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Social Bandits as Peasants' Protest in Java during the Dutch East Indies Government (1885–1930)

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ABSTRACT

Banditry in Java during the Dutch East Indies period (1885-1930) emerged as a response by peasants to colonial oppression, particularly because of plantation expansion, labor exploitation, low wages, and land rights seizures. This background made banditry not merely a criminal act, but a symbol of social and political resistance. This study aims to determine the background of the emergence of bandits during the Dutch East Indies government, social bandit actions during the Dutch East Indies government in 1885-1930, and the efforts of the Dutch East Indies government in overcoming these bandit actions. This study uses historical research methods by collecting sources (heuristics), verification, interpretation, and historiography. The results of this study are the background of the emergence of Social Bandit actions due to the disappointment and dissatisfaction of peasants with various policies made by the Dutch East Indies government, such as the Forced Cultivation policy, liberal economy, and expansion of plantation companies. The bandits carried out their actions by stealing, burning plantations, and even killing victims. Bandit actions occurred in Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Batavia, Pasuruan, and Probolinggo. To suppress bandit actions, the Dutch East Indies government reorganized the police, held night patrols, and worked with the local government.

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of banditry has caused controversy and unrest in Dutch East Indies society for a long time. During the Dutch East Indies era, criminal acts or banditry were not only for urban communities but also for rural communities. Banditry during the Dutch East Indies era was caused by a long history of exploitation that continued to be carried out on indigenous communities. They started from trade monopolies and the forced cultivation system, peaking in the opening and expansion of plantation businesses. The Sugar Law in 1870 marked the end of the Forced Cultivation System, while the Agrarian Law and Agrarian Decree made it easy for European companies to grant long-term land grants (Boogmard, 2004; Darini et al., 2019).

The elimination of the Cultivation System did not mean that the suffering experienced by peasants would improve. Because of the 1870 Agrarian Law issuance, private plantations developed in the Dutch East Indies, especially in Java and Sumatra. Entrepreneurs made three efforts in the private plantation industry to obtain plantation land: refract, rent, and concession (Sutrisno and Widyantoro, 2005; Rachman, 2017; Darini et al., 2019). Various policies implemented by the Dutch East Indies government were only to control and seek profit in the colonial territory. Because plantation owners preferred to rent land directly from peasants, this policy worsened the people's economy, and land rental increased poverty in rural areas (Istiyana, 2022).

The policy of exploitation of the people (peasants) implemented by the Dutch East Indies government always harmed the Dutch East Indies people, and local authorities gave rise to anger. They encouraged criminal acts or banditry. Furthermore, the socio-political conditions during the Dutch East Indies government made peasants criticize violently (Goenawan, 2023). The socio-economic gap among peasants results in movements and crime (Hartatik et al., 2021).

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Initially, banditry was carried out by a group of people for their interests or profits, or ordinary bandits. Gradually, peasants' unrest gave birth to banditry actions that led to social banditry. Hartatik et al. (2021) found that the transition of banditry from individual to collective occurred in urban centers; economic disparities caused this, so banditry became organized and targeted foreigners. Ordinary bandits commit crimes by robbing without a background, while social bandits rob for socio-political reasons (Suhartono, 1995). Social banditry is one of the essential characteristics of the socio-economic and political dynamics of rural peasants in Java, such as banditry in Batavia and Banten, *Kecu* in Yogyakarta and Surakarta, sugar cane burning in Pasuruan and Probolinggo between 1850 and 1942 (Fatah 2004; Purwaningsih and Aji, 2020). For the Dutch East Indies government, banditry was a criminal act that was disruptive and against the law, whereas, according to peasants, bandits were heroes (Curott & Fink, 2012; Kurnia, 2012; Tifaransyah et al., 2021)

According to Van Till (2011), banditry in West Java at the end of Dutch rule continued to be carried out by peasants and became popular in Java. Warto (2011) shows that banditry occurs due to the lack of opportunities for peasants to utilize natural resources and the pressure felt by peasants structurally. Istiyana (2022) also stated that the social upheaval in Java during the Dutch East Indies era was due to the shift from the forced cultivation system to a liberal economy. Other research by Curott & Fink (2012) suggests that bandits are heroes for the people because they benefit peasants. Rohmawati (2023) shows that socio-economic inequality in Surakarta gave rise to criminal acts and resistance from peasants or communities who felt disadvantaged by the Dutch East Indies government. Other relevant research from Darini et al. (2019) shows that the expansion and opening of plantation companies have led to the emergence of criminal acts by peasants in the Klaten area. Albar (2021), in his research, stated that the resistance carried out by the people against the Dutch East Indies government was due to irregularities against the landlords. The existence of the *Jago*, like Si Pitung, helped and influenced the people's lives.

