

Government of the Netherlands East-Indies
Political division of territory in the N. E. Indies (1)
by Dirk Teeuwen



P.1 Lieutenant-General G. C. E. van Daalen, Civil and Military Governor of Aceh from May 1905 until May 1908

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Pictures are available on request.

A word after a slash, in the text below, is the same word, title in Dutch.



P.2 Villa of the Governor of Sumatra's East Coast, Medan 1912

1. Introduction, territory governed directly and self-governing native states

The N. E. Indies were divided in directly governed territories and self-governing territories. These latter were ruled over by, more or less, independent native monarchs. The native states were of special importance on the Outer Islands. The Outer Islands were the N. E. Indian islands with exception of Java and Madura. On the Outer Islands lived 40% of the population within their self-governing territory. In Java was only 7% of the territory occupied by native states : the so-called Principalities / Vorstenlanden (Jokjakarta and Surakarta).



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The aim of the Government was to maintain the native states as far as possible and to develop them so that they were only incorporated in directly governed territories , when this was inevitable in the interests of the population.. The Government exercised supervision through its officials. The relation of the Government to the rulers of the native states was until 1898 regulated by detailed treaties, which because of their details often made intervention difficult. Since 1898 most treaties have been substituted, whereby the monarchs had to carry out regulations and orders given by the Government. Mutual rights, powers and obligations were contained in special regulations.



P.3 Residence of the Assistant-Resident of Bangil (near Pasaruan), East-Java, 1929



P.4 A Regent / Bupati addresses Wedana's. Location unknown.

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Formerly the native rulers enjoyed the income of all sources, while from 1898 these revenues from taxes, concessions, industries, etc. flow into the treasury of the native state. The monarch received after 1898 an allowance and a reasonable share in the proceeds from concessions, etc. Expenditures for administration, education, waterworks, and so on, were defrayed out of the treasury.



P.5 Residence of the Assistant-Resident of Sambas, West-Borneo 1929

2. Administrative division of territory, Dutch civil service

The whole territory of the archipelago, including the native states, was divided into provinces / gewesten. The Governor / Gouverneur (also called Resident or Assistant-resident) was the Dutch head of a province. In conformity to their respective titles their province was styled Governorship, Residency or Assistant-Residency. (a) The difference between a Governor, Resident, Assisent-Resident (as a civil head of a province) was meaningless with the exception of the salaries. Those officials represented the Government and possessed - in as far as compatible with the powers of the rulers of the native states - in their jurisdiction the highest civil and financial administration and control of the police.

The provinces were divided into divisions / afdelingen (and divisions / afdelingen in subdivisions / onderafdelingen in the Outer Islands) at the head of which stood an Assistant-Resident - the titles are somewhat confusing - assisted by a Controller / Controleur. At the head of a subdivision in the Outer Islands stood a Civil Administrator / Controleur / Gezaghebber. Again: the titles were somewhat confusing.

All the officials were Dutchmen and formed part of the N. E. Indian Civil Service. They received their university-training in Leiden (Holland) and Utrecht (Holland). The Civil Administrators, charged with the management of a subdivision / onderafdeling, were trained in Jakarta / Batavia at the School for Civil Servants.

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P.6 Residence of the Regent of Tjanjur / Tjiandjoer (near Bogor / Buitenzorg), West-Java 1929

3. Administrative division of territory, native civil service

From the commencement of the establishment of their power the Dutch realized that the native population should be left under the direct government of their own chiefs in as far as this was possible in the execution of authority. With that end in view the provinces were also divided into districts under native jurisdiction.

For the purpose of that direct government a division / afdeling of a province was also called "regency" / "regentschap". The Dutch civil head of a division / afdeling was the Resident or Assistant-Resident, the native civil head was the Regent / Bupati. These Regencies / Regentschappen were subdivided into districts / districten - and districts / districten into sections / onderdistricten – with lower native officials as their heads. At the head of a district stood a Wedana, at the head of a section an Assisitant-Wedana. The Regents were nominated by the Governor-General. The Regents normally descended from old distinguished families and were normally nominated in the hereditary line. The native civil servants received their training at special schools in Java.

In the Outer Islands native government officials were to be found under different names according to the various historical sources. These officials lacked the significance of the Bupatis in Java. Direct contact of the population on the Outer Islands with European officials was greater.

4. Devolution of responsibility on native administration

In order to give native officials a certain independence from Dutch control, so that gradually by increasing devolution by successive stages a large measure of responsibility is reached, in 1918, under new law, the opportunity was given in certain divisions and regencies to transfer various powers to Bupatis and lesser native officials.

5. Native corporations

Native communities were maintained in their original form all over the archipelago. In Java these villages or groups of villages were known as desa, in Sumatra as marga or nagari. Before 1912 these villages (acting as corporations) were known by the government as the jurisdiction of their native chiefs. This chief was more or less an officer of the government. After 1912 special interest was paid to their self-governing powers. For example the institution of community exchequers. The revenues from the community flew into this exchequer and money needed for local purposes were defrayed from it.

6. Local government

Before 1905 the government ruled autocratically larger centres with a mixed population and the administrative divisions in N. E. India. The spirit of the times required that those who were ruled had a right of say in their own government. So the Decentralisation Act passed in 1905. . Provinces and divisions had a right to claim money from the government's budget (set apart for special needs).

"The result of these measures was that 32 municipalities were established, governed by their own councils, and 15 provinces governed by a council (all residencies in Java and Madura with the exception of the native states); in the Outer Islands a few local bodies were called into being under local councils.....(Since then) many important works were carried out: water-supplies, slaughter-houses, markets, public baths, irrigation, drainage, etc. (2) The composition of the municipal councils took place through election. But the various groups of inhabitants were represented in the councils. Always with a majority of European members! Sometimes the members of a council were partly elected, partly appointed. Councils of local native communities consisted of natives. The members of the provincial councils were appointed by the Governor-General.

7. Sources, quotations, notes, account for pictures

Sources

- (1) Jong, Joop de: De waaier van het fortuin, de Nederlanders in de Indonesisch archipel (1595 - 1950); The Hague Holland 1998
- (2) Department of Agriculture, Industry an Commerce: Handbook of the Netherlands East-Indies 1930; Buitenzorg Java 1930
- (3) Klerck, dr E. S. de: History of the Netherlands East-Indies; Rotterdam 1938
- (4) Gonggrijp, dr G. F. E.: Geillustreerde Encyclopedie van Nederlands-Indië; Leiden Holland 1934
- (5) Department of Agriculture, Industry an Commerce: Handbook of the Netherlands East-Indies 1924; Buitenzorg Java 1924
- (6) Angoulvant, G.: Les Indes Neerlandaises, leur rôle dans l'économie internationale; Paris 1926

Quotations

- (1) Mainly this article is composed of Gonggrijp and Handbooks. See recommended literature.
- (2) Department of Agriculture, Industry an Commerce: Handbook of the Netherlands East-Indies 1930; Buitenzorg Java 1930", p. 97

Notes

- (a) In 1930 there were 36 provinces / gewesten, viz. 3 governments, 32 residences and 1 independent sub-residency. That was why the titles of the provincial head officials were different.

Pictures

P.1 Zentgraaff, H. C.: Atjeh; Batavia 1940 p. 165