

Coffee Cultivation in Java, 1830–1917

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Java began exporting coffee in the early eighteenth century, under the aegis of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which introduced coffee to the lucrative European market. Coffee cultivation had a checkered career until the 1830s, when it became part of the system of state control of peasant agriculture known as the Cultivation System (*Kultuur Stelsel*). For well over half a century after 1830, Java produced a substantial portion of the coffee imported by Europe. On the eve of the outbreak of leaf rust (*Hemileia vastatrix*) in the early 1880s, which ravaged Java's coffee groves, the island exported nearly 82 percent of all coffee leaving the Dutch East Indies, which amounted to 18 percent of world coffee exports.¹

Thereafter, Java's coffee cultivation declined rapidly. Nevertheless, as forced coffee growing had been the bedrock of colonial revenue in its heyday, the Dutch colonial government was understandably reluctant to abolish its monopoly of coffee production and export.² By 1917, when the final remains of the monopoly were wound up, the Dutch East Indies produced a mere 5 percent of world production, and accounted for only 2 percent of world exports.³

We know little about the impact of coffee cultivation on Java's peasantry in comparison with sugar, the other major commercial crop of the Cultivation System, which profoundly affected every aspect of the

¹ D. Bulbeck, A. Reid, and Lay Cheng Tan, *Southeast Asian Exports since the Fourteenth Century* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1998), pp. 150–1.

² C. Fasseur, *The Politics of Colonial Exploitation* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1992), pp. 142–61.

³ Bulbeck et al., *Southeast Asian Exports*, pp. 162 and 166.

economic life of indigenous people.⁴ The colonial government left almost all aspects of coffee production in the hands of peasants, despite some efforts at modernization in the late nineteenth century. Coffee cultivation consequently remained outside the close supervision of the administration. This was in striking contrast to sugar cultivation, which was scrupulously managed by colonial officials. Peasants involved in the production of coffee in Java, as well as in Sumatra, were nevertheless profoundly affected, to judge from recent studies based on colonial archives.⁵

The aim of this chapter is thus to present an overview of the ways in which coffee cultivation affected the lives of peasants in Java from 1830 to 1907. During this period, Javanese peasants were forced to produce coffee on a large scale on behalf of the government, and they made numerous adjustments to comply with these demands. These adjustments, and their secondary effects, explain much about the mode of operation of a peasantry engulfed in the production of commercial crops for the world market.

Compulsory coffee cultivation attempted to make use of the existing organization of peasant households, but, due to a heavy demand for labor to raise coffee production on large plantations, Javanese peasants experienced considerable difficulties in integrating coffee into other economic activities. They preferred growing coffee as a minor crop, in or near their villages. This required much less time and labor, and provided some flexibility in the allocation of family labor. When and where coffee cultivation proved unrewarding financially, in proportion to the amount of

⁴ C. Fasseur, "Organisatie en sociaal-economische beteekenis van de gouvernementssuikercultuur in enkele residenties op Java omstreeks 1850," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 133 (1977): 261-93; G. R. Knight, "From Plantation to Padi-Field: The Origins of the Nineteenth Century Transformation of Java's Sugar Industry," *Modern Asian Studies* 14, no. 2 (1980): 177-204; R. E. Elson, *Javanese Peasants and the Colonial Sugar Industry: Impact and Change in an East Java Residency, 1830-1940* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁵ C. Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism in a Changing Peasant Economy: Central Sumatra 1784-1847* (London: Curzon Press, 1983); K. R. Young, *Islamic Peasants and the State: The 1908 Anti-Tax Rebellion in West Sumatra* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); M. C. Hoadley, *Towards a Feudal Mode of Production. West Java, 1680-1800* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1994); F. van Baardewijk, "Rural Responses to Intensifying Colonial Exploitation; Peasant Reactions to the Introduction and Intensification of the Forced Cultivation of Coffee in Central and East Java, 1830-1880," paper presented at the Fifth Dutch-Indonesian Historical Congress, Lage Vuursche, 1986; M. R. Fernando and W. J. O'Malley, "Peasants and Coffee Cultivation in Cirebon Residency, 1800-1900," in A. Booth, W. J. O'Malley, and A. Weidemann, eds., *Indonesian Economic History in the Dutch Colonial Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 171-86.

labor involved and in comparison with other sources of income, Javanese peasants became indifferent toward it. The decline of coffee cultivation in Java from the 1880s was largely due to this state of affairs.

