupied. The fishermen, for a number of reasons, were reluctant to move into the new hamlet. Among the would-be inhabitants there was a gloomy feeling that the Fishermen’s Housing was closer to a ghetto where the poor of the community were being dumped together than a hamlet. A house there consisted of just a single room of very small proportion, only 4 x 2.5 metres. Quite a bit of attention was needed to make it into a proper family house. The room had to be enlarged, the walls had to be plastered, windows had to be installed, and the floor had to be elevated, because the new hamlet is located in a shallow depression which means when the tide comes most of the hamlet is flooded. A large sum of money was needed to finance the development, and not many of the fishermen had this sort of cash at their disposal. Until 1997, many houses were still in their original form. So reluctant were the fishermen to move into the new hamlet that it was only after the village officials threatened to cancel the ownership that they begun to occupy the houses and then gradually renovate them to make them more habitable.

The presence of the All Indonesian Fishermen’s Association (HNSI) in the village did not provide any help in improving Golkar performance either. As a matter of fact the association was no more than an empty shell. Until it finally found office premises in the early 1990s, next to the new office of Mino Soyo, the name board of the association was placed in front of the house of Karman, who was the regional chairman, and that was it. Since the new
office was built there have been no signs of any new activities: no staff, no office equipment, nothing. Karman himself was busy with his job as a staff member of the Pekalongan fish auction and in 1987-1992 became a member of the Regency House of Representatives. Apparently he had used the association as a stairway into the regional political arena. As a member of the ruling faction, Golkar, he was charged with the mission of ensuring a Golkar victory in in Wonokerto. His efforts proved ineffectual as in the 1992 elections Golkar again lost to the Democratic Party, which meant that Karman had to give up his seat in the House Representatives. Politically unhorsed Karman stayed on as the regional chairman of the HNSI because no one else was interested in that position and as far as the fishermen were concerned, the association was just hot air. "Lha mbuh apa kawi ..." "I don't give a toss about it ...", they use to say. All the fishermen knew was that they had to have the fishermen's identification card (kertu nelayan) which could be acquired through the Mino Soyo office. "To make people turn to Golkar, the government should approach Subur, Sentot, the fish traders, and some of the others, not Karman", Mulud Paetun gave his analysis, "They are the main supporters of the Democratic Party. If they had urged the people to choose Golkar, possibly Golkar would have won here".

Even though they did not expect much from the HNSI, fishermen working in Pekalongan were disappointed that the association never spoke up in defense of them vis-a-vis the purse seine boat owners. When a skipper lost his job, the association did nothing. When Skipper Gareng was killed in Natuna, the association was also conspicuous by its lack of action. "When Gareng’s body arrived back in Pekalongan and we were busy preparing everything, and staged a protest meeting about his death, Karman didn’t dare show his nose. He was hiding somewhere ...", Skipper Bulus said. It was this disappointment in the association which inspired purse seine skippers to create their own Paguyuban Jurumudi (Skippers' Association). The association aimed to strengthen solidarity among purse seine skippers and to maintain their common interest especially in their dealings with the boat owners. But all they could achieve was to purchase a radio set which was stationed at the HNSI and which could be used by the skippers’ wives to communicate with their husbands when they were away at sea. As a trade union the Skippers’ Association had a meager haul: being at sea most of the time, the skippers were rarely able to meet to discuss their common problems, and even when one of their members found himself in difficulties with the boat owner or was fired from his job, the skippers’ association could do nothing to help.

This catalogue of disasters shows that Golkar and its front organization were not a rousing success in the village. Even among the village officials who were supposed to be the main supporters of the faction Golkar was seen as a headache rather than anything else. Long before the 1997 general elections was staged, Golkar launched its campaign. The village

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8 Actually it was the association which had to issue the card, because it was HNSI membership but since Karman could not handle the work he was only too happy to hand the chore over to Mino Soyo.
officials were ordered by the district office to embellish the village with hundreds, if not thousand, of Golkar posters, stickers, and banners, and they had to mobilize the villagers to join in Golkar rallies. All this, of course, cost a pile of money and it was left to the village officials to find it. “Golkar, always Golkar. It really is a headache”, the village secretary, Sarawita, grumbled upon receiving a bulky package of Golkar banners from the district office as this meant that he had to submit a sum of money as payment. The villagers said that Golkar had lost the previous elections in the village was because it appointed the wrong persons to mobilize the villagers.

The relationship between villagers and Golkar only started to improve somewhat in June 1996 when a new Regency Head was appointed. The new Regency Head, Arjuno, was a lieutenant-colonel from the army. Unlike most of his predecessors, he developed a special interest in the fishing communities of the Regency. Speaking to an audience of fishermen he mentioned their important role in the regional economy: “Every day at least 7,500 fishermen work in the Pekalongan fishing port. They are energetic young people from Wiradesa district” (SM, Oct. 28, 1996). Prior to the 1997 general elections, he paid three official visits to Wonokerto and again once more after the election. The first visit was part of his campaign for Golkar. There he announced his plan to enlarge and modernize the village fishing port; “Deck-hands in the Pekalongan fishing port come from the neighbouring districts, but it is the municipality which reaps the benefit. If we modernize our fishing port here, large boats manned by fishermen from the villages can land and sell their catch here and the benefit will go to the villages and to the Regency”. The fishermen applauded to his speech thunderously. Modernization of the village fishing port was something about which the Mino Soyo management as well as the villagers had dreamed. For years they have been fostering the hope that, if the port were enlarged and modernized, the local economy would flourish. Large boats would land their catch here, fish trading and other related businesses would develop and provide opportunities for the co-operative and villagers to boost their income. For days after the Regency Head’s visit, the village was alive with talk about port modernization as if it were about to materialize in near future.

The second visit was to attend a ceremony in which land certificates were handed over to the inhabitants of the Fishermen’s Housing on May, 1997. Before he handed over the certificates to some of the housing inhabitants, the Regency Head gave a speech in which he stated that with the ceremony the 365 houses now officially belonged to the fishermen; they should be grateful to the government for this gift and not forget which party they must vote in the coming election. Again the Regency Head was rewarded with a long, enthusiastic applause

9 It took eleven years for the Agrarian Service Office to process the housing certificates. For one thing the process was involving a long legal procedure to change ownership of the housing land from Mino Soyo to the fishermen. For the other thing, housing certificates for the Fishermen’s Housing is not just one or ten pieces, but 365 pieces.
from the fishermen, and the fishermen chorused; “Yes Sir. Golkar for sure Sir”.

The third visit was to attend the 1997 Mino Soyo annual meeting. At this time the Regency Head had a fair idea about the difficulties faced by Mino Soyo and the auction; that the co-operative fuel trading business was outcompeted by private traders and that the auction suffered from illegal transactions outside the bidding hall. When he mounted the stage to give his opening speech, Arjuno stressed that it was the government’s wish to see that the fishermen’s common welfare be put above anything else and that fuel trading in the village should be run by the co-operative rather than by anybody else. Long thunderous applause exploded in the meeting hall even before he had finished his sentence. The audience turned their heads towards Dalari Kakap who sat in the middle row, as he was the head of the Cantrang Group which had opened the fuel station next to the fish auction. After that, the Regency Head shifted to fish trading and stated that illegal dealing had to cease since it was bad for the income of the fishermen and the fish auction as well. Another thunderous burst of applause exploded again, and now the fishermen eyes were cast in the direction of Subur and Sentot who sat in the first row right in front of the podium. Someone in the middle row shouted; “Nhaa ... itu orangnya Pak!” “There they are Sir ...!”. Arjuno did not respond to the shout. He just paused until the applause settled down and then continued his speech on another topic. He did not turn his face to either Subur or Sentot, perhaps he did not want to embarrass them in public although everybody in the hall knew that it was they at whom Arjuno’s criticism was aimed. But, a few weeks later, on August 11, as I have explained above, Arjuno visited the auction and caught Sentot red-handed buying the white anchovy without bothering to bid for it. The Regency Head did not reprimand Sentot. Instead he warned the auction officials to run the trading according to the regulations. From that moment, Sentot withdrew from the shrimp and white anchovy trading at the auction. Perhaps he lost face and could not bear the humiliation, or perhaps he felt betrayed by Subur, his ex-close friend, and then decided not to have anything much to do with him from then on.

Arjuno was always given enthusiastic responses by the fishermen. He was capable to draw the villagers’ interest that indeed in the 1997, the last general elections in the New Order era, Golkar won in Wonokerto Kulon. His position as Regency Head indeed obliged villagers to show enthusiastic response, but there is more to it than that. Arjuno’s statements about the ideal conditions for the village fishing fleet and co-operative are on the same wave length as the fishermen’s own wishes. The Regency Head’s speeches and actions intended to show the fishermen that the government is on their side and doing its best to materialize their wishes. Indeed the local government wanted to see Wonokerto fishing develop, as it would boost regional economic growth and increase local government revenue. In 1978, the central government granted local governments the right to tax 1 per cent of the fishermen’s catch for their revenue. One per cent may not be much, but if the total catch landed is big then the amount of tax will increase accordingly. Pekalongan municipality, for instance, annually
received between 240 to 690 million rupiah from the fishermen’s tax between 1984 to 1994 (FSO, Central Java, 1985: 4; 1995: 6). This fact did not, of course, pass unnoticed by Pekalongan Regency officials, who realizing that the majority of Pekalongan fishermen came from the Regency, had to sadly accept that all the Regency administration could pull in was a small tax from the ailing Wonokerto fishing market. But even so, the actual tax receipt from Wonokerto was still much lower than it could have been.

Table 38. Pekalongan Regency’s revenue from sea-fishing, 1989-1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Catch (Rp .000)</th>
<th>Regency Revenue Supposed amount</th>
<th>Actual amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>521,907</td>
<td>5,219</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>492,105</td>
<td>4,921</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>400,098</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>889,397</td>
<td>8,893</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


One per cent from the fishermen’s catch in 1989 would have been 5.2 million rupiah, but on the Regency revenue list only 803 thousand rupiah was reported; some 80 per cent less than it was supposed to be. Similar discrepancies also occurred in other years. For a clarification I went to Abimanyu, my high school mate, who holds a middle position in the regency office. He said; “That is the game, permainan, of the revenue office people. Before any revenue monies enter the regency purse, many sides lay their hands on it first. Golkar will take 5 per cent for its own cause. Then other people will claim their shares too. How much? I do not know!”.

Conclusion

The New Order with its centralized policy had weakened Mino Soyto as a local socio-economic organization. Mino Soyto which used to be the main socio-economic organization in the village in the old days has now turned into a shaky business institution. Losing its control over the fish trading and plagued by mismanagement, the co-operative had to scrap an income from trading merchandise and offering a credit service under a heavy competition from private entrepreneurs. Fish traders who had once worked under the auspices of the co-operative were now striking out on their own to compete each other as well as with the fish auction.

The regional as well as the national government, which were more or less identical to the Golkar party, tried their best to gain control over Wonokerto. They did so by establishing the HNSI to organize all those involved in sea-fishing and through credit programme (as explained in the previous chapter), and finally through initiating a housing complex for the poor deck-hands. Notwithstanding these efforts, Golkar was hardly able to generate political
support from among the villagers. Election after election, it proved unable to get the majority of their votes. Apparently, old-time loyalties to Sukarno’s National Party made them support its successor, the PDI (Democratic Party). But it may also have been sentiments of independence among the fishermen who used their votes for the opposition as a way of saying that they were not for sale to highest bidder. Only when in 1996 a new and enthusiastic Regency Head was appointed and he showed that he cared for the villagers, the government could mobilize the villagers’ support.

