

CULTIVATING *PEMBANGUNAN*:
RICE AND THE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA, 1945-65¹

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Abstract

Indonesia had dealt with the problem of rice related to economic recovery and development since the declaration of independence in 1945. This paper traces the process of understanding rice during the first twenty years of independent Indonesia which created various meanings of *pembangunan* (development). I argue that this process of understanding rice made possible for Indonesia's leaders, intellectual, and policymakers to cultivate *pembangunan* (development), moulding a condition for the seeds of the idea to grow. By understanding rice as an instrument for independence, a part of economic contestation, an object of scientific and technological intervention, and an ideal picture of society, *pembangunan* became a versatile and adaptable idea, both definitive and obscure. Because of such characteristics, *pembangunan* idea represented a shifting concept that slowly became integrated into the narrative of New Order economic change.

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Introduction

In 1969, Soeharto, the second president of Indonesia, attended a ceremony in Jakarta to start the Five-Year Development Plan I (REPELITA I, 1969-74). The first agenda of REPELITA I was to increase food production by intensifying rice yields, targeted at a forty-six percent increase.² The ceremony marked the beginning of the developmental programs taken by the New Order regime. Sixteen years later, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) based in Rome celebrated an achievement of Indonesian development: rice self-sufficiency. During a commemoration of the FAO founding, Soeharto proudly shared the success story of Indonesian agriculture and even announced that Indonesia would donate 100,000 tons of unmilled rice to countries in Africa.³ The Director-General of the FAO, Edouard Saouma, presented the president with a gold medal featuring a picture of Soeharto and his name on one side and a picture of a farmer planting rice, with the inscription "From Rice Importer to Self-sufficiency" on the other.⁴ Saouma said that Soeharto was the symbol of international agricultural development.⁵ As the image of rice became identical with that of the president, rice became central to the narrative of New Order agricultural development.

The association between rice and economic development was neither a sudden nor even a novel invention of the New Order. Indonesia had dealt with the problem of rice related to economic recovery and development since the declaration of independence in 1945.⁶ But why did the New Order development put rice at the centre of its development narrative? How was rice previously understood and conceptualized such that the New Order regime could continue

² K. H. Ramadhan and G. Dwipayana, *Soeharto: Pikiran, Ucapan, Dan Tindakan Saya: Otobiografi* (Jakarta: Citra Lamtoro Gung Persada, 1989), 238-299; Indonesia, "Rentjana Pembangunan Lima Tahun, 1969/70-1973/74," (Djakarta: Departemen Penerangan R.I., 1969), 28.

³ Robert Elson, *Soeharto: A Political Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 235.

⁴ Taufik Abdullah, *Indonesia: Towards Democracy* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2009), 429.

⁵ K. H. Ramadhan and G. Dwipayana, 4.

⁶ Tuong Vu, "Of Rice and Revolution: The Politics of Provisioning and State-Society Relations on Java, 1945-49," *South East Asia Research* 11, no. 3 (2003): 237-67.

a narrative around it? What can rice tell us about the course of development thinking in independent Indonesia?

In this paper, I argue that the combination of ways of understanding rice during the first twenty years of independent Indonesia made possible for Indonesia's leaders, intellectual, and policymakers to cultivate *pembangunan* (development), moulding a condition for the seeds of the idea to grow. By understanding rice as an instrument for independence, a part of economic contestation, an object of scientific and technological intervention, and an ideal picture of society, *pembangunan* became a versatile and adaptable idea, both definitive and obscure. Because of such characteristics, *pembangunan* idea represented a shifting concept that slowly became integrated into the narrative of New Order economic change.

The importance of rice in this study revolves around the aspects of the economy, social change, and ideology. *Oryza sativa*, the domesticated rice species, has long been a dominant food staple and agricultural product in Southeast Asia. By the fifteenth century, rice was the preferred crop in the region, and by the sixteenth century people all across Southeast Asia had practiced "shifting cultivation on low slopes; broadcasting seed on a floodplain; and transplanting seedling into a ploughed and banded field."⁷ By the early 1800s, rice accounted for about 65 percent of Java's per capita calorie supply.⁸ Indeed, rice yields since the early 1900s experienced ups and downs. From the period 1895 to 1930, an increasing number of farm households in Java started to cultivate upland fields with non-rice food crops. Nonetheless, rice remained attractive for farm households because, despite the greater amounts of required labor, its cultivation was a more profitable use of land.⁹ In Java alone, by the late

⁷ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680, Volume One: The Lands Below the Winds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 19.

⁸ Pierre Van Der Eng, "Food for Growth: Trends in Indonesia's Food Supply, 1880-1995," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XXX, no. 4 (2000): 598.

⁹ van Der Eng makes the interpretation that farm households cultivated and sold rice to access cheaper food and increase cash surplus. *Ibid.*, 176.

1930s, rice occupied 68 percent of the cropped area in the western part of the island, 45 percent in the central part, and 28 percent in the eastern part.¹⁰

On the social aspect, historians have discussed how the societal adaptation and cultural environment of the region shaped the ecological relationships between human and rice, including the social transitions and changes of the society.¹¹ The “ecosystem of rice” explains not only the encounter of the rice societies with the wider market economy but also their responses which changed the patterns of agrarian production.¹² The socioeconomic studies on rice provide an important account to understand not only societies and their transformation across time, but also the character of rice and its environment which makes it appealing for humans to cultivate it.¹³

Moreover, rice offers a material basis for the construction of ideology. For example, in the case of Japan from 1870 to 1940, Japanese intellectuals responded diversely to the rural condition of wet-rice agriculture and the modernization of rural society. Their responses further developed into “something of a silent partner” of ultra-nationalism during the Second World War.¹⁴ The ideology of “agrarian nationalism” provided not only clarification for the Japanese agrarianism during the transition from the Meiji restoration to the wartime period, but also offered a moral compass for collective self-identification in which agriculture was the “common denominator of the Japanese as a people.”¹⁵ As intellectuals perceived and understood rice as the economic and cultural backbone of people’s livelihood, rice was essential in the survival of a nation.

¹⁰ Vernon D. Wickizer and Merrill K. Bennett, *The Rice Economy of Monsoon Asia* (California: Food Research Institute, 1941), 34.

¹¹ Lucien M. Hanks, *Rice and Man: Agricultural Ecology in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1972), 69-163.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2; Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta: Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1852-1941* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011 [1974]).

¹³ See also Francesca Bray, *The Rice Economies: Technology and Development in Asian Societies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Francesca Bray et al., eds., *Rice: Global Networks and New Histories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁴ Thomas R. Havens, *Farm and Nation in Modern Japan: Agrarian Nationalism, 1870-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 320.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 317-18.

By considering this importance of rice, this paper offers a historical narrative to engage with the discussion of *pembangunan*. On the one hand, a political-economy approach offers a seemingly linear historical transition of Indonesia's development policy. For example, political-economy scholar Ian Chalmers periodizes Indonesia's development policy in 1945-65 into three phases: the period of populist development (1940-50); the era of burgeoning economic nationalism and the recourse to statism (1950-58); and finally, the advent of an authoritarian political system of the guided economy (1959-65).¹⁶

On the other hand, a semantic approach portrays Indonesia's development as a problem of language operation. "*Pembangunan*" is a noun rooted in a verb "*bangun*" which has two meanings. The first one relates to the activity of construction (building/houses/bridges, etc.); and the second one relates to the "activity of changing something or to a person changing from a state of sleeping/lying down/unconsciousness to becoming awakened."¹⁷ *Pembangunan* in the pre-New Order era arguably had different meanings to development; *pembangunan* meant "to *arouse* national consciousness; to *bring about* an independent Indonesia; and to *modernize* [*memperbaharui*] the way of life of a society which had formerly been colonized."¹⁸ During the New Order, the word "*pembangunan*" semantically inclined to the more economic meaning which bore an ideological burden.¹⁹ Heryanto argues that the growth of the system of meaning given to the word "*pembangunan*" is planned and controlled by the wielders of authority, which makes the word an important product of the development process and a core element for development practice.²⁰

¹⁶ Ian Chalmers and Vedi R. Hadiz, eds., *The Politics of Economic Development in Indonesia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 6-10. More contemporary scholars even invoke the taken-for-granted notion of New Order "developmentalism," arguing the current regime's development policy as a "new developmentalism." For example, see Eve Warburton, "Jokowi and the New Developmentalism," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 52 (2016): 297-320.

¹⁷ Ariel Heryanto, "The Development of 'Development'," *Indonesia* 46 (1988): 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10, original emphasis.

¹⁹ Ariel Heryanto, "Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia," (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University 1995).

²⁰ Heryanto, "The Development of 'Development'," 23.

Both frames, however, omit the process of the making of development as an idea. They appear to assume that the dynamic of *pembangunan* was a given and then jump to its political trajectory and semantic contradiction. This paper aims to contribute to the discussion by showing the historical contingency of *pembangunan* idea. Instead of discussing the different and shifting meanings of *pembangunan*, I focus more on the way intellectuals created and negotiated the idea based on rice problems.

Additionally, this study also engages with the Indonesian historiography of the 1950s and early 1960s. Historians have portrayed the first twenty years of Indonesia's independence as a period of either economic failure or political tension due to ideological conflict among national leaders and groups. For economic historians, the implementation of fiscal and monetary policy during the period was a failure that hampered Indonesia's economic development.²¹ For political historians, it was the ideological contrast among various political groups and constant changes of the political system that created a series of crises and confusion.²²

The debates about economic policy during the first two decades of independence were “a zone of contestation among nationalists, technocrats, and populists, and the social forces they represented and who viewed its goal, respectively, as the creation of [a] national economy.”²³ The binary divisions of groups—“administrators” versus “solidarity makers,” “economics-minded” versus “history-minded”—showcase the tension in the debates about development; that is, each group had its own economic image of post-revolutionary society

²¹ J.A.C Mackie, *Problems of the Indonesian Inflation, An Equinox Classic Indonesia Book* (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 2009 [1967]), 35-64; Anne Booth, *The Indonesian Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A History of Missed Opportunities* (Hampshire and London: MacMillan Press, 1998), 163-177; Jan Luiten van Zanden and Daan Marks, *An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800-2012* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 133-166; Thee Kian Wie, *Indonesia's Economy since Independence* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2012), 37-45.

²² Benjamin Higgins, *Indonesia's Economic Stabilization and Development* (New York: Institute of Pacific's Relations, 1957), 102-106; Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Singapore: Equinox, 2007 [1962]); M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1200*, Third ed. (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 261-341; Ian Chalmers and Vedi R. Hadiz, eds., *The Politics of Economic Development in Indonesia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-21.

²³ Bradley R. Simpson, "Indonesia's 'Accelerated Modernization' and the Global Discourse of Development, 1960-1975," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (2009): 467-86.

and spoke of development in its own way.²⁴ The need to balance the contending political and ideological forces shaped the regime's version of development.²⁵

Rice undoubtedly plays a part in both kinds of story, but it is more as supporting subject than main one, to emphasize the economic trajectory (e.g., food price, export-import policy) and the political tension among elites regarding rice supply and provision. This study shifts the frame of narrating the first two decades of independent Indonesia, showing it as a period of idea cultivation. This study demonstrates that through debates regarding economic structure, errors in policy implementation, and competition with other political agendas, the idea of *pembangunan* apparently obscured the difference between nation-building and economic advancement.

Additionally, this paper takes the background of the Cold War in which rice was pertinent in the foreign policy of both the United States (U.S.) and the Soviet Union. On the one hand, the U.S. project of the Green Revolution began with the emergence of the worldview that regarded hunger and poverty as a threat to international stability, followed by the U.S. interest to “display the fruits of modernity to be a powerful weapon against communism” in Asia.²⁶ The U.S. agricultural initiative in the 1950s and early 1960s, which took its organizational form in the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Manila, Philippines, included a mission to develop high yield varieties of rice seed. The deployment of the result—the “miracle rice”—in the late 1960s became a symbol of transition from stagnation to progress, from traditional to modern.²⁷ On the other hand, the Soviet Union used trade agreements to deal with the rice problem in Asia. In 1954, when Burma faced difficulties in selling its rice surplus due to the declining price of rice in the global market, the Soviet Union offered to buy

²⁴ Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, 19-37; Higgins, *Indonesia's Economic Stabilization and Development*, 102-06.

²⁵ Joshua Barker, "Beyond Bandung: Developmental Nationalism and (Multi)Cultural Nationalism in Indonesia," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2008): 526.