In general, this study focuses on conducting a deeper survey of social banditry as a manifestation of social protest by plantation peasants in various regions in the Dutch East Indies during the Dutch East Indies government in 1870-1930. It describes the motives for the birth of social banditry and the colonial government's response to handling and suppressing banditry. Several previous studies have discussed more banditry that occurred in a smaller scope.

METHOD

The research method used is the historical research method. Kuntowijoyo (2013) states that the historical research method implements technical instructions regarding sources, verification, criticism, interpretation, and historical presentation. Gottschalk (2006) states that the use of historical methods is a process of critically testing and analyzing records and relics of the past. Historical research methods include four stages of historical research that aim to reconstruct a historical event (Kuntowijoyo, 2013). The historical research method has four stages: heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography.

In historical studies, heuristic sources, such as understanding past events, are absolute (Kuntowijoyo, 2013). Heuristics is searching for sources or finding sources needed in research. In general, historical sources are divided into two, namely primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources used by researchers, such as reports from *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* 8 August 1892, No. 205, sources accessed at Delpher.nl., other primary sources *Ned.-Indië Brutale inbraak door gemaske den bandiet bij Solosche bakker. Bakkerszoon en waker gewond; de dader ontsnapt.* In *De Locomotief*. Saturday, 7 February 1931.

Secondary sources include Suhartono's book (1995), theses, journals, dissertations, and other similar sources. Verification is an effort to criticize historical sources collected to determine the authenticity and credibility of the source (Kuntowijoyo, 2013). Source criticism can be divided into two, namely external and internal criticism. Interpretation is a step that aims to reveal the meaning and facts that exist. In this study, it is required to observe and reveal accurate data. So, to reduce subjectivity, careful data processing and analysis are needed (Kartodirdjo, 1992). Historiography is the final step in the historical method. In this case, historiography describes data that has been obtained and proven true. In other words, the historiography stage is the stage of writing activities. The results of interpreting evidence are written into a harmonious historical story (Harlina, 2020). In writing, the chronological aspect becomes crucial to produce systematic historical writing. Therefore, the ability to write is essential to determine the research results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In 1870, the Cultivation System was abolished. Then, a new exploitation system was created, namely the Liberal Economic System (1870-1900) and the Ethical Political System (1900-1942). The exploitation of peasants intensified, and peasants suffered from poverty and hunger. Cultivation of indigo, coffee, sugar cane, tobacco, and commercial crops was still practiced in rural areas. In Vorstenlanden, although the Cultivation System did not apply, in that area, land rentals for private plantations had already been implemented, in practice resembling the Cultivation System (Suhartono, 1995; Sidharta, 1999; Kurniawan, 2014).

The exploitation activities of the peasants carried out by the Dutch East Indies government and its various policies were detrimental to the Dutch East Indies people and local authorities. They encouraged some people to commit banditry or crime. In addition to the factors of the formation of trading companies, the implementation of the monopoly system, and policies set by the Dutch East Indies colonial government, other factors encouraged banditry (criminality) at that time, namely the existence of social jealousy due to economic and social inequality (Rohmawati, 2023).

Social Banditry as a Manifestation of Peasants' Social Protest against the Dutch East Indies Government

Throughout the history of the Dutch East Indies, there have been many social protests by the people (peasants) in opposing policies that dominate the economy, politics, and culture that are oppressive, not only social protests that are religious, but also protests in the form of riots. Some riots are chaos, including social banditry in social movements and robbery, which is considered a security threat in rural areas, especially in sugarcane, tobacco, and coffee plantations (Siahaan, 1999). Banditry during the Dutch East Indies era showed the situation of peasants experiencing losses due to various policies made by the Dutch East Indies government, especially with the existence of plantation companies. Banditry was a social protest the disappointment and jealousy surrounding peasants' lives. The purpose of the criminal acts of banditry carried out by bandits among the rural population was to enrich themselves and improve the welfare of the lower classes (Istiyana, 2022).