Apart from winning the villagers’ political support, the regional government also had its own agenda to improve matters in Wonokerto Kulon sea-fishing. The fish auction had to remain an official, semi-governmental agency where fish trading should be carried out so taxes can be exacted. At the same time, the amount of fish landing in the village had to be increased too, so that the regency government could reap more revenue. But it is not an easy job. Fish traders are no longer interested in the auction since it is no longer part of their local economic system. Improvement of Wonokerto port to make it attractive to fishermen with bigger boats is also proving difficult to achieve, because it requires a large sum of money which is beyond the budget of regional government.
10. From village to suburb

Despite of what happened to the village fishing co-operative, under the New Order the Wonokerto community experienced major transformation and economic improvement. The fishing villagers' world has expanded beyond their village boundary. The labour force is no longer confined to village sea-fishing, and better incomes were being earned. Undoubtedly, compared to conditions in the decades prior to the 1960s, during the New Order living conditions in the village were improving too. Under the New Order, new job opportunities were created so that villagers could choose to work in Pekalongan or in their own village or to shift between those two at will. Apart from this, since the early 1980s, the batik industry in nearby Wiradesa has experienced a revival and provided employment for the village women who can earn a significant income as silk batik painter. The development of urban industries had also attracted some of the village youth to try their luck in the cities. Another great source of money —although this was shared only among a limited number of villagers— presented itself in the mid-1980s in form of shrimp cultivation. Nowadays, on average each household earns around one and half million rupiah per annum. With that money many villagers have been able to markedly improve their standard of living.

Higher incomes and more money

A growing amount of money nowadays flows into the village from a variety of sources: the Pekalongan fishing, the local fishing, batik painting and shrimp farming. By the 1990s approximately two billion rupiah (US$ 500,000) was entering Wonokerto Kulon annually. Eighty per cent (1.6 billion) came from the 1,000 deck-hands working in Pekalongan, a quarter of a billion from the village-based sea-fishing, and a hundred million from batik painting\(^1\), and a quarter of a billion from shrimp farming\(^2\). Compared to the early 1960s, when villagers depended for their incomes mostly on local fishing which on average provided each fisherman with an income equivalent to less than one ton of rice per year, the village is now economically much better off. In 1995, the average fishermen working in Pekalongan brought in an income equivalent to 2.5 tons of rice. Together with the income villagers received from batik painting and other sources, it is safe to estimate that by 1995 on average each household earned income equivalent to 3 tons of rice.

Compared to 1983, when I arrived in Wonokerto for the very first time, I notices a markedly higher standard of living in the village. This is most visible in better housing conditions. The old bamboo houses with thatched roofs which were common in the past have

\(^1\) There were around 500 young girls and housewives involved in batik painting. Their monthly wage was between Rp 20,000 to Rp 30,000 (see Chotim, 1994: 53).

\(^2\) Records in the Regency Fisheries Service Office point out that in 1996 fishponds in the village produced 116,241 kgs of various kind of fish and prawns with a total value of Rp 1,026,756,395. Approximately a quarter of it was produced by fishpond owned by Wonokerto Kulon villagers, and 40 per cent of the harvest was used to cover the cost of the farming.
generally been replaced by brick houses with tile roofs. Electricity has become more accessible to the villagers, and radios and cassette players can be found in almost every house. Among families of successful purse seine skippers, the fashion for renovating their houses according to a modern, urban and luxurious fashion has spread like wildfire; fine houses with ceramic tiles on the floors, wide front windows of tinted glass and thick tile roofs — although most still lack a bathroom and toilet. Alongside the brick houses, motorbikes, cars, T.V. sets, audio and video equipment, bank cards, and telephones have become new symbols of success, as is sending children to Semarang and Yogyakarta for higher education. During recent years, not only the rich have bought T.V. sets, others who did not want their children to crowd in a neighbour’s houses to watch the programme have also gone out purchased sets. Another indicator of the growing prosperity in Wonokerto is the villagers’ pattern of consumption. People now have sufficient rice with the appropriate side dishes — vegetable soup with fish or soya curd or with crackers — for their daily meals. Nowadays, there is even a surplus of food and the leftovers from the rice are sundried to feed the chickens. Paryuti, a young housewife with three children, discovered that dried rice has economic potential. Equipped with a small weighing scale, she visits her neighbours to buy the left-over rice for Rp 150 per kg and when she has collected 30 to 50 kilograms she sells it to duck farmers in Pecakaran village for Rp 350 per kilogram.

The household survey I conducted in 1997 gave a clear evidence that economic improvement has indeed been the fortunate lot of the villagers between the 1960s and the late 1990s. The improvement is reflected by the declining number of households which lack essential household equipment and jewellery, and the disappearance of poor housing:
Table 39. Household economic improvement, 1960s and 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of household</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Number of household</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posse no:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table and chairs</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold jewellery</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Housing condition:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth floor</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thatch-roofed</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood/bamboo wall</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking with firewood</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household survey

A more general picture of economic improvement among Wonokerto villagers is presented in the following table:

Table 40. Pattern of income improvement and distribution in Wonokerto, 1960s and 1990s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household level</th>
<th>Early 1960s</th>
<th>Late 1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Annual income equ. to ton of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>Rich boat owner</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big fish trader</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle income</td>
<td>Ordinary boat owner</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fishpond owner</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>Deck-hands</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data processed from FSO Pekalongan’s records

Income improvement in Wonokerto is enjoyed by all levels of household, rich, middle income, and low-income, all of which in general earn an income three times as much as they earned in the 1960s. As Table 40 shows, the improvement in income is also accompanied by change in the composition of the rich household level. In the 1960s, the rich level was occupied by local rich boat owners who in many cases were also managers of Mino Soyo. But as sea-fishing in the village declined and Mino Soyo lost its position as the main economic institution the
village, the rich boat owners who used to have more than one boat have had their day. Their position has been taken by purse seine skippers and, by the mid-1980s, by fishpond owners. As with the big fish traders, they continue to be counted among the rich households. Their income in the 1960s was more or less equal to that of rich boat owner. In the 1990s, those who are dealing with commodities for the overseas market like Sentot, Subur, and Kumaerah, specially are earning an income at a level equal to a purse seine skipper or a fishpond owner, and persons in these three occupations can maintain more or less the same standard of living. The levels of middle income and low income remain more or less the same, these are the ranks of ordinary boat owners, who on average possess only one boat, and deck-hands respectively. The table also shows that, while all social classes have improved their living standard, social differentiation has increased as well. The village rich, who in the 1960s earned six times more than the poor and two and half times more than the middle income classes, now earn seven to eight times as much as a deck-hands and four times as much as middle-income fishermen.

**Development and conspicuous consumption**

The increased circulation of money in Wonokerto has attracted many traders — selling anything from cheap tapioca chips (*krupuk angin*) to expensive Walls ice cream, from bamboo poles to colour television — who visit the village on a regular basis. Masons and carpenters who were called in by the villagers began to charge higher wages for their work. The village head, Abdul Jais, giving his impression of the people of his village, said, “Life in this village is expensive. People here have a *seleran tinggi*, expensive tastes. Their cigarettes, their clothes. They always purchase the expensive brands”. More or less similar comments come from other villagers. “I'll tell you the behavior of Wonokerto Kulon people”, skipper Kadir said, “They wear *lepis* (Levis) for trouser, *riben* (Ray Ban) for eye glasses, *karpil* (Carvil) for foot wear, go to restaurants, order bottles of beer. Do not mind that at home their house is going to fall into disrepair”. Perhaps these statements are a bit exaggerated, but there certainly is some truth in it. Cigarettes, such as Dji Sam Soe, Red Gudang Garam, Gudang Garam Filter, Djarum Filter, Marlboro or Dunhill are their favourites. For the bachelor fishermen life is easy. Without a family to take care of they can spend their money as they please. Usually they give a small amount to their mothers, as contribution to the daily household expenditures or to improve the house. The remainder they keep for their own entertainment, to buy fancy clothes, visit prostitutes, and buy alcoholic drinks:

Ucrit, thirteen years, son of Subur Karsi, works as an apprentice (*bocahan*) on skipper

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2 Almost all goods sold in city shops, are also sold in Wonokerto Kulon. I counted, that everyday no less than thirty-five peddlers comes to the hamlet where I lodged, Perumahan.

3 *Dji Sam Soe kreetk cigarette is sold at Rp 1.800 per packet in Wonokerto Kulon food shops; Red Gudang Garam Rp 850; Gudang Garam Filter Rp 1,100; Djarum Filter Rp 1,000; Marlboro Rp 1,800. Dunhill is not sold in the village food shops, usually the village youngsters purchase it in Wiradesa or Pekalongan for Rp 2,500 per pack.*
Wandi’s mini purse seine boat. Though already involved in a serious job, Rasim is still a kid; every now and then he likes to sit on his mother’s lap to have his hair combed. In December 1996, from a fifteen days fishing trip, he got a share Rp 100,000; Rp 40,000 went to his mother and the other Rp 60,000 he spent on a black T-shirt, a pair of jeans, and pocket money. For a week, I saw Rasim parading himself with a great deal of flair in those new clothes. Upon hearing that the young boy earned good money and seeing him acting the dandy, the village women teased him; “Crit, duwite pak nggo apa? Wis apak seneng wong wadok ya? Wingi mesti duwite dientekake nang Kebon Sayur ya Crit?”, “Crit, what did you do with the money? You are beginning to flirt woman aren’t you? You have run out money in Kebon Sayur haven’t you?”. (Kebon Sayur is another name for Boyongsari, a prostitution complex nearby Pekalongan fishing port). Rasim had, however, never been there. But from the video movies he watched every night aboard the boat and from the talk of other crew members, he knew about sex and women, but “… I am shy and too frightened to visit the complex”, he said to me.

Rasim may not have, but most of the village youth senior to him have visited the brothel area. In general, sexual morality in the village is rather loose. Pre- as well as extra-marital sexual affairs were and are common. In the 1960s these affairs were mostly confined to within the community boundaries, among the villagers themselves, and conducted on the basis of “You like it, I like it” understanding. Most of my old informants told that their adventures in the prostitution complex started after they joined the Pekalongan boats in the 1960s, “When we still worked on sailing boats … ho-ho-ho … there was no chance to visit Boyongsari or Gilimiring⁵. We had no money”. With the improvement in their incomes the young fishermen have become more prodigal in their sexual adventures:

Tasno, a twenty years old bachelor, purse seine deck-hand, was one of them. One day, upon landing in Pekalongan port, and having finished unloading the catch which lasted for nine days, Tasno with Rp 300,000 in his pocket went straight to Boyongsari. He stayed there for five consecutive days and nights with his favourite prostitute until his money had been spent. Totally finished. Even to get home to Wonokerto he had to ask money from his friend for the transport. He stayed home for three days only to hear his mother endlessly fretting about his stupid prodigality, and then he jumped at the chance of another fishing trip.

Another way to have fun among the young fishermen is to drink alcohol. People say that it was the Navy personnel who introduced alcohol to the village, but in the early days not many villagers could afford it. When more and more villagers had found their way to Pekalongan and their income improved, alcoholic drinks became common in Wonokerto. Up to the early 1980s,

⁵Boyongsari is prostitution complex in Pekalongan city, located close to the fishing port. Gilimiring is a prostitution complex nearby town of Comal, less than 10 kms west of Wonokerto Kulon.

