

The Heat of the Sunrise: The Suffering of Sukabumi People during the Japanese Occupation in West Java, Indonesia (1942-1945)

ABSTRACT: This article aims to describe the sufferings of Sukabumi people at the time of Japanese occupation in West Java, Indonesia. For reconstructing the event, the historical method, which includes Heuristics, Critics, Interpretation, and Historiography, were used. The result of this study shows that at the beginning of its arrival, the Japanese military was enthusiastically welcomed by Sukabumi people. They hoped that the Japanese military could free the Indonesia people from the Dutch imperialism. In fact, that hope was not realized. The Japanese policies were disadvantageous for the Indonesian people. Those policies were emphasized more on how the Indonesian people help the Japanese to become the new imperialist which substituted the Dutch colonial government. The Japanese military had used the religious symbols such as the scholars and the "kyais" as a tool of propaganda to support their economic war program. The Japanese policies that involved the scholar figures had replaced the scholars' and "kyais" position from the honoured one to become the dishonoured one. People assumed that they were responsible for suffering of Sukabumi people. The Sukabumi people suffered from poverty and systematic economic decreasing. As a result of the paddy collection and the "romusha" programs, there were many Sukabumi people who suffered from starvation, malnutrition, caused by the lack of food to be consumed. This situation was responsible for the people's death of starvation. The life of Sukabumi people was physically and psychologically suffering under the Japanese occupation in West Java, Indonesia.

KEY WORDS: Japanese occupation, Moslem scholar, propaganda, paddy collection and "romusha" programs, economic decreasing, and suffering of Sukabumi people.

INTRODUCTION

In order to occupy the Western part of West Java, Japanese troop landed at Bojonegara village in Banten. This troop consisted of two divisions. They kept moving toward the eastern area. Then, the troop was divided into two groups. The first group moved straight along the Serang path through Balaraja, then passed Tangerang, and entered to Batavia (Jakarta now). Meanwhile, the second group moved straight along the Serang path through

Rangkasbitung to Bogor. On 5th March 1942, the Japanese troops had successfully taken over and occupied Leuwi Liang area in Bogor (Ariwiadi, 1979; and Jaya, 2002).

At the same time, Major General Schiling with his Dutch Indies troop left his military camp in Batavia and retreated to Bandung. Unfortunately, Major General Schiling's troop was halted by a group of Japanese troop led by Colonel Nasu which previously had occupied Bogor area. When Major General Schiling's

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How to cite this article? Sulasman. (2014). "The Heat of the Sunrise: The Suffering of Sukabumi People during the Japanese Occupation in West Java, Indonesia (1942-1945)" in *TAWARIKH: International Journal for Historical Studies*, Vol.6(1) October, pp.93-104. Bandung, Indonesia: Minda Masagi Press and UNHAS Makassar, ISSN 2085-0980. Available online also at: <http://www.tawarikh-journal.com/index.php?p=abs&view=detail&id=93>

Chronicle of the article: Accepted (September 17, 2013); Revised (June 25, 2014); and Published (October 28, 2014).

troop tried to avoid this Japanese troop to the west, they were also halted by the other Japanese troop came from Karawang. On a desperate and fatigue condition, the remaining Major General Schiling's troop arrived in Bandung on 6th March 1942 (De Jong, 1982).

In its effort to take over Bandung, the 5,000 personnel troop led by Colonel Toshinori Shoji, which landed at the Eretan coast in Indramayu, moved toward the western part of Cirebon; therefore, on the same day, the Colonel Toshinori Shoji's troop had successfully occupied Subang and also occupied the Kalijati airport in Subang which located at least 40 km from Bandung (*Asia Raja*, 28/5/1942).

After occupying Subang, the Colonel Toshinori Shoji's troop kept moving to occupy Bandung. Their steps started by taking over the Dutch Indies defense area in Ciater, Subang. Meanwhile, the Dutch Indies troop retreated to Lembang which became their last stronghold. Unfortunately, Lembang also could not be defended any longer by the Dutch Indies troop, and it was finally occupied by Japanese troop on 7th March 1942 (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto eds., 1984:3-4).

The Lightening Operation of Colonel Toshinori Shoji's Detachment made such a critical impact to the position of Dutch Indies troop or KNIL (*Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger* or Dutch Colonial Army and its Members) on the battle in West Java. In order to solve the problem, the commander of KNIL, Lieutenant General H. Ter Poorten, ordered the West Java KNIL commander, Major General J.J. Presman, to not to make any battle in Bandung because the city consisted many Dutch and European citizens. After the Japanese troop occupied Lembang, Lieutenant General H. Ter Poorten ordered Major General J.J. Presman to negotiate with Japanese troop. Thus, on 7th March 1942, Major General J.J. Presman sent his envoy to Lembang to meet Colonel Toshinori Shoji and to propose the cease-fire.

