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Arabs under Japanese Occupation: A Preliminary Overview

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INTRODUCTION

From the mid-eighteenth century to the first half of the 20th century, a number of Arab communities flourished in various regions bordering the Indian Ocean. They were found in Madagascar and East African coast to the west, and Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and even the Philippines to the east. Most of the Arabs who constituted those communities were immigrants from a region in South Arabia called Hadhramaut. They were mainly engaged in trading in the region and formed a huge network across the Indian Ocean. Each of these Arab communities formed a trade diaspora in their country of residence, and although the various communities became entangled in the affairs of these countries, they did not lose their ties with their homeland, Hadhramaut. This form of community is very interesting in the fact that it is different from today's nation-state. Also, it is said that many religious scholars from Hadhramaut migrated to the regions around the Indian Ocean and contributed to the modernization of Islam in each place. Although this phenomenon is well known among the scholars doing research on the history of the Indian Ocean, few exhaustive studies have been done. Recently, scholars in the field have come to pay close attention to the Hadhrami migration activities and have carried out extensive research on the topic.¹⁾ However, Arab communities in Southeast Asia and the influence of the Japanese occupation of the region from 1942 to 1945 has yet to be fully studied. During this period, the Arab communities in the region were totally separated from Hadhramaut. What kind of relationship was there between Hadhramaut and the Arab communities in Southeast Asia? What was the influence of the Japanese occupation on this relationship? How did the Japanese military recognize the Arab minorities in the occupied region and decide its policy toward them? This paper attempts to answer these questions. Since the Japanese military occupied a large part of Southeast Asia that encompassed a variety of cultural and economic conditions and adopted different policies for each region, this paper concentrates on Java, the region most important for Hadhrami.

1. BASIC PROBLEMS SURROUNDING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND ARAB MIGRATION

What was the period under Japanese occupation for the Arab communities in Southeast Asia and the Hadhrami network in the Indian Ocean? To find the answer to the question, it is necessary to understand the context of the event such as the situation in Hadhramaut, the reasons for the continuous migration of Hadhramis, and the role of their diasporas to the homeland.

Hadhramaut is situated in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula between Oman and Yemen proper. The region is now one of the governorates of the Republic of Yemen. It roughly consists of three parts: a coastal region that faces the Arabian sea, the river bed around an inland wadi (Wadi Hadhramaut) which flows roughly parallel to the Arabian sea coast, and a plateau region between the two. Most of the population resides in the former two parts. Desolate and arid, Hadhramaut had little fertile land and no major industries, and the region could sustain only a limited population. In fact, Hadhramaut has been suffering from continuous demographic pressure, drought and famine throughout its history. As a result, excess population had to find places to live outside their homeland, and Hadhramis have been migrating to other parts of the world since ancient times.

Although the Arabs are said to have found the way to Southeast Asia before the 10th century, it was after the 18th century that large-scale migration to the region began, and from the mid-19th century, the scale of migration became even greater. At that time, there were continuous struggles among tribes in Hadhramaut, and as a result, the land and the irrigation system of the region had been severely damaged, and agricultural production was down. More and more people sought a chance in the outside world. These are the so-called "push factors" for the migration. One of the "pull factors" was the fact that Southeast Asia offered opportunities for those emigrants. For example, the Dutch East Indies became open to foreign private business around that time, and the situations in other parts of the region, such as today's Malaysia and Singapore, were also favorable to them. The improvement of transportation also facilitated the migration to the region. The flow of migration became even greater after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. By the first half of the 20th century, this migration had greatly influenced the population of Hadhramaut. For example, van der Meulen, who traveled to Hadhramaut in 1931, reported that, with regard to people originally from the city of Hurayda in Wadi Amd, Hadhramaut, that the number living in Java was twice that living in the city of Hurayda itself. By the time the Japanese occupied Java, the number of Arab immigrants and their descendants on the island was close to 80,000.²⁾

The Arabs who migrated to Southeast Asia to seek their fortune were mainly engaged in trade, money lending, and shipping, but also included religious scholars and teachers. These people are said to have contributed to the propagation of the orthodox Shafi'ite School in Indonesia. In particular, a group called the sayyid has

a genealogy that can be traced back to the prophet Muhammad through his daughter, Fatima, and thus were respected (or even venerated) by the people. Being from the center of the Islamic world, the Arabs exercised a certain level of influence on religious matters in Southeast Asia.

