



## Bawon System in Colonization Studies in Lampung Residency (1932-1941)

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to understand the application of the cotton system during the colonial period in Lampung Residency. The study uses a historical method consisting of four research stages: heuristic, critical sources, interpretation, and historiography with a sociological approach. The data collection techniques used consist of documentation and library techniques. Based on the research, it was learned that during colonization in Lampung, the cotton system was used as a colonial instrument that demonstrated the dominance of the Dutch colonial government over the economic and social society of Lampung and often provoked much local resistance. This policy has proven to significantly impact Lampung's social and financial structures, where colonials monopolize land and agricultural production at the expense of the lives and well-being of the local people and the colonists of Lampung. Nevertheless, the bamboo system in Lampung shows the dynamics of local colonialism, which is still frequently used in harvest rental.

**Keywords:** *Bawon; Colonization; Lampung; Residents*

### **Introduction**

Abundant natural resources make Indonesia known as a country that focuses on agriculture and as a sector that supports its people's economic lives (Intan & Meliza, 2021). The food needs produced by farmers are the most basic needs for humans; this is inseparable from the existence of farmers and the assistance of farm workers (workers). Farm workers in agriculture will maximize benefits according to their respective interests, including farm workers in the hope of getting wages. However, the reality is that the welfare and fulfillment of farm workers' wages are still low, so it is still a problem in employment in Indonesia. The issue of salary is still a concern for policymakers among the mutual relationship between parties such as workers (workers) as recipients and employers as wage payers, while the government is a regulator (Alfan Jamil Efendi et al., 2023; Syarifuddin, 2016). This illustrates the importance of wage issues and employment relations to reflect justice for all parties.

The wage system is quite crucial. It goes back to the agricultural sector, which experiences three cycles: the planting period, the maintenance period, and the harvest period. During these times, land farmers often need the help of farm labor. At their peak during the harvest period, land farmers urgently need labor to harvest with wage agreements, one of which is the bacon system for sharing harvest

(Wahyuni, 2016). Land farmers still often use the Bawon system during the harvest period, looking for farm workers to harvest. These workers are paid by sharing the overall harvest obtained.

Judging by historical flaws, it turns out that this bawon system has been used since the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia as part of the forced planting system, which was initially focused on the Java Island area. In the practice of the bawon system in general, farmers are required to plant part of the land they have with export commodities for the colonial government, such as coffee, tobacco, sugar, and others, as a form of taxes and tribute. The land used to grow this export commodity is called “bawon” land. After meeting the production quota for the benefit of the colonial government, new farmers were allowed to plant food crops for themselves on the same land. Since its inception in Java, the bawon system has been criticized because it is considered too burdensome for farmers, which impacts economic difficulties, hunger, and a decrease in the quality of life of farmers in Java.

Bawon during the Dutch colonial period had a very significant impact on the lives of Javanese farmers because it burdened them in meeting government production quotas and sacrificing their personal needs. This illustrates that this system impacts not only the economic realms but also the social and welfare of the community. In this regard, although the practice of the bawon system has received a lot of criticism and cons, it is still being carried out. This system began to spread outside Java Island during the validity of three ethical and political policies, one of which was emigration by spreading the population by forming new colonies in the Sumatra region, especially Lampung (Cahya et al., 2023; Galih, 2017; Wicaksono, 2021). This is based on the consideration of fertile land that is not yet densely populated and strategically located so that it is easy to supervise by the Dutch colonial government.

The arrival of colonists from Java Island began in 1905 to 1941, starting from the Gedongtataan area and then spreading to the Wonosobo, Kota Agung, and Sukadana areas in the Lampung Residency. The system of organizing colonists towards Lampung Residency is divided into several implementation types, one of which is the bawon system, which occurred from 1932 to 1941; in this system, the colonists were required to make their livelihood by building on the old colonists (Sjamsu, 1960). The bawon system is a wage model still used by farmers in principle. It provides wages in the form of rice or other crops given by landowners to workers by mutual agreement (Abdurrahim et al., 2014; Bahagia et al., 2020). The bawon system in the colonization period in the Lampung Residency emerged influenced by the condition of the colonial society, which began to improve, and the demand of the old colonists who needed human labor for planting to harvesting in the rice fields and gardens. The presence of colonists from Java Island to the Lampung Residency area with the bawon system, which initially provided benefits for the old colonists and the government, eventually gave color to the dynamics of the colonists' lives because of the unevenness that had an impact on their experience of suffering in their home areas that were repeated.

