

Coping with the Crises: Historical Comparison on Responses to the Crises in the Extreme Salient of Java

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ABSTRACT: *Did the people's response to the crisis change over time? Using three different crisis experiences in the 1930s, the 1940s, and the late 1990s, the article will examine how the local society of Besuki (residency) in East Java, responding to them. The three crises put a strong blow to the livelihoods of the local people. But the adversity of the impact was unevenly felt by different groups of people, depending on the nature of their material bases and the availability of alternative sources of income. It finds that there were similarities in the people's responses. During the three events, some sought to find a relief in agriculture, retail trade, and forest sectors, apart from making adjustments in expenditure and consumption patterns to mitigate the adverse consequences of the crises. But for those who found no other alternatives, the crises forced them to do illegal activities, including lootings, stealings, and illegal logging. Such adaptive responses seem to have been quite common. Crises also meant a higher number of crimes.*

KEY WORDS: *Responses to crisis, Indonesian crises, historical comparison, and Besuki residency.*

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth-century history of Indonesia saw four major crises which struck in the 1930s, the 1940s, the late 1960s, and the 1990s respectively. These had deep impacts on the lives of the Indonesian people. The 1930s crisis was a result of the worldwide economic depression; whereas the 1940s crisis was linked to the Japanese occupation and the struggle engendered by the war for independence (1945-1949). The 1960s crisis was the upshot of the unsound economic policies adopted during the Soekarno era (Wie, 2003:194) and the subsequent political transition. Finally, the 1990s crisis was triggered by the Asian financial crisis (Houben,

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