Java's Coffee Cultivation before 1832

In the eighteenth century, Java supplied a little over 4,000 tonnes of coffee a year, the second largest amount to reach Europe.⁶ At that time, almost all coffee was grown in West Java, particularly in the Cirebon-Priangan region, which was well suited for the crop. The VOC persuaded and bullied the indigenous potentates of the region into accepting contractual obligations to supply coffee at fixed prices. Local chiefs then procured coffee from their subjects, who were bound to serve their lords in terms of "feudal" obligations.⁷

With the increasing demand for coffee, people in West Java were forced to relocate themselves near areas suitable for cultivating the crop. Subordinates of lords controlled these communities of coffee planters. A village community consisted of a certain number of manpower units (*cacab*), each accommodating at least four people.⁸ Each household was counted as a *cacab*, and its ability to meet the prescribed production quota was a function of the manpower at its disposal. Peasants were not eager to cultivate coffee, as much of the income from growing the crop did not reach them. The cash that trickled down to a household was too insignificant to induce changes in the allocation of labor. In West Sumatra, village communities and households were organized on different principles. Moreover, marketing was not controlled by the VOC, but was in the hands of British and American interlopers. Peasant households thus responded enthusiastically to opportunities to earn cash, among others those offered by the cultivation of coffee in the eighteenth century.⁹

After 1800, when the VOC collapsed and Java came under the direct control of the Netherlands, apart from a brief British interregnum in 1811–16, coffee cultivation attracted a great deal of attention, because of its potential value to the new authorities. Some reforms were introduced to make coffee a more attractive crop for cultivators, mainly, opening marketing to private traders, who were keen to profit from it. Coffee

⁶ Bulbeck et al., *Southeast Asian Exports*, p. 147. A tonne was 1,000 kilos.

⁷ D. H. Burger, *Ontsluiting van Java's Binneland voor het Wereldverkeer* (Wageningen: Veenman, 1939), pp. 3–49; Hoadley, *Towards a Feudal Mode of Production*.

⁸ Hoadley, *Towards a Feudal Mode of Production*, pp. 37–45.

⁹ Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism*.

plantations were leased to villages, in return for payment ranging from half to a third of the output, to be paid in kind or money. The remaining beans could be sold to private traders, but the government retained the option of buying coffee at a fixed price.¹⁰ These reforms were part and parcel of a wider economic agenda of creating a “virile yeomanry.”¹¹ With the removal of local chiefs, however, their subordinates became tenants of coffee plantations. They allocated plantations among *cacab* units; collected the product; sold it to Chinese, Arab, or European traders from coastal towns; and pocketed much of the cash.¹²

State Enterprise in Commercial Agriculture after 1832

The life of Javanese peasants underwent a transformation after 1830, when a new policy was introduced, which forced them to set aside a portion of their land or their labor to cultivate a range of commercial crops, on behalf of the colonial state. The state progressively gained a monopsony over many crops, notably, indigo, sugar, tobacco, and coffee. Peasants were compensated at a price fixed by the government. To process the raw materials, the government awarded contracts to European and “Foreign Oriental” manufacturers, who were granted generous loans to set up factories, and who were helped to procure the necessary labor. However, coffee beans did not require the same kind of industrialization as sugar, and were generally exported as they were, after primary processing by producers using the “dry method.” A semiofficial firm, the *Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappij*, handled exports and shipping. Products were then sold at auction in the Netherlands, on behalf of the state.

Crops were generally paid well below world market prices, and hence the state obtained a high profit margin from selling them in the Netherlands. The new policy was financially successful beyond the wildest expectations of Dutch politicians, and it remained in place until the 1870s. At this point, its basic tenets came to be politically unacceptable, and they were replaced by a set of liberal ideas. However, compulsion in the coffee sector lingered on much longer than for other crops.¹³

¹⁰ P. H. Van der Kemp, *Java's Landelijke Stelsel 1817–1819 naar Oorspronkelijke Stukken* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1916), pp. 123–65.

¹¹ G. H. Soest, *Geschiedenis van het Kultuurstelsel* (Rotterdam: H. Nijgh, 1869), vol. 1, pp. 117–47.

¹² R. E. Elson, *Village Java under the Cultivation System, 1830–1870* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), pp. 36–7.

¹³ Fasseur, *The Politics of Colonial Exploitation*.

