

THE IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIREBON TOWARDS THE SOCIOECONOMIC OF ITS SOCIETY IN 1906-1942

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Abstract. From 1906 until 1942, Cirebon City was given a *Gemeente* status by the Dutch East Indies government which influenced the development of the city. This research aims to discover the government policies, the general conditions, the development of the city and the socioeconomic of Cirebon in 1906-1942. This study uses a critical historical research method which goes through four stages: heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. This study proves that the development of Cirebon in those years is inseparable from the *Gemeente* system which generated several policies. This results in various renewals, especially in the infrastructure field. The emergence of *Gemeente* in Cirebon caused a social impact resulting from the number of foreigners from Dutch and Japan who came and settled in the city. Moreover, the *Gemeente* system also affected the economic sector of the society.

Keywords: Cirebon, impact, community.

Introduction

After the appearance of the European during the reign of Dutch East Indies, Indonesia became a strategic country for maritime shipping and trading activities. It was proven by the emergence of the Japanese ships operating in Dutch East Indies, dominated by steamboats, motorboats, and sailboats. The existence of the Japanese motorboats in Dutch East Indies since 1920 succeeded in dominating the Dutch East Indies shipping.

The Dutch East Indies region, especially in the coast, was proven to have trading activities with Islamic traders, and these trades grew rapidly and brought social and cultural impacts on the local community.¹ The coastal cities were the harbor cities which were the sea trade node and a place where local and foreign ships and traders gather.

Cirebon was one of the coastal cities in Indonesia that had rapid development.² From its first establishment until the arrival of several kingdoms, Cirebon had grown into a shipping and trading center. For this reason, Cirebon was called a trading city or port city. The rapid development in this city was based on its natural resources. Moreover, due to its location on the coastline between Central Java and West Java, Cirebon also had a role as a medium for cultural exchange between those two provinces. Cirebon and its title as a port city had a close connection which cannot be separated. This was based on the location of Cirebon Port in the city, so that the city was also known as the Cirebon Port City.

¹ Susanto Zuhdi, *Cirebon Sebagai Pusat Perkembangan dan Penyebaran Islam*, (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1996), pp. 35.

² Robinson Tarigan, *Perencanaan Pembangunan Wilayah*, (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2009), pp. 122.

Cirebon's role became more important because it was where export commodities, such as sugar which were European's favorite, were being shipped to and sold in the European market for millions of *Gulden*. Meanwhile, in the import sector, Cirebon Port placed first for some imported commodities, such as iron.³ However, in 1930, there was an economic depression that caused a sharp decline in the export and import prices in the Dutch East Indies which also affected Cirebon Port. This case significantly affected the economic activities of the people of Cirebon.

This article would explain further about the development of the city of Cirebon during the urban planning changes after they received the *Gemeente* status which helped change various infrastructure, and the socioeconomic impacts that arose at that time. The focus of this thesis is not only lie in the aspect of the port, but also would examine the process on how the *Gemeente* of Cirebon was formed that associated with activities around the Port City that took place between 1906, which was the year of the formation of the urban planning of *Gemeente*, until the end of the Dutch East Indies reign in 1942.

METHOD RESEARCH

The method used in this study is a historical research method that corresponds with systematic procedures, processes, and techniques in descriptive analytical research to get the object under study.⁴ This method is also interpreted as a process of critically testing and analyzing past records and relics based on the data obtained. This research uses four stages, which are heuristics, criticism (verification), interpretation, and historiography.

Heuristics could be interpreted as a process carried out by researchers to obtain the required sources, data, or historical traces.⁵ This stage is divided into two categories: primary and secondary sources. The second stage, criticism (verification) is conducted as an effort to get the truth from the obtained sources. Next is the interpretation stage which is a procedure to look back at the sources that have been obtained and criticized. The last stage is historiography. It is a conclusion of the facts found which then is written into a historical writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. THE GENERAL CONDITION OF CIREBON'S SOCIETY BEFORE 1906

According to the Convention of London in 1814, the Dutch East Indies was handed back to the Sovereign Principality of the United Netherlands on condition of handing over the VOC's territories, such as Malay Peninsula and South Africa. After getting back their authority, Cirebon Port became one of the centers of economic and maritime activities which was managed in accordance to Dutch benefits.⁶ Dutch, at that time, was led by Raffles, attempted to abolish the feudalism system in the indigenous administration, and put forward

³ Firman Fatur Rahman, "Eksistensi Pelabuhan Cirebon: Studi Ekonomi Politik Masa Hindia Belanda (1930-1942)" *Skripsi*, (Jakarta: Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2019), pp. 3.

