
SOEHARTO AND THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

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Soeharto, who ruled Indonesia for thirty-two years (1966–98), was born in the hamlet of Kemusu, twelve miles west of the court city of Yogyakarta, in June 1921. The product of a broken home, he lived with a succession of families and attended a string of primary schools before entering a *schakelschool* (link school), designed to connect the village school system, where the language of instruction was Javanese and where the education was rudimentary, to the parallel and infinitely more prestigious Dutch-language stream. Although his command of Dutch was never good, putting him at a disadvantage in his later career, Soeharto joined the Royal Netherlands Indies Army (Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger, KNIL) in 1940. As a soldier in the KNIL, he showed promise and was pushed through a series of good, if rushed, basic military training programs. He was promoted to sergeant as a powerful Japanese force invaded Java on March 1, 1942. The Dutch surrendered a week later.

This article had its origins in research for a book that will look at the early life and times of former President Soeharto. Because there was a great deal of contextual material that is important for an understanding of Indonesian social, political, and military history during the Japanese occupation, it seemed worthwhile to present it here in a way that would allow full play to the context.

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PART ONE: A POLICEMAN FOR THE JAPANESE

A Spurious Air of Normality

In the days after the Dutch surrender, Soeharto stayed on in Cisarua, West Java, a soldier in a defeated army, waiting to see what would happen next. As a sergeant in the KNIL, he assumed, not unreasonably, that he would become a prisoner of war of the Japanese.² For a time nothing happened. Soeharto whiled away the hours playing cards, making, or so he later claimed, a handsome profit in the process. "I had only a guilder in my pocket, but as I played—and won—it soon grew to fifty."³ Deciding eventually that he had no wish to be incarcerated in a POW camp with his Dutch and Indonesian military comrades, Soeharto made his way to Cimahi, on the western outskirts of Bandung, accompanied by Amat Sudono, his closest friend in the KNIL. Here, they "bought some ordinary clothes" and discarded their distinctive green KNIL uniforms. Here, too, Soeharto encountered the Japanese army for the first time. "I was taking a break outside a civilian's house," he recalled. "Japanese soldiers had driven out the Dutchmen who had controlled us for centuries [*sic*]. They looked full of confidence and their countenances were truly frightening."⁴ A person of churlish disposition might be inclined to note that the Dutch had only been able to control Indonesians because they had always been able to find men like Soeharto who were willing to take the Queen's shilling to keep other Indonesians in their place. A more serious charge might be that Soeharto was now a deserter. As it happened, the surrender announcement of Lieutenant General Hein Ter Poorten, the ill-starred Dutch commander-in-chief, had declared that the KNIL had "ceased to exist," meaning that the Dutch colonial army had no further claims on Soeharto, or indeed on anyone else.⁵

In those early weeks of March 1942, Java was in a state of confusion and panic, powerful Japanese forces having landed at either end of the island and converged on Central Java in a giant pincer movement. But the Dutch were nothing if not efficient, and the trans-island trains were still running, lending a spurious air of normality in what was a period of extreme anxiety, at least for Europeans. Soeharto and Sudono bought tickets to Yogyakarta, which had fallen to the Japanese late on the afternoon of March 5, with barely any resistance from the seven-hundred-man Dutch garrison. Upon their arrival at Tugu station in the center of Yogyakarta, the two men heard an announcement, ominous in its implications, ordering all servicemen to report to an office in Jetis, a suburb about half a mile to the north. The idea of turning themselves in now had even less appeal, and they continued on to Sleman, a small town about six

² Soeharto, *My Thoughts, Words, and Deeds: An Autobiography as told to G. Dwipayana and Ramadhan K. H.*, ed. Mutiah Lestiono (Jakarta: Citra Lamtoro Gung Persada, 1989), p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Soeharto, "Watashi no rirekisho" [My Personal History], part 5, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, January 6, 1998.

⁵ B. Bouman, *van Driekleur tot Rood-Wit: De Indonesische officieren uit het KNIL, 1900-1950* [From Tricolor to Red and White: The Indonesian KNIL Officers, 1900-1950] ('s-Gravenhage: Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis, 1995), p. 165; and written communication, Brigadier General Ben Bouman, April 9, 1998.

miles north of Jetis. From there, they slipped away and spent a night in Sudono's house. The next morning Soeharto took a bus to Wonogiri and then traveled on to Wuryantoro, where he was taken in by his aunt and uncle.⁶ For the time being, he was relatively safe. But in Wuryantoro he had a relapse of malaria and was, or so he improbably claimed, bedridden for about six months.

A New Order in Java

Although they had been the unchallenged power in Java for more than 110 years and had made many profound changes, the Dutch had put down shallower roots than they liked to imagine. In Yogyakarta, as in other parts of the island, the brown-uniformed Japanese troops were greeted as liberators, at least initially. "When we arrived in Java," said Tsuchiya Kiso, a Sixteenth Army intelligence officer who was soon to play a key role in Soeharto's career, "all the Indonesians welcomed us ... Nowhere else, such as China or Manchuria, did it happen that the natives welcomed the Japanese occupation."⁷ The editor of the Japanese occupation newspaper *Unabara (The Ocean)* made the same point. "I was surprised because we were welcomed," he noted many years later. "We hadn't expected it. They were so fantastically welcoming."⁸ In the words of Selo Soemardjan, who was working at that time in the political affairs section of the Dutch police force in Yogyakarta:

We were very glad that the Dutch were driven away. So we received the Japanese with open arms. We welcomed them because they were liberators. Liberators from the colonial Dutch. I saw the Dutch running away, outside the city ... So we did nothing to help the Dutch. Perhaps one or two people who were very close to the Dutch [helped them]. But in general, nobody helped the Dutch. We were even glad that they had run away.⁹

Speaking on another occasion, Selo said, "We Javanese didn't care about the Dutch ... So when the Japanese came we didn't lift a finger [to help the Dutch]. We just watched."¹⁰

Apart from the warmth of the welcome, the troops of the occupying army were struck by the fact that the Indonesians seemed, physically at least, rather similar to Japanese. Nor, some of the better-educated Japanese officers soon realized, was this some indolent South Seas backwater, as many of them had imagined. The Javanese and the Sundanese were sophisticated people, with ancient cultures and elaborate social codes. Then there was the infrastructure. The Japanese could not help but admire the cities and towns they found in Java. These were well planned and well laid out, with many imposing European buildings, some almost as large as the big buildings in Tokyo. There were canals and graceful, tree-lined suburban streets. It was not difficult, they soon discovered, to live comfortably in Java. At the same time, some Japanese officers, familiar with the advanced factories and shipyards of their own country,

⁶ Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, pp. 17–18.

⁷ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, Mishima, Shizuoka Prefecture, February 2, 1999.

⁸ Interview, Kaneko Tomokazu, Tokyo, February 3, 1999.

⁹ Interview, Selo Soemardjan, Jakarta, September 2, 1997.

¹⁰ Interview, Selo Soemardjan, Jakarta, September 3, 1998.

professed to be surprised, even angry, that the Dutch had done virtually nothing to industrialize their Southeast Asian possession. It was true that the Dutch had built ports and railroads, sugar factories and irrigation canals. But that had been done, the Japanese were inclined to sniff, even six decades later, when all the excesses of their own rule were so widely known, to extract the natural resources of Java, not to help the Javanese themselves.

In the event, it did not take long for the warmth of the Indonesian welcome to cool. In some places, Japanese troops behaved with the same kind of cruelty they had shown in China. In the East Java junction town of Cepu, for example, troops terrorized and raped local women after Japanese units gained control. A more widespread problem stemmed from the sudden breakdown in law and order. At the time of the Dutch surrender, "the Indonesian masses, like a rising tide, attacked and plundered mercilessly the properties of the Europeans and the Chinese throughout Java," the Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Imamura Hitoshi, told Allied interrogators.¹¹ Many of those who resisted the mobs were murdered. The Japanese did not take kindly to lawlessness of this kind. Determined that Java be run with maximum efficiency in the interests of the war effort, they sent field units of the Kenpeitai, the notorious Military Police Corps, to restore order, an instruction the Kenpeitai carried out with exemplary brutality, bringing terror to many parts of the island.¹²

In Yogyakarta one morning in mid-1942, the Japanese rounded up a large group of people and forced them to watch a public execution. Indonesian prisoners, guilty of what crime no one knew, were tied to poles with their hands behind their backs. On a shouted command, Japanese soldiers ran forward and killed them with fixed bayonets. Some of those who had been obliged to watch spent the day vomiting.¹³ Nor did the situation improve much once order had been re-established. On the contrary, Japanese soldiers behaved with arrogance and cruelty, leaving the Javanese humiliated and deeply afraid. Selo Soemardjan's father was a low-level official in the palace of the Sultan. One morning, not long after the start of the occupation, he walked to work past Fort Vredenburg, not realizing that he was expected to stop and bow to the Japanese sentries. When he failed to do so, he was punched and knocked to the ground in front of passersby. For any Javanese, this would have been deeply humiliating. For a retainer of the Sultan, however lowly, it was an unbearable affront. He felt he had been shamed.¹⁴

During the early months of the occupation, the Japanese began to implement policies, devised well in advance, that were profoundly to transform the former Dutch East Indies. The guiding ideological principle of Japanese rule in the occupied regions of the Southern Area was the construction of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty

¹¹ Interrogation of General [*sic*] Imamura Hitoshi, "Supplement," undated, Algemeen Rijksarchief Tweede Afdeling, Algemene Secretarie en de Daarbij Gedeponeerde Archieven (1942–50) [hereafter abbreviated ARA ASDGA], No. 5284A, pp. 53–55 (p. 1 of Allied translation).

¹² For details of Kenpeitai responsibilities at the time of the Dutch surrender, see Zenkoku Kenyukai Rengokai Hensan linkai [Editorial Committee of the National Federation of Kenpeitai Veterans' Associations], *Nihon Kenpei Seishi* [The Authoritative History of the Japanese Kenpeitai] (Tokyo: Kenbunshoin, 1976), p. 1026.

¹³ Interview, Selo Soemardjan, September 2, 1997.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Sphere.”¹⁵ On the face of it, this principle implied equality among the various races and states in Asia, even if it was understood that Japan had cast itself in the role of dominant older brother. In practice, there was to be no equality and no co-prosperity. From the start, Japanese self-interest was paramount. Two weeks before Pearl Harbor, Tokyo had decided that “the supreme purpose of Japan’s southward advance was the acquisition of resources in the Southern Area, with the main emphasis on petroleum.”¹⁶ Japan hoped to establish a self-sustaining system that would allow it to wage war and “form a new order in Asia centering around Japan.”¹⁷ In support of that goal, the Sixteenth Army’s propaganda department launched an intensive campaign designed to convince Indonesians that they and the Japanese were brothers-in-arms in the great struggle for the new order in Asia.¹⁸ And although the campaign was undermined by the inescapable evidence of Japanese cruelty and self-interest, it succeeded in feeding anti-Dutch sentiment.

The Japanese, it is true, did not propose to treat the Southern Area as they treated Taiwan, which they had annexed in 1895, or Korea, which they had annexed in 1910. In those colonies, old forms of government had been abolished and replaced by administrative systems built on Japanese lines. Nor did they want to repeat the mistakes they had made more recently in Manchuria and China, where brutal and heavy-handed Japanese occupation had alienated the population. In the South, existing administrative structures and staff were to be utilized to the utmost and local culture respected. Nevertheless, the Japanese were determined to impose careful controls on the people of this area. While “native inhabitants” were to be encouraged to trust the Japanese forces, independence movements were “not to be stimulated prematurely.”¹⁹

For administrative purposes, and as a concession to the Imperial Navy, the Japanese had divided the Dutch East Indies into three distinct regions, with so little contact between them that they might as well have been three watertight compartments. Sumatra was placed under the Japanese Twenty-Fifth Army, after being linked for a time to Malaya. Java came under the Sixteenth Army. Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali, and the other islands of East Indonesia were under the control of the

¹⁵ See Kishi Koichi and Nishijima Shigetada, eds., *Indonesia ni okeru Nihon gunsei no kenkyu* [Research on the Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia] (Tokyo: Waseda University, Okuma Memorial Social Sciences Research Institute, Kinokuniya Shoten, 1959). An English translation of this pioneering work was produced in 1963 by the Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) of the US Department of Commerce. The material in this section is derived from the JPRS version, pp. 103–15.

¹⁶ Kishi Koichi et al., eds., *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), pp. 114–15.

¹⁷ The phrase “new order” is of interest. Benedict Anderson has noted that the two endlessly repeated slogans of the late colonial regime were *rust en orde* (peace and order) and *opbouw* (development). “Characteristically,” he writes, “the Suharto regime simply Indonesianized these slogans in the Orde Baru (New Order) and *pembangunan* (development).” See Benedict Anderson, “Indonesian Nationalism Today and in the Future,” *New Left Review*, 235 (1999): 14. It might be argued that the terminology was derivative in other ways as well. In 1940–41 there had been much talk about a New Order (*Neues Ordnung*) in Europe, with plans for a Reichsmark currency bloc. What was afoot, the historian Michael Burleigh has noted, “was an old-fashioned economic imperialism, with an industrially developed core surrounded by a periphery producing food and raw material.” See Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich, A New History* (London: Pan Books, 2001), p. 424. It is arguable that the tainted terminology of German fascism and Japanese militarism became doubly derivative when Soeharto picked up the phrase “New Order” and applied it to his political system in 1966.

¹⁸ M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200*, 3rd Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 250.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

Navy. The resources after which the Japanese hungered lay mainly, of course, in the Outer Islands. But Java was important, too, first as a source of sugar, rice, and salt, and later as a source of labor. Moreover, Java had to be defended against an Allied counter-attack, which US General Douglas MacArthur was expected to launch from bases in northern Australia. For the economic goals to be met, Java would have to be run with maximum efficiency, the army brooking no opposition. Nor did the Japanese waste any time in making their intentions plain. On March 7, the day before the Dutch surrender, General Imamura, a former deputy chief of staff of the notorious Kwantung Army, which had run the puppet state of Manchukuo (Manchuria) as an Imperial Army fiefdom for the best part of a decade, issued Order No. 1.²⁰ The army, it declared, was setting up a military administration in the “occupied territories” in order to “ensure the prosperity of the inhabitants, preserve the peace, and hasten the tranquility and happiness of the people.” The commander of the Japanese army would perform the functions of the governor general, but the “present machinery of government” would continue for the time being. That meant, in practice, that while Allied soldiers and Dutch policemen were detained, some fifteen thousand Dutch officials on Java were to remain at their desks.²¹

Once established, the Japanese moved to reshape the face of Java. Dutch businesses, plantations, and mines were taken over. Dutch banks, including the semi-government Javaasche Bank, which issued the currency, were liquidated; henceforth, Japanese military currency was to be used. Commercial banking was taken over by the Yokohama Specie bank. A press monopoly was awarded to the Asahi Shimbun group. Strict censorship prevailed, in newspapers, broadcasting, and filmmaking. It became an offence, sometimes punished by torture or death, to listen to foreign radio broadcasts. All existing law courts were abolished and replaced by courts run by the Japanese military administration. The name Batavia was changed back to Jakarta. Even the calendar and the system of timekeeping changed, in line with Japanese practice throughout the conquered territories. The Imperial calendar, which starts with the mythical founding of Japan in 660 BCE, was introduced, so that 1942 became 2602. Henceforth, the Japanese declared, Java would operate on Tokyo time, which meant that the sun would rise ninety minutes later than usual (at 7:30 AM, rather than at 6:00 AM).

Then there was the issue of communication. The Japanese faced a huge language problem in the East Indies. Almost no Indonesians knew any Japanese in 1942, and only a handful of Japanese knew any Dutch or even Malay, although some had begun studying rudimentary Malay on the ships carrying them south. Imamura banned the use of the Dutch language in schools, law courts, newspapers, letters and telegrams,

²⁰ A translation of “Order No. 1—Operation of Military Administration,” can be found in JAVINT 3131/4, SEATIC Det. HQ 23 Ind Div, 1 Feb 46, ARA ASDGA No. 5185. This was the first public notice issued by the Japanese in Java. It had been prepared and printed in Taiwan and was posted up everywhere behind the advancing troops. Although Imamura had served in the Kwantung Army, he had a broader background than most other army officers. In 1918, he had been posted to London as a military attaché. A decade later, he served as a military attaché in British India. See “Hitoshi Imamura,” Wikipedia (accessed April 15, 2009). Before World War Two, few Japanese army officers visited Britain or the United States. See Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 38. Imamura’s chief of staff, Okazaki Seizaburo, had commanded a garrison regiment in China in 1937–39.

²¹ Sato Shigeru, *War, Nationalism and Peasants: Java Under the Japanese Occupation 1942–1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), pp. 22–24.

and telephone conversations, mainly because the Japanese could not understand it. He did not, however, limit or prohibit people's use of the Dutch language in general.²²

Nor was Imamura willing to make any concessions to the Indonesian nationalists. On the contrary, during the early stages of the occupation, the Japanese "restricted the nationalist movement to a greater extent than [had] the Dutch."²³ All political parties were banned, all tertiary institutions closed. The Kenpeitai and the Japanese-run civilian police force monitored all political activity. The military administration banned the flying of the red-and-white Indonesian flag, insisting that the Japanese red-and-white flag be flown across the island. It also banned the playing of "Indonesia Raya," the "national" anthem. Later, it is true, the army allowed Indonesians to participate in a number of Japanese-sponsored mass organizations (Tiga A Movement, Putera, Jawa Hokokai, Masyumi) set up to mobilize support for the war effort. These bodies, which had no Dutch precedents, were to give the two dominant nationalist leaders, Sukarno and Hatta, whom the Japanese had released from internal exile, a highly visible public role.

Although many of the new measures were harsh, Imamura rejected the even harsher measures being urged on him by Tokyo and by the Southern Area Army Corps in Singapore.²⁴ Having seen in China that a repressive policy aroused popular resentment and led to failure, and having been surprised by the enthusiastic welcome his troops had received in Java (that welcome, he claimed, had convinced him that the Indonesians and Japanese were "certainly people of the same race and common stock"), Imamura decided at his first staff meeting, on March 10, to adopt a "mild" policy.²⁵ Priority would be given to economic reconstruction, the reestablishment of normal civilian life using Dutch engineers and executives and Chinese merchants and economic institutions, the reappointment of Indonesian officials, the reopening of Indonesian schools, and a strong propaganda campaign to emphasize friendship and cooperation.

Before long, Imamura found it necessary to modify his "mild" policy. In June, three months after the Japanese landings on Java, Tokyo decided to withdraw all but fifteen thousand of the fifty-five thousand troops on Java. Fearing an Allied attack from Australia and concerned about public order, Imamura believed he had no option but to intern all the Allied civilian nationals who remained at large.²⁶ In April, the Japanese had interned about two thousand Dutch officials. Now, tens of thousands of European men, women, and children, including the thirteen thousand Dutch officials still at their

²² See Imamura, "Supplement," p. 2.

²³ Robert Cribb, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992), p. 221, from which this paragraph is in part drawn.

²⁴ Mitsuo Nakamura, "General Imamura and the Early Period of Japanese Occupation," *Indonesia* 10 (October 1970): 11, on which this paragraph is largely based. (In other sources this author's name may appear as Nakamura Mitsuo.)

²⁵ *Imamura Hitoshi Taisho Kaikoroku* [Memoirs of General Imamura Hitoshi], Volume II (Tokyo: Jiyu Ajai-sha, 1960), pp. 11, 146–147, cited in Nakamura, "General Imamura and the Early Period of Japanese Occupation," pp. 10, 12.

²⁶ Imamura "Supplement," pp. 1–2. Imamura was "keenly expecting" that Java would be the chief target for an attack by US and Australian forces. He was concerned that Europeans would work in concert with any Allied force that landed in Java and that, at the time of such an attack, Indonesians would once again turn on Europeans.

desks, were sent (albeit over a twelve-month period) to civilian camps, where conditions were to prove deplorable and where acts of brutishness were to be more or less routine. The following month, Imamura informed Sukarno that Tokyo had decided to send a large number of Japanese civil servants to administer Java.²⁷ As the months went by, indirect rule gave way in some areas to a system of direct rule not unlike that prevailing in Taiwan and Korea. Boatloads of Japanese civilian contract employees (*gunzoku*) disembarked, to serve as administrators, policemen, teachers, engineers, judicial officers, interpreters, nurses, and clerical workers. The Japanese even brought in errand boys and stable hands.²⁸ Many of the newcomers had earlier served in Taiwan.²⁹

In more “normal” colonial circumstances, a system of rule based on Japanese practices on Taiwan might have worked well enough on Java, at least in the short term. Taiwan was ceded to Japan, not invaded, after Japan’s brief and hugely successful war against China in Korea. Japanese rulers were authoritarian and paternalistic, but they reformed the school system, modernized agriculture, and laid the basis for future Taiwan industrialization. These, however, were anything but normal circumstances. Japan was fighting by far the biggest war in its history against the immensely rich and powerful United States, as well as other enemies. It needed the resources of the East Indies, and it was prepared to go to almost any lengths to obtain them, introducing, as time went on, a system of forced labor and massive rice levies. As the war progressed, the Japanese were to exploit Java with a singularity and savagery that shocked the Javanese and the Sundanese. This exploitation coincided with a collapse in exports, brought on partly by the loss of traditional markets and partly by the depredations of the US Navy submarine fleet, which was soon sending scores of irreplaceable Japanese merchant ships to the bottom. Before long, Java’s entire economy was disrupted. Not surprisingly, whatever honeymoon may have occurred between the Japanese and the Indonesians proved short-lived.

On the surface, wrote Kuroda Hidetoshi, who visited the island in late 1942, Java was “a paradise in the occupied areas,” with an abundance of low-priced goods.³⁰ But it was a paradise built on sand. The symptoms of inflation were already visible. A huge quantity of rice had to be imported from Malaya, where rice fields were being converted to the cultivation of rubber. The supply of clothing was about to run out, with little hope of imports from Japan. Japanese civilians were troublemakers, quick to get intoxicated and quick to quarrel. Japanese soldiers were worse, since they became arrogant. “Thus, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was turning into a Co-

²⁷ The aim, he said, was to coordinate the administration and the military in the expectation of defense operations. See Nakamura, “General Imamura and the Early Period of Japanese Occupation,” p. 20. See also Kishi Koichi et al., eds., *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), p. 109, which makes the point that the Japanese officials were needed owing to a shortage of trained Indonesian officials and the difficulty of employing Dutch and Eurasians.

²⁸ Interview, Colonel Miyamoto Shizuo, Tokyo, April 8, 1999.

²⁹ Although a number of Japanese interviewees spoke of their earlier service in Taiwan, in no case did anyone refer to prior service in Korea, where Japanese rule was infinitely harsher than it was in Taiwan, mainly because the Koreans put up more resistance. The situation in Northern China was terrible because of war conditions and massive resistance. I am indebted to Ben Anderson for making this point.

³⁰ Kuroda Hidetoshi, *Gunsei* [Military Government] (Tokyo: Gakufu-shoin, 1952), pp. 82–83, 219, cited in Nakamura, “General Imamura and the Early Period of Japanese Occupation,” pp. 25–26.

Poverty Sphere and the hearts of the indigenous people were rapidly turning against Japan."³¹

Unlike the Dutch, who had sought to advance their economic interests under a cloak of orderly calm, the Japanese were to pursue a policy of mass mobilization, hoping thereby to energize the population in the interests of the war effort. This was to have major consequences in the years ahead. The Japanese came to see that if they were to mobilize the masses of Java, they would have to use the best-known nationalist leaders.³² Sutan Sjahrir, a young West Sumatran nationalist, chose to remain aloof from the Japanese, whom he despised. But Sukarno and Hatta cooperated with them and were to use their positions skillfully to advance the nationalist cause, making radio broadcasts and addressing mass rallies, thereby building support down to the village level. This development was crucial and helped foster the nationalist impulse the Japanese had always been so eager to contain.

Becoming a Policeman

Soeharto was aware, as he lay bedridden in Wuryantoro, that he could not stay with his relatives once he recovered. That, he felt, would impose "an extra burden to those who were already struggling to make ends meet."³³ Towards the end of 1942, he set out for Yogyakarta, hoping to find employment of some kind. In the event, there was no suitable work in the city for a twenty-one-year-old former KNIL sergeant. At loose ends, but with some money still in hand, he took a typing course in Patok, a densely settled district a short distance from the former Dutch governor's palace, now the official residence (*chokan-tei*) of the Japanese governor, Brigadier General Yamanouchi. While here, Soeharto fell ill again. "It was really a trying time, teaching me to be patient, the kind of self-control that I would need later." As it turned out, the typing courses were held in a building opposite the police station. In November 1942, "jobless and at a loss," Soeharto saw an announcement that the Japanese were seeking Indonesian police recruits. "I hesitated for a moment," he recalled, afraid the Japanese would discover he had been in the KNIL. That, he thought, might put paid to any hopes of joining the police. Worse still, it might lead to imprisonment. "Would I be safe in full view of the Japanese? I decided to take the risk and joined."³⁴ At the police interview, Soeharto said nothing about the KNIL.

Soeharto's claim that he managed to keep the Japanese in the dark about his service in the KNIL seems to strain credulity. After all, the Japanese followed strict procedures when it came to police recruitment in their colonies and overseas territories, based on the experience they had gained in Taiwan. To gain admission to the police force, a candidate had to pass a background check, a physical examination, and an academic test.³⁵ In the normal course of events, Soeharto would have been required to furnish

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200*, p. 251.

³³ Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 18.

³⁴ See Soeharto, "Watashi no rirekisho"; and Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 18.

³⁵ See Ching-chih Chen, "Police and Community Control Systems in the Empire," in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*, ed. Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 236.

references—his uncle in Wuryantoro would have been one logical referee—and these would have been checked with great care, probably at that time by the Kenpeitai, an organization widely and justifiably feared, even within the Japanese army. But it seems that Soeharto did, indeed, pull off the deception. Many years later, a former Sixteenth Army intelligence officer was asked whether the Japanese police had known of Soeharto's service in the KNIL. "In the beginning," he replied, "they didn't know."³⁶

Having passed this first hurdle, Soeharto was given a medical examination, which, to his relief, failed to detect any trace of malaria. He was then instructed to sit for an entrance test. In Taiwan and Korea, where almost every candidate had a thorough knowledge of Japanese, the exam included questions on Japanese language, composition, history, geography, and arithmetic.³⁷ In Java, there was little emphasis on Japanese-language skill, at least for the time being, there being so few people who knew much Japanese. Soeharto passed the test and was signed on as a police recruit. He was issued a Japanese-style police uniform and a service cap that featured the Japanese flag. Shortly afterwards, he was sent on what was in all likelihood a rigorous three-month police training course. Here, if the Taiwan model is anything to go by, the recruits' courses would have included lessons in ethics, law, police administration, criminology, sanitation, fire prevention, martial arts, and military drill, as well as courses in the Japanese language.³⁸ Curiously enough, it is the drilling that Soeharto seemed to remember most vividly. "Before long," he wrote in his autobiography, "I started a three-month training course. It wasn't difficult, as most of the drilling practice consisted of marching, similar to what I'd already experienced during my training for sergeant. I even passed with the highest marks. And because I was rated number one, I was given the job of courier and told to learn Japanese."³⁹ This, it is worth noting, is at least the third time in nineteen pages that Soeharto tells his readers he ranked at the very top of his class in school or on some course. Nor was it the last such claim he was to make.

In Yogyakarta, Soeharto was to observe firsthand the dramatic changes that were taking place under the Japanese. As Benedict Anderson has noted, the Dutch had ruled in "a calm, businesslike, bourgeois style, buttressing their authority with the myths of white superiority, rationalism, technological prowess, and the historic world mission of Western civilization."⁴⁰ With the defeat of the Dutch, those myths had been dethroned.

In their place new myths appeared—myths of spiritual power, of the ascendant East, and of self-sacrificing valor. The style of Japanese rule derived not from the utilitarian calculus of tropical capitalism, but from the military and imperial traditions of Japan, and from the violent and radical thought of the Young

³⁶ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999. Although the Japanese put great store by efficiency, both in Japan and in occupied territories such as Taiwan and Korea, the recruitment process used in Java shows anything but efficiency on the part of the Japanese, who were operating under wartime conditions and struggling with language problems.

³⁷ Chen, "Police and Community Control Systems," p. 236.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

³⁹ Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 19.

⁴⁰ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944–46* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 31.

Officers of the 1930s, not a few of whom served in the Sixteenth Army in Java. It was a profoundly theatrical style, compounded of pageantry, military discipline, public violence, and inexplicable silences.⁴¹

In some ways, it might be argued, the Japanese were every bit as utilitarian and calculating as the Dutch when it came to exploiting the resources of Java, although the Japanese were to be let down by their own inefficiency, incompetence, and callous disregard of others. Resources were what they wanted, and resources were what they intended to get. Nothing was to stand in the way of that. But Anderson's observation eloquently captures the sense that a new power existed in the land, one which was not only dangerous and unpredictable, but which was shaking loose a society hitherto kept in a state of semi-somnolence by dour European administrators and a complacent native elite. It was a world in which opportunities presented themselves for young men like Soeharto, men who were "not propp'd by ancestry" but who were clever and quick to adjust to changing circumstances.

Soeharto may have stumbled by accident on the police job, which he was to hold for the best part of a year, rather than six months, as he later claimed.⁴² But as a young man seeking preferment, he could hardly have done better had he tried. He had not only moved, almost effortlessly and with only an eight-month break, from the service of one colonial power to that of another; he had landed a job that was to bring him to the attention of senior Japanese police officers in Central Java. They, in turn, would pass him on to important Japanese army officers, putting him back on the fast track to military advancement. Nor could his timing be faulted. In November 1942, the police force on Java was undergoing a thorough makeover.

A Deeply Unpopular Institution

Early in the twentieth century, the Dutch had moved to centralize control over what had hitherto been a variety of local police forces. But at the time of the Japanese invasion, the police force remained divided into three separate branches—the Urban Police (*Stadspolitie*), the Field Police (*Veldpolitie*), and the political police, or General Investigation Bureau (*Algemeene Recherche Dienst, ARD*).⁴³ The second and third of these branches are of particular interest. The *Veldpolitie*, created in response to a general feeling of insecurity among Europeans, consisted of mobile units of twenty to sixty men, stationed in eighty-three centers in Java and Madura.⁴⁴ It was expected to

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² In his memoirs, Soeharto claims that he enlisted in the volunteer army "soon after" he joined the police force. See: Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 19. This is demonstrably untrue. According to an authorized biography, Soeharto joined the police force on November 1, 1942. See O. G. Roeder, *The Smiling General: President Soeharto of Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1969), p. 193. He was in the police force until at least October 8, 1943.

⁴³ See Cribb, *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 375–76; Takashi Shiraiishi, "A New Regime of Order: The Origin of Modern Surveillance Politics in Indonesia," in *Southeast Asia over Three Generations: Essays Presented to Benedict R. O'G. Anderson*, ed. James T. Siegel and Audrey R. Kahin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications), pp. 47–74; and M. Oudang, *Perkembangan Kepolisian di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Mahabarata, 1952), pp. 15–17. Oudang, a Pembantu Komisaris Besar Polisi (Assistant Commissioner of Police) in 1952, married a sister of Madame Soeharto.

⁴⁴ See Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, "State Violence and the Police in Colonial Indonesia Circa 1920: Exploration of a Theme," in *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary Violence in Historical Perspective*, ed.

act as a quick response unit, supervising the roads, combating the theft of cattle and field crops, and arresting important criminals, thereby avoiding any need for recourse to military assistance.⁴⁵ It was unlike a typical police force in that it was heavily armed. The ARD was a successor to an earlier political intelligence body, Politieke Inlichtingendienst (PID, Political Intelligence Bureau), which, during its brief existence between 1916–19, had monitored the activities of foreigners and local nationalists.⁴⁶ The ARD, still widely referred to in the 1920s and 1930s as the PID, was responsible for providing political intelligence to the colonial authorities; in the course of gathering that intelligence, it was able to intimidate many who might otherwise have created difficulties for the authorities.⁴⁷

The Sixteenth Army Military Administration, responsible not for a vast colonial possession but only for the “rump” of Java, had decided to abolish the three-branch police system and replace it with a unified police structure, one that was highly centralized and quite separate from the general administration.⁴⁸ These structural changes were accompanied by a dramatic shake-up in police personnel. In Dutch times, the police force had been top-heavy with European superintendents and inspectors, with a large number of Indonesian officers serving beneath them. After their lightning conquest of Java, the Japanese had disarmed and interned the Dutch police officers and put the restoration and maintenance of law and order in the hands of front-line army units, operating in conjunction with field units of the Kenpeitai. But, as has been noted, it was Japanese policy to keep most of the Dutch administrative system in place “to avoid provoking the natives by making drastic changes.”⁴⁹ Indonesian policemen, even high-ranking officers who had been pro-Dutch, were allowed to stay on in their jobs. That meant, however, that for the first few months there were no senior civil police officers.⁵⁰

In October 1942, a new central police department (Keimubu) in the Sixteenth Army Military Administration Headquarters took over the task of civilian policing from the

Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), pp. 93–94; and Sidney Jones, Ronny Lihawa, Santiago Villaveces-Izquierdo, and Ignatius Priambodo, “Reforming the Indonesian Police Mobile Brigade (BRIMOB),” Partnership for Governance Reform in Indonesia, February 16, 2004, p. 6, accessed on October 2, 2008, at www.kemitraan.or.id/

⁴⁵ Colonel C. A. Heshusius, a retired KNIL officer, has claimed that, in the Outer Islands at least, the police presence was small and responsibility for meeting serious challenges to public order rested with the army. Interview, Colonel C. A. Heshusius, Den Haag, April 23, 2001.

⁴⁶ Harry A. Poeze, “Political Intelligence in the Netherlands Indies,” in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880–1942*, ed. Robert Cribb (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), pp. 230–31.

⁴⁷ Takashi Shiraishi, “A New Regime of Order,” p. 71. In Yogya, as in other parts of the NEI, the political police kept detailed dossiers on nationalist politicians. When the Japanese came, they went to the ARD office, and everything there was at their disposal. Interview, Selo Soemardjan, Jakarta, September 2, 1997. Ben Anderson has noted that the Japanese took over almost intact the ARD network of informers, which enabled the Japanese to roll up the underground PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia, Indonesian Communist Party) very fast. Personal communication.

⁴⁸ See Kishi Koichi et al., eds., *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), pp. 138 and 177–78. For further details about the Japanese-run police force during the Occupation, see Oudang, *Perkembangan Kepolisian di Indonesia*, pp. 32–47.

⁴⁹ See Kishi Koichi et al., eds., *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), pp. 122–23, 177. See also *Nihon Kenpei Seishi*, p. 1026.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Kenpeitai, although the “latent leadership” of that organization continued and Kenpeitai officers were to intervene often in matters of military administration throughout the Japanese occupation.⁵¹ To fill the places formerly held by Dutchmen, the military authorities brought in a large number of senior Japanese civil police officers, most of them with long experience in Taiwan.⁵² These changes were not only to have a profound impact on police practices in Java. They meant that senior Japanese police officers, some of whom Soeharto was to have close contact with for the best part of a year, arrived in Java with fixed ideas about the maintenance of law and order, based on their experiences both in Japan itself and in a tightly run Japanese colony.

Although Soeharto makes no mention of the fact in his memoirs, he had joined an institution that was deeply unpopular.⁵³ In the pre-war period, the police force had been widely feared and resented on Java, more so than the KNIL, which had tended to keep largely to itself. In the Princely Territory of Yogyakarta, the Dutch maintained a police presence in each of the six regencies (*kabupaten*), usually with two Dutch police officers stationed in an outlying regency capital, with Javanese policemen below them. When Selo Soemardjan was a member of the pre-war police force in Yogyakarta, village people tended to say that *Merdeka* (independence) meant there would no longer be a police force to make their life a misery.

Because the Dutch police force in the countryside was very much feared. Because they were right there in the peaceful atmosphere of the villages and they have their motorcycles [with their revving engines]. That thing was already frightening. And when they came there must be something wrong. If the Dutch police came at that time there must be something wrong. It must be ... to arrest people. So [the people] were very much afraid. So much so that mothers said to their children, “Behave yourself! If you don’t behave, I’ll tell the Dutch police!” ... So when people said “*Merdeka!*,” [they thought] “No police!” They called it Veldpolice [*sic*]. Field Police.⁵⁴

For the pre-war Indonesian nationalists, a still greater problem had come in the guise of the Dutch political police, which maintained a network of informers and

⁵¹ Kishi Koichi et al., eds., *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), p. 178. In October 1944, the Keimubu changed its name to Chianbu.

⁵² If, as it appears, it was Japanese policy to recruit men who had served in Taiwan, rather than in Korea, then Indonesia was lucky. It should be noted, however, that the Kenpeitai recruited heavily among Koreans and that some of the most sadistic Kenpei were Koreans (who had been forced to take Japanese names). I am indebted to Ben Anderson for making this point.

⁵³ Interview, Selo Soemardjan, Jakarta, September 2, 1997. According to a perhaps less objective Japanese naval source, Dutch officials and police authorities had been “dreaded ... and greatly abhorred by the Indonesians-at-large as the direct perpetrator [*sic*] of exploitations.” See “Appreciation of Political Developments by Kaigun (Japanese Navy),” *Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* [hereafter abbreviated NIOD], *Indische Collectie* [IC], No. 005802-005806. This typed, five-page document, which is unsigned and undated, appears to have been written by Vice Admiral Maeda Tadashi, the Jakarta-based liaison officer between the Sixteenth Army and the naval administration in Makassar. Maeda, a senior Navy intelligence officer, was to play an important political role in the period before the Indonesian proclamation of independence. A handwritten entry at the top of the first page says, “*bp 26/9/1945 opgesteld door Maeda*” [“bp September 26, 1945, drawn up by Maeda”]. R. E. Elson has questioned the claim that the Dutch police were deeply unpopular. Personal communication.

⁵⁴ Interview, Selo Soemardjan, Jakarta, September 2, 1997.

which monitored all significant political meetings, not least in Yogyakarta, a city in which the nationalist flame burned with considerable intensity.⁵⁵

The Japanese-run police force was even more feared than its Dutch-run predecessor, and with good reason. One problem was that the Kenpeitai, which had controlled all police functions for the first seven months, was never completely divested of its powers in civilian policing on Java. In the period that Soeharto spent as a policeman, the Kenpeitai could, and did, intervene at will in civil police matters. As one former Japanese army officer put it, "The Kenpeitai in Java, being under the direct supervision of the Sixteenth Army, was always superior to the civil police, which was supervised by the military administration."⁵⁶

Founded by the Meiji government in 1881 to police the army and to monitor growing unrest among those subject to conscription, the Kenpeitai had acquired immense powers, both in Japan itself and in its overseas possessions.⁵⁷ In occupied territories, the Kenpeitai "censored the press, monitored suspected subversives, eradicated networks of spies, and maintained an undercover surveillance of post offices, railway stations, hotels, schools, temples, and other public gathering places. For disobedient civilians, it meted out punishments that were swift and harsh."⁵⁸ On Java, Kenpeitai officers made widespread use of their power to make arrests, to conduct searches, and to confiscate property. They used torture as a matter of course. In nearly three hundred cases they resorted to execution without trial, a practice approved by a subsequent Sixteenth Army commander, Lieutenant General Harada Kumakichi.

To assist it in its work, the Kenpeitai recruited and trained in Jakarta nearly one hundred educated young Indonesians. When the training was over, groups of five to ten of these men were attached to each of the main Kenpeitai units on Java. They served as non-commissioned officers (Kenpeiho) in the Imperial Japanese Army and wore Japanese uniforms and Japanese insignia. In the Kenpeitai office in Malang, for example, there were seven Kenpeiho. In Yogyakarta, a city with many high schools, the number was said to be greater. Teramoto Masashi, a Kenpeitai sergeant who was in

⁵⁵ Yogyakarta was the home of two important Indies-wide institutions: the Taman Siswa school system and the Muhammadiyah, a modernist Islamic social and educational organization.

⁵⁶ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002. According to a post-war study, "the police strongly tended to be subservient to the Military Police." Kishi Koichi et al., eds., *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), p. 180. Even within the army, the Kenpeitai cast a long shadow. When Sukarno and Hatta were kidnapped in August 1945 by young Indonesians demanding an immediate proclamation of independence, they (Sukarno and Hatta) asked Major General Nishimura Otoshi, the chief of the general affairs department, to ensure that the Kenpeitai would take no action against the kidnapers. Nishimura, one of the most senior army officers in Java, replied that he did not have "authority to control Kempei [*sic*]." See "Points of Talks" [*sic*], Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service/Centrale Militaire Inlichtingendienst [hereafter NEFIS/CMI], 1942-49, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken [hereafter BZ], No. 2016, August 16, 1945, p. 3.

⁵⁷ See Theodore Friend, "Hellcraft, Nostalgia, and Terror: Thoughts on Memoirs of the Kenpeitai in Wartime Indonesia," in *The Kenpeitai in Java and Sumatra (Selections from Nihon Kenpei Seishi)*, trans. Barbara G. Shimer and Guy Hobbs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Publication No. 65, 1986), p. 12; and Theodore Friend, *The Blue-Eyed Enemy: Japan Against the West in Java and Luzon, 1942-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 186.

