

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

Oranje Hotel  
Surabaja, East Java  
Indonesia  
May 25, 1956

Mr. W. S. Rogers  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
522 Fifth Avenue  
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

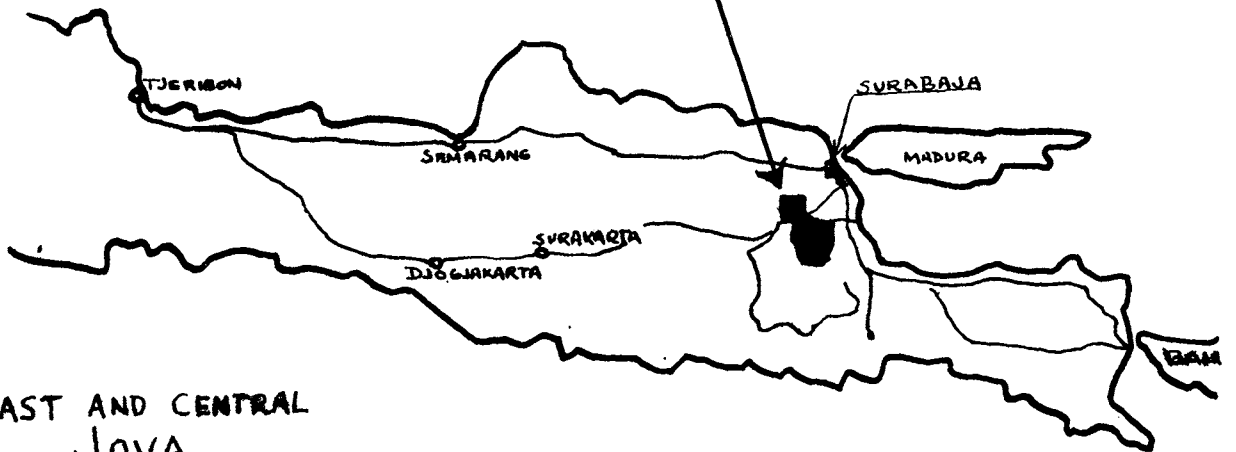
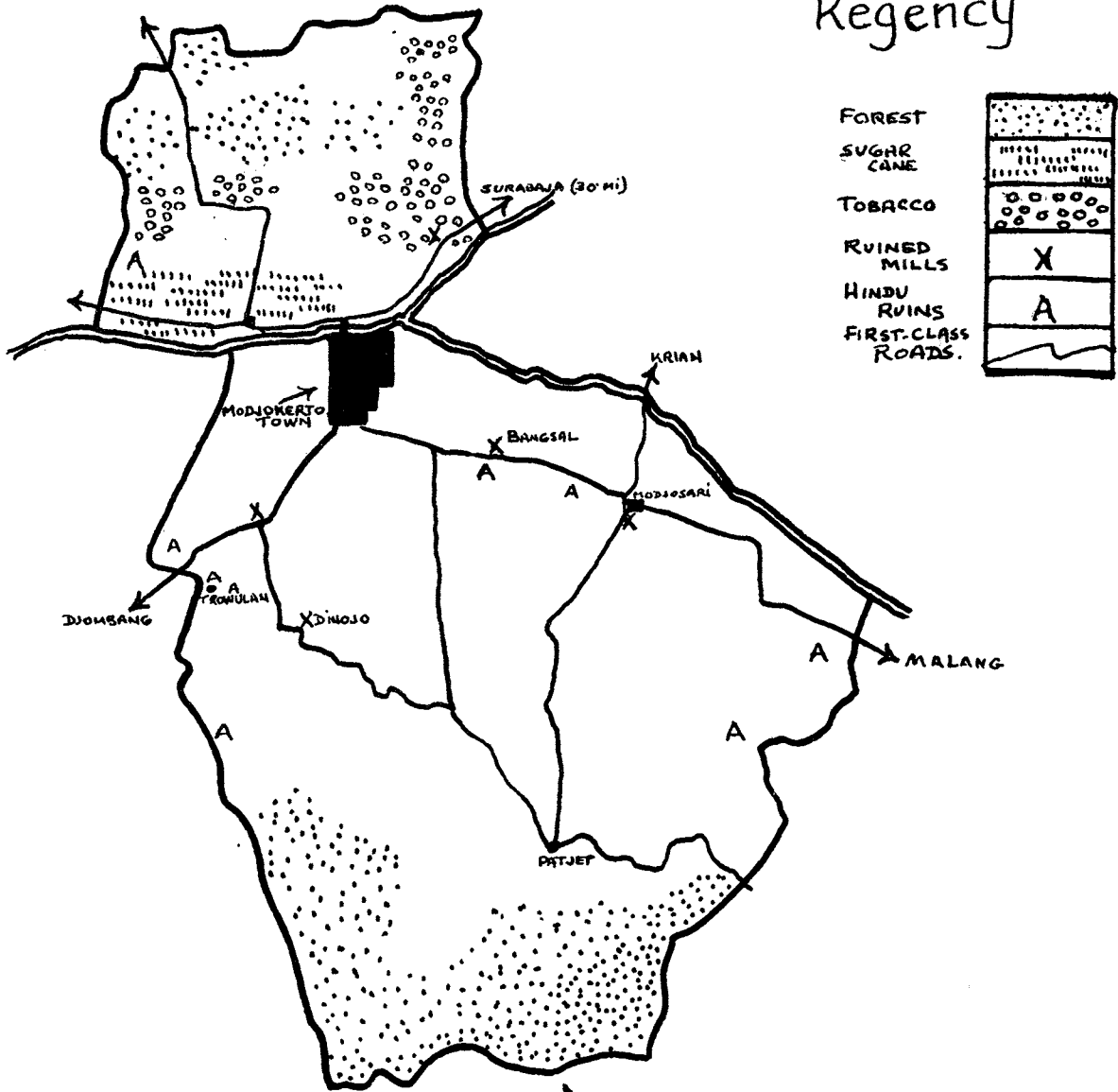
During the last twenty years, Communism in Asia has shown itself to be primarily a political movement, with a capacity for filling in vacuums in political authority as readily as the waters of the Brantas River fill the low places of this valley during flood time. There is obviously some wisdom in the cliché that Communism feeds on mass poverty, whether in North China or here in East Java. But experience in China, Korea and Indo-China indicates that the most immediate condition for its victory in a country is a major dislocation in effective state administration.

