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Socioeconomic changes among beca drivers in Jakarta, 1988–98

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Abbreviations

BPS	<i>Biro Pusat Statistik</i>
DBB	<i>Daerah Bebas Beca</i> (Beca Free Zone)
DKI	<i>Daerah Khusus Ibukota</i> (Special region of the capital)
JPS	<i>Jaring Pengaman Sosial</i> (social security net funds)
KB	<i>Keluarga Berencana</i> (family planning program)
KTP	<i>Kartu Tanda Penduduk</i> (identification cards)
KUD	<i>Korporasi Unit Desa</i> (village cooperative unit)
NGO	non governmental organisation
YTKI	<i>Yayasan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia</i>

The sudden economic crisis which began in Thailand in July 1997 has brought about fundamental change throughout Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, monetary crisis (*Krisis Moniter* or *Krismon* in Indonesia) and overall economic stagnation contributed to the ousting of long-serving President Soeharto. In Jakarta, the number of unemployed has soared, and the shortage of basic commodities caused by the collapse of the distribution system is bringing about a rapid increase in urban informal sector jobs (*Kompas*, 29 January 1999). At the same time, beca, a human powered transport system which was banned from Jakarta in 1990, have reappeared. This paper shows how *Krismon* and related external influences determine socio-economic aspects of the lives of beca drivers in Jakarta, some of the most vulnerable people in Indonesia. This paper analyses the cause and consequences of changes in socio-economic aspects of the lives of beca drivers in Jakarta between 1988 and 1998.

Context

The social phenomenon of circular migration between rural areas and urban centres in Java has been widely acknowledged (see Hetler 1986; Hugo 1981a; Saefullah 1994 for work on rural Java; and Castles 1967; Critchfield 1970a; 1970b; Jellinek 1977, 1978, 1991; Kartini-Sjahrir 1990; Koentjaraningrat 1974; Leuwol 1988; Papanek 1975; and Temple 1974 for Jakarta-centred research). People are pulled by the 'bright lights' of the capital city and the attraction of a cash income. In particular, under the New Order regime, which

encouraged industrialisation by Western development strategies, a large number of small landholders and landless peasants in rural Java were attracted to Jakarta. Capitalist development, due mainly to foreign investment, official development assistance, and oil revenue, has provided roads and various forms of transport (Hardjono and Hill 1989:257; Hugo 1981b:357; Jones 1985:157). However, the shortage of formal sector jobs in the city has led to the majority of migrants becoming involved in the urban informal sector. In addition, as Fuke (1986), Hetler (1986), Hugo (1981a) and Kartini-Sjahrir (1990) found, the type of informal sector occupation undertaken depends in part on the home villages. Beca riders tend to come from certain villages.

The beca has not only been a feature of Jakarta's tourist fabric but also a popular form of public transport for the lower and lower-middle class population of Jakarta. Tour guide books on Indonesia tend to contain illustrations of beca and directions on how to use them. Yet operating a trishaw has come to be regarded as a dead-end occupation for males, in the same way as prostitution is viewed for females in Indonesia (Jellinek 1987:184; Murai 1982:139; *Tempo*, 3 January 1990).² For example, former President Sukarno once commented '[d]o not be a beca driver (*tukang beca*); if anything, be a coolie, because beca driving is humiliating work'. Over the last two decades, during the New Order, the image of the *tukang beca* has not changed. If anything the government has projected *tukang beca* as a symbol of Indonesian

backwardness. Since 1970, policy with regard to beca operation has been under the control of the Governor (Dick 1981; Forbes 1990:117; *Kompas*, 25 June 1998). The destiny of beca drivers has been largely determined by the city authorities whose aim has been to eliminate them. The adoption of such a policy in DKI (*Daerah Khusus Ibukota* (Special region of the capital)) has greatly influenced the job opportunities of rural–urban migrants.

Ali Sadikin, the Governor of DKI from 1966 to 1977, pursued a severe campaign against the beca drivers (DBB (*Daerah Bebas Beca* or Beca Free Zone), seeking to push them out of Jakarta (Abeyasekera 1987:242). Wiyogo Atmodarminto, the Governor from 1988 to 1992, considered the *tukang beca* population the useless people of Jakarta (DKI 1988). Since January 1990, Governor Wiyogo has accelerated the elimination operation (*garokan*).³ Special elimination teams were organised to confiscate beca and then dump them into Jakarta Bay to make artificial reefs. By 1991, beca had virtually disappeared from the streets of Jakarta (*Kompas*, 17 March 1990; *Tempo*, 26 May 1990). Estimated at about 300,000 before 1990, the number of beca only amounted to about 5,000 in 1998 (*Kompas*, 25 June 1998). An important effect of *garokan* is that the number of beca has been controlled by the government authorities regardless of the fact that the original aim was elimination. This means that the number of beca driving jobs has effectively been under government control. Owing to structural factors, the relatively high ratio of people to beca was sustained, resulting in higher fees and a relatively secure livelihood for the remaining beca drivers.

Since the almost complete disappearance of beca in the early 1990s, Jakarta has changed substantially. The population has grown from 8,227,000 in 1990 to 9,704,000 in 1998 (Kantor Statistik DKI 1997:52–53). In the same period, Indonesia enjoyed remarkable economic growth; an average of 7.7 per cent for the years 1991–94, reaching 8 per cent in 1996 (Lindblad 1997:14). In Jakarta economic growth was reflected in the building of a large number of multi-storey buildings as shopping centres, luxury apartments and hotels. Most people were optimistic about the future of the Indonesian economy (Hill 1998:93). There was little criticism of Suharto and his family regarding the expansion of corruption.

The riot in Jakarta in May 1998 signified substantial diminishing of government authority. A small number of beca drivers dared to move across the border into Botabek (Bogor, Tangerang, and Bekasi) (*Media Indonesia*, 25 June 1998), but their operations were limited to the peripheral areas. On 24 June, Governor Sutiyoso⁴ gave permission for beca to operate for the time being in the back-alleys of Jakarta.

The reappearance of beca drivers prompted fervent criticism of Sutiyoso's decision from local administrations. On 26 June, several mayors (*walikota*) expressed concern that the cost of banning beca from Jakarta after the economic crisis would be enormous and that security problems would increase in the meantime. Sutiyoso capitulated to the pressure of the city councillors and revoked his decision on 30 June—only six days after his initial announcement. Beca operation was banned once again in accordance with the *Perda*

(*Peraturan Daerah* (Local by-laws)) a reflection of concerns over the heavy financial burden of re-eliminating beca in the future (*Jakarta Post; Kompas*, 1 July 1998).

Operation system of beca

There are similarities in the operation of trishaws (beca) across the cities of Southeast Asia. The trishaw provides door-to-door services for middle and lower-class people, effectively extending the formal public transportation system. Therefore, beca operate primarily in the side streets.

However, beca operation in Jakarta differs from other Southeast Asian cities. After the establishment of the DBB in 1971, authorities forced beca out of the city centre. Growth of the middle-class, partly resulting from increased oil revenue in the mid 1970s, precipitated rapid motorisation and growth in the number of private cars. Consequently, beca were no longer needed in many middle class suburbs.

Beca drivers tend to congregate at certain 'strategic' locations where the chances of picking up a passenger are known to be good. These locations include bus stops, intersections, in front of markets, and school and housing complexes (Kitajima 1990:132–33). The anthropological study of beca drivers in Yogyakarta by Shri Ahimusa (1988:133) shows a similar style of operation. However, the DBB policy, together with the disorganised public transport system in Jakarta, has contributed to increasing demands for the service beca provide.

