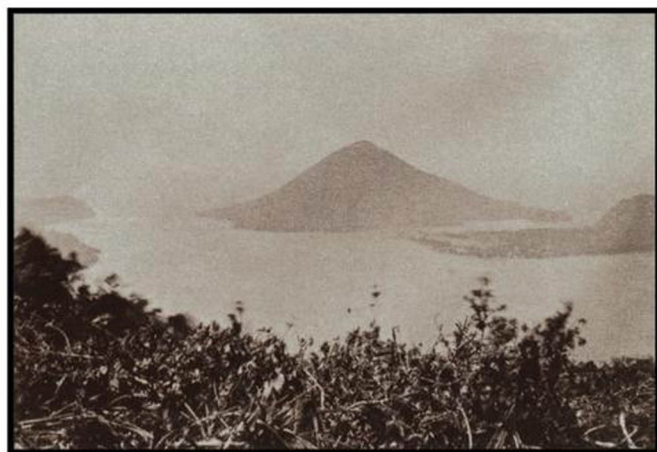


Rudolf Mrázek

SJAHRIR

POLITICS AND EXILE
IN INDONESIA



SEAP

Rudolf Mrázek

SJAHRIR:
POLITICS AND EXILE
IN INDONESIA

STUDIES ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia Program
180 Uris Hall
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York
1994

Editor in Chief
Benedict Anderson

Advisory Board
George Kahin
Stanley O'Connor
Takashi Shiraishi
Keith Taylor
Oliver Wolters

Editing and Production
Donna Amoroso
Audrey Kahin
Roberta Ludgate
Dolina Millar

Cover Design
Deena Wickstrom

I acknowledge with thanks the support I have received in writing this book from the following institutions: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program and Modern Indonesia Project; the Rockefeller Foundation, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in New York, the Toenggoel Foundation in Jakarta, and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS) in Wassenaar.

Cover photo: Banda Neira. From the photo and print collection of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden (KITLV), Afd. Documentatie Geschiedenis Indonesië (DGI) #8589.

Studies on Southeast Asia No. 14

© 1994 Cornell Southeast Asia Program
ISBN 0-87727-713-3

To George McTurnan Kahin

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

Preface: Effort at Biography	1
1. The Homeland	5
1. The World of Minangkabau and Sjahrir's Mother	5
2. Sjahrir's Father and the Notion of Rantau	9
3. Sjahrir's Sister and the Culture of Nationhood	16
4. Medan and the First Period of Sjahrir's Life	23
2. Bandung, 1926-1929	33
1. The City and the School	33
2. Jong Indonesie	39
3. The Youth and Sukarno	49
3. Holland, 1929-1931	56
1. Amsterdam and Leiden	56
2. Perhimpunan Indonesia	65
3. The Return Home	75
4. The Return to Java, 1931-1934	82
1. Chairman of the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia	82
2. The Confrontation with Sukarno	87
3. The Return of Hatta and the Minangkabau Base	95
4. The Dutch Reaction	105
5. Prison and the Internment Camp, 1934-1935	118
1. Cipinang Prison	118
2. Almost an "Ethical" Village	128
3. Sjahrir at Boven Digul	138
6. Exile in Banda Neira, 1936-1941	154
1. Politics without Sjahrir	154
2. Closer to the World	164

3. Flowers, Officials, Nationalists, and the Bandanese	175
4. Juffrouw Cressa, Oom Bing, and the Bandanese Children	189
5. The End of Exile?	197
7. The Japanese Occupation, 1942–1945	209
1. Sukabumi	209
2. Sjahrir's Pemuda	219
3. Network of Power	231
4. Nationalist Mainstream	243
5. Proclamation of Independence	253
8. The Revolution, 1945–1949	269
1. Perdjoengan Kita	269
2. Prime Minister	283
3. Tan Malaka	302
4. Road to Linggadjati	321
5. The End of Sjahrir's Cabinet	332
6. Adviser to the President	346
7. Madiun	361
8. The End of Revolution	376
9. The Fifties, 1950–1959	402
1. The Fluidity of Power	402
2. Oracle of Delphi	417
3. General Elections	430
4. Civil War	443
10. The Death	459
1. Prison	459
2. Last Writings	473
3. The Death	489
Epilogue: On Memory	497
Bibliography	501
Index	517

ILLUSTRATIONS

Banda Neira.....	Cover
Sjahrir as a Young Man.....	x
Sjahrir's Family House in Kota Gedang.....	8
The Pass between Kota Gedang and Bukittinggi	15
Hotel de Boer	25
Bioscoop Preanger	36
"Poetri Indonesia" of Bandung with Sjahrir	41
Jef Last.....	60
Leiden University.....	67
Map of the Netherlands	75
PNI Congress in Bandung	85
Hatta in 1934	98
Sjahrir	119
Boven Digul.....	129
Leaving Boven Digul	150
Soewarni Pringgodigdo and Soewarsih Djojopoespito	155
Map of the Eastern Archipelago	164
Postcard of Banda Neira	167
Banda Neira.....	177
Sjahrir	193
Map of Java.....	208
Japanese Drawings (1)	213
Japanese Drawings (2)	222
Japanese Drawings (3)	246
Premier Sjahrir	284
The Bridge	294
Tan Malaka	303
Sjahrir on the Radio.....	325

The Linggadjati Signing Ceremony	333
Sjahrir leaving by air	359
Sjahrir under Arrest	381
Five Stamps (Sukarno, Hatta, Maramis, Hadji Agoes Salim, Sjahrir)	398
Bual Bang Betjak	404
Stamps with Sukarno.....	433
Bual Bang Betjak	461
Hatta Speaking at Sjahrir's Grave	495

These days young people read stories only because they
love to hear their melodies; some of them listen to stories
only to laugh.

Hikayat Pancha Tanderan, 1965¹

¹ "Kebanyakan orang muda-muda pada zaman ini membaca hikayat itu sebab suka mendengar lagunya sahaja; ada pula yang mendengarkan hikayat itu sebab hendak tertawa sahaja." Quoted and translated in Hendrik M. J. Maier, *In the Center of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Ithaca: Cornell Studies on Southeast Asia, 1988), p. 83.



Sjahrir as a Young Man
(Photo courtesy of Mrs. Maria Duchâteau-Sjahrir)

PREFACE: EFFORT AT BIOGRAPHY

This is a study of schools and exile, politics and integrity: more of exile than schools; much more of integrity than of politics. Some who have read a part or the whole of the book in manuscript suggested that this was a biography of a man who failed. I can not disagree more. But I hope that what follows may help our understanding of what a failure really is.

I do not know where this story originated. Perhaps not in Indonesia at all. Perhaps as far back as in my boyhood fascination for the Jewish community in Prague, and, some years later, in my reading of Franz Kafka, a writer who came to manifest this community to me better than anybody else.

Kafka never mentioned the word "Jew" in his literary work. He was a Prague Jew, and a stranger among Prague Czechs, Prague Germans, and even other Prague Jews. He loved Prague, planned to escape the city to Jerusalem, and died in between. After his death, some Czechs, some Germans, and some Jews came to treasure Kafka as an arc, a trembling bridge, that might help them attempt a passage from one narrow tradition to another, and maybe beyond:

I was stiff and cold. I was a bridge. I lay over a ravine. My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other, I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay. The tails of my coat fluttered at my sides. Far below brawled the icy trout stream. . . .¹

It is generally accepted that each personality is formed by childhood experience and then by the cultural barriers erected across its path through life. The cultural barrier is a line at which a man is challenged to defect, to strengthen, or to reinterpret some of the fundamental values of his philosophy and behavior. Writing a biography should be a mapping of the checkpoints where cultural barriers are crossed or evaded.

By encountering the barriers one is changing oneself, and one is changing the landscape through which one passes: one builds a bridge for oneself and for others; one builds a bridge of oneself. That is, I believe, what Franz Kafka had in mind: there is unfortunately and repeatedly nothing but a search for integrity in front of every checkpoint. Or ideally that is how it should be.

Sutan Sjahrir was born in May 1909 in Padang Panjang, in the Minangkabau region of West Sumatra. Educated in Medan, Bandung, Amsterdam, and Leiden, he became a leading spirit behind the Indonesian emancipation movement of the 1930s,

¹ Franz Kafka, "The Bridge," in Franz Kafka, *The Complete Short Stories* (New York: Schocken, 1976), p. 411.

spent eight years in colonial prisons and in exile, was thrice prime minister of the independent Republic, and died in exile again. Some call him "one of the great figures of the Asian Renaissance."²

According to an American intelligence report of 1945, he was five feet and six inches in height and weighed one hundred pounds.³ His face, described by a Dutch friend, was "very expressive, but it lacked the stereotypical strikingness which leads to 'good photos'."⁴ This description probably is just another sort of stereotype.

Sjahrir is generally presented as aloof from everything that seems "traditional," "primordial," or "parochial." Conspicuously missing, indeed, are childhood memories and the reassuring asylum of home culture—features so prominent in the public images of Sjahrir's great contemporaries, Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta, Amir Sjarifoeddin, Soetomo, and Tan Malaka.⁵ Just as Kafka never used the word "Jew" in his literary works, Sjahrir hardly ever used the word "Minangkabau." Sjahrir is portrayed as restless and rootless, or, often by the same people, as extraordinarily fast and fluent in his release from traditional Minangkabau or Eastern spheres of thought and morals into the intellectual and ethical sphere of the West.

Sjahrir passed from childhood to maturity through Sumatran, Javanese, Indonesian, Dutch colonial, Dutch metropolitan, and various prison and exile cultures. He lived intensively in each of them and left behind accounts of his experience. There are letters to kin and friends, published and unpublished. There are articles in political and literary journals. There are speeches, deeds, and thoughts. There are photographs and his body language, preserved in the memories of those who knew him. All this, if handled with care, may stand for Sjahrir's own text, a sort of autobiography of Sjahrir. In writing about politics, economy, women, poetry, or whatever, when expressing one's opinions, one is, in a sense and essentially perhaps, writing about oneself. To unearth this "autobiography" in its entirety and to read it with concern—this was the principal ambition with which this book was written.

Any autobiography is intelligible only if the peculiar sequence of its narrative is taken into account. Every autobiography, I believe, progresses backwards, from a point at which the autobiographer is surveying his life, explaining it to his present self, and restructuring it so as to fit the requirements of the moment—of current ethics and aesthetics, of the experience one has accumulated until then.

There are many observation points in Sutan Sjahrir's autobiographical texts. The texts were written over a span of decades, under the spell of different places, cul-

² Herbert Feith in *Nation* (Sydney), April 30, 1966, quoted in *Perjalanan terakhir Pahlawan Nasional Sutan Sjahrir*, ed. H. Rosihan Anwar (Jakarta: Pembangunan, 1966), p. 64.

³ Quoted in St. Rais Alamsjah, *10 orang besar Indonesia terbesar sekarang* (Jakarta: Bintang Mas, 1952), p. 134; elsewhere it was 1.47 meters and 54 kilos.

⁴ Jacques de Kadt in *De Baanbreker* (1946), p. 4.

⁵ Bernhard Dahm, *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); John D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (New York: Preager, 1972); Sukarno, *An Autobiography as Told to Cindy Adams* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill, 1965); Mohammad Hatta, *Memoir* (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1978); Benedict Anderson, "A Time of Darkness and a Time of Light: Transposition in Early Indonesian Nationalist Thought," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979), pp. 219–48; Harry A. Poeze, *Tan Malaka, Strijder voor Indonesië's vrijheid: Levensloop van 1897 tot 1945* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976); Rudolf Mrázek, "Tan Malaka: A Political Personality's Structure of Experience," *Indonesia* 14 (October 1972): 1–47; Frederick Djara Wellem, *Amir Sjarifoeddin: Pergumulan Imannya dalam Perjuangan Kemerdekaan* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1984).

tures, epochs, and moods; with lesser or greater courage. Not one but a multiplicity of matrixes served as the foundation upon which the autobiography was built.

The urge to write an autobiography in this sense, may be the most dramatic manifestation of an interaction between the social and the individual. A self-evident way to study this interaction, therefore, is to compare the social and the individual texts available—what Jonathan Culler called “to naturalize” a particular text, which is to confront it with

a general cultural text: shared knowledge which would be recognized by participants as part of culture and hence subject to correction or modification but which none the less serves as a kind of “nature.”⁶

A method like this is convenient, as it helps to organize amorphous material and to distinguish its “elements” and “motifs.”⁷ The fact, however, that rather than comparing two sets of texts, we are “reading an autobiography,” should be constantly kept in mind.

“General cultural texts” and the “individual texts” by Sjahrir could never be analyzed simply as “values” running parallel or cross-cutting each other in a Euclidean paradise. “Perceptions”⁸ have to be studied. While an autobiography may originate from the most varying sources, it is always molded into a definite shape and meaning by the sheer power, or weakness, of its author’s individuality. Sjahrir’s will to write an autobiography and his decision to remain silent will be the principal themes to be studied.

The texts I read never allowed me to accept a stereotype of Sjahrir as moving, fast, fluently, and headlong, into the Western cultural orbit, leaving behind, obscure, insignificant, and meaningless, the culture from which he had started. Neither did Sjahrir appear to me as a solid bridge safely anchored in the two worlds. As my reading progressed, a different picture of Sjahrir’s experience emerged: if it was a structure, then it was an immensely elusive, loose, and tenuous one; if a bridge, then a bridge arched between a multiplicity of uncertain riversides, kept above ground and water not by moorings and pillars but by the vastness of the space to be crossed.

This study of Sutan Sjahrir is a personal story in more than one sense. Manifest in it I want to be my fascination with those men and women, in Indonesia and elsewhere, who out of courage, arrogance, or fear, climb the barriers of cultures. Their traces, if they get far enough, disappear as a rule into the vastness of the unknown. Thus, I believe, the universes for mankind are created and Angels of History are moved to march on.

I was lucky to meet on my way to Sjahrir a number of good people who were willing to share their time and knowledge. They were with me, talked and wrote to me about Sjahrir, and led me through mazes of libraries, archives, and private collections in Prague, Ithaca, Jakarta, Bandung, Medan, Bukittinggi, Leiden, Amsterdam,

⁶ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), esp. p. 140.

⁷ For “elements” and “motifs” see V. Propp, “Morphology of the Folktale,” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 24, 4 (October 1958): 11–19.

⁸ For a contrast between the study of values and perceptions see e.g. Els Postel-Coster, “The Indonesian Novel as a Source of Anthropological Data,” in *Text and Context: The Social Anthropology of Tradition*, ed. Ravindra K. Jain (Philadelphia: Institute for Study of Human Issues, 1977), p. 148.

The Hague, and Paris. Some will find their names in the text, others know how they helped without being mentioned. They often manifested more than merely an intellectual curiosity. Their strong feeling about Sjahir and about my project has been a continuous inspiration. Four of them, Ben Anderson, Jim Siegel, Ruth McVey, and George Kahin to whom this book is dedicated, I respected most throughout, and they became, so I hope, an inseparable part of my life. Am I grateful to them? I don't know. If it was not for them, I might still be sitting in Zizkov, Prague, counting my beads.

THE HOMELAND

En satoe en satoe en satoe dat is een
 En batoe en batoe en batoe, dat is steen
 En roti en roti en roti, dat is brood
 En mati en mati en mati, dat is dood.

A song from a *komedie stambul*¹

1. THE WORLD OF MINANGKABAU AND SJAHRIR'S MOTHER

The Minangkabau of West Sumatra are described as belonging to "probably one of the largest matrilineal societies in the world."² The smallest genealogical unit in Minangkabau is formed, according to *adat*—"custom," by a mother together with her children and is called a *samandai*—"a mother." Several close *samandai* (close in terms of matriliney) form a *parui*—"a womb." One *parui*, traditionally, dwells in a common house, with several *parui* composing the lowest territorial unit, a *kampuong*—"a village" or "a town ward," and several *kampuong* agglomerating in a *nagari*—"a community." At the head of each of these groups there is one (or, in the larger units, a council of) *mamak kepala waris*, shortened to *mamak* usually, "a maternal uncle" who guards the *waris*—"the legacy." Each Minangkabau is defined by *adat* as a member of a *kamanakan*—"a mamak's sisters' group of children."³

The house of one's mother (and of her eldest brother, i.e., the *mamak*'s house) was considered in traditional Minangkabau to be the focus of an "inward looking, stability and security searching tendency."⁴ This *rumah adat*—"customary house," or *rumah gadang*—"great house," often referred to by the name of a female house member, was supposed to become at birth and to remain for the rest of each Minangka-

¹ A. Th. Manusama, *Komedie Stamboel of de Oost Indische opera* (Wetevreden: Favoriet, 1922), p. 22.

² Tsuyoshi Kato, "Change and Society in the Minangkabau Matrilineal System," *Indonesia* 25 (April 1978): 1. Tanner and Thomas refer to Minangkabau matriliney as the "cultural centrality" and "decision-making mode." Nancy Tanner and Lynn L. Thomas, "Rethinking Matriliney: Decision-Making and Sex Roles in Minangkabau," in *Change and Continuity in Minangkabau: Local, Regional and Historical Perspective on West Sumatra*, ed. Lynn L. Thomas and Franz von Benda Beekman (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 69.

³ See, for instance, P. E. de Josselin de Jong, *Minangkabau and Negeri Sembilan: Socio-Political Structure in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1960), pp. 10-13.

⁴ P. E. de Josselin de Jong, *Social Organization of Minangkabau* (Leiden: University of Leiden Institute for Cultural Anthropology, 1975), p. 152.

bau's life the *rumah tunjuk*—"a house he could point to as his house of origin."⁵ As late as the 1920s, when Sjahrir was in his teens, if a man became seriously ill, every effort had to be made to move him from wherever he fell, be it his wife's or his children's house, into his *rumah tunjuk*: whether or not his mother was still alive, he was supposed to die where his "real house" stood.⁶

The *mamak's* place, the mother's house, was traditionally supposed to stand for the center of Minangkabau solidarity—"sharing slights, sharing shames." It was the Minangkabau nucleus—but a strikingly vaporous one.