⁶“Aren’t you afraid of the disease?”, I asked. “Oh don’t worry. After it, I took two capsules of Supertetra (a brand of antibiotic) together. Clear … No problem”, Skipper Darsono answered. But as a matter of fact, venereal diseases are not uncommon among the fishermen. Some of them have caught syphilis and gonorrhea. When they become aware of the symptoms, usually they tried to tackle it on their own by taking obat, a high dose antibiotic, which is sold freely in the village shops, or by taking jamu, a traditional herb medicine, made of the juice of young pineapple. If these cures did not work, they went to see mantri, paramedic.
drinking parties (kuntenge) were held almost every night at the many food stalls and purse seine skippers’ houses. "Every night the village reverberated with the noise of drunken people. Sometimes one of them fell into the river and came home covered with black mud. And the vomit ... hiii ... it spread everywhere", Maimun described the situation. Nowadays the habit has waned a little, but the village youths still do their best to maintain it. Almost before the bow of the boat touches the pier, away young deck-hands race to food shops for a proper meal and rice wine or beer. They club together to buy bottles of rice wine which they drink while unloading of the catch. When they return to Wonokerto to wait for the next fishing trip, every evening they are at home they sit in food shops until late, draining bottle after bottle of rice wine or beer. Sometimes a drinking bout goes too far:

One night Jabar Piyah, Ucrit’s brother-in-law, with four of his friends staged a drinking bout in Maryati’s shop. They drank too much, and on their way home all of them fell asleep in the village street. Then someone told Karsi, about her son-in-law. Using a wheelbarrow Karsi and Piyah transported Jabar and his friends home. Another day Ruji, Ucrit’s elder brother, almost died of suffocation. Since the early morning he had been drinking rice wine in Lies Tono’s shop, then moved to Karmin Kumbang’s shop. In the morning of the next day Ruji went to Paetun’s shop and kept drinking until late afternoon. Completely drunk, he walked off to relieve himself in a public lavatory, a simple cubicle installed over a muddy canal to irrigate fishponds. He fell into the shallow canal, into the black mud mingled with excrement. Ruji was found peacefully asleep in the mud by Mulud, Paetun’s husband, who was going to use the cubicle. Startled into forgetting his urgent need to void his bowels, Mulud jumped into the canal and pulled Ruji out of the mud. Tended by two friends, half conscious, Karji, his body and face was completely besmeared with black mud, staggered back to his home followed by village children like a carnival procession. It was a real spectacle for the neighbourhood.

Drinking parties are important to the village youths, as they provide a social arena to compensate for their long and repeated absences, and it furnishes them with a congenial environment of comradeship (cf. Adrian, 1991; Hüksen, 2000).

New public rituals
Mimicking urban gangs which are popular among city youth, since the mid-1980s young villagers have organized themselves into hamlet or neighbourhood gangs. According to Senggana, this trend was introduced into the village by boys who went to high school in Wiradesa, Pekalongan, and Semarang. To nurture solidarity among themselves, the pupils created the Association of Wonokerto Pupils (Gabungan Pelajar Wonokerto, Gapelwoker). Soon the association was copied by other boys. Beginning from the southern hamlet and moving in a northerly direction, the youth gangs are: Pegam (Pemuda Gambiran, the youth of Gambiran hamlet), Wokers (of Wonokerto hamlet), Fisherman’s (of north end of Wonokerto hamlet), Los Vegas (of Sinceh), Manunggal (of Sinceh), Atlantic (of Jalanan), and Remsi of
Perumahan. In the beginning some of the groups tried to run a business by selling cigarettes and instant food to Pekalongan purse seine crews on a credit basis. The business was short-lived, as payments were hard to collect because many of their customers intentionally escaped repayment by moving to other boats. The sad fact was also that the gangs were not sufficiently organized to run such business. These groups are basically loose social associations without a clear aim or a stable structure to back it up. The only function served by the groups is to build-up a feeling of solidarity and to unite themselves against youths of other hamlets. Within living memory, inter-hamlet rivalries between young people, especially between Wonokerto Kulon and Wonokerto Wetan/Api-api, have been common. A simple event, like a boy from another hamlet coming to court a girl from their own hamlet would be used as an excuse by the youths to plunge into an inter-hamlet brawl.

Nowadays the competition between the youngsters of different hamlets has a new arena; the dang dhut show on the occasion of Idul Fitri. Actually since the old days musical entertainment has been popular among the villagers, young and old alike. In colonial times their favourite entertainment was ronggeng, then in the late 1950s to 1960s came the so-called bolososo, an opera with gambus—a coalescence of Middle Eastern, Indian, and Malay—music, and since the late 1960s it is dang dhut, a modern version of gambus where the acoustic guitar is replaced by an electric guitar and the accordion has been usurped by the electric organ. Under the influence of these technological up-dates the melodious gambus music has escalated to a dynamic rhythm. In the past, entertainment was staged mostly by the rich families when they circumcized or married off their children. Usually they invited an entertainment group from a nearby village, for example the bolososo group from Bebel village, or from Wonokerto itself, Dalang Djonowidjojo, the village head, for a wayang show or the village youth Bulan Samodra Malay orchestra group. Times has changed and as the fishermen now earn a good income from working on Pekalongan boats, the scene has altered. Since the mid-1980s, every hamlet in the village stages dang dhut show as part of Idul Fitri celebrations by inviting special groups from cities and the whole show is organized by the youth gangs.

This dang dhut show is so important to the village youth that they are not all bothered that every show costs them 3 to 4 million rupiah—the funds are raised from among the gang members themselves, the purse seine skippers, and the boat owners. The event is much more than just entertainment, it is also a social arena which gives them the chance to show off. The more expensive the show, the prouder the gang members seem to be. At Idul Fitri 1997 alone, there were six dang dhut performances, one in every hamlet, and no less than 30 millions rupiah was spent to finance them all.

Dang dhut shows in Wonokerto Kulon are always lively events with a laden air of tension hanging over them. People come to watch the shows and to dance in front of the stage, but they also expect at least to witness or even to join in a brawl. The night before the
shows are staged, the youths of the hamlet hang around the platform and begin to set intoxicate themselves with beer and rice wine. In the morning they spread out to some spots close to the stage. With sullen eyes, they watch people arriving to see the shows, demonstrating who is in charge of the event. An hour or two before 9 o’clock when the show starts, the area around the stage is already thronged with people. Once the music begins to play and the female singer in her sexy costume climbs up on the stage, the audience cheers itself into a frenzy. They move aside to provide a dancing arena in front of the stage and soon the spot is filled with youths dancing drunkenly to the music.

Usually it is from the dancing arena that the brawl which can escalate into an all-out fight is sparked off. Whether they are really drunk or just pretend to be, the young men always act the goat while dancing. They like to provoke the youths of other hamlets who happen to join in their dance into a fight by insulting them or simply deliberately getting in their way so that a collision is inevitable. Once this happens a fight breaks out: people cheer and police and army men appear on the scene to separate the belligerents. The music is stopped until the situation returns to normal. This usually takes a bit of time. Sometimes a show is interrupted three or four times because of fights. On some occasions a show has even ended early because the fight turned really nasty. In Gambiran hamlet at the 1995 show, a boy was stabbed to death by a youth from an other hamlet. In Sinceh hamlet in 1999, the show developed into an inter-hamlet brawl lasting several days.

It is not only the youth who celebrate *Idul Fitri* in such an extravagant way. Male adults in Perumahan hamlet have founded a so-called fathers’ association (*Kumpulan Bapak-bapak*). Every *Idul Fitri*, the association raises funds from its members to stage an all night puppet show. At the 1997 *Idul Fitri* the show cost them 2 million rupiah. As among the youth, the wayang show is not merely entertainment, it also an arena for the fathers’ association to show off. To mark the occasion the association usually invites guests of honour from the district office —the district head and his staff; and from the village office —the village head and his staff. The show commences with a long ceremony in which the association head, the hamlet head, the village head and the district head give their laudatory speeches praising the association members for their efforts in keeping the fine traditional art alive. The puppet show begins at 9 o’clock in the evening. While these preliminaries are taking place people crowd closely around the stage, making it difficult for a late-comer to find a spot from where he can see the puppets clearly. Feeling uncomfortable about watching the show cramped in amidst the crowd, many people choose to sit at a distance and listen to the dialogue from loudspeakers. But as the hours pass, people begin to drift away from the show and go home. From the few hundred people present at 10 o’clock, only around forty are left some three hours later. When the show is being wound up at 4.30 in the morning, there are less than twenty people in front of the stage, either half or completely asleep so that seems as if that the puppeteer is running the show for the benefit of himself and his musicians only.
Another occasion for a wayang performance or a music show is when the villagers organize life-cycle rituals of which the circumcision of boys and weddings are the most prominent. In recent years, such celebrations have undergone a remarkable change. Whereas in the old days, it was only the village rich who had the means to stage a wayang show or a musical entertainment for their guests; now many other families are doing likewise. Even among the lower classes, a lively, costly celebration is a must, although usually without the extra trimming of the expensive entertainment. And whereas formerly they usually only celebrated circumcisions and weddings with some pomp, now they have expanded this extravagance to almost all life-cycle rituals, except those which are connected with death. It is common now to find a not particularly rich family in Wonokerto inviting hundreds of guests for their daughter’s wedding and entertaining them with costly music show, and a poor family celebrating their baby’s cuplikan in a lively manner by inviting one hundred or so guests.

Such expensive celebrations are made possible because the costs are shouldered by ‘the whole village’. Almost all the expenses for the celebrations are normally covered by sumbangan (contributions) from the guests. Financially, all the host of the celebration has to do is to be prepared to cover the initial costs incurred to buy meals, drinks, and to give an advance payment to the entertainers. The rest of the costs will be paid out of the contributions. Among the village rich, this initial cost will normally come from their own money; but among the village poor it is a common practice to collect this money by sending a female member of the household to beg for fish in Pekalongan port. She will go only to boats which are manned by men or led by skippers from the village, and can normally collect around Rp. 200,000 in cash. Contributions to life-cycle celebrations among Wonokerto villagers are a matter of reciprocity which is carried out under tight scrutiny. Nobody in the village dares to evade paying, and nobody dares to pay less than the amount she herself received when her family staged a celebration. Relatives are also bound by this reciprocity. Their contributions are expected to be higher than the ones made by neighbours and friends. For a big celebration such as circumcision or wedding a relative is expected to contribute between 50,000 to 100,000 rupiah. While a neighbouring housewife is expected to contribute at least 5,000 rupiah, either in cash or in kind—like rice, sugar, tea, or cigarettes. Apart from the housewives, their husbands and their

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7 Just as among other Javanese, Wonokerto villagers’ life is marked by a number of life-cycle rituals. They begin with mitoni when a foetus is seven months old, followed by babaran when the baby is born, then cuplikan when part of the umbilical cord falls from the baby’s navel, then selapanan when the baby is thirty-five days old and has its first hair cut. Some years later, if the baby is a boy, there will be a sunatan (circumcision) to mark the boy’s entry into adolescence. Several years later comes marriage, then nothing until a person dies. At night after a death there would be tahlilan, reciting prayers, held at the deceased person’s home. If the family is rich the tahlilan will be repeated for seven consecutive nights. Then forty days after the death there will be another tahlilan, this time it was called matangpuluh. This ritual is repeated again on the hundredth day (nyatus), and finally in the thousandth day (nyewu).
teenage and adult sons and daughters are invited and each of them is supposed to bring their contribution along.

Even though the basic idea is a form of balanced reciprocity, people regard life-cycle celebrations as a way to accumulate cash and collect back piggy-bank money (*ndudah celengan*) which has been given to friends, neighbours, and relatives. Normally people also expect that a celebration will produce a positive balance between expenditures and contributions. The first thing to be talked about at the neighbourhood when someone’s celebration is over is; “Priye? *Bati apa rugi?,* How was it? A gain or a loss?”. People try to invite as many guests as possible, not only because the number of guests will reflect their social status but primarily because more guests mean more *sumbangan* and a higher chance of a positive balance. One trick used to attract the guest to come is to put on some form of popular entertainment, although for the less wealthy families this can be a risky endeavour:

In late 1996, Kumaerah, one of the village big fish traders, had her son circumcized. She staged a great celebration to mark the occasion. For days guests flooded into her place, and on the night of the circumcision a *tarling* musical performance was performed by a group from Cirebon. A great number of guests thronged Kumaerah home yard, where they were seated on chairs around a stage on which the *tarling* group played their music. Outside the yard, hundreds of villagers watched the performance and enjoyed the lively event. Some were standing along the road in front of Kumaerah house, some were sitting on boats moored along the river banks. It was a very successful celebration. Guests came from as far as Kendal and Pemalang: fishermen who used to sell their catch to Kumaerah when they fished close to Wonokerto. Later people talked and speculated that Kumaerah had gained millions from this occasion.

