

RURAL UNREST IN SUMATRA, 1942
A JAPANESE REPORT

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The interaction of peasant movements with national elite politics has been a specter equally alarming to colonial and some independent governments in Asia. In Netherlands India colonial policy put a high priority on sealing the two phenomena off from each other, particularly after the communist-inspired revolts of 1926-27. To a remarkable degree the Dutch appeared to have succeeded, after 1927, in limiting national politics to the relatively small urban elite of Indonesia, and creating an impression of static *rust en orde* in the countryside.

To judge from the available record, the Indonesian peasantry might appear to have been quiescent from the late 1920s until 1945. Rural areas were certainly directly involved in the revolution of 1945-50, yet we still know very little about the manner in which peasant movements and preoccupations related to the national issues then being fought out. Part of our difficulty here undoubtedly lies in the paucity of information about peasant reactions to the Japanese occupation.

The transition from Dutch to Japanese rule in 1942 represented for rural people a discontinuity at least as dramatic as the Proclamation of Independence three and a half years later. The change provided the ultimate test of how successful the post-1927 Dutch policies of stabilization, compartmentalization, and reinvigorating the constraints of traditional *adat* had been. Would the Indonesian villager demand changes from the new regime, and with what degree of insistence or violence? Unfortunately, the almost total absence of information has so far tended to dissuade scholars even from probing this issue. Scholarly attention has necessarily been focused on the celebrated events of 1945 rather than 1942, and on Java rather than the Outer Islands, where a greater degree of violence accompanies the Japanese takeover.¹

The paucity of material on developments during the early part of the Japanese administration is nowhere more acute than for Sumatra, recently portrayed as "still shrouded in a good deal of mystery."² The major source of light on the subject, apart from the growing number

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1. Some evidence for this turbulence in the Outer Islands appears in Anthony Reid, "The Japanese Occupation and Rival Indonesian Elites: Northern Sumatra in 1942," Journal of Asian Studies (JAS), XXXV/1 (November 1975), pp. 49-62; Republik Indonesia. Propinsi Sumatera Selatan (Jakarta: Kementerian Penerangan, n.d.), pp. 32-33; Republik Indonesia. Propinsi Sulawesi (Jakarta: Kementerian Penerangan, n.d.), pp. 208-9; and C. van Heekeren, Rode Zon boven Borneo. West Borneo 1942 (The Hague: Bakker/Daamen, 1968), pp. 136-40.
 2. H. J. Benda, J. K. Irikura, and K. Kishi (eds.), Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia: Selected Documents (New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1965), p. vi.

of personal Japanese memoirs, is the collection of papers taken back to Tokyo by Marquis Tokugawa in 1943, and now available for consultation in the Japanese Self-Defense Agency archives, though without an adequate index.

The document translated here forms part of that collection, and we are grateful to the Self-Defense Agency for permission to translate it, and particularly to Mr. Imaoka, the former archivist, for his help in locating it. The document is a report compiled by someone in the police division of the Twenty-fifth Army Military Administration Headquarters in Singapore, in about November 1942. The Twenty-fifth Army was at that time responsible for the administration of both Sumatra and Malaya, and a separate report on the security situation in Malaya was compiled at the same time and attached to this report on Sumatra. Each report concentrates on the local problem believed to be most serious--the Malayan Communist party in Malaya and the opposition to pre-war officials and rajas in Sumatra. Although the larger questions of political policy must have been beyond his competence, in this Sumatra report the author makes clear that a major reconsideration of policy was in fact required.

In contrast to the Malaya report, no specifically anti-Japanese sentiment is given any prominence in the discussion of Sumatra translated here. The uncompromising hostility of the Acehese *ulama* Teungku Abdul Djalil is scarcely mentioned, partly because it climaxed just after the period covered by this survey, but also perhaps because an analysis of it would have been more difficult. Abdul Djalil had likened the Japanese to pigs and to the demonic Yajuj and Majuj (Gog and Magog) who bring destruction at the end of the world. It was simplest to write him off as a crazy fanatic (see note 4 below).

The disturbances described here do, however, derive from a common basic uncertainty and reorientation which accompanied the change of regime. Those who had grievances saw a chance to right them; those who lacked power or position saw an opportunity to obtain them. Many nationalist politicians of course believed that the Japanese would bring them closer to independence or at least a share in power. For peasants, however, the central issues were always taxation and land. It was primarily because of their role in levying taxes and disposing of land that ruling elites had earned popular hostility in particular areas. The propaganda of the Japanese and their Indonesian supporters led many to believe that taxation would be abolished, land returned to its "rightful" owners, and power taken from the hands of the aristocratic elite who had ruled under the Dutch system.

The emphasis placed in this report on Indonesian criticism of the "sultan and raja systems" suggests that the situation in East Sumatra occupied most of the author's attention. It may have been the Arnhemia (Pancur Batu) affair (see below pp. 129ff.) which gave rise to the whole report and dominated its conclusions. Behind the Arnhemia affair and all the other four East Sumatran incidents described was the *aron* movement among Karo Batak farmers of the *dusun*, or upper districts of the Deli and Langkat sultanates. Although there is, to the best of my knowledge, no mention of this movement in any Dutch source, its origins in the land problems of the late 1930s can be briefly described.

The 1930 census showed 28,079 Karo in Langkat and 37,341 in Deli-Serdang, almost all of them farmers of the *dusun* areas. In Karo traditional law it had been the village (*kuta*) which had controlled the disposal of land and operated as an effectively autonomous unit of

government. Kinship ties did bind the village for some purposes to its parent village (*perbapaan*). But in pre-colonial times only the trade passing down the East Sumatran rivers and the constant warfare in the area tied these villages into larger political units, of which the Malay states at the river-mouths were the most remote. The Dutch, however, came to acknowledge the primacy of Deli, Langkat and Serdang, and through a blend of intricate diplomacy and warfare forced the other Karo/Malay states into dependent relationships to one or another of these three. Dutch planters, moreover, utilized the domain principle claimed by the Malay rulers to lease vast tracts of land, in Karo as well as Malay areas. The royalties went not to the village but to the hierarchy of headmen, *datuk* and royal courts through which the Dutch administered the area. By the end of the Dutch era the autonomy of the Karo village was being rapidly undermined in favor of this predominantly Malay hierarchy, which thus came often to be resented for ethnic as well as economic and political reasons.