One of the characteristics of this migration activity is that the emigrants did not lose their ties with their homeland. While Hadhramis became assimilated with the societies of their host countries, mainly through marriage, they retained their identity as Arabs. Some of them returned to Hadhramaut after accumulating wealth, even twenty years after the initial departure. Those who made fortunes in their host countries invested their money in the construction of roads, religious schools, mosques, and irrigation systems in Hadhramaut.³⁾ Emigrants were connected spiritually and materially with their homeland, and the residents of Hadhramaut also needed their help. A considerable part of their income consisted of remittances from their relatives living abroad, and the economy of Hadhramaut depended heavily on the movement of people and goods across the Indian Ocean.⁴⁾

When one puts the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia in the context described above, the meaning of the event for Hadhramis becomes obvious. It led to the destruction of their network in the Indian Ocean, and the occupation affected the Arab communities in both Southeast Asia and Hadhramaut. First of all, the Arabs living in Southeast Asia were separated from their homeland. It was the beginning of a period in which they had to live in the society of their host countries without direct and close contact with their homeland. Due to these circumstances, a change of identity of the Arabs might have occurred. The Japanese policy was to elevate the social status and the living standards of the native Indonesians, and they facilitated the involvement in affairs of state by Indonesians, at least officially. In that sense, the Japanese period saw the beginning of Indonesia as a nation state. Although I do not intend to maintain that the formation of Indonesia was due to the Japanese occupation, the period at least can be seen as being a turning point for the country. The situation of the Arab immigrants seems to have changed during the course of events following Japanese occupation. The majority of Arabs in Indonesia came to consider Indonesia as their permanent home,⁵⁾ and Hadhrami organizations in Java came to bear an Indonesian outlook in that period. An example of this is the case of Al-Irshad.⁶⁾ Although what happened after the war has often been reported on, the situation of the Arabs during the Japanese occupation is yet to be studied. Could this change in Arab identity after the war and independence be traced back to the period under Japanese occupation? Did the policy of the Japanese military government toward Arabs influence this change? Did the Japanese have any concrete policy toward Arabs as a racial group? Though it is very difficult to give concrete answers all of these questions, in this paper I shall suggest an answer to the questions, especially the last one.

While the influence of the Japanese occupation on Arabs in Southeast Asia seems to have been spiritual, Arabs in Hadhramaut lost one of their most important sources of income as a result of the occupation, and were materially and financially

damaged. During the first half of 1942, most of Southeast Asia came under Japanese rule and the economy of the region became a part of the Japanese economic bloc, and was separated from the other regions surrounding the Indian Ocean. Since Japan's real purpose for occupying the region was to secure labor and materials for sustaining the war, they strictly regulated the movement of goods. Remittance was restricted even to places within the boundary of the Japanese territory and remittance to Hadhramaut, a region across the Indian Ocean and under British control, became totally impossible. Since a substantial part of Hadhrami economy depended on the financial flow from Southeast Asia, Hadhramaut must have been one of the most severely affected regions outside the Japanese territory during this period. It is generally believed that the damage caused by the famine in 1943 and 1944 was greatly aggravated by the termination of remittance and the ensuing shortage of funds to buy food.⁷⁾ Questions such as what kind of network was there in the Indian Ocean and how the Japanese damaged that network should be answered by detailed research on the subject. The important fact is that the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia changed forever the pattern of the movement of Hadhramis, and large-scale migration to Southeast Asia came to an end. This was partly due to the acquisition of independence by the countries of Southeast Asia. The newly formed nation states restricted remittance abroad, mainly because of economic difficulties. The British authorities, which controlled Hadhramaut, took the matter very seriously and sought reopening of remittance. It was in vain, however, and from the 1950's Hadhramis gradually changed the destination of their migration to the gulf states; countries that provided new opportunities for them. World War II was the decisive turning point for migration, and it can be said that Hadhramaut gradually lost the strong tie with Southeast Asia.