After accepting the Dutch Indies envoy, Colonel Toshinori Shoji stated his will to Major General J.J. Presman and asked him to hold meeting in Villa Isola (now Chancellery building of Indonesia University of Education) in Bandung on 8th March 1942 at 8:30

a.m. Colonel Toshinori Shoji contacted the commander of the 16th Force of Japanese Army, Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura, and described the problem to him. Then, Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura ordered Colonel Toshinori Shoji to contact Governor-General of Dutch East-Indie, Tjarda van Starckenborgh Stachouwer, to immediately hold the negotiation with Japan (De Jong, 1982).

Regarding that Japanese counter-proposal, Lieutenant General H. Ter Poorten asked Governor-General Tjarda van Starckenborgh Stachouwer to refuse the counter-proposal. Therefore, as an impact of this refusal, General Hitoshi Imamura desperately tended to release ultimatum which told that if on 8th March 1942 at 10:00 a.m., all Dutch officers have not moved yet to Kalijati, Subang, as a result, Bandung will be bombed. Besides that, Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura also demanded the Governor-General of Dutch East Indies to appear on the negotiation in Kalijati, Subang (Miyamoto, 1986).

Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura mentioned that if the proposal is ignored by the Dutch East Indies, the bombing action toward Bandung will be immediately launched. This Japanese ultimatum was followed by a proof of Japanese Bombing Air Force which flew upon Bandung. To strengthen the ultimatum, Japan did the trial bombing which bombed the *Regentsweg* Crossroad in Dalem Kaum, Bandung. This action made many died citizens. Responding to that action, Governor-General Tjarda van Starckenborgh Stachouwer, Lieutenant General H. Ter Poorten, several Dutch East Indies military officers, and a translator concluded to meet Japan in Kalijati, Subang. There, they met Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura who came from Batavia or now Jakarta (Notosusanto, 1979:27).

The result of this negotiation was non-condition surrender from Dutch East Indies Army led by Lieutenant General H. Ter Poorten to the Japanese Expedition Troop led by Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura. Thus, since 8th March 1942, the Dutch occupancy in Indonesia was ended. In a short time, the Japanese troops had occupied many strategic areas, especially the economic areas. The next Japanese target, after taking over the political

authority from Dutch, was taking over the economic authority. The plantation areas in Priangan, West Java, such as in Sukabumi, became the main target to occupy. It was because the plantation products were able to support the Japanese troops on its economic war program.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

About the Japanese Arrival in Sukabumi.

The Japanese troop entered Sukabumi through Bogor. They came from the troop led by Colonel Nasu. In a relatively short time, the Japanese troop was able to occupy the plantation areas in Sukabumi, such as in Parakansalak, Nagrak, Cirohani, Cimelati, Salabintana, and etc. (interview with Halim, 10/5/2004). Many of Sukabumi people at that time wondered why there were many “*orang kate*” (short people) spread on the villages. They greeted people politely; therefore, they made people to become interested (Abdullah, 1983). There was no cruelty on them like they showed later.

The local leaders in Sukabumi generally welcomed the Japanese arrival. With all hopes and cheers, they wished that Japan will be able to free Indonesian people from Dutch colonialism and imperialism. The example of that kind of attitude was as shown by *Kyai* (Islamic scholar and figure in Jawa) Haji Ahmad Sanoesi from *Pondok Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) Gunung Puyuh in Sukabumi. He welcomed the Japanese arrival well. He was even insisted to cooperate with Japan. As a man who full of knowledge and also as an honored social leader, *Kyai* Haji Ahmad Sanoesi saw that cooperation with Japan was part of ways to halt the Dutch imperialism. He saw that this cooperation was a strategic struggle toward the Japanese occupation (interview with Abdulqohar, 12/3/2004). This cooperation was shown by the “*Ajengan Gunung Puyuh*” (Islamic scholar and figure of Gunung Puyuh), i.e. *Kyai* Haji Ahmad Sanoesi, by ordering his men who enrolled in the AII (*Al-Ittihadijjatoel Islamijjah* or Islamic Unity) and BII (*Barisan Islam Indonesia* or Indonesia Muslim Front) to show the Dutch troop camps to Japanese troop. By *Kyai* Haji Ahmad Sanoesi’s men help, Japanese

troop was able to control the situation (Kanahele, 1967).

After Japanese troop had successfully occupied Sukabumi, there was a Japanese envoy named Haji Muniam Inada to meet *Kyai* Haji Ahmad Sanoesi. Haji Muniam Inada thanked him for the favor, and for later purpose, Japan kept maintaining cooperation with *Kyai* Haji Ahmad Sanoesi (interview with Abdulqohar, 20/3/2004). Japan wanted to cooperate with him to do its programs along the Japanese occupation era in Indonesia, especially in Sukabumi. As a token of gratitude, Japanese Governor-Military in Indonesia promoted him as a bureaucrat – as a *Fuku Shuchokan* (Vice Regent) in Bogor, West Java.

