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Japanese Occupied Indonesia

CLARA Working Paper, No. 8



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## **Labour Relations in Japanese Occupied Indonesia**

Working Paper for the CLARA Programme

by

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The Japanese military occupied most parts of Indonesia during World War Two and mobilised many millions of local people as labourers. Labour relations in Japanese occupied Indonesia is a huge issue for which there are relatively few detailed source materials or studies. As a consequence, our knowledge of the issue is very partial and hazy. Most of what we know derives from accounts by European eyewitnesses or investigation reports compiled by Dutch. In April 1946 in Singapore, for instance, the Netherlands War Crimes Investigation Team interviewed a group of Javanese whom Japanese had sent to the Riau islands and some other areas as labourers.<sup>1</sup> The investigation team focused on particularly brutal Japanese individuals. The testimonies, therefore, cannot be considered representative cases. Moreover, those investigations, as well as most existing studies and accounts, are about military projects whereas labour mobilisation for civil projects was quantitatively preponderant. Nevertheless, the existing testimonies will cast some light into the nature of the relationship between ruler and ruled. This paper will therefore examine some of the cases in those testimonies first. It will then shift its focus on civil projects.

The forcibly mobilised workers are commonly known in the Japanese term, *romusha*. They were mostly farmers. Typically they were ordered by their village chiefs to work for the Japanese for a year or so. Some of the village chiefs told the villagers where they had to go and work, some others did not. The destinations, if stated, were often inaccurate. For instance on 25 August 1942 in Magelang, Central Java, 468 men from various villages were assembled at the regency capital ordered by their village chiefs. The regent, accompanied by two Japanese, told them that they must work in Serang, West Java, for three months. They were, however, sent to the Riau islands via Jakarta and Singapore, and were forced to work there until the end of the war. The farmers usually obeyed the order because they knew that if they attempted to disobey they would be punished and forced to anyway. One village chief actually told them that if they refused they should be expelled from the village. One farmer was

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<sup>1</sup> The records of examinations are kept as 'Procesverbaal van Getuigenverhoor: Affidavit' [Official Report of Examination of Witnesses: Affidavit]. BUZA NEFIS/CMI Deel 1, 2240.

picked up in a street when he was visiting the city of Jogjakarta by Japanese who were driving a truck.

On the work sites, the romusha were given no freedom to take a day off or leave the work. In October 1942 on the Lebaran, the day of celebration at the end of the Muslim fasting month, the workers who were engaged in oil-emplacement work on the island of Sambu wanted to take a day off from work. The Japanese not only refused it but also punished the workers for making such a request, and made them to stand in the sun for three days. The foreman had to stand for seven days, being watched by Heiho, Indonesian auxiliary soldiers employed by the Japanese. As if this was not enough, three Japanese brutalised the foreman on the eighth day from around 8 a.m. till 4 p.m. Tokyo time. They beat him with wooden sticks, kicked him, and made him sit on the ground holding a wooden stick behind the bent knees. He fainted around 10 a.m. He regained consciousness around 1 p.m. and then the Japanese maltreated him again by beating his back with sticks. He was unable to walk after that, and had to be accommodated in a clinic for three months.<sup>2</sup>

Many Japanese were merciless towards weak or sick people. In the island of Batang, one Chinese worker from Singapore was maltreated because he was unable to lift a log (one testimony says that he was punished because he tried to escape). A Japanese called Yama hit the man with a wooded stick and broke his thighbone. The stick was about one meter long and as thick as an arm. Seeing that the man was unable to walk, Yama ordered Heihos to bury him in the ground up to the neck. A few hours later (one testimony says half hour later), he was unearthed and let free. He crawled back to the barrack with two arms and one leg, dragging the bloody broken leg. Yama forbade, with a threat of death, anyone from helping the poor man. In the barrack no medical treatment or food was given him. Several days later, they all shifter to Tanjung Pagar in Singapore. They took a boat and half way to Singapore, the wounded man was, by Yama's order, thrown into the sea by Heiho (local auxiliary soldiers employed by Japanese). The witness did not know if the man was still alive or already dead.<sup>3</sup>

Some Japanese habitually hit or kicked the labourers they forcibly mobilised. The investigation of war crimes mostly concerned not just hitting and kicking but severe violence which killed or nearly killed the victims. Such violence was usually meted out as punishment for some 'crimes'. Those crimes were usually thefts, particularly of small amounts of foodstuffs such as rice, potatoes, or beans. The reason for stealing food was that romusha were hungry. Although they usually received two or three meals a day, consisting of rice, vegetables, and occasionally some dried fish, the total amount of food they received in a day was not much more than the amount of normal one meal. This resulted in widespread ailments such as beriberi, dysentery, skin diseases, and malaria. The death rate was extremely high. The oil-emplacement work on the island of Sambu site originally had 200 coolies, of whom 138 died within one year. In November 1944 in the island of Sukijang, Japanese started harvested timber using 750 men. Since then many of them died. The estimated deaths vary from 400 to 570 depending on testimonies but over half of the coolies apparently died within the nine

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<sup>2</sup> Affidavit of Kandar from Magelang.

<sup>3</sup> Affidavits of Tarip from Rembang, Sajid from Purwokerto, and Patmoredjo from Blora. According to Sajid who heard about this event, the man tired to escape but was caught by Heiho. There were eight Heiho there. As for the reason why no food was given to the man, Patmoredjo states that there was a regulation, 'He who does not work shall not eat'.

months before the Japanese surrender although there was a polyclinic with medicines and a Japanese doctor. Shortage of food and malaria were apparently the two largest causes of such heavy tolls. Coolies were given mosquito nets only after their number dropped to less than half.

Ba Sidin was a patient in a clinic in Sukijang, suffering from beriberi and pruritus. One morning in November 1944, around 9 a.m., the doctor dragged him out, bound his wrists together, wrapped him in a plaited mat, and tied him in such a way that only Ba Sidin's legs below the knees could be seen. The doctor then set fire to the mat. All the patients of the clinic had to witness Ba Sidin jump. When the fire died out, the doctor bound Ba Sidin's feet and hanged him from a bough of a tree in such a way that Ba Sidin was upside down but his hands touched the ground to support part of his body weight. The doctor then removed the burnt mat from Ba Sidin's body and left him in that position until about 4 p.m. Thereafter the doctor let Ba Sidin down, poured a bucket of seawater over him, and let him loose. Ba Sidin's body had turned yellowish, and the skin of the right half of his back had completely peeled off. He could not sleep and moaned and groaned day and night. The same doctor gave him a medical treatment for three days. Thereafter, he stopped the treatment, and Ba Sidin passed away in the fourth day. The reason for the punishment was not publicly announced but it was apparently that Ba Sidin took without permission some potatoes from the clinic's garden.<sup>4</sup>

One day in a timbering site in Tanjung Pinang, a small amount of beans were stolen from the garden. About 300 coolies and foremen were assembled and two Japanese and a couple of Heiho beat every one of them, nine times on average, to draw the thief out. The thief was eventually caught and was beaten anew with rattan sticks. He was then tied to a tree in a sitting position with his hands tied behind the back, and left in that position for seven days and nights. He was given some drinks but no food. When he was let free, he could not walk, and was carried by other workers to the clinic, where he died about ten days later. The maltreatment was obviously the cause of his death because until the incident took place, he was as healthy as a fish, according to one witness.<sup>5</sup>

Beside food, supply of clothing was very insufficient. One day a Javanese coolie called Kartasan bought a jacket from his friend. A Japanese called Osaka suspected wrongly that Kartasan stole it, and as punishment, he tied Kartasan's hands behind the back and hanged him from a tree in such a way that his toes just touched the ground. Osaka then sprinkled petrol on Kartasan's head and set fire. Kartasan's hair flared up instantly, causing him shriek out of pain. Soon his head swelled up and became like a pig's and blood gushed out of it. Kartasan was then taken down and untied. Once his head was cleansed by his friends, Osaka approached him again and slapped his pig-like face many times with full force. Still unsatisfied, he pumped water into Kartasan's stomach until it swelled up like a balloon. After this torture Kartasan was taken to the clinic and stayed there for about one month.<sup>6</sup>

As stated earlier, these episodes were not representative cases. Some Japanese were extremely brutal while some were not. Some work sites were malarial while some others were not. Food distribution system became chaotic in Japanese occupied

<sup>4</sup> Affidavits by Selamat bin Joenoes and Kariomin bin Said from Magelang.

<sup>5</sup> Affidavits of Rebo from Solo, Wagijem from Klaten, and Pa Wiro Moelio from Sukosari.