⁵⁸ Friend, "Hellcraft," p. 13. On Java, according to a former Kenpeitai officer, the military police had three central responsibilities: the maintenance of peace and safety; the prevention of Allied espionage and propaganda; and the suppression of those people, "including natives," who had hostile feelings towards the Japanese. Interview, Taniguchi Taketsugu, Tokyo, February 1, 1999.

charge of giving additional training to those Kenpeiho assigned to Solo, said, "They were the most capable group of young men!"⁵⁹ Many Kenpeiho were from the middle or lower levels of the *priyayi*, the so-called "salaried officialdom" of Java.⁶⁰ A number were Christians.

Kenpeiho routinely witnessed Japanese military police torturers at work, given that the Japanese used Kenpeiho as interpreters during the interrogation and torture of Indonesian prisoners. However, the Indonesian assistants were not always passive observers of such torture. Many were enthusiastic, and indeed sadistic, participants. Major General Sukotjo Tjokroatmodjo, a former deputy head of the Military Police Corps (1974–78), was attached to an Indonesian military police unit in East Java late in 1945, during his cadet training. "I came away full of revulsion at what these ex-Kenpeiho were doing," he said.⁶¹ Their torturing was "abominable." "They were active

⁵⁹ Interview, Teramoto Masashi, Inba-mura, Chiba Prefecture, February 12, 1999.

⁶⁰ One prominent ex-Kenpeiho was Major General Parman Siswondo, a former medical student who was to serve as the commander of the Indonesian Military Police Corps (Corps Polisi Militer, CPM) between 1950–53 and as the head of Indonesian Army intelligence from June 1962 until his death in the abortive coup of October 1, 1965. He was attached to the Yogyakarta Kenpeitai office between 1943–45. As such, he would have served for a time under the brutal First Lieutenant Sato Heikichi, no doubt gaining a working knowledge of Kenpeitai operational methods. Parman's CV lists him as "Penterjemah [translator] Kenpeitai Yogyakarta 1943–45." See Harsja Bachtjar, *Siapa Dia?: Perwira Tinggi Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Darat* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1988), p. 238.

Seen by the Japanese as a man of ability and promise, Parman was sent to Tokyo, apparently as a "Grade One" Kenpei student (Kenpei Koshu Gakusei) at the Army Kenpei School. As such, he probably spent twelve months at the school. Given that there were practically no foreigners in the course, this was an extraordinary, if somewhat tainted, distinction for Parman. According to the Military Archives Library of the National Institute for Defense Studies in Tokyo, it is not possible to confirm that Parman was at the school. (Written communication, Kanno Naoki, June 17, 2009. I am indebted to Ken Ward for translating this letter.) However, Parman's presence at the school is accepted as a fact by the authors of an official Indonesian Army biographical study, who seem at some pains to explain Parman's decision to join the Kenpeitai:

During the Japanese occupation, Parman also witnessed the cruelty of the Japanese troops, especially the Kenpeitai. He wanted to investigate the cruel actions of the Kenpeitai, so he did not hesitate to join it. Almost no one in his family supported him in this. The Kenpeitai was hated by all the people.

Because he entered the Kenpeitai with a certain intention, he fell under Japanese suspicion. He was later arrested and interrogated, but was found not guilty and released. To increase his knowledge, he was sent to Japan to study at the Kenpei Kasya Butai [*sic*]. On his return to his homeland he continued to work for the Kenpeitai.

See "Letnan Jenderal S. Parman (1918–1965)," *Biografi Pahlawan Nasional Dari Lingkungan ABRI* (Jakarta: Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, 1988), p. 60. There was, in fact, no Kenpei Kasya Butai; this appears to be a garbled reference to Kenpei Koshu Gakusai.

Several prominent Indonesian civilians who were acquainted with Parman had no idea that he had served with the widely feared Kenpeitai. On learning that he had, they seemed quite unconcerned, saying they had liked him anyway. Former military police colleagues say that Parman was not like the "average" Kenpeiho, who was often brutal.

Some other former Kenpeiho also rose to high office in the post-war Indonesian Army. Major General Suiberthus Sudarman, a Roman Catholic who served as a sergeant in the Yogyakarta Kenpeitai between 1942–45, was the head of the Military Police Corps between 1968–72. Major General Gatot Suwagio, who was a member of the Kenpeitai Special Higher Police section in Jakarta, served as Inspector General of the Interior Ministry during 1966–67.

⁶¹ Major General Sukotjo Tjokroatmodjo, personal communication, August 18, 2009. Sukotjo said that although the actions of former Kenpeiho NCOs had been abominable, "as soon as they became officers, they behaved themselves."

[in torturing]! Oh yes! Oh, definitely! Yes!”⁶² Significantly, the Indonesians who served in the Kenpeitai did not form a post-war association of former Kenpeiho. This was due to an abiding repugnance in Indonesian society over the behavior of the Japanese Military Police Corps. There were no such inhibitions among men who had served in the Japanese-sponsored volunteer self-defense force (Peta) and various other mass bodies set up by the Japanese. On the contrary, they were proud of their association with these institutions.

Throughout Soeharto’s time as a policeman in Yogyakarta, the commander of the local Kenpeitai *buntai* (detachment) was First Lieutenant Sato Heikichi.⁶³ Sato, who was born in Miyagi Prefecture, north of Tokyo, in 1897, was one of the oldest detachment heads in the Kenpeitai. A man with a square face and a solitary manner, he had worked his way up from the rank of private but appears to have led a life that was irredeemably gloomy.⁶⁴ According to Taniguchi Taketsugu, a former teacher who headed the Military Police detachment in Bogor (and who was afterwards sentenced to fifteen years in jail on war-crimes charges), Sato was an honest and affable officer who did not drink and who could often be found sitting cross-legged, “like people do when they meditate.”⁶⁵ To Taniguchi, “he looked like a Buddha.” But there was something about Sato that set him apart from his colleagues. “He was a little different—in a negative way, if I may say so—from the *buntaicho* [detachment commander] pattern. He was conservative and deeply serious.”⁶⁶ According to many non-Japanese, Sato was a monster who did not hesitate to torture and kill his opponents. After the Japanese surrender, Sato was brought before a Dutch war-crimes tribunal and charged with “systematic terror” and the “torture of citizens.”⁶⁷ He was found guilty and hanged in 1948.

⁶² For claims that Kenpeiho in Blitar beat detainees, especially alleged Communists, as a matter of course, see Soeryana, “Blitar: The Changing of the Guard,” translated and annotated by David Bourchier, in *Local Opposition and Underground Resistance to the Japanese in Java, 1942–1945*, ed. Anton Lucas, Monash University Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 13 (Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 283–87.

⁶³ Sato took up his appointment in April 1942, shortly after the Japanese landings on Java, and remained in the post for more than two years, at which time he was transferred to Surabaya. The Kenpeitai unit in Yogyakarta, which controlled subunits in Purworejo and Magelang, had a staff of thirty-three to thirty-five Japanese. Written communication, Captain Kawano Teruaki, Military History Department, National Institute for Defense Studies, Tokyo, February 21, 1997, based on a conversation with Taniguchi Taketsugu. See also “Schema van de Plaatselijke K.P.T. Djokdjakarta,” ARA ASDGA, No. 5192. Additional information about Sato’s military career and trial was provided by Rolf Utermohlen of NIOD. Written communication, July 14, 1997. NIOD staff have been unable to locate Sato’s file. No fewer than 199 of the 538 Kenpei stationed in Java at the end of the war were convicted at the subsequent war-crimes trials in Jakarta. Forty received the death sentence. Only fifty-eight non-Kempei soldiers were convicted from a pool of twenty thousand regular army soldiers. See *The Kenpeitai in Java and Sumatra*, translators’ preface, p. 17.

⁶⁴ Interview, Taniguchi Taketsugu, Tokyo, September 5, 2003.

⁶⁵ Interview, Taniguchi Taketsugu, Tokyo, February 1, 1999. Taniguchi provided additional information about Sato on September 5, 2003.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ The charges related to the treatment Sato meted out to the Dutch governor of Yogyakarta, to members of the Roman Catholic clergy, and to employees of the Gondang Lipuro sugar mill, as well as to his ruthlessness in investigating the wrecking of the railway in Tugu. In Surabaya, it was said, Sato did nothing to curb the excesses of his subordinates. Written communication, Rolf Utermohlen, NIOD, July 14, 1997.

It is difficult to believe that Soeharto was unaware of Sato's practices, although there was, of course, nothing Soeharto could have done about them. In Yogyakarta, "everybody was afraid of the Kenpeitai."⁶⁸ On one occasion, a subdistrict head was taken in for questioning at the Kenpeitai headquarters in Yogyakarta. "And they were cruel," one of his friends recalled. "That's what he said. They were cruel. And I could believe it because he was terribly afraid. Terribly afraid to think back on the Kenpeitai."⁶⁹ On another occasion, a subdistrict head from East Java was taken to Jakarta and accused of spying for the Dutch. From time to time, he was beaten. But that was not the worst of it. For two months he was kept naked and cross-legged on a tiled floor, with his face up against a wall, amid the stench of his own urine and feces.⁷⁰ Brutality of this kind generated intense hatred towards the Japanese forces. In the words of a Japanese army special intelligence officer who served in Java, "The reason why the Kenpeitai was feared like a demon [*akuma*] by local people was, I believe, because it abused its powers."⁷¹

Within the Kenpeitai there was a Special Higher Police (Tokko-ka) section, sometimes known as the "thought control" police. On Java, this body had a daunting list of responsibilities. As well as keeping watch over the local population "and their attitude towards the Japanese Military Administration," it sought to learn all it could about the Indonesian Communist Party, the Indonesian independence movement, "subversive movements" within Islamic societies and religious organizations, and potential disturbances to public peace.⁷² The Tokko-ka paid particular attention to nationalist leaders such as Sukarno and Hatta. It also sought information on the political sympathies of the traditional rulers of Central Java, censored letters, and controlled broadcasting. The best and brightest of the young Indonesian Kenpeiho were attached to the Tokko-ka.⁷³

A second reason why the Japanese-run civilian police force was much feared had to do with its ethos and practices. Established in the late 1800s, Japan's unified national police system had been likened by its founder, Kawaji Toshiyoshi, to a family "with the government as parents, the people as children, and the police as nursemaid."⁷⁴ Not surprisingly, the attitude of civilian police officials towards the people had always been paternalistic. They were concerned, it is true, about the education and welfare of the people, but they also harbored "feelings of superiority and authority, with the

⁶⁸ Interview, Selo Soemardjan, Jakarta, September 2, 1997.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002.

⁷² See "Interrogation of Lieutenant Onishi Kyutaro, Glodok Jail, Batavia, May 17, 1946," ARA ASDGA No. 5280. Theodore Friend notes that the "Japanese army in general and the Kenpeitai in particular tended to replicate Dutch fears about communism and Islam. They distrusted them both as blind faiths, fanatical and unpredictable" (Friend, *The Blue-Eyed Enemy*, p. 206, citing *Nihon Kenpei Seishi*, p. 1038). For most of his presidency, it might be added, Soeharto was to harbor an identical fear of communism on the left and political Islam on the right, which allowed him to claim, conveniently but somewhat implausibly, that he was a man of the political center. Above all, the Kenpeitai had "supreme responsibility for army discipline." See Friend, *The Blue-Eyed Enemy*, pp. 186–87.

⁷³ Interview, Teramoto Masashi, February 12, 1999.

⁷⁴ Elise K. Tipton, *The Japanese Police State: The Tokko in Interwar Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), p. 47.

expectation of obedience and submission.”⁷⁵ Japanese police believed that compliance could be obtained by force, and they had become known very early for their arrogance and condescension towards the public.⁷⁶ The Japanese civilian police were equipped with pervasive powers and not shy about using torture. Nor did the police concern themselves solely with routine law-and-order matters. At the apex of the civilian police structure was the Special Higher Police (Tokubetsu Koto Keisatsu, or Tokko) section, which had functions broadly similar to those enjoyed by the Tokko division within the Kenpeitai.⁷⁷ Inspired partly by the police and prison systems in nineteenth-century France but partly, too, by the administrative practices of the British colonial police in East Asia, the Tokko had carved out a place in Japan as the most important and prestigious branch of the police force, with sweeping powers over political organizations, public meetings, and newspaper censorship.⁷⁸

Japanese civil police officers had, if anything, become even more arrogant and authoritarian when they found themselves dealing with non-Japanese people. On Taiwan, which was seen in Tokyo as a model for policing in Japanese colonies and occupied territories, the police force was “highly centralized and widely dispersed in the countryside, with awesome authority to manage and to intervene in the life of the Chinese.”⁷⁹ As “enforcers of law and defenders of colonial public order, the police officers censored publications, supervised public rallies, controlled firearms and explosives, rendered summary judgment in minor criminal cases, curbed illegal entry of laborers, kept domiciliary records, managed fire prevention, supervised pawn shops, bathhouses, hotels, restaurants, slaughterhouses, licensed prostitution, administered sanitation matters,” and so on.⁸⁰ They also helped local governments with tax collection and with the construction and maintenance of roads, enforcement of

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 48–49.

⁷⁷ This elite unit had the mission of protecting the *kokutai*, Japan’s ostensibly unique “national structure,” through “the proper guidance of thought” (see Tipton, *The Japanese Police State*, p. 153). During the 1930s, the Tokko had dealt ruthlessly with left-wing and labor groups, while fighting a rearguard and increasingly unequal battle with the Kenpeitai, which was interfering more and more in civil police matters. Nor was Java spared the attentions of the Japanese political police. A Tokko division was set up in Jakarta, with a branch in Yogyakarta.

The Kenpeitai had three divisions, namely, Tokko, Keimu (police affairs), and Shomu (general affairs.) Organizationally, the Kenpeitai belonged to the Ministry of the Army (Rikugun-sho), while the police reported to the Minister of Internal Affairs (Naimu-sho). According to a former Kenpeitai officer who served in Java, in Japan the main task of the Kenpeitai’s Tokko section was the control (*torishimari*) of spies (*choja*) and cabals (*inbodan*) from outside Japan. The Tokko section of the civil police, on the other hand, concentrated on identifying communists. However, in overseas territories such as Java, he said, the two groups had more or less the same function. Nevertheless, the Kenpeitai chief was higher than the police chief and could give orders to the latter. Telephone interview with Taniguchi Taketsugu, May 13, 2003.

⁷⁸ It has been argued that the Tokko drew its inspiration from Joseph Fouché, the former terrorist and intriguer who founded Napoleon’s political police. See Tipton, *The Japanese Police State*, p. 45, citing Brian Chapman, *Police State* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1970), pp. 27–29. However, as Umemori Naoyuki has shown, the Meiji government sent officials not only to European countries but also to British colonial East Asia (Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore) to research their police and prison systems. The institutions and practices of the Metropolitan Police Office were influenced by the practices of the British colonial police in several important aspects. See Umemori Naoyuki, “Modernization through Colonial Mediations: The Establishment of the Police and Prison System in Meiji Japan” (PhD dissertation, The University of Chicago, 2002), pp. 13–14.

⁷⁹ Chen, “Police and Community Control Systems,” p. 218.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 227.

public health measures, management of irrigation and water control, promotion of industry, cultivation of crops, and recruitment of colonial laborers and military volunteers. Nothing, it seemed, escaped their attention or was beyond their control.⁸¹ In short, the police were “the hands and feet of the governor-general in direct contact with the people.”⁸² On Taiwan, said Koizumi Saburo, a Japanese police inspector who had served on the island before his appointment as chief of the Special Higher Police section in Yogyakarta, the police were almighty and did everything.⁸³

It was hardly surprising, then, that the Japanese civil police officers who came to Java brought with them not just the paternalistic assumptions that were common among all Japanese police officers, but also the top-down approach of a tightly run Japanese colony. “We thought sending policemen from Japanese-occupied Taiwan was a good idea because they were experienced in dealing with people from other cultures,” said Colonel Miyamoto Shizuo, who was a senior staff officer at Sixteenth Army headquarters in the latter part of the war. “But in hindsight, it would have been better if we had chosen people who were new and fresh. Those policemen from Taiwan were already full of preconceptions about the people under Japan’s colonial rule. They had learned to look down on the natives before they were posted to Java. Had they not been from Taiwan, the consequences of Japanese occupation in Java could have been different, could have been better.”⁸⁴

The Japanese wasted little time in putting their distinctive—and frequently harsh—stamp on civil police practices in Java. They took over the Dutch colonial police school at Sukabumi, in West Java, and established, in each residency, a permanent course for the training of police personnel.⁸⁵ They conducted regular propaganda courses to imbue those already in the service “with the Greater East Asia ideals” and to impress on them the might of Japanese power. “As a result of this propaganda,” a post-war Dutch report noted,

the police force soon changed in outlook and behaviour. The Japanese system of corporal maltreatment, administered on the spot or at the police station, for

⁸¹ It was the police who directed the planting of sunflowers alongside roadways when the Japanese governor-general decided to promote the production of quality sunflower oil. It was the police who ordered unwilling villagers to cut down their bamboo thickets when the governor-general decided that it was important to eliminate mosquitoes. According to Koizumi Saburo, the police could have left the job to specialists, but people would not cooperate unless they were forced to by policemen (*omawarisan*). Indeed, on Taiwan the policeman was all-powerful. Koizumi said, “I doubt if Taiwanese liked us from the bottom of their hearts. But, anyway, Japanese policemen in Taiwan in my day were treated like celebrities in each community. We were often invited to a wedding reception of local people, too.” For all that, Koizumi “didn’t see much in common between policing in Taiwan and Yogya except that both Taiwanese and Javanese seemed obedient.” Koizumi Saburo, telephone interview, June 13, 1999. Koizumi arrived from Taiwan in early 1944 to become chief of the Special Higher Police section of the Yogyakarta Princely Territory civil police department. For details of Japanese policing methods in Taiwan, see Chen, “Police and Community Control Systems,” pp. 213–19.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁸³ Interview, Koizumi Saburo, June 13, 1999.

⁸⁴ Interview, Miyamoto Shizuo, April 8, 1999.

⁸⁵ “The Japanese Occupation of the Netherlands Indies, prepared statement of K. A. de Weerd, Attorney-at-Law, Major RNIA, International Prosecution Section, Netherlands Division,” November 1946, The National Archives of the UK/Public Record Office [hereafter TNA: PRO], WO 325/111, p. 39. Major Klaas de Weerd, who had practiced law in East Java, Bali, Southeast Borneo [Kalimantan], and North Sumatra between 1929–41, was a reserve officer in the KNIL. He spent the war as a POW in West Java.

the settlement of a minor infraction and thereby sidestepping further legal procedure, was introduced. Maltreatment as a punishment for insignificant offences could be witnessed daily in the streets. The legally powerless position of the population was thereby clearly demonstrated ... Moral standards of the police force were seriously shaken by this training. Examples set by the Kempei [*sic*] in the maltreatment of defenceless suspects were emulated by a certain section of the Indonesian Police Force.⁸⁶

Nor was the civilian police force lacking in resources. As well as its uniformed and plainclothes officers, the Tokko section of the civilian police force had a Special Police Strike Force (Tokubetsu Keisatsutai) with one company in each regency on Java and under the command of the regency police chief.⁸⁷ Each company had between 60 and 150 personnel, with more in the major cities. Well-trained and well-equipped, with carbines, machine guns, and armored vehicles, these units were designed to respond to any major threat to security, including demonstrations, riots, and armed robbery.⁸⁸ They also had a combat capacity.⁸⁹ Beyond this, senior police officers controlled a 1.3-million-strong Civil Defense Corps (Keibodan), which was in effect an auxiliary police force with a presence in every village and municipality. The Keibodan was designed to counter enemy espionage activities, to serve as an air and coast watch, and to investigate robberies and other crimes.

The Japanese may have abolished the three-branch police system operated by the Dutch, but the abolition was more apparent than real. In the blink of an eye, the powers and responsibilities of those three branches had been replicated, and vastly expanded, in the Keimubu, especially in its Tokko section, with its sweeping powers of surveillance and its Special Police Strike Force. In short, Soeharto was entering a world

⁸⁶ "The Japanese Occupation of the Netherlands Indies, prepared statement of K. A. de Weerd," p. 39.

⁸⁷ The strike force was set up in April 1944. For details, see Situs Brimob Polri, 0.1 Sejarah Brimob, <http://brimobpolri.wordpress.com/sejarah-brimob/> (accessed on October 2, 2008); M. Oudang, *Perkembangan Kepolisian di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Mahabarata, 1952), pp. 46–47; and Jones et al., "Reforming the Indonesian Police Mobile Brigade (BRIMOB)," p. 6. The details in the main text about the Tokubetsu Keisatsutai arsenal and duties are from the Brimob Polri site.

A number of Indonesians who had earlier served in the KNIL joined the normal civilian police force or the Tokubetsu Keisatsutai. One of them was Major General R. M. Soerjosoerarmo, an aristocrat from the Mangkunegaran court who had attended the Royal Military Academy (Koninklijke Militaire Academie, KMA) at Breda in the Netherlands. Another was Lieutenant General A. J. Mokoginta, who had attended the KMA in Bandung.

⁸⁸ The heavily armed mobile units of the Japanese-era Special Higher Police became, after the proclamation of independence in 1945, the Indonesian Special Police (Pasukan Polisi Istimewa), evolving, in 1946, into the Police Mobile Brigade (MOBRIG, later BRIMOB). To this day, BRIMOB is used primarily for military-type operations. It is not known whether the Polisi Istimewa and its successors inherited the unique and all-embracing powers of the Tokko section of the Japanese civilian police force or just those of its well-equipped mobile strike force. It has been suggested that today's BRIMOB is in some ways the direct heir of the NEI Veldpolitie; see Jones et al., "Reforming the Indonesian Police Mobile Brigade (BRIMOB)," p. 6. It is quite likely that the Dutch-era Field Police was, institutionally, a forebear of BRIMOB. But in terms of police practices, the Japanese lineage appears to be of greater significance. Although the Field Police was well-armed, it was set up to deal with criminal activity. The Tokubetsu Keisatsutai was given combat training, and during the Revolution, Special Police units performed as well as normal army infantry units. In practice, BRIMOB traces its descent from the powerful and repressive Japanese-era Special Police Strike Force in much the same way that the Indonesian Army's Military Police Corps (CPM) traces its lineage back in some ways to both the Yugekitai, the Japanese-sponsored Special Guerrilla Force, and to the Kenpeitai.

⁸⁹ Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, personal communication, April 22, 2009.

in which discipline was rigid, brutality a fact of life, paternalism taken for granted, and police influence all pervasive.

A Claim Greeted with Disbelief and Derision

Not long after he began his career as a policeman, Soeharto was “assigned as assistant [*toban*] to the Japanese police chief” in Yogyakarta,⁹⁰ serving, it has been suggested, “almost like a secretary” to him.⁹¹ With obvious pride and probably no exaggeration, the future president recalled that his new boss had informed him his “entrance test score and attitude had been rated the best among all applicants.”⁹² In Yogyakarta at that time there were, in fact, two Japanese civil police “chiefs,” operating at different levels. One of them, Lieutenant Colonel Takeoka Kenji, a mild-mannered man who had once been a senior official in the Japanese Internal Affairs Ministry, was the head of the police department (*keisatsu bucho*) of the entire Princely Territory of Yogyakarta.⁹³ As such, he was one of three important officers immediately under General Yamanouchi, a seasoned bureaucrat who had once governed a Japanese prefecture. The other police chief, one of about ten police station commanders (*keisatsu shocho*) under Takeoka, was Superintendent (Keishi) Okamoto Juko, who was responsible for police matters within the city of Yogyakarta itself.⁹⁴

Soeharto provides no details about the office in which he worked. Nor does he name the man for whom he worked. But a careful review of the evidence suggests that he served as an assistant to Okamoto, an experienced and deeply serious man who, from his headquarters in central Yogyakarta, presided with great watchfulness over the affairs of numerous police substations.⁹⁵ A native of Okayama Prefecture in southwest Honshu, Okamoto had come to Java directly from Taiwan, as had so many of his Japanese police colleagues. He was nearly fifty years old, which meant that he was almost two and a half times Soeharto’s age, and he seems to have been impressed by his young Javanese assistant, who was polite and clever and quick to learn.⁹⁶

Soeharto would have learned much from his time as an assistant to such a senior police officer. He would have gained an insight into everyday Japanese police practices, which were not only far-reaching but closely supervised, with swift

⁹⁰ Soeharto, “Watashi no rirekisho.”

⁹¹ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999. There must have been at least one Japanese secretary as well.

⁹² Soeharto, “Watashi no rirekisho.” As noted in footnote 39, Soeharto also mentioned this in his autobiography.

⁹³ Telephone interviews, Lieutenant Colonel Uchida Takefumi, February 12, 1999, and September 5, 2003. A former judge of the Yokaichiba District Court in Chiba Prefecture, Uchida was the head of the police department in the Yogyakarta Princely Territory from April 1944 until the end of the war, having succeeded Takeoka Kenji. Uchida was not aware in 1999 that Soeharto had once worked as a policeman in Yogyakarta. Nor did Takeoka, whom Uchida met for the first time at post-war gatherings of the Jawa no kai (Java Society), ever mention Soeharto’s name. Former civilian police officers, most of whom had served in Taiwan, were given military rank before they took up their new positions in the civilian police force in Java.

⁹⁴ Other major police stations were in towns such as Wates and Wonosari.

⁹⁵ According to Tsuchiya, “Soeharto was a policeman [*keisatsukan*] working under the Japanese police station commander [*keisatsu shocho*].” I am indebted to Yamaoka Yasuko for her help in establishing the police chain of command in Yogyakarta at this time.

⁹⁶ The details of Okamoto’s career come from the February 12, 1999, interview with Uchida Takefumi.

disciplinary action taken against those guilty of conduct “damaging police honor and public confidence in the police.”⁹⁷ He would have observed the arrogance and almost casual brutality of Japanese police officers, who beat and tortured suspects as a matter of course. He would have learned something about the seamier aspects of local society and come to know a good deal about those who made their living on the wrong side of the law. Nor could he have avoided learning something of the practices of the Kenpeitai, an organization that outdid the civil police when it came to using torture to extract information. He would no doubt have watched with some interest the bureaucratic struggles between the Kenpeitai and the civil police, struggles in which the military police always held the upper hand.

In later years, Soeharto appeared to suggest that he had attained the rank of assistant police inspector (*keibuho*) under the Japanese. This claim, which was accepted and repeated by many writers, is so extraordinary that it raises serious questions about his credibility.⁹⁸ *Keibuho* was the fourth rank up the promotional ladder, after policeman (*junsu*), senior policeman (*junsacho*), and police sergeant (*junsabucho*). In Japan, assistant inspector was a rank open only to a police officer with many years' experience or to a young man with a university degree, almost invariably from Tokyo Imperial University.⁹⁹ It was not a rank that would have been lightly awarded to a twenty-one-year-old Javanese who had never even started, let alone finished, junior high school, and who had only limited work experience. It is true that one or two Indonesian policemen did become assistant inspectors under the Japanese, but they were educated men, usually well into their thirties or forties, who had held responsible positions in the Dutch colonial police force. One such man was Assistant Inspector Soedarsono, who would, within three years, become Soeharto's immediate superior in the post-war Indonesian army; he served as a member of the Special Higher Police (Tokko) section in Yogya.¹⁰⁰

There are strong grounds for believing that Soeharto did not reach the rank of assistant inspector, and his apparent claim that he did has been greeted with disbelief and derision by former Kenpeitai and Japanese civilian police officers who served in Java. According to Taniguchi Taketsugu, the former chief of the Bogor Kenpeitai, it is “almost unthinkable [*kangaerarenai*] ... hard to imagine” that an Indonesian in his early twenties could have achieved such a rank.¹⁰¹ An identical view is expressed by Teramoto Masashi, a former Kenpei sergeant in Solo. “I don't recall any Indonesian in the number-two position in the Yogya police being given the title of *keibuho* in the

⁹⁷ Chen, “Police and Community Control Systems,” p. 238.

⁹⁸ In his biography of Soeharto, Robert Elson writes that Soeharto carried out his police duties “apparently at the rank of *keibuho*.” See R. E. Elson, *Suharto, A Political Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 9.

⁹⁹ Tipton, *The Japanese Police State*, pp. 98–100.

¹⁰⁰ Koizumi Saburo interview, June 13, 1999. Koizumi, a former police inspector (*keibu*) in Yogyakarta, worked closely with Soedarsono. Soeharto was ordered to arrest Soedarsono at the time of the July 3 Affair in 1946. Another man, who went even further, was a Javanese officer who also happened to be named Soeharto. According to a former Japanese chief of police in the Princely Territory of Yogyakarta, there was “a very capable Indonesian police officer everyone called Soeharto *Keibu* (Inspector Soeharto), who worked in the Yogya police station.” However, this was “definitely not the same Soeharto who later became the president, for he was at that time already thirty-seven to forty years old.” Interview, Lieutenant Colonel Uchida Takefumi, February 12, 1999.

¹⁰¹ Interview, Taniguchi Taketsugu, Tokyo, February 1, 1999.

Japanese sense of the term," he said. "It is unthinkable."¹⁰² Koizumi Saburo, a former police inspector in Yogyakarta, is of the same opinion. As he put it, "I don't think there were very many Indonesian *keibuho* in those days."¹⁰³ Tsuchiya Kiso, a former head of the Yogyakarta branch of Beppan, the Sixteenth Army's special intelligence section, and the man who was later to recruit Soeharto into the Japanese-sponsored volunteer army from the police force, does not recall the rank the future president held at that time. But he shares the skepticism of his former colleagues. "I think assistant inspector is pretty high up the ladder," Tsuchiya noted. "Even a Japanese has to start off as a policeman before becoming a senior policeman and then assistant inspector. If he really were an assistant inspector, he would have been the youngest. There are few twenty-year-old *keibuho* in the Japanese police force. None! If you are twenty, you can't be anything more than a policeman."¹⁰⁴ All the same, Tsuchiya is unwilling to rule out the possibility that Soeharto may have held such rank. Soeharto, "because he was very capable," had been appointed deputy director (*fukukan*) very quickly, and it was not impossible that he had been given the rank of *keibuho*. Although it was "pretty unlikely" that a man of Soeharto's age was made an assistant inspector, his Japanese superior "had the rank of superintendent, a rank above inspector. So it is possible that [Soeharto] was *keibuho*. I suspect his boss may have wanted his secretary to be not just a policeman, so it is possible he made him *keibuho* and gave him this exceptional promotion."

As it happens, Soeharto's critics may have judged him unfairly on this point. Soeharto may not have intended to claim that he held such a rank under the Japanese. A close reading of the relevant material suggests that a misunderstanding may have arisen, because, by 1969, the president seems to have been laboring under the extraordinary delusion that the word "*keibuho*" was the name of the Japanese occupation police force, rather than simply a Japanese police rank.¹⁰⁵ It is possible that Soeharto, and the others who seem to have taken their lead from him without checking, somehow mistook the word *keibuho* for *keimubu* (police department). If this explanation is correct, then Soeharto should be seen not as a man who was willing to claim an elevated rank to which he was not entitled but as someone whose normally prodigious memory had simply let him down and who had surprisingly little interest in fact-checking.

¹⁰² Interview, Teramoto Masashi, February 12, 1999.

¹⁰³ Koizumi Saburo interview, June 13, 1999.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

¹⁰⁵ There is evidence for this view in Roeder, *The Smiling General*. Roeder says (p. 96) that Soeharto enlisted as a volunteer "in the Japanese-sponsored police force, KEIBUHO." An official curriculum vitae published during Soeharto's presidency said that in 1942 Soeharto joined the "police (*Keibuho*) in Yogyakarta." See *Almanak "Antara,"* 78/79, Edisi Ke-III, 1978/1979 (Jakarta: Antara, [1978?]), p. 79. In his 1988 autobiography, Soeharto wrote that he saw an announcement that "*Keibuho*, the police" wanted new recruits (see Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 18; in the Indonesian-language version, *Pikiran, Ucapan, dan Tindakan Saya*, on page 22, Soeharto writes "*bahwa Keibuho, Polisi, menerima anggota baru*"). See also Hasja W. Bachtiar, *Siapa Dia?*, p. 341.

“The Indonesians are Swaggering About”

As Superintendent Okamoto tightened Japanese police control over everyday Yogyakarta life from his office on Kantoorlaan (now Jalan Reksobayan), attended by his diligent young Javanese assistant, two Japanese army officers were presiding over the local branches of separate, and mutually hostile, military agencies. One of those officers was First Lieutenant Sato, the head of the local Kenpeitai branch. The other was First Lieutenant Tsuchiya Kiso, the local Beppan head. In much the same manner as his military and civilian police counterparts, Tsuchiya was building up a network of Javanese spies and informers in the city and in the areas beyond, paying particular attention to developments within the Kraton (Royal Palace) of the Sultan. The Japanese were nothing if not watchful, as the Dutch had been before them and as the Soeharto government would be in the future. On Java, three intensely competitive bodies—the Kenpeitai, the civilian police force, and Beppan—were now running networks of Indonesian informers and gathering information, much of it mundane.



First Lieutenant Tsuchiya Kiso in uniform.

After the Japanese landings on Java, Beppan had been given the task of monitoring political, social, and economic conditions. To this end, it set up offices in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya, each of which filed monthly reports to army headquarters. These reports, a few of which survive in an archive building on one of Amsterdam's most elegant canals, are written in a telegraphic style that is sometimes irritatingly oblique.¹⁰⁶ But they provide a revealing—and surprisingly frank—picture of conditions in the turbulent world of occupied Java at a time when Soeharto was a member of the Japanese-run police force. In April 1943, a year into the occupation, Beppan had mixed news for Sixteenth Army headquarters. Some developments were positive. "Under the leadership of the Japanese," the Bandung office reported, "progress is noticeable daily, and there is cause for satisfaction in the fact that they [Indonesians] now regard the Dutch rule in NEI as a thing of the past."¹⁰⁷ Sukarno was playing an increasingly important role and had become "head man in control of concentration and movements and more confidence is being placed in him." But there was bad news, too. The "lower classes" were worried about the high cost of living. The drivers of *becaks* (pedicabs) and horse-drawn vehicles were complaining of the difficulty of earning their livelihood now that all Dutch citizens had been interned. Some Muslims were "still not burying their dead with the top pointing to Tokyo and the bottom to Mecca."¹⁰⁸ "Lower-class police officials" were complaining that they would have to be promoted to compensate for recent pay cuts. Corrupt practices were creeping in. Some of the police were "abusing their powers and doing unfair things."

There were problems, too, with the ethnic Chinese. According to Beppan, the Chinese were jealous of the progress made in all ways by the Indonesians and did not like being treated as enemy aliens. "The Indonesians are swaggering about saying they are the spearhead of the Japanese, but [the Chinese are saying] we Chinese are nearer to the Japanese in speech and everything ... They do not like their children to be educated with Indonesian children ..." For their part, the Europeans and Eurasians remained deeply hostile towards the Japanese. Dutch women in the internment camps had been having great difficulty getting food and had been spreading anti-Japanese propaganda. Eurasian women were saying that "when they have no money to buy food they will be forced to sacrifice their chastity." Many Eurasians were insulting the Japanese flag. "It is regretted," Beppan reported somberly, "that a Japanese flag was found being used in the W.C. of a Eurasian house [that was] searched ... The practice of calling Japanese 'monkeys' has sprung up lately." Eurasians were saying that there was "no need to hoist the Japanese flag as the Japanese Occupation of Java will not last forever and they will be defeated ..." With no reliable information in the strictly censored newspapers, rumors gained a life of their own, many of them conveying a sense that the Japanese war effort was in trouble. Beppan noted these rumors carefully: there was an acute shortage of materials in Japan; the defeat of the Japanese army was

¹⁰⁶ The documents are to be found in the Indische Collectie of the Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie on Herengracht. Copies of some of these documents are also held at the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague.

¹⁰⁷ "Staff Beppan Isum for April. 30 April, 1943. Bandung branch of Beppan," JAVINT 3117/14, SEATIC Det. 23 Ind. Div., 28 Nov. 1945. ARA ASDGA No. 5197, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2. The Japanese do not appear to have widely pushed these burial instructions, which would have produced a furor wherever they were introduced. Muslim dead should be buried with their face towards Mecca.

imminent; the British and Americans would certainly attack; the German army had been defeated [presumably at Stalingrad, in February]; the Japanese army has been “defeated” in Burma.¹⁰⁹

On April 29, 1943, Soeharto would have joined Japanese and Indonesian police officers in celebrations marking the forty-second birthday of Emperor Hirohito. But the event does not seem to have greatly moved those living in the cities and towns of Java. “The customary celebrations of the Emperor’s birthday were carried out, and were everywhere on a reduced scale, the only people showing any great enthusiasm being villagers,” the Bandung office noted.¹¹⁰

Fourteen months after the Dutch surrender, life on Java was harsh and getting harsher. Those foolish enough to complain could be picked up, either by the Kenpeitai or the civilian police. They could be beaten or tortured. Some were killed. Soeharto was deeply embedded in the police force at this time, perhaps by now having no choice in the matter. In less than six months, however, the Japanese were to recruit and train men for a new self-defense force on Java. When that time came, Soeharto decided to apply for selection as an officer cadet.

Part Two: A Soldier for the Japanese Army

“The Whole Island was Ablaze with Enthusiasm”

On Friday October 8, 1943, on the advice of his Japanese superior, Superintendent Okamoto, Soeharto presented himself at a temporary army recruitment center in Yogyakarta.¹¹¹ Wearing a *kain*, white shirt, and sandals, rather than his police uniform, he joined about four hundred other young men who had gathered on the grounds of an elementary school in the heart of the city.¹¹² The Sixteenth Army had decided to set

¹⁰⁹ “Staff Beppan Isum,” April 1943.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. The report added, almost in passing, what is probably one of the earliest surviving references to the wartime practice of enforced prostitution (sexual slavery) carried out by both the Imperial Army and the Imperial Navy, under which more than 100,000 “comfort women” were sent to officially approved brothels across Asia.

April 29: Emperor’s Birthday. Great congratulation ceremony. Meeting to urge complete destruction of England and America. Show put on by native women, comforts [*sic*] girls of the Army, Hospital and Army comforts girls.” (See “Staff Beppan Isum,” April 1943, p. 1.)

Japan’s so-called “comfort stations” were supervised by the Kenpeitai.

¹¹¹ Soeharto makes it clear that he was “advised” (*susumerareta*) by his police superior to apply to join the self-defense force. Soeharto, “Watashi no rirekisho,” Part 5, January 6, 1998.

¹¹² That, at least, is what Tsuchiya Kiso, the Japanese army officer who recruited Soeharto that day, remembers him wearing. Soeharto, he feels certain, was not wearing his police uniform (Tsuchiya Kiso, personal communication). How reliable is Tsuchiya’s memory, both on minor matters such as this and on matters of substance? In a series of interviews, and in subsequent correspondence, Tsuchiya came across as an intelligent, objective, and honest man, proud in an understated way of the role that he and his colleagues had played in forging an Indonesian self-defense force, but with no wish to overstate the case or downplay negative aspects of the Japanese occupation or, indeed, his wartime disagreements with

up a volunteer self-defense force on Java to augment its own overstretched units, and it was looking for officer cadets. Soeharto was determined to be a part of the new body.

Some of those waiting to be interviewed that day had impressive credentials; they came from a *priyayi* background and had attended Dutch high schools, some of them quite prestigious. These applicants were relatively healthy, well-fed and well-dressed. They included schoolteachers, policemen, public servants, and high school students. Others who waited patiently in the sun were less well qualified for the positions on offer. Most were barefoot. Many were in poor health (the most common medical complaints were skin diseases and TB). Many had only the most rudimentary education. Inside the hall, where they were called in one at a time, a twenty-six-year-old Japanese intelligence officer, First Lieutenant Tsuchiya Kiso, sat at a table choosing officer cadets for the new force. Tsuchiya and his superiors had already consulted widely, seeking the names of potential recruits, and some of those waiting in the courtyard bore letters of recommendation from Japanese or Indonesian officials. But there were many men who came forward of their own volition, fired by a sense that this was a defining moment in the nationalist struggle. As Tsuchiya recalled:

The whole island of Java was ablaze with enthusiasm after the Japanese military commander announced that the Peta [Pembela Tanah Air, Defenders of the Fatherland, or Java Volunteer Defense Force] was being organized and everybody, the young and the old, was so willing to defend the country that a lot of people came to apply without much effort on our part.¹¹³

The men Tsuchiya chose in Yogyakarta that day, and in other cities over the next nine days, would form the core of what was to become in time the powerful Central Java Diponegoro Division. A number of them, including Soeharto, were to play a key role, too, in the post-war Indonesian National Army (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI).

A Dilemma for the Japanese

The Japanese had had much to celebrate in the days after the Sixteenth Army landed in Java in March 1942. The island at the heart of the Dutch East Indies had fallen into their hands after a land campaign lasting a mere eight days. Elsewhere, the forces of the Imperial Army and the Imperial Navy were carrying all before them, from the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal to the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific.

fellow Japanese officers. His memory proved to be excellent on matters of substance that are easily cross-checked. After the war, Tsuchiya was arrested by the Allies and interrogated at length. The detailed account he provided in 1999, when he was eighty-two, and in subsequent years, is remarkably consistent with the account he gave Allied interrogators in 1945–47. It is in accordance, too, with the picture that emerges from Morimoto Takeshi, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi* [History of the Java Volunteer Defense Force] (Tokyo: Ryukeishosha, 1992), the 783-page semi-official Japanese history of the Indonesian self-defense corps, and with the memories of a significant number of Indonesian officers who served in that force. At the same time, Tsuchiya readily acknowledged in 1999 that he could not recall a great deal about Soeharto from 1943. He told Ruth McVey in 1980 that he really couldn't remember Soeharto. Ruth McVey, notes from interview with Tsuchiya Kiso, Osaka, October 1980 (private collection). The 1980 claim appears to overstate the case somewhat, given the substantial evidence to the contrary.