²⁶ Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 161.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 159-80.

a large portion (between a third and a half of the country's export).²⁸ The Cold War provides a transnational context for understanding development in Indonesia, showing the "local complexity" of rice which has shaped the on-going debate about the power and fallibility of development.²⁹

This paper chronicles the story of rice in the making of the *pembangunan* idea in 1945-65. The first part briefly narrates the role of rice in Indonesia during the Japanese Occupation that shaped the postcolonial discourse of Indonesia's economy. I summarize the implementation of Japanese policies in controlling and mobilizing food stuffs during the war, and the discussion among the Sanyo Kaigi, Indonesian political advisers to Japan, regarding the rice problem.

The second part tells the story of rice during Indonesia's early struggle of independence. With the return of the Dutch, the new independent government deployed a series of efforts in the struggle for independence in which rice was the auxiliary instrument. I also discuss how colonial scholars like J. H. Boeke, J. S. Furnivall, and Egbert de Vries commented on the new state's economy, contrasting their concern with the Indonesian leaders' concern regarding rice and the national economy.

The third part focuses on the debate among economists in the 1950s regarding *pembangunan* in which rice was part of their ideas. I use the academic works of Indonesian intellectuals, focusing on Mohammad Hatta, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, and Aidit, as well as Western economists like Benjamin Higgins among others, to explicate their contestation on Indonesia's macroeconomic situation vis-à-vis the government's burgeoning initiative of rice self-sufficiency.

²⁸ Joseph S. Berliner, *Soviet Economic Aid: The New Aid and Trade Policy in Underdeveloped Countries* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1958), 20; Matthew Foley, *The Cold War and National Assertion in Southeast Asia: Britain, the United States and Burma, 1948-1962* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 121-22.

²⁹ Jonathan Harwood, "Global Visions Vs. Local Complexity: Experts Wrestle with the Problem of Development," in *Rice: Global Networks and New Histories*, ed. Francesca Bray, et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 41-55.

The fourth part tells a story of how agricultural scientists, supported by the government, articulated *pembangunan* through scientific and technological intervention in rice production. I delve into a publication of the Ministry of National Research—*Research di Indonesia 1945-1965 III Bidang Pertanian* (1965)—and a periodical magazine published by the Central Bureau of People’s Food—*Madjalah Pertanian* (1960-65). By incorporating these sources, I focus on how the making of *pembangunan* required a series of technicalities in which science and technology were the tools to improve the quality of living.

The fifth part explicates the story of rice society as an idealistic picture of society constituted through the works of sociologists and anthropologists. This part shows how Soekarno, Hatta, and Indonesian intellectuals articulated *pembangunan* through the notion of *gotong rojong* (mutual cooperation) based on their perceptions and sometimes observations of rice society and villages. I use Hatta’s monograph on cooperatives and works of scholars such as Koentjaraningrat, Soedjatmoko, and Selo Soemardjan to understand the way these intellectuals noted and interpreted village lives.

The final part looks at the incorporation of rice in Indonesia’s foreign policy and aid negotiation. I utilize an English-language semi-official Indonesian newspaper—*The Indonesian Herald* (1961-62)—which had a section on economic development and was vocal in endorsing Soekarno’s foreign policy regarding West Papua. This part shows the way Indonesia’s government dealt with the problem of rice and national sovereignty, which created a dilemma of precedence.

This is a story of rice as an object of abstraction, a target for intervention, a stimulus for ideal visions of society, a *thing* that informs us that development is but a grain of power.

Mobilizing and Controlling: A Brief History of Rice Policy During the Japanese Occupation

When the Sixteenth Army of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) invaded Java in 1942, the region was barely self-sufficient. The military government considered the need to increase food production its most serious problem.³⁰ According to Aiko Kurasawa, under the slogan of “Multiply Production,” the Japanese authority imposed foodstuff programs to increase the production of rice, from introducing new seed varieties and cultivation techniques, constructing irrigation and clearing forest, to education and propaganda.³¹ However, rice production consistently declined, from 8.3 million tons in 1942 to 6.8 million tons in 1944 due to various factors such as climate, cattle shortage, infrastructural deterioration, and a lack of spirit among the farmers.³²

Kurasawa notes that although the statistics of production indicated an adequate amount of supply and calories, the real problem stemmed from the issue of distribution. Maximization of production had to be parallel with maximization of collection. Thus, besides encouraging domestic production, the Japanese also imposed a “forced delivery” system in which peasants had to deliver certain portions of their production to the government at a meager price.³³ The Japanese took over the Dutch office for rice distribution and established Office of Food Supply (*Syokuryō Kanri Zimusho*, SKZ) at the Department of Economic Affairs.³⁴ Resembling the Dutch system, SKZ had the function of handling foodstuffs through purchase and delivery, including stabilizing the price of rice by drawing up a detailed program of rice distribution to the urban population.³⁵ The difference between the SKZ and the Dutch system related directly

³⁰ Aiko Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control: A Study of Social Change in Rural Java, 1942-1945" (Cornell University, 1988), 35; Aiko Kurasawa, "Transportation and Rice Distribution in South-East Asia During the Second World War," in *Food Supplies and the Japanese Occupation in South-East Asia*, ed. Paul H. Kratoska (London: MacMillan Press, 1998), 32-66.

³¹ Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 33-61.

³² *Ibid.*, 62-68.

³³ *Ibid.*, 113.

³⁴ In 1939, the Dutch established the Food Stuffs Fund (*Voedingsmiddelenfonds*, VMF) that handled rice supply and price by controlling the rice market through excess purchase. Pierre Van Der Eng, "Food Supply in Java During War and Decolonisation, 1940-1950," in *MPRA Paper* (Munich Personal RePEc Archive, 2008): 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

to the “structural reform of the local administration” in which the Japanese abolished the provincial structure and gave residencies stronger power over administrative matters.³⁶ SKZ functioned together with rice mills and rice merchants associations (*kumiai*) and local authorities (*pangreh praja*, village leaders) in collecting paddy from farmers in residencies and distributing it.³⁷

The implementation of this system was difficult. SKZ experienced problems in holding the increasing amounts of rice for distribution to the Japanese army, government officials, Indonesian civil servants, forced labors, the police force, camps of POWs, and the urban population.³⁸ Historians share the view that, in practice, there was no uniform purchase and distribution policy because authorities in the residencies had different methods of assigning the quota at lower levels.³⁹ These authorities in the residencies, however, were prone to abuse the system. Corrupt *pangreh praja* often increased the quota to hold onto rice supplies and then sell them in the black market, or they colluded with rice millers and traders to increase the price.⁴⁰ Additionally, the Japanese authorities lacked coordination, knowledge, and experience, resulting in a malfunctioning delivery system and peasant uprisings.⁴¹

Because of this lack of knowledge, the Japanese asked the Sanyo Kaigi (Indonesian political advisers to the Japanese) for a solution regarding the rice problem. The Sanyo Kaigi comprised members of the national intelligentsia who, according to Benedict Anderson, for the first time faced the basic problems of Java “not simply as social critics but as part of the governmental apparatus.”⁴² Members of Sanyo, like Soekarno and Hatta, assessed the “unsatisfactory results of the [paddy] collections.”⁴³ Their assessment then stretched to an

³⁶ Shigeru Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1994): 128.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 121; Van Der Eng, "Food Supply in Java," 8-9.

³⁸ Van der Eng, "Food Supply in Java," 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-11; Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 128-32; Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants*, 128-35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12; Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 165-74.

⁴¹ Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants*, 137-38.

⁴² Benedict Anderson, "The Problem of Rice (Stenographic Notes on the Fourth Session of the Sanyo Kaigi, January 8. 2605, 10:00 AM)," *Indonesia* 2 (1966): 79.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86.

overview of the social and economic conditions in rural Java. However, they confined themselves to “consideration of improvements in the instrumental rationality of Japanese policy, not its substantive validity.”⁴⁴ For example, in replying to Soekarno’s question of how to address the Japanese military authority about the rice problem, Hatta suggested “an easier method on collection” in which the government should take rice only from villages that had a rice surplus.⁴⁵ Anderson notes that the ruling intelligentsia saw the critical conditions in the villages as temporary due to war and not as “deep-rooted malformations of [the] agricultural economy.”⁴⁶ Although the members of Sanyo were critical and concerned with the methods of mobilization, they supported the idea behind the government’s control over rice production and distribution.⁴⁷

Even at the end of the war in 1945, the Japanese distribution mechanism still did not work properly. Historians have identified multiple factors for the failure, including not only the government control over distribution but also low purchase prices, a deteriorating production process, and impediments to transportation.⁴⁸ Rice remained an urgent issue, pushing politicians and bureaucrats to think about solutions that were acceptable for people in both urban and rural areas.

Rice and Independence: The Struggle for National Sovereignty

The rice problem which continued after the Japanese Occupation kindled discussion of the development of the new independent state. Rice played a significant role in Indonesia’s

⁴⁴ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 105-06.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 81; Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants*, 138-44.

⁴⁷ Ibid.; Shigeru Sato, "Oppression and Romanticism: The Food Supply of Java During the Japanese Occupation," in *Food Supplies and the Japanese Occupation in South-East Asia. Studies in the Economies of East and South-East Asia*, ed. Kratoska P.H., *Studies in the Economies of East and South-East Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 183.

⁴⁸ Van der Eng, "Food Supply in Java," 38; Kurasawa, "Transportation and Rice Distribution in South-East Asia During the Second World War," 643-45.

struggle for independence, and making *pembangunan* was part of searching for recognition of national sovereignty.

After the Second World War, the Dutch was lack of foreign exchange. As the Dutch struggled to recover from a huge deficit in balance of payments, the colonial administration aimed to re-establish the “task which Dutch colonial politics had imposed upon itself before the war.”⁴⁹ With support from the Allies, the Dutch wanted to resume colonial extraction.

The Netherlands East Indies, however, had proclaimed its independence as the Republic of Indonesia in August 1945, in the voice of its nationalist leaders Soekarno and Hatta.⁵⁰ Their priority was foodstuffs. After the Japanese left, the purchased stocks of paddy held at the merchants’ storage failed to reach the rice mills and urban areas due to confusion among local authorities and lack of communication.⁵¹ By September 1945, the stocks of rice at the mills was only 323,200 tons.⁵² The new Republican government attempted to overcome the problem by copying the Japanese system of rice policy from the Occupation. It quickly established the Agency for the Supervision of the People’s Food Supply (*Djawatan Pengawasan Makanan Rakjat*, PMR) under the Ministry of Welfare. With a similar function to that of SKZ, PMR’s task was to stabilize rice prices and supplies by collecting over 20 percent of farmers’ paddy harvest and distributing it. Rice traders still had to supply paddy for the rice mills. PMR would then distribute the rice from the mills to the armed forces, civil servants, and urban areas.⁵³

In early 1946, the Dutch military re-occupied the capital city of Jakarta. The Republican government left for Yogyakarta, but still attempted to control the circulation of rice. Doing so was difficult. The inflow of armies and officials expanded the population, and an insecure

⁴⁹ Pierre Van Der Eng, "Marshall Aid as a Catalyst in the Decolonization of Indonesia, 1947-49," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1988): 337.

⁵⁰ The armed and diplomatic conflict between the Dutch and Indonesia, well-known as the “Revolution,” took place in 1945-50. See Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1200*, 261-86.

⁵¹ Van Der Eng, “Food Supply,” 46

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 28, 38.

situation and shortage of labor delayed planting for the wet season.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the Republic leaders decided to resist the return of the Dutch through not only armed combat but also a series of diplomatic efforts to gain international recognition.

Rice, amid the issue of domestic circulation, was a part of the Republic's weapons for battling the Dutch. On May 7, 1946, the English newspaper in Mumbai, *The Times of India*, made public Jawaharlal Nehru's inquiry to Sjahrir, the Prime Minister. "I learnt through the press that you have been good enough to offer to send half a million tons of rice from Indonesia to India to relieve famine conditions here."⁵⁵ Nehru then asked if Sjahrir could give him further details on Indonesia's offer and discuss an arrangement. A few days later, a cable came from Sjahrir saying, "For the sake of mutual assistance between the two nations we should like to receive in exchange goods most urgently needed by the majority of the population, for example, textiles and agricultural implements."⁵⁶ Indonesia would trade its rice for India's textiles.