<sup>6</sup> Affidavits of Kasa Bin Santami and Dasroni bin Wirialaksana from Cilacap.

territories and there were severe and chronic shortages of foodstuffs in some areas while in some other areas there were reasonable amounts of food. A romusha called Roesmadi was, for instance, taken from Banyumas to the island of Kijang, to Singapore, and then to Thailand. After testifying some cases of violence by Japanese, he testifies: 'We received relatively adequate food, although there was no meat or fish. There were not many sick people. Problems were mostly wounds and skin rashes. Handling of labourers was reasonable.'<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the above episodes reveal a number of characteristics of the 'labour relations' under the Japanese rule. One is that workers were given no freedom to choose work or choose not to work. The Japanese recruited labour by requesting the indigenous authorities to supply certain numbers of labourers. The local authorities, under the foreign military dictatorship, had little choice but to obey the Japanese orders. The villagers at the bottom of the scale had little choice but to obey the local authorities. Many of the forcibly recruited villagers were not even informed properly where they were being taken to and what kinds of work they had to do. Once they reached the destination, they were forced to work with a threat of violence. They were given no opportunities to express complaints or grievances. Even if not all Japanese were brutal, the very fact that many brutal Japanese were left unpunished until the Japanese surrender reveals the nature of the Japanese rule. The Japanese monopolised military power. All of their orders, or gentle requests or negotiations, were made with this power in the background. Unarmed Indonesian workers were completely helpless.

The Dutch war crime investigation focused on manifest violence by individuals. No less important was the latent violence that was inherent in the structure of the Japanese military administration. The Japanese labour mobilisation was so enormous that there were simply not enough Japanese to go around maltreating the labourers physically. Nevertheless the Japanese possessed the means to coerce millions of Indonesians to exploit their labour. In order to appreciate the enormity of the problem, we need to shift our attention from manifest violence to structural issues.

The first issue that needs to be examined concerns the employers. Japanese employers consisted of two broad categories. One was the military. The other was the civil administrative units, or occupation governments, whose task was governance of the occupied territories. The top authorities of the occupation governments were also military men but most of the administrative personnel under them were civilians. Under the civil authorities hundreds of Japanese commercial firms and their staff also worked in diverse fields.<sup>8</sup> The Army and the Navy mobilised labour for projects that were directly related to military operations such as construction of fortifications, airstrips, ships, roads, railways, storage facilities, and vegetable gardens for the troops. The civil administrative units drafted labour for a much wider range of projects that were usually not directly for military operations, although many of them constituted parts of the 'war economy'.

According to one Japanese record of romusha in Java, approximately 2.6 million labourers were in the employ of the Japanese in November 1944 in this island with the total population of approximately fifty million. The Army employed ten per

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<sup>7</sup> Affidavit of Roesmadi from Banyumas.

<sup>8</sup> For a list of those firms, see Hikita Yasuyuki (ed.), *Nanpo Kyoieiken: Senji Nippon no Tonan Ajia Keizai Shihai* [Southern Regions Co-Prosperity Sphere: Japanese Economic Rule in Wartime Southeast Asia], Tokyo: Taiga Shuppan, 1995, pp. 703-851.

cent of them, the Navy three per cent, and the civil administration 87 per cent.<sup>9</sup> Even this figure for civil administration was evidently underestimation. There was much labour, including child labour, which was mobilised for civil projects and yet did not appear in statistics.

The 'war economy' involved mobilisation of resources for the war effort as well as economic controls to enable non-combatant local population to obtain minimum amounts of basic commodities for their day-to-day lives. The latter was a no easy task. The most basic commodities for the general public were foodstuffs and clothing materials. Before the war Southeast Asia as a whole produced surpluses of food, particularly rice. Most of the surpluses, however, derived from the three deltas at the mouths of the Mekong, Chao Phraya, and Irrawaddy. The other areas had to import rice from there, or were barely self-sufficient. As inter-regional transportation became difficult, increasing food production became essential in many areas. As for clothing materials, Southeast Asia imported almost all of its needs. The Japanese calculated that in order to produce one third of the prewar consumption level of textiles in Java, starting from cultivation of cotton, 2.3 million people a day must work.<sup>10</sup> For spinning and weaving, they systematically mobilised schoolgirls. Local children seldom proceeded beyond the primary education. Most of those girls were therefore under the age of twelve. The Japanese also tried to strengthen government control over food distribution. For transportation of harvested rice, the Japanese mobilised primary schoolboys. Harvested rice was firstly carried to the collection centres on horsebacks and carts pulled by people, oxen, and horses. Schoolboys worked as auxiliary transport workers, loading, unloading, and pulling and pushing carts. The collected rice was then carried from the centres to the mills by automobiles that the Japanese commandeered.<sup>11</sup>

The basic reason for the large-scale labour mobilisation was not so much that the Japanese needed many resources for their war effort but that the 'war economy' was less efficient in terms of labour productivity. By mid 1943, the marine transportation within the occupied area had been severely crippled, and it became imperative for each of much smaller areas to strive to establish self-sufficiency. Smaller the unit, more difficult the goal was to achieve. Cotton had to be grown throughout Southeast Asia, even in the area where the soil or the climate was not quite suitable, and spinning and weaving had to be carried out even where there were no modern textile factories.<sup>12</sup> Under such conditions, production efficiency of labour was inevitably low. The Japanese tried to overcome this low production efficiency by mobilising more and more labour under the banners of 'production increase'.

Labour mobilisation was an integral part of the 'war economy'. There are few archival materials that directly deal with the problem of labour. We, therefore, need to

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<sup>9</sup> Mori Fumio, 'Gunsei Shubo' [Notes on the Military Administration], Gunsei Shiryo, No. 90.

<sup>10</sup> 'Resume van de Verklaring van den Heer Sangyoobutyoo ddo. 14/4-2065' [Summary of the Explanation by the Head of the Department of Industry on 14 April 1945], (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, deel 1, 1761).

<sup>11</sup> This is about Bali, based on 'Shokuryo ni tsuite' [On foodstuffs], Nishijima Collection, NV17-1, pp. 15-16. The condition in other areas were similar. About Java, see Sato, *War, Nationalism and Peasants*, chapter six.

<sup>12</sup> Initially the Japanese had no plan to grow cotton in Malay peninsular. As the war turned against them and the economic conditions worsened, however, they had to make one from 1944. See Mori Fumio, 'Gunsei Shubo' [Notes on the Military Administration], Gunsei Shiryo, No. 60, held at the Defence Agency Library, Tokyo.

take an indirect approach, that is, to examine the Japanese economic policies themselves and infer from there how much labour was needed for implementing these policies and in what manners they mobilised labour. Previously the studies of the economic impact of the Japanese occupation have focused mostly on two aspects, namely resource exploitation by Japanese and the collapse of the colonial plantation economy. In order to obtain a systematic understanding of the issue of forced labour during the Japanese occupation, we need to pay more attention to the overall economic change in the occupied territories in a broad historical and regional context.<sup>13</sup> The following section of this paper will examine the Japanese attempt to establish minimum self-sufficiency in clothing materials in occupied Indonesia in such context.

Soon after World War One Japan became the largest supplier of clothing materials to Southeast Asia. That was because Japan achieved an industrial takeoff when European powers were waging ruinous assaults upon one another. Japan's industry, however, remained dependent on the Western Empires for supply of raw materials.<sup>14</sup> Overcoming this dependency became Japan's new target, which eventually drove her into the Manchurian Incident, the Sino-Japanese war, and the Pacific war. Japan's geopolitical and economic ambition in the early 1940s was captured in the term, 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'. This term was apparently used for the first time by Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke on 1 August 1940. On that day the Japanese government published the document called *Kihon Kokusaku Yoko* (Foundation of the National Policy), and held a press conference. In this conference, Matsuoka declared, in reaction to the German occupation of the Netherlands and France and the threat of an embargo by the United States, that Japan's target was to construct an economically self-sufficient block, 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', which would include the Netherlands Indies, French Indochina, and other areas in the Southern Seas.