⁴ Helius Samsudin, *Metodologi Sejarah*, (Jakarta: Ombak, 2012), pp. 3.

⁵ Sardiman, A.M, *Mengenal Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Bigraf Publishing, 2004), pp. 102.

⁶ Firman Fatur Rahman, *op.cit.*, pp. 13.

revolutionary principles that demanded the implementation of European administrative sovereignty and authority throughout Java, which included Cirebon.⁷

After successfully occupying Cirebon with feudalism polity, the local institutions were being abolished and the authority (the king and the regent) were being paid in return for the administration of colonial power. On the other side, the abolition of political legitimacy of the Sultanate of Cirebon when the British government was still in charge made the Sultanate of Cirebon unable to do anything to the areas that they once had controlled, and they were handed over to the Dutch East Indies government.⁸

During Raffles authority, Cirebon was recognized as one of the provinces in West Java beside Banten, Batavia, and Preanger.⁹ Meanwhile, during the Cirebon Colonialism, it was a residency. Chronologically, the Residency of Cirebon started when the sultans signed a peace treaty with the Dutch in 1681, which they then placed a Resident in Cirebon as their representative. In 1705, the Dutch were given total power over Cirebon in return for their services in assisting Pakubuwono I in taking the throne of Mataram. Cirebon Residency included: Indramayu, Gebang, the Sultanate of Cirebon area which included area that later became Cirebon Regency, Majalengka Regency, Kuningan Regency, private lands in Kandanghaur and Indramayu, and Cirebon Priangan areas, including Galuh, Imbangan, and Sukapura. However, that residency only lasted until the first year of Daendels regime.¹⁰

Most of Cirebon's residents built their houses using bamboo, but they did not meet the requirement of a good arrangement, in terms of architecture, aesthetic, and health. Furthermore, this was compounded by the unhealthy condition of the city.

Until 1817, Cirebon did not have any water channel that met the standards, thus puddles were everywhere. Dead bodies and dead animals which were buried not too deep around the houses caused stench. Swamps and sewages could be found around the city. It was common that fish from the sea which were transported by boat were rotten when it arrived in the city, due to the lack of adequate storage facilities which worsened the city's health condition.

After Dutch ruled Dutch East Indies, there was a change in Cirebon's governmental system from a sultanate to a new autocratic governmental system. This new system ran centrally since the beginning of 1854.

The government then arranged attempts related to the government administration, especially on the region level that needed to be decentralized so that the regional interests could be considered.¹¹ With a change in the governance in 1903, the decentralized system began to be implemented which consequently on one hand gave more autonomy to the regional governments and on the other hand established representative boards.

The next problem arising from the decentralization was no longer the issue of whether it should be carried out for the benefits of the Dutch East Indies or for the regional units, but rather about the interpretation of the *De Wet Houdende Decentralisatie van Het in Nederlands-Indie's* content for the sake of the realization of the system. Thus, the existence of

⁷ Zaenal Masduqi, *Pemerintahan Kota Cirebon (1906-1942) Tesis*, (Yogyakarta: Universitas Gajah Mada, 2010), pp. 65.

⁸ Paramita R. Abdurachman, *Cerbon*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Mitra Budaya Indonesia, 1982), pp. 63.

⁹ Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, terj. Eko Prasetyaningrum dkk, (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2008), pp. 598.

¹⁰ Zaenal Masduqi., *op.cit*, pp. 71.

¹¹ Zaenal Masduqi., *op.cit*, pp. 85.

this system with the granting of the right to organize and manage one's own household did not have enough significance for the natives. Moreover, the structure of the city councils was very disappointing and did not reflect the public's wishes.¹²

In line with the Dutch interest in the rural areas of Cirebon that had links with the government and the private parties, indirectly made the port of Cirebon and the city became so important for the colony. It became the trading center which not only a transit place for the export and import commodities, but also as a center of political control for the rural areas.¹³ In the beginning of the 20th century, Cirebon Port became the fourth largest port for export and import in Java after the port of Batavia, Surabaya, and Semarang. With this enhancement, the Dutch East Indies government titled the city of Cirebon as *Gemeente* or municipality.

B. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIREBON IN 1906-1942

Cirebon's development made the colonial government awarded the city as *Gemeente* or municipality by the name of *Gemeente Cheribon*. Despite the limitation of the autonomy, a city which was titled as *Gemeente* has various rights, such as having a city council that has a right to manage its own finances, managing public facilities, e.g. roads, parks, markets, cemeteries, fire departments, health facilities, public transportation, street lights, housings, clean water, etc. Furthermore, a *Gemeente* also has a right to negotiate and set the city borders.¹⁴

The *Gemeente* status is only given to cities that have a certain level of development. It can be seen from how much interest of the colonial government by making these cities a *Gemeente*. There are three factors that can be taken into consideration on determining the establishment of *Gemeente*, which are the population, the local conditions, and the financial factors.¹⁵

By fulfilling those three required factors, on April 1, 1906, the Dutch Colonial Empire issued a State Gazette (Staatblad) No. 122 of 1906, which contained the designation of Cirebon as *Gemeente* (Municipality). Cirebon Municipality area was taken from part of the Cirebon Residency area with Cirebon as the capital city and with the city borders such as those contained in Staatblad No. 211 of 1897.

Along with that establishment, according to article 6 of the *ordonantie*, a Resident Assistant for was appointed with 11 government council members, eight of them were Dutch, two natives, and one *Timur Asing* (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*). On April 7, 1906 at 10.00, J.H.J. Sigal, who was the first chairman of the municipality, had led the first meeting of Cirebon municipality government.

The first meeting was concluded with four outcomes: all the city residents were asked to participate in advancing the new city government, a suggestion to put public interest first rather than personal interest, improving art and science, and an order to provide public facilities immediately. However, in the same year, J.H.J. Sigal was transferred to another region, therefore, his position was replaced by A.P. Breevootdt.¹⁶

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 90.

¹³ Novi Puji Astuti, "Pelabuhan Cirebon: Kajian Sosial Ekonomi Masyarakat Pesisir Tahun 1969-1995" *Undergraduate Thesis*, (Yogyakarta: Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2018), pp. 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

¹⁵ Zaenal Masduqi, *op.cit.*, pp. 93.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

From a certain angle, *Gemeente* was intended to guarantee the Dutch's interests in the involved cities. It was identical to the European *enclave*, even though it was only on the matters relating to various European commercial activities, lifestyle, social and political institutions, regulations, etc.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the establishment of the new status of Cirebon as *Gemeente* was a proof that Cirebon was important for the Dutch, knowing that only certain cities which were given the *Gemeente* status. With the status, Cirebon government had rights to determine their own tax policy and to develop and manage their own finance. Every region which made into a colonial city was given an ideal logo with a symbol and a slogan in it which the government and the residents wanted to achieve as their identity.

Cirebon Municipality had a symbol of three shrimps which symbolize their main resource, and a motto which read "*Per Aspera Ad Astra*" meaning "from thistles and swamps to the stars"; or from dark to light. Those words reflected the reality of the history of Cirebon's *Gemeente* status, from a dirty and unhealthy city into a neat and beautiful city.¹⁸ It further clarifies their status as a colonial city.¹⁹

In their first year of the city administration which was led alternately by the resident assistants, there were no visible activities which led to environmental improvement. Only in 1917 when the resident assistant position was held by J.H. Eyken that the government finally made their steps. The first thing which also the biggest thing that they did for the city was closing the Bacin River, which was very dirty, caused an unpleasant odor, and a hotbed for various diseases. After this step was completed, Cirebon became a fairly clean area compared to the previous condition. They then made Bahagia Street and Merdeka Street, and built several buildings, such as a cigarette factory, British American Tobacco, which still exists today.