Besides *Kyai* Haji Ahmad Sanoesi, the Japanese military government was also promoting another Sukabumi figure. It was Mr. R. Syamsudin, an AII figure to become the leader of Three As Movement’s propaganda program (Japan as leader of Asia, Japan as protector of Asia, and Japan as light of Asia). His job was to organize the scholars whether they were Islam, Christian, and any other religion; and whether they were noble or state officers (Benda, 1958).

When an anti-colonialist named Ir. Soekarno knew Ahmad Sanoesi’s attitude toward Japan, he asked him questions about that problem, when Ahmad Sanoesi got medical treatment from Dr. Abu Hanifah in Sint Lidwina hospital. Soekarno later visited him in *Pondok Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) Gunung Puyuh to have an in-depth conversation. On that meeting with Soekarno, Ahmad Sanoesi explained that Japanese was a new imperialist in Indonesia. They are East people who came to Indonesia by facing two enemies (Indonesian and Ally) at once.

Pretending to cooperate with them, Indonesian people can take an advantage of Japanese power and skill to: firstly, to expel Dutch; secondly, to ask them to train local people in a military skill. Japan had superiority in military skill. This fact was proven by occupying South East Asian area in no long time. Ahmad Sanoesi also explained that Japan had ever told him that there should be cooperation between Japan and Indonesia toward the Great East Asian War. Ahmad

Sanoesi argued that such opportunity as explained before cannot be ignored (interview with Abdulqohar, 12/3/2004 and 20/3/2004).

Thus, Soekarno agreed with Ahmad Sanoesi's opinion and he was going to discuss the opportunity with the other figures. The Ahmad Sanoesi's attitude toward Japan was followed by the other figures in Sukabumi, especially those who role as *pondok pesantren* figures, such as *Kyai* Haji Mohammad Hasan Basri from *Pondok Pesantren Babakan Cicurug* and *Kyai* Haji Mohammad Basoeni from *Pondok Pesantren Cipoho*, Sukabumi (Gunseikanbu, 1986).

About the Kyai, Ulama, and Japanese Propaganda. In order to gain Indonesian Moslem support toward their political planning, the Japanese military government gave precious social and political role to the Moslem leaders. When the Japanese troop occupied Indonesia in 1942, the wish of cooperation from Moslem became an immediate need for Indonesian people. However, the Japanese basic attitude toward Moslem was regulated on "The Principals of Military Governing in Occupied Territory" which was issued on 14th March 1942 (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto eds., 1984).

The Japanese policy toward Moslem was always an integrated part of the "propaganda and taming operation". They saw that religion was an important tool to manipulate the people's mind; thus, they concerned on the Moslem leaders role. Japanese greatly wished to local Moslem teachers, especially *Kyai* who rapidly contacts with the people; therefore, they will be able to help Japan to spread Japanese political doctrine upon the local people.

In order to gain Indonesian Moslem attention, the Japanese military government showed a cooperative attitude toward the Moslem scholars and they also always attempted to cooperate with them. Japan insisted to take advantage on Moslem scholars' popularity. According to Aiko Kurasawa, there were three Japanese important actions on propaganda and mobilization policies. They were: (1) the founding of Moslem organization called MASYUMI, *Majelis Syuro Muslim Indonesia*, or Indonesia Muslim

Advisory Council; (2) the founding of Religious Affair Department or *Shumuka* in every residential government and the major task of this department was to control the local scholars and to mobilize them for propaganda purposes; and (3) the founding of "Scholar Training" which was interpreted as an effort of Japanese military government to make the influent scholars to become pro-Japan propagandists (Kurasawa, 1993:237-275).

The "Scholar Training" program had high influence to the people. It contributed to the social-order change, especially for those who live in village (interview with Abdulqohar, 12/3/2004). This situation was merely caused by the changing of *kyais'* role in the society. *Kyai* (Islamic scholar and figure in Java) who previously as an honored and charismatic religious leader turned into Japanese propagandist who help Japan to convince people the important of Japanese programs, such as paddy collecting obligation and *Romusha* (involuntary labor) programs.

Both programs were proposed to help the development of Indonesia. Nevertheless, the implementation of both programs mainly caused so much suffering for people. At that time, the people's view toward *kyais* and scholars, especially for those who became Japanese propagandist was not as sacred as before. There were even lots of people who gave *kyais* and scholars a bad nickname, such as *Kyai Kuintal* (Islamic figure for 100 kilograms), *Kyai Romusha* (Islamic figure for involuntary labor), and etc. as explained by several informants from Sukabumi, especially for those who come from Parungkuda, Cicurug, and Cidahu (interview with Halim, 10/5/2004).