In Indonesia, the threats of regional disintegration, military dictatorship and Muslim rebellion hover over the same chasm in authority as Communism. These and other evils might eventually be fended off by an increase in Indonesian standards of living or the growth of a truly national culture, but such developments cannot be expected to come to full, effective fruition in this decade. A great deal of time is needed--altogether too much in the view of many impatient observers--but Indonesian leaders are pragmatic and cautious in their current planning on economic, social and cultural problems. This is a plain fact which we should note and accept.

In the meantime, Communism and the dozen other threats of 1956 hover lower and lower. Indonesia needs time, but news reports from the economic front or from the disturbed outer islands indicate that time is limited. The hope of Indonesia is the creation of a state apparatus which is sufficiently authoritative and acceptable, one which can at least approximate the former Dutch regime in firmness, yet at the same time meet the greatly increased material and moral expectations of an awakening citizenry. If this task of government-construction is carried out with some skill and perception, the nationalist, Muslim and socialist leaders of Djakarta will certainly have time to give more complete form to the unique institutions which are just now beginning to appear in their country.

This letter is the first of several which deal with the problem of government authority and conduct in Indonesia during this period of transition and anxious trial. The series describes several

# Modjokerto Regency



EAST AND CENTRAL  
JAVA

aspects of local government at the regency level, where the central government comes in contact with the villages it rules.<sup>1</sup> This is the level at which the ordinary citizen judges his government, and forms an opinion of its capabilities and right to rule. It is the level at which the most important loyalties are won or lost.

Modjokerto Regency in East Java has been chosen as the site for this study. In its dimensions, economy, social structure, cultural problems and history, it is as typical as a regency can be in this varied island country. By concentrating on one government sub-unit, these letters will lose in comprehensiveness, but they will compensate by describing in some detail the actual operation of government in a concrete human situation.

This first letter will introduce Modjokerto Regency in a general way. Succeeding letters will be case studies of particular fields in which the government is trying to carry out important decisions and policies.

### Vital Statistics

Similar in size to most of the regencies of Indonesia, Modjokerto had an estimated population of 464,508 in 1955, living in an area of 362 square miles. These figures give a population density of 1285 per square mile. The only city of appreciable size is Modjokerto, with 54,000 inhabitants. Most of the remaining population lives in the small clusters of hamlets which make up the 311 villages of the regency.

The packing of so many rural dwellers into such a tight space has given social life in Modjokerto much of its flavor and political life many of its problems.

To gain an impression of the concentration of human life in this typical Javanese regency, the visitor should drive up one of the several fine asphalt roads which rise on the ash alluvium slopes of the volcanoes on the south boundary of the area. As he looks out from the tiny town of Patjet, his back faces on a thick jungle of hardwood, bush and vine which rises to 10,000 feet on Mount Welirang, and he looks down on a checkerboard of dark green village area which separates the blocks of cultivated land in light green or gold, depending on the season. The village area includes over twenty percent of what he sees.<sup>2</sup> Down below are many Indonesians who have never been completely alone in their lives.

The high vantage point at Patjet reveals something of the dynamics of the growth of the culture below. Most of the village patches of dark green straddle the irrigation canals which give life to the rice which sustains Modjokerto Regency. The nearer villages have grown along the north-south axes of the smaller canals which take water immediately from the watershed of the volcanic complex in the south. Down on the plain of the Brantas River, fifteen miles away, most of the villages are elongated from east to west, along the more carefully controlled canals which take their water from the Brantas itself. Out in the haze beyond the river is a narrow band of "east-west" villages watered by the Brantas, largely by means of the eight pumps operated by the big Dutch sugar mill at Gempol Kerep. Beyond this strip is the dry, unfriendly region of the north, where farmers get water for their rice, corn and tobacco patches only when it rains. The north country rises unevenly into low limestone hills which have proved a generous host for the teak forests which redeem the region from poverty.<sup>3</sup>

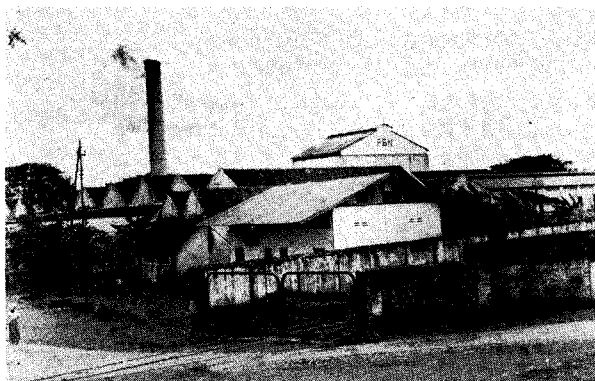
The staple crop of Modjokerto is rice, as it has been for at least a dozen centuries.<sup>4</sup> Normally, all the well-irrigated land of the regency (98,332 acres) is planted in rice once a year in late fall. Some of the same land is planted in rice again in late spring, while the remainder lies fallow or supports crops of beans, yams, or corn. Nearly 2,000 acres of the area around the Gempol Kerep mill is planted in a fourteen-month crop of sugar cane. Over 2,500 acres in the dry north has been given over to the increasingly important crop of virginia tobacco. The economy of Modjokerto Regency is agricultural, and the greater part of the farmers' yearly produce consists of food crops consumed in the villages.<sup>5</sup> The old isolation and self-sufficiency of the villages have been breaking down rapidly with the introduction of commercial crops and the growth of local and inter-regional markets, but the process has not yet touched all the villages.

