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PREVIEW

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**Peasant blacksmithing in Indonesia: Surviving and thriving  
against all odds**

Dunham, Stanley Ann, Ph.D.

University of Hawaii, 1992

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PREVIEW

PEASANT BLACKSMITHING IN INDONESIA:  
SURVIVING AND THRIVING AGAINST ALL ODDS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

ANTHROPOLOGY

AUGUST 1992

BY

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We certify that we have read this dissertation and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology.

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PREVIEW

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dedicated to Madelyn and Alice,  
who each gave me support in her own way,  
and to Barack and Maya,  
who seldom complained when their mother was in the field



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- Pak Hartoutomo, the head of Social Welfare
- Pak Atmosumarto, head of the largest hamlet in Kajar village

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a socio-economic study of peasant metalworking industries in Indonesia. The emphasis is on traditional blacksmithing, but data is also provided on copper, brass, bronze, silver and gold industries.

Since the late nineteenth century, economists and administrators have been predicting the demise of village industries in Indonesia. Despite such predictions, the number of persons employed in these industries has steadily increased, the rate of increase accelerating during the last two decades. Social scientists working in Indonesia have tended to view this increase negatively, as a sign of crisis in the agricultural sector. However, their models of rural change have been based almost entirely on studies of lowland wet-rice villages. This dissertation contends that these models need revising because they start with the false assumption that agriculture always generates more income per labor hour than non-agricultural occupations. It describes a number of villages where, for a variety of historical, ecological and demographic reasons, metalworking tends to be more profitable than agriculture. Villagers accordingly give metalworking priority in their strategies of resource and labor allocation, and consider agriculture to be a secondary occupation.

Part One of the dissertation draws on data from the fields of archaeology, history, metallurgy and cultural anthropology to describe metalworking industries as they existed in the past, and as they are viewed by the smiths themselves. This view, which includes a strong cultural dimension, is very different from the view of modern development planners.

Part Two presents current ecological data on metalworking industries. An overview describes their socio-economic organization, including patterns of resource allocation, intra-industry stratification, and the use of capital by village-based entrepreneurs. There follows a detailed study of Kajar, a large and well-stratified blacksmithing village in Jogjakarta region, and shorter descriptions of five other metalworking villages.

Part Three presents the development view of metalworking industries and raises questions about their future. It discusses the available macrodata from national surveys, and the possible impact of changes in protective import and licensing regulations. Extension programs carried out by the Department of Industry in metalworking villages are critiqued, and some recommendations presented.

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