Despite the name given to it later by historians, the new economic policy was hardly a “system,” but, rather, a bewildering array of local arrangements. Local officials were given a degree of latitude in implementing the basic concept to suit local conditions, which varied greatly from one area to another. Peasant communities made the most of a degree of freedom allowed to them by local officials, who were keen to benefit personally from increasing exports of commercial crops.¹⁴

Coffee was not initially included among the crops to be produced by peasants under the Cultivation System, but, after a long debate, it was decreed to be a compulsory crop in 1832.¹⁵ This was ostensibly to put an end to abuses that had allegedly become widespread in the coffee sector, due to the ubiquitous influence of private traders.¹⁶ Henceforth, specific peasant communities were to supply the government with coffee at the price of 25 guilders per *pikul* (62 kilos). Two-fifths of this amount, that is, 10 guilders, was initially deducted in lieu of “land rent” (land tax). Another 3 guilders were deducted to meet costs of transportation from the storehouse to the port of export. In areas where “land rent” was not being raised, cultivators were paid at reduced rates.¹⁷

The Expansion of Coffee Production, 1832–1884

Local officials set about expanding the production of commercial crops with zest, because they were rewarded with a generous premium, in proportion to total output. The cultivation of coffee thus grew considerably after 1832, as numerous coffee trees were planted in many parts of Java. By 1834, the island reportedly had 187,185,108 coffee trees, a little over two-third of them newly planted.¹⁸ As a result of this expansion, Java’s production rose significantly (Fig. 6.1).¹⁹ The export figures suggest that the bulk of coffee exported from Indonesia came from Java well into the early 1880s (Fig. 6.2). Most coffee came from the compulsory deliveries,

¹⁴ R. Van Niel, *Java under the Cultivation System* (Leiden: KILTV, 1992), pp. 121–53.

¹⁵ Elson, *Village Java*, p. 63. Much of the information from archival sources for the period 1830 to 1870 is reproduced in this excellent study of the Cultivation System, which is my main source of information for this period.

¹⁶ S. van Deventer, *Bijdragen tot de Kennis van het Landelijke Stelsel op Java* (Zalt-Bommel: Noman and Zoon, 1865), vol. 2, pp. 499–528.

¹⁷ Elson, *Village Java*, p. 64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 64–5.

¹⁹ Figs. 6.1–6.3 are based on statistics from P. Creutzberg, ed., *Changing Economy in Indonesia*, vol. 1: *Indonesia’s Export Crops 1816–1940* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1977), pp. 105–12.

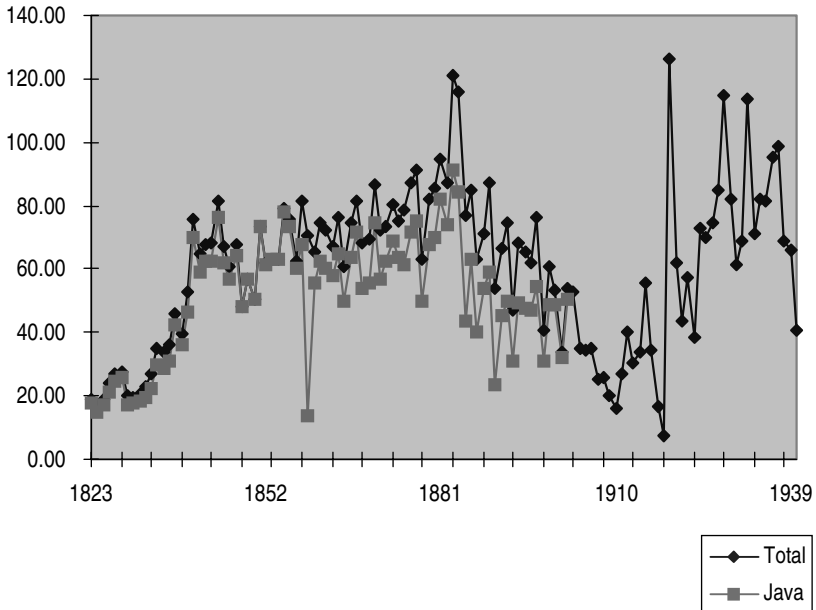


FIGURE 6.1. Coffee production in Indonesia, 1823–1942 (in thousands of tons). *Source:* R. E. Elson, *Village Java under the Cultivation System, 1830–1870* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), pp. 64, 65.

