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## EARLY INDONESIAN EMANCIPATION\*

ABDUL RIVAI, VAN HEUTSZ AND THE *BINTANG HINDIA*

'Not Boedi Oetomo, nor the year 1908, marked the beginning of our national movement, but the year 1903 saw the birth of a nationalist movement, after Dr. Rivai had spoken out, which really opened many people's eyes' (Latif 1938:30).

These remarkable words were written by Latif in a booklet which was published in 1938, five years after the death of Abdul Rivai. They referred to Rivai's activities as editor of the fortnightly journal *Bintang Hindia*, which appeared in The Netherlands in the years 1902-1907. Rivai, who was living in The Netherlands as a medical student during this time, filled many columns of this journal with his writings, which covered some quite unusual subjects for the period. His work as such had been virtually forgotten by 1938. Latif's book also went practically unnoticed, and, a few later incidental references apart<sup>1</sup>, Rivai and his *Bintang Hindia* sank into oblivion.

This fate was not deserved by either. In many respects the activities concerned were unique, with the early Indonesian struggle for emancipation and the Dutch Ethical Policy interfacing in a precarious balance.

Not only Rivai's efforts, but also other similar publicistic and organizational activities in the years prior to the foundation of Boedi Oetomo are no longer remembered. It looks as if historiography has subscribed rather too slavishly to the official, politically coloured, Indonesian historical view of the Indonesian nationalist movement, which has fixed on the foundation of Boedi Oetomo in 1908 as the starting-point of that movement. This view was put on record as such at quite an early stage, namely in the year 1918, when the commemorative volume *Soembangsih* was published. In inde-

\* This article is a revised version of an earlier Dutch-language publication about Rivai and the *Bintang Hindia* (Poeze 1986:32-51), supplemented on the basis of data from the department of colonies records (Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague) and from contemporary newspaper articles. All quotations from the Dutch and Indonesian are given in translation. The translation from the Dutch is by Maria J. L. van Yperen.

<sup>1</sup> Van Niel 1960:49-50, who bases himself on an interview with Abdul Moeis, contains a number of incorrect statements.

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pendent Indonesia the foundation of Boedi Oetomo is still annually commemorated as the birth of the nationalist movement. This fixation, as it were, on the year 1908 implies an underestimation of the social processes preceding the foundation of Boedi Oetomo. This organization was just as much the outcome of a variety of developments affecting Javanese society at the beginning of the 20th century as a number of other associations arising before 1908.

The general situation of Javanese society around the turn of the century is best qualified as one of 'stagnation', 'malaise' and 'recession'. Any dynamic tendencies in Javanese society, weak as they already were, had been repressed by the colonial administration. The traditional rulers, the *priyayi*, had been retained in their former offices and positions of authority, but had been reduced to mere executors of colonial dictates. There was no-one to defend the rights of the common masses, who were exploited and powerless.

After the conversion of the Dutch government to the principles of the Ethical Policy, which was endorsed by a broad coalition of Christian parties, Liberals and business interests in The Netherlands, a new course in colonial policy was adopted. An important component of this Ethical Policy was the development of the country and its people after Western models under Dutch supervision. The key to development was Western education. There was much discussion, in fact, about measures for the expansion of education, both on the elementary level for the masses and for the élite, and such measures were actually implemented. The formation of a reservoir of Western-trained Indonesians would at the same time meet the needs of government and business for cheap native middle-cadre personnel. The colonial administration required more personnel for positions in newly annexed areas and for newly set up or markedly expanded social welfare services and educational institutions. Thus a new Javanese social class emerged, that of the new *priyayi*, mostly members of the lower aristocracy, who settled especially in urban areas. Their first experiences with Western education had stimulated a desire for more, and it is among them that we find the pioneers of the campaign for the 'advancement' of Java, towards which end the dissemination of Western knowledge, particularly through education, was regarded as the prime means. Demands for a place in society and for greater opportunities were made with increasing self-confidence. Special trail-blazers here were newspaper reporters and teachers, who were in a relatively independent position vis-à-vis government and business.<sup>2</sup>

An eloquent example of this was the case of the journalist Tirtoadhi-soerjo, who founded the Sarekat Prijaji (SP) in 1906. This organization,

<sup>2</sup> Important information on the Ethical Policy and social change around the turn of the century is to be found in Locher-Scholten 1981:176-208, Van Niel 1960, and Sutherland 1979. A synopsis of this is given in Poeze 1982:xi-xvii.

whose specific aim was to promote (Western) education by opening schools and instituting a scholarship fund, set its sights on the whole of the Netherlands East Indies, attracting followers from the indigenous upper class — the Javanese *priyayi* and the aristocracy beyond Java. This SP initially attracted a membership of around 700, but subsequent financial and organizational complications soon led to its extinction. More lasting was the organization's organ, *Medan Prijaji*, which developed into an important mouthpiece for the new class of lower *priyayi*. The objectives of this journal soon came to exceed those of the SP itself. Aside from the immediate protection of members' interests, they included the promotion of social welfare, also through organization. Tirtoadhisoerjo voiced the problems and grievances of the rising new élite against the upper *priyayi*, who were having difficulties with the changes taking place in Javanese society, or against the colonial ruler, who was often at a loss how to deal with the new, Western-trained indigenous group (Sutherland 1979:57-8; Pramodya 1985:109-11, 46).

Quite a number of similar organizations, of a more fleeting nature and less ambitious in their aims than the Sarekat Prijaji, must have existed prior to this. Their history and background are hardly known, but are certainly worth serious study. Who were the persons responsible for their existence — the traditional élite trying to consolidate its authority in a form that had blown over from the West, or, even at this stage, the lower *priyayi*? Most probably the former. What were their objectives? Were they local study circles set up for the educational improvement of their members, or organizations instituted for social purposes? Here again, the former seems the more likely assumption.<sup>3</sup>

Rivai's was definitely a different case. Abdul Rivai was born the son of a teacher in Benkulen in 1871. He attended the Dokter Djawa School — the later School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen (STOVIA) (Training College for Native Doctors) — in Batavia from 1887, completing his course in 1895. Together with the teachers' training colleges and the colleges for training native administrators, the Dokter Djawa School provided the only form of advanced education for Indonesians in this period (Latif 1938:39; *Ontwikkeling geneeskundig onderwijs* 1926:351).