A typical *rumah tunjuk* was a rectangular wooden structure from twenty-five to more than a hundred meters in length, divided crosswise into compartments—*bilik*—with the number of compartments and the length of the house growing as the *parui* group grew. In each of the compartments lived either a *samandai*—a mother with her young children—or a single (unmarried or widowed) female member of the *parui*.

Every evening a group of strange men, the husbands, entered the house. It may be imagined, what a bustle the house became; each of the men brought with him his own mood, character and will. . . . It may be said of me,

a Minangkabau notes regarding his *rumah tunjuk*, "that I was born into a sort of barracks."⁷

Children, when at home, spent most of their time, day and night, in the front "reception hall," a common area which ran lengthwise through the house in front of the compartments. Any disagreement in the *rumah tunjuk* threatened quickly to become public property; any member had to be extremely cautious not to spark the flame. The whole structure was held together by its components not being allowed to come too close to one another.

Through *rumah tunjuk* life, through *adat*, customs, myths, and legends, a distinctive kind of motherhood was passed down by generations of Sjahrir's ancestors.

Sjahrir's mother, Siti Rabbiah—we do not know the year of her birth, only of her marriage, 1898,⁸ and death, 1922—had about three-quarter Minangkabau blood and was born of a Minangkabau who lived "abroad." She was born in Natal, South Tapanuli, north of Minangkabau proper. Both Rabbiah's mother and perhaps even her grandmother were also born of Natal or Natal-Minangkabau mothers and Minangkabau fathers.⁹

⁵ Kato, "Change and Society," p. 8.

⁶ Muhamad Radjab, *Semasa kecil dikampung, 1913-1925: Autobiografi seorang anak Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1974), p. 102.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸ According to one source, she married Sjahrir's father in Bonjol, Minangkabau, in August of that year; see Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus, Srikandi Indonesia: Riwayat Hidup dan perjuangannya* (Jakarta: Mutiara, 1980), p. 62.

⁹ The materials available contain various names and spellings for Sjahrir's mother. "Rabbiah" is the most frequent, and it is also used in Sjahrir's personal documents, such as those presented at his first wedding. See, e.g., *Secret Mail Report* 1937, no. 704. She is listed in Sjahrir's family records as a daughter of Soetan Soeleiman from Kota Gedang, Minangkabau. I have also used information from Muhammad Akbar Djoehana, Sjahrir's nephew; interview in Prague, August 16 and 17, 1983.

Rabiah, with her husband and children, lived in the land of Minangkabau itself for only a very short time. Most of her married life was spent at various places on the Minangkabau fringes, traveling where her husband did. Never did she and her family live side by side in an orthodoxly traditional *rumah tunjuk* with other "mothers" in a "womb."

A quarter of Rabiah's blood was Natal, Mandailing Batak in all probability. *Putri Siti Rabiah*, she was called, suggesting she was in her mother's line a direct descendant of a *tuanku besar*, a local "bigman" in South Tapanuli. Rabiah proudly kept her Mandailing title and carried herself with an aristocratic *esprit*. So effective was she that a favorite family story still relates how the oldest son of Siti Rabiah, Sjahrir's eldest brother, might have risen to become a Mandailing *tuanku besar* himself—if only he had not become (like Sjahrir) an ardent nationalist and "antifeudal" at that.¹⁰

A native pride in Natal alone, however, would never have made Rabiah and her children complete strangers to Minangkabau. Natal had never been a complete "elsewhere" to Minangkabau culture. Its tradition, including the role of women—more pronounced than among other Bataks—had made Natal a civilization very close to its neighbors to the south.¹¹ Merchants and other Minangkabau wanderers had come there from times immemorial, adding mightily to the mutual proximity of Natal and Minangkabau. Inter marriages between these wanderers and Natalese women, especially women of noble blood, such as Rabiah's marriage with Sjahrir's father were common and accepted by tradition.¹²

Rabiah is remembered by her kin as a strong-minded woman. Strong character is reflected in the beautiful face under tightly combed black hair, portrayed in a faded photograph of Rabiah in Sjahrir's family album.¹³ Rabiah liked immensely to travel, and often went "abroad," not infrequently alone. She got as far, informants say, as Madiun, Java.¹⁴

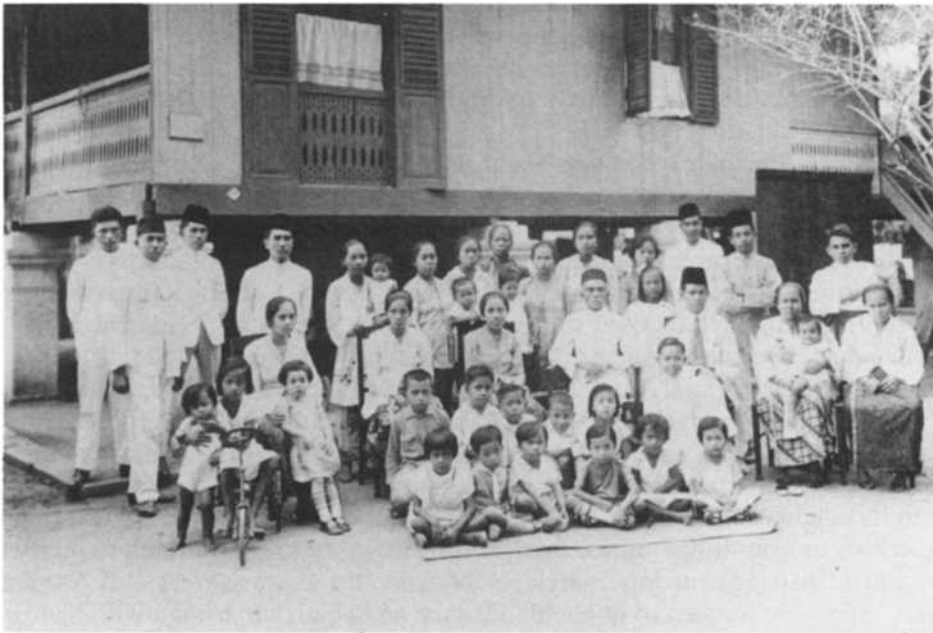
¹⁰ In the document listed in the previous note Rabiah's mother is also mentioned as "Puti Djohor Maligan, a granddaughter of Tuanku Besar Sintan from Natal." ("Riwayat Hidup Soetan Sjahrir," n.d., n.p. typescript in the *Archives Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir*.) Also interview with M. A. Djoehana, Prague, August 16 and 17, 1983.

¹¹ On similarities between Mandailing and Minangkabau perceived at the time, see especially M. Joustra, *Batakspiegel* (1910. Leiden: van Doesburgh, 1926); and C. Van Vollenhoven *Het Adatrecht van Nederslansch-Indië* vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1918), pp. 228–29, 238–39, 244.

¹² This did not exclude a strong mutual suspicion of both cultures. According to a Dutch official's impression of 1919—i.e., the time of Sjahrir's childhood—"the West Sumatrans (Minangkabau) feel themselves as 'endlessly higher' than the Tapanulese and, on the reverse, the Tapanulese consider themselves elevated compared to the former; they think of the Minangkabau as, other than the Acehnese, their worst enemies." See G. A. J. Hazeu, "Het eerste Congres van de Jong Sumatraan Bond, 1919," quoted in Hendrik Bouman, *Enige Beschouwingen over de Ontwikkeling van het Indonesisch Nationalisme op Sumatra's Westkust* (Groningen: Wolters, 1949), p. 31. Another, more recent, observer tells of a Minangkabau girl living in Tapanuli who "from her early school days was always forbidden to mix with her Tapanuli (Batak) schoolmates on the ground that 'they weren't religious'" (i.e., too emancipated), although actually they were Moslems, too." Istulah Gunawan Mitchell, "The Socio-Cultural Environment and Mental Disturbance: Three Minangkabau Case Histories," *Indonesia* 7 (April 1969): 133.

¹³ I was shown the album, while visiting Sjahrir's house, by Siti Wahjunah, Sjahrir's wife, in Jakarta, March 5, 1982.

¹⁴ Interview with Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir, Jakarta, March 3, 1982; according to the informant, these were Sjahrir's recollections.



Sjahrir's Family House in Kota Gedang

Reportedly well-educated, though there is no record of her attending a Western-type school, Rabbiah radiated her own particular blend of culture. She is remembered as reciting at family gatherings. Her all-time favorites were *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*; which were also the evergreens throughout Minangkabau at the time.¹⁵ As family lore has it, Rabbiah chose Sjahrir's name and the names of several of her other children under the spell of Scheherazade.¹⁶

Rabbiah especially loved *komedie stambul*, a craze in the 1910s and 1920s in the urban centers of the East Indies, a theatrical form, performed mostly by Eurasians, with a most peculiar mixture of Western and Eastern language, music, and dramatic plots;¹⁷ Scheherazade's tales, again, were often performed, along with Shylock and Sherlock Holmes. The genre hit Malaya and Indonesia after allegedly traveling from "Istanbul" (thus the *komedie's* name). Siti Rabbiah is said to have been in the audience

¹⁵ Radjab, *Semasa kecil dikampung*, p. 127.

¹⁶ Interview with Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir, Jakarta, March 5, 1982. (Note also that the Dutch spelling of Scheherazade is Sjaharazad.) A particularly popular figure in *komedie stambul* was "Sharyar, the king of India and Great Tartary"; Manusama, *Komedie Stamboel*, p. 15.

¹⁷ A typical text of *komedie stambul* as performed on Bali at roughly the same time is summarized in Beryl De Zoete, *Dance and Drama in Bali* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), p. 215. On *komedie stambul* or *komedie bangsawan* see also Manusama, *Komedie Stamboel*; Bronia Kornhauser, "In Defence of Kroncong," in *Studies in Indonesian Music*, ed. Margaret J. Kartomi (Clayton: Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, 1978), especially pp. 131–32; and Burhan Piliang, "Tentang teater baru Indonesia dan perkembangannya di Medan," *Budaya Jaya* 9, 100 (September 1976): 561–67.

whenever a *komedie stambul* troupe stopped in town. Then, at home on her accordion, she would play the newly learned songs.¹⁸

Other highlights of Rabiah's repertoire included German romances; one source of these may have been Lutheran missionaries who were very active in South Tapanuli at the time young Rabiah was there.¹⁹ Apparently, nothing fundamentally anti-traditional was seen in Rabiah's tastes. It is still a cherished story in Rabiah's family, for instance, that the family had a "lighter complexion." A stranger may even be told a story about "an ancestor with definitely blue eyes."²⁰

There were certainly echoes of tradition and matrilineal traits in Rabiah's behavior. She did not merely give names to her children, she bestowed titles: *siti* for her daughters, *sutan* for her sons—traditional and identical in Minangkabau and Natal. Rabiah's house, while far, of course, from being a truly orthodox *rumah tunjuk*, was famed for always being wide open to all the children of Rabiah's relatives and of the neighborhood. No distinction, it is said, was made between Rabiah's own ten children and the other youngsters who happened to appear in the house.²¹

Rabiah's affection, evidently, was widely extended and low keyed. I have found not a single piece of writing in which Sjahrir mentions his mother at any length. Only during his last years, when he was sick (and tired, and less resistant to sentiment, perhaps), did he like to tell his wife a story about Rabiah and himself. On a train once, the story went, Sjahrir's mother tenderly stroked the boy's head. He had been ten years old, he said, and something like that had never happened before.²²

Rabiah's behavior was hardly ever thought unbecoming by her family, her community, or Sjahrir. Rather, she appears to have been respected as a manifestation of the best in the culture, time, and place. Sjahrir's relation to his mother was not distracted. It was, rather loose—and, thus, in terms of her culture and his, it was meaningful. Later in this book, whenever we run across Sjahrir's "strange" behavior toward his homeland, his family, and, in particular, women—and whenever we reject terms like "aloof" or "harsh" or "unfeeling" as inadequate for describing it—the culture and the image of his mother will always be part of the argument.

2. SJAHRIR'S FATHER AND THE NOTION OF RANTAU

A newborn girl in Minangkabau traditionally was "more valued" than a baby boy.²³ A mature Minangkabau man was termed a *sumando*—an "in-marrying male." He was described in various Minangkabau epithets as being "like a bull buffalo bor-

¹⁸ Interview with Mrs. Sjahrizal Djoehana Wiradikarta, Sjahrir's sister, Bandung, March 12, 1982; interview with M. A. Djoehana, Prague, August 16, 1983.

¹⁹ The most detailed report yet on the Rheinische Mission and other German cultural activity in the area is J. G. Warneck, *Fünfzig Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra* (Berlin: Warneck, 1911); for other important information, rather critical of the Germans, see the valuable M. Joustra, *Van Medan naar Padang en terug; reisindrukken en ervaringen* (Leiden: van Doesburgh, 1915).

²⁰ Interview with M. A. Djoehana, Prague, August 17, 1983.

²¹ Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 12, 1982. Rabiah had ten children altogether, in the following order: Soetan Noer Alamsjah, Hafil Datoek Batoeah (Halil), Lalifah, Sjahrizal, Soetan Sjahrir, Azran Soetan, Marah Alam, Soetan Sjahsam, Mahroeazar and Idahar Sjah. See Alamsjah, *10 orang besar Indonesia terbesar sekarang*, p. 124; Leon Salim, ed., *Bung Sjahrir: Pahlawan Nasional* (Medan: Masadepan, 1966), p. 12; interview with Violet, the wife of Djohan Sjahroeazar, Sjahrir's nephew, Jakarta, March 8, 1982.

²² Interview with Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir, Jakarta, March 5, 1982.

²³ Hamka, *Merantau ke Deli* (1941. Jakarta: Djajamurni, 1962), p. 103.

rowed for impregnation," "like a fly on the tail of a buffalo," "like a spot of mud on one's forehead," "like ash on a tree stump—a soft wind blows and it will fly away."²⁴ According to an observer of the Minangkabau scene of the early twentieth century, a child sometimes did not recognize its own father on the street.²⁵ Mohammad Hatta, a Minangkabau, and Sjahrir's friend and contemporary, recalled from his childhood that at the time "the Minangkabau people used to believe that if a son closely resembled his father, one of them would quickly die." "I don't know if that is true," Mohammad Hatta commented in 1981. "We are at the mercy of God."²⁶

If motherhood in Minangkabau served as the culture's vaporous nucleus, then fathers moved around, loosely attached to the nucleus. Men might obtain a divorce over the most trivial matter. They did, and often; polygamy was a custom.²⁷ While motherhood and the maternal uncle, the *mamak*, were thought crucial in matters "governing strictly lineage affairs"²⁸—and were tied by this, most men were allowed to be rather free on the fringe of the community. Inheritance laws definitely favored, and still often favor, the mother's line: the *harta pusaka*—the house, the rice fields, the treasures of the clan—stayed with mothers. But a wide space was left open for fathers to earn their own wealth and to leave it to their children, even their grandchildren occasionally; afterwards, according to custom, however, the wealth had to be appropriated back into the mother's line.²⁹

Fatherhood and the male element were pushed towards the fringes in Minangkabau culture. But thus the fringes, the contours, and the meaning of the culture as a whole were made more visible and, to the culture's participants, more real.

The fringes are called *rantau* in Minangkabau: "outward regions" or "areas adjoining the heartland" (which, in turn, is called the *luhak* or *darak*). *Rantau* is any place to which a Minangkabau may migrate, whether it be immediately outside his village, Sumatra beyond the Minangkabau borders, Malaya, the Indonesian archipelago or even a wider world. *Rantau* is a place in which Minangkabau culture's loose elements or excessive tension may be released. But *rantau* is meaningless without "the heartland." It has always been acceptable for an adult man in Minangkabau to go to *rantau* at a certain point in his life.³⁰ But it was, and is, very

²⁴ Kato, "Change and Society," p. 6; see also G. D. Willinck, *Het Rechtsleven bij de Minangkabausche Maleiers* (Leiden: Brill, 1909), pp. 525–26. On the residence pattern of Minangkabau males see also *Change and Continuity*, ed. Thomas and von Benda Beekman; Mitchell, "The Socio-Cultural Environment," p. 128.

²⁵ Hamka, *Adat Minangkabau Menghadap Revolusi* (Jakarta: Tekad, 1963), pp. 56–57.

²⁶ Mohammad Hatta, *Indonesian Patriot: Memoirs* (Singapore: Gunung Agung, 1981), p. 11.

²⁷ On the traditionally high rate of polygamy among the Minangkabau as compared to other Indonesians see Mochtar Naim, *Merantau: Causes and Effects of Minangkabau Voluntary Migration* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1971); Josselin de Jong, *Social Organization of Minangkabau*, p. 16 and *passim*.

²⁸ Elizabeth E. Graves, *The Minangkabau Response to Dutch Colonial Rule in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981), p. 136; see also Josselin de Jong, *Social Organization of Minangkabau*, p. 17.

²⁹ Thomas and von Benda Beekman, eds., *Change and Continuity*; on the matrilineal ancestral property rules as complicating accumulation of capital among the Minangkabau still in the 1970s see Kato, "Change and Society," pp. 12–13.

³⁰ Early in one's life is usually the time for going to *rantau*—"before you are needed at home," as a Minangkabau proverb suggests; *Kerantau buyang dahulu, dirumah berguna belum*.

bad for the *perantau* (the man going to *rantau*) to become "destitute in *rantau*," *melarat di rantau*, to be lost in *rantau*, forgotten by those staying home.³¹

A true Minangkabau felt he had been sent (or forced out) to *rantau* by his matrilineal community and he took great care, and sometimes great pains, to fulfill his "obligation" to that community—an "obligation" not rarely described as a burden or shame.³² He thought it his greatest attainment to return home from *rantau* as a success.³³ And he was aware all the time, remembering the low-key, wide-ranging maternal affection, the ambiguous nucleus of the "house he could point to," that there was actually no absolute safety for him to return to.³⁴

Rantau was essentially a male business. Moreover, fatherhood became much more pronounced when a man moved to *rantau* and when he married there, which happened often and was not against Minangkabau custom. A "little family," emerged, with the father more in charge than could ever have been the case in the heartland. A fatherhood-centered kind of power appeared to the Minangkabau as residing in *rantau*.

