

## The Japanese Legacy: What's Still Left in The Education System in Indonesia?

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### Abstract

Compared to the Dutch, the Japanese occupation period in Indonesia was considerably short-term for “only” three and a half years. However, during the occupation period, the Japanese had changed policies created by the Dutch, particularly in education. The policy alteration that the Japanese made have unnoticeably become part of a colonial legacy in the Indonesian education system. The foremost obvious example was that the Dutch created dualism system in education for the Dutch East Indies (former name of Indonesia) that opened education access for solely Indonesian noble/royal families. When the Japanese came, they eliminated the dualism system into spirit of unity and nationalism. Hence, they transformed the natives' education system to promote *Bahasa Indonesia* as the national language, abolished the gap status and disparity between *rakyat jelata* (common people/mob) and *orang ningrat* (gentility) to get education and teacher certification to Indonesian people. The Japanese had also adjusted the study period to a system 6-3-3. Moreover, people had to attend the military training (*Kyoren*) to learn lines march (*Seinendan*). The Japanese had also introduced *taiso* (physical training) for people who would attend military service. The military background had boldly influenced the concept of education in Indonesia as built by the Japanese troops during the occupation era. The troops introduced the Japanese flag, national anthem, national language, and physical training. This research argues that there are concealed legacies from the Japanese occupation in Indonesia that have been left unnoticed. Thus, the main aim of this study is to figure out what elements of the Japanese occupation legacy can still be found in education system in Indonesia today. A historical qualitative method will be used to elaborate data from relevant historical documents and literatures. The result of this study will show as follows: 1) the comparison of the education system between the Dutch and Japanese, and 2) the result of the Japanese legacy in the Indonesian education system.

### Keywords

Japanese Occupation, Military Discipline, Legacy, Indonesian Education System

## **Introduction**

Dutch East Indies (DEI), later known as Indonesia, was occupied by Japanese troops for three and a half years. It lasted from 1942 to 1945 as worse leading consequences towards the World War II to South East Asia. According to the history, the World War II was started in Asia by Japan from 1931 to 1945. At the time, Japan was recognized as the fourth largest army on the earth after Britain, the United States and France which were called the “four power treaty” (Dania, 2014). Hence, Japan appeared as the strongest nation in Asia. As one of the members from the winning side of World War I, Japanese troops moved its further military ambition toward the Asia-Pacific War. Japan's ambition was not only war, but also to be a leader of Great-East-Asia. Therefore, Japan was eager to build “Prosperity for Great East-Asia” since 1940 (Idris, 2017). After Japan and the United States' diplomatic relationship was exacerbated, Japan started to invade Southeast Asia in the mid of 1941.

Eventually, on December 11, 1941, the Japanese military troops reached the Dutch East Indies, in Sulawesi island, and a month later, on January 10, 1942, they landed on Borneo island, later called Kalimantan (Soetopo, 2011, pp. 108 – 112). The Japanese troops mostly stayed in the center of the island because of natural resources. Oilfields and refineries were used to support Japanese effort in the war. Finally, the Netherlands declared without condition the end of their colonial rule by signing the Kalijati treaty on March 9, 1942 in Kalijati, Subang West-Java. The Queen Wilhelmina asked all the Dutch to come back and to protect their territory from German. In addition, after Dutch East Indies was taken over by Japanese Troops, Japan took control of the oil base on Kalimantan Island, in Tarakan City. They also expanded their movement to Palembang, South Sumatra and finally arrived in Java Island (Soetanto, 2011, p. 108 – 112). Java was considered as the rice bowl of the archipelago as well as a sugar exporter (Ricklefs, 2008, p. 34).

Japanese troops that stayed in DEI played a significant role in the war effort as suppliers for other Southeast Asia regions, such as the Philippines, Indochina, and Thailand. Surprisingly, their intention couldn't be seen clearly by the DEI people, precisely the departure of Japanese troops to DEI was welcomed by the people and they came up with the motto “Big Brother” (Eko, n.d.). Japan offered a new hope for DEI through the concept of propaganda “Prosperity for Great East-Asia”. They came with promises, such as the following 1) independence, 2) returning nationalist sentiment, and 3) glory of PAN-ASIANISM over Western imperialism (Mahayan, 2013). These promises meant they didn't receive substantial resistance from the DEI people. Japan could win the people's heart in DEI by evoking the spirit of nationalism that was forbidden during Dutch colonization. During the Dutch colonialization, the value of nationalism was emphasized on spirit of gaining independence, yet during Japanese occupation, nationalism was raised consciousness of contributing

people's voice and involvement, especially in politics (Kenichi, 1996). By this matter, people in DEI were importantly started to be admitted their voice and thought for advancing their region. In fact, DEI was officially taken by Japan starting 1942 with altering governance as the main priority of Japanese occupation in DEI. Nevertheless, Japan changed Dutch East Indies' society, economy, politics, culture and education, especially forming the regulation into purpose of Greater East Asia Coprosperity Sphere (Lapian, 1996).