The Dutch dismissed this offer as propaganda and insisted that the Republic of Indonesia itself was facing rice scarcity. The Royal Consul-General for the Netherlands in India explained to the press that "it was most unlikely that Java increased its production in recent years" after the Japanese Occupation.⁵⁷ In a radio speech, Hatta disputed the Dutch authority, saying that "[The Dutch] will certainly lose their minds upon hearing [our offer to India]. With their control only on paper, they cannot make such an offer. But the Republic of Indonesia is able to offer paddy to India, which is facing famine."⁵⁸ For Hatta, the Republic's offer to India would stop the Dutch propaganda in foreign countries.

This offer was "a diplomatic salvo to assert internationally both the Republican government's effective authority over the country and the high moral standards of its foreign

⁵⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁵ "Indonesia's Rice Offer to India," *The Times of India*, 7 May 1946, 3.

⁵⁶ "Java Rice Offer to India Materialise: Dr. Sjahrir's Cable to Pandit Nehru," *The Times of India*, 24 May 1946, 7.

⁵⁷ "Rice Position in Indonesia: Dutch Consul Explains," *The Times of India*, 31 May 1946, 3.

⁵⁸ 'Pidato Wakil Presiden tentang pengiriman beras ke India,' *Antara*, 22 June 1946 in Tuong Vu, "Of Rice and Revolution," 250.

policy.”⁵⁹ On the brink of armed conflict with the Dutch, Indonesia’s struggle for independence was pivotal and “the control over rice became synonymous with control over territory.”⁶⁰ The government’s decision received support from the press. Some newspapers called the decision “a gesture of thanks to humanity; a move that caused a stir in the world; a powerful slap at the Dutch.”⁶¹ Additionally, a song titled *Padi untuk India* (Paddy for India) was popularized to represent the government’s goodwill in supporting India as a friendly nation as well as to “recall solidarity” among Indonesians.⁶² On August 19, 1946, Indonesia’s government delivered the first two shipments of rice from the promised 500,000 tons to Madras (eastern India) and would deliver the rest at the end of the month.⁶³ With the success of this offer, rice became valuable as the symbol of authority and sovereignty that Indonesia needed.

The Republic’s effort to gain international recognition did not appeal to colonial scholars. As they already had experience in the region, these scholars were focusing their attention on the economic condition of the new state. In a journal article, J. H. Boeke, a Dutch economist who worked for the colonial government in the 1910s, wrote: “The nationalist leaders have relatively little interest in economic affairs. Only purely political problems appear of first importance to them.”⁶⁴ Coming from Boeke, this comment was not unexpected. Reflecting his former position as a senior economist of the colonized Indies, he blamed nationalist leaders and their mentality for the underdeveloped economy of independent Indonesia.

Since the late period of Dutch colonial rule, Boeke maintained his concept of “dual economies,” contrasting Western-type enterprise on the islands of Sumatera, Borneo, and

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Rhoma Dwi Aria Yuliantri, "Lekra and Ensembles: Tracing the Indonesian Musical Stage," in *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian 1950-1965*, ed. Jeniffer Lindsay and Maya H.T. Liem (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012), 432. Yuliantri could trace the name of the songwriter (A. Alie) but not the year when the song was composed. Nonetheless, according to the memoir of Francisca Faggidaej, an Indonesian journalist, this song was popular in 1946. Hesri Setiawan, *Memoar Perempuan Revolusioner: Francisca C. Faggidaej* (Yogyakarta: Galangpress, 2006), 109.

⁶³ "Java Rice Shipments for Madras," *The Times of India*, 21 August 1946, 7.

⁶⁴ J. H. Boeke, "Economic Conditions for Indonesian Independence," *Pacific Affairs* 19, no. 4 (1946): 396.

Celebes with Javanese agriculture. For Boeke, rice policy in the mid-1930s Netherlands-East Indies had provided a policy lesson: rice export for Java and self-provisioning for the other islands were required in tandem with improving production of other cash crops like rubber and tobacco.⁶⁵ The development of Indonesia into “a truly independent state,” he suggested, must accept Western capitalism, at least as an “inevitable stage of transition.”⁶⁶

J. S. Furnivall disagreed. “He speaks with an authority to which I cannot pretend,” said Furnivall, commenting on Boeke’s position. He continued, “Yet I cannot help feeling that he overstates his case.”⁶⁷ Furnivall was well known for his account of the “plural society” which resembled some of Boeke’s ideas on the different characteristics of Indies societies and their economic embeddedness. Furnivall, however, did not adopt a rigid system of economy like Boeke. Looking at colonial policy, he focused instead on different social orders based on racial lines that performed different kinds of economic function. In the field of production and distribution, each racial group had its distinctive role to play in the market, as there was no common “social will.”⁶⁸ Thus, the cause of lack of progress among the Javanese, Furnivall concluded, “seem[s] to lie in their history rather than in their mentality.”⁶⁹

The situation on the ground during their conversation was undeniably pressing. By early 1947 the PMR still could not function, despite the success of the Republic’s rice offer to India, and the outcome of the rice purchasing system was not as expected. The government faced a fiscal crisis and had to change the floor and ceiling prices of rice, thus pushing down the price. And with a low price, farmers refused to sell their rice to the government.⁷⁰ Additionally, the process of collecting rice had many obstacles, as the central government could not control the clash on the ground. The competition over rice “was not in marketing or sale, but in obtaining

⁶⁵ J. H. Boeke, *The Evolution of the Netherlands Indies Economy* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1946), 112-15.

⁶⁶ Boeke, “Economic Conditions for Indonesian Independence,” 399-401.

⁶⁷ J. S. Furnivall, “Capitalism in Indonesia,” *Pacific Affairs* 20, no. 1 (1947): 68.

⁶⁸ J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 446-459; J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 304-312.

⁶⁹ J. S. Furnivall, “Capitalism in Indonesia,” 68.

⁷⁰ Tuong Vu, “Of Rice and Revolution,” 246.

the necessary licenses from military commanders and other relevant [regional] government offices to buy food.”⁷¹ As historian Tuong Vu notes, during those years, rice was part of an armed and bleak contestation, held by “a man thinking with a Japanese head but walking with Javanese legs.”⁷² In this context, Boeke’s comment was condescending and Furnivall’s response did not provide a solution to the food problem in Indonesia.

In the midst of the rice supply and distribution problem, another Dutch economist, Egbert de Vries, also offered an interpretation of Indonesia’s economic problem: a choice between growing food crops and cash crops.⁷³ De Vries argued that direct participation in the export trade of cash crops was desirable for a country such as Indonesia. Repeating Boeke’s concern about the nationalists, yet in a more modest tone, he stated: “Even in Republican circles, there seems to be recognition of the fact that, under present conditions, some kind of estate agriculture is indispensable to the economic welfare of the country.”⁷⁴

De Vries was an agronomist graduated from a Dutch agricultural school in Wageningen. He once led the commission that designed the Bogor agricultural faculty in the 1940s. In 1949, he supported the scheme of international aid offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and endorsed the growing idea of international development promoted by the U.S.⁷⁵ With this view, De Vries was aware of how the choice to improve cash crops for export clashed with the urgent need for food. He continued that the problem of rice shortage in 1946-47 made the issue of employment pertinent for Indonesian agricultural workers. He concluded, “The Indonesian labourer will generally accept employment only if assured of a rice allowance; otherwise he prefers to use his time in clearing a field and growing his own

⁷¹ Ibid., 253.

⁷² Ibid., 247.

⁷³ Egbert de Vries, "Problems of Agriculture in Indonesia," *Pacific Affairs* 22, no. 2 (1949): 130-43.

⁷⁴ de Vries, "Problems of Agriculture in Indonesia," 133-34.

⁷⁵ Harro Maat, *Science Cultivating Practice: A History of Agricultural Science in the Netherlands and Its Colonies, 1863-1986* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 106-07. In this period, the Dutch government negotiated with the U.S., through the IMF and the World Bank regarding the Marshall Plan, a program that provided technical assistance to the Dutch to recover its economy. The negotiation of Marshall aid was heavily related to military tension and negotiation between the Netherlands and Indonesia regarding independence, resulting in a series of suspensions and a lower allotment of aid than the Dutch expected. Van Der Eng, "Marshall Aid as a Catalyst in the Decolonization of Indonesia, 1947-49," 335-52.

food or even in improvising a diet of roots and leaves.”⁷⁶ Nonetheless, de Vries suggested the importance of new capital which “[would] have to come from abroad.”⁷⁷ The most critical factor in this situation was “the attitude of the Indonesian nation and government toward foreign investments.”⁷⁸ Economic development required foreign capital or enterprises; and to flow in, the capital required political affirmation.

Soekarno had another agenda. Instead of relying on foreign sources, he aimed for a self-sufficient economy. “Why should we talk about political freedom if we are not free in matters of rice, always having to ask neighboring countries to buy rice?” asked Soekarno rhetorically in his 1952 speech.⁷⁹ He was concerned with domestic rice production, laying out some solutions and government initiatives to improve it. Near the end of his speech, he encouraged his audience: “Be the heroes of *pembangunan*. Make your nation strong, an independent nation in the sense of true freedom.”⁸⁰ For Soekarno, full control over rice—which should be achieved by self-sufficiency—would lead to the truest meaning of national independence. Rice was seemingly the foundation of Indonesia as a nation.

Through rice, *pembangunan* entered the narrative of Indonesia’s struggle of independence. It was not an easy path. Not only did the Republican government have to manage the rice supply and distribution for the population, but it also had to deal with the return of the Dutch and assert its legitimacy as the new state on the international scene. In the middle of this struggle, colonial scholars focused on the inflow of foreign capital for the development of Indonesia’s economy, while Soekarno aimed for self-sufficiency in which domestic production was the key to national independence.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 140.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Soekarno, *Pangan Rakyat Soal Hidup Atau Mati* (Antara, 1952 [cited 13 January 2018]); available from <https://megapolitan.antaraneews.com/berita/1425/pangan-rakyat-soal-hidup-atau-mati-petikan-pidato-bung-karno-tahun-1952>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Finding the Balance: The Debates on Rice and the National Economy

By the 1950s, the question of national independence centred on how to achieve self-sufficiency. The search for a self-sufficient economy comprised debates on multiple economic issues around rice such as fiscal condition, supply and distribution, the role of the state, and land distribution. In this economic sense, the idea of *pembangunan* was contentious.

In the early 1950s, the attempt to establish a national economy came from the pressure to mobilize indigenous enterprises against Dutch domination of trade. What was the point of choosing food crops and cash crops when the Dutch still controlled the trading houses and flow of goods? Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, who served as the Minister of Trade and Industry, launched the *Benteng* program to facilitate *bumiputra* businesses to import foreign goods by opening access of low credit through a state-owned bank channel. As a trained economist from the Rotterdam School of Commerce who had already been involved with the Republic's economic policy since 1946, Sumitro took the initiative against the Dutch economic interest. He saw the *Benteng* program more as a political countermeasure against Dutch interests than as an affirmative action to protect Indonesian enterprises. He wrote, "I didn't believe in policies such as quotas and quantitative restrictions, but neither did I believe in leaving the market as it is."⁸¹ For Sumitro, the *Benteng* policy was a mere transitional policy for rural business activity to move to the non-farm sector. The long-term objective was to diversify the pattern of production to include rapid industrialization.

Sumitro's attitude regarding the *Benteng* policy was a reflection of his long resentment of Boeke's dualism. He rejected the argument that "Indonesians or the 'Eastern races' can never improve their situation because they have different values."⁸² Sumitro disagreed with Boeke's assumption of the static character of the native economy which was seemingly shared by the

⁸¹ Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, "Recollections of My Career," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 22, no. 3 (1986): 35.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 31.

“anthropologists of the old school.”⁸³ He bitterly wrote, “They always tell me you can’t do this or that, because it will make people unhappy! They always want to justify and preserve the status quo. They don’t seem to understand that people respond to outside challenges.”⁸⁴

Sumitro clearly wanted to take Indonesia’s economy in a different direction from the Dutch style of management. But Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, the then Minister of Finance, disputed this view. Sjafruddin, who had previously worked as an assistant Inspector of Finance during the Dutch period, was more sympathetic to the Dutch ways of managing the economy and was even against the Indonesian takeover of the Dutch enterprises.⁸⁵ He recalled the *Benteng* program as mistargeted, because it could not accommodate most people in agriculture. “I was against the Benteng Programme of Sumitro,” stated Sjafruddin. “[W]e should assist [people in agriculture], and industry should be based on agriculture and on the natural resources found in Indonesia.”⁸⁶ Industrialization, Sjafruddin noted, cannot bypass education in management and technology. He was concerned with the implementation of the *Benteng* program which was prone to the practice of *ali baba*, a derogatory term for a “pseudo-joint venture between indigenous Indonesians and ethnic Chinese.”⁸⁷ This practice generally created a rent-seeking operation because the ethnic Chinese encountered a bottleneck when attempting to access sufficient foreign exchange to import.⁸⁸ He asserted, “If we did not educate first we would just create Ali Babas!”⁸⁹

The disagreement between Sumitro and Sjafruddin was indeed significant for the macrostructure of Indonesia’s economy.⁹⁰ Yet, Sumitro concurred with Sjafruddin on

⁸³ Ibid. Sumitro referred to the Dutch “Indologs,” scholars who trained in Leiden University.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ His sympathetic attitude toward the Dutch is evident through his saying: “I still had confidence in the judgement and sincerity of the Dutch. I felt I had fought not against the Dutch but against their regime, I didn’t hate them—I never hate anyone.” Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, “Recollections of My Career,” *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 23, no. 3 (2006): 104-05.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See J. Thomas Lindbald, *Bridges to New Business: The Economic Decolonization of Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2008), 131-32.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Prawiranegara, “Recollections of My Career,” 105.