Thus, the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia meant that, not only that the region came under Japanese rule, but also that the network of people and goods across the Indian Ocean was suddenly cut. The fact seems to provide a new viewpoint for researchers studying the influence of the Japanese occupation in Asia. Studies on the Japanese occupation tend to deal only with changes in the occupied territory, but the influence of the occupation reached far beyond the borders of the region under Japanese control. The destruction of the economy in Hadhramaut is a typical example of how vast regions around the Indian Ocean were connected by transregional networks that involved the movement of people and goods. Although detailed studies on the mechanism of the ties between the two regions, Hadhramaut and Southeast Asia, are yet to be done, the role of Japanese occupation on the destruction of the economy of Hadhramaut is undeniable.

The above points highlight the basic problems that confronted the Arabs in Southeast Asia during the Japanese occupation. The study of Arabs in Southeast Asia is relatively new, and few full-fledged studies on the subject have been carried out. The point I should emphasize here is that the perspective of the Arabs living in Southeast Asia and the Hadhrami networks in the Indian Ocean puts new historical light on the Japanese occupation of the region. As a first step for further studies, in

this paper I will discuss the treatment of Arabs under the Japanese occupation in Java, using some materials written by the Japanese.

2. TREATMENT OF ARABS UNDER JAPANESE RULE - OPPOSING VIEWS

The policy of the Japanese military government in Java toward foreign minority groups differed according to their racial status. For example, the Dutch, other Westerners (presumably except for Germans and Italians), and Eurasians were considered as "enemy aliens" and the Japanese placed severe restrictions on their activities. The Arabs were also subject to several restrictions and extra taxes, but in the case of the Arabs the situation may have been complicated and thus difficult to generalize. First of all, although they were categorized as "foreigners" under the Japanese rule, a substantial portion, probably more than half, of "Arabs" were born in Java and did not know their "homeland." Since few Hadhrami women migrated, those who born in Java were mostly children of marriages between male Arab migrants and local women and therefore were more assimilated to the host society than others. Moreover, their status as Muslims would have made the problem more complicated. The policy of the Japanese military government was to respect Islam, the religion of the "natives" (Indonesians). Putting aside the question of whether or not the Japanese really "respected" Islam, Muslim leaders, especially kyais, religious teachers at the village level, were treated relatively favorably during the occupation. The problem here is the distinctive status of Arabs within Indonesian Islam. Although the presence of Arabs within Indonesian Islam should not be overrated, Arabs exercised a relatively significant influence when their number is considered. Therefore, how the Japanese treated Arabs in the framework of their Islamic policy in Java is another issue.

Since the Islamic policy during the occupation was one of the remarkable aspects of the Japanese military administration, it is natural that the treatment of Arabs has been discussed in the light of that policy. There are few studies on the Arabs in Southeast Asia under Japanese occupation, but some scholars do mention the situation of Arabs during that period. Harry J. Benda, who wrote a book on the policy of the Japanese military government toward Indonesian Islam, maintains that Arabs rather suffered due to the unfriendly attitude of the Japanese authorities. According to him, the treatment of the Arabs by the Japanese was far from friendly, although it is difficult to prove that the Japanese military government had a coherent anti-Arab policy. One indication of the hostile attitude toward the Arabs was the prohibition of the use of the Arabic language in Arab schools. When the Japanese army landed on Java, most of schools were closed, in fear of upcoming battles on the island. Later, those schools were allowed to reopen on the condition that the native languages of Java be used in the classrooms. According to a contemporary Malay newspaper "Asia Raya," the permission to reopen the Arab schools was issued at a relatively late time. However, in 1944, "when active

Islamic support for the defense of Java urged the authorities to yet greater concessions,” the Japanese military government suddenly declared that they would consider Arabs as Indonesians. By this declaration, Arabs became preferred foreigners in Java.⁸⁾