One perception of *rantau* was of the Minangkabau encountering the non-Minangkabau and essentially male-dominated world. Royal power, according to tradition, came to Minangkabau that way. Prince Adityawarman arrived from Java in the dim past and carved out a patrilineal kingdom for himself. But because all the land had already been divided among matrilineal *nagari* communities, the new ruler's domain had to be placed, and to remain until its demise in the nineteenth century, on the Minangkabau fringes—in *rantau*.³⁵ Islam also came to Minangkabau in a *rantau* way. It had become the dominant religion of the Minangkabau by the nineteenth

³¹ Radjab, *Semasa kecil dikampung*, p. 72.

³² Keeping that balance between *rantau* and *rumah tunjuk* can be very demanding and even leads sometimes to serious mental disturbance. It is telling that a sickness caused by a migrant feeling torn between the strange community in which he lives and his attachment to his place of origin, manifest and studied in Jakarta in particular, is generally called "Padangitis" in Indonesia (a Minangkabau is often called a man of Padang), and Minangkabau are most numerous among those suffering from it. See Istulah Gunawan Mitchell, "Points of Stress in Minangkabau Social Life," *RIMA* 6, 2 (1972): 97, 114. A vivid description of the difficult and actually "shame-full" relation of a Minangkabau in *rantau* to his home matriline is given in Hamka, *Merantau ke Deli*, especially p. 47 and *passim*.

³³ It was obligatory for a *perantau* to bring what he earned back home, and it was done, often theatrically, mostly during *puasa* festivities each year. See Josselin de Jong, *Social Organization of Minangkabau*, p. 16. A delightful description is found in Radjab, *Semasa kecil dikampung*, pp. 172, 206.

³⁴ It is remarkable how much bitterness and how little sentimentality or nostalgia is involved in *perantau* memories of home. See, e.g., Radjab, *Semasa kecil dikampung*, p. 172; Hamka, *Merantau ke Deli*, pp. 107–8. The geographical definition of *rantau* is extremely vague; it is, I think, correctly described as a rite of passage, and the communal houses in the village where boys are supposed to spend their life after about 8 years of age are seen as a kind of *rantau*, too. Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927–1933)* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1971), p. 231; for a description of the essentially *rantau* atmosphere in such a communal men's house see Radjab, *Semasa kecil dikampung*, pp. 26–27.

³⁵ For the legend see Josselin de Jong, *Minangkabau*, p. 14. "In a sense," Abdullah says, "the royalty could be considered as the representative of the male-principle and the commoners of the female principle, both principles being integrated by a 'sacral marriage'." Taufik Abdullah, "Adat and Islam: An Examination of Conflict in Minangkabau," *Indonesia* 2 (October 1966): 4. See also Kathirithamby-Wells, in *Change and Continuity*, ed. Thomas and von Benda Beekman, pp. 121–30.

century, but it remained, throughout, a paradox, distinctly patrilineal and in a sense marginal: most respected men of Islam were wanderers in the land of Minangkabau with extremely loose ties to the matrilineal communities.³⁶ When the Dutch appeared, and when, at the turn of the present century, they were about to become the dominant power in the area, "typically those who responded most enthusiastically [among the Minangkabau] were the social and geographic groups traditionally associated with the *merantau* process."³⁷

Sjahrir's father came directly from the tradition of *rantau*. Mohammad Rasad gelar Maharadja Soetan was born on November 29, 1866³⁸ in the very heart of Minangkabau proper, in the Padang Highlands, in view of the holiest Minangkabau mountain, Marapi, in the *nagari* Kota Gedang, famous among all the Minangkabau communities for its gold- and silversmiths, for its tenacious adherence to matrilineal tradition, and especially for the number of its men who distinguished themselves in *rantau*.

Gold and silver, probably, gave Kota Gedang its pride and made it rich enough to switch easily to other businesses when late in the nineteenth century times changed.³⁹ "Goldsmiths," Josselin de Jong writes of Minangkabau tradition,

were neutral, and in the days of the Minangkabau kings they or their envoys could stop the battle at will by planting a royal yellow umbrella on the *tanah radjo* ("royal land," a veritable no-man's land).⁴⁰

The tenacity of Kota Gedang's adherence to matriliney was as famous as its jewelry. According to a report from the 1910s, the village enforced endogamy to such an extent that Kota Gedang was coming close to biological exhaustion.⁴¹ As late as in

³⁶ According to Abdullah, "Although the position of the religious teacher was not included in the official *adat* hierarchy, his influence went beyond that prescribed by *adat* for a *penghulu* (matrilineal extended family's head). In his own *nagari* a religious teacher could often command the loyalty of the people outside his own *suku* (matrilineal clan). In the supra-*nagari* sphere he stood outside the *nagari adat* communities." Taufik Abdullah, "Modernization in the Minangkabau World: West Sumatra in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century," in *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Claire Holt et al. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 202. Or by the same author: "The fascination with the definition of the world rather than the structure of the society, both in terms of its arrangement and its religious validity, was to remain one of the most dominating themes of the history of Islam in Minangkabau." Taufik Abdullah, "Islam, History and Social Change in Minangkabau," in *Change and Continuity*, ed. Thomas and Benda-Beekman, p. 149.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁸ As in Sjahrir's mother's case, there are several different spellings of the Sjahrir father's name. Again, this is the spelling as it stands on Sjahrir's marriage certificate; see *Secret Mail Report* 1937, no. 704. For the date of birth and sketchy genealogy see Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus*, p. 62.

³⁹ K. A. James, "De Negeri Kota Gedang," *Tijdschrift voor het Binnenlandsch Bestuur* 49 (1915): 189, 193-94; for the still lasting fame throughout Indonesia of Kota Gedang goldsmiths and silversmiths see Mochtar Lubis, *Het land onder de regenboog: De geschiedenis van Indonesië* (Alphen: Sijthoff, 1979), p. 183.

⁴⁰ Josselin de Jong, *Minangkabau*, p. 83; see also p. 60.

⁴¹ "The centuries-long traditional marriage-network, through which the desirable blood-exchange and selection are so much been restricted, had already left its mark. In general, the type of *Kotagedanger* is slender and tuberculosis is spreading." James, "De Negeri Kota Gedang," p. 189.

1920—and in a case that stirred all of Minangkabau—a Kota Gedang girl was “proclaimed dead” by her family and community because she dared to “marry outside.”⁴²

But Kota Gedang was most famous for its *rantau*. According to the *nagari* historian,

In Kota Gedang, the *perantau* life was pursued by almost all males. Village families had numerous slaves and retainers who tended to daily agricultural tasks, and the women provided whatever general supervision was needed over the fieldwork. Men were free to practice their *perantau* occupations unburdened by domestic obligations. . . . *Perantau* life was idealized and a stigma was often attached to a youth, even the heir to a *penghulu*-ship [extended matrilineal family head], who stayed home.⁴³

The power and wealth of gold and silver, it seems, first brought the men of Kota Gedang to *rantau*. Then came the business in coffee. During the 1820s, Kota Gedang had already “opted for the Dutch side,”⁴⁴ and during the following decades it expanded into the *rantau* of the new colonial epoch more effectively than any other *nagari* in the land. A story which became proverbial throughout Sumatra told of Kota Gedang children traveling each day along the steep path to the Dutch schools at Fort de Kock (Bukittinggi) on the opposite slopes of the valley.⁴⁵ Soon no prestigious “Dutch-colonial” school nearby was without a few Kota Gedang students. By the second decade of the twentieth century, young men from Kota Gedang were studying as far away in *rantau* as Batavia on Java, or even Holland.⁴⁶

Many of Kota Gedang’s men soon found employment in the new Dutch colonial justice and financial departments, in schools as teachers, and in topographical and medical services.⁴⁷ By general consent, one of the most advanced and promising of

⁴² *Adatrechtbundels XX*, 144, quoted in Josselin de Jong, *Minangkabau*, p. 67. The girl’s name was Daena, and she married a Javanese in Medan, where they both worked. Discussion about the affair can be found in *Soeara Kota Gedang* 5, 13 (October 1920); “Perkawinan Daena,” *ibid.*, p. 14; “S.M.A.A.L. Boengan Si Daena,” *ibid.*, 5, 17 (December 1920); “Bagaimana Pikirankoe tentangan Vrijheid perampoean berhoeboeng denga perkawinan Daena,” *ibid.*, 5, 3 (February 1921); “Penoeoep dari perkawinan Daena,” *ibid.*, 6, 4 (March 1921).

⁴³ Graves, *Minangkabau Response*, pp. 132–33.

⁴⁴ The fact of early pro-Dutch loyalties/affinities, according to Graves, “is charged by outsiders, and accepted by some Kota Gedang villagers themselves.” See *ibid.*, p. 133.

⁴⁵ For example, see James, “De Negeri Kota Gedang,” p. 185; Mohammad Hatta, *Memoir* (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1978), pp. 23–24; Roem, *Bunga Rampai*, vol. 2, p. 51.

⁴⁶ Of 160 pupils at the Fort de Kock government school ninety were from Kota Gedang; in the European Elementary Schools (ELS) designed primarily for Dutch children on the West Coast and elsewhere, sixty-nine Kota Gedang children studied, in the Dutch-Native Schools (HIS) fifty-three young Kotagedangers sat, twenty-six (!) girls among them; at the model colonial School for Training Native Doctors (STOVIA) founded in Batavia in 1902, fifteen Kota Gedang youths were enrolled in 1915, while one Kotagedanger studied in the even more prestigious Koningin Wilhelmina School also in Batavia. In 1910, the “Studiefonds Kota Gedang” were established and two boys from the *nagari* were sent to Holland to study at the Technische Hooze School in Delft. See James, “De Negeri Kota Gedang,” pp. 186–88, 193–94.

⁴⁷ By 1915, 165 Kotagedangers, at a time when the village had a few thousand people, were listed as well advanced and successful in *rantau*. Seventy-two were said to be proficient in Dutch, and seventy-nine worked outside the West Coast of Sumatra. Thirty-five worked as non-*adat* (i.e., colonial) bureaucrats of whom eighteen held positions in justice departments,

these *rantau* positions was that of *jaksa*, public prosecutor at the colonial civil and criminal court.⁴⁸

A *jaksa* served "with foreigners" and was therefore respected at home as a man opening the way for his kin into a wider world. To prevent the abuse of this access, the Dutch took care not to post any *jaksa* directly in his home area: thus *rantau* was opened still wider to a *jaksa*. At the same time, a *jaksa* was supposed to advise the Dutch on "traditional native law" and therefore should not be pushed too much by the Europeans into "non-native" preconceptions. A *jaksa* was not to be too close to either side. A *jaksa* was to be a sort of bridge. That was the profession of Sjahrir's father.

Sjahrir's father came from one of most ancient of Kota Gedang's matrilineages, the Datoek Dinagari branch of the *suku* (matrilineal clan) Kato. He paid endogamy its due by accepting a Kota Gedang girl as his first wife, with whom he had three daughters and three sons—Rohana, Ratna, Roeskan, Radena, Bajoeng, and Noerzamariz. Mohammad Rasad and his first wife never divorced. The wife and, after she died, the oldest daughter maintained the family's "house one may point to" in Kota Gedang throughout Mohammad Rasad's life.⁴⁹

In 1915, Mohammad Rasad was listed as one of ten *jaksa* who were natives of Kota Gedang.⁵⁰ It was a tradition for men in the family, evidently: Mohammad Rasad's grandfather, Datoek Dinagari, had been a *jaksa*; he had served as the first official of that rank in Fort de Kock in 1833-1868. Two of Datoek Dinagari's other sons, one of them Mohammad Rasad's father, were *jaksa*, too. Both Mohammad Rasad's father and grandfather, probably, had also married Natal women; both, like Mohammad Rasad, left their first wives, Kota Gedang women, in charge of their houses back home.⁵¹

Mohammad Rasad never served in or near Kota Gedang. His first post, probably, was in Padang Panjang, a Minangkabau town at a "junction point between the *darak* [the heartland] and the *rantau*."⁵² Then he moved deeper into the *rantau*, to Jambi, south-east of Minangkabau.⁵³ By that time he had already married three other "*rantau*" wives, all of whom he later divorced—in 1889, 1909, and 1914 respectively. After Jambi probably came Bonjol, where he met Sjahrir's mother, Siti Rabiah, then Padang Panjang, again, and in 1910 again Jambi. After another four years, in 1914, he moved still deeper into *rantau*—to the cosmopolitan city of Medan on East Sumatra's

thirty-one in finance departments, thirty-eight as teachers, six in topographical services and six in medical services. Ibid.

⁴⁸ On *jaksa* in the Netherlands East Indies see, e.g., Daniel S. Lev, "Judicial Institutions and Legal Culture in Indonesia," in *Culture and Politics*, ed. Holt et al., pp. 266, 276, 317.

⁴⁹ Alamsjah, *10 orang besar*, p. 137; interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 12, 1982; Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus*, pp. 62-63.

⁵⁰ James, "De Negeri Kota Gedang," p. 193.

⁵¹ Datoek Dinagari's other son who was a *jaksa* was the father of another important Kota-gedanger and the grandfather of the famous Indonesian politician Hadji Agoes Salim. Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 12, 1982; interview with Mrs. Violet Sjahroezah, Agoes Salim's daughter, Jakarta, March 5, 1982.

⁵² Here, the goods changed hands from *rantau* caravans to the merchants of the Minangkabau heartland. See Muhammad Saleh's autobiography (1850-1914), quoted in Tsuyoshi Kato, "Rantau Pariaman: The World of Minangkabau Coastal Merchants in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Asian Studies* 39, 4 (1980): 743, n. 37.

⁵³ Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus*, p. 62.



The Pass between Kota Gedang and Bukittinggi
(KITLV, Afd. Documentatie Geschiedenis Indonesië [DGI]) #11.235

coast. There, he retired in 1924, served for a short time as a legal adviser to the Sultan of Deli, and died in 1929.⁵⁴

Sjahrir's father never cut his ties to Kota Gedang. In 1922, the year his last *rantau* wife, Sjahrir's mother, died (Mohammad Rasad's first Kota Gedang wife had died in 1897), fifty-six year old Mohammad Rasad—clearly to accommodate his village's custom—was married one more time in Kota Gedang, and again to a Kota Gedang woman.⁵⁵ He was listed, throughout, in the village journal *Soeara Kota Gedang*, "The Voice of Kota Gedang," as a distinguished member of the community. His contributions to the village were carefully noted in the journal and during the village's public meetings. His debt to the matrilineal community—the debt of shame—was mentioned, in exact figures, as often, and as prominently as his contributions.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 12, 1982; interview with M. A. Djoehana, Prague, August 17, 1983. A different sequence and some different places where Mohammad Rasad stayed—Alahan Panjang, Simpang Tonang, Rao, Simpang Tonang Taloe Taloe, Padang, and Toengkel—are listed in "Kartini Ketjil dari Minangkabau: Sitti Rohana binti Maharadja Soetan dari Kota Gedang sebagai perintis djalan bagi poetri di Minangkabau," *Pandji Islam* 12 (May 19, 1941): 9054.

⁵⁵ Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus*, p. 62, gives her name as Kiam.

⁵⁶ For example, see *Soeara Kota Gedang* 4, 7 (April 1919), on Mohammad Rasad promising 100 fl. for the fiscal year 1920; *ibid.*, 4, 13 (July 1919) congratulating the *nagari* on Idul Fitri celebration; *ibid.*, 6, 9 (July 1921) and *ibid.*, 6, 13 (November 1921), where he is listed as paying only 40 fl. between 1919 and 1921. A property dispute between Mohammad Rasad and Kota Gedang over a horse, which dragged on for four years between 1904 and 1908, is described in "Kartini Ketjil dari Minangkabau," p. 9055.

Medan was where the photograph I saw at Sjahrir's house was taken. Mohammad Rasad was already a *hoofddjaksa*, "head *jaksa*," by then. He was at the peak of his career. He had gotten as far as any man of his *nagari* could hope to, and he commanded adequate respect for his success. But, through the same process, an unpaid debt to his matriliney had accumulated. In the photograph, he is a proud old Minangkabau in a Moslem cap and European clothes. A Star of the Knight of the Oranje Nassau Order is pinned on his jacket. His grandson told me that the occasion for the photograph was the Dutch Queen's birthday.⁵⁷

3. SJAHRIR'S SISTER AND THE CULTURE OF NATIONHOOD

History seemed to accelerate in Minangkabau towards the beginning of the twentieth century. Western economic penetration into the colony became highly visible.⁵⁸ After half a century of enterprising optimism, double-faced liberalism, and hesitant philanthropy in Dutch colonial policy in the East,⁵⁹ a new Dutch Christian-Social Democrat coalition in 1901 proclaimed an "ethical course" as the new official guidelines. The "ethical policy" would "provide the Netherlands with a proper moralistic foundation [and] inspire Hollanders towards a more glorious colonial future," and, mostly through the spreading of Western education, "also ope[n] the way for Indonesians to share in the glory of their own future."⁶⁰

In the words of *The History of Minangkabau*, "the hammers of modernization were beating upon almost every place in the social organism, upon each of its veins and nerves."⁶¹ In 1908, a year before Sjahrir was born, scattered rural uprisings took place in Minangkabau against the efforts by the Dutch administration to tighten its control over the region through the introduction of a new system of taxation.⁶² According to one view, the uprisings were a

nostalgic struggle . . . directed against the unintelligible outside forces that increasingly dominated people's lives. . . . [The uprisings] ended in despair.⁶³

⁵⁷ This, again, is a picture from the family album of Sjahrir that I was shown by Mrs. Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir in Jakarta on March 5, 1982; interview with M. A. Djoehana, Prague, August 17, 1983. Mohammad Rasad was awarded the medal in 1923; Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus, Srikandi Indonesia*, p. 62. According to "Kartini Ketjil dari Minangkabau," p. 9054, Mohammad Rasad got, during his service, "five medals, small and big, gold and silver ones."