¹¹³ Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 6, 2003.

But success in war is often fleeting, and by mid-1942 the war was starting to go badly for Japan. An almost unbroken string of Japanese military triumphs had come to an abrupt halt at the Battle of Midway in early June, almost six months to the day after the opening strike against Pearl Harbor and only three months after the Japanese landings in Java.

As 1942 wore on, the Japanese Southern Army, which had primary responsibility for Burma, Malaya, Sumatra, Java, British North Borneo, and the Philippines, and which maintained garrison armies in French Indochina and Thailand, found itself increasingly cut off from the Japanese home islands as a result of US submarine attacks on Japanese merchant shipping. As a result, Java assumed even greater importance as a supply base, for food, raw materials, and manpower.¹¹⁴ But as the Japanese were well aware, Java was itself vulnerable. In early 1943, the Sixteenth Army still feared an imminent Allied attack on Java from bases in Australia.¹¹⁵ And, as it knew only too well, the Japanese forces on the island were insufficient to withstand any such attack.

At the time of the landings in March 1942, the Sixteenth Army had been a force of 55,000 men, built around two divisions, with about twenty-two battalions. Five months later, it had been pared back to eight battalions. The 5,200-strong Sakaguchi Task Force, which had swept westward through the heartland of Central Java in early March, had been sent, by the end of the month, to Burma. At the end of August, the powerful Second Division had been sent, together with two other units, from West Java to support operations at Guadalcanal, where the Japanese and Americans were locked in a grinding land and sea battle. That had robbed Java of another 24,000 front-line troops. In early November, the Forty-Eighth Division had been sent from East Java to defend Timor and islands in the Arafura Sea.¹¹⁶

Nor had General Imamura been given suitable replacements. As he noted bitterly at the end of the war, to make up for the units that had been redeployed he was sent "ten battalions of aged soldiers, in all, under thirty thousand men, and with this small military force I had to defend Java."¹¹⁷ In some ways, the situation seems to have been even worse than that. According to a senior Japanese staff officer, the redeployments left the Sixteenth Army "with a total force of two regiments (consisting of fifteen thousand military men, of whom 8,500 were combat forces, and fifteen thousand Japanese civilians seconded to the army)."¹¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the Japanese were "acutely aware" of the limitations of their military strength. If they were to concentrate

¹¹⁴ Miyamoto Shizuo, "Jawa shusen shori-ki" [An Account of the Cessation of Hostilities in Java], in *The Japanese Experience in Indonesia: Selected Memoirs of 1942–1945*, ed. Anthony Reid and Oki Akira, Monographs in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series, No. 72 (Athens, OH: Ohio University, 1986), p. 220. A more literal translation of *Jawa shusen shori-ki* is "An Account of the Management of the End of the War in Java."

¹¹⁵ Interrogation of General Imamura Hitoshi, "Supplement," p. 1 (translation.)

¹¹⁶ See Military History Department, National Institute for Defense Studies, Defense Agency, *Senshi Soshō. Ranin koryaku sakusen*, No. 3 [War History Series, Volume 3. Occupation of the Dutch East Indies] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1967), pp. 76, 570–71; and Military History Department, National Institute for Defense Studies, *Senshi Soshō. Nanseihomen Rikugun sakusen: Marei Ranin no boei*, No. 92 [War History Series, Volume 92. Army Operations in the Southwestern Theatre: The Defense of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1976), p. 48.

¹¹⁷ Imamura "Supplement," p. 2 (translation).

¹¹⁸ Miyamoto Shizuo, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 220.

their meager forces to oppose an Allied landing, they would have no troops in reserve to maintain public order, a prospect that deeply troubled Imamura, who remembered so clearly the outbreak of lawlessness that followed the Dutch surrender. As he said after the war, "I could not but preconceive the occurrence of such similar plunderings and violence when the Japanese army concentrated its forces in the event of an Allied landing on Java."¹¹⁹

One solution to the manpower problem was to create an indigenous army of some kind, using either conscripts or volunteers, as the Japanese had done when they founded the Indian National Army and the Burma Independence Army at the end of 1941.¹²⁰ But the Japanese were not at all sure that Indonesians were physically or temperamentally suited to military service. In an attempt to resolve the matter, they turned, in November 1942, to Beppan, the special intelligence section of the Sixteenth Army. It was a move with far-reaching consequences, not least for Soeharto, who at that time had just been accepted into the Japanese-run police force in Yogyakarta.

The Secret Work of Beppan

The work of Beppan has gone largely unrecorded, but this body was to have a lasting impact on Indonesia's military and political life. In less than two years, Beppan was to recruit and train a 37,500-strong Indonesian volunteer self-defense force, the basis of the future Indonesian National Army. It was to recruit and train a small but potent Special Guerrilla Force (Yugekitai), the embryo of the Indonesian Army intelligence service and, in East Java at least, of the TNI's powerful Military Police Corps.¹²¹ Beppan was also to recruit and train five hundred young Indonesian Muslims as leaders of the Barisan Hizbullah (Army of God), a paramilitary force designed to harness Islamic support behind the Japanese at the time of an expected Allied invasion of Java.¹²² Hizbullah would later play a central role in the bitter post-war drive to make Indonesia an Islamic state.

¹¹⁹ Imamura "Supplement," p. 2 (translation). Although self-serving in some respects, Imamura's statement captures well the Japanese dilemma.

¹²⁰ About half of the 45,000 British Indian troops who had surrendered in Singapore volunteered to join the INA within two months of its formation.

¹²¹ Created at the end of 1944, the Yugekitai was an undercover force designed to gather intelligence and conduct guerrilla operations behind the lines in the event of an Allied landing on Java. Six hundred recruits enrolled in January 1945 and a further 600 in July.

¹²² A Barisan Hizbullah training camp was officially opened in West Java on February 18, 1945. For details about Hizbullah, see "Statement by Capt. YANAGAWA, dated 14 Dec 1945," Javint 3132/2, SEATIC Det., GSI, 23 Ind Div., 15 Jan 45," ARA ASDGA (1942-1950), No. 5190. The 21-page Yanagawa "Statement," which contains invaluable details about the establishment and training of Peta, the Yugekitai and Hizbullah, is in three parts: Part I (8 pp.), Part II (9 pp.), and Part III (4 pp.). A three-page attachment gives an account of Yanagawa's actions after the Japanese surrender. Page 1 of Part II of the "Statement" is missing from the file held at the ARA. However, Part II of the "Statement" can be found in the Indische Collectie of the Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD IC No. 006508-006516). In the "Statement," the translator has erred in rendering Yanagawa's given name as "Munenari," a common mistake. It should be Yanagawa Motoshige. The same error appears in Joyce C. Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia: Independence and Volunteer Forces in World War II* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1977); and in Mitsuo Nakamura, "General Imamura and the Early Period of Japanese Occupation," pp. 1-26. Nishihara Masashi, *The Japanese and Sukarno's Indonesia: Tokyo-Jakarta Relations, 1951-1966* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1976), refers throughout to Yanagawa Tomoshige, although this may be a typographical error.

Beppan came out of a distinctly unsavory tradition. Before and during World War II, Japanese army intelligence and covert action work was conducted by three separate bodies—the conventional tactical and combat intelligence G2 units; the Kenpeitai for counterintelligence and security functions; and a great many Tokumu Kikan, or “special task agencies,” for clandestine operations (*boryaku*).¹²³ The latter were responsible for softening up and penetrating target national groups, supporting and training puppet national armies, preparing propaganda material, and spinning intelligence-gathering webs designed to help the conventional forces maintain the subjugation of occupied areas. These Tokumu Kikan tended to obtain the best-trained personnel, both military and civilian, drawing especially on recent graduates of the Nakano Gakko, the prestigious Army Intelligence School, which had been set up in Tokyo in 1938. Brutal in its methods, especially in China and Manchuria, the Tokumu Kikan was hated and feared almost as much as the Kenpeitai.¹²⁴

On the eve of the Pacific War, the army had sent about a thousand intelligence agents, many of them Nakano Gakko graduates, to Southeast Asia under cover as consular officials, shipping agents, bankers, journalists, migrants, students, and businessmen.¹²⁵ Other Nakano School graduates, including some who had been posted for a time in Japanese-occupied Taiwan, arrived in Southeast Asia later with the invading Japanese forces. While on Taiwan, a group of young Nakano Gakko graduates in the Tokumu Kikan had found themselves working in a remodeled warehouse, there being no room for them in the overflowing General Staff office of Army Headquarters. They decided to call themselves Beppan, a word derived from *betsu*, meaning “separate” or “different,” and *han*, meaning “group” or “section.”¹²⁶ They continued to use this name when they were in Java, mainly to avoid the negative connotations of the term Tokumu Kikan, and before long it became the practice throughout the so-called Southern areas (Nanpo) for army intelligence agencies consisting mainly of Nakano School graduates to be called Beppan.¹²⁷ On Java, at least,

¹²³ See “Intelligence in the New Japan,” CIA website, www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/docs/v07i3a01p_0005.htm, pp. 5–6, on which this and the following two sentences are based (accessed on September 20, 2007). “Tokumu” means “special task,” while “kikan” is “organization” or “system.”

¹²⁴ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002.

¹²⁵ See, for example, Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 6.

¹²⁶ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, August 20, 2002. The transformation from *han* to *pan* is explained by phonetics.

¹²⁷ During its five-month stay in Bandung, the Second Division used the term “Isamu Bunshitsu” or “Isamu Gunshitsu” (“Isamu” was the code name for the Second Division; “Bunshitsu” means “detached office”). See Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 91. In Jakarta, the name Beppan was used. First Lieutenant Yanagawa Motoshige, who set up the Bandung Bunshitsu, said it was a branch of the Tokumu Kikan, adding that the functions of the Bunshitsu in Bandung and the Beppan in Jakarta were the same. “Bunshitsu” was the usual word, having been used in Manchuria and elsewhere, but some people thought it had acquired a bad name, which is why the Jakarta group was called Beppan. Ruth McVey interview with Yanagawa Motoshige, Jakarta, November 13, 1980. The Isamu Bunshitsu had its offices in the former Dutch political police (Politieke Inlichtingendienst) building in Bandung. According to Togashi Tomoshige, another former member of Beppan, the name Beppan came into general use a month or so after the Japanese occupation of Java. When the Second Division was transferred to Guadalcanal, he said, the former Isamu Bunshitsu was put under the control of the Sixteenth Army and was known as Beppan. Ruth McVey interview with Togashi Tomoshige, Tokyo, October 1980.

In a post-war interrogation, Captain Yoshitake Chikao gave a somewhat different account. He said that when the Sixteenth Army headquarters was transferred from Bandung to Jakarta, an intelligence room (*Joho-shitsu*) was set up. Then, as contacts with “the native population” gradually increased, an office

Beppan seems to have largely eschewed the sort of practices that had given the Tokumu Kikan such a bad name.

Beppan was a body with high-level connections in the Japanese army. The “big boss” (*o bosu*) of the organization was Major General Kokubu Shinshichiro, the chief of staff of the Sixteenth Army.¹²⁸ He had been “directly appointed” to this position by Japan’s wartime prime minister, Lieutenant General Tojo Hideki, who was also minister of the army, a clear sign that Tojo considered Java crucial.¹²⁹ There was “a strong trust relationship” between the two generals, forged in the days when Kokubu had been a battalion commander in a regiment commanded by Tojo.¹³⁰

Those connections seem to have served the agency well. Although initially a very small organization, with only two dozen officers and men on Java, Beppan had an unusual degree of autonomy.¹³¹ This won it no friends in the Kenpeitai, an

was established outside the headquarters building “on account of headquarters’ prohibition of natives frequenting their premises, partly from the point-of-view of prevention of espionage, partly because of the complicated nature of its work.” This office, which was staffed by a small number of Japanese army officers and interpreters and which took over premises at Prapatan Gambir 64 and, later, at Jalan Kebon Sirih 44, was always a part of the intelligence section of the Sixteenth Army headquarters. But to avoid confusion, it was called the “Separate Intelligence Room” (*Betsu no Joho-shitsu*) or “Separate Section” (Beppan) for short. See “Captain YOSHITAKE, The Beppan of the General Staff,” *Kantoor voor Japansche Zaken*, Batavia, undated, p. 2, ARA ASDGA (1942–1950), No: 5300. Yoshitake joined the “outside” office around May 1942. Asked by his interrogators to explain the difference between Beppan and the Tokumu Kikan, Yoshitake said he remembered hearing the name of the latter body but claimed, implausibly, to have “no knowledge of its intrinsic nature.”

¹²⁸ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002. Kokubu was chief of staff from June 1943 to November 1944.

¹²⁹ Colonel Miyamoto Shizuo, in a reply given in response to written questions from the author, May 25, 1999. See also “Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi” [Miyamoto Shizuo’s Story], the last four chapters of Ara Kenichi, *Jakarta yoakemae: Indonesia dokuritsu ni kaketa hitotachi* [Jakarta before the Dawn: Those Who Staked All on Indonesian Independence] (Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 1994), pp. 195–217. In compiling this book, Ara interviewed four people, including Miyamoto, Kaneko Tomokazu, and Zulkifli Lubis. He presented their stories in a first-person narrative style.

¹³⁰ Kokubu later served under Tojo in the Ministry of the Army.

¹³¹ At the start, Beppan had about ten staff members in Jakarta and about five in each of its three branch offices, which had been established in Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya. See “Written Statement of Kempeitai [sic] Capt. Yoshitake,” Item 2047, *Southeast Asia Translation and Interrogation Centre (SEATIC) Intelligence Bulletin*, No. 225, January 4, 1946, TNA/PRO WO 203/6303. The claim that Yoshitake was a member of the Kenpeitai is a glaring error; he was a member of Beppan. See also “Captain YOSHITAKE, The Beppan of the General Staff,” p. 4. By the end of the war, Beppan appears to have had a staff of about three hundred people.

Yoshitake went on to head the Nami Kikan (Wave Agency). This body had two responsibilities. First, it was to report all enemy naval movements, including those of submarines; to this end, it operated small vessels along the coast. Second, it was to destroy enemy shipping during an Allied landing. As cover, Nami Kikan vessels transported Sixteenth Army cargo. See “VERKLARING. Afgelegd door: Kapitein TSUCHIYA Kiso,” “Statement of Capt. TSUCHIYA Kiso, member of the ‘Beppan’ (NANSEITAI) Staff,” Cipinang Jail, March 3–8, 1947, pp. 5–6, NIOD IC No. 006524–006535. The name Beppan was changed to Nanseitai in April 1945, when Beppan’s role switched from intelligence to “active defense work.” Tsuchiya and Yoshitake told Ruth McVey that one of the Nami Kikan’s tasks was to train American and Australian POWs it had “turned” for *boryaku* and propaganda work. The Nami Kikan, they said, also trained a Yugekitai unit composed of locally born Chinese. It recruited candidates by asking *bupatis* (regents) to recommend the sons of leading Chinese families “who wanted to be given training to become more effective merchants,” with a promise or hint that good relations with the Japanese would result. Nothing was said about this being an intelligence body, but those trained were to be sent back to their home areas to work as merchants while providing the Japanese with information on the Chinese community, economic affairs, and shipping news. Ruth McVey interview with Tsuchiya Kiso and Yoshitake Chikao,

organization used to getting its own way and not well disposed to those it saw as rivals. According to a seasoned Kenpeitai junior officer, Beppan was a powerful and influential body, "the only organization among the Japanese forces which could override [the] all-feared Kenpeitai."¹³² Beppan, he added, had powers of arrest and authority to search and confiscate property. That claim is disputed by former Beppan officers. Unlike the Kenpeitai, they say, Beppan did not have any official powers of arrest nor did it have the authority to conduct searches and confiscate property. In Japanese-occupied Java, however, those constraints meant little. Beppan officers felt free to act as and how they saw fit. "No one complained," said a former Beppan chief, somewhat disingenuously, "when Beppan used those powers if necessary," adding the qualification that the agency probably resorted to these practices no more than ten times during the three-and-a-half year occupation.¹³³

General Kokubu was too busy, of course, to direct Beppan's activities on a day-to-day basis. Nor did Major Kuriya Jisuke, the staff officer in charge of intelligence for the Sixteenth Army, have time to provide more than general oversight of Beppan.¹³⁴ That meant, in practice, that Beppan was run by Captain Maruzaki Yoshio, an officer with some very fixed views about the revolutionary potential of Indonesian youth. After graduating as a member of the Nakano School's first class in mid-1939, Maruzaki had been posted to a section of the Second Bureau (Intelligence) of the Army General Staff.¹³⁵ Maruzaki was seen by his Japanese colleagues as a broadminded and tolerant officer, but he was also tough, with a streak of zealotry in his makeup. In early 1941, as war loomed in the Pacific, he had been planted in the Japanese consulate in Surabaya, East Java, to study Indonesian society.¹³⁶ While there, he came to the view that if Japan

Osaka, October 1980. Tsuchiya told Allied interrogators that Yoshitake had helped train a Special Overseas Chinese Defense Unit (Tokubetsu Kakyo Keibotai). This was an organization of young, locally born ethnic Chinese civilians set up in late 1944 within the Civil Defense Corps (Keibodan); Yoshitake's training course was very short (one week), and this body does not seem to have amounted to much. See Tsuchiya Kiso "Statement," pp. 3-4. See also "Explanations Regarding All Kinds of Armed Bodies," a document drawn up by the headquarters of the Sixteenth Army, p. 7, NIOD IC No: 059394 (11 pages). It is not clear if there were any relationship or overlap between the Kakyo Keibotai and the Nami Kikan. The Nami Kikan was headed at one time by First Lieutenant Yonemura Masao. See Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 93.

¹³² Interrogation of Lieutenant Onishi Kyutaro, Glodok Jail, Batavia, May 18, 1946, ARA ASDGA, No. 5280. Onishi, who was stationed in Java throughout the Japanese occupation, joined the Imperial Army as a private in 1919, transferring to the Kenpeitai two years later. In 1933, he was attached to the feared Kwantung Army Kenpeitai in Manchuria and reached the rank of warrant officer four years later. Between 1943 and 1945, he was attached to the Tokko (Special Higher Police) division of the Java Kenpeitai Headquarters in Jakarta. In the words of Captain Yoshitake, a Beppan officer, "Sometimes the Kempeitai [*sic*] misunderstood Special Section as if it was an organization to keep a check on Kempeitai [*sic*]. At times there was very bad feeling between the two organizations." See "Written Statement of Kempeitai [*sic*] Capt. Yoshitake," pp. 12-13.

¹³³ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, August 20, 2002. Tsuchiya was the head of Beppan during the final stages of the war.

¹³⁴ Kokubu may have been the "big boss" of Beppan, but Major Kuriya actually directed it. Although he is sometimes referred to as Kuriya Tsugunori, Tsuchiya says that he and his colleagues in Beppan called him Jisuke. Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002. Kuriya had served in Jakarta as a military attaché. Ruth McVey interview with Tsuchiya Kiso, Osaka, October 1980. See also Stephen C. Mercado, *The Shadow Warriors of Nakano: A History of the Imperial Japanese Army's Elite Intelligence School* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2002), p. 36.

¹³⁵ Mercado, *The Shadow Warriors of Nakano*, p. 35.

¹³⁶ Supported by a government-run company set up to finance intelligence operations, Maruzaki took lessons in Indonesian and Dutch and, as one writer put it, "generally had quite a good time," at least until

wanted the assistance of the Indonesians “in the coming struggle against the Westerners, the Indonesians should first be endowed with a fighting spirit, a spirit based on self-confidence as Asians who are not inferior in any way to Westerners.”¹³⁷ It would be difficult, he felt, to raise the spirit of older Indonesians, but he was confident that younger people could easily be imbued with the necessary fighting spirit.¹³⁸ As the head of Beppan, Maruzaki was given the opportunity to imbue young men with precisely that spirit.

At this time, Beppan was still monitoring political, social, and economic conditions on the island in an attempt to provide headquarters with “a good grasp of the sentiment among the Javanese.”¹³⁹ But Beppan was no mere sponge, passively absorbing non-military information that might be of interest to army headquarters. Beppan officers were graduates of the Nakano Gakko. They had come through a rigorous intelligence course of study, where the curriculum included not only intelligence, strategy, and propaganda but also languages, philosophy, history, current affairs, martial arts, counter intelligence, and the various facets of covert action.¹⁴⁰ They had been instructed in the art of winning over “native people” to the Japanese side (*senbu*) and had been taught how to train local recruits (*minzoku shido*). They had mastered techniques relating to the development of spiritual strength (*seishin-ryoku*). They had been shown how to achieve their various tasks in occupied territories.¹⁴¹

December 1941, when he and other Japanese officials were interned by the Dutch following the attack on Pearl Harbor. See Nugroho Notosusanto, *Tentara Peta Pada Jaman Pendudukan Jepang di Indonesia* [The Peta Army during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia] (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1979), p. 59.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 29, 2002. Beppan’s task, another officer observed, was to “collect and properly arrange ... information on the movements of each race and the voice of the general population in the island.” See Yoshitake “Statement,” p. 4. To this end, Beppan’s offices in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya each filed monthly reports with the Sixteenth Army headquarters.

¹⁴⁰ Tsuchiya Kiso, written responses to questions, May 29, 2002. See also “Nakano agents and the Japanese forces in New Guinea, 1942–1945,” www.thefreelibrary.com/Nakano+agents+and+the+Japanese+forces+in+New+Guinea,+1942-1945-012316110 (accessed September 21, 2007); and www.thefreelibrary.com/Nakano+agents+and+the+Japanese+forces+in+New+Guinea%2c+1942-1945.-a0123162110 (accessed August 4, 2009).

¹⁴¹ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002. In one of its early special assignments, Beppan recruited between twenty and forty volunteers from the small ethnic Indian community on Java and sent them to Singapore for training in the Indian National Army. See also George S. Kanahale, “The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Prelude to Independence” (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1967), p. 118. Kanahale states, incorrectly, that some three hundred ethnic Indian volunteers were sent from Java to Singapore. Later, in mid-1943, Beppan was ordered to make a propaganda film, “Call to Australia,” which sought to convey the impression, totally false, that Australian prisoners of war were being treated humanely on Java, thereby seeking in some ill-defined way “to create an anti-war spirit in Australia.” Yanagawa “Statement,” Part I, p. 4. Yanagawa was the “chief producer” of the film. Later still, there were to be more special projects. In 1944, Beppan drew up plans to land intelligence agents in northern Australia, using two Chinese-crewed junks that had been sent from Shanghai to a special training base in the Bay of Jakarta. Some junks were sent, but the mission was a failure. The program was under the command of Captain Yonemura Masao, who had been the Beppan man in Yogyakarta when Soeharto began working in the local police force. Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002. In what seems to have been a related exercise, Beppan sought to “get hold of a complete set of Australian army, navy, and air force uniforms,” eventually assembling about fifteen or twenty such outfits, including underclothes, boots, and socks. See “Written Statement” of Captain Yoshitake, *SEATIC Intelligence Bulletin* 225, January 4, 1946, 12–13, TNA/PRO WO 203/6303. At about the same time, Beppan took in and sheltered a man it thought to be Tan Malaka, an Indonesian revolutionary whose Marxist views were

In November 1942, Major Kuriya gave Beppan a new and important assignment, one that would eventually eclipse its intelligence-gathering functions. As Yanagawa Motoshige, a Beppan officer who was to have a profound impact on the lives of many future Indonesian army officers, and indeed on the Indonesian National Army, later put it, “we began to study the education of Indonesian youth.”¹⁴² This statement, translated into English in a post-war interrogation document, is bland, even opaque, but the import is dramatically clear. Some Japanese officers had begun to toy with the idea that Indonesians could be trained to serve in separate military units, not just as auxiliary soldiers (*heiho*) in Japanese army units. The idea, as a senior Indonesian general later put it, was to do a test on some “laboratory mice,” to see whether “Indonesian *pemudas* [youth] were physically and mentally strong enough to undergo military training.”¹⁴³ Initially, the Japanese had it in mind to produce a squad of strong and determined army intelligence operatives. These men might, as Kuriya saw it, be infiltrated into Australia ahead of a possible Japanese invasion.¹⁴⁴ But it did not take long for Beppan to broaden the focus of the program. After discussions with his colleagues, Maruzaki decided to take this opportunity to test the “overall military capabilities” of young Indonesians, without forgetting the intelligence-gathering aspect of his assignment.¹⁴⁵

The officer chosen to run the trial program was First Lieutenant Yanagawa, a graduate of Takushoku University in Tokyo, who, like First Lieutenant Tsuchiya, had done his basic training in the Imperial Japanese Army Air Force before being tapped for the second intake at Nakano.¹⁴⁶ Yanagawa was about five feet four inches tall; he was, as the Japanese say, *chuniku chuzei*, a person of medium height and build. Some of his army colleagues thought him quite ordinary to look at. However, he appears in a post-war photograph with a shock of thick black hair, exceptionally bushy eyebrows, a slightly quizzical expression, and wearing a bow-tie. A man of high intelligence, exacting standards, and exceptional will power, Yanagawa made a powerful impression on everyone he met, both Japanese and Indonesian. “He was a very strong-willed, confident man,” said Tsuchiya, one of his Beppan contemporaries. “We could plainly say stubborn, someone who didn’t listen to others. But, at the same time, he couldn’t accept things he considered wrong, like bribery and injustice. He believed in righteousness. He was very sharp.”¹⁴⁷ In the opinion of Kaneko Tomokazu, a civilian journalist who had befriended Yanagawa before the war and who sailed with him to Java on the troopship *Sakura Maru*, Yanagawa’s character could be summed up in the

anathema to the Japanese in general and the Kenpeitai in particular. Beppan officers concluded after the war that the “Tan Malaka” who lived at a Beppan house in Gang Scott, in central Jakarta, might have been an imposter.

¹⁴² Yanagawa “Statement,” Part I, p. 3.

¹⁴³ Interview, Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, September 15, 1998.

¹⁴⁴ See Nugroho Notosusanto, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia” (PhD dissertation, Universitas Indonesia, 1977), p. 97. Kuriya “thought that Indonesians would be less conspicuous than Japanese in Australia,” especially as many Indonesians were in Australia with the Dutch. The aim was to assess the possibility of training Indonesians as “excellent suppliers of infm,” to create “good observers along Jap[anese] army lines.” Yanagawa “Statement,” Part I, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Nugroho, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” pp. 97–98.

¹⁴⁶ For details of Yanagawa’s background, see Ruth McVey interview with Yanagawa Motoshige, Jakarta, November 13, 1980.

¹⁴⁷ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, Mishima, February 2, 1999.

Japanese expression *take o watta yona*; this phrase, rich in connotations of admiration and respect, is commonly used to describe a strong and manly individual. Yanagawa was, said Kaneko, straightforward, open-hearted, frank in disposition, someone who did not pay attention to trifling matters.¹⁴⁸ Taniguchi Taketsugu, who headed the thirty-five-man Kenpeitai detachment in Bogor and thus had the responsibility to “watch quietly” all Japanese army personnel within his area, including Beppan officers, remembers Yanagawa as a man of bravery and fortitude, someone who invariably made quick and correct decisions.¹⁴⁹ Nor was Yanagawa lacking in flamboyance. In Bogor, said Taniguchi, he took to riding about on a “wonderfully big thoroughbred horse, pure white. I often saw him on that horse. It was unheard of.”

Yanagawa is spoken of with equal awe by some of Indonesia’s most senior first-generation military leaders. “He was a very tough man,” said Lieutenant General Kemal Idris, who trained under Yanagawa for five months. “He was very rough. But I liked him. He was not only rough towards Indonesians but towards Japanese themselves.”¹⁵⁰ According to Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, Yanagawa was not really flamboyant at all, the splendid horse notwithstanding. “He was a typical Prussian-style Japanese officer. He was an intelligence officer, not the flamboyant type.”¹⁵¹ No one, said Purbo, ever forgot Yanagawa.

Everyone remembers him. If he inspects us, he will inspect our eyes, to see if you are sleepy, have no energy, are not vital. Because, according to their philosophy, the eyes are the mirror of the soul, whereas in Javanese culture you must not look into the eyes of an older person. In the old days, we were brought up that way. Here we learned to look directly into someone’s eyes, with vigor! Not with “fish eyes.” Fish never sleep. “*Mata ikan*,” [Fish eyes] Yanagawa would say, “You are a damned fish eyes!” ... The eyes were very important. One by one he would look into your eyes.¹⁵²

According to another officer, Major General Moersjid, Yanagawa was not only a man of immense presence, with clear leadership qualities; he had almost mystical powers as well. When Yanagawa was the commander of the officer cadet school in Bogor, he made it his practice to inspect the morning parade from the back of his horse. Although there might be several hundred men lined up before him, Yanagawa claimed that he could tell if even one man blinked. To Moersjid, it was uncanny. “We started thinking, ‘How could it be possible that one man, at a distance of, let’s say, one hundred metres, could observe one man blinking? That must be supernatural!’ But it did happen! He could see that!”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Interview, Kaneko Tomokazu, Tokyo, February 3, 1999. Kaneko was a civilian who had worked before the war as a writer for the Japanese Army magazine *Rikugun Gaho* (Army Illustrated). He served in the Sixteenth Army’s well-staffed Propaganda Corps (Senden-han) as an assistant to Lieutenant Colonel Machida, who headed that department until November 1942. Not long after that, Senden-han was incorporated into the Military Administration (Gunseikanbu) and changed its name to Senden-bu.

¹⁴⁹ Interview, Taniguchi Taketsugu, Tokyo, February 1, 1999.

¹⁵⁰ Interview, Lieutenant General Kemal Idris, Jakarta, September 1, 1998.

¹⁵¹ Interview, Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, Jakarta, February 13, 2000.

¹⁵² Interview, Purbo Suwondo, Jakarta, September 1, 1998.

¹⁵³ Interview, Major General Moersjid, Jakarta, April 29, 1999. Ruth McVey, who interviewed Yanagawa in 1980, found him “an impressive old man, probably was a very impressive character for *pemudas* in the

Yanagawa considered himself a man with something that amounted almost to a sacred mission, or so he liked to claim after the war. One of his army intelligence colleagues, Major Fujiwara Iwaichi, had played a key role in setting up the Indian National Army. Another, Colonel Suzuki Keiji, had been instrumental in establishing the Burma Independence Army. Yanagawa believed that it was his destiny to build a similar institution on Java. Each of these three men, it has been claimed, "was imbued with a romantic and idealistic self-image of his own and Japan's role in fostering Indian, Burmese, or Javanese independence."¹⁵⁴ Each, it has been further claimed, was struck by the parallel between his own mission and that of Lawrence of Arabia, the British archaeologist and intelligence officer who, while assigned to the Arab Bureau during World War I, led often bickering Arab guerrilla forces against the Ottoman Empire and later pushed for an independent Arab state. It is possible that Yanagawa did indeed see himself in this light. At Nakano, he had been trained to work in the Arab world. He was to go to the Middle East as a merchant, as a cover for his military activities. He had learned about Lawrence, he told Ruth McVey, while at Nakano.¹⁵⁵ Tsuchiya, however, has cast doubt on the notion that Lawrence's example influenced Yanagawa in his dealings on Java. Yanagawa, he says, did not draw any parallel between himself and Lawrence until well after the war.¹⁵⁶ Whatever the truth of the matter, "Through the imaginative negotiations and promptings of these men, three revolutionary armies were spawned."¹⁵⁷

Yanagawa, Tsuchiya, and another Beppan officer spent December 1942 searching for a suitable training center and suitable Indonesian recruits.¹⁵⁸ By January 10, 1943, they had both. Working in great secrecy, they set up a Youth Training Center (Seinen Dojo) at Tangerang, just west of Jakarta, and brought together about fifty young Indonesians, most of them in their late teens, for a five-month training program.¹⁵⁹ The

war." Information from McVey's notes of an interview with Yanagawa Motoshige, Jakarta, November 13, 1980.

¹⁵⁴ Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, pp. 7–8.

¹⁵⁵ Ruth McVey interview with Yanagawa, November 13, 1980. For more details, see Yanagawa Motoshige, *Rikugun chohoin Yanagawa Chui* [Army Intelligence Officer First Lieutenant Yanagawa] (Tokyo: Sankei Shimbun, 1967). Yanagawa lived in Indonesia after the war.

¹⁵⁶ "I never heard him say a word about Lawrence of Arabia," said Tsuchiya, who was one of Yanagawa's key army associates during the Japanese occupation of Java. "Nor can one find any such references in his book *Rikugun chohoin Yanagawa Chui*. However, when I met him in Jakarta in about 1970, I gained the impression that he was isolated from the Japanese community in Indonesia, which may have led him to a state of mind much like that of Lawrence of Arabia." Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002. There are, in fact, two references to Lawrence of Arabia in Yanagawa's book. In one instance, he refers to Colonel Suzuki as the "Lawrence of Burma." In the other, he says, in effect, that the people of Indonesia should all become like Lawrence in order to win independence. This hardly proves that Yanagawa saw himself playing such a role in the early 1940s, but the possibility should not be discounted.

¹⁵⁷ Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ Yanagawa is generally given the credit for establishing the *asrama*. Tsuchiya and Yoshitake believe this was not Yanagawa's achievement, but Maruzaki's; Yanagawa, they feel, claims too much credit. Yanagawa was, however, the head of the *asrama*. Ruth McVey interview with Tsuchiya and Yoshitake, Osaka, October 1980.

¹⁵⁹ Among those who attended the course were Zulkifli Lubis, Daan Mogot, Kemal Idris, Umar Wirahadikusumah, R. M. Sroehardojo, Mohamad Jasin, and Suprijadi, who was to lead a revolt against the Japanese in 1945. Sroehardojo was to serve later as a battalion commander under Soeharto. According to Yanagawa, the recruits were mostly from Jakarta; about ten were from Surabaya, half a dozen from Central Java, and several from Bandung. See Yanagawa "Statement," Part I, p. 4. According to Togashi Tomoshige, a former Beppan officer who was in charge of spiritual training (*latihan jiwa*) at Tangerang,

Beppan officers had high hopes for the course and devised a program that placed extraordinary emphasis on spiritual values and physical fitness, themes that had been so central to their own training in Japan. Cadets were worked hard, with an exhausting round of study and physical activity. They studied Japanese, the history of the Netherlands East Indies, world affairs, tactics, communications, espionage, counter-intelligence, propaganda, conspiracy, shooting, reconnaissance, liaison, and camouflage. They were subjected to constant drill and devoted many hours to gymnastics, swimming, *sumo*, and *kendo*, a martial art which had its origins in *samurai* sword-fighting. They were taught Japanese martial songs.¹⁶⁰ Nothing was said about independence. "As the question of Indonesian independence was not yet settled," Yanagawa noted, "we tried only to inspire cooperation, coexistence, and co-prosperity among the peoples of East Asia."¹⁶¹ The pace was relentless, the pressure intense. The students began to falter. For a time, even Yanagawa wondered whether it had been such a good idea after all. "At the beginning it seemed rather impossible to get any results without keeping a constant watch," he said.¹⁶² "But later the men began to understand our spirit of enthusiasm and worked with a will."

One of those who observed the changes in the Indonesian cadets was the journalist Kaneko Tomokazu, who was a member of the Sixteenth Army Propaganda Corps. "I had many trips to the Tangerang Seinen Dojo," he said.

Because I was in charge of newspapers, Mr. Yanagawa wanted me to go there to see how young Indonesian people were trained and became strong. Whenever I went there, Yanagawa took part in the *sumo* himself with the young Indonesian trainees to show how strong they had become. And I could clearly see the difference after two or three months' training.¹⁶³

According to one of the Indonesians who trained at Tangerang, Yanagawa was not only strict and tough, but also keen to insure that the cadets developed a sense of pride. When, eventually, he let them leave the camp, he encouraged them to travel (without paying) first-class on the train, "saying they shouldn't think it was for foreigners or the rich; it was their country, and they were its hope so deserved the best."¹⁶⁴ Yanagawa "defended his boys strongly if they were hassled by the Japanese, and looked after their interests, so they got great confidence in him." He was perceived

Beppan asked each *kabupaten* (regency) on Java to send three or four people, who should be devout Muslims (*tegas Islam*). Togashi interview with Ruth McVey, October 1980.

¹⁶⁰ Nugroho, "The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation," p. 98.

¹⁶¹ Yanagawa "Statement," Part I, p. 3. In his book, Yanagawa writes that he took a warning from the case of Colonel Suzuki Keiji, in Burma, who, "when he tried to redeem his promise to the BIA of independence, lost his position as head of the Minami Kikan." See Yanagawa, *Rikugun chohoin Yanagawa Chui*, p. 112, cited in Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 100. Yanagawa told Ruth McVey that when Suzuki had pushed for Burmese independence, he had been "sent to Siberia," so he decided he would keep his mouth shut and concentrate on training Indonesians to be ready for independence. Yanagawa Motoshige interview with Ruth McVey, Jakarta, November 13, 1980.

¹⁶² Yanagawa "Statement," Part I, p. 4.

¹⁶³ Interview, Kaneko Tomokazu, Tokyo, February 3, 1999.

¹⁶⁴ Kusnowibowo, in an interview with Ruth McVey, Jakarta, November 20, 1980. Kusnowibowo served later as a senior officer in Bakin, the State Intelligence Coordinating Board. See also Ruth McVey interview with Yanagawa Motoshige, Jakarta, November 13, 1980.

as sincere. Those who were trained by him “had a particular pride; indeed, one could say they were *sombong* [arrogant] about it.”¹⁶⁵

By May 1943, when the members of the first intake completed their course, the Japanese were well pleased. The test, said Tsuchiya, was a “great success.”¹⁶⁶ According to Yoshitake Chikao, another Nakano graduate, “This training, due to the fervor of the instructors and the native youths, gradually produced successful results, which ... developed incidentally to become the very foundation of the organization of the militia force, born from the fervent desire of the natives.”¹⁶⁷ The Indonesian recruits were also pleased. A second intake of Indonesians entered the training center in June, graduating in October. On June 10, General Kokubu, the officer with close links to Prime Minister Tojo, took up his appointment as chief of staff of the Sixteenth Army and “big boss” of Beppan.

As the new recruits began their training, Lieutenant General Inada Masazumi, the recently arrived deputy chief of staff of the Southern Army, made an inspection tour of Java, Sumatra, and Borneo.¹⁶⁸ Concerned about inadequate Japanese troop numbers and knowing that no reinforcements would be forthcoming, he recommended that both Lieutenant General Harada Kumakichi, who had taken over as the Japanese commander on Java in November 1942, and his opposite number in Sumatra train a core of local troops to supplement Japanese forces. Harada, who had been a senior staff officer during the 1937 Japanese conquest of Shanghai, was already strongly in favor of such a course.¹⁶⁹ Tojo, who happened to be travelling in Southeast Asia, was also in favor. Tokyo shared Inada’s concern about Japanese troop numbers (although even some of Inada’s own officers are said to have worried that it might be dangerous to arm indigenous forces).¹⁷⁰ Tokyo also felt it needed to mollify Indonesian nationalist leaders. The Indonesians had been bitterly disappointed when, in January 1943, Tojo announced that Burma and the Philippines would be granted “independence” within

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ “Statement” of Captain Tsuchiya Kiso, March 3–8, 1947, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ See Yoshitake, “The Beppan of the General Staff,” p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 11, based on an interview with Inada.

¹⁶⁹ Harada was the military attaché at the Japanese Embassy in China when, on December 12, 1937, during the six-week Rape of Nanking, Japanese naval aircraft attacked and sank the US Navy gunboat *Panay* as she lay at anchor in the Yangtze River, upstream from Nanking (Nanjing). Colonel Hashimoto Kingoro, an aggressive and insubordinate ultranationalist who had masterminded two coup attempts in Japan, had ordered his artillery and a squadron of Japanese Navy bombers temporarily under his command to attack the *Panay* and other neutral foreign vessels, threatening to summarily execute the reluctant navy squadron commander unless he complied. At a press conference in Shanghai eight days later, Harada, a friend and associate of Hashimoto, sought to put all the blame on the Japanese navy. Harada told the press he had been to Nanking and had made a personal investigation of the *Panay* incident. He cleared Japanese army units of any fault. Tokyo later took full responsibility for the attack, but claimed it had been unintentional. In Shanghai, according to Hallett Abend, a correspondent for the *New York Times*, Harada was known as a drunken, disreputable, and mendacious officer who had connections with Shanghai’s vice and drug rings “from which the Japanese army profited hugely.” Time and again, Abend wrote, Harada called upon the American Consul-General in Shanghai “so drunk that he could scarcely articulate, and actually swayed on his heels when he tried to stand erect.” For a good account of these events, see Hallett Abend, *My Life in China 1926–1941* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1943), pp. 268–75. According to one of his senior staff officers in Java, Harada “had a long military career in China and was known as a China specialist [*Shina-ya*]. He had a firm belief that native people’s cooperation was indispensable in fighting war.” See “Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi,” pp. 195–217.