The problematic nature of this concept can be illustrated with criticisms and comments presented at that time. Royama Masamichi, a professor at Tokyo University until his resignation a year earlier in protest against the government's interference with the academia, and a member of Prime Minister Konoe's think tank, Showa Kenkyukai, responded immediately and pointed out that the term, 'Co-Prosperity Sphere', was not used in the 'Foundation of the National Policy'. He complained that the concept was too vague, and it was not at all clear how it could be achieved in practical terms. The

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<sup>13</sup> There is no comprehensive and systematic study of the economies in Southeast Asia from this angle. For the issues of food and labour in Java, see Shigeru Sato, *War, Nationalism and Peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin; New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1994). There are also the following studies on Indonesia. John O. Sutter, *Indonesianisasi: Politics in a Changing Economy 1940-1955* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959); Iwatake Teruhiko, *Nanpo Gunseika no Keizai Shisaku: Marai, Sumatora, Jawa no Kiroku* [The Economic Policies in the Southern Regions under the Military Administration: A Record on Malay, Sumatra and Java] (Tokyo: Kunkoshoin, 1981, also reprinted and published in Tokyo by Ryukei Shosha in 1995); Iwatake Teruhiko, *Nanpo Gunsei Ronshu* [Essays on the Military Administration in the Southern Regions] (Tokyo: Gannando, 1989); Goto Ken'ichi, *Nippon Senryoki Indonnesia Kenkyu* [Studies of Indonesia during the Japanese Occupation] (Tokyo: Ryukeishosha, 1989); and Kurasawa Aiko, *Nippon Senryoka no Jawa Noson no Henyo* [Transformation of Javanese Villages under the Japanese Occupation] (Tokyo: Soshisha, 1992).

<sup>14</sup> For instance, Japan imported 794,000 tonnes of raw cotton in 1937, of which 55 per cent came from British India, 32 per cent from the United States, and only 3 per cent from China. See, *Shiryō Shū Nanpo no Gunsei* [Collected Documents on The Military Administration in the Southern Regions], (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1985), pp. 218-226.

national policies in Germany, Britain and the United States were, he argued, supported by much research, whereas lately in Japan there was a marked tendency among politicians to use empty slogans without careful examination. This tendency was not only confusing but also dangerous.<sup>15</sup>

Matsushita Masahisa of Rikkyo University gave a more blunt criticism. On 7 October 1940, in one of the series of symposia that the Navy organised, he argued that the concept of 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' was deceptive because Japan would exploit resources from the other areas of the sphere but she had nothing to reciprocate with. When Latin American countries lost European market, the United States was able to function as the market for their products, whereas Japan was incapable to function as the sole market for the Southern Regions. It would be more honest to talk about a *Lebensraum* (Living Space). The so-called 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' was, he asserted, destined to become a 'Co-Poverty Sphere', and that the Japanese people must be aware of that.<sup>16</sup>

It was not just critics who were aware of the deceptive nature of the concept. Some policy makers were also frank about it. Finance Minister, Kaga Okinori, explained in the Imperial Conference on 5 November 1941 as follows:

The southern regions to be occupied have been importing considerably large amounts of various commodities. When we occupy the areas, importation of those items will stop. If the local economies were to be maintained effectively, we should be supplying those commodities. However, we do not have the necessary capabilities. For a considerably long period we cannot afford to pay attention to the economic wellbeing of the local people. We cannot but adopt so-called exploitative policies. In order to obtain natural resources and labour, we will issue military notes and other currencies but maintaining their values will be difficult.

We adopt the principle of self-sustenance of our expeditionary forces, and exportation of commodities from Japan to the occupied land must be kept at the absolute minimum.... We must push on forward ignoring for the time being the economic confusions in the occupied land caused by the fall in the value of the currencies and so on.

Local inhabitants are, however, culturally primitive and their lands are rich in natural resources. Maintaining their lifestyles would, therefore, be relatively easy in comparison with some other areas such as China.<sup>17</sup>

The military venture was certain to create serious economic stress in the occupied territories. Japan nevertheless plunged into war in order to secure strategic resources. Kaga explained that the Japanese policy was to ignore economic problems in the occupied land. There was, however, a limit to what they could ignore because 'to win the hearts of the people' was also one of the official aims of the military administration. Between winning the hearts of the people and ignoring their economic

<sup>15</sup> Royama Masamichi, 'Daitoa Kyo-eiken no Chiseigakuteki Kosatsu' [Geopolitical Examination of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere], in his book, *Toa to Sekai* [East Asia and the World] (Tokyo: Kaizosha, 1941), pp. 360-363. Kihon Kokusaku Yoko uses the term, 'New Order in Greater East Asia'.

<sup>16</sup> 'Gaiko Kondankai' [Symposia on Diplomacy] (Kishi Shiryo, M7-57).

<sup>17</sup> *Shiryo Shu Nanpo no Gunsei*, p. 214.

wellbeing lay a great contradiction. The occupation authorities had to grapple with it. Many of the 'Japanisation' policies were, in a sense, means with which to deal with this contradiction.

Kaga's prediction that maintaining the local people's primitive lifestyles would be relatively easy proved wrong. The military administration quickly discovered that even the most basic matters such as providing the local people with food and clothing was a formidable challenge. As we have seen, Southeast Asia as a whole was more or less self-sufficient in food before the war. Clothing materials were, in contrast, mostly imported, mainly from Japan. Japan's textile exportation rose sharply after World War One, and during the Great Depression when the Western powers lost their capacity to export textiles, Japan established a near monopoly of the market in Southeast Asia.<sup>18</sup> As a counter measure, the Netherlands Indies authorities imposed restrictions on textile importation, promoting at the same time local weaving industry. Two years before the onset of the Great Depression, the Bandung Textile Institute had invented improved handlooms, of which they built 49,000 by 1941. After 1935 they also accelerated importation of modern power looms. In 1940 the Netherlands Indies had 82 weaving mills, 78 of which in Java. Besides, there were approximately 500,000 old-fashioned handlooms in operation in the villages.<sup>19</sup> These looms in total produced various clothing materials including seven million pieces of sarongs per year, which was about ten per cent of the local consumption. Indonesia's weaving industry, however, depended on imported yarns. Indonesia's indigenous population did grow some cotton and in 1940 exported 1,548 tonnes (349 tonnes from Java and 1,192 tonnes from the Outer Islands) of raw cotton to Japan. This was statistically negligible, and so was Indonesia's spinning industry. When the Germans occupied the Netherlands in May 1940, the Dutch authorities decided to promote further industrialisation in Indonesia, including spinning industry to which they allocated a budget of fifty million guilders in 1941 and started building modern spinning mills at Pasuruan and Bojonegoro.<sup>20</sup>

Japan's textile industry had become huge in comparison but, as we have seen, it depended heavily on imported raw cotton. When the Sino-Japanese war broke out in July 1937, Japan occupied northern part of China, created puppet governments, and began advocating a 'New Order in East Asia'. This 'New Order' included an eight-year plan to increase cotton production in North China by 600,000 tonnes per annum by 1946, and to import half of it to Japan. After the Germans occupied France and France formed a new government at Vichy, the Japanese also planned to apply diplomatic pressure on French Indochina and Thailand and request them to grow 200,000 tonnes of cotton for Japan in each area.<sup>21</sup> Soon after launching attacks simultaneously on Pearl Harbor and the Allied territories in Southeast Asia, the Japanese government ordered

<sup>18</sup> Yoshitada Maruyama, 'The Pattern of Japanese Economic Penetration of the Prewar Netherlands East Indies' in Saya Shiraishi and Takashi Shiraishi (eds), *The Japanese in Colonial Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1993), p. 109, Table 6.2.

<sup>19</sup> D.H. Burger, *Sociologisch-Economische Geschiedenis van Indonesia, Deel II* [Sociological and Economic History of Indonesia, Part II] (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. 121.

<sup>20</sup> *Indisch Verslag 1941*, pp. 300-301, 352-353; C.J.J. Van Hall, *Insulinde: Werk en Welvaart, tweede druk* [Insulinde: Work and Prosperity] (Naarden: In Den Toren, c. 1940), pp. 149-151; KNIL, *Nederlands-Indie contra Japan II* [Netherlands Indies against Japan II] (Bandung: G.C.T. van Dorp, 1950), pp. 239-45; Iwatake, *Nanpo Gunseika*, p. 257; and 'Daitoa Kokudo Keikaku An Yoko' [Outline of a Proposal for Construction of Greater East Asia] (Kishi Shiryō, M5).