The green flatness of the Brantas valley is punctured by five towering white smokestacks. Two of them are in operation, one for the sugar cane mill at Gempol Kerep and one for the alcohol factory at Wates. The three remaining stacks rise over the ruins of sugar mills at Brangkal, Dinojo and Bangsal. In 1929, nine sugar mills were in operation in the regency. By 1935, the depression slump had closed down five of these. The Japanese occupation and the revolution destroyed three more, so that the influence of foreign capital in Modjokerto Regency is limited to the remaining enterprises at Wates and Gempol Kerep, plus the tobacco barns of the British-American Tobacco Company which have replaced the sugar mill at Perning.

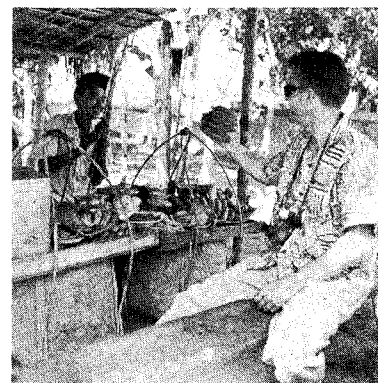
Aside from the foreign-owned factories, industry in Modjokerto Regency is concentrated in the town of Modjokerto, which has grown up where the principal highways of the region intersect at a bridge over the Brantas River. The town's five rice mills are



Hillside view of villages, each surrounded by its communal rice lands.



Wates Alcohol Factory.



Indonesian village merchant and American.



Chinese merchant in Modjokerto town.



Planting rice near Modjosari. An average plot is less than an acre.

located on the main streets running out of town. Down the back alleys and side-streets are scores of small shops and factories which produce furniture, shoes, coffee, soy sauce, iron tools, poor quality batik cloth, kretek (clove) cigarettes and other consumer goods. Almost all these enterprises are Chinese owned.

Outside of Modjokerto town, industry is sparse. A large textile mill operates at Pugeran, halfway up the slopes of the volcanic complex in the south. Three more rice mills operate in the tiny town of Modjosari in the southeast, and scattered villages throughout the regency produce bricks, tiles and handwoven fabrics in small quantities.

Commerce in the regency is also centered in the markets, shops and storehouses of Modjokerto town. Produce comes to town by ox-cart, horse wagon, bicycle, jalopy or on the shoulder-hoists of jogging coolies. By six-thirty in the morning, most of the 160 miles of all-weather road in the regency are jammed with humanity moving slowly toward Modjokerto. In town, the public market and Chinese-owned shops are filled with movement and the babble of bargaining until the mid-day lull begins at one o'clock. At five-thirty the setting sun allows the temperature to drop four or five degrees from the predictable noon-time peak of 88 degrees, and once more the townspeople and village visitors are out in the streets to stroll, listen to the patent medicine vendors in the public square, and perhaps to shop in the stores which stay open until eight p.m. During such a day, a great quantity of merchandise is sold and much money falls into the hands of the Chinese merchants whose vigor and skill have allowed them to dominate the city's commerce. Their fortress is the dingy whitewashed main street of Modjokerto town, where the din of a typical market day disguises the fact that most commercial transactions are petty and the Indonesian buyer does not yet have the purchasing power to support much of an expansion in the commerce of the regency.

In its outer appearances, the physical culture of Modjokerto is much the same as it was ten or even twenty years ago. New crops have appeared (tobacco, cabbage) and minor industries have sprung up, but the visible changes are hardly dramatic. Viewed from the hill at Patjet, from the window of one of the buses which race dangerously along its highways, or from a coffee shop on the city square, Modjokerto Regency appears a green fruitful land which has too readily provided the minimum requirements for human life, thereby allowing its human culture to lapse into stagnation and lethargy.

Yet the appearance of stagnation is deceptive. This countryside, which seems to doze and loll through the days of this first decade of independence, is experiencing a major reorganization down at the foundations of its social life.

### The People of Modjokerto

The main patterns of social life in Modjokerto have been handed down through centuries of foreign and native Javanese rule. The question now is whether these old institutions, which have proved so constant in former periods of crisis, will be able to stand against or bend with the pressure of new social forces. At first glance, the social institutions of Modjokerto appear amazingly durable.

The memories of past ages are powerful among the people of Modjokerto, but they are often surprisingly inaccurate. Some villagers, now nominally Muslim, still make offerings to the Hindu elephant god, Ganesha. But they call him "Gadjah Mada", after the great thirteenth century prime minister of the Modjopahit empire. Out near Modjosari in the east, a villager with uncanny intuition has uncovered three ancient wells which date from the Hindu period. If he is lucky in his digging, he shuffles home at mid-day through cassava fields littered with fragments of fine Sung porcelains, carrying whatever relics he has discovered that morning.<sup>6</sup> One of his prize relics is a small brass, Dutch-made statue of Santa Claus which he claims to have found at the Hindu site. Another case of mistaken identity can be witnessed at Trowulan, at the west border of the regency, where villagers make offerings every year at a thirteenth century Hindu monument which they have renamed "mouse temple". The offerings are intended to appease the non-Hindu devils which the villagers hold responsible for sending hordes of mice into the rice fields and barns at harvest time. Such a mixing and blurring of Hinduism, Islam and ancient animism gives the impression of a colossal astigmatism in the religious outlooks of the Modjokerto villages. Actually, the mixture has an historical clarity all its own, reflecting as it does the successive additions to the original and persistent belief in a world of spirits which guard and threaten the village.