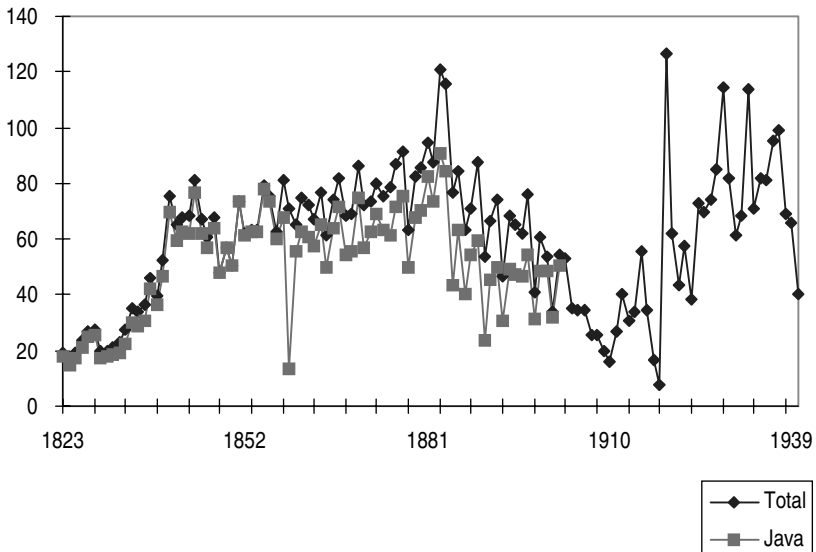


FIGURE 6.2. Coffee exports, 1823–1931 (in thousands of tons). *Source:* Elson, *Village Java*.

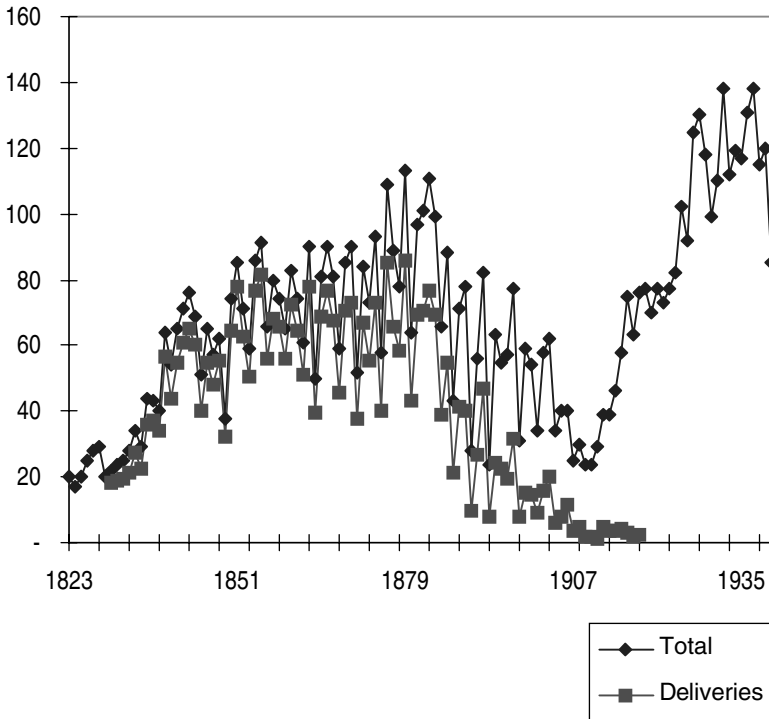


FIGURE 6.3. Compulsory deliveries as a proportion of total coffee production, 1823–1935 (in thousands of tons). *Source:* Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 64, 65.

attesting to the great labor services that the state imposed on peasants (Fig. 6.3).

Once initial expansion came to an end, by about 1840, coffee cultivation settled down to a steady pattern. Peasants gathered as much coffee as possible from existing plantations, as well as hedgerows and forests near their villages, and cared little about maintaining distant coffee plantations, unless forced to do so. There was little expansion in coffee cultivation in the 1840s and 1850s, as far as the number of coffee trees was concerned.²⁰ By then, much of the land suitable for growing coffee near villages had been occupied, and peasants were forced to go further away to find suitable land. Local officials applied pressure on peasants to maintain existing coffee trees in plantations with more care, to preserve production levels. Thus, plants were supposed to be pruned, fertilized, and protected from wild animals. Any gaps were to be filled with seedlings.²¹

²⁰ Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 110 and 131.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–6.

The diminishing area of land suitable for coffee cultivation was regarded as a problem, but officials had to admit that the real problem was the low price paid to coffee growers.²² It was thus raised from a low point of 8.40 per *pikul* to 13 guilders in 1867. To further encourage peasants, they were allowed to clean and dry coffee in their own villages, instead of having to do so near the storehouses. The practice of deducting the cost of coffee transport from the crop payment was also stopped, and existing plantations could be abandoned where they became unproductive.²³

In 1872, the specific regulations governing coffee cultivation in Priangan, the foremost coffee growing area in Java, were revised, in order to relieve the pressure on local inhabitants and encourage them to expand production. The revised regulations considerably reduced the amount of work required to maintain the large coffee plantations far away from villages.²⁴ These reforms helped coffee planters to some extent, and made cultivation slightly more efficient, but they did not arrest the erratic oscillations in coffee deliveries (Fig. 6.2).²⁵

The Decline of Coffee Cultivation after 1880

Coffee cultivation in Java declined after 1880, largely as a result of the spread of devastating orange rust (leaf blight, or *Hemileia vastatrix*).²⁶ Despite numerous efforts on the part of the colonial government to restore coffee cultivation, it failed to rise to its former glory.²⁷ Production and exports plunged to hitherto inexperienced depths in the last two decades of the nineteenth century (Figs. 6.1 and 6.2).