¹⁷⁰ Kanahale, “The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia,” p. 119.

the year, with no such pledge for Indonesia. In August 1943, the Southern Army issued an order to the armies in Sumatra and Java “approving the establishment of native armies.”¹⁷¹ Implementation of the decision was left to the local army commanders.

Harada, who had been impressed by the success of the Tangerang experiment, wasted no time in complying with this instruction. He and his staff sought, however, to create the impression that they were responding to local demands. On September 7, in a “spontaneous” gesture timed and stage-managed by Beppan, Gatot Mangkupradja, who had been a close associate of Sukarno in the pre-war Indonesian National Party, wrote a petition, in his own blood, urging Harada to establish a volunteer force for the defense of the fatherland.¹⁷² The letter was given extensive coverage in the newspapers, and people came to believe that this force was an Indonesian patriotic initiative. (Beppan had sought to persuade the young Sultan of Yogyakarta to play this role, but without success.¹⁷³) Yanagawa, who had been working on the propaganda film “Call to Australia,” was ordered in mid-September to “put out propaganda aiming to rouse enthusiasm for the defense of Java by a Volunteer Defense Force.”¹⁷⁴ During this time, he and his Beppan colleagues wrestled with three main questions. What motto should be adopted? What attitude was to be taken on the question of independence? What was the best way to harness Islamic sentiments?¹⁷⁵ As the Japanese policy on independence had not been settled, Yanagawa decided that recruits should be drawn from a religious, rather than a nationalist, background.

On October 3, 1943, Harada announced the formation of a volunteer defense force on Java “based on the spirit of the common defense of ... Greater East Asia and in response to the intense desire of the fifty million Indonesians for homeland defense.”¹⁷⁶ The force would be subject to the direction of the supreme commander, with units assigned for local defense against America, Britain, and the Netherlands. Candidate officers would not have to have any particular educational qualifications, but they would need to be of “firm ideology and of vigorous will” and be of strong physique. Training would be based on the spirit of sharing a common fate with the Japanese forces. Those who joined were “to devote their souls, flesh, and blood to the ideology of Japan and the Greater East Asia” region.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, the Japanese pushed ahead with a program, started in May, to train a large number of *heiho*, Indonesian

¹⁷¹ Miyamoto, “Jawa shusen shori-ki,” p. 221.

¹⁷² Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999. See also Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, pp. 32, 420; Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, pp. 99–100; and Gatot Mangkupradja, “The Peta and My Relations with the Japanese,” trans. Harumi Wanasita Evans and Ruth McVey, *Indonesia* 5 (April 1968): 105–34. Tsuchiya said that although Gatot’s petition was a Beppan initiative, it gave expression to a widely held aspiration. Afterwards, “the whole of Indonesia flared up with hope that Japan would do something, and many petitions came in from many islands, some written in blood.” These were spontaneous, and “even when we said, ‘We don’t need any more petitions!’ they kept pouring in.” This pattern of behavior, in which seemingly spontaneous public demands were orchestrated by those in authority to create a spurious sense of responsiveness, was to become a feature of Indonesian society under the Soeharto government.

¹⁷³ Tsuchiya revealed this in a 1972 interview with Joyce Lebra. See Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 99, n. 65.

¹⁷⁴ Yanagawa “Statement,” Part I, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ Kishi Koichi et al., eds., *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), p. 194.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 195–96.

auxiliary soldiers who were attached to Japanese units on Java. These men, who tended to come from a fairly modest social and educational background, were issued Japanese army rifles and bayonets and “treated on the same level as Japanese soldiers.”¹⁷⁸

The Japanese were to create a number of mass organizations during their three-and-a-half-year occupation of Java, many of them significant. But none was to have as great an impact as the Java Volunteer Defense Force, which the Japanese called the Jawa Boei Giyugun—or Giyugun, for short—but which became known to Indonesians as Peta. Conjured out of nothing, virtually overnight, and manned entirely by Indonesians, it burst into life as a force of no fewer than thirty-three battalions, each consisting of about 522 officers and men.¹⁷⁹ It was to grow in less than two years into an organization of sixty-nine battalions, or about 37,500 men, on Java and Bali, with another 20,000 on Sumatra.¹⁸⁰

The Japanese did not envisage, at least initially, that the Peta would be in any way an independent force, although they were to move, late in the war, to put it on the path to greater autonomy. Unlike the Indian National Army and the Burma Independence Army in Japanese-occupied Burma, Peta was structured for decentralized activities.¹⁸¹

Peta would have no higher command, no general staff, and no unit larger than a battalion. Instead, it would come under the direct control of the Sixteenth Army, which would deal with the battalions on an individual basis through local Japanese garrisons. Contact between the various Peta battalions, even those in the same residency, would be discouraged. Nor, indeed, was Peta intended as a front-line force. In the words of an undated Sixteenth Army headquarters document, “The duties of the ... PETA were ... mainly ... those of air-watch along the coast, guarding of important objects and cooperation in the building of fortifications.” Peta units, it said, were “not to participate in the actions of war.” During “actual warfare,” they were to remain at the

¹⁷⁸ See “Explanations Regarding All Kinds of Armed Bodies,” p. 4. By the end of the war, there would be nearly 14,900 *heiho* on Java and another 2,500 who had been sent from there to Timor, trained to fight, but used mainly as guards and drivers.

¹⁷⁹ A Japanese battalion normally comprised one thousand men, but the Sixteenth Army thought it would be hard to control thousand-man Peta battalions and made them half that size instead. Interview, Colonel Miyamoto Shizuo, Tokyo, February 4, 1999.

¹⁸⁰ There were sixty-six battalions on Java, with a total of 35,853 men; and three battalions on Bali, with 1,626 men. See “Explanations Regarding All Kinds of Armed Bodies,” pp. 2–3. Nugroho says each battalion had about 535 members. Nugroho, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” p. 147. On Sumatra, the Twenty-fifth Army set up its own 20,000-strong volunteer force, but with 150-man companies as the largest fighting units. Although Bali was administered by the Imperial Navy, the navy had insufficient men to defend the island against Allied attack. In view of this, Tokyo ordered the Sixteenth Army to take charge of Bali’s defense. Tsuchiya set up a training unit there in 1944.

¹⁸¹ Colonel Miyamoto Shizuo has written that, after the war, he asked General Kokubu whether he or other senior officers had had any concerns at all about Peta. Kokubu replied that he had had no such worries in the beginning because when Peta was first established the tide of war was going in Japan’s favor. “But,” wrote Miyamoto, “considering a case of the worst coming to the worst, they didn’t put Peta under Sukarno’s control but kept it in the hands of the Japanese staff officer in charge of strategy [*sakusen sanbo*].” See, “Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi,” pp. 195–217. Needless to say, this didn’t stop Sukarno claiming later that, “The [Japanese] High Command requested Sukarno’s help in attracting the proper candidates for officers ... I looked for young men whom I could control ... I singlehandedly proposed the future colonels and generals of our Republican Army back in the fall of 1943.” See *Sukarno: An Autobiography, As Told to Cindy Adams* (Hong Kong: Gunung Agung, 1966), pp. 186–87.

rear, where they would be engaged in guard duty.¹⁸² In short, this was, at best, an embryo army. It was to be, nevertheless, a wholly Indonesian force, save for two or three Japanese officers and four or five Japanese NCOs who would be attached to each battalion, mainly for administrative, liaison, and training purposes.¹⁸³ The battalion commanders (*daidancho*), company commanders (*chudancho*), and platoon commanders (*shodancho*) would all be Indonesians, mostly Javanese or Sundanese, as would the soldiers.

By early October, Maruzaki had taken over the dormitory of the former KNIL Nineteenth Battalion in Bogor and set it up as the Java Volunteer Defense Force Officer Cadet Training Center (Jawa Boei Giyugun Kanbu Renseitai).¹⁸⁴ He had also assembled his core staff. What he needed now was 856 young, and not so young, Indonesians who could serve as the backbone of the Peta—33 battalion commanders, 127 company commanders, and 696 platoon commanders.¹⁸⁵ These men were to be drawn from various parts of West, Central, and East Java and sent back to recruit others to serve in a local force in their home regions, and nowhere else. The assumption was that the trainees had good local knowledge and social ties and would be well placed to fight in

¹⁸² "Explanations Regarding All Kinds of Armed Bodies," p. 3. Miyamoto says the aim was to "defend the fatherland and Islam" against reoccupation by the Dutch and to train support troops for the Japanese. But he also stresses another consideration. Harada, "whose administration was influenced by his experience in China," felt that "order among the natives should be maintained by the native military so that the Japanese army could be held in reserve as a core force." See Miyamoto Shizuo, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 221.

¹⁸³ Yanagawa "Statement," Part I, p. 7. According to Miyamoto, about five Japanese were attached to each battalion "as trainers." See Miyamoto Shizuo, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 222. According to Nugroho Notosusanto, each *daidancho* had a *shidokan* (supervisor), usually a captain or first lieutenant, who advised him how to run his battalion. The *shidokan* was assisted by several subordinate officers, who advised the *chudanchos* and the *shodanchos*. There were also noncommissioned Japanese officers (NCOs) who helped supervise the sections. See Nugroho Notosusanto, "The Peta Army in Indonesia 1943–1945," in *Japan in Asia*, ed. William H. Newell (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981), p. 40.

¹⁸⁴ The name had been chosen with great care. According to one account, it was the strong wish of Major General Kokubu that the center be a *renseitai* (training corps) rather than a *kyoikutai* (education corps). He wanted the army to train (*kitaeru*) Indonesians rather than just educate (*kyoiku suru*) them. He particularly liked the radical (left-hand side) of the *kanji* character for *ren*, because it means "metal." He wanted to turn young Indonesians into hardened soldiers by giving them rigorous training, "just as steel manufacturers subject iron to intense heat and beat it to produce refined iron." (To make steel, of course, one must also add alloys.) The training corps changed its name to *kyoikutai* at about the time of the second intake of cadets in early 1944. According to Tsuchiya, there were two reasons for this. First, Kokubu had by that time left Java. Second, Yanagawa, who had strong ideas of his own, had taken command of the center. Interviews, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999, and August 27, 2001, and written communication, May 29, 2002. The first part of Tsuchiya's explanation is curious. As noted above, Kokubu did not leave Java until November 1944. According to Morimoto Takeshi, a member of the teaching staff at Bogor and author of the semi-official Japanese history of the Peta, the person who suggested that the radical of *renseitai's ren* be "metal" rather than other possible *kanji* characters, such as "fire" or "tree," was not Kokubu, but Captain Maruzaki. Kokubu, Morimoto writes, recommended the *kanji* character for "fire." He wanted the Japanese Army and the Peta cadets to become like "a ball of fire," but eventually accepted Maruzaki's idea. See Morimoto Takeshi, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*.

¹⁸⁵ See Yanagawa "Statement," Part I, p. 6. The figures vary somewhat. Morimoto says there were 33 *daidanchos*, about 140 *chudanchos*, and approximately 600 *shodanchos*, two hundred each from East, West, and Central Java. See Morimoto Takeshi, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, pp. 86–87. Yanagawa gave a figure of 34 *daidanchos*. An Indonesian *daidancho* was the equivalent, on paper, of a Japanese Army *daitaicho*, who carried the rank of major. A *chudancho* was the equivalent of a *chutaicho*, who was a captain. A *shodancho* was the equivalent of a *shotaicho*, who was usually a second lieutenant. However, the ranks of major, captain, and second lieutenant were not awarded in the Peta.

that region if the Allies landed. It was envisaged that each *daidancho* would recruit some five hundred men to serve as NCOs and soldiers in his locally raised battalion.

Because Beppan was such a small organization, quite unable to scour Java on its own, Maruzaki asked officials in the Japanese military administration to recommend officer cadet recruits. He consulted Japanese and Indonesians in the provincial bureaucracy. He consulted Kenpeitai officers and regional Japanese police chiefs. He sought advice from Beppan's resident experts on Indonesian Islam, one of whom was a Japanese interpreter named Ono Nobuharu, who had lived for many years in the East Indies, embracing Islam and changing his name to Abdul Hamid Ono. He consulted the Beppan chiefs in Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya. He consulted the Tangerang graduates. At the end of this process, Maruzaki had a long list of names of potential recruits. He now arranged for three of his subordinates to conduct the interviews by which the future Indonesian officers would be chosen. In Central Java, that task fell to Lieutenant Tsuchiya, the director (*shibucho*) of Beppan's Yogyakarta office.¹⁸⁶ Until this time, Tsuchiya had spent his days gathering intelligence, not least about developments within the Kraton, and supervising the Beppan offices in Semarang, Solo, and Madiun. Now, on Friday, October 8, 1943, he began a recruiting drive that was to bring in a crop of young officer cadets, a number of whom were to rise to high office in the future Indonesian National Army. One of them was Soeharto.¹⁸⁷

Recruits for a Volunteer Force

For ten days in mid-October 1943, Tsuchiya conducted a whistle-stop tour of Central Java and parts of East Java, interviewing applicants for the volunteer self-defense force. Traveling by car and accompanied by an Indies-born Japanese civilian interpreter and a Japanese army medical officer, he visited as many as ten cities, setting

¹⁸⁶ Tsuchiya, who combined intelligence and drive with a good sense of humor, was to have an impact on the future Indonesian officer corps perhaps second only to that of Yanagawa. A graduate of a technical school in Shizuoka, Tsuchiya worked for twelve to eighteen months in a Japanese factory that made military binoculars before joining the Army Air Force. He spent a year as a cadet at an Army Air Force school, and stayed on for six months as an instructor. In 1938, he was sent to join the first main entering class at the recently opened Nakano Gakko, where he met Yanagawa and Yonemura Masao, who was also to play an important role in Java. Following his graduation in 1939, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and assigned to intelligence duties at the War Office in Tokyo. In December that year, he was transferred to military headquarters in Taiwan, where he made a study of the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina and began to teach himself Malay. Recalled to Tokyo in October 1941, Tsuchiya was assigned to Sixteenth Army headquarters, where he conducted further research on the Dutch Indies. Landing in Java in March 1942 with a branch force of the invading army, he moved to Bandung, where he spent about three months in the special intelligence office (*bunshitsu*) of the Second Division. From there he went to Jakarta, where he joined Beppan. In June 1943, he took over as the director of Beppan's Yogya branch from First Lieutenant Yonemura, who had also been transferred from Taiwan to Java. The Yogya branch had one officer, one sergeant-major, and three interpreters. Interviews, Tsuchiya Kiso, Mishima, February 2, 1999, and March 2001; Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 29, 2002; "Interrogation of Captain Tsuchiya Kiso at Glodok Jail," Southeast Asia Translation and Interrogation Center Intelligence Bulletin No. 228, January 25, 1946, p. 26, TNA/PRO WO 203/6306; and "Statement of Capt. TSUCHIYA Kiso, member of the 'Beppan' (NANSEITAI) Staff," p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ Among the others recruited in Central Java, either in this or in the two subsequent Peta intakes, were Sudirman, the future *panglima besar* (commander-in-chief); four future army chiefs of staff (G. P. H. Djatikusumo, Bambang Sugeng, Achmad Yani, and Surono); Gatot Soebroto, a future deputy army chief of staff; Sarwo Edhie, a future commander of the elite red beret unit; and Sarbini, a future minister for veterans affairs.

up his mobile recruitment office in schools and community centers. In each of these towns, Japanese and Indonesian officials had publicized the recruitment program and attended to the necessary paperwork, but it was Tsuchiya who conducted the interviews and made the selections, sitting at a small table, with the interpreter on his left and the doctor on his right. Although it had not been planned that way, the selection of potential Indonesian officer cadets was rushed and rudimentary, even slapdash at times.¹⁸⁸ But the decisions made by Tsuchiya and by his two Beppan colleagues in East and West Java were to have a profound impact on the shape of the future Indonesian National Army.¹⁸⁹

In Central Java there were many hopeful applicants, perhaps two thousand in all, and no time for niceties. Tsuchiya did not invite applicants to sit down because it took up too much time. "It was quite rushed," he said. "When I look back, it was a rush."¹⁹⁰ In Yogyakarta, Tsuchiya got through all four hundred applicants in one day. A large number went away disappointed. "There were some to whom I said, 'Leave!' and the guys were so reluctant to leave and said, 'Please recruit me!' There were many of those. But there was a limit to the number we could recruit. It was a hard job to screen out those applicants." Working from early morning until dusk, Tsuchiya was quick to establish a routine. "I did not give ranking to applicants," he said. "They were simply placed in two categories—either pass or fail. There was no written test. They were asked only two or three oral questions and, if accepted, proceeded to the physical examination. I selected those who were cheerful, pleasant, and seemingly smart."¹⁹¹ When it came to choosing potential company commanders, Tsuchiya tended to favor young men who looked physically strong and who had worked as schoolteachers or served with the police force, the civil defense organization, or one of the many youth

¹⁸⁸ "Selection was to be made after strict screening of a large number of volunteers," a Japanese officer noted immediately after the war. "But as a matter of fact, urgency led to indiscriminate selection." See "Document taken from 16 Army HQ," NEFIS Document 2618, November 14, 1946, NIOD IC No. 006501-006506, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ Before he set out on his recruitment drive, Tsuchiya asked several organizations in Yogyakarta to recommend suitable candidates for the Peta. He contacted the provincial government office, which passed his request on to the Seinendan (youth group), the Keibodan (civil defense organization), and schools. He also contacted the Kenpeitai, the civilian police force, and a number of army defense companies (*rikugun-boeitai*). He sought the views of his colleagues in Beppan as well. This effort yielded a crop of names. In Central Java, Tsuchiya was responsible for recruiting *daidanchos*, *chudanchos*, and *shodanchos*. According to Tsuchiya: "We used two channels to reach potential *daidanchos*—provincial governors and Beppan's Islamic Guidance Section. We asked provincial governors to recommend people from religious and neighborhood groups, as well as people from government offices, whom they thought had strong leadership qualities. ... Beppan's Islamic section gave us names, too." Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 6, 2003.

Using Yogyakarta as his base, Tsuchiya made day trips to some of the towns on his list, staying overnight at one or two of the more distant locations. During his ten-day recruitment drive, he interviewed candidates in Yogyakarta, Magelang, Semarang, Solo, Madiun, Pati, Mojokerto, Bojonegoro, and, possibly, Banyumas. Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 84. Tsuchiya was unable to recall visiting Banyumas; he thought that that region, known for producing many soldiers, may have been part of Yanagawa's recruitment pool.

¹⁹⁰ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

¹⁹¹ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 6, 2003, and written communication, September 17, 2003. Candidates of interest were asked to give their age, address, and educational background, and to answer one or two other questions. They were also required to provide information about family members. Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, September 16, 2003.

groups.¹⁹² “As for platoon commanders [*shodancho*], I selected vigorous, enthusiastic young men whose attitude was firm and who spoke clearly.”¹⁹³ How long, Tsuchiya was asked, had each interview lasted; would an applicant have had perhaps ten minutes before the board? “Shorter than that,” he replied, his face creasing into a broad smile. “Some, ten seconds! The minute I saw someone I could tell if he was suitable. Usually I spent one or two minutes on those I thought had potential.”¹⁹⁴



First Lieutenant Yanagawa Motoshige (seated) interviews a potential Peta recruit in Bogor, October 10, 1943, while General Harada and others look on. *Pradjoerit* 3 (1944–45).

One of those deemed to have potential was Soeharto. As Tsuchiya recalled, We borrowed the site of an elementary school for the examinations, and it is there that I first met Soeharto. Since many years have passed, I don't have too vivid a memory of Soeharto at that time. But we met each recruit face to face—individual interviews were conducted—and I can say that his manner was so crisp and clear.

¹⁹² The main consideration of the Japanese was that the candidates be reasonably literate; in 1942, illiteracy was widespread in Java. Officers had to be able to read and understand instructions, write reports, keep records, and so on. Ben Anderson, personal communication, February 26, 2009.

¹⁹³ Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 6, 2003.

¹⁹⁴ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

The words he chose when responding to my questions were very clear-cut and easy to understand. There was nothing I could grade as a minus.¹⁹⁵

Like so many others over the years, Tsuchiya was struck by Soeharto's composure. "He was calm. He looked confident. No appearance of being intimidated." Asked how he would rate Soeharto among the 230 men he selected for the platoon commanders course, Tsuchiya replied, "He belonged to the top class!" That was due in large part to the fact that his education, however incomplete, was infinitely better than that of so many of the others who were seeking admission.

You must realize that the educational level of Indonesian youngsters in those days was very low. They had very little education. Anybody who had had some years of schooling found it easy to be prominent. Even those who had had only a few years in elementary school could be conspicuous. There weren't many who had a junior-high-school education, and so to have graduated from a high school was something you could be really proud of. Those people with even a little education stood out among those who had only a smattering of education.¹⁹⁶

Yanagawa, who was conducting interviews in West Java, found the same thing. As he said later, "Quality, both in physique and education, was rather lower than we had expected, and it was very difficult to find suitable people."¹⁹⁷

Soeharto had been advised by Superintendent Okamoto to apply for selection in the volunteer army. But why was Okamoto willing to dispense with the services of an assistant on whom he had come to depend? Did he feel under pressure from the army? To some extent, he probably did. "If he was under any pressure at all," Tsuchiya said, "I suspect it could have come from Soeharto himself, with his strong wish to enter the volunteer army. But it is also possible that he felt pressure from within himself to cooperate with the commander's proclamation and with Beppan."¹⁹⁸

In giving the green light to the formation of the new self-defense force, the Sixteenth Army had ruled that no former members of the KNIL were to be recruited.¹⁹⁹ The loyalties of such men, it was thought, might be suspect. Aware of the ruling, Soeharto took care to make no mention of his service in the KNIL, just as he had in the police interview nearly a year earlier. He was to remain "watchful" for some time thereafter, "hoping the Japanese would never discover this and arrest me."²⁰⁰ As it happened, Tsuchiya knew that Soeharto had served in the Dutch colonial army and chose to ignore the fact.²⁰¹

The policy ... was that we should not admit anyone who had worked in the former Dutch army, regardless of position. However, those who had worked in the Dutch

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Yanagawa "Statement," Part I, p. 5.

¹⁹⁸ Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 6, 2003.

¹⁹⁹ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 83.

²⁰⁰ Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 19.

²⁰¹ In his memoir in the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, Tsuchiya noted, "Soeharto said he hid the fact that he had once belonged to the Dutch army in order to be admitted to the PETA. But we knew he had been there." Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

army were from the elite, and they had good brains as well as physical strength. So I thought it would be a pity if we didn't admit them. And I happened to see Soeharto in Yogyakarta. Soeharto was a former Dutch army noncommissioned officer ... It was against the military policy, but I thought it would be a shame not to hire a capable person like this so I decided to admit him.²⁰²

As Tsuchiya saw it, Soeharto's attributes outweighed any drawbacks that might have been associated with his prior service in the KNIL.

It was my belief the internal order from military headquarters was a bad one. Because I was aware that all Indonesians had feelings against the Dutch. And the fact that a person had once been in the Dutch army wouldn't prove that he would cooperate with Holland and fight against the Japanese regime. So I myself thought this order very strange.²⁰³

Having made his decision, Tsuchiya passed Soeharto over to the doctor. Soeharto was asked to strip down to his underpants—he was presumably no longer wearing his KNIL-issue underpants—for a brief examination. Soeharto had no skin disease, TB, or any other obvious problem and was pronounced medically fit.

In later years, Soeharto was to claim that he was one of only two applicants selected in Yogyakarta out of about five hundred who turned up.²⁰⁴ This is demonstrably untrue, the distortion of a man who never missed an opportunity to polish up his credentials. It was true that only a small number of applicants were deemed suitable, but Tsuchiya recruited at least twenty or thirty men in Yogyakarta that day.²⁰⁵ And the list of those who joined the same 230-strong training company as Soeharto includes the names of at least three men who were to become close associates of the future president and serve with him during the war and the Revolution. They included Soedjono, Soemyarsono, and Pranoto Reksosamoedra. Soeharto must have known that his statement about being one of only two men selected in Yogyakarta was false when he made it.

As soon as he had met his recruitment quota, Tsuchiya wound up his Beppan job in Yogyakarta and left for Bogor, where he was to accept the successful candidates from Central Java. He had only one or two days before the entrance ceremony was held, on October 20.²⁰⁶ At Bogor, the recruits were to be divided into five groups: a Special Company for the thirty-three men who were to be trained as battalion commanders

²⁰² Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999. Lieutenant Colonel Miyamoto Shizuo, who arrived in Java in April 1944, and who was one of four staff officers responsible to the chief of staff of the Sixteenth Army, echoed those sentiments. Although he did not meet Soeharto at that time — “[Soeharto] was way, way down” in the hierarchy—he heard from his fellow officers before the end of the war that “Soeharto was so capable that he should be recruited even though he had been with the Dutch army.” Interview, Colonel Miyamoto Shizuo, Tokyo, February 4, 1999. According to Taniguchi Taketsugu, the former Kenpeitai chief in Bogor, Soeharto's service in the KNIL was not something Soeharto needed to hide. “The Sixteenth Army,” he said, “didn't take it as a big issue.” Interview, Taniguchi Taketsugu, Tokyo, February 1, 1999. Six decades later, Tsuchiya was unaware that another of the men he almost certainly recruited, Achmad Yani, had, like Soeharto, been a sergeant in the KNIL.

²⁰³ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

²⁰⁴ Soeharto, “Watashi no Rirekisho.”

²⁰⁵ Tsuchiya Kiso, telephone conversation, September 15, 2003.

²⁰⁶ See Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 85. Yanagawa says the course opened on October 22. See Yanagawa “Statement,” Part I, p. 5

(*daidancho*), a First Company for the 127 company commanders (*chudancho*), and three companies for the platoon commanders (*shodancho*). Tsuchiya took command of the Fourth Company, which was to train the 230 platoon commanders from Central Java, including Soeharto.²⁰⁷

The 850 Indonesians who joined the first intake at the Bogor officer training center—and the 1,300 others who were to follow them in 1944—came from three distinct age cohorts and, indeed, layers in society. Those selected for training as battalion commanders were prominent local figures who were thought by the Japanese to have “influence among and authority over the youth.”²⁰⁸ Of these, 30 or 40 percent had a strong Islamic background.²⁰⁹ Although their professional skills would never be up to standard (the Japanese had decided to give the battalion commanders only six weeks’ training, which was half the planned time set aside for the instruction of the platoon commanders), their social position and charisma were what counted. Their task was to ensure that the local Peta unit had the all-out support of the community. “The wisdom of this recruitment policy,” a retired Indonesian officer observed, “became evident during the war against the Dutch: our troops easily got the support of the population.”²¹⁰

Battalion commanders were, on average, nearly twenty years older than platoon commanders, most of whom were recruited directly from school and still in their teens. As such, they were more experienced, more politically astute, and more wary of the Japanese, if not openly hostile to them, than were the younger men. The company commanders, who formed a middle layer between these two groups, were generally

²⁰⁷ For the details, see Yanagawa “Statement,” Part I, p. 7. Morimoto gives slightly different, rounded figures. See Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, pp. 86–87. Yanagawa was the commander of the Third Company, which had 246 cadets from West Java. The Second Company, commanded by Lieutenant Yonemura Masao, had 220 cadets from East Java. The three *shodancho* training companies consisted of four sections (*kutai*), each with about fifty-five to sixty men. On paper, the commanding officer at Bogor was Colonel Uchino Uichi. But he was busy with other duties at Sixteenth Army Headquarters, and the man who actually ran the center (and who personally trained the *daidanchos*) was the deputy commander, Captain Maruzaki.

²⁰⁸ Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, pp. 20–21.

²⁰⁹ This estimate was given by Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, who has written extensively on the Peta. Personal communication, July 8, 2009. Harry Benda, working from incomplete data and admitting that his conclusions are tentative, appears to overstate the Islamic dimension. Discussing the Peta, he writes that, “Muslims played an outstanding role from the very beginning.” The Indonesian officer corps, he adds, “contained a great number of *kiyai*. As far as can be ascertained, the new Indonesian military elite in effect drew its main strength from Muslim leaders and from members of the aristocracy.” Muslims “soon occupied an important, and perhaps even a predominant, place” in the Peta officer corps. See Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam Under the Japanese Occupation 1942–1945* (KITLV, Dordrecht: Foris Publications Holland/USA, 1983 [original: The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1958]), pp. 138–40. While it is true that there were a number of devout Muslim *daidanchos* in the Peta—including such men as Kasman Singodimedjo (a lawyer and former head of the Muhammadiyah in Jakarta), Sudirman (a Cilacap schoolteacher who would be elected in 1945 as the commander-in-chief of the Indonesian Army), Arudji Kartawinata, and Imam Sudjai’i—the Islamic factor should not be exaggerated. An identification with Islam does not seem to have been disproportionately strong, at least in Central Java, among the *chudanchos*, and still less so among the *shodanchos*, who would go on to play such a significant role in the future national army.

²¹⁰ Written communication, Major General Soetarto Sigit, August 5, 2000. As one Japanese document put it, the aim was to recruit “local influential persons with an intense racial spirit.” See “Document taken from 16 Army HQ,” p. 3. The word “racial” should perhaps have been translated as “nationalistic.” The central role of the *daidancho* “was to give moral leadership and exercise political supervision over their subordinates.”

about ten to fourteen years older than the platoon commanders. Some of the company commanders were well-educated men who had been schoolteachers in the Dutch era, but there were also religious teachers, civil servants, and prominent local figures.²¹¹

The officer cadets who joined the Peta were motivated by a range of considerations.²¹² Almost all of the battalion and company commanders had been “persuaded” to enlist in the volunteer force during informal meetings with Japanese officials.²¹³ Many of the company commanders seem to have had no interest at all in a military career but joined because of the pressure that had been brought to bear or because they were convinced that it was necessary for Indonesians to obtain military skills. Although the Japanese were careful to make no promises about independence, “most Indonesians had a feeling that somehow Indonesian independence would soon come, in whatever form.”²¹⁴ When that time arrived, an army would be one of the prerequisites. Some of the cadets were driven by careerist considerations. They reasoned that their involvement in the volunteer defense force would open up avenues for social advancement “where other fields of endeavor had for them reached a dead end.”

Most of the cadet officers, however, joined up willingly, albeit “with various degrees of fervor.” Some were convinced that their country’s well-being was closely linked to the fortunes of Japan in the Pacific War. Others believed that Peta would serve as “one large training camp to produce military cadres for independent Indonesia.”²¹⁵ In later years, a number of those who went through the officer-cadet program said they had been influenced by the eight-hundred-year-old Joyoboyo prophesy. According to a version current during the Japanese occupation, “the Javanese would be ruled by white men for three centuries and by yellow dwarfs for the life time of a maize plant, prior to the achievement of a golden age.”²¹⁶ On balance, one Indonesian researcher tactfully concluded, “Most Peta officers were motivated by patriotism, although the element of careerism was not altogether absent.”²¹⁷

What of Soeharto? What drove him? In the later stages of the war, when the harshness and brutality of Japanese rule was becoming impossible to ignore, Soeharto seems to have become increasingly nationalistic, although he was careful to disguise any anti-Japanese sentiments he may have felt and was to go on serving until the bitter end, a loyal instrument of Japanese Army oppression, trusted by his superiors and rewarded with important assignments. In 1943, it was a very different matter. Soeharto’s careerist instincts, always well developed, would have told him that the

²¹¹ Interview, Colonel Soepardio, Bogor, September 10, 1998.

²¹² See Nugroho Notosusanto, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” pp. 125–29, on which this section is based.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 125. It seems unlikely that most of them were persuaded by members of Beppan, as Nugroho claims. According to Nugroho, those with a Muslim background were approached by Abdul Hamid Ono, the so-called Islamic expert in Beppan. Those with a non-Islamic background were approached by Yanagawa and his colleagues.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

²¹⁶ Cribb, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, p. 228.

²¹⁷ Nugroho Notosusanto, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” p. 128. Nugroho went on to become the head of the Indonesian Army history department. He was later appointed rector of the University of Indonesia and then minister of education under Soeharto.

Peta was a promising avenue, one in which he could put to good use the experience he had gained in the KNIL. Besides, he apparently had little say in the matter. It is clear that Okamoto encouraged him to join the Peta, and Soeharto would have known that the Japanese would not look favorably on a refusal. According to Nugroho Notokusanto, an Indonesian historian and honorary brigadier general in the TNI, those who were ordered by their superiors to join the Peta

... felt no particular ardor for their new status, but they did not dislike it either. Among them we could find people who would do their best to perform any job entrusted to them, and some of them were to continue their military career after the independence of Indonesia was achieved, reaching top positions in the Indonesian Armed Forces.²¹⁸

Nugroho, who was something of a careerist himself, may not have been thinking of Soeharto when he wrote these words, but the cap does seem to fit. Soeharto, of course, puts a very different spin on these events, collapsing events and stressing only the nationalist aspects. As he told a Japanese journalist,

Without the fighting spirit and patriotism that was hammered into us in the Peta, I don't think we would have been able to drive the Dutch away when they came back to recolonize us. I am grateful to the Japanese army in that sense. However, my gut feeling is that their real purpose in occupying Indonesia was not the "Liberation of Asia" but something they did in their own interests. The reason why we cooperated with them was to gain our independence.²¹⁹

"He Was From Another World"

Bogor stands, green and damp, at the foot of Mt. Salak (7,185 feet), forty miles south of central Jakarta. Behind the town, which is 860 feet above sea level and pleasantly cool, a narrow road begins its tortuous climb up through the tea plantations and on across the mountainous backbone of Java towards the upland city of Bandung. A Dutch Governor General, Baron van Imhoff, had built a retreat in Bogor, which he renamed Buitenzorg ("Without a Care"), in 1745 to escape the unhealthy climate of the capital, and he had made sketches for a splendid official residence, modeled on Blenheim Palace in England. The building that eventually appeared, remodeled and rebuilt many times, painted a dazzling white and looking nothing like Blenheim,

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

²¹⁹ Soeharto, "Watashi no rirekisho." The fact that the Peta cadets were, by the very nature of things, overwhelmingly Javanese and Sundanese helps explain why, after 1945, the Indonesian army had so many Javanese and Sundanese officers, a sore point among some people, both military and civilian, in the Outer Islands. Another part of the explanation for the Java-centric nature of the future Indonesian army is that the republic was restricted to the Javanese and Sundanese areas, plus Sumatra, during the revolution. Interestingly, the three brightest stars at Tangerang had been non-Javanese—Zulkifli Lubis (Batak), Daan Mogot (Menadonese), and Kemal Idris (Minangkabau). Equally interesting is the fact that the three most prominent members of the pre-war Royal Dutch Military Academy (KMA) in Bandung were non-Javanese. T. B. Simatupang, who became chief of staff of the armed forces, was a Batak. So, too, was A. H. Nasution, a future army chief of staff. Another KMA cadet, Alex Kawilarang, perhaps the most widely respected field officer in post-war Indonesia, was Menadonese. Simatupang was the "Crown cadet" at the KMA, meaning that he was the top student of his year, beating all his classmates, who were overwhelmingly Dutch and Eurasian. It is also true that most, if not all, of these six officers had spent at least some of their senior high school years on Java. Three of the six were Christians.

became in time the primary residence of the governors-general. It was set down amid ninety-five acres of lushness and greenery, with sweeping lawns supporting a large herd of spotted deer, imported from Holland. Alongside it was the world famous Botanical Garden, which had been started by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles.

Soeharto arrived in Bogor on Tuesday, October 19, having traveled from Yogyakarta on a Japanese army truck in the company of other prospective platoon commanders.²²⁰ If he had any misgivings as he entered the former KNIL compound, which stood, with its imposing new Japanese gateway, a short distance to the north of the palace and the adjacent small town, they are likely to have been fleeting. He and his fellow cadets from Central Java were greeted warmly by Tsuchiya, an officer who radiated authority, energy, and enthusiasm. Although he was only eight or nine years older than most of his charges, Tsuchiya appears to have had a paternal concern for their education and well-being. And even allowing for the possibility of some post-factum rationalization, he seems to have been more of an Indonesian nationalist than most of those in his training company, Soeharto included. Tsuchiya says that, during this period, he believed in the goal of Indonesian independence, even if he and his colleagues were not permitted to talk of such matters for the time being. "We felt we Japanese should go there and work for their freedom," he claimed many years later. "It was with this wish and this high hope that we departed Japan. Long before Peta was founded, there was, very deep in our hearts, the hope that some day soon Japan would help Indonesia become free."²²¹ Nor was Soeharto entering an unfamiliar world. He already knew a good deal about army life from his time in the KNIL, and he knew a good deal about the Japanese from his time in the police force. Moreover, he was to be billeted with more than two hundred other young men from Central Java, cocooned in a Javanese world, just as he had been when he served as a corporal in an ethnic Javanese KNIL infantry company in East Java.

At the same time, Soeharto may have felt that he had little in common with many of those undertaking the *shodancho* course. For one thing, there was the significant age difference separating the cohorts. At the broad base of the officer cadet pyramid, the accent was on youth. As many as 80 percent of the prospective platoon commanders were either schoolboys, recruited directly from junior high school, or young men not long out of school.²²² The other 20 percent were, for the most part, low-level government employees, most of them in their late teens or early twenties. Soeharto, who was twenty-two, was five years older than most of those in his intake. He was also a great deal more experienced than most of them, having worked for the Volkscredietbank, having risen up through the KNIL to the rank of sergeant, and having served for nearly a year as a policeman under the Japanese.

Socially and educationally, it was another matter. Among the 2,088 cadets who were to be pushed through the three *shodancho* and *chudancho* courses at Bogor in 1943–44 were eleven young Javanese princes or other members of the nobility, ten of them

²²⁰ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 84.

²²¹ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

²²² Interview, Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, July 31, 2002.

from the courts of Solo and one from Yogyakarta.²²³ Nor were these aristocrats swimming alone in a sea of commoners. As many as 70 or 80 percent of the *shodancho* cadets came from the ranks of the *priyayi*, albeit in many cases the lower tiers of that social category.²²⁴ “Most of us were from a *priyayi* background,” said Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, an East Javanese officer whose father had been a school inspector in the Dutch education system. “Certain background, certain values, certain philosophies, certain standards of living.”²²⁵ Soeharto was, of course, from a non-

²²³ Princeslings and other young aristocrats of the two royal courts of Solo were well represented in the Peta officer corps, with no fewer than ten signing up. The two royal courts of Yogyakarta were represented hardly at all, and what representation there was came from the Pakualaman.

Four members of the Sunanate of Surakarta (Solo) joined—or, in one case, nearly joined—the Peta. They were G. P. H. Poerbonegoro, a Breda graduate and former KNIL officer who was to have joined a *daidancho* course, only to withdraw; G. P. H. Djatikusumo, a former cadet at the KNIL Reserve Officers Training Corps (Corps Opleiding Reserve-Officiieren, or CORO) in Bandung who became a *chudancho*; R. M. Subroto Kusmardjo, who became a Yugeki *shodancho*; and R. M. Sukandar Tjokronegoro, a *chudancho* who became a senior officer at TNI headquarters in Yogya. In 1936, Djatikusumo had been offered a place at the Royal Military Academy in Breda. He turned it down because, as an officer in the Dutch army, he would have had to swear an oath of loyalty to the Dutch Queen “and that is too difficult.” Interview, Lieutenant General G. P. H. Djatikusumo, Jakarta, March 9, 1981. Sukandar, who was expelled from the elite Dutch-language Higher Civil School (Hogere Burger School, HBS) in Malang after a clash with a Dutch teacher who is said to have hated *pribumis*, finished senior high school in Jakarta. He later went to Tokyo, where he studied economics. When the war broke out, he joined an army officers’ school and graduated as a first lieutenant (*chui*). He landed at Kragen, East Java, with the Japanese invasion force. When the Peta was established, he was transferred to that body as a *chudancho* and was posted to Bogor, where he served as a staff officer. He was later assigned to the Yugekitai in Malang, where he played an active role in forming the Untung Suropati Division. He became deputy chief of staff of the TNI under Lieutenant General Oerip Soemohardjo. He died, as did Oerip, in 1948.

Seven members of the Mangkunegaran joined the Peta. They were: the future Mangkunegoro VIII, K. P. H. Hamidjojo Saroso, who became a *chudancho*; his younger brother, K. P. H. Hamidjojo Santoso, who became a *shodancho*; and five grandsons of Mangkunegoro VI—R. M. Yonosewoyo (*shodancho*), R. M. Yonohatmodjo (*shodancho*), R. M. Ronokusumo (Yugeki *shodancho* and later *chudancho*), R. M. Ronopuspito (Yugeki *shodancho*), and R. M. Ronopradopo (Yugeki *shodancho*). Written communication, Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, May 20, 2002. I am not aware of any members of the Yogya Kraton who became Peta officers. As far as I know, only one member of the Pakualaman, K. R. M. T. Soemyarsono, joined the Peta. Reflecting on this phenomenon, Djatikusumo said that one group of cadets had come from the *bangsawan* (nobility). “What is *bangsawan*? The bluebloods! The Tjakraningrats from Madura. Mangkunegoro, with his younger brother. And us. Not from Yogya! Very strange!” Asked why this was so, he replied, “I don’t know!” Interview, Lieutenant General G. P. H. Djatikusumo, Jakarta, March 9, 1981.

²²⁴ By this time, Benedict Anderson has noted, the word *priyayi* was being used in such a loose manner that even a postal clerk could describe himself as low *priyayi*, allowing him to bask in the glow of a term still tinged with connotations of aristocracy. In the 1940s, there was not much of a nobility left on Java. Many of these *priyayi* were simply children of officials, “quite petty bourgeois but with typical aristocratic pretensions.” Benedict Anderson, personal communication.