Benda assumes that the unfriendly, if not hostile, attitude of the Japanese military government toward Arabs stemmed from their fear of pan-Islamism, the ideology that had troubled the former ruler, the Dutch. It was said that those who carried a new flame of the ideology were newly arriving Arab immigrants. The problems related to pan-Islamism were so serious that in the turn of the twentieth century Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch advisor, who insisted on the abolition of discriminatory regulations against Arabs, suggested that the government forbid the entry of any more Arab immigrants. Benda maintains that the Japanese authorities, like the Dutch, recognized pan-Islamism as an idea that was completely foreign to them and a major obstacle to successful rule of Java. Thus, they were cautious of the behavior of the Arabs and imposed restrictions on their activities. This said, Benda also pointed out that, since Java and the rest of Indonesia were virtually separated from the Middle East, the center and the source of the idea of pan-Islamism, the Japanese authorities were not as cautious as their predecessor.⁹⁾

On the other hand, Van der Kroef has an almost opposite view. He maintains that, because of their connection with Islam, Arabs were treated almost the same as Indonesians during the Japanese occupation, and points out that this is remarkable compared to the treatment of other foreign groups such as Eurasians, Europeans and the Chinese, who were considered as enemy aliens and suffered from persecution during the occupation. Furthermore, as the Japanese military government had a policy to respect and promote Islam in the country, Arabs, who were thought to be the bearers of “pure” Islam, were treated favorably by the occupation authorities. He concluded that the attitude of the Japanese authorities toward Arabs made Indonesians reaffirm their superiority.¹⁰⁾

Although the views of Benda and Kroef are almost opposite, the two have the same idea behind their theories. Both Benda and Kroef believe that the policy toward the Arabs was set in conjunction with the Islamic policy of the Japanese military government. Benda maintains that the Japanese authorities were cautious of the Arabs because of their special connection with Islam while Kroef maintains that they were favored by the Japanese for the same reason. It seems that both scholars assumed that the Arab policy, if such a policy ever existed, was a part of Japan’s policy toward Indonesian Islam. To examine whether or not this view is correct, it is necessary to reconstruct the treatment of Arabs by the Japanese military government.

3. THE POLICY OF THE JAPANESE MILITARY TOWARD THE ARABS

During the Dutch period, Arabs, together with Chinese and other non-European foreigners, were categorized as *Vreemde Oosterlingen* (Foreign Orientals) by the

government. This distinction seemed to be kept in the Japanese period. Arabs were categorized as foreigners, although most of the Arabs in Java did not even know their "homeland." Because of their status as foreigners, various duties and restrictions were imposed on them.

First, the Japanese military government required all foreigners to register at the government office. According to the proclamation of the government, all foreign residents whose age was more than seventeen, except for Japanese, had to register their nationality, place of birth, address, name, age, occupation and other information at the government office of their residence.

The foreigners were divided into two categories: Westerners (Europeans and Americans), and other foreigners (Chinese, Arabs, Indians and other non-Western foreigners). The difference between these two categories appeared in the amount of the registration tax they had to pay; the registration tax for western men and women was 150 fl. and 80 fl. respectively, while the tax for other foreigners was 100 fl. and 50 fl. for men and women respectively.¹¹⁾ The amount of the tax seemed to have been relatively high for some of them. Shortly after the proclamation, the military government declared that those who could not afford to pay the tax at once would be allowed able to pay it in installments (over a period of five or ten months, depending on solvency). The government granted a temporary grace for those who could not even afford to pay in installments.¹²⁾

Another financial burden imposed on Arabs was the special war tax. Europeans, Chinese and other Asian residents who had properties which worth more than 25,000 fl. or an annual income of more than 3,000 fl. had to pay a special tax to support the Japanese war effort. The calculation of the tax was based on that of the Dutch East Indies, and Asian foreign residents had to pay 35 times the property tax that they paid during the Dutch period and/or three months' of income tax.¹³⁾ Those who did not meet the deadline were charged an additional 5% on the original amount of the tax.¹⁴⁾ It is not clear from the text of the order if the category "other Asian residents" included Arabs. However, it is improbable that Arabs were exempted from the duty.