Rivai worked as a government doctor in Deli, where he was also active as a journalist and translator, for a number of years (Harahap 1939:6-8). He resigned in 1899 and left Indonesia for further medical training and general education in The Netherlands. Soon after arrival there he addressed an application for admission as a student of medicine at the University

<sup>3</sup> A number of these organizations are mentioned in Nagazumi 1972:28-9, 180 note 14. Tjokro Adi Koesoemo, regent of Temanggung, has given a detailed description of a study circle like this, Sasangka-Poernama, in his town, adding a suggestion to institute a similar organization for the whole of Java 'for the sake of stimulating the advancement of the Javanese' (Tjokro Adi Koesoemo 1907).

of Utrecht to the Department of the Interior. In this connection he asked for an exemption from the requirement that candidates must have a secondary school certificate as prior qualification — in the same way as medical students from the Dutch West Indies were exempted from this. Rivai received the reply that the law made it impossible for his request to be granted. What he was not told was that a revision of the law was considered desirable on the basis of the Minister's recommendations — which revision was not implemented until 1905, incidentally (Harahap 1939:9-10; Vb. 7-12-1899 no.15; Exh.20-12-1899 no.21).

Rivai took up residence in Amsterdam, where he began to prepare for the state matriculation examination. He moreover became active in journalism, starting his own periodical, *Pewarta Wolanda*. The aim of this journal, according to Rivai, was to disseminate information about The Netherlands in the Indies and to foster the native population's affection for its masters (*bangsa toewannja*). Allegedly the Malay press copied every one of its articles, which according to Rivai was proof of the journal's success. Its existence was soon jeopardized by lack of subscribers and by outstanding subscriptions, however, so that Rivai decided in 1901 to stop publication.

The forced prolongation of his stay in The Netherlands was probably one factor which induced Rivai to eke out his rapidly dwindling savings by other means. He published in daily papers, and also regularly in the weekly of the 'ethical' Vereeniging Oost en West. In these articles he joined the debate about the causes of the crisis in Javanese society. So he wrote a number of lengthy articles about the 'demoralization of the Javanese' and 'the religion of the natives of the Indies'. Without attacking colonialism as such, he did level some fundamental criticism at the methods of colonial administration. In his view the Dutch in the Indies lacked knowledge of and interest in indigenous society, which in turn was responsible for the lack of understanding of the causes of the decline, which, it should be noted, was taking place 'under the very wings of European culture and development'. The Javanese had become demoralized in the battle for survival by the educational standard, the expertise and the experience of the Europeans, Chinese and Arabs, supplemented by official rules and regulations advantageous to these categories. Nobody was taking the interests of the former to heart, for 'the simple reason that an organization towards that end still remains to be created'. Only by the moral elevation of the Javanese could the downward trend which might end in their moral and physical ruin be halted. Education was the best means towards this end, though it should be given a very broad interpretation. Moreover, something needed to be done to change the attitude of the existing Javanese administrative élite, who were selfish and slavish in their obedience to the government and cared little about their subjects. A drastic change of mentality was necessary, which might be achieved to a large extent through education in The Netherlands. More generally, the cultivation of

the Malay and Javanese languages should be a prime concern; it should be accompanied by the publication of a great many 'useful, educational works which will stimulate the Native to use his brain and power of observation'. To these comments he added professions of allegiance to The Netherlands and the Queen. The Dutch people, devoted to justice as it was, would repair the political omissions of its government. Then the natives would 'turn their face in prayer no longer to the ka'abah but to The Hague, where they know the Queen of The Netherlands, dearly beloved by you all, and to whose subjects they are indebted for their happiness and prosperity, to be enthroned' (Rivai 1901; *Koloniaal Weekblad* 22-8-1901).

At the beginning of 1901 Rivai met H. C. C. Clockener Brousson, a young Netherlands East Indies Army officer on leave in Holland. This was a most remarkable person, who was actively devoting himself in the Indies to an improvement of the relations between Dutch and Indonesians. He had many friends among the Indonesians. His lack of balance, short temper and biased views, however, got him involved in all kinds of conflicts and led to a number of his projects being shipwrecked. But his efforts to spread the Dutch language and Dutch culture among the Indonesian people also landed him a number of striking journalistic successes. In 1899 Clockener Brousson published a trial issue of *Soerat Chabar Soldadoe*, which in April 1900 began to appear regularly. Its contents were aimed especially at the improvement of the position of indigenous soldiers and focused on their immediate sphere of interest. It also featured articles by Rivai, which it probably copied from *Pewarta Wolanda*.

The meeting between Rivai and Clockener Brousson was one between kindred spirits. They decided to combine their two journals into *Bandera Wolanda*, which was to appear in Batavia once every ten days. Clockener Brousson applied to the Colonial Department for financial assistance. Although the Department took a warm interest in the work of *Bandera Wolanda*, it took the position that a subsidy was ruled out for reasons of unfair competition. Clockener Brousson was referred to the governor-general and advised to ask the government to take out subscriptions for military personnel and schools. In Batavia he partly got what he wanted, with the government taking out well over 900 subscriptions — considerably less than the requested 3400 (Vb. 14-1-1901 lt.L1; 28-1-1901 no.30). This, among other things, landed the journal in financial problems, which led Rivai to stop working for it (*Koloniaal Weekblad* 3-10-1901). Clockener Brousson subsequently became involved in a rather unsavoury affair, by which he forfeited the goodwill of the Colonial Department in The Hague once for all. One of the objectives of *Bandera Wolanda* had been the modernization and refinement of Islam, and consequently the prevention of fanaticism and intolerance. Clockener Brousson himself published articles on Islam to this effect and even gave in to the temptation of writing an anti-Roman Catholic article stressing the relation between and superiority of Protestantism and Islam vis-à-vis Catholicism, in which he had

the foolhardiness to bring Queen Wilhelmina's faith into the discussion. He went to the extreme of having himself converted to Islam, though only as a matter of form, as he informed the Minister, in order to be able to maintain better relations with Muslims. The Minister called Clockener Brousson to account and gave him a reprimand. Clockener Brousson promised he would reform himself. Soon thereupon his article began to cause a general commotion, especially after a lengthy counter-attack by the Catholic paper *De Tijd*. This led Clockener Brousson to try and wriggle out of the predicament by going as far as denying he had written the controversial article. The whole affair induced Clockener Brousson to resign from the army and give up the *Bandera Wolanda* (Vb.11-10-1901 lt.P18; 12-11-1901 lt.Q20; 30-11-1901 no.2; 1-2-1902 lt.F2; 27-2-1902 lt.S3).