²²⁵ Interview, Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, Jakarta, September 1, 1998. Purbo’s suggestion that 70 to 80 percent of the *shodancho* cadets were from a *priyayi* background fits broadly with the findings of a 1977 study. In a sample of 124 ex-Peta officers, Nugroho Notosusanto found that 70 percent (fifty-nine out of eighty-four) of the *shodanchos* were from a *priyayi* background. However, thirty-eight of them were from the low *priyayi*, a category that included men whose fathers were train conductors, pawnshop keepers, and NCOs; nineteen were from the “middle” *priyayi* and two from the “grand” *priyayi*. There was one member of the nobility, and twenty-four commoners. See Nugroho, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” p. 122. According to Major General Moersjid, more than half the Peta platoon commanders were the sons of government officials. Interview, General Moersjid, Jakarta, May 8, 2000. Moersjid was a member of the second *shodancho* intake in 1944, together with Widodo, who later became Army chief of staff; Supardjo Rustam, who became interior minister; and Daryatmo, who became speaker of the People’s Deliberative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, MPR). Some *shodancho* cadets were the sons of aristocrats and entitled to call themselves Raden Mas. Some others were the grandsons of aristocrats and

priyayi background, although he had lived for some years with his uncle, a government official in Wuryantoro. This made him something of an outsider.

In pre-war Java, elevated social status had tended to go hand-in-hand with better-than-average education, which served only to deepen the divide between Soeharto and many of his fellow cadets, especially those who had been selected as future company and battalion commanders.²²⁶ As many as 10 percent of those in Soeharto's intake had attended one of the prestigious Dutch-language senior high schools, or the Japanese occupation equivalent; they were not only fluent in Dutch, but had acquired the European social graces that were essential if one were to rise in pre-war colonial society.²²⁷ Some had gone on, after completing secondary school, to study at the medical faculty, the civil servants' college, the agricultural college, or one of the teachers' training colleges. Of those in Soeharto's intake, 80 percent had spent three (sometimes four) years in a Dutch-language junior high school or its Japanese equivalent. As a result, they had enjoyed an education that nearly matched the training acquired by students who had attended Dutch-language senior high schools, save for the fact that their Dutch was not quite as fluent and their schooling had ended by the time they were sixteen, before they could go on to senior high. The remaining 10 percent came from a much less exalted educational background. Some, like Soeharto, had attended a *schakelschool*. Others had attended vocational schools. A small percentage had come from a *pesantren*, or rural Islamic boarding school.²²⁸ In some of the training companies at Bogor, almost everyone was from an urban, middle-class, Dutch-speaking background. "In my *kutai* [section] of thirty East Java cadets," said Purbo Suwondo, "there was only one who was from a *pesantren*. The rest were at least junior high students. In my one-hundred-man company, I think there were only one or two cadets who came from a *pesantren* ... Maybe 95 percent had attended a MULO junior high school."²²⁹

In short, there was a significant educational, as well as a social, cleavage between the *shodancho* cadets at Bogor. Ninety percent of the young men in Soeharto's intake were at home in the Dutch language, at ease in the modern world, and had spent at least three years in junior high school, which put them in the category of the relatively well-educated in 1943. A minority had come from a world in which Javanese families

in a position to call themselves Raden. Most chose not to use these titles as a gesture to the new spirit of egalitarianism that came with the revolution.

²²⁶ The correlation between social status and education was not automatic, of course. A man such as G. P. H. Djatikusumo, a son of Pakubuwono X of Solo, might have received a sound Dutch education, in Java and in the Netherlands. But many Kraton princelings had little education.

²²⁷ These were the Higher Civil Schools and General Secondary Schools (Algemene Middelbare Scholen, AMS). Under the Japanese, the AMS was replaced by Sekolah Menengah Tinggi (Higher Middle School), in which the language of instruction was Indonesian. Below that was the Sekolah Menengah Pertama (Lower Middle School), which replaced the More Extensive Lower Education (Meer Uitgebreide Lagere Onderwijs, or MULO) junior high schools.

²²⁸ A non-Western education was by no means an impediment to a successful military career. Major General Muchlas Rowi, a *pesantren* student who trained as a *chudancho*, became a successful battalion commander in the Untung Suropati Division in Malang. In the early 1950s, he took private Dutch-language classes in the afternoons and evenings.

²²⁹ Interviews, Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, July 31, 2002, and July 8, 2009. Almost all of the cadets had some knowledge of the Japanese language, the high-school students having studied it for two hours a day for the previous eighteen months.

spoke Dutch at home and read Dutch books, newspapers, and magazines as a matter of course. They had attended schools in which most of the students were Dutch or Eurasian. The others, while speaking Javanese or Sundanese at home, had had more than ten years' education in schools where the language of instruction was Dutch.

In their school days, these young men had behaved in many ways like young Dutch or Eurasian boys. They had known, almost by heart, the works of Karl May, the best-selling German author who specialized in adventure books about the Wild West, populating his stories with characters such as Winnetou, a fictional Apache chief, and his faithful sidekick, Old Shatterhand, a German émigré who was an outstanding sharpshooter.²³⁰ They had read books about Dik Trom, a corpulent Dutch schoolboy. They were familiar with Pietje Bell, another fictional Dutch schoolboy. They had pored over the Flash Gordon stories in the Dutch magazine *D'Orient*. They had read about Dutch national heroes such as Michiel de Ruyter and Piet Hein, two seventeenth-century admirals, and had committed to memory the school songs dedicated to those men and designed to inculcate the values of Dutch nationalism and Dutch patriotism in students. Those cadets who had reached senior high school by the time the Japanese arrived had, of course, been exposed to a richer intellectual diet. They had read more widely and more deeply. The more serious among them had some familiarity with modern and classical European literature, with philosophy, with international relations, European imperialism, the crisis of capitalism, the rise of fascism and Nazism, and with Marxist thinking.²³¹ Soeharto was one of about twenty young men, in a training company of 230, who did not come from a Dutch-language background. He may have had a fleeting acquaintance with that world while attending the *schakelschool*, but it was not his milieu. "He was from another world," said Major General Moersjid, with the merest sniff of condescension. "I'm not sure whether he had read the books by Karl May about Winnetou. Maybe he knew more than I do about *wayang* [Javanese shadow plays]." ²³²

²³⁰ Some of the cadets had identified not with the white men in the books, as their Dutch schoolfriends are said to have done, but with the Native American chief, a man "oppressed" by Europeans. As it happens, Germans also identified with Winnetou, who was seen by his creator as a "truly noble man." "Winnetou," the magazine *Der Spiegel* noted in 2006, "is the quintessential German national hero, a paragon of virtue, a nature freak, a romantic, a pacifist at heart, but in a world at war he is the best warrior, alert, strong, sure." See Michael Kimmelman, "In Germany, Wild for Winnetou," *New York Times*, September 12, 2007, www.nytimes.com/2007/09/12/arts/design/12karl.html (accessed on July 17, 2009).

²³¹ This sketch of the intellectual horizons of those who had reached senior high school and university is drawn from J. D. Legge, *Intellectuals and Nationalism in Indonesia: A Study of the Following Recruited by Sutan Sjahrir in Occupation Jakarta*, Monograph Series, Publication No. 68 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1988), pp. 76–77. Legge is writing about the young intellectuals associated with Sjahrir, a privileged, unique, and well-educated group. But his study gives a sense of an intellectual environment that would not have been foreign to some Peta cadets, particularly those at the *chudancho* level.

²³² Interview, Major General Moersjid, Jakarta, May 8, 2000. Moersjid, of course, had some reason to dislike Soeharto. When Soeharto came to power, Moersjid was arrested and jailed for more than three years, with no charges ever filed. At the time, his only "crime" appeared to be his unswerving loyalty to President Sukarno. However, Moersjid and Soeharto had clashed on at least two occasions in the early 1960s. In 1961, when Moersjid was the assistant for operations and Soeharto the commander of the Army General Reserve Corps (Caduad), Moersjid blocked Soeharto's attempts to have the battalions that had been earmarked for Caduad duties put under his immediate command. In 1962, when Soeharto, who was head of the Mandala command for the liberation of West New Guinea, sought to bypass both Moersjid, who was by then deputy chief of staff of the Army for operations, and Major General Soeprapto, the deputy for administration, he was brought into line by Moersjid.

It would be wrong, however, to make too much of these social and educational differences. During the Japanese occupation and in the early post-war years, the distinction between officers who came from a *priyayi* and Dutch-language stream and those such as Soeharto, who came from a more modest background, was of little or no consequence. It would only become important in the 1950s, when attempts were made to transform a large and unwieldy guerrilla force into a modern professional army. At that time, Soeharto would find himself struggling to keep up with his better-educated colleagues and rivals, only achieving by dint of hard work and after-hours study some of the educational advantages they had so effortlessly acquired. By the late Fifties, Soeharto would find himself bumping up against both a glass, and a class, ceiling in the TNI. Thanks to a combination of application, aptitude, and great good luck, he was to become one of the very few officers of his generation—perhaps the only one—to make it to a senior TNI staff position in Jakarta despite having had such a limited education. But it was a close call.

If the prospective Indonesian platoon commanders came from a broad cross-section of Javanese society, albeit weighted heavily towards the educated urban middle-class elite, their Japanese officers and instructors came from a similarly diverse social and skills background. Most of the senior officers—and they weren't really very senior at all—were Beppan men who had graduated from the Army Intelligence School. They had no expertise whatsoever when it came to training recruits in basic infantry skills. As Tsuchiya readily acknowledged, "We were absolute amateurs. We had not had much military training ourselves before we had to take on the task of training a large number of Indonesian army recruits ... It was like laymen training laymen."²³³ They were, however, brimming with enthusiasm and optimism. And they had recruited two other categories of men to look after the technical training.

Some members of the Japanese training staff at Bogor were recent graduates of the Reserve Officers Academy (*Yobishikan Gakko*), highly motivated and eager to pass on what they themselves had absorbed during their own eight-month training course. Others were combat-hardened Imperial Army noncommissioned officers, many of whom bore the scars of recent fighting in China and on the Malay Peninsula.²³⁴ As a former Indonesian cadet remembered, "My company commander, for instance, was a China veteran ... He had lost two of his fingers, so if he salutes back, it's only three fingers ... I think he [had been] wounded two or three times."²³⁵ In Soeharto's 230-man training company, there were twenty-eight Japanese apart from Tsuchiya—four officers, eight NCOs, sixteen of other ranks—as well as four interpreters and a few Indonesian graduates of the Tangerang Youth Training Center. "What we did," Tsuchiya explained, "was to let the sergeants and corporals take charge of the actual military training while we, the company commanders, concentrated more on enhancing moral and emotional strength. We put the emphasis on nurturing nationalism and agitating them so that they would want to fight together with the Japanese military for the independence of Indonesia."²³⁶

²³³ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, August 27, 2001.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*; and Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 89.

²³⁵ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, April 14, 1998.

²³⁶ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, August 27, 2001.

“Training Took Place Even in Heavy Rain”

The Japanese entertained high hopes for the Peta, and General Harada traveled down to Bogor to preside over the opening ceremony, which was held on Wednesday, October 20, 1943.²³⁷ This did not proceed quite as expected. The young men who were to be trained to lead an Indonesian volunteer force had been drawn up on the parade ground in the early hours of the morning, and as the general took his place on the reviewing stand, they looked quite impressive. Their uniforms, which were modeled on those of the Japanese army but made from surplus KNIL cloth, consisted of a green tunic and jodhpurs and a brown leather belt. The prospective battalion commanders had high black boots. The others wore black shoes and black leather leggings.²³⁸ Some wore a Dutch ceremonial sword. All of this gave the Indonesians a superficial resemblance to Japanese officer cadets. It soon proved to be illusory. As Harada began his opening remarks, one of the Indonesian officer cadets fainted. He was followed by another and then another. Before long, cadets were falling like ninepins, even though it was barely 8:00 AM, and the sun was still low in the sky. The Japanese looked on in dismay. “Everyone stood there in line,” Tsuchiya said, “and the commander-in-chief addressed them for about forty minutes. But he was only five minutes into his speech when officer cadets began to fall down, one after another. The commander-in-chief was so disappointed. Later he said to us, ‘Can this really be successful with such weak soldiers?’ Of course, we were all disappointed.”²³⁹ The recruits had succumbed to what the Japanese called *nisshabyo* (sunstroke). “It’s more than fainting,” said Tsuchiya. “They were hardly alive. They were barely breathing.” Tsuchiya and his fellow officers wondered themselves if the Javanese and Sundanese cadets would be able to endure the severe training the Japanese had in store for them. “It was astonishing to us. We were surprised how weak they were. They weren’t expected to do anything except stand.”²⁴⁰

Despite the unpromising start, the Beppan officers were determined to make a success of the training program. They knew they had too little time to give the cadets all the necessary technical skills. They knew, too, that there were not enough textbooks to go around.²⁴¹ None of this fazed them. Fired with enthusiasm themselves, they sought to instill a similar enthusiasm into their Indonesian charges. At Bogor, there was an unrelenting emphasis on the importance of nurturing spiritual strength (*seishin-*

²³⁷ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 85.

²³⁸ Nugroho, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” pp. 171–72.

²³⁹ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. See also Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 88.

²⁴¹ Captain Yamazaki Hajime, who was later to head the Planning Department for the Guidance of the Java Volunteer Defense Force (Giyugun Shidobu), although formally only the number-three man in that organization, gives an example of how difficult it was to translate Japanese military texts into Indonesian: “It took almost a month before we agreed on the translation of such basic terms as *heishi* (soldier). We didn’t want to use *soldaat* because it was Dutch, the enemy language. *Kesatria* sounded as archaic as *mononofu* in Japanese. After much discussion, we settled on *prajurit*. But even that didn’t seem just right. *Prajurit* sounded a little outdated, like *samurai* in Japanese.” See Yamazaki Hajime, *Kita-ni minami-ni* [Northward, Southward] (published privately by Yamazaki in Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture, 1977), pp. 80–81.

ryoku) and enhancing self-awareness and enthusiasm.²⁴² *Seishin* had been greatly emphasized in the training of intelligence officers at the Nakano Gakko.²⁴³ It was also fundamental to Japanese army doctrine, which continued to stress the primacy of spiritual factors—loyalty, faith in victory, aggressiveness, and fighting spirit—over material ones in warfare.²⁴⁴ The army's successes against superior forces in the Sino-Japanese war (1894–95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) "gave its leaders confidence that their unique Japanese fighting spirit would ensure victory even against nominally stronger enemies."²⁴⁵ As it happened, this was to prove a costly delusion for the Japanese, who, alone among the great powers, had never experienced at firsthand the destructive firepower of the modern weapons used on the European fronts in World War I.²⁴⁶ However, the belief in voluntarism, the idea that a highly motivated force can overcome a better equipped enemy, proved of critical importance in Indonesia. It came to underpin and reinforce the Indonesian concept of *semangat*, or revolutionary ardor, which was to be such an important energizing force in the post-war struggle for independence.

The Japanese knew, of course, that they would be able to get more out of their charges if they could tell them they would be fighting for an independent Indonesia. But for now, the word "independence" was taboo.²⁴⁷ "The educational goals would have been attained more quickly if we could have openly hoisted the slogan of Indonesian independence," one Japanese historian has written. "But the policy of Imperial Headquarters was that Java was to be secured as a supply base, so any agitation in favor of independence was strictly prohibited."²⁴⁸ In these circumstances, the Japanese company commanders could only imply that Indonesia deserved to be independent, which they did by hammering away in their morning lectures about the iniquities of Dutch colonialism.

Yanagawa, who was responsible for training the first intake of West Java platoon commanders, the men who would become the all-important battalion commanders of the post-war Siliwangi Division, had his own way of instilling in the recruits the necessary offensive spirit, which the Japanese called *kanto seishin* and the Indonesians *semangat menyerang*. A devotee of *sumo*, he devised a modified form of the sport that stressed the importance of boldness and aggression. In normal *sumo* bouts there is a good deal of unhurried circling and maneuvering. A wrestler who forces his opponent out of a circular ring, or who makes him touch the ground with anything other than

²⁴² Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 91.

²⁴³ See, for example, Ruth McVey interview with Tsuchiya Kiso and Yoshitake Chikao, Osaka, October 1980.

²⁴⁴ See Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, p. 37.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Alvin Coox and Saburo Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, 1959), p. 16; and Leonard A. Humphreys, "Crisis and Reaction: The Japanese Army in the 'Liberal' Twenties," *Armed Forces and Society* 5 (Fall 1978), pp. 173–77, cited in Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, p. 37.

²⁴⁷ The Japanese flew Sukarno and Hatta to Japan in November 1943, a few weeks after the Peta course began, to be decorated by Emperor Hirohito. Sukarno's attempts to get even limited Japanese backing for the nationalist cause came to naught. Prime Minister Tojo rejected Sukarno's request to permit the use of the anthem "Indonesia Raya" or the red-and-white Indonesian flag.

²⁴⁸ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 91.

the soles of his feet, is declared the winner, even if his opponent has managed to enter the winner's side of the ring. In the Yanagawa version, which left a deep imprint on the memory of many men who were to rise to prominence in the post-war Indonesian army, a circle was drawn in the sand with a line running across the middle. Wrestlers were taught to fly at one another as soon as they heard the command, "Start! [*Kakare!*]" The man who entered his opponent's territory was declared the winner. "If possible," said one former cadet, "you should meet your enemy on his ground, in his half of the circle ... You had to be faster than your enemy. Even if you ... succeed in throwing him down, that's not important. It's being faster. *Semangat* was emphasized, the warrior spirit."²⁴⁹ This emphasis on fighting spirit and aggressiveness was entirely in keeping with Japanese army doctrine, which stressed the importance of taking the offense at all times.

As one of the Japanese company commanders put it, "Yanagawa had liked having his trainees doing *sumo* back in Tangerang. He loved *sumo*. It was his firm belief that *sumo* was the best sport to nurture the fighting spirit."²⁵⁰ Those who emerged from the ring with badly grazed skin were taught to rub wet salt into the wound, a painful procedure, but one that aided the healing process. Soeharto and his fellow officer cadets from Central Java were not taught *sumo* in their company, but many of them took part in the *sumo* bouts organized by Yanagawa for the West Java cadets, some of whom found the traditional white *marwashi* (waist cloth) embarrassingly brief and wore shorts underneath. Soeharto seems to have thrown himself into these contests, although he may not have enjoyed them as much as others did. "We also did *sumo*," he said. "A contestant was not permitted to stop until he won five bouts. I had a hard time since I was thin."²⁵¹ As well as the *sumo* wrestling, there was *juken jitsu*, or bayonet drills, the cadets wearing Japanese face masks and using wooden rifles, and *kendo*.

At Bogor, as had been the case at Tangerang, the Indonesian officer cadets were quick to pick up the importance of spiritual training. Indonesia, two former Beppan officers said, was "like a white paper; you could write anything on it."²⁵² The basic principle of the Japanese training was *makoto* (sincerity). "This was expressed especially in the personal relationship between the training officer and the cadre. They emphasized the importance of personal commitment, relations which cannot be betrayed ... Japanese intelligence officers were expected to die for their country, and they emphasized that Indonesian *pemudas* must be ready to do the same for theirs."

The Japanese had planned to give Soeharto and the other platoon commanders three months' intensive training at Bogor, but this was cut back to two months "due to the worsening situation of the war."²⁵³ It was impossible, they knew, to turn out well-rounded junior officers in that time, so they concentrated on instilling fighting spirit, on teaching basic infantry skills, and on building up the physical strength of the cadets.

²⁴⁹ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, September 1, 1998.

²⁵⁰ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

²⁵¹ Soeharto, "Watashi no rirekisho." It is possible Soeharto did not begin *sumo* training until he returned to Bogor nearly a year later, when Yanagawa was the commanding officer.

²⁵² Ruth McVey interview with Tsuchiya Kiso and Yoshitake Chikao, October 1980, from which this paraphrased paragraph is taken.

²⁵³ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 89.

The emphasis was placed on infantry training, night fighting, and static defense.²⁵⁴ Training was kept simple. Although 90 percent of the cadets had attended junior high school, and some had gone a good deal further than that, there were others who had had very little education. "There were so many tiers," said Tsuchiya. "That is why we set the level of the training to the level of the lowest peasants."²⁵⁵

For Soeharto, the day began at 7:30 AM (6:00 AM in the "old" timekeeping system), when a Japanese bugler sounded reveille. On this signal, the cadets, bare from the waist up, made their way at the double to the training field for roll call. While waiting for other members of the company to assemble, they engaged in the Japanese practice of *kanpu-masatsu*, or body-rubbing, using a small dry towel and bellowing the words "*yoisho, yoisho!*" under the direction of the cadet class leader. Roll call was followed by the flag-raising ceremony, an event invested with immense solemnity. As the Japanese flag inched its way up the flagpole, Soeharto and the others turned and bowed deeply from the waist in the direction of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.²⁵⁶ After that came gymnastics, which was followed, on most days, by a four-kilometer jog through the streets of Bogor, with squads of young men doing a lap of the palace and the botanical gardens. The run ended with the cadets swarming up a steep hill from the river in a simulated bayonet charge (*totsugeki*), the air echoing with shouts of "*waaa...a!*," a cry designed to instill fear into the heart of any enemy. The slowest ten members of each group would be penalized with an additional 200-meter charge. All of this made a lasting impression on Soeharto. "'*Kakero! Kakero!* [Run! Run!]' I can still clearly remember our instructors' shout in the morning running session," he told a Japanese journalist more than fifty years later. "Even today, the language I use when I talk about those days is Japanese."²⁵⁷

After breakfast, the members of the Fourth Company broke up into four sections for a ninety-minute classroom lesson, either on spiritual strength or military science. Along with his fellow cadets, Soeharto was instructed in the code of conduct that had been set down in the 1882 Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors. This code identified five cardinal virtues—loyalty, propriety, valor, righteousness, and simplicity—that should guide the behavior of servicemen, and it made the observation of these virtues a sacred obligation to the emperor as supreme commander. "Keep well in mind," the Rescript said, "that your duty outweighs death itself as much as a mountain outweighs a feather." In Japan, these ideas had been reinforced in the 1930s when militarists and ultra-nationalists began laying stress on the *Yamato-damashii*, the spiritual qualities supposedly unique to the Japanese people. By the start of the Pacific War, *Yamato-damashii* was equated with unquestioning loyalty to emperor and nation. For all that, the Japanese appear to have drawn a clear distinction between their own servicemen and the Indonesian candidate officers.

²⁵⁴ According to Tsuchiya, the Japanese did not give the cadets any lessons on guerrilla warfare because, at the time, they still thought they could fight an "authentic war." The idea of guerrilla training came later, when the Japanese army began to realize it was losing the war. Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 105.

²⁵⁷ Soeharto, "Watashi no rirekisho."

Although the Bogor cadets were required to bow towards the Imperial Palace each morning, there seems to have been no requirement that they take an oath of loyalty to the emperor. According to Tsuchiya,

They didn't take a pledge of loyalty to the emperor nor to Japan on arrival at the Peta course. The emperor's retainers ought to be Japanese military men, whereas the Peta recruits were Indonesian. They joined for the sake of Java's defense. So if I remember correctly, we didn't make them recite an oath of loyalty to the emperor in our daily routine activities. We did a lot of recitation of the Imperial Rescript, it is true. But those five items were something, I believed, essential not only to a soldier but to any human being.²⁵⁸

Oath of loyalty or not, Soeharto was to feel a surge of pride and satisfaction when, on a wintry Tokyo day in 1968, he met the emperor, on an equal footing, as one head of state to another. "I wore Javanese clothing and I met the emperor of Japan!" he told a colleague on his return.²⁵⁹ "Oh yes, I met him! That is the emperor that we had to bow to ... And it was so cold. I forgot to wear socks. I had only sandals." "Oh," recalled the colleague, "he was very happy."

The morning lecture was followed by instruction in one or more of the standard field exercises set out in the Japanese army infantry textbook (*Hohei soten*).²⁶⁰ The afternoon was given over to further exercises in the field, the focus being on small-unit tactics, especially those involving offensive action against an enemy. During these sessions, Soeharto learned how to attack and overrun a defensive position. He learned how to face an enemy with his bare hands. He mastered Japanese army bayonet techniques. "After lunch," one former cadet remembered, "we had to run to the exercise area, which is now the Bogor golf course. It was hot, and we were soaked with sweat. When we came back in the afternoon, our shirts were often white from the salt of dried up perspiration."²⁶¹ It was, this officer thought, "very, very tough training."²⁶² From time to time, the acting commander of the Bogor center, Captain Maruzaki, inspected the training grounds, mounted on a large white horse and receiving oral reports from the company commanders.²⁶³ With his unyielding manner, Maruzaki was seen as a man to be propitiated. No one took him lightly. When he rode into view, the Japanese instructors and Indonesian cadets threw themselves into the training with renewed vigor.

On most occasions, the cadets were required to run back to the barracks through the streets of Bogor, carrying their KNIL-issue rifles. Many found this so exhausting, a Japanese observer noted, "they were almost ready to cry."²⁶⁴ But the Japanese granted no respite. If an Indonesian cadet failed to run fast enough or fell out, he would find himself mocked by his instructors. "Hey you!" a Japanese corporal would shout. "You said you want to have independence and you can't even do this! How can you become

²⁵⁸ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 15, 1999.

²⁵⁹ Confidential communication, November 15, 2004.

²⁶⁰ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 90.

²⁶¹ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, September 1, 1998.

²⁶² Interview, Purbo Suwondo, September 10, 1998.

²⁶³ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 90.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

independent if you can't even run five miles?"²⁶⁵ On other occasions, cadets would march back to camp, singing Japanese and Indonesian songs. One of the favorites was the Japanese military song "Hohei no honryo," with its famous first line "Banda no sakura" (Cherry blossoms in full bloom). Other favorites were "Bengawan Solo" and "Hallo Hallo Bandung." Back at the barracks, there were still more songs, including "Shina no Yoru" (China Nights)—a romantic ballad, popular at the time but now seldom sung because it is considered deeply offensive in China, and "Umi Yukaba," a melancholy lament about the inevitable death that awaits a soldier or sailor.²⁶⁶ After dinner, cadets were taught how to shout commands in the field, a procedure known as *gorei chousei*. Members of a platoon would gather at one end of a soccer ground. The cadet chosen to command them would stand at the other end, bellowing out orders like a company sergeant major and suffering punishment and humiliation if those orders could not be clearly understood. Afterwards, there might be compulsory practice of Japanese army songs. The two hours to 9:00 PM were set aside for study. A bugler sounded lights-out shortly afterwards.

From time to time, the Japanese would organize night training sessions, which began after dinner on Saturday night and continued until sunrise the following day. As Tsuchiya, the commander of Soeharto's training company, noted, "Everybody looked forward to Sunday."²⁶⁷ During the course, the cadets were taken three or four times to the firing range, where they would each fire about ten rounds. "There," said one Peta officer, laconically, "we learned that every bullet should kill one person. Japanese efficiency!"²⁶⁸ As in any army, great emphasis was placed on the care and maintenance of weapons. Here, Soeharto had an advantage over his fellow cadets. The Peta officer cadets were issued with captured KNIL rifles and machine guns, all of which were familiar to Soeharto, who could strip and reassemble them even when blindfolded.

The training at Bogor was not only intense but relentless, just as it had been at Tangerang. Bogor is one of the wettest places on earth, with an annual rainfall of 160 inches. It has been known to have as many as three hundred thunderstorms in a single year. But the arrival of the late-year monsoon had no impact on the Japanese training program. As Tsuchiya put it:

²⁶⁵ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, April 14, 1998.

²⁶⁶ More than half a century later, many older Indonesians could recall the words of "Umi Yukaba," which had been taught at school during the Japanese occupation:

Umi yukaba, mizuku kabane
Yama yukaba, kusa musu kabane
Okimi no he ni koso shiname
Kaerimi wa seji.

If I go away to sea,
 I shall become a corpse floating in the water;
 If I go away to the mountains,
 I shall become a corpse from which grass grows;
 If it is for the emperor,
 I will not regret my death.

²⁶⁷ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, January 21, 1999.

²⁶⁸ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, September 1, 1998.

Training took place even in heavy rain. Weapons and clothes got soaked. Our lips turned purple. We could not stop trembling. My army sword got rusted through. Trainees had trouble taking care of their wet clothes and weapons on rainy days.²⁶⁹

The acting commander of the First Company, who was responsible for training the 127 Indonesian company commanders, was known to his charges as a “madman” (*orang gila*) after he forced them out on midnight maneuvers in clothes still soaking wet from an afternoon thunderstorm. As the semi-official Japanese history of the Peta notes, “He wanted to teach the company commander cadets that war went on regardless of weather. Since everyone was in high spirits, no one came down with a cold.”²⁷⁰ In short, the Japanese squeezed every available minute from the day. “Because our time was limited,” Tsuchiya said, “we couldn’t afford to see even a day pass without physical training outdoors. Even if spears fell, we were determined to do this outdoor training.”²⁷¹ The Indonesians found it difficult to meet the exacting standards of the Japanese NCOs who supervised their field training. “As in every military establishment,” one Indonesian officer said, “they were never satisfied with your first effort. You had to do it all four or five times. ‘You did not shout loud enough!’ ‘You did not advance fast enough!’”²⁷²

Punishments were imposed for the slightest infraction. Perhaps the severest form of corporal punishment (*taibatsu*) inflicted on cadets was *seiza*, which involves kneeling on the floor, folding one’s legs under one’s thighs, while resting the buttocks on the heels.²⁷³ Most Japanese find it difficult to maintain the *seiza* position for more than thirty minutes, even with a cushion under the knees. Cadets at Bogor were forced to do so for an hour or more, sometimes all night. During that time they were expected to remain still and reflect on themselves. Cadets referred to this mockingly as *zazen*, which is a form of religious meditation in Japan, and among them the term *zazen* became virtually synonymous with corporal punishment. At other times, a cadet might be forced to stand at attention for an hour in the midday sun, his rifle held out in front of his body. To make matters worse, some Japanese officers and NCOs were in the habit of slapping cadets on the face, a common practice in the Japanese army, but one which the Indonesians found deeply humiliating. Nor was it only individuals who were punished in these ways. If one man in a company erred, the entire unit might be made to sit in the *seiza* position, sometimes for an entire night, watched by three Japanese NCOs, each carrying a two-meter-long bamboo cane. Very few cadets could do this for long, and when, inevitably, someone fell to the ground, an instructor would move in and strike him viciously across the back. The victim would sit up again, only to fall down yet again and be struck yet again. A unit that spent an entire night in this way was expected to be on the parade ground at 7:30 AM the next day, ready for another full day of training. Recalling this kind of treatment, Major General Moersjid

²⁶⁹ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, January 21, 1999.

²⁷⁰ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 91.

²⁷¹ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

²⁷² Interview, Purbo Suwondo, September 1, 1998.

²⁷³ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 119.

said, "Sometimes I didn't get the point. What kind of training is this? We were treated like that! But afterwards we felt it couldn't be different, it had to be done like that."²⁷⁴

General Purbo Suwondo was another who was to conclude that there might have been some method in the Japanese madness, even in their penchant for collective punishment. "That happened very often," he said. "That makes for a kind of esprit de corps. That fosters a concern for others. If you do something wrong, the whole platoon will be punished."²⁷⁵ According to General Widodo, a contemporary of Soeharto's who became chief of staff in the Indonesian Army, "it was very hard training," with a heavy emphasis on physical training, the use of weapons and basic platoon tactics. "And almost every day we received a slap—*pukul!* Almost every day!"²⁷⁶ Others, looking back, thought the punishment was more mental than physical.²⁷⁷ Whatever the truth of the matter, the experience left a mark on some of Indonesia's future army officers. Bashed by the Japanese, a number of them went on to become bashers themselves. Some recruits, finding the training and the punishments impossibly hard, applied for a discharge. But they were "talked into staying by strong persuasion."²⁷⁸ The Japanese reminded them of "the situation of their motherland" and of the heavy future responsibility of the younger generation.

Soeharto and the other *shodancho* cadets from Central Java were fortunate to have Tsuchiya as their company commander. Not only was he sympathetic to the Indonesian nationalist cause, but he also kept a tight rein on his Japanese army subordinates, especially the NCOs, who had lived for years in an institution in which brutal punishment was accepted as normal. At Bogor, Tsuchiya chose to live in the barracks with the Indonesian trainees, forgoing the house that had been set aside outside the camp for the commanders of the training companies. And he had given strict instructions that no cadet was to be slapped on the face. What is more, he went out of his way to empathize with his Indonesian officer cadets. As he said later, "When a *seito* [pupil] was ordered by a *kutaicho* [section commander] to stand through an hour-long recess due to a mistake he made, while others lay in the shade of the trees, I would stand next to him until the recess was over. I didn't want the recruits to think Japanese were merciless and cruel."²⁷⁹

Soeharto seems to have had a high regard for Tsuchiya and met him twice while on official visits to Japan as president.²⁸⁰ The Japanese instructors, Soeharto said, were "strict-minded military officers, but we felt their sympathy for us."²⁸¹ Even so, the

²⁷⁴ Interview, Major General Moersjid, Jakarta, April 29, 1999.

²⁷⁵ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, Jakarta, September 1, 1998. Purbo made the point, however, that his company commander, First Lieutenant Shindo Kazuma, a veteran of the war in China, did not slap his charges. Written communication, March 1, 2009.

²⁷⁶ Interview, General Widodo, Jakarta, November 17, 1981. Widodo was in the second intake at Bogor.

²⁷⁷ Interview, Moersjid, May 8, 2000.

²⁷⁸ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 89.

²⁷⁹ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, January 21, 1999.

²⁸⁰ When Soeharto went to Japan for the first time, he asked to see Tsuchiya as his old trainer. After that, people say, Tsuchiya was "bombarded" with offers from Japanese company representatives "thinking he had an in and wanting to get him to act as their agent; but he refused." Ruth McVey interview with Tsuchiya Kiso and Yoshitake Chikao, October 1980. At the time of Soeharto's visit, Tsuchiya was working for the Nissan Motor Company.

²⁸¹ Soeharto, "Watashi no rirekisho."

treatment was harsh enough for Soeharto to remember it clearly forty-five years later. As he wrote in his memoirs, "Once during an exercise we were forced to drink filthy water from a river behind a Goodyear rubber factory. At another time, we were made to kneel for hours because one of the recruits had thrown his *hanchō*'s [squad leader's] cap away."²⁸² In an account given to a Japanese newspaper, Soeharto said, "Peta training was beyond imagination. We had military drill, theory, and spiritual training from 5:30 in the morning until midnight. The training given to the platoon commanders who would command troops at the front line was especially rigorous. When they found one trainee slacking off, they made all of us kneel with our backs straight [*seiza*] until midnight."²⁸³

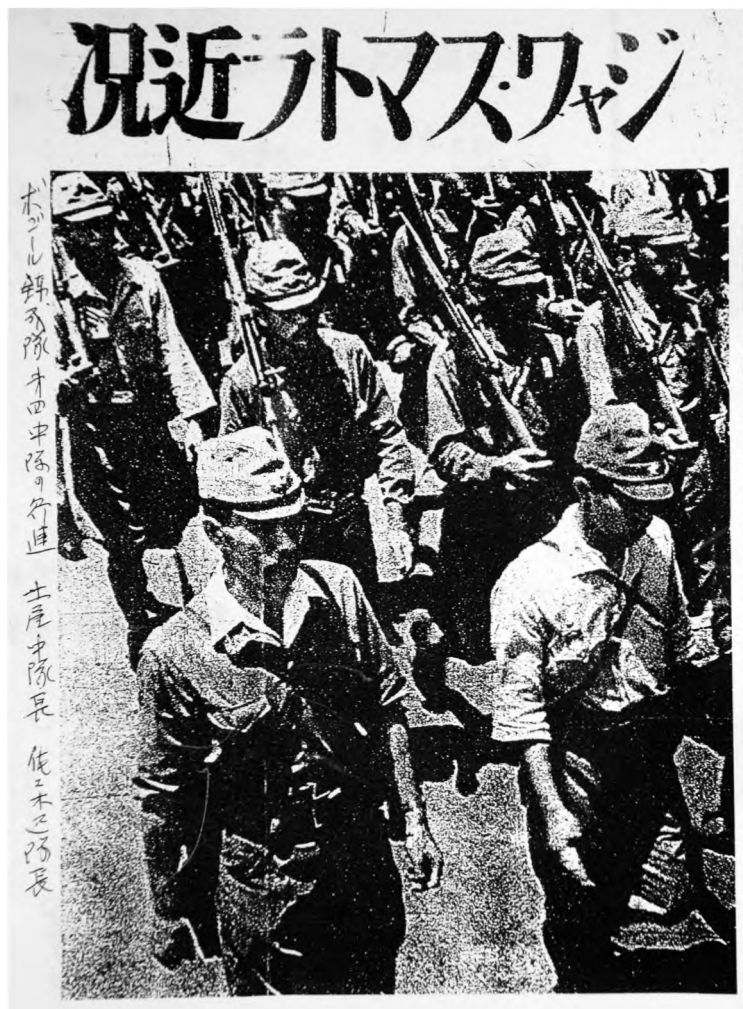


Photo from an article "Jawa Sumatra Kinkyo" (What's Happening in Java and Sumatra) showing Peta cadet officers from Central Java returning from a day's field training led by First Lieutenant Tsuchiya (left) and Second Lieutenant Sasaki. The photograph appeared in the magazine *Bungei-Shunju*.

²⁸² Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 20.

²⁸³ Soeharto, "Watashi no rirekisho."

Throughout the course, the Japanese stressed the importance of showing respect towards superiors and attending to the welfare of subordinates. "We had water bottles made from coconuts," one officer remembered. "When you took a break you would first offer your water bottle to the instructor. We also learned the techniques of leadership. You have to think of your subordinates, your *anak buah*. Your concern is for your subordinates. It's called *buka no shoaku*."²⁸⁴ Soeharto, who had of course been made aware of such considerations in the KNIL, took all this very much to heart. In later years, he was to be known for the exceptional attention he paid to the welfare of his men. Indeed, the efforts he made to advance those interests were to lead him into dubious fund-raising and business deals, which were to be a hallmark of his years both as a senior officer and as president, and which, when taken to excess, would do so much to undermine his legitimacy as president.

The Japanese went to some pains to feed their officer cadets well. Breakfast might include Japanese *miso* soup, made from bean paste, accompanied by white rice, sometimes mixed with corn, sometimes with soy beans.²⁸⁵ A typical dinner consisted of beef or fish, rice, tomatoes, green vegetables, peanuts, and other items. Still, there never seemed to be enough food, and some cadets risked beatings by slipping out through the barbed wire at night to hunt for food. Once, during a night exercise involving both *chudancho* and *shodancho* cadets, G. P. H. Djatikusumo, a prince of the royal court of Solo, son of the popular and corpulent Pakubuwono X, and K. R. M. T. Soemyarsono, a member of the Pakualaman, the minor court in Yogyakarta, stopped to collect sweet potatoes from a village garden—two well-educated young Javanese aristocrats scabbling about at night in a West Java potato patch, a metaphor for a world in transition.

As time passed, the Indonesians gained in strength. Even those who had fainted during the entrance ceremony "learned to endure the severe training and to give a fierce look back at their instructors when in the beginning they failed in focusing their loosely opened eyes."²⁸⁶ "After a week or ten days," said Tsuchiya, "we noticed a change in their eyes. They had a sharper look in their eyes. That was obvious."²⁸⁷ The Japanese noted, too, that the Indonesian cadets were growing darker after long hours out in the sun.

Most of the cadets were Muslims, and the Japanese had, of course, gone out of their way to recruit a number of prominent Islamic figures as future battalion and company commanders. Beppan was anxious not to offend any religious sensibilities, if at all possible. Care was taken to ensure that all food was *halal* (permitted). But there were limits to the concessions that it felt it could make. This was wartime, and the Peta was a special force being trained for defense purposes.²⁸⁸ "I'm sorry," said Tsuchiya. "We had to ignore Islam. In Islam there is a provision that says that, in a time of emergency, followers do not have to abide by the regulations ... So we made use of that. So Friday

²⁸⁴ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, September 1, 1998. *Buka* means subordinate. *Shoaku* means "to be in control of."

²⁸⁵ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, June 12, 2003.

²⁸⁶ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 89.

²⁸⁷ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

²⁸⁸ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 92.

wasn't a day off, and we didn't let them do their prayers every day. There could be some people who made regular daily prayers behind our backs, but we didn't set up a regular time for prayers."²⁸⁹ According to Tsuchiya, the Japanese did not encounter any difficulties on this front. On the contrary, those *daidanchos* who were from a strongly Islamic background "persuaded the lower ones not to demand their religious observances." According to Morimoto Takeshi, Japanese officers had come to an agreement with Indonesian religious leaders, who conceded that they did not have to pay special consideration to religious practices. Although no time was set aside for mosque attendance on Friday, Morimoto said, cadets were free to pray before reveille and after lights-out if they chose.²⁹⁰

On Friday afternoons, the cadets were expected to rest in the camp. Family members could visit if they lived nearby, but cadets were not permitted to leave the training center at any time, except when they were under instruction or on the closely supervised morning run. For Soeharto, one of the treats at Bogor was the *daifuku-mochi*, a Japanese confection made of sweet bean paste and available in the canteen. For others, an even greater treat was the cigarette ration. The Japanese provided each cadet with two or three packs of Western-style cigarettes each week, a rare treat in wartime Java. These could be either be smoked or exchanged with visitors for fruit and snacks.