As Benda also pointed out, the use of Arabic language in schools was also forbidden. After the conquest of Java, only schools which used languages indigenous to the native population (e.g. Javanese, Malay, Sundanese and Madurese) were allowed to reopen.¹⁵⁾ Arabic was considered a foreign language and thus excluded from places of learning. This measure had a serious influence on both religious schools and schools of the Arab community. As the Qur'an could not be taught without using Arabic, the issue was more serious than the Japanese military government thought. At the end of 1942, Japan permitted the use of Arabic in schools. However, the use of Arabic was limited to religious instruction, and schools in the Arab community that used Arabic for general instruction continued to suffer under the policy.¹⁶⁾

Aside from these measures, which are clearly documented, Japanese newspapers, reports, and confidential documents of that period express the view of

the Japanese toward Arabs. It is difficult to argue whether or not the views regarding Arabs expressed in these materials were a direct reflection of the policy of the Japanese military government, but they do indicate certain tendencies in the Japanese view of the Arab minorities in Java, and, generally, the Arabs are described negatively. First, the Japanese regarded the Arabs (and the Chinese), as being exploiters of the Indonesians. For example, one Japanese newspaper reported on the miserable living conditions of the Indonesians, and described how the Arabs exploited them. According to this report, when Indonesians buy furniture and clothes from Arabs, they pay for the items in installments. However, if they get behind with the installments, the Arab merchants expropriate the commodities without any compensation, and force them into a state of economic misery again.¹⁷⁾ Another report says that because of the way Arabs did business with Indonesians, they regarded Arabs as stingy and greedy people and hated them.¹⁸⁾ At the local economy level, the Arabs had the upper hand over the Indonesians. As the Indonesians were not generally skilled traders, foreign minorities such as the Chinese and Arabs, who had experience doing business as middlemen and as international traders, dominated the regional economy. The Japanese military government was well aware of this situation and thought that it was necessary to reduce the influence of these wealthy minorities.¹⁹⁾ Therefore, the Arabs were presented in Japanese documents as being the cause of the low standard of living of the Indonesians.

These reports and articles, however, do not have a particular anti-Arab character. Rather, they were intended to reveal the necessity of elevating the living standard of Indonesians. The Japanese military promoted, at least officially, the building of a "New Java" by Indonesians. Thus, the Indonesians, who were formerly at the lowest level of the social strata, were suddenly elevated to the highest level of society.²⁰⁾ During the whole process, the Japanese military government tried to reduce economic domination by a small part of the population. Economic exploitation by the Arabs and the Chinese were referred to as a typical example of the misfortune Indonesians had experienced. In fact, however, the Japanese military was also hostile to wealthy Indonesians,²¹⁾ so the problem of economic domination by foreign minorities was therefore a class issue rather than a racial issue.

With regard to the relationship between the Arabs and Islam, the Japanese recognized the superior position of Arabs in Indonesian Islam. A confidential report by the Japanese military government says that the Arabs had the upper hand in terms of religious matters, mainly because they were from the Arabian Peninsula, the center of Islam. The special position of Arabs among foreign minorities was also certified by an incident that occurred after the occupation of Java. Shops owned by Chinese suffered from raids by Indonesians, but Arab-owned shops were spared. The report concluded that it was probably because the Arabs were Muslims like the Indonesians, and came from the central land of Islam.²²⁾ Arabs were prominent among local Muslim leaders, too. For example, four Arabs were

included among the twenty-two members of the board of management for the reconstituted Islamic federation during the initial period of the Japanese occupation.²³⁾ The presence of Arabs among Muslim leaders, however, did not affect all Arab residents. The Japanese observed that some Arabs were respected by Indonesians as religious scholars or leaders, but most Arabs were not pious, and the only aspect which Arabs and Indonesians had in common was their "status" as Muslims.²⁴⁾ Also, Indonesians were discontent with the domination of Arabs in the religious matters and tried to gain the upper hand after Japan came to rule Java.²⁵⁾ The influence of the Arabs may have been reduced after Arab associations were excluded from the Masjumi, a Muslim support organization set up under the auspices of the Japanese military government.²⁶⁾ Therefore, it is improbable that the Japanese favored Arabs because of their special position in religious matters.