Previously, beca provided indispensable door-to-door services for lower-middle and lower class urban dwellers, especially in *kampung* areas. Relatively wealthy urban

dwellers, moreover, used beca drivers to chaperone their children to and from school. Traders used beca to transport their raw ingredients to and from the market. Housewives used beca to ferry them to and from the market each day. Office workers used beca to take them to work (Jellinek 1991:60; see also Forbes 1979:165).

Beca drivers tend to cultivate regular customers (*langganan*), who would be served by a friend should the normal beca driver be unavailable (if they were to visit their home village briefly, for example).

During the eight year absence of beca from the streets of Jakarta, the public sector gradually met the demand for low-cost transport in the back alleys. Evidence shows that the number of *Mikrolet* increased from 8,751 in 1990 to 10,498 in 1996 (Kantor Statistik DKI 1997:282). Although the statistics do not present the exact figure, the number of bicycle taxis (*ojek sepeda*) and *ojek motor* in Jakarta back alleys soared (*Bisnis Indonesia*, 4 March 1998; *Suara Karya*, 18 February 1998). The development of low-cost urban transport further marginalised beca.⁵

Lower-middle class suburbs have clearly become the operation areas of beca. *Jakarta Post* (25 June 1998) and *Suara Pembaruan* (1 July 1998) report that several regions, such as Jembatan Lima (West Jakarta), Kali Malang (East Jakarta), Gadjaja Mada (Central Jakarta), Tanjung Priok (North Jakarta) and Bintaro (South Jakarta) have a high density of beca vehicles. My field work from October to December 1998 suggests that Tanjung Priok, Pademangan, Muarabaru, and Kalibaru (North Jakarta), Telukgong, Jelambar, Grogol Jembatan Lima (West

Jakarta), Rawamangun (East Jakarta), and the Bendunganhilir–Pasar Tanahabang corridor (Central Jakarta) were major operation sites for beca (*Kompas*, 11 March 1999; *Sinar Harapan*, 10 March 1999).

Beca transport has grown in these areas because of the lack of crackdowns resulting from funding shortfalls for *garokan* and the complete absence of a clear policy towards beca. In December 1998, most survey respondents were not scared of Tramtib. Fear of military personnel in Indonesia significantly declined after the May 1998 riots. *Garokan* became harder to undertake, moreover, because of increasing concern for human rights and improved press freedom (*Kompas*, 26 January 1999). The number of beca is steady or slightly increasing. Although no conclusive or comprehensive statistics are available, it is estimated that there were about 5,000 vehicles at the end of 1998. Everybody is waiting until a clear policy emerges.⁶

Forbes (1978:222) found that in Ujung Pandang there were four ways of acquiring a beca; (1) some beca drivers own their own beca—owner-riders; (2) some drivers hire vehicles from beca owners—characterised as rented beca drivers; (3) some drivers buy beca vehicles paying by instalment; (4) some

drivers borrow a beca vehicle from someone without charge. Similar categories are apparent in Jakarta.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of beca ownership. In a 1978 study by DKI (1978:29), only 2.7 per cent of beca drivers were classified as owner-operators. By contrast, of the respondents in my 1988–89 study, 89.4 per cent used beca *batangan* (beca renters), whereas 10.6 per cent had their own beca (owner-operators). This had grown to almost 15 per cent in 1998. This is a significant change in the levels of beca ownership, which is directly related to Indonesia's remarkable economic growth.⁷

The possibility of harsh treatment after the June 1999 election, however, has made most beca drivers hesitant to buy their own vehicles, many have preferred to rent. The increased fare for a trip compared to ten years ago makes it relatively easy for beca drivers to pay the rental charge.⁸ Empirical data support this view. In the 1988–89 survey, rent varied from Rp 500 to 2,500. The group which was charged between Rp 500 and Rp 999 operated for a half-day shift only. Therefore, the fee was about half a day's rental costs. In 1998, the rental fee varied from Rp 2,000 to 5,000 depending on the operation areas and the condition of the

Table 1 The breakdown of beca ownership (per cent)

Researcher	DKI	Azuma	Azuma
Year	1978	1988–89	1998
Owner-rider	2.7	10.6	14.9
Rented from tauke or others	97.3	89.4	85.1
Total (n=)	100 (300)	100 (312)	100 (275)

Sources: DKI (1978) and field studies in 1988–89, and 1998

vehicle, with the majority of drivers paying between Rp 3,000 and 3,999. Given that the estimated minimum passenger charge for beca was approximately Rp 1,000 per trip in 1998, the rental charge was quite affordable for the drivers. In 1998, half-day shifts had almost entirely disappeared. Beca drivers struggled to maintain their margins, however, in the face of hyperinflation resulting from the economic crisis. For example, a respondent claimed that a tyre tube had cost only Rp3,500 previously, but cost Rp10,500 in 1998.

There are a number of merits to renting rather than owning beca. First, the living costs of the renter are reduced, because they can find accommodation in the *pondok* (free lodging) of a *tauke's* house which has basic facilities, such as a toilet and bathroom.⁹ *Tempo* (13 January 1990) observed that drivers found renting a beca more profitable than owning, because the daily rental fee gave beca drivers an incentive to go out and seek business. It was perceived that drivers who owned their own beca had less motivation to make money (*kurang semangat*) and had a tendency to be lazy (*malas-malasan*), because they did not have to pay a daily rental fee. Renting was also a logical choice when the risk of beca being confiscated by city authorities was so significant.

The option of renting was further encouraged by the flexibility of the rental system (Jellinek 1991:59). For example, beca owners readily gave drivers permission to settle accounts within several days or in daily instalments, depending on how busy they were. Because of the higher incomes in

Jakarta associated with DBB policy, the rental obligations were normally met in time. Beca drivers who rented were able to visit their villages without worrying that their beca might be stolen. They could easily change their place of employment within the same region through village contacts who operated beca (*cari batangan*). 'Alternatively, when a regular driver returned to his village he allowed a friend to drive his vehicle until he returned' (Jellinek 1991:59). Thus, another reason for the popularity of renting was that it facilitated circular movement between Jakarta and the beca drivers' home villages.

Pondok* system and the relationship with *tauke

The *pondok* system is an important mechanism which enhances circular migration. It encourages migration to Jakarta despite the absence of secure and free accommodation. *Pondok* also provides a useful insurance system for the *tauke* to ensure payment of the daily rental fee and reduce the theft of beca vehicles by renters (Jellinek 1991:61,63).

In the early 1970s, prior to the development of the *pondok* system, beca drivers rented their own accommodation (Critchfield 1970a:19,124; 1970b:8). A study conducted by Kuntjoro-Jakti (1976:93-94) found that 60.4 per cent of beca drivers lived in their own houses. Temple (1974:Table 5-43) found that, in 1973, 40.8 per cent of the beca drivers in his sample resided in their own houses and 34 per cent of them lived in rented accommodation.¹⁰ The remarkable economic growth of Jakarta since the late 1970s has encouraged an increase in the

number of indigenous beca owners who provided free accommodation for beca drivers (Jellinek 1991:63).

However, this pattern of accommodation changed between the late 1970s and late 1980s. Table 2 compares accommodation types in a study by Pabel (1978:30–31) in 1978 and those of the author in 1988–89 and 1998. The most significant change lay in the proportion of those renting a house or room (*rumah kontrak*), which grew from 8 per cent in 1978 to 18.3 per cent in 1988–89 and 35.6 per cent in 1998.

Renting a room or house (*kontrak*) generally operates like a *pondok*. Those who come from the same region or village often rent a small house or a room in a shantytown. While there were many problems associated with this form of accommodation, such renters emphasised the enhanced personal freedom they enjoyed. This was in contrast to the expectations that had to be met when living in a tauke's house.