⁵⁸ The best survey of the colony's economic development of that time is still J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), pp. 174-427.

⁵⁹ On the 1850s and 1860s as the "pre-history" of the "ethical course" see M. K. (D. M. G. Koch), "Prof. Boeke over de ethische richting in de Nederlandsch-Indische politiek," *Kritiek en Opbouw* (February 16, 1940), pp. 20, 36.

⁶⁰ Robert Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (The Hague: van Hoeve, 1970), p. 9.

⁶¹ M. D. Mansoer et al., *Sedjarah Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1970), p. 173

⁶² On that act as a "break with tradition" see, e.g., Bouman, *Enige Beschouwingen*, pp. 18-19. In 1914, the provincial administration was reorganized; a merit civil service was installed—the *demandang*, who, much more than his predecessors, distanced himself more from the matriliney and got closer to the Dutch administration nexus. Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, p. 23.

⁶³ Abdullah, "Modernization in the Minangkabau World," pp. 209-10.

"Despair" may be the correct word, but only if what is meant is that the Minangkabau became aware (in Freud's terms) of the "intolerable burden of culture." This despair did not incapacitate the Minangkabau in responding to the outer world in their particular and genuine way.

Minangkabau *rantau*, even after 1908, functioned as a buffer, softening the Dutch impact on the Minangkabau heartland and on the heart of Minangkabau tradition. *Rantau* itself kept its peculiar character as a culture of the fringes—a place where the culture of Minangkabau proper, as well as the culture of the actual Holland or the actual West beyond the seas, resounded only in a muffled way. Not only the Minangkabau *perantau* but also some of the Dutch, who had wandered so far, absorbed, and accepted, many of the perceptions of the culture in-between.

"Association" was the proclaimed official ideal of the new "ethical course" in the East Indies. For the mainstream ethical system proponents it was an ideal of *gelijkstelling*, "the equalization," of the best of the "natives" with the Dutch,⁶⁴ the building up of a group of "brown Hollanders," who would speak "almost faultless Dutch." For other proponents of the "ethical policy," however, it seemed too simply like a conquest. These Dutchmen, for whatever reason, were repelled by the "soul-of-clay . . . golden-calf . . . ultramaterialistic" society of Europeans in the colony.⁶⁵ They saw themselves and their race, in relation to the "natives," as more complex: they were "first, exploiters, second, guardians, and third, partners in distress."⁶⁶

Their views may have been religious,⁶⁷ or socialist,⁶⁸ but they almost invariably also had a distinctly romantic flavor.⁶⁹ These Dutchmen's intentions were often lofty and thus, sooner or later in the colony, proved to be unrealistic. More than others, these proponents of the "ethical policy" were prone to venture too far from the Dutch colonial mainstream and, thus, were "bound for exile."⁷⁰ Because the colonial

⁶⁴ "Indonesians who had attained a Western education and maintained a basically Western life style could apply for classification as Europeans." C. L. M. Penders' note to Hatta, *Indonesian Patriot*, p. 58.

⁶⁵ Henri Borel, "Indië van de Europeanen," quoted in Robert Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel; wat Nederlandse schrijvers en dichters over Indonesië hebben geschreven, vanaf de eerste jaren der Compagnie tot op heden* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1972), pp. 321–22.

⁶⁶ J. H. W. Veenstra, quoted in E. B. Locher-Scholten, "Kritiek en Opbouw (1938–1942). Een rode splinter," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 89, 2 (1976): 215.

⁶⁷ On the connection between the associationist ideas among the Dutch and the Theosophical movement see, e.g., Van Niel, *The Emergence*, p. 129.

⁶⁸ Theodore van Deventer, a father of the ethical course was, by his own confession, a man of "socialistic leaning" (letter to parents in 1886, quoted in Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, p. 319); the co-sponsor of the ethical policy was H. H. van Kol, at the same time "the colonial authority for the Social Democratic Party" (Van Niel, *The Emergence*, p. 9). J. E. Stokvis, another leading socialist in the colony was called, and not without reason, "*ethicus*"; see D. M. G. Koch, *Batig Slot* (Amsterdam: De Brug, 1960), p. 101. Augusta de Wit, a foremost "ethical" writer and one on rather the romantic if not the sentimental side of it, was from 1916 a member of the social democratic party, too, and, according to Nieuwenhuys, "her entering the party was due less to her political insight than to her ethical attitude" (Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, pp. 327–28).

⁶⁹ Beekman writes suggestively on the strong trend of romanticism among Dutch colonial authors in general. E. M. Beekman, "Dutch Colonial Literature: Romanticism in the Tropics," *Indonesia* 34 (October 1982), especially pp. 17–39.

⁷⁰ The term is used in the context of British in India, where comparable streams among colonials might be detected; quoted in John A. McClure, *Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 17.

relationship was an injustice, one of them said, every European had "to work so as to make himself superfluous as rapidly as possible."⁷¹ These proponents of the "ethical policy" were characterized by their "strange-ness from home," and it was fitting when a well-known "ethical" novel of the period was sub-titled "*Indrukken van een zwerveling*," "impressions of a wanderer."⁷²

There were very few businessmen among this vanguard group. There were some government officials. But the group was mainly composed of journalists, scholars, and teachers. They often got very deep indeed into the body of the indigenous society and culture. They seemed able to cross the line between "colonial" and "native," but they were scattered in the process. Because they thought of their role in terms of affinity, they would be successful, they believed, if they could articulate this affinity to the indigenous people, and to themselves. Their conquest, to a very large extent, proceeded by way of translation.

A process of dissident proponents of the "ethical policy" going astray could be detected in many parts of the colony. Minangkabau perceptions and the tradition of *rantau*, however, seemed to be exceptionally effective in fostering the phenomenon. The spread of Dutch-style and Dutch-language schools in Minangkabau at the time had no equal anywhere else in the colony.⁷³ Schools became a striking new feature of the Minangkabau landscape. They were built—the buildings in "classical style," in "colonial style," in "traditional" Minangkabau style are still there—mostly, in the places reached first by the Dutch roads and railways, on the fringes of the Minangkabau world.

The "ethical"-Minangkabau "translation" emerged at the turn of century and soon became a new language of *rantau*. *Perantau* and *zwervelingen*, Minangkabau and Dutch wanderers, came together in an ambiguous mixture of cultures, or a new culture, perhaps. A culture off the mainstream, bound for exile, and loose.

In that translation the Minangkabau *perantau* became "*dynamisch*," "dynamic." They moved, in the "ethical" image, forcefully around their culture's traditional matrilineal nucleus which was translated and imagined as *statisch*. *Intellect met energie*, "intellect with energy," *nuchterheid*, "matter-of-factness," *wilskracht*, "will-power"—these were the terms which the Dutch vanguard proponents of the "ethical policy" liked to use in describing themselves, and into which they also translated "the best of Minangkabau."⁷⁴ A Dutch author describing the *rantau* qualities of Kota Gedang exclaimed in 1915: "Yes, the pulse of the evolution in the East is unmistakably felt here."⁷⁵

⁷¹ J. E. Stokvis in *De Locomotief* (March 12, 1923), quoted in Dahm, *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence*, p. 47.

⁷² This was the subtitle of a book by Marie C. van Zeggelen published in 1910 in Amsterdam by Scheltema and Holkema, *De Hollandsche vrouw in Indië: Indrukken van een zwerveling*.

⁷³ In 1912 there were twenty-three "ethical" schools in Padang alone, with a total of twelve-hundred pupils, compared with only fifty-three such schools for the whole island of Java plus Madura. XY, "Het Inlandsch Onderwijs te Sumatra's Westkust," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* II, 1 (1913), p. 398; quoted in Graves, *Minangkabau Response*, p. 141.

⁷⁴ James, "De Negeri Kota Gedang," pp. 187–92. Even authorities who were not exactly charmed by Minangkabau style, real or imagined—like Willinck, for instance, one of the founding fathers of modern Dutch colonial scholarship—believed that "the laws of the (Minangkabau) people are . . . the most remarkable of all the Archipelago." Willinck, *Het Rechtsleven*, p. 1.

⁷⁵ James, "De Negeri Kota Gedang," p. 187.

The looseness of the Minangkabau cultural nexus was highly praised—and translated as *democratie*. According to an influential Dutch study of the time,

It is sufficiently well-known that in Minangkabau-Malay society there is no place for aristocracy. *Tagak samo tinggi, doedoek samo rendah* ("raise to the same height, fall to the same depth") is one of the foremost principles on which the society is based, and each matter is naturally and under all circumstances handled according to this principle.⁷⁶

"*Moepakat*," a Minangkabau term for decision making in a *nagari* village community, was "translated" as "*referendum*." The Minangkabau world as a whole became, in this translation, "a federation of small native republics."⁷⁷

At the turn of the century, after decades of bloody struggle and politics, the "Dutch East Indies" emerged, at least in Dutch eyes, as one, compact colony covering the whole Indonesian archipelago. In the perspective of this new whole, Minangkabau and the island of Sumatra gained the transparent quality of the fringes. Minangkabau became a very visible and often representative part of the *buitengewesten*, the "outer regions," as against "central" Java.

Set against the Dutch image of Java—as the land of rice fields, palaces, and temples, the purest manifestation of the ancient "Orient"—the "outer regions" represented "newness."⁷⁸ Mohammad Hatta heard it explained early in the twentieth century by his Dutch teacher: "the Sumatrans and the Javanese are different—the Javanese are servile, humble and patient, while the Sumatrans are courageous."⁷⁹ And also: "The Moluccas [the spice islands where the Dutch appeared first, in the seventeenth century] are the past, Java is the present and Sumatra is the future."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ "Maleische democratie en padangsche toestanden," *Sumatra Bode* (March 27 and 28, 1907), p. 115. Ten years later, the statement was almost verbatim repeated ("*zeer republikeinsche*," "very republican," "*een federatie van dorpsbonden*," "a federation of village unions," etc.) in the most influential book of the time and of Dutch colonialism perhaps. Van Vollenhoven, *Het Adatrecht*, pp. 256 ff. The "*Tagak samo tinggi*" quote with the same "democratic" interpretation appears also in another classic of the time, L. C. Westenenk, *Acht dagen in de Padangsche bovenlanden* (Batavia: Javasche Boekhandel, 1909), p. 43. See also the "translation" reappearing in various forms in standard Dutch studies such as B. J. Haga, *Indonesische en Indische democratie* (The Hague: Den Ster, 1924), esp. pp. 24 ff; J. C. van Eerde, *Koloniale volkenkunde* (1914. Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1926), esp. pp. 123–24, 159.

⁷⁷ Van Eerde, *Koloniale volkenkunde*, pp. 116, 121. Other Dutch scholarly treatises of the time, depicted the Sumatrans' "*republikeinsche vrijheidszin*," "republican sense of freedom," and "*dorpsrepublikanisme*," "village republicanism." C. Lekkerkerker, *Land en volk van Sumatra* (Leiden: Brill, 1916), p. 205.

⁷⁸ Even a man rather biased against the Minangkabau, G. D. Willinck, wrote in his classical study, in many ways a standard for Dutch scholarship of the whole prewar period, about the "autocratic rule of princes in Java," and the "image of Buddha with closed eyes," having "no spirit of initiative," and contrasting it with the Minangkabau, where there was a "completely different spirit: a great concern with the future . . . a great amount of contradiction and individual as well as social energy." G. D. Willinck, *De Indiën en de Nieuwe Grondwet: Proeve tot vaststelling van normale staatsrechtelijke verhoudingen tusschen het moederland en de koloniën* (Zutphen: van Belkum, 1910), pp. 23–24.

⁷⁹ Mohammad Hatta, *Bung Hatta Antwoordt* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1979), p. 113.

⁸⁰ See Hatta, *Indonesian Patriot*, pp. 33–34. "At that time," Hatta remembered, "I did not realize that this was the motto of the Dutch colonialism which was then poised for the full scale exploitation of Sumatra . . . and I interpreted the motto 'Sumatra is the future' to mean that the future 'golden period' of Sumatra was very much in the hands of the Sumatra youth." See also

Statistics show that the Minangkabau actively responded to this effort at "ethical" translation.

The demand to learn Dutch became so great among the Minangkabau that anyone with the slightest knowledge of the language would establish a backyard school giving crash courses to aspiring civil servants and professionals.⁸¹

"Almost every day" petitions from Minangkabau citizens were published asking for more Dutch-style schools.⁸²

This did not mean that Dutch suddenly and solidly became "the inner language"⁸³ of the "modern" Minangkabau. The language of the new *rantau* had to be, like the *rantau* culture itself, a language in-between. For the Minangkabau there had been a long-established vehicle of communication in *rantau*—a simplified Malay used by native and foreign merchants and travelers throughout the archipelago. As colonialism progressed, the Dutch used a modified version of this "bazaar Malay," and established a "*dienst*," or "service" language for the lower levels of the colonial administration and business. It was the mutilated language, now, that was to express the new transition. The merchant and civil-servant Malay was pushed toward becoming a cultural vehicle. Clumsy, and crowded with as "yet" untranslatable Minangkabau and Dutch phrases, it served the purpose well.

De Oostkust, "The East Coast," a journal of the Djaksa Bond, "Jaksa Union," to which Sjahrir's father in all probability subscribed, was a perfect example of a text in the trembling "service" Malay.⁸⁴ *Soenting Melajoe*, "The Malay Ornament," a journal published at the same time by the *jaksa*'s daughter and Sjahrir's half-sister, Siti

Mrázek, "Tan Malaka A Political Personality's Structure of Experience," pp. 34–35 on the concept being widespread in Minangkabau. Also Lekkerkerker, *Land en volk van Sumatra*, pp. I, VII: "Among the progressive great islands of the Dutch Indies, Sumatra stands in the forefront. It is the island of the upcoming future." *Statisch*, "static, unmoving, passive," became, in the large body of the Dutch journalistic, scholarly, and political literature, a code for the Javanese nucleus of the colony. When a prominent Dutch "ethical" writer, G. A. J. Hazeu, in 1918, reviewed a new Minangkabau youth journal, he used exactly the same vocabulary as another Dutch author, three years before, when describing *rantau* qualities of *nagari* Kota Gedang. The journal, Hazeu said, is "in general written in a very matter-of-fact [*nuchter*] and down-to-earth way," in "a healthy critical spirit. . . . The young men and women who can discuss the evolution of their society in such a way, are, in their spiritual freedom, in no way inferior to their Western contemporaries." Then the Dutchman turned to another "native" journal, published this time by Javanese youths. This he found "quite the opposite" to the Sumatran paper, full of "sorely deep speculations," and "occasionally wholly unreadable." See G. A. J. Hazeu, Adviser for Native Affairs, commenting on Jong Java and Jong-Sumatranen Bond journals in 1918; quoted in Bouman, *Enige Beschouwingen*, pp. 60–61.

⁸¹ Graves, *Minangkabau Response*, p. 140.

⁸² "Director of Education to Governor General, March 17, 1913" in *Verbaal*, May 21, 1913, No. 50.

⁸³ The term is from Benedict Anderson, "The Language of Indonesian Politics," *Indonesia* 1 (April 1966): 102.

⁸⁴ It was a two-dimensional, administration-business language; see, e.g., "Verslag dari keadaan dan perjalanannya," the "Union's activity report," read, at the Union meeting first in Malay and then translated by the chairman of the Bond into Dutch, as the journal put it: "*dengan setjara divertaling oleh Voorzitter kita.*" *De Oostkust* 9, 9 (July 9, 1927): 190.

Rohana Kudus, was already being written very much in the still more trembling language of the new *rantau*.

Even during her lifetime, Siti Rohana became a celebrated woman, with epithets applied to her like "the first woman educator in Minangkabau" or even the "Kartini of Minangkabau," being thus compared with Raden Ajeng Kartini (1879-1904) who in turn was called "the mother of Indonesian nationalism." Rohana was born to Mohammad Rasad and his first Kota Gedang wife in September 1884. She had no formal education, and her father was her teacher.⁸⁵ When her mother died and her father married again, Rohana returned to the family's house in Kota Gedang.

She is remembered as having designed the costumes for a theater she organized in the village—mostly Minangkabau legends reportedly were performed. Rohana founded, in the first years after her return to Kota Gedang, a small girls' school, and in 1911, the village's Keradjinan Kaum Ibu Setia, "Association of Industrious Mothers." At the same time, she started and helped to build up the Vereenigingen Studiefonds, a community scholarship fund for sending Kota Gedang youngsters to schools in the wider world.⁸⁶

She was, for a woman, remarkably exposed to the *rantau*. Some time in 1911, she approached Datoek Soetan Maharadja, an editor of *Oetoesan Melajoe*, "The Malay Messenger," and asked him to give her a women's page in his paper. Datoek Soetan Maharadja, called sometimes the "father of Minangkabau journalism," was a prominent voice of the new translation. "*Kemadjuan* [progress]," he wrote, "should be understood not as an imitation of the outside world but rather as the unfolding of ideals inherent in Minangkabau *adat*."⁸⁷ Maharadja's first journal, *Insoelinde*, "The Archipelago," founded in 1901 and written in Malay, was filled with Dutch words like *dynamisch*, *nuchterheid*, *wilskracht*, or their Malay and respectively Malay-Minangkabau "equivalents." *Adat*, the Minangkabau ethos—as Maharadja, in affinity with the vanguard proponents of the "ethical" policy, understood it—was "democratic," and the traditional Minangkabau mechanism for decision making, *moepakat*, proved it.⁸⁸

Rohana got the women's page in *Oetoesan Melajoe*. The next year, 1912, again with the help of Datoek Soetan Maharadja she became an editor of *Soenting Melajoe*, the first women's magazine in Malay.⁸⁹

Although a passionate voice for women, Rohana never lost contact with the world of fatherhood. According to one report, it was Rohana's father who introduced her to Datoek Soetan Maharadja. Some surviving letters, all written in Malay, suggest that Rohana and her father always maintained a warm relationship. She often signed her name in *Soenting Melajoe*, as "*Rohana Kuddus binti* [daughter of] *Maharadja Soetan*."

