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## EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY: COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM IN THE DUTCH EAST INDIES, 1910-1930



The Dutch East Indies experienced the replacement of company rule by Dutch government rule and the complete transformation of Java into a colonial society and the successful extension of colonial rule to Sumatra and the eastern archipelago during the early 20th century. The boundaries of the modern state of Indonesia were defined during this time and the process of generally exploitative political, military, and economic integration began. This collection comprises correspondence, studies and reports, cables, maps, and other kinds of documents related to U.S. consular activities. U.S. Consulates were listening posts reporting on the activities of the Dutch colonial government and the activities of the native peoples.

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### **Detailed Description:**

*Source Note:* Record Group 59, Records of the U.S. State Department, Central Classified Files, Class 800, Netherlands, 1910-1929. Includes content only for country codes for Netherlands East Indies and associated islands: 856d, 856e, 856f, 856g, 856h, and 856i.

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The Netherlands East Indies in the Nineteenth-century experienced not only the replacement of company rule by Dutch government rule but also the complete transformation of Java into a colonial society and the successful extension of colonial rule to Sumatra and the eastern archipelago. The modern state of Indonesia is in a real sense a nineteenth-century creation. It was during this century that most of its boundaries were defined and a process of generally exploitative political, military, and economic integration begun. Some analysts, such as Benedict R.O'G. Anderson in his books *Language and Power: Exploring Indonesian Political Culture and Violence* and *The State in Suharto's Indonesia*, argue that the New Order state of Suharto is a direct descendant of the Dutch colonial state, with similar objectives as

summarized in the Dutch phrase *rust en orde* (tranquility and order). There was, at least, a natural historical continuity between the Dutch colonial and modern Indonesian state.

The dismantling of the Cultivation System on Java, Dutch subjugation of Sumatra and the eastern archipelago, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 stimulated the rapid development of a cash-crop, export economy. Another factor was technological change, especially the rise of the automotive industry, which created unforeseen markets for tropical products in Europe and North America. Although palm oil, sugar, cinchona (the source of quinine, used in treating malaria), cocoa, tea, coffee, and tobacco were major revenue earners, they were eclipsed during the early twentieth century by rubber and, especially, petroleum. Sumatra and the eastern archipelago surpassed Java as a source of tropical exports, although sugarcane remained important in East Java.

Rubber plantations were established on a large scale in the early twentieth century, particularly around Medan, Palembang, and Jambi on Sumatra, with British, American, French, and other foreign investment playing a major role. A high-yield variety of rubber tree, discovered in Brazil and proven very profitable in Malaya, was utilized. It was during this period that the emergence of small-holder rubber cultivation, which was to play a major role in the Indonesian economy, took place.

Tin had long been a major mineral product of the archipelago, especially on the islands of Bangka and Billiton, off the southeast coast of Sumatra. But petroleum was, and remained, the Netherlands East Indies most important mineral resource. Oil, extracted from Sumatra after 1884, was first used to light lamps. In 1890, the Royal Dutch Company for Exploration of Petroleum Sources in the Netherlands Indies (Koninklijke Nederlandsche Maatschappij tot Exploitatie van Petroleum-bronnen in Nederlandsche-Indië) was established, and in 1907 it merged with Shell Transport and Trading Company, a British concern, to become Royal Dutch Shell, which controlled around 85 percent of oil production in the islands before World War II. Oil was pumped from wells in Sumatra, Java, and eastern Kalimantan.

Rapid economic development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries profoundly changed the lives of both European residents and indigenous peoples. By 1930 Batavia had a population of more than 500,000 people. Surabaya had nearly 300,000 people and other large cities—Semarang, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surakarta— had populations between 100,000 and 300,000.