During the Japanese military government era, the training course was held 17 times. The number of scholars who enrolled the training was approximately more than one thousand people. After finishing the course, the enrolled scholars were given a diploma certificate by Japanese military government through *Shumubu* (Department of Propaganda Affairs), and then they came back to their village. In their village, they played a new role as the Japanese propagandists who spread the paddy collecting obligation and *Romusha*

program. Their certificate was not only as a token of their graduation from the training, but also as an identity which told that they were spreading propaganda. This certificate was also assumed as a token which tells that the owner is a loyal cooperater of Japanese military government (Iskandar, 2000).

The Japanese military government insisted that *kyais* who had training should spread the Japanese wish among the people. At that time, Japan attempted to influence the people's view through trained *kyais*. Japan wanted to take advantage toward *kyais* to make them to become the conductor between the Japanese government and the people. If the training did not give enough advantage to turn the trainee to become the Japanese supporter, the training at least made the trainee to keep them to not to become the anti-Japan (Kurasawa, 1993:317).

The Japanese ruler had never passed the opportunities to take the advantage of religious ceremony for the sake of their propaganda. They allowed the scholars to give sermon, and for the reward, the scholars were asked to refer to the political affairs on their sermon. For instance, during the fasting month in 1944, the Japanese military government arranged the radio program for 15 minutes every day. On that radio program, the scholar from every residence gave their sermon and they were also asked to include the political affair, such as convincing people regarding the Japanese triumph and increasing the working spirit among the people.

The scholars were also asked to accommodate the people's feeling if there was an unpleasant situation or unpleasant event. *Kyais* had a task to explain the unpleasant Japanese policies to the people and also to encourage people to involve in, such a *Romusha* and paddy collecting obligation program, and encourage them to enroll in *Heiho* (indigenous militia) and to become volunteer (interview with Abdulqohar, 20/3/2004).

The most important task of the scholar was to calm down the *Romusha* workers. *Kyai* tasked to give sermon in front of the candidate of *Romusha* worker around their departure to working camps. *Kyai* also convinced them that

how important they are. The example of this situation was as similar as found in southern Banten area where seven scholars were sent to *Romusha's* camp consisted of thousand workers who worked as forced labor in order to make the workers to work hard (cited from news of *Soeara Moeslimin*, 1/9/1944).

The role of *kyai* as a tool of Japanese propaganda got various reaction from the people. There were spread sinistic nickname for *kyais* who became the Japanese propagandists. Those nickname such as *kyai mata-mata kempetai* (Islamic figure to help the Japanese military police's spy), like the one which was given to *Kyai Harun* from Banyuwangi; or *Kyai kuintal* (Islamic figure for 100 kilograms) which was given to *Kyai Abbas* from *Pondok Pesantren Buntet* in Cirebon, West Java.

About the Paddy Collecting Obligation. To support its economic war program, Japanese military government effectively controlled and supervised the production, especially for agriculture products. One of the programs was called "Paddy Collecting Obligation" which obliges the farmers to collect some of their agriculture products, especially paddy as a main provision of Asian people to the government with a low price.

The Japanese military government issued Java as a supplier for the island outside Java, Malayan-British, and Singapore; and also for the battle field in South Pacific. Although the capacity of rice production in Java was not as big as in Siam (Thailand), but at least Java became the rice producer in entire Indonesian archipelago. At that time, Java was demanded to produce 50,000 tons of rice and 30,000 tons of corn (cited from news of *Soeara Asia*, 11/4/1944).

Five months after occupying Indonesia, the Japanese military government (*Gunseikanbu*) took the first steps to gain food provision more systematical. An organization called SKZ (*Shokuryo Kanri Zimusho* or Food Management Office) was made under the supervision of *Gunseikanbu* Industrial Department in order to manage the food provision. This organization was responsible for supervising all buying and distributing process under the country monopoly. This organization was issuing the

sum of paddy that should be bought by the government and issuing the official rice price, and also arranging the detailed program for distributing rice for the citizen (Kurasawa, 1988).

After the SKZ was authorized, therefore, on August 1942, the high scale rice buying was systematically conducted by Japanese military government. Nevertheless, SKZ faced difficulty in getting enough rice. There was little rice supply in the miller storehouse, because they were not able to buy large enough sum of rice on last crop season. To resolve the problem, with a big sum of capital, they ordered millers to buy more paddy grain from the farmers. But, unfortunately, there was little paddy grain left on farmers' hand, because the crop season had left.

The Japanese policy on paddy grain changed. On the new rice season on April 1943, the free rice market was prohibited. Farmers should hand over some of their crops possession to the government. The devolved paddy was going to be milled and distributed by the government. The existing miller and rice trader were not allowed to operate freely, but allowed to operate under the license of SKZ as technical agent to cultivate rice for some rewards.

The policy of paddy collecting obligation was conducted as follow: firstly, based on various sectors demand, SKZ issued all amount of rice which was needed for the Japanese troop supply, outside Java export, and local consumption. Then, they allocated quota for every residence based on its capacity which later spread among all its regencies. And by the same way, regency issued the allocation for its districts, district for sub district, and finally sub-district for village.