In the early years of estate expansion there was in practice plenty of land for all. The tobacco estates were able to satisfy peasant discontent by offering those in their area a so-called *jaluran*--a newly harvested tobacco field, fertile, well fertilized and prepared for planting--in a different place each year.

By the late 1930s, however, the system was breaking down under the pressure of rapidly increasing population in prosperous East Sumatra, and the growing impatience of the estates over the *jaluran* system. Each year brought greater conflicts over the way *jaluran* were distributed, particularly in the more explosive Karo areas. The issues came to a head in 1938, aggravated by the publicity given a draft law to abolish *jaluran* altogether in favor of permanent subsistence blocks for farmers, in connection with the rewriting of estate concessions in terms of *erfpachten* (long leases). The Medan press, the East Sumatran representative in the Volksraad (Soeangkoepon), and of course the nationalist parties, all took up the various cases of grievance and "starvation" which then came to light. The police chased off those squatting on estate land and burned their huts. In May, 600 Karo peasants marched from the *dusun* to demand a better deal from the sultan of Deli.³

It was in this climate, the following month, that ten Karo from the Arnhemia district sought advice from the Medan headquarters of the Gerakan Rakjat Indonesia (Gerindo, Indonesian People's Movement), the largest political party in East Sumatra and the one most active on the land question. They were advised to establish a purely farmers' organization in the *dusun* area. This took shape immediately in the Serikat Tani Indonesia (Setia, Indonesian Peasant League), led by Minta Karo-Karo as chairman and Kitei Karo-Karo as secretary. Branches were quickly established in various villages of the *dusun*, and such grievances discussed as shortages of land, maldistribution of *jaluran*, the deterioration of Karo adat under outside influences, and the prohibition on peasants entering forests.

From September the government began to crack down on the movement through the sultanate hierarchy, forcing four *penghulu* (village heads) to resign from Setia, and dismissing others who failed to comply.

3. Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur, Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche Pers (Weltevreden, 1938), April 16, May 7, and July 2, 1938. Volksraad, Handelingen van het College van Gedelegeerde (1937-38), pp. 185-87, 204-5, and 215-18.

Under this pressure Setia began to turn towards cooperative activity in marketing and farming.⁴ Although information on its activities in 1940-41 is unfortunately not available, there is no doubt that it gradually became transformed into the aron described in this report. Captain Inoue Tetsurō, the police chief responsible for crushing the aron, mentions that its leaders were Kitei Karo-Karo and Gumba Karo-Karo, both of whom had been briefly imprisoned in December 1938 when serving respectively as secretary and vice-president of Setia.⁵

The word aron (or aroan) is normally used among Karo Batak of the Deli *dusun* to designate a group of villagers who harvest collectively, moving through the fields of each member in turn. When the harvest is complete the same members are responsible for a dramatic entertainment (*guro-guro aron*) in which they compete with other groups for popularity.⁶ The use of the term aron for the 1942 peasant movement reflects its primary concern with the "illegal" occupation and cultivation of land.

There is fortunately a little more information on the aron in the memoir of Captain Inoue, who had been acting in 1942 as both *bunshūchō* (assistant resident) of Deli/Serdang and police chief (*keimubuchō*) for all East Sumatra. Although compiled some time after the events described in our report, and conflicting with it in some minor factual respects, Inoue's memoir was clearly based partly on documents still in his possession, and sheds more light on the character of the aron. The most relevant section is the following:

[On August 6] I consulted the records on the aron. One of the Kenpetei [military police] records stated that during the disturbed time when the Japanese were landing in Sumatra one of the members of the "Fujiyama [*sic*--Fujiwara] Kikan"⁷ told the people of Deli-hulu [Upper Deli], "when the Japanese come, the native chiefs will be thrown out, and you can own whatever land you like." But when the native chiefs kept power for month after month, and people had to obey the existing land laws, they became dissatisfied. Ambitious leaders of political parties worked up this dissatisfaction, distorted the rash promises of the Fujiyama-Kikan members as if these meant the Japanese Army's recognition of their demands, and instigated innocent people to cultivate land illegally and become members of the aron Secret Society. Then the *dat-sonchō* and *chū-sonchō* [datuk and perbapaan?] were frequently attacked and robbed by them. If possible they tried to cut

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4. "Politiek Verslag Sumatra's Oostkust" (hereafter "Politiek Verslag S.O.K."), June, September, October, and December 1938, and March 1939, in mailrapporten (hereafter Mailr.) 776^x/38, 1080^x/38, 1217^x/38, 222^x/39 and 544^x/39 respectively (Colonial Archive of the Interior Ministry, The Hague).
 5. Inoue Tetsurō, Bapa Djanggut (Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 1953), p. 55; "Politiek Verslag S.O.K.," December 1938, p. 10, Mailr. 222^x/39.
 6. Tengku Luckman Sinar, "The East Coast of Sumatra under the Japanese Heel," Berita Kajian Sumatra, I/1 (1972), p. 33.
 7. The Fujiwara-*kikan* was the Japanese fifth-column organization for Sumatra, under the command of Major Fujiwara Iwaichi. It dispatched several boatloads of Sumatrans from the Malayan coast in January and February 1942 to prepare a sympathetic reception for the Japanese invaders. The greatest success of this F-*kikan*, as it was known, was in sparking an anti-Dutch revolt in Aceh, but it also operated through the Gerindo party in East Sumatra. See Anthony Reid, "The Japanese Occupation and Rival Indonesian Elites," pp. 52-58.

down the chiefs and replace them. As a minimum they demanded more power against their chiefs.

The aron problem was created by the land problem. As long as the authorities maintain the existing one-sided land law which is based on a secret contract between the traditional aristocrats and the Dutch planters, the prospect of a return of public order in Deli-hulu is unlikely.