The continuity of old institutions is seen more clearly in the organization of the village community itself. At least eighty-five percent of the population of Modjokerto Regency consists of Javanese born in the villages of the regency. Their villages show a remarkable uniformity in organization. Almost all villages exercise communal control over their irrigated land. Use of the land is limited to a kernel group of gogol--the village citizens, first class--who till equal shares of watered land as their right and perform certain types of communal labor as their duty. Generally, about half of the households in a village control a gogol share of land. Most of the remaining villagers work as hired laborers, coolies, petty merchants or farmers on the non-irrigated village land. The choice of village headman (lurah) is decided by election, though an unpopular headman has an opportunity to perpetuate his rule through various pressures. In some villages, the position is all but hereditary.

The salary lands given to the headman and the other village officials are in some cases adequate enough to make this group an economic elite; in other cases they are not large enough to attract ambitious men into public service.<sup>7</sup> Outside of the official group, great prestige often falls to a local Muslim teacher, a puppeteer who performs the Hindu wayang plays, a successful dukun (a dealer in the traditional medicines and magic arts), or to a villager who has found a job outside with the agencies of the central government.

Dominated by the gogol class and directed by its officials, the village lives through its cycle of seasons in a tight net of customary law, which prescribes correct social conduct and economic relations in great detail. The spirit of the customary law is often violated or warped by a powerful village headman, but the law persists stubbornly. Where the spirit of the law is strong, communal solidarity is often impressive: communal labor obligations are carried out each Friday, village feasts are supported and attended, and the poorer gogol do not lose control of their land shares. Such villages, scattered without pattern in Modjokerto Regency, are often pointed out as models by conservative officials who fear the disturbing effects of the social changes now brewing.<sup>8</sup>

In a few villages, the traditional Javanese pattern of village life has been badly upset. Two villages in the southeast are inhabited by Madurese people, with their own unique customs and personality. Several other villages in the south have become deeply Islamized through intensive missionary work, and one large village in the west has become entirely Christian. Still others have been changed by the introduction of a new crop (tobacco in the village of Djedis) or trade (batik-making in Betro village), or by their proximity to the markets and cultural ferment of Modjokerto town (Wates and Lengkong villages). Now, under the Republic, the pace of change has been greatly stepped up, but the main outlines of village society appear much the same as they were when today's adults were born.<sup>9</sup>

Traditionally, the highest Javanese status group in Modjokerto society has been the priayi, the former aristocrats who trace their good blood back to the pre-Dutch days when they ruled Java.<sup>10</sup>

One group of Modjokerto priayi originates from the collection of nobles and feudal lords who ruled in East Java from the tenth to the seventeenth centuries; many of them claim they can trace their families back to the Modjopahit Empire.<sup>11</sup> A larger group of priayi find their antecedents in the courts of Djogjakarta or Surakarta, which ruled Modjokerto as an outer province two centuries after the fall of Modjopahit. When the period of actual Dutch administration began in Java at the turn of the nineteenth century, the hybrid priayi group was recognized and drawn on as a source of native officials for

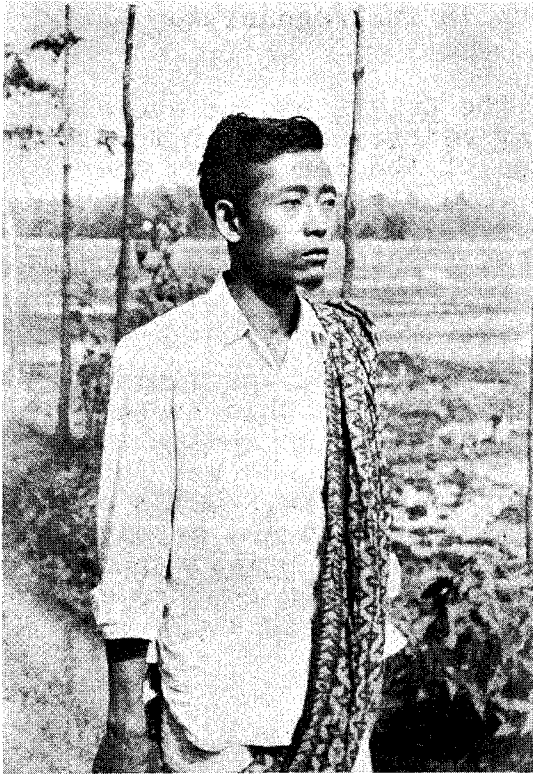
the system of indirect administration set up in the regencies.

Under the Dutch, the position of the priayi became anomalous and slightly weird. As a status group, they maintained their traditional role viz-a-viz the villages. In the eyes of the commoners, the priayi serving in the shallow hierarchy of Javanese officialdom constituted the government. The influence of the Dutch officials was always felt but seldom seen by the villagers, for the important levels of direct Dutch administration began above the regency.

In actuality, the field for priayi employment was limited to several score important jobs in the regency, though this number grew with the expansion of Dutch colonial administration in the two decades before the Japanese War. Those fortunate ones who won jobs with the government had no chance to advance far in rank, wealth or power, and increasing numbers of their younger brothers and cousins found no chance for acceptable employment at all. The priayi group became partially atrophied and functionless. Increasing numbers slid down toward poverty, sustained only by their aristocratic style and powerful, distant relatives.