Always conscious of its ethnic and cultural diversity, society in the Netherlands East Indies grew more so as the number of Dutch and other Western residents—especially white women—increased and chose to live European-style lives in special urban areas with wide streets or on plantations. There also were increasing numbers of Indonesians who lived in these Western-style urban areas. Nevertheless, the European *trekkers*, as they were known in Dutch, were often not much different from their British counterparts described by George Orwell in *Burmese Days*, longing for the home country and looking on the native world around them with suspicion and hostility. An early twentieth century work described Batavia's European quarter as "well planned, it is kept scrupulously clean, and while the natives in their bright colored clothes, quietly making their way hither and thither, give the required

picturesque touch to the life in the streets, the absence of the crowded native dwelling houses prevents the occurrence of those objectionable features which so often destroy the charm of the towns in the Orient."

The trekkers contrasted with an earlier generation of Dutch colonists, the *blijvers* (sojourners), who lived most or all of their lives in the islands and adopted a special *Indisch* (Indies) style of life blending Indonesian and European elements. The *rijsttafel* (rice table), a meal of rice with spicy side dishes, is one of the best-known aspects of this mixed Indies-European culture. Eurasians, usually the children of European fathers and native mothers, were legally classified as European under Netherlands Indies law and played an important role in colonial society; but as trekkers outnumbered *blijvers*, the Eurasians found themselves increasingly discriminated against and marginalized. It is significant that a strand of Indonesian nationalism first emerged among Eurasians who argued that "the Indies [were] for those who make their home there."

The Chinese minority in the Netherlands East Indies had long played a major economic role in the archipelago as merchants, artisans, and indispensable middlemen in the collection of crops and taxes from native populations. They encountered considerable hostility from both natives and Europeans, largely because of the economic threat they seemed to pose. In the late nineteenth century, emigration from China's southern provinces to the East Indies increased apace with economic development. Between 1870 and 1930, the Chinese population expanded from around 250,000 to 1,250,000, the latter being about 2 percent of the archipelago's total population. Chinese were divided into *totok*, first-generation, full-blooded emigrants, and *peranakan*, native-born Chinese with some native ancestry who, like *blijvers* and Eurasians, had a distinct Indies life-style. Overseas Chinese lived for the most part in segregated communities. During the early twentieth century, the identity of overseas Chinese was deeply influenced by revolutionary developments in their homeland.

National consciousness emerged gradually in the archipelago during the first decades of the twentieth century, developed rapidly during the contentious 1930s, and flourished, both ideologically and institutionally, during the tumultuous Japanese occupation in the early 1940s, which shattered Dutch colonial authority. As in other parts of colonial Southeast Asia, nationalism was preceded by traditional-style rural resistance. The Java War, joining discontented elites and peasants, was a precursor. Around 1900 the followers of *Surantika Samin*, a rural messiah who espoused his own religion, the Science of the Prophet Adam, organized passive resistance on Java that included refusal to pay taxes or perform labor service. Militant Islam was another focus of traditional resistance, especially in Sumatra.

Native nationalism reflected trends in other parts of Asia and Europe. Pilgrims and students returning from the Middle East brought modernist Islamic ideas that attempted to adapt the faith to changing times. Other influences included the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885; the Philippine struggle for independence against both Spain and the United States in 1898-1902; Japan's victory over Tsarist Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), a major challenge to the myth of white European supremacy; and the success of *Kemal Atatürk* in creating a modern, secularized Turkey after World War I on the ruins of the

Ottoman Empire. The Russian Revolution of 1917 also had a profound impact, reflected in the growth of a strong communist movement by the late 1920s. National consciousness was not homogeneous but reflected the diversity of Indonesian society. Dutch repression and the shock of war from 1942 to 1945, however, forged diverse groups into something resembling a unified whole.