Social Bandit Terminology

For the Dutch East Indies government or a group of people in power, banditry was considered a criminal act against the law. Banditry is defined as the actions of criminals who disturb and disrupt comfort. In contrast, bandits were considered heroes for the peasants then (Tifaransyah et al., 2021). Banditry consistently refers to the actions of individuals or groups who oppose the law. Bandits can also be defined as 1) friendly robbers; 2) someone who steals and kills cruelly and without shame; 3) someone who gains an unfair advantage; and 4) enemies (Suhartono, 1995). A member of a group who attacks and robs with violence is called a bandit (Suhartono, 1995; Siahaan, 1999; Rahmana, 2018). Furthermore, bandits can be divided into ordinary bandits and social bandits. Ordinary bandits usually commit crimes by robbing without a background, while social bandits rob because of socio-political interests (Suhartono, 1995; Siahaan, 1999).

Hobsbawm, a social historian from England, introduced social banditry. He said that banditry was carried out by a group of marginal people from the farming community who were considered to have done something illegal by the authorities. Social banditry originated from their relationship with the peasants (Suhartono, 1995). Furthermore, to clarify the term bandit, Hobsbawm divides the criminality of this form of banditry into three categories. First, the respected banditry, as practiced by Robin Hood; second, the banditry of the guerrilla group; and third, the banditry of the error-spreading group (Rohmawati, 2023). Therefore, the peasant social banditry movement was carried out to eliminate injustice, oppression, and exploitation. It protested poverty, tax pressure, compulsory labor, and socio-political pressure, and aimed to return what the government had taken from them.

The Roots of Banditry

One of the social problems in rural areas, the loss of land function, emerged along with banditry. The colonial government exploited the land that was the peasants' primary source of life. The relationship between land ownership and the position of peasants was only as cultivators of the Bachchan land of land rights holders, particularly land, appanage land, and government land. The rights of these land cultivators were accompanied by the obligation to pay various taxes in the form of goods, labor, or money (Suhartono, 1995).

Establishing private plantation companies in the Dutch East Indies after the Forced Cultivation System ended brought Dutch East Indies society into a new era (Istiyana, 2022). Dutch East Indies society entered a new era by establishing private plantation companies in the Dutch East Indies after the end of the Forced Cultivation System (Suhartono, 1995). By linking foreign investors to invest in the Dutch East Indies, the colonial governments saw an excellent opportunity to gain profit. The colonial government strengthened this effort by creating the *Agrarische Wet* in 1870. This law functioned as a legal-political basis for the colonial government to help capitalist companies. At first glance, land rights such as *eigendom*, refract, concessions, and lease rights benefited the Dutch East Indies people. However, this law was only intended to facilitate foreign investor investment in the Dutch East Indies (Darini et al., 2019; Istiyana, 2022).

In the capitalist production process, peasants become providers of labor. The only property of peasants, namely labor, is used as one of the factors of production. Plantation and factory output can only run if wages are suppressed, and profits are multiplied if wages are suppressed to a minimum. The position of peasants and laborers becomes very weak; they are powerless to face the rulers and entrepreneurs, like a buffalo whose nose is led and easily ordered by all its owners (Suhartono, 1995). The entry of plantations into the countryside has a significant impact on peasants. This is because plantations not only swallow up land in the countryside but also the labor of peasants. As a result, peasants who do not have the opportunity to survive on the plantation will suffer more and more severely (Arifin, 2004; Rohmawati, 2023). Most peasants find this situation difficult because they need the capital or skills to carry out activities outside the agricultural sector. As a result, high levels of crime or banditry occur on plantations (Padmo, 1994; Padmo, 2000; Darini et al., 2019).

In 1911, the price of rice in the market reached *f*10.53 per quintal, and the average wage of sugarcane peasants ranged between *f*0.20 and 0.30 per day (Wasino, 2008). Peasants were dissatisfied with the capitalist system because of the conditions in the agricultural sector. Carrying out criminal acts such as robbery and banditry were forms of *Bumi Putra* dissatisfaction (Darini et al., 2019). The dynamics that occurred on the plantations that always benefited the Dutch East Indies government became the cause of the birth of social protest movements among peasants in rural areas of Java.

Social protest movements or banditry are manifestations of the dissatisfaction and disappointment of peasants towards plantations, which make their lives increasingly miserable, and the economy of peasants is suffocating and eroding. They carry out banditry as a form of protest changes that occur in rural areas, not just to enrich themselves. Bandits like this appear to defend and take back what should belong to peasants after they have distributed the results of their robbery to other peasants. Furthermore, this is referred to as social banditry (Istiyana, 2022).