Even though the education system during Japanese occupation emphasized the military, Japan altered the education system legacy from Dutch colonization. As nationalism was brought to DEI, education was remade for all people in DEI without separate levels. Japan abolished the dualism of education and returned the usage of Bahasa Indonesia as medium of instruction (Paauw, 2009). Furthermore, they also left legacy on other education activities to evoke nationalism that still exist today.

### **Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What policy changes related to education were made during Dutch Colonization?
- 2) What policy changes during Japanese occupation and Japanese legacies go unnoticed in the current Indonesian education system?

### **Research Objectives**

The main goals of this study were to examine the Japanese occupation in Dutch East Indies from 1942 to 1945. Japan also influenced education policies in Indonesia. Thus, in order to address the main goal of this study, there were the following objectives:

- 1) To illustrate the policy alterations from Dutch colonization on education system during Japanese occupation in Dutch East Indies from 1942 – 1945.
- 2) To analyze the existing legacy from the Japanese occupation on the education system in Indonesia.

### **Research Methodology**

This study applied a historical method that covers some stages, starting from selecting topics, collecting and verifying data, interpreting, analyzing, and writing a systematic research. In collecting data, a heuristic method is applied to gather material. In the first step, investigation for primary data was conducted by exploring archives which are mostly from the National Library and the Ministry of Education in Jakarta and books provided from the Ministry of Education. For secondary data, some books, articles and journals were taken from libraries and online archives. The second step was to verify the data collections by testing their validity, authenticity, originality and also their relation to the research topic. The data verification stage can be differentiated into two forms: internal and external. By committing

internal investigation, data verification and credibility are corresponded to their contents, while by committing external investigation, originality of the data is checked. Besides verifying data, comparing data archives is also committed among similar data to find the most objective materials. Next, the verified data are interpreted. In this step, data are analyzed to find their relevance, backgrounds, and their importance to the research focus, especially to any photo documentaries. In the final step, the writing process is conducted in a systematic way so that the research is understandable and appropriate with historical writing methods.

### Japanese Occupation in the Dutch East Indies in 1942 - 1945

The ambition of “Greater-East-Asia Coprosperity Sphere” leading by Japan was well celebrated by DEI people. They finally arrived in DEI in the mid of 1941 and yet the DEI was still under Dutch rule. After the Kalijati treaty, Japan started spreading the slogan 3-A. The slogan was essentially able to attract the DEI people. The 3A movement had meaning, as follows (Sugiyono, et.al, 2005);



**Figure 1** Poster of 3A Propaganda

*Nippon Tjahaja Asia*

*Japan is the light of Asia*

*Nippon Pelindoeng Asia*

*Japan is the protector of Asia*

*Nippon Pemimpin Asia*

*Japan is the leader of Asia*

The slogan 3A raised sympathy and nationalism of the DEI people. Firstly, Japan showed their anti West-imperialism through abolishing western ideology 3G (Gold, Gospel, Glory) by spirit of Pan-ASIANISM (Supardan, 2008, p. 96-106). This base influenced all aspects of life, like economy, social, military and education. Furthermore, the noteworthy alteration was the areas of administration from 15 areas in Dutch colonization to 3 areas in Japanese colonization.

**Table 1** The Change of the Administration Area in Dutch East Indies between Dutch Colonization and Japanese Occupation (Military Report, 1919, p.6; M.C. Ricklefs, 1993, p. 250)

No.	Administrative Areas in Dutch Colonization	No.	Administrative Areas in Japanese Occupation
1.	Sumatra and neighboring in-lands	1.	Java and Madura
2.	The Archipelago of Bintang or Riouw	2.	Sumatra Island
3.	The Lingga Archipelago	3.	Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, Nusa Tenggara and Irian Jaya Island
4.	The Karimata Archipelago		
5.	The Tambilan Islands		
6.	The Anambas Islands		
7.	The Natoena Islands		
8.	The group of Banka and Billiton with neighboring islands		
9.	Java with Madoera and neighboring Islands		
10.	Borneo		
11.	Celebs with neighboring Islands		
12.	All other islands lying east of Borneo and Java		
13.	The northernmost portion of Timor		
14.	The northern part of Borneo		
15.	The Sulu Islands		