Clockener Brousson was not in the least daunted, however. March 1902 saw the appearance of a prospectus for the journal *Bintang Hindia*, which was to be published in Amsterdam, with Clockener Brousson and Rivai as its editors-in-chief. There was little to find fault with in the objectives of the journal from a Dutch point of view, as they included providing information about the mother country for 'native fellow-citizens', strengthening the ties of loyalty to Queen and country, winning over the leaders of the great Indies nation to the Dutch cause, in short, 'elevation, improvement and education towards logical thinking'. Hence these objectives fitted in eminently with the paternalistic Ethical Policy which the Dutch administration had recently adopted as its official guiding principle.

*Bintang Hindia* contained articles of a diverse content, though all with a didactic undertone. Many of its numerous photographs were independent of the subjects of these articles. Its high-quality presentation was modelled on Dutch illustrated journals. The existing Malay-language periodicals in Indonesia could not hold a candle to *Bintang Hindia* as far as presentation and lay-out were concerned, in fact. Most of them were typographically poor and led a precarious existence, being continually beset by lack of finance and subscribers, as their content and purport did not always go down well even with Dutch people who intended well with the Indonesians.

But *Bintang Hindia* was quite a different matter. Of each of the four trial issues, fifteen thousand copies were distributed. At the launching of the first volume, on 1st January 1903, the periodical already had over six thousand subscribers.

Clockener Brousson had not been daunted by his earlier experiences in getting government assistance. He managed to persuade three organizations with East Indies connections (the Vereeniging Oost en West, Vereeniging Moederland en Kolonien and Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond) to petition the Minister of the Colonies for assistance to the journal. These three influential organizations, which included many authorities with in-

terests in the Indies among their members, were thinking in terms of distribution to military barracks and schools, of a direct government subsidy and of freedom from postage. The official reaction was totally negative: Clockener Brousson had wholly disqualified himself from government support by his earlier escapades, while there was not the slightest guarantee of 'impartiality and reasonableness'. Minister A. W. F. Idenburg was slightly more moderate, expressing the view that the case should at least be referred to the governor-general (Vb. 16-1-1903 no.18).

In the Indies the request was passed on to the relevant departments. The commander of the armed forces and the education authorities were not prepared to do anything beyond taking out a few subscriptions and circulating a prospectus. Despite bureaucratic opposition in The Hague, the Minister had no objection against this procedure. He did, however, send express warnings against Clockener Brousson and cite a negative official opinion of Rivai which described the latter as a 'red'. He recommended that an explicit stipulation be made that the assistance would be immediately withdrawn in the event of publication of intolerant or seditious articles (Vb.23-2-1904 It.Y4).

No articles of this kind were to be found in the journal, however. The Ethical Policy supporters found their ideas most aptly voiced here. It featured articles by Rivai about the emancipation of the Indonesians, which according to him should be effected first and foremost through the expansion of education. He further urged his fellow-countrymen to persevere and devote themselves personally to the development of the Archipelago under the guidance of and in close cooperation with The Netherlands. The emphasis for the time being was on the education of the *priyayi*, who should especially be given the opportunity to get a good grasp of the Dutch language, the key to Western knowledge. Rivai contested the idea that the Indonesians would use this knowledge to become independent of The Netherlands, asserting that Dutch fears in this direction were unjustified and misplaced. After the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, each issue gave considerable attention, in articles and illustrations alike, to this clash, in which a coloured nation was defeating a white opponent. The articles generally testify to an expectation that a new era had set in in the Indies, an era that would bring sweeping changes. *Bintang Hindia* was a sign of this, as well as being the vehicle for the message of renewal.

Rivai's general premises were enthusiastically endorsed in the rising number of subscriptions from the Indies themselves. The journal was a great success in general, in fact, its circulation rising to 14,000 after one year. Clockener Brousson had returned to the Indies in 1903 and now opened an office in Bogor (later Bandung) to handle all the administrative affairs for Indonesia. An extensive network of agents was set up, with Clockener Brousson going on long propaganda campaigns and opening



branch offices in Sumatra and Celebes.<sup>4</sup> By the end of 1904 the circulation had risen to 27,000. The chief editors were joined by the STOVIA doctor Johan Tehupeiry, from Ambon, who had worked with Clockener Brousson as a journalist before. Tehupeiry was the driving force behind the Indies supplement added to the copies from Holland in the course of 1905.<sup>5</sup>

The number of readers reached via both paid and free subscriptions, which is a multiple of the number of actual subscribers, is astounding. The whole of the Indonesian élite must have been reached by it. Consequently, it must have exercised an influence on the mind of the new *priyayi*, receptive to Western knowledge and ideas as it was, which can hardly be overestimated. Information on the exact number of subscribers and their social background and geographical distribution for the number of years for which the journal ran would provide a fascinating picture of the growth of social consciousness among the indigenous population and the composition of the new élite. In the year 1905, 75% of the subscribers were government employees (figures mentioned in petition Clockener Brousson and Rivai, The Hague, 28-9-1906, Vb. 3-10-1906 no.44).