The *fuku-bunshūchō* [controleur, district head] of Arnhemia reported the following incidents:

- June 3, 1942: The *sonchō*⁸ of Sumba [Sembahe?] was killed.
- June 5 The banana plantation of the *sonchō* of Tangkahan was seized.
- June 8 The *dai-sonchō* [perbapaan] of Gunung Mulia [Suka Mulia?] was terrorized.
- June 14 The *sonchō* of Sibolangit and his wife were both killed.
- June 20 The house of the *sonchō* of Lau Cih was plundered and burned.⁹
- June 25 The wife and children of the *sonchō* of Namo Mungkul [?] were killed.
- June 27 Twenty pigs belonging to the *sonchō* of Puneng [Penungkiren?] were stolen.

These specific incidents leave aside the question of illegal cultivation.

The report of the *fuku-bunshūchō* went on to explain how people became members of the aron. Members had to bring a white chicken to the aron leader; its neck was wrung, and all drank the blood.¹⁰ Uncooked rice was put in front of the new member, who had to swear his loyalty to the aron and promise secrecy. Then the new member had to hold grains of rice sideways in front of his mouth and throw them in.

There appear to be about 15,000 members of the aron.

Most people were very afraid of the aron, and did not dare open their doors after 6 p.m.¹¹

Inoue put down the aron movement in draconian fashion, personally decapitating five leaders in a public display. Nevertheless, as an expert in tropical agriculture, he saw clearly the land hunger that was the basis of the problem. He relates that he urged four specific concessions to the needs of the Karo farmers of upper Deli.

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- 8. *Sonchō*, the Japanese term for the head of an administrative village, was used in Sumatra for the head of a cluster of villages, usually having several thousand inhabitants. In West Sumatra, a *sonchō* was head of a *nagari*; in Aceh, he was the former *uleëbalang*. In this area of East Sumatra the *sonchō* appears to have referred sometimes to the pre-war perbapaan head, sometimes to the *penghulu*.
 - 9. Lau Cih, a perbapaan-ship only a few kilometers north of Arnhemia, had been a principal center of Setia and the home of Kitei and Gumba Karo-Karo.
 - 10. For the role of the sacrificial cock in (Toba) Batak ritual see Ph. O. L. Tobing, The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief in the High God (Amsterdam: van Campen, 1956), pp. 158-67; and J. C. Vergouwen, The Social Organisation and Customary Law of the Toba-Batak of Northern Sumatra (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), p. 91.
 - 11. Inoue, Bapa Djanggut, pp. 54-55.

1. Lease of 6,000 sq. meters [the size of the old, generous jaluran] of unirrigated land to each family.
2. Complete freedom for growing *palawija* (second crops of vegetables, and so forth).
3. Permission for new *sawah* (irrigated rice land) wherever this could be done without disruption to the estates.
4. A tripling of the salt ration.¹²

The police report below, then, offers some insight into rural tensions at the end of the Dutch regime. If this can be matched by similar material and field research for other areas of Indonesia, we will be closer to understanding what the Dutch and Japanese regimes meant for the Indonesian peasantry.

12. Ibid., p. 69.

CONSIDERATION CONCERNING ORDER IN SUMATRA

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I. General Overview of the Security Situation in Sumatra

1. Evaluation of the security situation

Since the beginning of the Japanese military administration there has been no sign of an organized insurrectionary movement over the whole area of Sumatra such as that of the Malayan Communist party in Malaya. However, the rise of national consciousness has been apparent in the conflicts and hostilities among the population, the boycott of officials who have retained their pre-war positions, and the demand for the abolition of the sultan, raja and datu systems. As a result, conflicts between the people and the native officials have gradually increased. In the Arnhemia district of the East Coast *shū* [Dutch residency], the natives got up a riot which ended with scores of dead and wounded. The prestige of the police collapsed, popular unrest was aggravated, and conditions became disturbed.

Special attention should be paid to the following points.

- a. The disaffection of "Indonesians" dreaming of national liberation and independence.¹
- b. Conflicts among the population, especially between the people and the sultans or rajas.
- c. Opposition against the employment of former Dutch government officials.
- d. Rumors and grievances over the decreased supply of everyday goods and inflation.
- e. Dissatisfaction and disappointment with the military administration, which has not fulfilled the expectations of the people.

1. The word "Indonesian" appears to be used in this report only to refer to urban-based nationalists, and for that reason is translated with quotation marks.

The promises of freedom from colonial oppression broadcast from Tokyo and Japanese-held Penang had ensured the Japanese conquerors an enthusiastic initial reception in Sumatra, as elsewhere in Indonesia. These hopes were rapidly crushed when the Japanese military regime imposed even more stringent controls on nationalist activity than had the Dutch regime, in conformity with a Sumatra military administration directive of April 1942: "All actions or statements which may encourage native independence movements should be carefully avoided": Benda, Irikura and Kishi (eds.), Japanese Military Administration, p. 172. Within three months of the invasion (February-March 1942) the Indonesian national flag and anthem had been banned and all political parties dissolved.

- f. The anti-Japan and anti-military activities of Dutchmen retained and employed by the Japanese military administration.²

These problems have been observed separately in scattered areas, however, and have offered no substantial threat to public order. They are future (not immediate) problems, and if industries are developed, goods are circulated and the living standard of the population is well established these problems will not become a consideration in the maintenance of order. Therefore it is time a policy toward the indigenous groups was established, police operations put on a proper basis, propaganda energetically promoted, and efforts made to improve living standards. Such measures would make it easy for us to maintain public order.