Not long after Kumaerah’s son’s circumcision, Tinah Tarno of Perumahan hamlet was going to marry her first daughter, Nanik. Although socially and economically Tinah was far from equal to Kumaerah—Kumaerah was a rich trader with a very vast network of social relations, while Tinah was just a wife of a purse seine net-maker—Tinah boasted to her neighbours that she was going to make her daughter’s wedding as lively as Kumaerah’s son’s circumcision, and make an equally large profit out of it. Actually many close friends had advised Tinah that such a grand wedding was not necessary for Nanik. For years, Nanik had been working in Jakarta and during that time she had been absent from the hamlet. Apart from this, Nanik’s prospective husband was not known in the hamlet, being a chap from Klaten whom she had met in Jakarta. But Tinah was determined; “*Pancen Nanik wis ora akeh kancane na kene. Tapi ora masalah, anger tanggapane rame, tamune ya mesti akeh ...*”, “It is true that Nanik no longer has many friends here. But that’s not a problem, if the entertainment is great then a large number of guests will come too ...”, she said. Many weeks before the wedding Tinah told everybody that for Nanik’s wedding she would invite a famous electronic organ player from Pekalongan plus two famous female singers, one from Pekalongan and the other from Jakarta, to entertain the guests. The entertainment alone, she boasted, would cost her a million rupiah.

Two weeks before the wedding hundreds of invitation cards began to be sent to purse seine skippers, masters’ mates, engineers, seine masters and everybody whom Tinah’s husband happened to know be it only by name. It was not easy at all for Tinah to finance her ambitious project. Her own money would not stretch to making the initial preparations for the great wedding. An advance payment to the musician and singers had to be settled. A permit for the music entertainment had to be obtained from the district office, which cost her hundred and fifty thousand rupiah.
Moreover, the permit would not be given unless she bought twenty pieces of yellow coloured Golkar T-shirt with the symbol of the party, a banyan tree, printed on the back of it accompanied by a slogan “Golkar Plithanku”, “Golkar has my vote”. Each shirt cost her five thousand rupiah. Finally, Tina had to find the money to buy the meals and drinks and many other necessities too. To cover the initial costs, Tina went to her relatives and friends to borrow money and in the end she managed to stage the wedding celebration.

Unfortunately some hours before the great evening there was an exceptionally high tide and Perumahan hamlet was flooded. When the water subsided several hours later, home yards and alleys all over the hamlet were full of mud. Tinah’s great celebration was a total failure. The entertainment went ahead, but only a handful of guests came. Other guests from outside Perumahan hamlet simply retreated the way they had come when they found it was impossible to enter the hamlet without covering themselves in mud.

For weeks after the celebration Tina and Tarno were terribly upset. Many debts had been incurred, but the guests produced just small contributions. Tarno was so desperate, day in day out he just sat in the house his chin on his hands regretting his ill fate. Meanwhile Tina showed signs of great mental agitation. To everyone who would listen she fretted, swore about the whole villagers angrily; “Shameless people .... They do not know to return other people’s courtesy, ora ngerti mbales budi ...”.

For Tinah the high tide had brought nothing but disaster. It is an ill wind that blows nobody some good and to many of the people she invited in the neighbourhood it was a blessing. They had a good excuse not to come and thus save their money. As far as the villagers are concerned, contributions are a heavy economic burden that they are only too happy to obviate, if only they can. A contribution is all right, as it costs the household no more than 10,000 to 15,000 rupiah.

The problem is when the ritual celebration seasons come, in the months of Mulud, Bakdo Mulud, Ruwah, and Besar in the Javanese calendar, there are usually more than twenty invitations. Nowadays the problems loom even larger as people stage life-cycle ritual celebrations not only during these supposedly auspicious months but in every month, all year round, even during months like Sura and Pasa (Ramadhan), which according to the calendar are ‘wrong’. If people do not want to be ridiculed, they have to contribute to all of these invitations.

Ngatirin, the manager of the credit service unit of Min Soyo, told me that during the months of sumbangan the number of people asking for credit rises significantly; “Sumbangan must be paid whether there you have the money or not. It is better to run into debt than lose face in front of your neighbours”.

Often people try to economize on household expenditure to be able to make contributions. One afternoon Dwi, my assistant, found Sri on the riverside picking teki grass. She explained that the grass was to be used as a substitute medicine to help Mbilin, her younger sister, who suffered from kidney failure. The medicine from the doctor had run out and the family had no money to purchase more medicine. “Kalah karo sumbangan”. “We have been caught out by the contributions”, Sri said. Early one morning, from my small house, I overheard Ni’ah sighing to Paryuti; “Nyong ngguya-ngguyu kaya kiye po’o atine rujah-rajeh Par.

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8In the Javanese lunar calendar, a year consists of twelve months: Suro, Mulud, Mulud, Bakdo Mulud, Jumadilawal, Jumadilakhir, Rejeb, Rumah, Pasa, Sawal, Legeno, and Besar.
Sumbangan sak mono akehe kuwi apak luru duwit kadek ngendi?”. “Though you see me smiling and laughing Par. My heart is bleeding. How can I get money to honour that incredible number of sumbangan?”

Life-cycle rituals are not the only demand made at the villagers’ financial contributions, another major drain on their resources is during house renovation (sumbangan mbangun omah). Inspired by what they see in the cities and on television the villagers nowadays are eager to renovate their houses. When a family plans to do so they start by buying parts of the building materials (nyelengi bahan) in advance at building suppliers shops in Wiradesa. The shop owners stimulate this scheme, as they receive cash for the materials at current prices while the bricks, cement and beams will only have to be delivered when the buyers actually begin to renovate their houses. In their eyes nyelengi bahan means an interest free loan. To the villagers, nyelengi bahan is a scheme which protects them from both price increases, for once their money is handed to the shop owners it is no longer valued in cash terms but in materials; and from market seduction to spend their money on buying less necessary things. Nyelengi bahan can last for two to three years after the first purchase is paid. During that period the buyer will visit the shop from time to time to add his purchases when there is a little extra money put by, sometimes for a kilogram of nails, sometimes for a window pane, and maybe next time the money will be good enough for ten sacks of cement and so on till finally they have enough materials in stock to commence the renovation.

Other costs for house renovation are covered by contributions. As with life-cycle celebrations, a sumbangan omah is organized informally, without recording the participants’ names and the amount of the contributions. But although it is informal, the scheme runs under tight social control. When a family decides to renovate its house, talk about it will have spread all over the hamlet or even the whole village several weeks before the project is initiated. It functions as a kind of early-warning system informing villagers that someone is about to claim reciprocity and expect everyone to whose house building he has contributed to return that contribution: an equal amount or more but not a cent less. The news is confirmed when a truck carries bricks, sand, cement and other materials into the village and unloads the stuff at a spot near the house which is to be renovated. The final signal given in the form of the arrival of carpenters and brick-layers; this time, the moment has come to pay the debt, no matter what. People who have received five thousand rupiah when they renovated their house must return at least the five thousand rupiah; those who received thirty packets of cigarettes for the carpenters and brick-layers, must return the thirty packets; those who received a truck load of sand, must return the truck load, even if they have to borrow money from someone else. People who have not yet been caught up in this reciprocal chain of sumbangan omah can now become involved by contributing whatever they like, if they are entertaining future plans to renovate their houses, so that they can claim their contributions.
Money ... money ...

With an average annual income of more than 2,000 kilograms of rice (which is two to three times better than in the early 1960s), Wonokerto deck-hands families now generally live above the poverty line. Without hesitation most of their wives answered my question about their present economic situation with; “Life is better now. Nobody goes to sleep suffering hunger pangs anymore. Nobody lives in a thatch-roofed houses anymore. Not like it was during the time of the sailing boats”. Despite the improvement in their daily diet, the quality of their housing, and of the conspicuous consumption, particularly among the youths, households in the village are haunted by a never-ending cash shortage. Once I heard Anggada complaining; “Duwite wong nelayan kawe mbuh, kaya duwit ora sah. Angger bali oleh bagen akeh mesti bae langsung ... ‘Ayo mrana ... Ayo tuku kae ... Ayo mrene ...’ nggan wis enthek”, “I don’t understand it, the fishermen’s money seems to be bewitched. Whenever we get home with good notes in our hands, it is like its beyond our control ...’Let’s go that way ... Let’s buy that ... Let’s go this way ... Let’s buy this ...’ then suddenly the money is gone”. Anggada is not the only one in the village who is astonished by how fast their income vanishes from their pockets and how they face a cash shortage from time to time. Often people blame it on the tuyul, a mythical being who looks like a dark-skinned, bald-headed, small naked boy. They complain that a tuyul has entered their houses and stolen their money. They swear that the money was kept in a safe place and they are sure that they had so many bank notes; but when they went to fetch the money some notes had gone.

Indeed, it is neither because the money is bewitched nor because of the mischief of a tuyul that the villagers’ money seems to run through their hands like water, but because their expenditure is high—at least as high as their income or sometimes even higher. Data from the household survey point out that in 1997 that for its daily expenditures alone, on average each household spends Rp 6,900 per day or Rp 207,000 per month or Rp 2.4 million per year. This amount does not include house appliances, contributions, and other items.

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9 There was the couple of Glundhung and Yanti, a successful shopowner household in Api-api village. However, so goes the villagers’ story, their success was achieved by resorting to evil ways with help of a tuyul. A neighbour of the spouses opened a fishing supply shop and claimed to be losing money mysteriously by the day. Eventually the shop owner was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery. For several days he made a personal sacrifice, nglakoni tirakat, by not taking rice with his meals. His sacrifice paid off, one night he caught the thief, a tuyul. Under interrogation the tuyul confessed that he was ‘son’ of Glundhung and Yanti. Glundhung and Yanti, the tuyul ‘parents’, were summoned immediately, and the shop owner threatened them; “There, I have detained your ‘son’ in my room. I do not care how, but my three million rupiah must be returned, otherwise I will tear off your son’s limbs”. It was believed if a tuyul was tortured, the pain would afflict to his ‘owner’ or ‘parents’. The stolen money, the story said, was returned. Of course, I never checked this story with either Glundhung or Yanti or the shop owner. It is unthinkable to come to a person and asked; “Is it true that you are keeping a tuyul?”. I have heard many versions of stories like these one, and when I asked for further clarification; “Do you see the event by yourself?”, the answer was always; “No. I was told by so and so. But it was true. Believe me!”.
Table 41. Daily household expenditure of Wonokerto household 1977 (Rp)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>1,183</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side dish</td>
<td>1,615</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firewood</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerosene</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children snack</td>
<td>1,304</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarette</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,894</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,450</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,850</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household survey.

Almost half, 47 per cent, of the routine expenditure is spent on family meals which are served three times a day. This amount (some Rp 3,300) is not much to spend on daily meals for a family which on average has 4.6 members—or 3.6 if we consider that the husband is mostly away in fishing trip. The very first thing purchased by a housewife is always rice, one or two kilograms; "Rice is the most important thing, a side dish is easy. Even if we do not have money to buy it, we can still have fish taken back by our husbands or given by neighbours who happen to have some extra fish. If we are really stuck we can eat just rice without any side dish"10. Having one or two kilograms of rice in the house means that food for one day is guaranteed. Then the housewives may think of buying a side dish. Usually all they buy are vegetables, tempe, tahu, and frying oil. Meat is almost entirely out of the question, as just fruits these are too expensive. Only on special occasions when there is extra money does a household buy meat or some chicken. There are a good number of breakfast sellers in the village every morning, but most Wonokerto housewives prefer to cook their own meals. Only households with children who have to be at school before 7 o'clock will buy a part of their breakfast from the sellers.