Although the Japanese military government categorized Arabs as foreigners and had relatively negative view of them, it did not intend to totally alienate them. Rather, the Japanese expected Arabs to cooperate with Indonesians in the making of the "New Java." Some activities of the Japanese indicated their attitude toward foreign minorities. For example, the Japanese held a round table discussion in Surabaya shortly after landing on Java, inviting representatives from each ethnic group. Mr. Basu-uedan,²⁷⁾ a cotton spinner in Surabaya attended the talk as the Arab representative. During the discussion, every attendant expressed hope for the new era and made requests to the Japanese military.²⁸⁾ The reason for the Japanese expectations that Arabs cooperate with Indonesians was closely related to the real purpose of the Japanese occupation of Java, i.e. to secure the materials and labor in order to sustain the war. To accomplish this, cooperation by the whole population of Java was necessary. The works of Japanese writers conscripted by the military, which must have reflected their intention, emphasized the oneness of the whole population regardless of their ethnic background.²⁹⁾

The expectations of the Japanese military government regarding Arab cooperation culminated in a 1944 proclamation in which the government declared that it would consider Arabs as Indonesians. According to the proclamation, the Arabs had come to understand the war situation and to cooperate with the Indonesians and join the Jawa Hoko Kai. Therefore the Japanese military government would now consider the Arabs as Indonesians, and eliminate the foreign status. Shortly after the issue of this proclamation, Arabs were exempted from registration duty and payment of the registration fee.³⁰⁾ Were the Japanese authorities really satisfied with the behavior for the Arabs? The text of the very same proclamation suggests otherwise. It says that some of the Arabs still think that they are superior to the native population, stick to their old customs and traditions, think about only profit for themselves, and do not understand the overall situation of the war. It also says that the Arabs must thank the Japanese military government for this treatment, and participate in the building of the "New Java."³¹⁾ Why then did the Japanese military government accord the status of Indonesians to the Arabs? The key to the answer is the time that the notice was issued. During

the course of 1944, the situation of war became increasingly unfavorable for Japan. Although Java was not directly involved in the war, or perhaps because of this, the Japanese military needed the cooperation of all of the residents of the island to secure labor and materials for the war. Granting Arabs the same status as Indonesians was a part of the process of unifying the whole population of Java. In other words, the side that needed the proclamation more was the Japanese military government, not the Arab community. In fact, other foreign minorities were given almost same treatment by the Japanese military government. In the same year, Eurasians, (people with mixed Indonesian and European (mostly Dutch) parentage), were granted status equal to Indonesians. Furthermore, exemption from paying registration taxes was given to the Chinese before the Arabs. Thus, since the change of status was not peculiar to the Arab community, they did not really become a privileged foreign group as Benda maintained.

Thus, the typical view of the Japanese authorities toward Arabs was that they were “a minority group which dominated, together with other foreign minorities, the economy of the island, exploited and looked down Indonesians, and did not cooperate with them.” Also, they “had the upper hand in terms of religious matters because of their place of origin and could exercise certain influence on the population.” The most important point for the Japanese must have been the fact that they had an influence on the community of the island despite their small number and contemptuous attitude toward Indonesians. In the eyes of the Japanese authorities, Arabs must have appeared as a possible source of disorder, if not a threat, to the society. Since keeping the public order was necessary condition for securing labor and materials for the war, the existence of such a minority must have been a matter of concern for the Japanese military.³²⁾

The whole discussion suggests that there is another aspect of the Arabs other than Arabs as being the bearers of “pure” Islam, i.e. Arabs as a mere minority group. From the sources that I used for the present paper, I could not find any evidence that the Japanese military government recognized Arabs, as a collective, as the bearers of “pure” Islam and paid special attention to them. Rather, Arabs are generally mentioned in the Japanese sources as being one of the foreign minority groups of Java who, together with the Chinese, Eurasians and others, dominated the economy of the island and were reluctant to cooperate with Indonesians. However, it is true that Arabs were not categorized as enemy aliens as Eurasians were. Their assimilation with Indonesians through marriage and their status as Muslims must have helped them to some extent. Thus, it can be said that among foreign groups, Arabs could live in relative tranquility.