2. Background information

i) In contrast to their counterparts in the Malay peninsula each ethnic group in Sumatra has organized itself apart from other groups, and their group consciousness is relatively strong. The colonial policy of heavily exploiting the population for their agricultural produce has provoked them to resent the Dutch and foreign nationals. Moreover, conflicts over land for cultivation have continually been observed, as is natural in an agrarian society.

ii) The present state of the communist and anti-Japanese movements

a. Communist movements

At present there is no threat of communist activities. There is also no serious threat for the future unless elements of the Malayan Communist party come into Sumatra secretly to evade the strengthened measures to suppress them.³

b. Anti-Japanese movements

No serious anti-Japanese movements have been so far observed, although on November 10 some Muslims in Aceh shū started anti-Japanese activities which resulted in a great number of dead and

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2. In East Sumatra the regime of the Japanese chōkan (governor), retired General Nakashima, was particularly liberal towards Dutch personnel considered useful in the plantation sector and medical or technical functions. Even some civilian administrators, like Dr. Rees, the Assistant Resident of Langkat, were retained in an advisory capacity by the Japanese until the middle of 1943. This facilitated the establishment of anti-Japanese underground networks among Dutch and pro-Dutch officials, the most important of which was headed by O. Treffers, the former Assistant Resident of Deli-Serdang. A. J. Piekaar, Atjeh en de oorlog met Japan (The Hague: van Hoeve, 1949), pp. 308-16; Oostkust van Sumatra Instituut, Kroniek 1941-6 (Amsterdam, 1947), pp. 17-19; Willem Brandt, De Gele Terreur (The Hague: van Hoeve, 1946), pp. 44-48.
3. Some prominent anti-Japanese leftists from Malaya did slip into Sumatra in 1942, including Tan Kah Kee, who lived quietly through the war in Brastagi. Tan Malaka also passed through Sumatra in June and July 1942, on his way incognito from Singapore to Java. In contrast to these men, who remained in hiding, the most prominent pre-war communists in Sumatra established good contacts with the Japanese regime and worked with them in propaganda functions. These men, Xarim M.S., Nathar Zainuddin, and Nerus Ginting Suka, had returned from exile in Boven Digul in the early 1930s.

wounded on both sides.⁴ Other than this, there are only a few activities among Indonesians and Chinese which might be judged to be anti-Japanese.

iii) The present state of conflict among the population

In Sumatra, there are such ethnic groups as Bataks, Acehnese and others each living in their own regions. These peoples, who resented Dutch oppression in the colonial era, are unsatisfied with the way the former Dutch government officials have remained in office under the Japanese occupation. In addition, trouble and conflicts have frequently arisen among the population from their dissatisfaction and hostility towards the sultan and raja systems, the way agricultural land is distributed, and the taxation system. A most serious situation exists in the East Coast shū, where there have been repeated local disturbances.

Also among the Acehnese, who are the most violent and exclusive of all the inhabitants of Sumatra, violence and intimidation occur constantly. This is the most serious state of affairs for the maintenance of public order under existing circumstances.

iv) The present state of protection of important facilities and natural resources

At the beginning of the war, the Dutch army organized a demolition corps to destroy such important facilities as oil fields, refineries, and storage tanks.⁵ Although the main figures in this corps

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4. Although the Bayu Affair referred to here was probably the most serious cause for Japanese concern in Sumatra, unfortunately it receives no detailed attention in this report, which appears principally concerned with events up to the end of October 1942. The soul of resistance in Bayu (Lhokseumawe district in north Aceh) was Teungku Abdul Djalil, who had recently taken over the leadership of a famous Islamic school at Cot Plieng. He dissociated himself strongly from the enthusiastic welcome given to the Japanese by PUSA, the major Islamic organization in Aceh, and was credited with the famous Acehnese phrase Geulet asee, geutrimong buy--"they have driven out the dogs (Dutch) and brought in the pigs (Japanese)." From August 1942 there were reports that the Hikayat Perang Sabil, the classic Acehnese poem of summons to the holy war, was being read in the Bayu area, and that Abdul Djalil was identifying the Japanese as the enemies of Islam. Each demand by Acehnese or Japanese officials that Teungku Abdul Djalil appear before them for questioning only drove him to more resolute defiance. He went into religious seclusion (chalwat), while the two to three hundred pupils of his school prepared themselves for sacrifice through the constant recitation of religious formulae (ratib). As the pressure on him increased in early November, Abdul Djalil turned the area around his mosque and school into a fortified sanctuary forbidden to outsiders. The Japanese finally attacked with machine-guns and mortars on November 10 (some reports say 9). In a fierce battle the Acehnese defenders accounted for eighteen Japanese dead (according to Japanese figures) with their rencong (daggers), swords and spears, before the whole area was reduced to ashes and the defenders all killed or captured. The Acehnese dead exceeded a hundred. Piekaar, Atjèh, pp. 304-7; Mohammad Said, "Teror Djepang di Atjeh Nopember 1942," Merdeka (Jakarta), July 3 and 4, 1972; Hamka, Kenangan-kenangan hidup (2nd ed.; Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1966), pp. 202-11.
 5. Dutch demolition work on the eve of the Japanese takeover was concentrated on destruction of the BPM refinery and installations at Pangkalan Brandan (East Sumatra) and the NKPM (later Stanvac) refinery at Sungei Gerong (Palembang).

were arrested after the occupation, some members still remain in isolated areas. In addition some intrigues have occurred on the part of natives to destroy important facilities for motives of private revenge. It is therefore highly necessary to make all efforts to protect important facilities and natural resources.

v) Trends among ethnic groups

Among the local inhabitants it is necessary to pay special attention to the Bataks (1,230,000), who live in Tapanuli and the East Coast shū, the Minangkabau (2,000,000), and the Acehese (960,000), to keep order in Sumatra. The Bataks constantly resort to violence because of their racial arrogance and aggressiveness. The Minangkabau and the Acehese occupy important positions socially and economically and their aggressiveness frequently causes violence and intimidation, eventually resulting in the riot of November 10.⁶ The Acehese are particularly exclusive, especially against the Chinese. Recently the Acehese created problems in Aceh shū and the Bataks caused troubles in the East Coast shū. At the same time, however, the Bataks are relatively well educated and the Acehese are brave, clever, and ambitious. Therefore, if we guide them in the right direction by suitable propaganda, they will cooperate with us willingly.