An attempt to appoint the mayor had been carried out since 1916 when the council ballot took place. However, definitively, the appointment of the mayor was first executed in 1920. J.H. Johan was chosen to be the first mayor, but in 1925, he resigned from his position, and replaced by R.A. Schotman, who only served the city until November 1928, and then replaced by J.M. van Oostrom Soede. In March 1928, the Mayor-Council, the Regional Head Board, and the Municipal Government (*College van Burgermeester en Wethouders*) were established. The Municipal Government apparatus was originally consisted of two Dutch people, but in the following year, it was expanded with the Local Municipal Government apparatus.²⁰

The Dutch East Indies society, both locals and the European themselves, felt that the result of the condition and implementation of the city government in various areas, including Cirebon, after World War I (1914-1918) were not significant enough. That condition was caused by the lack of money that the regional councils received to fund the regional needs and the regional councils' authorities were very limited. Therefore, the public demanded greater authority in government autonomy. The demand was even more intense after the Dutch East Indies government formed the House of Representative or *Volksraad* on May 18, 1918

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 100.

¹⁹ Abdul Wahid, *Bertahan di Tengah Krisis: Komunitas Tionghoa dan Ekonomi Kota Cirebon Pada Masa Depresi Ekonomi, 1930-1940*, (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2009), pp. 38.

²⁰ Zaenal Masduqi, *op.cit.*, pp. 103.

(*Staatsblad* 1918/674) which gave a wider opportunity for the locals to participate in the government.²¹

On October 1, 1926, referring to *Bestuurhervormingswet* and *Stadsgemeente Ordonantie*, based on the provision in *Staatsblad* 1926 No. 370, all *Gemeente* cities had expanded into *Stadsgemeente*, including Cirebon. R.A. Schotman was inaugurated as a mayor on January 16, 1926 replacing J.H. Johan to run the governance and the development together with the members of the city council, the Councilors, and the public for the prosperity and the advancement of the city. The structure of the government carried out by Cirebon *Stadsgemeente* was adjusted to the government structure imposed by the Dutch East Indies Government in *stadsblad* 1926 No. 365, which were Council (*Raad*), Mayor's Assembly (*College van Burgemeester*), Councilors (*Wethouders*), Mayor (*Burgemeester*) or Council (*Raad*), Mayor (*Burgemeester*).²²

October 1, 1926 was the beginning of the implementation of the *Staatsblad* 1926 No. 370, as well as the beginning of the implementation of Cirebon city government. R.A. Schotman was inaugurated as a mayor on January 16, 1926 replacing J.H. Johan to run the governance and the development together with the members of the city council, the Councilors, and the public for the prosperity and the advancement of the city. The projects carried out by the mayor and its apparatus included the fields of health, transportation, education, and infrastructure. With the expansion of the city, the Cirebon *Stadsgemeente* Council was expected to be even more active in managing its area. It was due to the Cirebon municipality was one of the important areas for trading and the economy of the West Java regional government in particular, and for the Dutch Colonial government in general.²³ During this *Gemeente* period, the government carried out several improvements, such as flood prevention, transportation, health, education, market establishment, and water needs, which will be explained as follows:

1. Flood Prevention

Gemeente's programs to change the dirty and messy image of Cirebon to be clean and in order had started by the Resident Assistant J.H. Eyken in 1917 by closing the Bacin River. The flood prevention started from the Sukalila River which dirtied Cirebon every time it rained. It was prevented by making underground sewers equipped with a pumping machine to distribute water used for bathing, washing, and others. Moreover, gutters were made in places that were often flooded so that it could properly channel water. Started in 1925, this city was free from floods and disease outbreaks.²⁴ The year of 1925 was considered as the beginning of Cirebon's growth.

2. Transportation

The development in the transportation field started in 1915 by setting up street lights and widening and repairing paved roads equipped with sidewalks, parks, and trees. In the same year, the Public Works Service (*Burgerlijke Openbare Werken*) was making a report on the road condition as well as the budget needed for the implementation and maintenance. In

²¹ Nina H. Lubis, *Sejarah Kota-kota Lama di Jawa Barat*, (Bandung: Alqaprint, 2000).

²² Ukon Budiman, "Perubahan Sistem Pemerintahan Kotamadya Cirebon Dari *Stadsgemeente* Sampai Kotamadya Daerah Tingkat II (1926-1974)", *Undergraduate Thesis*, (Bandung, Universitas Padjadjaran, 1996), pp. 33.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 39.