Social Banditry Movements against the Dutch East Indies Government

The peasant resistance movement was carried out in rural areas, especially on the island of Java, because the peasants disagreed with the policies of the Dutch East Indies government. This movement was carried out secretly or without public knowledge because it was organized underground using methods that violated colonial law and social regulations. To fight for the rights of the seized peasants, the peasants and lower-class workers would fight back by committing criminal acts (Istiyana, 2022).

The bandits have a goal: to take the people's financial resources. Landlords, village heads, the Dutch government, and the Chinese are included in this group. Bandits not only steal, but they also commit robbery, beatings, and murder. These bandits usually work together with five to a dozen people in one action. They have different job structures, each with a different task (Istiyana, 2022). A critical aspect of the socio-economic-political dynamics of rural Java was the practice of social banditry. This included banditry in Batavia and Banten, *kecu* in Yogyakarta and Surakarta, and sugarcane burning in Pasuruan and Probolinggo from 1850 to 1942 (Fatah, 2004; Rahman, 2018).

Social Banditry in Batavia

The Batavian people called social bandits *Jago* because they dared to defend the people's interests. If someone committed a crime that was detrimental to society, the term "*Jago*" was often used as a suffix because they were considered cowards by society. This *Jago* came from criminals who had served prison sentences but continued to commit crimes on the orders of the government. For personal interests, the government would need experts. *Jago*

means fighting cock. The term *Jago* is estimated to have existed since the 16th century and was taken from the Portuguese word *Jogo*, which refers to a cockfighting game that was very popular with the Portuguese. This term developed into the title of cockfighting champion after first appearing in Banten in 1810. This term was then developed for people who protect society and martial arts experts (Nawi, 2016; Albar, 2021).

The emergence of the *Jago*, or social bandits in Batavia, was not without reason, but they had lived for the longest time suffering under the power of the scattered and merciless. Several factors encouraged the emergence of *Jago* in Tanah Abang. The first was the suffering experienced by the peasants in the Tanah Abang plantations. The second was the increasing frequency of extortion in the Tanah Abang market. Most of this extortion was carried out by the *Jago*an or thugs who worked for the landlords. In addition, the presence of Si Pitung, a legendary figure, further increased the prestige of Tanah Abang (Albar, 2021).



Figure 1. The museum of Rumah Si Pitung, Jakarta (Source: Nursalam, 2021)

Some reasons why *Jago* appeared in Batavia, especially in Tanah Abang, included the misery felt by peasants and the practice of *Jago*an, or extortion, which was rife in the Tanah Abang market. A legendary figure named *Pitung* led the *Jago* in this area. His name refers to a figure shrouded in legend. In Sundanese, *Pitung* means *Pitulung* or Helper. Pitung's real name is Salihun (Salihoen). According to local and Chinese versions, Pitung is described as a hero and a cruel hero for the people of Batavia (Van Till, 2018; Albar, 2021; Istiyana, 2022). In the newspaper report *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad "Nederlandsch Indie,"* (1892), published on 8 August, No. 205, Si Pitung was suspected of committing theft in the report of Master Cornelis. This suspicion caused Master Cornelis to investigate Si Pitung's house in Sukabumi. The robbery was not done by himself. He stole it and then distributed it to the community. Si Pitung is often called the Dutch East Indies' Robin Hood; his name is immortal in Javanese folklore (Van Till, 2011).

Social Banditry in Surakarta

During the Dutch East Indies, Surakarta was one of the most critical areas in the local and colonial government structure and the center of all population activities in the province of Central Java. Therefore, social banditry movements can occur in various regions, especially on the island of Java (Rohmawati, 2023; Ridwan, 2010). Regardless of its social structure, Surakarta consists of three groups of people: Javanese living in rural areas, Dutch citizens who are primarily of European origin, and Chinese and Arabs living in the cities (Jamaludin, 2015; Rohmawati, 2023).

The Dutch East Indies colonial government often intervened in Surakarta's trade and royal political affairs. Therefore, in addition to almost losing its identity, criminal acts in the Java region, especially Surakarta, began to be carried out by city and village bandits. This was clearly the result of jealousy caused by social and community inequality, caused by the cheating of the Dutch East Indies colonial government, cruel local rulers, and private entrepreneurs who wanted big profits. Because their enemies were victims, the residents considered the bandits friends, especially during the Dutch East Indies era (Pranoto, 2008).