Soeharto made several important friends among the *shodancho* cadets at Bogor, all of them within his sixty-man training section, one third of which consisted of recruits from the Princely Territory of Yogyakarta. His closest friend was Soedjono, the son of a *pegawai negeri* (official) of the Pakualaman.²⁹¹ A solidly built young man, bespectacled and always neatly turned out, Soedjono was seen by colleagues as "a good fellow" and was later to display considerable gifts as a military commander. In the years after 1945, when Indonesia was fighting for its independence against the returning Dutch, Soedjono was not only Soeharto's closest friend but one of his two most competent and dependable battalion commanders.

Soedjono is of interest for two reasons. First, he had not completed elementary school. That meant that he had even less formal education than Soeharto. Of the sixteen men who were to serve as battalion commanders under Soeharto between 1945–50, all but Soedjono were better educated than their commanding officer, sometimes by a long chalk.²⁹² Second, Soedjono was a Roman Catholic. During his early years as an army officer, and later as president, Soeharto was to depend, to a marked degree, on officers from a Christian background. Of his sixteen battalion commanders in the late 1940s, no fewer than five were Catholics.²⁹³ There was, however, no political or religious significance in this fact, as there would be in later years, when Soeharto seemed to go out of his way to appoint Christian officers to

²⁸⁹ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

²⁹⁰ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 92.

²⁹¹ Interview, Brigadier General K. R. M. T. Soemyarsono, Jakarta, April 24, 2000. This Soedjono is not to be confused with Soedjono Humardhani, a Central Java financial affairs officer whom Soeharto came to know in the mid-1950s.

²⁹² Two of the sixteen had reached technical college, two had reached teacher's college, and another two had reached senior high school.

²⁹³ Aristocratic families did not become Catholics, with a few rare exceptions. But two of Soeharto's five Catholic battalion commanders were from the court of the Pakualaman.

senior positions, conscious, no doubt, that they could pose no threat to his position. Rather, the disproportionate number of Christians was a reflection of both the high educational standards in Christian schools and the broad social, political, and religious backing for the revolutionary movement.

Another cadet whom Soeharto befriended at Bogor was Pranoto Reksosamoedra. Pranoto was from Purworejo, an area in which the Communist Party was to gain many supporters; indeed, his uncle was to emerge as a prominent local Communist.²⁹⁴ In Yogyakarta, Pranoto had attended Muhammadiyah junior and senior high schools established on the Dutch pattern and with a “Western” orientation. He had gone on to a Teacher’s Training College (Hollandsch-Inlandsche Kweekschool, HIK), where he studied to be a teacher in the Dutch-language Muhammadiyah system.²⁹⁵ Pranoto was intelligent, reserved, and seen by his colleagues as unswervingly honest. Yet another colleague from this time was Soemyarsono, the quietly spoken aristocrat from the Pakualaman. He had attended the same Muhammadiyah junior high school as Pranoto, and, though two years younger than Pranoto, was as close to him as Soeharto was to Soedjono. In 1945, Soemyarsono was to set up his own battalion in Yogyakarta, alongside Soeharto. A year later, after Soeharto was promoted to regimental commander, Soemyarsono served under him as a battalion commander. Later, in December 1947, he was one of a small group of people invited to Soeharto’s wedding.

Each of these friendships, it is worth noting, was to come under strain in the years ahead. In 1948, Soeharto would relieve Soemyarsono of his battalion on the grounds that he was insufficiently decisive. Nor, according to Soemyarsono, did Soeharto’s high regard for Soedjono prevent him from treating him harshly on one occasion. In a moment of anger in 1950, Soemyarsono claims, Soeharto struck Soedjono, apparently on the head, for smuggling a stolen blue Studebaker when the Garuda Mataram Brigade was returning to Java after a deployment in Makassar.²⁹⁶ In 1959, Soeharto and Pranoto were to fall out irrevocably when the latter reported Soeharto, who was by then military commander in Central Java, to army headquarters over freewheeling business and trading deals, which Pranoto, who personified the puritanical ethos of most Central Javanese officers, found deeply offensive; Soeharto never forgave this “betrayal.” He refused to accept President Sukarno’s appointment of Pranoto as acting army commander in October 1965, and when he came to power, he lost no time in finding reasons to jail his former friend.

Curiously, Soeharto makes no mention of these men in his autobiography, referring only to other “friends” from his time at Bogor. One is a man named Supio. “We were assigned to the same barracks and became close friends,” the future president wrote of Supio, while nevertheless relegating him to a subservient position in the Soeharto narrative. “After an exercise, he would wash both his and my clothes while I cleaned our guns. He would also wait in line in the canteen to buy us *mochi* ... There was never

²⁹⁴ Interview, Dayino, Jakarta, February 3, 2000.

²⁹⁵ Before World War Two, the Muhammadiyah worked hard to modernize Indonesian education with Dutch as the model of what was modern; hence the use of Dutch titles when one might expect Indonesian. I am indebted to Ruth McVey for making this point. Personal communication, August 24, 2009.

²⁹⁶ Interview, Brigadier General Soemyarsono, Jakarta, February 2, 2000. Other sources, including the late Colonel Alex Kawilarang, have insisted that Soeharto himself was behind the theft.

enough, so you had to line up fast to get any.”²⁹⁷ The other friend is a man whom Soeharto refers to as “Pranoto Wijono.” This is odd. There was no one of that name involved in the *shodancho* course at Bogor. The only Pranoto at Bogor was Pranoto Reksosamoedra.²⁹⁸ This suggests either that Soeharto’s exceptionally good memory and almost obsessive attention to detail failed him when he came to write his memoirs, or that he was, once more, rewriting the historical record, unable, perhaps, to acknowledge that he had once been friends with Pranoto Reksosamoedra, a man he had come to detest. Among the others in his platoon were Bardosono, a young man of a mystic bent who was to hold key positions in Soeharto’s New Order government, and Maryono, who went on to serve as a company commander in Soeharto’s Battalion X in Yogyakarta in 1945.²⁹⁹ In 1965, while serving as Assistant III (Personnel) in the Diponegoro (Central Java) military region, Colonel Maryono sided fatally with the September Thirtieth Movement; he and his fellow Central Java plotters were hunted down and killed by troops operating on Soeharto’s orders.

Another *shodancho* cadet from Central Java was Amad Jani (later Achmad Yani), who would be killed in the failed 1965 coup. The son of an Indonesian chauffeur, Yani had been brought up by a Dutch family, as a result of which he was able to attend the Christelijke AMS senior high school on fashionable Oranje Boulevarde (now Jl. Diponegoro) in Jakarta. He joined the KNIL, where he served in the cartographic section and rose to sergeant. Yet another cadet from Central Java was Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, who became a close friend of Yani’s at Bogor. In 1965, Sarwo Edhie was commander of the Army Para-commando Regiment (Resimen Para Komando Angkatan Darat, RPKAD), which would lead a brutal crackdown on alleged Communists in Central and East Java, as well as Bali, and track down Maryono and his colleagues. Others on the course were Surono Reksodimedjo, a future Army chief of staff, and Munadi, whom Soeharto would later appoint as governor of Central Java.

The list of *shodancho* cadets from West Java included Amir Machmud, a blunt and unsophisticated officer who would later do Soeharto’s bidding for thirteen years (1969–82) as Indonesia’s all-important interior minister. Umar Wirahadikusumah, who was to serve as vice president under Soeharto (1983–88), was also attached to the West Java company, presumably as a trainer, given that he had graduated from the Tangerang course. The East Java Training Company included Mohammad Jasin, who, in the

²⁹⁷ Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 19.

²⁹⁸ Soeharto’s claim has puzzled former Peta colleagues. The late Brigadier General Soemyarsono, who was in the same *shodancho* training platoon as Pranoto Reksosamoedra and Soeharto, was adamant that there was only one Pranoto in that platoon—Pranoto Reksosamoedra. Interview, Brigadier General Soemyarsono, February 23, 2001. That claim is supported by Colonel Soepardio, a former Peta *shodancho* who retired in 1980 as the deputy head of the Military History Division of the Indonesian Armed Forces. Written communication, Colonel Soepardio, May 21, 2002.

²⁹⁹ In the 1960s and 1970s, Bardosono, by then a brigadier general, was given important positions both at Bina Graha, the presidential office block in Jakarta, and at the powerful Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (Kopkamtib), while doubling as the general chairman of the All-Indonesia Soccer Association. Bardosono’s appointment to the latter job was to bring him national attention. Bardosono had been “handpicked by Soeharto [and] was also a practicing mystic.” See Hamish McDonald, *Suharto’s Indonesia* (Melbourne: Fontana Books, 1980), p. 239. In 1977, during a soccer scandal in which Indonesian team managers allegedly paid bribes to opposing players during a preliminary World Cup regional tournament in Singapore, Bardosono returned to Jakarta “flourishing a Buddha statuette, which he claimed had been placed by the Thai team behind the Indonesian goal to exert a powerful attractive force on the ball.” *Ibid.*

1970s, after a time as deputy army chief of staff, would risk everything by daring to accuse Soeharto of greed and hypocrisy. In subsequent years, some of these men were to rise to high office by dint of their own ability. Others were to win preferment because Soeharto made it a practice to intervene in the promotions system. Throughout his career, Soeharto was to value personal connections more highly than competence, and he would reach back across the decades to bring forward men whom he knew and trusted and who could be counted on to implement his wishes.

As well as those in his immediate circle, Soeharto was thrown together with a number of instructors and officer cadets who were to play key roles in the post-war Indonesian National Army. One of them was Zulkifli Lubis, a subdued, disciplined, and intense young Batak whom Beppan officers considered the brightest Indonesian they ever recruited.³⁰⁰ One of ten children of a Batak schoolteacher, Lubis was born in Aceh but moved to Yogya, where he enrolled in 1940 in the AMS-B high school. He was fluent in Dutch, which he spoke with a distinctive lisp. Selected as a member of the first intake at the Tangerang training center, he learned Japanese very quickly and displayed a natural flair for intelligence work, propaganda, and clandestine operations. At Tangerang, he never said anything if he was angry but would quietly obey the command he had been given.³⁰¹ But if Lubis did not make trouble, he was much stronger in his criticisms of the Japanese than his fellow students. "He was," said Tsuchiya, who came to know him well, "a fanatic Muslim, very strong in spirit."³⁰² Lubis was never slapped by the Japanese, although everyone else was, at one time or another, as a result of which some of his less gifted fellow cadets labeled him a Japanese lackey (*antek jepang*).³⁰³ Rated number one at Tangerang, both in class work and outdoor military training, Lubis was sent to the Peta training school at Bogor as an assistant instructor (*shido-gakusei*) in Soeharto's training company, which means that Soeharto would have been in contact with him on a daily basis. Lubis was nineteen when the Bogor course began, two and a half years younger than Soeharto.

At the beginning of 1944, the Japanese sent Lubis to Singapore for further intelligence training, a rare distinction, conferred on no other Indonesian. Not long after the proclamation of independence, Lubis set up the first of what was to become a series of government and army intelligence bodies, infiltrating not only the political parties and mass organizations but also the army, as well as liaising with underground groups and carrying out propaganda work. A contemporary Dutch intelligence report gives the following quick sketch of Lubis: "about 1.7 metres tall, slim, with a broad face, sound white teeth, pimpled nose, heavy eyebrows, straight hair combed backwards with a parting in the middle, big ears, speaks Dutch."³⁰⁴ In the 1950s, Lubis was the stormy petrel of Indonesian military politics, enveloped in an air of mystery and intrigue, serving for a time as acting army chief of staff and allegedly staging an

³⁰⁰ Interview Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999. Tsuchiya and Yoshitake made the same point in an interview with Ruth McVey in October 1980.

³⁰¹ Ruth McVey interview with Tsuchiya Kiso, Osaka, October 1980.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ruth McVey interview with Zulkifli Lubis, Jakarta, November 11, 1980.

³⁰⁴ This description is contained in a March 1946 Dutch army intelligence report. See "Zoeikifli Loebis," NEFIS/CMI 2744, File no: 0036. B.Z.

unsuccessful coup. Another assistant instructor in Soeharto's company was Daan Mogot, who had been the runner-up at Tangerang, behind Lubis.

To his fellow cadets at Bogor, Soeharto seemed uncommonly taciturn. Asked to recall his first impressions of Soeharto, Soemyarsono could do no better than anyone else. "He was polite," he said. "But he did not speak too much."³⁰⁵ He was "low-profile." The Japanese also found Soeharto quiet, but were much impressed by his abilities. Tsuchiya, who had recruited Soeharto and who watched him closely for two months as his company commander, felt that he was one of the best and brightest of the officer cadets at Bogor. He was not as gifted as Zulkifli Lubis, who was "plain and simple, quiet, sober, restrained, modest, low-keyed" and, as Tsuchiya saw it, quite the most impressive of all the Indonesians who underwent officer training during the occupation. Nor was he as good as Daan Mogot, who was "more Japanese than an ordinary Japanese officer" and "willing to do anything."³⁰⁶ But Soeharto was one of the stars of the Fourth Company. As Tsuchiya put it, Soeharto "did an outstanding job in both classroom work and in military training outdoors. He was always able to do a model demonstration when we asked him to do so. Let's suppose there's an 'enemy' out there with a gun. In training, he was able to give a good example and run to the enemy and kill him."³⁰⁷

For one or two of the cadets, the relentless combat training was tiresome, and they undertook it reluctantly. Soeharto treated it with the utmost seriousness, charging headlong at imaginary enemies with rifle and bayonet, shouting in the approved manner, abandoning all normal reserve. The Japanese instructors watched all this admiringly. "You have to be really serious in showing a good example," Tsuchiya explained. "If the example is done poorly, the others can't learn." In these exercises, Soeharto would show exactly how an attack was to be carried out, crawling forward toward the enemy for about 150 yards, then charging the last fifty yards, screaming as he went, disposing of the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting with the bayonet. At the end of the course, Tsuchiya ranked his Indonesian cadets in order of ability, from one down to 230, although no cadet was told where he had finished. "I can't remember where Soeharto was," Tsuchiya said. "Maybe he was within the top ten. But he was never number one. Lubis was easily number one. And number two was Daan Mogot ... They rose to the top through ability ... They became almost like Japanese military officers."³⁰⁸ A retired Indonesian army historian who graduated from the Bogor course was a little less generous in his assessment. "Pak Harto," he said, somewhat dismissively, "was not that outstanding."³⁰⁹

On Thursday, December 2, 1943, when Soeharto's intake had less than three weeks of training to complete, the sixty-five-year-old commander-in-chief of the Japanese Southern Army, Field Marshal Terauchi Hisaichi, visited the Bogor center, resplendent in full dress uniform and spurred riding boots. He was accompanied by an aide-de-camp to Emperor Hirohito, by General Harada, and by the commanders of all the

³⁰⁵ Interview, Soemyarsono, February 2, 2000.

³⁰⁶ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Written communication, Colonel Soepardio, May 21, 2002.

Japanese battalions deployed on Java. Before the visit, Yanagawa had told the 246 future platoon commanders in his company, "Pretend the general is a Dutchman, your enemy! Glare at him!" an instruction that was obeyed to the letter, as the future officers of the West Java Siliwangi Division fixed the visitor with an "angry stare." When Terauchi had finished his inspection, he turned to Harada and said, only half jokingly, "Don't make them too strong! The Japanese may have to suffer later."³¹⁰ It was a concern that would in time prove real enough. Interestingly, the officers of the Japanese high command took no chances during Terauchi's visit to Bogor. No Indonesian officer cadet was allowed near the high-ranking visitors, who were guarded by the Kenpeitai and other Japanese soldiers.

December 8 was the second anniversary of the beginning of what the Japanese called the "Greater East Asia War," which had begun with the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. The Indonesian battalion commanders had by now completed their course and were commissioned during a ceremony in Gambir Square (now Merdeka Square), in the heart of Jakarta, during which each man was presented with a Japanese-style ceremonial sword. General Harada took the salute as around eight-hundred members of the first Peta intake marched past the reviewing stand and out into the streets of Jakarta, led by the band of the Japanese Sixteenth Army. "It was," one Japanese wrote, "a good opportunity to show the newly established Java Volunteer Defense Force to the Indonesian public."³¹¹ Two days later, the new battalion commanders left for their home regions, where they were to recruit and train five-hundred-man battalions.

The appointment ceremony for the company and platoon commanders was held on the lawns of the Bogor Palace on December 20, with Harada once more taking the salute. Zulkifli Lubis made a "pledge of acceptance" on behalf of the Indonesian company and platoon commanders.³¹² When the ceremonies were over, Harada held two separate parties, one for the Japanese officers inside the palace, another for the Indonesian officers, who gathered on the lawns at the front of the palace.³¹³ For Soeharto and his fellow trainees, it was a day of triumph and pride. The next day, Soeharto left to join his battalion. As a *shodancho*, he wore on each collar three gold stripes on a field of blue, the Peta badges of rank having been modeled on the Japanese ones.³¹⁴ After a course that had lasted barely two months—Soeharto was to claim in his memoirs that his *shodancho* training had taken four months, a more intensive course that had been given only to recruits in the second intake—Soeharto was an officer in the first Indonesian defense force.

The Japanese had been ambitious in the extreme to imagine that they could create an Indonesian self-defense force from scratch in just a few months, not least when the raw material seemed at first to be so unpromising. But they succeeded. The men who were to dominate the Indonesian army for the first thirty years of independence came

³¹⁰ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 94.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³¹² Tsuchiya interview, February 2, 1999.

³¹³ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 95.

³¹⁴ See Pamoe Rahardjo, *Tentara Peta (Pembela Tanah Air): Mengawal Proklamasi 17 Agustus 1945 Mulai dari Rengasdengklok* (Jakarta: Peta Press, 1993), p. 71. These details were confirmed by Purbo Suwono, July 24, 2009. Nugroho says the *shodanchos* had two gold stripes on a field of blue. See Nugroho, "The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation," p. 172.

away from Bogor with three key attributes—fitness, fighting spirit, and a familiarity with small-unit infantry tactics. All this, of course, was of obvious benefit to the Japanese. More importantly, it was to stand the Peta officers in good stead during the post-war clashes with the Dutch colonial authorities. The intensity of this training, the emphasis on fighting spirit and physical toughness, had had a profound impact on the cadets, especially those who had gone straight from school to the platoon commanders course. As one Indonesian officer observed, “We were at the age of being like wax, you know. You can make whatever you want from that material. Because you are receptive to anything.”³¹⁵ But that did not mean, this officer added, that the Indonesian officer cadets were simply stooges of the Japanese. “Some people [have said], ‘You were cooperating with the Japanese.’ You can say that. We can also say something else. No, we were not cooperating, we were just seeing what we could do for our own nation.”

Alwin Nurdin, who later became a major in West Java’s renowned Siliwangi Division, was one of those whose life was totally changed by his experience in the Peta. Born into a privileged middle-class family in West Sumatra, Nurdin had grown up feeling no animosity towards the Dutch. “But still,” he said, “the Japanese time came, and it was an inspiration for us.”³¹⁶ While the arrival of the Japanese may have been the downfall of the Dutch, “for us it was a chance in a million. We had to grab [our] independence. When the Japanese came, we were just Dutch [*sic*] schoolboys. [When they left we were highly motivated army officers].” The Peta, Lieutenant General G. P. H. Djatikusumo liked to point out, was the nucleus of the TNI. “So I say to everybody who would care to listen, if you would like to understand this power structure now, you cannot afford not to study the anatomy of the Peta.”³¹⁷

Despite the hardships and humiliations of the Bogor course, not one man had dropped out. On the contrary, the young Indonesian officers had developed an intense pride in their training and their capabilities. They felt they were members of a highly favored elite. They were fired with enthusiasm. As one Japanese officer noted, they were “very ardent, except for a few, and their abilities could not be neglected.”³¹⁸ Soeharto was no less enthusiastic than his colleagues. Soon, he knew, he would take command of a forty-four-man infantry platoon, one that would have to be established from the ground up. It was going to be an enormous challenge, but it was a challenge he was confident he could meet.

For their part, senior Japanese staff officers were “especially enthusiastic” about the volunteer force, no one more so than General Harada, who was to remain a supporter of Peta throughout his time on Java.³¹⁹ As one senior Sixteenth Army staff officer put it, “General Harada loved Peta, and I could see he couldn’t help smiling when he talked about it. He was always willing to review the Peta ... He was very keen on Peta, and trusted it, too.”³²⁰ According to a Japanese staff assessment written immediately after

³¹⁵ Interview, Major General Moersjid, Jakarta, May 8, 2000.

³¹⁶ Interview, Alwin Nurdin, Jakarta, April 14, 1998.

³¹⁷ Interview, Lieutenant General G. P. H. Djatikusumo, Jakarta, March 9, 1981.

³¹⁸ “Document taken from 16 Army HQ,” p. 4.

³¹⁹ Harada was the commanding officer of the Sixteenth Army until April 1945. After the war, he was brought before an Australian war-crimes court for his role in the summary execution of three Australian flight sergeants at Tanjung Priok in February 1945. He was found guilty and hanged in 1947.

³²⁰ See Miyamoto Shizuo, “Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi,” pp. 205–6.

the war, "the Japanese army had great expectations [for] these troops. The Japanese C-in-C and all ranks, mindful of the Army's intention, favored them heartily."³²¹ That was not entirely true. Some Japanese officers were to become, in time, deeply skeptical about the Peta. Although the Peta was a highly decentralized set of units, with no higher command structure, these officers saw potential danger to themselves in an armed Indonesian defense force; their reservations echoed the sort of concerns that had been expressed in earlier years by senior KNIL officers. Colonel Miyamoto, who was posted to Java in April 1944, was not at all sure it was wise to put "total trust" in the Indonesian force,³²² fearing it might one day turn on its mentor, as, indeed, some units did at the end of the war.

Part Three: "Why Did They Choose Soeharto?"

Defending the Beaches

On his return to Central Java, Soeharto was assigned to the Peta battalion being established at Wates, seventeen miles southwest of Yogyakarta. Fearing an Allied attack from Australia, the Japanese had drawn up operational plans to fight a defensive battle on the south coast of Java, concentrating the bulk of their forces on East Java but with other units guarding the southern coast of Central and West Java.³²³ Under these plans, Indonesian battalions would defend the beaches most susceptible to amphibious assault while Japanese troops were held in reserve, ready to launch an immediate counterattack.

It was, of course, a strategy of desperation. No one doubted for a moment that the Japanese excelled in the art of beach defense. Imperial Army engineers were skilled in the construction of bunkers, dugouts, and blockhouses, all of them mutually supporting and extremely well camouflaged. It is also true that the south coast of Java is notoriously forbidding, with dangerous seas and very few beaches. But the Japanese could not hope to defend every beach on the south coast. Nor could one or two five-hundred-man Peta battalions stem a full-scale Allied landing, which, the Japanese estimated, would consist of as many as ten divisions.³²⁴ At best, a defending battalion

³²¹ "Supplementary explanation of armed parties in Java under Japanese mil. adm. (Condensed translation)," from "Document taken from 16 Army HQ," p. 2. "C-in-C" refers to "commander in chief."

³²² See Miyamoto Shizuo, "Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi," p. 206. According to Tsuchiya, Colonel Miyamoto "did not understand Peta and totally distrusted it." Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 29, 2002.

³²³ If General MacArthur's forces in Australia were to seize Timor, the Japanese reasoned, it would take "only one night" for them to reach Java. The Sixteenth Army had to be ready with sufficient force to defend the coastal regions of East Java. Looking back, Colonel Miyamoto said he should have realized, on his arrival in Java in April 1944, that there would be no counter-attack from Australia. Only in about March 1945, as the Americans moved on Okinawa, 350 miles southwest of Japan, did he and his fellow planners finally realize there would be no attack on Java from Australia. See Miyamoto Shizuo, "Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi," pp. 195–217.

³²⁴ Miyamoto Shizuo, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 230.

could cover a beach frontage of 900 to 2,000 yards. That meant that Peta units would be very thinly distributed. It also meant that frontline Peta battalions would be subjected to a devastating naval bombardment before any Allied landing. Japanese reserve units, as hopelessly outnumbered as the Dutch had been when they faced the Japanese in 1942, would be pounded from the air and sea as they sought to join the battle. To make matters worse, this strategy created political problems. It did not take long for Indonesian leaders to conclude, erroneously, that the Japanese had decided to let local troops do the fighting and dying while the Japanese remained safely out of sight. "Sukarno," said Morimoto Takeshi, "hated the idea of using Indonesians as a shield for the Japanese."³²⁵

Fissures Begin to Open Up

As these plans were put into operation, Soeharto was posted on to Glagah, a hamlet on the Indian Ocean, nine miles west of Wates. Glagah stands on a narrow strip of low-lying ground between the Menoreh Hills and the ocean, a few miles south of the east-west highway. It is a forlorn and decrepit little town, set deep among coconut palms and banana trees. To the north are rice fields, to the south, uncultivated land that gives way to grass-covered dunes. These extend for several hundred yards, to the uninviting coastline of the Indian Ocean, the domain of Ratu Loro Kidul, the Goddess of the South Seas, a spirit much feared in Javanese mythology. As he approached the town, Soeharto would have smelled the salt in the air and heard the muffled roar of the surf. Beyond the dunes, the waves roll in relentlessly, dark and powerful, crashing onto the beach and tossing plumes of spray into the air, creating an almost permanent curtain of haze over the beach.

The Japanese had chosen their defensive position here well, as might be expected, and it is likely that work was already underway on the construction of the beach defenses. These would have been designed with great care. In most places, Japanese strong points were earth emplacements, reinforced with timber, particularly palm logs or teak, and sometimes with corrugated iron.³²⁶ The roofs of these structures were made of several layers of logs, covered with dirt and rocks and planted with fast-growing vegetation for camouflage. From narrow firing slits, anti-tank guns and medium machine guns were sited to fire on landing craft as they beached, ready to cut down assault troops as they struggled through rows of barbed-wire obstacles, some of them below water level. Field guns deployed well behind the coastal strip were positioned to bring fire to bear on the beaches, supported by light and heavy mortars, which often proved to be even more deadly.

If the Glagah defenses were already under construction, Soeharto may have seen for the first time the way the Japanese treated their Javanese *romusha* (laborers), men and women, most of them Javanese peasants, who had been mobilized into a vast and terrible slave army, working under appalling conditions on defense and infrastructure projects. The Sixteenth Army had begun drafting forced laborers in October 1943, the month Soeharto joined the first Peta intake at Bogor, and in the twenty-two months

³²⁵ Morimoto Takeshi, February 1, 1999.

³²⁶ Japanese Beach Defences in South East Asia, Directorate of Combined Operations, Headquarters India Command, New Delhi, April 11, 1945, TNA: PRO WO 203/3671 58604.

that were to follow, hundreds of thousands (by one account, “many millions”) of Javanese were pressed into service.³²⁷ Some were put to work on a hopelessly ambitious scheme to double rice production in three years. Others were sent to build fortifications and airfields and other defense projects. Still others were packed off to West Sumatra, where they were sent down into the mines. Tens of thousands more were sent as far away as Thailand and Burma to work on the notorious Death Railway.

Wherever they served, the *romusha* were treated brutally by their Japanese or Indonesian overseers, who fed them meagerly, beat them savagely, and worked them to the point of exhaustion. Tens of thousands died, from pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria, dysentery, and yaws. Many thousands more seem simply to have been worked to death. In time, the ill-treatment of the *romusha* would do more than anything else to generate anti-Japanese resentment among the young men of the Peta.³²⁸ It also left many Javanese with feelings of contempt for the lower-level Javanese officials charged with bringing in the required number of *romusha*, and it sullied the image of political leaders such as Sukarno, who reluctantly endorsed the scheme.

The last weeks of 1943 and the early months of 1944 were a time of intense activity for Soeharto. An Indonesian volunteer defense force was being created from scratch. It had to be manned and trained and supplied. The commander of the First Battalion (Wates), Martodjoemeno, had gone on ahead to recruit the five hundred young men who were to serve as soldiers in his new battalion, drawing on his contacts in the local community.³²⁹ He and his fellow battalion commanders seem to have had no difficulty in finding volunteers. As one historian has noted, “the lure of a uniform, a steady diet, pay, or adventure attracted many young aspirants.”³³⁰ Nor were entry standards especially high. There was no minimum standard of education, no requirement that a recruit have any knowledge of Japanese or even that he be able to produce a letter of recommendation from someone in the bureaucracy. All that he needed was a strong physique and the necessary fighting spirit. Many recruits were peasant boys, “apolitical, with little or no schooling.”³³¹ Others came from humble backgrounds in the cities and towns of Java. In the years ahead, these recruits were to be the dependable foot soldiers not only of Peta but also of the post-war Indonesian army. And they were to prove remarkably sturdy and steadfast, even in times of great

³²⁷ It has generally been thought that 200,000 to 500,000 *romushas* were put to work on military construction sites outside their own areas. See, for example, Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, p. 13; and Cribb, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 408. However, Sato Shigeru has argued that historians have tended to underestimate the magnitude of *romusha* recruitment because they have focused primarily on those who were sent overseas. Sato argues that the mobilization program involved “many millions” of people. See Shigeru Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation, 1942–1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), pp. 154–200.

³²⁸ See, for example, Nugroho Notokusanto, *The Revolt Against the Japanese of a Peta Battalion in Blitar, February 14, 1945* (Jakarta: Centre for Armed Forces History, Department of Defence and Security, 1974). This theme is emphasized in a diorama at the Peta Museum that now stands on the site of the original Peta training depot in Bogor.

³²⁹ According to Morimoto, the commander of the First Battalion, stationed in Wates, was Anjaya Purbokusumo. See Morimoto Takeshi, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 397.

³³⁰ Kanahale, “The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia,” p. 125.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

adversity, when some of their better-educated superiors were to fall into despair at the apparent hopelessness of the anti-Dutch struggle.³³²

For Soeharto, as for the other Indonesian officers, the establishment of Peta would have brought an exhilarating sense of purpose. It was an honor to be part of a self-defense force of 16,500 armed men. It was a challenge to be asked to train a forty-four-man infantry platoon (*shodan*), to pass on the skills learned in the KNIL and at Bogor, to instill in the recruits something of the fighting spirit that had formed such a central part of the Japanese indoctrination. For the recruits, too, this was a deeply satisfying time. These men were equally proud to be part of an all-Indonesian armed force, kitted out in the distinctive dark green Peta uniform, which set them apart as members of a new and important institution in local society, issued with rifles taken from KNIL armories, and trained to handle heavy machine guns and mortars. As the rainy season dragged on, turning the ground to oozing red mud, these men were drilled and trained intensively by their platoon commanders and company commanders, just as the latter had been by the Japanese. Enormous emphasis was placed on the development of physical stamina and *semangat*, just as it had been at Bogor. In the Peta, *semangat* “came to mean an almost reckless kind of physical courage, defiant of bodily injury and even death.”³³³

In Wates and Glagah, Soeharto was given command of one of the three platoons (First Platoon) of the First Company of the First Battalion. He now found himself working alongside several Peta officers whose lives were to be closely interwoven with his in the years ahead. One of them was his company commander, Sunarwibowo. A well-educated a man in his early thirties, Sunarwibowo had been a high-school teacher under the Dutch, when teacher standards had been high. Identified by the Japanese as a potential leader, he had been recruited by Tsuchiya and sent to the *chudancho* course at Bogor, as had a number of other high-school teachers. Sunarwibowo was to be Soeharto’s regimental commander when, in Yogyakarta in October 1945, Soeharto set up his first battalion. Another man Soeharto served with on the Indian Ocean beach at Glagah was Bardosono, a platoon commander who had been a student at the AMS-B at the time of the Dutch surrender. The third platoon commander was Hadjid Soedibjo, who was to serve in 1945 as one of Soeharto’s fellow battalion commanders under Sunarwibowo. Two of Soeharto’s friends from Bogor—Pranoto Reksosamoedra and Soedjono—were serving nearby, having been given command of platoons in the Second Company.³³⁴

Each Peta battalion came under the wing of a Japanese battalion—in places, one Japanese battalion might have responsibility for seven or eight Peta battalions—and in each Peta battalion there were six or seven Japanese officers and NCOs, responsible for such matters as logistics and training. But the Peta battalion commanders were proud of their “independence” and sensitive to slights, be they real or imagined, which meant that the Japanese officers attached to these units needed to act with considerable tact.

³³² Personal communication, Major General Sukotjo Tjokroatmodjo, Jakarta.

³³³ Kanahale, “The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia,” p. 125.

³³⁴ Raden Sutomo, who was in charge of the battalion’s financial affairs, was made chief of supply at the Defense Ministry in May 1946, with the rank of major general. Selo Adji, the commander of the Third Company, later became a regimental commander in Yogyakarta.

As the months wore on, strains were to develop between some Japanese battalions and their Indonesian “brother” units.

“Modest but Very Sharp”

Soeharto spent an exceptionally short time in a Peta fighting unit. On May 10, 1944, less than five months after he had graduated as a platoon commander, he found himself back at the Officer Cadet Training Center in Bogor. With the war going from bad to worse, the Japanese had decided to create another twenty-two Peta battalions, in addition to the thirty-three already in place, to bolster their defenses along the south coast. That meant they needed another twenty-two battalion commanders, another eighty-one company commanders, and another eight hundred platoon commanders.³³⁵ Soeharto, having made a good impression as a platoon commander, had been chosen for training as a company commander, which would put him in charge of three platoons, or 132 men.

Bogor in mid-1944 was a changed place, a noisy military town with many bars and brothels, all of them well patronized by Japanese soldiers and civilians. At the training center, which was now under the command of Yanagawa, there was the same high-minded emphasis on Japan’s wartime goals, the same commitment to the idea of building an Indonesian defense force that would fight alongside the Japanese army. But the Indonesian officer cadets were all too aware of the ugly realities of Japanese occupation, and fissures were opening up between the Japanese and the Indonesians. To some extent, too, fissures were opening up in the Japanese ranks. When Soeharto was first in Bogor to undergo the platoon commanders’ course, the training center had been run by Beppan. Now, with Peta growing by leaps and bounds, the Japanese had established in Jakarta a Planning Department for the Guidance of the Java Volunteer Defense Force (*Giyugun Shidobu*). This body, which took its orders from the Sixteenth Army Headquarters and which was intended “as a sort of proto-general staff” for Peta, carried out much of the work formerly done by Beppan.³³⁶ It was the Planning Department, not Beppan, which now ran the training center.³³⁷

These changes coincided with a gradual deterioration in the ideals that had attended the creation of the Peta. Members of the instruction staff that had been assembled for the new Peta levy came mostly from Japan. They had no knowledge of the local languages or customs.³³⁸ (Compounding this problem, about one hundred

³³⁵ Yanagawa gives a figure of 20 battalion commander cadets, 81 company-commander cadets, and 780 platoon commander cadets. See Yanagawa “Statement,” Part II, pp. 3–4. Once again, Morimoto gives slightly different figures. See Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 98. According to Yanagawa, the new intake of *shodancho* cadets began their training on April 10, with the *chudancho* cadets starting on May 10, and the *daidancho* cadets on June 10. All three training courses finished on August 10. See Yanagawa “Statement,” Part II, p. 4. Morimoto says the course began on April 1 and ended on August 10. See Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, pp. 98 and 124. If Morimoto is correct, and if the *chudancho* course began on April 1, Soeharto spent more than four months on this course, not two months. This would be in keeping with Soeharto’s claim that the course lasted four months.

³³⁶ Tsuchiya Kiso and Yoshitake Chikao interview with Ruth McVey, Osaka, October 1980.

³³⁷ As part of the overhaul, the Training Centre (*Renseitai*) had been renamed the Education Corps (*Kyoiku-tai*).

³³⁸ Yanagawa “Statement,” Part II, p. 2.

Japanese officer cadets had arrived directly from Japan and been assigned to Peta battalions across Java without proper orientation.)³³⁹ A number of the new arrivals were overbearing and brutal. In theory, corporal punishment was prohibited in the Peta. But, notes Morimoto Takeshi, some Japanese resorted to slapping Indonesians on the face almost daily.³⁴⁰ As it happens, Morimoto appears to have been well-qualified to make that observation. According to a former Peta cadet who rose to a high rank in the post-war TNI, Second Lieutenant Morimoto's company was notorious for its "daily slapping practices."³⁴¹

The restructuring notwithstanding, Beppan officers continued to play an important role in Peta training. Yanagawa, recently back from a two-month visit to Japan, threw himself into his role as commanding officer at the training center, which included a four-man Carrier Pigeon Research Unit.³⁴² He was still as demanding and determined as ever, but his new responsibilities, some of his Beppan colleagues felt, had given him an inflated sense of his own importance, and he had taken to riding around Bogor on a large white horse, as his predecessor, Captain Maruzaki, had done.³⁴³ In the months ahead, he was to have a running battle with Lieutenant Colonel Masugi Kazuo, the new Sixteenth Army intelligence chief.³⁴⁴ He was also to become caught up in an increasingly bitter dispute between young Japanese officers at the training center and Japanese working in the local Japanese civilian administration.³⁴⁵

³³⁹ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, pp. 102–3.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Written communication, Lieutenant General Purbo Suwondo, March 9, 2009. According to Purbo, Morimoto was a *kutaicho* and mortar instructor.

³⁴² According to one account, Yanagawa had taken back "photographic negatives plus research materials and reports." While in Japan, he made a vain attempt to find thirty Japanese "for secret-service work in Beppan in connection with Chinese affairs." Yanagawa "Statement," Part II, p. 1. What Yanagawa actually took back, it seems clear, was his propaganda film "Call to Australia." Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 29, 2002.

³⁴³ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999. Yanagawa was promoted to captain on December 1, 1944. See Yanagawa "Statement," Part II, p. 1. This promotion, said Tsuchiya, "led him to mistakenly believe that he was also number-one among the Japanese living in Bogor. He became arrogant." Tsuchiya seems to have erred on the timing of Yanagawa's promotion, however. It came through the day *after* he completed his stint as the commanding officer at the Bogor center—so any perceived arrogance can't be attributed to that promotion.

³⁴⁴ See Yanagawa "Statement," Part II, pp. 8–9. These differences centered mainly on the army's treatment of the ethnic Chinese community.

³⁴⁵ By the time Soeharto attended the company commanders' course, there was a palpable antagonism between the Japanese members of Yanagawa's training company and members of the military administration, which was headed by the Japanese governor. Young Japanese officers at the Peta training center were complaining among themselves about what they saw as the comfortable lifestyle of those working in the administration. These officers, they said, routinely took afternoon naps and "played around with Eurasian women." For their part, those in the administration objected to the behavior of off-duty officers and NCOs from the Peta training company. These men, according to the administrators, filled the Bogor restaurants and the local Japan Club every night, drinking to excess and hiring prostitutes. Administrators were angered, in particular, by Probationary Officer Takagi Nobuhiro, a notorious drunkard and troublemaker who was always getting into fights. He often drew his sword and threatened Japanese civilians and administrators. Even when he was sober, Takagi was inclined to commandeer the main street to give his recruits combat training, and he became enraged if a car sought to pass. In a post-war memoir that was seen by some as boastful and perhaps not entirely accurate, Yanagawa said that, one day in June 1944, when he himself was absent, the chief of staff, General Kokubu, having heard the complaints of the administration staff, descended on the Peta training center. He rebuked the center's Japanese staff severely and ordered that no one was to leave camp. Infuriated that Kokubu had apparently

Soeharto spent three months on the company commanders' course, from May 10 to August 10. This was a month longer than the term of the first such course in 1943, and it gave him a solid grounding in the subjects he studied.³⁴⁶ Parallel courses were run for the new batch of *shodancho* cadets, who were given four months' training, and the new *daidanchos*, who were given two months. One of those in the battalion commanders' course while Soeharto was at Bogor for the second time was Sudirman, a twenty-eight-year-old Islamic schoolteacher who, eighteen months later, would be elected commander-in-chief of the Indonesian army. There is no reason to believe the two men met at this time, and indeed it is highly unlikely that they did. Men in the three training tiers were largely kept apart from one another.

Once again, Soeharto made an indelible impression on his Japanese army instructors. More than five decades later, they could recall with ease his coolness, his composure, his competence. According to former Second Lieutenant Nakamoto Yoshiyuki, who was the head of his training section, "Soeharto was a cautious man and never showed off his talent. He was a steady man who never lost his temper."³⁴⁷ According to Morimoto, Soeharto "was remembered by all his instructors as a very capable man." Soeharto, he said, was "modest but very sharp" and, although capable, never took advantage of other people to make himself look good.³⁴⁸

On Thursday, August 10, 1944, at the end of the course, a formal graduation ceremony was held in Jakarta. A photograph taken at the governor general's palace shows the inauguration ceremony for new Peta battalions. Indonesian officers stand in neat rows, rigidly at attention, feet slightly splayed. The ban on the red-and-white national flag remained in force, but each man carries a Peta flag, which, with its green field, its distinctive red sun, and red beams radiating in all directions, and its white crescent moon and star, was an overripe and overdesigned amalgam of Imperial Japanese Army and Islamic symbols.³⁴⁹ A Japanese flag, with its blood-red circle on a

accepted at face value the administrators' one-sided story, Yanagawa expressed the view privately to some of his colleagues that the chief of staff should be killed. Fearing the worst, Captain Maruzaki, the head of Beppan, made a violent and somewhat theatrical attempt to defuse the situation. Unsheathing his military sword, he sliced off the little finger of his left hand in the presence of Yanagawa, Tsuchiya, and Yoshitake. "You may want Kokubu's head," he told his subordinate, "but I will give you my finger instead. Give up such an idea." For details, see *Rikugun chohoin Yanagawa Chui* [Japanese Army Intelligence Officer, First Lieutenant Yanagawa], pp. 146–156. In November 1944, it was decided that Maruzaki should return to Japan "owing to his illness." With his departure, Tsuchiya took over as the head of Beppan. (The trouble-making Takagi was shunted off to the Peta battalion in Bojonegoro, East Java.) See Yanagawa "Statement," Part II, pp. 3, 8. Maruzaki's illness cannot have been too serious. Back in Japan, he was promoted to major and went to work in the Izumi (Spring) Unit, which was "to wage campaigns of assassination and terror against the Allied troops and Japanese collaborators." He was later transferred to Korea. Mercado, *The Shadow Warriors of Nakano*, pp. 127 and 160.