II. Details of the Disturbances

Since May, eleven disturbances to public order have occurred in Sumatra. In terms of their characteristics, they can be classified into three land distribution problems, three taxation problems and five cases of resentment and antipathy against the former Dutch government officials who remained in office. Close investigation of the details of the above cases reveals the following causes for these incidents. The majority of the inhabitants had expected that under the military administration their long-standing and earnest hopes for (1) the independence of Indonesia, (2) liberation from the oppression of the former Netherlands Indies Government, and (3) the abolition of the sultan and raja systems, etc., would be immediately realized, and that they would be able to live in freedom. These popular expectations of liberation from the former regime became important and began to influence the people's behavior. Leaders quickly grasped the popular sentiment, and further aroused these feelings. On the other hand, the political machinery of the military administration utilized the former Dutch government officials and the sultan and raja systems in the general administration as a tentative policy.⁷ This widened the cleavage between popular expectations and the realities of the military administration. Moreover, the officials, sultans and rajas who participated in the administration abused their authority and power contrary to people's expectations, either to show the Japanese army their loyalty or merely in continuance of their old habits. Their actions often differed from what people expected and exceeded the intentions of the military government. The inhabitants have come to be extremely alienated from the government and antagonistic towards it. This can clearly

6. See note 4.

7. Japanese policy towards the rajas is outlined in a document of July 1942 in Benda, Irikura and Kishi (eds.), Japanese Military Administration, pp. 184-86. This envisages gradually persuading the rulers "voluntarily" to surrender effective powers in return for continued status and perquisites.

be seen in the disturbances caused by the distribution of land. The people disregarded the instructions of the officials, sultans, and rajas and cultivated or opened up fields at will. To achieve what they wanted large numbers of them boldly resisted the attempts of officials to restrain the illegal cultivation. On the other hand the officials concerned resorted to force to try to disperse them and finally opened fire on them, gravely exacerbating the hostility of the people towards authority. In some cases which resulted in a number of dead and wounded, the situation got completely out of the authorities' control. The incidents caused by taxation developed in a similar way. The officials levied taxes which were not commensurate with living standards and tried to collect them in a forceful way. Out of fear of popular resistance they brought police escorts, and the shooting on their side provoked the people to riot. Most of the disturbances in Sumatra followed a similar pattern to this. We who are responsible for securing public order are painfully aware that these incidents have given us abundant grounds for a bitter reassessment of attitudes.

The attached table summarizes the development of the various disturbances in Sumatra.

A Table Summarizing the Disturbances in
Sumatra: May-October 1942

- (1) May 10--Junjun [Junjung (Kerinci) or Sijunjung?] village, West Coast shū [West Sumatra]

Direct cause: Instigation by "Indonesians."

Summary: When three "Indonesian" teachers appealed to many villagers in front of the village office to force their sonchō to resign, a quarrel broke out among them, and six policemen came to stop it. Then three hundred villagers were instigated to make a riot, which the Japanese army put down.

- (2) June 1--Batukarang, about three kilometers west of Kabanjahe, East Coast shū.

Direct cause: A policeman's firing upon the crowd who were inveighing against him.

Summary: At about 8 p.m., the inhabitants gathered to discuss a demand to the raja urung about the problem of land distribution.⁸ The raja urung feared the consequences and asked the chief of Kabanjahe police station to settle the affair. At around 11:30 p.m., four policemen hurried to the spot and tried to take Shiboron, the leader of the three hundred people who had assembled there, to the police station in order to investigate the affair, but because of the rage of the crowd they had to release him. The crowd still did not calm down, but inveighed against the four policemen and the raja urung. At last one policeman opened fire, which led to a fight. One policeman and three inhabitants died and seven inhabitants were wounded.

8. Batukarang was the largest of fifteen urung the Dutch had demarcated in the Karo plateau, each ruled indirectly through a hereditary raja urung. There were no foreign estates in the Karo plateau, and the land issue described here has a different origin from that in cases 3, 6, 10 and 11 below. Batukarang was one of the few areas of the Karo plateau irrigated in the 1920s, and one result was an unprecedented concentration of valuable land in the hands of some individuals, notably the raja urung in question. Much of this irrigated land changed hands during the 1942 aron affair. Another source of conflict was rivalry among a number of families for the raja urung-ship. This may have been the reason the raja urung mentioned here was later denounced to the Japanese, arrested, tortured and killed.

- (3) June 18 and 20--Arnhemia, East Coast shū.⁹

Direct cause: The inhabitants' resentment against the policemen who arrested and executed those who were illegally cultivating public land.

Summary: As a result of propaganda from the "Indonesians," the [Karo] Batak inhabitants ignored their raja and cultivated public land without obtaining any permission. When they were prevented from doing this and fourteen of them were arrested and executed, about two hundred inhabitants surrounded the police station. On the 20th, three hundred people surrounded it again and made a disturbance. At last on July 26 they attacked the station. Scores of people were killed and wounded.

- (4) August 18--Taeberu [Tayer Baruh?] village, Payakumbuh, West Coast shū.

Direct cause: The people were urged to pay a tax by the sonchō, whom they did not support.

Summary: A villager who had been discontented with the sonchō who had retained his pre-war position committed an outrage against him when he was urged to pay a tax. Soon other villagers joined him. The arrival of policemen prevented the outbreak of a riot, but the situation is still threatening.

- (5) August 26--Bandan [?] village, Palembang.

Direct cause: The sonchō put under arrest the son of a man who had not paid a tax.

Summary: The man whose son the sonchō had arrested got so angry that he decided to kill the sonchō. But at the sonchō's conference he shot and injured the *gunchō* [district officer] by mistake.

- (6) September 1--Payatsumankuru [?] village, Tapanuli.

Direct cause: The warning shots of policemen to disperse the crowd.

Summary: Policemen went to the village to investigate the arms in the possession of the inhabitants. The villagers resented the stringent investigation and assembled in a manner which created a dangerous situation. More policemen were called for and warning shots were fired, which made the crowd rebel. As a result six were shot dead and eight wounded.

- (7) September 7--Ujung Bandar village, East Coast shū.¹⁰

Direct cause: The people suspected the native officials of harming them deliberately.