Needless to say, communications between Rivai and Clockener Brousson were anything but smooth, which prevented flexibility of their editorial policy. Clockener Brousson was fickle and impulsive, moreover, and his instructions were not always very clear or consistent. Rivai carried these out faithfully, however. He nevertheless expresses some slight indignation, in an article of May 1905, at Clockener Brousson's prescribing the deficient Malay orthography in use in Java for the journal and admonishing Rivai to express himself less pointedly in his political articles (*Bintang Hindia* 1905:98-100).

Rivai published his noteworthy article 'Kaoem Moeda' a few months after this (*Bintang Hindia* 1905:159-61). The term 'Kaoem Moeda' was used by him to refer to the group of those people who had broken free from the old ideas and traditions and were open to Western knowledge, without,

<sup>4</sup> The *Bintang Hindia* made a big impression. Clockener Brousson as editor-in-chief and director got much enjoyment from this popularity and sometimes also used it to his advantage. So he and Rivai were admitted as early as the beginning of 1903 to the editorial board of the Malay monthly *Insulinde*, published in Padang, which contained articles on a wide range of subjects aimed at the general education of the reader. From that time on *Insulinde* provided ample space for all kinds of *Bintang Hindia* announcements (*Insulinde* May 1903-January 1905). How much prestige Clockener Brousson enjoyed is also evident from his election as president of the Maleische Journalistenbond (Malay Association of Journalists), of which 22 Indonesian, Chinese and European editors of Malay journals became members at its foundation in Batavia in January 1906 (*De Locomotief* 11-1-1906; Indies supplement of *Bintang Hindia* 3-20 (15-1-1906)).

<sup>5</sup> There are volumes of *Bintang Hindia* present in the Leiden University Library as well as in the collections of the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology in Leiden and the National Library in Jakarta. None of these collections is complete. Only the Royal Tropical Institute possessed six issues with the Indies supplement (volume 3 nos. 20-23 and volume 4 nos. 3-4).

however, betraying their own background. Rivai also formulated a kind of programme for the Kaoem Moeda here, viz.:

1. Respect must be shown for tradition and the rules of law. This does not imply that one should turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to changes that are sound and necessary, however.
2. In the Indies a 'spiritual aristocracy' has gradually emerged, so that the indigenous population is divided into three categories, namely: a. the masses, b. the hereditary aristocracy, and c. the spiritual aristocracy.
3. The indigenous population should gradually participate in trade and industry, too, contrary to the current situation, where all profit-making enterprises and all trade are in foreign hands.
4. The indigenous population should improve itself in solidarity and should learn to realize the power of unity. Mutual jealousy should be set aside and touchiness discarded. Differences of opinion should not lead to acts of revenge likely to damage the reputation of the people. No matters which may appropriately be settled internally by the people should be brought into the open for all foreigners to see; in other words, the people should not cast a slur on its own reputation.
5. The indigenous people should help one another.
6. All activities by the indigenous people that are useful and conducive to prosperity should be supported by one and all.
7. All activities that are necessary and useful for the indigenous people and the Indies should be carried out by all and given the support of all, so that they may be effectively carried into realization.
8. Ways and means should be sought to abolish all conditions damaging the name of the indigenous population and all legal rules and customs encumbering the life of the native people.

For the realization of these objectives the foundation of a Perhimpunan Kaoem Moeda, with branches in all the major towns and regions, was necessary. Rivai thought that Clockener Brousson and Tehupeiry would be suitable members of its board, without previously consulting them about it, for that matter. Rivai considered his organization's principal duty to be the promotion of education through urgent appeals to the government, the publication of textbooks, and the institution of scholarship funds. *Bintang Hindia* might conveniently serve as the organization's organ for the time being. Rivai explicitly pointed to the Chinese Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan as an analogous organization. This had been founded in B atavia in 1900 with as prime aim the opening of schools partially inspired by modern Chinese nationalistic ideas.

Clockener Brousson's and Tehupeiry's reactions were very reserved, though they asserted that they agreed with the objectives of the Kaoem Moeda. They did not believe that a large organization imposed from above would be viable, however, as such an organization would be bound to succumb to internal conflicts in no time. More appropriate would be the creation in as many places as possible of small, local, independent asso-

ciations, which might gradually unite to form one large organization. Rivai's reply was fiercely critical, accusing his fellow-editors of nervousness about taking the plunge. He once more denounced the predominant self-interest by which the majority of his compatriots were activated and exhorted them to have faith in their own ability; in his view the time was ripe now for the creation of an indigenous Indies organization, with or without government support (*Bintang Hindia* 1905:266-70).

Clockener Brousson and his three Indonesian editors opened their counteroffensive in the Indies supplement of the same number in which Rivai had lectured his co-editors. In an article entitled 'Slordigheid van Administratie en Redactie in Holland' (Carelessness on the part of the Administrative and Editorial Departments in The Netherlands) they wrote: 'The editorial and administrative departments in the Indies are *extremely* dissatisfied about the exceedingly slipshod way in which the B.H.'s interests are being looked after by the Editorial and Administrative Departments in The Netherlands'. The dispatch was irregular, the tone of many of Rivai's articles was displeasing, and the latter's slipshod way of working was responsible for the wrong captions being placed under the wrong photographs. Repeated letters to The Netherlands had been to no avail. That is why 'we would like to give Messrs Boon [the publisher] and Abdül Rivai one more warning, this time in public. If the same errors occur again in the fourth year of publication, the B.H. will be edited and printed entirely in *the Indies*. Hopefully this public rebuke will arouse those fellows in Holland at last!'

Tehupeiory added a long postscript to this, testifying amply to his annoyance at Rivai's activities. He accused him of being arrogant, 'as though he is the only person over there in *Amsterdam* who knows what is good and useful for us'. He was neglecting his duties, 'busy as he may be, with his trips to Germany, France and England'. 'Many Javanese and Sundanese *priyayi*, so we hear from a European official who travels all over Java in his official capacity all the time, subscribe to B.H. because of the *lampiran* printed locally in Indonesia, but disapprove most severely of the so-called "political" articles by Mr. A. R., which "political" articles are in complete conflict with the ideas generally prevailing in Java, also among the so-called Kaoem Moeda! Mr. A. R. seems to forget that in the first place he has seen little of the Indies and has utterly lost his bearings as a result of his long stay in The Netherlands and that we, living with and among the natives in Indonesia, and especially Mr. C. B., as a result of his frequent travels and social intercourse with natives of all classes, are considerably better informed than he is over there at *Damrak 7* in *Amsterdam!*' Both these readers and the editors were frequently annoyed at Rivai's 'red' ideas, according to Tehupeiory.