Figure 2. Residents are guarding the *Ronda* post (Source: Hanggoro, 2019)

The residents even tried to keep these bandits from the police because they would also receive the proceeds from the robbers. One example of crime is banditry or *kecu*, which seems to be caused by food shortages. However, in Surakarta, there are two different reasons for this banditry, namely economic factors that cause raids or robberies and political problems that cause kidnappings and murders (Tifaransyah et al., 2021). The social banditry movement in Surakarta increased in 1915, with 58 criminal cases and 51 cases of treason. This was a significant increase compared to the 1900s. Cases continued to increase again in 1919, with 85 cases; however, in 1924, the number dropped drastically to 24 cases (Rahmana, 2018; Rohmawati, 2023).

Among them is an incident in the village of Kretek, Sragen, on 15 November 1973, when a *bekel* saw a gang of *kecu* consisting of twenty people with dark eyes. The *bekel's* old wife was killed in the back house, while the *bekel's* young wife survived because she was sleeping in the front house. The gang of *kecu* brought property worth 108, 84, and 11 buffaloes and several sacks of rice. They took all the property to the Grobogan area. On 17 June 1880, the plantation entrepreneur Simo was also visited by bandits in the Gebong area. The thieves met the plantation entrepreneur to vent their curiosity and jealousy, who had long been eyeing the oversized master's house (Suhartono 1995; Rohmawati, 2023).

One example of a robbery case in the Surakarta area during the Dutch East Indies colonial rule was recorded in *De Locomotief* on Saturday, 7 February 1931:

> "A report from Solo today reported that at around three in the morning, a robbery occurred at the house of a famous baker, Gaba Setoe, in Messin. A masked robber managed to enter the house undetected and woke up a Chinese woman, demanding 200 guilders. He threatened to kill the woman if his demands were not met, backing up his threat with a knife. Luckily, the woman's son, sleeping in the next room, woke up because he heard the noise and immediately went over. He saw that his mother was in danger and tried to fight the robber without a weapon. In the fight that ensued, the robber injured the son's head and chest, although the wounds were not fatal. A guard also came to help, but he was also injured, with his ear cut off. After the fight, the robber managed to escape. It is suspected that the perpetrator was a white man who had worked at the house a few days earlier, and efforts are underway to arrest him." (*De Locomotief*, 1931).

The repeated incidents worried the wealthy residents, and they tried to protect themselves. Various steps were taken, such as reporting to the police and strengthening home protection with the help of officers. Prevention efforts were tightened in the 1870s as disturbances from bandits increased. Resident Zoutelief even ordered the closure of village roads and the implementation of night patrols to reduce the incidence of robbery, theft, and murder by bandits (Suhartono, 1995). Regarding the number of robberies or banditry between 1885 and 1900 in Java, it is as follows:

Table 1. Conflict in Central Java in 1885-1900

Area	1885	1887	1892	1895	1898	1900	Amount
Surakarta	8	-	1	3	1	2	15
Klaten	2	8	11	2	-	-	23
Boyolali	-	-	1	1	6	4	13
Sragen	10	-	1	1	2	2	16
Wonogiri	5	3	-	-	-	-	8
Amount	**25**	**12**	**14**	**7**	**9**	**8**	**75**

Source: Surhatono (1991).

The table above shows that the highest number of bandits in Central Java occurred in the Klaten area. Other areas had lower numbers of bandits than the Klaten area (Suhartono 1991; 1995). The high incidence of *kecu* in Klaten is due to the vastness and fertility of the region. In 1915 in Surakarta, the incidence of *kecu* was relatively high, 51 times compared to the years before 1900, which were less than 10 times a year (Suhartono, 1995).

The acts of banditry and cattle theft in the Kasunanan Surakarta area continued to increase in the following years. G.F. van Wijk in the Wirabhumi (2007), made a list of livestock thefts and burglaries between 1905 and 1913, as follows:

Table 2. Cattle Breeding and Theft in the Surakarta Regency Area, 1905-1913

Year	Amount	
	Conflict	Livestock Theft
1905	113	813
1906	50	618
1907	69	452
1908	97	421
1909	115	562
1910	72	703
1911	76	610
1912	48	347
1913	25	251

Source: Suhartono (1995)

The number of cattle theft and robbery cases began to increase when peasants paid their obligations to the holders of the *lungguh* in the month of Maulud (12 Rabiulawal of Hijri) and Fasting (Ramadhan). The robbery was often carried out by those who could not pay their duties to the royal family and servants (Wirabhumi, 2007).