Other major household expenditures include children’s snacks, which account for 18.9 per cent. This is the main source of daily headaches among the housewives. Children in the village usually keep whining for snacks, from the moment they get up early in the morning till

10 Among the village housewives there is a fish reciprocity. When one's husband or son returns from fishing trip with stuff for a side dish of fish, iwak lawuhan, part of it will be delivered to other households. Usually these close by. This reciprocity is quite loosely regulated there being no strict stipulations about when to return the fish and how much. I never heard people quarrel or gossip about another person in relation to this fish reciprocity. As a matter fact, some households, those of fishermen who work in the village, have a reputation as a main giver of fish; while households of fishermen who work in Pekalongan are the main fish receivers. The reason is simple, because fishermen who work in the village engage in one-day fishing trips, they are in a better position to bring fish home almost every day; unlike those who work in Pekalongan who return after a fishing trip of one or two months.
they go to bed again in the late evening. They are quite good in nagging snacks from their mothers; they begin with asking sweetly, then shout loudly, then end up crying. If those first three attempts fail, then comes the final weapon; crying and carrying on in the yard or the village street before the neighbours’ eyes. They will not stop before their mothers or fathers give them money or take them to a nearby food stall to buy the snack. Everyday in the village tug-of-war is played between mothers and children over snacks. Mothers exploit the resource of their vocabulary to express their annoyance and powerlessness under the terror of the children’ demands. “Allah O God Lord ... Tur ... Tur ... what a kid you are. It’s only eleven o’clock, and now you are asking another hundred rupiah for your fourth snack! Tak jurke obat curut sisan mengko kowe ... I will give you rat poison to drink ...!” Another moment, another mother, and the rat poison was replaced by tak sembeleh, I will have your throat cut; then tak gecek, I will crush you into pulp; tak lelebke kali, I will have you drowned into the river; and so on, and still the mothers never won.

Compared to the ordinary fishermen’s annual income, which was around 2 million rupiah, household daily expenditure amounted to 2.4 million. The discrepancy has to be covered by income earned by the wife, daughter, or son. The conspicuous consumption of many villagers who spend lavishly on extravagant dang dhut music shows, on costly life-cycle celebrations, and a prodigal life style contrasts sharply with day-to-day economic problems in most Wonokerto households. Not only are they bedeviled by this expenditure, but they also have to cope with highly irregular incomes as no housewife can predict when her husband will return from the sea and how much money he will bring. It is not a surprise then to find that many household in the village are plagued by never-ending debts. Data from the household survey, show that on average each household had to shoulder Rp. 265,000 on debts.

Table 42. Household debts in Wonokerto, 1977 (Rp)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Debt</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No debt</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash debts</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>711,911</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food debts</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39,728</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House appliances</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash, food, H. app.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>602,954</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash, food</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>143,300</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash, H. app.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>245,555</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total average</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>265,418</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household survey.

However, it seems that household debts in the village are like a tip of iceberg, only a small part of it is visible:
Several days before *Idul Fitri* 1997, Maimun, my foster mother, insistently asked me for a million rupiah, the house rent for the next five months in a lump sum. She argued that the money was needed for the installment on Rhen’s boat the family wanted to buy for 2.5 million rupiah deposit for years now, while the rest would be paid later every time the boat produced a good catch. I gave the money and she looked instantly very relieved. But, later I found out that the boat was still in the possession of Rhen, no deposit had been paid. From the neighbours I heard then that Maimun used the money to settle her debts to numerous creditors. Maimun never disclosed the amount of her debt, either to me or even her husband; but I noticed that she had dealings with more than four *bank thongols*—semi-formal money-lenders—and a number of traders, and on many occasions I saw her seek a hiding place in a neighbour’s house when a *bank thongol* or a trader approaching her house to collect the payment.

People from low income households, such as Maimun, are not the only ones plagued by debt. It seems that almost everybody in the village is indebted, and the higher a person’s income the bigger his debts are. Even Abdul Jais, the village head, who occupies the highest position in the formal social hierarchy in the village is not free from debt. In a desperate attempt to make money out of his fairly minuscule piece of *bengkok* land, Abdul Jais had decided to turn it into a shrimp pond; an attempt which landed him in serious financial difficulties:

The village head is indebted to at least three banks, the District Credit Bank, the People’s Bank, and People’s Credit Bank Dian Muda, for an amount of no less than 20 million rupiah and he does not have the wherewithal to repay it. Every time the bank officials come to see him, Abdul Jais gives his standard answer; “Look Officer, you can see I have not even the slightest intention of running away from my obligations. There is just no money in my possession to repay it. You can see for yourself, my business is doomed ...”. This indebtedness came from Abdul Jais’ project for shrimp cultivation. Attracted by the high profit to be made from shrimp-raising, with capital borrowed from the banks, in 1993 Abdul Jais turned his *bengkok lurah* land into a shrimp pond. The shrimp were raised once a year in a period of four months and produced a quite good harvest. In 1995 the harvest was sold at a total value of 30 million rupiah to a shrimp dealer from Tegal who dared to offer just Rp 100 higher for every kilogram of shrimp than Dalas, a local shrimp dealer. Unfortunately, the Tegal shrimp dealer reneged on his debt. Abdul Jais kept trying to get his money back. He took an army officer, a police officer, even the district head to accompany him to negotiate with the shrimp dealer, but he only received Rp 750,000. Every time Abdul Jais came, the shrimp dealer just answered; “See Pak Lurah, I am in difficulties too. My trading is doomed. I am beset by debts. All my belongings have gone, and there is still not enough to cover the debt. I am bankrupt ...”. So is Abdul Jais. Unable to resume his shrimp-raising, Abdul Jais then rented his land, for 1.5 million rupiah per year, to a shrimp farmer.

**Savings: gold and arisan**

To ease seasonal fluctuations in household income and the problem of cash shortages most Wonokerto housewives engage in *arisan* (rotating savings association) and whenever possible they also save their money in the form of gold jewellery. Jewellery is a favourite form of saving among the women. They can buy it in Wiradesa jewellery shops and in time of need they can sell it easily. While waiting for the lean times, the jewellery serves as a personal...
embellishment. Data from the household survey show that in 1997 on average each household owned 15.9 grams of gold jewellery, although forty-seven housewives, 21 per cent of the respondents, did not own a single gram. Gold has a special value for the women, because as they say; “Saving in jewellery is cool, not like saving in cash. If you save in cash, there will be the constant temptation to spend it again and again until all is gone. But if you save in jewellery, you will not part with it except when you are in really dire straits”.

The arisan is a relatively new institution in Wonokerto. It became popular in the 1980s when economic conditions in the village started to improve. Prior to 1970s, it was unknown there. Arisan is a form of collective saving. Managed by a treasurer (bandar), a group of people contribute a fixed amount of money to the fund according to a regular schedule: once a week or once every fortnight or once a month. At these meetings a lottery is held and the winner receives the kitty of that day. The process continues until all participants have had their turn. As a collective savings fund, the greater the number of participants in an arisan, the larger the amount of cash accumulated at the meetings, but it also prolongs the process and the waiting time for those who come last on the list. To tackle this problem, at every drawing there are two or three winners instead of one. The process is strictly controlled but sometimes a slight adjustment creeps in if someone is in urgent need of cash to cover medical expenses and the like. A similar organization is the so-called arisan dendeng (lit: beef saving fund): members also contribute regularly to the fund but no lottery is held. Instead the money is kept by the bandar and several days before Idul Fitri, the arisan funds are distributed among all participants who then use it to buy the expensive ingredients required for the festive meals at the end of Ramadhan.

There are dozens of arisan groups in Wonokerto, ranging from neighbourhood arisan groups to arisan PKK (semi official Village Women’s Welfare Organization, led by the wife of the village head); from a teenage arisan group with a Rp 2,500 contribution per week to a rich purse seine skippers’ wives arisan group with a Rp 150,000 contribution per month. In Perumahan hamlet alone there are eleven groups, run by a number of bandar arisan. Normally a bandar runs more than one arisan group. As manager and treasurer, a bandar has the privilege of being the first to draw and to take 10 per cent from each draw as a management fee. The job is not easy: every drawing day the bandar often has to make door-to-door visits to collect the contribution and there are always participants who have an excuse for not paying or even simply hide in a neighbour’s house to avoid the bandar. If someone fails to fulfill their obligation on a drawing day, it is the bandar’s responsibility to cover it; later she will have to press the defectors to make their contributions. Although in some cases women are member in more than one arisan, in general they can afford to join only one. The contribution on average is around Rp 10,000 per month which means that each participant spends some 120,000 rupiah per year on arisan contributions. When their number is drawn and they receive the money, they generally use it either to renovate their house, to finance life-cycle celebrations, to buy house
appliances or jewellery, or if need be, to pay off their outstanding debts.

**Prosperity, uncertainty, and the evil spirit master**

In the eyes of the people who are plagued by a cash shortage, there are two groups of villagers who are spared such pecuniary troubles: the purse seine skippers’ families and the shrimp ponds owners.

According to the share arrangements, a purse seine skipper’s share is three times bigger than that of ordinary crew members which already puts him ahead. There are, however, at least four other ways for him to earn some extra income. First is the 5 per cent bonus they get out of the clean catch which is to be shared between the skipper and his assistants—master’s mate, engineer, quartermaster, seine master, seine men, but the skipper receives the lion’s share. His second possibility is the so-called *uang cepretan* (sprinkle money): an extra bonus when his boat produces a good catch. The third is *uang sodogan*, a super bonus, which is given when the boat brings in an exceptionally good catch which fetches over 10 million rupiah for the boat owner. In that case, the skipper will get the super bonus of at least a million rupiah. The fourth is the ‘contingency fund’ needed to pay off naval patrols and marine units, sea police patrols, and local fishery officials whom they happen to meet on their fishing trips. For every trip, the skipper is usually supplied with half to one million rupiah by the boat owner. Sometimes not all this money is spent, and the skipper can pocket the remainder. All in all, under the best possible conditions an ordinary crew member gets Rp 300,000 out of a trip, while the skipper can go home with some 4 million rupiah\(^{11}\). Of course this does not happen every trip, but some skippers revealed that on average they earn no less than one and half million rupiah per month; “*Ora mati kadek siji setengah sak wulane*”.

With this level of income, purse seine skippers have emerged as the new rich in the village. They live in finely-built, large brick houses, equipped with a stereo set and a video, and one or two motorcycles, which allows them to lead a pretty prosperous life-style. They save their money in banks, buy expensive jewellery for their wives, and send their children to college or university in the cities. Being regarded as rich persons, purse seine skippers are regularly approached by their neighbours and crew members who want them to become their patrons. During the *Idul Fitri* celebration, they are pressed to contribute more than other villagers to raise money to stage a dang dhut performance. At the 1996 *Idul Fitri*, the Perumahan hamlet youth contributed Rp 30,000 per person for the performance, but three

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\(^{11}\) This level of income is achieved when a purse seine boat produces a catch of 70 million rupiah, more or less a hundred tons of fish. From that amount, 21.5 million go on fishing supplies and the auction fee, resulting in a 48.5 million rupiah clean catch which is to be reduced by a 5 per cent bonus (Rp 2,425,000) and 35 per cent depreciation (16 million rupiah). The rest, 30 million rupiah, goes to the boat owner (12 million rupiah) and crew members (18 million rupiah). The 18 million crew members’ portion is divided into sixty shares, which means 300 thousand rupiah (1 share) for every ordinary crew member. Meanwhile the skipper gets 3 shares (X Rp 300,000) plus one million rupiah bonus, one million rupiah extra bonus and one million rupiah super bonus: 3.9 million rupiah in total.

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skippers (Tonah, Bulus and Bo'im) were under strong moral pressure to pay Rp 400,000 each. When a family suffers a financial blow, the mother will turn to a purse seine skipper if all other efforts have failed. When a poor family have their son circumcised, and they have next-to-nothing to entertain neighbours, it is the purse seine skipper who has to take the initiative to extract contributions from the neighbours, by throwing his money first.