⁹⁰ Their debate on the nationalization of Java Bank shaped the course of Indonesia’s financial structure and macroeconomic policy. See Thee, *Indonesia's Economy since Independence*, 24-68.

balancing the amount of rice import with domestic production. They agreed that during Sukiman's cabinet (April 1951 - February 1952) the government put too much attention on rice trade instead of increasing rice production. In 1951 and 1952, respectively, the government imported 530,000 tons and 760,000 tons of rice, both of which were nearly three-quarters of the value of all food imports.⁹¹ In 1951, forty percent of the rice import came from Burma.⁹²

Sjafruddin observed that the increase in foreign exchange in 1950, which boosted the government's capacity to import, was not the result of domestic policies. Thanks to the Korean War boom, the demand for oil and rubber increased Indonesia's exports. But, continued Sjafruddin, the government could not repeat such capacity and use import as a justification to lower rice prices anymore. The government had to think about crops production in order to ease the need for import. Sumitro had a similar concern, saying that Indonesia's exports were highly dependent on particular commodities like rubber; the government was negligent in the production of other crops. Additionally, better use of government expenditures in productive activities was desirable. Sjafruddin suggested the rehabilitation of irrigation facilities and opening up new *sawah* (wet-rice fields), and Sumitro, taking a macroeconomic view, highlighted better fiscal and monetary policies.⁹³ In the debate between Sumitro and Sjafruddin, rice was part of the contest to control fiscal expenditure and to boost (indigenous) industrialization.

In 1952, the cabinet changed and Benjamin Higgins, a development economist from the U.S., started his work as an advisor to Sumitro. As the debate on rice ensued, he enjoyed the luxury of *rijstaffel* (rice table) during lunch in the Hotel des Indes.⁹⁴ Since the launch of the

⁹¹ United Nations, "Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East, 1953," (Bangkok: Research and Planning Division, Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, Department of Economic Affairs, 1954), 72

⁹² Badan Urusan Logistik, "Seperempat Abad Bergulat Dengan Butir-Butir Beras," (Jakarta: Badan Urusan Logistik, 1971), 53.

⁹³ The debate of Sumitro Djojohadikusumo and Sjafruddin Prawiranegara is discussed in Thee Kian Wie, *Indonesia's Economy since Independence*, 38-65.

⁹⁴ Benjamin Higgins, "The Ideological Factor: Indonesia, 1952-52," in *All the Difference: A Development Economist's Quest* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 48-72; *Rijstaffel* (rice table) is a Dutch meal combining indigenous and European culinary styles. *Rijstaffel* emerged in the late nineteenth century and was associated with the

Special Welfare Program (*Rentjana Kesedjahteraan Istimewa*, RKI) in 1949/50 under the Department of Agriculture, the government had encouraged technical research on rice seeds, production organization, and fertilization to intensify domestic rice production. The government aimed for food self-sufficiency by 1956; thus, it required proper budget management. In the new cabinet of Wilopo (1952-53), Sumitro—who now served as the Minister of Finance—formalized development planning and established the National Planning Bureau (*Biro Perantjang Negara*) to integrate food self-sufficiency into the national investment budget. Higgins had the role of advisor to this new institution.

Higgins saw that food production would be a high priority in the short run as Indonesia was low on capital. For him, using the small amount of capital available in Indonesia for the improvement of food production was on point. “It makes good sense,” he said, “[because] the supply of capital is so limited, the knowledge of industrial resources so incomplete, and technical skills outside agriculture so scarce.”⁹⁵ In a journal article, D.W. Fryer, another economist from the U.S., shared Higgins’ opinion and suggested heavy application of fertilizer and large-scale production to improve food production.⁹⁶ The government echoed this solution. It established the Five-Year Agricultural Plan to build a fertilizer factory in Asahan and a phosphate factory in Tjirebon, and the Five-Year Irrigation Plan to extend the irrigated area of rice-fields to 314,000 hectares.

The government did not achieve the target of rice self-sufficiency by 1956. But with the establishment of the National Planning Bureau, Indonesia entered a regime of planning, in which rice was a key target parallel to fiscal policy. “It is hoped that the 3 per cent annual increase in national income can be maintained during the planning period, 1956-1960. ... With

luxurious life of Dutch colonials in the Netherlands-East Indies. See Fadly Rahman, *Rijsttafel: Budaya Kuliner Di Indonesia Masa Kolonial 1870-1942* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2001).

⁹⁵ Benjamin Higgins, *Indonesia's Economic Stabilization and Development* (New York: Institute of Pacific's Relations, 1957), 55.

⁹⁶ D. W. Fryer, "Indonesia's Economic Prospects," *Far Eastern Survey* 23, no. 12 (1954): 178-79.

a marginal savings (and investment) ratio of 40 per cent, 0.52 per cent per capita national income can be set aside each year for new capital formation,” wrote Higgins.⁹⁷ This capital formation would be used to increase rice production. For Mohammad Hatta, the former Vice-President and an economist, the implementation of the Five-Year Plan (of 1956/57-1960/61) could increase the production of rice by 2 million tons. “If we can do this,” he said, “the welfare of the people will improve ... [and] the state can save foreign exchange for rice import.”⁹⁸

Although Hatta was concerned with fiscal policy, he paid more attention to the management of rice supply and distribution. Perhaps his concern was derived from his experience during the Occupation dealing with the problem of rice. In his view, with the geographical challenge of Indonesia, where big and small islands were distant from each one another, the rice granaries became extremely important. Hatta wrote, in a poetic manner, “During the season of storm and high tide, when ships were troubled to drift on the shores, [people] suffered from hunger. No rice, and not all of their crops could be eaten, rotting as they could not sell them.”⁹⁹

Rice granaries would save the situation. Each granary would store a minimum amount of rice supply for one year as a regional stock, namely the “iron stock” (*persediaan besi*). For example, if one village had a population of 1000 and each person required 100 kilos of rice per year, then the village would have to have a minimum of 100 tons of rice. If the accumulated rice from individual granaries were only 20 tons, the village granary would have to provide the remaining 80 tons. If there was a surplus, let’s say of 25 tons, the village could sell its rice outside through a cooperative under the supervision of the village government. If the village could not achieve the minimum amount of rice supply, the village government would have to buy rice from another region through the cooperative. The granary-cooperative system had to

⁹⁷ Higgins, *Indonesia's Economic Stabilization and Development*, 55.

⁹⁸ M. Hatta, *Beberapa Fasal Ekonomi I: Jalan Keekonomi Dan Pembangunan* (Jakarta: Dinas Penerbitan Balai Pustaka, 1960), 179.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

be established “not only in the small islands ... but in all area of Indonesia. Of each village, *nagari* or family!”¹⁰⁰

Sumitro echoed Hatta’s calculation on the different supply of rice between regions, yet unlike Hatta, Sumitro was not concerned so much with the organization of rice supply and distribution. He cared about the aggregate: the area size of cultivation, production, and calorie consumption. Using a calculation of rice consumption required by an individual, he estimated the number of families that could be covered by the accumulation of paddy fields, both wet and dry, in Java.¹⁰¹ However, “95 per cent of farm families own too small a plot of land and are far from fulfilling their family’s food needs ... and land expansion in Java is no longer possible.”¹⁰² He later suggested increasing production through the expansion of paddy fields to the islands outside Java.

Sumitro and Hatta’s different emphases in thinking about rice reflected two meanings of *pembangunan*. Hatta was straightforward: *pembangunan* must concern first the fulfilment of the primary needs of the people. The goal of rice self-sufficiency was not limited to the expansion of paddy fields, but also involved building roads, irrigation systems, fertilizer factories, and good management of distribution. Sumitro took a more academic approach. He explained *pembangunan* by initially laying out a comparative notion of an “underdeveloped economy,” arguing that in Indonesian context, economic development meant a “balance.” In Sumitro’s account, this balance was between an increase in food production and population; in the distribution of population among Indonesian islands to create a balance between people and their area’s natural wealth; and between agriculture production and industrial development.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 180-81. Hatta was born in Minangkabau family, and “*nagari*” is a term for regional administrative unit of Minangkabau people.

¹⁰¹ For Sumitro’s reference see Nathan Keyfitz and Widjojo, *Soal Penduduk Dan Pembangunan Di Indonesia, Pustaka Ekonomi, No. 1* (Jakarta: Pembangunan, 1955).

¹⁰² Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, *Ekonomi Pembangunan* (Jakarta: PT. Pembangunan Jakarta, 1955), 170.

¹⁰³ Djojohadikusumo, *Ekonomi Pembangunan*, 143.

Hatta and Sumitro, nonetheless, shared the same view on two outlooks. First, *pembangunan* was the state's responsibility. To achieve rice self-sufficiency "so that *pembangunan* runs effectively based on the principle of 'achieving maximum results with minimum costs in the shortest time possible,' firmly, without hesitation we must carry out a guided economy," said Hatta during the 1957 National Conference of Development.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Sumitro argued that the government played an important role in achieving the balance of economy and, more importantly, in ensuring the balance of payment from international trade. Sumitro disagreed with implementation of trade based merely on comparative (dis)advantages which ignored "the fact that there are strange differences between continents regarding the level of technology, production, development, and progress. These differences are caused by structural factors."¹⁰⁵ For Sumitro, the state, thus, must oversee its foreign exchange because it was important to change structural factors in order to implement development. Sumitro concluded, "*Pembangunan* means that the state has an obligation to directly and indirectly monitor how factors of production are used."¹⁰⁶

Second, *pembangunan* was not about the rivalry between agrarian production and industrial development. Hatta explained industrialization in the contexts of unequal distribution of population. For him, industrialization alone was not sufficient for Indonesia where many still living in villages with low purchasing power and dominating in Java. He added that industry should be happened in populated areas where labor and market could exist, hence transmigration program—moving population from Java to another islands—was important in pursuing the national prosperity.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Sumitro emphasized a "balanced development" in which agrarian production complemented industrial structure: "improvement in the agrarian

¹⁰⁴ Hatta, *Beberapa Fasal Ekonomi I*, 274.

¹⁰⁵ Djojohadikusumo, *Ekonomi Pembangunan*, 308.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁰⁷ Hatta, *Beberapa Fasal Ekonomi I*, 164-67.

production would open possibilities for industrial development.”¹⁰⁸ He shared Hatta’s idea of domestic migration to move labor from more populated areas to less populated areas. With more equal distribution of population, labors working in agriculture sectors could slowly shifted to non-agriculture sectors.¹⁰⁹

On the matter of agrarian relations, D. N. Aidit, the leader of the Communist Party, was vocal, as the problem behind low production of rice and general agricultural goods was the feudalistic land relations in villages. Unstable rice prices were a result of “the mismanagement of bureaucrat capitalists and the manipulation and monopoly of village devils (*setan desa*) over agricultural products.”¹¹⁰ Using his research findings in Javanese villages, Aidit strongly criticized economists who undermined the impact of high inflation on farmers, arguing that, indeed, “inflation fastens the process of land concentration.”¹¹¹

Aidit disagreed strongly with Sumitro’s account of the absence of a massive class of landlords in villages and that the problems of farmers were merely related to urban trade capital. Speaking in front of Indonesia’s economists, he expressed his snarky remark, “[Sumitro’s statement] was indeed a false conclusion and covers up the reality in our villages. ... Yes, what can we say, if we carry out an analysis like Sumitro who did not first confirm what is meant by the word ‘landlord.’ It is an empty analysis and completely unscientific.”¹¹² For Aidit, shifting consumption from rice to corn and banning rice imports were only a short-term solution. The long-term solution for Indonesia’s self-sufficiency was to free productive agricultural labors from feudalistic relations of production through agrarian revolution and land reform.¹¹³ Rice, in Aidit’s mind, corresponded with the overall relations of land and labor production, and

¹⁰⁸ Djojohadikusumo, *Ekonomi Pembangunan*, 342.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹¹⁰ D. N. Aidit, *Pemecahan Masalah Ekonomi Dan Ilmu Ekonomi Dewasa Ini* (Jakarta: Jajasan Pembaruan, 1964), 24. The “seven village devils” were exploitative elements in the relations of rural agricultural productions, such as landlords, officials who defend the interest of landlords, *idjon* dealers (mortgagee, middlemen), bureaucratic capitalists who exploited farmers, villagers who collaborated with landlords, money lenders, and usurers.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

although he did not use the word *pembangunan* extensively, he always referred to Soekarno's Economic Declaration to achieve a socialist economy when talking about economic problem.