<sup>21</sup> 'Daitoa Kokudo Keikaku An Yoko' and *Shiryōshu Manpo no Gunsei*, p. 224.

the Japanese Association for Cotton Cultivation to make a cotton production plan for Southeast Asia. This Association, which was formed soon after the Manchurian Incident with a view to increasing cotton production in Korea and Manchukuo, hastily made a five-year plan for the area comprising the Philippines, Burma, and the Netherlands Indies, and submitted it to the government (Table 1).<sup>22</sup>

Table 1. Japan's Initial Five-Year Plan for Cotton Cultivation in Southeast Asia (hectares)

	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Philippines	30,000	60,000	120,000	240,000	500,000
Java, Sumatra	10,000	20,000	40,000	80,000	140,000
Sulawesi, NT, NG, SB	15,000	30,000	60,000	120,000	338,000
Burma	50,000	83,000	133,000	200,000	338,000
Total	105,000	195,000	353,000	640,000	1,316,000

Source: 'Nanpo Keizai Taisaku (Kaiteiban)', p. 62. NT, NG, SB signify Nusa Tenggara, New Guinea, and South Borneo respectively.

The government officially adopted this plan on 4 April 1942 and started allocating duties to the Japanese companies in the Association by assigning locations and amounts of production. It is transparent even from the well-rounded figures that the plan was made without thorough research or preparation. Moreover, the amount of cotton these regions could produce in 1947 was, even if this plan were fully achieved, no more than 230,000 tonnes, far below the level of self-sufficiency. The plan in China was fraught with problems and not progressing as the Japanese had hoped for. Furthermore, the Japanese came to realise that shortages of clothing materials in Southeast Asia were more serious than they had imagined. As soon as the Japanese occupied Indonesia, the local people lodged many complaints and petitions with the occupation authorities about the difficulty of obtaining clothing materials. Before the Japanese invasion the Dutch started emergency stockpiling of clothing materials such as cloth, thread, yarn, and dyes. The Japanese took over the stockpiles and discovered that they amounted to no more than two to three months' consumption.<sup>23</sup> The occupation authorities had to handle the limited resources very carefully, and immediately introduced a range of regulations such as production control (to decrease the production of cloth to 25 per cent and sarongs to 30 per cent of the pre-war level), price freezing,

<sup>22</sup> 'Nanpo Keizai Taisaku (Kaiteiban)' [Economic Policies with regard to the Southern Regions (Revised Edition)], in Ishikawa Junkichi (ed.), *Kokka Sodojin Shi Shiryo Hen 8* [History of the National Mobilisation, Sources, 8] (Tokyo: Kokka Sodojin Shi Kankokai, 1979). For British Malaya the Japanese initially had no cotton cultivation plan but from 1944, as establishment of local self-sufficiency became imperative, they started one. See Mori Fumio, 'Gunsei Shubo' [Notes on the Military Administration] (Gunsei Shiryo, no. 90), p. 202.

<sup>23</sup> 'Jawa ni okeru Shuyo Busshi no Taiyo Gessu' [Stocks of Main Resources in Java] (Kishi Shiryo, M16); 'Jawa ni okeru Shuyo Yunyu Minju Busshi Zaikodaka, Showa 42 Nen Ichi Gatsu Tsuitachi' [Stocks of Main Imported Items in Java for Consumption by the Local Population as of 1 January 1942] (Nishijima Collection JV 10).

prevention of hoarding, and coupon and rationing systems.<sup>24</sup> As time passed, increasingly tight control over a range of economic matters proved necessary, and the Japanese embarked on a scheme of social and economic restructuring under the banner of 'Construction of New Java'.

Since the initial five-year plan prepared in Tokyo was obviously insufficient, the Army and the Navy prepared more ambitious five-year plans later in 1942 for their respective jurisdictions (Table 2 and 3).<sup>25</sup>

Table 2. The Army's Initial Five-Year Plan (hectares)

	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Sumatra	14,000	25,000	70,000	110,000	140,000
Java	30,000	50,000	90,000	150,000	180,000
Burma	354,000	545,000	613,000	680,000	816,000
N. Borneo	250	1,500	5,000	7,500	10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>398,250</b>	<b>621,500</b>	<b>778,000</b>	<b>947,500</b>	<b>1,146,000</b>

Source: Gunsei Shiryo, no. 107.

Table 3. The Navy's Initial Five-Year Plan (hectares)

	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
S. Sulawesi	9,625	26,950	57,750	92,400	130,500
N. Sulawesi	19,390	41,550	66,480	82,730	94,000
Bali	5,090	11,140	22,250	35,640	50,900
Lombok	4,090	10,220	20,450	32,720	40,900
Sumbawa	530	1,330	2,650	4,240	5,300
Flores	1,800	4,500	9,000	14,400	18,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,525</b>	<b>95,690</b>	<b>178,580</b>	<b>262,130</b>	<b>339,600</b>

Source: Nishijima Collection, NV19.

<sup>24</sup> 'Jawa ni okeru Shokogyo Seisaku' [Commercial and Industrial Policies in Java] (Nishijima Collection, JV 6-1), pp. 8-11.

<sup>25</sup> The Japanese divided the Netherlands Indies into three main administrative areas and the Twenty-Fifth Army occupied Sumatra, the Sixteenth Army Java and Madura, and the Navy was in charge of the rest. Table 2 is compiled from the tables in 'Sen'i Sakumotsu Chiiki Betsu Nenjibetsu Seisan Mokuhyo' [Annual Production Targets for Fibre-Producing Crops according to the Regions] (Gunsei Shiryo, no. 107). This table does not include the Philippines for some reason. The Japanese had a large project there. See Nagano Yoshiko, 'Menka Zosan Keikaku no Zasetu to Kiketsu' [Frustration and Outcome of the Cotton Production Plan], in Ikehata Setsuho (ed.), *Nippon Senryo ka no Firipin* [The Philippines under the Japanese Occupation] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1996), pp. 185-217. Table 3 is made from several tables in 'Sho Sunda Mensaku Shonendo Seiseki Gaikyo' [Overview of the Cotton Production Results in the First Year in the Lesser Sunda] (Nishijima Collection, NV19).

The harvested cotton was partly to be sent to Japan and partly to be locally processed. The occupied land, however, had insufficient cotton processing facilities. The Japanese government, therefore, made a four-year plan to reduce the textile industry in Japan and shift 1,120,000 spindles (there were 12,000,000 spindles in Japan) and 38,000 looms to the occupied land.<sup>26</sup> The Army set the production target of cotton cloth for local consumption in Java, Sumatra, and Burma in 1944 at 65,000,000 square yards in total, which was 0.77 square yards per person. This amount was far from sufficient because the pre-war average consumption of cloth per person per year was 11.97 square yards in the Netherlands Indies, 13.27 square yards in the Philippines, and 22.43 square yards in Japan.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, importation of cotton products from Japan plummeted as soon as the Japanese started aggression, and ground to a complete halt in the course of 1943.<sup>28</sup>

The Japanese in occupied Southeast Asia commenced their cotton production project in their respective areas but their plan to shift spinning and weaving machines from Japan fell through, and shortages of clothing in the occupied areas became progressively visible. One Japanese, Fukuda Shozo, inspected Java in mid 1943 and reported that there were many children who could not go to school because their pants were torn; lack of clothing was also frustrating the Japanese attempt to increase rice production in Java because there were many farmers who could not work in the fields as their sarongs were torn.<sup>29</sup> The occupation authorities in Java gradually strengthened their own ambitious plan and planted cotton in 36,062 hectares in 1943, 73,300 hectares in 1944, and planned to use 127,500 hectares in 1945.

The situation in the Navy's jurisdiction was also serious. On 31 October 1943 in Bali, the Japanese conducted a survey of prices of basic commodities and found that the average price of clothes was 251.24 per cent of the pre-war level. Three months later, on 31 December, they conducted another survey and reported that the price of clothes could not be identified because there were no clothes on market.<sup>30</sup> In 1943 the Navy planted cotton ambitiously using 54,239 hectares of land, or 146 per cent of their own initial plan. Later in the year, however, they decided not to expand cotton fields any more despite the increasingly serious shortage of clothing. There were three basic reasons. One was lack of cotton processing machines. Their jurisdiction was supposed to receive 160,000 spindles and 6,400 looms from Japan in three years, but only a fraction of the target numbers arrived, and processing the harvested cotton proved difficult.<sup>31</sup> Another was that it became difficult to ship the produced cotton out of the area because the Japanese marine transportation was crippled particularly after their loss

<sup>26</sup> Detail of the plan is available in 'Somubucho Kaigi Sekijo Sangyobucho Setsumei Yoshi' [Gist of the Explanation by the Head of the Department of Industry at the Meeting of the Heads of the General Affairs Departments] (Gunsei Shiryo, no. 107).

<sup>27</sup> 'Resume van de Verklarende Redevoering van den Heer Sangyoobutyoo ddo. 14/4-2605 (1945)' [Summary of the Explanatory Speech by the Head of the Department of Industry delivered on 14 April 1945] (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, deel 1, 1761).