Two theories support the practice of the bawon system during the colonization period in the Lampung Residency. The bawon system is in line with the theory of nationalism initiated by Ernest Gellner (Jati et al., 2023), this stated that World War I encouraged the awareness of nationalism among Indonesian youth, which affected the bawon system during Dutch colonization. In addition, the theory of the influence of payment system financial innovation on the demand for money is also relevant (Aristiyowati & Falianty, 2019). In the context of the bawon system, the payment and financial model has a vital role in the wage system. This theory provides insight into how innovations in the payment system at that time could affect the demand for money and transactions during the colonial period.

The involvement of cooperation between land owners (powerful) and workers. Implementing colonization with the bawon system can also trigger conflicts of interest. This is supported by the theory of power relations initiated by Talcott Parson and Foucault, which explains that if one party is in power and the other party is in power, it tends to cause conflict between them (Sumintak & Idi, 2022). Conflicts are very likely to occur because there is a dependency relationship between builders (workers) who get an unsuitable share (wages) of the crop and are not by the labor devoted. After all, it is under the control of the landowner.

There are several previous studies on the bawon system. First, research conducted by Wahyuni (2016) with the title *Analysis of the "Bawon" Wage System in Rice Farming (Case Study on Farmers in Gambar Village, Wonodadi District, Blitar Regency)*, this study aims to understand the ongoing wage system practice and its impact on farmers. The results of this study provide relevant insights related to the bawon system and its influence on farmers' lives. The two studies conducted by Sukoco (2022) with the title *Under the Threat of Mechanization: The Motive for the Election of Bawon in Farmers in Sambirejo Village, Saradan District, Madiun*. This study illustrates how the bawon wage system influences farmers in choosing their agricultural practices.

Based on the above explanation, to find newness from previous research, this study aims to examine more deeply how the bawon system operates and affects colonial dynamics and local resistance in Lampung, providing a new perspective in studying colonialism and resistance in Indonesia. This research can theoretically help broaden horizons and provide a source and reference for studying the bawon system during colonization in the Lampung region. Practically, this research can be a treasure trove of learning resources that provide benefits in understanding the bawon system and the response of local communities during the colonization period in Lampung.

## ***Method***

This research uses the historical method, a research procedure that aims to reconstruct the past, which is classified into four stages: heuristic, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 1995; Sumargono, 2021; Wasno & Yuliantri, 2023). Meanwhile, the sociological approach used in this study was to see the social state of the community at that time (Hasan, 2023; Soekanto, 2013). Furthermore, in carrying out this research using the historical method, the method used in this study is a historical method using credible archival sources and previous research. Primary sources used include regional archive books, contemporary books, and others. The secondary sources in this study come from various literature in the form of books and scientific articles, with study topics relevant to this research. The stages of implementing this research consist of heuristic, namely collecting data from various previous research sources pertinent to the research study, such as archives and contemporary books examining colonization patterns in Lampung and other supporting data from the Lampung Provincial Archives. The second stage is source criticism, which is carried out by classifying the data collected for external and internal criticism. External criticism is carried out by looking at whether the data that has been collected is accurate to the needs of the research.

Furthermore, internal criticism is by examining in depth the data obtained by the research problem being studied. This stage of criticism is also referred to as data verification. The third stage is interpretation, which is the process of understanding and analyzing historical sources that have been criticized and verified before. The fourth stage is historiography, the process of writing a synthesis about implementing the bawon system during the Dutch colonial rule in Lampung.

## ***Results and Discussion***

### **A. Colonization in Lampung Residency**

Lampung is one of the areas at the eastern end of the island of Sumatra (Indonesia), which has a strategic location because it is the gateway to Sumatra. Historically, Lampung has a strategic location and is one of the parts of complete control under the rule of the Sultanate of Banten, which includes trade rights, human resources, and natural resources, including pepper as a surplus granary for the Sultanate of Banten. However, this changed during the reign of Arya Adi Sendika; the Sultanate of Banten de jure did not have power in Lampung. At this time, the Sultanate of Banten became a loan guarantee from the VOC, and the Lampung region was gradually controlled by the VOC starting in 1711. The Dutch colonial government controlled the Lampung region when the VOC was dissolved.