This polemic and these criticisms were undoubtedly responsible for a growing coolness in the relations between Rivai and Clockener Brousson. Rivai's ideas were too extreme for the editors in the Indies. The latter were

better qualified to assess the practical possibilities than Rivai, who had been living abroad for six years. For them his plans were probably also too extreme from a political point of view, their political position being unequivocally pro-Dutch.

An end was put to the political debate partly also by other developments. At the end of the second year of the journal's life, at the beginning of 1905, Clockener Brousson and publisher N. J. Boon had serious thoughts of ceasing publication. Both had invested large sums of money in the journal, but were receiving no returns. Boon had a claim for Dfl. 6,000, other creditors for a total amount of Dfl. 16,500, and Clockener Brousson for Dfl. 22,000. The latter had even foregone any form of remuneration for his services. The problems were caused to a large extent by the notorious malfunctioning of the Indies postal service and by the unreliability of many of the agents, as a result of which subscribers and subscription fees were going lost. Apart from that, the expense of the Indies supplement and the fine format of the journal, as well as the large proportion of non-paying subscribers were responsible for the difficulties. According to inside information the journal at the end of 1904 had ten thousand subscribers, of whom three thousand were non-paying (letter F. W. H. Tuinburg, Bandung, 25-7-1906, Vb. 3-10-1906 no.44).

A way out of this predicament was provided from a most unexpected direction. In October 1904 J. B. van Heutsz came into office as governor-general, not in the last place as a result of his reputation as pacificator of Aceh. Van Heutsz had an aversion to party politics, red tape and delaying procedures. He was impulsive, resolute and quick at making decisions. In certain cases he mostly ignored official advice, having preformed his own opinion. During his governorship, de facto Dutch rule was established throughout the Archipelago — to permit the people of the more remote areas as well to share in the blessings of Western civilization. Van Heutsz was also an active advocate of the diffusion of Western education, as far down as the level of the village, and stimulated the institution or the extension of all kinds of government services designed for the benefit also of the indigenous population (Witte 1976; Lamster 1942 and 1946).

Van Heutsz summoned Clockener Brousson into his personal presence in February 1905, after hearing of the journal's financial troubles. He showed his extreme regret at the decision to cease publication on account of his appreciation of the journal's useful function for the non-European citizens of the Indies. The governor-general put forward a proposal that in the case of subscribers in government employment the subscription fee be taken out of their wages and paid into the account of *Bintang Hindia* (petition Clockener Brousson and Rivai, The Hague, 18-9-1906 in Vb. 3-10-1906 no.44). This was followed by a series of long discussions between Clockener Brousson and a variety of officials concerned, culminating in a detailed proposal put forward by Clockener Brousson in April 1905. Here he contended that it would be possible to overcome the Natives' and

Foreign Orientals' proverbial distrust of the government, to guide them in the right direction, to educate them, as it were, and to strengthen their loyalty, via the pages of *Bintang Hindia*. By means of an expansion of eight pages, to be made available to the government to publish informative articles and to announce and explain decisions, it would be possible to reach the native élite direct. Clockener Brousson even went so far as to offer to turn *Bintang Hindia* into an unofficial gazette, whereby the government would have the right to determine the journal's policy and subject its contents to constant scrutiny. In return for all this, Clockener Brousson was asking for an interest-free loan of twenty thousand guilders, exemption from postage, and the administration's help in canvassing for agents and subscribers (memorandum Clockener Brousson, 8-4-1905 in Vb. 13-2-1906 lt.P4).

Clockener Brousson's proposal was put before a number of different departments, with a note that the governor-general was prepared in principle to lend the requested support. The advice given by these departments was anything but enthusiastic, varying from negative to reserved. That of the most important advisor, the director of the department of education and religion, J. G. Pott, was unreservedly negative. The 'rag' was grossly exaggerating its own importance and Clockener Brousson was making ridiculously high demands in order to pacify importunate creditors. An eight-page government supplement was totally superfluous. The director proposed the incidental publication of articles and notices, to be paid for afterwards.

Van Heutz was not impressed and announced that the departments should as a matter of urgency work out proposals which would meet Clockener Brousson's requests. And so it came to pass that a circular was sent to all heads of local government departments on 6 November 1905. Van Heutz threw the full weight of his authority into this circular, as the following passage testifies:

'It is the Governor's view that this periodical provides extremely useful instructive reading for the more or less educated Native, that it is calculated to broaden his outlook and stimulate his mental activity, so that the officials of this Government should by all means consider it their duty as much as possible to encourage the general distribution and stimulate the reading of this journal.

The Editors, at the Government's request, have declared their preparedness to disseminate more accurate ideas and detailed information in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, domestic politics, and public health, as well as concerning economic measures to be taken in the interests of the Natives.'

Sample copies and subscription lists were sent to the Colonial Administration, with the instruction to distribute these via agents to be especially approached for this. A detailed brochure with instructions on how to proceed for the government officials concerned was put out by *Bintang*

*Hindia* (Vb. 13-2-1906 lt.P4).

This mode of canvassing proved successful. The first subscription lists were handed in by the agents in December 1905. In this way, the journal had 15,000 subscribers on its books by 1 April. The list of names of agents testifies to the favourable influence of the government circular. Most of the agents were government employees. The great majority of subscribers were resident in Java, but there were smaller numbers to be found in all parts of the Archipelago.

The unillustrated Indies supplement contained for the greater part brief contributions by readers on such subjects as progress and education — subjects close to the heart of the *kaoem moeda*. Developments in the Chinese community also received relatively much attention. Various writers engaged in lively polemics with one another. After the beginning of the fourth year of publication, in April 1906, the journal featured series of translated articles on personal hygiene and stock-raising.