The economic growth since the New Order commenced is strongly relevant to the changing characteristics of tauke. During the 1950s and 1960s, most tauke were Chinese and ran medium or large-scale operations

(Lubis 1983:160). This is an important point because, according to a former Chinese tauke,¹¹ the *pondok* system was not established at that time. Chinese, largely influenced by ethnic prejudices, were rarely allowed to share a house with their subordinate beca drivers. In order to prevent the theft of beca vehicles, the drivers had to hand over their identification cards (KTP) and show the tauke their drivers' licences (*SIM Beca*) (Pabel 1978:38–39).

In the early 1970s the majority of tauke were still Chinese who owned more than 100 beca. In 1974, anti-Chinese demonstrators protested that 'even though indigenous Indonesians earn money by beca driving, only Chinese beca owners can make it rich'¹² (Matsumura 1986:175). Heavy registration taxes and harassment by DKI officials in the mid 1970s forced almost all Chinese beca owners into *bajaj* and taxis (Jellinek 1991:59,61).

The nature of ownership has changed dramatically. In 1988–89, most tauke were small scale enterprises consisting of fewer than 10 vehicles. The nature of the relationship between the beca drivers and the tauke has also changed. In Ujung

Table 2 Status of present accommodation (per cent)

Researcher	Pabel 1978	Azuma 1988–89	Azuma 1998
Rumah tauke (<i>Pondok</i> system)	74	67.3	23.6
Kontrakan (renting a room/house)	8	18.3	35.6
Own house	14	5.8	5.8
Friends' house	3	1.9	8.7
In the beca	n.a.	4.8	26.2
Others	1	1.9	n.a.
Total	100	100	100
(n=)	(100)	(312)	(275)

Sources: Pabel (1978); field studies in 1988–89 and 1998

Pandang, beca drivers did not display any particular loyalty to the owners, in contrast with other informal sector workers. Beca drivers changed their tauke frequently (Forbes 1978:68). Pabel's empirical data (1978:38–39) indicate that in the same period the relationship between beca drivers and tauke in Jakarta was essentially paternalistic. Jellinek (1991:61) also describes the warm relationship between tauke and renters, such that loans were provided when drivers were ill and 'gifts of clothing and money [were given] at Lebaran'.

The situation began to change dramatically from the mid 1980s. In part this was because of the introduction of the 'rumpon'¹³ project by Governor Suprpto, which meant that beca owners could not buy their beca vehicles back from KAMTIB after confiscation. There were more small scale beca owners competing for drivers and this contributed to the destruction of the close patron–client relationship that had previously existed.¹⁴

In the 1998 survey, about half of the respondents shared the same provincial origin with their tauke, and some 20 per cent shared the same district. More than a quarter of the respondents came from different provinces. Three out of eight tauke rented to drivers from the same district and others rented to drivers from the same province. Thus, the village-based network of beca and tauke has continued to decline over the past decade. The apparently contradictory trend of decreasing thefts of beca vehicles may be explained by the mutual trust arising out of the overall improvement in welfare. Compared with the 1980s, the behaviour of respondents in their relationships with tauke was much more disciplined.

Another change which took place between 1988–89 and 1998 was a substantial decline in the number living in *rumah tauke* alongside a sharp increase in the proportion renting a room or house (*kontrakan*). First, the uncertain prospects for beca operation have made the tauke reluctant to allow beca drivers to reside in their houses. Second, village-based networks have continued to decline, such that less than 10 per cent of the respondents who are living in the tauke's house come from the same district. Third, the nominal income for tauke grew because of the limited number of beca vehicles. Fourth, beca drivers are becoming more individualistic than before. The proportion of those sleeping 'in the beca' rose from 4.8 per cent in 1988–9 to 26.2 per cent in 1998; the invention of *Autan*¹⁵ (mosquito repellent) contributed to this change. Using this new anti-mosquito substance, beca drivers can sleep without interruption from the insects. Survey data show that almost all of the respondents sleeping in beca—who tended to be poorer and older drivers—used this repellent.

In general, beca drivers come to the tauke's house to pay rent every 2–7 days, depending on their relationship and situation. If the drivers have gained the tauke's trust, more relaxed payment conditions (more than 10 days) are tolerated. Also, some tauke collect the fee from the drivers' operation site. In this manner, significant change has occurred over ten years.

Similar change is evident in guarantees for renting a beca. In the past, in order to prevent theft, some tauke kept the drivers' KTP or a copy of it; some tauke still do this. However, since most tauke tend to rent to

acquaintances, they usually do not require any guarantee (*tanpa jaminan*). Sometimes, beca vehicles are stolen and sold, but tauke do not take out insurance to prevent theft. The relatively low cost of vehicles and manageable number of subordinates have contributed to this practice.

Beca drivers in Jakarta

The previous sections described general features of beca operation in Jakarta. The focus of this section is on the specific survey responses. In general, beca in Jakarta—as in other Southeast Asian regions—are operated by men of all age groups (Wheeler and I'Anson 1998). Table 3 compares the breakdown of beca drivers' age in 1988–89 and 1998. The age group 25–39 accounts for more than half of the total number of respondents.¹⁶ Similarly, in 1998 the most productive and energetic age group (25–39) made up the largest proportion (close to two-thirds). The proportion of drivers over 50 years old seems to be increasing, whereas the proportion aged less than 24 years seems to be falling. It seems that the age structure has changed significantly in the course of ten years.

Table 4 shows that most respondents were married. The studies by DKI (1978:10), Suparman (1984:Table 11) and YTKI (1987:Table 1) reported that a similar percentage of their respondents were married. The married respondents tended to have a relatively large number of children.¹⁷ Table 4 indicates that in spite of a family planning program initiated by the government, about two-thirds of the respondents had more than three children in 1988–89. Consequently, drivers have to earn additional income to support their children until they are old enough to contribute to the household income. It is also a Javanese custom that a husband should provide for his wife and family (Kodiran 1983:334). Table 4 shows that most respondents were married in 1998, but a significant difference from the earlier survey is obvious in the number of children. In 1998, the proportion had dropped; with only about half reporting more than three children. The respondents seemed to be more aware of the positive effects of family planning. It might be possible to interpret the declining number of children as a result of continued forceful family planning practices and growing awareness among beca drivers.

Table 3 Respondents, by age (per cent)

Age	1988–89	1998
15–24	21.9	15.0
25–29	19.2	17.2
30–34	22.1	19.4
35–39	11.5	17.2
40–44	9.6	12.8
45–49	8.7	4.8
50+	7.9	13.6
Total (n=)	100 (312)	100 (274)

Source: field studies in 1988–89 and 1998

Table 4 Respondents' marital status and number of children, 1988–89 and 1998 (per cent)

Children	Unmarried		Married		
	None	1–2	3–4	5+	
1988–89 (n=312)	29.8	2.1	36.2	40.0	31.5
1998 (n=274)	12.1	6.4	39.1	29.6	12.8

Source: field studies in 1988–89 and 1998.

Origin of beca drivers

Behavioural migration theory proposes that people of the same ethnic or racial group tend to integrate into a particular occupation and even live in the same area (Miles 1991). Table 5 presents the origins of the beca drivers who participated in the studies. The largest proportion of beca drivers were drawn from Indramayu, Cirebon, Brebes and Tegal. No strong conclusions can be drawn from direct comparisons of the different studies, because they used different survey locations and methodologies and were conducted in different years (DKI 1978:8; Pabel 1978:15–16; YTKI 1987:Table 1–3).

The northern coastal regions of West and Central Java provided such a considerable number of beca drivers because of the ease of access to Jakarta. These regions are connected to the capital by the *Jalur Pantura* (Northern coastal highway) and a railway, originally established under Dutch rule (Hugo 1985b:87). Temple (1974:Table 5–33) found that, in 1973, 52.8 per cent of beca drivers in Jakarta travelled by bus and 46.4 per cent used the train. In the 1960s, before the highway was built, it took more than 12 hours to travel by road between Jakarta and Indramayu. Today the bus service operating

along this highway is an extremely rapid and popular mode of transport (Manning 1986:15).