Summary: The people killed the sonchō on the grounds that the problem of agricultural land caused them real hardship, because the Japanese administration utilized the former Dutch government officials.

- (8) September 10--Lubuk Basung village, West Coast shū.

Direct cause: Former policemen of the Dutch administration instigated the people

9. Arnhemia, originally a Dutch estate town, was renamed Pancur Batu on March 10, 1943. (*Sumatra-Sinbun*, March 11, 2603 [1943]). This affair, described in more detail below, is known in Indonesia as the Pancur Batu Affair.

10. Like cases 1, 3, 10, and 11, this incident was apparently a manifestation of the aron. Setia had been active in Ujung Bandar. In December 1938 the *anak beru* (deputy, or supporting, headman) of the village had been dismissed by the sultan for his membership in Setia, but the *penghulu* had nevertheless joined the movement, presumably to be dismissed in turn. "Politiek verslag S.O.K.," December 1938, Mailr. 222*/39.

to start trouble, and policemen opened fire.

Summary: When one of the inhabitants was imprisoned in the police station as an offender against the transport regulation, many people gathered around the station. Ex-policemen and those who had belonged to the self-defense association instigated them to use violence. Policemen fired warning shots to disperse the crowd.

- (9) September 26--Puninjawa [?] village, Baturaja district, Palembang.

Direct cause: Policemen fired warning shots against a violent crowd.

Summary: The *fuku-gunchō* [deputy district officer], the clerk, and the *joyaku* [deputy headman] came to the village with two policemen to collect a tax there. Many villagers assembled and attacked them. When the policemen fired warning shots, the villagers became more upset. At last the policemen, *fuku-gunchō* and *sonchō* fired on them, and one villager was killed.

- (10) October 3--Sembahe village, near Arnhemia, East Coast shū.

Direct cause: A fit of antipathy to the officials.

Summary: The acting *sonchō* of Sembahe was killed by two aron members with their *parang* [machetes] when he was extracting palm oil.

- (11) October 15--Bulilir village, outside Medan, East Coast shū.

Direct cause: Policemen firing on a crowd.

Summary: Because the "sultan" [of Langkat] accused the inhabitants of cutting trees belonging to the *sonchō*, a chief of police and thirteen other men went to the spot for investigation. A few hundred local inhabitants gathered around them. Because the people were taking a defiant attitude, the policemen fired warning shots, which caused a riot. Six of the inhabitants were shot dead and four were seriously wounded. The villagers thought that the cause of this incident was information sent secretly by the *sonchō* and his wife, and they later killed them both, with one employee, and wounded a female servant.¹¹

III. The Direct Causes of the Incidents

Though many factors contributed indirectly to the incidents, the most immediate and important cause is the antipathy of the people towards officials who retain positions they held under the Dutch regime. When these officials took administrative measures which conflicted with popular sentiments, or tried to oppress the people, the people affected joined together to defy the officials, which eventually resulted in open conflict between the officials and the people. This is the present state of affairs. In the cases cited we deplore the measures and the attitudes taken by the officials. In most of the above cases, believing there was a threat of mass violence, the officials immediately opened fire in order to disperse the crowd; yet this

11. The seven Karo villagers accused of this reprisal killing were tried five months later in the Medan high court, suggesting that the Japanese believed the lawless interregnum was over. One of the accused was sentenced to death, four to life imprisonment, and the others to ten and seven years, respectively; Sumatra-Sinbun, March 11, 2603. Hamka, Kenang-kenangan hidup, pp. 197-98, and 246, describes the Bulilir Affair, like the Arnhemia (Pancur Batu) one, as a Karo revolt against the authority of the sultans. See also Tengku Luckman Sinar, "The East Coast," p. 33.

only angered the people and provoked them to riot. Thus, judging from past experience, shooting by officials, especially policemen, was the direct cause of the incidents. Together with the indirect causes already mentioned, this deepened the gulf between the officials and the people, as if the officials themselves provoked the disturbances. We must keep this point in mind in guiding the officials responsible for maintaining order.

IV. Some Views Concerning the Maintenance of Public Order

What has been described above is the pattern of disturbances which have so far appeared in Sumatra. There are still many ethnic problems among the population which have not yet appeared on the surface. Therefore any measure taken to secure public order should be based on a true understanding of the condition of the people, and punitive police actions should be based on the same understanding. Consequently the following points should be observed in the maintenance of public order.

1. It should be strongly emphasized that the Japanese authorities are responsible for handling incidents of this kind on the spot, especially in the field of police activity. It has been the case that incidents have been handled only by native officials and policemen as if there were no leadership on the side of the Japanese. This appears to have been the most significant factor in aggravating the situation.
2. It is necessary to give full instructions to native officials and policemen in how to handle disturbances. It is especially important to instruct and train the policemen when and how to use their firearms.
3. Police activity in response to these incidents should concentrate on seeking their fundamental causes and removing such causes. Once the appropriate measures are decided upon, they should be carried out thoroughly and without hesitation, so that the people really respect and obey the authorities.
4. As regards making use of the sultans and rajas in administration, they should be placed under the strict supervision of Japanese officials, to ensure they do not abuse their authority or take administrative action which goes beyond the intentions of the military government. It is important to make the inhabitants understand the real intentions of the Japanese military administration and to let this administration penetrate deeper through strict supervision and guidance of the sultans and rajas.
5. The following aspects of the native problem, which appear to have a great bearing on public order, should be investigated thoroughly to provide background material in resolving these problems.
 - a. The actual conditions of the inhabitants which lie behind petitions or opposition movements against taxation.
 - b. The background and the real causes of petitions for the abolition of the sultan and raja systems.¹²

12. Here as elsewhere the writers appear to have East Sumatra in mind, although there were also attempts to oust the uleebalang in Aceh, the other Sumatran residency in which indirect rule was widespread. There appear to have been

- c. The actual state of conflict and jealousy among the population.
- d. The conditions underlying the petitions from various religious groups.
- e. The true nature of various groups and societies, and especially the degree of political consciousness shown by their leaders.