The reactions to Van Heutsz' decisions were withering. The Indies press went as far in its criticism as the limited freedom of the press in the colony permitted. The Netherlands press was under no such restriction in its criticism of the Indies government. In the Indies it was particularly Clockener Brousson who was under attack. Led by the notorious Karel Wijbrands, who had been letting no opportunity go by to taunt and vilify Clockener Brousson in his *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* since 1904, the whole of the Indies press rose up in arms. The use of government officials for propaganda purposes was especially strongly condemned — it was unfitting and extremely damaging to the prestige of a European official to be instructed to approach the native population in the humiliating role of a 'canvasser' (*Weekblad voor Indie* 26-11-1905:539; *De Locomotief* 10- and 11-1- and 1-3-1906; *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* 6-1-1906). Hence the instructions of the circular were not always faithfully carried out — only a quarter of the officials lent their cooperation (*Bintang Hindia* 1906:117).

The Dutch press joined the ranks of these critics. *De Nieuwe Courant* even wrote: 'The GG's impulsive nature, which generally leads him to approach his goal in as direct a way as possible, here has caused him to push aside obstacles which solicitude for the dignity of the government ought to have obliged him to respect'. However, the paper laconically observed, this was not the first time a 'strong personality vested with the power to rule' had acted 'eccentrically' (*Nieuwe Courant* 23-12-1905). Here again Clockener Brousson was the butt of the attacks. He was called a 'charlatanical Dutch hajji' who was 'chasing after proselytes' in his journal (*De Telegraaf* 2-3-1906).

When the decisions reached the colonial department, the officials here, too, were sent into a flurry of writing. Their advice, too, was scathing. Clockener Brousson's mistakes were discussed in detail. Government by newspaper was undesirable, government canvassing objectionable, and

financial support, the budgetary justification of which was moreover dubious, misplaced. It was an unpalatable affair, but what had happened had happened. But the matter was not to be hushed up. This agreed with the views of Minister D. Fock, who had come into office in August 1905. He asked for a letter of disapproval to be drafted, 'without any pointed remarks (for which this affair would seem to give cause, I admit)'. The letter of 13-2-1906 was unequivocal, for that matter. It conceded that the intention had been good, namely to strengthen the ties between the administration and the natives, 'in the sense that the benefits offered by a Western administration meet with grateful recognition and appreciation, in order thus to foster greater loyalty to Dutch authority'. But otherwise it expressed nothing but criticism at the circular and the interest-free loan. The decision to grant freedom from postage had evidently escaped this department's notice. The canvassing in any case was ordered to be stopped (Vb. 13-2-1906 lt.P4).

Van Heutsz' reaction followed on 4 April 1906. He defended the measures taken by him. For many native people the *Bintang Hindia* provided the only, or almost the only reading; it was pro-Dutch in spirit and purport; and the journal contributed to the natives' intellectual elevation. There was no other alternative, the native press being of an intellectually inferior level and not always loyal. He rejected the objections to canvassing and the loan. And finally, Van Heutsz lashed out against the criticism at his arbitrary behaviour, at the same time showing some of his aversion to politics. 'I cannot refrain from remarking that a Governor-General who evinces so little independence as to start wondering at every decision he must make, even a trivial one, whether the current Minister might agree, and subsequently consulting instead of taking a decision, would show himself to be the wrong person for his high and responsible position and to be undeserving of the faith which H.M. the Queen has seen fit to place in his intellectual abilities and character.' The advisor in The Hague might well get excited all over again, but was powerless to do anything beyond indicating that the options now were either to say no more and acquiesce or to repeat the earlier letter. Minister Fock wrote on 16 May 1906 that Van Heutsz' concluding remarks 'slightly' underestimated the position of the minister vis-à-vis the Crown and the States General. It made consultation about measures which might have political consequences or might cause a sensation essential. Fock urgently repeated his order that the canvassing should stop. Not long after this the department discovered the exemption

from postage, and on 25 May sent an angry letter about this. Van Heutsz hereupon had to retrace his steps, be it probably half-heartedly.<sup>6</sup>

Clockener Brousson had meanwhile left for The Netherlands again in April 1906, accompanied by an Indonesian assistant editor and proof-reader. With Abdul Rivai he had to discuss a number of matters which inter alia had provoked the difference about the Perhimpunan Kaoem Moeda. According to Clockener Brousson a number of Rivai's articles had not been properly understood. Rivai felt that the explanation for this was obvious. He had been away from the Indies for almost eight years and during that time had seldom met a compatriot. He was apparently no longer thinking and feeling like an Indonesian, as he himself wrote (*Bintang Hindia* 1906:74). Clockener Brousson for his part admitted that he had been too hard on Rivai in his criticism from the Indies, and that Rivai alone was to thank for the regular appearance of the journal, often despite great difficulties. The editors would thenceforward present a united front under Clockener Brousson's leadership (*Bintang Hindia* 1906:95-6). This did, in fact, happen. Rivai took a gradually larger share in the journal, now that articles from the Indies themselves were mostly published in the Indies supplement. Politics were no longer a permitted subject, but Rivai still had ample scope for venting his ideas in his articles on education. He furthermore contributed a series of articles on political institutions at the request of the colonial government. Clockener Brousson asked him to write on the 'awakening of the Chinese people'. In 1906 *Bintang Hindia* already had a Chinese readership of six thousand (*Bintang Hindia* 1906:206), which number Clockener Brousson was keen to keep and extend. Productive as he was, Rivai also wrote on all kinds of general subjects, including history and geography.