Another point I should mention is that Arabs as an ethnic group were by no means a monolithic entity. Among Arabs in Java, there were religious scholars and teachers who were greatly respected by the population, but there were also Arabs who exploited the people through money lending and trade. The Indonesians were well aware of the distinction between the two kinds of Arabs. From the time before Japanese occupation, there were two expressions used to refer to Arabs. The term

“Orang Arabi” was used for people with a good understanding of Islam who were usually regarded as Muslim scholars and respected by the people. The term “Orang Hadramiet” was used for those who represented the negative aspects of Arabs.³³⁾ The Japanese authorities also noticed differences between the wealthy and non-wealthy Arabs. A confidential report says that wealthy Arabs were of relatively good conduct and well disposed to Indonesians whereas those living in poor conditions tended to exploit the Indonesians, who in turn came to hate them.³⁴⁾ The almost opposite characteristics which different members of Arab communities exhibited must have made it difficult for the Japanese authorities to determine their attitude toward Arabs as a collective.

Considering all the points in the discussion above, I conclude that the Japanese military government probably did not have any concrete policy toward Arabs as an ethnic group. The Arabs were neither favored nor disfavored by the occupation authorities as a whole. The problems that involved Arabs were probably treated on a case-by-case basis, and the decision in each case would have been political in nature, meaning that any decision result would have been the one most favorable to achieving the goals of the military administration. At the very least, I could not find any evidence that the Japanese authorities were particularly anxious about the tie between Arabs and pan-Islamism, as Benda maintained. Nor did I find an indication that Arabs as a whole were favored because of their status as Muslims, the view that Van der Kroef expressed. Apart from the fact that some leading Arab figures were Muslim leaders, it is probable that Arabs were treated in most cases as a mere foreign minority group. It should not be forgotten, however, that, when compared to other alien residents, the Muslim status of the Arabs probably helped them to some extent.

4. CONCLUSION

World War II and the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia was a period of isolation for both Arab communities in Java and their homeland, Hadhramaut. Although it looks as if the occupation of Southeast Asia by the Japanese was a disaster for the Arab immigrants living in that region, it was their homeland that suffered more severely in that period. The termination of remittances from Southeast Asia resulted in a shortage of money in Hadhramaut, and the local economy came to standstill. In this sense, one can say that Hadhramaut, the homeland of the Arab immigrants, was “separated” and “isolated” from the Arab communities in Southeast Asia. The phenomenon clearly indicates the fact that there was a relationship of mutual dependence between the two regions across the Indian Ocean. The Hadhramis in Southeast Asia depended on Hadhramaut as the source of their identity, while the residents of Hadhramaut economically relied on the wealth of other regions around the Indian Ocean, the most notable of which was Southeast Asia. The Indian Ocean provided Hadhramis with a space in which a dependent region could develop a self-sufficient network of people and goods.

The treatment of Arabs by the Japanese military government was the reflection of both their separation and assimilation policy. During the course of the occupation, Arabs were legally separated from the native population of Java, as was the case in the Dutch period. At the same time, however, they were expected to cooperate with Indonesians in supporting the Japanese war effort in the interests of Greater East Asia and in building the "New Java." With the end of colonial era and the formation of the nation-states around the Indian Ocean, the Hadhrami diaspora gradually lost its identity as Arabs and became more assimilated with the societies of the host countries. How the period under Japanese occupation contributed to this process is not clear from the materials used in this paper. However, the period probably was the turning point toward greater assimilation. Though the occupation lasted only three and half years, the Hadhramis, some of whom had already declared themselves as Indonesians before Japanese period, came to cooperate with the Indonesians.

In this paper, I have attempted to point out main issues surrounding Arabs in Southeast Asia under the Japanese occupation. Regrettably, however, most of the important questions are left unanswered. For example, the situation of Arab organizations such as al-Irshad and Partai Arab Indonesia during the period, how the Arabs reacted to the Japanese military government's policy, how the identity of Arabs changed because of the occupation experience, and other problems should be fully studied in the future. Since the greatest obstacle to further study is the dearth of source materials, extensive collection of materials on the subject in Japanese, Indonesian and other languages as well as interviews with people directly or indirectly involved in the events seems to be indispensable.