The proportion of beca drivers from Central Java was lower than that from West Java in the 1970s studies, but by the late 1980s, as my survey data revealed, more than half the drivers came from Central Java. Similarly, the study by YTKI in 1987 found that 67.6 per cent of drivers came from Central Java. One explanation for this change lies in the accelerated rural development in West Java, which has absorbed more surplus labour in the region than has been the case in Central Java (Hill and Hardjono 1989).

An important change in the places of origin of beca drivers between 1988–89 and 1998 is the drop in the proportion from Central Java. Although about 90 per cent of the respondents came from West and Central Java, the diversity at the district level, along with a significant proportion from coastal North Java, cannot be ignored. A growing proportion of beca drivers drawn from other districts of West Java is evident. There are several reasons for this change. First, the El Niño effect and the economic crisis hit rural West Java harder than the other regions.

Table 5 Areas of origin of the beca drivers (per cent)

Researcher	DKI 1978	Pabel 1978	YTKI 1987	Azuma 1988–89	Azuma 1998
Province/District of origin					
Central Java	31.2	31	67.6	56.7	43.6
Tegal	14.1	9	n.a.	26.0	12.7
Pemalang	0.8	2	n.a.	5.8	5.5
Brebes	6.6	14	n.a.	2.9	8.4
Others	8.7	6	n.a.	22.0	17.0
West Java	55.6	72	22.9	37.5	45.8
Indramayu	16.6	27	n.a.	19.2	13.1
Bekasi	5.8	11	n.a.	5.8	1.5
Cirebon	7.9	23	n.a.	3.8	4.0
Karawang	12.0	9	n.a.	0	5.5
Others	13.3	2	n.a.	8.7	21.7
DKI	5.4	0	5.7	2.9	5.8
Other regions	7.9	0	3.7	2.9	4.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100
(n=)	(241)	(100)	(105)	(312)	(275)

Sources: field studies in 1988–89, 1998, DKI (1978:16–17), Pabel (1978:18) and YTKI (1987: Table 1–3).

Kompas (5 January 1998; 22 January 1998) reported that the long dry season resulted in delayed rice planting in Karawang, and thousands of hectares of sawah were drought-stricken for several months in Bekasi. As the drought continued through February, the shortage of food became critical, even causing famine in rural areas (*Bisnis Indonesia*, 10 June 1998). *Merdeka* (4 August 1998) reported the rural devastation in Cianjur, West Java; where only two litres of rice were left per household. According to *Republika* (13 August 1998), 80 per cent of the villagers in Cirebon, West Java, were suffering from shortages of staple foods. Increasing rice prices forced the villagers in Tangerang to eat cassava (*singkong*) instead of rice (*Media Indonesia*, 29 August 1998).

Chain migration and chain occupation

Table 6 shows that the most important factor in migration to Jakarta remains the role of friends and kin, the phenomenon known as chain migration or chain occupation.

The 1988–89 survey showed that, upon entering Jakarta for the first time, most migrants stayed at a tauke's house. Interestingly, 17.9 per cent of migrant beca drivers came from the same village as the tauke with whom they stayed and another 20.2 per cent of them stayed with tauke who came from the same sub-district. This strongly supports the view of behavioural migration theory (Aswatini Anaf 1986:47–48; Hugo 1985a:93; Hugo et al. 1987:233–36).

Table 6 With whom did you come to Jakarta the first time to drive beca? (per cent)

	1988–89	1998
Friends/Brother	76.9	68.7
Father	1.9	1.3
Alone	14.4	18.0
Relatives	4.7	6.7
Others	2.0	5.3
Total	100 (n=303)	100 (n=275)

Sources: field studies in 1988–89 and 1998

Beca drivers from the same village tended to operate in substantially the same district in Jakarta. In Tanah Abang, Central Jakarta, for example, 24 out of 30 beca drivers came from Indramayu. Most of the respondents stated that before moving to Jakarta, they had information about beca driving and the life in Jakarta, and had targeted this form of work.

There was a sharp decline in the importance of village-based networks in the 1998 survey, but the friends-and-relatives effect is still evident. Over the intervening ten years, the number who migrated alone had increased slightly. More than 80 per cent of the respondents obtained their beca-driving job within a week of arriving in Jakarta with the assistance of friends or relatives.

Sutiyoso's decision to allow beca operation in 1998 was broadcast throughout Java, but about two-thirds of respondents obtained the news from their friends and relatives. More than half of the beca drivers (53.1 per cent) operating in 1998 had been beca drivers before the total ban in 1990. More than 80 per cent of the drivers who had driven beca prior to the ban were operating in the same area where they rode before.

Previous occupation of beca drivers

Table 7 shows the change of occupation of the respondents over 14 years. In the 1988–89 survey, less than half of the beca drivers had been employed as agricultural labourers or farmers. Ten years later, the sharp increase in numbers of agricultural labourers and farmers must be noted. The economic crisis may be a possible explanation. Some eight respondents (2.9 per cent) had been retrenched from various private companies. In total, 27 (18 per cent) had been dismissed from various job categories (see also Table 12). In addition, the number of construction workers declined from 6.8 per cent in 1988–89 to 2.2 per cent in 1998. Many respondents said they had been retrenched from the construction, public, and transport sectors. The economic crisis was substantially responsible for this change. Owing to large-scale retrenchment in the construction industry and other sectors, a lot of wage labourers were forced to return to their home villages, and were temporarily absorbed into the farm sector (Johnson 1998:39; *Kompas*, 21 January 1998). In this way, the proportion of agricultural labourers or farmers jumped from 46.6 per cent in 1988–89 to 62.4 per cent in 1998.¹⁸ The village attracted retrenched

workers almost like a magnet. After they lost their jobs in Jakarta, most people went back home.

A second point is the significant decline in the number of vendors in Jakarta—from 23.7 per cent in 1988–89 to 7.3 per cent in 1998—despite the rapid increase in the number of small-scale traders in Jakarta. The major reason for the decline is the increasing capital required and the greater fluctuation of commodity prices in Jakarta. However, there are some puzzling findings. Among ex-beca driver respondents, some 20.7 per cent had been in various small-scale trading jobs, but only 7.3 per cent were engaged in trading jobs immediately before returning to beca driving. This suggests that a large number of the respondents had abandoned trading because of increasing competition and difficulties in operating small businesses.

Some respondents clung to beca driving. The category of ‘beca driving in other areas’ jumped from 3.9 per cent to 12.7 per cent. They claimed that the freedom to work and

move was the major attraction of driving beca (*narik beca bebas*). It seems that they enjoy beca driving, and know well how to catch passengers. Understandably, their net income is slightly higher than that of other groups of drivers. Among them, the most significant difference is that some 10 per cent of the respondents previously rode beca in Botabek region—after the total ban in 1990, they were forced to move to the region. Declining income caused by the increasing number of beca in the other areas, as well as DBB policy in Tangerang and Bekasi, had forced them to return to Jakarta (*Kompas*, 26 June 1998; *Suara Pembaruan*, 26 June 1998).

According to the study by DKI (1978:20), 59 per cent of respondents stated that they chose beca driving because it was easy to get the job. Beca driving skills were considered easy to acquire. Jellinek (1991:59) suggests that the basic technique of beca driving can be learned in half an hour. An additional attraction was the free accommodation provided by the *pondok* system.