<sup>28</sup> Trade statistics are available in Iwatake, *Nanpo Gunseika*, pp. 127-137.

<sup>29</sup> Fukuda Shozo, 'Jawa Kakyō no Kinkyō' [Recent Situation of the Chinese in Java] (Tokyo: Toa Keizai Kondankai Shiryo, no. 16 (March 1944)), pp. 23-26.

<sup>30</sup> 'Bari To nai Bukka Shisu' [Price Indices in Bali] (Nishijima Collection, NV22).

<sup>31</sup> For detail of the plan, see 'Boshokki Ichu Keikaku' [Plan to Shift Spindles and Looms] (Nishijima Collection NV6) and 'Economic Policy in Occupied Southeast Asia' (NIOD IC 063214). For the situation in Sulawesi, see *Serebesu Shinbun* [Celebes Daily] of 28 May, 3 July, 5 and 10 October, 13, 17, 28 November 1943, 1 January, and 1 and 22 January 1944.

in the battles in Guadalcanal.<sup>32</sup> The final reason was that the Navy as well as the Army in the Navy's jurisdiction mobilised labour locally to construct military facilities such as forts, airstrips, roads and store houses, in preparation for the Allied counter offensive. This created labour shortages for food production. Most of the Navy's areas imported food before the war but this importation either dropped or stopped during the occupation. Expanding cotton fields was certain to aggravate the already serious food shortages.<sup>33</sup>

While maintaining the cotton production target for 1944 at the 1943 level, the Navy tried to process the produced cotton as much as possible by building manual spinning machines, using traditional handlooms, and mobilising schools girls. In this way in Nusa Tenggara in July 1944, for instance, they produced 18,000 pieces of sarong in Bali, 9,500 pieces in Lombok, and 2,000 pieces in Sumbawa. This was far from sufficient but that was more or less what they could achieve. In West Coast of Borneo, a sarong smuggled from Java cost 150 guilders in August 1943 whereas a similar one used to cost 2.50 guilders before the war. Prices were much higher in Banjarmasin in South Borneo. By smuggling clothes from Java to Pontianak, and then to Banjarmasin, traders could make handsome profits.<sup>34</sup> Despite the seriousness of clothing issue, the Navy decided to abandon their cotton production plans altogether in a number of places and to revert the fields to food crops. The Navy now requested the nine Japanese companies which had been sent there to grow cotton, to concentrate their effort for food production. They had to make a choice between food and clothing, and they chose food.<sup>35</sup>

As we have seen, Indonesian people grew some cotton in prewar years in various parts of the archipelago. In Salier island during the occupation, the Japanese ordered the islanders to increase cotton production by about tenfold and deliver ninety per cent of the produce to the Japanese at a fixed price. The islanders concealed as much of their produce as possible and produced clothing materials or sold it at much higher prices on black market. In this way, the local people apparently kept producing their own clothes to some extent even after the Japanese had abandoned their project.<sup>36</sup>

About the situation in Java, the head of the Department of Industry, Tennichi Koichi, explained on 14 April 1945 to the Sanyo Kaigi (Indonesian Council of

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<sup>32</sup> For statistics on marine transportation in the region during the war, see 'Jawa ni okeru Kamotsu Yuso no Genkyo' [Current Situation of Cargo Transportation in Java] (Gunsei Shiryo, no. 18).

<sup>33</sup> 'Romu ni tsuite' [On Labour] (Nishijima Collection, NV17-11), 'Serebesu, Menado Chiku Shokuryo Kankei Shiryo' [Data on Food Supply in Menado, Celebes] (Nishijima Collection, NV2), and *Serebesu Shinbun*, 14 January 1944. For a study of labour mobilisation in the Navy's jurisdiction, see Remco Raben, 'Arbeid voor Groot-Asie: Indonesische Koelies in de Buitengewesten, 1942-1945' [Labour for Great Asia: Indonesian Coolies in the Outer Islands, 1942-1945], in G. Aalders *et al.* (eds.), *Oorlogsdocumentatie '40-'45: Negende Jaarboek van het Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* (Amsterdam: Walburg Pers, 1998), pp. 81-111.

<sup>34</sup> 'Compilation of NEFIS Interrogation Report on Borneo' (NIOD IC 061037), p. 11 and 'Memodandum betreffende de Behandeling van de (Militaire) Krijgsgevangenen in Nederlandsch Indie door de Japanners, 29 Aug. 1945' [Memorandum with regard to the Treatment of the (Military) Prisoners of War in the Netherlands Indies by the Japanese, 29 Aug. 1945] (NIOD IC 016053).

<sup>35</sup> See, among others, 'Seramu Minseibu Kannai Norin Chiku Suisan Zakkan Zakken, [Observations on Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery, and Live Stock Industry in Seram under the Navy's Civil Administration] (Nishijima Collection, NV15), pp. 17-28.

<sup>36</sup> 'Interrogation of Three Boeginese Sailors' (NIOD IC 060880), p. 7.

Advisers) in the following way.<sup>37</sup> In pre-war years, Java consumed 1,280,000 piculs of cotton per year. The production target for 1944 was 75,000 piculs while the outcome was 30,000 piculs. The shortfall was due to a severe drought and insufficient know-how. They set the target for 1945 at 250,000 piculs, of which 120,000 piculs were to be delivered to Jakarta government and 130,000 piculs were to be processed into clothes within the Residencies. The portion delivered to Jakarta government was to be made into military uniforms, canvasses for automobiles, sails, as well as yarns that was to be redistributed to the needy Residencies.

The wartime production target was, according to Tennichi, about a third of the pre-war level, or 4 yards per person per year, just enough for a pair of shorts and a short jacket. That would require about 430,000 piculs of cotton and 215,000 power spindles. At the beginning of the occupation there were only 42,000 spindles in Java. To ease the situation, the Military Administration took various measures, one of which was to build manual spinning machines. One such machine was able to spin 40 grammes of yarn per day. Their target was to build one million of them, and up to that moment 210,000 had been built. They also continued building handlooms particularly in Pekalongan and Priangan Residencies.

Another measure was to make clothes from gunnysacks. Sack factories in Solo stopped producing sacks, and concentrated on producing clothes. In addition, one million tonnes of sugar was stored in sacks at that time. By emptying the sacks, 12 million pieces of clothes could be made. Kapotex (made from kapok and latex) was also to be used. It was cheap and easy to make. One drawback was that it had low porosity and did not ventilate well but it could be used for wrapping bodies for burial.

Tennichi further explained that, to achieve self-sufficiency in clothing, they had to secure raw materials, processing apparatus, and manpower. The manpower required for the project was 2.3 million people per day. In addition, owners of houses (500,000 households) were requested to plant cotton in their house gardens. On the Emperor's birthday, 29 April, there would be a special distribution of clothes to farmers, romusha, school teachers, and low ranking public servants.<sup>38</sup>

The above is the gist of Tennichi's exposition. Before long, those who received the special distribution of clothes began appearing in clothes made from storage sacks. Gunnysacks were normally made of jute that grew in the Bengal region of British India. Bengal was responsible for 97 per cent of the total jute production in the world. Indonesia imported about 30 million gunnysacks annually, which became unobtainable during the war. There was therefore a serious shortage of gunnysacks at the beginning of the occupation. The Japanese attempted to grow jute and roselle but the outcomes, particularly of jute, were far from satisfactory.<sup>39</sup> Indonesia, however, produced a large amount of sisal and exported 94,452 tonnes in 1940, mostly to Australia. Sisal is a very coarse fibre that was normally used for cordage. The Japanese decided to use sisal for

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<sup>37</sup> 'Resume van de Verklarende Redevoering van den Heer Sangyoobutyoo'.

<sup>38</sup> The Japanese used clothing materials to manipulate Indonesians. They distributed clothing materials only to those who had delivered cotton to them or those who had worked for them for a certain period. On Luang Island, in contrast, the Japanese confiscated all clothing as a reprisal for the killing of two Japanese by the islanders in August 1944. The islanders therefore had to grow cotton in order to manufacture their own clothing. 'Compilation of NEFIS Interrogation Reports on Tanimbar and Babar etc.' (NIOD IC 061240), p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Jute does not grow well unless it enjoys over 13 hours of sunlight per day. Most of Indonesia, being on or close to the equator, does not receive sunlight for so long.

making sacks. Most of the sacks produced in Indonesia during the occupation were made of sisal, supplemented with some other miscellaneous fibre such as roselle, coconut fibre, and pineapple leaves.