²⁴ Dahlan, *Tjirebon dari Gelap Menuju Terang dalam buku Peringatan 50 Tahun Kota Besar Tjirebon 1906-1956*.

1928, the construction of new roads began, including thoroughfare between the coast and Kebonbaru and the road to the port, with the help of subsidies from the center. Several railway lanes were built, such as SCS lane (Semarang-Cheribon Stoomtram-Haaschappij) that was built since 1893, Cirebon-Cikampek lane was built in 1909, and Cirebon-Kroyalane since 1912.²⁵ The city itself had two railway stations, Kejaksan and Parujakan, which were built at the same time in 1911. Kejaksan Station was built on the initiative of *Staatsspoorwegen*, a train company owned by the Dutch East Indies government.

3. Health

The government tried to eradicate the malaria outbreak that occurred in 1929 in the port area. The government also tried to improve the health and welfare of the people by cleaning up the villages, closing the sewage disposal, burying dead bodies and dead animals, cleaning the roads, gutters, and trenches, providing trash bins in each village, closing the Bacin River, etc.²⁶

In an attempt to clean the city, a water tunnel was built as well. The plan of building a water tunnel had been around even before the *Gemeente* status was given. However, in 1915, a new discourse arose, and began to be implemented in 1918 in the southern Cirebon, and it was finished in 1922. In 1929, another water tunnel was built in the northern Cirebon and finished after five years. The making of the first water tunnel was successfully built with the government assistance and with the permission from the *Burgerlijke Openbare Werken*, meanwhile the second one was built independently.²⁷ In addition, there were also two major projects in handling the water refinement and disposal carried out from 1927 until 1929 accompanied by the establishment of Sipadu and Selayar drinking water factories.

Hospitals were built considering the growing need for health. The first hospital which was built was a maternity hospital “Pamitrán” (*Perkumpulan Akan Menolong Ibu Terus Rawat Anak Nusunya/The Society will Help Mother to Continue to Care for Her Breastfed Children/Doorgangshius voor Kraamvrouwen*) in 1916 with the intention of providing care assistance to maternity mothers and their children.

In 1919, the Cirebon *Gemeente* government proposed to build a public hospital to the Cirebon *Gemeenteraad*. The first stone was laid on March 14, 1920 and was inaugurated on August 31, 1921 with the name *Gemeentelijke Ziekenhuis “Oranje”*, which is now called Gunung Jati Regional General Hospital. There were only seven doctors and six private doctors in Cirebon at that time. Cirebon had two polyclinics as well: Kejaksan Polyclinic and Cangkol Polyclinic, plus two polyclinics in the hospitals.²⁸ The government provided funding for the establishment of those hospitals of f 75.800 with an interest of 5% for 20 years, while after that, a sum of f 55.000 was received from private companies and sugar factories.²⁹

The costs incurred by this *Gemeente* were less than the cost of basic needs of other municipalities. In mid-1929, *Oranje* Hospital was taken over by the provincial government. In the same year, the *Gemeente* who took care of the hospital administration implementation was released from their duties as well.³⁰

²⁵ Susanto Zuhdi, *op.cit.*, pp. 93.

²⁶ Sub Bidang Pengolahan dan Pembinaan Kearsipan Bidang Kearsipan, *op.cit.*, pp.

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²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6.

²⁸ Nina H. Lubis, *op.cit.*

²⁹ *Gedenkboek der Gemeente Cheribon 1906-1931*, pp. 119.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The *Gemeente* government also tried to make funeral maintenance efforts in Progol for the European. In 1920, a new cemetery was also built on Demagamalang Street which could only be used since 1922. Both cemeteries were in a good care and there was a diversion from the Progol Cemetery to Dermagamalang for the Chinese and indigenous people.³¹

4. Education

An elementary school for European children was built in 1912 under the name *Europeesch Lagere School* (ELS). In 1925, the Dutch established a junior high school called *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* (MULO) which was an ELS, *Hollandsch Inlandsche School* (HIS), *Hollandsch Chineesche School* (HCS) secondary school which was open to all ethnics and classes.

Among the Chinese ethnic group, a Chinese school was built in 1903 with Mandarin *Tioong Hoa Hwee Kwan* as the language of instruction. This school was pioneered by Mayor Tan Tjien Kie. To compensate for the development of that school, the *Gemeente* government then built *Hollandsch Chineesche School* in 1915 using Dutch language as its language of instruction.