The decisive lever of Dutch policy toward the Javanese priayi was in the field of education. Under twentieth century colonial policy, a limited number of Javanese were permitted to enjoy the advantages of Dutch education. With few exceptions, the conditions for higher education were (1) priayi origin, and (2) sufficient money.<sup>12</sup> As the school system expanded, increasing numbers of highborn Javanese went through middle school, high school and even on to university. They began to play a double role as proponents and models of the aristocratic culture of Java and pioneers in a process of westernization. Yet this educated group, important as it was, probably constituted a decreasing percentage of the priayi group as a whole, which was keeping pace with other classes in the great population expansion on Java. There was seldom enough money to send more than a few members of a family all the way through school.

In the twenties and thirties, leadership in the Indonesian nationalist movement in Java was supplied largely by members of the Javanese priayi, especially by those who did not find or refused to accept service at the lower levels of the colonial government.<sup>13</sup> The expansion of the Indonesian role in government during the Japanese period brought more non-priayi into official life, but leadership was naturally maintained by those with education and experience. The complete Indonesianization of the government which began in 1949 carried the process further and the priayi role became proportionally smaller as the government grew in size to meet its problems. Still the priayi maintained their key role and have become the backbone of the present government administration in Java.



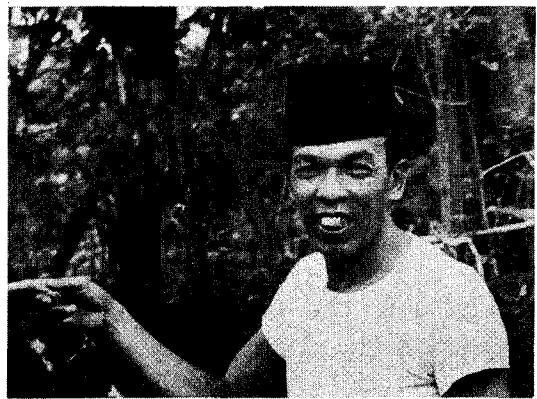
A gogol landholder.



Smiles and tears...

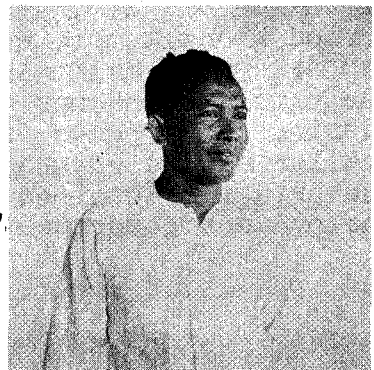


Village wayang puppeteer.



Village headman, Kuntjorowesi

Village  
headman,  
Mlirip.



In Modjokerto, the highest ranking officials are the Regent (Bupati), the heads of the forestry, agricultural and irrigation services, the judge and the district attorney. All are of priayi origin. At the next level down, almost all of the executive officers and bureau chiefs are of similar social background. Descending down through the ranks of government, fewer high priayi are found, and one encounters more of the lower priayi who had Dutch education only through lower middle school or attended one of the few non-Dutch private middle schools. Social newcomers of non-priayi origin are found mainly in the lower administrative jobs, though there are several notable exceptions.

Today, the dominating social group in Modjokerto Regency is the officialdom rather than the priayi. In general, the former aristocrats have prestige and power only through their positions in the government. Most of them have discarded their titles (Raden, Raden Mas), or use only the telltale initials, R. and R.M. Because of their background and leading role in government, the priayi have contributed important aspects to the style and personality of government, but the shadow they throw over the new emerging elite seems destined to grow dimmer and dimmer.

The social distance between the medium or high officials and commoners is still very great. Inter-marriage is not common, though it does occur if the commoner has education, position and money. The personality values of the old aristocracy--refinement, restraint, poise, passivity--are part of the personality of the new official, but these elements have been mixed with revolutionary examples of hearty joviality, free expression and "modernity" in all its vagueness. The perfect example of this style is seen in the traditional-revolutionary personality of President Sukarno. As well as any other factor, the new official personality style reflects the real but diluted priayi influence in Indonesian government in Modjokerto.

Perhaps the present relationship between the highest and lowest social groups in Modjokerto was best described by the official who said, "Before the war, the common people had to sit on the floor when they addressed us and were obliged to call us by aristocratic titles. Now, that has all changed. They call us 'Papa' and we look on them as children of our own families."<sup>14</sup>

One illustration of the social predominance of the new officialdom in the Indonesian community of Modjokerto Regency is found in the Modjokerto telephone directory. Of the 158 numbers listed for Indonesians, 125 are the office or home telephones of government officials. Of the remaining 33 telephones, 15 are rented to small businessmen, 5 to agencies and organizations, and 3 to doctors.<sup>15</sup>

In the same directory, 151 numbers are listed for Chinese

homes and businesses, nearly five times the number listed for Indonesians outside the government.

Approximately 10,000 of the people of Modjokerto Regency are of Chinese origin. Their shops dominate the two main streets of Modjokerto town and their money is invested in almost every sizeable non-government or non-Dutch enterprise in the regency. The Fukienese and Cantonese who make up Modjokerto's Chinese minority have played their economic role with skill and vigor, ready for business at all hours--even during the mid-afternoon nap-time.

The Chinese of Modjokerto have guarded and multiplied their wealth at a considerable distance from the Javanese community which surrounds them. A small group of longtime residents have intermarried with Javanese and adopted Javanese language, dress and customs. The rest of the community appears to be split into two factions: one which has been impressed and swayed by the waves of Chinese nationalism which now emanate from Peking, and a second group which has made some efforts toward assimilation with their host society. To some extent, the two groups can be identified with the first generation residents (singkeh) and those whose parents were born in Java (the totok or baba).