APPENDIX
DESCRIPTION OF THE ARNHEMIA AFFAIR,
EAST COAST OF SUMATRA

Purport

1. There have been conflicts between the natives and Dutch government officials in the Arnhemia district of the East Coast shū, arising from the land problem and alleged oppression. The [Karo] Batak people who had organized the aron society (corporate cultivation body) forced the inhabitants of the 321 villages near Arnhemia to enter the party in the hope of settling the land problem, and gradually they united into something like secret societies. Finally on July 26 and 27 they attacked the Arnhemia police station with the result that quite a number of people on both sides were killed and wounded. Even after that they have disturbed public order by killing sonchō and resorting frequently to violence.
2. The East Coast shū police arrested nine aron leaders who bore responsibility for the affair, issued a proclamation, and assigned a *keisatsu-buchō* [superintendent of police] to the task of pacification and reestablishment of public order in cooperation with the *bunshūchō* [assistant-resident].¹³

I. Summary of the Arnhemia Affair

1. On July 20, 1942, on receipt of information that some members of the aron society beat up the sonchō and wounded him in Goeriisan [Durian Sembilang?] village near the town of Arnhemia, several policemen from the Arnhemia police station were sent out to investigate the facts. But because of the interference of many members of the aron society, the policemen were forced to return. On July 26, a party of thirty-five policemen were sent out to investigate the case of the

appeals to abolish the East Sumatran rulers from both wings of the nationalist movement--Gerindo, which had attempted to support the Japanese actively through the fifth-column "F movement"; and the moderate politicians who supported the "Comité Indonesia" organized by the Partai Indonesia Raya (Parindra, Greater Indonesia Party) leader Sugondo. Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan hidup*, pp. 186 and 197; Dr. Amir's notes of June 14, 1946, Rijkinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, I.C., Doc. 005966.

13. In reality, Inoue Tetsurō was both the *bunshūchō* of Deli-Serdang at this time, and concurrently superintendent of the police for East Sumatra; Inoue, *Bapa Djanggut*, p. 52. Although in his memoir and elsewhere Inoue's police function is usually referred to as *keimu-buchō* rather than *keisatsu-buchō*, there is little doubt it is he to whom the report is referring here. Inoue was greatly trusted by the East Sumatra chōkan, Nakashima, and his multiple roles appear to have been designed to give him a free hand to deal with the aron.

beating up this sonchō as well as the subsequent aron interference, but they could get nowhere, because the aron party had destroyed the evidence.

2. On the way back to the central station, the police party met ten villagers carrying their parang, and confiscated the parang. But near the border of the village one villager, Nassa, came after the police party and tried to take back the parang. So the police arrested him and confined him in the Arnhemia police station.

3. The same day at 10 p.m., about five hundred aron members of the neighboring eighteen villages rushed to the Arnhemia police station to get Nassa back. The police, who had prior information of this attempt, placed fifty men on guard and tried in vain to calm the crowd down. The mob forced its way into the station, and the policemen opened fire to drive them out again.¹⁴ The people then hid themselves around the station to await another chance to attack. Three hours later the Kenpeitai arrived on the scene and at last the crowd dispersed.

4. The number of dead and wounded in this affair are as follows:

	<u>dead</u>	<u>wounded</u>	<u>total</u>
local police		4	4
natives	<u>21</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>78</u>
total	21	61	82

II. The Causes and the Development of the Affair (or Sedition)

1. Background

i) The East Coast shū, where kings [rajas] had governed, was gradually developed by many entrepreneurs since the establishment of Dutch administration in Sumatra in the middle of the nineteenth century. Tobacco cultivation in particular flourished because the climate was suitable and the government gave the tobacco companies the right to use the land. The companies opened up vast areas and exported the harvest every year. Almost all government revenue was derived from the tax levied on use of the land. To produce tobacco of good quality the land must be left fallow for eight years after each [tobacco] crop. During the fallow period this land was distributed among the inhabitants for their own cultivation, so that the idle people could obtain rich land without any hardship. For both officials and inhabitants in Arnhemia there was peace and order.

ii) But the number of natives who came from other places seeking a place to settle gradually increased until the amount of land for distribution became too small to distribute an equally adequate plot to all. In 1932, the government made an agreement with the companies to divide people into three different categories of entitlement.¹⁵

14. Tengku Luckman Sinar, "The East Coast," pp. 33-34, cites the Indonesian police chief in charge of this operation, Tengku Arifin Tobo, to the effect that the aron members were deliberately lured into an attack on the police post and then slaughtered in hundreds.

15. Competition to obtain the fertile jaluran was intensified not only by the steady influx of migrants to East Sumatra, but also by the drastic reduction in tobacco-planting by the estates during the depression. A Dutch official, Klaassen, was

- 6,000 sq. m. Those who had lived in their present location since their forefathers' days.
- 4,000 sq. m. Those who had moved in from other places.
- 2,000 sq. m. Widows and orphans.

After some years the people of the second group presented petitions to the government saying that it was hard to maintain their livelihood on only four thousand square meters of land. Eventually they began to cultivate and occupy public land without any government permission, and complained more and more about government police action. The aron society, which was a legal, incorporated cultivators' association, backed up the people's demand and eventually transformed itself into an association whose primary purpose was to occupy land illegally.

iii) On the other hand the "Indonesians" had appealed to the people on a platform of reforming the government structure and obtaining national independence, using such slogans as "Give us the full right to vote." But the inhabitants were too indifferent to politics to listen to them. So the "Indonesians" took up the land problem, established the Committee of Indonesian Agricultural Land Economy and campaigned "give us the rich land," in order to win the inhabitants' support.¹⁶ They did not miss the opportunity to get behind the aron society, and tried to work up the people against the government.

iv) The government, recognizing the danger of the situation, tightened its control over the illegal occupation of public land and sentenced the offenders to penal servitude or banishment. Under this pressure the aron society gradually transformed itself into an underground movement resembling a secret society and forced the inhabitants to enter the society.