Meanwhile, among the Muslim natives, an Islamic boarding school was built. During the reign of *Gemeente*, Islamic education continued to provide their services. Buntet Islamic boarding school even opened a school education or madrasa with the classical system in 1928 to compensate for the view that generally, people did not want to attend Islamic education.

5. Market Establishment

In 1918, several markets began to be built, such as Balong Market, Kejaksan Market, and fish market. A cow and pig slaughterhouse was built as well, but in 1922, this slaughterhouse was no longer used because it was considered to be unprofitable. In 1924, there was an increase in market development in Kesambi. The presence of those markets had given quite good results as it had succeeded in becoming a source of the city's economy in non-agricultural fields and becoming a place for traders of various kinds of merchandise to meet their buyers. The non-agricultural economic growth was more or less caused by internal factors such as population pressure and the number of farmers who did not have their own agricultural land.³²

Various domestic industries which had the possibility to develop in 1920 employed hundreds of families as makers, transporters to the markets, retailers, or traders. They produced bread, biscuits, cakes, pastries, candies, noodles, angel hair, crackers, tofu, peanuts, popsicles, various drinks, cigarettes, batik, fragrances, toiletries, coconut oil, face powder, earthenware, and so on. Those products were sold in markets that had been provided by the government, shops and stalls located along the Pasar Pagi-Karanggetas-Jagabayan-Pasuketan-Lemahwungkuk Street, and even sold in Jakarta markets.³³

Many cooperatives have *Rechtsperson* (rights of people; legal entities), while some of which had not had it yet or did not even want the rights of people. Cooperatives that already had legal entities would be given by the government demands in administration, techniques on how to run a cooperatives association properly, and were allowed to do all profitable transaction.³⁴

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10.

³² Soegianto Padmo, *Sejarah Ekonomi Modern Indonesia Berbagai Tantangan Baru*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1998), pp. 21.

³³ Dahlan., *op.cit.*, pp. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

The need to increase water supplies had been one of the most important topics since the beginning of the *Gemeente* in 1906. Yet, because the water supply had not meet its maximum result, the water supply planning was re-done in 1924 by requiring 42 hydrants (hydrant faucet) along the road in the behalf of the resident of 23.540 people.³⁵

The new government started to take this planning attempt seriously in 1918 by conducting a number of studies and measuring the discharge obtained from Cipaniis water source which was located in the countryside. However, the government did not fully support the attempt as they did not provide subsidies as needed. In 1924, there was a change in the connection of the channel distribution of water pipes starting from Cipaniis to the city. There was also an establishment of a dam in Cirebon Port which was listed in the decree No. H 29/8/15 in April 1925. It was intended to maintain the cleanliness of the water around the port and to calm the water.

C. THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS TOWARDS THE PEOPLE OF CIREBON IN 1906-1942

1. Social Field

Since Cirebon was awarded the *Gemeente* status, various social classes of people started to settle down in the city. This rapid population growth was caused by migration from outside Cirebon, whether it was the Europeans, Chinese, or locals. This growth had occurred in almost all residences in Cirebon since before this city became a *Gemeente*. Cirebon as a port city and its trading function was a place where people from different social classes and different cultures met. Therefore, the composition of the population were varies.³⁶

The migration made Cirebon, which was a village, turned into a city. The number of rice fields decreased to 66% due to the change in function of those fields. Those rice fields were changed into areas for non-agricultural sectors, such as industries, trades, labor services, etc. The existence of non-agricultural industries succeeded in making Cirebon become widely known by foreigners. The port also made the city crowded and became an attraction for the foreigners. All of those things certainly made the city economy and infrastructure more advanced.

Migration caused overcrowding in Cirebon and it made the land ownership of the indigenous communities displaced. The number of farmers who did not have their own rice fields increased from 527.434 people in 1903 to 732.202 in 1930.³⁷ Even when there was an Agrarian Reform (Land Reform 1918), there were still poor farmers who experienced a prosperity decline due to the overcrowding beside unbalanced distribution of yield.³⁸

As a result of population explosion, residential land was difficult to obtain resulting in a struggle for urban space.³⁹ Many migrants lived along the river bank, railways, ports, and other slums. This made the level of security for the economic, education, and health investment declined. This population explosion made the food needs increased, while

14. ³⁵ Sub Bidang Pengolahan dan Pembinaan Kearsipan Bidang Kearsipan., *op.cit*, pp.