Since local fishing began to decline in the 1960s, the purse seine skippers have become symbols of success in Wonokerto and they are viewed with awe by their neighbours. But this is an ambivalent feeling, as it is often strongly tinged with envy. Envy of the purse seine skippers' economic success is unequivocally revealed when villagers speak pejoratively about this group as being no better than gedibal Cina: the lackeys of the Chinese boat owners who, following in the steps of their Chinese masters, achieve their economic success by resorting to the help of evil spirits (Abidin, 1994: 88). People say there are many kinds of evil spirits worshipped by purse seine boat owners and skippers to help them be successful in their fishing and in their quest to be rich. Apart from a green giant (buto ijo), there are also mekothok (a nasty looking giant), spirits who reside in many old graveyards, and spirits who live in the Gedung Batu temple in Semarang and on Mount Kawi in East Java (cf. De Jonge, 1998). To solicit the help of these evil spirit beings, people have to contact dhukan or juru kunci (custodian) of the haunted places and make their intention known. In return, the dhukan or the custodian will tell them what kind of ritual needs to be performed and what kind of sacrifice has to be given to the spirits in order to win their help. As the help has to do with a great amount of wealth, people believe that the spirits have to be paid with human souls at a rate of one per year. In the early stages of their contract with the evil spirits, people averred, normally the purse seine owners or the skippers sacrifice the life of one of their crew-members. When, for one reason or another no more crew-members can be sacrificed the worshippers of evil spirits will sacrifice their relatives, for the spirits must inexorably be paid come what may and the contract with the spirits cannot be terminated. It will come to an end only when the worshipper dies. When there is no more relatives who can be sacrificed, it is time to sacrifice the life of the worshipper's immediate family, wife, sons, or daughters. In the end, when there is no more immediate family who can be sacrificed, it is the time for the worshipper to give his own soul in return for all wealth he has been enjoying.

The villagers often link their accusation of purse seine boat owners and skippers with the deaths of purse seine crew members. Every year a number of purse seine crew members die because of accidents or disease while they are on a fishing trip. If we look at the figures, their number is not particularly high: around 0.005 per cent out of the number of fishermen

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12 In August 1983, Skipper Datuk's purse seine was caught by storm and sank in the waters of Kangean Island, from thirty-five deck-hands only two were saved by another purse seine three days later. In June 1996 another small purse seine was lost at sea, only a single deck-hand was ever found (SM, June 11, 1996a).
annually. Not prepared to be palmed off with statistics the villagers see it differently. They just compare the death rate in Pekalongan to the death rate among fishermen working in the village and among them casualties rarely occur. As far back as the fishermen remember there have been only two fatal accidents in local fishery: one was Karmaji in the 1950s, who was struck by lightning at sea, and the second was Bleput in 1996 who drowned while fishing at night. “But in Pekalongan crew members die every year, just like dry leaves falling from the tree”, Uncle Darjan said, “always poor crew members! They have been sacrificed by the boat owners and skippers to the evil spirit masters who help them to become rich”.

Regardless of what the villagers may think, economic success of the purse seine skippers has not come easily. Being a purse seine skipper is a hard, stressful job — physically, psychologically, and economically demanding. Skippers bear the ultimate responsibility for the safety and success of the fishing trip; it is they who stay awake during most of the fishing trip to be only briefly relieved when the master’s mate takes his turn at watch; who deal with naval and marine units in the fishing area, bribe them in subtle ways to satisfy their demands without losing face; who decide where and when to drop the seine; who decide whether a trip should be terminated or continue when the fish fail to appear but the fish compartments are still empty; who bear the crew members’ grumbles when the fishing spots prove empty, who take the heat when the boat owner accuses them of being incompetent if a fishing trip turns sour, and take the risk of being fired from their proud position and find themselves out on the streets with their pockets to let humiliated as a failure.

There is no formal, legal work contract between purse seine owners and skippers. The relationship is basically a personal one. A boat owner has an absolutely free hand in appointing any skipper to run his boat. Of course, he will choose the best one available; but he cannot risk his investment by tying himself to a long-term contract with one particular skipper. If the skipper is able to bring in a good catch on his first or second fishing trip, it is fine; he can stay. If he fails, he will be replaced by someone else. From the skippers’ point of view, their position is by no means guaranteed. They can easily be sacked, and for every skipper there are master’s mates and ex-skippers who will be more than willing to take their position.

Perhaps it is because of these uncertainties that purse seine skippers never feel confident about their own technical skills and are involved in a continuous search for supernatural backups. Every purse seine skipper has a fast relationship with kadol — kadol, is the fishermen’s slang for kyai, religious teacher, and a dukun — and throws himself to mystical practices to ensure the success of his fishing trip and his own position. Here the story of Skipper Bulus:

Bulus was a successful skipper. His fishing trips always produced a satisfying catch as that in 1995 he was appointed skipper on a tanker-type purse seine. Bulus was a skillful fishermen and an apt learner, he had only finished primary school but he could read sea

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13 Between August 1995 to October 1996, for instance, apart from Skipper Gareng’s death there were ten reported deaths among purse seine crew members (Pekalongan Hospital’s record; SM, Nov. 02, 1996).
chart well and finely interpret fish-finder data on the monitor screen. Despite this natural aptitude, Bulus was always haunted by the feeling that his fishing skills and technical knowledge was not up to the mark. Every time his boat was repaired or took on supplies for the next fishing trip, Bulus went on a number of trips to visit kyai, dukun, or sacred places such as the Gunung Jati shrine in Cirebon, the Demak mosque and the wali (Moslem saints), tombs in the Demak - Rembang area. Bulus had also visited a tomb in Suralaya, a small hamlet south of Pekalongan, which claims to be Sjech Siti Jenar's last resting place. There he sought supernatural blessing and mystical power. Every time he was about to board his boat, Bulus paused a moment to halt in front of the ladder, his head bowed, his breath held, and murmured one of the short mantras his kadol taught him. Hanging round Bulus' neck was a throng with a small amulet he had get from a kyai in Cirebon, and his thick wallet bulged with other amulets from various sources. On the bridge, two incense burners were installed, on the port and starboard sides of the helm. At sea, when the seine master and other deckhands were busy dropping the seine at the chosen fishing spot, Bulus stayed on the bridge burning incense with such intensity until that small room was redolent with heavily scented smoke. It was not the sort of incense which people buy in shops, but a special sort, impregnated with powerful spells, given to him by the kadol. On top of kilograms of incense, amulets, and many verses of mantra, he took gallons of holy water along. It would be used to wash the seine before the first dropping, and to wash it again when the dropping was found to have been disappointing.

Even when the boat is already at sea, the contact between the skipper and his supernatural advisors is maintained. Unlike, for instance, American fishermen who prefer to keep their radio as silent as possible during their fishing trips, Pekalongan purse seiners tend to use their radio as if it were a loudspeaker at a wedding ceremony in the village. Once they are at sea, they use their communications radio liberally: to chat with friends aboard other boats; to contact the boat owner; and to contact their family in Wonokerto who use the communication radio bought by the Skippers' Association and installed at the HNSI office. The usual exchanges between the skippers and their wives concern the catch; "How many compartments have you already got?", and "Bad, only a few. You better see the kadol. Please hurry. Ask for another prayer and —holy— water". Then the wives go off immediately to their husbands' supernatural advisors.

Of course, the services of these super-natural advisors are not free gifts. An efficacious kadol tacitly demands a share at least equal to that of an ordinary deck-hand, or even more. A skipper never dares to give less, for fear that the kadol might reroute the fish to another skipper who pays more. One time, Tasni, the wife of skipper Bo'im, went to see Kyai Ismail south of Wiradesa and told him that after forty-five days at sea her husband only had filled three compartments with catch; and this while time Bulus who fished in the same waters already filled 7.5 compartments. "All right. I will see to it. You come again in back days", the kyai told

14 The technical reason behind this radio silence among American fishermen is to keep other fishermen away from any good fishing spot a fisherman happened to find (Palmer, 1990a; 1990b).
Tasni. After having handed rice and other food to the kyai's wife, Tasni left. During the following five days, Bo'im's catch had risen up to eight compartments; while Bulus' catch stayed at eight compartments too. When Tasni saw Kyai Ismail again, he said; “Yes, in a difficult time like this rejek (God's gift) must be shared. It should not be taken by one single person”.

Paying one kadol with one share of ordinary deck-hand does not present much of a problem. The difficulties lie in the fact that usually a purse seine skipper contacts three or four kadol at the same time; things are made even more complicated as every kadol must be contacted through a woman who acts as a go-between and who has to be paid whenever she escorts the skipper or the skipper's wife to the kadol. And there is still more. As well as these supernatural advisors, the purse seine skippers also contact numerologists (tukang petung), to calculate the appropriate day to start a fishing trip and the right hours to drop seine, advice which costs half a deck-hand's share; and local dukun. Each needs to be given either cash or some packet of cigarettes for every consultation. For every fishing trip, Bulus spent close to one million rupiahs on his kadol, tukang petung and local dukun. Part of it was taken from the total catch —there were shares for one kadol and one numerologist calculated in the share arrangement— while the rest was paid out of Bulus' own earnings.

Apart from the uncertainty of the catch, recently a new problem has arisen to afflict purse seine skippers: a shortage of crew members. Since the early 1990s it has been not easy for a skipper to get enough deck-hands to man his boat. The present labour force from fishing villages along northern coast of the province is simply not large enough as many young men have left to work in the urban industries. To deal with this problem, juru gidang (scouts) roam the agricultural villages in the southern hills of Pekalongan, Batang, and Pemalang, to recruit able-bodied men to work on the boat. The juru gidang try to seduce the villagers with stories about the bounty to be enjoyed from sea-fishing: if they join the purse seine fleet they will be able to watch video movies every day, have good meals every night, and receive a good wage at the end of the trip. They have not been highly successful. After one fishing trip most of the newcomers decide not to join again. The money was good: Rp 100,000 for a month at sea was far better than sitting idly at home waiting for the harvest, but life and work aboard a fishing boat proved to be beyond their psychological and physical capacity. Kampret, an eighteen-year-old from Mesoyi village, 30 kms south of Pekalongan, told me a story of Kantong, his younger brother:

"From the very first day of the fishing trip he was awfully sea sick. He just lay down limply on the deck, wrapping himself in a sarong. He refused to take any meals and threw up all the time. On the third day, he was hysterical... "I want to go home... I want to go home". "How?", other deck-hand asked to ease him. "I will ask a motorbike to come and pick me up (ojeg)"."
But it was not only the life on board which was so foreign to them which kept the farmers away. In the 1990s the villages were experiencing labour shortages too because many youngsters had gone to Jakarta and other big cities to work in the factories, and the farmers needed every available hand.15

The deck-hands are fully aware of what is going on and treat it as an opportunity to turn it to their own advantage. Every time a juru gidang approaches them for a fishing trip, they ask for an advance payment (duwit panjer) ranging from 10,000 to 15,000 rupiah per person. "It is not at all easy now to get enough crew members to man my boat", Tono Lies said. Actually for skippers who are known to be successful it is still not too difficult to recruit deck-hands. Their reputation among the deck-hands is a solid guarantee that they will return with good earnings. It is the less successful skippers who suffer most. When one of them has disbursed up to 600,000 rupiah to recruit the crews, it may happen that half of them never show up at the boat. They just simply go to another skipper who has given them a slightly higher advance payment. Many boat skippers are forced to resign because of this labour shortage. Harjo Bolong used to be a successful skipper with a good income which allowed him to build a large brick house, and buy two fishponds, motorcycles, and recently a new cantrang boat. But in 1997, his luck seemed to be running out; he never made a single good fishing trip. The bad trips and the problem of recruiting sufficient deck-hands made Bolong unsure about his future. In the case of Skipper Rakhim, it was this problem of labour shortage which drove him to return his purse seine to its owner, and then take a job as crew member aboard a Wonokerto cantrang boat.