Table 7 Previous occupations of beca drivers

Researcher	Suparman 1984	Azuma 1988-89	Azuma 1998
Construction workers in Jakarta	13.1	6.8	2.2
Beca driving in rural areas	n.a.	3.9	12.7
Vendor in Jakarta	n.a.	23.7	7.3
Agricultural labourer or farmer	53.8	46.6	62.4
Unemployed	9.4	8.9	7.6
Other	23.2	8.9	n.a.
Unsure	0.5	1.3	n.a.
Total (n=)	100 (383)	100 (303)	100 (275)

Sources: field studies in 1988–89, 1998 and Suparman (1984).

Educational attainment

Limited education is the major obstacle to obtaining formal sector jobs (cf. DKI 1980:46–47; Pabel 1978:23; Suparman 1984:19; YTKI 1987:Table 1-4). Beca drivers in Jakarta have always possessed rather low levels of education.

Jones and Manning (1992:398–400) observed a significant improvement in the level of education in Indonesia under the New Order. Census data for Jakarta (BPS 1975; BPS and DKI 1992:40) show that, in the period 1971–90, the proportion of people with no schooling decreased markedly—from 39.2 per cent in 1971 to 11 per cent in 1990. Beca drivers, however, have clearly not shared in such ‘fruits of development’ (*hasil pembangunan*). Even the young beca drivers generally do not have a primary education. Some 27.8 per cent of young beca drivers reported that they had dropped out between years 1–3 of primary school.

Table 8 compares respondents’ educational attainment over ten years. Oey–Gardiner (1997:118–134) noted the remarkable achievement of the Indonesian education sector. To some extent, the data

in Table 8 support her position, but the dramatic improvements in Indonesian education were distributed very unevenly among the respondents. In 1996, about 60 per cent of Jakarta residents were Junior High School graduates or more, whereas only 16 per cent of the respondents in my 1998 survey had reached the same grade.

Data in Table 8 show that in 1988–89, 65 per cent of beca drivers had failed to complete their primary education. The reason for leaving school was generally economic hardship in the village. According to data from YTKI (1987:Table 1–4), when asked the reasons for not continuing school, 61.4 per cent of respondents answered ‘no funds for schooling’. This implies that the beca drivers’ family backgrounds were as poorer villagers, such as agricultural labourers and small scale peasants.

Land ownership

In Java, the definition of land sufficiency (*cukupan*) for household survival has been the subject of much argument. The issues are summarised by Hardjono (1987:247) in terms of *cukupan* for one family. In the early

Table 8 Educational attainment: comparison of beca drivers and Jakarta population (per cent)

	No schooling	Primary school not completed	Primary school completed	Junior high school	Senior high school +	Total
Beca drivers						
1988–9 ^a	19.1	46.0	21.1	11.0	1.8	100
1998 ^a	8.8	38.2	36.1	13.3	3.6	100
Jakarta population						
1996 ^b	3.24	12.41	25.4	20.72	38.23	100

Notes: ^afield studies in 1988–89 (n=312), 1998 (n=249)

^bIncludes only citizens of Jakarta over 10 years old. Kantor Statistik DKI (1998:54) (n=7,736,844).

twentieth century, the adequate holding size was regarded as 0.7 hectares of sawah or 1.4 hectares of dry land. 0.5 hectares of sawah or 2 hectares of dry land was considered adequate to ensure a sufficient life in the early post-war period. In the New Order period, 0.7 hectares of rain-fed sawah and 0.3 hectares of house garden (*pekarangan*) were defined as *cukupan* (Ananta et al. 1986:135; Hugo 1981a:180). Hence, it can be said that in Java, the most important definition of rural economic welfare depends on the amount of land owned (Wahono 1994:6–8).

In both 1988–89 and 1998 those who had no land also had little education. The proportion of those who had not completed primary school was the largest among those owning less than 0.5 hectares. Needless to say no-one among the wealthy group was illiterate.

Among a substantial number of empirical studies on Jakarta's informal sector, as well as on rural–urban migration, few studies undertake research on the farm-owning status of informal sector participants. Table 9 shows that a large number of landless and small scale peasants migrate to Jakarta as informal sector participants.

Table 10 indicates that 49.1 per cent of migrant beca drivers in 1988–89 did not own farmland (*sawah garapan* or *lahan*). 51.9 per

cent of drivers had some access to farmland, though most had access to less than 1 hectare. Most respondents can be classified as poorer peasants below the standard of *cukupan*. Compared with the other studies of the informal sector, the proportion of landless peasants (49.1 per cent) is relatively low. This may be because those who had no land refused to be interviewed, whereas those with farms were happy to participate.

The number of landless peasants among the respondents increased by nearly 30 per cent between 1988–89 and 1998. Moreover, the number of small-scale farmers with 0.1–0.5 hectares as well as with 0.5–1.0 hectares of farmland declined sharply. There is little difference, however, in landowning status by provincial origin. It is possible that beca drivers who had previously been peasants or small scale farmers were more confident about speaking openly in the atmosphere of *Reformasi* than they had been in the earlier survey.

The very high proportion of landless peasants among beca drivers in 1998 reflects changes caused by crises which particularly affected the Javanese countryside—the economic downturn and the drought caused by El Niño. Nearly a quarter of the respondents from various districts of rural Java reported harvest failure (*panen gagal*) during 1997 or had only one harvest during

Table 9 The landless ratio of rural–urban migrants to Jakarta (per cent)

Researcher	Suharso et al. 1976	DKI 1980	Said Rusli 1984	Samuel 1984
Landless	70.6	73.2	63.5	79.0

Sources: Suharso et al. (1976:39–40), Said Rusli 1984:87, DKI (1980:61–62), and Samuel (1984:26–27).

1998.¹⁹ Other structural factors hit paddy agriculture in Java. The inflated price of fertiliser (*urea*) from Rp 500/kg to Rp 1,115/kg, caused by the inefficient delivery system of KUD (*Korperasi Unit Desa* (village cooperation unit), brought about a desperate shortage of cash income for the small scale farmers (*Kompas*, 8 December 1998; Manning and Jayasuriya 1996:29). Pesticide prices soared (*Suara Pembaruan*, 7 January 1998; Soetrisno 1999:166). One large scale farmer, for example, rode beca for the first time to raise cash for purchasing fertiliser and pesticide.

Mobility determinants

'Pull factors' in migration are often diverse. There may be several factors that pull a person to migrate. Wage employment, however, is pre-eminent among the reasons. Table 11 shows the percentage of

rural-urban migrants in several previous studies who became involved in urban informal sector jobs for economic reasons.

The specific reasons for migration in 1998 were the El Niño effect and the economic crisis. Table 12 shows that in the 1998 survey the most frequently stated reason for migration was 'looking for subsistence food' (*cari nafkah*), and only a few respondents answered that they were 'looking for experience' (*cari pengalaman*). The second most frequently cited reason was the better income that could be derived from beca driving jobs in Jakarta. The third most common reason was poor job opportunities in drivers' villages (*Suara Pembaruan*, 7 July 1998).

The increased number of unemployed in Jakarta has expanded the market for a cheap mode of transport. At the same time, the supply of potential beca drivers has been

Table 10 Beca drivers' ownership of farmland, 1988–89 and 1998 (per cent)

Area of land owned (ha)	1988–89	1998
No farm land	49.1	77.7
0.1–0.5	32.3	13.1
0.5–1.0	15.7	5.0
1.0–2.0	2.0	3.1
2.0+	1.9	1.1
Total (n=)	100 (303)	100 (260)

Sources: field study in 1998

Table 11 Migrants who came to Jakarta for economic reasons (per cent)

Researcher	Heeren	UI	Supranto	Suharso et al.	Azuma	Kartini-Sjahrir
	1955	1976	1979	1981	1988–89	1990
Percentage	74.4	62.8	94.8	65.4	98.1	78.0

Sources: Heeren (1955:708), Senat Mahasiswa UI (1976:10), Supranto (1979:Table 5); Suharso et al. (1981:7–8), field study in 1988–89, and Kartini–Sjahrir (1990:60).