Van Heutsz informed Clockener Brousson's successor in the Indies, the retired major F. W. H. Tuinenburg, on 28 June 1906 that the circular and the exemption from postage would be cancelled. He made it clear that he was acting 'on the explicit instructions' of the department, with as excuse that the nature and purport of a number of articles were unfitting for a semi-official government newspaper. Tuinenburg gave his assurance in his reaction that Clockener Brousson would definitely not make this mistake again. He explained at length what would be the consequences of the cancellation. As a result of the circular and the prestige accorded the journal, the number of subscribers had risen to 22,000 and subscription fees were coming in more regularly than before. The journal was being run

<sup>6</sup> This correspondence is contained in Vb. 16-5-1906 It.A11, except for that on the subject of exemption from postage, which is kept in Vb. 25-5-1906 It.U11. Fock and Van Heutsz also conducted a private correspondence, in which colonial problems were discussed in a slightly more informal manner. There is no mention of *Bintang Hindia* in these lengthy letters — evidently the matter was not important enough. The two men clearly had respect for each other, though the tone of their letters remained formal and polite. Letters in the Van Heutsz collection of the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague.



at neither a loss nor a profit, however. The withdrawal of government support would lead to liquidation or sale of the journal to a less loyal, for example Chinese, publisher. The specially appointed staff would have to be dismissed, the investments in printing presses and paper at the printing works in The Netherlands and the Indies would not pay off, and the expenses for 150,000 sample copies would have been made for nothing. After all these adversities, Tuinenburg suggested that the circular and exemption from postage be cancelled — seeing this was inevitable in any case — in a way that would not point to a total rupture between *Bintang Hindia* and the government and whereby the damage would be kept down to a minimum. In an official request to Minister Fock, Clockener Brousson and Rivai made a dramatic appeal for the support to be continued (letter Tuinenburg, Bandung, 25-7-1906, and request in Vb. 3-10-1906 no.44).

Van Heutsz repealed his circular on 16 August. He announced that after generous support, *Bintang Hindia* should be able to take care of the distribution itself, so that the circular could from now on remain inoperative. In his letter to the minister, Van Heutsz showed himself to be most compliant, but asked for sympathy with the plight of the journal, among other things in view of the expectations raised. It would be possible to meet these with reduced government support, in accordance with Tuinenburg's suggestions. The advisors at the department of colonies wanted no part of this. They saw themselves put in the right and desired a radical termination of all support. Fock opted for a more diplomatic course of action. Van Heutsz had shown his good will and needed no further punishment. Fock sent a telegram to the effect that Van Heutsz' position should be endorsed (Vb. 3-10-1906 no.44).

The matter was duly settled. The government supplement was reduced to four pages and the subsidy for the supplement was offset against the repayments of the interest-free loan. *Bintang Hindia* even so proved no longer economically viable. Government and postal officials reacted to the repeal of the circular by obstructing the journal's distribution. Agents lapsed into their old mistakes. As a result, the journal lost thousands of subscribers, and much money was wasted on attempts to collect outstanding subscriptions. Chinese subscribers were prevented by their leaders from continuation of their subscriptions. Under these circumstances, the only thing Tuinenburg could do was to advise discontinuation of publication. This happened quite abruptly, in fact, with the last number, dated 1 July, being distributed in the Indies on that date. Hence the decision to liquidate must have been taken in The Netherlands some months before this.

Clockener Brousson had yet another reason for winding up the journal. He had come to the conclusion that a periodical like *Bintang Hindia* ought not to publish any political articles. He had plans for starting a more neutral journal, which was to appear as *Bandera Wolanda*, in a much more modest format and at a much lower subscription fee, from 1st January 1908.

Tehupeiory, 'a refined, well educated and level-headed person', was to be put in charge. There was no place for Rivai, who had appeared to have 'become unhinged as a result of a long stay in Europe and to have adopted a great many social-democratic ideas which cannot but exercise a negative influence on his work as editor, especially when such a person presumes to act as a reformer of the natives. Always putting himself in the foreground, without, however, always being altogether fair, by sending insinuating articles against the chief editor to various periodicals, also in the Indies, behind the backs of the other members of the editorial board, his removal from this board had become inevitable.' (Correspondence from Tuinenburg to the government, 23-7-1907 and December 1907, Vb. 17-2-1908 no.6.)

It is probably to be inferred from the abruptness with which publication ceased that the conflict between Clockener Brousson and Rivai, which had been patched up by them, had erupted afresh, this time with fatal consequences for *Bintang Hindia*. Every issue had contained from three to five articles by Rivai, without whose prolific pen it had been impossible to fill the journal. The obvious assumption that suggests itself here is that Rivai said goodbye after his umpteenth quarrel with Clockener Brousson. The only thing Clockener Brousson then could do was to wind up. And although the end had been foreseen, it came about a little too abruptly. As a result, the last issue contained not a single indication that the journal would cease publication and that it would be revived in *Bandera Wolanda* as its successor. Only a circular in which Clockener Brousson set forth his new plans was added as an afterthought (circular, Vb. 17-2-1908 no.6).

The causes of the quarrels between the two chief editors are not very difficult to guess. Rivai's views on the emancipation of the Indonesian élite were much more progressive than Clockener Brousson's. Rivai would have liked to have had an opportunity of expounding all his ideas in the journal, which opportunity, however, he was never given. Rivai's consideration for the government's views in his numerous contributions is striking. But Clockener Brousson probably acted as censor. Even so, certain passages still sometimes escaped his attention. So 'a Young Javanese' wrote the following in a review of the Russo-Japanese war:

'So far the people of the white race, the spoilt pets of history, had regarded themselves as sole lords and masters of the earth. The sudden appearance of a people of another race on the scene to defy one of the most powerful nations of the West with implements which, though adopted from them, it had perfected independently, seemed almost like an affront to them. They were not used to this. The fact remains even so. Willy-nilly, they will have to get used to respecting Japan as a major power.'

Further on, the article continues:

'It is a matter of urgent necessity that the white races finally accustom themselves to approaching people of other races without preju-

dice and without self-exaltation, and that they finally stop letting the course of their politics, often influenced by the merchant and mine-owner as it is, be determined by purely materialistic interests. *Justice and fairness in the estimation of other people*, that is what the future of Europe demands.'

These two quotations are typical of the tone of the article as a whole (*Bintang Hindia* 1906:213-6).