The green giant of shrimp pond owners

Until the early decades of the twentieth century there were only a limited number of brackish water fishponds in Wonokerto; less than one hectare according to De Wilde's account (1911: 10) and around five hectares according to the 1913 district topographical map. In the following decades, the number increased steadily and in the 1990s seventy-five per cent of the village agricultural land had been transformed into fishponds. Since the early days, ponds owners have been able to make a good and stable income cultivating bandeng (milk fish), which they could harvest once or twice per year depending on the opportunity to buy the fry. They also earned a fine additional income from trapping wild shrimp which could be done on a daily basis. But it was not before they turned to shrimp farming in the mid-1980s that fishpond owners' income began to escalate.16 In the beginning the farming was carried out by entrepreneurs from Semarang and Pekalongan who rented the ponds. After three years, the farmers were convinced that shrimp farming really was a very good business. They did not extend their rental contracts with the entrepreneurs, and supported by technical know how from the Fisheries Service Office

15 For a more detailed discussion on northern Java rural labour force migration to cities see Koning (1996).
16 A wider discussion on shrimp farming in northern coast of Java is presented by Hannig (1986) and Suzuki (1995).
and capital from the banks, the pond owners started their own shrimp farming. In those early years, farming was good. Every season which lasted for four months from the preparation stage up to harvesting, a hectare of pond proved capable of producing around three-quarters of a ton of shrimps, valued at 12 million rupiah. After deducting farming costs, which was around 5 million, the farmers earned a net income of roughly 7 million rupiah.

The success attracted other farmers to engage in shrimp farming. A net income of seven million rupiah from one hectare of shrimp pond was far more than the yield from milk fish farming which hovered only 2 million rupiah per hectare per farming season—which last for six months. Using money from banks they transformed their milk fishponds into shrimp ponds and pursued their hopes of making fortune in shrimp farming. At that time the banks were stung by the shrimp farming fever and they saw it as a great field for investment and therefore credit for shrimp farming was lavishly provided. “Almost every pond in this area was used to raise shrimps ...”, Ngatirin of the co-operative who was also a pond owner told me. Attracted by the good results provided by shrimp farming, the farmers intensified their efforts. They set out shrimp twice or even three times a year, hardly leaving time for their ponds to lie fallow. Powerful electric lights were installed around the pond to stimulate the shrimps’ appetite, so they would gain weight fast within the three-month period. But then disaster struck. For reasons which are still obscure, some say it was poor water management, others say a virus attack, yet others blame it on the accumulation of residue of shrimp food, vitamins, and chemicals used in farming, in 1990 the harvest failed and it did so consecutively in the following years (see Muarif, 1996; Poernomo, 1997).

No single farmer in Wonokerto and its surrounding villages was spared the harvest failure. However, it was farmers with small ponds who were hit hardest and some of them had to sell their only possession. Gembil, a farmer from Api-api village, lost his mind. He went bankrupt because of the harvest failure and the bank confiscated his ponds. He walked along the village streets stark naked, mumbling; “One million, two million ... ten million ..., ha-ha-ha-ha-ha ... I am rich ... I am rich. One million, two million ...”. Rich farmers with several ponds also suffered, but they were still able to manage, by using their savings or by selling household belongings, to settle their debts to the bank. Some of them even saw the small farmers’ bankruptcy as an opportunity to acquire more ponds cheaply. Before bank officials came to the ill-fated farmers in order to confiscate their ponds, a rich farmer would step in. He convinced the small farmers to sell their ponds and then to use the money to settle their credit with the bank. “If the bank confiscates your pond, there will be nothing left for you. But if you sell the pond to me, you will be able to settle your credit and you will still have some money left”, Ngatirin quoted the rich farmer’s words. Hajjah Wartonah, a rich shrimp farmer of Api-api village, is said to have bought fifteen of ponds from bankrupt farmers in those years.

The farmers had learned their lesson, that intensive farming was no good for their business. Since then, the farmers have cut back on their efforts. They put out the shrimp just
once a year, no longer use electric lights, and raise a fewer number of shrimps in every pond. Indeed, this effort has proved to be adequate in preventing any further harvest failure. But still, shrimp farming is a gamble. A harvest may succeed and produce a profit of millions of rupiah or it may fail and bring a loss of millions too.

Those who succeed—generally the richer villagers who are in position to survive occasional failures—are envied by those who have failed or have been unable to join in the new venture. And from envy to insinuation and suspicion proves to be only a small step. This envy is understandable as the money in shrimp farming is barely shared out among villagers and most of the proceeds go to the pond owners. All other villagers can do is hire themselves out as contractors whose boats are chartered to haul supplies to the ponds or to transport the shrimp to the village, or they find employment as wage labourers employed during the shrimp harvest. Gossip begins to spread insidiously in the village claiming that successful pond owners had concluded a pact with a ‘green giant’ (buto ijo) who has made their farming thrive: a pact which is usually disapproved by villagers of as an evil act, but at the same time makes villagers stand in awe of the magical powers of the shrimp farmers.

Villagers are also convinced that the harvest failures of some farmers are caused by someone else’s buto ijo who has stolen the shrimp. Tony, a staff member in the Regency Fisheries Service Office, a holder of fishery engineering degree, explained why a shrimp pond in Wonokerto suddenly lost its shrimp just two days before the harvest:

“The pre-harvest sampling had been taken two days before the planned harvest, and it showed that the harvest would be very successful. The pond was obviously full of mature shrimp which were of sufficient size. However, to everybody’s shock, when the pond was harvested it was found almost empty but for a handful of shrimp, water, and mud. That’s all. It could not be the work of ordinary thieves for, normally equipped with ringed nets (jala) at a maximum they could take a hundred kilograms of shrimp in one night. Moreover the pond was guarded twenty-four hours a day during the last stage of the raising. There was no other explanation, except that the shrimp had been moved magically to a pond belonging to someone else. Perhaps to one of Hajjah Wartonah’s ponds, because her ponds rarely fail.”

Stealing shrimps from the ponds before the harvest is not unknown either. It was therefore not without reason that among pond owners Perumahan hamlet has gained itself the nickname as kampung alap-alap, the hamlet of vultures. Anggada confessed to me that sometimes he as well as many other people in the hamlet stole shrimps from the ponds. With a borrowed ringed net sometime after midnight he would approach a pond silently and cast the net. Once he got five kilograms of shrimp, and he sold it to Paetun Mulud for 75,000 rupiah. Anggada was by no means a hardened criminal and he did not do this all the time, “Only when I am really in dire straits”, he said. He was afraid of getting caught by the owner or the pond’s guard, but he was even more terrified because he believed that some pond owners would turn their buto ijo against
One day Anggada was employed to harvest Haji Ceret’s ponds. The harvest that season was rather disappointing: the six thousand square metre pond produced just a quintal of shrimp. When they were taking a rest, the harvesters overheard Ceret saying: “This bad harvest is not a problem. Not at all. My buto ijo is still able to provide a lot more money for me”. Upon hearing the words, Anggada dropped a big shrimp he had hidden in his pocket and kicked it back to the pond. “What if my life was taken by Ceret’s buto ijo because of that shrimp?”, he said to me.

Harvest time in the ponds is a great time for the village children and housewives as well as for the petty fish traders. When people hear that a shrimp pond is about to be harvested, the villagers come in their hundreds to glean the leftovers of the harvest (gogoh urang). Upon arrival at the pond, they sit or walk around restlessly like a flock of birds waiting for the harvest to be over. Then jump into the muddy knee-deep pond to forage the harvest leftovers. If the owners do not pay close attention, even before the harvest is over people will jump into the pond to get some shrimp. Sometimes villagers can be so obtrusive that they create a threatening atmosphere around the ponds. This is understandable, because there is a considerable amount of money in ponds of which peoples are eager to grab their share. A medium-sized tiger shrimp sells for Rp 750 or even Rp 1,000. Lucky gleaners might get a handful of shrimp which they then sell directly to petty fish traders waiting in the hide. From a shrimp harvest, for instance, some young girls and boys collect a nice amount of pocket money: Turminah got Rp 300; Susi Rp 800; Budi Rp 18,000; Carmadi Rp 13,000; and Asar Rp 2,100. Turiyah, a petty fish trader, usually brings Rp 200,000 cash to every shrimp harvest to buy the gleaners’ shrimp or for shrimp which are below standard which she purchases from the pond owner. The next morning she sells her shrimp at the Datulak shrimp market.

Sometimes villagers do not merely steal the shrimp, they ransack the whole pond. This happened to Tan Ken Ju, or Kinju in the village parlance, a Chinese from Wiradesa who rented several fishponds in Wonokerto. When one of Kinju’s pond was about to be harvested, hundreds of prospective gleaners had gathered around the pond. When the harvest nearly over, suddenly there was a cry; “Ce... ce... ce... (Attack... attack... ransack...)”. Upon hearing that cry, the gleaners went crazy. Some of them jumped into the pond, grabbing every shrimp they could lay their hands on. Others marched to the waterpump shed where the harvest was collected. They snatched as many shrimps as they could, using their clothes as a sack. Within a moment the frenzy had subsided, and nothing was left for Kinju who had run away as fast as his legs could carry him when the attack started. It was said that Kinju lost almost sixteen million

18 The petty traders buy the gleaners’ shrimps secretly, at least out of sight of the pond owner for they are afraid of being accused of co-operating with the gleaners who on many occasions did not only collect leftovers but also steal the shrimp.
19 Armed robbers also often attack shrimp ponds in the Tegal-Pekalongan area (SM, Nov. 08, 1996).
rupiah because of the ransacking. "Pa' orah ... Cino sugih bae kok", "Leave it be ... He is a rich Chinese anyway", was the villagers' comment. But Kinju was not the only one to experience such a fate; others had to put up with the same affray. That is why nowadays pond owners prefer to have their shrimp harvested discreetly during the night to avoid gleaners; or why they invite police or soldiers from Wiradesa to protect the harvest.

Conclusion
The economy of Wonokerto during the New Order era was in a better shape than it had been before. Unlike in the early 1960s, incomes were not solely dependent on local fishing but were derived mostly from large-scale fishing in Pekalongan, apart from batik painting and shrimp cultivation. This meant the villagers could enjoy proper food, better housing and —especially the youth— entertain an extravagant life-style. But as often is the case, expenditures raced ahead of income which means that from time to time villagers are confronted with a cash flow problem. Many people have tried hard to manage their money carefully but their efforts do not seem to have been good enough and indebtedness has struck almost everybody at one time or another. However some of the village rich now live a good life without too many financial problems. Under the circumstances, they have become the object of envy being accused of using witchcraft.

The fishing fleet has been modernized, fishing grounds have been expanded, fishponds have been intensively utilized, the labour potential of the households is fully deployed and indeed it is not without a result. Just as the villagers say economic life in Wonokerto has improved, but for many villagers life is still far from easy. The large influx of new riches and commodities has stimulated consumerism also among those who can hardly afford to spend their money on such luxuries. Nevertheless, they increasingly to do so and therefore they are still in search of money.
11. *Entek amek kurang golek*: state, fishermen, and the illusion of cornucopia

From studying the social history of Wonokerto we learn that the ups and downs in village life in this Javanese fishing community during the last two centuries and the economic, social, and cultural configuration of sea-fishing are as much the product of the interaction between community and state as of the internal social dynamics of the community alone. Wonokerto’s historical journey since the early nineteenth century has been a journey of incorporation of a marginal community on a far-away coastline into a fishing community which is fairly and squarely in the clutches of the state. However, seen from the perspective of the state, the incorporation has not been a total success. There is no question that economically Wonokerto community has been totally incorporated into the national fishing industry. However, socially and politically the incorporation process is still only half-way.

Nineteenth-century Wonokerto, like other fishing communities along the northern coast of Java, was on the fringe of Java, tapping its sources of livelihood from an aquatic frontier. As they were part of a marine environment, relatively unconnected to the agro-ecological system of Java, fishing villages were socially positioned on the fringes of the rural peasant world; they were the outer fence of the socio-cultural system of agricultural Java. Being the frontier of the Java, they were villages to which people from the interior could flee when life in their own communities became too burdensome. This is exactly what happened during the nineteenth century when Wonokerto grew rapidly because of the number of people leaving the interior of Java when the Cultivation System made life hard.