The paddy collecting obligation was delegated and supervised by *Kucho* (Village Chief). Thus, the responsibility of paddy collecting obligation was under the *Kucho's* hand. *Kucho* usually promoted a person to help him to do his duty. Thus, he established the tight supervising upon the production on farmers. Around the near harvest time, *Kucho* usually sent his men to estimate the result of every rice field. If there was a farmer who wanted to harvest his rice field, he should

inform to *Kucho*. As a result, *Kucho* would send his men to harvest that rice field.

Harvest time in villages was seldom conducted secretly; it was because harvesting at that time was done traditionally. In a traditional harvesting, every person gathered to become the harvester. Those who involve in harvesting will be rewarded grain which is called *bawon* (share of rice harvest received for one's service during harvesting). This traditional method was found in Sukabumi, especially in Cicurug region which covers Parungkuda, Cicurug, Cidahu, and etc. (interview with Nengsih, 25/8/2004).

After accepting paddy grain from the farmers, he who took responsibility for paddy collecting obligation would inform the *Kucho*. If collected paddy grain did not meet the given quota, so in the end of the crop season, *Kucho* should be responsible. Actually, every paddy collecting obligation was under demand. To fulfill the demanding standard, the *Kucho* would inspect the farmers. This inspection was led by *Kucho* his-ownself by promoting an inspection team. This team consisted of *Kucho*, village officer, promoted buyer, and *Keibodan* (Village Police) member. The task of this team was to inspect the farmers' house. This action was an informal action ordered by *Kucho*, and was not a legal punishment or farmers. If a farmer was known to hide excess paddy, thus, the excess would be confiscated.

Responding to this action, farmers finally tried to avoid this confiscation. Therefore, the farmers' wives and their children were busy to save their paddy grain from confiscation by hiding it in a particular place such as in the pillows, mattresses, under the bed, and roof. Besides hiding the paddy grain, farmers avoided the confiscation by pounding the grain in their house, and then the product would be sold in the black market (interview with Engkom, 7/7/2004).

This case was merely caused by the market selling price was higher than the government selling price. As mentioned by To'i, a farmer from Central Pondok Kaso village in Cidahu sub-district, Sukabumi; and also Idim from Cipanengah in Parungkuda sub-district, Sukabumi, that they separated their un-stored-grain. To avoid the *Keibodan's* inspection,

they turned paddy grain into rice and sold it immediately to Cicurug market located 12 km from their villages. Besides, they also sold it to Cibadak market or even sold it to Bogor (interview with To'i & Idim, 15/7/2004). Farmers from Sukabumi rural area, such as Cicurug, Cidahu, Cibodas, and Pondok Kaso, usually paid their loan after harvest time. This loan was for fulfilling their needs before harvest time. This system was called *barnen/yarnen* which an abbreviation of *bayar-panen* (paid after harvesting). As a result, the farmers had little grain owned.

For Sukabumi people, especially for those who live in rural area, the paddy collecting obligation was a hard time. The reason was besides having their own loan, farmers also had an obligation to store 30% to 50% from their grain production to the government. The reason why the farmers living in Sukabumi rural area became so suffering was mainly because they could not buy rice in the market. It was because the chance to buy rice was very difficult or even disappeared.

To solve this problem, the Japanese government urged people to eat alternative meal. The government introduced new recipes to the house wives. Those new recipes were called the "Struggling Menu" by the propagandists. One of these recipes was a mixed porridge named "Struggling Porridge". This porridge was made of sweet potato, cassava, and bran. The other recipes were the "Great Asian Porridge" and the "Asian Bread" made of cassava and soybean powder. Many recipes suggested by the government consisted of cassava, corn, soybean, and any other similar commodities.

However, the prices of those commodities above were also increasing in price in the market. The reason was the decreasing of the production and the increasing of demand. Because there was no decent food to consume anymore, as a result, never eaten foods were finally consumed. Food was from banana and papaya trunk, and also cassava leaf (interview with Sanukri, 25/7/2004). Papaya leaf was cooked with sand to make the bitter taste disappeared. Japanese government even suggested people to eat snail to fulfill the protein need.

Although there was an idea to change the menu, the people nutrition became worse and worse, especially for those who live in rural area. Therefore, there were many people who died from starvation. This situation made a phenomenon which called *siring* people. *Siring* people was a person who came from village to village to beg for food. This *siring* finally died on their way asking for food, because there was no enough energy to continue their journey.

Villagers who knew that dying *siring* would send the *siring* back to their original village, so the *siring* would not die in the village. The reason for sending back dying *siring* was because the cost of burying dead people, and there was no enough energy to do that, everybody were starve to death. If the same situation found in the next village, so the dying *siring* would transfer again to the next village, again and again until the *siring* die. The *siring* was also buried alive to make sure that the *siring* would not burden anyone (interview with Sanukri, 25/7/2004).