NOTES

- 1) As far as I know, there were three conferences on Hadhramaut in the 1990's, two of which were exclusively on Hadhrami migration or Hadhramis outside Hadhramaut.
- 2) Huub de Jonge, 1997, p.95.
- 3) Lekon 1997, pp.274-275.
- 4) There is dispute as to whether or not the dependence on remittances from Southeast Asia destroyed the self-sufficiency of the Hadhrami economy. For an overview of the opinions by various researchers as well as a discussion on the impact of remittance on Hadhramaut, see Lekon 1997.
- 5) Van der Kroef 1953, p.323.
- 6) Mobini-Kesheeh 1997, p.247.
- 7) For the brief account of the damage of Hadhramaut, see Lekon 1997, p.272.
- 8) Benda 1958, pp.126-131.
- 9) Benda 1958, p.126.
- 10) Van der Kroef, 1953, pp.322-323.
- 11) "Fukoku (Proclamation)" No. 7 (April 11, 1942) in Osamu Kan Pō No. 1, p.3. Indonesian translation of the proclamation is included in Kan Pō Special Number (Nomor Istimewa), p.10.

- 12) "Fukoku (Proclamation)" No. 19 (June 11, 1942) in Osamu Kan Pō No. 1, p.6. Indonesian translation in Kan Pō Special Number (Nomor Istimewa), pp.17-18.
- 13) "Padjak-perang Teristimewa: Keterangan dari Pembesar Gunseibu di Jogjakarta (The Special War Tax: the Explanation by the Japanese Military Government in Yogyakarta)" in Kan Pō No. 1, p.27.
- 14) "Makloemat: Padjak Perang Istimewa Haroes Diloenasi Selekas-lekasnja (Official Notice: The Special War Tax Must be Paid as soon as Possible)" (September 30,1942) in Kan Pō No. 4, p.12.
- 15) "Fukoku (Proclamation)" No. 12 (April 29, 1942) in Osamu Kan Pō No. 1 (December 16, 1942), p.4. Indonesian translation in Kan Pō Special Number (Nomor Istimewa), p.12.
- 16) According to Benda, only seven Arab schools had obtained opening permits from the government by October 21, 1942. Benda 1958, p.243, note 27.
- 17) The Asahi, April 27, 1942.
- 18) Zen Jawa Kaikyō Jōkyō Chōsasho, p.354.
- 19) For example, a report on the situation in Pekalongan says that it is necessary to redress the domination of the Chinese and Arabs within the regional economy. Jawa Nenkan, p.194.
- 20) The Asahi, July 14, 1943.
- 21) Gandasubrata 1953, passim.
- 22) Zen Jawa Kaikyō Jōkyō Chōsasho, p.354.
- 23) The formation of the federation was the first attempt by Japan to unite all Muslim institutions under Japan's instruction. Benda 1958, p.116.
- 24) Zen Jawa Kaikyō Jōkyō Chōsasho, p.354.
- 25) Zen Jawa Kaikyō Jōkyō Chōsasho, p.354.
- 26) Benda 1958, p.152.
- 27) Transliteration from Japanese. Most probably, this person is Abdurrahman Baswedan, one of the founders of Partai Arab Indonesia (PAI).
- 28) The Asahi, April 5, 1942.
- 29) For example, Asano wrote that those days Arabs and Chinese were participating in the San A Undo (The Three A Movement), studying Japanese with Indonesians. Asano 1944, p.115.
- 30) "Seijirei (Government Order)" No. 35 (August 22, 1944) in Osamu Kan Pō No. 21, p.1
- 31) "Pengoemoeman Gunseikanbu: Tentang Memperlakoekan Bangsa Arab Sebagai Bangsa Indonesia (Proclamation of Gunsei Kanbu: About Considering Arabs as Indonesians)" (July 1, 1944) in Kan Pō No. 48, pp.13-14.
- 32) In fact, Dr. van Nieuwenhuijze, in his conversation with Benda, questioned the idea that the Japanese were afraid of the relationship between Arabs and pan-Islamism. Benda 1958, p.242, note 19.
- 33) Van der Kroef 1955. p.306.
- 34) Zen Jawa Kaikyō Jōkyō Chōsasho, p.354.

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