⁸⁵ Interview with Rohana published in *Api Pantjasila*, May 22, 1962.

⁸⁶ For details on Rohana's life see especially Tamar Djaja, "Sitti Rohana," *Buku Kita* 1 (September 9, 1955): 387-90; and I. Djumhur and H. Danasupata, *Buku pelajaran sejarah pendidikan* (Bandung: Tjerdas, 1956), pp. 128-29. Rohana's interview in *Api Pantjasila*, May 22, 1962; Claudine Salmon, "Presse féminine ou féministe?" *Archipel* 13 (1977): 164, 166; "Kartini Ketjil dari Minangkabau."

⁸⁷ Datoek Soetan Maharadja quoted in Abdullah "Modernization in the Minangkabau World," p. 222.

⁸⁸ The quotations are from 1917 and 1915 respectively. *Ibid.*, pp. 222, 235.

⁸⁹ Rohana was named as a member of the board already in volume 1, no. 2 (July 1912).

It was, most probably, also through her father that she got to know her Dutch friends. Professor Ph. E. van Ronkel was one of them, a former teacher at the Dutch Gymnasium in Batavia, Java, who served in Minangkabau at one time. The other was L. C. Westenenk, the Dutch assistant resident in Minangkabau and a prominent "ethical" authority on Minangkabau.

Rohana and her students made "traditional Minangkabau" *sarong* and *selendang*, shawls or stoles, and "Europeans often came to Kota Gedang just to buy one of Rohana's products as souvenirs"; her merchandise went "as far as Paris, to *Co. Au Bon Marche*, *Maison Aristide*."⁹⁰ In 1913, Mr. Westenenk and his wife invited Rohana to Holland to participate in a woman's exhibition in Brussels. She did not go because her in-laws did not give her permission.⁹¹

Rohana became, at one time in her life, a Singer sewing-machine representative, "*agen Singer*," in Kota Gedang.⁹² She composed *syair*, poems in a traditional Minangkabau style, on themes such as *Kemajuan*, "Progress,"⁹³ and *Konigin Wilhelmina*, "The Dutch Queen."⁹⁴ She wrote about "progressive women's fashion,"⁹⁵ and once listed the "top ten" most beautiful women in history—Helena, Cleopatra, Scheherazade, Dante's Beatrice, Elizabeth of England, Wootvilliel?, Maria of Scotland, Nelli Gwinne [Nell Gwynn?], Madame Pompadoure, and Mrs. Siddone [Sarah Siddons?].⁹⁶

Besides her many other engagements, one report says that Siti Rohana Kudus bought a dispensary in Medan in 1915 as an additional source of income and as a way to disseminate her views further. This information is not entirely clear, and some other sources deny it.⁹⁷ Certainly, however, Rohana moved to Medan in 1920 and stayed there for four years, before she moved to Padang and then back to Kota Gedang. She remained in Medan, as everywhere, a highly visible and active personage. She served, together with another well-known Sumatran journalist, Parade Harahap, as editor of a local magazine *Perempoean Bergerak*, "An Active Woman," and she also taught at a Medan school called *Dharma*, "Duty."⁹⁸ Between 1920 and 1924, Rohana must have seen almost daily her father's "little family," also living in Medan. This is an important fact, because these years in Medan, were the crucial years of Sjahrir's early life.

⁹⁰ Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus*, p. 54.

⁹¹ On Rohana's planned trip there is an article in *Soenting Melajoe* 2, 12 (March 13, 1913); on her not going she wrote a letter to her father ("Rohana is crying"); the letter is reproduced in Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus*.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 47; photograph is *ibid.*

⁹³ *Soenting Melajoe*, 2, 22 (May 23, 1913). For Rohana on "*kemadjuan*" see also *ibid.*, 1, 30 (August 30, 1912).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 30 (August 30, 1912).

⁹⁵ *Soeara Kaoem Iboe*, 1, 3 (September 21, 1924).

⁹⁶ *Soenting Melajoe*; n.d., quoted in Tamar Djaja, *Rohana Kudus*, p. 56.

⁹⁷ On Rohana Kudus' shop in Medan see James, "De Negeri Kota Gedang," p. 190; Hazil Tanzil, Sjahrir's relative and a man, as a rule, very knowledgeable about Sjahrir's family, doubted the information. Interview with Hazil Tanzil, Jakarta, March 8, 1962.

⁹⁸ Salmon, "Presse féminine," p. 176.

4. MEDAN AND THE FIRST PERIOD OF SJAHIR'S LIFE

Possibly, Sjahrir did not retain even the vaguest memory of his birthplace, Padang Panjang. Sjahrir was born there on March 5, 1909, in the *jaksa's* house on Air Matakucing, the main street of the town. A Moslem school, a *surau*, stood next to the house, and the street led down to nearby Matakucing Lake. Besides Sjahrir's parents, an older brother and a sister also lived in the house—Soetan Noer Alamsjah, born in 1900 in Bonjol, and Siti Sjahrizal, born in Padang Panjang two years before Sjahrir.

Only a year after Sjahrir was born, the family moved to Jambi. Sjahrir's other two brothers were born there—Soetan Sjahsam in 1911 and Mahroeza in 1913. Sjahrir grew to the age of four in Jambi. He quickly learned, as his older sister remembers, to walk, to talk, even to read a little, because she often took him with her when she went to school.⁹⁹ If Sjahrir remembered anything from Jambi—the “native” civil servants' quarters where his family lived, the occasional European dressed all in white, the rubber plantations around the town, the wooded hills on the horizon—it would easily have merged in his mind with Medan, which came next.

As far as we know, the family lived on Gang Mantri, in a part of Medan called Kampong Aur.¹⁰⁰ They were not rich, but they were well-off enough to send the most intelligent of their children to “modern” schools.¹⁰¹ Sjahrir is said to have been “the cleverest of the boys.” In the tests given regularly by their father, Sjahrir usually got nine to ten points out of a possible ten. Only for handwriting did he rarely get more than five points.¹⁰²

In 1915, at the age of six, Sjahrir enrolled in the best school available in Medan—the Europeesche Lagere School, ELS, the “European Lower School.”¹⁰³ At the time, only 4,631 “natives,” in contrast to 26,817 European children, attended Western-style primary schools in the colony of 60 million.¹⁰⁴ History classes in Sjahrir's school as

⁹⁹ Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 7, 1982.

¹⁰⁰ Letter to the author by H. Mohammad Said, Medan, dated December 28, 1983. Compare with *Medan Area Mengisi Proklamasi* (Medan: Biro Sedjarah Prisma, Badan Musjawarah Pejuang Republik Indonesia, 1976), p. 752, n. 55.

¹⁰¹ A *Hoofddjaksa* in 1927 got on average between fl.300 and fl.450 per month which was high on the official native pay scale; the monthly wage for an *assistent wedana* of the police, a sub-district level official, was between fl.175 and fl.250. See “Geschiedt dan ungeschiedt,” *De Oostkust* 9, 9 (1927): 184–86; a new Ford car in Medan in the spring of 1926 cost fl.1,740, with a starter fl.200 extra; *Sumatra* 3, 11 (March 13, 1926). On the standard of living of another Minangkabau *hoofddjaksa* at that time, comparable to Sjahrir's father, see Salim, *Limabelas tahun Digul*, pp. 510–11.

¹⁰² Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 7, 1982.

¹⁰³ H. Rosihan Anwar, ed., *Mengenang Sjahrir* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1980), p. 18; Subadio Sastro-satomo, “Sjahrir: Suatu perspektif manusia dan sejarah,” in *ibid.*, p. xl. There were two ELS in Medan at that time, see S. van der Plas, *Memorie van Overgave*, Sumatra's East Coast (July 2, 1917), pp. 119–22.

¹⁰⁴ The data are for HIS and ELS schools. *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* 8 vols. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1917–1939), 3: 94; on the colony's population being about 60 million at that time see *ibid.*, 1: 299. Just a year before Sjahrir entered ELS, in the colony a new system was invented of Hollands-Indische Scholen, HIS, seven-year primary schools with Dutch as the medium of instruction to relieve the Indonesians' pressure for Western education and to avoid lowering the ELS's standards by popularizing it too much. There were four HIS in Medan by 1916. Van der Plas, *Memorie van Overgave*, pp. 119–22; also Simon L. van der Wal, ed., *Het Onderwijsbeleid in Nederlandsch-Indië, 1900–1942* (Groningen: Wolters, 1963), docs. no. 27–29, 51, pp. 244–57; also Penders in Ali Sastroamijoyo, *Milestones on My Journey* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), p. 385, n. 8. The best studies available on the subject of

well as in all the others, began with "One day in 1596, four [Dutch] ships from afar appeared before the town of Bantam."¹⁰⁵ The pupils sang, on festive occasions, "Because of the Dutch blood in our veins, our song rises so high."¹⁰⁶ They were expected to wear trousers and jackets,¹⁰⁷ to speak Dutch among themselves in class and to their teachers; they switched to Malay, whenever they were among the "natives" or the Dutch in a mixed crowd.¹⁰⁸ Their textbooks were exemplary examples of "ethical" translations:¹⁰⁹ ABC books about "Isa the tea-plantation worker," for instance, a native girl too timid to complain when overlooked on a pay day ("you must be more daring," a white master, who has discovered the error, urges her);¹¹⁰ more advanced textbooks, with chapters on Multatuli, a Dutchman of the late nineteenth century who risked his official career to help the "natives"; textbooks with portraits of C.Th. van Deventer, the "father of the ethical system."¹¹¹

The Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs, "MULO," "The Advanced Elementary School," to which Sjahrir graduated in 1923 and where he spent the next three years, was again the best school in Medan. It was more "ethical" than the *Hogere Burgerschool* "HBS," "Citizen's High School," a possible alternative which existed in some of the other cities in the colony.¹¹² While the HBS was virtually identical with schools of the same name in Holland, MULO was "designed for the Indies." Any subject of "no use in the Indies" was supposed to be replaced by "topics relevant to the culture of the Indies."¹¹³

the Indies colonial education in general are still I. J. Brugmans, *Geschiedenis van het onderwijs in Nederlands-Indië* (Groningen: Wolters, 1938), and C. L. M. Penders, "Colonial Education Policy and the Indonesian Response, 1900–1942" (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1968).

¹⁰⁵ The "main historical personalities" (*hoofdpersonen*), in the textbooks, were listed as follows: "(1) Columbus; (2) Cortez; (3) Charles V; (4) Martin Luther; (5) Calvin; (6) Ignatius de Loyola; (7) Willem of Orange; (8) J. P. Coen; etc. See F. van Rijsens, *Hoofdpersonen uit de Algemeen Geschiedenis*, vol. 1 (12th edition; Groningen and Batavia: Wolters, 1928), p. 26; for the "1596" beginning see, e.g., G. van Duinen, *Geschiedkundig leesboek voor de lagere school in N.I.* (Batavia: De Veurnadig, 1919), p. 8 (the Dutch ships also appear on the textbook's cover).

¹⁰⁶ Roem, *Bunga Rampai*, vol. 2, pp. 97–98.

¹⁰⁷ M. Manggis Dt. Radjo Panghoeloe Rasjid, "Bung Hatta: Sepanjang yang saya kenal sampai menjelang remaja" in *Muhammad Hatta: Pribadinja dalam kemanusiaan*, ed. Meutia Farida Swasono (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1980), p. 209.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Beb Vuyk and her husband, Leonen, June 8, 1983. Beb Vuyk, a Eurasian, attended that kind of school in the Indies at the same time as Sjahrir did.

¹⁰⁹ Most of the textbooks were printed in Holland by J. B. Wolters: Groningen, The Hague, but were specifically designed for the colony.

¹¹⁰ A. M. de Man-Sonius and M. Mendel, *In en buiten Zonneland. Een drietel leesboeken*, vol. 2 (Groningen, The Hague: Wolters, 1925), pp. 5–9.

¹¹¹ A. M. de Man-Sonius, A. J. Schweitzer and J. van der Wateren, *Nieuw leesboek. Bloemlezing ten dienste van voortgezet lager en middelbaar onderwijs in N.O.I.* (Weltevreden: Visser, 1922), pp. 40–51, 59–67; A. J. Eijkman and Dr. F. W. Stapel, *Beknopt Leerboek der Geschiedenis van N.I.* (1919. Groningen, Batavia: Wolters, 1937), p. 86.

¹¹² A HBS was not opened in Medan until 1928. C. J. van Kempen, *Memorie van Overgave, Sumatra's East Coast* (September 10, 1928), p. 292; also *Hoogere Burgerschool met 5 jarigen Cursus en Algemeene Middelbare School . . . te Medan: Programma van de Cursus 1929–1930. Tweede Schooljaar* (Medan: Deli Courant, 1930), pp. 43–48.

¹¹³ From the correspondence on the subject exchanged between the Minister for Colonies, the Directorate for Education and the Adviser for Native Affairs between 1913 and 1917; see van der Wal, ed., *Het Onderwijsbeleid*, docs. no. 51, 54, 55, 56, pp. 244–57; see also *ibid.*, *bijlage*, p.



Hotel de Boer
KITLV (DGI) #19.744

We still know little about Sjahrir at the time. He played soccer. He was a fast center-forward, fast as lighting, a friend says.¹¹⁴ He played the violin. A lady who met him later says he played horribly, but the young Sjahrir seems to have been good enough at the time to play fox-trots, for a little pocket money, at Medan's fashionable, *echt* colonial, and, except for servants and musicians, all-white *Hotel de Boer*, "Farmer's Hotel."¹¹⁵

698. See also a review of the MULO textbook of history in *Mededelingen van de Vereeniging van leerkrachten bij het M.U.L.O. in N.O.I.* 1, 9 (May 12, 1928).

¹¹⁴ Interview with Burhanuddin, Jakarta, March 6, 1982. According to a report on the Minangkabau Association in Medan, *Minangkabau Saijo*, "Minangkabau men coming *merantau* to Medan are very fond of soccer, a sport from Europe"; there was a heated debate at the Association's general meeting about a possible Association's soccer club ("M.S.V.C.—Minangkabau Saijo Voetbal Club"), the worries being about "Minangkabau men having hot blood, thus the good name of the nation might be blemished." Also, the meeting suggested a compromise, the European sport should be combined with the traditional Minangkabau sport, *silat/pentjak Andalas* ("Sumatra"), November 27, and again December 25, 1923.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir, Jakarta, March 12, 1982. His Master's Voice was offering the following music sheets in Medan in 1925, all fox-trots: "What Do You Do Sunday, Mary?," "Indian Pawn," "Peter Pan," "That's What I Will Do," and "Alabama Band," besides "Stars and Stripes Medley" ("a one-step") and "Poem" by Fibich described as a waltz. *Deli in Woord en Beeld* 3 (November 11, 1925). On the Medan hotels of the Hotel de Boer level being all-white see, for instance, Ladislao Szekely, *Tropic Fever: The Adventures of a Planter in Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 46.

In 1915, just when Sjahrir entered the first grade of his ELS, a new "ethical" *Bibliotheek voor Nederlands-lezende Inheemsden*, "Library for Dutch-reading Natives," began to publish and distribute in the colony, especially among ELS and MULO students, cheap editions of its choice of juvenile reading. Dutch children's classics, were prominent on the list: *Puss In Boots*, Oltmans' *Little Shepherd*, Malot's *Alone in the World*, Burnett's *Little Lord*, Karl May's American Indian novels, *Don Quixote*, *Baron von Munchhausen*, a popular History of Java by Mrs. Fruin-Mees, books about exotic areas like Netherlands-Ambon, Netherlands-Menado, and Nova Zemlja, "ethical" stories from the Indies by Marie van Zeggelen.¹¹⁶ Sjahrir later mentioned the "hundreds of [Dutch] children's books and novels" he had read in his "early youth."¹¹⁷

One would be surprised if the soccer- and violin-playing Sjahrir had been left untouched by another craze of the time, the movies—with Tom Mix or Buffalo Bill or d'Artagnan. At least the last of these characters also appeared in a *komedie stambul* version at the same time.¹¹⁸

Much of the story of Sjahrir's childhood may be told through the way his clothes and costumes changed. Sjahrir got an elementary Islamic education from his father, and one can picture the boy's tiny white-garbed figure at the *jaksa's* feet. Did Sjahrir's father change for the occasion, or did he leave on his official uniform as an *ambtenaar*, civil servant? Between the ages of six and twelve, each day after classes in his Dutch-style school, Sjahrir changed from the prescribed trousers and jacket and stepped across the street to attend Koranic courses.¹¹⁹ And there was a soccer uniform, too, and a dinner jacket, probably, prescribed for the *soirées dansantes* at the *Hotel de Boer*. (Somehow, any description of Sjahrir's "ordinary" clothes remain out of the picture.)

¹¹⁶ Minister for Colonies to the Queen, 26.2.1926 in *Verbaal*, February 26, 1926, no. 45. Advertisements for some of the literature in Malay—Gulliver Travels, the Story of Napoleon Bonaparte, Buffalo Bill—can be found even earlier in Rohana's journals in the form of traditional Minangkabau *syair*. See, e.g., *Soenting Melajoe*, 9, 6 (February 6, 1920), p. 3. These were also some of the books that Hatta and Sjahrir gave later to their pupils as good reading. See Des Alwi, "Oom kacamata yang mendidik saya" in *Muhammad Hatta*, ed. Swasono, p. 324. On Karl May being popular among the Sumatran youth in the 1910s and 1920s see Hatta, *Memoir*, p. 67.