Furthermore, in the economic realm, the colonial government began to implement the practice of forced planting and exploitation of natural resources in Lampung, which had a significant impact on the local economy and indigenous peoples. This practice began in the early 19th century by forcing farmers in Lampung to grow export commodities such as coffee and rubber for the Dutch export market. This impacted the change in the local agrarian structure and environmental sustainability and caused losses for farmers because they lost control of their land and agricultural products during the Dutch colonial government (Dell & Olken, 2020).

The determination of plantation land caused local communities and Indigenous people to lose their rights to the land they owned, thus changing the demographic and social composition in the Lampung region which ultimately caused tension and resistance (Dang, 2021; Migot-Adholla et al., 1991; Simpson & Hugill, 2022). The oppression and discriminatory policies against the local community imposed by the colonial government often caused tension and resistance in the local community, not only in Lampung but also in other areas under the auspices of the Dutch colonial government.

This continued until the beginning of the 20th century. The Dutch colonial government received a lot of criticism from humanitarian fighters such as Van De Venter, Van Koll, and others who wanted a politics of reciprocity (ethical politics) in the indigenous land. In response and criticism of the injustice of the *culturstelsel* system and the condemnation in 1901, Queen Wilhelmina, in her speech, stated that the colonial government would improve the fate of the natives through an ethical, political policy that included three aspects, namely emigration (population removal), irrigation (construction of waterways) and education (implementation of schooling) (Karsiwan et al., 2021). This ethical, political practice began to be implemented in 1905, and the Lampung Residency area became the first area of colonist placement and development from the island of Java.

The Dutch colonial government moved 155 heads of families from Begelen Village, Kedu Residency, to Gedongtataan and established a village called Bagelen. The Dutch government fully financed this trip, and those who lived there were also provided with a year's worth of groceries and household furniture such as plates, chairs, and farm equipment. The occupation of the population into the Karesinan area of Lampung during the Dutch East Indies government consisted of three systems: the system that the government paid for as a whole from 1905 to 1911 (half the time of Heyting's proposal, ten years), the bank loan system from 1912 to 1928, and the *bawon* system from 1932 to 1841 (Halwi Dahlan, 2014). The practice of colonialism in the Dutch East Indies in the Lampung Residency was carried out using a trial placement in the Bagelen area in 1905, then Wonosobo in 1922, Trimurejo (Marga Nuban) in 1932, and Sukadana in 1932 by land and sea. After previously carrying out a health check. The wave of the arrival of colonists to the Lampung region continued with various models of implementation that occurred over 37 years (1905-1942), which were divided into three implementation periods, namely:

1. From 1905 to 1911, the government borne all the needs of clothing and food free of charge under the free system. Furthermore, in 1911, the government stopped implementing this free system because it was considered too expensive and established another system for the subsequent colonization.
2. From 1912 to 1922, the Savings and Loan system meant that all costs for the colonists' needs had to be paid back by the respective colonists. To facilitate the savings and loan system (debt), on 13 March 1911, the government in Teluk Betung established a bank called Bank Rakjat Lampung (Lampongsche Volksbank). This system of in-bank lending given to the colonists was valid for 10 years with an interest rate of 9% in one year. The nominal loan for each head of the family is limited to a maximum of f200, and this loan must be paid in installments to the bank after 3 years of managing land in the colonized area (Asri, 2022; Sjamsu, 1960).
3. From 1932 to 1942, the *Bawon* system turned out to have a positive impact on the Dutch colonial government because it reduced the cost of relocating colonists. This *bawon* system existed

because of the desire of some colonists who lacked labor, so they asked the civil servants to bring in new colonists from their relatives

Based on the three types of colonization implementation, this study is more focused on implementing the bawon system in Lampung Residency. This is because, in this bawon system, it is said that the government gets profits, and also, the old colonists want new workers to manage the land. So, there is an assumption that colonization in the Lampung Residency area has gone well and that population welfare has increased or vice versa.