Indonesian people also improvised clothes from whatever materials they could lay hands on, such as tablecloths, bed linen, mosquito nets, flour sacks, mats, and bark of trees. People in the upper strata of the society always had privileged access to fine clothes. After the Japanese capitulation they took over the Japanese clothing stockpiles and kept wearing very fine clothes. Many people, in sharp contrast, had to stay in gunnysacks or rags.<sup>40</sup> In April 1946, Dutch officers investigated the conditions of rice-mills in Java. All of their reports state that the mill workers were badly clothed. Importation of clothes from Australia began soon and the Red Cross and the NIGIEO (Nederlands-Indische Gouvernements Import en Export Organisatie) started distributing clothes to the needy, but in July 1946 in East Java, people paid 20 to 25 guilders for gunnysack clothes.<sup>41</sup> In certain areas in East Java in 1947, as much as 80 per cent of the population still wore gunnysacks for clothes.<sup>42</sup>

The situation in the Outer Islands was no better. A Dutch officer who inspected plantations in Sumatra in late September and early October 1945 reports that 'a very large proportion of the workers wore gunnysacks of rags thereof'. The hospitals were overcrowded with twice or more as many patients as the number of beds. Many patients, including women, children, and infants, were lying on the stone floor, clad in gunnysacks, often suffering from severe skin disease or a deep wound.<sup>43</sup> Similarly in Lombok people had to use gunnysacks and tree bark for clothing.<sup>44</sup> In Bolaang-Mongondow in North Sulawesi where the Japanese had abandoned their cotton production, Chinese traders started shifting rice to neighbouring Minahasa, and bringing in clothes in return. The Dutch re-established their authority and imposed a ban on exportation of rice that was scarce in the region. Both the Chinese traders and the local authority, raja Manoppo, were critical about the Dutch measure. Manoppo explained that the local population had a choice between two evils, '*Malu atau Mati*' (Embarrassment or Death, a parody of the official slogan, *Merdeka atau Mati*, Freedom of Death). By importing clothes, some would be relieved from being *malu*, even though some might have to face *mati* from lack of food as a consequence.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> 'Economische Toestanden te Malang en Omgeving' [Economic Situation in Nalang and its Environs], 22 June 1946 (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, deel 1, 1767).

<sup>41</sup> 'Eenige Economische Gegevens uit Oost-Java' [Some Economic Data from East Java] (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, deel 1, 1761). In December 1940 the wholesale price of one small gunnysack was 30 cents, a large one 39.5 cents, and the average daily wage of coolies was about 25 cents (*Indisch Verslag 1941*, pp. 248, 367). Wages increased by about twofold over the occupation period.

<sup>42</sup> William H. Frederick, 'The Appearance of the Revolution: Cloth, Uniforms, and the Pemuda Style in East Java, 1945-1949', in Henk Schulte Nordholt (ed.), *Outward Appearance: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), p. 207.

<sup>43</sup> 'Rapport I/Z Bezoek aan Olie en Vezel Ondernemingen Ulto. September Begin October 1945' [Report on the Visit to the Oil and Fibre Enterprises in the End of September and the Early October 1945] (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, deel 1, 1767).

<sup>44</sup> 'Rapport inf. Gaspersz (Praja) betreffende de Toestand op Lombok gedurende het Tijdeperk vanaf het Begin van de Japanse Overheersing tot de Komst der Geallieerden' [Report on the Information from Gaspersz (Praja) with regard to the Situation in Lombok during the Period from the Beginning of the Japanese Rule to the Arrival of the Allies] (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, deel 1, 1929).

<sup>45</sup> 'Rapport Inzake de Algemeene Situatie in de Onderafd. Bolaang-Mongondow' [Report on the General Situation in the Subdistrict of Bolaang-Mongondow], 17 June 1946 (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, deel 2, 1350).

A report about the situation in the islands of Sula during the occupation illustrates how lack of clothes could be a life-threatening problem for many people. An informant states that if a stranger came to visit a family and that family had only one sarong left, the children and younger women would hide and give the sarong to their mother, who could show herself. This was of course no laughing matter because women would have to go out if they were to obtain food. This island used to export copra and import rice. Importation of rice stopped during the occupation. The islanders had to grow their own food but the Japanese took away about 1,500 male coolies from Sanana to Kairatu. So women had to work the fields. They could not, however, till the land and mend the fences at the same time. Thus fences suffered from disrepair, and wild pigs ruined the crops. In 1944 approximately 10 per cent less land was cultivated. As a consequence, food price increased by three to fourfold by mid 1944. Meanwhile the price of an old gunnysack rose from 25 cents to three guilders.<sup>46</sup> Shortage of clothing was apparently perceived more serious an issue.

Shortages of cotton affected people's lives in a range of ways. Hospitals quickly exhausted their stocks of cotton wool or cotton bandages and had to improvise bandages from stems of banana leaves.<sup>47</sup> Women often had a difficulty finding cloth for sanitary napkins, and had to use kapotex instead, which was much less effective.<sup>48</sup>

The Japanese effort to overcome such problems by producing cotton affected food production in various ways. Cotton could grow either in irrigated fields or on non-irrigated fields, but planting on non-irrigated fields could be done only in the rainy season because germination requires plenty of water. In irrigated fields it could be planted anytime so long as water was available. Moreover, productivity in irrigated fields could be up to ten times higher, but wet rice was the most important food crop. The Japanese Military Administration faced a difficult question of how to grow cotton and other fibre-yielding crops without causing reduction in food production. They planted cotton partly in irrigated fields and partly on dry lands.<sup>49</sup> At the same time they took several measures to prevent food production from decreasing. One was to plant cotton on rice fields as the secondary crop after harvesting rice. This would, however, affect the production other secondary crops. Another measure was to convert

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<sup>46</sup> 'Interrogation of Soeleiman Asik Ex-Prahoë "Doenia Baroe", Zuid-Molukken' (NIOD IC 060882).

<sup>47</sup> 'Compilation of NEFIS Interrogation Reports Nos. 351-364' (NIOD IC 061024), p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Di Bawah Pendudukan Jepang: Kenangan Empat Puluh Dua Orang Yang Mengalaminya*, [Under the Japanese Occupation: Reminiscences of Forty-two People Who Experienced It] (Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 1988), p. 42. This book also contains testimonies of the local people's effort to grow cotton in their house gardens for their own consumption.

<sup>49</sup> In Java two Japanese companies, Tozan Sangyo and Mitsui Norin, were assigned to grow cotton. Tozan Sangyo's plan for 1945 was to plant cotton, mainly through subcontract, in 59,345 hectares, of which 15,747 hectares (26.5%) were irrigated land. 'Nijuu Nendo Hanshu Yotei Menseki' [Planned Area under Cultivation for 1945] (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, bijlage 3, 2178). In Sumatra, there were three companies, and in the Navy's area nine companies engaged in cotton cultivation. See 'Nanpo Kaku Chiiki ni okeru Gytai Chosa – Menka Saibaigyo' [Investigation into the Industries in the Southern Regions – Cotton Cultivation] (NIOD IC 082060), p. 27. In addition, there were several hundred Japanese commercial firms operating in occupied Southeast Asia assigned to a wide range of activities. About Java the following document lists 209 names of such companies: 'SEATIC (NEI) Screening Document No. 65, List of the Companies that have been operating in JAVA during the war' (NEFIS/CMI, deel 1, 2398). About entire Southeast Asia, see Hikita Yasuyuku (ed.), '*Nanpo Kyo-eiken*': *Senji Nippon no Tonan Ajia Keizai Shihai* [Co-Prosperity Sphere in the Southern Regions: Japanese Economic Rule in Wartime Southeast Asia], Tokyo: Taga Shuppan, 1995, pp. 704-787.

plantations which used to grow export-crops to food crop fields. Another was to create new agricultural fields by reclaiming swamps and clearing forests. Yet another was to enable double cropping in rice by introducing a quick-maturing strand of seed and by improving water supply through irrigation extension. Initially the Japanese were apparently optimistic about food production. The productivity of rice per unit of land in Java was about one third of that in Japan. They therefore thought that rice production in Java could be doubled in five years by introducing the more sophisticated, Japanese way of cultivating rice.