The colonial government made some effort to inject a degree of technical sophistication into coffee cultivation and modernize it, but with dismal results in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.²⁸ Coffee

²² J. Kuneman, *De Gouvernements Koffiecultuur* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1890), pp. 23–33.

²³ Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 137–8.

²⁴ J. W. De Klein, *Het Preangerstelsel (1667–1871) en zijn Nauwkerking* (Delft: J. Waltman, 1931), pp. 119–29; A. Goedhart, *De Onmogelijke Vrijheid* (Utrecht: Vrijuniversiteit, 1948), pp. 66–90.

²⁵ Kuneman, *De Gouvernements Koffiecultuur*, pp. 34–41.

²⁶ W. Burck, *Over de Koffiebladziekte en de Middelen om haar Bestreiden* (Buitenzorg: Gouvernements Drukkerij, 1889).

²⁷ K. W. Huitema, *De Bevolkingskoffiecultuur op Sumatra* (Wageningen: Veenman and Zoon, 1935), pp. 26–43.

²⁸ Huitema, *De Bevolkingskoffiecultuur*, pp. 26–43; Kuneman, *De Gouvernements Koffiecultuur*, pp. 119–33; *De Gouvernements-koffiecultuur van 1888 tot 1903* (Batavia: Gouvernementsdrukkerij, 1904); *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1890, appendix TT.

was still a source of revenue, however, and the government only slowly and reluctantly restricted the area subject to its coffee monopoly. The changing political climate in the Netherlands after 1900, which led to the introduction of a colonial policy professedly more keen to promote the well-being of indigenous peoples, hastened the complete abolition of compulsory coffee cultivation in 1917.²⁹

Peasants were particularly reluctant to cultivate coffee in large and distant plantations, a task that required a major reshuffling of labor at household level. They preferred to grow coffee in and around their villages on a small scale, in order to supplement their income, especially when returns from coffee were falling, as after the world price collapse of the mid-1890s. The crop was increasingly unattractive to most peasant households, in comparison to other sources of income such as wage labor, small domestic industries, and petty trade. These alternative sources of income became increasingly popular with villagers, as all aspects of indigenous economic life became more commercialized.³⁰ The colonial state was reluctant to admit that changing indigenous economic life was a factor contributing to a diminishing interest in coffee. To better understand peasant reluctance to cultivate coffee, it is necessary to examine how cultivation of the crop was incorporated into local economies, and especially how coffee cultivation collided with other activities of peasant households.

Coffee Cultivation and the Peasant Economy

In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, coffee was grown in Java according to three different modes: in plantations, in hedgerows, and as an agroforestry crop. Growing coffee in plantations located far away from villages was the most arduous mode of operation for peasants, but the government preferred it, because of its greater short-term productive capacity. To prepare coffee plantations, people were mobilized en masse. They cleared land of shrubs and large trees and ploughed, weeded, terraced, and fenced the cleared land, before planting out. Seedlings were gathered from old plantations, and were aligned in rows between shade trees, each household usually planting around 600. This preliminary work was normally carried out during the dry season, but it continued into the

²⁹ Goedhart, *De Onmogelijke Vrijheid*.

³⁰ M. R. Fernando, "Growth of Non-Agricultural Economic Activity in Java, 1820-1880," *Modern Asian Studies* 29, no. 1 (1995): 77-119.

early part of wet season. During this initial phase, coffee-planting households were required to stay in temporary shelters near the plantations, to save time and labor.³¹

It is difficult to state with any confidence whether entire households were mobilized, or whether only men were requisitioned for this work, which forced people to stay away from their homes for fairly long periods under strenuous conditions. Growing coffee in plantations located far away from the villages was understandably unpopular, because it kept people away from other economic activities, such as cultivating food crops and domestic industries.

The other modes of growing coffee caused no such problems. People could easily accommodate the work needed to plant coffee as hedgerows or as shrubs in forests subject to minimal clearing (agroforestry). That required much less arduous labor, and women and children could give a helping hand.