Rice became an object of economic contestation over balancing its availability and affordability, and import and domestic production. Additionally, rice was an object in pursuing as well as in questioning a self-sufficient economy. For intellectuals like Hatta and Sumitro, *pembangunan* was about not only valuing the rice, overseeing its flow, and keeping it manageable for the betterment of society, but also putting *pembangunan* in the hands of the state. In addition, *pembangunan* also related to the mode of industrialization which was inseparable from labor question, i.e., the distribution of population. Communist intellectual like Aidit saw rice cultivation in the context of land relations; thus, *pembangunan* referred to the agenda of a socialist economy in which the unequal distribution of land became a priority. Rice played a central role on the unceasing tug of war between the free market and the controlled economy.

Making Better Rice: The Scientific and Technological Intervention of Rice Production

The economic debates around rice revolved around the macro-condition of the state and the population. Although contentious, *pembangunan* became the government's main narrative to achieve a self-sufficient economy through increasing domestic rice production—a process which required technical instruments. By the end of the 1950s, science and technology were the important tools for improving the quality and quantity of rice, and therefore the quality of living.

In 1952, at the opening of the Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Indonesia, President Soekarno emphasized the importance of the food issue as “the life and death of a nation.”¹¹⁴ He stated his concern about the increase of population, low calorie consumption, and an

¹¹⁴ Soekarno, *Pangan Rakyat Soal Hidup Atau Mati* (Antara, 1952 [cited 13 January 2018]); available from <https://megapolitan.antaranews.com/berita/1425/pangan-rakyat-soal-hidup-atau-mati-petikan-bung-karno-tahun->

inadequate aggregate supply of rice.¹¹⁵ The food problem in Indonesia, Soekarno argued, was “objective” because of the imbalance between production and consumption. His question about how to harvest more rice as fast as possible was inseparable from the questions of improving seeds quality and cultivating methods.

In the political vision of Soekarno, scientific and technological endeavors were the vanguard of increasing food production and therefore promoting economic prosperity. “Science has no worth if it does not become applied science,” said Soekarno.¹¹⁶ Thus, Indonesians “have to expand agricultural areas and intensify our work, especially through selection and fertilization.”¹¹⁷ Yet he was aware that paddy varieties could not be easily replicated. He suggested that “paddy type first must be ‘regionalized.’ Before *Bengawan* paddy [variety] can be applied across the Indonesian archipelago, it is necessary to establish regional selection centers in multiple places.”¹¹⁸ The regionalization of paddy would not stop with centers, he continued: “organizations must also be established to disseminate the results of the regional centers directly to the farmers.”¹¹⁹ Additionally, Soekarno pointed out the importance of change of farmers’ mentality. Passionately he said, “Farmers must be awakened by attention [of education] from these selection centers; farmers must be revived, must be ‘fired up.’”¹²⁰ Soekarno’s technical and political visions were clear that people’s prosperity began with seeds and the peasants’ way and mentality of cultivation.

The government had the will to improve the quality of seeds—to have superior seeds (*benih unggul*) adaptable to the environment and more resistant to pest or diseases. The General Agricultural Research Station in Bogor managed several implementation bureaus, one of which—the Agricultural Technology Research Center (*Badan Penyelidikan Teknik Pertanian*,

¹¹⁵ The Faculty of Agriculture Universitas Indonesia was the embryo of Bogor Institute of Agriculture.

¹¹⁶ Soekarno’s speech (1963) in Soekarno, *Ilmu Dan Perjuangan: Kumpulan Pidato Ketika Menerima Gelar Doctor Honoris Causa Dari Universitas Dalam Negeri* (Jakarta: Intri Idayu Press - Yayasan Pendidikan Soekarno, 1986), 36.

¹¹⁷ Soekarno, *Pangan Rakyat Soal Hidup Atau Mati*.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

BPTP)—was responsible for conducting research on food and cash crops. One of the leading scientists on rice seed breeding was Hadrian Siregar, a graduate of the Dutch Secondary Agricultural School (*Middelbare Landbouwschool*, MLS), who had been a breeder at the General Station since the early 1930s.¹²¹ He was well-known for his experience in producing and testing the propensities of *indica* and *japonica* varieties, two main groups of paddy varieties in Indonesia.

In 1955, Siregar decided to separate rice seed research from that of other food crops by establishing a special center for paddy research (*Balai Penyelidikan Padi*) under BPTP's food crops division. Under this center, the main efforts to improve varieties were selection and hybridization. Breeders selected superior varieties from the two main types of paddy, awnless (*indica* type, *cereh*) and awned (*sub-japonica* type, *bulu*).¹²² After the selection, these paddies were planted in rice fields as a demonstration project for farmers who then would multiply the hybrid seed through their own use. These seeds were called, among other names, *Baok*, *Brondol Putih 277*, *Gendjah Ratji*, *Tjina*, *Untung*, *Latisail*. Some years later, a researcher recalled this process: "New results, which after being tested in regional experiments turned out to be superior, were immediately released for implementation and usually replaced what previously had been the superior varieties."¹²³

Up to the mid-1960s, the General Station produced new superior seeds, such as *Sigadis*, *Remadja*, *Djelita*, *Dara Sinta*, and *Dewi Tara*. Summarizing research on rice, the Chief of the Research Bureau of the Department of Agriculture said that "among the activities and results

¹²¹ S. Sumardi, "Dr. Hadrian Siregar: Hasil Karya Dan Pengabdianya," ed. Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Jakarta: Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, 1983), 20-22.

¹²² Awnless and awned paddy are different in nature. Awnless varieties perform relatively well in poorer soils and are resistant to unfavorable environments and diseases because they have a rigid stem structure. However, they had low propensity to cross-pollinate and form natural cross-breeds, resulting in limited number of natural varieties. Awned varieties, although they were not as adaptive as awnless varieties, have lower sensitivity to the change of season, resulting in fast maturation and earlier harvest. Additionally, awned varieties had a high propensity to cross-pollinate, so farmers could choose from a wider range of natural cross-bred varieties. Pierre van Der Eng, *Agricultural Growth in Indonesia: Productivity Change and Policy Impact since 1880* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996), 82-85.

¹²³ Sadikin Sumintawikarta, "Tjataan Tentang Penelitian Tanaman Pangan Antara Tahun 1945-1965," in *Research Di Indonesia Iii: Bidang Pertanian, 1945-1965*, ed. M. Makagiansar and Sadikin Sumintawikarta (Djakarta: Departemen Urusan Research Nasional Republik Indonesia, 1965), 70.

of research on paddy, the most prominent is in the field of breeding.”¹²⁴ The breeding activities were not just for wet paddy, but also for dry paddy (*padi gogo rantjah*). Independent research institutions, such as Scientific Research Institute of Agriculture and Planting in Klaten and Research Institute of National Agriculture in Yogyakarta, also produced dry land paddy varieties. Jagoes and Martief Jemain, researchers from these institutes, introduced dry paddy varieties like *Radjalele* and *Padi Marhaen*.¹²⁵

Rice breeding was not the only technical attempt to improve production. With the introduction of new varieties, researchers also paid attention to other factors, such as planting method and fertilization. They navigated their way to intervention in rice production through cultivation experiments and improving scientific skills. For example, paddy researchers had noted that different varieties had their own characteristics, age, and color, even though the seeds were produced in the same station. Their subsequent experiments showed that “for the variety of Bengawan paddy, which is known as an easily falling type, planting as deep as 7.5 cm reduces the falling percentage, but also reduces the yield.”¹²⁶ For fertilization, phosphate and nitrogen gave more benefits to wet paddy, while potassium was not good for wet paddy but beneficial for dry paddy. For unfertilized soil, the yield of awnless paddy was usually higher than that of awned paddy. The selection of green or synthetic fertilizer had to correspond with the variety used.¹²⁷

Scientific research on seeds, soils, fertilizers, and all technical efforts to produce more and better rice, however, would be of no avail without guidance to farmers and villagers. In 1950, the Ministry of Agriculture had established the Agricultural Extension Service and built Center of Rural Community Education (*Balai Pendidikan Masyarakat Desa*, BPMD) in each

¹²⁴ Ibid., 69.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 71.

¹²⁶ Hadrian Siregar, “Sedikit tentang rabahnja pertanaman padi dan usaha-usaha kulturtehnis untuk mentjegahnya,” *Tehnik Pertanian 4*: 172-180 in Ibid., 72.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

sub-district to implement rural education.¹²⁸ An official from the Ministry said, “This center will be used as a place to increase awareness and activities of villagers, especially for farmers to improve their technicality and social economic [condition].”¹²⁹ Each BPMD would serve approximately 15 villages and should be located in a place accessible to most farmers.¹³⁰ The building had 2.5 to 5 acres of land to demonstrate farming methods, a building to facilitate meetings, and materials such as seeds, tools, fertilizers, and insecticides.¹³¹ BPMD was a place to demonstrate the “how” and “why” of the cultivation, of not only crops but also livestock and poultry.¹³²

In 1958, the government asserted more control over rice production through the establishment of the Agency for Food Production and Dry Land Opening (*Badan Perusahaan Produksi Bahan Makanan dan Pembukaan Tanah Kering*, BPMT), with the main objective of rice self-sufficiency within three years. Its program, the Paddy Center (*Padi Sentra*), gave rice farmers easy access to credit to buy seeds and fertilizers. For wet-rice, the Paddy Center would supply the seeds, but dry lands on the islands outside Java needed to utilize regional seed centers (*Balai Benih*) and village seed gardens (*Kebun Bibit Desa*) to multiply the dry land seeds, as the Research Center could not provide the full supply.¹³³ In supporting BPMD and the Paddy Center program, farmers, who also became breeders, had to be aware, too, of the quality of seeds, their yields, and storage.

During the late 1950s, these technical interventions and guidance to increase rice production through farmers were intensified by the expansion of military education.¹³⁴ Due to

¹²⁸ Soekandar Wiriadmadja, "Penelitian Pertanian Zaman Perang Kemerdekaan (1945-1950)," 112-13.

¹²⁹ Wakil Kementerian Pertanian Bagian Rantjangan Kesedjahteraan, "Rentjana Kesedjahteraan Istimewa 1951-1956 (1950)," in *70 Tahun Penyuluhan Pertanian Di Indonesia 1908-1978*, ed. Departemen Pertanian (Jakarta: BPLPP, 1978), 67.

¹³⁰ R. Soewardjo, "BPMD: Balai Pendidikan Masyarakat Desa - Village Educational Center," ed. Djawatan Pertanian Rakyat - Extension Service Pusat (Djakarta, Indonesia: 1953), 6-7.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Mh. Tjoehaja, "Pedoman Untuk Menghasilkan Bibit Padi Unggul Di Balai-Balai Benih Dan Kebun-Kebun Bibit Desa," *Madjalah Pertanian* 3 (1962): 50.