Social Banditry in Yogyakarta

Yogyakarta is one part of the "Land of the Rising Sun". Yogyakarta has fertile land, so many plantation companies were established, especially for sugar cane, tobacco, indigo, and coffee. As in other regions, in Yogyakarta, social banditry emerged, better known as *Kecu* (Suhartono, 1995). The social conditions that occurred after the establishment of the plantation company became worse and more miserable than before. The average wage of sugarcane peasants in 1911 ranged from *f*0.20-0.30 per day, while the price of rice on the market that year reached *f*10.53 per quintal (Wasino 2008; Darini et al., 2019). The disappointment and dissatisfaction of peasants with the capitalist system that does not side with peasants makes peasants commit criminal acts such as banditry. Banditry is an activity or action that is torturous and does not hesitate to kill and force its victims (Darini et al., 2019).

Movement confusion in Yogyakarta is also called a social banditry movement. It was reported in *Koloniaal Verslag* that acts of banditry occur every year, and the frequency is relatively high. One of the residents who once served in Yogyakarta said that he could hardly sleep during his duty because of the many disturbances caused by banditry. The disturbances of banditry are very frightening, especially for plantation personnel who live in the village (Suhartono, 1995). The banditry movement that occurred almost every night became a topic of news that was quite popular in newspapers then, even known as the *kecu* newspaper.

The *kecu* were led by a *ulung benggol* and were famous for their *kawedungan*. The actions of this *keto* were very systematic; the *punggol,* as the leader, was responsible for the welfare and security of its members. A *benggol's* existence determined the success or failure of the perfect or banditry action (Suhartono 1995; Istiyana, 2022). During the reign of Sultan Hamengku Buwono V (1828-1855), the *benggols,* such as *Pentung Pinanggul*, *Dhadhung Sinedel, Kandhang Jinongkeng,* and *Gobang Kinosek,* carried out operations on plantations in the southern part of Yogyakarta (Suhartono, 1995). Theft in Yogyakarta has been increasing since 1870. The increasing number of bandits in Yogyakarta has made the government increasingly worried. The most worrying peak occurred in the Bantul area in 1920.

Most of the bandit actors in Yogyakarta were peasants. This banditry movement responded to various problems experienced by peasants. Historians such as Suhartono, Sartono Kartodirjo, and other social historians call this banditry action social banditry, not ordinary banditry, because banditry has a socio-political goal. The root of the problem lies in the presence of plantations, a burdensome tax system, and obligations that have haunted peasants since the 1830s. Conditions like this complicate the situation of peasants.

Social Banditry in Pasuruan and Probolinggo

Protests or banditry by peasants in the Pasuruan and Probolinggo areas were often marked by the burning of sugar cane and theft of relatively high-level animals. The fertility of the rice fields in the Pasuruan and Probolinggo areas caused many people to raise cows and buffaloes. These types of animals can help their owners in managing the rice fields. The existence of these two animals became increasingly important after the opening of sugar cane plantations in the area. Although railways and trams had been built on the plantations, these two animals remained important, as did the power to pull carts and cigars.

Suhartono (1995) said that banditry in the Pasuruan and Probolinggo areas was more towards ordinary banditry. The bandits only prioritized personal gain. As happened in other places, the presence of plantations became the reason people carried out social banditry. Plantations showed dependence on the availability of these animals. The existence of animals changed hands and were often sold to Illegal Butchers. In the *Koloniaal Verslag*, it was shown that animal theft in Pasuruan was recorded as 1382 animal thefts in 1909 and decreased to 778 in 1914; the number continued to decline, recorded at 189 in 1919, further reducing to 63 in 1924. According to the government and plantations, this banditry or crime was none other than political banditry at the local level (Suhartono, 1995).