Once planting was completed, peasants did not have to work hard on a regular basis, although a large work force was required for harvesting. Little maintenance was required until the coffee trees began to bear fruit, after three or four years. The arduous task was picking coffee beans and carrying them in bags to the villages, where men, women, and children helped to clean and dry them.

Transporting coffee beans to local storehouses, which were not conveniently located for inhabitants of remote areas, caused great hardship. Trekking along footpaths across the mountains carrying heavy bags was difficult, although draught animals sometimes eased the operation. Further irritation was caused by people having to wait many days to deliver their coffee, due to insufficient personnel and weighing equipment in storehouses and shortages of cash with which to pay them.³²

The way in which labor was allocated in cultivating coffee varied a great deal from one area to another, depending on local arrangements. These were influenced by ecological and manpower constraints, which appear to have been most severe in the remote upland areas of Java, where coffee was mainly grown. When labor was scarce, the inhabitants of one or several villages usually combined their resources in the initial phase of planting. This was perhaps a practice harking back to before 1830, when the cultivation of coffee was imposed on a village community as a whole. Villages followed this old custom when a heavy workload was involved,

³¹ Elson, *Village Java under the Cultivation System*, p. 65.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.

spreading the burden more evenly among households. Collective village work might also be a necessity for harvesting. Villagers divided up the area planted in coffee trees between individual households, however, for the purposes of maintenance, which required little labor. This may have reflected the fact that, after 1832, peasant households became the basic units of production of coffee in the eyes of the Dutch authorities.³³

Peasants could ill afford to be away from their wet-rice fields during the initial phase of preparing land, which partly coincided with coffee planting. The government's insistence on plantations, as against the other two preferred modes of cultivating coffee, thus proved to be a major stumbling block. Coffee came to attract less and less attention as time went by. Aging coffee plantations were rarely replaced, especially when there was little forested land that could be used for this purpose within a tolerable distance from a village. Nor were seedlings planted to fill gaps in aging plantations. Fencing was neglected, and proved ineffective against the ravages of wild animals. Plantations thus yielded fewer and fewer coffee beans per hectare in the 1850s and 1860s.³⁴

Peasant households' enthusiasm for coffee also waned when it brought little money in return for a considerable outlay of labor. The method of payment varied from place to place, and depended to some extent on the whim of local officials. Thus, the government made the situation more difficult in 1844, by lowering the purchasing price to 10 guilders per *pikul*, and by imposing a 2 percent overweight charge to compensate for any loss of weight in transit.³⁵ The payment per *pikul* was subsequently increased, but the contribution to peasants' income depended on a host of factors not taken into consideration when setting the official price. Crop payments for coffee were sometimes handed over to village heads, who found it not too difficult to pocket most of it. However, this was frowned upon by the Dutch, who cited this as a reason for obliging peasants to take their beans to storehouses, where they were paid in person.³⁶

The Javanese peasant economy, although centered on production of food crops for consumption, was not a subsistence or natural economy, as often depicted by scholars.³⁷ Even in the early nineteenth century,

³³ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁴ Kuneman, *De Gouvernements Koffiecultuur*, pp. 42–56.

³⁵ Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 69–72.

³⁶ W. G. Clarence-Smith, "The Impact of Forced Coffee Cultivation on Java, 1805–1917," *Indonesia Circle* 64 (1994): 245–50.

³⁷ Burger, *Ontsluiting van Java's Binneland voor het Wereldverkeer*.

domestic industries, petty trade, and wage labor were significant.³⁸ The range and degree of activities for earning money to meet the material needs of households were determined by the amount of resources at their disposal. In the light of the little information available, it is difficult to be precise about the allocation of labor by peasant households. Around 1880, however, a peasant household, in a hilly area of central Java where coffee was grown, earned over 80 percent of its cash income a year from work outside the production of food crops. The bulk of this income, 72 percent, came from selling garden products, grass, timber, and cloths woven by women. Money earned from selling coffee was only 4 percent of total income, a paltry sum in comparison with other sources. However, coffee plantations required 15 percent of the time bestowed on all economic activities. It is not surprising, therefore, that Javanese peasants were reluctant to cultivate coffee and sell it to the government at a low fixed price.³⁹