The pro-Peking group can be identified by its communist-oriented primary schools, wall photographs of Mao Tse-tung, and the red flags hung up on holidays. The other group has supported the work of the indefatigable Lie Tong-Liang, who has set up a large primary school and a middle school with completely Indonesian curriculum. Generally, the businessmen of both groups have attempted to secure Indonesian citizenship, but their efforts have been blocked by the confusion in naturalization laws.

If the Chinese are to be assimilated into Modjokerto society, they must leap across a tremendous cultural gap. All the laws, pledges and plans in Indonesia cannot hide the disdain of the Javanese priayi-official for the values and personality of the merchant or the patronizing attitude of most Chinese merchants toward the culture of their customers. Furthermore, the Chinese business community is taking full advantage of the new business opportunities presented by the Dutch withdrawal, thereby increasing their wealth and widening the gulf between their community and the Javanese.

The European colony in Modjokerto is only a remnant. A few Dutch managers live with their families at the factories in Wates and Gempol Kerep. Their position has been made somewhat difficult by government regulations and the inevitable labor troubles, but they have generally been able to work with profit and live in comfort. Their dilemma in free Indonesia cannot be compared to that of the several score Eurasians of Modjokerto who hold on to minor jobs and

try to face a social situation which the colonial period did not prepare them to understand. Perhaps the best adjustment has been made by a clever, jovial Eurasian on Djagalan Street, who has accepted the "Javanese Religion" and become a popular dealer in magic and spells.<sup>16</sup> Other Eurasians work at the two Dutch factories, living close to the Dutch managers in tiny enclaves of nostalgia and confusion.

The half million people of Modjokerto Regency are separated clearly into their social and ethnic groups, but the boundaries seem unimportant at times and group antagonisms are often dispelled by the soft moderation which seems to permeate the air in rural Java. On Saturday night, the cinema is packed with movie-lovers. Indonesian officials and Chinese sit in back in the three Rupiah seats, lower officials, students, and well-to-do commoners in the second class, and the poor up front in the one Rupiah section. They are separated, but their entertainment is the same, they dress much the same, and the difference in prices is not great.

The absence of visible social antagonisms in Modjokerto Regency is in part a tribute to the cosmopolitan outlook which is traditional in Java. It is also a sign that the high are not so high nor the low so low as a description of social groupings might seem to indicate.

### How Deep a Revolution?

Despite the fundamental political gains of the revolution, a hurried survey of the physical culture, economy and social structure of Modjokerto Regency invites the conclusion that few basic changes have been wrought in these particular spheres by the great events of 1945-49.

Such a hypothesis has its virtues and its proofs, but it is misleading. It would be as foolish for us to accept this viewpoint as it would be for the chief of East Java irrigation to assume that the annual deposition of half a foot of sand in the bed of the Brantas River forbodes no danger, simply because the Brantas has not changed its course in the last hundred years.

Dynamic forces are working to change the social order which Modjokerto inherited from the colonial period. The nature of these forces can be illustrated by comparing the revolution in Atjeh, during which the Muslim scholar group forcibly eliminated the aristocratic elite, with the revolution in Java, in which former aristocrats played a leading part in a unified movement against the Dutch. In Atjeh an

immediate and dramatic social revolution took place; in Java, victory in the revolution set forces of social change in motion which are only now beginning to have their effect. In due time they must express themselves more fully.

In those aspects of life in which little has changed in fifteen years, the regency government is following the example of the former colonial government quite closely; irrigation water must be distributed, roads maintained, forests protected, and crime combated during the hunger season (patjeklek) before the spring harvest. In other fields, the new government has no model to follow or must, for obvious reasons, refuse to follow the example of the authoritarian rulers who preceded them. It is especially in these fields that the new government must prove its right to rule or accept the responsibility for failure.

The pivotal change since colonial days in the villages of Modjokerto has been an absolute increase in personal opportunities. In a sense, the lid on village society has been taken off, for the child of the village can now hope to go on to the regency capital to middle school. If he is bright and diligent, he has some chance of going to high school in Surabaya and on to university on a government scholarship. The opportunities for education, which were formerly limited almost solely to the aristocratic group, are being extended to more and more citizens.

What is more, the villager can hope that his school diploma will get him a position in the greatly expanded government bureaucracy. Where before, only selected priayi could hope to rise to medium level government positions, now a great number of village children in the regency can nourish the dream that they will eventually become officials.

The expansion of the school system and the restaffing of the government have not yet proceeded far enough to answer the hopes and dreams of the villagers, but great progress has been made in five years.

The first wave of educational expansion has been seen mainly at the primary and junior high school levels. More than 40,000 children are attending primary schools in Modjokerto Regency, at least double the number in colonial days. Now the schools present a uniform curriculum in the Indonesian language, where before the language of instruction was Javanese. In addition, the majority of the primary schools are now six-year preparatory schools for higher education, and the sixth grade children may all take the same competitive examination for acceptance in the national junior high schools in Modjokerto town.



Javanese priayi values are expressed in the character of Ardjuna in the wayang plays: delicacy, poise, courage.