From late 1943 the Japanese in Indonesia started systematic and intensive labour mobilisation under the banners of 'production increase' and 'total mobilisation'. They conducted large irrigation projects at sixty-two places in Java alone. The Japanese propaganda organs constantly reported that rice fields were being expanded at various places and a substantial increase in production was anticipated. Apparently those projects did indeed increase production in certain areas. For instance, an Indonesian official reported in October 1946 to the Muslim political party, Masyumi, that rice production in the regency of Sidoarjo increased from the prewar level of 453,466 tonnes per annum to 634,794 tonnes during the occupation but it dropped in 1946 to 360,958 tonnes due to the war of independence.<sup>50</sup> In May 1946 a Dutch intelligence officer wrote the following report about Gorontalo in North Sulawesi; 'during the Japanese occupation rice production increased dramatically but the area is still not self-sufficient and therefore requires importation of rice.'<sup>51</sup> All in all, however, the area under food crops decreased constantly despite all the effort to prevent it, and production dropped more sharply in Java as well as in some other areas.<sup>52</sup> In Bali in 1943, two Japanese companies, Mitsui Norin and Mitsubishi Shoji, grew cotton using 7,153 hectares of land, or 141 per cent of the Navy's initial plan.<sup>53</sup> The Navy decided not to expand cotton fields any more for 1944, but the land area available for wet rice declined from 95,125 hectares before the war, to 94,367 hectares in 1944. The average production of wet rice before the war was 169,125 tonnes while the Navy set the production target for 1944 at 190,187 tonnes. The increase in production was to be achieved by practising double cropping in 19,345 hectares.<sup>54</sup>

The Japanese set ambitious targets for rice production, but it dropped in Java from 8,993,000 tonnes in 1941 to 6,870,000 tonnes in 1944 according to one statistic.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> 'Pedoman tentang Daja Oepaja oentoe Menambah Hasil Pertanian dalam Daerah Kaboepaten Sidoardjo' [Guidelones for Efforts to Increase Agricultural Production in the Regency of Sidoarjo] (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, bijlage 3, 3145).

<sup>51</sup> 'Rapport over Gorontalo, Manado, 3 Mei 1946', [Report on Gorontalo, Manado, 3 May 1946] (BUZA NEFIS/CMI, deel 2, 1352).

<sup>52</sup> According to Pierre van der Eng, the harvested area for rice in Java dropped from 4,101 (thousand hectares) in 1941 to 3,203 in 1945. During the same period, the area for maize dropped from 2,229 to 1,488, cassava from 1,003 to 551, soyabeans from 440 to 141, peanuts from 8,237 to 5,833. See Pierre van der Eng, *Food Supply in Java during War and Decolonisation, 1940-1950*, Hull: The University of Hull, Centre for South-East Asian Studies, Occasional Paper No. 25, 1994, p. 73. For a detailed study of labour mobilisation for agriculture in Java, see Shigeru Sato, 'Economic Soldiers in Java: Indonesian Labourers Drafted for Agricultural Projects during the Japanese Occupation', forthcoming as a chapter of a book edited by Paul Kratoska, to be published by Routledge.

<sup>53</sup> 'Showa 18 Nendo Mensaki Ichiranhyo' [An Overview of Cotton Cultivation in 1943] (Nishijima Collection, NV6).

<sup>54</sup> 'Shokuryo ni Tsuite' [On Food Provision] (Nishijima Collection, NV17-1), pp. 3-4.

<sup>55</sup> Eng, *Food Supply in Java*, p. 73.

Soon after the Japanese launched the large campaign for ‘production increase’, a Japanese top authority in tropical agriculture, Terao Hiroshi, made an inspection tour in Southeast Asia and publicly criticised the agricultural reforms that were being undertaken there. The gist of his argument was that it was wrong to consider the Japanese methods superior and the local methods inferior. He defended the local methods by explaining that there were good reasons for the local farmers to adopt their own methods. At the same time he presented a list of problems associated with the introduction of the Japanese methods to the tropical environment.<sup>56</sup>

The Japanese in Java were evidently aware of those problems even before Terao inspected the area. Fukuda Shozo, who was not an agriculture specialist and inspecting economic issues was not the purpose of his visit to Java in mid 1943, apparently obtained information on food production in Java from some Japanese in Java and made the following passing remarks in his report that the quick maturing and high yielding variety of rice was experimentally planted on about fifty hectares of land but it proved vulnerable to insect attacks, required thorough weeding, and absorbed much more nutrients than the local varieties. It did not grow without labour intensive care including manuring, but the local people detested handling manure as being dirty.<sup>57</sup> Despite of all these problems, the Japanese felt that they had to take some measures.

In the Navy’s area, labour mobilisation for military projects affected civil projects, particularly production and distribution of food, more seriously. Although the Navy was in charge of the civil administration in this area, the Army’s combat units also stationed there and demanded labour for constructing fortifications. The demands for labour by the Army for constructing fortifications and other facilities in Bali was 2,500 men until September 1944 and 700 men from October 1944. The Navy also employed constantly about 3,500 men, plus 3,000 men for half year in 1944 for opening airstrips. In Lombok, the Army and the Navy employed approximately 5,500 men for construction of fortifications, airstrips, storing facilities, and meat processing factories and so on.<sup>58</sup>

The total population was 1,250,000 in Bali, 820,000 in Lombok, and 320,000 in Sumbawa. The demands by the military were around 0.5 per cent of the population in Bali and Lombok, and 5 per cent in Sumbawa. The total work force was, however, about a quarter of the total population, which meant that the demand in the relatively large and sparsely populated island of Sumbawa was nearly twenty per cent of the total work force, and labour had to be brought in from elsewhere.

As the southwest Pacific battle front was gradually pushed westward, demands for labour and food by the military likewise shifted. The islands of Timor, Flores, and Sumba were more or less self-sufficient in food in prewar years but in 1944 Timor had to import about 2,000 tonnes of rice, and Sumba and Flores needed 1,000 tonnes each. As for Sumbawa, the civil administration planned to produce some surplus of food by increasing agricultural outputs but this project became impossible due to labour

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<sup>56</sup> Terao Hiroshi, ‘Nanpo Nogyo Gijutsu Shido ni Tsuite’ [On Instructing Farming Technique in the Southern Regions] (Gunsei Shiryo, no. 107).

<sup>57</sup> Fukuda, ‘Jawa Kakyō’, pp. 23-26. The Netherlands Indies imported substantial amounts of chemical fertiliser (138,739 tonnes in 1940 according to *Indisch Verslag 1941*, p. 352), which stopped during the occupation.

<sup>58</sup> “Romu ni tsuite” [On labour], in Nishijima Collection, NV 17-11, held at the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Wasweda University pp. 11-12.

mobilisation by the military, and importation of food became also necessary.

Part of the reason why importation of food became necessary in these islands was that local food production dropped. Most of adult romusha were drawn from the agricultural sector, which created shortages of labour for growing food crops. Before the war Southeast Asia as a whole produced surpluses of food, particularly rice. Most of the surpluses, however, derived from the three deltas at the mouths of the Mekong, Chao Phraya, and Irrawaddy. Most other areas had to import rice from there, or were barely self-sufficient. During the war, importation of food became difficult for most deficit areas. Moreover, demands for food by the military and the occupation governments increased, and less labour was made available for food production. To make the situation even worse, the compulsory cultivation of cotton and some other non-edible crops took up substantial parts of agricultural fields.

In this kind of situation, the occupation authorities tried to work out how much labour that they could deliver to the military without causing widespread and excessive damage to the economic foundation of the local communities. They also tried to identify farmers' slack seasons. Compared with the simple pattern of labour input in the temperate climate with four distinctive seasons, however, the crop cycles in the tropical climate were much more complex, and slack periods were difficult to identify.<sup>59</sup>

The Navy's civil administrative unit in charge of Bali, Lombok, and Sumbawa calculated work force in the following way. The people from the age of ten to fifty were considered work force. Those from ten to fifteen and from forty-one to fifty were observed half as efficient as those in between. A man from the age of sixteen to forty constituted one unit of labour. Such man would work 300 days per year on average. He was therefore 300 units of labour per year. On the ground that women were less frequently engaged and less efficient in physically demanding labour than men, a woman in the same age group was considered 60 units per year, and those from ten to fifteen and from forty-one to fifty 30 units each.<sup>60</sup>

Calculated this way, Bali had 90 million, Lombok 57 million, and Sumbawa 23 million units of labour per year. The demand for labour in Bali in 1944, not including the demand by the military, was calculated to be 116 million (68 million for agriculture and 48 million for other fields), 60 million in Lombok (34 and 26 million respectively), and 26 million in Sumbawa (10 and 16 million). Their calculation showed that all the three islands had considerable shortages of labour even if there were no direct demands by the military.