For Sukabumi people who lived in Cicurug, Parungkuda, and Cidahu, live under the Japanese occupation was a horrible nightmare. They lived under the sorrow and limitless poverty. Starvation was everywhere, no rice to consume. The most decent meal at that time was rice which was mixed with banana fruit. There were housewives who bring their starve children to go to the field to find sweet potato, or banana fruit to be mixed with rice. If there was no sweet potato or banana fruit, they take the banana trunk.

The housewives' duty was doubled. Besides taking care of their children, they also should go to the field to seek food. Sometimes, to seek food in the field, they should walk as far as miles away from their houses (interview with Nengsih, 25/8/2004). Malnutrition happened everywhere. Based on the information from Halim and also from To'i and Idim, the most suffering was also the mothers. They usually found dead mother and her children lying on the ground, on the sewer. There was also found dying people in cassava field such one found in Ciambar (interview with Halim, 10/5/2004; and interview with To'i & Idim, 15/7/2004).

This *siring* people phenomena was found

around Cicurug area, where there were many people who turned into *siring*, especially those who work in contract plantation such as in Parakansalak. The *siring* from Parakansalak, Cidahu, and Jabon begged for food to Cipanengah. The situation was not better as anywhere else, so the *siring* would be moved to the near villages such as Kompa, Cibodas, and Central Pondok Kaso. The buried alive *siring* was found in Kalapa Karang, Cipanengah, and Legok Gedud (interview with Halim, 10/5/2004; and interview with To'i & Idim, 15/7/2004).

Besides having no food to consume, there was also lack in decent clothes. As mentioned by Engkom, Nengsih, and Uho that they were no longer using clothe to cover their body, but instead they used rubber. In a hot day, the rubber clothes feel so hot and it makes a noisy sound. For men, they used short made of mattress clothe which previously cut and re-sown. This kind of clothe usually had many flea on it, so the men had mangy on their body (interview with Engkom, 7/7/2004; interview with Nengsih, 25/8/2004; and interview with Uho, 30/8/2004). The paddy collecting obligation program produced the systematic poverty. People were insecure about this. The hardship passed the limit. Hate and anger grew on the people heart (Anderson, 1961 and 1988; and Nagazumi ed., 1988).

About the Romusha. Besides poverty caused by paddy collecting obligation program, the other miserable thing for Sukabumi people was also *Romusha* (program of involuntary labor during Japanese occupation). Literally, *Romusha* means labor, but in an Indonesian history context, this term has a very special meaning regarding much bitter experience that should be felt. For Indonesian people, *Romusha* means mobilized worker of Japanese military government. Generally, *Romusha* came from ordinary farmers who were forced by Japanese military government to work in Japanese project sites, especially the sites which support its war program (Kurasawa, 1993:123).

The meaning of *Romusha* was shifted from an economic interest to become warfare interest. In the beginning, the *Romusha* workers commonly worked in private

enterprises to do productive part and were assumed as an employee. This situation then changed when Japan needs to build more facilities. They were mobilized to work in the sites as force labors (Kurasawa, 1993:123-126). *Romusha* workers were not only forced to work on the site near their houses, but also forced to work anywhere else that Japan desired. One of destination site of *Romusha* workers was Banten in Western Java island. There were many workers sent there, and several came from Sukabumi. Banten was an under developed area in Java; and there, Japan found their chance to develop their economy (Lapian & Chaniago eds., 1988).

The occupying Japanese military government concerned more on the establishment of southern of this Banten area. Some large scale projects were conducted here, and of course those projects need many workers. One of those projects was the construction of railway from Saketi to Bayah as far as 150 km. This railway connected the existing railway between Labuhan and Jakarta with the new railway in the southern coast of that area where many mining deposits lie there (Kurasawa, 1993:145).

According to Tan Malaka, who was working as a *Romusha* supervisor, said that the Banten project was finished on April 1944, where many workers were mobilized. It was said that 10,000 workers died for limitless hardworking. He also compared the Banten project to the railway construction between Anyer and Panarukan under the Dutch colonial where thousands workers were mobilized and many of them were died (Malaka, 2000:147).

Besides making Saketi-Bayah railway, there was also the South Banten highway project which lied between Malimping to Bayah, and also airport project in Rumpin area where many of the workers came from Sukabumi. There was also coal mining construction in southern Banten which exactly located in Bayah, Lebak (Malaka, 2000:18). In 1944, around 16,000 *Romushas* worked in Bayah. And 11 km from Bayah, there was Cikotok gold mining that had been being already mined since Dutch colonial era. From that gold mining, there was also found tin and zinc. This site was exploited by 1,200 workers every day.