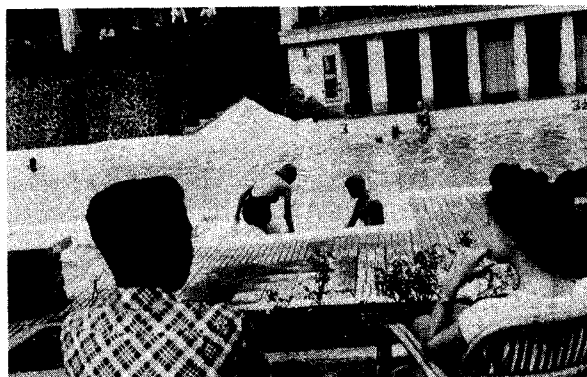
Happy again. Sulastri had cried two weeks previously, when she found there was no room for her in the first grade of the village school.



A new government school at the village of Modjokumpul.



Village school children wave their flags in a holiday parade.



Going away to high school means exposure to fascinating, "modern" things. This pool near Malang did not admit Indonesians before 1942.

Vanished is the dual school system in which a limited number of upper-class children encountered the rigors of Dutch-language education, while a larger number of village children attended three-year vernacular schools which aimed at little more than literacy. The impact of the new situation is seen in the activities of parent-teacher (wali-murid) associations in villages throughout the regency, which collect money to build school buildings, buy materials and books, and increase the meager salaries of teachers assigned by the Ministry of Education. The activities of these associations is evidence that the increase in village initiative has outstripped the present capacities of the government to meet educational needs. Whatever the quality of village primary education, the fact remains that the Indonesian government finds itself in a unique position today in the field of education; it is actually responding to a demand instead of fostering and fathering a society which has little will to change.

The village child meets his worst obstacles when he has graduated from primary school. At this time he encounters the most important current limits to social mobility. Generally, only the children of the higher village officials or the richest gogol can afford to go to Modjokerto town to attend junior high school. The expense of clothes, shoes, transportation (a bicycle, if the distance is great) and a modest school fee is far too great for the non-gogol to bear. If the family can collect enough money for the school venture through saving, leasing land or pawning their possessions, they meet an equally important barrier. Junior high school facilities are so limited in Modjokerto that only the brightest of primary graduates can be taken. The fortunate ones are accepted by the national junior high school, the technical school or one of the two teachers training schools. Some of the rest attend the five private junior high schools in town, and the remaining students must accept the fact that their chances for rising in society have vanished.

The step from junior high school to senior high school is even more difficult. To attend one of the high schools in Surabaya, junior high school students must pass a stiff competitive examination and find financial resources for residence in the big city. The usual Rp. 150. fee for room-and-board in Surabaya is beyond the capacities of the average family; of the villagers, only the headman can be expected to finance a son or daughter through three years of schooling. Even medium-level officials in Modjokerto town must make great sacrifices to give their children high school education, for the average monthly income of such officials is approximately three times the school expense.

Despite the obstacles, many village children of Modjokerto Regency are attaining the coveted junior high school diploma, and not a few have advanced to high school. They are considered by their teachers to be more serious and diligent than their classmates from the city, though they are said to lack sophistication and the mental

agility that comes from an educated family background. Their spirit and their problems are like those of many of the villages they come from: serious about their new opportunity, yet concerned that government facilities have not yet allowed the field of opportunity to become broader.

The expansion of the educational system at its lower levels is not an unmixed blessing for a society like Modjokerto's, which places such value on harmony and is so disturbed by conflict. The villages of the regency are already experiencing a problem of "unemployed intelligentsia". Hundreds of village children have graduated from primary school and have, for various reasons, failed to make the long leap to junior high school. Others have gone to junior high school and either dropped out or failed to advance to senior high school on completion of their course. Especially in the wealthier villages, they constitute a discontented and idle group; jobs are simply not available. After receiving their diplomas, many of them refuse to do manual labor, and if they are willing to use their hands, there is really no need for their labor in a typical village situation where there is a great deal more employable labor than the productive resources of the village can utilize. Once they have received a little education, the village children want and need more, but they must also have an opportunity to use their training in a job. As it is, the unemployed young men of the villages take odd jobs and often serve as members of the Village Youth Security Corps, which has in many cases won power in community politics without serving a vital function. At present, it appears that the Communist Party is making this youth group its main target in its village program.

Education is merely one of the factors which are changing the outlook of the Modjokerto villagers. During the Japanese occupation and the revolution, nearly every village provided recruits for outside organizations. Until 1945, most of the village volunteers went to the romusia forced-labor corps, the hei ho military labor battalions or to the Peta army units. Hundreds returned to their villages with new ideas and changed values.<sup>17</sup> With the outbreak of the revolution, the pace of change was stepped up with the formation of village militia units to fight the Dutch. For four years, the villages of Modjokerto Regency became the target for intensive propaganda work and played host to Indonesian military units fighting the Dutch. From present evidence, there is every reason to believe that the combined experiences of the revolution have started a major reorientation in village thinking.

During the six years of full independence, the channels of contact between the villages and the outside world have been maintained and widened. In the final months of the election campaign of 1955, the political parties succeeded in upsetting and stimulating the consciousness of villages in the regency with their recruitment drives and debates on policy. Contrary to the tradition of village solidarity

and at odds with the teachings of customary law, the general election campaign was fought on the basis of conflicting interests and values. The result was an unprecedented broadening of the range of ideas which circulate in the village.

The effect of new political ideas in the villages of Modjokerto Regency is impossible to gauge, but there can be little doubt that important changes in taste and style have accompanied the political revolution. The craze for buying bicycles and wrist watches has driven village wives to distraction, but many give in to their husbands' argument that the new possession will be pawnable and thus provide a type of security. According to regency officials, the desire for material possessions--certainly not a new thing in itself--has increased so markedly since the Dutch period that it constitutes a threat to the orderly development of the regency. Certainly the increased material expectations of the general population--especially the younger generation--have made some contribution to the significant increase in petty crime and corruption in the regency, but the same wants are also contributing to the growth of the initiative and personal ambition which the government believes necessary for any development at all.