There is no comparable quantification of supply and demand of labour in the prewar years in these islands. It is, nevertheless, clear that the labour shortages in the above calculation were due to an increase in demand both in agriculture and other fields. In non-agricultural fields a number of Japanese companies employed local manpower and operated, among other things, meat, vegetable and seafood processing factories, canneries, rice-mills, paper-mills, storage-bag factories, and marine and land transportation.<sup>61</sup>

Agriculture demanded well over half of the total work force. There were several reasons for the increase of demand for labour in agriculture. First, Japanese introduced new crops, the most important of which was cotton. Second, they also

<sup>59</sup> 'Romu ni tsuite', pp. 7-12.

<sup>60</sup> 'Romu ni tsuite', pp. 1-4.

<sup>61</sup> 'Romu ni tsuite', p. 5.

planned to increase, or at least maintain, food production through more intensive utilisation of the dwindling land and labour, practising double cropping in rice wherever possible. Third, they attempted to minimise the decrease in the land area for food production by converting the fields for export crops such as coffee and coconut into fields for food-crop like maize and dry-rice, and opening up new fields and extending irrigation channels particularly in Lombok and Sumbawa.<sup>62</sup>

For growing cotton, four Japanese companies, namely Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Kanebo, and Nanyo Kohatsu, were assigned to work in these three islands. In 1943 the area under cotton was 7,200 hectares in Bali, 5,750 hectares in Lombok, and 1,200 hectares in Sumbawa. Existing documents produced by Japanese are mostly about the quantities and technical aspects of cotton production. They seldom discuss the issue of labour. The reason for the lack of concern about labour seems to reflect the methods of labour utilisation they adopted. There were three methods. One was subcontract. The Japanese negotiated with indigenous authorities, gave them production quotas, provided them with seed, and bought the produce. This was the easiest method for the Japanese. So, over eighty per cent of cotton was produced this way. Indonesian authorities possessed coercive power over the local population. Simply by giving them quotas, the Japanese could expect them to implement such policies as forced cultivation and delivery of designated crops, and forced labour mobilisation. Indonesian farmers were made to grow cotton by their own village chiefs and so on, who acted as the representatives of the foreign overlords.<sup>63</sup> Due to this kind of indirect method, the staff of the Japanese companies did not have to worry about the issue of labour or feel that they were coercing local farmers.

Another method was direct management. In this method, the Japanese companies rented land, employed labour, and directly managed certain amounts of cotton fields. The main purpose of this method seems to have been to conduct experiments to find out what kinds of seeds, fields, and cultivation methods were suitable. The total land area thus managed was therefore relatively small. Yet another was direct purchase from farmers or middlemen. Even after the Industrial Revolution, some indigenous population kept growing small amounts of cotton, which Japanese bought. In fact it was the local population who desperately needed clothing materials during the Japanese occupation, so some farmers spontaneously grew cotton for their own consumption, and tried to conceal it from the authorities as much as possible.<sup>64</sup>

Exactly how labour was mobilised for these projects in the Navy's area is hazy due to insufficient availability of information. Japanese and Indonesian civil administrators no doubt produced many documents about those difficult projects but few of the documents seem to have found their way to the archives in Japan or the Netherlands.<sup>65</sup> In comparison, there are detailed primary sources on Java.<sup>66</sup> There were

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<sup>62</sup> 'Shokuryo ni tsuite' [On foodstuffs], Nishijima Collection, NV 17-1.

<sup>63</sup> One Japanese document records that the Army in Sumbawa ordered the local regent to grow cotton for them on 500 hectares of land. This was clearly violation of the Navy's administrative authority and thus the Navy's civil administration requested the regent not to accept such order. This episode would show that Japanese could secure labour relatively easily by simply approaching the local authorities. See 'Men ni tsuite' [On Cotton], Nishijima Collection, NV 17, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> 'Interrogation of Three Boeginese Sailors', Indonesian Collection document number 060880, p. 7, held at the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, Amsterdam.

<sup>65</sup> One way to overcome this problem is to conduct research in Indonesia but for the past fifteen years the Indonesian immigration authorities have not allowed me to visit Indonesia for an unexplained reason.

of course regional differences in terms of occupation policies but the overall aims and the broad outline of the policies were similar. The following section outlines the labour situation in Java.

The overall scale and the trend of labour mobilisation in Java can be seen reflected in the record of railway passengers, which increased from less than seven million per month in 1942 to over eighteen million per month in late 1944.<sup>67</sup> The Japanese employed a range of methods to recruit labour. The most important instrument was a Java-wide network of labour recruiting agencies called Romu Kyokai (Labour Association) which the occupation authorities created in late 1943 and early 1944. In this system, requests for labour were sent from the local agencies to the central office in Jakarta. The central office computed the overall demand for labour and allocated quotas to the local offices. These quotas were then sent down to the village level through the network of Romu Kyokai.

Typically in this system, villagers were told by the local officials such as village chiefs or subdistrict heads to assemble at a certain place and time, and then sent away by train, often without being told where they were being taken to. Many of them, being frightened, escaped before reaching the work sites. The number often dwindles to half or less by the time they reached the destinations. From the work sites as well, many escaped. Those escapees tried to walk home but they sometimes could not find their way home. In Java three regional languages were spoken not including Indonesian. For those who were sent from Central Java to West Java, for instance, verbal communication with the local people was impossible. Moreover, they often had no money to buy food. Many were therefore stranded in their own island, and starved to death on the roadside or in other public places.

Most of these who worked received wages which were nominally at the same level as in the prewar years.<sup>68</sup> Those farmers who were ordered to deliver their crops to the authorities likewise received payments. Due to the large-scale mobilisation of wage labour and the compulsory delivery of food and other items, farmers' nominal incomes increased dramatically. The money they received was, however, the military noted and other currencies that the Japanese issued in large amounts. The increased circulation of currencies, coupled with dire shortages of daily essentials such as food and clothing, resulted in runaway price inflation. The authorities gradually raised the wages and the purchase prices of commodities that the farmers had to deliver but prices of daily essentials rose much faster.

Mobilised labourers were usually provided with food. The amount of food they received, however, gradually dwindled. There were three main reasons. First, the total amount of food available decreased in many places due to decreased importation or decreased production despite the 'production increase' campaigns. Second, the system of compulsory delivery of food to the government malfunctioned. War profiteering and black market thrived instead and the occupation authorities could not secure sufficient

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Since the political climate there is changing, they may allow me to do so now.

<sup>66</sup> For more detail, see Sato, "'Economic Soldiers' in Indonesia".

<sup>67</sup> 'The Survey of the Railway Affairs to be Succeeded', p. 48. Indonesian Collection document number 012516, p. 48, held at the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, Amsterdam. In 1942 the number of passengers were already larger than in the prewar years.

<sup>68</sup> In addition to paid romusha, the Japanese in Java also mobilised unpaid labour service corps called *kinro hoshi tai*. As of November 1944, the Army employed 50,000 and the civil administration employed 150,000 men and women in such corps.

foodstuffs. Third, the bureaucracy for food distribution was inefficient. One day in October 1943 in a village in Java, villagers were ordered to work for one week. They were promised to receive 100 grammes of rice a day. They had to walk for two hours to the site. Later they were told that the rice would be given them after they completed their assigned period of work. The villagers refused to work under such conditions and walked back home the same morning.<sup>69</sup> This episode seems to indicate that labourers arrived at the work site but food for them did not, due to administrative inefficiency that was widespread.

To sum up this rather lengthy paper, we can conclude that labour mobilisation in Japanese occupied Indonesia was truly in a large scale. Japanese put their slogan, 'total mobilisation', into practice. They had to mobilise so much labour because labour productivity dropped during the war. Japanese mobilised local people for producing food and clothing but availability of those essential commodities plummeted and people went hungry, and their clothes were quickly reduced to rags. Japan's 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' was indeed destined to become a 'Co-Poverty Sphere'. Labour mobilisation was in part for covering up the economically destructive nature of the Japanese venture. The aim of the Japanese war effort, according to their rhetoric, was to 'emancipate' Indonesians who had been made coolies for the Dutch for centuries. The Japanese themselves, however, forcibly and systematically mobilised labour in an unprecedented scale. Some Dutch people called the labourers mobilised by Japanese, *slavenarbeiders*. Under the banner of emancipation, Japanese indeed enslaved Indonesians.

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<sup>69</sup> 'Penghidoepan Rakjat: Roomusha Menolak Bekerdja Karena "Didjoestai"' [People's Living Conditions: Romusha Refused to Work For Being "Cheated"], NIOD IC 031773.