## **B. Implementation of Colonization with the Bawon System in Lampung Residency**

In 1932, the emigration of Javanese colonists to the Lampung Residency area began again. This third colonial emigration period used the bawon system in its implementation. This bawon system existed because of the desire of some colonists who lacked labor, so they asked the civil servants to bring in new colonists from their relatives. At the beginning of the arrival, the new colonists were stationed in Gedongtataan with the families of the old colonists to build (cut rice fields) with the wages agreed between the old colonists (land inspectors) and the new colonists who helped the harvest (workers). The implementation of the shipment of new colonists in 1932 from Java Island to the residents of Lampung used government expenses assisted by controller Van der Zwaal. The colonists' situation is improving, so they need help to petrify their rice harvest in the rice fields. They asked for relatives who were still on the island of Java to help the government. This request of the old colonists became a new strategy in political colonization to carry out the emigration of people outside Java Island at a low cost. This is because the demand is supported by the ability of the colonists to bear the housing and feeding of the new colonists until the harvest is complete. Therefore, the new colonists had to come before harvest time arrived.

Based on this, it can be understood that in bringing in new colonists, "colonization is based on the principle of cooperation in village relations." In addition to temporary housing and food, the old colonists also received cutting or bacon wages like those on the island of Java. Through this bawon wage, the new colonists could continue their livelihood until the harvest of palawija (corn, cassava, and others) and harvest rice from their land. In addition, they usually get wages from part-time jobs such as pepper plantations, irrigation, onderneming, and others. Through this system, the old and new colonists bore the basic costs incurred by the new colonists. In this case, this bawon system prioritizes a sense of kinship and cooperation. By establishing good relations between the new and old colonists, the harvest process in the fields and rice fields will continue so that the new colonies will also slowly get a better life.

The main principle in this bawon system is the formation of kern (core village). Because the government has incurred costs for transferring the core colonists, they (the core colonists) in the Gedongtataan area attract new colonists until they can be independent. The arrival of new colonists who were intended to help the old colonists during the harvest period began in 1932 and brought in 7000 new colonists at a cost of f 48,000. At the beginning of the arrival, the new colonists were placed in Gedongtataan with the families of the old colonists to build (cut rice fields) with a wage of 1/7 to 1/5 of the income. After completion, the new colonists were transferred to other areas to get their land and work by bringing the bawon products obtained from helping the old colonists.

In the first 3 years, these new colonists were exempt from income tax collection based on art. 32 sub d. After 3 years of inhabiting the colonized land, several obligations must be carried out:

1. Pay a year's income tax of 4% of the total income. The old colonists paid F90, while the new colonists paid F50. In addition, there was also a tax on livestock: 2% from F 25 for each buffalo or cow owned by the colonists.
2. After the first 3 years, new colonists are also required to work for rodi (heerendienstplicht) with the obligation to work for 20 days a year, especially for infrastructure repair work such as village roads.

3. After the first three years, the colonists were also required to work in the rice fields or fields owned by the village head for five days a year. The land in question is land given by the government to the village head in lieu of salary.
4. The obligation to fall from the mountain is to cooperate and work together when disasters occur, such as floods, repairs to river embankments, and others.

Furthermore, in 1933, there was no arrival of new colonists because the land that the new colonists would occupy was still being investigated. Only in 1934 were new colonists brought back from Java Island to Gedongtataan to bring in 1375 people; in 1935, as many as 12524 people, and in 1936 as many as 12500 people. All of these colonists and the old colonists were built in the Gedongtataan area. Then, most of them were moved to the new colonization areas that the government had determined.

The following table shows the development of colonial society in the colonized land after the first three years, especially in the Gedongtataan area.