³⁴⁶ See Yanagawa "Statement," Part I, p. 5, and Part II, p. 4.

³⁴⁷ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 127.

³⁴⁸ Interview, Morimoto Takeshi, Tokorozawa, Saitama Prefecture, February 1, 1999. In his book, Morimoto says "it is assumed" that Soeharto attended the third company commanders' course, in September 1944. The assumption is incorrect. Indonesian colleagues insist he was a member of the second intake.

³⁴⁹ The Peta flag was designed on the basis that it should not resemble the Indonesian flag, should look similar to the Japanese military flag, and should incorporate the Islamic crescent and star. Tsuchiya Kiso, personal communication. Benda has suggested that the aim was to express "the desired identification of Japan's war with a Holy War for the defense of Indonesian Islam against the Christian, imperialist West." See Harry Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation 1942–1945*, p. 141.

field of white, hangs at the front of the hall. As Soeharto and his fellow company commanders were sworn in, each was presented with a Japanese-style ceremonial sword. "It was not a genuine Japanese sword, and the length was less than [that of] the swords worn by Japanese officers," an Indonesian historian was to remark dryly. "Yet it was received with a certain measure of pride."³⁵⁰

By the time he left Bogor for the second time, Soeharto had spent a total of thirty-one months in military service: twenty-one of them with the Dutch, ten with the Japanese. Remarkably, he had spent twenty-two (and, by one count, almost twenty-four) of those thirty-one months in training centers, receiving instruction from experienced Dutch and Japanese army instructors, to say nothing of his three-month police training course.³⁵¹ This training, when combined with his determination, his initiative, his natural aptitude, his capacity to organize, and his willingness to take charge, was to give him a distinct advantage, not only during the Japanese occupation, when he was to be singled out for preferment and given at least two important and sensitive assignments, but during the post-war struggle against the returning Dutch. In 1945, when the revolutionary struggle began, Soeharto had more than five times as much military training as the average *shodancho* or *chudancho*, and eleven times as much as those officers who had attended only the first Japanese-run platoon commanders' course or who had been on the parallel company commanders' course. This was a striking difference.³⁵² He had between ten and fourteen times as much formal military training as the battalion commanders, including Sudirman, whose subsequent importance to the independence movement stemmed not from his professional military qualifications, which were slight, but from his spiritual qualities, which led him to be seen as the almost mystical embodiment of revolutionary struggle. As well as all that training, Soeharto had gained practical experience during his attachment to a KNIL infantry battalion. If he lagged a long way behind most Peta officers when it came to secondary education and social position, he was streets ahead of all but a handful of them when it came to professional military training.

There were limits, of course, to what Soeharto and the other Peta officers were taught. As we have seen, the Japanese gave the cadets a brief but excellent introduction to small-unit tactics, especially at the platoon and company level. This was to prove invaluable during the 1945–49 struggle for independence against the Dutch, which was all that mattered in the short run. But it meant that the officers who were to form the backbone of the TNI for the best part of three decades had, for the time being, at least, no higher military education and were capable of mounting nothing more than battalion-size operations, if that. That limitation was to play into the hands of officers such as A. H. Nasution, T. B. Simatupang, Alex Kawilarang, Hidajat Martaatmadja, and Didi Kartasasmita, who had attended either the pre-war Royal Military Academy

³⁵⁰ Nugroho, "The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation," p. 134.

³⁵¹ He had spent seventeen of his twenty-one months in the KNIL in training establishments and only four months on attachment to a battalion. He had spent five of his ten months in the Peta in training establishments.

³⁵² The disparities were somewhat less, of course, in the case of those platoon commanders who, like Soeharto, had also been selected for a company commanders' course, and in the case of those men who had begun their military training in 1944, when the courses were longer. But even here, Soeharto was a long way ahead; he still had more than four times as much training as the platoon or company commanders who had attended either a longer course or two separate courses.

in Breda in the Netherlands or the substitute academy established in Bandung after the German invasion of Holland in 1940.³⁵³ Not surprisingly, these officers were considered more suitable for senior staff and command positions in the early years of the TNI.

Concessions from the Japanese

In July 1944, while Soeharto was on the *chudancho* course, the Americans captured Saipan, an island in the Marianas only 1,200 miles from Tokyo. In September, US forces seized Morotai, an island in the Moluccas, which General MacArthur saw as a jumping-off point for the Philippines, three hundred miles to the north. Observing this remorseless American advance, Sixteenth Army planning officers concluded, erroneously, that MacArthur would now move on Java from the north, rather than from the south. Increasingly alarmed at the inadequacies of their defenses on Java, the Japanese pushed ahead with yet another expansion of Peta, which, they had decided, needed a further eleven battalions to strengthen defenses on the north coast of Java. The third and final intake of Peta officers was in no way special. Like the Dutch on the eve of the Pacific War, the Japanese were desperate for Indonesian officers and NCOs and could not afford to be too choosy about whom they took. "As this was the third batch of trainees," Yanagawa noted, "the quality was very inferior to the previous ones."³⁵⁴ Moreover, the Japanese had cut their training courses to the bone, just as the Dutch had done. The third Bogor course ran for barely a month; the cadets were rushed through at a pace that left the Japanese training staff "a bit bewildered."³⁵⁵

By late 1944, Peta had sixty-six battalions on Java, with more than 37,000 armed men. This made the Java defenses look a little more respectable, at least on paper, but it also created a new problem. As Colonel Miyamoto Shizuo, soon to become the Sixteenth Army staff officer in charge of strategy, wrote in his memoirs, "This was twice as large as the entire Sixteenth Army, and four times the actual combat strength of the army."³⁵⁶ The Japanese had equipped Peta with 18,700 rifles, nearly 700 heavy machine guns, nearly 200 light machine guns, nearly 100 trench mortars, and 20 artillery pieces. Although Indonesian officers were not aware of the fact, they now had in their control two-fifths of the arms on Java, while the Japanese held three-fifths.³⁵⁷ Beppan, which had set up and trained the Indonesian volunteer force, was still as enthusiastic as ever about Peta. So, too, was the commander-in-chief, General Harada. But Miyamoto, a latecomer to Java, had misgivings. As he wrote many years later,

³⁵³ Lieutenant General Oerip Soemohardjo's military education at Meester Cornelis, now Jatinegara, in Batavia (Jakarta), was less good, but better than that of the Peta officers. Oerip was the first chief of the general staff in the Indonesian Army.

³⁵⁴ Yanagawa "Statement," Part II, p. 6.

³⁵⁵ Morimoto, *Jawa Boie Giyungun-shi*, p. 126. The course began on August 21 and wound up on September 20. Yanagawa suggests it ran for about six weeks. See Yanagawa "Statement," Part II, p. 5.

³⁵⁶ Miyamoto, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 223. Colonel Miyamoto arrived in Java in April 1944 as staff officer in charge of supply, with responsibility for distributing arms and munitions to the Peta battalions. By 1945 he had been promoted to Sakusensanbo, the number-two staff officer, in charge of strategy, under Colonel Obana Yoshimasa. As Obana was often ill, Miyamoto served, in effect, as the key planning officer of the Sixteenth Army. Miyamoto Shizuo, reply given in response to written questions from the author, May 25, 1999.

³⁵⁷ Miyamoto, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 224.

“when I first saw the Peta, I thought I couldn’t place total trust in it ... to me it seemed dangerous to allow Indonesians to carry weapons when more than ten thousand Japanese nationals were living in various parts of the island. I thought the Indonesians in Peta would soon learn of our wartime reverses and that we should be ready to change our policy in regard to the force.”³⁵⁸ Despite these reservations, Miyamoto decided not to push for changes “since no other staff officers seemed to share my concerns.”

With their military fortunes in dramatic decline, the Japanese changed their tune on the question of Indonesian independence. On September 7, 1944, Prime Minister Koiso Kuniaki promised that independence would be granted to the East Indies “in the future” or “someday” (*Indonesia shorai dokuritsu*), which was translated into Indonesian as *di kemudian hari*. The Koiso statement was hedged with caveats. The timing of independence was not to be discussed, nor were there to be any “formal activities” for independence. But Tokyo was now signaling that it was willing to promote political participation in the Indies, that it was prepared to encourage “enthusiasm for independence” and ready to conduct propaganda in favor of independence. It also was willing to allow Indonesians to fly the national flag and to play “Indonesia Raya,” the future national anthem.³⁵⁹ Although stopping well short of Indonesian demands, this statement was seen in Java as further evidence that Indonesia would soon be free. As it happened, the nuances of the Koiso statement were lost on many of the Indonesians being trained at Bogor. “In response to this announcement,” Yanagawa told Allied interrogators, “we began, in training the Giyugun, to inculcate the idea that the Giyugun was the army for Indonesian independence. As a result of these lessons, however, those cadets who were not well-educated misunderstood and supposed that independence had already been granted, which caused us considerable difficulties in the training.”³⁶⁰

In the wake of the Koiso announcement, the Sixteenth Army believed it had “clear authority to make the Giyugun and Heiho the foundation of a future national army of Indonesia.”³⁶¹ As a result, those responsible for Peta were ordered to begin “a gradual conversion of infantry to other arms.”³⁶² According to a document captured at the end of the war, Japanese officers now began to organize Peta MT (motor transport) battalions, Peta “tank battalions,” and Peta engineering battalions.³⁶³ According to a Sixteenth Army study, the Japanese had “a plan under consideration” to organize an “Indonesian National Army” after the granting of independence.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁸ See Miyamoto Shizuo, “Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi,” pp. 195–217.

³⁵⁹ See Nishijima Shigetada, “The Independence Proclamation in Jakarta” [Indonesia Dokuritsu Kakumei], in *The Japanese Experience in Indonesia*, ed. Reid and Akira, pp. 303–04. See also Major General Nishimura, April 10, 1947, reply to questionnaire of Mr. A. P. M. Audretsch, Office of the Attorney General, Netherlands East Indies, NIOD IC No. 006793–006807, p. 9.

³⁶⁰ Yanagawa “Statement,” Part II, p. 6.

³⁶¹ Miyamoto, “Jawa shusen shori-ki,” p. 225.

³⁶² “Supplementary explanation of armed parties in Java under Japanese mil. adm.,” from “Document taken from 16 Army HQ,” p. 4. There is nothing to indicate who wrote this study. However, the sentiments expressed, not least the skepticism about the wisdom of relying on the Peta, suggest that the author could well have been Colonel Miyamoto.

³⁶³ “Document taken from 16 Army HQ,” p. 4.

³⁶⁴ See “Explanations Regarding all Kinds of Armed Bodies,” p. 5.

On the face of it, the Japanese were preparing to make Peta more like a conventional army. But references to new Peta tank and artillery units need to be treated with circumspection. Although the Japanese are said to have eventually turned over 20 armored cars, 20 artillery pieces, and 330 trucks to the Peta, a former head of Beppan has claimed that he never heard the expression "Peta MT."³⁶⁵ Nor is there any reference to such a unit in the detailed and semi-official Japanese history of the Peta. There is certainly no reason to believe that the Japanese gave serious thought to handing over any tanks. Indeed, as Beppan officers saw it, some senior officers at Sixteenth Army headquarters were using the talk of "a gradual conversion of infantry to other arms" as a device to reduce the number of Peta fighting battalions, which they viewed as a potential threat.

As fears of an Allied landing grew, the Japanese set up yet another armed body, one that was to play little or no role in the war, given the lateness of the hour, but which was much better trained than Peta and which was to be a progenitor of the Indonesian post-war intelligence service and, in some ways, the Military Police. In November 1944, Sixteenth Army headquarters ordered Yanagawa to create a Special Guerrilla Force (Yugekitai) to gather intelligence and conduct guerrilla operations behind the lines in the event of an Allied attack.³⁶⁶ Based at a new headquarters in Bandung, Yanagawa established the force using about forty Japanese and about 160 of the best second-intake Indonesian platoon commanders, who, in addition to their four-month *shodancho* training, were given four months' instruction in intelligence-gathering and guerrilla warfare.³⁶⁷ The Indonesians were to be sent back to their home areas in East, West, and Central Java, where each was expected to recruit and train an

³⁶⁵ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002. In a similar vein, Purbo Suwondo said he and his fellow Peta officers in Malang did not hear anything about future motor transport, artillery, or armored units. Written communication, Purbo Suwondo, March 9, 2009.

³⁶⁶ The full name of the organization, which, Yanagawa later said, "doesn't make sense deliberately," was Jawa Boei Giyugun Tokusetsu Yugekitai I Go Kinmutai (Special Guerrilla Force No. I Task Force). Interview, Morimoto Takeshi, February 1, 1999. The Yugekitai had no organic relation to the Peta but was established by and controlled by Beppan officers. Until the Allies landed, it was to concentrate on intelligence work. Personal communication, Purbo Suwondo, March 5, 2009. For further details about the Yugekitai, see "The Organization of the 'I GO' Task Force," Yanagawa "Statement," Part III, pp. 1–4. See also Ruth McVey interview with Hasuda Tatsuo, Tokyo, October 23, 1980.

³⁶⁷ Yanagawa "Statement," Part II, p. 2, and interview, Purbo Suwondo, September 1, 1998. Yugekitai training was totally different from Peta training and in many ways more difficult. Yugeki were given automatic rifles and other arms and were trained especially for night action. They were taught not only how to use but also how to repair all kinds of weapons, and how to live on their own and make decisions individually rather than as a unit. They were trained in *boryaku* (clandestine operations) and in collecting information from *kampung* residents. Members of the force wore dark blue civilian clothing (the clothing was supposed to be black, but there was no black dye) and were allowed to grow their hair long, which helped them blend in with the population. (Yanagawa had a major fight about that with more senior officers before he got permission, "pointing out that it was unrealistic to require people who were going to melt into the countryside to crop their hair in the Japanese military fashion.") Because it was crucial to keep the Yugekitai a secret so that the Allies would not roll it up right away, its existence was not known to other units. See Ruth McVey interviews with Tsuchiya Kiso and Yoshitake Chikao, Osaka, October 1980, and Yanagawa Motoshige, Jakarta, November 13, 1980. See also Yanagawa "Statement," Part III, p. 3. Yanagawa, who took the most talented Peta officers he had trained in Tangerang and Bogor to act as instructors, ranked the Yugekitai as the best of the Japanese-trained Indonesian units. The West Java headquarters was in Lembang. The headquarters for Central Java was in Salatiga and the one for East Java in Malang. Some graduates of the third *shodancho* course were also recruited into the Yugekitai. According to Yanagawa, the Yugeki officers "were generally people of the education and status of schoolteachers."

additional five guerrilla fighters.³⁶⁸ “Our plan,” Tsuchiya said, “was to hold out as long as possible, fighting a guerrilla war together with the Nihongun [Japanese military] once it moved back into the mountains.”³⁶⁹ Those plans came to naught. The first course finished in July 1945, only weeks before the Japanese surrender.

Former Yugeki officers went on to hold some of the most senior positions in the Indonesian army and state intelligence services. When Zulkifli Lubis was running the Special Military Investigator (Penyelidik Militer Khusus, PMC), an early post-independence intelligence body in Yogyakarta, he put trusted ex-Yugeki officers in the most sensitive positions; as a determining factor in the selection process, his trust in a man trumped any expertise that officer may or may not have had in intelligence matters.³⁷⁰ Among the appointees were R. M. Subroto Kuswardjo and Kusnowibowo.³⁷¹ Other former Yugeki officers who went on to play prominent roles in intelligence were Lieutenant General Tjokropranolo (chief of Hankam Intelligence), Major General Nicklany Soedardjo (Bakin), Major General R. M. Yonohatmodjo (Bakin), Brigadier General Sugeng Djarot (Bakin), Major General Mansjoer, Brigadier General Agus Pramono, and Major Rusman. Some of the officers who rose to prominence in the intelligence service, it is true, had no connection with the Yugekitai. They include Lieutenant General Sutopo Juwono, a former student; General Yoga Sugama, a wartime graduate of the Imperial Military Academy (Rikugun Shikan Gakko), in Japan; Lieutenant General Charis Suhud, a former *korektor* (proofreader) on *Asia Raya*; and Major General Parman, a former Kenpeiho.

The Military Police Corps, known initially as the Polisi Tentara (PT), was another institution with strong Yugekitai connections. After the proclamation of independence, almost all of the former Yugeki officers in East Java, together with most of their men, joined the Polisi Tentara RI, Resimen III, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bambang Supeno. This became the core of the Polisi Tentara in East Java. The one notable exception was Major Sobirin Mochtar, who formed an infantry battalion with Yugeki company commanders and noncommissioned officers. This unit, known as Battalion 507 (“Sikatan”), was one of the best fighting battalions in the Brawijaya Division. In Central Java, the PT/CPM was led by men from several distinct streams: former Yugekitai officers; a small but relatively well-educated group of former Kenpeiho; and former students. Among the Yugeki officers who joined the Military Police were Major General Sudirgo, who had helped develop his intelligence skills

³⁶⁸ There were 49 *shodanchos* from West Java, and they later recruited about 200 other young men from their home region. The figures for Central Java were about 52 and 180 and for East Java about 57 and 200. Yanagawa “Statement,” Part III, pp. 1–2. The Yugekitai officers were graduates of the Tangerang *asrama* or the Peta training courses in Bogor. Those who were not did not become more than NCO’s. Ruth McVey interview with Tsuchiya Kiso, Osaka, October 1980.

³⁶⁹ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, June 19, 1999.

³⁷⁰ While not himself a Yugeki officer, Lubis had been close to Yanagawa, the commanding officer of the Yugekitai, since the days of the Tangerang training camp. Lubis had spent the latter part of the war working with Japanese intelligence in Singapore and Malaya.

³⁷¹ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, Jakarta, March 5, 2009. In late 1945, many former Yugeki officers in Salatiga drifted down to Yogya and joined Lubis. For further details, see Ruth McVey interview with Kusnowibowo, November 20, 1980; and Ruth McVey interview with Zulkifli Lubis, November 11, 1980. See also Muchsin Lubis, “Zulkifli Lubis, Komandan Intelijen Pertama di Indonesia,” *Tempo*, July 29, 1989, reproduced in *M.E.M.O.A.R: senarai kiprah sejarah, Diangkat dari Majalah TEMPO* (Jakarta: Grafiti, 1993), p. 53.

while serving in the PMC in Yogyakarta in late 1945, Major General Soenarso, and Lieutenant General Tjokropranolo. If most former Yugeki officers in East Java and some in Central Java were drawn towards the Military Police, in West Java former Yugeki were more inclined to join infantry battalions. However, the first *pribumi* commander of the Para-Commando Regiment, Major R. E. Djaelani, was a former Yugeki.³⁷² Personal relations were usually good between Military Police and intelligence officers who had served together in the Yugekitai. Several senior CPM officers, including Sudirgo and Soenarso, moved across to Bakin, the ostensibly civilian State Intelligence Coordinating Board, during the New Order.

Although many senior officers of the Military Police Corps came from a Yugekitai background and were to have an important impact on that body, the CPM was also influenced in significant ways by the practices and procedures of the Kenpeitai, at least insofar as its police—as distinct from its combat—responsibilities were concerned. For example, until 1958, a CPM officer was legally entitled to arrest any army officer up to two ranks his senior. This rule was taken directly from the Kenpeitai; Kenpei officers could arrest army officers up to three ranks their senior. It has been observed that the CPM was regarded in the 1960s as an elite force, with its officers better educated than most military men, and seen as more honest and serious than those in other specialized units of the Indonesian National Army.³⁷³ While that is true, this “arrest” provision had made the CPM unpopular in some military circles, especially during the Revolution.³⁷⁴ In the period after independence, CPM criminal investigation work, that is the investigation of crimes committed by army men, was a speciality of former Kenpeiho. Some men who had served in the Kenpeitai were also involved in the Military Police’s political investigation work.³⁷⁵ However, the military judicial system, retired military police officers say, was based on the Dutch, not the Japanese, system. Former civilian police officers also played a role in shaping PT/CPM procedures.

Restructuring the Volunteer Army

As Japan’s fortunes fell, those of Soeharto rose. For the second time in three years, he was reaping the benefits that came from joining the armed forces of an alien monarch in the northern hemisphere. What is more, important new appointments were about to come his way, giving him some early experience as a staff officer. In late 1944, Peta was still seen by the Japanese as a potentially valuable reserve force, but it was an administrative burden for the Sixteenth Army, which was preoccupied with its efforts to meet an expected Allied invasion. The Japanese had their Planning

³⁷² The RPKAD, set up under a different name in 1952 by the West Java commander, Colonel Alex Kawilarang, was trained and led initially by a former Dutch commando named Rokus Bernardus Visser; he had taken out Indonesian citizenship, converted to Islam, and changed his name to Muhammad Idjon Djambi.

³⁷³ Ben Anderson, personal communication, February 26, 2009.

³⁷⁴ Major General Sukotjo Tjokroatmodjo, personal communication, February 5, 2001.

³⁷⁵ Purbo Suwondo, interview, Jakarta, March 5, 2009, and Sukotjo Tjokroatmodjo interview, August 18, 2009. See also Corps Polisi Militer, *50 Tahun Corps Polisi Militer: 22 Juni 1946 s/d 22 Juni 1996* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1996), p. 283. In the early stages of the revolution, “political investigation” work could mean almost anything a local commander decided it meant; there were no rules. Purbo, the Regiment III staff officer responsible for training and education, was frequently with Bambang Supeno when the latter was in command of troops on the Sidoarjo front.

Department for the Guidance of the Java Volunteer Defense Force (Giyugun Shidobu) in Jakarta. They also had two regional offices (Giyugun Shitsu) to take care of matters concerning the volunteer army, one attached to the Japanese forces in the eastern half of Java (Tobu boeitai), the other attached to the forces in the western part of the island (Seibu boeitai). But the growing size of the Peta was creating difficulties for the staff at the regional offices. It was also creating difficulties for the sections (Giyugun Gakari) in charge of the Peta in each of the various Japanese battalions.³⁷⁶

In an attempt to address this problem, the Sixteenth Army decided to overhaul the organization of the volunteer army. On December 20, 1944, it set up three separate "regional headquarters" (Chikutai Shireibu) for the Peta, in East, Central, and West Java.³⁷⁷ These offices, which were to receive their orders from the Planning Department or directly from Sixteenth Army Headquarters, were not really headquarters (*shireibu*) in the accepted sense of the term. They were to have no command responsibility. Rather, they would take care of the administrative, logistical, training, financial, and medical needs of the Peta battalions.³⁷⁸ Nevertheless, they were important. Each would be headed by a Japanese colonel or lieutenant colonel, and each would have a staff of about fifty officers and men, about forty of them Japanese who had worked either in the Peta regional offices or in the Peta sections of the various Japanese battalions; the rest were trusted Indonesian "apprentices" from the Peta.³⁷⁹ Each "headquarters" would take care of the eighteen to twenty-five Peta battalions stationed in its region.³⁸⁰

The Japanese saw this as another step towards the creation of a more independent Indonesian defense force. In the words of Miyamoto, the intention was that the Indonesians "would soon run all three Chikutai Shireibu by themselves."³⁸¹ Nor was that all. Despite his misgivings about the volunteer army, Miyamoto planned to bring Peta battalions together in regiments and brigades, so that the Indonesian force "would be able to grow to be their national military," which meant, presumably, that Indonesian officers were to be trained for higher staff and command positions.³⁸²

For the Japanese, there were two things to be said for the new regional headquarters. First, they could be presented to the Indonesians as evidence that Japan envisaged that a separate Peta Headquarters (Giyugun Shireibu) would be set up at some stage, taking Indonesia another step closer to an independent defense force. Second, these regional headquarters would allow the Sixteenth Army to "slim down"

³⁷⁶ The fact that there were sixty-six Peta battalions and only eight Japanese ones suggests that a typical Japanese battalion may have been responsible for about eight Peta battalions.

³⁷⁷ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 232. Duties that had been covered by the Giyugun Shitsu and by the battalions' Giyugun Gakari were expanded, solidified, and transferred to the Chikutai Shireibu.

³⁷⁸ Each Chikutai Shireibu consisted of six departments—general affairs, education, intelligence, weapons, finance, and medical. *Ibid.*, p. 231. As such, they were responsible for the bookkeeping, distribution of food and weapons, training program, and relationship between the Japanese instructors attached to each battalion and the senior Indonesian officers in those battalions. Interview, Morimoto Takeshi, February 1, 1999.

³⁷⁹ Interview, Miyamoto Shizuo, Tokyo, February 20, 1999. For further details, see "Document taken from 16 Army HQ," p. 3.

³⁸⁰ On May 17, 1945, a fourth Chikutai Shireibu was created. With this, the number of Daidan each Shireibu was responsible for was reduced to between eleven and twenty-two.

³⁸¹ Miyamoto interview, February 20, 1999.

³⁸² Miyamoto, "Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi," p. 206.

to fighting strength ahead of what was expected to be a climactic battle for Java, leaving the Peta free to proceed in its own way.³⁸³ That strategy, which may seem remarkable in view of all the expectations invested in Peta, reflected the thinking of Miyamoto. A China veteran who had arrived in Java in April 1944, more than two years after the key Beppan officers, Miyamoto had no familiarity with the Peta and no sympathy with the Indonesian youth movement. On the contrary, he distrusted the armed Indonesian units that the Japanese had created and was ill-at-ease with the rising anti-Japanese sentiment on Java. In the words of Tsuchiya, who had done so much to build the Peta, both on Java and Bali, "He believed that Indonesians had no war potential ... He always tried to make a strategy using mainly the Japanese army and excluding the Peta. He was an executive [*kanbu*] who was anti-Peta."³⁸⁴ Miyamoto, according to Tsuchiya, did not trust Peta and wanted it to fight separately. As we shall see, Miyamoto did not take issue with that assessment. He came to believe, he said, that Peta members "should choose their own way [*jibun no michi*]" when the war went into a decisive phase.

With much riding on this new administrative structure, the Japanese went to some lengths to select capable Indonesian staff officers, calling on some of Peta's best battalion and company commanders. One of those officers was Soeharto, who had continued to make a positive impression on his Japanese superiors. After completing the company commanders' course at Bogor, which gave him a rank equivalent to captain, Soeharto was sent to the office of the Central Java Chikutai Shireibu, in Solo, where he was placed in charge of training.³⁸⁵ There were, of course, Japanese officers above Soeharto in the Solo office. But the appointment was a clear sign of the regard in which he was held by his Sixteenth Army superiors. "Looking at this," said the author of the definitive Japanese history of the Peta, "you can be sure Soeharto was trusted by the Japanese."³⁸⁶ Tsuchiya, who had recruited and trained Soeharto, but who had lost track of him after that, felt the same way. "The Chikutai Shireibu was an organization that oversaw all the battalions in that region," he noted. "So if Soeharto was assigned to the Chikutai Shireibu, it must have been a really important position."³⁸⁷ According to Colonel Soepardio, a former Peta *shodancho* and former deputy head of the Indonesian Armed Forces' Military History Division, "the most important Indonesian Peta officer was Soeharto."³⁸⁸ Soeharto, he claimed, "was supposed [in time] to be the regional commander for Central Java."

As the senior Javanese training officer at regional headquarters in Solo, Soeharto would, in theory, have been in regular communication with about twenty Peta battalions. He would have had contact with a wide range of Peta officers and had a good sense of conditions in Java at a time of mounting hardship and privation, when most Peta officers were confined to their own districts, with little or no opportunity for travel and little or no contact with other Peta battalions. Soeharto, however, seems to

³⁸³ Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 231.

³⁸⁴ Written communication, Tsuchiya Kiso, May 29, 2002.

³⁸⁵ Interview, Morimoto Takeshi, February 1, 1999. See also Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 20.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, Mishima, February 2, 1999.

³⁸⁸ Interview, Colonel Soepardio, Jakarta, September 10, 1998.

have held this position for no more than seven or eight weeks, hardly enough time for him to have made many new contacts with Peta battalions.

For the most part, Japanese officers and NCOs formed a favorable impression of Soeharto, but this was not always the case. Some were skeptical. One such man was Sergeant Teramoto Masashi, who was attached to the Kenpeitai office in Solo, where it was his job was to keep a close eye both on Peta units and on Mangkunegoro VIII and other members of the minor court in that city. As he recalled:

I saw *Shodancho* Soeharto a few times when he was in the Chikutai Shireibu office in Solo when I visited a Peta unit where my old friend Sergeant Goto Tetsuo was an instructor. I wasn't particularly impressed with him. He was rather inconspicuous. He seemed restless and inconsequential and didn't look brilliant. That is why I was astounded in later years to learn that he became president.³⁸⁹

At the same time, Teramoto acknowledged that his colleagues had found something to admire in Soeharto. Asked if he thought the Kenpeitai had "cleared" Soeharto before his admission to the Peta, he replied, "I don't think so. Few of us paid particular attention to him; he seemed reliable."

After a short stay in Solo, Soeharto was transferred to the Jaga Monyet camp in Jakarta to train students from technical schools "for the Engineering Corps." It was the first time he lived in the future capital. One of those he trained was platoon commander Singgih, whom he had earlier encountered at Bogor and who, in August 1945, was one of the young men who were to kidnap Sukarno and Hatta in an attempt to force the pace of the proclamation of independence. When the Jakarta assignment was over, Soeharto returned to the Chikutai Shireibu, which had in the meantime moved from Solo to Madiun. Here, for the first time in his military career, he lived not in the barracks but in a house provided by the Japanese, another sign of the growing regard in which he was held by them.

Throughout this time, the Japanese continued to beat the propaganda drum, with strident denunciations of the emperor's enemies. Late in 1944, the army commander had issued instructions concerning the ideals of the volunteer forces. The Peta, he said, should "aim at the independence and preservation of the people and religion" and "march forward toward the annihilation of the enemies, Americans, British, and Dutch."³⁹⁰ Increasingly, however, statements of that kind fell on deaf ears. By now, many Peta officers combined a deepening hostility towards the Japanese with an increasingly virulent nationalism. At one level, there was resentment over small personal humiliations. Peta officers had been led to believe that they were members of an elite corps that would play a vital role in the achievement of Indonesian independence, but they found themselves treated in many cases like second-class citizens, obliged to salute Japanese NCOs and to accept without complaint the "arrogant and humiliating" attitude of Japanese NCOs and soldiers.³⁹¹ To make

³⁸⁹ Interview, Teramoto Masashi, Inba-mura, Chiba Prefecture, February 12, 1999. See also Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 234.

³⁹⁰ *Jawa Shimbum*, October 9, 1944, quoted in *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), p. 196.

³⁹¹ Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 148, and Nugroho, "The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation," p. 174. Junior officers were answerable only to their battalion commanders, and

matters worse, the food allowance of the Peta “conspicuously declined” from the middle of 1944, aggravating the dissatisfaction of some Peta members.³⁹²

At a more serious level, Peta officers were embittered over the suffering that had been visited on Java during the Japanese occupation. For the Japanese, Java was a major supply center for the armies in the “Southern areas,” which were now all but cut off from the Japanese home islands as a result of the relentless US Navy submarine campaign. For the Indonesians, Java had become an island of immense hardship. In 1944, the rice crop failed in many parts of Java, and Japanese rice requisitions hit especially hard. On top of that, the economy suffered from huge inflation as the Japanese printed money as fast as they could. As was to happen again in the 1960s, inflation eroded the buying power of official salaries, spawning racketeering and corruption. Java was chronically short of food, medicine, textiles, bicycle tires, and kerosene. In many places, Indonesian families were reduced to one meal a day. As the textile shortages worsened, some people had nothing to wear. In June 1944, according to a Japanese report, the clothing shortage was so acute that children could not go to school, women could not leave their homes, and men could not visit the mosque. In Madura, “government employees were seen working in their offices wearing shorts made of old gunny sacks and nothing else.” Later in the same year, farmers were seen “working stark naked in the fields,”³⁹³ although presumably this was only in the very early morning and at dusk, given that a naked man in the midday sun would quickly succumb to heat stroke. In some places, people went about wearing sarongs made from odiferous rubber sheeting. In Puworejo, they wove a kind of “cloth” from the fibre of the *waru* tree or went about in clothing made from jute bags. One senior official in Yogya had a single shirt and a single pair of trousers, both made from jute sacks. When he sent his houseboy out, he lent him his clothes and stayed inside, naked.

Throughout this time, the Japanese were recruiting more and more *romusha*, topping up their army of civilian slave laborers as men and women succumbed to disease, malnutrition, overwork, and ill-treatment. Many *romusha* continued to toil on defense projects alongside Peta units, their suffering plainly visible. Recalling the hardships of those times, Selo Soemardjan said, “rice was taken away, cattle were taken away, young people were taken away. So the whole economic life was disrupted.”³⁹⁴ Families thought only of survival. “People hated the Japanese,” said Kemal Idris, who had been one of Beppan’s more promising trainees at Tangerang. “They were not the people we thought they were. They were worse than the Dutch. They were very harsh. They took all the food—rice and all these things—for their own purposes.”³⁹⁵ As conditions deteriorated, there was open peasant resistance to Japanese rice levies. The largest rebellion took place in Indramayu, one of the major rice-

those battalion commanders, jealous of their rights and privileges, were sometimes unwilling to take much direction from Japanese liaison officers.

³⁹² Nugroho Notosusanto, *The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia* (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1979), p. 151, cited in Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants*, p. 262. It might be more accurate to say that in many areas the food allowance declined. There seem to have been no food-related problems, for example, for those serving in the Yugekitai in Malang, which was considered a prosperous area.

³⁹³ See Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants*, p. 76.

³⁹⁴ Interview, Selo Soemardjan, Jakarta, September 2, 1997.

³⁹⁵ Interview, Lieutenant General Kemal Idris, Jakarta, September 8, 1997.

producing areas on the north coast of West Java, between April and August 1944. The Japanese dealt harshly with the protests. Hundreds were killed, and many more died of malnutrition.³⁹⁶

If Soeharto is to be believed, he was as much affected by this suffering as anyone else.

My feelings towards the Japanese army were gradually changing. Most of us had welcomed them as our Asian big brothers, who, we thought, would help us attain independence. But we were beginning to find the conduct of many Japanese soldiers unbearable. Food was taken by force from the villagers, and hundreds of thousands of people who were transferred to the battlefields in Burma as *romusha* never returned to their homeland.³⁹⁷

Rebellion in East Java

At Sixteenth Army headquarters, Colonel Miyamoto felt a growing sense of disquiet about the size and firepower of the volunteer army. What would happen, he continued to wonder, if Peta units were to rebel or desert in response to the worsening Japanese military position? Had the Japanese, in seeking to boost their defenses against an external enemy, created a potentially serious internal threat to their position on Java? Could the Indonesians be trusted? Miyamoto, it seems, was not the only officer with such reservations. Summing up his feelings immediately after the war, one Japanese officer wrote, "With regard to their fidelity towards the Japanese army, we could not help entertaining a slight feeling of apprehension arising from our superficial study of them, but we regarded them as a grateful race appreciative of our endeavors to promote their welfare."³⁹⁸

On February 14, 1945, the worst Japanese fears materialized when the Peta battalion in Blitar, a town in the backblocks of East Java, revolted, killing four Japanese and seven ethnic Chinese who were thought to be pro-Japanese.³⁹⁹ The leader of the revolt was a militant twenty-one-year-old platoon commander named Suprijadi. The son of a government official who went on to become a post-war *bupati* (regent) of Blitar, Suprijadi was seen by his friends as a solitary and slightly eccentric young

³⁹⁶ Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants*, pp. 144–48.

³⁹⁷ Soeharto, "Watashi no rirekisho."

³⁹⁸ "Supplementary explanation of armed parties in Java under Japanese mil. adm. (Condensed translation)," from "Document taken from 16 Army HQ," p. 2.

³⁹⁹ For a good account of the revolt and its aftermath, see Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, pp. 147–53. See also Nugroho Notosusanto, *The Revolt Against the Japanese of a Peta Battalion in Blitar*; and Shiraishi Aiko, "The Anti-Japanese Revolt of the Peta Army in Blitar," *Southeast Asian Studies* 13,4 (1976): 535–58.

In the January 6, 1998, installment of "Watashi no rirekisho," in the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, Soeharto said, "In December 1944 the Indonesian commander who led the rebellion against the Japanese army in Blitar was executed." This is an extraordinary observation. The Blitar revolt occurred not in 1944 but in February 1945. The mistake may be due to a failure of memory on Soeharto's part and to the fact that he had more pressing matters on his mind at the time, given that his New Order government was beginning to collapse around him. It is possible, however, that the error, one of many in a thirty-part series, was made by the Japanese journalist who took down the president's story. Nor is it certain that the leader of the revolt was executed, although it is often assumed that he was.

man.⁴⁰⁰ While still a schoolboy, he had made a point of swimming alone in the notoriously dangerous waters of the south coast wearing green swimming trunks, even though legend has it that anyone dressed in green will offend the Goddess of the South Seas and be drowned.⁴⁰¹ After finishing junior high, he attended the Secondary Training College for Native Civil Servants (Middelbare Opleidingschool voor Inlandsche Ambtenaren, MOSVIA) in Magelang.⁴⁰² Although angry with the Japanese for disrupting his career, Suprijadi joined the initial Beppan training course at Tangerang. During that course, his close friend Zulkifli Lubis once remarked, Suprijadi had kept his thoughts to himself. "But by the time we were at Bogor, he often said, 'We can't trust the Japanese!'"⁴⁰³ That distrust had grown deeper over the next two years. By early 1945, it appears, Suprijadi had his heart set on immediate independence, to be achieved by revolution.⁴⁰⁴ In the opinion of a Japanese army investigator, Suprijadi was "a strange person, very suggestible but with strong powers of leadership."⁴⁰⁵ Suprijadi had likened himself to both Prince Diponegoro, the leader of the 1825–30 rebellion against the Dutch, and to a mystic who was Diponegoro's spiritual adviser.

In the early hours of February 14, backed by most of the officers in the battalion, two of them his seniors, Suprijadi led some 360 men out of the barracks in an emotionally charged but ineptly planned rebellion.⁴⁰⁶ The Indonesian troops directed mortar fire on the Sakura Hotel, where Japanese officers were billeted. They followed up with bursts of machine-gun fire aimed at houses occupied by the Japanese "supervising officers" and at the local Kenpeitai headquarters. The attackers then left Blitar, with three columns heading north and one south. Despite months of talk and preparation on the Indonesian side, during which attempts were made to enlist the support of other Peta battalions, the revolt was poorly executed. It was dealt with quickly and effectively by the Japanese, who rushed troops to the area while seeking to

⁴⁰⁰ Interview, Major General Sukotjo Tjokroatmodjo, May 28, 2009. Sukotjo's wife, Sri Kustijah, was a good friend of Suprijadi before the war.

⁴⁰¹ Personal communication, Sri Kustijah, August 18, 2009.

⁴⁰² Interview, Sukotjo Tjokroatmodjo, May 12, 2009. According to another source, Suprijadi attended the MOSVIA in Jakarta. Interview, Colonel Soepardio, Bogor, September 10, 1998. Sukotjo is a more reliable source on this point.

⁴⁰³ See "Zulkifli Lubis, Komandan Intelijen Pertama Indonesia," *Tempo*, July 29, 1989, pp. 54–55.

⁴⁰⁴ Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 150.

⁴⁰⁵ See report by Captain Yamazaki Hajime, quoted in Miyamoto, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 227.