The way in which labor was allocated along gender lines is unclear, but, from the nature of work, it can be safely deduced that work requiring hard manual labor fell on the husband's shoulders. The wife spent some time on food crop production, sowing and planting out rice, weeding, harvesting, and drying paddy, as was usual for women in Java. She also spent a fair amount of time weaving cloth for sale, once again a preoccupation of women. The small amount of labor bestowed upon food crop production resulted from the small size of farms, consisting of an average of 0.04 hectare of wet-rice land, 0.07 hectare of dry land, and 0.03 hectare of yard. In upland areas, rice was cultivated on a small scale on terraced fields and provided only part of the food for local inhabitants.⁴⁰

Coffee-growing areas of Java were different from those in Sumatra, where there was a clearer differentiation between men earning cash and women growing food.⁴¹ In Java, too, men were involved in economic activity to earn money, but they also had to carry out much of the work to produce food crops, and thus could not be away from home for any length of time to deal with coffee. Javanese peasants certainly had a clear sense of the importance of different types of work in terms of their economic value, even if some observers found it naive and out of step with Western notions of the economic value of time and labor.

³⁸ Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 3-22; P. Boomgaard, *Children of the Colonial State* (Amsterdam: CASA, 1989), pp. 116-34.

³⁹ Arminius, "Het budget van een Javaansche landbouwer," *Indische Gids* 11, no. 2 (1889): 2174-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2174-5, 2181.

⁴¹ Young, *Islamic Peasants*, pp. 146-51.

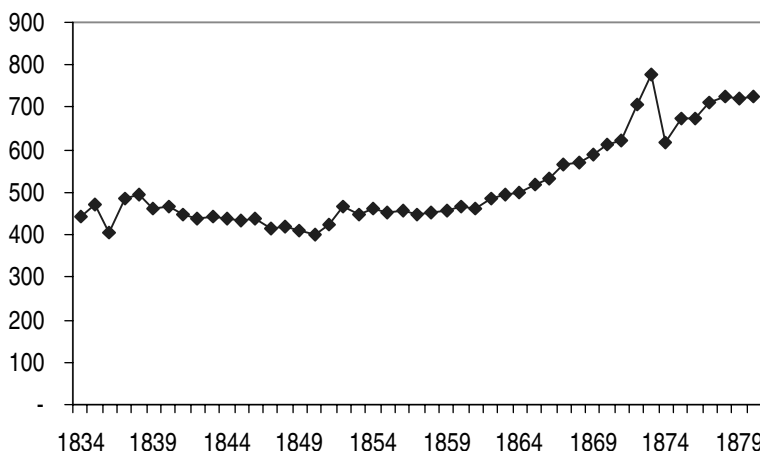


FIGURE 6.4. Number of coffee-growing peasant households in Java, 1834–70. Source: Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 64, 65.

Although Javanese peasants were disinclined to undertake work that did not bring them adequate financial rewards, they could not give up coffee, because it was a compulsory crop. The Cultivation System was based on the ruler's prerogative to acquire the land and labor of peasants. The number of households forced to cultivate coffee rose throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century (Fig. 6.4), and much of the increase in the number of coffee-growing peasant households occurred in Central Java (Fig. 6.5).⁴²

The effects of compulsion can be seen from the statistics of the number of peasant households obliged to grow coffee, which rose until it amounted to nearly 60 percent of all peasant households on the island. It seems that the government tried to compensate for the rapidly diminishing area of land suitable for cultivation by forcing more people to cultivate coffee. However, there was some regional variation, suggesting local forces at work, with West Java having more coffee growers than Central and East Java, as shown in Table 6.1.

However, in Central and East Java, variations were indicative of a change in domestic economic activities at household level. The majority of peasant households had become accustomed to the use of cash as never before in daily life. To raise their money income, they found it necessary

⁴² Figs. 6.4–6.6 are based on data from F. Van Baardewijk, ed., *Changing Economy in Indonesia*, vol. 5: *The Cultivation System, Java 1834–1880* (Amsterdam: KIT, 1993), pp. 249–60.