Table 12 Major reasons for riding beca in Jakarta

Reasons	per cent responded 'yes'
<i>Cari nafkah</i> (looking for subsistence food)	90
Better income of beca driving	68.7
Poor job opportunities in the villages	67.3
No other jobs in Jakarta	66.7
Economic crisis (Krismon)	53.3
Followed friends or kin	34
Harvest failed (<i>panen gagal</i>)	25.3
Retrenchment	18
Looking for experience (<i>cari pengalaman</i>)	3.3
Must repay the debt	2.7

Source: field study in 1998

bolstered by the collapse of the economy, which has limited the number of alternative formal and informal sector jobs available for those with poor connections and little education (Jones and Mamas 1996:69).

Microeconomic characteristics of beca drivers

The 1988–89 survey shows that 99.7 per cent of the respondents worked every day except when physically ill or when beca vehicles were unavailable. Beca driving necessitates working long hours, because much time is spent waiting at the beca station looking for passengers.

The nominal net income per day for beca drivers has increased sharply, but real income has fallen substantially. In the 1988–89 survey, for example, nearly half of the respondents earned more than Rp 3,000 (6.2kg of rice equivalent) per day. The 1998 survey, however, shows that only 7.6 per cent of beca drivers earned more than Rp 15,000 (5.6kg of rice equivalent). Previously, only 7.6 per cent of drivers fell into the

lowest income category, but the proportion of drivers in this category has now jumped to 16.7 per cent. The net daily earnings of vulnerable people have tended to fall over the past decade, but it would be rather simplistic to conclude on this basis that beca driving is no longer profitable. There is a puzzling aspect to the research findings—the proportion of drivers in the middle income category (4.1–6.2kg of rice equivalent in 1988–89, 3.7–5.6kg rice equivalent in 1998) increased from 20.2 per cent to 49.8 per cent.

In 1998, about half of the respondents enjoyed a net income of more than Rp 10,000 per day. However, presenting the respondents' money income per day is rather problematical owing to considerable increases in the price of basic commodities (*harga sembilan bahan pokok*) as well as the smaller number of beca vehicles than before. For example, the retail price of rice soared from Rp 1,290/kg in January to Rp 2,700/kg in November (Johnson 1998:Table 3; *Suara Pembaruan*, 12 November 1998). It is worthwhile, however, to grasp the change in net income since 1988–89. Table 13

presents a comparison of net daily incomes in 1988–89 and 1998 based on the litre of rice equivalent. The net daily income of beca drivers has clearly begun to bunch around the lower end of the range.

Many respondents claimed that beca driving brought a secure daily income for them. This is especially true when compared with on-farm work which is subject to drastic seasonal variations. Though income may have declined over the years, what remains is highly valued given the current economic crisis and drought in rural Java. A large number of beca drivers insisted that beca operation in Jakarta should be legalised at least until the economic crisis eased, otherwise a rescue program would be needed to provide JPS (*Jaring Pengaman Sosial* (Social security net funds)) (*Kompas*, 16 April 1999). Some beca drivers expressed anxiety about the further decline of net earnings caused by the growth of the Mikrolet transport system. This growing competition from other means of transport was causing a great deal of frustration among beca drivers. The increasing cost of essential items after the crisis only compounded this frustration.

Rural–urban wage gap

According to microeconomic migration models, especially the Harris and Todaro model, labour migration occurs from low income areas (villages) to higher income areas (cities). Economists have emphasised the importance of expected wage differences between rural and urban areas as a primary motivation in the migration decision.

The rural wage is hard to generalise because of the diversity of share cropping ratios and different wage systems. In the 1988–89 survey, the majority of the working population (87.7 per cent) received a daily wage between Rp 1,000 and Rp 2,000. When this is compared with the net earnings from beca driving (Rp 1,000–4,999), few clear wage gaps can be seen. More importantly, though, the agricultural sector is seriously limited in providing a secure daily job. For example, 8.7 per cent of migrant beca drivers came from single crop areas, 57.6 per cent of them were from double-crop areas and 33.7 per cent of them came from areas which enjoyed three harvests a year (*palawija*). This means that on-farm jobs can be provided in

Table 13 Comparison of net income of beca drivers per day, 1988–89 and 1998

Income in 1988–89 (Rp)	500– 999	1,000– 1,999	2,000– 2,999	3,000– 4,999	5,000+
Litre of rice equivalent	1.3–2.6	2.6–4.1	4.1–6.2	6.2–10.3	10.3+
Drivers (per cent, n=312)	7.6	28.8	20.2	27.9	15.4
Income in 1998 (Rp)	1,500– 5,999	6,000– 9,999	10,000– 14,999	15,000– 19,999	20,000+
Litre of Rice equivalent	5.6–2.2	2.2–3.7	3.7–5.6	5.6–7.4	7.4+
Drivers (per cent, n=275)	16.7	25.9	49.8	6.5	1.1

Note: 1 litre of rice price was Rp 484 in 1988–89, Rp 2,700 in November 1998

Source: field studies in 1988–89 and 1998

land preparation and harvest between one and three times a year only. Hence, it can be anticipated that under-employment or disguised unemployment is a significant problem for most of the year. In contrast, as argued earlier, beca driving can ensure a secure, regular income. As a result, a significant rural–urban wage gap exists in terms of ensuring daily job opportunities rather than absolute daily income.

In 1998, 46.7 per cent of the respondents earned Rp 5,000–6,999 for a full day of farm work (*harian*), whereas more than half of them received Rp 3,000–4,000 for a half-day's work (*bedugan*). The sharecropping ratio varies from region to region: one-fifth or one-sixth to the harvesters was the dominant sharecropping ratio in West Java, whereas it was one-tenth in Central Java. These sharecropping ratios precisely paralleled the findings in the 1988–89 survey. A substantial increase in on-farm wages in rural Java was evident, but wage increases were still unable to keep up with the skyrocketing price of rice (Rp 1,567/kg in April 1998) (Johnson 1998:Table 3).

The alternatives after the total ban of 1990 and July 1999 election

Table 14 presents the alternatives to beca driving after the total ban of 1990. The majority of respondents preferred to 'go back to the village'. This implies that some opportunities were available for on or off-farm work in their home villages.²⁰ Since the lifting of the ban, however, beca drivers have generally not made long term plans. They say '*Capek pikir daripada narik*' (to be worried about the future is more wearisome than driving beca) (*Kompas*, 26 October 1988). Their lives and work are organised on a day-to-day basis. Their main concern remains earning for today alone, rather than thinking and planning for tomorrow. It is difficult to say whether this is good or bad—perhaps their future is too bleak to think about.

Why do beca drivers return to their villages instead of settling in Jakarta? Temple (1974:114) states that 'only trishaw riders would prefer to go back to their villages, most often because their wives are there'. However, most vendors also left their

Table 14 Alternatives to beca driving after the total ban of 1990 (per cent)

Researcher	Suparman (1984)	<i>Kompas</i> (1988)	Azuma (1988–89)	Yusuf and Kurniawan (1991)
Return to villages	58.7	34.3	39.8	45.2
Unsure	1.0	24.0	15.5	5.5
Look for a job in Jakarta	n.a.	18.3	14.6	33.9
Look for a job anywhere	17.7	20.2	8.7	n.a.
Ride beca in another place	n.a.	n.a.	9.7	11.5
Transmigration	6.9	n.a.	0	n.a.
Other	15.7	3.0	11.7	15.4
Total (n=)	100 (382)	100 (500)	100 (308)	100 (108)

Sources: field study in 1988–89, Suparman (1978:Table 15), *Kompas* (13 January 1990) and Yusuf and Kurniawan (1992:59).

families behind in their villages. A similar response was evident in the 1998 survey. Table 15 reveals the alternatives to beca driving after the election in June 1999. In the 1988–89 survey, 39.8 per cent of the respondents preferred to go back to the villages; a similar finding was evident in the 1998 survey.

