

Family - rooted productive activities : a study of Pondok Jagung in West Java

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Abstrak

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the role of the family in rural development. The argument presented here is based on the lengthy anthropological style fieldwork I conducted in Pondok Jagung, a West Javanese village.

As is many other villages on this island, population is already pressing hard on limited land resources. A large proportion of village population is landless. In the six year period over which I studied Pondok Jagung, the village economy became diversified by exogenous intervention: new factories were established, an army complex and, real estates were built, sand dredging was set up and the infra-structure improved. These new economic opportunities were welcomed by villagers: by men because they offered them new sources of cash income and by women because their increased household incomes enabled them to provide better for their families. Women, whose primary concern is their family welfare, have on the whole remained aloof from the new formal employment available now, because this would interfere with their role of mother and housewife. Informal sector activities which women, in particular the poorest, would welcome are as yet not really profitable.

By careful analysis of both my quantitative and qualitative primary data, I have attempted to show the pivotal role of the family in the perpetuation of socio-economic village life. The existing intra-familial division of

labor by complementing the various jobs done by individual household members provides not only a useful survival strategy for the poorest, but also a convenient arrangement for the wealthier to improve their standards of living. Detailed case material clearly indicates the family rootedness of productive activities. Women spend most of their time managing their households, while men try to earn a cash income. The only important source of income for women is the informal sector, which is still highly under-developed in Pondok Jagung.

The family-rootedness of productive activities which this thesis attempts to throw into relief is not only a significant theoretical proposition, but also has important applied implications. By fitting better into the existing culture pattern of Javanese villages, family focused development programmes are likely to be more successful in raising rural levels of living than are the ongoing attempts to industrialize rural sectors.