

Research Summary

Railroad Workers in the Historiography of the Japanese Occupation and the Revolution

Railroad workers during the Japanese occupation era (1942-1945) and during the revolution of Indonesia, played a very prominent role. The first train stations constructed were those for the Yogyakarta-Juana (Semarang) line, a line used for transporting sugar plantation products from inland Java to the harbor in Semarang. The railroad system in East Sumatra, on the other hand, was established at the end of the nineteenth century to support the operation of the large plantations (*cultuurgebied*). East Sumatra only possessed one railroad company, namely the *Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij*. Aside from transporting plantations products, this railroad was also used to carry contract labour from Java to the plantation. The Japanese administration maintained and at the same time simplified twelve railroad companies inherited from colonial Dutch operating in West, Central and East Java and in Sumatra, and reduced them to four companies operating on a territorial military basis.

During the Japanese occupation, the railroad service and railroad kampong life had become important. There were three main problems at that time. There were three main problems at that time. First, the Japanese government recruited young people to work in the railroad service, be it as workshop workers, administrative workers at the station, train engineers, depot workers, as well as train traffic workers, to the substitute for the 1) skilled railroad workers who had been sent to Burma and Thailand to operate the railroad system there, and for the 2) skilled Europeans railroad staff who only worked until the end of 1942, and then were made war prisoners. Second, the railroad kampongs, including the Young Railroad Generation (AMKA) played a significant role in taking over train stations and other companies and in then handing them over to the Republic. Third, in the first police action in 1946, railroad workers were busy making temporary huts and transforming wagons in temporary dwellings for railroad workers evacuating to Cirebon, Purwokerto, and Yogyakarta. Took over the railroad system in East Sumatra, on the other hand, with the DSM train company in their hands the troops could freely trade the plantation products. The proceeds of the sale were partly used to supply the troops' armament and the rest was turned in to central government.

In the historiography of the Japanese occupation and the revolution the railroad workers exhibited two aspects. First, inherited habits of continuity, which they transferred from the pre-war period, such as the tradition of defending and maintaining the kampongs of the railroad workers, enhanced their activities, as did the habits of disseminating information about their experiences. The second aspect was the transfer of new skills by the Japanese occupations government, namely, the education of machine technicians and the semi-military trainings was later used by railroad workers to respond again to the arrival of the Allies and Nica. These skills were used to face evacuation emergencies and to facilitate the take over activities of railroad workshop and stations.

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