Most beca drivers in Jakarta rode beca in other places after the total ban was imposed in 1990. A rather aggressive response towards crackdowns is becoming extremely frequent. More than half of the beca drivers said that they would fight TRAMTIB, if their vehicle was confiscated. They no longer suffer in silence, but express their ideas.

In the last crackdown, I just bit my finger (*gigi jari*) and experienced crackdown without resistance. But now, I am different. I will fight them until I die. I am not scared this time. If beca driving is banned, how can I feed my family in the village? There is no secure job in the village because of drought. Death by hunger is the same as by fighting.²¹

Circular migration

Previous studies of beca drivers in Jakarta found that the pattern of movement can be characterised as circular migration. In the early 1970s, Papanek (1976:62–64) found that 66.2 per cent of sampled beca drivers returned to their villages every year. Moreover, 23.6 per cent went back to their villages more than five times a year, and 20.8 per cent returned between three and five times a year. Hence, since the early 1970s, circulation has been a significant dimension of beca drivers' migration pattern.

Table 16 provides some basic data on the frequency of visits to the home village, by region. In general, geographical distance can be identified as a major obstacle to moving; the transport cost and journey time is directly related to journey distance. In the West Java region it can take up to 6 hours to return to villages from Jakarta, whereas the other regions require at least 8 hours and even up to 15 hours. This factor is also a major obstacle to circulation. Table 16 indicates that drivers from Central Java are

Table 15 Alternatives to beca driving in case of total ban after the election

Reasons by order	per cent responded 'Yes'
Look for job in village	68.7
Look for job in Jakarta	68.0
Fight if confiscated	56.0
Return to village	53.3
Ride a beca in other place	40.0
Unsure	28.0
Demonstrate	10.0

Source: field study in 1998.

Table 16 The frequency of return to the village, 1988–89 and 1998 (per cent)

	1–2 weeks	2 weeks–1 month	1–2 months	2–3 months	3 months+	Total
1988–89						
West Java	8.2	21.4	5.1	1.0	2.1	37.8
Central Java and others	2.0	25.5	20.4	8.2	6.1	62.2
Total (n=294)	10.2	46.9	25.5	9.2	8.2	100
1998						
West Java	21.4	14.4	3.7	2.0	9.8	51.3
Central Java and others	3.3	22.5	5.7	0.4	16.8	48.7
Total (n=244)	24.7	36.9	9.4	2.4	26.6	100

Sources: field studies in 1988–89 and 1998

likely to return to their home villages less frequently than those who come from West Java. Clearly, distance is a major factor in migrants' patterns of return to the home village. The cost in terms of transport charges and time spent travelling obviously deters frequent journeys to the more distant regions of rural Java.

In the 1998 survey, circular migration was still evident, but its nature had changed substantially. Table 16 shows that the proportion of West Javanese visiting home every 1–2 weeks more than doubled, whereas the number who visited every 1–2 months shrank acutely in 1998. Beca drivers who sleep on their beca—some 26.2 per cent of all respondents—understandably return home more frequently than *kontrak* residents, who may only return to their villages once a year for the Islamic holiday of Ramadan. This is an economically rational decision. The rent for *kontrak* costs a minimum of Rp 10,000 a month, so those who reside in the *kontrak* are likely to minimise the frequency of their return.

Table 16 shows that circular migration is not giving way to permanent migration, but to other forms of mobility where there is more than just one rural and urban destination. This is indicated by the fact that the proportion of beca drivers returning at one-to-two-weekly intervals more than doubled—the bulk of this being respondents from West Java. At the same time, the proportion returning at intervals longer than three months had expanded about threefold in West Java, and substantially in Central Java and elsewhere in 1998. The emergence of this trend was foreseen by Forbes (1981:68) who argued that if the wage labour sector in urban areas expanded and the rural agricultural sector became more commercialised, circular migration might change to another form of mobility. 29.4 per cent of respondents who had been employed in Jakarta before becoming beca drivers had been employed in the city for more than three months. They tended to take their family to Jakarta, and nearly half of them seldom participated in on-farm jobs.

Moreover, the length of stay in the village has been decreasing compared to before. In the 1988–89 study, 51.9 per cent of the respondents stayed in the village for more than eight days, whereas only 15.4 per cent of the respondents stayed more than eight days in 1998.

The other factor in frequency of return is the cost of transport. Table 17 reveals the transport costs of return visits (door-to-door) from the 1988–89 and 1998 surveys. The nominal amount of rupiah must be analysed carefully. A comparison of transport cost with the rise in the cost of necessary items reveals that transport between Jakarta and villages in West Java has actually become more affordable (*Kompas*, 8 May 1998; *Bisnis Indonesia*, 19 May 1998; *Republika*, 19 May 1998).

Beca drivers set monetary targets for how much to remit to the villages. They drive beca every day until their target is achieved. Table 18 shows that in 1988–89, more than half of migrant beca drivers take back between Rp 20,000 and Rp 59,999 when they return to their village. Because of the hyperinflation in the late 1990s, it is hard to present an accurate comparison of remittances in 1988–89 and 1998. Although the nominal amount of remittances

increased sharply, the actual value of that remittance has fallen substantially in terms of the rice price equivalent—a finding reinforced in Table 13, which reveals sharply declining daily net income. Cash flow from Jakarta to rural areas has fallen substantially.

Money is remitted through a system of mutual assistance (*gotong royong*) in which earnings are entrusted with fellow villagers returning home. Almost every week someone goes back. This system does not work for beca drivers from distant places, such as East Java, Yogyakarta, and the outer islands, because there are fewer drivers from the same village. Post office remittances (*Pos Wesel*) are rarely used, except by more highly educated beca drivers and those who were unable to trust their colleagues. In 1998, methods of remittance had not changed: the beca drivers from West Java were still likely to take their money back themselves, and those from Central Java had a tendency to ask their friends to take it back (*titip teman*). According to economic migration theory, urban-to-rural remittances play a significant role in terms of restoring equilibrium in the rural–urban wage gap and may contribute to rural development through the trickle-down effect (Stark 1991:216–17).

Table 17 The transport cost for return in 1988–89 and 1998 (per cent)

	500– 5,000	5,001– 10,000	10,001– 20,000	20,001+
1988–89 (Rp)				
Litre of rice equivalent per cent (n=294)	1.3–10.3 31.9	10.3–20.7 40.9	20.7–41.3 24.2	41.3+ 3.1
1998 (Rp)	500– 29,999	30,000– 49,999	50,000– 99,999	100,000+
Litre of rice equivalent per cent (n=237)	1.9–11.1 48.5	11.1–18.5 28.7	18.5–37 16.0	37+ 1.8

Sources: field studies in 1988–89 and 1998

Table 18 Remittances in 1988–89 and 1998 (per cent)

1988–89 (Rp)	0–9,999	10,000– 19,999	20,000– 39,999	40,000– 59,999	60,000+
Litre of rice equivalent per cent (n=294)	20.7 1.1	20.7–41.3 15.2	41.3–82.6 35.8	82.6–128.8 29.9	128.8+ 18.0
1998 (Rp)	0– 49,999	50,000– 99,999	100,000– 199,999	200,000– 299,999	300,000+
Litre of rice equivalent per cent (n=237)	18.5 12.7	18.5–37 22.4	37–74.1 41.3	74.1–111.1 15.2	111.1+ 8.4

Sources: field studies in 1988–89 and 1998.