Centuries of Dutch cooperation made the highest ranking priyayi on Java and their counterparts on other islands politically conservative. But lower ranking members of the elite—petty officials, impoverished aristocrats, school teachers, native doctors, and others—were less content with the status quo. In 1908 students of the School for Training Native Doctors in Batavia established an association, Budi Utomo (Noble Endeavor), which is considered by many historians to be the first modern political organization in the Netherlands east Indies. Java-centered and confined largely to students and the lower priyayi, Budi Utomo had little influence on other classes or non-Javanese. Because of its limited appeal and the suspicion of many members of the high-ranking priyayi, the organization did not thrive. Similar elite-oriented groups, however, were established during the 1910s both inside and outside Java.

Significantly, Budi Utomo adopted Malay rather than Javanese as its official language. Malay, the lingua franca of the archipelago, became a symbol of its unity and the basis for the national language of an independent "Indonesia", Bahasa Indonesia. Unlike Javanese, which was laden with honorific language emphasizing status differences, Malay was linguistically democratic as well as free of Java-centeredness, although Bahasa Indonesia itself does not abandon status-conscious forms.

A more assertive political movement than Budi Utomo appeared with the establishment in 1910 of the Indies Party (Indische Partij) by E.F.E. Douwes Dekker, a Eurasian and descendant of the author of Max Havelaar. A veteran of the Boer War, fighting on the Afrikaaner side and a journalist, Douwes Dekker criticized the Dutch Colonial Ethical Policy as excessively conservative and advocated self-government for the islands and a kind of Indies nationalism that encompassed all the islands' permanent residents but not the racially exclusive trekkers. In July 1913, close associates of Douwes Dekker, including physicians Tjipto Mangunkusumo and R.M. Suwardi Surjaningrat, established the Native Committee in Bandung. The committee planned to petition the Dutch crown for an Indies parliament. In 1913 it also published a pamphlet written by Suwardi, "If I were to be a Dutchman," that gained almost instant notoriety. Regarded as subversive by the colonial government and impudent by Dutchmen in general, the pamphlet, which was translated into Malay, led to the exile to the Netherlands of Douwes Dekker and his two Javanese associates. In exile, they worked with liberal Dutchmen and compatriot students. It is believed that the term Indonesia was first used in the name of an organization, the Indonesian Alliance of Students, with which they were associated during the early 1920s.

The responses of Islamic communities to the new political environment reflected their diversity. Hard-pressed by ethnic Chinese competition, especially in the batik trade, Muslim merchants formed the Islamic Traders' Association in 1909. In 1912 this group became Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union) under the leadership of a former government official, Haji Umar

Said Cokroaminoto. Sarekat Islam became the first association to gain wide membership among the common people. By early 1914, its membership numbered 360,000. Committed in part to promoting Islamic teaching and community economic prosperity (anti-Chinese sentiment was a major appeal), the organization also drew on traditional Javanese beliefs about the return of the "Just King," and Cokroaminoto went so far as to cast himself in the role of a charismatic, if not divine, figure. Cokroaminoto's advocacy of Indies self-government caused the Dutch some anxiety. By 1916 Sarekat Islam had some eighty branches both on Java and in the Outer Islands.

The modernist or reformist trend in Islam was represented by Muhammadiyah (Followers of Muhammad), a group established at Yogyakarta in 1912. It was particularly strong among the Sumatran Minangkabau, and a number of modernist schools were established there. Its importance is reflected in the fact that Minangkabau, such as Mohammad Hatta, were surpassed in numbers only by Javanese among the leadership of the Indonesian revolution. In 1926 the Nahdatul Ulama (Revival of the Religious Scholars and sometimes known as the Muslim Scholars' League) was organized as a conservative counterweight to the growing influence of Cokroaminoto's syncretism and modernist ideas among believers.

In May 1914, Hendricus Sneevliet established the Indies Social-Democratic Association (ISDV), which became the Communist Association of the Indies (Perserikatan Komunisi di Hindia) in May 1920 and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1924. Backed by the Comintern in Moscow, the PKI became active among trade unionists and rural villagers. In 1926 and 1927, despite advice by Tan Malaka, a Comintern agent from Sumatra, to the contrary, local leaders instigated rural insurrections in western Java and Sumatra. The government moved decisively to crush the insurrections and imprison communist leaders. Some, like Tan Malaka, fled into exile. But 1,300 communists were exiled to the grim Boven Digul penal colony in West New Guinea. The PKI all but disappeared, not to be an important actor on the political stage until after independence.