Another symptom of the change is the difficulty some villages are finding in mobilizing village labor for community projects. In some cases, young villagers refuse outright to perform their traditional labor duty without pay and the village suffers because of the deterioration of its roads and canals. In other instances, villagers will oppose a government-sponsored development project because of political differences with the directing official. Conservative elders may criticize such conduct as irresponsible and anti-social--which it undoubtedly is by older Javanese standards--but there is little they can do about it.

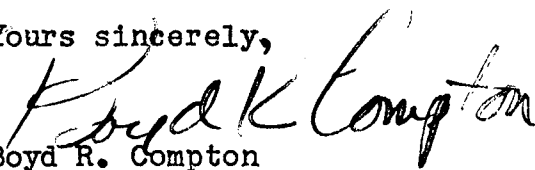
The pace and expression of change varies greatly from village to village in Modjokerto Regency, and there are some outlying villages which have apparently been left untouched by the ferment of the last fifteen years. On the whole, however, it is safe to say that the villages of the regency have been experiencing a major change in spirit and outlook. With their increasing material and political expectations, they pose a perplexing problem to the new officials, who realize that standards of living and opportunity have not increased enough to keep pace with popular wants.

The outer appearances of Modjokerto society are therefore deceiving. In their internal organization and government, the villages have not changed significantly since pre-war days. The communal system in economic and political matters continues to operate and the division between gogol and non-gogol groups remains clear. Relations

between the villages and the agencies of the central government have changed basically in principle with the establishment of the Indonesian democratic state, but many former policies and regulations continue. Within the government, new positions have opened up to Indonesians and the absolute expansion of government has given new opportunities to commoners, but the pre-war division between priayi and non-priayi still determines the distribution of most high posts. Yet despite these and other constants, there are irrefutable signs that new energy and force have been injected into the old system by the events of the revolutionary period.

The general situation in Modjokerto Regency in 1955-56 is ideally described by the word "transition". It is possible to know a great deal about the type of colonial society which preceded the recent decade and a half of breathtaking change. From hints and signs, it is possible to know something about the direction change is taking in the present environment of freedom and democracy. But it is certainly not possible to know how far these changes will carry or what type of new institutions will emerge in coming years. The outcome will depend in large part on the performance of the Indonesian government which has taken on itself the immense responsibility of guiding such regencies as Modjokerto through this time of transition. The activities of this government will be described in more concrete detail in following letters.

Yours sincerely,

  
Boyd R. Compton



### Notes

1. In Java and Sumatra, the structure of government is quite uniform. The hierarchy includes provinces (ten in Indonesia), residencies (seven in East Java province), regencies (about 500,000 population), districts (100,000 population), and sub-districts (25,000 population). The legal basis for government is State Law 22/1948, which called for the abolition of residencies and districts. The important regency level of administration can be compared in size and function to the hsien in China.
2. Living conditions in the "village area" are not crowded, for almost every house is surrounded by a large garden.
3. It is claimed that these low hills supported the first pre-historic cultures of Java. This theory argues that the low-land valleys were too swampy and malarial to be habitable, and that the now-fertile volcanic slopes were being perennially deluged with fire or ash.
4. From temple ruins and artifacts, we know that the area of Modjokerto supported a high rice-growing civilization in the tenth century. There is little doubt that irrigated rice was cultivated long before.
5. Sample surveys by the author indicate that approximately twenty percent of the farmer's rice crop leaves the village in well-irrigated areas. This question will be treated in a later letter.
6. The earliest fragments at the site can be dated as eleventh century; the latest are early Ming blue-and-white.
7. The headman's salary land (gandjaran) varies in size from slightly more than one hectare to more than four hectares. In some villages (Pakuwon, for example), the former tjawisan land, given to the headman in commutation of labor duties, has been set aside as "communal development land".
8. Some of the most active and progressive villages are those whose traditional communal institutions remain most intact. The author saw this especially in Pugeran and Pungging sub-districts.
9. One great change has been the extension of the voting privilege to all citizens who are over eighteen years of age or already married.
10. Information for the priayi section of this letter has been taken almost entirely from personal interviews with Modjokerto priayi.
11. When the Muslim Sultanate of Demak destroyed Modjopahit, many nobles fled to Bali and Madura. In more modern times, East Java priayi families have intermarried with the high families of the prosperous port cities. Many of them have Chinese or Arab blood.

Notes (continued)

12. A considerable number of commoners became eligible for Dutch education through adoption into priayi families. Other commoners received education as the personal favor of individual Dutchmen, because their families had made money in business, or for other reasons.
13. A statistical study should be carried out to determine the priayi role in the Indonesian nationalist movement. A survey of Indonesian Nationalist Party (P.N.I.) leadership might accomplish this purpose and teach us something about the nature of the persistently traditional elements in P.N.I. thinking.
14. This remark was made on March 26, 1956 by a high priayi. Generally, the names of people quoted will not be mentioned in these letters.
15. The directory was published in 1955. Since there is a long waiting list of people who want telephones, the directory and its information can only be used to indicate social standing in the most general way. It should also be noted that some families of high standing do not wish to have telephones and others cannot afford them.
16. The "Javanese Religion" is a varying mixture of Hinduism, Buddhism, belief in the wayang ideology, animism and magic. It has thousands of followers in East and Central Java; millions of nominal Muslims accept some of its teachings and beliefs.
17. Many romusja have never returned to their villages. Some taken from the Modjokerto area died working on the notorious Siam-Burma railroad. There is still great animosity toward the Japanese in the villages of Modjokerto, apparently more than in the cities and among the elite group which cooperated with the Japanese.