Among workers who worked there were from Sukabumi area that were brought by southern Sukabumi way through Pelabuhan Ratu, Cisolok, and Cibareno, then entering to Bayah area (Malaka, 2000).

At that time, Banten area was a center of *Romusha* site; therefore, thousands *Romusha* were already sent there by train periodically for three months as mentioned by former *Romusha* workers who became this study informant. They were from Sukabumi and worked in Rumpin, Banten. They stated that *Romusha* who came from Sukabumi were sent to Cikoleang in Rumpin by 16 coaches' train which loaded to more than 3,000 passengers. The *Romusha* workers were taken from every train station such as in Sukabumi, Cibadak, Parungkuda, and Cicurug train station. Before departing, they were previously assembled by officers. Then, the workers were taken from Sukabumi to Banten. The journey was never stopped whether in Bogor or Manggarai, then kept moving to Banten through Tanah Abang and finally finished in Cisawu post. After embarked in Cisawu post, *Romusha* workers walked for one and half hour to reach Cikoleang in Rumpin or anywhere else where the workers should work (interview with Oci, 25/3/2004).

Romusha workers, who were sent to Rumpin or any other place in Banten, came from small villages in Sukabumi. They commonly worked as farmers or jobless villagers. As mentioned by Maemunah, a *Romusha* worker's wife who came from Tapos, Cibodas, Sukabumi, she told that her husband accepted to become *Romusha* workers because he did not have any work. She hoped that his husband could get salary to support their living on that hard time (interview with Maemunah, 30/8/2004).

Commonly, they were asked directly by the *Kucho* (Village Chief) to become a delegation for their village. For Sukabumi area, each village was delegated by five men; for instance in Cibodas and Cicurug area, which had four villages and for each village were five workers. Therefore, the *Kucho* sent twenty workers. They departed from Parungkuda train station.

When the husbands were far to become *Romusha* workers, the role of the husband

were taken by their wives who had two roles actually. The first role was to become the housewife; and the second was to become the patriarch. According to Nengsih and Maemunah, they took their husbands position. They were responsible to feed their children during that time. The double roles of the wife began with taking care of their children and family, and also they should go to rice field or farm to seek sweet potato, banana fruit, or any other food. They also cultivated the land and fixed the roof. All jobs were done sincerely while they were hoping that their husband would bring much money when they arrive (interview with Nengsih, 25/8/2004; and interview with Maemunah, 30/8/2004).

There were many *Romusha* workers who had already arrived in Cikoleang, Rumpin, Banten who tried to escape from that place. Such as done by *Romusha* workers who came from Pondok Kaso, Tonggoh Village, Cibodas, Parungkuda district, Sukabumi, they were Oci, Syafe'i, Dawani, Djakaria, San Indit, and the other workers totally forty workers who led by Mansur. They escaped from Cikoleang, Rumpin at two o'clock in the early morning by taking the rear entrance of the site through Ciujung River and then crossing the river by raft that fortunately found there. After crossing Ciujung River, on their way to Sukabumi, they slept in Ciampea, Bogor. The escape took time for two nights by walking (interview with Oci, 25/3/2004).

One of the former *Romusha* workers' wives, named Nengsih, stated that when her husbands arrived, her husbands' condition was horrible. His body was skinny and tired, their clothes was ragged like beggar (interview with Nengsih, 25/8/2004). What Nengsih experienced was similar to Maemunah who got her husband with the similar condition. Her dream when she accompanied her husband departing to Rumpin ruined (interview with Maemunah, 30/8/2004.).

The workers escaped because they could not resist working there any longer. They should clear up the hill by cutting down rubber trees. The other reason was not enough food to consume there. The rice of government provided was not enough, even the rice got

many sand on it. The workers should queue up to get their ration. What happened in Cikoleang, Rumpin, Banten was not similar to what the group commander said before they departed (interview with Oci, 25/3/2004).

When they asked to become *Romusha* worker, they should bring their own pillow and mat to sleep. They also should bring their own plate, spoon, fork, and knife. The fork and knife were used to cut and slice meat on their meal. In fact, no meat they found; even the rice was full of sand. The best meal they had was just steamed sweet potato. Besides, there was lack of fresh water and poor sanitation. They dehydrated and there was no loophole. The situation spread disease among the workers (interview with Oci, 25/3/2004).

According to several former *Romusha* workers, they said that the worst condition was waiting for lucky one to stay alive on their way to their working site. Most of the working site was far, and they should walk miles away to reach the site. In some sites, disease was usual. Besides having no fresh water for bathing, the *Romusha* workers were also settled on small simple barracks made of bamboo and plank. They crowded on a small place. The meal was at its lowest quality, and the ration was less. Thus, it made them died in starvation and disease (interview with Oci, 25/3/2004).