The existence of plantations has put pressure on peasants, especially in terms of the economy. In addition to animal theft, in the Pasuruan and Probolinggo areas, there has also been ongoing burning of sugarcane plantations. Elson in Suhartono (1995) said that peasants will always carry out this burning when they experience economic suffering and cannot adapt to social change. Peasants burned sugarcane during the forced cultivation period. Peasants held protests in the Probolinggo area in 1834, a form of their rejection of the implementation of the forced cultivation system (Suhartono, 1995; Rohmawati, 2023). The fire in Probolinggo began burning plantation stalls and warehouses every year. The number of burnings that occur each year can even reach 100 times, as happened in 1846 when the burning reached 144 times. However, in the following years, the number decreased (Suhartono, 1995; Hanggoro, 2019; Rohmawati, 2023).

Table 3. Bandits in Pasuruan and Probolinggo

Area	1903	1912	1921	1927
Pasuruan	51	96	44	10
Bangil	122	232	47	4
Malang	-	49	25	11
Probolinggo	59	78	56	15
Kraksaan	113	231	28	15
Lumayang	25	75	39	21
Amount	**370**	**761**	**239**	**86**

Source: Fr. Van Anrooij (Suhartono, 1995)

According to the Assistant Resident of Krakasaan, P. Arends in Suhartono (1995), between 1882 and 1886, the burning was caused by several things, such as factory owners, including plantation supervisors, and hatred towards local authorities. This burning caused peasants to be dissatisfied with the activities of the plantation company. In

addition, low wages also gave rise to resistance from peasants towards the authorities, so it is not surprising that peasants carried out burning actions against plantation companies (Suhartono, 1995).

The Dutch East Indies Government's Response to Social Bandit Actions

The rampant banditry during the Dutch East Indies era was very disturbing and threatened the government's integrity in the public's eyes. Banditry continued to increase and carried out actions almost every night. Seeing the increasing condition of banditry, the Dutch East Indies government tried to eradicate and resolve the actions of the bandits or *kecu* (Tifaransyah et al., 2021; Rohmawati, 2023). The colonial government considered bandits as a group of lawbreakers who disturbed the security and order of the people and had to be destroyed, so they did not hesitate to shoot them dead (Istiyana, 2022). The efforts of the Dutch East Indies government in overcoming banditry are as follows:

Sending Marechaussee (Dutch Military Unit)

The increasing number of bandits, especially in Java, forced the Dutch East Indies government to send Marechaussee to suppress them. Marechaussee was established in 1890 and functioned as a police force among the civilian population. The Aceh War was Marechaussee's first task (1837-1908). With Marechaussee's arrival in the Dutch East Indies in 1920, he tried to stop the banditry that the colonial government prohibited (Istiyana, 2022; Tifaransyah et al., 2021; Rohmawati, 2023).

Police Reorganization

Police reorganization was one of the efforts of the Dutch East Indies government to overcome banditry. By changing guard posts or guard posts into integrated guard posts, this police reorganization aimed to stop social banditry. Because the colonial government never knew what drove banditry, this police organization also aimed to encourage the community to voice their complaints about the crimes of bandits (Kurnia, 2012; Istiyana 2022). The existence of this police organization requires many members to fill guard posts.

Night Patrol

Most bandit actions are carried out at night. So, to calm down the bandit actions, the government and residents carry out night patrols to tighten security. They tighten night guards at the village guard posts, close road access at night, and build fences (Suhartono, 1995; Istiyana, 2022). Thus, the efforts of the bandits' movements or actions are increasingly narrow and challenging to enter the village. The men are trained to be able to defend themselves and fight the bandits because no one does banditry.



Figure 3. Residents standing guard with various weapons in the 1900s (Source: Hanggoro, 2019).

The men in the village, who are usually equipped with martial arts skills to fight bandits, must patrol. They will be given separate tasks that are rotated periodically. Weapons such as handcuffs, kentongan, swords, and whistles are given to members. In addition, they are allowed to carry firearms or the like for security. They usually carry weapons such as dragging or wooden spears, gambling or clubs, and dating ropes to tie (Istiyana, 2022). With these weapons, it is beneficial for the guards to protect themselves and paralyze banditry.

Cooperation with Local Government

The colonial government's efforts to reduce banditry were achieved by cooperating with the local government. The government improved the police in the Kasunanan area and formed a research group (secret police), which was directly under the assistant resident and police commissioner. Improvement efforts were made by creating an institution that assists the police in their duties. In the Kasunanan area, the institution was called Djogoweti, which had 282 employees with the following formations: 13 Langsir, 24 Reksopidono, 84 Djogwesti, 144 Djogolastris, and four police officers for the Patuh Regency (Kurnia, 2012).



Figure 4. Punishment actions against criminals in the Dutch East Indies in the 1900s (Source: Hanggoro, 2019).