³⁶ Susanto Zuhdi., *op.cit.*, pp. 97.

³⁷ Jan Breman, *op.cit*, pp. 126.

³⁸ Imas Emalia, "Dinamika Kota Pesisir dan Kesehatan Masyarakat; Situasi Cirebon pada Masa Kolonial 1906-1930", in *Jejak Nusantara* (Volume 04, November 2016), pp. 115.

³⁹ Basundoro, p, *Merebut Ruang Kota: Aksi Miskin di Kota Surabaya 1900-1960*, (Tangerang: Marjin Kiri, 2013), pp.

agricultural land was displaced and used as plantations owned by foreign private companies, settlements, shops, offices, markets, and other infrastructure developments.⁴⁰

2. Economic Field

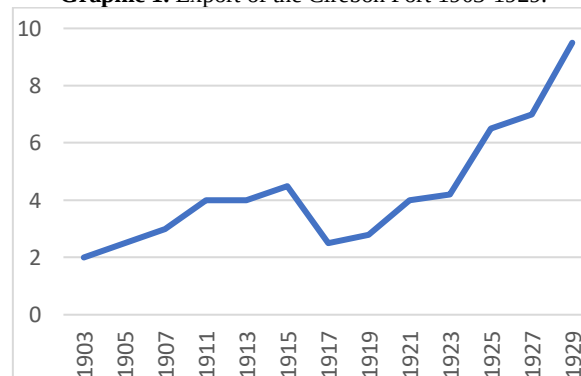
Export and import activities gave a significant impact to the economy of Cirebon. It had an effect on the sustainability of the surrounding community, especially in the economic field. The economic activities were also related to other cities, such as Semarang, Cilacap, Tegal, and Pekalongan. Activities related to the port could be found in these cities and it created competition in the economics. It could be seen how much influence Cirebon Port had on the sustainability of the city residents during the *Gemeente* periode.

Among the cities mentioned above, Cilacap was a city whose port was the toughest competitor of Cirebon Port. It was due to the port having hinterland, same as the port of Cirebon. These two ports accommodate export commodities from the hinterland which had good economic value for the Dutch East Indies government, hence the export value of both ports were quite similar.

However, it is different if it was seen from the import value of Cirebon Port which was far superior in comparison to Cilacap due to its location which was not on the main shipping route geographically. Also, it was a *terra incognita* (unknown) port. Unlike Cirebon Port, which was one of the silk roads and it was supported by the hinterland.

In the early 20th century, export and import of Cirebon Port continued to increase until before World War I. The war which lasted from 1914 until 1919 affected the export activities of Cirebon which had experienced a decline.

Graphic 1. Export of the Cirebon Port 1903-1929.



Source: *Jaaroverzicht van den In-en Uitvoer van Nederland-Indie* 1927.

The impact of World War I on the export of Cirebon Port was due to several reasons. First, Cirebon Port was part of the global shipping network, and they supplied almost all of its commodities to Europe, where the war took place. Secondly, the export commodity types were less diverse and dominated by commercial crops, such as sugar. As a result, export activities of Cirebon Port had decreased.

This decrease did not last long. Instead, there was a slight by slight increase until 1929. 1929 also became the highest point that Cirebon Port reached in their export activity. The increase was due to the need for sugar in Europe after World War I. Moreover, the port

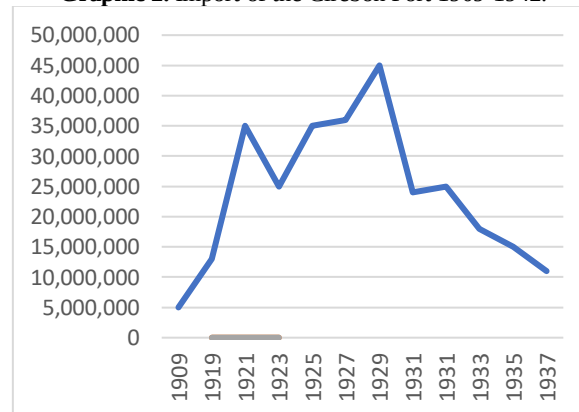
⁴⁰ Imas Emalia, *loc.cit.*

distribution and management infrastructure which got better and became more professional gave additional value and other supporting factors as an increase in the export volume of the port of Cirebon.