¹³⁴ Farabih Fakhri, "The Rise of the Managerial State in Indonesia: Institutional Transition During the Early Independence Period, 1950-65" (Leiden University, 2014), 86-88.

the existing political tensions among political groups, including the army, and the regional movement of the Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic (*Pemerintah Revolusi Republik Indonesia*, PRRI) against Soekarno, the previous structure of parliamentary democracy shifted to Guided Democracy. Arguably, one of the characters of this regime was the rise of the army.¹³⁵ In 1959, the government initiated a coordinating body of Prosperity Operation (*Operasi Makmur*) and established the Centralized Food Command (*Komando Operasi Gerakan Makmur*, KOGM). The first task of KOGM was to mobilize the population through student and farmer organizations, based on the principle of mutual cooperation (*gotong rojong*). Changing the agricultural method of rice farmers and making them modern was the final purpose of the operation. "Agricultural revolution was necessary," said Brigadier General Azis Saleh, the Junior Minister of Agriculture under the Ministry of Production. He meant a revolution in agricultural methods; through the Paddy Center, the government had attempted to modernize rice cultivation.¹³⁶

The implementation of rice self-sufficiency, however, went awry. From 1958 to 1961, the rate of increase of rice production was up to 1.2 per cent a year, with a total of 292,000 tons; meanwhile, the population was increasing at the rate of 2.3 per cent a year.¹³⁷ This situation increased concern about the rice supply and also raised the general issue of food self-sufficiency. In a meeting in 1962, the Regional Bureau of People's Food in West Java decided that, aside from rice self-sufficiency, food self-sufficiency was essential. The reasons were first, rice was not the main staple food for several regions (e.g., villagers in Central Java were more accustomed to *gaplek*); and second, regional climates had to be accommodated (i.e., long dry season).¹³⁸ Subsequently, the nutrient content of other staple foods became important, as

¹³⁵ For more details see Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*; Daniel S. Lev, *The Transition to Guided Democracy: Indonesian Politics, 1957-1959* (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 1966 [2009]).

¹³⁶ "Agricultural Revolution Necessary," *The Indonesian Herald*, 22 November 1961.

¹³⁷ "Rice Production and Imports," 48.

¹³⁸ Esuk, "Swa Sembada Bahan Makanan (SSBM) Sebagai Pelengkap Swa Sembada Beras (SSB)," *Madjalah Pertanian* 5 (1962): 109-13.

the purpose was to balance the intake of calories and protein. The Bureau of People's Food Improvement (*Lembaga Perbaikan Makanan Rakjat*), together with the Division of Technology of the Research Bureau of the People's Plantation (*Lembaga Penelitian Perkebunan Rakjat*), attempted to find the solution through, among other approaches, making dry *gethuk* (cassava snack) from sweet potatoes.¹³⁹ With simpler cultivation methods and shorter growing cycles, corn and sweet potatoes could ease the pressure on the food supply.

Given the wide range of research on paddy and rice cultivation, agricultural scientists did not explicitly define *pembangunan* the way economists did. The scientific and technological interventions regarding rice—through seed breeding, cultivation methods, and farmers' education—were attempts to improve the quality of rice as well as its growing factors, such as planting method and farmers' working spirit. The policy priority of the government might change, but in this story *pembangunan* was about improving the quality of living in which science and technology were ready to be the tools.

A Spoonful of Rice: The Ideal Picture of Society

The efforts to improve rice was inseparable from the lives of farmers and village society, and Indonesia's intellectuals and bureaucrats were aware of this. Their dream of a just and prosperous society made it possible for them to envision an ideal Indonesian society. *Pembangunan* was the vision of rice society and village community.

The association between rice, farmers, and village community was a “seductive mirage” for intellectuals, politicians, and government bureaucrats.¹⁴⁰ “I was happy to be among so many passengers,” said Amal Hamzah's protagonist of the short story, “Spyglass.” “There were all

¹³⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹⁴⁰ “Seductive mirage” refers to the “ways the village ... has been represented and acted upon at a number of levels by both outside observers and agencies of government and administration.” Jeremy Kemp, *Seductive Mirage: The Search for the Village Community in Southeast Asia* (Dordrecht, Holland: Foris Publications, 1988): 1. For similar discussion on the construction of the “village” concept, see Jan Breman, *The Shattered Image: Construction and Deconstruction of the Village in Colonial Asia* (Dordrecht, Hollan: Foris Publications, 1988).

sorts of conversations, but the majority of them revolved around the issue of rice.” Rice was ubiquitous. “Rice, rice from the city this four-letter word which here means existence, life or death, had been with me.” He turned his sight to the window. “I could see the [people’s] paddy fields filled with green rice plants. In two more months at the most it would be ready for harvest.” He hoped for a prosperous life. “Thank God, let them be wealthy again with the paddy which they reap.”¹⁴¹

Amal’s protagonist expressed only what he heard and saw, but he directly associated the green wet-rice field with the prosperity of farmers during the harvest season. Through his protagonist, Amal showed a romantic gaze toward the village. Yet, his view was far from surprising. Coming from a royal family in Langkat, North Sumatera, Amal was an intellectual figure with a legal and literary education in Jakarta. He actively wrote prose and poems in 1948-1952, and after publishing a number of books and literary essays, he worked for the Indonesian embassy in Bonn, West Germany from 1953 to 1958. In Amal’s educated and literary mind, wet-rice field depicted the future welfare of the people.

The association between rice cultivation, rural life, and an ideal picture of welfare also appeared among Indonesia’s national leaders and scholars. In relation to rural society, Soekarno was in favor of the term and concept of *gotong rojong*. Variedly translated, the general meaning of this term is mutual cooperation among members of a community, yet Soekarno utilized the term as the foundation of the Indonesian nation-state. According to Denys Lombard, a historian of Indonesia, Soekarno leveraged *gotong rojong* as a national slogan for overcoming all economic difficulties. In doing so, Soekarno “flattered tradition for the sake of village solidarity and delayed its destruction.”¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Amal Hamzah, "Spyglass," in *Indonesian Writing in Translation* ed. John M. Echols (Singapore: Equinox Publishing 1956 [2009]), 105-08. The short-story was originally written around 1948-1949.

¹⁴² Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya, Bagian III: Warisan Kerajaan-Kerajaan Konsentris* trans. Winarsih Partaningrat Arifin, Rahayu S. Hidayat, and Nini Hidayati Yusuf (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), 89. For Lombard, Soekarno’s account was intriguing, because when Soekarno first used the term in 1942, it coincided with the decline of collective property rights; the communal land had drastically decreased in size and been turned into private land.

Hatta agreed with Soekarno, but as an economist he tried to differentiate between social and economic cooperation. On the one hand, Hatta thought that social cooperation was the older, traditional type of mutual assistance commonly found among Indonesian people. “In the traditional Indonesian villages all work which is too heavy for one person [including tilling the rice fields] is done with the aid of fellow villagers.”¹⁴³ For Hatta, this social cooperation was performed without exact economic calculation; the common people lived by mutual assistance. Thus, Hatta understood Soekarno’s use of *gotong rojong* as social cooperation, the type of social interaction that makes “a strong feeling of *solidarity*, a feeling of harmoniously belong[ing] together.”¹⁴⁴

On the other hand, economic cooperation aimed to improve the welfare of the people by their working together. Solidarity was necessary, but economic cooperation also attempted to get maximum results with the means available. Organization had to be the foundation of the cooperation by uplifting the weak and assembling scattered economic forces. For Hatta, to be able to do these things, economic cooperation also required another feeling: *individuality*, “a conscious self-respect in relation to one’s fellow members [which] creates confidence in one’s ability to do things.”¹⁴⁵

Hatta’s further explanation on cooperatives in the rice sector was based on his observation regarding the *idjon* system, a practice of mortgaging crops before harvest time. Hatta did not provide details about who conducted the mortgage and usury in villages, referring to them only as *tukang idjon* (mortgagee), but he aimed for cooperatives to free farmers from such practices of extortionate usury. When members of a rice cooperative needed credit, they would be given a loan of money from the proceeds of the sale of the rice. Later they could pay off their debt with rice. Rice cooperatives were “perfectly adapted to the exigencies of the

¹⁴³ M. Hatta, *The Co-Operative Movement in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 1.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2, original emphasis.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

villages, ... [T]he people are learning by joint enterprise to improve their economic situation, which languished under the evil of *idjon* system.”¹⁴⁶

For Hatta, the traditional Indonesian villages ignored individuality in favor of traditions and customs; the general, collective opinion always came first. Yet cooperatives, in Hatta’s view, could not be successful without both solidarity and individuality. He asserted, “[I]f we want to develop our villages into cooperatives, we must teach new ideas.”¹⁴⁷ These activities of education should be demonstrated by leaders with idealism, in whom the people could have faith.¹⁴⁸ Hatta desired community development in which all members shared responsibility.

Hatta highlighted that building up cooperatives required constant striving for improvement. Education of villagers, in Hatta’s mind, required patience and the conviction that the ideals would be accomplished. The government echoed Hatta’s stance on village education as an instrument to build farmers’ knowledge and mentality regarding rice cooperatives through the role of the Agricultural Extension Service, the establishment of BPMD in sub-districts, and the publication of *Madjalah Pertanian* by the Central Bureau of People’s Food. Staff of the Agricultural Extension Service (*para penjuluh*) had a leadership role in educating farmers in villages. Not only did they have to have certain technical knowledge of rice cultivation, but also they needed people-oriented skills and organizational skills.¹⁴⁹ “[BPMD] was designed so a new modern peasant soul can be built in accordance with the call for independence,” said a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture.¹⁵⁰ He continued that the total *pembangunan* of the farming community needed to be carried out as thoroughly as possible, and it was for both the physical development of farmers and that of their mind and character.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Atilla Garnadi, "Penjuluh Pertanian," *Madjalah Pertanian* 1-2 (1962): 21-22.

¹⁵⁰ BPLPP, "70 Tahun Penyuluhan Pertanian Di Indonesia," ed. Departemen Pertanian (Djakarta: Departemen Pertanian, 1978), 66.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 66-67.

Hatta was attentive to the mind and character of farmers as well. He said that Indonesians “should adopt an attitude of humility” by using an analogy of rice: the riper the rice, the more it bends down.¹⁵² He added that all explanations about community and the principles of cooperatives should be incorporated in “attractive stories of daily life.”¹⁵³ In 1962, when the government pushed forward its agenda of rice self-sufficiency, *Madjalah Pertanian* (*Agricultural Magazine*) published short moral stories about rice alongside scientific articles.

One short anecdote was titled “The Hidden Treasure.”¹⁵⁴ It started with an old farmer lying on his bed, waiting for his time to die. He called his two sons, expressing regret that he could not give them anything except a portion of land. “If you are diligent, you will find a big hidden treasure inside that land.” After the father died, the two sons started digging the land to find the treasure; they worked the land, day and night. The treasure wasn’t there, but the soil became fertile and the paddies grew well with satisfying yields. Another story was titled “The Story of Areca Tree and Paddy,” a moral tale about the utility of rice for human beings.¹⁵⁵ The areca tree, big and tall, looked down on the noble and humble paddy for being small and weak, but in the end, it was the paddy that was more useful for people than the tree. These efforts considerably materialized Hatta’s ideas not only to provide education and guidance but also to fuel morality and working spirit of rice farmers and villagers.

The entanglement of Hatta’s cooperative and Soekarno’s *gotong rojong* vis-à-vis agricultural society, however, irritated intellectuals like Soedjatmoko. He had an interest in democratic socialism and developed his understanding by travelling to Western and Eastern Europe. He was eventually disappointed in both West European democracies and the Communist states of Eastern Europe due to the “striking disparities between ideologies and

¹⁵² Hatta, *The Co-Operative Movement in Indonesia*, 63.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵⁴ F. Sudarto, "Harta Jang Terpendam," *Madjalah Pertanian* 1-2 (1962): 17.

¹⁵⁵ F. Sudarto, "Tjeritera Pohon Pinang Dengan Padi," *Madjalah Pertanian* 5 (1962): 144.

performance in all of them.”¹⁵⁶ Although this disappointment led to no answer he had sought, Soedjatmoko was increasingly interested in the issue of development, even establishing the P.T. Pembangunan publishing house that printed social science books.¹⁵⁷ With his enthusiasm for development issue yet an uneasy relationship with Soekarno, Soedjatmoko was damning about the “superficial similarity between the functioning of a cooperative and the practice of *gotong rojong*.”¹⁵⁸

Soedjatmoko argued that the similarity “obscures the significance of the changes resulting from the establishment of a co-operative in a village, and not infrequently this very similarity becomes an obstacle to the success of the co-operative.”¹⁵⁹ He argued that *gotong rojong* was rooted in the feudal-agrarian structure and, in practice, many village cooperatives were no more than “associations of the local feudal elements [used] as a new means of perpetuating the traditional power over the poorer villagers.”¹⁶⁰ For Soedjatmoko, the key to the success or failure of a village cooperative depended not only on the leaders and members to provide organization but also on sociocultural changes. He suggested that “[W]e must align our thoughts and actions and production relations with the new factor of the machine that we introduce into our existence.”¹⁶¹ Soedjatmoko wanted a complete absorption of the machine into social structure, a cultural co-evolution of human and technology, because the “machinery and technology used by any people are an embodiment of, and are inseparable from, the culture of that people.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ George McT. Kahin and Milton L. Barnett, "In Memoriam: Soedjatmoko, 1922-1989," *Indonesia* 49 (1990): 134.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* One of the books published by P.T. Pembangunan is Sumitro's *Ekonomi Pembangunan* (1955).