¹¹⁷ Sjahrir (Sjahlrazad), *Indonesische Overpeinzingen* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1945), August 28, 1937. The Amsterdam edition of *Indonesische Overpeinzingen* was in part translated into English by Charles Wolf, Jr. as *Out of Exile* (New York: John Day, 1949), and into Indonesian by H. B. Jassin as *Renungan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Poestaka Rakjat, 1947). I have greatly profited especially from Charles Wolf's translation and I gratefully acknowledge my debt.

¹¹⁸ On Tom Mix being a fashion in Minangkabau at that time see Radjab, *Semasa kecil dikampung*, p. 123; Douglas Fairbanks was d'Artagnan in the famous movie version of 1921; see Jerzy Toeplitz, *Geschichte des Films*, vol. 1 (Munich: Rogner und Bernhard, 1988), p. 130. On the Three Musketeers being played by *stambul* troupes see Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, pp. 387–88. In *Andalas* journal for 1926 we find "Joseph" (of Egypt) being played at *Oranje Bioscoop*, "Tom Mix" at *Deli Bioscoop*, "Jack Dempsey" in *Tjong Koeng Bioscoop* and *Politie Setan* ("The Police Devil") at *Royal Bioscoop*. There is an interesting letter by one W. L. Leclercq from Medan dated January 1928 about the movie culture in the city; reprinted in *Orientatie* 1, 7 (April 1948): 54.

¹¹⁹ Interviews with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 7, 1982, and with Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir, Jakarta, March 12, 1982. L. F. Tijnstra, "Zoeklicht op Sjahrir" (January 16, 1946) in *Collection J. W. Meyer Ranneft*, no. 497. On the usual parallel education in *surau* and Western school for the Minangkabau boys of that level and generation see Hatta, *Indonesian Patriot*, p. 99.

Sjahir lived in a colorful household. Indies journals in Dutch and Malay were spread on the coffee table. Yet, the *jaksa*'s house was very much ruled by women. Three more children were born to Rabiah in Medan: Boejoeng Oeki in 1915, Abdoel Gafoer in 1917, and Idharsjah in 1918. For a while at least, another daughter of Mohammad Rasad, Radena, lived in the house together with Rabiah and her children and Radena's own four little boys, Djohan Sjahroezah, Djazar, Djazir, and Hazil Tanzil.¹²⁰ Before Rabiah died, in 1922, a family legend has it that she told her sons, "Don't dare to disobey your older sister: it is she who is responsible for your future."¹²¹

Sjahir was thirteen when his mother died, and the oldest of the three boys living in the house.¹²² But it was Sjahrizal, Sjahir's eldest sister, fifteen years old at the time, who took charge of the little family's affairs. Her father, she told me later, "did not have much interest in the children except for their education."¹²³ It would have been difficult for him to do so—Sjahir was his eighteenth child, and, by 1923, the *jaksa* had become a happy father, with various wives, twenty-five times.

For young Sjahir, to experience the Medan of the 1910s and 1920s was to experience *rantau*, and the new "ethical"-Minangkabau translation of *rantau*, in a most exemplary case.

The three dozen petty rulers surviving in and around Medan—the Malay, Simelungun Batak, and Karo Batak sultans—were wasting their power and prestige largely in intrigues against one another.¹²⁴ They offered the "ethical" Dutch, and the "modern" Minangkabau as well, a flagrant illustration of a feudalistic anachronism and a perfect argument for the future to belong to *democratie*.

Medan might easily have been taken as an exemplary city of "matter-of-factness," "evolution" and "progress." Non-existent before the 1860s,¹²⁵ the city emerged in the two decades over the turn of the century: Medan's European population became six times larger in those twenty years, and its Asian population grew thirty times.¹²⁶ By the mid-1920s, Medan was acknowledged as the most "urban" settlement in Sumatra, and—besides Batavia, Surabaya, and Semarang—the most

¹²⁰ *Canang* [special edition], January 18, 1987, p. 40.

¹²¹ Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 3, 1982.

¹²² One brother, Sjhsam, was born in Jambi, January 16, 1911. (See the Dutch Embassy in Brussels to the Foreign Ministry in The Hague, 26.11.1948; in *Archief Buiten. Zaken*; A.G. no. 7283, 1949.) The younger brother, Mahroezar, was born 1913 in Medan; see *Prisma Medan* 1976, p. 752.

¹²³ Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 7, 1982.

¹²⁴ Van der Plas, *Memorie van Overgave*, p. 174. See also Michael van Langenberg, "Class and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia's Decolonization Process: A Study of East Java," *Indonesia* 33 (April 1982): 3, n. 2, for the list of the principalities and the literature on the subject.

¹²⁵ In Medan histories, 1862 is described as Year One, the year of the treaty (*Acte van Verband*) between the Sultan of Deli and the Dutch representative E. Netscher which opened the area to colonial exploitation and made Medan the center of the new world. *Limapuluh Tahun Kota-pradja Medan* (Medan: Djawatan Penerangan, 1959), pp. 35, 48. Medan officially became the center (through its establishment as the seat of a Governor and a Law Council among others) in 1909; see *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* 2: 691–92.

¹²⁶ According to *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* 2: 691–92, in Medan, in 1915, there were two thousand Europeans, fourteen thousand Chinese, and seventeen thousand "natives." Ibid. Between 1920 and 1930, again the Medan population increased by 69 percent; Michael van Langenberg, "North Sumatra under Dutch Colonial Rule: Aspects of Structural Change," *RIMA* 11, 1 (1977): 110.

real city in the whole archipelago.¹²⁷ In 1913, instead of prisoners, "free coolies" began to be employed to clean the city streets, and, in 1928, motor cars were assigned to the task. In 1924—and Sjahrir must have witnessed this—the main racecourse of Medan was selected as the first stop in the archipelago for the first-ever Holland-Indies trans Euro-Asia flight; the landing occurred amidst great celebration throughout the city, on November 21.¹²⁸

The region was known throughout the East as a "Deli miracle." Coffee, tobacco, and rubber plantations, symmetrically arranged and connected by train, surrounded Medan. Officials, merchants, planters, and coolies, more than 250 thousand of them, populated the place.¹²⁹ There were waves of capitalist booms and bankruptcies, but a postwar depression had just been overcome by the mid-1920s, during Sjahrir's time in Medan, and optimism reigned.¹³⁰

There were still, in the mid-1920s, fresh memories of Medan being "a half wilderness,"¹³¹ a "Wild West." "Every Dutch loafer was a potential *grand seigneur* in Deli."¹³² Street singers in Medan still sang that someone who had murdered in Java could find a new life here.¹³³ The "men of Deli" still were pictured as "cutting down and burning the primeval forest."¹³⁴ The land of Medan was still "the Gold Land" of the planters, the *perkeniers* (from *perk*, "flower bed," "garden"). The planters had settled down a bit in the 1920s; they bet on horses, played soccer, tennis, cricket, sailed (in that scale of priorities),¹³⁵ and drank *bols*, especially. But for many, and for themselves, too, they were still seen as "*een nieuw mensentype*," "a new kind of men"¹³⁶ ("the irrepressible race who stride booted into the council-halls of kings," in

¹²⁷ Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography*, p. 36.

¹²⁸ In *Gemeente Medan 1909–1934* (Medan: Deli Courant, 1934), n.p.; there are photographs of some of these occasions. In the entry "Medan" in the second volume of the encyclopaedia of the Dutch East Indies, published in 1918, we read: "This city has a very special character, it appears neither European nor typically Indies-like. Its orderly layout was kept from the beginning according to a plan, and its neatness [*netheid*] distinguishes this city favorably from most other bigger places in the Indies. . . . It has also a voluntary firebrigade, which is unique in the Indies. . . ." *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2: 691.

¹²⁹ Based on the reports of *Handelsvereniging Medan* quoted in J. Weisfelt, *De Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij als factor in de economische ontwikkeling van de Oostkust van Sumatra* (Rotterdam: Handelshogeschool Dissertatie, 1972), p. 171. Compare H. J. Grijzen, *Nota van overgave, Sumatra's East Coast* (February 1921).

¹³⁰ See, e.g., (Sjahrir?), "Kapital dan Boeroeh di Deli," *Daulat Ra'jat* 2, 26 (May 30, 1932); a sharp increase in production, especially of coffee (which was principally from the Medan-Deli area), is clear for the 1920–1925 period as compared with 1915–1920, in Furnival, *Netherlands India*, p. 316.

¹³¹ Grijzen, *Nota van Overgave*, pp. 1–2.

¹³² This is in Tan Malaka's letter to the League for Civil Rights, dated February 1933; the letter is published in Poeze, *Tan Malaka, Strijder voor Indonesië's vrijheid*, p. 566.

¹³³ Grijzen, *Nota van Overgave*, p. 2.

¹³⁴ Ann Stoler, "In de schaduw van de maatschappij: een geschiedenis van platage-vrouwen en arbeidsbelied op Noord-Sumatra," in *Feminisme en antropologie* (Amsterdam: Sara, 1981) quoted in *Excerpta Indonesica* 25 (July 1982), p. 13.

¹³⁵ M. J. Lusink, *Kroniek 1927: Oostkust van Sumatra* (Amsterdam: Oostkust van Sumatra Instituut, 1928), p. 92.

¹³⁶ Leopold Szekely-Lulofsz, quoted in Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische Spiegel*, p. 351.

Kipling's fitting description of their British-Indian counterparts¹³⁷), true embodiments of "the passion of enterprise, and the spirit of the vanguard."¹³⁸

The planters provided an influential personality model in Medan during those years—a Karl May's Old Shatterhand or a Tom Mix of sorts. They were also men defined by a manifold frontier and a pluralist inheritance. Undeniably of Medan, and still "all were strangers."¹³⁹ What "struck one first" was that these men had "almost no noticeable connection with any community."¹⁴⁰ "None of them 'belonged': They came from elsewhere and were looking forward to going elsewhere."¹⁴¹

It may seem absurd to make a connection between the Medan *perkeniers* and the vanguard proponents of the "ethical" policy in Medan. As one might expect, the *perkeniers* typically were rough, and frequently brutal toward one another and toward "the natives." And the proponents of the "ethical" policy might be expected to be sensitive, and occasionally sentimental (toward one another and toward "the natives"), living for their *jours* where "men and their wives talked about philosophy and theology between playing music."¹⁴²

But absurdities were possible in the sphere of in-between. A booted planter might even be seen at the piano, in an "ethical" *salon* (or, for that matter, at one of the monthly concerts of Beethoven or Schubert at the Muziekkorps Sumatra Oostkust, "Orchestra of the East Coast" of the Delische Kunstkring, the "Deli Art-Circle").¹⁴³ Proponents of the "ethical" policy existed on the plantations, such as the famous Dr. C. W. Janssen, a director of the Senembah plantations, and at the same time a philanthropist, a director of the Oostkust van Sumatra Koloniaal Instituut, the "Colonial Institute of Sumatra's East Coast," who built model schools for coolie children, each with a playground and a hall for gymnastics.¹⁴⁴ Also, women built the bridge. Not a few of the "ethical" writers, known through the colony, who lived in or wrote about Medan were women—Annie Salomons, Carry van Bruggen, Madelon Szekely-Lulofsz, Jo Manders, Dana Tscherning Peterson.¹⁴⁵ Some, indeed, were the planters' wives.

¹³⁷ Quoted in McClure, *Kipling and Conrad*, p. 22.

¹³⁸ Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische Spiegel*, p. 346.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

¹⁴⁰ Van der Plas, *Memorie van Overgave*, p. 252.

¹⁴¹ Lily Clerkx, *Mensen in Deli: een maatschappijbeeld uit de Belletrie* (Amsterdam: WU University Press, 1962), p. 103.

¹⁴² H. Veersema, *Delianen van de tafelronde* (Medan: Köhler, 1936), p. 141, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

¹⁴³ Lusink, *Kroniek 1927*, pp. 84–87; the "Muziekkorps S.O.K." concerts did not come to an end until 1927. On January 7, 1926, a new Sumatra Oostkust Orkest had its premiere in *Deli Bioscoop*; there also was, in Medan, "Het ensemble van het Grand Hotel." See *Sumatra* 3, 3 (January 16, 1926), p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ See a long eulogy on Dr. C. W. Janssen in Lusink, *Kroniek 1927*, p. 5. Enlightening information on Dr. Janssen, and on Minangkabau reaction to him, can be found in letters by Tan Malaka (a teacher in the Janssen schools and a Janssen protégé); see the letters and other sources on Dr. Janssen in Poeze, *Tan Malaka*, pp. 78, 81, 83, 101–2, 566. See also Tan Malaka, *Dari Pendjara ke Pendjara* (Jakarta: Widjaya, n.d.), 1: 56, 59, 62–63; translated in Helen Jarvis, ed., *From Jail to Jail* 3 vols. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Southeast Asian Series, 1991), 1: 35, 48–49, 55–59; and Mrázek, "Tan Malaka," p. 15.

¹⁴⁵ Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, pp. 342–48. See also Reid's introduction to Szekely (*Tropic Fever*, pp. XII–XIII). On the influence of, perhaps, the most important of them, Szekely-

Let us try again to imagine Sjahrir's family house in Medan. Dutch "Happy-Home" magazines were sold through the colony, and the *jaksa's* family surely read them, too. A "fresh-air house" was advertised in them and became a must; also "a bedroom with a still life on the wall," "a modern kitchen, naturally," with "a *Perfection* petroleum cooking range."¹⁴⁶ A *hoofddjaksa* had to have "an advanced household" to keep in step with the place; sometimes even a local Dutch official might visit him.¹⁴⁷ *Jours* were held in the house, where Rabbiah played her accordion and Sjahrir his violin, in between light conversation, and recitations from *The Arabian Nights*.

Sjahrir lived very much in a tropical *art nouveau* world during the early period of his life. Absurdly at first glance, it was almost a world of nostalgia for over-there-back-home—which was Holland! Sjahrir-the-boy moved through almost-Dutch interiors—the ELS and MULO classrooms, his father's office, his home and the homes of his friends and relatives of the same *niveau*, of a few Dutch classmates, perhaps, and of some Eurasians. The real world of the colony came to him through the doors and windows of these interiors. Naturally, thus, the world came, as often as not, in the form of either exoticism or petitions.

To his father's office in the Dutch colonial criminal court (and Sjahrir was often there), "native" coolies, if courageous enough, came to complain about the harassment and brutality of their supervisors. Later, to the office of Sjahrir's older friend and brother-in-law, Dr. R. M. W. Djoejana—a graduate of the best school in the colony, and a medical doctor at the main Medan *Gouvernement Polikliniek* (Sjahrir was a frequent visitor at this office, too)—coolies and rickshaw drivers, prostitutes, tuberculosis sufferers, and opium addicts streamed, complaining, again, and looking to the "ethical" doctor and his "modern" medicine for help.¹⁴⁸

Medan was a "bizarre" place. There were Chinese, Japanese, Minangkabau, Bataks, Eurasians, and Europeans, many of them non-Dutch; English was widely spoken in Medan.¹⁴⁹ Virtually all of the coolies on the plantations, the "scum of the bazaars," were from Java.¹⁵⁰

It was easier in Medan than anywhere else to see the Javanese as a true manifestation of the "pre-modern," "passive East."¹⁵¹ A well-known "ethical" writer described them:

Lulofsz, on the Indonesians see, e.g., M. Ullfah Santoso, "De Indonesische vrouw en het Passief Kiesrecht," *Kritiek en Opbouw* (June 1, 1938), p. 126.

¹⁴⁶ From contemporary magazines quoted by Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, pp. 342–43. The most popular magazine in Sjahrir's family, his sister told me, was *Andalas*.

¹⁴⁷ *Jaksa*, even *hoofddjaksa*, however elevated in Indonesians' view, were held in rather low esteem by Dutch officials. Letter from H. Mohammad Said, December 28, 1983. Still, Sjahrir's sister told me the Dutch district officials visited the house occasionally. Interview with Sjahrizal Djoejana, Bandung, October 22, 1987.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Prof. Dr. R. Mohammad Djoejana Wiradikarta, Bandung, March 7, 1982. There were three departments in the hospital: (1) general department—this was where Dr. Djoejana worked, (2) a mental hospital, and (3) a Chinese section.

¹⁴⁹ There had to have been some "bridge language" between Dutch and English in Medan, too. See, for example, spring horse races being called "*de voorjaarraces*," *Sumatra* 4, 16 (April 17, 1926).

¹⁵⁰ In 1920, out of 238,336 workers coming to Sumatra under a previously negotiated contract, 212,395 were Javanese (and 23,868 were Chinese); see Weisfelt, *De Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij*, p. 171.

¹⁵¹ In 1920 only 12,162 of 250,462 plantation workers in the area were "free workers." *Ibid.* The rest, the "contract coolies" were legally forbidden not only from striking or invoking other

They walked, they ate. They slept. They had, sometimes, a woman. If they spoke, they might speak of the same topic: a far-away village on Java.¹⁵²

Given the image of the Javanese, when the Dutch proponents of the "ethical" policy and the planters had to decide who was the "modern," "dynamic" element of "native" Medan society, the choice seems to have been equally easy for both groups. The conclusion was general: "the Minangkabau."¹⁵³

After the turn of the century, Medan became a model for the Dutch colony's new frontiers. But also, for some, Asians as well as Westerners, it became a melting pot out of which a new, modern nation might emerge. A prominent Minangkabau wrote in a novel about the Medan of the time:

They came here as contract coolie laborers from Java, as merchants from Minangkabau, Tapanoei, Bawean, Bandjar and Betawi,¹⁵⁴ and from other places, too. After they endure the most varied kinds of hardship, a new assimilation (by which I mean a synthesis, a blending together) takes place. Its result is called a Child of Deli. And this Child of Deli, he is a bud, the richest flower in the bouquet of the emerging Indonesian nation. . . . His manners are free, his Malay is fluent, the accents of different places of origin vanish into a new Language of the Great Indonesia.¹⁵⁵

Not unlike the Dutch planters in Medan, thus, the indigenous crowds of the place were also seen as "*een nieuw mensentype*," "a new kind of men," emerging in the East. The Minangkabau *perantau*, by general acclaim and by their own conviction, were the most dynamic element of the new kind of "Indonesian" in Medan. They were where the future pointed. By logical extension, the Minangkabau *perantau* were seen, and saw themselves, as the most dynamic element of a new nation. In the mid-1920s many of the Minangkabau in Medan were looking forward, with a growing intensity, to fulfilling the role.