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#### *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files*

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political and military affairs; studies and statistics on socioeconomic matters; interviews and minutes of meetings with U.S. and foreign government officials and leaders; legal and claims documentation; full texts of important letters and cables sent and received by U.S. diplomats and embassy personnel; reports, news clippings and their translations from journals and newspapers; and countless high-level/head of state government documents, including speeches, memoranda, official reports, aide memoires, and transcripts of political meetings and assemblies.

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#### *State Department Central File Classification System*

Under the decimal classification system adopted by the State Department in 1910, Class 8 indicates Internal Affairs of States. The country numbers assigned to the Netherlands colonial possessions include: 856d: Netherlands East Indies (Netherland India); 856e: Java and Madura; 856f: Sumatra; 856g: Borneo; 856h: Celebes; 856i: Other Netherlands Islands.

The documents reproduced in this collection refer to the internal affairs of the Netherlands' southeast Asian possessions. A decimal point is used after the first three digits (class number and country number), followed by a number that represents a specific topic and or subtopic. This number, in turn, may be followed by a slant mark (/). The numbers that follow the slant mark are assigned to individual documents as they are accumulated on a specific subject. For example, a decimal file number taken from a document reproduced in this collection is 856d.6363/10. The four-digit number 6363 signifies that the subtopic is petroleum, and the number following the slant mark indicates that this is the 10th document received on this subtopic. The documents under one subject classification are generally in chronological order, coinciding with the document number assigned (which follows the slant mark). There are instances, however, when a document file number was not assigned until a date considerably later than the one on which the document was received.

This is a listing of the State department's Central Classification Class 8 topics and subtopics with applicable decimal number ranges:

#### **NETHERLANDS [EAST] INDIES**

**(Netherland India)**

**(Country number 856d)**

*POLITICAL AFFAIRS*

856d.OO/2-57

General.

856d.OOB - 856d.OOS/1

Bolshevism; the Governor General; socialism.

*GOVERNMENT*

856d.01 - 856.0491

Constitution; citizenship; passports; suffrage; territory; executive departments: general; legislative branch: general, proceedings; judicial branch: laws, commercial laws, bankruptcy laws, authority to administer oaths.

*PUBLIC ORDER, SAFETY, HEALTH, AND WORKS*

856d.111 - 856d.156/3

Regulations governing residence, trade, travel, and traffic in liquors and drugs; public health: general, vital statistics, practice of medicine and surgery; correction and punishment: general, prisons; public works: general, roads, streets, highways, harbors.

*MILITARY AFFAIRS*

856d.20 - 856d.248/5

General; Army personnel; equipment and supplies; airplanes.

*NAVAL AFFAIRS*

856d.30 - 856d.348/5

General; equipment and supplies; naval seaplanes and seaplane bases.

*SOCIAL MATTERS*

856d.401/1- 856d.453

People; race problems; religion; marriage, divorce; public entertainment; holidays; history, education, and etiquette: general.

*ECONOMIC MATTERS*

856d.50 - 856d. 506/2

General; statistics, census; investment of capital, corporations; labor, compulsory labor; insurance.

Financial Conditions

35 856d. 51/067

General.

856d.512 - 856d.51693

Taxation, income tax; monetary system; branch banks of Netherlands East Indies in China.

856d.52/0 - 856d.56/5

Lands; intellectual and industrial property: general, trademark laws; immigration: general, immigration of Chinese and Japanese into Netherlands East Indies; emigration: general.