The change of administration area asserted that Japan enhanced unity among secular and religious nationalist (Imam, 1999). Another noticeable adjustment was that Japan offered a *pro-pribumi* (indigenous) and pro-independent ideology (Yang, 1998). It strengthened the trust of the DEI people to side with Japan. By the time the Japanese doctrine the DEI people, Japan took advantages to include the ideology of *Hokko-Ichi-u* (Eight crown cords, one roof) which directed to their ambition of "Greater-East-Asia Coprosperity Sphere through Japan" because they believed that "Asia for Asians" (Sugiyono, et.al., 2005). In fact, the reason Japanese troops entering DEI was to acquire natural resources for the war effort.

The alteration was still continuing to other factors. In the social system, Japanese military government (*Gunseikanbu*) altered organization bureaucracy. They made an organization in each level of region respectively. For instance; *Tonarigumi* and *Azzazyokai*, known as *Rukun Tetangga* and *Rukun Warga*, as well as a region was led by *ken-cho*,

known as mayor (Aman, 1999). Likewise, the economy system changed according to the needs of war, like Japanese troops built the rice organizing committee, *Shokuro Kanri Zimusoho* (SKZ) to supply rice to other islands out of Java and Southeast Asia region (Aman, 1999). This was in contrast to the Dutch colonization which consisted of mainly expanding the economy. Furthermore, Japan changed government system from centralization to decentralization (Perdana, 2010). The cultural system in DEI was also changed in term of abolishing dualism. During Dutch colonization, the DEI people were separated by the strata between common people/Mob (*Rakyat Jelata*) and gentility (*ningrat*) (Larasati, 2013). It was affected different rights to socialize, especially get to education. In actual fact, those changes were influenced by political interest. Obviously, it could be reflected on education military, forced labor (*romusha*) and worship the Japanese empire.

### **The Policy Alteration of Education during the Japanese Occupation in Dutch East Indies**

The education that was held by Japanese occupation emphasized the spirit of military. Due to the military, the education started to eliminate dualism as the legacy from Dutch colonization. Systematically, Japanese replaced the Dutch education system to simpler education. Dutch colonization exclusively set up the education accessed by only noble or gentility people and native Dutch. Yet, Japan simplified the education and opened it to all DEI people.

In the beginning of the Japanese occupation, many schools were actually closed. However, the schools were reopened with a new concept introduced by the Japanese as stated in regulation no. 12 (Sugiyono, et.al., 2005). The simplification of education benefited the DEI people. There was no longer a complicated education system like during Dutch colonization and there was an educed understanding on the importance of the education. The Japanese applied several major education policies that broadly impacted the education system towards independence era. These were a) using Bahasa as medium of instruction and they forbade the use of Dutch for any purposes (Paauw, 2009) and b) integrating the education system equally for both noble or gentility people and commoners.

Japan forbade 3 schools that used Dutch as medium of instruction and for noble or gentility people, such as *Europeeshe Largere School (ELS)*, *Hollandsche Inlandishce School (HIS)*, and *Schakel School*. Then, Japan shortened the duration of basic education (*volks school*) into; a) 6 years for primary school (*Kokumin Gakko/Sekolah Rakyat*). Previously in Dutch colonization, this level had the duration of 3 to 5 years, b) 3 years for junior high school (*Shoto Chu Gakko*) and c) 3 years for senior high school (*Koto Chu Gakko*) (Prayudi and Salindri, 2015).

**Table 2** Comparison the Length of Basic Education Duration between Dutch Colonization and Japanese Occupation

School during Dutch Colonization	Duration	School during Japanese Occupation	Duration
Volks school	3 -5 years	Syooto Kokumin Gakko (the First school)**	6 years
Vervolg school and Volledige tweede klas	6 years	Kootooka Kokumin Gakko (the second School)	
		Shoto Chu Gakko	3 years
		Koto Chu Gakko	3 years

The table 2. Shows that If a student took *volks school* during Dutch colonization for 3 years, the student could continue their study in *Kootooka Kokumin Gakko* for class level 4 to 6 (Kurusawa, 1993).

A significant change accrued regarding the perception of teachers. During Dutch colonization, teaching was not fully recognized as a good profession compared to other civil servants government jobs. Teacher received a smaller salary than other civil servants. Hence, the teaching profession was unpopular at that time. In 1931 according to the meeting of *Perserikatan Guru Hindia Belanda* (Dutch East Indies Teacher Association) the Dutch massively reduced the quality of education. This impacted teachers. Many lost their jobs that inhibited their social advancement (Upi, 1994).