The efforts made by the colonial government were able to suppress and reduce banditry. The actions of the bandits gradually decreased and rarely occurred again after that. The policies of the colonial government, the Netherlands, and other factors caused the reduction in banditry. The cases of banditry began to decline, and modern organizations started to emerge in the early 20th century. These organizations channeled the voices of the people or the little people, such as peasants, laborers, and plantation workers. The existence of these organizations represented the people's demands regarding plantation penetration (Tifaransyah et al. 2021).

The existence of Personeel Fabriek Bond (PFB) in Yogyakarta is a labor union organization that aims to defend the interests of workers (Sulthon, 2016; Sulistyo, 2018). In addition, the existence of the Sarekat Islam (SI) organization was able to suppress banditry; Sarekat Islam expanded its influence by recruiting many masses, including workers and peasants (Rahmana, 2018). In addition, the existence of the Islamic Union was able to unite the peasants by showing national identity to the peasants or their native land (Rohmawati, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Banditry in Java during the Dutch East Indies era was carried out by individuals or groups with violence, robbing, and even killing victims. Bandits can be divided into two, namely ordinary bandits and social bandits. Social bandits are motivated by common interests, whether political, economic, or social. Thus, banditry during the Dutch East Indies era is social banditry because most of the figures who acted were peasants. Various expansions of plantation companies caused the occurrence of banditry during the Dutch East Indies period. Peasants felt disadvantaged by policies made by the government, such as labor exploitation, low wages, and peasants' land rights. The dissatisfaction and disappointment of peasants towards the government gave birth to resistance by carrying out social protests, which were manifested through banditry movements. The term bandits differed in various regions, for example, *Jago* or *Jagoan* in Batavia, Robber in Yogyakarta and Surakarta, and Bandits in East Java Probolingo and Pasuruan. Banditry is done by stealing from the Chinese, Arabs, and Europeans. In addition, the bandits steal livestock and burn plantations. Banditry in the Dutch East Indies symbolizes identity, resistance, and struggle carried out by peasants for justice.

Banditry or chaos is very disturbing and disrupts peace. The Dutch East Indies government considered this a severe problem, so the Dutch East Indies government tried to suppress banditry. The efforts were to reorganize the police, hold night patrols, order the community to build fences, cooperate with the local government, and send military troops to secure. Efforts could suppress and contain banditry and even begin to disappear. In addition, the reduction

in banditry was caused by the emergence of many organizations that could represent peasants, such as the Islamic Union, the Labor Union, and so on.

Thus, banditry in Java during the Dutch East Indies period cannot be understood solely as ordinary criminal acts but as a form of social resistance rooted in structural injustice. The fact that most perpetrators came from peasant backgrounds shows that banditry could transform into an expression of the political and economic movements of oppressed groups. Thus, social banditry during the Dutch East Indies administration from 1885 to 1930 was a manifestation of the rural economic crisis caused by Dutch East Indies government policies and demonstrated the position of peasants as actors in the struggle for justice, even if through means considered criminal by the Dutch East Indies government.

In the context of Indonesian historiography, this finding enriches our understanding of the dynamics of popular resistance, which did not always take the form of large-scale rebellions or formal political organizations, but also through underground movements and actions that were labeled criminal. This opens space for a reinterpretation of the social history of rural Java, where "social bandits" are not merely criminals, but representatives of popular resistance to colonial domination and economic discrimination. From the perspective of social crime theory, this case demonstrates the relevance of the concept of social banditry as proposed by Eric Hobsbawm, whereby certain criminal acts gain moral legitimacy from their community. Within this framework, robbery by Javanese peasants can be seen as a strategy for resistance and a symbol of collective identity that transcends individual interests.

This study has limitations and requires further research. First, the study relies heavily on colonial sources, which are likely biased in portraying peasants as criminals, thereby distorting the picture of resistance. Second, generalizations about peasants' motivations still require more in-depth analysis through local sources, oral traditions, or archives of people's movements. Third, this study focuses on Java and does not cover similar phenomena in other parts of the archipelago, which may have different dynamics. Recognizing these limitations, further research can be directed towards regional comparative exploration, alternative sources, and interdisciplinary analysis linking the study of criminality with agrarian politics and rural social history. In this way, Indonesian historiography can become richer in understanding the resistance of the ordinary people, which is often hidden behind the label of criminality.

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