Table 1. Distribution of Agricultural Land of the Colonist Population

Year	Population	Agricultural Land Area (ha)
1936	33.374	7.400
1937	34.358	8.246
1938	35.350	8.484
1939	40.793	9.531
1940	42.414	9.732
1941	-	13.042

Source: Sjamsu (1960)

At the beginning of this period, the crop yield in the colonized land was much better because it reached 50 pikul per one smell compared to Java, which was only 25 pikul per one smell; this also affected the condition of the population, which improved, especially with the existence of the bawon system. This bacon system is profitable for the government because the costs incurred are lower than in the previous colonization period, which is only f7.15 per head of the family. At the same time, the burden of colonial life is borne independently. The colonists were only loaned farm tools, nails, roofs, and seedlings, all of which cost f 5. So, the new colonists had a debt that had to be paid to the government worth f 17.5. Meanwhile, those who did not participate in the construction were given a loan of 5 quintals of rice (f 7.50), so the colonists who did not build also had a debt of about f 25 (Sjamsu, 1960; Ysselstein, 1941). Based on this, it can be understood that the colonists who came between 1932 and 1941, whether they built or not, were still allowed to make loans to the government.

The bawon system significantly saves costs and benefits the colonial government so that it can bring many colonists to the Lampung Residency area. However, if you look further into the existence of this bawon system, the life of the colonists is not much better than that of those living on the island of Java. The increasingly dense population, one of which is Metro, reaches 513 people/km, and the increasing poverty rate has become a life problem again experienced by most of the colonists in the Lampung Residency. The rice fields in the Gedongtataan area are also getting narrower yearly due to the wave of colonists arriving from Java, so many come out of the core villages to open new land. Based on statistical data, the land area in the Gedongtataan area in 1937-1940 decreased by 4.6% or 1.53% a year. It is reinforced that 32% of the colonists in the Gedongtataan area in 1938 did not own rice fields, while 73% of the rice field owners only owned land with an area of less than 1 smell (Sjamsu, 1960; Soekasno, 1941), as seen in table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Rice Field Land Ownership During the Bawon System

No.	Rice Field Ownership Area	Number of Owners	% of all owners
1	Less than 1 bau	3.634	73
2	Less than 2 bau	1.129	23
3	Less than 3 bau	136	3
4	Less than 4 bau	28	>1
5	Less than 5 bau	25	1
6	More than 5 bau	12	>1

Source: Sjamsu (1960)

The third colonization period narrowed the distribution of land owned by colonists. In addition to land, there are additional works outside the land of the colonized area such as road construction, dionderneming, plantations, and others) but these additional jobs are also getting less and less because the population is increasing yearly. Not only did the new colonists suffer, but the old colonists who already owned rice fields also had their lives inseparable from the mastery of rice milling with the green system, which was detrimental to the land owners. This is based on Va der Zwaal's report in the year that land leeches drove out the colonists in the Gedongtataan region (Zwaal, 1936).

The situation experienced by the people in this colonized land makes them again shackled in problems such as population density, poverty, and misery, like in Java. The existence of a savings and loan system that often does not benefit workers because the proportion of small wages creates dependence and causes a vulnerable position to exploitation and injustice (Rahmah et al., 2020). Although the first year of colonial life looked prosperous, as the wave of new colonists from Java Island arrived, the lack of guidance in land management and economy made these colonists fall back to the same level of life as in Java.

### C. Interaction of Local Communities with Colonists in the Colonization Period of 1932-1941

The emigration program for the Javanese population in the Lampung region was indeed deliberate by the Dutch colonial government to limit the power of local customs. The local people of Lampung themselves are pretty thick with customs. This custom also includes licensing and accepting immigrants as guests or staying. So, it can be said that the arrival of colonists from Java to the Lampung Residency area is inseparable from customary permits. The acceptance of immigrant communities who want to settle and establish settlements has permits that must be fulfilled through evidence of recognition from immigrants of the clan's authority over clan customary rights.

Customary rights are an obligation that immigrant groups must fulfill by paying a certain amount of money or a "review" to the clan leader so that the established village gets security because it has entered a specific clan territory. Although this customary right was only recognized in 1928 by the government, this customary matter and review of money had been carried out since the beginning of the emigration of the colonists to the Lampung area. So, it can be said that the villages built by colonists are a small part of them under clans such as Gedong Dalam, Ulu Belu, Tulung Boho, Way Kerap, Tulung Seribu, and others. Because of the continuous wave of colonists, finally, after the recognition of money, the clan relinquished the authority and rights to part of its land area to the indigenous people who had just recognized it. Because of the many waves of the arrival of these Javanese colonists, they began to spread to form new settlements such as Wonosobo, Sukadana, and Metro.