However, Japan brought a favorable view of teachers to Indonesia, known as “*Sensei*”. This view honored them in the society. Surprisingly, during the beginning of the Japanese occupation, the number of teacher and students decreased. It caused the Dutch education policy was changed, yet the books were still in the Dutch language. In addition, all Dutch books were translated into Bahasa and Japanese language published by *Bunkyo Kyoku* (office of teaching) as stated by UPI (1994). Moreover, the readiness of teachers during Dutch colonization was only acknowledged to teach secondary education.

**Table 3** The Number School, Student and Teacher in Basic Education Level in 1940 – 1948 (Tilaar, 1995)

Era	Academic Year	Number of Basic Education School	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
Dutch Colonization	1940/41	17,848	2,259,245	45,415
Japanese Occupation	1942/43	15,009	2,253,410	36,287

To solve the teacher problems, the Japanese increased their salary 150% and introduced the Japanese education values for teacher. The Japanese admitted that teachers played an important part in teaching morality. Hence, students respected and disinclined to teachers. Then, to cope with the lack number of students, Japanese mandated the DEI people to be able to read and write. So, the number of students increased to as many as 60% in 1944. Attendance rose from what was only 25 students in a class during Dutch colonization to approximately 40 students during the Japanese occupation (Setijadi, 1975).

Likewise, the school system was altered. Before, Japanese colonization the school principal was a Dutch general and teachers were not valued. In Dutch colonization, the quality of teacher was recognized in inferior level. During Japanese occupation the senior teacher at school was chosen as the principal (Supardan, 2008). Additionally, the recruitment of school principals during the Japanese occupation prioritized teachers who could read and write Japanese or English and had other skills (Sumintono, 2017).

In terms of curriculum, the Japanese established several subjects in the basic education towards the war effort, these were 1) military training (*Kroyen*), 2) moral lesson (*shusin*), 3) practical lesson (*sagyo*), 4) Japanese language lesson, 5) Bahasa lesson, 6) local language lesson (Java, Sundanese and Madura), 7) history lesson, 8) geography, 9) mathematics, 10) science, 11) sport, 12) music, 13) writing art (*shuji*), 14) handcraft lesson, 15) painting and 16) home care (Kurasawa, 1993). Bahasa and local language were used as a medium of instruction in schools. Local language usage was aimed at local students understanding as there were a few students and teachers able to understand Bahasa. Furthermore, Japanese used education in curriculum to obligate the activities on military. Japan required every school to hold a morning ceremony. During the ceremony the students were required to sing the Japanese national anthem "*kimigayo*" and they raised the flag "*hinomaru* to evoke the spirit of Greater Asia Coprosperity unity. Also, Japan established physical activity, aerobic (*taiso*) in the morning and also jogging or running around the village (*jajiasi*). Japan encouraged teachers and students to do community service (*Kinrohoshi*), like reconstructing public places and infrastructure for war efforts, cleaning school, and planting trees (Soetanto, 2011).

### **Unnoticeable Japanese Occupation Legacies in the Indonesian Education System**

Even though the Japanese occupied the Dutch East Indies for a short period of time, the Japanese left a legacy in Indonesia, particularly on education. The length and level of basic education are their main influences on the educational system in Indonesia, particularly constitution number 4 in 1950 which later turned to constitution number 20 in 2003.



**Table 4** Transformation of Length and Level of Basic Education in Indonesia

<b>School Level during Japanese Occupation</b>	<b>School Level (Present)</b>	<b>Length</b>
Syooto Kokumin Gakko (the First school)**	Elementary School	6 years
Kootooka Kokumin Gakko (the second School)		
Shoto Chu Gakko	Junior High School	3 years
Koto Chu Gakko	Senior High School	3 years

Table 4. shows that the Indonesian education system level and length were adopted from the Japanese occupation policy. And now, this legacy has been applied and mandatorily established as compulsory education. The Japanese occupation mandated the development of reading, writing and calculating skills. Those skills have pkayed an important part in today's education system.

Interestingly, the perception of teachers has improved. Since Indonesia received independence, teaching has become a popular profession. The institutions of teacher production are still maintained in Indonesia. In addition, school principal recruitment has been clearly applied from the Japanese occupation. The school principal can be nominated from the senior teachers in that school. It is established in regulation from Ministry of education number 0374/0/1978 (Rahman, 2015).