By the mid-1920s, Sjahrir's father was approaching retirement age and was hardly likely himself to move dynamically into yet another era. But two of his cousins, for instance, sons of other Medan *hoofddjaksa*, did so dramatically, and in a manner easy for Sjahrir to see. In Java, one of them, Hadji Agoes Salim, had become by the early 1920s, a major figure in the new militant and mass Indonesian nationalist movement Sarekat Islam, the "Islamic Union." His brother, Abdul Chalid Salim, had left for Java, too, and by the mid-1920s was well on his way to becoming an Indonesian Communist leader and an outcast.¹⁵⁶

workers' rights to strike, but even moving from the plantations without their employers' consent or changing their contract (which was a long-term, several-year contract). In many aspects, actually, it was only a slightly modified form of slavery.

¹⁵² Madelen Szekely-Lulofsz Rubber quoted in Clerkx, *Mensen in Deli*, p. 46.

¹⁵³ Minangkabau and Mandailing, S. van der Plas wrote in 1916, "form the most intellectually developed part of the native population. It is among them that one finds awakened associations." (Van der Plas, *Memorie van Overgave*, p. 66.)

¹⁵⁴ Bawean is an island in the Java Sea close to Madura; Banjar is a place in West Java; Betawi is Batavia (now Jakarta).

¹⁵⁵ Hamka, *Merantau ke Deli*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁶ For the early political years of Hadji Agoes Salim see Van Niel, *The Emergence*, pp. 118-19 (based on the author's interview with H. A. Salim). For the younger of the brothers see the

In 1923, Dr. Djoehana moved to Java, too, for a better job and eventually a brilliant medical career. With him went his wife—Sjahrir's sister, the woman who had taken care of the *jaksa's* little family until then. In the succeeding months, it appears, the rest of the family in Medan began to gravitate toward her new place of residence. In the summer of 1926, Sjahrir finished his schooling at the MULO, and it was, naturally, his turn to go.

man's memoirs, Salim, *Limabelas tahun Digul*, especially pp. 38–42. On Chalid Salim's first arrest in July 1927 see Lusink, *Kroniek* 1927, pp. 34–35.

BANDUNG, 1926–1929

Sukarno and his friends lived in a house in Regentsweg (now Jalan Kabupaten), which I had to pass when I went from our school in Tegalreja, to the centre of the city. I still remember vividly how in passing the abode of those young intellectuals, I felt pride, sympathy and solidarity with them in a struggle which promised a new era for the Indonesian people. They indeed, symbolized at that time the awakening of a new Indonesia.

Soetan Takdir Alisjahbana¹

1. THE CITY AND THE SCHOOL

Mohammad Hatta once explained why he—a Minangkabau teenager going to Java early in the century—decided out of all the “ethical” schools available, upon a commercial school and, thus, the career of “a merchant.” It could not be otherwise, Hatta said, because “in our family there was not one person who ever held a civil service position.”² Seventy years after the event, this old friend of Sjahrir could imagine but two alternatives for a *perantau*—either that of a *handelaar* (merchant) or of an *ambtenaar* (civil servant). Both were clearly family careers, that of his father and of his uncle. “Not for a single moment did I ever think of becoming an *ambtenaar*,” Hatta added, as if not sure if the explanation he had given was clear enough.³

Sjahrir chose the *ambtenaar*’s path. The MULO diploma he obtained in Medan qualified him to become a lower official, in the state railways or pawnshops, for instance, or a government secondary school teacher. But the MULO had been designed mainly as a “substructure for the AMS,”⁴ the Algemene Middelbare School, “General Intermediate School,” which, in turn, was to provide an opening for its graduates to go yet higher, to college either in the colony or in Holland. The

¹ S. Takdir Alisjahbana, *Indonesia’s Social and Cultural Revolution* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 138.

² Hatta, *Bung Hatta Antwoordt*, p. 116. Mohammad Hatta chose the Middelbare Handelschool in Batavia, and then higher commercial studies in Holland up to the Handelshogeschool (at the university level) in Rotterdam.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Director for Education to Governor General, March 16, 1914 in van der Wal, ed., *Het Onderwijsbeleid in Nederlandsch-Indië, 1900–1942*, pp. 248–53; and Nota of W. H. Bogaardt to Governor General, May 18, 1917 in *Verbaal*, March 13, 1918, no. 44.

division of the AMS in which Sjahrir enrolled, the "Westerse-klassiek," "Western-classical," division, was expected to prepare students "for juridical examinations" and for college law studies.⁵ Sjahrir, as this choice of school suggests, was sent to Bandung to carry on his father's profession, becoming a *jaksa* in a wider *rantau* and at a higher level.⁶

A new AMS was to be opened in Medan in 1927. Nevertheless, Sjahrir went on to Java. The AMS in Bandung, founded in 1920, was at the time one of the most expensive schools in the colony and the second most expensive in the city, surpassed only by the Technische Hoogeschool, "Technical College."⁷

Anda Murad, a scholar and a Minangkabau herself, points out in her thesis how often young Minangkabau *perantau* tended, if possible, to wander into areas where their sisters or other women of their families had already settled.⁸ The presence of sisters or other substitute mothers, waiting in a male-defined *rantau* and prepared to take care of the new coming men, was a sort of perverted tradition in itself. Or was it a heightened tradition perhaps. The young Minangkabau, even in the freer and looser sphere of *rantau*, was made constantly aware of his unceasing dependence on women.

This might be one reason why, in Sjahrir's own recollections and in the memoirs of his friends, images of female relatives waiting in Java and caring for Sjahrir are so subdued. Hamdani, Sjahrir's schoolmate in Bandung, remembered that Sjahrir "lived *in de kost* [bed and board], in the house of a Minangkabau man on Dr. Samjudo Street."⁹ Maybe, Hamdani—himself a Javanese—did not know, and was not told by Sjahrir, that the "Minangkabau man on Dr. Samjudo Street" was the husband of Radena, Sjahrir's half-sister who had moved from Medan to Bandung a short time before Sjahrir did.¹⁰ And Sjahrir's full sister was in Java, too—Sjahrizal Djoehana who lived with her husband in Serang, five hours by train from Bandung. It was too far, the lady complained to me sixty years later, to keep tight control over Sjahrir, except during vacations.¹¹

⁵ Ibid. According to a report from 1929, 96 percent of the 133 students of the Bandung AMS continued their studies after graduation. *Algemeen Verslag van het Onderwijs in Nederlands Indië* XXX I (1929): 114.

⁶ Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 7, 1982.

⁷ According to the available figures (for the late 1930s) the average expenses for a pupil (student) for one school year were:

People's schools: ca. 5 f. (guilders)

Native MULO: ca. 65 f.

Technical School: ca. 169 f. to 202 f.

AMS: ca. 260 f.

HBS: ca. 174 f.

MULO: ca. 213 f.

Technische Hoogeschool: ca. 345 f.

Director for Education to Governor General, February 27, 1940, *Secret Mail Report* 1940, no. 341; also in van der Wal, ed., *Het Onderwijsbeleid*, p. 666. Hamdani, Sjahrir's classmate at the AMS, says that tuition was fl.25.- per month; interview with Hamdani, Jakarta, October 30, 1987.

⁸ Anda Murad, *Merantau: Outmigration in a Matrilineal Society of West Sumatra* (Canberra: Australian National University, Department of Geography, 1980).

⁹ Hamdani, "Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya," in *Mengenang Sjahrir*, ed. Anwar, p. 72.

¹⁰ Interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, March 7, 1982.

¹¹ Ibid. and interview with Sjahrizal Djoehana, Bandung, October 22, 1987.

The family was spreading from Kota Gedang and Medan. Mahroezar, Sjahrir's younger brother, also left for Bandung in 1926 in the middle of his ELS school years and at the same time as Sjahrir.¹²

For Sjahrir the change from Medan to Bandung did not seem to have been particularly radical or painful. Bandung was a city located at a higher altitude than Medan, and much cooler, but its cultural landscape was very similar. It was surrounded by an almost identical kind of "advanced," "twentieth-century" country. By the 1920s *Preanger* (Priangan), the region of West Java around Bandung, was, like Deli, the site of some of the colony's largest coffee plantations. Bandung was much closer to Batavia than Medan, but it was still marginal. The "real" center of the colony, Batavia, was a five-hour ride by train, and its people were very conscious of the distance. Bandung and the *Preanger* region contrasted sharply with Java proper, the real mainstream of Javanese civilization.¹³ The *Preanger* was "far less Indianized [than Java proper] and more strongly Islamicized"; thus, in many ways, it was "an intermediate zone between Java and the Outer Islands."¹⁴

Bandung was more metropolitan than Medan. It had more schools, including several of Indies-wide importance,¹⁵ and quite a few of the colony's central offices. It was also the seat of the Dutch Indies central military command. The houses in Bandung were more fashionable than those in Medan, and the gap between current European and colonial architecture was smaller; there were some functionalist buildings in Bandung, already in the 1920s, and even a trace of *Bauhaus*.¹⁶ In February 1928, the first radio conversation took place between Bandung and Berlin: it lasted five minutes and the "quality was very good."¹⁷

The Bandoengsche Kunstkring, "Bandung Art Circle," was, definitely, more *à jour* than the Kunstkring in Medan. It had 848 members in 1928, a symphony orchestra, and a theater company. It organized, in that year, thirteen concerts (with the Viennese Trio and the Dresden String Quartet, among others), nine theatrical performances (with the London Musical Comedy Company for instance), three film evenings, five exhibitions (all of Western art), three public lectures, and a special night of Javanese dance by dancers from the royal court in Solo.¹⁸ There were regular youth concerts, and a lecture series in which AMS professors were prominent figures—on history, on literature, on philosophy, and on the spirit of the

¹² There is a report on Mahroezar finishing his Medan ELS by 1929 in "Politiek Verslag Oostkust van Augustus '34" in *Secret Mail Report* 1934, no. 1137.

¹³ Java proper is usually understood as the area in Central and East Java between Banyumas and Malang with its nucleus in the Yogyakarta-Surakarta area.

¹⁴ Fritjof Tichelman, *The Social Evolution of Indonesia: The Asiatic Mode of Production and its Legacy* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1980), p. 154.

¹⁵ The Technische Hoogeschool of Bandung was founded in 1920 (Dahm, *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence*, pp. 43–44), the HBS in 1915 (*Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* I: 139, where the Bandung schools in general for 1915 are listed). For the development of Bandung schools during the 1920s and 1930s see the Director for Education to the Governor General, February 27, 1940 in *Secret Mail Report* 1940, no. 341.

¹⁶ Djefry W. Dana, *Ciri perncangan kota Bandung* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1990).

¹⁷ *Onze Courant* 13, 5 (March 1, 1928), p. 3.

¹⁸ *Jaarverslag v.d. Bandoengsche Kunstkring* (Bandung: Kunstkring, 1928), *passim*. See also *ibid.*, 1926, listing concert trios from Paris and Rome, and *ibid.*, 1927, reporting on a German operetta with "*Schwarzwalde mädels*," for instance, and a lecture by Rabindranath Tagore on art. See also *Bandoengsche Kunstkring, 1905–1930. Gedenkschrift*, *passim*.



Bioscoop Preanger
KITLV (DGI) #11.887

East.¹⁹ Advanced “natives,” especially students of the better schools were much more versatile than in Medan and were seen, occasionally, among the audience.²⁰

Bandung soccer matches were on a higher, inter-island level, and teams came from as far away as Singapore.²¹ Although the better clubs were still all-white, tennis was the fashionable game for all races to play.²² Movies reached Bandung almost instantly, on their way from the West. Late in the summer of 1926, when Sjahir arrived, a screen version of Conrad’s *Nostromo* was shown in the Bioscoop Preanger in Bandung at practically the same time as it appeared in London, Amsterdam, and Leiden.²³

¹⁹ See, e.g., J. C. de Haan, “Het Grieksche Epos. Homerus,” in J. C. de Haan et al., *Zeven Artikelen over Grieksche Kultuur* (Bandung: Vorkink, 1923), pp. 15–23, and J. C. de Haan *Geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Bat. Versluys, 1933), on the activities of Sjahir’s professor of history.

²⁰ Compare with Tan Malaka: “When the economy was at its peak (1926–1927) it was relatively easy to make a living, workers could get employment easily, and some of the younger generation had the opportunity to learn to speak Dutch and to get rather soft jobs as clerks. Furthermore, there were all kinds of light diversions like cinemas, soccer, and hula dancing.” Tan Malaka, *Dari pendjara ke pendjara*, 1: 150; *From jail to jail*, trans. Jarvis, 1: 140.

²¹ *Kaoem Moeda* (Bandung), 1926–1927, *passim*.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.* (September 1926, *passim*).

There were 15,937 Europeans in Bandung late in the 1920s, ten times as many as were in Medan when Sjahrir was there.²⁴ As in Medan, however, they formed only about one-ninth of the city's total population.²⁵

Sjahrir's school in Bandung, not unlike the MULO in Medan, was conceived as an exemplary "ethical" school. Like the MULO, the AMS was multiracial—in Bandung's AMS, in 1927, out of a total of 107 students, 56 percent were "natives," 13 percent Chinese, and 31 percent Europeans.²⁶ Like the MULO in Medan, the AMS in Bandung was "Indies-centered."²⁷ The school's aim was, in the Dutch view, to exemplify

the right and duty of the youth of the Indies to study their culture, to find, in the culture, a place for themselves, and to carry on, later, responsibilities of leadership.²⁸

Dutch, Malay, English, French, Latin, Ancient History, History, Geography, Civics, Botany, Gymnastics, Physics, and Chemistry were subjects taught at the school.²⁹ And for the students there Western knowledge was to be "not an ultimate object but a means."³⁰

Sjahrir appears to have been a perfect AMS scholar: swift, alert, and bright. He was not exactly "a diligent kind of a student."³¹ He was rather a debater, also courageous enough to ask his Dutch professors "pertinent questions." Dr. de Haan, a well-known and distinctly "ethical" figure in Bandung and throughout the colony,³² and

²⁴ *Bandoeng 1906–1931. Officieele jubileum uitgave . . . van gemeente Bandoeng op 1. April, 1931* (Bandung: Gemeente Bandoeng, 1931), n.p.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Algemeen Verslag van het Onderwijs in Nederlandsch Indië* 28, 1 (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1927): 165–66; in the AMS in Yogyakarta 60 percent of the students were "natives," in Solo 93 percent, in Batavia 82.8 percent, and in Malang 51 percent. Ibid. In 1929 Europeans made for only 27 percent of the students in the Bandung AMS, but still this was the highest percentage found in any of the AMS schools in the colony. *Algemeen Verslag van het Onderwijs in Nederlandsch Indië* 30, 1 (1929): 99.

²⁷ See, e.g., Nota W. H. Bogaardt, in *Verbaal*, March 13, 1918, no. 44. In Bandung in 1925, there were five HBS with 1,603 Europeans and 123 "native" students and two AMS with seventy-four European students and 154 "natives"; in addition, there were twenty-eight Chinese in the two AMS. Van der Wal, ed., *Het Onderwijsbeleid*, appendix, p. 698.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Nota W. H. Bogaardt, in *Verbaal*, March 13, 1918, no. 44.

³¹ Soewarsih Djojopoespito, "De thuiskomst van een oud-strijder," *Tirade* 21, 221 (January 1977): 40–41.

³² See, e.g., J. C. de Haan, *Schets van de Westeuropeesche Letterkunde* (Batavia: Wolters, 1932). For a review of one of de Haan's MULO textbooks see *Mededelingen Mulo* 1, 9 (May 12, 1928). See also de Haan, "Het Grieksche Epos." De Haan, especially, is well recorded in the history of the colony and may well serve as an example of the "ethical" teacher. A comparison of the "Eastern spirit" with the "Greek spirit" was part of his Bandung public lecture series; when he wrote about Goethe, his great favorite, for instance, he gave a general introduction, twenty lines on Faust and seven lines on other works; all the rest, ninety lines was given to an analysis of Goethe's "Paria" ballads. de Haan, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 148–52.

Miss Dr. Katwijk, Sjahrir's teachers of history and classics respectively, are mentioned by name.³³

Sjahrir in Bandung, it seems, was no Kipling's Trejago who "crosses the border only in disguise."³⁴ Sjahrir's categorical insistence that there were "no ghosts and spirits"—rather a minority view in Java of the time—his repeated emphasis that everything was "logical," became proverbial and even a subject of anecdotes among his Bandung friends.³⁵ But indeed, "matter-of-factness" and "rationality" were exactly what was expected, in Bandung, of a boy "from Minangkabau." Sjahrir soon became a star, so his friends' memoirs say, in his AMS classes, as well as in Patriae Scientiaeque, "Motherland and Science," the AMS students' debating club.³⁶ The *rantau* widened this way and sometimes contracted strangely; translation kept the culture of *rantau* alive; the name of the debating club was in neither Dutch nor in Malay, but in Latin.