- a. Those who refused to enter the society were beaten or killed.
- b. The undertakings of the aron society were:
 - 1. to keep the secrets of the aron;
 - 2. to send any information obtained by members to the aron at once;
 - 3. to fight bravely against officials when they came to a place where the members were working;
 - 4. to sentence to death any members who betrayed secrets.
- c. The secrets of the aron society were:
 - 1. don't obey the orders of the sonchō;
 - 2. don't be afraid of policemen; when they come, never retreat but stay and fight with your swords.

empowered in 1932 to make for the first time a careful inventory of all those considered entitled to the full jaluran, which was traditionally 1 bahu (six thousand square meters). "Memorie van Overgave Sumatra's Oostkust, Gouverneur Ezerman, 1933," Mailr. 929/33, pp. 213-24.

16. By the "Indonesians" here the Gerindo party appears to be meant, the most vigorous and radical nationalist party in East Sumatra. Unrest over the distribution of jaluran in the Karo-inhabited dusun of Deli reached its peak in May 1938 (see introduction). Gerindo took up the issue and established two branches in the dusun, at Arnhemia (June) and Sunggal (December 1938). It is not clear whether the committee referred to here in the report is the Comité Pencegah Kelaparan (Committee to Prevent Starvation) established by the fiery Mohammad Djoni in October 1939 after he had resigned from Gerindo, or perhaps Setia itself or one of its cooperative offshoots. "Politiek Verslag S.O.K.," October 1939, Mailr. 1489*/39.

In this way the aron society organized about two thousand inhabitants of 321 villages in Arnhemia district and established one large secret society.

v) This was the situation when the emperor's army occupied this area on March 12, 1942. Because of the activity of the propaganda organization of the emperor's army, the people had expected that the officials of the former Dutch regime would lose their positions and power and that the people would be liberated from their oppression.¹⁷ However, contrary to their expectations, the Japanese army made use of the former Dutch government officials and ordered local political associations to be dissolved. The natives' resentment against the officials was greatly aggravated and the situation became steadily worse.

2. The immediate cause of the incident

Because the sonchō reported the illegal occupation of land and native policemen investigated the cases and arrested offenders, the people came to think that if they could eliminate the sonchō and the policemen they would be free to do what they wanted. They became very hostile towards sonchō and policemen, and even began to offer resistance. When an aron member was arrested, mob psychology, together with the instigation of the aron leaders, moved the people to recapture him. The policemen immediately fired in self-defense.

III. Counter-Measures

1. In the East Coast shū up to the present the police have concentrated their energy on investigating the organization and development of the aron society. After obtaining information they arrested Jacob Siregar¹⁸

17. Particularly influential in Sumatra were broadcasts from Radio Penang in the interval between the Japanese occupation of that town in December 1941 and their landings in Sumatra (South Sumatra late February; North Sumatra March 12). Many of the broadcasts were made by Sumatran nationalists living in Penang, who naturally emphasized their hopes of liberation. In the passage from Inoue's memoir translated in the introduction the role of the Fujiwara-kikan in arousing Karo hopes was mentioned.

18. Mohammad Jacob Siregar (1912-c. 1960) was the son of a prominent Mandailing businessman, publisher, and religious teacher, Sutan Martua Radja. He had a good Dutch education to MULO level in Binjai, East Sumatra, but always showed more interest in nationalist politics than in his father's commercial enterprises. He joined Sukarno's Partai Indonesia (Partindo, Indonesian Party) in 1932, but rose to prominence in its successor Gerindo--as chairman first of its Binjei branch (1938), then for all East Sumatra (August 1939). He was particularly concerned with the land issue and therefore enjoyed considerable influence with the Karo farmers organized in Setia. He had contacted the Japanese before the invasion and became the East Sumatran leader of the F-kikan, but his role in the aron affair remains obscure. Inoue, Bapa Djanggut, p. 59, cites a conversation he had with Siregar's Eurasian wife Khatijah, who pleaded for his release: "Of course Iwan [Jacob Siregar] is anti-sultanate, but he is wise enough to know he cannot eliminate the authority of the sultans by reckless measures. Probably Iwan could be 'a father of the people of Upper Deli' but never a leader of the aron." Inoue's reply to this was that "we have never had conclusive evidence" about Siregar's involvement in the aron. He had been arrested "on the basis of political necessity, based on the opinion of the shūchōkan [governor] himself."

and eight other leaders of the aron society, who are presently under interrogation.¹⁹

2. The police division also issued the following proclamation, assigned a keisatsu-buchō to the task of pacification and guidance of the people in this area in cooperation with the bunshūchō [of Deli-Serdang], and increased the police force.

Proclamation

- a. The aron, which is not based on tradition, is dissolved.
- b. The following offices will be opened in the Arnhemia Branch of the Gunsei-bu [military administration]:
 - an Arnhemia Cultivators' Corporation Office
 - an Arnhemia Agricultural Information Bureau.
- c. After dissolution of this aron, its reorganization on a true basis will be permitted only if the permission of the bunshūchō is obtained, and then under proper guidance of the office of the Arnhemia Cultivators' Corporation.
- d. The Arnhemia Agricultural Information Bureau will give general information on agricultural affairs.
- e. Weapons which are unnecessary for cultivation should be surrendered to the police station at once.

Those who offend against the above regulations and band together illegally to disturb the peace and order of society will be punished severely.

IV. Conclusion

Though the original cause of this affair is rooted in former Dutch colonial policy, its direct cause lay in the misconduct of the police at an early stage of the affair. For this reason the situation became serious, and many natives were killed or wounded. Now the affair seems to be settled, but its harmful influence on the political consciousness of the natives and on the military administration has been so great that it will take great efforts and a long time to establish order. The essential attitude of the responsible Japanese in dealing with such problems in the sphere of native affairs should be to grasp the general conditions, to develop the correct treatment for the problem, and to carry out what is once decided thoroughly and decisively.

19. Among the others arrested were Siregar's deputy in the pre-war Gerindo leadership, Mohammad Saleh Oemar, and the leading Karo in Gerindo, Keras Surbakti.