By 1930, a crisis began to surge Europe and continued to spread until the colonies of the Dutch East Indies were affected by the economic depression as well. The economic depression caused trade activity to decline, factories began to close, banks went bankrupt, and commodities such as cotton, copper, oil, sugar, rubber, and others experienced a sharp decline in prices. This situation then affected the export and import activities in the Cirebon Port.

Unlike the export, the import activities in Cirebon were still quite good compared to small ports in Cilacap and Pekalongan, which both were under the support of the port of Semarang. Due to only certain ports that were opened as ports for the export and import, the import situation in Cirebon Port could only be compared to the rival, the port of Cilacap. Since the opening of Port Cirebon, import activities at this port had continued to increase until it reached the highest value in 1929.⁴¹

Graphic 2. Import of the Cirebon Port 1909-1942.



Source: *Verslag Sub-Agentschap NHM Tjilacap* 1930, pp. 3. NHM archive box 9197. ARA- DH.

Since 1930, there had been a significant decline due to economic depression. There were a few factors affecting the increase in import of the Cirebon Port. First, geographically, the port of Cirebon was located on the north coast. Furthermore, Cirebon had had historical roots for several centuries before and had been the route of the silk road which made importers prefer to import their goods through Cirebon Port.

There was a concern from the possibility of whether there would be effect in the Cirebon Port due to the repairing process of the port of Semarang at that time beside the positive impact caused by the value of the imports from the port of Cirebon.

CONCLUSION

Before 1906, Cirebon was known as a city which was dirty and messy, which made this city a source of all diseases. Nevertheless, due to its strategic location in the north coast of West Java, Cirebon became an important city for the international trade route.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, hlm. 81-82.

On April 1, 1906, Cirebon was chosen to be one of the cities with *Gemeente* status by the Dutch East Indies government. This was due to the significant development in Cirebon. The giving of the status was not only based on the development of the city, but also based on the factors of population, the local conditions, and the financial factors. From those three factors, Cirebon was considered sufficient to get that status. It was also inseparable from the interest of the Dutch East Indies government who sought to exploit this city. On October 1, 1926, the Dutch East Indies government ordered the whole Java and Madura to upgrade the status to *Staadsgemeente* with broader autonomy. The change of the status would later make the government system which was run from the central government of the Dutch East Indies.

The *Gemeente* status made the city continue to improve, especially in terms of infrastructure. Roads, buildings, and water supply had improved. There were also a few establishments of markets, hospitals, and schools. Although some of those improvements and developments did not last long.

The establishment of the *Gemeente* status had several impacts to the city, socially and economically. The impact that arose in the social field came from the condition of the city residents themselves which since the enactment of *Gemeente*, there was a rapid population growth due to migration from Europe, China, and the local residents. The migration caused the local residents to lose their land ownership and it made the welfare of the Cirebon residents decreased.

The migration was not only affecting the social field, but also the economic field. There was competition between native fishermen and Dutch and Japanese fishermen. The native fishermen were disadvantaged by this in terms of technology since they were still using traditional fishing equipment. On the other side, the foreign fishermen were already using modern equipment which made it easier to catch fish which then they marketed where the native fishermen sold their catch at lower prices in order to attract customers. This was made worse during the economic depression in which foreign fishermen built fishing companies which made the management better and in order, meanwhile the native fishermen's income were decreasing each year.

The impact on the economy was dominated by the export and import of the Cirebon Port. Since holding the *Gemeente* status, the exports in the port of Cirebon had increased each year, although there was decline in 1915-1917. Meanwhile the imports had increased significantly, during the Malaise crisis that engulfed the entire world, they were decreased drastically. In response to the economic depression that affected the economy of Cirebon City residents, the *Gemeente* government tried to overcome the situation, but the results were not optimal. Eventually, many people were unemployed and the hunger rate became quite high, resulting in the suffering of the city residents.

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