#### *INDUSTRIAL MATTERS*

856d.60 - 856d.607A

General; monopolies, concessions, expositions; Netherland-Indian annual fair at Bandoeng, Java, 1923.

Agriculture

856d.61 - 856d.6176/59

General; irrigation; pests affecting plant life; alkaloidal plants, tobacco, tea, coffee; trees, barks, rubber.

Mines and Mining

38 856d.63 - 856d.6362

Mines, mining laws, gold mines, tin, coal.

Petroleum:

856d.6363/a-69 - 856d.6363/441-597

Other Mining Products:

856d.637 - 856d.6375

General; sulfur, asphalt.

Engineering

856d.6463/1

Electric power.

Manufactures and Manufacturing

856d.6511 - 856d.6581/10

Iron and steel industry; leather; sugar production and distribution.

#### *COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION*



856d.71292/1 - 856d.78

Post: transportation of foreign mails between Netherlands East Indies and Siam (Thailand), postal rates; cable: general, cable laws, wireless telegraph: traffic agreement of Southern Radio Corp. with the Administration of Netherlands East Indies, laws and regulations governing wireless telegraphy; telephone: general; railway: general; street railway.

Other Means of Communication and Transportation

856d.796 - 856d.7971

Aerial navigation: laws and regulations, stations and landing fields; automobiles: laws and regulations.

*NAVIGATION*

856d.801/1 - 856d.8593

Marine navigation laws and regulations; rates of freight transported by vessels; aids to navigation; merchant vessels: general, fueling of merchant vessels.

*OTHER INTERNAL AFFAIRS*

856d.91 - 856d. 9251/2

Public press: general, newspapers; science, seismology, weights and measures.

**JAVA AND MADURA**

**(Netherlands East Indies)**

**(Country number 856e)**

*POLITICAL AFFAIRS*

856e.OO - 856e.0443/5

General; Bolshevism; chief executive of Java and Madura; Government: general, territory; legislative branch: general; judicial branch: commercial laws.

*PUBLIC ORDER, SAFETY, HEALTH, AND WORKS*

856e.101/1 - 856e.157

Municipal government; police organization; regulations governing residence, trade, travel, traffic in liquor and habit-forming drugs, street traffic; public health: general, pharmacopoeia and material medica; charities: proposed hospital for cure of opium smokers; public works: general, water supply, roads, streets, highways, harbors, docks, public buildings.

*MILITARY AFFAIRS AND THE ARMY*

856e.248/1-27

Airships and airplanes.

*NAVAL AFFAIRS, NAVY, NAVAL VESSEL*

8566.30 - 856e.348

General; naval maneuvers; navy yard, naval stations; hydroplanes and airships.

*SOCIAL MATTERS*

856e.401 - 8560.48/6

People; religion; manners and customs; marriage; public entertainment; holidays; education: general; societies: American Association of Netherlands India; etiquette: salutes, entertainment by officials of Java, audience with the Governor General of Java, entertainment in Java by U.S. resident officers; calamities and disasters.

*ECONOMIC MATTERS*

856e.50 - 856e.5061

General; census, cost of living; investment of capital, corporations; labor, compulsory labor; fire insurance.

Financial Conditions

856e.51 - 8566.5171

Financial affairs; financial affairs at Bandoeng; taxation, income tax; monetary system; banks; stock exchange.

Intellectual and Industrial Property

856e.543Au7 - 8566.543W36

Trademark rights of Australasian Films, Ltd., in Java and Madura; trademarks of the Bauer Chemical Co., in Java; trademarks of the Vacuum Oil Co.; infringement of trademark "Way Down East."

Immigration and Emigration

856e755 - 8560.5693

Immigration; emigration to China.

*INDUSTRIAL MATTERS*

856e.602 - 856e.607E

Concessions; expositions and exhibitions; Fibre Exhibition at Soerabaja; International Rubber Exhibition at Batavia; Colonial Exhibition at Semarang, 1914; Tea Congress and Exhibition at Bandoeng, 1924; Annual Industrial Exhibition at Bandoeng, June and July 1924.