The Japanese have left Indonesia legacy on the nationalism even though, Indonesian have formed nationasilm before the warship period. The regional, religious and national organizations were established by fistly marking Budi Oetomo and Muhammadiyah, a prominent Muslim organization, in 1908 and the Indonesian National Party in 1927. However, the coming Japanese occupation was the highest tension of revolution deriving from Sukarno and Hatta, and others, like Syahrir and Malaka, who fought to obtain a social revolution with independence (Tagliacozzo, 2011). As the propaganda of triple A movement was aimed to raise the Indonesian population's feeling of nationalism, the Japanese allowed Indonesian people to participate in political boards, which were never permitted during Dutch Colonization. The Japanese were also selecting the nationalist local leaders, like Sukarno and Hatta, who were ever improsened during Dutch colonization to lead the social movement and make unity between Indonesia and Japan for the war purpose. They allowed Sukarno to hold rallies and influence Indonesian youth to be part of the massive nationalism movement through distributing propaganda through mass instructions, radio broadcasters, films, circulation of newspapers and publications until it could be reached by indigenous groups throughout Indonesia. The Japanese administration, actually gave the Indonesian nationalists

chances to be involved in governments in many ways which was unknown under the Dutch colonization.

The Japanese Military also assisted in forming an army called "PETA" (Pembele Tanah Air or Defenders of the Homeland) by providing a number of soldiers with weapons and military training and officers that emphasized loyalty to country in which awakened the national awareness of the Indonesian youth as well as fostered discipline (Lim, n.d.). Another Japanese effort was to conduct policies propagated in the social and cultural spheres towards Islam. Japanese pursued a policy of using the latent energy of Islam toward the military administration, as such a young generation of Muslims were assisted to establish local militias named " Hizbullah" (Muslim volunteer crops). Therefore, for the first time during colonization and the occupation era, not only were the masses alienated from urban intellectuals and activities. They were engaged in political activity which also accelerated the spirit of nationalism throughout the country (Kenichi, 1996).

The Japanese also inherited policies from the education system. Bahasa Indonesia was inaugurated on the constitution number 4 in 1978, written together with the level and length of basic education regulation, as a medium for teaching and learning in the classroom as well as the local language as it was to simplify the 250 local languages and dialects used during Dutch colonization in which fostered a significant national identity. In terms of sport education, it also became one of the important subjects to maintain a healthy body and soul, written on constitution number 4 in 1978. Now, it is known as *Senam Kesegaran Jasmani* (SKJ) or physical fitness exercises. The moral lesson in Japanese occupation is actually preserved and changed into religious lesson that purposed to strengthen noble character.

The *hinomaru* (raising flag), today, in Indonesia has been a routine every Monday as a morning ceremony where the singing Indonesian national anthem is sung, raising flag and giving short speech by headmaster or teacher. It aims to remind the sacrifice of heroes and increase the value of nationalism. The flag ceremony and national anthem singing have been arranged through the Indonesian government regulations number 44 in 1958. Lastly, *Kinrohoshi* (*kerja bakti*) or community service became an education activity in the schools. Those activities are reflected in what schools in Indonesia do today. The students are educated to be responsible for cleaning the classroom as well as a healthy environment is becoming responsibility together. The students are divided into small groups and scheduled every day to clean the classroom. There is also a big cleaning day at least a day per week.

## Conclusion

The Japanese occupation left alteration to Indonesia. The policy on education in Indonesia is unconsciously implemented until the present time. Nationalism remained the most essential value from the Japanese occupation. Due to nationalism, the Indonesian people can be united to get rights to education. Abolishing the dualism conducted value of

togetherness among Indonesian people. In fact, there is no caste among Indonesian people. Principally, education is able to be accessed by all. In the other words, education is for all. Evoking nationalism is also signed by returning the usage of Bahasa Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia can be used again as a medium of instruction. Likewise Bahasa Indonesia and local language are able to acquire acknowledgement to be used in education. In reality, nowadays teachers and students can use both languages in the classroom.

The nationalism that Japanese embodied, apparently, returned the privilege in mastering the nation. In term of education, obviously during Japanese occupation, recruitment of school principals was from Indonesian people, especially from senior teachers in the schools. Then, it occurred in Indonesia today. Japanese reverted the image of the teacher profession, so now teaching has become a popular occupation in Indonesia. Finally, the military ideology is still preserved in the educational system in Indonesia through the flag ceremony, national anthem singing, community service and sport education.

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