¹⁵⁸ Soedjatmoko, *Economic Development as a Cultural Problem, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Translation Series* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1958 [1954]), 5. Soedjatmoko had a close link with Sjahrir, the first Prime Minister, and was a very loyal friend; Sjahrir's democratic socialism was influential on Soedjatmoko, although he soon established his own intellectual perspectives. Kahin and Barnett state that "Soedjatmoko never could quite sort out his feelings towards Sukarno. He was impatient with [Soekarno] and often intensely critical of his shortcomings." Kahin and Barnett, "In Memoriam: Soedjatmoko, 1922-1989," 132-39.

¹⁵⁹ Soedjatmoko, *Economic Development as a Cultural Problem*, 5.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

Soedjatmoko did not draw his conclusion from direct observation of rice cultivation and farmers, but from his understanding of progress in human history and modernity. He said that “the conquest of nature by man is possible and it constitutes a legitimate purpose in life. ... In order to achieve mastery of nature, man must first gain knowledge of the laws of nature.”¹⁶³ He did not advocate mere scientific and technological adoption in agricultural society, but suggested that society must develop culturally together with the machine and technology. What he meant was changes in the way of living and thinking, as “besides the diverse technical and economic aspects, there is also the human dimension to economic development.”¹⁶⁴

Subsequently, Soedjatmoko shared a particular idea of Hatta: he echoed the importance of education. While Hatta focused on education about the principles and practices of cooperatives, Soedjatmoko emphasized philosophical education regarding development in each phase of formal education. For example, in elementary school, children must be familiar with the “conviction that [they] can better the conditions of [their] environment by a subsequent contribution to the increase of production.”¹⁶⁵ At the more advanced level, higher education must adjust to the “demands of social progress and [become] an instrument of reconstruction and development.”¹⁶⁶ For Soedjatmoko, readjustments in the basis of education would produce a new outlook among the personnel of the state apparatus: people who would “see [themselves] as an instrument contributing toward realization of [Indonesia’s] aims of development.”¹⁶⁷

Unlike Soedjatmoko, who was concerned with long-term cultural change, Koentjaraningrat paid attention to the practice of *gotong rojong*. He was trained at Yale University in anthropology and was familiar with the Javanese kinship system. He was

¹⁶³ Ibid., 9.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 21.

concerned with *gotong rojong* as a social reality, not as a mere concept for social change.¹⁶⁸ He cited his fellow anthropologist, Bachtiar Rifai, who said that *gotong rojong* was a too perfect imagination of people who did not participate in it.¹⁶⁹ Drawing from his ethnographic study in two villages in southern Central Java, Celapar and Wajasari, Koentjaraningrat presented the multiple practices of *gotong rojong*. He noted the various intensities of *gotong rojong* in agricultural activities.

“In the easy intervals, a *tani* [farmer] can cope with the work alone or with the assistance of members of his immediate family. But in the busy period he needs additional help. ... The phases in land cultivation for which *grodjogan* [the local term for mutual cooperation] assistance is usually asked are: hoeing, planting of rice seedlings and care of the young shoots, and weeding the *sawah* while the rice plants grow (*matun*).”¹⁷⁰

He concluded his study by saying that “[*gotong rojong*] is a feature of any social order based on agriculture.”¹⁷¹ Should his impression prove to be true, he added, the practice of *gotong rojong* would diminish as the influence of urban life increased.

Despite his initial scepticism, Koentjaraningrat apparently advocated *gotong rojong* as an ideal form of Indonesian society, not exclusively to rural areas. He asserted that *gotong rojong* could be a “feature of the personality ... the character of all the Indonesian people”¹⁷² The spirit of *gotong rojong* and its idealistic meaning should be imbued in the majority of the Indonesian people—for them to serve society and not be concerned only with individual

¹⁶⁸ James J. Fox, “In Memoriam Professor Koentjaraningrat 15 June 1923 - 23 March 1999,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 157, no. 2 (2001): 241. The Southeast Asia Studies Program at Yale University published his MA Thesis, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System* (1956), was published in 1957 as a Cultural Series Report.

¹⁶⁹ Koentjaraningrat, *Gotong Rojong: Some Social-Anthropological Observations on Practices in Two Villages of Central Java*, trans. Claire Holt (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 1961 [2009]), 2.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

interests.¹⁷³ With such statements, Koentjaraningrat was inclined toward Soekarno's ideal of *gotong rojong*.

The association between rice cultivation and the social structure of villagers also correlated with programs of community development. In the early 1960s, the central government deployed three programs of community development under the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Cooperatives.¹⁷⁴ As each ministry had determined its own system, Indonesia's community development programs became pluralistic in philosophy, approach, and objective.

A sociologist, Selo Soemardjan, assessed these programs by capturing the everyday lives of villagers. Social change was at the center of his concern. Soemardjan had previously worked as an officer of the Dutch administrative service in Yogyakarta and then trained as a sociologist at Cornell University. He was extremely familiar with the administrative issue of top-down policy implementation and the process of social change.¹⁷⁵ He already had experience working in villages for more than twenty-five years, and was qualified to see the sociological connection between the government and society.¹⁷⁶

In 1962, endorsed by the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Soemardjan conducted research in Banyumas, Central Java and Bojong, West Java to assess the government's community development programs. Soemardjan started his report with his review of the three systems of community development deployed by the Indonesian government.¹⁷⁷ He said that although there were multiple systems of community development, "there are no necessarily

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ The Ministry of Education, through the Department of Community Education (*Djawatan Pendidikan Masyarakat*) launched a program called *Pen-Mas*; The Ministry of Social Affairs created Village Social Institution (*Lembaga Sosial Desa*); and the Ministry of Cooperatives had village community development program under the Bureau for Village Community Development (*Biro Pembangunan Masyarakat Desa*). Selo Soemardjan, *The Dynamics of Community Development in Rural Central and West Java: A Comparative Report*, Cornell Indonesia Modern Project Monograph Series (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 1-12.

¹⁷⁵ His dissertation on villages in Jogjakarta was also published with the title *Social Changes in Jogjakarta* by Cornell University Press in 1962.

¹⁷⁶ George McT. Kahin, "Preface," in Selo Soemardjan, *The Dynamics of Community Development in Rural Central and West Java*, iii-iv.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

conflicting differences ... [t]hey can even be mutually supporting.”¹⁷⁸ For Soemardjan, the different results of each system were dependent on the particular features of each village community.

For example, in Banyumas, the community development program of the Ministry of Education worked through village officials. During his visit, “most of the new organizations for community development ... were in the process of being established, while some were still in planning.”¹⁷⁹ Once some consolidation had been reached, villagers took up new activities of *gotong rojong* work that was already in place. He noted the women’s organization, *Ikatan Kartini*, which engaged in *beras djimpitan*, a mechanism of collecting rice from each household. “[E]very member [of the organization] is expected to set aside a spoonful of rice every time before cooking the family meal.”¹⁸⁰ Each week, the leader of the lowest administrative body in the community, the *Rukun Tetangga*, would collect this rice and sell it at lower than market price to those designated as poor by the government. The village youth organization, *Taruna Karya*, also worked to increase rice productivity by “spreading the use of artificial fertilizer and new high-powered rice seeds.”¹⁸¹ In Bojong, Soemardjan found a similar practice of *beras djimpitan*, namely *beras perelek*, in which almost every *Rukun Tetangga* had collective rice storage to be used in critical periods and to help needy people. The rice cooperative abolished the practice of *pantjen* duties in Bojong (similar to the *idjon* mortgage system) and replaced it with cash-payment by the cooperative.¹⁸²

Soemardjan’s comments were policy oriented. He noted that “if a government wants to establish a program of community development it should determine what attitude its executive agencies ought to assume towards the communities to which the program is to be applied,” that

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 28.

of either authoritative agency, educator, or consultant.¹⁸³ Each attitude, he explained, had its own system and strategies, and establishing the attitude was necessary before the government identified the program.

Soemardjan, however, continued his explanation by showing how the features of a community's social response also played an important role. In Banyumas, the Ministry of Education, whose staff had "Western-oriented educational backgrounds," prepared the community to "understand and eventually to utilize influences of Western origin in the social and economic sectors of life."¹⁸⁴ Whereas in Bojong, Soemardjan did not see the enforcement of "alien cultural elements ... upon the community; only a reshaping of existing institutions is endeavored. ... The movement is directed inward."¹⁸⁵ Soemardjan did not come up with a final, ideal system of community development. He rather raised an open-ended question: "Which system is better? The answer is: Better for what?"¹⁸⁶

This conceptualization of rice society and village life by intellectuals implies visionary meanings of *pembangunan* regarding society: a *gotong rojong* society, a cooperative society, a technologically modern society, or a society that is culturally responsive to external influences (i.e., policy). It was not clear which society was the ideal one, as intellectuals had their own consideration and vision, driven by their assumptions and observations about rice societies and village life. For sure, the discourse of "community development" was not alien for these intellectuals.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Ibid., 31-34.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 40

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ For an example of the history of "community development" and the connotation attached to the term see Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015);

Rice, Aid, and West Papua: The Dilemma of Priority

The ideas of realizing a dream of a just and prosperous society, however, entangled with the question of foreign aid and the emergence of another political agenda. *Pembangunan* became increasingly vague and obscure, as the government was juggling different national priorities.

Soekarno's vision of economic independence during the 1950s was not a sign of isolation from foreign cooperation. Indonesia played an active role in foreign relations with other countries and international organizations. In 1952, Indonesia hosted the Third Session of the International Rice Commission (IRC) of the FAO in Bandung after the previous two sessions held in neighboring countries, Thailand and Burma. The session was technical. The delegates of Indonesia, who were mostly staff of the General Agricultural Research Station and officials from the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the Ministry of Economic Affairs, discussed Indonesia's concerns and progress regarding domestic rice production and further cooperation with the members of the Commission. During the welcoming speech, the Minister of Agriculture expressed Indonesia's vision to be a self-supporting country, and stipulated that the recommendations of the Commission "must be translated into nation-wide movements in every country."¹⁸⁸

In the global context of the Cold War, Indonesia's agreements of cooperation with other countries were flexible and dynamic. By the early 1960s, Indonesia appeared to have received substantial aid or offers of aid. From January 1956 to the end of 1962, this assistance came in the form of grants and loans totalling over \$2.7 billion, which became a major supplement of the government's total income.¹⁸⁹ The Indonesian government used this aid to overcome the shortage of basic goods, including rice. From 1956 to 1961, the U.S. sold 661,000 tons of rice to Indonesia; China, in 1958, provided a loan of \$20 million for the import of rice.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ FAO, "International Rice Commission Report of the Third Session," (Bangkok: FAO, 1952), 1.

¹⁸⁹ Donald Hindley, "Foreign Aid to Indonesia and Its Political Implications," *Pacific Affairs* 36, no. 2 (1963): 111.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Indonesia negotiated aid and trade not only with the Western bloc but also with the Communist bloc. Indeed, the relationship between Indonesia and the U.S. was uneasy. As noted by Suzanne Moon, a historian of Indonesia, the U.S. and Indonesia conflicted ideologically over how to achieve development.¹⁹¹ When the U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower rejected Soekarno's request for a loan in early 1956, Soekarno signed an agreement with the Soviet Union's leader, Nikita Khrushchev, for the exchange of experts and trainees.¹⁹² The ratification of the Indonesian-Soviet agreement in 1959 initiated seven years of rapid aid from the Soviet Union. From 1959 to 1965, Indonesia was the largest recipient of Soviet aid (mostly loans) in Southeast Asia, receiving double the amount of aid to North Vietnam and one-third of all Soviet aid to Asia.¹⁹³

The Indonesian government, however, still attempted to get a loan from the U.S. In 1958, the Minister of Public Works sent a request to the U.S. International Cooperation Administration (ICA) to sell Indonesia 500 tractors on credit—insisting that with or without U.S. help, Indonesia would embark on the self-sufficiency program.¹⁹⁴ Moon notes that U.S. officials did not see Indonesian self-sufficiency as necessary as long as it could purchase staples from the U.S. or other rice-surplus countries like Burma or Thailand.¹⁹⁵ For the U.S. officials, Indonesia's rice self-sufficiency was a mere quick solution; it was “a struggle for the Indonesian mind,” a gradual change through technical training and proper farming management and control that had to be pursued. Yet for Indonesia's officials, self-sufficiency was an attempt to gain economic independence as soon as possible.