In addition, the development and colonization structure of the community on the island of Sumatra is still based on customs, laws, and the structure of ancient societies, such as in Java, including wages. The bawon system is based on customs, laws, and the structure of communities and villages in Java as the implementation of experimental colonization in 1905. As a result of the same model of community structure as in Java, colonized villages become isolated areas (enclaves) such as imitations of

the original region within the region, and the Indigenous people of Lampung (Hadjono, 1982; Sjamsu, 1960).

This made the colonists less integrated with the local community. In addition, there was a difference in treatment between the local population and the colonists (the latter owned large tracts of land), so the local population often received a smaller percentage of the crop yield (Rahmah et al., 2020). The existence of colonized areas and separate local community areas and the practice of the bawon system also have an impact on the social and cultural fields of the local community, thus giving birth to inequality produced by this system, deepening the line of social class division, having an impact on the relationship between individuals and groups in society. Sometimes, it causes disputes and conflicts between the two groups of indigenous people and immigrants that are difficult to avoid. On the other hand, there is a shift in land ownership, the emergence of groups with large land areas, and groups that only own yard land (Maslahah & Wahyu Hidayat, 2016). This made the misery experienced by the colonists in the previous area reoccur.

#### **D. Analysis of the Impact of the Bawon System on Colonial Life in Lampung Residency**

The bawon system used during the third colonization period greatly affected the economic growth of the people of Lampung. To pay for the temporary cost of living, the new colonists were required to bring in the old colonists because of this system. In addition, colonists were also forced to work on plantations or ancient colonial projects without adequate compensation. As a result, their quality of life deteriorates, and poverty increases. (Breman, 1997, 2014). Much of the labor diverted to meet colonial needs disrupted the regional economy, reducing attention to the area's sustainable economic growth (Elson, 1997; Lindblad, 1993). This causes the regional economy to depend on colonialism, making it challenging to develop independently.

The bawon system itself has caused significant social changes in Lampung. Family and communal structures are broken by this work system, disrupting society's traditional structure. In addition, social values developed, and oppression and injustice gave rise to dissatisfaction and distrust of the government. In Lampung Residency, the bawon system has an impact on several things, including:

1. With the bawon system, there is sharper social stratification. Clear boundaries between farm labor groups and large landowners mark this. In addition, this system creates social disparities because the landowners benefit from it, and the workers suffer.
2. Lifestyle shifts were influenced by the exploitation of time and energy to work outside to meet family needs, such as participating in road construction. In addition, this led to colonists spending less time on traditional social and cultural activities.
3. Bawon became an agreement between the old land owners and workers to distribute labor wages. This resulted in large landowners, millers, and workers being distressed due to inadequate wage (income) sharing agreements, which led to rising poverty.

During the colonization period of the Lampung Residency, the Bawon system impacted the social and economic aspects of the colonized area. In social terms, this system exacerbates social disparities, alters the structure of society, and disrupts people's social lives. Although infrastructure development occurs, the impact on the people's economy is very harmful, with poverty increasing, incomes decreasing, and local food production decreasing. Although this bawon system was abolished after colonization, its effect on the community and economy of Lampung is still felt today. Colonial economic and social practices that changed local dynamics included a highly centralized and unequal labor system. On the contrary, this historical awareness of oppression forms a strong collective identity and the spirit of independence of the people of Lampung. This still affects Lampung's social and political interactions.



## Conclusion

The bawon system was one of the colonial tools during Dutch colonialism in the Lampung Residency. This shows the dominance of the Dutch colonial government over the economy and society of the people of Lampung, which triggered many local resistances. This policy has proven to have a significant impact on the social and economic structure of Lampung, where colonialists monopolize land and agrarian production at the expense of the lives and well-being of local and colonialist populations. Although it often fails, physical resistance continues to be carried out as a form of community response to colonization. Nonetheless, it has provided inspiration and a foundation that reflects the power struggle and the struggle for local identity and autonomy. The bawon system in Lampung shows the dynamics of colonialism and resistance in Indonesia. From a historical point of view, understanding this period is crucial to understanding the long-term effects of colonization actions. One example is the bawon system, which is still often used in the crop wage model today.

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