CONCLUSION

For Sukabumi people, lived under the Japanese authority was an unforgotten nightmare. Japan did not only massacre people, but also ruined the normal economic living in rural area. The serious production decreasing was a result of the forced labor phenomena or the so called *Romusha* (program of involuntary labor during Japanese occupation). People worried about who would be the next victim of the Japanese policies. That feeling haunted them anytime and anywhere.

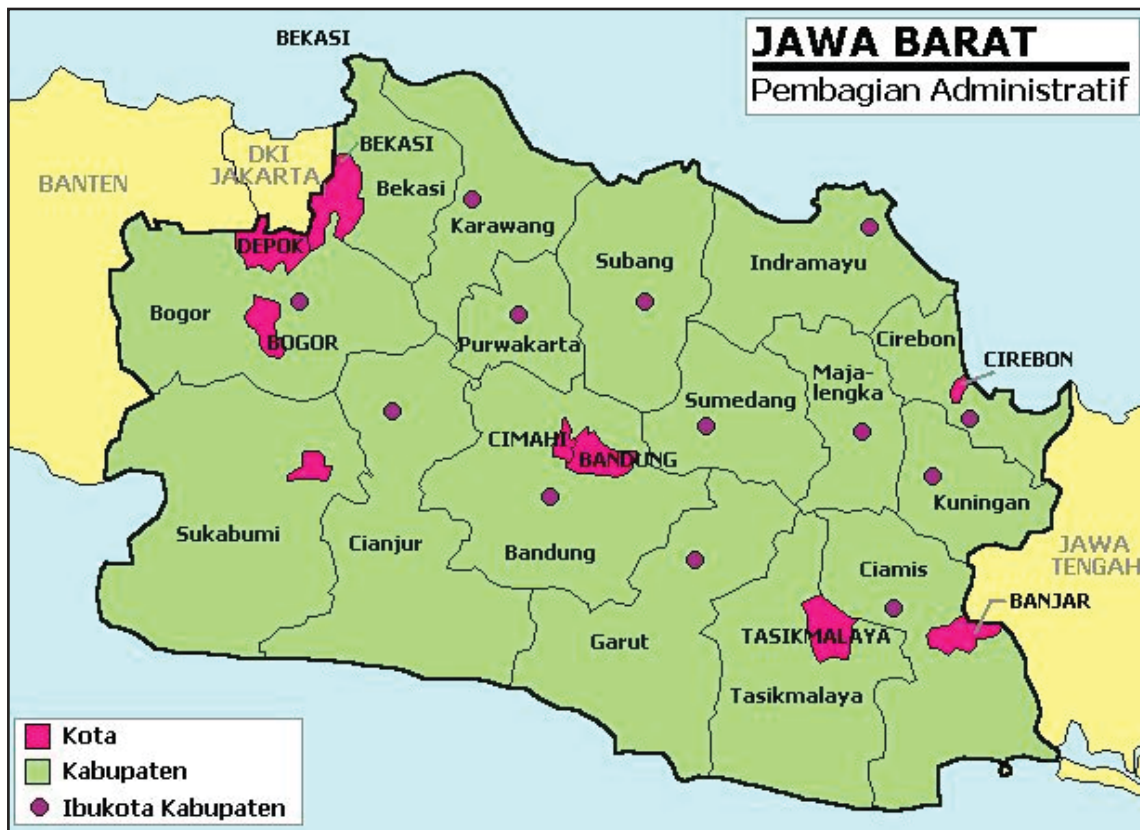
The wives carried heavy responsibilities to take care their family alone, because their husbands went to *Romusha* sites and never came back. They should take care of their orphaned children and should raise them alone without their husband. All of those situations were later raised hate and resisting

spirit against Japan, especially near the Indonesia revolution situation in 1945.

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- Interview with Engkom, an informant who lived in the time of Japanese occupation, in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, on 7th July 2004.
- Interview with Halim, an informant who lived in the time of Japanese occupation, in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, on 10th May 2004.
- Interview with Maemunah, an informant who as former *Romusha's* wife and lived in the time of Japanese occupation, in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, on 30th August 2004.
- Interview with Nengsih, an informant who lived in the time of Japanese occupation, in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, on 25th August 2004.
- Interview with Oci, an informant who as former *Romusha* and lived in the time of Japanese occupation, in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, on 25th March 2004.
- Interview with Sanukri, an informant who lived in the time of Japanese occupation, in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, on 25th July 2004.
- Interview with To'i & Idim, the farmers who lived in the time of Japanese occupation, in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, on 15th July 2004.
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Sukabumi Area in West Java, Indonesia
(Source: www.google.com, 30/8/2014)

For Sukabumi people, lived under the Japanese authority was an unforgotten nightmare. Japan did not only massacre people, but also ruined the normal economic living in rural area. The serious production decreasing was a result of the forced labor phenomena or the so called *Romusha* (program of involuntary labor during Japanese occupation). People worried about who would be the next victim of the Japanese policies. That feeling haunted them anytime and anywhere.