Prospects

According to a survey by *Republika* (11 September 1998) of 1,000 beca passengers in Jakarta, some 86 per cent supported their renewed operation, claiming they were desperate for more affordable, flexible, and spacious transport. The 14 per cent who did not support renewed beca operation cited many reasons—‘inhumane’, ‘cause traffic jams’, ‘hard to ban again’ and ‘security concern’. Respondents were mostly residents in lower middle-class suburbs, and generally comprised traders, housewives and civil servants. Unless a much better public transport system is established, beca will continue to fill the transport needs of the lower-middle class in Jakarta.

The long term policy towards beca has entered a period of uncertainty after the June 1999 election. The current situation is more stable than before, because there is little likelihood of confiscation, but government policy remains unpredictable. For example, Governor Sutiyoso again refused to abolish Perda No. 11/1988 on 15 April 1999 (*Kompas*, 16 April 1999). In the back alleys, a lot of Mikrolet and Minibus are operating where the main operation areas of beca used to be.

In addition, the number of *ojek spada* and motor drivers has soared, providing part-time jobs for poorly-paid public servants and retrenched urban labourers (*Suara Karya*, 18 February 1998). Beca vehicles are becoming increasingly marginalised by these old and new competitors. Also, *tauke* are more cautious about adding to the number of beca because of the uncertain future and increasing competition with other urban back-alley transport. If the economic crisis should worsen, passengers might choose more affordable but inflexible forms of transport, such as Mikrolet and Minibus; and beca drivers’ earnings would decline.

One source of support for beca drivers comes from the current influential Minister for Cooperation and Small Scale Industry, Adi Sasono. In 1990, he was very sympathetic to beca drivers, and attacked the constitutionality of *garokan*, saying: ‘The 1945 Constitution states that every citizen has the right to work. What governor Wiyogo is doing is destroying work.’ Local by-laws recognised beca elimination, but, as he noted, ‘how can local by-laws be rated higher than the Constitution?’ (*Tempo*, 3 February 1990).

I have been observing the fate of urban peasants in Jakarta since the mid 1980s, and have seen much graffiti on beca, which encapsulated their insecure feelings. Presumably, 'Beri aku jalan' (give me pathway) may be the most appropriate words for the current situation. Harsh *garokan* is unlikely to be tolerated because of the increasing awareness of human rights, and the support from NGOs under the *Reformasi*. However, inconsistent policy towards beca makes beca drivers feel insecure, their future never free from uncertainty. In this context, the position of beca drivers has not changed over ten years. Sooner or later, human-powered transport might disappear from Jakarta. In the eight year absence of beca, other means of transport took over their traditional operating areas. This suggests that it may be difficult to expand the operation of human-powered transport into other parts of the capital. If anything, the DKI should organise a more user-friendly public transport system in the lower-class suburbs, and offer beca the opportunity to fill the remaining niches of the urban public transport system.

Notes

¹ This paper is partly derived from Chapter 4 of an unpublished PhD thesis (Azuma 1994), and major updating is based on a field study from October to December 1998 during my visiting fellowship at Demography Program, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University. The author is grateful for helpful comments from referees at early draft of this paper.

- ² In my experience the phrase 'tukang beca' is used as a pejorative term in Jakarta.
- ³ Literally, *garokan* means scratch (*garok*) in Javanese (*garuk* in Indonesian) (Echols and Shadily 1982:118; Prawiroatmojo 1981:130). This term is used as a synonym for the elimination of beca. It is also one of the steps of weeding in farm jobs.
- ⁴ Major General Sutiyoso was born in December 1943 in Semarang, Central Java. He was a graduate of Magelang military academy, and mostly promoted in elite courses in the military. This resulted in a rather irresponsible attitude towards the poor. His final position in the army was Commander of Jakarta special region (*Pandan Jayag*) between 1996 and 1997 (*Bisnis Indonesia*, 7 October 1997).
- ⁵ Their frustration towards Mikrolet resulted in an attack on two Mikrolet in Tanjung Priok district. Beca drivers insisted that the operation of Mikrolet in Tanjung Priok must be limited until six o'clock in the evening in order to share the passengers (*Kompas*, 11 January 1999).
- ⁶ On 7 October 1998, I interviewed a Tramtib officer of the DKI on this issue. He refused to comment on beca. What he said was '*nggak mau pikir lagi soal beca*' (I don't want to think about beca).
- ⁷ Jellinek (1991:63) reports that since the mid 1980s several people in the *kampung* she studied had become owners of beca.
- ⁸ The transport fee depends on negotiation prior to boarding. In general, rates are set by the beca drivers themselves (Ocampo 1982:50). In 1983, Suparman (1984:18) found the cost was about Rp150–300 for a one-way trip. In my 1988–89 survey, the most common charge for a one-way trip was Rp200–300. In 1998, as a result of hyperinflation, the fee had jumped to Rp500–1,000 for a trip.

- ⁹The cost of these facilities cannot be ignored, as the charge for the public bathroom (*WC umum*) was Rp 50-150 in 1988-89 and Rp 500 in 1998. Although a large number of beca drivers frequently use walls and canals and so forth as a toilet, taking a bath and washing require a *WC umum*.
- ¹⁰However, a study by Hugo (1981a:222) in the mid 1970s provides questionable evidence that the majority reside in dormitory accommodation (*asrama*) provided by the middleman from whom they rented their beca.
- ¹¹Interview with Mrs Lea Kin Hua, 21 April, 1989.
- ¹²*Malapetaka Sebelas Januari*: January disaster, the demonstration on 11 January 1974
- ¹³A project to throw confiscated beca vehicles into Jakarta Bay to form a man-made reef.
- ¹⁴Regarding the compensation for beca loss, serious fights between owners and renters began to take place. *Tauke* requested compensation for beca vehicles which were confiscated and allegedly thrown into Jakarta Bay. Few beca drivers, however, could afford to pay for such an expensive vehicle. The alternative was to simply leave town (*dibawa kabur*). This practice meant that *tauke* often collected a higher rental fee as insurance, and recruited drivers from the same sub-district or village as a countermeasure (YTKI, 1987:I-7).
- ¹⁵The cost of one small package is Rp 500, and it can be used twice.
- ¹⁶The studies by DKI (1978:9-11), Suparman (1984:17-18) and YTKI (1987:Table 1) find that the job requires relatively high body strength, and therefore the most productive age group tended to take part in beca driving. A study in Bandung conducted by Hyodo (1988:197), on beca drivers' body constitution and muscle strength, shows that beca driving requires relatively high energy. Even taking account of the significant differences between upland (Bandung) and flatlands (Jakarta), without adequate body strength it is hard to pedal a beca.
- ¹⁷In Java, a well-known proverb states that if you have many children you do not have to be worried about earning an income in your old age (*banyak anak banyak rejeki* or *anak nggawa rejekine dhewe-dhewe*) (Geertz 1963:83).
- ¹⁸In 1998, eight per cent of respondents currently had additional income sources in the informal sector in Jakarta, which is a slight decline from 11.5 per cent in 1988–89.
- ¹⁹Data in Table 12 show that 25.3 per cent of the respondents claimed harvest failure was the main reason underlying the choice to ride beca.
- ²⁰Understandably, farm owning respondents are more likely to return to their villages. In contrast, only 14.9 per cent of landless respondents in the author's survey replied that they would return to their villages. Landless respondents were more likely to choose jobs in Jakarta.
- ²¹Unlike in 1990, NGOs helped to protect beca drivers' human rights. For example, the Legal Aid Institute supported the return of confiscated beca from Cakung, and the Urban Poor Consortium is trying to abolish Perda No.11/1988 in order to allow beca operation (*Jakarta Post*, 6 October 1998; *Kompas*, 16 April 1999). Clearly, civilian society is emerging in some parts of Indonesia.

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