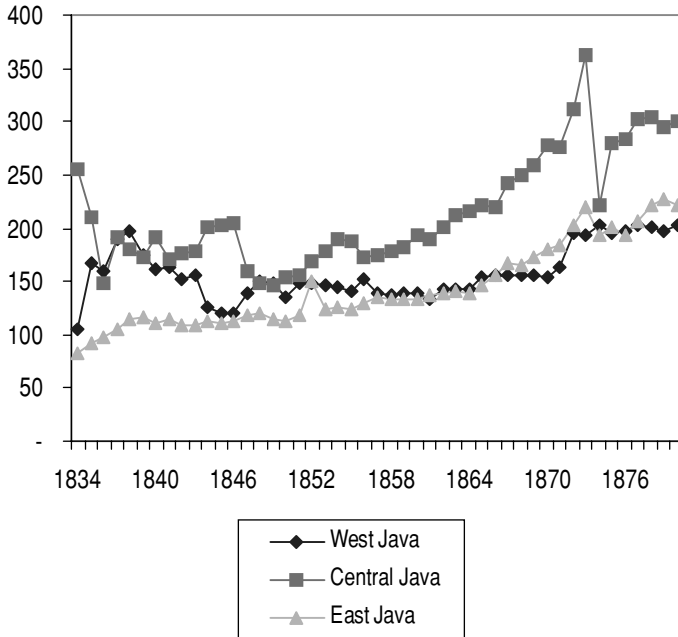


FIGURE 6.5. Number of coffee-growing peasant households in Java by province, 1834–1879. *Source:* Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 64, 65.

to diversify their economic activities outside food crop cultivation. Coffee was for a time a reasonably profitable source of cash, notably, for people who could grow it on a small scale in hedges and forests near their homes. More and more peasants turned to coffee after 1860, but it was a short-lived phenomenon, for the number of coffee-growing households dropped again by 1880. In West Java, in contrast, coffee cultivation remained high but stagnant. This was due to the disenchantment of local inhabitants, who were forced to seek land suitable to grow coffee on plantations, far away from their villages and for no extra payment.

Crop payments to coffee-producing households were subjected to frequent fluctuations during the middle decades of the nineteenth century (Fig. 6.6). The amount of money that coffee planters actually received was dependent on several factors, including soil fertility, the age of trees, and the degree of control villagers could exercise over village officials. Peasants growing coffee in Pasuruan, East Java, found it an exceptionally suitable area for coffee, and thus appear to have benefited more than coffee growers elsewhere.

TABLE 6.1. *Impact of Forced Coffee Cultivation on Peasants, 1830-1870*

Province	No. peasant house-holds	% all peasant house-holds	No. peasant house-holds	% all peasant house-holds	No. peasant house-holds	% of peasant house-holds	No.	%
	1836-60	1836-60	1840-70	1840-70	1850	1850	1850	1850
West Java	159,689	65	161,422	57	134,521	45	139,857	47
Central Java	148,496	32	192,361	40	153,093	39	192,834	31
East Java	97,560	27	111,101	30	113,606	27	133,516	27
Java	405,745	38	464,884	41	401,220	36	466,207	33

Sources: F. van Baardewijk, *Changing Economy in Indonesia*, vol. 5: *The Cultivation System, Java 1834-1880* (Amsterdam: KIT, 1993), pp. 186-93; "Kultuur Verslag" (cultivation reports held in Dutch archives), 1836-51, and *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1852-71.

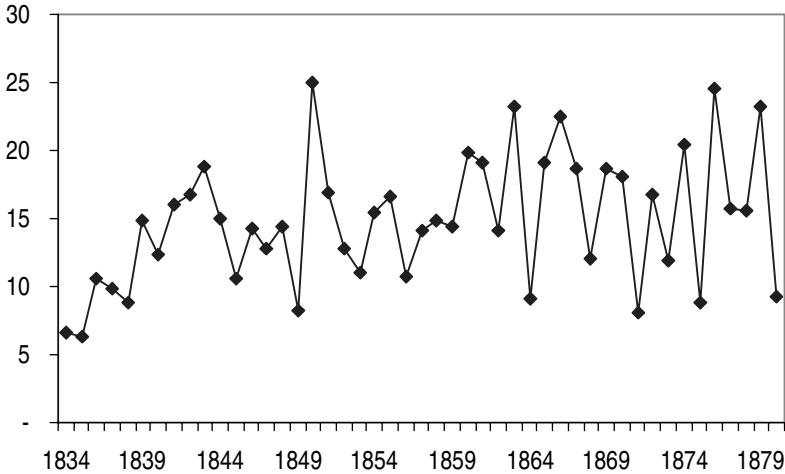


FIGURE 6.6. Crop payment per peasant household, 1834–1879 (in guilders).
 Source: Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 64, 65.

Conclusion

Falling income from growing coffee was evidently a major reason for the crop's decline after 1850.⁴³ Peasants then began to bestow more time on other economic activities.⁴⁴ However, they were still prepared to produce coffee on a small scale, in and around hamlets and in nearby forests, well into the early twentieth century. Peasants also responded to some extent to government efforts to rationalize smallholder coffee cultivation after the onset of *Hemileia vastatrix*. The reforms, however, came too late for most Javanese peasants, who had found greener pastures.

⁴³ Elson, *Village Java*, pp. 139 and 196.

⁴⁴ Fernando, "Growth of Non-Agricultural Economic Activity."