In the early 1960s, the vision of self-sufficiency in Indonesia's foreign policy started to crumble. Rice prices inflated, and the government had to deal with the Dutch attempt to create

¹⁹¹ Suzanne Moon, "Take-off or Self-Sufficiency? Ideologies of Development in Indonesia, 1957-1961," *Technology and Culture* 39, no. 2 (1998): 187-212.

¹⁹² Ragna Boden, "Cold War Economics: Soviet Aid to Indonesia," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 3 (2008): 116.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Moon, "Take-off or Self-Sufficiency?" 197.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

an independent state in West Papua. The central government broke off diplomatic relations with the Netherlands, mobilized considerable military force to West Papua, and undertook a political campaign under Soekarno's operational command. Military expenditures increased rapidly, by 75 per cent of the national budget, contributing to a huge budget deficit in 1962.¹⁹⁶ This political dispute over West Papua created a dilemma for the Indonesian government: economic recovery or national sovereignty.

Nonetheless, the government needed a new way to communicate its political goals to the world. With an endorsement from Indonesia's Foreign Office, Arifin Bey, an Indonesian journalist who had just completed his PhD at Georgetown University, came back to Indonesia and became the editor of the new English language daily newspaper *The Indonesian Herald* which declared itself "the messenger of the nation's identity."¹⁹⁷

The new messenger did its work. News and updates on West Papua as well as Indonesian leaders' statements asserting Indonesia's position and criticizing Western countries and the United Nations dominated *Herald* columns. The editorial team often used a confrontative tone for its pieces—"Is Uncle Sam Aware?" "The Enemies Within," "Brother How Could You," "The Angry Young Man"—to communicate the government's political agenda to push the U.S. and the UN in negotiations with the Netherlands.¹⁹⁸ The newspaper also routinely published editorials that conveyed government opinions and analysis regarding Indonesia's foreign affairs, as well as provided updates on the government's economic development program and cooperation. The news coverage on the agricultural program for economic development was similarly assertive, with titles such as "Agricultural Revolution Necessary" and "Revolution in Food-stuff Supplies Necessary."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Fakhri, "The Rise of the Managerial State," 110; Mackie, *Problems of the Indonesian Inflation*, 67.

¹⁹⁷ "The messenger of the nation's identity" is the slogan of the *Herald* newspaper.

¹⁹⁸ "Is Uncle Sam Aware?" *The Indonesian Herald*, 02 December 1961; "The Enemies Within," *The Indonesian Herald*, 05 December 1961; "Brother How Could You," *The Indonesian Herald*, 11 December 1961; "The Angry Young Man," *The Indonesian Herald*, 18 December 1961.

¹⁹⁹ "Agricultural Revolution Necessary," *The Indonesian Herald*, 22 November 1961; "Revolution in Food-Stuff Supplies Necessary," *The Indonesian Herald*, 05 December 1961.

As the political condition in West Papua was affecting Indonesia's economy, Soekarno, proclaiming himself as the Supreme War Administrator, went on the offensive in addressing the economic situation. A few days before Christmas in 1961, the front page of the *Herald* delivered the message, "may the light of peace guide us all." On the same page, the newspaper reported Soekarno's demand of the death sentence for people who disturbed the country's economy.²⁰⁰ "We have proofs of these attempts [of disturbing the economy]. ... We are now in a revolution which is reaching its highest integrity, and [people] ... are hoarding rice excessively causing [a] rise in prices."²⁰¹ The *Herald* editors echoed Soekarno's concern: "We hope that in the present period of implementing the [People's] Command, the government will be successful in securing control [over] those bent at disturbing the smooth running of our economic life."²⁰²

With the bombardment of the West Papua issue, the *Herald's* agricultural update was limited. The "Economic Development" column communicated mostly trade agreements or industrial activities and plans. Soekarno's intensified agenda toward West Papua was at the center of Indonesia's foreign affairs, and the *Herald* had to follow the agenda of the central office. Nineteen sixty-one became the year of command, in which coverage of food and clothes in the *Herald* was not in the context of self-sufficiency or economic growth but in the context of Indonesia's military logistics and mobilization to secure West Papua.

Amidst the tension at Indonesia's center, the U.S. attempted to mend its relationship with Indonesia with the agreement Food for Peace.²⁰³ In February 1962, the *Herald* reported that this program would provide 192,000 tons of rice (\$24.5 million); 195,000 tons of wheat flour (\$15 million); 242,000 bales of cotton (\$36.3 million); 5,000 tons of tobacco (\$10

²⁰⁰ "President's Instructions: Death for Economic Violators, Be on Guard against Enemy," *The Indonesian Herald*, 23 December 1961.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² "The People's Command and Economic Sector," *The Indonesian Herald*, 27 December 1961.

²⁰³ "Rice from U.S.A.," *The Indonesian Herald*, 15 February 1962.

million); and an additional \$6.9 million for ocean transportation, as shipping on U.S. vessels was required.²⁰⁴ In the same year, President John F. Kennedy commenced the Economic Survey Team which, after observation, provided a recommendation: “since [the] long-run influence of aid is likely to be greater the more fundamentally it is related to the promotion of Indonesian national objectives, [the U.S. government] should be willing to support these objectives.”²⁰⁵ Indonesia’s Foreign Minister, Subandrio, expressed his pleasure with the food aid agreement and the hope that the agreement would overcome food shortages. He added, “Indonesia at present is able to contribute to efforts for defending world peace and for creating understanding among all nations in the world.”²⁰⁶ The economic relations between Indonesia and other countries were, after all, an instrument of the revolution.²⁰⁷

This narrative of revolution, however, could not stem the import of rice. Since 1960, the government had imported up to one million tons of rice, equivalent to about six per cent of the national calorie consumption.²⁰⁸ In 1963, the government cancelled the Paddy Center program. The credit system was prone to fraud and the system to repay the credit using rice paddy did not work because the purchase price was always lower than the market price. The government attempted another program of Mass Guidance (*Bimbingan Massal*, BIMAS) in 1964 and imposed an import ban to incentivize domestic production, which in one year the government compromised. In early 1965, it signed an agreement to purchase 80,000 tons of rice from Burma.²⁰⁹ “In the long run there seems no reason why the necessary increase in domestic production should not be achieved,” said one economic report, “though ‘standing on our own feet’ may not always be interpreted as implying self-sufficiency in foodstuffs.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ "New Long Term Food-for-Peace Agreement Signed," *The Indonesian Herald*, 20 February 1962.

²⁰⁵ United States Economic Survey Team to Indonesia, "Indonesia: Perspective and Proposals for United States Economic Aid, a Report for the President of the United States," (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1963).

²⁰⁶ "New Long-Term Food-for-Peace Agreement Signed."

²⁰⁷ "Economic Relations Tools of Revolution," *The Indonesian Herald*, 23 March 1962.

²⁰⁸ Mackie, *Problems of the Indonesian Inflation*, 114.

²⁰⁹ The official amount of rice imported from Burma in 1965 was 81,500 tons. Badan Urusan Logistik, "Seperempat Abad Bergulat Dengan Butir-Butir Beras," 74.

²¹⁰ "Rice Production and Imports," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1965): 65.

This final part of the story shows how rice became a secondary priority when in the 1960s the government prioritized another agenda. The central authority was juggling the rhetorical narrative to gain political sovereignty over West Papua and a series of diplomatic agreements to access foreign rice aid and technical assistance. *Pembangunan* was a catch-22: a dilemma that perpetually asked how to use outside resources without compromising independence.²¹¹

Conclusion: Cultivating *Pembangunan*

This study has traced how the multiple understandings of rice during the first twenty years of independent Indonesia created the idea of *pembangunan*. After the Second World War, the rice problem remained a pressing issue for national leaders, intellectuals, and policymakers. The full control over rice, domestically and internationally, against the return of the Dutch fuelled *pembangunan* as part of Indonesia's struggle of independence. Indonesia's economists responded to the notion of economic freedom as the true independence by debating rice issues in relation to the national economy. They defined *pembangunan* not only as part of the valuing and managing rice for the betterment of society, but also as part of the state project, with an aspiration for a self-sufficient economy.

The aspiration regarding the national economy required technical intervention. The government needed an instrument to advance the economic condition of the people by increasing the quality and, later, the quantity of rice. Science and technology played a role in this part through seeds breeding and experiments on cultivation methods. The guidance to farmers by the government pushed these scientific and technological interventions on the ground, with the specific purpose of improving farmers' working methods and spirit.

²¹¹ Franklin B. Weinstein, *Indonesian Foreign Policy and the Dilemma of Dependence: From Sukarno to Soeharto* (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 2007 [1976]), 19-41.

Intellectuals did not stop at macro and technical issues. They also envisioned ideal pictures of Indonesian society based on their observation and understanding of agricultural and rural society. The relationship between villagers around rice cultivation and distribution provided materials for intellectuals to think about social changes and seek their own version of Indonesian society. From *gotong rojong* to cooperatives society, from technologically modern society to culturally responsive society, these intellectuals implied visionary outlooks of *pembangunan*.

In this story, rice became a weapon of struggle for independence, an object of economic contestation modified through scientific and technological intervention, and an ideal picture of society. Errors in policy implementation and competition with other priorities added complexity to these processes of abstracting rice. The government's policies on rice waxed and waned with the top-down political ambitions and manifestations. *Pembangunan* was, therefore, versatile and adaptable, making the idea simultaneously definitive and obscure.

When the regime officially changed in 1967 after the political turmoil related to the Indonesia Communist Party, Soeharto, the predecessor of Soekarno, named his regime the "New Order" and his first cabinet "Kabinet Pembangunan." The regime continued the program of rice self-sufficiency as well as economic policies to control the price of rice through balance of payment and a distribution mechanism. He quickly recruited economists like Sumitro, created the Five-Year Development Plan with rice production as one of its priorities, continued the 1964 program of BIMAS, and intensified the role of the Ministry of Agriculture and its research bureau.²¹²

²¹² Booth, *The Indonesian Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 178-86; van Zanden and Marks, *An Economic History of Indonesia*, 185-88; Alexis Rieffel, "The Bimas Program for Self-Sufficiency in Rice Production," *Indonesia* 8 (1969): 103-33; Leon A. Mears, "Rice and Food Self-Sufficiency in Indonesia," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* XX, no. 2 (1984): 122-38; C. Peter Timmer, "Does Bulog Stabilise Rice Prices in Indonesia? Should It Try?" *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 32, no. 2 (1996): 45-74.

While Soeharto's regime continued and intensified *pembangunan* through institutionalization, it was during the first decades after 1945 that the idea of *pembangunan* was slowly growing and finding its root.²¹³ As Farabih Fakhri argues, the roots of the New Order should be sought in the 1950s and early 1960s, the periods when "ideologies and discourses on efficiency, development, and modernity" legitimated the creation of institutional order.²¹⁴ Clearly, the making of *pembangunan* was not total. The process of abstracting and conceptualizing rice occurred in a difficult time when the regime was facing numerous policy failure and a dilemma of priority. Nonetheless, this process made it possible for Indonesia's leaders and intellectuals during this period to cultivate *pembangunan*, a living and growing seed of idea.

Just like the concept of "revolution," the meaning of Indonesia's *pembangunan* and its desire to improve is no longer singular, nor static.²¹⁵ It is, then, left for future work to dig deeper into the intellectual anxiety and struggle of Indonesia's leaders and society in defining national development. *Pembangunan*, in the end, is like a stalk of rice: dependent on the climate and technical change, alterable to the wind of new regime.

²¹³ On New Order development (and its critiques) see, among others, John J. MacDougall, "The Technocratic Model of Modernization: The Case of Indonesia's New Order," *Asian Survey* 16, no. 12 (1976): 1166-83; Chalmers and Hadiz, eds., *The Politics of Economic Development in Indonesia*; Michael T. Rock, "The Politics of Development Policy and Development of Policy Reform in New Order Indonesia," in *William Davidson Institute Working Paper No. 632* (2003); Bradley R. Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008); Tania Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Fuller Collins, *Indonesia Betrayed: How Development Fails* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

²¹⁴ Fakhri, "The Rise of the Managerial State," 352.

²¹⁵ For a concise discussion of the Indonesian national revolution see Norman Joshua, "State and Revolution in the Making of the Indonesian Republic," *Jurnal Sejarah* 2, no. 1 (2018): 64-76.

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