As in Medan, Sjahrir sometimes played soccer in Bandung, still as center half-back. Friends say that he was "expert, fast, and clever" in the sport.³⁷ He belonged to the neighborhood club, *Voetbalvereniging Poengkoer*, "Soccer Association Rear End," but he played more often with a team composed largely of AMS students, in a club called *Luno* an abbreviation for *Laat U niet overwinnen*, Dutch for "Don't let yourself be conquered."³⁸

As in Medan, theater in Bandung was very much a part of the city life. Sjahrir played in the—AMS-connected—*Batovis* which was an abbreviation of the Dutch *Bandoengse Toneel Vereniging van Indonesische Studenten*, "Indonesian Students' Bandung Theater Company."³⁹ *Batovis* toured Bandung and places nearby. The students played *toneel* not *komedie stambul*—a more purely Western form of drama. (An article in Medan's *Deliana* in late 1928 commented that high-school and college students in Java were more advanced than those in Medan, which was proven, the article stated, by the fact that students in Java were playing *toneel* while those in Medan still stuck

³³ Mangandaralam Syahbuddin, *Apa dan Siapa Sutan Syahrir* (Jakarta: Rosda Jayaputra, 1988), p. 65.

³⁴ Rudyard Kipling, *Beyond the Pale*, quoted in McClure, *Kipling and Conrad*, p. 9.

³⁵ One of Sjahrir's friends in Bandung tells a story of one of the group's excursions, when Sjahrir insisted on spending a night among the holy tombs of Salek. Sjahrir left the place in the middle of the night and explained his desertion in the morning by complaining of "clapping doors, chilling wind, and an abominable odor of flowers." "We mocked him and laughed," the friend remembers. "Through your logical reasoning," they teased him, "how would you explain all these invisible things?" Soewarsih Djojopoespito, "De thuiskomst van een oudstrijder," p. 41.

³⁶ Hamdani, "Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya," p. 74. Hamdani says about twenty people participated in average. Interview with Hamdani, Jakarta, October 30, 1987.

³⁷ Hamdani, "Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya," in *Mengenang Sjahrir*, ed. Anwar, p. 72; Burhanuddin, "Sjahrir yang saya kenal" in *ibid.*, pp. 48–69; interviews with Hamdani and Burhanuddin, Jakarta, March 5 and 6, 1982.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Among Sjahrir's soccer friends in Bandung Hamdani lists Ma'mun, Soemantri, Siwojo, Wiwi, Soebagio, Lagimoen, Boediono, and himself; among Patriae Scientiaeque members, Sjahrir's AMS colleagues Boediono, Samsoeddin, Roesbandi, Santoso, Ongko G. (there was a Chinese Ongko family with three boys, Ongko E, Ongko F, and Ongko G, all close to Sjahrir then in various groups), Harsono, Imam Soedjahri, and Hamdani again; among the *Batovis* members, Tjutjun (Rusni), Hardjan, Inoe Perbatasan, Soebagio, Dipo Ling. Hamdani, "Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya," pp. 72, 74, 76–77; interview with Hamdani, Jakarta, March 5, 1982.

with *komedie stambul*.)⁴⁰ Sjahrir, in *Batovis*, was a “director, a writer, and sometimes an actor, but only in roles of intellectuals.”⁴¹ *Batovis* played almost every month, in Dutch, and “many Dutch people came to see the plays.”⁴²

During the three years that Sjahrir spent in Bandung he travelled only occasionally to see his sister in Serang and to Batavia, where his half-sister’s family had moved; once during this time he might have visited the house in Medan. He traveled more with his AMS schoolmates and his *Luno* and *Batovis* friends. In old family albums of his friends photographs are treasured of picnics, bicycling, and boating. It is clear from the photographs that all this was done in an almost purely Western style. The young people traveled around Bandung, on the *Dago Road* or the *Grooten Postweg*, “Great Post Road,” with their breathtaking views of the nearby mountains; or they made trips to nearby Girijaya, Situ Aksanto, Pengalengan Lake, or to the volcano of Tangkubau Perahu, for the day and during weekends.

They wandered through the country, stayed overnight in empty cabins or in the open, once even in a graveyard. One memory from this period is of Sjahrir entertaining his friends during a picnic on a violin,⁴³ another is of Sjahrir singing “folksongs mixed with Western classics and Strauss waltzes.”⁴⁴ He was “perhaps the only one among us,” a friend says, “who could sing these Western songs correctly, even their mostly German texts.”⁴⁵

Instead of performing for the planters in the *Hotel de Boer*, Sjahrir, in Bandung, was dancing himself; waltzes, fox trots, and charlestons. Sjahrir now attended more fashionable and more multiracial *soirées dansantes*. If it was a sign of daring among some of Sjahrir’s generation to be “bold enough to get close to the Dutch girls,”⁴⁶ then Sjahrir, as he is recalled, was in the vanguard.⁴⁷

2. JONG INDONESIA

In Bandung’s city center, on what is today called the “Street of Asia and Africa,” in a window of the *Algemene Indische Dagblad (AID)*, “General Indies Daily,” a news bulletin was displayed each day at about six o’clock in the evening for the Dutch-reading public. According to a friend of his, Sjahrir was seen at the journal window “almost every evening.”⁴⁸

⁴⁰ *Deliana* (September 1, 1928), pp. 3–4; see also on student *toneel* in Java, *ibid.* (August 1, 1928), pp. 11–12.

⁴¹ Soewarsih Djojopoespito, “De thuiskomst van een oud-strijder,” p. 40.

⁴² Syahbuddin, *Apa dan Siapa Sutan Syahrir*, p. 6. Interview with Murwoto, Jakarta, December 6, 1987.

⁴³ Soewarsih Djojopoespito, “De thuiskomst van een oud-strijder,” pp. 40–41.

⁴⁴ Hamdani, “Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya,” p. 72.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Abu Hanifah, *Tales of a Revolution* (Sydney: Andus and Robertson, 1972), p. 30.

⁴⁷ Hamdani, “Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya,” p. 71; L. F. Tjismstra, “Zoeklicht op Sjahrir” (January 16, 1946), in *Collection J.W.Meyer Ranneft*, no. 497; Subadio Sastrosatomo, “Sjahrir: Suatu Perspektif manusia dan sejarah,” in *Mengenang Sjahrir*, ed. Anwar, p. XII; interview with Subadio Sastrosatomo, Jakarta, March 4, 1982. Rusni in Syahbuddin, *Apa dan Siapa Sutan Syahrir*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Burhanuddin, “Sjahrir yang saya kenal,” p. 48; interview with Burhanuddin, Jakarta, March 6, 1982.

At about the time Sjahrir arrived in Bandung, the AID bulletin reported the arrival in the Indies of a new governor general—A. C. D. de Graeff, a close friend, it was said, of many prominent “ethical” proponents.⁴⁹ Alarming reports of an attempted Communist uprising—with centers in Batavia, West Java, and in Sjahrir’s homeland, Minangkabau—appeared in the news bulletin shortly afterwards, late in 1926 and early in 1927.⁵⁰ Six months thereafter, and a year after Sjahrir arrived in Bandung, another report appeared in the AID window. The Perserikatan Nasional Indonesia, “Indonesian National Association,” was founded on July 4, 1927, in Bandung by Mr. Sukarno C. E., a graduate of Bandung’s Technical College, a school just a few blocks from Sjahrir’s AMS.

Sjahrir’s friends later claimed that Sjahrir, on February 20, 1927 in Bandung, was among the ten boys who decided to start the young people’s nationalist association Jong Indonesie, “Young Indonesia.”⁵¹ No contemporary record of his participation could be found.⁵² However, he is mentioned in a police report in February 1928 as the chairman of one of the association’s meetings.⁵³ In August 1928, “Soetan Sjahrir, student of the AMS” was already known to the Bandung police as “the chairman of the editorial board” of the young association’s journal.⁵⁴

By late 1928, Jong Indonesie had spread far beyond Bandung. The association already had branches in Batavia, and in Yogyakarta and Surabaya in central and eastern Java. There were branches of the girls’ division of the association, Poetri Indonesia, “Daughters of Indonesia,” in Bandung, Batavia, and Surabaya. Three journals, at least, were published by the association—*Jong Indonesie* in Bandung, *Kabar Kita*, “Our News,” in Surabaya and *Soeara Kita*, “Our Voice,” in Yogyakarta.

⁴⁹ On this governor general see, e.g., Koch, *Batig Slot*, p. 38; H. Sneevliet, “De nieuwste explosie van koloniaal machtsmisbruik in Indonesië,” *De Nieuwe Weg* (Amsterdam) 5 (1930). See also John Ingleson, *Road to Exile: The Indonesian Nationalist Movement, 1927–1934* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979), esp. pp. 40–41, 94–97, 105.

⁵⁰ For detailed information see Harry J. Benda and Ruth T. McVey, eds., *The Communist Uprisings of 1926–1927 in Indonesia: Key Documents* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1960). What was prominently to be seen in the Vorkink publishing house window, it seems, were mostly lists of Dutch contributors to the fund “for the victims of the communist *keri* [sickle] violence”; see, e.g., *Kaoem Moeda*, November 15, 1926 ff.

⁵¹ On the beginning of Jong Indonesie see *Politiek-politioneel overzicht van Nederlandsch Indië* (hereafter PPO), February 1927. (For the years 1927–1930 of the central reports, the edition by Harry J. Poeze is used: Harry J. Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneel overzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië*, vol. 1 [1927–1928] [The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982], p. 6); PPO, April 1927 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneel overzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1: 145).

⁵² Sjahrir was a member of the *Jong Indonesie* central board according to *Dossier Sjahrir* in *Collection Meyer-Ranneft*, no. 497. Hamdani, “Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya,” p. 75; and Burhanuddin “Sjahrir yang saya kenal,” p. 49, spoke of Sjahrir as the Bandung branch chairman (*ketua* and *voorzitter*, respectively). Sjahrir, however, is not mentioned, as far as I know, in any police or press report (PPO or *Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisisch-Chineesche Pers*, (title varies) hereafter *Overzicht van de IMC pers*) until February 1928, including a rather detailed report on the organization in *Overzicht van de IMC pers*, 1928, no. 1, pp. 16–17.

⁵³ PPO, February 1928 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneel overzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1: 248–49). On Sjahrir being among the founders see Sastra (not very reliable regarding this as he came to know Sjahrir only in 1932), Sastra, “Sjahrir untuk Sastra dan Sastra untuk Sjahrir,” *Mengenang Sjahrir*, ed. Anwar, p. 82; also Tijmstra, “Zoeklicht op Sjahrir.” See also Murwoto, *Autobiografi selaku perintis kemerdekaan* (Jakarta: Departemen Sosial, 1984), p. 9, who says Sjahrir was the chairman of the organization’s congress in 1927.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, July 1928 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneel overzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1: 358).

the first chairman of Jong Indonesie,⁵⁸ Hamdani, the Jong Indonesie's secretary and treasurer,⁵⁹ and also Samssoeddin,⁶⁰ were Sjahrir's classmates at the AMS. Murwoto came from AMS Yogyakarta. And one finds the same names among the members of the Luno soccer club (Soebagio, Soemantri, Boediono, Hamdani, and also Burhanuddin), the *Batovis* theater (Soebagio, Hamdani, and Samssoeddin), and *Patriae Scientiaeque* (Boediono, Hamdani, Samssoeddin).⁶¹

The mood and style of the AMS permeated Jong Indonesie. The association's activity in Bandung appeared to be almost equally divided between its cooperative shop—where “souvenirs” and “traditional artifacts” were made and sold for charity and for financing other undertakings—its soccer and tennis clubs, club house, theater company, and its library with “120 books—in Malay, French, English, German, and Dutch.”⁶²

One field of Jong Indonesie activity should be especially mentioned: the youth association's own school, Tjahja Volksuniversiteit. The school was another way of translation, as its very title suggested: “*tjahaja*” is Malay for “radiance” or “gleam” or “ray of light,” and “*volksuniversiteit*” is Dutch for “people's university.”⁶³ Jong Indonesie organized other Tjahja Volksuniversiteit schools in Batavia and Yogyakarta, but Bandung's school was considered to be the most advanced and the model.⁶⁴

Soebagio Mangoenrahardjo, Sjahrir's very close friend at the time, was the Bandung school's founder and director. Sjahrir is listed among the top leaders.⁶⁵ According to a Bandung report of 1928,

⁵⁸ Sastra, “Sjahrir untuk Sastra,” pp. 80, 82.

⁵⁹ Hamdani, “Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya,” p. 73; see also Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, p. 436.

⁶⁰ “Police report on Hamdani,” in *Secret Verbaal*, November 28, 1934 L33.

⁶¹ PPO July 1928 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneele overzichten*, 1: 358); Hamdani, “Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya,” pp. 74–75; another important Jong Indonesie leader at that time was Soedarsono, two years behind Sjahrir at the AMS (“Dossier Sjahrir” in *Collection Meyer-Ranneft*, no. 497).

⁶² *Fadjar Asia*, May 19, 1928 in *Overzicht van de IMC pers*, 1929, 1: 371. On Sjahrir at that time “active in building people's cooperatives” see “Riwayat Hidup Soetan Sjahrir,” n.d., n.p. typescript in the *Archives Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir*.

⁶³ There was also a Volksuniversiteit Indonesie, with its center in Batavia, organized by Parade Harahap, the journalist whom we already met as the co-editor of the Medan's women's journal *Perempoean Bergerak*; for more details on this school system see its journal *Volksuniversiteit*, nos. 1–6.

⁶⁴ In Batavia, the *Tjahja* was established by a meeting in November 26, 1928; on both this and the establishment of Yogyakarta *Tjahja*, see PPO November 1928 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneele overzichten*, 1: 466–67). In Bandung on January 31, 1928, the journal *Volksuniversiteit* emerged from the Bintang Timoer press (*Overzicht van de IMC pers*, 1928, p. 292); I was not able to locate any issues of this journal. On *Tjahja* being discussed at the Jong Indonesie meetings see, e.g., PPO May 1929 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneele overzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië*, vol. 2 [1929–1930] [Doordrecht: KITLV, 1983], p. 117), and *ibid.*, July 1929 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneele overzichten*, 2: 161). For the Yogyakarta *Volksuniversiteit* of the youth organization see *Soeara Kita* 3, 1 (November 1928): 8.

⁶⁵ Tijmstra (“Zoeklicht op Sjahrir”) says that Sjahrir was the “*directeur*” of *Tjahja*, a claim which, given the other sources, is improbable. On Soebagio founding the *Tjahja* in Bandung with one Adang, Dadang and R. Moeso among others, see PPO November 1928 2: 415. In “Police report on Hamdani,” Hamdani is said “to have established here, on the initiative of the

this university is designed not merely to teach reading and writing, but also to give instruction in foreign languages, economics, mathematics, physics, and other study subjects. All lectures are given to Indonesians of every age and to women as well as men, free of charge by high school and college students. . . . Six hundred persons are already registered as "pupils." There are coolies, peasants, and workers among the registered, and also a few dozen women and old people over forty.⁶⁶

There are other reports of Tjahja Volksuniversiteit teaching "Dutch, Indonesian, English, German, and French and in law, anthropology, sociology, stenography and history."⁶⁷

Sjahrir's friends from Tjahja Volksuniversiteit recalled how they "traveled around Bandung," how they taught the common folk in the villages "for a simple dish of rice," and how they "wore sarongs."⁶⁸ According to one account, "Sjahrir himself hung a board above the entrance of his 'university' which read 'Free English Lessons by Mr. Soebagio from New York'."⁶⁹

It, evidently, was the quality of the time—this belief that the essentially AMS syllabus the students used at the Tjahja Volksuniversiteit, stenography, or French, might somehow, in the future at least, be useful for a peasant or a fifty-cent-a-day coolie.⁷⁰ Actually, the real "common people" seem to have been rather the exception in the Tjahja Volksuniversiteit classrooms. They knew hardly any languages except Sundanese, which, in turn, was unintelligible to most of the Tjahja Volksuniversiteit teachers, Sjahrir included. Pupils from the city in fact prevailed at Tjahaja Volksuniversiteit, and the lectures were given either in Malay or in Dutch.⁷¹

According to Jong Indonesie's statutes of 1927, it was the aim of Jong Indonesie to promote the idea of Indonesian national unity through a boy scout movement, sports, journals, and booklets, and through holding meetings.⁷² Jong Indonesie, one of the association's leaders stated, "is not based on politics"; it "studies politics as a

known Soetan Sjahrir and Soebagio, the so-called Volksuniversiteit Tjahja." (*Secret Verbaal*, November 28, 1934 L33.)

⁶⁶ Inoe Marto Kusumo in *Pemoeda Indonesia* 1, 10–12 (May–August 1928), quoted in *Overzicht van de IMC pers*, 1928, 2: 45.

⁶⁷ Ingleson, *Road to Exile*, p. 65. Soebagio's report on the school is summarized in *PPO II*, September 1929 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneele overzichten*, 2: 209).

⁶⁸ The picture is based on Tijmstra, "Zoeklicht op Sjahrir," and especially on the interviews with Hamdani and Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir, Jakarta, March 6. and 12, 1982; the latter recalling what Sjahrir had said. See also Hamdani, "Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya," pp. 74–75.

⁶⁹ Sutrisno Kutojo, ed., "Inventarisasi Data Biografi Pahlawan Nasional Sutan Sjahrir," typescript, n.d., *Archives Siti Wahjunah Sjahrir*, p. 4.

⁷⁰ There were educational systems in Indonesia at that time which emphasized developing practical skills, too: Taman Siswa for instance; see Ruth T. McVey, "Taman Siswa and the Indonesian National Awakening," *Indonesia* 4 (October 1967): 128–49; Tjahja Volksuniversiteit, it seems, did not belong among them.

⁷¹ Hamdani, "Sutan Sjahrir di masa mudanya," p. 75; interview with Hamdani, Jakarta, March 6, 1982; Soewarsih Djojopoespito, "De thuiskomst van een oud-strijder," p. 40; Burhanuddin, "Sjahrir yang saya kenal," p. 49; interview with Burhanuddin, Jakarta, March 6, 1982.

⁷² *Jong Indonesie* (Bandung), October 1927 in *PPO* October 1927 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneele overzichten*, 1: 146); see also Petrus Blumberger, *De nationalistische beweging*, pp. 393–94; also *PPO* July 1928 (Poeze, ed., *Politiek-politioneele overzichten*, 1: 358).