As we have seen, the state took early steps to reap benefits from the community through a systematic taxation implemented with the help of tax farmers. Later on, as the state bureaucracy grew stronger and more stable, the community was organized under a village administration under which taxation could be imposed more efficiently through bureaucratic channels. In the early twentieth century, the state plunged deeper into village life by establishing local fishing organizations in the community in an attempt to jack up fish production of Java which had been on the decline in previous decades. In Wonokerto the organization helped the community to become financially self-sufficient so that boat owners were no longer dependent on external sources of capital to maintain and develop their fishing fleet. Five decades passed and over the years it turned out that the fishing organization—which was transformed into a co-operative after Indonesian independence—had not been successful in increasing fish production in Wonokerto. Capital accumulated by the fishing organization just made fishery a field of diminishing returns rather than
developing its sustainability; more capital was invested in an already overcrowded business to work on already overexploited fishing grounds. Only when the New Order state directly involved itself by injecting a large amount of capital into the modernization of the infrastructure and by convincing capital owners to invest their money in modern fishing boats, were the fishermen in a position to expand their fishing grounds to faraway waters and greatly increase their catch.

Inevitably, these state interventions had brought impacts on the social condition of the fishing community. The introduction of the tax-farming system and the forced Cultivation System in the first half of the nineteenth century had laid a firm foundation on which the fishing community could develop as more people kept coming to take up jobs in sea-fishing. After the tax-farming system was abolished in the 1860s and the taxation of the fishermen was organized by the village administration, a clear social differentiation between deck-hands and boat owners became potently obvious in Wonokerto Kulon fishing community. This differentiation became more marked and more incisive in the early twentieth century when the Mino Soyo fishing organization was established and the community gained a position as the centre of sea-fishing in the Regency. This situation began to crumble in the mid-1960s with the coming of the New Order regime with its plans for the vast-scale modernization of sea fishery. Capital from outside the fishing communities was solicited and injected, and large-size, finely motorized boats were introduced. Almost overnight the position of Wonokerto as the centre of sea-fishing in the Regency had disappeared, and the community was turned into a supplier of deck-hands for the modern fishing industry in Pekalongan.

State intervention has also brought Wonokerto fishing community from the precariousness of marginality to a recognizable position in the wider social arena. As the major source for labour supply of the economically important fishing industries of Pekalongan, nowadays the fishermen nowadays are hardly marginal people, nor is their community. The establishment of the Mino Soyo fishing organization in the early twentieth century certainly reinforced the fishermen’s social identity. Pertinently, of the existence Mino Soyo was an explicit and official acknowledgment by the government of the community. Finally, as the fishing villagers’ interaction with people of other communities has grown intensive the gap between fishing community and other communities must be narrowing. Many people from outside the fishing community have entered sea fishery and many people from the fishing community have sought a niche in urban-based industries.

In spite its great effect on the social organization and position of Wonokerto community in a wider social arena, apparently the state has not been quite as successful in transforming the villagers’ ‘loose-structure’ social system into a more
rigid structure with which it can easily control villagers through the bureaucracy and government regulations. Rather than dance to the government’s tune, in running their economic activities the villagers tend to play according to their own rules of game. Rules which basically put individual interest and freedom above anything else. A government policy will be appreciated and adjudged in as far as it fits in with villagers’ own interest and is attune to their sense of freedom. When it does not, villagers tends to write it off as nonsense.

Intensive campaigns run by political parties have also failed to turn villagers into loyal political constituents. Rather than being loyal constituents, Wonokerto villagers have preferred to sit on the sidelines and watch the political parties compete with each other as if they were watching a cock fight. With the advent of the New Order and the arena on which the competition between the political parties could be played out was replaced by a stage for the government’s single party, the villagers simply joined the opposition.

Given the tendency displayed in their political behaviour, I do not think that modernization of sea fishery has improved political position of the fishermen. The creation of fishermen’s front organizations by the political parties in the 1950s, Golkarization of the fishing community, and creation of the All Indonesian Fishermen’s Association (HNSI) in the early 1970s, and on top of this, the creation of a so-called Masyarakat Perikanan Indonesia, Indonesian Sea Fishery Society, by Sudwikatmono, President Soeharto’s brother-in-law, few years before the New Order came to its end (Kompas, Jan. 27, 1996; Jun 1, 1996), undoubtedly has produced an impression that the modernization of sea fishery has allowed —Javanese and Indonesian— fishing communities to seize a greater share of the political power. However, this impression is wrong. As we have seen, all the institutions mentioned above were not created by the fishermen themselves to serve the fishermen’s interests, but created by either the government or the political parties or entrepreneurs to serve their own interests. Cogently, political activities in the fishing communities have always been in the hands of people who are not themselves fishermen, but fishing organization managers, fish auction managers, staff members of the Fisheries Service Office and —as in the case of Indonesian Fishing Society— big entrepreneurs who invest their capital in sea fishery. They wield the power while the fishermen themselves keep spending most of their time at sea and are politically inactive. Undeniably, once such organizations have been set up, the fishermen’s aspirations can be brought up in a wider political arena and in one or other way this can lead to an improvement in the fishermen’s well being. However, what is appears to be an improvement in the political position of the fishing community is basically not an improvement of the fishermen’s political activities, but the effect of the growing
interest of the state, political parties, and entrepreneurs in the fishing community and sea fishery. At best, I think, the fishermen are only political objects rather than active political subjects.

Nor does it stop here. There is still another effect produced by state policies of modernization of sea fishery.

I find no evidence that the so-called community property, as Matthews (1993) suggests, has ever existed among fishermen on the northern coast of Java. Indeed, every fishing community along the northern coast of Java generally claims its own fishing grounds, namely the waters north of the village where fishermen from the community regularly used to fish. But that is not a community property, since the claim is not accompanied by any institutionalized effort to prevent fishermen from other communities fishing in the fishing grounds. Perhaps the nineteenth-century fishermen fished only in fishing grounds nearby their villages, but it is very likely was because the nearby fishing grounds were still rich with fish rather than because of community common property. As overfishing began to post a threat, the fishermen began to expand their fishing grounds by intruding into other communities’ fishing grounds. With the arrival of the twentieth century, it was clear that Java Sea was an open fishing ground where fishermen from Tegal could fish in Jakarta Bay and fishermen from Comal could fish in Juwana waters.

What did the open fishing grounds mean to the fishermen? They meant, fishing grounds were perceived as a frontier which could be expanded almost endlessly. When fish stock in a fishing ground has been depleted, the fishermen could simply move to another fishing grounds which still contained a fresh stock of fish. Open fishing grounds have also led the fishermen to perceive sea fish not only as a common property, more than that it is a common property which always available. As far as the fishermen are concerned, the economic problem which haunt them lie not in the availability of the fish stock but in the death of fishing technology which would allow them to exploit it. When catches drop, the first thing the fishermen do is not to look for what is wrong with the fish stock, but what is wrong with their fishing boats and gear which seems no longer to be able to produce good catch for them.

Unfortunately for the fishermen, when the government intervened in the sea fishery, rather than urging the fishermen to revise their views on fishery resources, what the government did was typical of any other government’s policy in dealing with frontier economic activities; it adopted the frontier people’s views and practices and sanctioned these as a state policy (Melbin, 1978). When the government brought sea fishery modernization policies to the fishermen, in every respect the policies were based on views similar to those expressed by the fishermen: that, the sea fishery production must be increased and it is always possible to increase because the country’s abundant
sea fishery resources have not yet been fully exploited. The key to achieving that goal is the modernization of the fishing fleet to enable the fishermen to roam from sea to sea and reap the natural bounty of the deep. Culturally Indonesian sea fishery modernization is an engagement of two similar ideologies, not a conflict between two different ideologies. To the fishermen sea fishery modernization is neither a correction nor threat to their ‘traditional’ views. On the contrary, the government’s systematic programme to increase and improve the scope of the fishermen’s fishing technology is a reinforcement and an official endorsement of the fishermen’s ‘traditional’ views.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, when their catch declined what Wonokerto and Pekalongan fishermen did was to increase the number of their boats and consult numerologists to find out what was meta-technologically wrong with their boats and fishing gear. Nowadays, when faced with similar problems, what they do is — apart from still consulting numerologists — to increase the number of the boats and adopting more effective fishing technologies; as Sentiko convincingly said to me; “Angger praune gede, mesine gede, mesti beres!” “If the boat is big and the engine is big, then everything will be all right”; Natural fish stock is never been considered to be a problem.

Perhaps, this view of an eternally available fish stock too provides an explanation for the fishermen’s consumerism and prodigal behaviour with money. Among Pekalonganese, laymen and government officials alike, Wonokerto villagers are notorious for their consumerism and prodigal behaviour. An official in the Regency office once told me that the fishing villagers are fools who have never abandoned the habit of spending their money lavishly without giving a single thought to the future, that they are people stung by “Pung nak, pung no. Pung nak, pung keh, mentality”, an abbreviation of ‘Mumpung enak, mumpung ana. Mumpung enak, mumpung akeh’; a Javanese version of carpe diem; seize the day before it is gone; enjoy the money before it vaporizes. Another official commented that the fishing villagers have never been cultivated the Javanese notion of gemi ngati-ati, being thrifty and shrewd.

The views expressed above are certainly exaggerated. As we have seen, whenever possible the villagers do try to save their money, in jewellery, in arisan, and in nyelengi bahan to be used to improve their housing. All this indicates that the fishing villagers do care about the future. However, as we have seen too, all these forms of saving do not eradicate the fact that the fishing villagers are indeed consumerist, prodigal, and they are proud of this; as a Banyuwangi — East Java — fisherman boasted; “Kalau di sini, tidak cuma nasinya putih, rokoknya juga putih”. “We here, not only is our rice white (first class), our cigarette is also white (Western)” (Kompas, Oct. 01, 1998). To some degree, the consumerist behaviour of the fishing villagers must have something to do with the total integration of their economy into the market system,
what constantly stares them in the face is that most of their consumption goods have to be bought; pertinently, the market not only provides the fishing villagers with goods to cover their daily needs, it also dictates their taste. But, I think to put this all down to the market is simplistic. More than anything else, the way people treat and use their money is related to the way they perceive it.

As the fish stock is perceived by the fishermen to be an unfailing and ever-present blessing to a greater or lesser degree the money produced from it is perceived in a similar way too. Once I asked Skipper Asim about the fishing villagers’ consumerism and prodigality in squandering their money, and he replied; “Don’t be astonished! That is us. Fishing villagers. Never regret spending money, entek amek kurang golek”. Money is perceived as something cheap, entek amek kurang golek; if it is running out, there is still abundance out there to be harvested; if it is less than it is supposed to be, there is still plenty out there to be picked up.

It is not too much, I think, to say that basically the fishermen and their fellow fishing villagers are people caught up in the toils of a collective dream of abundant resources and equally abundant wealth. When money comes their way they spend it in a prodigal way, as if they are prosperous people with infinite supply of cash. When poverty strikes they grumble that their better-off neighbours accumulate their money with aid of evil spirit masters. Their grouching is not because they perceive that the wealth is limited, therefore their better-off neighbours have stolen part of the wealth which is supposed to be their right as Foster (1967) has suggested. The wealth is abundant, it just becoming harder to access so that only through recourse to supra-human efforts people can lay their hands on it.

Indeed, up to this time the views of the fishermen and of the government about the availability of the fish stock and the role key of fishing technologies have not been contradicted by declining catches. The development of a modern fishing fleet in Pekalongan has increased the catch and brought the fishermen there a better economic life. But, there is no guarantee that the fishermen can sustain this achievement for a longer period, since the improvement has basically been achieved through the expansion of fishing grounds. The fact is that since the 1980s catches from the Java Sea have been decreasing steadily. To get an adequate catch, at the cost of fishermen of other islands, nowadays Pekalongan purse seine fishermen have to fish in the Natuna Sea and in Masalembo waters. Sooner or later fishery resources in the Natuna and Masalembo fishing grounds will be exhausted too. When this happen, overfishing like that which struck the fishing grounds off northern coast of Java in the nineteenth century and dragged the fishing community into poverty will certainly strike again. Before it is too late, I think, the fishing community and the government should strike a new tack in
the way the fishery is run. A new tack which is based on the more realistic premise that fishery resources are limited and are not as abundant as they are imagined to be.
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