⁴⁰⁶ One of the few officers not to join the revolt was the battalion commander, Surachmad, who had been the *wedana* (district chief) in Blitar under the Dutch. It has been claimed that Surachmad warned the Japanese military *shidokan* (supervising officer) that Suprijadi and his associates were planning to rebel. For details of that allegation, see Soeryana, "Blitar: The Changing of the Guard" in Lucas, ed., *Local Opposition and Underground Resistance*, p. 307, and translator's footnote, p. 320–21. See also Jacques Leclerc, "Afterword: The Masked Hero," in Lucas, ed., *Local Opposition and Underground Resistance*, pp. 328–30. Although Surachmad's battalion revolted, some have alleged that the Japanese took no action against him. According to Soeryana, a man of the left (whose name is sometimes given as "Soerjono"), Surachmad had been a member of the pre-war Dutch political police. Former Peta officers reject the charge that Surachmad betrayed his own men and the claim that he escaped without punishment; they say that he was, in fact, beaten by the Japanese. After the proclamation, Surachmad became a TNI regimental commander in Kediri. It was a company from one of Surachmad's battalions that captured and shot the revolutionary leader Tan Malaka in 1949. For further details about the Blitar affair, see Soedianto Sastroatmodjo and Aboelkabar, *TKR Divisi VII Untung Suropati Malang-Besuki 1945–1948* (Malang: UM Press, 2000), pp. 42–48.

negotiate a settlement with the rebel leaders.⁴⁰⁷ Colonel Miyamoto, who was given the task of clearing up the Blitar incident, sent the head of intelligence, Lieutenant Colonel Masugi, to the town. Masugi was to recommend that the leaders of the revolt be court-martialed.⁴⁰⁸ Captain Yanagawa, who had done so much to establish the Peta and who had recently set up the Special Guerrilla Unit (Yugekitai), was also sent to Blitar. He was joined by a three-man party from the East Java Yugekitai, headed by twenty-year-old Bambang Supeno, a future chief of staff of the Indonesian Army (1952–55) and a future ambassador to Japan.⁴⁰⁹ Unable to locate Suprijadi, who simply vanished but who may, in fact, have been captured and killed by the Japanese, Supeno sought to persuade Muradi, another leader of the revolt, to bring the main body of the battalion back to Blitar. The negotiations remained deadlocked until Colonel Katagiri, the commander of the Japanese regiment in Malang, handed his ceremonial sword to Muradi as an act of good faith pledging that he would honor his commitments, one of which was an assurance that no one would be court-martialed.⁴¹⁰ The units returned to Blitar on February 17.

What caused the revolt? One key factor was resentment at the economic misery that had been visited on the island under the Japanese and the suffering of the civilian population, especially the *romusha*.⁴¹¹ A second had to do with the daily humiliations of military servitude under the Japanese, not least the slappings, which were an affront to Javanese. But there were particular local factors as well. By early 1945, Japanese soldiers in Blitar were widely disliked on account of their arrogance and insensitivity. Discipline was lax, and some Japanese officers seem to have spent much of their time forcing their attentions on local women. The behavior of Japanese civilians seconded to the army was no better. According to Miyamoto, there was resentment in Blitar over “the licentious and luxurious lifestyle of the Japanese,” who were heedless of the hardships of the local people. There was anger, too, over the Japanese attitude towards the issue of independence.⁴¹² “As Blitar is located away from the center,” Captain Yamazaki Hajime, the officer in charge of the supervision of the Peta, noted in a report to headquarters, “there was not adequate supervision of the Giyugun there, and the

⁴⁰⁷ As well as sending a company of Kenpeitai troops to disarm the Indonesian battalion, the Japanese dispatched units from the Katagiri Regiment in Malang and the Harada Regiment in Surabaya. They also involved, in some way, elements from four kinds of Indonesian units: two Peta battalions (one from Kediri and one from Tulungagung), although these, it seems, were not deployed; a Yugekitai “Task Force” from Malang; elements from the police in Kediri; and elements from the Tokubetsu Keisatsutai. At the same time, they sought help from Suprijadi’s spiritual advisor, a certain Kiyai Bendo. Interview, Colonel Soepardio, Jakarta, September 10, 1998; Yanagawa “Statement,” Part III, p. 3; Soedianto et al., *TKR Divisi VII Untung Suropati*, p. 47; M. Oudang, *Perkembangan Kepolisian di Indonesia*, p. 47; and Nugroho, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” pp. 183–84.

⁴⁰⁸ Interview, Colonel Miyamoto, February 4, 1999.

⁴⁰⁹ This was the first and last operating order given to the Yugekitai. According to Yanagawa, the dispatch of the Yugeki task force to deal with the mutiny “caused a rumor among Giyugun [Peta] that ‘I Go’ Task Force [Yugekitai] was a Kenpei in Giyugun.” Nor was this the only problem. The East Java unit of the Yugekitai Task Force was so “influenced by the Blitar riot [*sic*] and we had to give other education to these Giyugun.” See “The Organization of ‘I GO’ Task Force,” Yanagawa “Statement,” Part III, p. 3.

⁴¹⁰ That, at least, is how the Indonesians tell the story. See Nugroho Notosusanto, *The Revolt Against the Japanese of a Peta Battalion in Blitar*, pp. 22–23. Some retired Indonesian officers believe that Katagiri’s men had, by then, already captured and killed Suprijadi.

⁴¹¹ See for example, Nugroho Notosusanto, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” p. 178; and Nugroho, *The Revolt Against the Japanese of a Peta Battalion in Blitar*, p. 13.

⁴¹² Miyamoto, “Jawa shusen shori-ki,” p. 227.

Japanese trainers [as well as] civilians seconded to the military and ordinary civilians had been leading a dissolute life."⁴¹³ Resentment, which had been simmering for months, is said to have come to a head when a wealthy Japanese raped the fiancée of a Peta officer.⁴¹⁴ In an outburst of fury, the (always unidentified) Indonesian officer killed a Japanese instructor and fanned "dissatisfaction among the people over the Japanese attitude towards the independence issue, in order to gain wider support for his actions."⁴¹⁵

At Blitar, an entire Peta battalion had taken part in an armed uprising, the first time an Indonesian unit had turned on its mentors.⁴¹⁶ Alarmed by this development and fearing that the unrest could spread, the Japanese disarmed the battalion and arrested no fewer than fifty-five officers and men, ignoring the promises of clemency that are said to have been given by Katagiri. Among the detainees were two of the four company commanders, eight of the twelve platoon commanders (the number would have been nine had Suprijadi been produced), and thirty-three of the forty-eight *bundanchos* (squad leaders, or NCOs). These men were sent to Jakarta to face a court martial. All were convicted. Six were sentenced to death (and later beheaded on the beach at Ancol, in Jakarta), three to life imprisonment, and the others to various periods of imprisonment. The remaining officers and men of the battalion were taken to Brebeg, a remote village on the lower slopes of Mt. Wilis, a volcano about thirty miles northwest of Blitar, an area known mainly for its pine forests and its poisonous black-widow spiders. According to a Japanese officer who had trained Peta recruits at Bogor, "After the rebellion, the Japanese army removed the battalion from Blitar to somewhere remote so they would not influence others. It was almost like imprisonment! No weapons! As punishment, they took away all the weapons. Instead, they were given wooden guns."⁴¹⁷ After Blitar, the Japanese abandoned any plans they may have had to transform Peta into a national army; there was no more talk about Peta regiments and Peta brigades. They also shelved their plan to put the three Peta regional headquarters entirely in Indonesian hands.⁴¹⁸

In writing about this period, Soeharto is at pains to stress his mounting anti-Japanese feeling. All his experience in the Peta, he said, had convinced him "that in no way could we condone the brutal treatment meted out by some of the Japanese

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ The rape was mentioned by Captain Yanagawa in a 1962 interview with Nugroho Notosusanto. See Nugroho, "The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation," p. 187. Colonel Miyamoto, who sent Yanagawa to Blitar to investigate, notes primly that the Japanese man "robbed a Giyugun officer of his girlfriend." See Miyamoto, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," pp. 227–28.

⁴¹⁵ This account is based on a report made by Captain Yanagawa. See Miyamoto, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," pp. 227–28.

⁴¹⁶ After the Blitar revolt, members of a Peta company guarding a hydroelectric plant at Cileunca, south of Bandung, rebelled against two Japanese instructors attached to the company, killing one of them. The Japanese are said to have beheaded two Peta NCOs and two soldiers who were involved in the affair and tortured others. See "Peristiwa Pemberontakan Peta di Cileunca Pangalengan, Bandung Selatan, Jawa Barat," in *Peta: Tentara Sukarela Pembela Tanah Air Di Jawa dan Sumatera 1942–1945*, ed. Purbo Suwondo (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1996), pp. 175–91. The date in the title is misleading; Peta was only established in 1943. See also *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia* (JPRS), p. 205.

⁴¹⁷ Interview, Morimoto Takeshi, February 1, 1999.

⁴¹⁸ Interview, Colonel Miyamoto, February 20, 1999.

officers. I felt a growing desire to fight back."⁴¹⁹ In the aftermath of the Blitar incident, he goes on, the Japanese decided to purge the Peta officer corps not just in Blitar but in various other places as well. "I had a feeling that I was one of those who would be ousted, but a number of Japanese officers who respected me saved me from expulsion."⁴²⁰ Some years later, Soeharto gave this story a further polish. The Kenpeitai, he said, "began watching me closely because they knew I was beginning to feel critical about them."⁴²¹ Even if these claims are true, it is notable that Kenpeitai "suspicion" is not referred to until 1945.

Soeharto may have felt some concern about his position at that time. But the Japanese confined their wrath to those who had led the Blitar revolt, and it is difficult to avoid the impression that Soeharto is attempting here to embellish his not-altogether-shining nationalist credentials. If he felt a growing desire to fight back, he had an odd way of showing it. Everything suggests that, at this time, he was quite willing to go on ingratiating himself with the Japanese. Nor, it seems, did the Japanese ever entertain any serious doubts about Soeharto's loyalty at the time of the Blitar uprising. On the contrary, he was the one man, out of 250 Peta company commanders on Java, to whom they turned in their hour of need. Immediately after the revolt, Soeharto was sent to Brebeg to train junior Peta members as *bundanchos*, to replace those arrested by the Japanese.⁴²² Given the state of Japanese paranoia about the loyalty of the Peta, there could hardly have been a more sensitive assignment at that time or stronger evidence of the faith that Soeharto's superiors had in him.

Japanese officers who served in Java reject out of hand Soeharto's claim that he fell under suspicion at this time. "In his memoirs, he claimed that he was considered a dangerous person by the Japanese army," said Morimoto Takeshi. "But that was not true ... I think Mr Soeharto concocted a story that the Japanese army didn't like him and considered him a dangerous person. He wanted to give the impression he was a person who always fought against the Japanese."⁴²³ The Japanese, said Morimoto, had never had any reason to doubt Soeharto's loyalty. They would not have sent him to Jakarta in late 1944 to train the students from the technical schools had they not trusted him implicitly. Nor would they have sent him to help retrain the remnants of the Blitar battalion after the February 1945 revolt. "Do you believe that the Japanese army would give responsibility to someone they considered dangerous? The Japanese army selected Soeharto to become the head of this training group for Heiki Bundancho [ordnance squad leaders] [in Jakarta], so we obviously trusted him."⁴²⁴

Morimoto is not much impressed by Soeharto's claim that he was under Kenpeitai surveillance. "Soeharto said he was closely watched by the Kenpei because he was

⁴¹⁹ Soeharto, *My Thoughts*, p. 21.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Soeharto, "Watashi no Rirekisho."

⁴²² According to Morimoto, Soeharto was put in charge of retraining the Second Company of the Blitar battalion. Interview, Morimoto Takeshi, February 1, 1999.

⁴²³ Ibid. During the interview, Morimoto spoke, unbidden, of Soeharto's "forgeries" and "fairytales." A number of other retired Japanese officers expressed doubts about the accounts that Soeharto gave of his experiences during the occupation.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

saying things against the Japanese army. But everyone, including myself, was watched by the Kenpei. So he wasn't the only one."⁴²⁵

Morimoto is not alone in claiming that the Japanese had reason to believe they could rely on Soeharto at this time. According to Tsuchiya, Soeharto had always done everything the Japanese had asked of him and more. Soeharto had been an "outstanding" platoon commander and had been sent back to Bogor to train as a company commander. He had moved up "the elite ladder of the Peta organization" and been chosen to "clear up" the Blitar rebellion. "This shows, I think, that he was trusted by the Japanese military."⁴²⁶ Asked why the Japanese chose Soeharto for such a highly sensitive assignment, Tsuchiya replied, "Since I wasn't closely working with Soeharto at that time, I can only guess it was because he was considered capable by Japanese military officers to do this rather difficult task of grasping the Blitar battalion as a whole and bringing it under control."⁴²⁷

Some Indonesians who served with Soeharto in the Peta believe that he was, indeed, suspected by the Japanese after the Blitar revolt. "Speaking of the suspicious attitudes of the Japanese," said Colonel Soepardio, the Indonesian military historian, "even [prominent future leaders such as] Sudirman and Achmad Yani and Sarwo Edhie were suspected by Japanese intelligence. They were suspected by the Kenpeitai and the higher command. They used all sorts of channels for information."⁴²⁸ But that, said Soepardio, made it even more difficult to understand why Soeharto would have been given such a sensitive assignment. As he put it, "we ... don't understand why! But those were the facts! He was assigned there."⁴²⁹ It may simply have been that Soeharto was the most qualified man for the job. "He had been a sergeant in the KNIL and promoted from *shodancho* to *chudancho*. He may be classified as an outstanding [officer.] Maybe. [But we ask ourselves] 'Why did they choose Soeharto to do that job?'"⁴³⁰ The only conclusion that could be drawn, he felt, was that the Japanese had decided they could trust Soeharto.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Soeharto does not appear to have achieved much at Brebeg, where he evidently stayed for about five months, from March until August 1945.⁴³¹ The atmosphere seems to have been one of distrust and disillusionment, of languor and half-hearted training. "The battalion was under what we call

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Interview, Tsuchiya Kiso, February 2, 1999.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Interview Colonel Soepardio, Jakarta, September 10, 1998.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Soeharto's noncommissioned officer in Brebeg was Imam Munandar, a *shodancho* who had been born in Blitar. See *ibid.* and Bachtiar, *Siapa Dia?*, pp. 214–15. Imam Munandar was to prove a blunt and brutally direct Soeharto subordinate in later years. In 1966, when he was the military district commander in Surabaya, his commanding officer, General Soemitro, observed that it was strange that, while many low-level supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI, Partai Komunis Indonesia) had been killed, many PKI cadres were in jail. Imam Munandar replied, "In that case, let's just release the ones we have in jail and kill them." Ramadhan K. H., *Soemitro: Former Commander of Indonesian Security Apparatus* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1996), p. 113. During the New Order, Imam Munandar rose to major general. He served as governor of Riau between 1980–90.

confinement," said former Staff Sergeant Murakami Kiyota, who was in charge of training noncommissioned officers at Brebeg.

It was the size of four middle-sized companies and had about four hundred men. They were not serious about training any more ... There were a few houses in the area, one of which was used by the instructors and another as a brothel. Several prostitutes lived there. I was wondering if this was the way things should be, but soon enough the war ended. Then the corps was dispersed.⁴³²

On February 5, 1945, while he was preoccupied with his Special Guerrilla Force duties, Yanagawa was ordered to help establish yet another armed body, Hizbullah. In early 1945, twenty Peta *shodanchos* from each of the three provinces of Java, all of them "very enthusiastic" Muslims, were trained at a former camp for Australian POWs in Cibarusa (Bogor) by a twenty-man team of Yugekitai *shodanchos*.⁴³³ The training of those in the Islamic Youth Corps (Kaikyo Seinen Teishintai), or "Islamite Youth Forwarder Unit," as it was rather awkwardly described in a subsequent Allied interrogation report, was conducted by the Department of Religious Affairs of the Military Administration, with help from the Yugekitai. Although five hundred Muslim trainees were eventually given three months' military instruction, Yanagawa, told Allied interrogators that,

owing to the indifference of the Indonesian staff, and the quarrels among the different sects of Islam these works [*sic*] only remained nominal. Afterwards there was trouble between the Preparatory Committee of the Indonesian Independence Movement and staff of the Islamite [*sic*] and the Military Administration lost their [*sic*] enthusiasm. So no good effect came out of this endeavour.⁴³⁴

"We Fight Together and We Die Together"

In late 1944 and early 1945, as Soeharto shuttled between Solo, Jakarta, Madiun, and Brebeg, the Japanese position grew increasingly untenable. By early March 1945, MacArthur's forces had recaptured Manila after heavy fighting. By late March, US Marines had seized Iwo Jima, at the cost of 6,800 American and 21,000 Japanese lives. In April, Australian forces captured Tarakan, the oil port in eastern Kalimantan. The path now lay open to the Japanese home islands. But MacArthur had not finished with Southeast Asia. He planned to have an Allied invasion force storm ashore in Java in June; the American and British chiefs of staff would ultimately overrule this plan.⁴³⁵ As

⁴³² Morimoto, *Jawa boei giyugun-shi*, p. 595.

⁴³³ Yanagawa "Statement," Part III, p. 3.

⁴³⁴ Ibid. Yanagawa never seemed to work up much enthusiasm for Hizbullah. "I was rather busy with my own work in Bandung," he told Allied interrogators, "so I used to go to this training camp every other week." The five hundred Hizbullah trainees, devout Muslims aged between seventeen and twenty, came from residencies across Java.

⁴³⁵ As noted in a British officer's telegram, MacArthur "always maintained it was mistake to change SWPA [Southwest Pacific Area] but fell in with the British [*sic*] views ... His own plan was to land 7th and 9th Australian Divisions last less a Brigade ferried in landing craft and timed to arrive coincidentally with main surrender in TOKYO and thinks he would have met no serious opposition from Australian Government at that time." See cable from Gairdner, British Staff Section Tokyo, to Mountbatten, November 17, 1945, TNA: PRO WO 203/6418. 58696. The SWPA included Australia, the Philippines, the Solomons, New Guinea, the

the Japanese officers of the Sixteenth Army planning staff saw it, there was still some time left in early 1945 for them to develop Java as a supply base. A “decisive war in Java” would only come, they felt, after Singapore, Banjarmasin, and Makassar had fallen to the Allies. But they were well aware that an attack on Java, which they now expected to be launched “from the direction of Sumatra,” would be unstoppable. There would be no hope of holding off an Allied landing with a handful of under-strength Japanese battalions, backed up by untested Peta units scattered along the coast. As Miyamoto wrote after the war, “The enemy was expected to attack Java with at least ten divisions equipped with tanks and other sophisticated weapons and under a complete air cover.”⁴³⁶

Faced with an impossible situation, the Japanese decided they would pull their forces back to the mountains of West Java and fight a last-ditch battle in the region of Bandung, just as the Dutch had attempted to do three years earlier. This time, however, there would be no surrender. The Japanese on Java planned to fight to the death, as had the 21,000 Japanese defenders on Iwo Jima. For the Allies, any landing on the island might well have proved extremely costly, at least in the final phase. Even at this stage, the Japanese could field a mixed-bag force of 80,000 men—15,000 soldiers of the Sixteenth Army, 15,000 Japanese civilians attached to the army, 20,000 men of the Forty-Eighth Division (which had been brought in from Timor), 10,000 men from the Air Force, and 20,000 from the Navy.⁴³⁷ They also had 40,000 small arms and a factory that could produce 175 tons of gunpowder a month and 50,000 hand grenades.⁴³⁸

As the staff officer in charge of strategy, Colonel Miyamoto had to make a decision about the future role of Peta. Aware that he had 80,000 Japanese available and even more doubtful about Peta following the Blitar revolt, he concluded that there would be “no need at all to rely on the Giyugun as a military force.”⁴³⁹ Peta battalions would not be involved in the final stand in West Java, but would be left to follow their own inclinations. “I’m sure [Japanese officers] intended to make the Giyugun [Peta] a key adjunct to the Sixteenth Army when they created it in 1943,” Miyamoto said many years later. “However, as the war situation became worse and worse, and we were beginning to foresee the possibility of Java turning out to be the last battlefield for the Southern Army (Nanpogun), we didn’t want the Indonesians to share our fate, as fellow travelers in one and the same boat.”⁴⁴⁰

Bismark Archipelago, the British North Borneo territories, and all of the Netherlands Indies except Sumatra.

⁴³⁶ Miyamoto, “Jawa shusen shori-ki,” p. 230.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231. Friend says the Japanese drew up their plans for the final battle in April 1945. Friend, *The Blue-Eyed Enemy*, p. 203.

⁴³⁸ Miyamoto, “Jawa shusen shori-ki,” pp. 231–32.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 229, 231, and 233.

⁴⁴⁰ Miyamoto Shizuo, reply given in response to written questions from the author, May 25, 1999. Some confusion has arisen over Japanese thinking about the role Peta was expected to play in the event of an Allied landing on Java. This is partly because there were serious differences of opinion between Miyamoto, on the one hand, and Beppan officers such as Yanagawa and Tsuchiya, on the other. Miyamoto expected the Allies to land in Java in overwhelming force once they had “annihilated” Japanese forces on Singapore. The Japanese were in a hopeless position, he knew, but the intention was to fight to the death in West Java. The Indonesians had been indoctrinated with the slogan “fight together, die together,” referring to their partnership with the Japanese. But it was unlikely, Miyamoto argued in a post-war memoir, that the Indonesians would continue to share “a firm comradesly sentiment” with the Japanese in

This is disingenuous. Miyamoto's decision that the Peta would not play an important role in the defense of Java did not stem from a Japanese desire to save the Indonesian force from the ravages of combat, perhaps even annihilation. Peta, after all, had been created to defend Java. Rather, it stemmed from his belief that when the chips were down, the Japanese would not be able to rely on Peta standing firm. Owing perhaps to the extreme sensitivity of the situation, staff officers of the Sixteenth Army did not communicate any of this to Indonesian political leaders. On the contrary, they managed to convey the impression that the Indonesians were to be left to man the beach defenses alone, puny and underequipped, in the face of an overwhelming Allied assault, cannon fodder for the now absent Japanese. As Miyamoto noted, "In order ... to keep the Japanese frontline troops well disposed towards the Giyugun and the Heiho, I ordered the Japanese instructors to train the Indonesians diligently and to stress the slogan 'We fight together and we die together.'"⁴⁴¹ This led, not unnaturally, to misunderstanding and resentment. As noted earlier, Sukarno was deeply troubled

the face of overwhelming Allied firepower. For that reason, he decided he could not take Peta into consideration when preparing his strategic plans. It would be better, he argued, for Peta troops to be moved to East Java so they would not be drawn into the climactic battle on Java. See Miyamoto, "Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi," pp. 195–217. Miyamoto claims to have been concerned, too, that the Japanese had insufficient small arms. He could cobble together a Japanese force of sixty thousand men for the army's last stand, excluding those units that were being brought in from Timor. There were 60,000 small arms on Java, but only 34,000 of them were in Japanese hands, 19,000 having been turned over to Peta and 7,000 to the Indonesian police. Miyamoto said he would have liked to claw back all 26,000 weapons in Indonesian hands, but settled instead for 6,000. His reasoning was that these weapons were desperately needed by the Japanese. But he did not make any secret of his concern that the Indonesians had so many weapons at their disposal.

Beppan officers such as Yanagawa and Tsuchiya, who had done so much to create and nurture the Indonesian self-defense force, wanted it to play an important role in the defense of Java, if only as a guerrilla force. Tsuchiya believes that Miyamoto was motivated more by an unjustifiable fear of Peta than by a desire to arm additional Japanese units. As he explained it:

After the Blitar revolt, Miyamoto drew up a plan under which the Japanese would fight against the Allied forces on their own while giving Peta tougher training so that its members would gain pride in themselves as an Indonesian military force and fight separately from the Japanese. His idea was to prevent the Peta, at the very least, from interfering with Japanese operations. In order to weaken Peta's combat ability, he made them give back 6,000 rifles. His idea was to have Peta reorganized into units that did not need rifles, such as artillery, engineering, transport, and supply, to be commanded by those Peta leaders specially retrained by the Japanese Army. He thought that, by doing so, he could reduce the number of fighting battalions without hurting their honor and pride. (Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 29, 2002.)

Misunderstandings about the Japanese Army's plans for Peta have been compounded by a small, but significant, error that occurred when Miyamoto's memoirs were translated into English for a book that appeared in 1986. In the book, the translator or editors inserted, in square brackets, a reference to "the secret official attitude" that Peta units "would not be militarily reliable." See Miyamoto, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 233. That, however, is not what Miyamoto wrote in "Jawa shusen shori-ki":

I never said "The Giyugun would not be reliable." I just decided we would not rely on the Giyugun at a time of decisive action. They may be militarily reliable [*ateni naru*], but we would not rely on them [*ateni shinai*]. That was our attitude—a common understanding shared by higher officers of the Sixteenth Army. We thought ownership of the Giyugun should be in Indonesian hands—not in the hands of the Japanese military. They should choose their own way [*jibun no michi*] when the war goes into a decisive phase. We couldn't tell whether they would be anti-Japan or pro-Japan when that time came. (Miyamoto Shizuo, responses to written questions, May 25, 1999.)

Whatever the shortcomings in the translation of the original passage, this argument is unpersuasive. Both here and in his memoir, "Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi," Miyamoto comes very close to questioning Peta's reliability. See Miyamoto, "Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi," pp. 195–217. What is more, Tsuchiya says that is exactly what he did.

⁴⁴¹ Miyamoto, "Jawa shusen shori-ki," p. 233.

by the thought that Indonesians might be used as a shield for the Japanese. His concerns were only laid to rest when the Japanese arranged for him to meet Captain Yanagawa. During the meeting, Yanagawa made it clear that that was not the case.⁴⁴²

As the Sixteenth Army was preparing to make a final stand in West Java, US Army Air Force B-29 bombers were taking the war to the Japanese home islands, with devastating consequences. On a single night in early March, a force of 334 aircraft mounted a low-altitude incendiary attack on Tokyo, targeting the vulnerable wood and paper Japanese houses. Almost sixteen square miles of the city were burnt out and 267,000 buildings destroyed. More than 83,000 people died. In the months ahead, the B-29s were to return night after night, triggering firestorms in as many as fifty cities.⁴⁴³ In Southeast Asia, Japanese positions were under relentless Allied attack. By June, MacArthur was firmly in control of the Philippines. On July 1, he sent Australian troops ashore at Balikpapan, the port and oil-processing center in eastern Kalimantan.

The hopelessness of the Japanese position was well known in Indonesia, and as the months passed, the calls for independence grew increasingly strident. For young Indonesians, the mood was electric, the atmosphere charged with possibilities. As Benedict Anderson has observed, "The sense of waiting and preparation spread slowly but inexorably. By the end of the occupation, it was as if a gigantic engine was being

⁴⁴² Interview, Morimoto Takeshi, February 1, 1999. As concern mounted in Indonesian circles, Kaneko Tomokazu, a civilian employed in the Sixteenth Army's propaganda department, arranged a secret meeting between Yanagawa and Sukarno. Recalling those events, Kaneko said:

I arranged that meeting because I had heard that Sukarno and other Indonesians were a bit unhappy about the Peta deployment. It looked like the Japanese were planning to use Peta as a shield at the front line instead of having Japanese dying. I heard this and thought it was a terrible misunderstanding. That is the reason I arranged this secret meeting between Yanagawa and Sukarno. Through this dialogue, Sukarno came to realize that wasn't the purpose of the Peta deployment ... I remember Sukarno left the meeting greatly relieved, and it showed in his expression. Sukarno and I left in the same car. I remember Sukarno being very excited. (Interview, Kaneko Tomokazu, Tokyo, February 3, 1999.)

Kaneko, who went on to become vice president of the "Japan-Indonesia Association, Inc.," believes this was "one of the most historic meetings in Japan-Indonesia relations."

The change in Japanese policy was communicated immediately to the Beppan officers and came as no surprise to them. As Tsuchiya said:

Unlike people like Yanagawa and me, who arrived in Java at the time of the landing operations and worked together to start up the Giyugun, Mr. Miyamoto came to the island much later, when the prospect of Japan winning the war was negligible. Besides, he had little knowledge of Indonesia or the feelings of its people. He said from the time of his arrival in Java that such a thing as the Giyugun couldn't be relied upon. It was only after the war, when he was back in Japan, that Mr. Miyamoto came to understand how the Indonesians felt and became a sympathizer of the Peta. After Japan lost in Burma, Guadalcanal, and Saipan, we were aware that the Japanese military itself was no match for the Allies. How could the Japanese military [Nihongun] count on the Giyugun when we had lost confidence in ourselves as a military force? (Tsuchiya Kiso, response to written questions, June 19, 1999.)

According to Tsuchiya, the Beppan officers did not hold it against Miyamoto when they saw several years' work apparently going to waste. "The fact that Mr. Miyamoto said he didn't rely on Peta didn't make us hostile to him," he said. "We [at Beppan] weren't on bad terms with him." After the war, Tsuchiya said on another occasion, Miyamoto became "deeply pro-Indonesian and pro-Peta." He came to be impressed by the nationalist feelings and pro-Japanese sentiment of young Indonesians. He fell in love with Indonesia and took care of many Indonesians who went to Japan to study. (Tsuchiya Kiso, written communication, May 29, 2002.)

⁴⁴³ Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, pp. 504–05.

accelerated ever more furiously, but not yet put into gear."⁴⁴⁴ By mid-June 1945, Tokyo had decided that it had no option but to bow to the inevitable. It ordered that "all possible speed should be made towards the granting of Indonesian independence."⁴⁴⁵ As the Japanese saw it, Java was "politically more advanced and should be given independence earlier than the other territories concerned," preferably by early September 1945.⁴⁴⁶

On August 7, the day after the United States dropped a single atomic bomb on Hiroshima, killing eighty thousand people, Japan's Southern Army announced that the proclamation of independence would be approved as soon as a preparatory committee had made the necessary arrangements. Four days later, at a meeting with Sukarno and Hatta in the hill station of Dalat in southern Vietnam, Field Marshal Terauchi confirmed that independence would soon be granted, albeit under Japanese guidance.⁴⁴⁷ The Japanese, he said, would support independence for the whole of the former Netherlands East Indies, pointedly excluding Malaya and the British territories in North Borneo, which the Indonesians were claiming. Indonesia now looked set to be granted independence under Japanese auspices. Events, however, were running out of control.

At midday on August 15, 1945, while Soeharto was retraining the disarmed and dispirited soldiers from the Peta battalion in Blitar, Emperor Hirohito announced in a radio broadcast that Japan had surrendered unconditionally. There had been rumors for more than ten days that Japan might surrender, but they had always been denied. Now, at his headquarters in Jakarta, Lieutenant General Nagano Yuichiro, the commander of the Sixteenth Army, and his senior officers listened to the broadcast in disbelief. "All of us," one officer remembered, "stood upright solemnly unable to utter a single word ... Commander Nagano left the room tottering with a grave and sorrowful look."⁴⁴⁸ Captain Tsuchiya was one of the officers at army headquarters. At first, he said, "we could not believe it. And I went back to my office but I was so troubled that I did not know what to do that day ... I thought that broadcast was not true and that it was a false broadcast from the Allies."⁴⁴⁹ Captain Yanagawa, who, like Tsuchiya, had been in Java since the Japanese landings, was equally disconcerted. "I felt," he said, "such a big shock that it was like a rushing train in full speed stopping

⁴⁴⁴ Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, p. 31.

⁴⁴⁵ "Interrogation of Maj. Gen. Nishimura Otoshi on the Indonesian Independence Movement," Singapore, January 16, 1947, NIOD IC No. 059330 (10 pp.) According to Miyamoto, who worked closely with him, Nishimura's given name was Otsugu, not Otoshi. This may not be right. The name is rare, and the Chinese characters can be read in four or five different ways. The Allied interrogators may have heard Nishimura pronounce his own name and written it down as given.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ J. D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1973), p. 193. In the Japanese version of events, Sukarno and Hatta went to Saigon "to express their gratitude" to Field Marshal Terauchi. Major General Nishimura, April 10, 1947, reply to questionnaire of Mr. A. P. M. Audretsch, NIOD IC No. 006793-006807, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁸ Yamamoto Moichiro, "Watashi-no Indonesia—Dai Juroku Gun Jidai-no Kaiso" [My Indonesia, a Memoir on the Period of My Service in the Sixteenth Army] (Tokyo: Nihon-Indonesia Kyokai, 1979), p. 77, as cited in Goto Ken'ichi, "Caught in the Middle: Japanese Attitudes toward Indonesian Independence in 1945," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27,1 (1996): 37-48.

⁴⁴⁹ "Statement," Captain Tsuchiya Kiso, March 3-8, 1947, p. 7.

suddenly.”⁴⁵⁰ For the Deputy Chief of Staff, Major General Nishimura Otoshi, the broadcast came “like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.”⁴⁵¹



Tsuchiya Kiso (right) visiting his former Beppan colleague Yanagawa Motoshige at the latter's home in Jakarta, September 28, 1972.

Events now moved quickly. At a meeting on August 16, Nagano ordered his men to demobilize all Peta units on Java and Bali and gather in their arms.⁴⁵² No one at headquarters argued against the decision. As Benedict Anderson has noted, the Allies could hardly be expected to look with favor on a body “created for the sole purpose of fighting against them.”⁴⁵³ Nor, in the wake of the Blitar revolt, could the Japanese be

⁴⁵⁰ Yanagawa “Statement,” Part III, p. 4.

⁴⁵¹ Major General Nishimura, April 10, 1947, reply to questionnaire, p. 15.

⁴⁵² Miyamoto, “Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi,” p. 213. Anderson, citing an Indonesian army history, writes that Nagano made the decision on August 17. See Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, p. 100. Nugroho says orders to disband the Peta battalions were issued on August 18. Nugroho, “The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation,” p. 197. Yet another source says the order to disband the Peta was issued on August 19. See “Explanations Regarding all Kinds of Armed Bodies,” p. 3.

⁴⁵³ Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, p. 99.

comfortable living alongside an Indonesian force with some 37,000 men and more than one-fifth of the weapons then on Java.⁴⁵⁴ Politically, it was another story. At a ceremony in the front garden of his small Jakarta villa on August 17, Sukarno delivered a short speech and then read out the proclamation of Indonesia's independence, a two-sentence statement that he had drafted following close consultations with Vice Admiral Maeda. "We, the people of Indonesia," it said, "hereby declare the independence of Indonesia. Matters which concern the transfer of power and other things will be executed by careful means and in the shortest possible time."⁴⁵⁵ After this announcement, so brief but so pivotal, a Peta officer raised the red-and-white national flag, and those present joined in singing "Indonesia Raya."⁴⁵⁶ Across town, Tsuchiya was burning Peta records and other secret papers.

On August 19, General Nagano issued a four-point order. Support for the Indonesian independence movement was to cease immediately; the Japanese military administration was to remain in power until the arrival of Allied troops; law and order was to be maintained; and the status quo at the time of the surrender was to be maintained. Indonesian hopes had been riding high until this point. Now, it was learned, there would be no further help from the Japanese, a development greeted "with great annoyance and resentment."⁴⁵⁷ Before long, the Japanese would be fighting to contain an island-wide outburst of popular fury, in which hundreds of Japanese soldiers and civilians would be slaughtered.

Disarming the Volunteer Army

The Sixteenth Army had decided to disarm and demobilize the Peta. But the Japanese had good reason to be worried. What if Peta units refused to hand in their weapons? What if they rioted? As it happened, the thirteen thousand Peta weapons were handed in without incident on August 19–20, thanks to careful planning, and a certain amount of duplicity, on the part of the Japanese.⁴⁵⁸ Peta battalions were told that, in view of the critical situation, they were about to be given Japanese weapons in place of the Dutch ones they had been using.⁴⁵⁹ After they turned their weapons in at the armory, the Indonesian soldiers were assembled on the parade ground. As they listened to lengthy speeches, soldiers from local Japanese battalions stood guard around their compounds, while others placed the weapons on waiting trucks, which promptly drove away. The next day, the Indonesians were told about the Japanese

⁴⁵⁴ Anderson's analysis accords with that of Colonel Miyamoto, who made the recommendation to disband Peta. See Miyamoto, "Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi," p. 213.

⁴⁵⁵ For a full account of Sukarno's speech, which was lost for many years, see George McT. Kahin, "Sukarno's Proclamation of Indonesian Independence," *Indonesia* 69 (April 2000): 1-3.

⁴⁵⁶ For a detailed examination of the events culminating in the proclamation, see Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, pp. 61–84.

⁴⁵⁷ Nishimura interrogation, January 16, 1947.

⁴⁵⁸ Peta had earlier been forced to surrender 6,000 of its 19,000 weapons.

⁴⁵⁹ For a good account of the process, on which this section is based, see Nugroho, "The Peta Army During the Japanese Occupation," pp. 197–98. According to Miyamoto, "The Peta disbanded calmly on August 19 and Heiho on August 23." See Miyamoto, "Miyamoto Shizuo no hanashi," p. 217. Nishimura says "the disbandment of the Giyugun and Heiho came ... on or after Aug. 19th." It was "a bigger success than had been expected, taking advantage of Indonesia's unpreparedness." See Maj. Gen. Nishimura, answers to additional questions from Mr. A. P. M. Audretsch, April 15, 1947, p. 3, NIOD IC No. 006808-006811.

surrender and the decision to disband the Peta. They were not told that Sukarno and Hatta had declared Indonesia's independence.

In his memoirs, Soeharto writes that on August 18 [*sic*], 1945, "we were dismissed and ordered to surrender our arms." This is unconvincing. Soeharto and one or two others may have had weapons while stationed at Mt. Wilis. The men of the Blitar battalion did not. Of all the sixty-six Peta battalions on Java, this was the one the Japanese now had least reason to fear. Be that as it may, the events of August 19 must have been deeply puzzling to Soeharto. He had no idea that the Japanese had surrendered, nor did he have any idea that Sukarno had proclaimed Indonesia's independence. All he knew was that, some time after the unit had surrendered its few weapons, a party of Japanese army officers turned up mysteriously at Mt. Wilis to announce that the Peta had been disbanded. Soeharto and his fellow Javanese were paid six months' salary in advance and given an allowance of clothing and food, including rice, salt, and sugar, after which they were left to make their way home. The Java Volunteer Army had ended not with a bang, not even with a whimper.

In early 1942, the people of Java largely accepted, and had long since accommodated themselves to, Dutch rule. Now, three-and-a-half years later, they had no time for it at all. An old world had been turned on its head. There were many reasons for this, but they all came back to the fact that the mystique of Dutch power had been irrevocably shattered. In March 1942, Indonesians had seen the Dutch on Java surrender to an Asian power after a land campaign lasting only eight days. They had then looked on as the Japanese went out of their way to humiliate and mistreat Europeans. During the Japanese occupation, many Indonesians had moved up the bureaucratic ladder to occupy places once largely reserved for Europeans. Others had been trained in armed bodies or been mobilized in Japanese-created youth groups. All had been subjected to unremitting Japanese propaganda, which was virulently anti-American, anti-British, and anti-Dutch. Japanese promises of independence had whetted the Indonesian desire for self-rule. Japanese abuses had sharpened Indonesian anger and a determination to go it alone. Now, the Indonesians found themselves in a political vacuum with the Japanese defeated and the Dutch yet to return. Indonesian leaders, both political and military, were more than willing to fill the void. The Dutch, meanwhile, labored under the delusion that nothing had really changed in the East Indies. The Dutch in the Netherlands had endured five years of German occupation, during which there had been virtually no news from Java. The Dutch on Java, languishing in POW and civilian internment camps, were almost equally ignorant about events that were taking place beyond the barbed wire. Nor did Dutch servicemen in Australia know very much more; each time they had sent agents to Java, the Javanese had betrayed them to the Japanese, which should itself have told them something.

"The Peta Made Him"

The people of Java had suffered dreadful privations during the Japanese occupation. Soeharto, a born survivor, had had rather a good war. He had served in two armies, first on one side, then on the other. He had been well-fed, well-dressed, and well-paid. And although he was yet to fire a shot in anger, his career was coming

along nicely. The Dutch had pushed him through their pre-war NCO-training programs as they prepared to face a Japanese onslaught. The Japanese had pushed him through their wartime officer-training programs as they prepared to face an Allied onslaught. Now, with the Japanese beginning to withdraw, dejected and apprehensive, to their camps and cantonments, and the Dutch yet to return, Soeharto was poised to play his part in the struggle that would secure Indonesia's independence.

In mid-August 1945, Soeharto had a lot to be thankful for. As one of his Indonesian colleagues put it, "The Peta made him."⁴⁶⁰ During his twenty-two months in the Peta, Soeharto had gained a great deal of invaluable experience. He had been sent on an abbreviated but rigorous platoon commander's course under tough and experienced Japanese NCOs, many of them veterans of the war in China. He had created and trained a forty-four-man platoon (*shodan*) and led it for four months. He had qualified as the leader of a 132-man company (*chudan*), with a rank equivalent to captain. He had served in a series of important training and administrative positions. It had, in short, been a time of rare and unexpected opportunity, allowing him to build on all he had learned in the KNIL. In August 1945, Soeharto had more military training by far, and more military experience, than perhaps 98 percent of his fellow Peta officers, the men who would form the backbone of a new Indonesian army.

For the moment, it is true, Soeharto was just another ex-Peta officer, one of about 2,150 such men demobilized and disarmed by the Japanese.⁴⁶¹ His prospects did not seem especially bright. In the small world of the Indonesian elite, Soeharto was very much an outsider, socially and educationally. He was unknown outside the Peta—and not especially well-known within the Peta, given the Japanese practice of allowing minimal lateral contact among Peta units. Nor did he have any connections with the nationalist movement. Indeed, he would have been regarded with skepticism by many nationalist leaders, partly on account of his service in the KNIL, partly on account of his uncritical support for what some of them saw as Japanese fascism. But in the fluid and dangerous world of post-surrender Java, Soeharto held some important cards. He had ability, training, experience, judgement, and determination, as well as a wide range of contacts among young men from Yogyakarta who had been trained to fight.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview, Purbo Suwondo, Jakarta, April 14, 1998.

⁴⁶¹ The number of Peta officers is derived from figures given in the Yanagawa "Statement," Part I, pp. 6-7; Part II, pp. 3-6, and 8; Part III, pp. 1-2.