Agriculture

85&6.61 - 856e.6176

General; soil, properties, irrigation; pests affecting plant life in Java; rice; fibers; tea, coffee, cocoa; sugar; forestry, barks, rubber.

Animal Husbandry

8566.6232

Birds.

Mines and Mining

856e.63 - 8566.6363

Mines, gold mines, lead, tin mines, petroleum.

Engineering

856e.64 - 856e.6463

General; electric engineering.

Manufactures and Manufacturing

856e.6511 - 8566.6583

Iron and steel; rubber; drugs, perfumes; packing foods, sugar, edible fats.

*COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION*

856e.70 - 856e.77

General; transportation of mail and goods; cable rates; wireless telegraph; wireless telephone; railways.

Other Means of Communication and Transportation

856e.796 - 856e.7971

Aerial navigation, aerial navigation laws; flying station on Java; automobiles, automobile laws.

*NAVIGATION*

856e.807 - 8566.8593

Security of life at sea; harbor or port dues; shipping; fueling of merchant vessels.

*OTHER INTERNAL AFFAIRS*

856e.911 - 8566.927

Newspapers; science, geography, anthropology, archaeology.

**SUMATRA**

**(Netherlands East Indies)**

(Country number 856f)

*POLITICAL AFFAIRS*

856f.00 - 856f.0443

General; Governor of Sumatra; citizenship; territory; commercial laws.

*PUBLIC ORDER, SAFETY, HEALTH, AND WORKS*

856f .114 - 856f.156

Regulations governing traffic in liquors and habit-forming drugs; materia medica; correction and punishment; roads and highways; harbors.

*SOCIAL MATTERS*

856f.403 - 856f.451

Fine arts, education, etiquette, ceremonials.

*ECONOMIC MATTERS*

856.50 - 856f.5611b/1

General; cost of living; housing; capital, corporations; labor, slavery; financial affairs; financial affairs of the Dutch-American Rubber Plantation Co.; lands; rights of nationals of Sumatra to hold or acquire real property in Java and Madura; infringement of American patents in Sumatra; trademarks "Capstan U.S.A." and "Westinghouse U.S.A." in Sumatra; emigration from Sumatra to the Philippines.

*INDUSTRIAL MATTERS*

856f .602 - 856f .6176

Monopolies, concessions; agriculture; pests affecting plant life; rice; hemp, sisal; tobacco; saps, resins, gums, turpentine, rubber.

856f.63 - 856f .6583

Mines, tin, coal, petroleum, lime and cement; engineering: general; manufactures and manufacturing: edible fats.

*COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION*

856f.73 - 856f.7971

Cable; wireless telegraph; telephone rates; railways; other means of transportation; aerial navigation laws; automobiles, automobile laws.

*NAVIGATION*

856f.83 - 856f.8503

Menaces to navigation; freight rates.

*OTHER INTERNAL AFFAIRS*

856f.911 - 856f.9243

Newspapers; meteorology.

**BORNEO**

**(Netherlands East Indies)**

**(Country number 856g)**

*INTERNAL AFFAIRS*

856g.00 - 856g.75

Political affairs; economic matters, corporations, oil development, land; rubber; gold mines, coal, petroleum, natural gas; iron and steel; wireless telegraph; telephone.

**CELEBES**

**(Netherlands East Indies)**

**(Country number 856h)**

*INTERNAL AFFAIRS*

856h.6113/l - 856h.8007

Irrigation; petroleum; navigation, piracy.

**OTHER NETHERLANDS ISLANDS**

**(Country number 856i)**

*INTERNAL AFFAIRS*

856i.00 - 856i.796

Political affairs; regulations governing firearms and ammunition; lands; monopolies, concessions; copper in Netherlands Timor; petroleum; aerial navigation.