European condemnation of *Bintang Hindia* was virtually universal. Only seldom was a positive opinion of it to be heard. A few cautious comments were made here and there that the government's support was in keeping with the objective of arousing the Javanese people to independence of thought (*Soerabaja Courant*, quoted in *Tijdschrift voor het Binnenlandsch Bestuur* 29(1905):309). When the excitement had died down a little, the middle-echelon colonial official J. E. Jasper also joined in the debate with a more discriminating viewpoint in *Weekblad voor Indie*. He pointed to the total lack of popular literature, of which the average native reader and student had such a great need as a means towards his gradual education. In spite of the 'socialistically tendentious articles and reproductions of pictures of war' it featured, the journal offered first and foremost 'extremely simple, attractive reading, which is bound to arouse pleasant thoughts [in the Native]'. So a 'welcome trifle' had been contributed 'towards the education of the masses' (*Weekblad voor Indie* 4-3-1906:821-3). Nor did the *Koloniaal Weekblad* leave *Bintang Hindia* in the lurch. Rivai was granted many of its columns for the defence of his journal (*Koloniaal Weekblad* 3-5-1906). Protestations of sympathy for the periodical were made after Clockener Brousson's return (*Koloniaal Weekblad* 23-8-1906).

For the Indonesians, however, the journal was a unique medium throughout the period of its existence. They were hereby offered a periodical of unprecedented presentation and unsurpassed format from the West — the source of all modern science and progress — in which their thirst for knowledge was satisfied and their awakening longing for emancipation offered a forum. Judging from the circulation figures, the journal must have reached virtually the whole of the indigenous élite. Its success was enormous, and it evidently responded exactly to the needs of the moment.

Rivai's role in this can hardly be overestimated. He was the admired Indonesian who, despite all advice to the contrary, had gone to the West to learn. There he had successfully held his own. His scholarship had been testified and his authority confirmed by his writings. He became a veritable oracle for the many of his fellow-Indonesians approaching him by letter for advice, often about studying in The Netherlands.<sup>7</sup>

The journal itself developed into the pivot of a kind of 'kaoem moeda' movement, to which numerous Indonesians turned with questions and

<sup>7</sup> Rivai published two articles about this in his journal, namely in August 1903 and November 1904, which are reproduced in part in Poeze 1986:42-4.

comments. As Tuinenburg states, the Bandung office received about forty letters like this every day, all of which were answered to the best of the editors' ability (Tuinenburg's letter in Vb. 3-10-1906 no.44). A similar function was fulfilled by Tirtoadhisoeerjo's *Medan Prijaji*.

The Dutch who made such disparaging remarks about the 'rag' appear to have had a totally mistaken view of the function fulfilled by *Bintang Hindia* for the numerous Indonesians for whom the traditional conception of society had been modified under the influence of Western education and ideas. *Bintang Hindia*, Rivai, Tehupeiry and the remainder of the staff in the Indies, which included the later political leader Abdoel Moeis, offered them a reliable hold in their search for a new position and a new identity and in the resultant uncertainty. Van Heutsz' support of the journal in this respect represented a very wise political act, more than the governor-general realized himself.

Clockener Brousson let Rivai know, as was said above, that he was not really understood in the Indies. I doubt whether this conclusion is right and whether the remark was not meant rather by Clockener Brousson to restrain his colleague, whose plans for the Perhimpoeenan Kaoem Moeda were too extreme for him.

The extent of Rivai's influence and authority is testified by the way he inspired Wahidin Soedirohoesoedo. This *dokter djawa*, who in 1901 became chief editor of the Javanese periodical *Retnodhoemilah*, exerted himself in word and deed for the improvement of the people and society of Java. He regarded Western education as the key to progress, and from 1905 conducted a campaign for the creation of an organization which was to be primarily active in the institution of a scholarship system. Wahidin first expounded his views on the subject in his journal in May 1905. He divided the Javanese into three groups: the *kaoem koeno*, or traditionalists, the *kaoem toea*, or elderly, and the *kaoem moeda*, or youth. For the latter two groups he proposed forming an organization which might share the benefits of progress through study of the Dutch language and the Javanese translation of Dutch books. The relevant material was to be made available in Javanese script in an illustrated fortnightly journal, which should preferably be published in The Netherlands and sent to the Indies from there. Wahidin was counting for support on Abdul Rivai, who in turn would have to secure the assistance of the Javanese in The Netherlands (Nagazumi 1972:30-1).

This Javanese replica of *Bintang Hindia* is proof of the impression this journal made on its readers, as well as of the prestige of Rivai. Not long after that Rivai came forward with his plans for a Perhimpoeenan Kaoem Moeda, whose objectives were more general and more far-reaching than those of Wahidin's proposed organization. Wahidin's exertions on behalf of a scholarship organization were to culminate in the foundation of Boedi Oetomo in 1908.

Rivai himself in January 1907 proudly summed up *Bintang Hindia's*

achievements as follows: the expansion of Dutch-language education, a raise in teachers' salaries, the opening up of colonial government posts and officers' ranks to Indonesians, and an increase in opportunities for Indonesians to go to The Netherlands. His journal had contributed, at least indirectly, to all of these improvements (*Bintang Hindia* 1906:222-4). Though one may have one's doubts about the reality of these concrete achievements, the journal's major contribution to the emancipation of the indigenous élite is beyond question. The promotion of this emancipation and the strengthening of this élite's self-confidence were characteristic aims of the journal. The articles on education and on the Indonesians in The Netherlands and the reports on the emancipation of China and on the Russo-Japanese war, in which a coloured people were defeating a white nation, all contributed to this. Last but not least, the periodical played a constructive role in the embryonic stage of the development of modern organizations among the new Indonesian élite.

Loyalty to the colonial ruler was still a matter of course — it was not yet questioned anywhere among the Indonesian élite. The ideals of the Ethical Policy and those of emancipating Indonesians were still very close to each other. The government assistance given *Bintang Hindia* by Van Heutsz was entirely in keeping with this situation. This remarkable experiment shipwrecked on the controversial personality of Clockener Brousson and on legalistic procedures, however.

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